



Money in the Middle Ages: the Medieval Exchequer

3.6 explore life and death in medieval times



Note for teachers

This resource makes use of material available on [virtualtreasury.ie](https://www.virtualtreasury.ie), specifically the Gold Seam documents relating to the Middle Ages in Ireland.

It refers to a [Manuscript Gallery](#) containing images of documents and objects relating to the workings of the medieval exchequer in Ireland.

Learning intentions

- To compare and contrast the use of money in our society today with medieval times
- To examine historical evidence for the workings of the **Irish Exchequer**
- To use historical evidence to write an account of working in the Irish Exchequer

Activity 1: Think-pair-share

Think about how you use money today.

What do you use to make and receive payments?

How do we keep records of payments made?

Compare and contrast: how do you think the use of money was similar and different in the Middle Ages?

The Irish Exchequer in the Middle Ages

- The Irish Exchequer was established when King Henry II of England arrived in Ireland in 1171 to take ownership of the island.
- The Exchequer was responsible for collecting and spending the king's money in Ireland, for example taxes, rent, fines.



This illustration from the 15th century shows the Exchequer in action.

Historical evidence for the Irish Exchequer

The digital archive, virtualtreasury.ie, contains historical evidence for the Irish Exchequer.

A gallery of some of the most important documents can be viewed [here](#).

The following slides contain questions relating to images from the gallery. Make sure to read the information relating to the images before answering the questions.



Activity 2: examining in the evidence

13th century tally sticks

- What do we use to record proof of payment today?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of using tally sticks as proof of payment?



Activity 2: examining in the evidence

Memoranda Roll of the Irish Exchequer, 1319-20

- What was the Memoranda Roll?
- The Memoranda Roll was made up of rotulets (sheets) of parchment stitched together. Suggest reasons why the document was stitched and rolled in this way.



Activity 2: examining in the evidence

Leather pouch containing documents relating to the account of Nicholas de Clere, treasurer of Ireland, from 1290-2

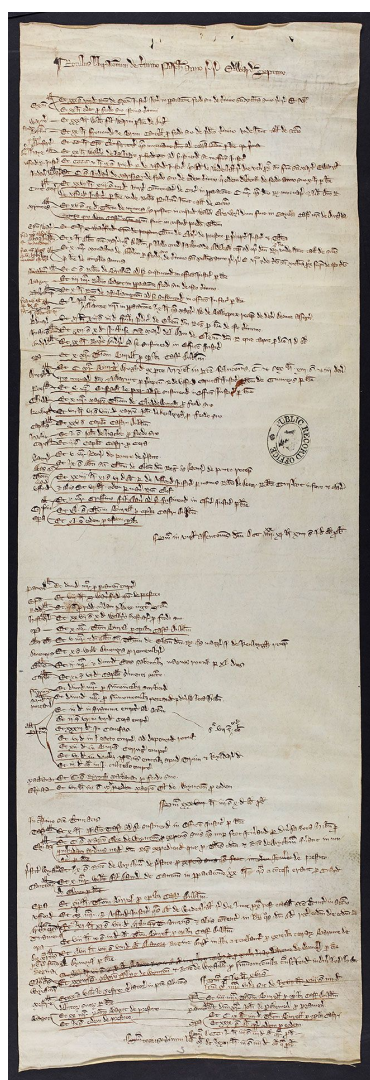
- This pouch was used for storing and transporting documents. What features of the pouch make it suitable for this purpose?



Activity 2: examining in the evidence

Roll of issues in the Irish exchequer between 1278 and 1285

- According to the explanation on the Virtual Treasury webpage, what type of payments were recorded in this roll?
- This parchment roll was made from animal skins. Why do you think this material was used to make the roll?



Activity 3



Imagine you are a government official working in the Exchequer.

Using the illustration (left) and other information you have gathered from the historical evidence, write a paragraph describing your work at the Exchequer.