



HISTORIC ROYAL PALACES

**Information provided on the provenance of one object**

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***The Valasse Cross comes to the Tower***

11 March 2025 – 6 February 2026

The Chapel of St John the Evangelist, Tower of London EC3N 4AB

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© Réunion des Musées Métropolitains, musée Beauvoisine

**Lender's name and address:** La Métropole Rouen Normandie, sise Le 108, 108 allée François Mitterrand, CS 50589, 76006 Rouen Cedex, N° SIRET 20002341400101, APE 8411Z

**Accession number:** 443 (A)

**Title:** *Valasse Reliquary Cross*

**Creation date:** 11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> century

**Type:** Cross

**Medium:** Gold, gilt silver, silver, precious stones

**Object dimensions:** 465 x 330 x 30 mm

**Place of manufacture:** Italy or Western Germany; and France

**Credit line:** Musée des Antiquités, Rouen Métropole Normandie

**Provenance:**

From the Valasse Abbey, acquired in 1792 by Jacques François Begouen when he acquired the abbey; acquired in 1843 by the museum from the Begouen collections via Alphonse Charles Poret

Ownership between 1933 – 1945: in ownership of the lending museum.

**Historic Royal Palaces**

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1. At its centre is a small reliquary cross which was most likely made in Italy or Western Germany in the late 11<sup>th</sup> to early 12<sup>th</sup> centuries. It was perhaps once set in a larger reliquary or bookbinding or even worn as a devotional object.
2. The larger body of the cross was made in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, most likely in Normandy or northwest France. This was almost certainly made to house the smaller cross and likely used as an altar or processional cross. On the front, below the smaller inlaid cross, is a wooden relic set in wax.
3. According to tradition, the cross was given by the Empress Mathilda (1102-1167), or her son Henry II (1133-89), to the Abbey of Valasse (Seine-Maritime), which Matilda founded in 1157. Empress Matilda was the daughter of King Henry I and granddaughter of William the Conqueror. Matilda struggled with King Stephen during an English Civil War known as the Anarchy. She ultimately succeeded in securing the throne for her son, the future Henry II.
4. Recent research has suggested the smaller cross may have been an imperial object owned by Matilda from her first marriage to Henry V (1081-1185) who was King of Germany and Holy Roman Emperor.

**Note that this cross has a complete history of ownership from the beginning of the year 1933 to the end of the year 1945.**

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