

The Chancellor's File—Part 1

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AMONG THE documents featured in the Exhibition 'Richard III' at the National Portrait Gallery was a letter from Richard to his Chancellor of England, John Russell, Bishop of Lincoln. This letter acquired some fame as the 'Warrant to Try Persons Unnamed', for in the Exhibition Catalogue¹ there was some speculation regarding its possible reference to the 'matter of the Princes'. The person responsible for initiating the debate and for much of the Exhibition Catalogue, research and presentation was Dr Pamela Tudor-Craig. In her subsequent address to the Richard III Society,² she presented further extracts from the Public Record Office File which was the source of the document and the purpose of this present article is to implement as far as is practicable, Dr Tudor-Craig's recommendation that 'these letters deserve full and careful publication . . .'

Before considering the content of the documents it may be of interest to comment on their present state and provenance. The file or portfolio containing the 'Warrant to Try Persons Unnamed' and its companions can be seen at the Public Record Office, Chancery Lane, London. The present reference for retrieving the file is C.81/1392. The 'C' stands for Chancery, the government department from whose records it originates and Classification C.81 covers documents variously termed 'Chancery Warrants' or 'Warrants for the Great Seal'. These are mostly the filed letters and bills which the Chancellor's office kept as evidence of instructions from the King or his principal officers to issue royal letters under the Great Seal of England. However, the class also contains some general correspondence.

C.81 covers the period from Henry III to the end of Richard's reign after which class C.82 takes over. There are 1799 files³ which are divided into categories according to the origin of the letters and within these categories are arranged in chronological order. File C.81/1392 contains the surviving 26 *signet* warrants for Richard III's reign. It should be pointed out that there are a number of files of chancery warrants of other categories for the reign which have yet to be fully reported in print.⁴ However, the signet warrants are potentially of greatest interest because they were initiated in the royal household, written under the supervision of, and sealed by, the King's secretary, John Kendale, and countersigned by Richard himself.

In the file there are 26 letters, with a schedule of names attached to one of them, making 27 pieces of which nine are written on parchment and the remainder, surprisingly for this time, on paper.⁵ Four of the paper letters exhibit clear watermarks. In three cases the mark takes the form of a hand in prayer from which issues a flower. In the fourth case the watermark design is a running dog looking backward with a flower in his mouth.⁶

It is evident that economy in writing materials was not practised by the clerks of Richard's signet office for many of the letters occupy only a small proportion of the sheet on which they are written. This is in considerable contrast to the methods of some of the other departments of state where pieces of parchment were usually carefully selected for each document and covered with closely written script. The documents are nearly all in remarkably good condition with the exception of No. 18 which has lost a few words torn from a corner, and No. 11 which is badly torn and stained by damp, but even in this case the obscured words can be easily read through the stain with the aid of an ultraviolet lamp. As might be expected, the parchment documents are now much more robust and free from damage than the papers. Almost all the documents show a small tear (now repaired) near the centre which may indicate that they were at one time punctured and stacked on spikes or hung on leather thongs probably soon after use. This method of storage is still used today in some offices for the short term filing of bills and delivery notes and the like in order of receipt.

References in various printed works of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries indicate that the chancery warrants were filed in bundles in the Wakefield and White Towers of the Tower of London.⁷ According to Maxwell-Lyte⁸ the Chancery records of Richard III, Henry VII and later were kept in the Rolls Chapel, Chancery Lane, in the sixteenth century, in which case they must have been transferred at a later date for some of the documents certainly bear the Tower of London stamp. The records were transferred back to Chancery Lane to the new Public Record Office in 1856 and have since been carefully sorted and skilfully repaired, and are now bound in portfolios. Despite the immense volume of the public records it seems that some sort of retrieval system was in operation even at the beginning of the eighteenth century when Thomas Rymer was able to extract and print document No. 24 in our file, and in 1825 and 1846 when Sir Henry Ellis printed No. 6 and No. 26 in his *Original Letters*.⁹ In fact, far from being new material, it is clear that these signet letters were not unfamiliar to nineteenth century historians¹⁰ but until the present time, neither file C.81/1392 nor any other of the later chancery warrants have yet been reproduced and considered as a collection.

The principal intrinsic value of these documents, aside from their subject matter, is the presence of the royal sign manual or autograph. In addition to authentication by the signet seal, most of the letters were also initialled by King Richard himself, presumably signifying his personal approval of the completed document before it was sealed by the secretary. Surviving letters indicate that, prior to his accession to the throne, Richard usually signed himself 'R. Gloucestre'.¹¹ Thereafter the signature contracted to 'RR' standing for 'Ricardus Rex'. His style does not appear to have changed greatly in the period 1475 to 1485 and his monogram is similar to Edward IV's 'RE', whilst the signature of 'G. Clarence'¹² is very different. Richard seems to have been very consistent in signing his signet letters, Edward IV less so, whilst the Lancastrian kings seem to have only signed those of particular personal interest, the signet seal presumably being sufficient authentication of itself.¹³

The main text of signet letters was apparently written by the secretary or more commonly by one of the four clerks of the signet office, some of whom would be present in the King's household at all times.¹⁴ In the Chancery and Privy

Seal offices it was usual for the clerks to sign their work but in this file the signet letters are only occasionally signed by the writer. It seems that if the King signed the letter himself then it was unnecessary for one of the clerks to take any responsibility by adding his own signature.¹⁵ However, letter No. 7 is of particular interest in bearing the secretary's own signature 'J. Kendale' at bottom right and the text may be in his hand. Whether this is connected with the date 24th December—Christmas Eve—we can only surmise. Perhaps the signet clerks had their Christmas leave but Kendale was still on duty! The only other signature that occurs is 'Herbert' on documents 1 and 5. Dr Tudor-Craig identifies this person as William Herbert who was granted an annuity of 40 marks for acting as secretary to Richard's son Prince Edward. However, there appear to have been several men of that name in the service of Edward IV and Richard III.¹⁶

All the documents except Nos. 16 and 25A¹⁷ are addressed on the reverse (the outside when folded) 'to the right reverend father in God our right trusty and welbeloved the Bishop of Lincoln, our Chancellor of England', or a variation of this in Latin or French if the text is in that tongue. This is the conventional form of address for a bishop and no other emotive significance should be attached to the words or to similar forms such as 'dearest cousin' for relations of the blood royal; 'right trusty and welbeloved' for knights; and 'our trusty servant' for persons of lesser rank. The first line of the letters also begins in common form such as 'Right reverend father in God right trusty and right welbeloved, we greet you well . . .' Each letter is headed 'By the King' or the corresponding '*Per Regem*' or '*Depar le Roi*' to leave no doubt as to its origin. Where letters under the Great Seal were issued as a result of warrants under the signet seal they also bear a note '*per Regem*' to indicate the source of authorisation. Letters patent and close warranted by letters under the Privy Seal were similarly noted 'By P.S.', and letters authorised by the Treasurer would be noted 'By Bill of the Treasurer'. It is interesting to note that several letters patent issued during Buckingham's rebellion when Richard III assumed personal control of the Great Seal, are noted as warranted 'By the King by word of mouth'.¹⁸

Although the Chancellor was one of the most powerful and influential officers of state, his authority to use the Great Seal to initiate executive action in the form of letters was rigidly circumscribed to very minor routine matters and for this reason the Chancery clerks were very careful to preserve the warrants or evidence of authority for the use of the Great Seal which is the reason for the survival of file C.81/1392 and the many others like it. Also, in 1439 an Act of Parliament had established that no grants of office or lands should be back-dated to take effect before the date of receipt of the royal warrant in Chancery.¹⁹ For these reasons some of the letters bear a note at their head in Latin of the form: 'Memorandum that on the . . . day of . . . in the year below written this letter was delivered to the Lord Chancellor of England at . . . for execution'. The letters which do not bear a delivery note²⁰ should therefore theoretically correspond with those which did not result in grants of land or office under the Great Seal. However, Maxwell Lyte²¹ has shown that great consistency and logic is not always to be found in the Chancery Records nor can this be confidently attributed to shortcomings of the clerks or to the accidents of survival. It has not been definitely established that all the patent and close rolls of this period were completed or have survived, and it is most unlikely that all of the more vulnerable

letters of warranty survive. It does not seem likely that the twenty-six letters now filed as C.81/1392 in the Public Record Office were the only signet letters from Richard to John Russell.

The letters are in three different tongues, English, French and Latin, and choice of language at this time was often very clearly related to the content of the letter. The letters in French all relate to transactions with the Duke of Brittany or the French King. As for the Latin documents, Nos. 9 and 10 are common form, diplomatic documents for which the Latin formulae were well-known and widely accepted throughout Europe. Nos. 5 and 24 are concerned with grants of land and offices and indicate the actual required wording of the letter to be issued by the Chancellor under the Great Seal. Almost all Letters Patent and Close continued to be worded in Latin until this was discontinued by Act of Parliament in 1733 apart from the period of the Commonwealth.²² In earlier times the choice of language had not been so logical. Chancery consistently used Latin throughout the Plantagenet era but French was used widely in the records of Parliament and for other branches of government and the law during the fourteenth century, and the use of English crept in gradually to displace it during the reigns of the Lancastrian kings.²³ The records of Richard III's Parliament are the first to be written wholly in English. It is evident from this file of letters and others that in Richard III's signet office English was the language of convenience and Latin and French were used only where occasion and strong tradition demanded.

There are basically three types of letter in this file. From the above it will be clear that one category of signet letters to the Chancellor consisted of very detailed warrants going so far as to dictate the actual wording to be used in the letter he was required to issue under the Great Seal.²⁴ For instance Letter No. 26 contains the text of the proclamation against Henry Tidder and his adherents, the wording of which could obviously not be delegated to the Chancellor alone. In the second and most numerous category the King commands letters to be issued under the Great Seal outlining the requirements in general terms and leaving the wording to be settled by the Chancellor, making use of his discretion and the collective drafting experience of the Chancery clerks. Whereas some of the matters so delegated are of minor importance, it is clear that Richard had a great deal of confidence in John Russell's ability to interpret his requirements on other more weighty matters and produce an effectively worded instrument of the royal will. In some cases he is told to give credence to the bearer of the letter who presumably would provide additional or secret background information. In the third category, which overlaps uncertainly with the second, are instructions and communications which do not specifically call for letters Patent or Close to named persons. Such a letter is No. 1 which calls for Russell (with the advice of those of the Council remaining in London) to select suitable persons to try unnamed prisoners for an unspecified offence. More generally, No. 3 instructs the Chancellor to safeguard the interests of the Hanse merchants who might be harassed by any of the King's subjects contrary to the treaty of 1474. Also in this category is the famous letter No. 6 dispatched from Lincoln on 12th October, 1483, calling for the Great Seal to which Richard added his own lengthy postscript which tells much of his relationship with Russell. (Illustrated.)

Although these documents are classified as signet letters it should be made clear that the wax impressions of the signet seal are no longer attached to any of

them. All that remains is a faint orange coloured stain generally just over one inch in diameter. The few seals surviving in other archives are reported to be extremely fragile.²⁵ It is possible that the seals on warrants received in Chancery were removed so that the wax could be re-used. Alternatively they may have simply fallen off during storage and refiling over the centuries. In any case there was usually no need for the longevity which was planned for Letters Patent where the seal was attached by means of parchment or silken tags.²⁶

In the absence of any more than vague traces of the seal, reference to the wording provided the principal means by which these documents were presumably later identified as signet letters in order to make up the present file C.81/1392. It has already been mentioned that the letters are usually headed 'by the King' which in itself distinguishes letters emanating direct from the King's household. The other indication is in the sealing or dating clause at the end of the letters. This usually takes the form: 'Given under our signet at . . . the . . . day of . . . in the . . . year of our reign', the regnal year is frequently omitted and has to be deduced from the place and month-date mentioned or from the contents of the letter.

Whereas the frequent omission of the regnal year from the dating clause can cause some confusion in other reigns this is not a problem for Richard's short reign and the places mentioned in the dating clauses provide useful confirmation of and additions to the known royal itinerary. Dr Tudor-Craig has pointed out that Richard's visit to Minster Lovell Hall on 29th July, 1483, *en route* from Oxford to Gloucester was not known from any other source than C.81/1392/No. 1.²⁷

It is very unfortunate that there are so few surviving signet letters for Richard's reign but this is more than compensated for by the survival of one of the signet office docket-books—the famous Harley Manuscript No. 433, now in the British Library from which extracts have been taken by numerous authors.

A full transcript of this important manuscript is shortly to be published and this will bring invaluable historical evidence into the hands of the many scholars and enthusiasts who cannot readily consult the original.²⁸ In the meantime it is worth while outlining the relationship of Harley MS.433 to the general body of surviving government documents and in particular to the Chancery Warrants which are the subject of this article. Harley 433 is a large volume of several hundred folios. Its precise status has been disputed in the past but it is now perhaps generally accepted that it is the 'docket book' in which copies or notes of outgoing letters were entered by the signet office clerks working under Richard III's secretary John Kendale.²⁹ It also contains copies of certain incoming letters and various memoranda which do not relate to correspondence, for instance a proposal for increasing the efficiency of the financial management of the King's lands.³⁰ Harley 433 is a very fortunate survival and remarkable in that it may have been recovered from the Household baggage at Bosworth Field. Similar

C.81/1392/6 Letter to the Chancellor, John Russell, requesting him to send officers of the Chancery with the Great Seal. Postscript in Richard's own hand. Dated at Lincoln, 12th October, 1483. (Crown copyright—this document is reproduced by permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office.)

books would have been kept by Edward IV and Henry VII's secretaries but the earliest similar surviving book is from Elizabeth's reign.³¹

The relationship of the various documents and offices requires some brief explanation. It is thought that in Norman times the Chancellor acted as the King's secretary authenticating the royal letters with the Great Seal of England. Later, as the Chancellor acquired more judicial duties, Chancery ceased to be an office of the King's Household and became established in London. On their frequent progresses and campaigns, the Plantagenet kings therefore needed a means of communicating with the Chancellor and others and a small 'Privy Seal' was instituted with its keeper acting as King's secretary. In the fourteenth century the Keeper of the Privy Seal also became office bound and went 'out of Court' with increased and diversifying duties and yet another officer became the King's secretary. During the reign of Edward IV the Secretary and the Signet Office became the principal instrument of communication of the Crown without becoming burdened with other duties.

Letters authenticated with the signet seal were used for giving instructions to the Keeper of the Privy Seal, the Chancellor, the Treasurer and other officers as well as for communicating direct with other persons, towns and institutions where speed was important. Signet letters were not used for making or confirming grants of lands, offices, commissions and regular payments *direct* to individuals. These functions continued to be performed by means of letters patent or close under the Great Seal of England whilst irregular payments out of the Exchequer were normally authenticated by Letters under the Privy Seal as were certain legal summonses. Exceptionally, the signet letter would be used to expedite payments where letters patent already existed but the exchequer had delayed payment, or to authorise urgent irregular payments later to be confirmed by privy seal warrant. Such cases were not routine and indicate special royal interest.

The use of signet letters for immediate rather than long term matters explains why only a small number survive outside the Public Records—they would have no long term value to the recipient. On the other hand, as explained earlier, signet letters were kept by royal officers as warrants for their actions. This article has considered the letters so kept by the Chancellor and it is likely that there were more that have not survived. Several files of signet letters also survive in the records of the office of the Keeper of the Privy Seal and it is hoped that these will be investigated in the near future.³²

In the following section is a 'Calendar' of the documents in file C.81/1392, briefly summarising the date and contents of each. In subsequent articles it is intended to reproduce full transcriptions of the more interesting documents with a short commentary where appropriate and it is hoped that this will provide material for others to carry out more detailed research.

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CALENDAR OF 'SIGNET WARRANTS' (P.R.O. C.81/1392)

1. Warrant for letters of commission to try persons unnamed.
Dated at 'this manor of Minster Lovell'—29th July (1483).
2. Warrant for: Letters of general pardon to Ralph Hastings.
Letters of confirmation of all grants made to Ralph Hastings
by Edward IV.
Letter of commission to Lord Dynham and others.
Dated at 'oure monasterie of Gloucester'—2nd August (1483).
3. Warrant instructing the Chancellor to see that the 'merchant strangers of the Stylyard' have whatever legal protection or redress required against mistreatment by the King's subjects without having to make suit to the King.
Dated at 'oure Castel of Warrewic'—13th August (1483).
4. Warrant for further revised letters of commission to Lord Dynham, Lieutenant of Calais to treat with Lord Cordes (Phillipe de Crevesceur, Le Sieur de Querdes) regarding restitution for acts of piracy.
Dated at 'oure Citie of York'—12th September (1483).
5. Warrant for letters patent granting a life annuity of 40 marks out of the revenues of Holt, Bromfeld and Yale in the Marches of Wales to John Savage knight of the body in consideration of good and faithful service. (In Latin).
Dated at Pontefract—22nd September (1483).
6. Letter to the Chancellor requesting him to send officers of the Chancery with the Great Seal. With postscript in the King's hand.
Dated at 'oure Cite of Lincoln'—12th October (1483).
7. Warrant for letters patent under the Great Seal to acquit Gerard Canysian and Dame Elizabeth Stokton his wife after payment of 500 marks in lieu of return of the Bill of Obligation which has been mislaid.
Dated at 'oure Palois of Westminster'—24th December (1483).
8. Warrant for letters patent granting the prebend of Bollenhill in the collegiate church of Tamworth to John Geoffrey and letters patent of notification of the same to the Bishop of Chester or the see being vacant, to the Archbishop of Canterbury or his vicar-general.
Dated at 'our Palois of Westminster'—18th February (1484).
9. Warrant for letters patent commissioning Thomas (Langton) Bishop of St David's as ambassador to Charles King of France with authority to agree a truce and arrange a diet for the agreement of a permanent treaty. (In Latin).
Dated at the University of Cambridge—10th March (1484).
10. Warrant for letters patent commissioning Thomas (Langton) Bishop of St David's and John Shirwood Bishop elect of Durham as ambassadors to the court of Pope Sixtus IV at Rome. (In Latin).
Dated at the University of Cambridge—10th March (1484).
11. Warrant for letters of commission to certain persons to be named by Walter Felde provost of the college of our Lady and Saint Nicholas in the University of Cambridge to take such carpenters, masons and other artificers as necessary to finish the church.
Dated at Huntingdon—12th March (1484).
12. Instructions to the Chancellor to prepare warrant to excuse fees payable by

the Monastery of Gloucester for the letters patent of the grant of 20 pounds per year out of the fee farm of the town of Gloucester as recently warranted by letters of privy seal.

Dated at Nottingham Castle—23rd March (1484).

13. Warrant for and draft of letters patent under the great seal to ratify a truce with Francis Duke of Brittany to endure 1st July 1484 to 24th April 1485. To be dated 8th June, 1484. (In French).
Warrant dated at Pontefract Castle—10th June (1484).
14. Warrant for letters of commission of oyer and terminer (to hear and determine) under the great seal to John, Lord Scrope and others to try James Newnham (who has confessed) and others for great treasons.
Dated at Scarborough Castle—6th July (1484).
15. Instructions to the Chancellor to correct an error in the letters patent and enrolment of a grant to Thomas Stroder of the manors or lordships of Northcote and Willington which state both to be in Cornwall whereas the former is in Devon.
Dated at Nottingham Castle—18th September (1484).
16. Draft or copy(?) of letters of commission of oyer and terminer to John Lord Scrope and eleven others to enquire of true and law-abiding men in the counties of Devon and Cornwall concerning treasons, conspiracies and other offences perpetrated by Richard Edgecombe Esq., John Lenne, Mercer, late of Launceston, John Belbury, Mercer, of Lyskard and John Toser, Dyer, of Exilond. (In Latin).
Undated and unsigned. (Resultant enrolment dated 24th October, 1484).
17. Letter enclosing confessions* of three merchants of the West Country who have aided the rebel Sir Robert Willoughby and others in Brittany. Warrant for letters of commission of oyer and terminer to John Lord Scrope, 'Sir John Catesby and Townesende and Sylyarde our Judges' requiring them to proceed to Exeter to try the prisoners there.
Dated at Nottingham Castle—9th October (1484).
Postscript in same hand orders the Chancellor to prepare a writ of 'scire facias' directed to Edward Berkleley to show why he should not forfeit 1000 marks recognisance for the misbehaviour of the rebel Sir William Berkeley.
*Enclosures missing.
18. Instructions to cancel a recognisance against John Chester of Bristol for the good behaviour of his brother who was alleged to have harboured and succoured rebels, the said John and his brother having appeared before the King and his Council and demonstrated innocence.
Dated at Nottingham Castle—14th October (1484).
19. Warrant for letters under the great seal to discharge James Blount Captain of Hammes Castle of the safe-keeping of the Earl of Oxford. The letters to be given to William Bolton, yeoman usher of the Chamber who is charged with receiving the Earl from Hammes and conveying him to ship at the 'see syde' in the company of James Blount who is 'not to depart before he see him shipped'.
Dated at Nottingham Castle—28th October (1484).
20. Warrant to the Chancellor to cancel a recognisance in the sum of 500 marks against Sir John Ferrers who was of lately bound to keep the peace against

Viscount Lisle and others and not depart beyond a mile of the City of London.

Dated at Westminster—1st December (1484).

21. Warrant to discharge Lord Lisle and Sir James Laurence of their recognisances not to depart from the City of London or a mile about the same.
Dated at Westminster—2nd December (1484).
22. Warrant for and draft of letters patent commissioning and authorising John Bishop of Lincoln the Chancellor, John Gunthorp Dean of Wells and Keeper of the Privy Seal, Thomas Burgh and Thomas Montgomery knights of the body and of the Order of the Garter, William Catesby Esquire of the body and Thomas Hutton Doctor of Canon Law or any three of them to be ambassadors to meet with Antony Bishop of St Pol of Leon to negotiate an extension of the truce with Francis Duke of Brittany. (In French).
Dated at Westminster—20th February (1484).
23. Warrant for letters patent of commission under the Great Seal for William Matthew and John Alysandre to be the King's 'Carte takers' in all places within the realm.
Dated at Westminster—28th February (1485).
24. Warrant for letters patent of commission under the great seal for Ralph Asheton knight of the body and Robert Rydon bachelor of law to be vice-constables of England or commissioners in the office of Constable of England to investigate, proceed against and try crimes of lese majeste 'summarily and plainly without noise and show of judgement on simple inspection of fact.' (In Latin).
Dated at Westminster—29th April (1485).
- 25A. List of names of Scottish envoys to have letters of safe conduct as instructed in 25B. Countersigned by the King at top and bottom of the list.
No date (attached to 25B).
- 25B. Warrant for letters of safe-conduct for the Archbishop of St Andrews with 40 persons on horseback to pass through England to Rome to last for one year and other letters of safe-conduct for the Scottish envoys coming to a diet or conference on the borders.
Dated at Kenilworth Castle—21st May (1485).
26. Warrant for and draft letters of proclamation under the great seal to the sheriffs of every county declaring the traitorous intentions of Piers Bishop of Exeter, Jasper Tidder, John late Earl of Oxford and Sir Edward Widevile having chosen for their captain one Henry Tidder, calling upon all the King's subjects to be ready in their most defensible array to do service of war when called to resist the King's enemies.
Dated at Nottingham Castle—21st June (1485).

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. P. Tudor-Craig, *Richard III*, National Portrait Gallery Exhibition Catalogue, London (1973), pp.54–55, 98.
2. P. Tudor-Craig, Address to Richard III Society London Branch, *The Ricardian*, No. 43, December 1973, p.2.

3. *Guide to the Contents of the Public Record Office* Vol. 1, HMSO, London (1963), p.43, states 1796 files. Three have been added since publication as shown by the PRO search room lists.
4. The Public Record Office references for the various categories of Chancery warrants for the reign of Richard III are as follows:

Warrants under the privy seal	C.81/886-907 (22 files)
Warrants under the signet seal	C.81/1392 (1 file)
Signed bills and other direct warrants	C.81/1529-31 (3 files)
Treasurer's warrants	C.81/1641-2 (2 files)
Council warrants—none survive	

5. Miss Condon, who has made a wider study of the signet warrants covering the reigns of Edward IV and Henry VII, states that there seems to be a correlation between the character of the letter and the material on which it was written. Matters of common form such as warrants for grants tend to be written on parchment. The signet warrants received in the Privy Seal Office and surviving in its files are usually of this type and are almost all parchment. Messages of a more immediate or 'political' nature are usually on paper. Why this should be is not at all clear.
6. Miss Condon has found the 'hand and flower' in various forms to be the most common watermark in the late fifteenth century.
7. T. Rymer, *Foedera, Conventiones, Litterae etc.* (Rymer's Foedera), London (1704-13), Vol. XII *passim*.
Sir H. Ellis, *Original Letters etc.*, Series 2, Vol. 1, London (1827), and Series 3, Vol. 1, London (1846), *passim*.
8. Sir H. C. Maxwell-Lyte, *Historical Notes on the use of the Great Seal of England*, HMSO (1926), pp.401-3.
9. Rymer *op. cit.* pp.268-269. An 'Index to Records' dated 1739 survives on the Public Record Office reference shelves which shows that at that time some of the chancery warrants were in the Tower and some in the Rolls Chapel. Ellis *op. cit.* Series 2, Vol. 1, pp.159-160 and 162-166.
10. After the establishment of the Public Record Office further extracts from the Chancery warrants of the period were printed notably in:
National Manuscripts: Facsimiles (England) Part 1, Ordnance Survey Office, Southampton, HMSO (1865), No. LIX (now reference C.81/1392/13 in the present file), and J. Gairdner (Editor), *Letters and Papers, Richard III and Henry VII*, Vol. 1, HMSO (1861) *passim*, printed several of the copies of these letters which he found in Harley MS. 433 although he did not print anything direct from the Chancery files.
11. Best reproductions of Richard's ducal signature are to be found in *National Manuscripts, op. cit.*, Nos. XLVII, XLIX, L, LI, LV.
12. *National Manuscripts, op. cit.*, No. XLVII.
13. J. Otway-Ruthven, *The King's Secretary and the Signet Office in the XVth Century*, Cambridge (1939), pp.24-26, and Maxwell-Lyte, *op. cit.*, pp.130-132.
14. Otway-Ruthven *op. cit.*, p.113.
15. The letters in this file which are *not* signed by the King are Nos. 5, 6, 7, 16. The letters signed by clerks or the secretary are Nos. 1, 5, 7. Thus 1 is signed by Richard and a clerk, 6 carries Richard's unsigned holograph postscript, 16 is misfiled, leaving 5 and 7 in support of the general rule that either the King or the clerk signed. Most of the signet warrants received in the Privy Seal Office were signed by Kendale or one of the clerks, see note 36.
16. P. Tudor-Craig, *Exhibition Catalogue, op. cit.*, p.54; British Library MS. *Harley 433* f.34; Otway-Ruthven, *op. cit.*, p.188.
17. C. 81/1392/No. 16 appears to be a draft or copy of a letter of commission rather than a signet letter to the Chancellor. It bears no date or seal mark and is not addressed to the Chancellor but has the abbreviated version of the standard forms of a letter of commission. It has probably been misfiled. C.81/1392/No. 25A is a schedule of names attached to No. 25B and is not a letter in its own right.

18. *Calendar of Patent Rolls 1476-1485*, HMSO (1901), pp.368, 370.
 19. Maxwell-Lyte, *op. cit.*, p.258.
 20. Letters in the file with delivery note are Nos. 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 15, 24, 26.
 21. Maxwell-Lyte, *op. cit.*, p.259 *et passim*.
 22. *Ibid.*, pp.238-240.
 23. *Rotuli Parliamentorum* (The Rolls of Parliament), Vol. VI (1783).
 24. Letters in the file containing a full draft of the required letter patent are Nos. 5 (Latin), 9 (Latin), 10 (Latin), 13 (French), 22 (French), 24 (Latin), 26 (English).
 25. Miss Condon states that attempts were sometimes made to 'key' the wax to the paper by cutting small slits in the area before sealing but this is not evident in this file.
 26. Examples of surviving seals are cited by Otway-Ruthven (*op. cit.*, p.24): Signet seal of Edward IV on British Library MS Add. Ch. 56425 and Signet Seal of Richard III in Birch's Catalogue of Seals No. 758. The latter is described as: '... 1in. in diameter and bore a shield of the arms of France and England quarterly, ensigned with a crown of three crosses and two fleurs-de-lis, and surrounded by a collar of roses, having the St George pendant therefrom.'
- The seals on paper warrants most frequently had 'paper' seals made by depositing wax on the face of the document, then applying a square of paper (diamond-wise) and finally impressing the seal matrix causing the wax to come through the paper square. Not surprisingly, the projecting corners of the paper square have since provided a source of damage. The best surviving seals result from different treatment presumably for special purposes. In the case of the seal on BL MS. Ch. 56425 the wax impression is contained in a 'fender' of plaited rushes which is sewn to the parchment document.
27. P. Tudor-Craig, *Exhibition Catalogue, op. cit.*, p.54.
 28. Maxwell-Lyte (*op. cit.*), p.28, suggested it may be a docket book of the Privy Seal Office containing 'much other miscellaneous matter including a series of notes of documents issued under the signet.' Since the Keeper of the Privy Seal did not always accompany Richard's Household but the Secretary and the Signet Office did, Harley 433 is much more satisfactorily explained as the Secretary's notebook, naturally doubling as the Signet Office docket book and book of Council Memoranda.
 29. British Library *Harley MS. 433*, f.270-2, printed in *English Historical Documents*, Vol. IV—1327-1485. Edited A. R. Myers, London (1969), p.531, and J. Gairdner, *op. cit.*, pp.81-85; discussed by B. P. Wolfe, *The Royal Demesne in English History*, George Allen & Unwin (1971), p.187.
 30. *Public Record Office Guide (op. cit.)*, Vol. 1, p.44.
 31. There are numerous signet letters in the files of the Privy Seal Office—the warrants to the Keeper of the Privy seal to issue letters under the Privy Seal. Public Record Office references for the reign are as follows:
 - PSO 1/56 (Portfolio of 66 documents—May-December 1483)
 - PSO 1/57 (Portfolio of 50 documents—December 1483—March 1484)
 - PSO 1/58 (Portfolio not inspected—March 1484—November 1484)
 - PSO 1/59 (Portfolio not inspected—November 1484—May 1485)
 - PSO 1/60 (Portfolio not inspected—May 1485—August 1485)
 32. Publication of B.L. *Harl. Res. 433* by the Richard III Society is to begin in June 1979.