

HERITAGE WEEK



# MEDIEVAL TREASURE HUNT

*Thirteen Medieval objects:  
drink, food, vanity, hygiene and religion*



## FIRST FLOOR



### Drinking Horn, C15th, German (HCM 217, display case 1)

**Material:** Aurochs Horn, a type of wild cattle; silver gilt; silver with a layer of gold on top.

**What is it:** A drinking horn, characteristic of the late medieval, Griffins Foot or Dragon's Foot, style.

**The Story:** An expensive luxury cup for drinking toasts, each person drank and then handed on to their neighbour. Drinking horns were frequently given as gifts and used as charter horns to seal land and other legal agreements.

**Curious Fact:** Animal horn was very useful, used to hold coins, gunpowder and lead shot, ink, and even cut into slices to make a lantern as it let some light through.

### Gravoire or Hair Parter - C14th, English (MG 018, display case 4)

**Material:** Walrus Ivory

**What is it:** A hair parter or hair pin, probably came as a set with a comb and mirror.

**The Story:** An expensive thing to have owned at the time. Carved from the tip of a walrus tusk with two embracing figures, possibly Tristan and Isolde. Walrus ivory was very important to trade in Northern Europe.

**Curious Fact:** The economies of Iceland and Greenland depended on Walrus Ivory, the advent of easily accessible elephant ivory led to a crash in the market and was the main reason for the collapse of the Viking colony in Greenland.





## Carving of St Thomas à Becket C12th, English

(MG027, display case 4)

**Material:** Walrus Ivory

**What is it:** Scene from the life of St Thomas à Becket.

**The Story:** The four knights were involved in the murder in 1170 of Becket in Canterbury Cathedral. One knight holds the axe with which to break down the Cathedral door. There are also two Clergy and a Bishop (holding the staff), who has also lost his head.

**Curious Fact:** The death of Thomas à Becket gave him cult status across Europe.

## Maiolica Drug Jar c1510-20, Faenza or Venice (HCM 291 display case 7)

**Material:** Earthenware, white tin glaze

**What is it:** A pharmaceutical, apothecary or drug jar.

**The Story:** Used for the spice, Cumin, medicinally thought to aid the digestive system, reducing flatulence and bad breath, as well as being a flavour for food. The jar shape, without a spout, tells us that it was for dried material and will have been stoppered with cork or wood to keep the spice dry and away from light.

**Curious Fact:** The magical qualities of cumin include love, lust and fidelity and it is recommended to repel evil.



## Raqqa-style Bowl, Syrian, C13th

(MG 130, display case 12)

**Material:** Stone Paste

**What is it:** A food bowl.

**The Story:** From one of the prolific potteries in Raqqa, it is decorated with a wonderful turquoise glaze that makes the bowl look good and waterproof. The bowl was dipped in the glaze and then set down, giving it's accidental pattern. The tiny cracks and uneven colour in the glaze come from the salts in the soil due to the bowl having been buried. It's simple shape and decoration indicate that it was for daily use.

**Curious Fact:** Techniques, including lustreware, tin glazing and underglaze were invented by Islamic potters.



### Aquamanile - C15th, German (CG 073 display case 6)

**Material:** Brass

**What is it:** A hand washer.

**The Story:** In the form of a horse, ridden by a dragon, it was used to pour water over a person's hands mostly in houses of the wealthy or the church. Eating with just

a knife and one's fingers meant handwashing was frequent. It was also part of welcoming a guest. Filled through a rectangular opening at the top of the horse's mane, and emptied through the tap at the base of the horse's chest. Many like this are known to have been made in Nuremberg in Germany.

**Curious Fact:** The death of Thomas à Becket gave him cult status across Europe.

## TOP FLOOR

### Carving of Rabbit C15th, English (HCM 036 display case 28)

**Material:** Stone

**What is it:** Possibly a terminal for tracery work on a tomb-canopy.

**The Story:** A carved stone fluted moulding on which sits a portion of a winged rabbit, with an anthropomorphised face. Chest or altar tombs became common in the Medieval period and occupied prominent positions in Church and graveyards. Canopied tombs were inside churches defining the owner as a member of the elite. Canopies could be elaborate and were often decorated with heraldic features.

**Curious Fact:** Rabbits generally represent fertility and innocence in medieval art but this is more typical of the Medieval Bestiary depictions. The image of a rabbit, as a grotesque or chimera, becoming the attacker suggests strength and bravery were necessary characteristics for the Medieval man.



## The Antrim Cross, C9th, Irish (HCM 627, display case 41)

**Material:** Cast Bronze and Enamel

**What is it:** A Early Christian Cross, Ecclesiastical Art.

**The Story:** The most important Irish antiquity in our collection. Named after the county it was found in. Its equal arms were once been decorated with metal plaques. Two sides of the central pyramidal boss are unusual as they have animals on them. This helps in the dating of the cross, which from its metal and shape could be C7th, but the use of these animals places it more in the early to mid C9th. The importance of the Antrim Cross lies in it being the only virtually intact example of its kind and period - though there were others, as we know from comparable enamelled bosses looted by the Vikings and placed in their Norwegian graves, including the Oseberg ship burial that occurred shortly after AD 834.

**Curious Fact:** It is possible that the High Crosses of Stone, found all over Ireland, were modelled on the Antrim Cross.



## Cashel Bell, C9th, Irish (HCA 617, display case 39)

**Material:** Cast bronze, an alloy of 90% copper, 10% tin

**What is it:** Monastic handbell.

**The Story:** Used in an early Irish monastery at Cashel, it is one of three, probably made by the same workshop. The others were found at Bangor and Lough Lene in Westmeath. The Lough Lene bell, replicated half size replica and in silver, is the bell the Ceann Comhairle (Speaker) of the Dail rings to keep order. The Cashel bell was found in 1848, and like the other two has an incised celtic cross on each face. These bells played a central role in monastic life, calling the monks to prayer, and as a symbol of obedience to its call. They were believed to represent the voice of God, and to ward off evil.

**Curious Fact:** The celtic cross design is unusual on a bell, although quite common in Ireland, but more usually as graveyard memorials.

## GROUND FLOOR



**Stained-Glass panel of Angel with Trumpet, c 1300, English** (CG 042 Crucifix room)

**Material:** Glass, lead.

**What is it:** Stained glass.

**The Story:** Stained glass along with wall paintings were an important means of telling Bible stories to people who could not read. The angel is blowing a trumpet, and the blue background represents Heaven. This panel may have been one of a series, possibly from Bristol Cathedral, a former Augustinian Abbey. The blue background highlights the variations in depth of colour that are typical of early glass.

**Curious Fact:** The stained glass pieces are held together by thin strips of grooved lead, making it very fragile and therefore such early pieces are rare.



**O'Dea Mitre and Crozier, 1418, Irish**  
(LDL 001 & LDL 002 display case 59)

**Material:** Textile, enamel, silver.

**What is it:** Bishop's hat and staff, a ceremonial walking stick.

**The Story:** On the mitre are two tiny figures, a kneeling bishop and Mary, representative of Bishop O'Dea and St. Mary's. On the crozier, which is based on the medieval continent form of a shepherd's crook, are little figures of saints, some of which are cast or made in a mould and some made using enamelling, where ground glass is heated and fuses with the metal. The only known Irish example, it was made by Thomas O' Carryd for Bishop Cornelius O'Dea, Bishop of Limerick in 1418 and used in St. Mary's Cathedral.

**Curious Fact:** These are rare pieces as, with changing fashions, such items got remade in a newer style. Bishop Milner had drawings made of the Mitre and Crozier before they were created.

**Striegel Panel Painting - SS Sebastian, Nicholas of Myra and Anthony of Egypt late C15th, early C16th German**  
(HCP 002, display case 59)

**Material:** Wooden panel using tempera, made by mixing the colour pigment with egg.

**What is it:** A triptych.

**The Story:** Before most people could read, saints each had symbols that told who they were, the pig (bottom right) and the T-shaped cross on his cloak and on his staff are the symbols of Saint Anthony of Egypt. He was a hermit who lived alone in the desert, but many people came to join him, leading to the development of monasteries. The other saints are Saint Nicholas (Santa Claus) and Saint Sebastian, all three prayed to by people who feared the plague, the terrible sickness of the Middle Ages.

**Curious Fact:** Anthony of Egypt is also known as Anthony the Great, and Father of All Monks.



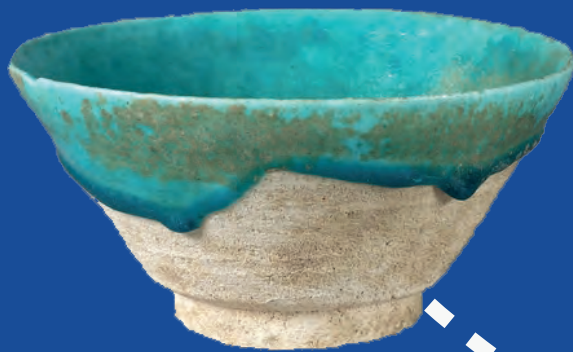
**Reliquary Chasse (casket) C13th, Limoges, French** (HCM 080, display case 66)

**Material:** Chamblevé enamelled bronze plaques

**What is it:** Casket for the relics of saints.

**The Story:** The front shows the murder of St Martial, one of the patron saints of Limoges; the ends have figures of saints standing between roundels; the back end of the lid have roundel decoration, while the front of the lid shows Christ in Majesty in a circle flanked by angels. At a later date, probably in the 15th, crocketed gables and pierced roof-cresting and lion feet to support the crocketed sideposts were added.

**Curious Fact:** The chasse was uncovered during excavations for the foundations of a house near Godalming, Surrey, c.1840, and was formerly in the collection of Lord Midleton.



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