SIGILLOGRAPHY

John Marshal (II)

The equestrian effigy parallels in size and design that found in a number of contemporary magnate seals. The 'leaping' posture of the galloping horse is reminiscent of the first seal of Earl William de Mandeville of Essex, also, one assumes, a design of the later 1160s, though here the rider's sword arm is tighter to his body and the sinuous curve of the trunk resembles more the 'third' seal of King Stephen of England.[1] This was a design that would colonize the equestrian seals of the next decade. There is a partial legend on the one surviving impression (no. 6): + SIGILL[VM] . . .

William Marshal (I)

Eight impressions of the elder Marshal's seal survive, and at least one antiquary's sketch. The impressions are in all but one case made in green wax, the exception being the earliest (no. 27), which is in natural wax. The acts to which they are attached can in some cases be closely dated, so we know that the Marshal used the same seal through most if not all his career. The earliest closely datable impression is from 1190 (no. 27) and the latest, applied to one of his own charters, is dated 1207 (no. 32), when he was an earl. However, an impression from the same matrix is also attached to one of the 1217 reissues of Magna Carta which confirms that he used the same seal throughout his time as earl.[2] This is remarkable, as the matrix is unimpressive in size and design for a man of such stature as the Marshal became, and even for the captain and baron he was in 1190. The diameter of the impression is a mere 22 mm, less than half the size of the usual magnate great

[1]National Archives (PRO), E42/231. For Stephen's seal, T.A. Heslop, 'Seals', in *English Romanesque Art, 1066–1200*, ed. G. Zarnecki and others (London, 1984), 303, no. 332.

[2]N. Vincent, 'A census of Magna Carta manuscripts', in *The Magna Carta (Sotheby's, 2007)*, 63 (no. viii), from, Bodl. Libr., MS Ch. Gloucs. 8. My thanks to Professor Vincent for a discussion on this. He points out that a cast of an impression of the Marshal seal once said to have been attached to the Magna Carta issue of 1216 (but now lost) survives in Durham University Library (*ibid.*, p. 60, no. v).

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seal of his day. The design is the customary (if in this case miniature) equestrian effigy, wielding a sword, but the matrix had no space for any appropriate rim or legend, which from the various impressions can be reconstructed as: + S[IGILLVM] WILL[ELMI] MARESCAL[LI]. He did not change it in 1199 to record his elevation to the earldom of Pembroke. The small size of the seal meant that on occasion it was pressed deep into lumps of wax (nos 32, 40 and 71), which practice reveals no sign that the matrix was mounted as a ring bezel. The singular indifference the Marshal's use of his seal displays to status can only be deliberate: either an ostentatious embrace of the theological stance of *contemptus mundi*, or a courtier's deliberate self-deprecation.

William Marshal (II)

A number of seals are associated with the younger Marshal. He had at least two seals before succeeding his father in 1219, though neither of those that survive was a great seal (nos 142 and 164). Both featured the intaglio gems beloved of contemporary clerics, rather than the usual knightly effigy. His great seal appears soon after his succession as earl in two acts dating dating between 1219 and 1221 (Nos 110 and 112). It was about 30 mm in diameter; the image is equestrian facing right, the rider in a long flowing surcoat wielding a sword and wearing flat-topped helm, the shield to front on a strap around the neck. It is comparable to the image on the obverse face of the fourth seal of Earl Ranulf III of Chester (*c.*1218) though less than half its size.[3] The legend reads: + SIGILLV(M) WILL(ELM)I MARESCALLI COMITIS PENBROCHIE. This would be the *primatum sigillum* the earl referred to in his letter to M. Hugh his clerk in 1223 (no. 159). The now lost act, no. 144, may have exhibited a different, armorial seal, but this cannot be confirmed.

Richard Marshal

Small fragments (no. 186) and antiquaries' sketches (nos 196 and 199) survive, both of Richard's seal before he became earl. No. 186 shows the great seal was equestrian wielding a sword, bearing a signet counterseal at on the reverse. Both sketches show a comparable obverse to no. 186, but a fully armorial reverse of a two-sided seal,

[3]T.A. Heslop, 'The seals of the twelfth-century earls of Chester', in *The Earldom of Chester and its Charters*, ed. A.T. Thacker, *Journal of the Chester Archaeological Society*, 71 (1991), Plate xii, 194–195.

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bearing the Marshal arms: *per pale, a lion rampant*. If these are accurate representations, the seal would be the earliest instance of the Marshal heraldic bearings.

Gilbert Marshal (III)

Two good impressions survive of Gilbert's seal as earl (nos 211 and 237). It seems to have been modelled directly on that of his eldest brother, the late Earl William (II). It is about 25 mm in diameter, slightly smaller than his brother's. The equestrian figure is much like William's, though it lacks the trailing saddle cloth. The shield in this case, however, is clearly armorial, and carries the Marshal device. The two impressions allow the legend to be fully recovered as: S[IGILLVM] GILEBERTI MARESCALLI COMIT[IS] PEMBROCHIE.

Walter Marshal

A single imperfect impression survives of Walter's seal (no. 240). It is round and 20 mm in diameter, the smallest of the fraternal seals. As with the others it shows an equestrian figure facing right, wielding a sword and with the shield to front, the top is broken and so the style of helmet is not clear. The recoverable legend reads: . . . [WA]LTERI MARESCALLI COM[ITIS] . . .

Matilda Bigot

There are two battered fragments of impressions of the same seal of the countess, both from the period of her second widowhood, when she was marshal (nos 272 and 274). Both are central fragments and depict a cloaked and robed standing figure, the cusps of the vesica seal filled with scrolling. Its shows the image customary on female seals since the later twelfth century.[4] No. 272 is, however, double-sided, displaying on the reverse traces of a shield motif with the chequy device of Warenne. No. 276, dated 1241, has a small fragment of another seal. It is also from her second widowhood but the fragment that survives shows a different device, a lily. A small portion of the legend [B]IGOT shows she carried her first husband's name on that seal.

[4]S.M. Johns, *Noblewomen, Aristocracy and Power in the Twelfth-Century Anglo-Norman Realm* (Manchester, 2003), 128–130.

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