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Find of the Month – October

Posted on [28th October 2022](#) by [Pip Smither](#)

The find of the month for October is mundane and unusual at the same time. The object in question is a purse bar, which would have been a common sight in the Medieval period.

Purses are pouch-like containers, generally made of leather or fabric, used to store and carry coins. Metal elements from medieval and early post-medieval purses include the arched hanger onto which the strings of medieval purses were tied, and the purses with metal sub-structures of the late medieval and early post-medieval period.

Most purse bars are quite plain or have some lined decoration. However, a few have words on them.

This example has the words “CRISSTE” (with a backwards S) for Christ on one site and STMARIA for St. Mary on the other.

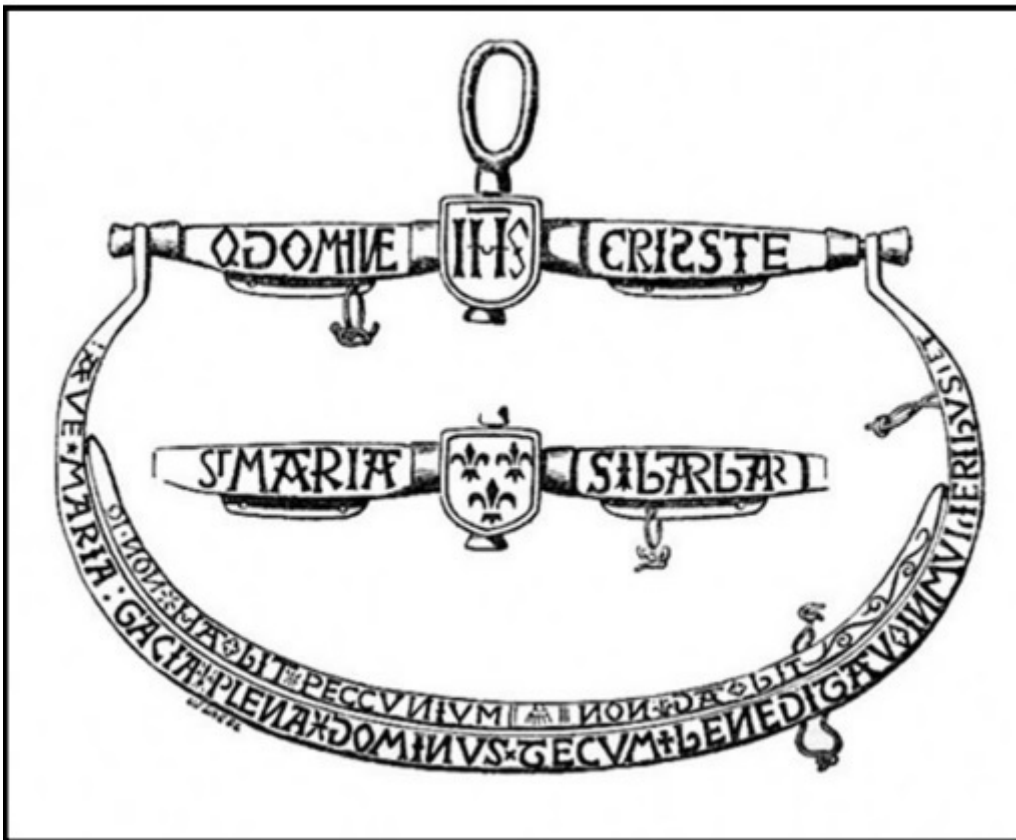




There are other purse bars in the south-east region which bear these words ([BERK-61B794](#) and [SUR-A59505](#)). There is also another fragment of a purse bar which reads "O DOMINIE" and "ST BARBA" ([SUR-25C4C1](#)).

Put together these purse bars would have read "O DOMINIE CRISSTE ST MARIA ST BARBARA" (O Lord Christ St Mary St Barbara).

The missing frame of the purse bar might have read "O DOMINE CRISSTE ST MARIA S. BARBARA AVE MARIA DOMINVS TECTVM BENEDICTA TV IN MVLIERIBVS ET QVI NON HABIT PECCVNIVM NON DAT BIT" (O Lord Christ St Mary St Barbara Hail Mary Full of Grace the Lord is with you, Blessed are you, the women who do not live among you and do not depart with money that is not theirs).



Purse bar from Norfolk (Hume 1863)

This phrase is found on a purse bar found in Norfolk (Hume 1863, 275). The reference here is to the money carried in the purse and the sinless female saints (Standley 2010, 102).

References:

Hume, A. 1863, *Ancient Meols: or, Some account of the antiquities found near Dove Point, on the sea-coast of Cheshire*, John Russell Smith: London.

Standley, E.R. 2010. *Trinkets and Charms: The use, meaning and significance of later medieval and early postmedieval dress accessories*. Unpublished PhD Thesis, Durham University.

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