

The Wilson Art Gallery & Museum Information Sheet



The Archaeology Collection

The result of a hundred years of archaeological collecting is many thousands of individual artefacts. For documentation purposes this large collection is separated into 'object records' which may consist of a single 'small find', such as a medieval brooch, or a whole box of 'bulk finds' like pottery sherds. There are approximately 10,000 archaeology object records.

- 74% are finds made in Gloucestershire
- 14% are coins from hoards and sites
- 6% are ancient Greek, Roman and Egyptian antiquities
- 5% are finds from Europe or from Britain outside of Gloucestershire
- 1% is of unknown origin



Head of Hermes, Cyprus, about 400 BC.
Height 20 cm (1915.114.60 Bushnell Colln.)

Finds made outside Gloucestershire

Nowadays the museum only accepts archaeological finds made in its collecting area of north-east Gloucestershire. However, in the first half of the twentieth century some small but significant groups of non-local archaeology were acquired. Among these are ancient Egyptian artefacts donated by the Committee of the Egypt Exploration Fund in 1907 and antiquities from all over the Mediterranean World purchased from A.J. de Havilland Bushnell in 1915.

Prehistoric finds from Gloucestershire

The collection boasts some prehistoric groups of regional, and indeed national, importance. Of particular significance are finds from the great Neolithic long barrow sites, such as Belas Knap (excavated in 1863-5 and the 1920s), Notgrove long barrow (1881 and 1934-5) and the West Tump barrow (1880), consisting mostly of human bone. Other finds include polished stone axes and large quantities of flint tools, while from the Bronze Age come items like the Barnwood Beaker vessel and Collared Urns from near Bourton-on-the-Water.

Later prehistory is well represented by finds from excavations at the Oxenton and Leckhampton hillforts, the extraordinary late Bronze Age metalwork hoard buried at Nottingham Hill and finds from the iron age settlement at Kings Beeches on Cleeve Hill. The large collection of finds from Salmonsbury Camp (Bourton-on-the-Water) is the result of years of painstaking excavation by Gerald Dunning and Helen O'Neil in the 1930s, and is of great importance in iron age studies.



Early Bronze Age flint arrowhead from Naunton.
Length 3 cm (1941.156)

Roman, Anglo-Saxon and Medieval Gloucestershire

The museum's Romano-British collection derives from the small towns, villas and farmsteads that covered the county. Large collections are held from the settlements at Wycomb and Bourton-on-the-Water, as well as the farmsteads or villas at Haymes, Vineyards Farm, Compton Grove, Spoonley Wood and Whittington Court.



Romano-British lead cistern from Leadenwell, AD 200-300. Diameter 80 cm (1934.23) ▪



The lack of Anglo-Saxon artefacts in the collection was partially addressed in the 1990s when finds made in 1969 from a cemetery at Lower Farm, Bishops Cleeve, were donated to the museum. These include brooches, spearheads and beads dating to the 6th century. The medieval and later collections are dominated by artefacts from urban deposits at Winchcombe and finds from the moated site at Prestbury. The heraldic floor tiles from Hailes Abbey, dated to about 1270, remain some of the most popular items in the collection.

Anglo-Saxon brooch from Bishop's Cleeve. Diameter 5 cm (1996.95.10.2)

Current collecting

In recent years the museum has received the results of excavations ahead of new housing developments in Bishops Cleeve, such as those at Stoke Road, Home Farm and Gilder's Paddock, which revealed iron age, Roman and Anglo-Saxon deposits. The number of finds made in the last few years in Cheltenham shows this area once saw activity in the late Bronze Age at Sandy Lane, while re-developments in Pittville and St James's Square have confirmed the presence of Romano-British farmsteads.

To find out more about the collections held by the museum contact:
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