Gallery trail
for adult visitors

ASHMOLEAN

British Archaeology at the Ashmolean Museum

Explore the museum to find highlights from the museum's British archaeological collections

Start in gallery 8: Ark to Ashmolean, Lower Ground Floor

This Roman jar in the large case is one of the first archaeological objects to enter the museum. It is part of the Founding collection and is listed in the museum's 1685 catalogue. It was made in the major Roman pottery factories near Farnham, Surrey, between AD 275-400.

The gallery also contains material from other early archaeological investigations including prehistoric material from Cornwall given by W. Borlase in 1758, and material from the Anglo-Saxon cemetery at Brighthampton excavated by J.Y. Akerman 1857-58.

There are also iconic pieces representing key events in British history, such as the lantern taken from Guy Fawkes when he was arrested on 5 November 1605.

Go to gallery 7: Money, Lower Ground Floor

This gallery contains many important archaeological finds of coins and coin hoards from Britain.

The hoard of Roman coins from Chalgrove (Oxfordshire) found in 2003, proves the existence of a lost Roman Emperor.

The hoard of gold coins found at Crondall (Hampshire) in 1828 is still the most important evidence for early Anglo-Saxon coinage. It marks the reintroduction of coinage into Britain two centuries after the Romans left.

The Tudor gold hoard found in 2007 at Asthall (Oxfordshire) contains gold coins from the years 1470-1526. It may have been hidden because of the Dissolution of the Monasteries under Henry VIII.

Go to gallery 3: Restoring the Past, Lower Ground Floor

As well as displays on the history of museum conservation, this gallery also shows archaeological objects that were repaired and reused in the past. For example, a Bronze Age knife from Felixstowe, Suffolk, that is made from a fragment of a sword.

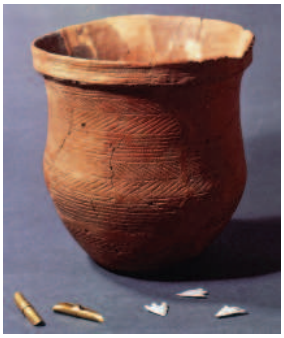
Go to gallery 5: Textiles, Lower Ground Floor

The case by the stairs shows archaeological objects relating to the making of textiles in the past.

Although people may imagine archaeologists finding lost 'treasures', in fact most finds are everyday objects which provide information about how normal people lived at different times.

Go to gallery 17: European Prehistory, Ground Floor

About a third of the archaeological objects in this gallery are from Britain, and include well-known local treasures such as the Beaker period grave group from Radley with the oldest gold ornaments found in Britain. There is also a Bronze Age shield from Long Wittenham, which has been damaged during combat. And, from Little Wittenham a Late Iron Age sword corroded inside a highly decorated bronze scabbard.



Less well known are other extraordinary objects such as the large Late Bronze Age cauldron found at Shipton-on Cherwell in 1928.

Go to gallery 13: Rome, Ground Floor

This gallery highlights key sites from Roman Oxfordshire, AD 70-420. These include a shrine at Woodeaton, a farm at Shakenoak and the Roman pottery industry in Cowley.

The Roman pewter dinner service found at Appleford in 1968 would once have belonged to a prosperous family. It was hidden in a well about AD400, at the end of the Roman occupation of Britain.

Go to gallery 40: European Ceramics, 2nd floor

This gallery considers ceramics made in Europe from Medieval times. It contains highlights from the Ashmolean's collection of Medieval and post-Medieval ceramics from Britain and from the continent. The central cases show the famous Marshall collection of Worcester porcelain.

Go to gallery 41: England, 2nd floor

This gallery looks at the archaeology and history of England from 400-1600 AD.

It contains what is probably the Ashmolean's greatest archaeological treasure - The Alfred Jewel. This can be found in a special case near the entrance to the gallery, and is displayed with a smaller jewel from Minster Lovell, which might have been made in the same workshop.

The gallery has just been reopened with new displays including cases about the Medieval village of Seacourt, Oxford Taverns, and pioneering archaeological air photographs taken by Major George Allen of Iffley.

Don't miss the Late Roman buckle and throwing axe from Dorchester. These were discovered in 2010 and are on display during intervals between conservation work and study.