

Collecting and Protecting

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1 - Reconstructed necklace

About 900-1470

Chimú, Peru, South America

Taken from a burial by *huaqueros*, or grave-robbers, the necklace is incomplete. It has been reconstructed using modern turquoise beads and the looted pieces of tumbaga, a traditional alloy of gold and copper.

2 - Storage vessel

About 900-1470

From near Callao, north coast of Peru, South America

Probably robbed from a tomb, this vessel's spherical body shape is described as *aryballoid*. It dates to a time when the mighty Chimú kingdom was under Inca imperial control.

3 - Common genet

Genetta genetta

Africa

Although international trade of the genet is not restricted under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), this specimen was voluntarily handed over to H.M. Customs and Excise. The identity of this specimen may have been confused with its close relative the civet, whose trade is tightly controlled.

4 - Mongoose and banded spitting cobra

Herpestes species and *Naja naja sputatrix*

Possibly collected in central Java

This distasteful and poorly constructed taxidermy was seized by H.M. Customs. It features a mongoose in combat with a cobra – a typical, but inaccurate, representation of these species. Although mongeese are resistant to many snake venoms and will defend themselves if threatened, they rarely engage in such physical conflict.

5 - Hawksbill turtle

Eretmochelys imbricata

South-east Asia

The hawksbill turtle is a critically endangered species. In the last 100 years, millions of hawksbill turtles have been killed for their shells which are a valuable raw material for making decorative objects. In 1977 international trade of the hawksbill turtle became illegal under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES).

6 - Alabaster dish fragments

About 2,500 years old

Discovered by Belzoni in Egypt

Giovanni Belzoni was a circus strongman and engineer who hunted Egyptian treasures for the British government. Objects collected by this larger than life figure became much sought after. This dish is reputed to have been “discovered in the tomb of Psammuthis at Thebes in 1818”.

7 - Sacred eye plaque from a mummy burial

Around 2,600-3,100 years old

Discovered by Belzoni in Egypt

In 1822 many of Belzoni’s objects were sold at auction in London. The label on the plaque suggests this was one of them. Others can be found in the British Museum.

8 - British bird egg collection in a collector’s cabinet

Collecting and studying birds’ eggs, or oology, was once a popular pastime. For some it became an obsession. However, it has been illegal to collect the eggs of most birds since the Protection of Birds Act of 1954. The Wildlife and Countryside Act in 1981 has made it illegal to own eggs collected after 1954 unless you have a licence. The sale of birds’ eggs is also prohibited. Despite these measures, egg collecting continues, particularly from rare species, and poses a threat to their survival.

9 - Cooking pot

Made in Exeter around 1100–1200

Found at Princesshay, Exeter Archaeological collecting has changed radically since the days of Belzoni. This pot is one of thousands of finds made each year by archaeologists working in Devon. It was discovered during the redevelopment of Princesshay in 2005–2006. Much of the work of archaeologists is now carried out as part of the planning process. If there is a chance that a new development will damage the archaeological record, the local authority will instruct the developer to investigate and record the archaeology before the construction work can go ahead.

10 - Headdress (Arok)

Late 1800s

Macusi, Guyana, Amazon, South America

To the Macusi, the forest canopy is home to the celestial birds, the messengers of the benevolent Sun who inhabit a world above the Earth. Feathers are highly prized and when worn in a headdress, enable individuals to connect with their social values.

11 - Trophy head (*tsantsa*)

Made in 1918

Shuar, Peru, South America

This artefact was processed by hand during a ritual to appease the muisak, or avenging spirit. It was not intended for burial, but was displayed as a trophy of courage.

12 - Figure

Early 1900s

Meko, Ketu, south-west Nigeria, Africa

Known as Oluso' lekun, this was once a guardian figure that stood beside the town's gate. Protective figures offered people reassurance in times of great change. It was taken by R.J.

Newberry, an officer in the Nigerian Colonial Service.

"I stole it... but had no qualms as it never had any offerings... I knew it was in disrepute."

13 - Wampum

Before 2000

U.S.A.

Wampum are beaded artefacts that traditionally symbolised treaties, alliances and trade agreements or commemorated events. Europeans mistook wampum for a form of currency.

This piece was given by the late John White, Chief of the Tamaroa and Metchigamea tribes of Illinois.

14 - Gold ring containing a Greek coin

About 2,000-2,300 years old

Discovered by Belzoni in Egypt

Belzoni claimed this ring came from the finger of a mummy. It was later in three different private collections before it was donated to this museum.

15 - Money cat

Before 1870

Canton, China

The money cat is an Asian symbol of prosperity commonly found in homes. This one was removed “from the head of a lady’s bed, at the taking of Canton” according to the museum records. This probably took place during one of the Opium Wars.

16 and 17 - Baskets

1990s

These baskets were presented to RAMM by Tasmanian communities following the repatriation of Truganini's jewellery in 1997.

16 Made from river reed (*Schoenoplectus pungens*) by Lennah Newson of Hobart, Tasmania

17 Made from jackie vine (*Cuscuta tasmania*) by Auntie Eva Richardson of Hobart, Tasmania

Basket-making predates European contact in Tasmania. This revived tradition encourages people to connect with their cultural heritage. Knowledge of ancestral skills helps people maintain an Aboriginal identity that was almost lost in the 19th century.

"It's like your life. You look after your baskets, you look after your family, you look after your threads of life, which you weave with your reeds."