

AMPULLA

Unique ID: IOW-18717E

Object type certainty: Certain

Workflow status: Awaiting validation

An incomplete Medieval lead alloy pilgrim ampulla (c 1300-c. 1500).

The neck has been removed and one suspension loop is missing, although the stubs of the loop are present.

The circular body has a raised crown on one side and a 'compass-drawn' flower of four petals on the other side. The crown is now barely visible. Between each petal there is raised hatching. Below each suspension loop the edges are bevelled on both faces. The neck has been deliberately cut off the body and the edges of the cuts has been tightly closed together and sealed. The body has been pressed inwards from the crown side. There are two deliberate cut marks on the base of the body.

This ampulla is dark grey and worn.

Length: 33.8mm; width: 28.8mm; thickness: 7.9mm. Weight: 26.24g.

Ampullae with similar designs have been published (Spencer 1990: 89-90, figs. 182-184).

Brian Spencer, formerly Senior Keeper at the Museum of London, who made a life-time study of ampullae, has written: 'Ampullae or miniature phials were an important kind of souvenir. Generally flask-shaped, but with a narrow, flattish section, they were designed to contain a dose of the thaumaturgic water that was dispensed to pilgrims at many shrines and holy wells. Ampullae were made of tin or lead or tin-lead alloy and were provided with a pair of handles or loops so that they could be suspended from a cord or chain around the wearer's neck. Coming into use in the last quarter of the twelfth century, they were, in England, almost the only kind of pilgrim souvenir to be had during the thirteenth century. They were nevertheless available at a number of shrines, and thanks to returning pilgrims or to local entrepreneurs, probably featured as secondary relics in virtually every thirteenth-century English parish church. Until the early fourteenth century, ampullae took various forms, were frequently inscribed and usually bore representations of the cult-figure or relic that they were intended to commemorate.....Ampullae could be comfortably kept on the person or easily hung up in the home, or suspended, for the benefit of livestock, in the stable or cow shed or on the beehive. Ampullae were often donated to the neighbourhood, to be hung in the parish church. Almost as a matter of course, churches throughout thirteenth-century England secured possession of Canterbury ampullae containing what was perhaps the most famous of all elixirs, the water of St Thomas, tinged with the martyr's miracle-working blood' (Spencer, B. 1990, 57-58).

Spencer, B. 1990. Pilgrim Souvenirs and Secular Badges. Salisbury and South Wiltshire Museum. Salisbury.

Find of note status

This is a find of note and has been designated: County / local importance

Evidence of reuse: Neck removed and sealed

Subsequent actions

Current location of find: Finder

Subsequent action after recording: Returned to finder

Chronology

Broad period: MEDIEVAL

Period from: MEDIEVAL

Period to: MEDIEVAL

Date from: Circa AD 1300

Date to: Circa AD 1500

Period of reuse: MEDIEVAL

Dimensions and weight

Quantity: 1

Length: 33.8 mm

Width: 28.8 mm

Thickness: 7.9 mm

Weight: 26.24 g

Discovery dates

Date(s) of discovery: Sunday 2nd September 2018 - Sunday 2nd September 2018

Personal details

This information is restricted for your access level.

Other reference numbers

Other reference: IOW2018-1-274

Materials and construction

Primary material: Lead Alloy

Completeness: Incomplete

Spatial metadata

Region: [South East](#) (European Region)

County or Unitary authority: [Isle of Wight](#) (Unitary Authority)

District: [Isle of Wight](#) (Unitary Authority)

To be known as: Isle of Wight

Spatial coordinates

Grid reference source: GPS (from the finder)

Unmasked grid reference accurate to a 0.01 metre square.

Discovery metadata

Method of discovery: Metal detector

Discovery circumstances: Club rally

Current location: Finder

General landuse: Cultivated land

Specific landuse: Operations to a depth greater than 0.25m

Spencer, B., 1990 [*Salisbury Museum Medieval Catalogue: Part 2, Pilgrim souvenirs and secular badges*](#) Salisbury: Salisbury and South Wiltshire Museum 57-58; 89-90, figs. 182-184