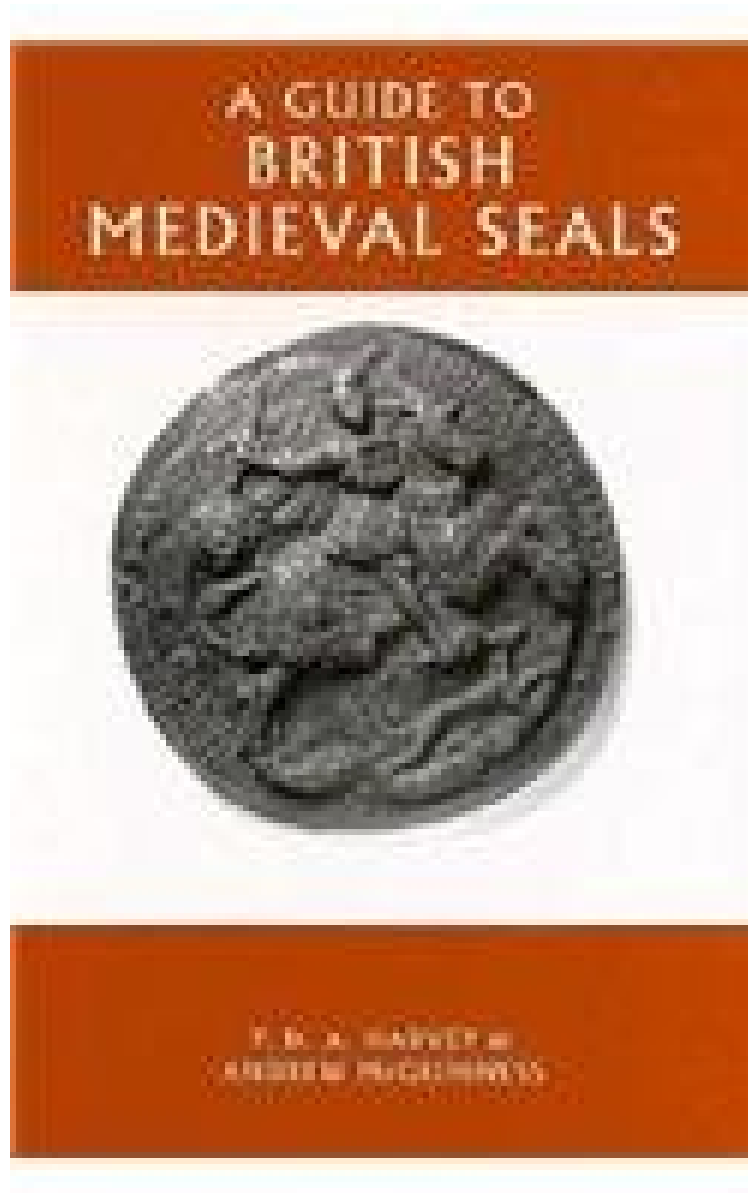


A Guide to British Medieval Seals

P.D.A. Harvey, Andrew McGuinness

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#2620640 in Books University of Toronto Press, Scholarly Publishing Division 1996-04-19 Original language: English PDF # 1 9.91 x .65 x 7.051, 1.32 #File Name: 0802008674133 pages | File size: 71.Mb

P.D.A. Harvey, Andrew McGuinness : A Guide to British Medieval Seals before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised A Guide to British Medieval Seals:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Good, but overly brief English language introduction to British Sigillography/Sphragistics By Mike I'm not a scholar in this field, but I was doing some research in an unrelated discipline that could benefit from knowledge of seals. I found myself looking for an overview of this somewhat

esoteric auxiliary science of History. I quickly found that the vast majority of the scholarship accessible to the uninitiated was unavailable, untranslated, or focused almost entirely on Heraldic Seals. I checked the academic journals for recent research. The journals in the field were completely incomprehensible to me and hinged on issues I found largely indecipherable. I contacted a scholar, who was kind enough to recommend this book, for which I'm quite grateful. This guide covers, with plenty of pictures, various seals in England and Scotland divided into chapters as follows: Introduction, Royal Seals, Aristocratic/Heraldic Seals, Seals of the Secular Clergy, Non-Heraldic Personal Seals, and Seals of Corporate Bodies and their offices. It also has a fairly extensive selected bibliography that I found useful. It's one of the few books that addresses Non-Heraldic Personal Seals, which I had difficulty finding even basic information on elsewhere. Being an overview, the content is fairly thin, but exceedingly well-referenced. I don't know if this is a lack of available data (the author frequently indicates a lack of extant sources on many matters - unsurprising when you deal with physical matter 8 centuries old) or an authorial oversight, but several chapters are just too short and several salient subjects (e.g. the craftsmen and physical properties of wax) received virtually no treatment. I was particularly interested in the Seals of Corporate bodies and it only received a few pages. Assuming there is further material, a more extensive treatment seems merited. 112 pages is on the thin side for a book of this type. I was also extremely disappointed that there was so little discussion of how these seals were used in transactions. Aside from the passing mention of land sales and treaties, little is discussed regarding the puzzling use of another often unrelated party's seal. It seems to defeat the purpose of the seal. A few pictures could benefit from some more work - two pictures in particular could have benefitted from diagrams or multiple views. I still don't quite comprehend how the 2-sided seal-press in figure 12 works, or the tag prepared for sealing fits through in fig 17. The matrices, seal presses and the like were actually my primary interest and the mechanics of the construction of seals is barely addressed (the selected bibliography did provide a reference to something of interest, though). Color photos of the wax would be helpful too, since the different colors are mentioned as having significance in certain instances, though I'd imagine that would drive up the cost of the book, which is already full of pictures and printed on thick paperstock. Other minor caveats include the extremely dry tone. Still, considering the audience is largely graduate students and archivists, I wouldn't characterize that as a flaw. It does mostly what it set out to do and is probably the best-written thing out in English in terms of an introduction to the subject matter. While I honestly found it a bit disappointing, to be perfectly frank, this may be more a function of the lack of pertinent information on the subject matter than any flaw with the book's author. This is really one of the few introductions in English written in the last hundred years. Highly Recommended for its (limited) audience. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Good book. By martin e. Very good resource for this subject. Could be more developed for ecclesiastical and monastic seals. Book came in good condition and quickly

In medieval Britain the seal was, for some three hundred years, the way most documents were authenticated. Seals and seal impressions are useful as evidence in problems of social and economic history, the history of art, law, and diplomacy, but to date they have not been thoroughly discussed. In this groundbreaking work the authors examine every kind of seal used for authenticating documents - their development, design, and use - with reference to contemporary records. An index of mottoes and inscriptions provides invaluable and practical help in identifying seals in other collections. The volume is abundant with illustrations, mainly depicting seals from the extensive collections of The British Library and the Public Record Office, London. Designed to fill a long-standing gap in the literature, this lucid introduction to British medieval seals is aimed at graduate students, archivists, historians, and anyone interested in medieval documents and artefacts.

'At last there is a thorough and authoritative introduction to the seals and sealing practices of medieval England, Scotland and Wales ... The authors of this new book evaluate the symbolism and artistry of seals as well as their legal, social, and political significance.' (David Heisser Albion) About the Author P.D.A. Harvey is Professor Emeritus of Medieval History at the University of Durham and author of many books on the history of cartography, including *Medieval Maps* (1991). Andrew McGuinness is a former lecturer in History at the University of Glasgow.