Hands On Learning
with Reading Museum Service

FOOD AND DRINK H166C

In this box you will find a collection of items associated with eating and drinking.

Pewter plate

This plate is made of pewter, which is a metal alloy of tin and copper or lead. It is bright and shiny and was often referred to as 'poor man's silver'. Pewter was introduced to Britain by the Romans in the second century AD, but it wasn't until the Middle Ages that it became widely used to make the majority of household items, including candlesticks, mugs, bowls and buttons. Pewter is still used today, but usually only for ornaments, as from the nineteenth century onwards mass-produced goods made of glass and china have taken its place in the kitchen and on our dinner tables.



Copy of a Roman spoon

Roman spoons were usually made of bronze, silver or bone and often had a pointed handle. One possible use for this point would have been to open the shells of seafood.

Archaeologists find Roman spoons in many parts of Britain with a wide variety of designs and patterns. Some have animals on the end of the handle and some are engraved with good luck inscriptions such as 'vivas' (may you live) or the names of gods.



Hands On Learning
with Reading Museum Service

FOOD AND DRINK H166C

Meat paste jar



This small jar was made around 1930 and contained a meat or fish paste. An oval space can be seen on the side where a label would have been placed.

The best-known producer of these pastes was Shippam's, which was a family run business established in 1786 in Chichester. At this time, the company was simply a grocers shop, but it grew to become a household name in the twentieth century. It wasn't until 1905 that Shippam's introduced the glass jars, like the one in this box, with a sealed metal lid. They also started to sterilise their products for a longer shelf life. In 1955 the first commercial television station was established, which allowed Shippam's to advertise its products across the whole of Britain. Many television adverts from the 1950s featured chickens, cows and fish dancing and singing and the popular slogan 'it's hard to see how you could do without Shippam's pastes' became widely known.

The glass used to make these jars is very thick and sturdy, which meant that they could be cleaned and reused. In Canton near Cardiff in Wales, there was a café called Ma's that sold lemonade in old paste pots for one penny!

Shippam's still makes fish and meat pastes today, although the company was bought in 2001 by a larger company called Princes and the last member of the Shippam family retired in 1998. The glass jars have become a popular collector's item.

Coffee grinder



Today we tend to buy coffee pre-ground, but it was common to buy whole roasted beans that were ground at home in a machine like this. The beans would be placed into the top and then the handle turned to produce a coffee powder that could be collected in the little drawer below. The mechanism inside is called a burr mill and if you look carefully you will see the teeth that grind the beans into powder. On either side of the box there is an iron loop so that the grinder could be secured to a table with screws.

This coffee grinder was made by a company called A. Kenrick and Sons Ltd, which was established in 1791 in West Bromwich and made many objects from cast iron.

Hands On Learning
with Reading Museum Service

FOOD AND DRINK H166C

Mustard tin

Mustard is a thick, yellow paste made from crushed mustard seeds mixed with water, milk or vinegar. Some types of mustard can have a very strong taste, which makes your eyes water and nose run, while others are quite mild.

On the bottom of this tin you can see the words 'expressly made for Champion's mustard' and in very small letters on the lid you can see the name of the manufacturers of the tin, A Lloyd and Sons Ltd, who made containers for things like tea, biscuits, chocolate and other products during the nineteenth century.



This tin is decorated with scenes from *Little Red Riding Hood* and is typical of the painted tins that were very popular in the nineteenth century.

Ginger beer bottle



Ginger beer is a fizzy drink made with lemon, ginger and sugar. It used to contain a large quantity of alcohol but the amount has been reduced and sometimes it contains no alcohol at all. It originated in England in the eighteenth century and was most popular in the early twentieth century. At this time there were over 3,000 companies in England making Ginger Beer and R.White's was one of them. The company was started in 1845 by Robert and Mary White, who made lemonade and ginger beer in their home and then sold it from a barrow. The company grew very quickly and by 1869 there were several factories producing their drinks. This particular bottle comes from Windsor and is ceramic.

London at dinner book

This book was first printed in 1858 and gives the reader tips on eating out in London and serving the perfect dinner. It also has many interesting adverts for restaurants and cafes with menus and price lists.



Hands On Learning
with Reading Museum Service

FOOD AND DRINK H166C

Fragment of Bellarmine jug



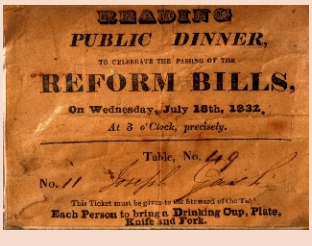
This piece of pottery was once part of a Bellarmine jug, which was used for drinking ale. The jugs were named after Cardinal Bellarmine, who became very unpopular in Protestant countries across Europe in the sixteenth century because of his strong Catholic views. Jugs like this were produced in Protestant countries such as Germany, Holland and England to make fun of the cardinal as they were decorated with a funny picture of his head and his long grey beard. For this reason these jugs are sometimes called 'beardman' or 'greybeard' jugs. You can see this in the picture on the right. It was common for Protestants wishing to insult him to smash the jugs!



This fragment was found in Broad Street, Reading, during an excavation in the 1960s.

Ticket for reform dinner

The reform bills of the nineteenth century introduced laws that made life much fairer in Britain. They allowed more people from all sections of society to vote, rather than just the richest 5 percent of the male population. The Reform Act of 1832 was very important because it recognised that people living in growing northern towns and cities had a right to vote. The region had seen tremendous growth as a result of the Industrial Revolution and was not represented fairly until this law was passed. It also enabled anyone owning a property worth more than £10 to vote, which was better than the previous laws although it still excluded a large number of people from the lower classes. More bills were introduced in the following years to allow even more people to vote, including women in 1918. At first only women over the age of 30 could vote, but in 1928 the Equal Franchise Act lowered the age limit to 21 - the same as men.


READING
PUBLIC DINNER,
TO CELEBRATE THE PASSING OF THE
REFORM BILLS,
On Wednesday, July 18th, 1832,
At 3 o'Clock, precisely.
Table, No. 49
No. 11
This Ticket must be given to the Steward of the Table
Each Person to bring a Drinking Cup, Plate, Knife and Fork.

This ticket was for a dinner in Reading to celebrate the passing of the bill. Notice at the bottom the instructions to bring your own cup, plate and cutlery! There were 7,000 guests dining at 116 tables, which were loaded with food and decorated with laurel. After the meal the guest played games in the Forbury Gardens.