

2: A Fertile Land

1. Two-handed sword

The history of the sword is not known. It is thought to be a good copy or an amalgam of different swords. It is similar to the type of sword used in the 16th and 17th centuries, often known as the “claymore”. Heavy and unwieldy, such swords did immense damage to man and horse.

ELGNM: 1949.1

Hunting

Hunting was a common past time in the medieval period. Not only an exhilarating pursuit, but the teamwork and exercise involved kept men fit and prepared for war. Darnaway and Longmorn were great forests kept exclusively for the King’s pleasure. The export of skins helped the economy of the area.

2. Rug

The inner skins are all wildcat but the edging may be of pine marten. This example is from Scotstonhill Farm, Elgin, dated 1912.

Prolific throughout Britain in medieval times, wildcats were hunted for their fur. The agricultural and industrial revolutions (particularly shipbuilding in the Highlands) ate up the forests that formed their natural habitat and began polluting Britain’s natural resources, affecting wildcat numbers. They began to disappear from England, Wales, Ireland and southern Scotland by the end of the 19th century.

Now the greatest threat to wildcat survival is interbreeding with domestic cats. Numbers are now fewer than 100 although the species has been protected since 1988. Nature Scot (formerly Scottish Natural Heritage) and Scottish Wildcat Action for example have active programmes of research and conservation. There is a wildcat displayed in the Museum’s Rear Gallery.

ELGNM: 1998.16

3. Sparrowhawk.

Hawking or falconry uses trained birds of prey to hunt small wild game or birds. In medieval times, this was a pastime of the wealthy. The sparrow hawk is adapted for hunting birds in confined spaces, so gardens are now ideal hunting grounds. This is a juvenile female bird.

ELGNM: 1978.362

4. Dog bone

Found at Ladyhill, Elgin, showing cut marks which suggest that the dog may have been skinned. Separate breeds were not yet developed in medieval times. The larger dogs were used for hunting.

ELGNM: 2001.35.74

5. Falcon hood

The hood is placed on the falcon's head to keep it calm, for example, when it is waiting to be flown. Hawking, or falconry was expensive because of the specialist housing and accessories required such as hoods, jesses (leather tethering strap attached to the bird's ankle), bells and lures. Bells were attached to the bird's legs so that the trainer could keep track of its whereabouts.

ELGNM: 1978.659

Pottery

Towards the 15th century, locally made pottery was becoming thicker and less refined than it had been, as the craftsmen were no longer monks but individuals who handed the skills down through the family. There were good local sources of clay around the southern shores of the old Loch of Spynie, at, for example, Gilston, Duffus Parish. Pottery was also imported from England and from mainland Europe.

6. Greyware jug from Flanders

Low countries Greyware jug, circa 14th century AD. This is a very rare example as redware quickly replaced greyware as the material of choice. It is the most complete example known in Scotland. It was found in a barrel pit at 213-219 High Street, Elgin, during archaeological excavations of what was formerly the site of Nicholson's garage (now Marks and Spencer).

ELGNM: 1986.4

7. Water jug

This glazed water jug was found 10 m deep in a well in Lazarus Lane, South College Street, Elgin during the archaeological excavations for the 1976 relief road. It was produced locally but the frill on the base copies the German stoneware form, circa 15th century.

ELGNM: 1980.1

8. Water jug

Earthenware (lead) glazed water jug circa 14th – 15th century. Like item 7, this vessel was found 10 m deep in a well in Lazarus Lane, South College Street, Elgin during the archaeological excavations for the 1976 relief road. Pottery was made locally from about 1350 until at least 1700 and the possible source of the clay for this jug was the clay pit near the present road to Lossiemouth at Windyridge.

ELGNM: 1980.2

9. "Pirlie Pig"

Pottery "Pirlie Pig" or circular money box. The term "pirlie pig" comes from old Scots: a "pig" was the term for an earthenware vessel or pot, while the word "pirlie" meant very small. Such items were common in Scotland in the medieval period. They are usually found with one end broken where it has been smashed to extract the contents.

ELGNM: Uncatalogued (*Ref: EL88D 2601*).

10. Jug

Medieval pottery jug from Lossiemouth, late 14th century AD.

ELGNM: 1938.1

11. Baluster jug

Medieval pottery baluster jug, probably 16th century, made locally and found during archaeological excavations in South College Street, Elgin. Baluster is a general term for a style of tall medieval jug used in Europe whose height is about three times its diameter.

ELGNM: 1977.250.71

12. Dripping Tray fragment

Dripping tray made of local fabric for collecting fat from an animal being roasted on a spit. Found during archaeological excavations in South College Street, Elgin.

ELGNM: 1977.250.51

13. Face jug fragment

Local copy of an English face jug found at Boars Head, Urquhart Parish, by Lossiemouth Field Club in 1934. It is circa 13th century AD in date.

ELGNM: 1934.2.2

14. Face mask jug fragment

Local 14th century AD copy of a Yorkshire face mask jug. Originally there would have been two arms coming to meet at the front. Found at Boars Head, Urquhart, by Lossiemouth Field Club in 1934.

ELGNM: 1934.2.1

Daily Life

Oats and bere barley were the staples of the diet. Wheat was grown for the wealthy and for export.

15. Knocking stone or barley quern

Used for bruising barley. Found in a wall in South College Street, Elgin.

ELGNM: 1924.2

16. Spindle whorls

Spindle whorls fitted onto the spindle to increase and maintain the speed of the spin. They can be made of many different materials, and some are even decorated. The examples here are from Pluscarden, Culbin, Bruceland, Stotfield (Lossiemouth) and Upper Manbeen.

The examples from Bruceland were purchased from Treasure Trove with assistance from the National Fund for Acquisitions.

ELGNM: 1987.73, 1978.109, 1999.1.50 (TT43/98), 1887.20, 1999.1.17 (TT43/98), 1957.27 and 1875.6

Feast for a King

Many animal bones were found during the excavations at Ladyhill / Castlehill, Elgin in the 1970s. Cattle, sheep and goats were found most frequently, but also deer bones indicating a high status diet. Pottery finds suggest that the castle was not occupied after the 15th century AD.

17. Bones

From left to right:

- Oyster shell
- Goose bone
- Fish bone
- Red deer bone
- Roe deer bone
- Roe deer lower jaw bone
- Boar bone

ELGNM: 2001.35.72, 79, 80, 82.8, 77.1, 75

Fine Possessions

18. Bronze ewer

Bronze ewer or urn circa 1500 AD, found during an archaeological excavation of a cable trench in Elgin High Street (adjacent to the site of the Old St Giles Kirk) in 1922. A similar ewer was found at Urquhart Priory.

ELGNM: 1953.26

19. Swivel ring

A medieval swivel ring for straps possibly with two dolphin head decorations on either side, probably used for attaching to a dog lead. Found at Lhanbryde, by Alistair McPherson.

Purchased from Treasure Trove with assistance from the National Fund for Acquisitions.

ELGNM: 2000.83.1 (TT133/99)

20. Swivel ring

A medieval swivel ring for straps possibly with two hound head decorations on either side, probably used for attaching to a dog lead. Found at Lhanbryde, by Alistair McPherson.

Purchased from Treasure Trove with assistance from the National Fund for Acquisitions.

ELGNM: 2000.83.2 (TT133/99)

21. Pin

Medieval bronze pin with incised cross decoration found in a shell midden at Loch Spynie in around 1863.

ELGNM: 1888.14

22. Strap end

Medieval strap end with raised dot decoration found at Lhanbryde by Alistair McPherson.

Purchased from Treasure Trove with assistance from the National Fund for Acquisitions.

ELGNM: 2000.83.3 (TT133/99)

23. Horse harness pendant

Medieval horse harness pendant found at Duffus by Alistair McPherson.

Purchased from Treasure Trove with assistance from the National Fund for Acquisitions.

ELGNM: 1999.41 (TT135/98)

24. Brooch or badge

Medieval brooch or badge, circa 14th - 15th century AD in date, found at Loanhead. During the medieval period, the wearing of coins and coin-like badges was thought magically to bring wealth to the wearer.

Purchased from Treasure Trove with assistance from the National Fund for Acquisitions.

ELGNM: Uncatalogued (TT63/05)

25. Zoomorphic strap end

Medieval Romanesque, zoomorphic (animalistic) strap end, circa 12th century AD, found at Waulkmill, near Elgin by Alistair McPherson. The function of such objects is unclear but it is suggested that they may have been attached to book straps. A strap end such as this may have been used in the fastening of a Psalter, a Christian book including the Book of Psalms.

Purchased from Treasure Trove with assistance from the National Fund for Acquisitions and Mr and Mrs Alan Wills.

ELGNM: 2004.3 (TT62/03)

Pottery

26. Pottery sherds

Top row from left to right:

- Reduced ware, probably English, Grimston-type ware, from the Ladyhill / Castlehill, Elgin archaeological excavation.
- Paffrath, blue greyware fragment from a ladle, German import, found during archaeological excavations in Elgin High Street in 1977.
- North East England redware sherd from the Ladyhill / Castlehill, Elgin archaeological excavation.

Bottom row from left to right:

- Three examples of London Rouen copy, showing local trade with London, mid-13th - 14th century AD.

- Pottery sherd from a French Beauvais double sgraffito dish, made to look like Italian Renaissance ware, circa 1550 AD. This would have been extremely high-status ware, available to the church or the very wealthy – perhaps the former, given its find location near the Cathedral. The potter begins with a white clay and then a red slip and then another white slip but scrapes off a layer where the script or design is to be seen, being careful not to go down as far as the white layer beneath so as not to spoil the piece.

ELGNM: 2001.35.37, Uncatalogued (*Ref: HS77/665*), 2001.35.29.3, 2001.35.31.1, 2001.35.31.2, 2001.35.29.2, and Uncatalogued (*Ref: SC77 168 1008 BAL*).

Coinage

David I was the first king to have coins minted in Scotland. Until 1280 AD, the silver penny was the only coin available. It could be cut in two for halfpennies or in four for farthings. The Edward I and Henry III pennies found at Bruceland may have been dropped by English soldiers but are more likely to have been in local circulation.

27. Coins

From the top left clockwise:

- Alexander III (1249-1286) silver penny from Culbin
- Edward I (1272-1307) silver penny from Bruceland, Elgin
- Edward I (1272-1307) silver penny from Bruceland, Elgin
- Henry III (1216-1272) cut silver ½ penny from Bruceland
- Henry III (1216-1272) silver penny from Bruceland, Elgin

ELGNM: 2003.19.2, 2002.13.1, 2, 4, 3

Medieval Fairs

Brucelands, formerly a quiet loop in the river Lossie to the West of Elgin, gives evidence of much activity in earlier days. Outside the Burgh and near the gallows, it may have been a site of medieval fairs. There would have been fair or market sites right across Moray in the Medieval period.

28. Finds from Brucelands, Elgin

Top left and clockwise:

- Pendant in the form of a small crotal bell, circa 16th - 17th century AD
- Annular brooch with pin circa 13th - 14th century AD
- Decorated double looped buckle, pin missing, circa 15th - 17th century AD
- Post-Medieval button with moulded decoration of radial patterns
- Thimble of copper alloy, circa 17th century
- Mount for clothing in the form of a rose, circa 16th – 17th century AD
- Horse harness pendant, circa 14th – 16th century AD
- Pendant mount, possibly for a horse harness, circa 14th – 15th century AD

Purchased from Treasure Trove with assistance from the National Fund for Acquisitions.

ELGNM: 1999.1.18, 25, 30, 29, 38, 32, 22, 37 (TT43/98)

In the Peephole

William the Lion of Scotland (1165-1214)

William the Lion, grandson of David I, reigned from 1165-1214, the longest reign of medieval times. Many Scottish coins were minted during his reign.

The coin that you see here from Pitgaveny is dated to c1195 to 1230; although it may have been struck after he died, and before his successor Alexander II put his own name on coins around 1240.

- Sterling, third (short cross and stars) coinage c1195-1230

Obverse: ø LE[]W[]0Tp ø; crowned bust left with sceptre



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Reverse: 0LTR:O3.....; short voided cross; three 5-pointed stars and one 6-pointed star in angles

Artefact description by Nick Holmes, Numismatist:

William the Lion of Scotland sterling, third coinage c1195-1230

Weight 1.46 g; uncertain die axis 300° (?)

This coin seems to be exceptional for the issue in several respects, and it is unfortunate that parts of the reverse legend are illegible.

It clearly refers to the moneyer Walter and there are two letters of a mint name after O3. There is space for only one or perhaps two

letters before the 0, so the coin is clearly not a joint 'Hue Walter' issue.

The only known coins of Walter alone are of the Perth mint, but if this is indeed a 'Walter Perth' issue, then it is remarkable for having a 21-point reverse, with the single 6-pointed star opposite the letters LT.

All known coins of Walter at Perth have four 6-pointed stars on the reverse, and 21-point coins are extremely rare even on the later 'Hue Walter' coins.

They are not mentioned by Stewart in *The Scottish Coinage*, and there is only one specimen in the collections of the National Museum of Scotland, this being Burns (1887) 21g, fig. 57F, from different dies, with the 6-pointed star opposite the letter W.

Exceptionally rare, this coin was valued for the Treasure Trove Panel at £4,500 but was kindly donated by the finder, Alistair McPherson, to Elgin Museum.

ELGNM: TT143/17

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