

THE MUSEUM OF WRITING RESEARCH COLLECTION.

The Museum of Writing Research Collection forms part of the IES and is lodged on the 18th Floor of Senate House. It has over 100,000 items and is acknowledged as being one of the most comprehensive writing-related collections.

To pass a few minutes of your time during this difficult period, the MOWRC has the following quiz for you, using some unusual objects from the collection. We hope it is fun, that you find something of interest and that you cannot identify too many of the objects, as that would mean that they are not as unusual as we might think.

BEWARE THE RED HERRINGS



1. a - A replacement part for a gas boiler valve.
b - A cartridge for the first Biro.
c - Part of a steam engine whistle.



2. a - Early builder's plumb-weights.
b - Two Medieval leads: forerunner of today's pencil.
c - Parts of a Roman heating system.

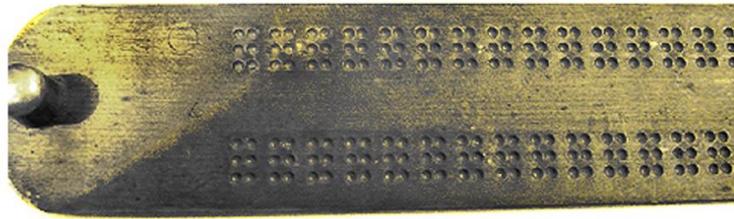


3. a - A tool for opening oysters.
b - A letter opener.
c - A medieval manuscript pointer.



4. a - A Victorian pen-nib wiper.
b - A brush for polishing fountain pens.
c - A brush for wiping graphite off a sharpened pencil.

5



- 5. a - Part of an early calculator.
- b - Part of a ship's steering mechanism.
- c - A plate for writing Braille.

6



- 6. a - An early Greek earwax remover.
- b - A medieval pen.
- c - An 18thC pastry-cooks tool for decorating pie crusts.

7



- 7. a - Two early pen nibs.
- b - Part of a flintlock firing mechanism.
- c - Two halves of a split tobacco damper.

8



- 8. a - A dressmaking tool for marking buttonholes.
- b - An Edwardian point for clearing gaslight burners.
- c - A medieval pricker for marking lines on parchment.

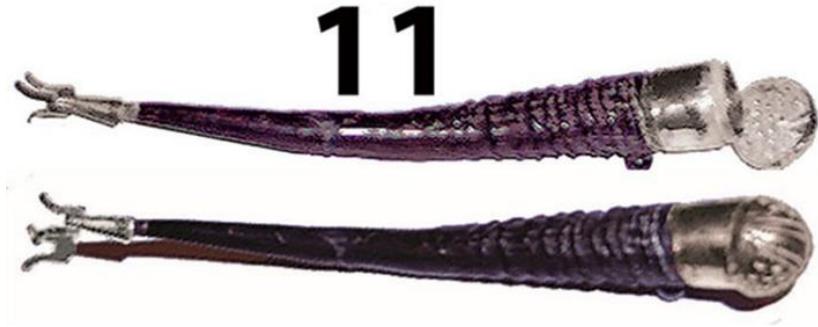
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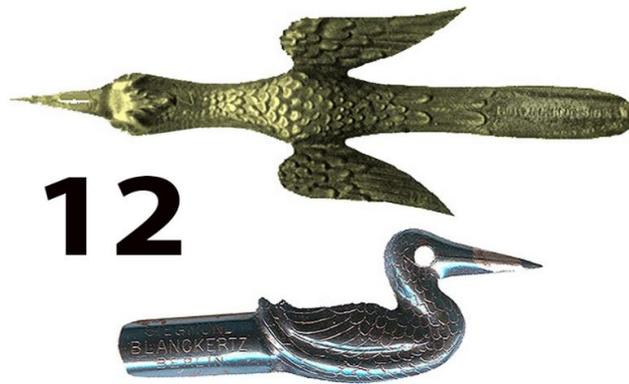
- 9. a - A pencil sharpener.
- b - The logo off an early sewing-machine.
- c - The badge of a Singer salesman.



10. a - A tooth from an extinct dog-like animal.
b - A medieval gold burnisher.
c - My first Wisdom Tooth.



11. a - A fancy 19thC salt cellar.
b - A medieval sander.
c - A rare Holy-water dispenser.



12. a - Two appliqués from a Georgian writing-box made for an ornithologist.
b - Two badges from a bird-watching club.
c - Two early Victorian pen-nibs.

MUSEUM OF WRITING RESEARCH COLLECTION QUIZ ANSWERS.

1. **b** - It is a 'cartridge' for the first ballpoint pen under the Biro title. It was manufactured by the Miles Martin Aircraft Co., later the Miles Martin Pen Co. and was used principally by the FAF as they did not leak at high altitudes like fountain pens.
2. **b** - Two medieval leads that were used for drawing or marking lines on manuscripts. They often came from leadings of old stained-glass windows and drawn to a point.
3. **c** - A medieval pointer for reading or following a text.
4. **a** - A Victorian pen-nib wiper. The bristles were hard enough to give a nib a good cleaning.
5. **c** - This plate was part of an apparatus used by a Dr. T. R. Armitage in 1880 for impressing Braille characters.
6. **b** - A bronze medieval pen. For a long time, experiments had been made to invent a pen with a reservoir. The earliest known is a 14thC one from Italy. Our example dates from the 17thC and was a complete failure as it either leaks or does not write at all. I have tried it many times without much success.
7. **b** - A red Herring that caught me out. I bought them as Roman nibs in my early days of collecting' They turned out to be parts of a flintlock mechanism. I have seen many since and, as yet, have not been caught again.
8. **c** - This pricker was used to make small holes down one or both sides of a sheet of vellum or parchment which would then be a guide for the spacing of each line.
9. **a** - A die-cast pencil sharpener, early 20thC. These were made in the many forms from toys to furniture, airplanes, toilets, and musical instruments.
10. **b** - This is the tooth from an extinct bovine animal, Bos Taurus, and the root has been shaped to be inserted into a wooden handle. The tooth would then have been used to burnish/polish gold on a manuscript. It is the only known extant example of such a burnisher, although teeth, such as boar's, were commonly used.
11. **b** - A medieval sander that was filled with gum-sandarac or pumice and sprinkled over parchment then gently rubbed in, before writing, to degrease it. It could also be filled with chalk or biotite, a form of mica, to dry the ink after writing.
12. **c** - These are two Victorian pen nibs. Steel nibs were first massed produced in Birmingham in the 1820s and soon began to be made in a great variety of shapes and forms. Some had portraits of famous people or inventions, such as trains, impressed in them. These in the shape of birds are fairly rare. The one with the outstretched wings was made in June 1840 by Hollingshead to celebrate the first penny post a month before. It was considered to be the world's most valuable nib until a second one by Hollingshead was discovered, which bore the head of Queen Victoria.

I hope you had some fun and maybe even learnt something of interest to you. Look out for the announcement of our Virtual Museum of Writing that we hope will be live in the next month or so.

Keep safe and well.

Alan Cole; Consultant, Museum of Writing Research Collection.