



# GWEITHDY GALLERY



ST FAGANS NATIONAL MUSEUM OF HISTORY

# Make With Metal

## What is metal?

Metals are minerals that can be found in rocks known as ores. They can be separated from the ore using heat in a process called smelting. There are many different metals, including pure metals such as iron, copper and gold, and alloys (a combination of metals) such as bronze and brass. Metals are usually hard, shiny and strong. They can be transformed into objects by heating them and shaping with a hammer, or casting into moulds.

## What's in this display?

This display holds objects demonstrating how metalwork has been used over time by craftspeople such as blacksmiths and farriers – from Bronze Age and Iron Age tools and weapons, to uses in the household, in farming, and in the Church.

## Objects of interest

- Goffering irons – These special irons were heated in the fire and used to iron ruffles in clothes.
- Rushlight holders – These holders could accommodate a candle, or the cheaper alternative of the pith of the rush plant soaked in tallow could be held and burned in the pincers.
- Firedogs – A pair of firedogs would be used in the hearth to allow air to circulate around the burning logs, and to stop any embers from rolling away. In the Iron Age, the firedogs would be a status symbol, marking the central hearth of the roundhouse.

## Questions to ask / Points to consider

- Why was the object made?
- How was the object made?
- Who made the object?
- What is the purpose of the object – is it for everyday use? Ceremonial? Special occasion? Decorative?
- Do we still use this object today?
- Use key words to describe the properties of the object.

## Links to buildings

- Bryn Eryr – These roundhouses are reconstructions of Iron Age dwellings containing replica artefacts such as firedogs, spearheads and shields.
- Rhyd-y-car – These cottages were originally built in Merthyr Tydfil around 1795 as housing for Richard Crawshay's iron ore workers.
- Llawr y Glyn Smithy – Dating to the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, this building is still in use as a blacksmith's workshop today.

### Tasks for back at school

- Design a shield – What would your shield look like? What would make it strong? Could you carry it in battle?
- Chocolate casting – Use melted chocolate and moulds to cast shapes as bronze-workers would have with molten metal.
- Make a coin – Take inspiration from the coins on display and design your own, then use art foil to create them.

# Make with Plants

## What are plants?

Plants are living things which grow, and have roots, stems and leaves. Some plants are flexible yet strong and are used in creating objects. For example, willow and hazel trees can be woven, and straw can be bound together.

## What's in this display?

This display highlights the use of plants such as willow, hazel and straw in the construction of basketry, fish traps, furniture, coracle frame, lip-work baskets and bee skeps, and the tools required in making them.

## Some objects of interest to look closer at.

- Baskets – what do you use for carrying things around today? Baskets have been used for a very long time for the transportation and storage of goods. The ones on display here could be used for carrying foodstuffs such as eggs, potatoes and fish.
- Fishing – fishermen have traditionally used plants such as hazel and willow to create their own traps. They're designed so that the fish/lobsters get in to eat the bait, but can't get back out.
- Tools – look at the tools used in working with plants. What are they made from? What are most tools made from today?

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## Links to other buildings

- Bryn Eryr – look at the thatched rooves of the roundhouses. Can you spot a difference? One has been thatched with spelt, a plant grown in Britain for its

grain since the Bronze Age. The other has been thatched using reed. The base layer is made from a spiky plant called gorse.

- Kennixton – observe the way straw has been used to create the decorative under-thatch of the roof. Upstairs, the hangings on the bed are copies of 18<sup>th</sup> century vegetable dyed dornix fabric. In the garden, you will find straw rope bee skeps where the family would collect honey.
- Melin Bompren Flour Mill – what happens to the grain if the stem of the plant is being used to thatch a roof? It could be milled into flour in a building such as this. Built in 1853, a waterwheel powers the two grinding stones inside.

### Tasks for back at school

- Use rolled up sheets of newspaper or plastic straws instead of willow to create a basket.
- Taking inspiration from the fishing traps on display, use Art Straws to try and create your own.
- Make your own corn dolly.

# Make with Stone

## What is stone?

Stone is a hard substance found in the ground under the soil layer. Different types of stone have different properties, and are used for different purposes. For example, slate is a hard, impermeable stone which can be split into sheets, making it useful for creating roof tiles. Granite is coarse-grained, hard and impermeable. This makes it useful for road construction.

## What's in this display?

This display includes slate carving, stone monuments, medieval sculptures, flint tools and weapons, stone axes, and a mosaic.

## Objects of interest

- Slate objects – people have been quarrying slate in north Wales for over 1800 years. The slate trade in Wales reached its peak in 1898, with 17,000 workers producing 485,000 tons of slate. Quarrying was a dangerous but quite well paid job.
- Carved stones – these stones have been intricately carved and incised. They have been created for different purposes. Some of these purposes are clear, such as stones created as monuments to individuals or commemorating events like the gifting of land to the Church. Other carved stones' original purposes are unclear, but could be objects of worship, or symbols showing land as being Christian, for example.
- Flint tools and weapons – flint is a hard, glassy type of stone which has been used for thousands of years. An experienced flint-knapper understands that the stone can break predictably into usable flakes if it is struck in a particular way. Tools used for creating flint objects include hammer stones such as beach pebbles used to strike, and pressure flakers made of antler or copper used in the later stages of shaping.

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## Links to other buildings

- Llainfadyn – This slate quarry-worker’s cottage uses slate for its roof as well as for objects inside. How many uses of slate can you count here?
- Circular pigsty – This pigsty built around 1800 is constructed entirely of stone. The roof is corbelled, meaning each circular layer of stones is reduced gradually until it creates the dome shaped roof of the sty.
- Gwalia – This grocery store shows us what shopping for food would be like in the 1920s. How would they keep food cool and fresh in this time? At the back of the store you’ll find the cold counter made of marble. It’s cool to the touch, and was used to keep butter, cheese and meats chilled.

### Tasks for back at school

- Use squares of colourful card to design and make your own mosaic.
- Take inspiration from the carved stones to design and paint your own pebble.
- Find a selection of different stones and create artwork using the different colours.

# Make with Textiles

## What are textiles?

Textiles are materials made by weaving, knitting, knotting or pressing fibres together.

## What's in this display?

This display contains items such as quilts, rag rugs, woven blankets and clothes, knitted socks, tools used for spinning wool into yarn, patchwork and samplers.

## Objects of interest

- Quilts – These quilts are made of different materials including cotton and wool. Quilts such as these could be made in quilting classes (and entered into quilting competitions), or be made by itinerant quilters, who travelled from farm to farm making and repairing quilts for the family. The designs can feature patterns made up of diamonds, roses, leaves, zig zags and trellis to name a few.
- Rag rugs – Rag rugs are a great way to make new objects from old clothes. Scrap material can be cut to strips and inserted through a hessian sack backing with a prodding tool to make a colourful rug. People have made rag rugs for a long time, and they become very popular in times when money was tight, for example during the clothes rationing of the Second World War.
- Samplers – Early samplers were a reference tool for embroiderers – a way to practice stitches or to collect patterns and effects to use again. Their purpose changed over time, and became a way to show different needlework skills in one exercise piece, which could be displayed rather than used as a reference.

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## Links to other buildings

- Esgair Moel – This mill was built around 1760. Local farmers would bring their wool here to be turned into textiles. Today the mill is still in action, from dyeing wool to creating fabric.
- Bryn Eryr – Making clothes in the Iron Age would be a lengthy process. Can you find objects and tools used in the production of textiles here? The raw

wool would be washed and carded, spun into thread using a drop spindle, before being woven into fabric on the upright loom. The weights you see hanging at the bottom of the loom keep the threads taut.

- Rhyd-y-car – These houses originally from Merthyr Tydfil are representations of how people lived in 1805, 1855, 1895, 1925, 1955 and 1985. Does the amount of textiles change in each house through time? Why do you think that is?
- Tailor's Shop – This Tailor's Shop was originally built in Ceredigion in 1896 and is shown as it would have looked in the 1950s when clothes were generally made to measure.

### Tasks for back at school

- Use geometric shapes as a template to design a quilt or patchwork pattern.
- Make a handloom and weave a small textile piece.
- Use cut up pieces of old clothes and create a rag rug for your classroom.

# Make with Clay

## What is clay?

Clay is a natural, earthy material comprised of extremely small pieces of mineral. When wet, it is soft and sticky, and can be moulded and shaped. It hardens when dry. Baking the clay hardens it further. Clay is used in making items such as bricks, pots and ceramics. Clay can be different colours depending on the soil content in which it is found.

## What's in this display?

This display holds objects demonstrating the use of clay through time - including Neolithic pottery bowls, Bronze Age beakers, Roman pottery including Samian ware - a type of glossy red pottery made in the Roman Empire, Medieval jugs, Mediaeval and Post-Medieval figurines, medieval tiles and salt-glazed earthenware pots made by Ewenny potteries.

## Objects of interest

- Beakers – dating to the Bronze Age, these decorated cups were important items included in burials. Some beakers show traces of how they were made (thin sausages of clay coiled around to form a cup), and could be decorated with tools including the crinkled edge of a seashell to create patterns.
- Moulds – these moulds are made of plaster and were used at the Ewenny Pottery in the Vale of Glamorgan. Moulds could be used to create decorative embellishments, animal models and candlesticks.
- Tiles – many of these medieval tiles have come from Abbeys. Common forms of decoration include using wooden stamps to create impressions, or inlaying by stamping and then filling the impression with a light coloured slip.

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## Links to other buildings

- Bryn Eryr and Nantwallter – both of these buildings have been built from clay.
- St Teilo's Church – can you find the glazed tiles within this medieval church?

- Kiln – this kiln was built around 1800 at Ewenny, and was used for firing clay objects such as bowls, chamber pots and puzzle jugs.

### **Tasks for back at school**

- Coil pots - use this technique to make your own small bowl.
- Design and paint a tile inspired by ones in the gallery.

Using stamps, tools and moulds design and create your own clay plaque.

# Make with Wood

## What is wood?

Wood is the hard material that forms the trunk and branches of a tree. There are many different types of wood with different properties which make them suitable for particular tasks. For example, alder has been used historically to make water pipes due to the fact that it is durable under water. Oak is one of the hardest and most durable timbers, and has been used extensively to build houses and ships.

## What's in this display?

This display highlights the use of wood - in woodturning for furniture, bowls and spoons; the tools of woodworkers from the Bronze Age; carpentry tools of the 19<sup>th</sup> century; chair making, coopering, rake making, and the carving of lovespoons, butter prints and walking sticks.

## Objects of interest

- Lovespoons - These would be carved with great care and devotion, and given as gifts to a loved one. The oldest spoon in the museum's collection dates to 1667. Close grain woods such as sycamore, box and fruit woods were a popular choice of material. Common symbols in the designs include hearts for love, diamonds as a wish for good fortune, and the wheel as a symbol of guiding a loved one through life.
- Butter Prints – These were used to stamp a design into the butter ready for market. They're made from a wood called Sycamore, which doesn't leave a taste. The designs can include hearts, acorns and pineapples. Though the craft of carving these stamps was commonplace in many countries, the canoe shaped stamps are unique to Wales.

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## Links to other buildings

- Tŷ'n Rhos Sawmill – This was built in 1892 to house a water-powered saw. The family who owned the business were also highly regarded for their joinery work, furniture, carts and wagons.

- Stryd Lydan Barn – This barn was built around 1550 in Llanerch Banna. The timber-framed walls are in-filled with split chestnut laths. Can you find the carpenter's marks on the beams? This tells us that the frame of the building was constructed in the carpenter's yard, the timbers then numbered, before finally being assembled on site.
- St Teilo's Church – This is shown as it would have look in the 1530s – before the Reformation. The rood screen, which separates the nave from the chancel, is elaborately carved from oak. Can you follow the life story of St Teilo in the carvings?

### **Tasks for back at school**

- Taking inspiration from our butter prints, use (or make) stamps to create patterns in clay or plasticine.
- Design a lovespoon - Think carefully about the special meanings different designs might have.
- Using paper and crayons make bark rubbings of trees in your local area. How many different trees can you find?