

Narrative and the Alfred Jewel

by TGA Ltd.

Some mystery surrounds the Alfred Jewel, chief treasure of the Ashmolean Museum in our home town of Oxford, England.

With its strangely personal inscription, no one doubts that its sponsor was the Saxon king, Alfred the Great (849-899AD).



The gold letters spell 'AELFRED MEC HEHT GEWYRCAN' – 'Alfred ordered me to be made.'

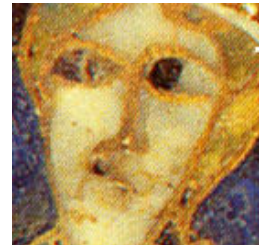
But how was the jewel used or worn? What fitted into the dragonhead socket at its base?

And who is the unknown male figure carrying two plant stems or flowers?

Visitors spend many minutes looking and wondering.

But we like the Alfred Jewel for a different reason – the way that it's made.

The Saxon craftsman first formed the shape of his picture in golden wire. Then he filled each space with coloured enamel to bring the image to life.



The gold and enamel working technique is known as cloisonné.

Your narrative is the underlying structure of golden wire on the Alfred Jewel. The enamel colours are the stories you have to tell – vivid, varied, compelling. On the polished surface, gold and enamel blend together in a single picture.

And who is the man carrying flowers? Experts now think he may symbolise the sense of sight, insight and understanding.

We like that too.