



Various items, clockwise from top. A steelyard weight, c15thC. £35. Armour piercing arrow head, capable of piercing plate armour up to 250 yards. £15-20. Bow requiring 100lb pull; an experienced archer was capable of getting 12 arrows in the air per minute. Deadly against cavalry, the effect not being matched until the invention of the machine gun 400 years later. £15-20. Fish hook. The large size may indicate an element of game fishing in the Middle Ages, or very large salmon or pike. £35. All 14th/15thC.



Two views of finger rings. Clockwise from the top. Silver poesy or poetry ring indicating affection, inscribed inside AMI AMI, paste stone. £125. Silver seal and initial ring. £100. Bronze ring with enamelled bezel. £45. Silver and part silver gilt handclasp ring, signifying betrothal. £100. All 14th/15thC.



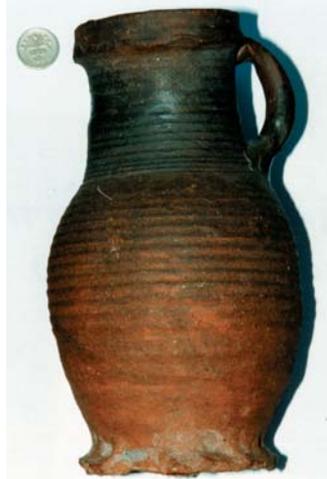
Terracotta tiles, left a floor tile, right a wall tile, both bearing semi heraldic designs, glazed, c14thC. £30 each.



Top to bottom. Eating knife, 28cm long, with bone handle and bronze decoration, c15thC. £90. Arrow head, war type, semi-armour piercing, 12thC. Type that would have been used by Robin Hood, had he existed! £15-20. Triple candle holder for fixing to table or other flat surface, impossible to date, even to a given century. £15.



Three bronze horse harness pendants enamelled and gilded. Left to right. Small pendant and hanger, coat-of-arms a white lion on red field attributed to Simon de Montfort. £250. These items which match perfectly, were found separately at an old tournament field in Yorkshire, c13thC. Shield shaped pendant carrying the arms of England signifying a Royal retainer, the arms carry a label for a first son. Probably Edward II, while Prince of Wales, before 1341. £125. Pendant bearing the figure of a minstrel or herald. Not attributable. £100.



Jug, unglazed, c14thC. £80.

Collecting Medieval Artifacts - with Price Guide

by Alexander K Duncan

The Medieval period is rarely covered as a source of collecting, yet the period itself is becoming better known through historical and archaeological television coverage. However, the everyday collectable items of the times are rarely discussed in detail and these can provide a conduit into the heart of the period. A small number of dealers nationwide provide a range of interesting and collectable items from jewellery through to household appliances, including a particularly rich source of leather ornamentation, employing small items of enamelled and gilded metal. Medieval craftsmen used the champlevé system of enamelling, and the mercury method of gilding. Both of these systems gave results which can last for thousands of years. The extent of the Medieval period is flexible within varying contexts but the generally accepted dates are from 1066 to 1485 i.e. from the arrival of the Normans to the advent of the Tudors. 1485 represents the dawn of modern history.

There are basically two types of Medieval artifact, those that have been under the soil for hundreds of years, and those that have not. Much of the latter are beyond the means of the average collector, and are seldom available. The aspiring collector should therefore be prepared to accept some imperfections when building a collection. This said, it has to be pointed out that some pieces which have been buried for long periods can and do turn up in good condition. Medieval objects can be very interesting and may be often quite rare. They are often attractive and sometimes quite beautiful. Very occasionally Medieval items fill all the above criteria, without costing a fortune.

One of the main sources of attractiveness and interest is in the pieces which depict heraldry. In many of these it is possible to trace names such as merchants, lords, ladies, even kings. Dating can be difficult, except in very rare circumstances, for example when the date of a marriage is known, a coat of arms may change. Quality and style of workmanship is of little help. An item made in 1250 may be of better quality than one made in 1450. However, we are dealing with a broad and relatively little known period. Precise dating is not always relevant and often impossible. That said, there are clues, mainly in heraldry, which help us to separate the eleventh century from the tenth, or the fifteenth from the sixteenth. The Normans and the Tudors had a big influence on English history. Their marks show.

Jewellery, especially in the form of finger rings, is quite common. Some of the rings are wearable today, but most are too small because hands were slither in the Middle Ages. Finger rings are mainly of gold, silver or bronze. Documents, usually on vellum or parchment are also easy to come by, and are attractive because of the sheer skill and beauty of the writing. Most are religious in nature and written in Latin, but the colour and decoration of pages from psalters or books of psalms is sufficient reward if you lack the skill of interpretation. Later writings from the Tudor period are often written in English.

Weapons in Medieval times were mainly made of iron. Steel was also used but only in the most expensive edged weapons. Pure steel weapons were in the Bentley/Rolls Royce class. Common iron swords often snapped or bent in use, which must have been embarrassing for the user, to say the least. Though iron is a vulnerable metal chemically, many items have been preserved in the mud of rivers and estuaries. The Thames is a common source. However, the more common items found are usually made from bronze, an alloy of 90% copper and 10% tin. This is durable and accepts sharp casting. Very little glass has come down from this or any other period, being usually recycled. Most of what is available comes from the Middle East.

The general availability of Medieval artifacts is good, supplied mainly by specialist dealers who guarantee the genuineness of their wares, and sometimes their provenance.

Perhaps one of the greatest pleasures for collectors, is in being able to hold and to study and to display objects that are so old that they may only usually be seen in museums, and then not so often. And in museums one is usually denied the pleasure of touch. Given time collectors often acquire an incredible understanding of the period, indeed a specialised knowledge which is often able to question received wisdom.

The prices for Medieval and indeed for many antiquities are reasonable. Most items shown cost the writer no more than £250, with an average less than £100. Guide prices only.

Editor's Note: Dealers specialising in the Medieval period can be found in our Classified Pages. This feature is a pilot for a series which we hope to commence in our May/June Edition. The first feature will cover 'Collecting the Stone Age'. The Editor will welcome readers' comments on 'Collecting Medieval Artifacts' and on the planned series.



Three bronze studs with enamel and gilding, used for leather decoration. Left to right. Lozenge shaped stud with red enamel bearing a coat-of-arms of a white cross potence, on a red field. Though not clear, the cross has traces of silvering, which represents white or in heraldry, argent. Attributed to Sir William Alton, second baron. £120. Round bronze stud with red and blue enamel and gilding. From a saddle decoration. Attributed to Sire de Audenard, c1275. £60. Another lozenge shaped stud, with blue enamel and a gilded sun in splendour. Borne by Frances and Thomas Aldham, c14thC. £50.



Cooking pot, unglazed, made up from shards, c14thC. £50.



War and peace. Stone cannon ball from late 14thC skirmish. Some of the indentations contain glass, probably formed from the silica in the stone due to the heat from firing. £80. Pax, of carved alabaster, depicting the annunciation. Passed among the congregation to be kissed during services as a symbol of peace. Somewhat frowned upon during the reformation, therefore rare, c15thC. £250.



Page from a bible, book of Genesis, English scribe, c1240. Four pages £180.



Carved stone head of a boy, from the hall of a manor house. Smoke blackened, of good style, c12thC. £220-230.



Four pewter retainer's badges, and small bone dice. Clockwise from the top. Gilded gauntlet, probably pilgrim badge from Thomas à Becket's shrine at Canterbury. £65. Bone dice, exactly the same as a modern dice, but more easily lost perhaps. Found at Billingsgate. £25. Retainer's badge bearing the cast image of a hart, in an enclosure. This is representation of the 'Hart enchained', the badge of Richard II and Henry V. £55. Pilgrim badge bearing fleur de lys, with a ring to carry a flower or favour. £55. Secular badge in the form of the sun in splendour; badge of the Duke of York. £65. All 14th/15thC.



Clockwise from left. Battle axe. £60. Kidney dagger with wooden pommel used to penetrate joints in armour. £800. Bill hook, used for agricultural purposes or as a peasant weapon in times of trouble. £45-50. All well presented iron, and of the 14thC.



Vellum page from a psalter or psalm book, c15thC. £150.



Left to right. Enamelled and gilded bronze figure of a monk from an arm of a large cross, c14thC. £110. An ivory honey spoon with carved figure of a bee, c11thC. £75. Silver cloak pin. £55.



Three bronze horse harness pendants. Left to right. Pendant bearing the initial 'M', not for the Virgin Mary, but probably the emblem of the Queen, as the piece is an expensive one. Possibly Margaret of Anjou (1430 to 1482) wife of Henry VI. £120. Shield shaped heraldic pendant, bearing the impaled arms of a man and wife, Valence and Montgomery. There is much red and blue enamel with some gilding present. £150. Lozenge shaped pendant bearing the device of a pelican 'vulning herself' i.e. pecking her breast to feed blood to her young. When doing this, she is said to be in her piety. A religious emblem, lozenge shaped to indicate a woman probably a prioress. Much white red and blue enamel with gilding, creating an enamel picture as well as a heraldic device. There are seal matrices bearing the same symbol so they were probably used for female religious houses. There was a certain amount of sexism involved with these houses, as they were usually last in the queue when it came to pecuniary endowments. Perhaps they were considered to be too peccable. £150.