

British Police Raid Pub in Search for Jesus' 'Holy Grail'

British police raided an English country pub this week in search of a stolen wooden relic believed by some to be the Holy Grail—a cup from which, according to the Bible, Jesus is said to have drunk at his final meal before His crucifixion.

The Grail has captivated religious experts for centuries, spawning myriad theories about its location and inspiring numerous fictional accounts from the Middle Ages onward.

The object of the police search, which was unsuccessful, was a frail wooden bowl known as the Nanteos Cup that has been attributed with healing powers since the 19th century, attracting pilgrims and others who believe it may be the Holy Grail itself.

After receiving a tip, a team of eight officers and a police dog arrived on Sunday morning at the Crown Inn, a village pub in the rural English county of Herefordshire.

"They turned the place upside down. They came with fiber optic cameras to look in all the corners and nooks and crannies, and under the floorboards ... they were clearly serious about it," the pub's landlady, Di Franklyn, said.

Police said the relic, a dark wooden cup kept inside a blue velvet bag, had been stolen from a house in the area about a month ago. Photographs available online show a bowl-shaped vessel with around half its side missing.

"We get a few rogues and scallywags in the pub, but no one who's quite on the level of stealing a priceless ancient artifact," Franklyn said.

The cup takes its name from Nanteos Mansion, a country house in Wales where the vessel is reported to have been stored until 1952 after 16th-century monks fleeing King Henry VIII's dissolution of England's monasteries sought refuge there.

The cup was said to have been brought to Britain after Jesus' death by Joseph of Arimathea, the biblical figure who provided Christ with a tomb and, according to legend, brought Christianity to Britain.

Scientists who have examined the cup have said it almost certainly dates from many centuries after the crucifixion, and is not made of the olive wood that might have been expected for a Middle Eastern drinking vessel.