EXPLORERS & COLLECTORS

Heroes & Villains

Heroes & villains

Africa, Asia, America, Pacific

This case is mostly a snapshot of a bygone age, a time when the British explored, surveyed and plundered the far reaches of the globe. Many items were collected for the Canterbury Philosophical and Literary Institution Museum. Its members gathered, debated and displayed objects for their own and public education. Their museum has evolved into The Beaney.

Souvenirs from the battle of Omdurman, Sudan, 1898

These are souvenirs from the 1898 battle of Omdurman, Sudan. They belonged to 'dervish' fighters in the army of Muhammad Ahmad, who adopted the title *al-Mahdi* ('the Divinely Inspired One'). He led an Islamic holy war against Sudan's ruling Egyptian class and its British supporters. When France began to show an interest in the area, an Anglo-Egyptian army led by Sir Herbert Kitchener advanced into Sudan. They had the advantage of modern weapons transported via the Suez Canal and massacred the Mahdi fighters at Omdurman, their capital.

The items were brought back from the battlefield by Captain J Graham and presented to the Museum by his father, General Sir James Graham, KCB.

African spear and shield

19th century; Mahdi people, Sudan

Wood, metal, animal hide

Captain J Graham brought back three spearheads and two spears described as 'small' but with shafts so long they had to be broken for transport. One spearhead was said to have belonged to the *Khalifa*, the Mahdi's successor.

Collected by Captain J. Graham, 1898, and presented by General Sir James Graham, KCB, 1902
Canterbury Museums and Galleries reference 3007, 3009

African sword and scabbard

19th century; Mahdi people, Sudan

Metal and wood

A souvenir with broken blade. It belonged to a fighter in the Islamic Mahdi army massacred by British troops.

Collected by Captain J Graham, 1898, and presented by
General Sir James Graham, KCB, 1902
Canterbury Museums and Galleries reference 3004

'Jibbah' tunics

1881-98; Mahdi people, Sudan

Cotton and wool

These *Jibbah* or *Jibbeh* tunics belonged to officers in the Islamic Mahdi army. They are made from strips of hand-spun and woven cotton with appliqué of coloured woollen patches. The frugality of these garments and their clear re-use of textiles accord with the Islamic principles of humility and poverty adopted by the Mahdists. The patterned design of these tunics helped make Mahdi officers visible to their troops in battle.

Collected by Captain J Graham, 1898, and presented by
General Sir James Graham, KCB, 1902
Canterbury Museums and Galleries reference 4752, 4753

Captain Thomas Boteler, RN

Captain Thomas Boteler RN (1797-1829) was Lieutenant and Assistant Surveyor aboard HMS *Leven* on a naval survey around Africa that took five years, covered 56,000 km of coast and involved apprehending several slave ships. During the voyage he formed 'a large and valuable collection of natural curiosities' and artefacts. He gave items to Canterbury Philosophical and Literary Institution Museum, *"which reflects so much credit on the city, and in which I shall ever feel the greatest interest."*

In 1828 he sailed as Captain of HMS Hecla to continue survey work in West Africa but died of fever, along with most of his crew.

African dagger in scabbard

18th to early 19th century; Fernando Po, West Africa

Wood and metal

Small dagger in gold-covered scabbard collected in 1821-26.

Presented by Captain Thomas Boteler, RN, to Canterbury Philosophical and Literary Institution Museum, 1827-28, and acquired through purchase of the Museum by Canterbury Corporation, 1846-47
Canterbury Museums and Galleries reference 4612

African dagger in scabbard

18th to early 19th century; Fernando Po, West Africa

Wood and metal

Small dagger in gold-covered scabbard collected in 1821-26.

Presented by Captain Thomas Boteler, RN, to Canterbury Philosophical and Literary Institution Museum, 1827-28, and acquired through purchase of the Museum by Canterbury Corporation, 1846-47
Canterbury Museums and Galleries reference 4613

African sword

19th century; Akan Gold Coast (Ghana)

Metal and wood

The weapon with double-balled handle and openwork decoration on the blade is from the Akan area of the Gold Coast and probably an Ashanti sword.

Probably presented by Captain Thomas Boteler, RN, to Canterbury Philosophical and Literary Institution Museum, 1828, and acquired through purchase of the Museum by Canterbury Corporation, 1846-47
Canterbury Museums and Galleries reference (nn)

African sword

19th century; Congo

Metal and wood

This is a Congo ceremonial sword used among the Ngombe, Ngbandi and Lokele peoples.

Probably presented by Captain Thomas Boteler, RN, to Canterbury Philosophical and Literary Institution Museum, 1828, and acquired through purchase of the Museum by Canterbury Corporation, 1846-47
Canterbury Museums and Galleries reference (nn)

Dr David Heathcote

Dr David Heathcote, a Canterbury-based artist, who has lent these and other African items to the Beaney, worked as an art history teacher in Nigeria from 1966 to 1979. He was concerned to see the traditional arts of the Hausa people under threat, and carried out an extensive documentation project that led to both a doctorate and a major exhibition in London, *Arts of the Hausa*, in 1976.

African water pot and water juj

20th century; Hausa people, Northern Nigeria

Earthenware, gourd rind

The pot was formed by pressing clay into an earthen hollow, making two half-rounds then joining them together and smoothing by hand. It sits on a ring when carried on the head. The jug is used for washing before entering a mosque.

Lent by Dr David Heathcote, 2012

African sculpture, Qur'anic board, cap and gourds

20th century; Yoruba, Hausa and Ashanti peoples, Nigeria and Ghana

Wood and bronze

Two of the Yoruba sculptures are ritual 'deceased-twin substitute' carvings. The third is a small figure with distinctive hairstyle. Such African sculptures, with bold abstract features, have had a huge influence on modern artists. The doll is Ashanti from Ghana and would be carried by a pregnant woman to promote beauty in her unborn child.

Ghana is a centre of gold mining and the Ashanti are best known for their intricate tiny brass sculptures used to weigh gold. Dried and decorated gourd rinds are from the Hausa people, northern Nigeria, as is the Qur'anic writing board of the Hausa people has been decorated to celebrate a pupil's achievement at school, and the embroidered cap.

Lent by Dr David Heathcote, 2012

African hair pin

19th century

Bone

This hair pin has four long prongs and a spoon-shaped handle, which has been described as a snuff ladle.

Canterbury Museums and Galleries reference 4633

African headrests

19th century; Ashanti, Ghana

Painted wood

The smaller headrest is typical of the Ashanti people in the former Gold Coast, now Ghana. It is decorated with a wash of blue pigment. The larger headrest follows the Ghanaian shape but has elements of southeast African decoration. Cross-cultural styles like this were used in South Africa. The original black paint has worn with use.

Headrests were used by African men of fairly high status and were significant personal objects, protecting the owner's head and hairstyle.

Canterbury Museums and Galleries reference 4508, 4509

Travellers to the East

Chinese ceramic temple

19th century; Shiwan in Guangdong province, China

Glazed earthenware

This building is modelled on a Shenist folk temple to nature gods and patron gods. The Chinese text on the pillars can be translated as 'Fiction or reality, we revisit our ancestors with these figures'.

It was probably made at a workshop called Rui Yuan in Shiwan, Fo Shan City, Guangdong province, a well-known centre for ceramics production of this type. The ceramic used is known as stoneware because of its durability. Shiwan was famous for making architectural ceramics and ceramic figures during the Ming and Qing dynasties (14th to early 20th centuries).

Presented by Mr W Welby, 1874
Canterbury Museums and Galleries reference 125

Buddha seated on elephants

19th century; Burma

Bronze-covered wood

In Buddhism the elephant symbolises strength of mind, embodying calm majesty and noble gentleness. This Buddha has the hands arranged in 'touching the earth' pose.

Presented by Miss Mona Sharp, 1908
Canterbury Museums and Galleries reference 4864

Buddhas

19th century; Thailand

Silver-covered wax, Alabaster

The silver Buddhas are posed in the attitude of meditation. The carved alabaster Buddha, in 'touching the earth' pose, has small wings. All are probably from domestic shrines.

Canterbury Museums and Galleries reference 1756, 126, 1751, 1752

Chinese shoes and purse

19th to 20th century

Silk and wood

The purse has a drawstring moneybag inside the eggshell-like segments, which are held together by tassels. The child's shoe was given to the museum with a stone inside to keep its shape. Embroidered shoes displayed on the right have a raised sole to keep the embroidered fabric above dust and dirt on the ground.

Child's shoe conserved with grant-aid from the Kathy Callow Trust, 2012;
purse presented by Mrs F. Brewster, 1905
Canterbury Museums and Galleries reference 4710, (nn), 4757

Chinese pagoda model

19th to 20th century

Ivory

Pagodas are tiered buildings in Asia, originally with a religious function and often sited near temples. The word ‘pagoda’ comes from the Portuguese pagode, meaning ‘temple’.

Canterbury Museums and Galleries reference 1750A

Model of a Chinese junk

19th century; China

Wood and textile

The junk is a traditional South-East Asian boat. Each shipyard builds junks in a slightly different way so there are many varied types. Models like this were made for international exhibition.

Presented by Major C Lefevre, OBE, 1945
Canterbury Museums and Galleries reference (nn)

Model of a South-East Asian canoe

19th to 20th century; probably from Burma

Wood

Like the Chinese junk, this model of a canoe is made with care to detail of the oars, planks and construction of the full-size equivalent.

Canterbury Museums and Galleries reference 4522

Shield from Borneo

19th to 20th century; Borneo

Wood and cane

A shield carved with an integral handle on the reverse from the same piece of wood. Split cane has been added during construction for strength.

Presented by Lady Mitchell, 1907
Canterbury Museums and Galleries reference 4843

Model of a Malay house

19th-20th century; Malaysia

Wood

This is a faithful model of a house built on stilts, near water or in areas subject to flooding. The roof tiles are of finely split wood planks.

Presented by Rev. F. Payler Woodward, 1914
Canterbury Museums and Galleries reference L239

Decoration from a Burmese building

19th century; probably Mandalay, Burma

Wood and gold leaf

This is one of several souvenirs brought back from Burma after British forces overthrew King Thibaw in 1885. His palace in Mandalay was ransacked and its decorations, including this panel, dismantled.

Presented by Miss Mona Sharp, 1908
Canterbury Museums and Galleries reference 4867

'Kris' knives

18th to 19th century; Malaysia

Metal and wood

The *Kris* is a traditional Malay knife. One or several of these may the Kris knives given to the museum after their seizure from the forces of Tipu Sultan, ruler of Mysore, at Seringapatam, South India, in 1799.

Canterbury Museums and Galleries reference 1465, 1466

Travellers to the Pacific, Australasia and America

Taiaha stick

Early to mid-19th century; New Zealand

Wood

A Maori weapon for fighting, decorated with a head, eyes and a tongue.

Canterbury Museums and Galleries reference 4602

Bark cloth

19th century; South Sea Islands

Bark

Canterbury Museums and Galleries reference 4590

Tongan headrest or pillow

Late 18th century; Tonga, South Sea Islands

Probably whalebone

Headrests were valued, high status items. This example has inlaid decoration including a flying bird. It is probably one of the objects collected during Captain Cook's voyages and distributed among museums in Britain.

Canterbury Museums and Galleries reference 4507

South Seas paddles and scoop

19th century; Ra'ivavae, Austral Islands

Wood

These paddles and scoop date from about 1815 to 1840. They are for decoration rather than practical use and were originally made for local trade. As the South Seas opened up to visitors from the west, the decorative paddles became much sought-after collectors' items among Europeans.

They were made on one island, Ra'ivavae, but some were traded to Taluh, another island, and acquired from there. The carvings were made with sharks' teeth or European tools. One paddle is decorated with heads and dancing girls. The scoop has an unusual squared handle.

Canterbury Museums and Galleries reference 4567, 4569, 4574

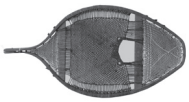
Dance staff

19th century; Buka, Bougainville, Papua New Guinea

Wood

The red and black decoration would originally have been stronger in colour and the bottom, later re-carved, would have been shaped like a tongue. .

Presented by Lady Mitchell, 1907
Canterbury Museums and Galleries reference 4844



Snowshoe

Early to mid-19th century; Central North Canada

Wood, animal gut, cloth

One of a pair of snowshoes used by animal trappers and made from local materials except for the cloth, which probably came from Stroud in Gloucestershire, which had trading links with Canadian trappers.

Canterbury Museums and Galleries reference 4513

Clubs from Nootka Sound

Late 18th century; Nootka Sound, Vancouver Island, Canada

Whalebone

The form and decoration of these clubs is unique to people from Nootka Sound. One has a serpent-head handle unlike any other clubs so far recorded. They were collected during Captain Cook's voyages in 1776-79.

Canterbury Museums and Galleries reference 4476, 4477

South Seas clubs

Late 18th to mid 19th century; New Zealand and Fiji

Stone, Root ball

A Maori stone club and a throwing club from Fiji, both of them for use, not decoration.

Canterbury Museums and Galleries reference 4473, 4490

Adze

18th century; Eskimo, Alaska

Caribou antler, stone and animal gut

This is a tool for cutting and digging. The blade is made of nephrite, a variety of jade, which is a hard and durable stone, used since ancient times for tools as well as decoration.

Canterbury Museums and Galleries reference 4500

Spears or ceremonial swatter sticks

19th to 20th century; Torres Strait, Australia

Wood

These long spears are particular to people living in the Torres Strait. They are richly decorated status symbols and have hollow bottoms.

Canterbury Museums and Galleries reference (nn)

Coir comb

18th to 19th century; Tonga, South Seas

Coir

The decorative hair comb from Tonga is made of coir fibres.

Canterbury Museums and Galleries reference 1763

Shell necklace

18th to 19th century; Tahiti, South Seas

Shells and fibres

Pearl shells for the necklace have been carefully serrated round the edges and bound with pandanus (aromatic plant) leaves, hibiscus string and dyed black fibres.

Canterbury Museums and Galleries reference 4451

Lime gourd

19th century; Solomon Islands

Gourd rind

The gourd was used for burning coral to create lime, which was chewed with betle leaves.

Canterbury Museums and Galleries reference (nn)

Coconut cup

19th century; Polynesia

Coconut shell

The coconut cup would have been used for fermented drinks. It is a high status item with decorations linked to the Cook Islands.

Canterbury Museums and Galleries reference (nn)

South Seas fishhooks and cloak pins

19th century; New Zealand, Tahiti and Hawaii

Bone, shell and twine

People living in the South Seas have created a large range of different fishhooks, each suited to catching a particular type of fish.

Canterbury Museums and Galleries references 4462, 4463k

Aboriginal hammers

Early to mid-19th century

Stone, wood and gum

These are practical tools made from local materials. The stones are fixed to the wooden handles with gum from trees.

Canterbury Museums and Galleries reference 4480, 4481, 4482

General William Miller

General William Miller (1795-1861) was born in Wingham, near Canterbury, and after fighting against Napoleon went to South America, leading battles for independence in Chile then Peru, where he became a national hero. He gave the museum a collection of 800 insects, 100 specimens of minerals and several fossils.

Cast of part of a Mastodon andium lower jaw

1845 copy of prehistoric original

Plaster

This is a cast of the fossilised jaw found in South America and given to Canterbury Philosophical and Literary Institution Museum in 1841 by General William Miller. The original was lent to the British Museum in 1845, when it was used to help establish the new species of elephant ancestor *Mastodon andium*. Canterbury Curator John Brent allowed the British Museum to keep the original in exchange for a cast and various other fossil specimens.

Presented by William Miller to Canterbury Philosophical and Literary Institution Museum and acquired through purchase of the Museum by Canterbury Corporation, 1846-47
Canterbury Museums and Galleries reference A160

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HOUSE OF ART
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