

## Yellow copper messenger seal case?

Dr. Anton C. Zeven, NL-Wassenaar, anton.zeven@hetnet.nl, www.antonzeven.nl

Note: a seal is a print of a seal matrix.

There are two occasions where a sigillant/sealer could not be present to fix his or her personal seal, or that of the city or other institution to a document. In a paper (ACZ: to-be-published) I explained that sometimes the number of sigillants was high which meant that several sigillants had to leave before they could add their seal. They probably left a wax seal print with the clerk or with a person representing the sigillant. A second example is that the sigillant of for instance a piece of land for sale went with his son to the aldermen, the notary or the clerk elsewhere, while another owner of the land, for instance his wife, stayed home. She, therefore, gave to her husband a copy of her seal print to have it fixed to the document.

I have not seen any archival record about messengers and others who travelled with a seal print to another place. But when it occurred we may expect that the seal print was protected in a little case and that this case was closed with a parchment or textile cord, string or lace which, on its turn, was sealed. Hence during the voyage nobody could tamper with the legitimate seal.

In Rotterdam the city archeologists (BOOR-office, contact man: Cees Herweijer) found a yellow copper case with inside the rather good preserved remains of the city seal of Rotterdam. Further research showed that this seal carried the legend. *CLAVIS SIGILLI [de rotterdam]*. See pictures.



The sizes of the seal case are width 4,5 cm, height 3 cm. That of the seal was 23 mm. At right an improved and a photo-shopped seal print.

The whitish rectangle shows the parchment tail; the piece of wax covering it had disappeared. The seal can be described as the central part being the river Rotte, left and right the dikes and below horizontally the dam in the river Rotte to separate the Rotte from the river Meuse. Near the dam a village developed with the name Rotterdam.

The seal is dated: medieval times. This means that it was preserved in the soil for some six or seven centuries.

Two remains of similar cases were earlier found by the BOOR. As the wax seals had disappeared the use of these cases was not recognized at that time.

**Question:** I believe that similar cases with identical use will have been found elsewhere; but they were probably not recognized as seal cases.

Dr Anton C. Zeven, NL-Wassenaar  
[anton.zeven@hetnet.nl](mailto:anton.zeven@hetnet.nl) [www.antonzeven.nl](http://www.antonzeven.nl)

Maybe several of the seals below are sent as seal prints to Lübeck to be embedded by the Lübeck clerk in virgin wax



Verbond tussen de Wendische en Saksische steden, 1476.

**Source:** Internet. Archiv der Hansestadt Lübeck, Lübeck.

There are more multi-seal documnets with similar seals.