

Into the Middle Ages

400 to 1485

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1 - Gold ring

Around 800-900

From Exeter Cathedral

From a grave in the Saxon cemetery. The ring was placed next to the body, rather than on the finger.

2 - Finger ring

Around 900-1000

From High Street, Exeter

A simple ring of twisted copper alloy wire.

3 - Brooch

About 1250

From Trichay Street, Exeter

Made of copper alloy with glass or paste settings. It would have been used to fasten a tunic or cloak.

4 - Buckle

Around 1200-1250

From Bartholomew Street East, Exeter

The front of a decorative copper alloy buckle.

5 - Buzz bone

Around 1100-1200

Found in Queen Street, Exeter

A form of musical instrument also called a bullroarer. The bone is whirled around on a string making a roaring or buzzing sound.

6 - Flute

Around 1100-1200

From Queen Street, Exeter

Made from the wing bone of a large bird.

7 - Flute

Around 1100-1300

From Goldsmith Street, Exeter

An unfinished flute made from the leg bone of a sheep.

8 - Flute

Around 1100-1300

From Trichay Street, Exeter

Made from the leg bone of a swan.

9 - Flute

Around 1200-1250

From Trichay Street, Exeter

This object is highly polished from frequent use. It might have been played single-handed in the manner of a pipe-and-tabor.

10 - Comb

Around 900-1100

From Holloway Street, Exeter

Just over half of this comb survives. It is made up of sections of carved animal bones held together with iron pins. Both men and women used combs like this.

11 - Silver penny of King John

Minted between 1199 and 1216

From Princesshay, Exeter

A mint had been established in Exeter from the time of Alfred the Great (871-899) but this is the oldest Exeter-made coin to be found in Exeter. Earlier silver coins were either melted down to make new coins or sent to pay the Viking tax, Danegeld.

12 - Seal of the Cathedral Chapter

First used 1133

From Exeter Cathedral

As Exeter became an important religious, political and economic centre, so documents needed to be authenticated with official seals. This is a copy of the seal used by the Cathedral Chapter from 1133. The seal shows a church building, but we do not know if it is an accurate depiction of Exeter Cathedral.

13 - Folding balance

Around 800-1000

From High Street, Exeter

At a time when coins were still quite rare, a merchant might have used this to weigh silver bullion for trading. Only one of the balance's two arms and a length of chain survive. The chain held a small pan into which the goods to be weighed would have been put.

14 - Wooden spade

Around 1000-1100

From Goldsmith Street, Exeter

Made of oak. The holes show where the handle would have been attached.

15 - Crucible

Around 1000-1200

From Goldsmith Street, Exeter

This was used to melt metal for casting. Metalworking must have been an important industry in early medieval Exeter as many of these crucibles have been found.

16 - Lamp

Around 1000-1200

From Goldsmith Street, Exeter

A locally made pottery lamp. The black colour around the rim is soot which accumulated from the burning of animal fat.

17 - Stone lamp

Around 1000-1100

From Goldsmith Street, Exeter

Such a large, solid lamp might have been used on a table or workbench. Animal fat or oil and a wick would have been placed in the bowl at the top. It is made from Beer stone from South Devon.

18 - Whetstone

Around 1100-1200

From Goldsmith Street, Exeter

The wear on the stone shows where it was used to sharpen tools. It would have been worn around the neck or on a belt.

19-20 - Cooking pot sherds

Around 1000-1150

From Bedford Street, Exeter

These are sherds of small, unglazed cooking pots. They were made in a kiln found during excavations on Bedford Street, and have become known as Bedford Garage ware.

21 - Pitcher

Around 1100-1200

From Goldsmith Street, Exeter

This highly decorated style of pottery was probably made in East Devon.

22 - Pitcher

Around 1150-1250

From Mermaid Yard, Exeter

This type of large, locally produced jug was amongst the most common pottery used in early medieval Exeter.

23 - Pitcher

Around 1000-1100

From Queen Street, Exeter

Part of a large vessel for holding liquids such as beer or milk.

24 - Cooking pot

Around 1000-1150

From High Street, Exeter

This pot would have been put into the fire and hot embers piled up around it.

25 - Cooking pot

Around 1100-1200

From South Street, Exeter

Exeter was an important port in this period, taking imports from all over Europe. This pot came from Normandy in France. Finds such as this confirm the documentary records which note the presence of rich European merchants in Exeter.

26 - Barrel

Around 1100-1300

From Paul Street, Exeter

During excavations in Paul Street a medieval well was encountered. Its sides had been lined by packing two old barrels, their heads and bases removed, one above the other in the shaft. The upper barrel had largely decayed, but the lower one was extremely well preserved.

It was formed of oak cask staves, tightly bound with hoops of hazel.

27-34 - Spindle whorls

Between 900-1200

Found in Exeter

All made from the end of a cow leg bone, with a hole drilled through the centre. Spindle whorls are used in hand spinning. They act as a weight and flywheel to help twist fibres into yarn for weaving.

27 Exeter

28 Smythen Street

29 Preston Street

30 Trichay Street

31 High Street

32 Goldsmith Street

33 High Street

34 Goldsmith Street

35 - Spindle whorl

Around 1100-1200

From Goldsmith Street, Exeter

Made from lead, it is heavier than the bone spindle whorls and might have been used to make a different thickness of yarn.

36-38 - Bone pin beaters

Around 1100-1200

Found in Exeter

Tools used in weaving. The smooth points are used to push stray threads into place and to pick up threads when making woven patterns. They are highly polished all over, suggesting that they have been well used.

36 Goldsmith Street

37 Rack Street

38 Trichay Street

39-41 - Bone pins

Around 1000-1200

Found in Exeter

Pins, such as these, would have been used to fasten clothing or to pin back hair. They could also have been needles for sewing coarse cloth or making nets.

39 Goldsmith Street

40 High Street

41 High Street

42 - Bone heddle frame

Around 1100-1200

From Rack Street, Exeter

A small piece of decorated bone, possibly part of a hand loom for weaving braids.

43-45 - Hooked fasteners

Around 1000-1200

From Goldsmith Street, Exeter

Before buttons and buttonholes were invented, these small hooks were used to fasten clothing.

One end was sewn into the garment and the other hooked into the fabric on the other side.

46 - Leather belt

From 1040-1100

From Goldsmith Street, Exeter

The belt had been well worn, and was cut and torn into pieces before being thrown into a rubbish pit.

47-48 - Casket mounts

Around 1100-1230

Found in Exeter

These engraved sheets of bone were pinned to wooden boxes or caskets as decoration.

47 Goldsmith Street

48 Exe Bridge

49 - Bone offcut

Between 1000-1300

From Cathedral Close, Exeter

Small discs were cut from this bone to make into beads. Such beads were a popular decoration for clothing.

50 - Animal bones

Around 1020-1150

From Goldsmith Street, Exeter

A small sample of the discarded butchery remains from a rubbish pit. Analysis of the bones shows that cattle, sheep and pig were the main animals being eaten in Exeter, and that all parts of the carcass were being used.

51 - The Common Seal of Exeter

Between 1170-1200

Used at the Guildhall, Exeter

This is the oldest surviving seal from any town or city in England. It shows an elaborate building with a pair of towers - symbols of wealth and security, rather than depictions of any specific building. Inscribed on it is 'SIGILLVM CIVITATIS EXONIE', which means the seal of the city of Exeter. The seal was used to authorise important documents.

52 - The Seal of the Wardens of Exe Bridge

Around 1250

Made of bronze

The seal was used by the wardens of the bridge, who administered lands and funds donated for its upkeep. The earliest surviving example of an impression of this seal is attached to a document of 1256-1264. The inscription reads 'S'PONTIS EXE CIVTATIS EXONIE' - the seal of Exe Bridge of the city of Exeter.

53 - Candlestick

Around 1100-1200

From Dartington Hall, Totnes

Such an ornate bronze candlestick might have been used in a chapel. A wax candle was fixed onto the spike.

54 - Hanging lamp

Around 1000-1200

From High Street, Exeter

A pottery lamp designed to hang from chains. It was filled with animal fat or oil and burnt a wick. Later versions were made from glass and would have given off far more light.

55 - Shoe

Around 1150-1250

From Trichay Street, Exeter

A large man's shoe, it is heavily worn and patched.

56 - Ladle

Around 1150-1250

From North Street, Exeter

Imported from the Rhineland area of Germany, this type of pottery is called Blau-grau, or blue-grey, ware.

57 - Jug

Around 1200-1250

From Trichay Street, Exeter

This brightly glazed jug was imported from northern France and was probably used to serve wine.

58 - Jug

Around 1150-1250

From Acorn Roundabout, Exeter

This type of French wine jug was imported into the important cities of England and Ireland such as London, Southampton, Dublin and Bristol, as well as Exeter.

59 - Jug

Around 1200-1250

From Trichay Street, Exeter

This is the only complete example of this type of French wine jug to have been found in England. The bright green, speckled decoration is achieved by adding bronze dust into the glaze. It would have belonged to a wealthy, fashionable household.

60 - Pitcher handle

Around 1000-1200

From Trichay Street, Exeter

The clay that this handle is made from contains grains of quartzite, showing that it comes from Brittany or western Normandy.

61 - Pitcher handle

Around 1000-1200

From High Street, Exeter

Part of a pot imported from Normandy. Many imported pots have been found from this period when Exeter was expanding rapidly. It suggests that the growth in Exeter's economy was reliant on European trade.

62 - Pitcher handle

Around 1100-1200

From Goldsmith Street, Exeter

This red-painted handle comes from the Beauvais region of France.

63 - Strap end

Around 900-1000

From near Poltimore

Pinned to the end of a leather belt, the strap end acted as both decoration and reinforcement. It's decorated with stylised animal forms.

64 - Buckle

Around 1000-1200

From near Cullompton

An attractive buckle in the form of an animal with its head turned to face us.

65-71 - Stirrup mounts

Around 1000-1100

These mounts were placed as decoration at the junction of the stirrup and stirrup leather. They were attached with iron pins but do not seem to have been too secure, as many have been found by metal-detectorists.

65 Woodbury, found by Mr Bond

66 Stokenham

67 Cullompton

68 Poltimore

69 Clyst Honiton

70 Poltimore

71 Clyst Honiton

72 - Spring head

Between 660-760

From near Burlescombe

A hollowed willow or poplar tree trunk used to collect clean spring water. It was in use at the time that Anglo-Saxon influence reached Devon. The site seems to have been used as a source of water for a long time. Pre-Saxon occupants built a spring head from planks. This has been dated by dendrochronology, or tree-ring dating, to 629.

73 - Shoe

Between 640-760

From near Burlescombe

Found squashed within the hollowed tree trunk. It was probably lost by accident, although watery places were often used to make offerings.