

A ROMAN LEAD SEALING FROM BURGH CASTLE

by Martin Henig, D.Phil., F.S.A.

A Roman lead sealing (Pl. VIa) was found by Mr H. Hunn with the aid of a metal detector, on the Glebe Marshes by Breydon Water, some quarter of a mile to the north-west of the Saxon Shore fort (TG 474 047 approx.). The sealing, an irregular piece of lead, maximum diameter 30mm, has a circular impression (diameter 16mm) on the obverse showing an animal, probably a griffin, running to the right. The reverse is blank but the string-hole is clearly to be seen.

Leaden sealings - generally produced with a bronze or iron die - were used to ensure the security of packages; numerous examples have been found at Brough-under-Stainmore (Roach-Smith 1868, 117-20; see also Richmond 1936, 104-25). Amongst other sites where sealings have been found are Richborough and Felixstowe (Bushe-Fox 1949, 138, Pl. XLIV, 164; Roach-Smith 1854, 197, Pl. XXXII, 1-3). A more recent find - a private sealing from Kirmington, Lincolnshire, showing Cupid on a dolphin - resembles our example.¹

The griffin device, if that is what the sealing shows, may be paralleled on several intaglios from Britain. Two examples are early Roman in date (Henig 1978, nos. 650, 651). Another - even closer - is on a 4th-5th-century silver ring from the Amesbury hoard (Henig 1978, no. 801). Our seal may have been made during the 3rd century when Burgh Castle was a flourishing military station.

Mr Hunn has generously donated the sealing to Moyses's Hall Museum at Bury St Edmunds (Accession no. 1983-104).

Note

- ¹ Henig 1975. See also Henig 1980 for an example of an official sealing of Severan date.

References

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