

Bag Seals (& Cloth Seals)

Hedge fodder! If this is your view then please call me Mr Hedge and throw them my way. I wasn't ever particularly interested in bag seals, putting them in the same class as buttons and musket balls, i.e. slightly above shotty caps and ointment tubes but like buttons and lead shot these seals can provide a lot of history and interest if a little bit of time is invested in studying them.

Detectorists are pretty spoiled these days when it comes to find identification but there are always gaps or at least areas where the information is scattered and hard to find. Bag seals occupy one of these areas and I thought it would be fun to make a start on trying to fill this particular gap. Since the closure of Corrine Mills' 'Our Past History' site 'The Bag Seal Gallery' can be found here:- <http://www.bagseals.org/gallery/main.php>

Aylesbury Dairy Co. Seal

http://www.bagseals.org/gallery/main.php?g2_itemId=2995

Aylesbury Dairy Co. Seal, Image & Found by Adri@n.
THE AYLESBURY DAIRY CO. around the outer edge in a circle followed by a star and LIMITED LONDON across the middle. No. 57 in a circle on the other side

"To commence with a few general notes, the rise and progress of the Aylesbury Dairy Company may not be without interest. When in the year 1865 the cattle plague invaded this country, and also visited the cow-sheds of London, necessitating the slaughter of a great number of milch cows, Mr. G. Mander Allender, who for some time had paid great attention to practical dairyfarming, formed the idea of supplying London with really good milk, direct from the country. In order to carry this scheme into effect, he, in 1865, founded this Company, of which, since that time, he always has been, and still is, the most active and energetic managing-director. The business was increasing so rapidly that it was soon found to outgrow its first abode, and in 1870 it was removed to the specially built and extensive premises at St. Petersburg Place, Bayswater.

From the very commencement of the business, the supply of pure milk of high quality was made the leading principle. To completely secure the purity of the milk, it was necessary to have a certain control over it from the time it leaves the cow-nay, even more, over the conditions under which the cows are kept, and by which they are surrounded. The Aylesbury Dairy Company, therefore, only enters into a contract for the supply

of milk, after the farm in question has been inspected and satisfactorily reported upon by the Company's sanitary engineer" (PROCEEDINGS OF THE SOCIETY OF PUBLIC ANALYSTS. THE VISIT OF THE SOCIETY OF PUBLIC ANALYSTS TO THE FARMS OF THE AYLESBURY DAIRY COMPANY ON THE ~ 9th JUNE, 1887.)



The idea is simple. You lot send in photos and scans of the seals you find and I upload them onto the gallery with an ID if I can but more often with just as much detail as I can get from the image. Over time when more of the unidentified seals come in a picture of the full wording and image on that type of seal can be established. Even then a full ID is not certain. If we have a company name then it is great to track these down from historical directories or other web sources and I usually include a history of the firm with the picture. If it is foreign and many are, then I rely on friends like folkert to peruse the gallery from time to time and leave comments or even full ID's. In fact much of the best information is supplied by people who are just browsing – come and have look and make your suggestions.

Vilbel Salt Bag Seal (Weitenauer Plomben Seal)

http://www.bagseals.org/gallery/main.php?g2_itemId=3429

Vilbel Salt Bag Seal Image and found by folkert

A lead seal which can be dated to the 1830s/ 1840s (Vilbel is a town north of Frankfurt)

From: agersoe (Wed 11 Oct 14:17:37 2006)

Most likely a salt bag seal.

From the town today called Bad Vilbel.

From: agersoe = GreatDane (Wed 11 Oct 14:22:11 2006)

The townname in this kind of frame is typical for the german salt bag seals, first half 19th century.

From: Folkert (Mon 2 Jul 13:07:20 2007) These seals are also called "Weitenauer Plomben (seals)", named after the manufacturer of the pliers for these sea.s. Seals of this type were also used by South German states (members of the Süddeutsche Zollverei) who wanted to regulate and control the customs of each member country.



While I try to be as accurate as possible this is still very much a hobby and I look on it as cross between a giant codeword puzzle and mystery object. The lettering on the seals is rarely complete and the pictures and symbols they display can be baffling. Unlike a completed codeword that ends up in the bin the reward for deciphering a seal is another, hopefully full, ID that is kept for all to see and use in the identification of their finds.

Bag seals are the focal point of this undertaking but you will see that their more venerable and often more illustrious cousins, cloth seals, are also included. This is because they are usually lumped together and frequently confused with bag seals by the detectorist. Strangely, although they are generally several hundred years older than bag seals, much more has been written about them and hence information is more readily available. Having said that there still appears to be only one publication that covers, in depth, a worthwhile selection of the cloth seals found in Britain and that has been out of print for many years, Geoff Egan, 'Lead cloth seals and related items in the British Museum (B.M.occ.papers 93). I am very pleased to have had some exquisite examples of cloth seals sent in and included.

Cloth Seal, Kent, Stuart Britian Arms

http://www.bagseals.org/gallery/main.php?g2_itemId=3144

Cloth Seal, Kent, Stuart Britian Arms, Image & Found by Eagle

Found on the London Thames foreshore. Kent cloth seal same type as No.51 Fig.18 in Geoff Egan, 'Lead cloth seals and related items in the B.M. (B.M. Occasional Paper 93)'



While on the subject of artifacts that are confused with bag seals there is a small 'not a seal' section in the gallery including things like pot mends and squashed ointment tube tops!

Not a Seal - Squashed Tube Top

http://www.bagseals.org/gallery/main.php?g2_itemId=2236

Not a Seal - Squashed tube top, Image by StuE, Found by PWS

Found in the Colchester region.

An example of another object that can be mistaken for a bag seal. It is the top of an ointment tube - the screw thread can be seen bent towards the bottom.



So why not give us a hand to create this bag seal ID database? Simply photograph or scan (make sure it's a CCD type scanner to avoid blurring with depth of field) both sides, even if one is blank, and post it on a forum or better still email it to me in large format at stuartelton@hotmail.com with any info you have on it. If you have not included a ruler in the picture then diameter is useful and the County it was found in can also be of interest. If you have a bag or jar full and don't want the hassle then give them to me at a rally and I will scan them and return them next time we meet.

Finally for those compulsive hedgers amongst you I have one final enticement. Every one who has contributed to the Gallery is fully acknowledged and so immortality on the Internet could be yours! Just pocket that seal and send it to me.

http://www.bagseals.org/gallery/main.php?g2_itemId=1952