

Funded Research

Seals in medieval Wales, 1200-1550 (SiMeW)

SchemeName	Research Grants (Standard)
Subject	History - Social History
Award Holder Name	Professor Phillipp Schofield
Organisation	University of Wales, Aberystwyth
Department	Department of History and Welsh History
Assessment Panel	Medieval and Modern History
Date Awarded	18/12/2008 10:56:27

Seals are a major source of images and words from the past, offering unique insight into their owners/users and, together with their parent documents, into the context in which they were used, but they remain poorly understood and under-exploited. This research project (Seals in Medieval Wales 1200-1550 (SiMeW)) involves detailed investigation of medieval seals and their use in Wales and the Welsh Marches in order (a) to examine and record a source hitherto under-explored in a British context, and (b) to interpret and present the information gained from that examination in a variety of formats for both academic and wider audiences. The seals to be studied (c.5000) are in selected archive collections in the National Library of Wales (NLW) and county record offices in Wales and adjoining English counties, the majority having been preserved alongside - or still attached to - their 'parent' documents. Each seal will be systematically recorded and the parent document described, and representative examples of seals will be imaged, resulting in a large well-documented body of new source material which, when the project's interpretative, contextual and historical research is done, will become publicly accessible. Seals have particular importance as a potential source for medieval Wales, where written records and other sources are not abundant; they provide insight into many facets of medieval life, including politics, religion, culture, economy and society. The study of seals (sigillography), their images, words (legends), associated documents and provenance all offer opportunities to examine, amongst other things, political associations, social structure, and economic and cultural exchange. As well as opening new avenues to the medieval Welsh past, this project will also provide a much-needed foundation and core project for the study of medieval seals in Britain, where a profile akin to the emerging sigillographic studies elsewhere in Europe has yet to develop.

Project Summary/Extract SiMeW's research will be presented in various formats and will extend well beyond a narrowly academic focus. Most obviously, the project team will, employing the data gathered, produce a major co-authored book, organised according to the following main headings: politics, religion, culture, economy and society in medieval Wales, and reflecting the core interests of the project team. More particular issues relating to the use and interpretation of seals in a Welsh context will be explored in peer-reviewed articles (at least two). The project team will also undertake outreach activities including workshops for heritage professionals, local history groups, and schools as well as medievalists and sigillographers. A professionally-curated exhibition on Welsh seals at NLW in 2012 will be followed by a smaller travelling exhibition to be hosted by local museums or archive services in Wales, augmented by material from their own collections. The exhibitions will be supported by an illustrated catalogue, which will be designed to suit different levels of interest, and prepared by the project team. Also in 2012, an international conference will be hosted to publicise the project and to encourage knowledge transfer between SiMeW's findings and other sigillographic studies, and to encourage further work upon medieval Wales. Further outreach for the project will be provided by NLW's 'Gathering the Jewels' website (www.gtj.org.uk), which will present c.350 images of seals digitised for the project with associated commentary and supporting information, including such 'hands-on' learning materials as 3-d images of selected seals and 'make your own seal' on-line activities. Finally, the corpus of research material will be deposited with CADAIR, Aberystwyth University's digital research repository, where it will be maintained and made accessible via the Internet on a long term basis, thus offering a new research resource for further study by all interested researchers.

Number Of Studentships	0
Start Date of Award	01/09/2009 00:00:00
End Date of Award	31/08/2012 00:00:00
Applicant	Professor Phillipp Schofield

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