

Wider Horizons

1485 to 1642

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1 - Overmantel

Around 1550-1600

From High Street, Exeter

This wood carving would have been displayed above a fireplace to show off the sophistication of the householder. It was carved in Holland or Belgium and depicts a classical scene – the Judgement of Paris. Paris, seated left, judges the beauty of Athena (right, with helmet), Juno (centre, with peacock) and Aphrodite (left, with child). He chooses Aphrodite.

2 - Plaster frieze

Around 1590-1600

From Bamfylde House, Exeter

This frieze comes from the richly ornamented townhouse of the Bamfylde family of Poltimore. Sadly, the house was destroyed in the bombing of 1942. This fragment is one of the few pieces of decorative woodwork, plaster and lead that survive.

3 - Plaster caryatid

Around 1600-1610

From Berry Pomeroy Castle

The great hall was a grand, highly decorated room with a fireplace as a central feature. This is one of a pair of female figures that stood either side of it. She originally held a bunch of laurel to symbolise loyalty. The hairstyle and clothing gives use strong clues as to when she was made.

4 - Painted oak panel

Around 1580-1620

From High Street, Exeter

We are more familiar with brown, polished oak panelling but in Tudor houses it was usually brightly painted. A visit to the restored parlour in St Nicholas Priory gives a good idea of what a whole room would have looked like.

5 - Wool comb

Around 1700-1900

From Sidwell Street, Exeter

A pair of these combs are used on wool prior to spinning. They help to remove tangles and straighten fibres. It is a simple design that has not changed for centuries.

6 - Trade token

Issued 1666

Issued in Cullompton

The first stage of making woollen cloth was the roughly woven material made by rural weavers. This was transported to Exeter by pack horse for finishing. This halfpenny token issued by Henry Hopping depicts a pack horse.

7 - Trade token

1666

Issued in Exeter

Issued by Marie Mountjoy, one of several women merchants identified on Exeter tokens. The motif is the Virgin Mary, the symbol of the Mercers' Company, showing that Marie was a member of this clothworkers' guild.

8 - Cloth seal

Around 1700-1750

From Barnado Road, Exeter

Lead cloth seals were attached to bales of woollen cloth as part of a process of regulating its quality. Cloth was inspected prior to export and faulty pieces rejected.

This one shows the Royal Arms of England. Seals of this type were sometimes gilded to make the product appear more prestigious.

9-10 - Cloth seals

Around 1700-1750

From Magdalen Street, Exeter

These seals were found near to where George and Samuel Coade operated their cloth-finishing trade.

They were intended for application to the Coades' own cloths, bearing the family name and crest.

11 - Tenterhooks

Around 1700-1750

From Little Silver, Exeter

Tenterhooks were L-shaped staples, much like a bent nail, placed at regular intervals on a rectangular wooden tenter frame. When the washed woollen cloth came from the fulling mill it was stretched out on these hooks to prevent it shrinking as it dried. This gives rise to the phrase 'being on tenterhooks'.

12 - Roof boss

Around 1400-1500

From the Harry Hems Collection

The woollen cloth trade was important to many villages. This may explain the depiction of shears in this roof decoration from a church.

14-16 - Tillet block inserts

Around 1700-1750

From the Customs House, Exeter

Merchants identified their bales of cloth by inserting stamps like these into larger tillet blocks. The central stamp is for the Kennaway family.

13, 17 - Tillet block inserts

Around 1700-1750

From the Customs House, Exeter

Exeter had a flourishing trade exporting woollen cloth. These blocks were inset into larger tillet blocks to show where the cloth was being exported to: in this case Russia and France.

18 - Tillet block insert

Around 1700-1750

From the Customs House, Exeter

A block that could be inset at the centre of the larger tillet block. This one shows a castle tower, similar to that on Exeter's coat of arms.

19 - Tillet block

Around 1700-1750

From the Customs House, Exeter

When the city's cloth trade was at its height in the late 17th and early 18th centuries, its reputation was maintained by a system of careful quality controls. Before cloth could be exported it was inspected for size and quality and then wrapped in coarse cloth known as tillet. The wrappers were then stamped using official wood-blocks called tillet blocks. This one is elaborately carved with the Royal Arms of England.

20 - Tillet block insert

Around 1700-1750

From the Customs House, Exeter

A block that could be inset at the centre of the larger tillet block. This one shows a palm tree.

21 - Hoard of gold coins

Around 1625

From near Chudleigh

These valuable coins were deliberately hidden at some time towards the end of the reign of James I. This type of coin was called a 'unite', so named to mark the unification of England and Scotland under James's rule.

22 - Gold posy ring

Around 1550-1750

From near Totnes

Posy rings were love tokens. They were inscribed with a poetic motto or posy, from the French poesy.

This ring is decorated with a dove and gloved hand holding a pansy, from French pensée or thoughts.

The inscription inside the band reads: 'your true frend without end'.

23 - Gold posy ring

Around 1500-1750

From near Bovey Tracey

Inscribed inside 'I like my Choyes [choice]'.

24 - Memorial ring

Around 1600-1800

From near Appledore

Rings to commemorate a person's death were popular in the 17th century. This one depicts a skeleton, an hour glass and the latin phrase memento mori, meaning 'remember you will die'. Inscribed on the inside of the band is the motto 'in god & thee my joy shall be'.

25 - Silver gilt posy ring

Around 1600-1800

From near Pinhoe

Inscribed on the inside of the band is the motto 'In God above [above] wee ioyned [join] or [our] love'.

26 - Gold posy ring

Around 1500-1700

From near Colcombe Castle

Inscribed on the inside of the band is the motto 'I esteeme virtue [virtue] more than gould [gold]'.

27 - Silver dress hook

Around 1500-1600

From near Pinhoe

An ornate clothes fastener.

28 - Glass flask

Around 1600-1700

From Dartington Hall

This unusual vessel is Islamic or has at least been influenced by Islamic style. Devon merchants were trading all over the world and were able to bring back many exotic items for grand houses such as Dartington Hall.

29 - Plaster overmantel

Around 1650-1700

From Great Moor Farm, Sowton

It seems appropriate for a farm to have the image of the sun above the main fireplace.

30-66 - Silver and silver gilt spoons with embossed and engraved decoration and inscriptions

30 - Trefid spoon, about 1688

Probably made by Richard Sweet, Chard, Somerset. On reverse, the initials and date: 'ER IM 1688'.

31 - Trefid spoon, about 1700

Made by Richard Sweet, Dunster. On reverse, the initials and date: 'ID TE 1702'.

32 - Trefid teaspoons, about 1695-1700

Made in London. Maker's mark: JW. The bowls have raised 'rat-tails' on the reverse.

33 - Seal top spoon, about 1620

Probably made by Joseph Arden, Sherborne. On the seal, the date and initials: 1621 IF.

34 - Spoon with squirrel knop crest of the Gilbert family, about 1580

Made by John Eydes, Exeter. On reverse are the arms of the Gilberts and on the bowl: 'IV' and on the stem: 'DEVON. AG. 1596'.

35 - Apostle spoon, about 1640

Made by Edward Anthony, Exeter. St John holds a cup of sorrow.

36 - Puritan spoon, about 1665

Made in the West Country but maker unknown. On reverse, the initials and date: 'MS 1680 EM'.

37 - Trefid spoon, possibly for a child, about 1700

Made by Gabriel Felling, Bruton, Somerset. Inscribed on reverse: 'C I E M C 1738'.

38 - Slip top spoon, about 1650

Probably made in Wiltshire. On reverse, the initials: 'AT' and on the stem, the initials: 'MS BM'.

39 - Trefid spoon, about 1670

Probably made in the West Country. On reverse, the initials and date: 'RH MT 1688'.

40 - Trefid spoon, about 1680

Probably made by John Peard Senior, Barnstaple. On reverse, the date and initials: '1682 ML IR'.

41 - Trefid spoon, about 1700

Probably made by Richard Sweet, Honiton. On reverse, the initials and date: 'MS 1703'.

42 - Puritan spoon, about 1665

Made in the West Country but maker unknown. On reverse, the date and initials: '1667 SP SC'.

43 - Puritan spoon, about 1669

Made in the West Country. Inscribed on the handle: 'WT' and on reverse: 'I I 1669'.

44 - Puritan spoon, about 1660

Made in Exeter but maker unknown. On reverse, the initials and date: '1659 KP'.

45 - Hound's head spoon, about 1575

Made by Thomas Mathew, Barnstaple. On reverse, the initials and date: 'AW 1628'.

46 - Lion sejant spoon, about 1625

Probably made in the West Country. On reverse, the initials: 'GH / A'.

47 - Lion sejant spoon, about 1625

Probably made by John Quick, Barnstaple.

48 - Lion sejant spoon, about 1590

Made by William Bently, Plymouth. On reverse, the initial: 'W'.

49 - Berry knop spoon, late 16th to early 17th century

Probably made in England. On reverse, the initials: 'CAS MSD'.

50 - Seal top spoon, about 1600

Made by William Horwood, Exeter. On the seal, the initials: 'RB'.

51 - Slip top spoon, about 1635

Probably made in Bristol. On reverse, the initials: 'IN IP'.

52 - Seal top spoon, about 1660

Probably made in Wiltshire. On the seal, the initials and date: 'MN 1662'.

53 - Seal top spoon, about 1620

Probably made by John Quick, Barnstaple. Inscribed on the stem: 'PRAIS GOD', on reverse, the initials 'GB' and on the seal 'EG' over 'AT'.

54 - Seal top spoon, about 1620

Probably made in Wiltshire or Dorset. On reverse, the initials and date: 'A GS 1659'.

55 - Seal top spoon, about 1590

Made by Stephen More, Totnes. Inscribed on reverse: '1669 W I I'.

56 - Slip top spoon, about 1630

Made in London but maker unknown.

57 - Wrythen knop spoon, about 1625

Made by John Parnel, Truro. In the bowl, the initials: 'EM'.

58 - Apostle spoon, about 1650

Probably made in Exeter or the West Country. St Jude carries a cross.

59 - Apostle spoon, about 1635-1636

Made by George Barnes, Exeter. Inscribed on reverse: 'RA CL 1636'.

St Bartholomew holds a large flaying knife.

60 - Apostle spoon, about 1625

Made by Edward Anthony, Exeter.

St Jude holds up a cross.

61 - Apostle spoon, about 1664

Probably made by Thomas Wood, Exeter. St Jude carries a cross. Inscribed on reverse: 'MR / WR / 1664' and on the stem: 'THINK ON'.

62 - Terminal figure spoon, about 1620

Probably made by John Quick, Barnstaple. Inscribed on the stem: 'HONOR GOD' and on reverse: 'MD SL 1739' and 'IW'.

63 - Apostle spoon, late 16th century

Probably made in Exeter or the West Country. St Paul holds a sword.

64 - Apostle spoon, about 1655

Made by Samuel Cawley, Exeter. St John holds a cup of sorrow. Inscribed on reverse: RC / EL / 1665.

65 - Apostle spoon, about 1570

Made by John Jones, Exeter. St James the Less holds a fuller's bat. On reverse, the initials: 'IA'.

66 - Maidenhead spoon, about 1590

Made by Richard Orenge, Sherborne.