

Humanities Writing Competition 2023-24

Item Information

LR.775 - Terracotta figurine of Leda with the swan (?)

https://lrc.girton.cam.ac.uk/object-record.php?get_object_record=777



‘Tanagra’ figures, dating from the third century BCE, are named after the town in Greece where they were first found in large quantities, most often in tombs. They are small terracotta human figures made in hollow moulds, brightly painted in watercolour after firing. Although they follow an older tradition of terracotta figures used as cult images or votive objects, they may have been used simply as ornaments. This one may depict the mythological character Leda, who was impregnated by Zeus in the form of a swan.

Place: Boeotia, Greece

Date: ca. BCE 400–350

Acquisition Source: Hon. Evelyn Saumarez, 1902. Purchased in Athens 1873.

Dimensions: Height 17.8 cm

LR.799 - Terracotta stag

https://lrc.girton.cam.ac.uk/object-record.php?get_object_record=801



This stag is one of a great variety of Hellenistic Greek animal figurines whose purpose may originally have been votive and funerary but which can seem purely playful. It is rather roughly made with a wall of clay attaching the body to the rectangular base.

Place: Boeotia, Greece

Date: ca BCE 400–210

Acquisition Source: Gwendolen Crewdson, 1918–19

Dimensions: Height 18.7 cm

LR.1005 - Carthaginian 'cocked hat' lamp

https://lrc.girton.cam.ac.uk/object-record.php?get_object_record=1007



A clay oil lamp from Carthage (now in Tunisia). The rim is pinched together to provide rests for two wicks. The central bowl would have acted as a reservoir for the oil.

Place: Carthage

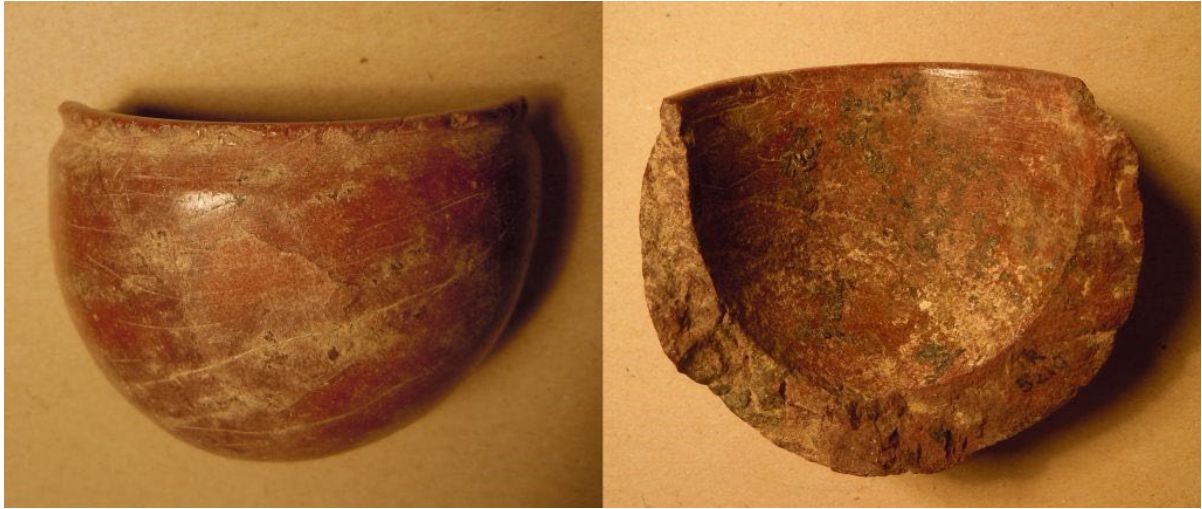
Date: first millennium BCE

Acquisition Source: Ethelwyn Pearson, 1936

Dimensions: Length 8.8 cm; height 3.3 cm

LR.1075 - Porphyry bowl from Tell al Rimah, Iraq

https://lrc.girton.cam.ac.uk/object-record.php?get_object_record=1091



Only half of this small, near-spherical bowl remains. Tell al Rimah was the site of a Mesopotamian town occupied principally from the third millennium BCE to the Late Assyrian period (ending approximately 600 BCE). Porphyry was later to become the most prized stone of Roman Emperors. This bowl may have been a piece of luxury tableware.

Place: Tell al Rimah, Iraq

Date: Second millennium BCE?

Acquisition Source: Dr Joan Oates, 2010 (excavated by Dr David Oates, British School of Archaeology in Iraq, 1964–1971)

Dimensions: Height 5.5 cm; diameter 6.9 cm

LR.727 - Early Anglo-Saxon wrist clasps

https://lrc.girton.cam.ac.uk/object-record.php?get_object_record=729



These copper-alloy fasteners were used like cuff buttons to fasten the sleeves of women's dresses in early medieval East Anglia. This is one of several pairs discovered in the fifth- to sixth-century CE cemetery on the Girton College site.

Place: Girton, Cambridge

Date: CE 400–600

Acquisition Source: Excavation at Girton College, 1881

Dimensions: Length 3.8 cm; height 1.4 cm

Some ideas suggested by the objects:

- The preservation of damaged, everyday or un-beautiful objects from the past
- Classical attitudes to sexuality
- The history of archaeology and museums
- Lighting
- Early trade in precious minerals