



Rare 'locked' letter sealed 300 years ago is finally opened virtually

Three hundred years ago, before envelopes, passwords and security codes, writers often struggled to keep thoughts, cares and dreams expressed in their letters private. One popular way was to use a technique called letter locking -- intricately folding a flat sheet of paper to become its own envelope.

The letters had never reached their final recipients, and conservators didn't want to open and damage them. Instead, a team has found a way to read one of the letters without breaking its seal or unfolding it in any way. Using a highly sensitive X-ray scanner and computer algorithms, researchers virtually unfolded the unopened letter. (Above) This is a computer-generated unfolding sequence of a sealed letter from 17th-century Europe. Virtual unfolding was used to read the letter's contents without physically opening it.



Almost 200 images by one of history's first photographers, William Henry Fox Talbot, are going under the hammer in New York next month, offering collectors a rare glimpse at early Victorian Britain. According to Sotheby's auction house, which is handling the sale, the collection is "arguably the most important lot of 19th century photographs to ever come to market."

The images depict indoor and outdoor scenes, spanning architecture, botany and daily life in the 1840s. Talbot, an English scientist and inventor, also produced various portraits of family members and friends as he experimented with his pioneering camera technology.



Crews were dredging the river. Instead of muck, they pulled up three cannons and a mystery. Three recovered cannons, one of which is seen here, are believed to be from the 18th century.

The cannons appear to date to possibly the mid-1700s -- predating the Civil War by about a century -- which aligns closely with the HMS Rose's history. They are about 5 feet long. Further study and the removal of sediment on the cannons may provide information on when and where they were manufactured.



An exceptionally rare 15th century porcelain bowl made in China that somehow turned up at a Connecticut yard sale and sold for just \$35 was auctioned off Wednesday for nearly \$722,000.

The small white bowl adorned with cobalt blue paintings of flowers and other designs — one of only seven such bowls known to exist in the world. The bowl dates back to the early 1400s during the reign of the Yongle Emperor, the third ruler of the Ming Dynasty, and was made for the Yongle court. The Yongle court was known to have ushered in a new style to the porcelain kilns in the city of Jingdezhen, and the bowl is a quintessential Yongle product.

McAteer said only six other such bowls are known to exist, and most of them are in museums. No others are in the United States. There are two at the National Palace Museum in Taipei, Taiwan, two at museums in London and one in the National Museum of Iran in Tehran.



American and Egyptian archaeologists have unearthed what could be the oldest known beer factory at one of the most prominent archaeological sites of ancient Egypt, a top antiquities official said on Saturday.

He said the factory apparently dates back to the region of King Narmer, who is widely known for his unification of ancient Egypt at the beginning of the first dynastic period (3150BC-2613BC).

Adams said the factory was apparently built in this area to provide royal rituals with beer, given that archaeologists found evidence showing the use of beer in sacrificial rites of ancient Egyptians.



The hoard of 300-year-old silver coins is thought to have washed ashore from sunken Spanish shipwrecks close to Wabasso Beach in Indian River County.

Similar age to the coin pictured, and Martinez has estimated that the 22 pieces are worth around \$7,000 (£5.5k) in total, although he doesn't plan on selling them.



(Left Image) London's skinniest house' is on the market for \$1.3 million

A house billed as "possibly the skinniest house in London" is up for sale for £950,000 (\$1.3 million). A close up of a street in front of a building: The property sits between two shops in west London.

The property sits between two shops in west London. Just six feet wide and covering 1,034 square feet, the five-story property was once a hat shop, according to real estate agent Winkworth, which is marketing it.