

## Medieval World at the Ashmolean

- Many of the objects from medieval times, (broadly 1066-1485) are on display in Gallery 41: England 400-1600.
- Other galleries include objects from around the world. They reveal aspects of medieval daily life and illustrate far reaching trade routes from the east for transporting a range of goods such as ceramics, spices and textiles.
- Objects and artworks can be used as starting points to explore a range of themes. They demonstrate the sophistication and complexity of medieval life.
- Themes include, writing, technology, design, pilgrimage, food and drink, trade, reading and writing, monasteries and religion.

## Galleries containing relevant objects

Gallery 7: Money

Gallery 30: Mediterranean World, pilgrimage items, crusader knight brass rubbing and an astrolabe.

Gallery 40: European Ceramics, examples of medieval pottery, local and European

Gallery 34: Medieval Cyprus, crusader coins

Gallery 42: Early Italian art

Gallery 28: Asian Crossroads

Gallery 31: Islamic Middle East

## Gallery 41: England 400-1600

1. Reliquary casket of Saint Thomas Becket, gilt copper alloy, enamel and wood, about 1200, Limoges, France



This reliquary casket, depicting Saint Thomas Becket's assassination at Canterbury Cathedral and subsequent entombment, was intended to hold a relic of the saint.

AN2008.36

## Gallery 41: England 400-1600

2. Stylus, copper alloy and silver, 900-1200, unprovenanced, Icklingham, Suffolk



Styli like this were commonly found in monastic centres and were used to score lines on manuscripts or to write on wax tablets. The flat end was used to erase errors. Wax tablets and styli were used by monks to practice writing in order to illuminate manuscripts.

AN1921.1047

### Gallery 41: England 400-1600

3. Puzzle jug, Brill/Boarstall ware, 1250-1350, from the Town Hall site, Oxford



Puzzle jugs were made for drinking games. The 'puzzle' was how to drink from the jug without getting drenched from the spouts at the side, which connect to a chamber at the bottom. It was filled through the hole at the top of the hollow handle. The face masks around the rim are a typical Oxford decoration. AN1921.202

### Gallery 41: England 400-1600

4. Floor tiles, ceramic, 1300-1400, Godstow, Oxfordshire



Portion of tile floor excavated from Godstow Nunnery. The irregular pattern is thought to be because the tiles were bought from another religious foundation and re-used. The Nunnery was founded in 1133.

AN1974.30 30-33

### Gallery 41: England 400-1600

5. Pilgrim badges, depicting Saint Thomas Becket and his shrine at Canterbury Cathedral lead alloy, 1270-1400, London



Pilgrimage was a key feature of medieval society. Although the main destination was Jerusalem, Canterbury was a popular place for pilgrimage in England. Pilgrims travelled to cathedrals that preserved the relics of saints they believed held miraculous powers. AN1988.937 , AN1986.2

### Gallery 41: England 400-1600

6. Early Medieval Oxford Ware, 1000-1250



Dish for food preparation and baking, locally made and used in Oxfordshire.

AN1991.139

### Gallery 30: Medieval World

7. Astrolabe, probably made in Spain, 1260



Astrolabe used to tell the time, among other tasks of astronomy and astrology. The astrolabe was widely used in the Islamic world. It can be used to mimic the movement of the sun and stars across the sky. Lent by The Museum of the History of

Science. Given by Lewis Evans INV. NO. 49033

### Gallery 28: Asian Crossroads

8. Model of a camel, China, Tang dynasty (AD618-906), soft whitewear, remains of paint

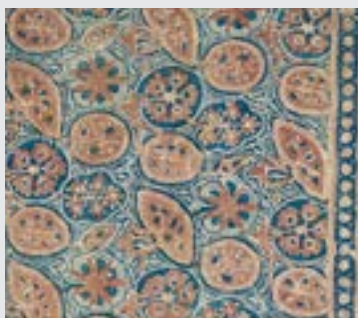


Camels were used to carry goods on the Silk Road. At the time, the exchange of goods and technical knowledge flourished between China and Western Asia including silk. Rhubarb was in high demand as it was used for medicinal purposes in Western Asia and the Mediterranean.

EA1956.988

### Gallery 28: Asian Crossroads

9. Indian textile traded to Eastern Indonesia, 1300s, Gujarat



Textiles were traded to Indonesia in exchange for local products, such as spices or sandalwood. Merchants had trading partners in distant places to help them purchase and trade goods. Spices such as cinnamon, pepper and cloves were carried both over land and by sea from their Asian sources to the markets in the mediterranean. Oil, wine, or honey were moved in storage jars. EA1998.222

### Gallery 31: Islamic Middle East

10. Hanging lamp, Egypt, 1300s



Made to hang in a mosque, the flaring mouth of the lamp is decorated with Verse 24:35, The Light Verse from the Qur'an. The name that appears around the body of the lamp is Mamluk Sultan Muhammad ibn Qala'un who commissioned it.

EA1972.5

## Gallery 1: Exploring the past

11. Decorative smoke vent in the form of a head, 1300s



This chimney pot once belched smoke from a merchant's house in the High Street of a fourteenth century house in Oxford. In the medieval period, houses were generally organised around a hall with a central hearth with the smoke rising up through the rafters and escaping through a chimney pot. AN1887.3206

## Gallery 2: The Ashmolean Story

12. Medieval Anglo-Jewish bronze ritual vessel, discovered in a disused moat in Norfolk at the end of the C17th made 1200-1300



Jewish communities spread rapidly throughout the Mediterranean world from the 1st century CE, but it was not until the 11th century CE that Jewish people began to settle in England. Two hundred years later, they were expelled from the country in 1290. AN2009.10

## Working with objects: key questions

- Who made it?
- Where and when was it made?
- What materials is it made from?
- How was it made?
- What was it used for?
- How was it used?
- Who used/owned it?
- What was its significance at the time it was made?
- How might it be interpreted by different people at different times?
- Why is it on display in a museum?



Casket panel showing a knight and his lady, ivory, 1350-1400, unprovenanced AN2008.27

## Further resources

Ashmolean Education Learning Resources:  
[www.ashmolean.org/learning-resources](http://www.ashmolean.org/learning-resources)

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