

# Revealing Cosmeston's medieval past

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A fragment of the Aquamanile

A pottery vessel dating back to the 13th Century has been found by University archaeologists at Cosmeston, shedding new light on medieval life in the area.

The aquamanile was found in many fragments at the Manor House site at Cosmeston, near Penarth, and the pieces were spread over a wide area. Aquamanile were designed to hold water with which the most distinguished diners at a table could wash their hands.

The [discovery](#) reveals the refined nature of life in the manor house and importantly, the [archaeologists](#), from the University's School of History, Archaeology and Religion have identified the pottery as "Vale Ware". This is also the first time such an elegant piece has been found that has been produced by local craftsmen for the local elite.

Professor John Hines, School of History, Archaeology and Religion who is leading the dig said: "It became regular practice to shape these aquamanile in the form of animals. The one we have found represents a ram. Examples were made in the major medieval potteries at Scarborough, and we have a reproduction of one of those.

"It is probably to be dated to the later 13th century. This is also important, because this was a period when the local lords of the manor, the de Costentin family, were still holding and resident at the manor. From the mid-1310s they were displaced, and Cosmeston was run directly for greater, ambitious barons, who held large numbers of individual manors at the same time."

On Saturday 9th and Sunday 10th July, families and members of the public can join archaeologists on the excavation and help piece the aquamanile and other finds back together.

The Getting Medieval event will also give visitors the chance to handle medieval objects and get close to the crafts of the past. No booking is necessary and the free event runs from 10am – 4pm both days. Visitors to Penarth Carnival are welcome to join over the weekend.

For the duration of the excavation at Cosmeston, University archaeology students and staff will explain their latest discoveries on free public tours of the site daily at 10.30am and 2.30pm (except Fridays) until 18 July. All are welcome and no booking is required.

Provided by Cardiff University

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