

## Medieval Love Tokens

There are many beautiful brooches to be seen around the National Museum of Ireland - Archaeology. Brooches have been used by people for thousands of years, mainly to fasten their clothing. Brooches had a lot of other uses too and sometimes were used to show someone's wealth. Some brooches were beautifully decorated with precious metals, such as the 'Tara' Brooch, dating to the 8<sup>th</sup> century.



In Medieval Ireland, people had small brooches, made from silver and gold, and decorated with coloured glass. These were often given to a man or woman as a gift and a sign of love and affection.

### Medieval Ring Brooches



In Medieval times, about 800 years ago, men and women would often gift each other small ring brooches to show their affection. In some cases, the brooches were given as a promise of betrothal or marriage. Sometimes the brooches had messages on them. The brooch on the left has a message written in Norman-French, which says: 'I am a gift of fine love'. Norman-French was the language of courtly love. Another brooch found in Meath says: 'I am here in place of the friend you love'. Men and women would use these to fasten the tops of their gowns or tunics.

Many of them are made out of gold, and sometimes silver was used. They were decorated using coloured glass, and occasionally, precious stones such as rubies and sapphires, that were imported from as far as India. Sometimes a design would be incised or etched onto the surface of the brooch to decorate it.



In 2016 a gold ring brooch was found on the beach near Dingle in Co. Kerry. This brooch dates to the 13<sup>th</sup> century and is over 700 years old. It is made from gold, and when it was found, it had a blue stone, called tourmaline, that was loose in its setting. It is decorated with clasped hands that may represent the act of giving. There is an inscription on it, but it is not clear what the inscription means. This was a very unusual find as these brooches are normally found in towns and cities, so it is a mystery as to how it ended up on a beach in Co. Kerry!

