

Guille-Allès Museum Captions

1. Wooden head rest

This headrest is described in the Museum records as having been made by the Biahareens or Red Sea Tribes in North Africa. It is wooden with carved geometric designs, and was likely produced during the 19th Century.

The exact provenance is unknown, but it is thought to have been donated to the Museum by a Guernseyman who served in the British Army in North Africa and returned to the island with this memento.

2. Chinese slippers

Presented to the Guille-Allès Museum by a Mr John Fallaize, these beautifully embroidered slippers are listed in the Museum's original records as being Japanese, but the style – particularly the platform sole – is distinctive of Chinese Manchu (Manchurian) design, so this appears to be a misidentification.

Thick, raised soles of this nature allowed the wearer to walk on unsurfaced roadways when the rains had turned the earth to mud. The extra 1 – 1 ½ inches in height made a significant difference.

However, the open-backed, slip-on design is confusing, as this is not typical of Chinese Manchu shoes of the 19th Century or earlier, which instead had closed backs. One explanation is that these slippers may have been made specifically for export to the West. There was a huge market for Chinese goods in Europe and North America as trade developed during the 18th, 19th, and early 20th Centuries, and goods were often mass-produced and tailored specifically to the tastes of Western buyers. These slippers may be an example of Chinese producers sensing an opportunity and adapting a distinctly Chinese style to the Western market.

3. Shell bangles or arm rings

Shell bangles from the coast of Papua New Guinea, collected during the 19th Century. Bangles like these were produced for many centuries by indigenous peoples living in Melanesia, an area of the South Pacific that stretches from Papua New Guinea in the west to Tonga in the east.

The bangles were made by carefully cutting a horizontal slice through a large sea-snail shell. The incised decoration on the outer edge of the bangle is natural, not man-made, and is dictated by the existing decoration on the snail's shell. The shells have a thick layer of nacre or mother-of-pearl on the inside. This gives the inner surface of each bangle an iridescent and very smooth surface, making it both attractive and comfortable to wear.

4. Native America Moccasins

A pair of moccasin ankle flaps made by the Cree, a North American Indigenous people living primarily in Canada.

The ankle flaps feature quillwork, a form of embroidery using porcupine spines. The tassels are made of deer hair.

They were presented to the Guille-Allès Museum by a Mr W. Albert Carey, presumably collected during the late 19th Century.

5. Seated figure of Buddha

Carved from a single piece of white marble, this figure of Buddha originated in Burma (Myanmar) in either the 18th or 19th Century. It was donated to the Guille-Allès Library & Museum by a Mr G Tardiff of St Martin's in September 1921.

The Buddha is seated on a throne in the Vajrasana or Adamantine position, with his legs crossed and the soles of both feet turned upwards. The remains of the characteristic bell-shaped ushnisha or turban can still be seen on his head. His face is serene, and his hands form the gesture of Bhumisparsha mudra, meaning he is calling the Earth to witness his steadfastness.

Earlier examples were carved with rich detail and lavishly decorated, often painted gold. However, these eventually gave way to a more simplistic representation with less surface detail and little or no colour, emphasising Buddha's spiritual purity and simplicity.

6. Coffin falcon figure

A funerary figurine from ancient Egypt, circa 700 – 300 B.C. Figurines of this type were traditionally attached to the top of Egyptian coffins or canopic chests.

The figure probably represents Sokar, one of the Egyptian gods of the dead. It appears to depict a falcon or a hawk, which was how this deity was portrayed. The bird is presented in mummified form, with its body bound in mummification wrappings and only its head visible.

The figurine is made of carved wood which has been coated in gesso (fine plaster) to produce a smooth surface. Various coloured pigments have then been applied for decoration.

7. Stone bull figurine

A stone figure of Nandi the bull-calf, Lord Shiva's mount and his most devoted disciple.

Nandi is a sacred figure in Hindu temples, often found directly opposite the shrine of Shiva, and regularly honoured by worshippers with offerings of flowers and incense. Visitors to Shiva's shrine may touch the Nandi figure in the hope that they will be imbued with the strength of his devotion to Shiva. In Sanskrit, Nandi means 'joyfulness' or 'He Who Gives Joy'.

This example originated in Burma (Myanmar). The surface of the carving has lost some fine detail, perhaps as a result of being touched by large numbers of worshippers over the centuries.

8. Ushabti figurine

A funerary figurine known as a ushabti, originating in Egypt sometime in the first millennium B.C.

The Egyptians placed these figurines in tombs to act as servants to the deceased in the afterlife. Hieroglyphics would often be inscribed on the ushabti's legs or back, with the name of the deceased and an affirmation of the ushabti's readiness to work on their behalf.

The more affluent the person being buried, the more numerous the ushabtis that were buried with them. In addition, the higher the status of the deceased, the more elaborate and decorative their ushabtis. But there was also a huge market for cheap, mass-produced ushabtis for inclusion in the burials of common Egyptians – this is one such example. It was made in a mass-produced mould using either blue-glazed earthenware or a type of ceramic material known as Egyptian faience.

9. Coffin mask

A burial mask from the Roman period in Egypt, likely 3rd Century A.D. A fine example of the way in which Roman and Egyptian burial beliefs and techniques were blending during this period.

The mask is more accurately referred to as part of the cartonnage from a mummified burial. A mummified body would be buried with a shroud laid over it, painted in colour with a stylised representation of the deceased. As a native Roman, the figure would be shown wearing typically Roman clothing, but combined with Egyptian protection hieroglyphics.

This example shows the characteristic face of a Roman, with distinctively Roman haircut and facial hair. Originally the head would have featured a plaster representation of a Roman-style head wreath – now sadly missing.

10. Bottle of seeds

Seeds collected in Australia during the 19th Century, in their original collection bottle. The species is unknown, though it is thought to be one of the acacia species.

The seeds were donated to the Guille-Allès Museum by a Mr John Fallaize.

11. Cocoa beans

Cocoa beans collected in Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) during the 19th Century.

They are displayed in their original collection tin.

12. Collection of seaweeds

A fine example of the popular Victorian pastime of pressing and drying botanical specimens. These seaweed specimens were collected during the 19th Century, likely from local waters. The species are unidentified.

This is one of a series of 23 such pages in the Museum collection.

13. Armadillo

Armadillos are characterised by the leathery armour shell over their bodies – the word ‘armadillo’ means ‘little armoured one’ in Spanish. This species, the Black Armadillo (*Dasypus peba*) is native to Paraguay in South America. It has nine articulated bands in its armour – these allow the armadillo to curl up into a tight ball when threatened, protecting its vulnerable head, feet and underbelly.

Black Armadillos are timid, nocturnal creatures, frequenting open plains and fields rather than woodland. They have long claws for digging, and survive on insects, grubs, and other small invertebrates. Their eyesight is not particularly good, but they have very good hearing and a strong sense of smell.

This specimen was presumably collected during the 19th Century. It was gifted to the Guille-Allès Museum by a Captain T. Guilbert, one of numerous taxidermied animals that were on permanent display.

14. Coral

This genus of stony coral is found in tropical and sub-tropical areas of the Indian and Pacific Oceans. Commonly known as cauliflower, rasp, or knob-horned coral, its scientific name is *Pocillopora verrucosa*. This specimen was collected during the 19th Century.

Corals are marine animals that group together in ‘colonies’ of genetically identical polyps. The polyps secrete calcium carbonate to form a hard skeleton, giving the coral its distinctive appearance.

Corals are found in all the world’s oceans, but are today under threat from the effects of climate change and ocean acidification.

15. Starfish

A species of sea star or starfish found in northern areas of the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans, including the English Channel. Its scientific name is *Solaster papposus*, but it's otherwise known as the Common Sunstar.

This specimen is dried and has therefore lost its colour, but in life it would have had a red-coloured top side with rings of white, pink, yellow, or dark red. Its surface would have been covered by brush-like spines – you can still see traces of these in some areas. It's commonly found on rocky seafloors and prefers areas of high tidal movement.

This specimen was donated to the Guille-Allès Museum by a Mr A de Carteret of St. Martin's. It's presumed to have been found locally, and to have been collected during the 19th Century.

16. Ammonite fossils

The Guille-Allès collection includes a large number of fossilised ammonites, shelled molluscs that died out around 66 million years ago. Ammonite fossils are found all over the world, sometimes in very large concentrations, and are easily recognisable from the distinctive spiral shape of their shells.

There are fourteen ammonite specimens on display here, including the large *Asteroceras obtusum* from the Lower Jurassic period, set in Blue Lias limestone substrate. This was collected from Lyme Regis, Dorset.

The thirteen smaller specimens also date from the Lower Jurassic Period, and were all collected in the British Isles. Of particular interest is one example that shows the suture lines where the outer shell met the septa, the thin walls between the ammonite's internal chambers. Another specimen displays the remains of the body chamber, now filled with calcite.

17. Food or feasting bowl

A food or feasting bowl made from wood and carved with traditional symbols, produced during the 19th Century.

Museum records indicate it originated in Mandok Island, part of Papua New Guinea. This provenance has not been confirmed, as no similar examples from Mandok Island have been located. However, the form and decoration of this bowl are similar to documented examples from the much larger neighbouring island of Siassi, so the provenance is likely correct.

18. Shark-tooth knife

A wooden blade adorned with two rows of shark teeth, each painstakingly bored through a small hole and bound with natural twine. The knife originates from the Gilbert and Ellice Islands, a chain of 16 atolls in the Pacific Ocean, halfway between Papua New Guinea and Hawaii. The Gilberts are now part of Kiribati, while the Ellice Islands became Tuvalu in 1978.

The knife was presented to the Guille-Allès Museum by Rear Admiral Francis Henry Shortt, a Guernsey resident from at least 1860 onwards who collected numerous items during his long service in the Royal Navy, and subsequently donated some of them to the burgeoning Museum collection.

19. Flint spearhead

This spearhead was presented to the Guille-Allès Museum in the late 19th Century by a Miss Bonamy, as one item in a significant and varied donation of archaeological finds from Denmark.

Miss Bonamy's other donations included stone axe heads, stone hammer heads, and flint saws. It's presumed that these were collected from an archaeological excavation, although no other provenance information is recorded, and the spearhead's date of origin is therefore unknown.

20. Roman oil lamp

A moulded terracotta oil lamp from the Roman province of Asia Minor (now Turkey). Likely 1st to 3rd Century A.D. The lamp features a depiction of a running, barking dog at the centre.

A fibre wick would have been pushed down inside the lamp, with a tail protruding from the spout. This end would be lit and would wick the combustible oil upwards to produce a smoky flame. The hole in the centre allowed oil to be poured in to refill the lamp, and also allowed a pin to be pushed inside to hold the wick in place.

21. Dagger with iguana skin sheath

A dagger and sheath from Kordofan in Northern Sudan, most likely made and collected during the late 19th Century. Records give the sheath as being covered in iguana skin.

The dagger is of traditional form and certainly looks lethal, though it was likely made for show or decoration rather than practical use – the blade is flat and has no spine thickening to stop it bending in combat. Some indigenous peoples produced items of this nature for the burgeoning 19th-century tourist market, so this may be a possibility.

22. Ornamental drinking vessel

A drinking vessel from Fiji in the South Pacific, presented to the Guille-Allès Museum by a Miss Hartwell in 1887. An inscription in the records reads: “With Daisy’s Love, Easter 1887”.

The vessel is hollow ceramic, made waterproof by rubbing pine resin into the warm clay just after firing. Similar examples exist in various museum collections around the world, including the British Museum and the Smithsonian. Examples from the 19th Century are varied with eccentric shapes: some inspired by sea creatures, others by fruits and vegetables, and many with these distinctive knobbed decorations on the surface. This particular vessel may have been inspired by native sea creatures.

COIN COLLECTION

Over the course of its existence the Guille-Allès Museum acquired a fine and varied collection of coins, with examples ranging from the ancient world to the 20th Century. A selection of these coins is displayed here.

Commemorative medal, 1846

Not a coin, but a medal struck to commemorate the landing of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert in Jersey, on 3rd September 1846. The Royal couple had visited Guernsey very briefly a few days beforehand. No medal was issued here, but the occasion was eventually commemorated by the construction of Victoria Tower.

20 shillings of Charles I, 1642

This unusually large and heavy silver coin was struck in Oxford during the Civil War. The Latin inscription around the outer edge of the reverse reads 'EXVRGAT DEUS DISSIPENTUR INIMICI', 'Let God arise and his enemies be scattered'.

Brock silver medal, 1835

The Bailiff, Daniel de Lisle Brock (1762-1842), was celebrated on at least two medals. This one, issued in 1835, has an inscription on the reverse reading 'Whose devotion to his country's weal has obtained him a name more lasting and imperishable than all the honours which rank and titles could bestow'.

Brock bronze medal, 1835

Presumably designed for those who were unable to afford the silver version, this is otherwise identical to the silver medal.

Eight escudos of Ferdinand VII, Spain, 1811

This attractive coin, representing Ferdinand as an Admiral, was struck in Santiago in Chile, at that time under Spanish control.

Silver crown of Victoria, 1887

The 'Jubilee' crown (five shillings) struck from 1887-1892 was widely disliked because the crown on Victoria's head was thought to be 'ridiculously small'. The design was eventually changed in 1893.

Half-sovereign of Victoria, 1887

The gold half-sovereign (and the full sovereign) were introduced by George III in 1817.

Half-sovereign of Edward VII, 1902

From the first year of Edward's reign.

Allès medal

Several different styles of medal from 'Mr Berry's Academy' are known, including examples dated to 1818, 1827 and 1836, as well as this one from 1833, given to Frederick Allès when he was just ten years old. The inscription on the obverse records that it was 'Obtained by F. Alles for pre-eminence in GAINS Mr Berry's Academy Dec. 1833' – 'GAINS' in this instance meaning progress. Other medals were awarded for subjects including arithmetic, reading, poetry and 'carriage'.

Guille medal

The Association Française pour l'avancement des sciences, founded in 1872, presented worthy recipients with this bronze medal, including Thomas Guille. His surname appears in the cartouche beneath the figure of a woman reading.

GPS Guille Alles medals

These three medals were awarded to J.R. Clarke by the Guernsey Photographic Society in 1912, 1913 and 1919-21. Around the time that these medals were awarded the Society met at the Guille-Allès Library at 8pm on the first Monday of the month, 'winter months'.