

A port of some importance!

Porthladd o bwys!



Object stories

Storiau'r gwrthrychau

Neolithic stone axe heads



Historian Dennis Morgan explains:

“About 4000BC the first Neolithic migrants crossed Southern Britain into Glamorgan... Watered by three rivers – the Rhymney to the east, the Taff at the centre and the Ely to the west – the terrain was marshy and waterlogged ...[so] it is not surprising these early settlers bypassed the site of the future Welsh capital, though they may have explored its rivers and estuaries in their primitive boats.

It was the Vale of Glamorgan with its fertile soil which attracted [them] and ...tools [found] reveal how they began the task of curbing the wilderness. Flint knives, saws, sickles and a wide-ranging variety of polished stone axes have been discovered at St Fagans, Ely and in the Vale.”

From: *The Cardiff Story*, Dennis Morgan

Bronze Age arrowheads and axe head



Adam Gwilt, Curator at Amgueddfa Cymru - National Museum Wales:

“These flint arrowheads date from the early Bronze Age (2300-1500BC) and most were found in gardens or allotments! The people who lived in the Cardiff county area in the Bronze Age were primarily farmers and early metal workers. They would use arrows for hunting but they were also symbols of warrior status.”

Samantha Heale, Curator at the Cardiff Story Museum:

“The discovery of this axe head on Flat Holm Island in 1988 dates human activity on the island to the Bronze Age (900-700BC). Flat Holm Island is a small island in the Bristol Channel and is the southernmost tip of Wales.”

Late Bronze Age sword



Adam Gwilt, Curator at National Museum Wales explains why this sword is special:

"Swords are quite rare finds from this time in Wales, this one was made around 3,000 years ago. Typical finds in South Wales are hoards of bronze socketed axes, like those found at St Mellons, St Fagans, Llandaff, Cyncoed. Slashing swords were first used in Britain from about 1300 BC and weapons were as much about status and display as about aggression and violence. [It was found buried] in deep deposits next to the River Ely, which suggests it was used as part of a religious ceremony near or in the ancient river channel. Many Bronze and Iron Age prized items were gifted to the pagan gods and goddesses who lived in rivers, lakes and bogs."



Roman jar

Evan Chapman from Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales explains:

“This is an example of the local grey ware, the coarse pottery from South East Wales during the Roman period. It was found on a kiln site in Llanedeyrn, so is evidence for mass production of pottery... the fact that there was a kiln locally shows there was a community for it to service.”

Historian William Rees wrote about the Romans in Cardiff:

“...a small civil community had taken root, made up, in all likelihood, of the wives and children of the garrison and the usual medley of time-expired soldiers, camp followers and traders, a community which may be regarded as the germ of modern Cardiff.”

From: *Cardiff: A History of the City*, William Rees

Samian bowl



Evan Chapman, from *Amgueddfa Cymru* – National Museum Wales:

“This bowl is an example of the tableware imported from Gaul (France) by the Romans from the mid 1st to mid 3rd century. It comes from excavations in the Castle, so was probably used by the soldiers stationed in the Roman fort on the site in the late 1st, early 2nd century.”

Historian Dennis Morgan explains:

“Examples of Samian pottery, Italian and Greek marble, beakers from Lyons [France], or wine from Italy and Gaul have all been unearthed in the region near Cardiff. From Penarth Head, the merchant ships carrying these valuable cargoes became a familiar sight in the Bristol Channel.”

From: *The Cardiff Story*, Dennis Morgan



'Coed y Wenallt coin hoard'

Dr Richard Watson explains:

"Before King Henry I died in 1135, he chose his daughter Maud as his heir and made several of his lords swear that they would support her. However, his nephew, Stephen claimed the throne and was supported by the majority of the King's Council.

Cardiff at this time was the caput or capital of the Lord of Glamorgan's little kingdom. It was a Marcher Lordship, so not part of the dominions of the King of England. The Lord, Robert of Gloucester was Maud's half brother and was one of her chief generals and supporters. Cardiff was a secure base, with its Castle and a borough of citizens to support it. So it was significant enough to set up a mint and strike coins for Maud."

Medieval stained glass fragments from Blackfriars and Greyfriars



Historian Dennis Morgan explains:

The Dominicans [Blackfriars] were the first to arrive in Cardiff in 1242... The Marquess of Bute excavated the site in 1887 when floor tiles, and stained glass decorated with pictures of animals, birds and flowers were found."

From: *The Cardiff Story*, Dennis Morgan

Rosie James, Principal Landscape Officer:

"You can see the remains of the Blackfriars Friary in Bute Park. After Henry VIII's break with Rome, demolition of the property began almost immediately and the building materials were taken to be used elsewhere in Cardiff. Although in 1540-43, proceedings took place against John Lambert and Jayne Lychefeld who were accused of having '*...broken & plucked downe the wales, wyndowes and tyMBER*' of the property and carried it away. The action was apparently brought by supporters of the Friars and was an unsuccessful attempt to regain control of their property."



Stonework from Greyfriars

Dr Richard Watson explains:

“Britain was Catholic at this time, and in Catholic teaching, your good deeds in this life get you to heaven. Cardiff at the time was ruled by the de Clares, one of the most powerful families in England! They gave land and money to encourage both Dominican Friars (the Blackfriars) and Franciscan Friars (the Greyfriars) to establish themselves in Cardiff – the only town in Wales to have friaries of both orders.

The Greyfriars worked among the poor and sick. They would preach to the local community, and so were often Welsh speaking. And this would have given Cardiff an immediate connection and importance with the Welsh living in the surrounding area.”

Medieval floor tiles



Dr Mark Redknap, Curator at Amgueddfa Cymru
- National Museum Wales:

"These floor tiles, decorated with various coats of arms, were excavated in High Street. In the medieval period, this area of Cardiff had some high class housing, homes to rich merchants, and these floor tiles would have come from one of them."

Dr Richard Watson explains:

"By 1670 when the Hearth Tax was collected, Cardiff was the biggest community in Glamorgan. And it had more multiple hearth [fireplace] houses than Swansea or Cowbridge, which shows that some very wealthy people lived and were making their living there."

Jetton



Mr and Mrs Borley describe how they found the jetton:

"It's a reckoning counter [or jetton], from the 13th or 14th century. We found it in our allotment. It would have been used by a travelling salesman to count money. Each time he counted a hundred he would use one of these, so by the time he'd finish he'd know how much was there. The allotment was on Greenway Road, which was not far from the sea wall.

We took it to the museum; the National Museum, when we found it about 30 years ago. She [the lady in the museum] said it was probably from a traveller of Eastern or Asian extraction who had landed on the sea wall, near New Road and set up camp before going on to sell things like silks or beads."

Seal dies



Dr Mark Redknap, Curator at Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales:

“These dies were used to create the seals for official customs documents. They date from around 1605 and show how important a port Cardiff was in that period. One says, ‘Creek of Swansea in the Port of Cardiff’, the other ‘Creek of Chepstow in the Port of Cardiff’.”

Dr Richard Watson explains more:

“Cardiff was the head port in the system that had been established after the Act of Union. It was an important port way before the Marquess of Bute built the docks in the 19th century! In Wales there were three head ports – Cardiff, Milford Haven and Chester. The Customs Office was located in the head port, and it was responsible for collecting customs duties in and out, and keeping records of every sailing out of the port and its ‘creeks’ – the lesser ports it was charged with. Cardiff’s creeks included Newport, Caerleon, Chepstow, Neath and Swansea.”