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A Tale of Two Armours

In the 1890s Bolton's first museum, the Chadwick Museum which was in Queen's Park, acquired two suits of armour.



This armour is made from coconut fibre and is from the Kiribati Islands which are in the Pacific Ocean. It was bought at an auction in 1890 at Capes, Dunn and Pilder. Its previous owner was George C. Yates, a local antiquarian. In 2017 staff from the British Museum and the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology at the University of Cambridge visited us to look at the armour for a project on armour and weapons from Kiribati. It was concluded that the arms are re-used legs from overalls! We also found out that using cowrie shells to decorate the cuirass is rare and so it probably belonged to a warrior or chief. The only other example in the UK is at the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford.



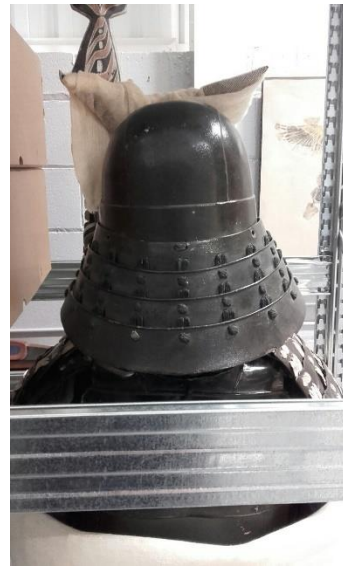
This is a link to a Twitter post by Dr Ali Clark from the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology in Cambridge about Kiribati armour:
<https://twitter.com/clarkers/status/1250725035146457090?s=21>



The accession register for 1892 shows that on the 25th November a Japanese suit of armour came into the museum's collection. It was from H. Murray & Co., Knowsley Street and a note says it was 100 years old.

The curator, William Midgley, made some purchases for the armour which are listed in the petty cash book. In November 1892 he bought wood wool for the armour. Wood wool is made of slivers of wood and would have been used to stuff the armour so it kept its shape. In January 1893 he bought a base for it from J. Eccles and eyes. This all cost 18 shillings 7 pence, about £120 in today's money.

Now, the armour is on a mannequin with hands and a base. The material underneath the helmet is stockinette. This also covers the base and has been used to tie the armour to the roller-racking so that it does not fall over.



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