

# Mystery objects





# Mystery objects

## Bracer

This leather strap is a piece of archery equipment. It was worn around the lower arm, with the large decorated part laid over the inner arm.

The bracer protected the arm from being hurt by the string of the bow or arrow feathers when arrows were being shot, and also prevented loose clothing becoming entangled in the bow string.

Bracers were usually made of leather, but could be made of any hard material, such as ivory or horn.

Professional Tudor archers had decorative moulded bracers made from leather dipped in boiling oil, which covered the whole lower half of their arms, and these were very hard and strong and lasted years.

This soft leather bracer was designed for more occasional use, and is decorative as well as being useful.



### How do we know about bracers?

Illustrations and descriptions in Tudor documents, and finds made during archaeological excavations. Bracers of similar design to this one, along with boiled leather bracers, were recovered from the wreck of the *Mary Rose*, Edward VIII's flagship. There is an example of a boiled leather bracer in the British Museum's online collection.



# Mystery objects

## Candlestick

This silver candlestick is of a mid-1500s design, especially for use on tables. It has a tray to catch drips of wax, to stop damage to expensive table linen.

Before the mid-1500s candlesticks either stood on 3 legs and had no drip tray, or had a drip tray at the bottom of the candlestick, to catch the drips when the candlestick was carried.

In Tudor times, rooms were lit by torchlight (from burning torches), firelight, candlelight and rushlight. Torches were only suitable for large stone buildings like castles and churches; firelight was too dim to read or work by; so most ordinary people used candlelight or rushlight.

Poorer people used rushlights, made by dipping rushes dipped in lamb fat or oil, and cheap candles made from tallow (rendered animal fat). These candles didn't give bright or even light, and were smelly whilst burning.

Rich people used candles made by dipping linen wicks in beeswax. These candles burned brightly and evenly, and smelt sweet whilst burning.



### How do we know about candlesticks with drip trays?

Illustrations and descriptions in Tudor documents, and finds made during archaeological excavations. Similar candlesticks can be seen in museums and historic houses.



# Mystery objects

## Decade ring

This cast iron ring was used to help people pray. It is called a decade ring because it has ten 'knobs' and a bezel (the bigger knob), representing a 'decade' of prayers. An Ave Maria (Hail Mary) prayer was said for each of the knobs, and then a Paternoster (Our Father) was said for the bezel.

These rings look very uncomfortable, but if worn on the thumb they are surprisingly comfortable to wear.

From the mid-1400s onwards, many decade rings had an image of a saint or the owner's initials on the bezel.

Catholicism was banned between 1534 and 1554, and between 1570 and 1778. Rosaries were made illegal in 1571, and wearing a rosary could result in being punished, imprisoned or even executed. Many Catholics carried on practising in secret, and they wore or carried decade rings, which had not been banned by law.



### How do we know about decade rings?

Manuscript illustrations and descriptions, finds made during archaeological excavations. Decade rings were made until at least the 18th century, and Liverpool museum has the best collection in the UK.





# Mystery objects

## Niddy noddy

This wooden tool consists of a central bar, with crossbars at each end, offset from each other by 90°. It was used to make skeins from handspun yarn, by holding the central bar and winding the yarn in a loop around the four 'corners' of the niddy noddy. One of the crossbar ends has a flat side to make removing the skeins easy.

Yarn needed to be taken off drop spindles or spinning wheel bobbins and made into skeins ready for washing, dyeing, storing or selling. Skeins of the same size could be made by counting the number of times the yarn was wound around the niddy noddy.

In Tudor times the yarn was made from wool, or vegetable fibres such as linen, hemp or nettle.



### How do we know about niddy noddies?

Manuscript illustrations and descriptions, and finds made during archaeological excavations. Pieter Pietersz's 1570 painting: *Man and Woman by the Spinning Wheel* clearly shows a niddy noddy. Niddy noddies are still used today.



# Mystery objects

## Rosary

This string of bone and wood beads is called a rosary. The word rosary has two meanings; it is both a sequence of prayers and the string of beads used to count the prayers.

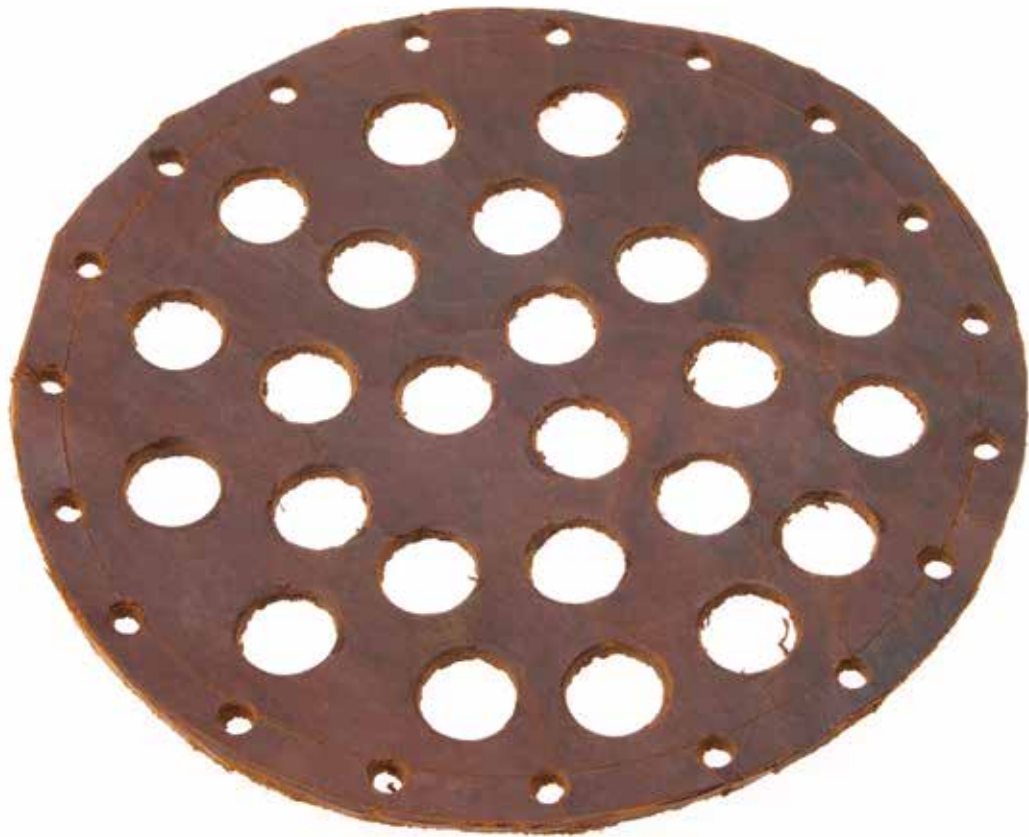
There were many kinds of rosaries, each for a different prayer sequence. This rosary consists of 40 white beads representing Ave Maria (Hail Mary) prayers, and 5 black beads representing Paternosters (Lord's Prayer). Each bead was touched in turn, while the prayer it represented was recited. This rosary would take around 10 minutes to recite and was seen as an effective penance (or act of remorse for sin) by the Roman Catholic Church.

Praying using rosaries was banned by King Henry VIII in 1538. Queen Mary restored England, Wales & Ireland to Catholicism from 1553 to 1558, but Elizabeth I banned Catholicism again in 1570, and rosaries were made illegal in 1571.



### How do we know about rosaries?

Illustrations and descriptions in Tudor documents, and finds made during archaeological excavations. Rosaries were recovered from the wreck of the *Mary Rose*, Edward VIII's flagship, and this is a copy of one of those. Rosaries are still used by Catholics today.



# Mystery objects

## Spacer

This circular piece of leather has many holes punched into it. The smaller holes around the edge allowed the spacer to be sewn into the top of a quiver. The bigger holes in the centre held the arrows in the quiver apart, and prevented the arrow flights from being crushed or damaged, which was very important, as damaged arrows do not fly properly.



### How do we know about spacers?

Illustrations and descriptions in Tudor documents, and finds made during archaeological excavations. Arrow spacers were also recovered from the wreck of the *Mary Rose*, Edward VIII's flagship, and this one is a copy of one of those.

