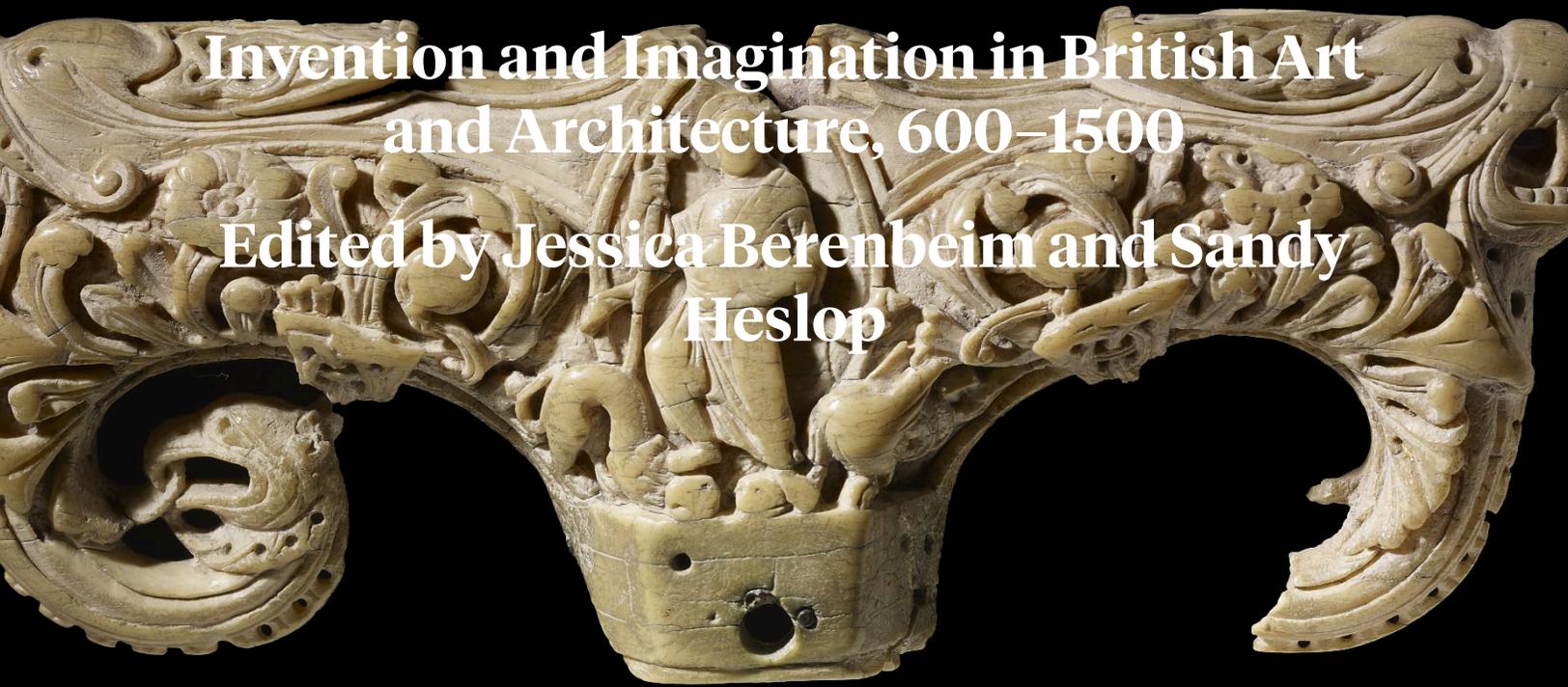


British Art Studies

June 2017

**Invention and Imagination in British Art
and Architecture, 600–1500**

**Edited by Jessica Berenbeim and Sandy
Heslop**



British Art Studies

Issue 6, published 29 June 2017

Invention and Imagination in British Art and Architecture, 600–1500

Edited by Jessica Berenbeim and Sandy Heslop

Cover image: Unknown maker, Ivory Staff Terminal from Alcester, 11th Century, ivory, 14 × 5 cm. Collection of the British Museum (1903,0323.1).. Digital image courtesy of Trustees of the British Museum

PDF generated on 15 February 2024

Note: *British Art Studies* is a digital publication and intended to be experienced online and referenced digitally. PDFs are provided for ease of reading offline. Please do not reference the PDF in academic citations: we recommend the use of DOIs (digital object identifiers) provided within the online article. These unique alphanumeric strings identify content and provide a persistent link to a location on the internet. A DOI is guaranteed never to change, so you can use it to link permanently to electronic documents with confidence.

Published by:

Paul Mellon Centre
16 Bedford Square
London, WC1B 3JA
<https://www.paul-mellon-centre.ac.uk>

In partnership with:

Yale Center for British Art
1080 Chapel Street
New Haven, Connecticut
<https://britishart.yale.edu>

ISSN: 2058-5462

DOI: 10.17658/issn.2058-5462

URL: <https://www.britishartstudies.ac.uk>

Editorial team: <https://www.britishartstudies.ac.uk/about/editorial-team>

Advisory board: <https://www.britishartstudies.ac.uk/about/advisory-board>

Produced in the United Kingdom.

A joint publication by

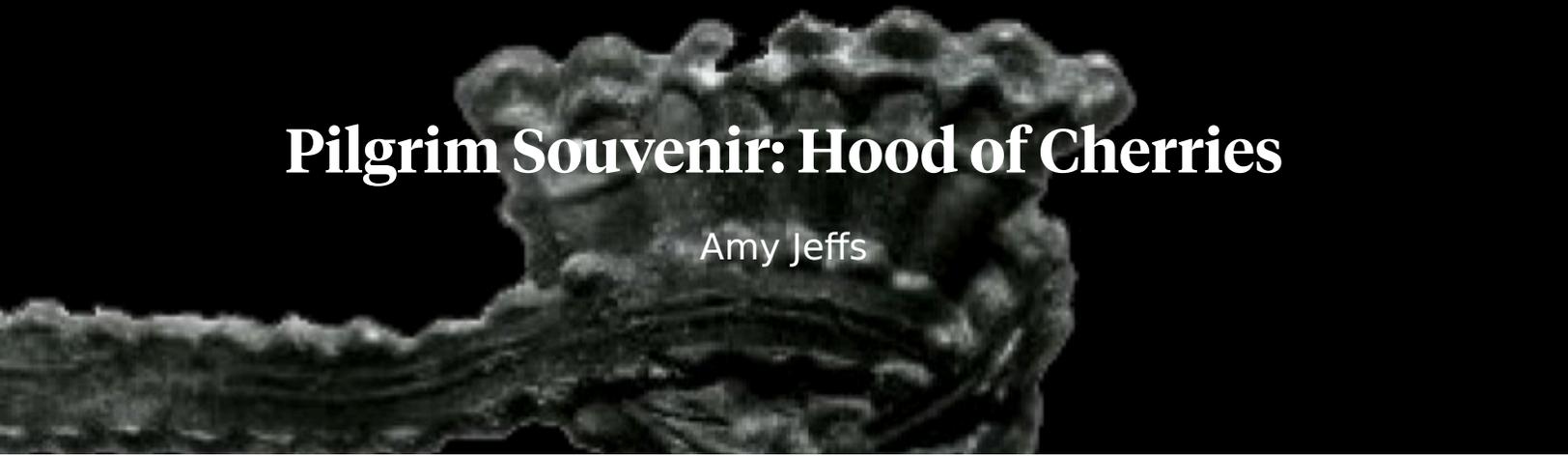


PAUL MELLON
CENTRE

YALE CENTER FOR BRITISH ART

Contents

Pilgrim Souvenir: Hood of Cherries, Amy Jeffs



Pilgrim Souvenir: Hood of Cherries

Amy Jeffs

Authors

PhD candidate at the University of Cambridge

Cite as

Amy Jeffs, "Pilgrim Souvenir: Hood of Cherries", *British Art Studies*, Issue 6,
<https://dx.doi.org/10.17658/issn.2058-5462/issue-06/cherries-badge>

This lead alloy badge from the British Museum represents a medieval hood repurposed as a sack for a harvest of cherries (fig. 1).¹ It measures 38 by 30 millimetres and was cast integrally with its pin and clasp in a three-part mould.² When first made, it would have shone like silver. Badges were purchased in their millions by pilgrims between the late twelfth and early sixteenth centuries, as attractive, wearable and cheap souvenirs of their visits to holy sites (fig. 2). By the later Middle Ages badges were also worn as general symbols of devotion, as livery insignia, and as humorous or amorous tokens; which of these categories the “hood of cherries” badge falls into is debatable. Five of them have been found: three in Salisbury, and another in London (fig. 3), while the provenance of the fifth is unknown.³ Their cataloguers reluctantly associate them with the cult of St Dorothy, whose emblem is a basket of fruit, although Spencer expressed concern that, “a fashionable hood seems far removed from her story.”⁴ There are also possible alternative explanations to its meaning, which will be explored here.



Figure 1.

Unknown maker, Hood of Cherries, circa 400–1500, lead alloy with pin, 3.9 cm. Collection of the British Museum (1856,0923.7). Digital image courtesy of Trustees of the British Museum.

A fifteenth-century date can be suggested based on the style of the hood.⁵

It has a gorget (a collar for the neck) and a tippet (the long band of fabric that replaced the tubular liripipe). These are both decoratively dagged and the hole for the face has a rolled rim, suggesting that it may represent a kind of hood called a chaperon, which was worn on the head: the fifteenth-century descendant of the fourteenth-century gorget, hood, and liripipe.



Figure 2.

St Lawrence of Rome shown healing a blind man before pilgrims, on the mid-15th century *Heiligentaler altar St. Nicolai church, Lüneburg, Lower Saxony* (detail). The pilgrims are shown in contemporary dress, with a variety of devotional badges on their hats. Digital image courtesy of imageBROKER / Alamy Stock Photo

On all the surviving examples, the seven fruits can be tentatively identified as cherries from their long, sometimes paired, stems. A separate source exists to support this conclusion. On folio 196v of the early fourteenth-century Luttrell Psalter, alongside other familiar or popular scenes of country life (fig. 4), a thief is shown scrumping from a cherry tree. He is depicted in the tree with his liripipe hood back-to-front, filling it with cherries. The illuminator is careful to render the tree's leaves, bark, and ripening fruit identifiable. The hood of cherries on the badge may therefore be interpreted as visually referencing a spontaneous harvest of cherries.



Figure 3.

Unknown maker, Hood of Cherries, circa 400-1500, lead alloy with pin, 4 cm. Collection of the British Museum (1856,0701.2114) Digital image courtesy of Trustees of the British Museum.

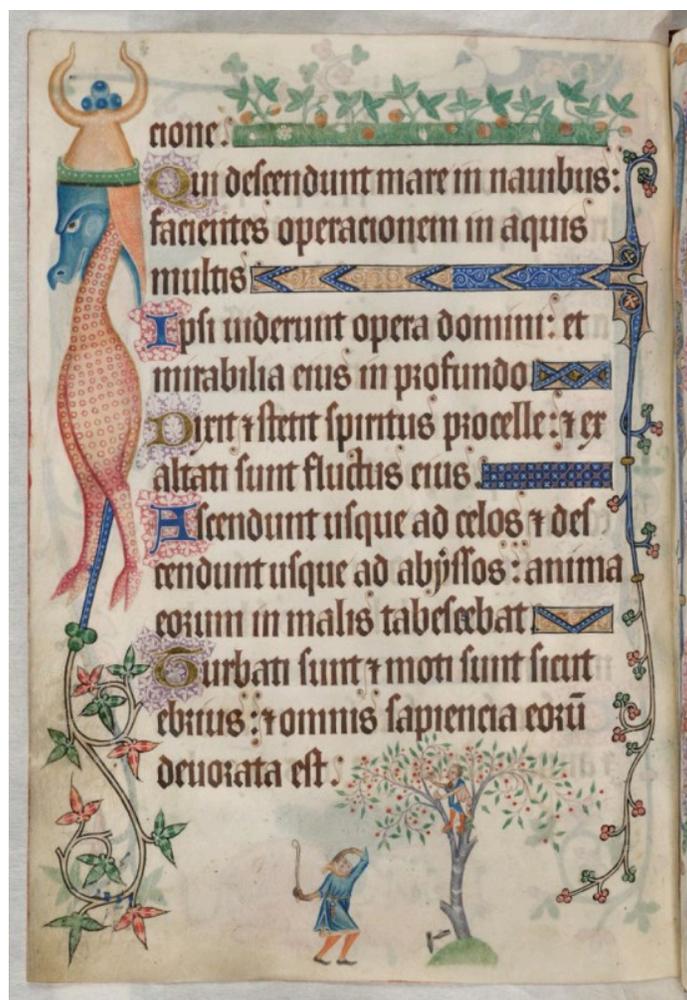


Figure 4.

Folio 196v, from *The Luttrell Psalter*, circa 1325-1340. Collection of the British Library (Add MS 421430). Digital image courtesy of British Library

Just such a harvest was a motif central to a story that enjoyed a short burst of popularity during the second half of the fifteenth century, when all five of these badges were probably made. It features at the beginning of the N-Town mystery play for the Nativity (lines 24-44).⁶ In the story, Joseph and the pregnant Mary are travelling to Bethlehem. They notice a tree miraculously bearing cherries out of season. She asks Joseph to pick some for her but he responds irritably that the one who got her pregnant should harvest them, not him (this line also becomes the refrain in the derivative “Cherry Tree Carol”). At God’s command, therefore, the cherry tree bends and Mary is able to gather her fill of the fruit.

The motif of the Virgin’s unexpected glut of cherries was popular in England during the period of this badge-type’s production, and appeared in other visual and literary works.⁷ Whether or not it furnished the imagery of this

badge, the scrumped harvest of cherries is an effective natural metaphor for unexpected wealth, as the rare four-leaf clover is for good luck. As new research explores the many mysterious iconographies borne by medieval pilgrims' souvenirs and secular badges, the "hood of cherries" badge is a testament to how much may be learned from their study alongside the elite art and popular literature of the Middle Ages.

Footnotes

- 1 London, British Museum, objects nos. 1856,0923.7; 1856,0701.2114. That the orientation of the badge as depicted above is correct is shown by the direction of the pin on the reverse (the clasp is always at the bottom when the pin is vertical).
- 2 The casting process can be seen in [this video clip](#) shot by the Digital Pilgrim Project in collaboration with Colin Torode of [Lionheart Replicas](#).
- 3 The find-spot of 1856,0923.7 is unknown, but the other was found in London. The other three surviving examples were all found in Salisbury. As well as the two at the British Museum, see B. Spencer, *Pilgrim Souvenirs and Secular Badges* (London: HMSO, 1998), 102, cat. nos. 170-71 (142/1978 & 190w/1987, Salisbury & South Wiltshire Museum); M. Mitchiner, *Medieval Pilgrims and Secular Badges* (London: Hawkins, 1986), 96, cat. no. 219.
- 4 Mitchiner, *Medieval Pilgrims*, 96; Spencer, *Pilgrim Souvenirs*, 102, cat. no. 171; <http://www.kunera.nl/> (accessed 11 August 2016), two badges depicting baskets full of fruit have been found in London and one in Salisbury. On these badges, the fruits are very numerous and there is no consistency in the type or number of fruits depicted.
- 5 I. Brooke, *Illustrated Handbook of Western European Costume: Thirteenth to Mid-Nineteenth Century* (Mineola, NY: Dover, 2003), 19-20; K. M. Lester and B. V. Oerke, *Accessories of Dress: An Illustrated Encyclopedia* (Mineola, NY: Dover, 2004), 12.
- 6 S. T. Carr, "The Middle English Nativity Cherry Tree: The Dissemination of a Popular Motif", *Modern Language Quarterly* 36, no. 2 (1975): 140.
- 7 The cherry tree motif in medieval English art will be explored by the author in a future article.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

London, British Museum, objects nos.: 1856,0923.7; 1856,0701.2114
London, British Library, Cotton Vitellius D VIII (The N-Town Plays)
London, British Library, Add MS 421430 (The Luttrell Psalter)

Secondary Sources

Brooke, I. *Illustrated Handbook of Western European Costume: Thirteenth to Mid-Nineteenth Century*. Mineola, NY: Dover, 2003.
Carr, S. T. "The Middle English Nativity Cherry Tree: The Dissemination of a Popular Motif." *Modern Language Quarterly* 36, no. 2 (1975): 133-47.
Lester, K. M., and B. V. Oerke. *Accessories of Dress: An Illustrated Encyclopedia*. Mineola, NY: Dover, 2004.
Mieszkwski, G. *Medieval Go-Betweens and Chaucer's Pandarus*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006.
Mitchiner, M. *Medieval Pilgrims and Secular Badges*. London: Hawkins, 1986.
Spencer, B. *Pilgrim Souvenirs and Secular Badges*. London: HMSO, 1998.

Licensing

The Publishers of *British Art Studies* are committed to supporting scholarship on British art and architecture of all periods. This publication is made available free of charge at <https://www.britishartstudies.ac.uk>. We ask users to identify the use of materials made available through this website and to provide an appropriate credit to the author and the publication, so that others may find and use our resources.

Except where otherwise noted, this work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 2.0 UK: England & Wales Licence (CC BY-NC 2.0 UK). To view a copy of this license, visit <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/2.0/uk/> or send a letter to Creative Commons, PO Box 1866, Mountain View, CA 94042, USA.

The Publishers fully support the protection of intellectual property and are committed to complying with, and strictly adhering to, all applicable copyright law. In many cases, copyright or other proprietary rights may be held by individuals or entities other than, or in addition to, the Publishers. If a work or a photographic image is still protected by copyright, you must cite the relevant copyright information when using the image and comply with all other terms or restrictions that may be applicable to that material.

In some cases, exceptions to copyright that permit limited use of protected works without the permission of the copyright owner may have been applied. We are confident that we have carried out due diligence in our use of copyrighted material as required, but we apologise for any inadvertent infringement of rights.

Digital copies of resources are made accessible for research for one of the following reasons:

- they are in the public domain;
- the rights are owned by the Publishers;
- we make them accessible under an exception or limitation to UK copyright law, as outlined in the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 (as amended);
- we have permission to make them accessible;
- or, there are no known restrictions on use.

If you believe that we have made a mistake and wish for your material to be removed from our site, please contact us at copyright@paul-mellon-centre.ac.uk.

Please include the following information with your request:

- Name and contact information, including email address and phone number.
- Identification of the resource for consideration of removal. Providing URLs in your communication will help us locate content quickly.
- The reason for the request.

The Publishers respond promptly, normally within 21 business days. We may remove the resource from our site while we assess the validity of the request. Upon completion of the assessment, we will take appropriate action and communicate that action to you.