



From mountain to sea

# Treasures of Historic Banffshire

Activity Resource



## Introduction

The Treasures of Historic Banffshire exhibition at Duff House celebrates the heritage and culture of the area through unique Celtic, Pictish and contemporary objects.

'Celtic' and 'Celts' are words with many meanings which have changed through time. Around 500BC ancient Greek historians used the word 'Celts' to describe barbarians, or wild people, north of the Mediterranean world. Today 'Celtic' is primarily used to describe cultures and languages around the Atlantic edges of Europe – Scotland, Ireland, Wales, and areas of France.

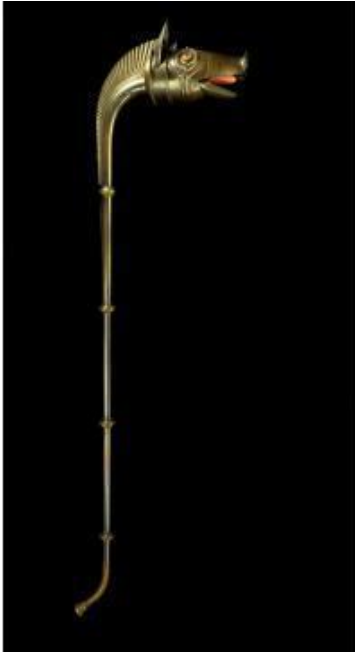
Picts were tribal peoples who lived in the areas we would now call northern and eastern Scotland, from the late Iron Age through to early Medieval times.

This exhibition links significant objects discovered in Banffshire with ancient cultures and connections throughout a changing Europe.

Treasures of Historic Banffshire can be used to help classes understand the way in which we use objects to investigate our past places, peoples and cultures, and relate them to today. It also provides a starting point from which to discover Celtic art and design, and how this relates to modern creative techniques used by northeast artists and makers.

This resource explores the idea of **Place** through three themes: **Sound, Story, Identity.**

## Sound – The Deskford Carnyx

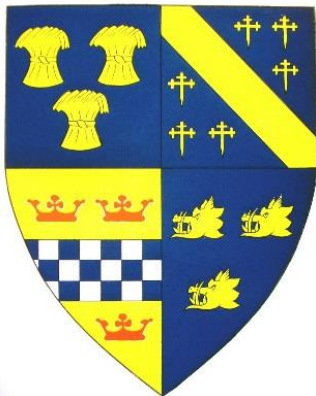


A carnyx was a war horn used in battle to inspire warriors and scare the enemy. 200 years ago the head of a Celtic carnyx was found on farmland near Deskford in Banffshire. Ancient images showing how the instrument was played helped modern experts create a copy.

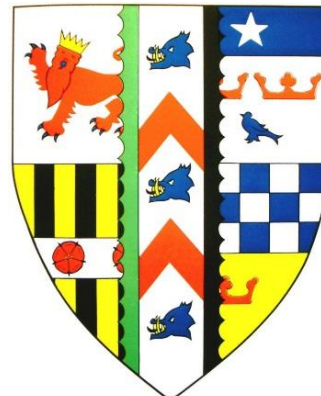
The Deskford Carnyx could have sounded like a boar as well as looked like one. It was described by ancient writers as 'making a terrifying wall of noise' during battle, but it can be quieter than a flute and louder than a trombone.

The shape of the Carnyx head allows the sound to reverberate and come out of the whole head, not just the mouth - in the same way that you can make noise by humming loudly without opening your mouth.

- Listen to the film of the Carnyx being played. Imagine you are in battle. How would hearing the Carnyx make you feel and why?
- What sounds can you hear now, inside and outside, that describe where you are? Describe the types of sounds you would hear in a place in Aberdeenshire that means a lot to you.
- There are other instruments in the exhibition that can be played in the same way as the Carnyx, in battle or for celebrations. What instruments are played by soldiers today? Can you name instruments that might be played at a celebration where you live?
- Why do you think the head of the Deskford Carnyx is shaped like a boar? Boars also appear on local coats of arms below. Design your own coat of arms.



Aberdeenshire County Council



Banff County Council

## Story – The Gundestrup Cauldron



The Gundestrup Cauldron is like a graphic novel that tells of courage, danger and magic. Some scenes feature carynces similar to the Deskford Carynx, and people wearing jewellery like that found in the Gaulcross Hoard.

This magnificent silver cauldron is one of the most important objects of its time. Experts think the decoration and detail was added over several hundred years.

The Cauldron was found in a bog in Denmark but was made a long way away in south-east Europe. There are scenes on the panels from Western Europe but also from Asian cultures and wildlife. It shows us evidence of a connected world, not just a Celtic one.

- What is your favourite part? What animals can you see? (Use a torch to look inside and outside the cauldron). What story do you think the panels might be trying to tell?
  - The images on the panels could have been used to remind people about their history and culture. In Aberdeenshire we have bothy ballads and sea shanties that now do the same thing. What traditional songs do you know? Write a song or poem about the place you live.
  - The Cauldron has travelled many miles and across many cultures, and people do the same thing. A large number of us who live in Aberdeenshire have family and friends across the world. Create a decorative map to describe a journey you'd like to make in the future.
  - Listen to the sounds in the Cauldron room. Think about the materials and tools that would have been available at the time. How do you think they made the cauldron? Where would they have got the materials from
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## Identity – The Gaulcross Hoard



The Gaulcross Hoard is a collection of Pictish silver jewellery and many smaller objects such as silver ingots and hacksilver (chopped up bits of silver to be recycled into something new).

It was found at Gaulcross near Fordyce in Banffshire, in 1837, the same year that Queen Victoria came to the throne.

The only objects from the Hoard on display are a silver hand pin (so called because the pin's head looks like the palm of a fist), a unique and complete silver spiral bangle, and a special piece of silver wire chain made by a method called trichonopoly (a bit like French knitting).

In the past, just like today, appearance and adornment said a lot about a person's identity – their age, gender, status, where they came from and who they wanted to be. Silver jewellery such as this could be highly decorated and was worn by both men and women.

- How would it feel to wear expensive jewellery like this? Who would wear it? What type of person would wear a 'statement' piece of jewellery today?
  - These objects were made at different times, possibly spanning hundreds of years but they were deliberately buried together along with lots of other bits of silver. Why do you think someone did this?
  - Look at the design on the hand pin. Spiral designs like these are some of the oldest in the world. What do the shapes remind you of? The maker would have been inspired by what they saw and familiar animals around them. Create a design based on natural shapes in your environment.
  - Your identity is made up of many things, including where you live and what's important to you. Further on in the exhibition is a collection of silver objects made by artists in northeast Scotland. These artists express their identity through the things they make. See if you can spot what has inspired them to make their unique work.
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## Further resources



### Aberdeenshire Museums Services

Search for items online or book a free guided tour of the Discovery Centre in Mintlaw and explore some of the 250,000 objects in the collections of Aberdeenshire Council Museums.

- <https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/leisure-sport-and-culture/museums/>

### Aberdeenshire Libraries Services

Find out about your Library Service, search the online library catalogue, reserve books and view events around Aberdeenshire.

- <https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/libraries/>

### National Museums Scotland

For more information on the items in the exhibition

- Deskford Carnyx  
<http://www.nms.ac.uk/explore/stories/scottish-history-and-archaeology/deskford-carnyx/>
- Gundestrup Cauldron  
<http://blog.nms.ac.uk/2016/07/13/glenmorangie-research-project-silver-in-celts-part-i/>
- Gaulcross Hoard  
<http://blog.nms.ac.uk/2015/10/15/glenmorangie-research-project-the-gaulcross-hoard/>

### Photo credits

Deskford Carnyx – © National Museums Scotland

Gaulcross Hoard – © National Museums Scotland

Gundestrup Cauldron – © Roberto Fortuna & Kira Ursem / National Museum of Denmark

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