**News release**

**Strict embargo until 00.01am Friday 23rd November 2018**

**STUNNING STAFFORDSHIRE HOARD HELMET RECONSTRUCTIONS REVEALED FOR PUBLIC DISPLAY**

* Research reveals approximately a third of the fragments in the Staffordshire Hoard come from a very high-status helmet.
* Helmets of its kind are rare – the Staffordshire Hoard Helmet is one of a very small number to be found from this period.
* Two reconstructions of the helmet have been created, nearly 10 years since the Staffordshire Hoard was discovered, and will be on public display at Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery and The Potteries Museum & Art Gallery from Friday 23rd November.

Birmingham Museums Trust and The Potteries Museum & Art Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent have today (Friday 23rd November 2018) revealed two reconstructions of a magnificent helmet contained within the Staffordshire Hoard.

Experts studied thousands of incredibly rare fragments - believed to be more than 1,300 years old - to build a picture of the original helmet. They then spent 18 months using both cutting-edge technology and ancient craft techniques to make stunning replicas of the internationally-important find.

The Staffordshire Hoard was found in a field near the village of Hammerwich, near Lichfield, in Staffordshire, in 2009. It is the largest collection of Anglo-Saxon gold and silver ever discovered. Heavily damaged before it was buried, the 7th century treasure contains more than 4,000 precious fragments, approximately a third of which are now known to come from a single, very high-status helmet.

From 2014 to 2017, the helmet was studied as part of the major research project on the treasure funded by Historic England and the museums which care for the collection. This extensive research enabled experts to identify the fragments which belonged to the helmet, believed to have been made around AD 600-650.

Helmets of this period are incredibly rare - there are only five other Anglo-Saxon helmets known. The detail and bold crested design means the Staffordshire Hoard Helmet is likely to have had an important owner.

Two helmet reconstructions have been created to showcase how the original may have looked. From today (23rd November), these reconstructions will be shown simultaneously at Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery and The Potteries Museum & Art Gallery, which care for the collection on behalf of joint owners Birmingham City Council and Stoke-on-Trent City Council.

The helmets will be part of the museums’ permanent Staffordshire Hoard displays and visitors can get up close to the impressive reconstructions which bring to life the richness of the find.

Significant parts of the original helmet, including the steel base which provided the shape, are missing, and the surviving parts are too damaged and incomplete to be re-joined.

It will never be possible to reassemble the original physically. Instead, the project explored how the helmet may have been made and what it looked like, enabling archaeologists to understand its construction better and test theories about its structure and assembly.

The reconstructions were created by a team of specialist makers. The School of Jewellery at Birmingham City University (BCU) led on the fabrication of the precious metal elements of the helmet. Laser scanning of the original objects was used to ensure the replica pieces are as close to the surviving original parts as possible.

Other specialists, including Royal Oak Armoury, Gallybagger Leather, Drakon Heritage and Conservation and metalsmith Samantha Chilton, worked collaboratively to bring the helmet to life, advised by the archaeologists.

Steel, leather and horsehair elements were created, as well as the wood and paste, that scientific analysis of the original has revealed were used in its construction.

Despite the intensive research project, there are still many questions to be answered about the helmet, including who exactly it would have been made for. The Staffordshire Hoard Helmet is comparable to the Sutton Hoo Helmet from Suffolk, of which a famous reconstruction is on display at the British Museum. That helmet is thought to have belonged to a king or prince, and the Staffordshire Hoard Helmet is similarly impressive.

Dr Ellen McAdam, Director of Birmingham Museums Trust, said: “After nearly 10 years the Staffordshire Hoard is still giving up its secrets.  Research has now shown us that the Hoard contains fragments of a helmet.  Only Anglo-Saxon Kings wore helmets, and this is one of a very small number ever to be found.  It has been carefully reconstructed by scholars and craftspeople to give us an insight into the way Anglo Saxon warriors lived and fought.  The displays in Birmingham and Stoke-on-Trent will share the results of research with the public to help them understand how the Hoard came into being.”

Councillor Anthony Munday, cabinet member for greener city, development and leisure at Stoke-on-Trent City Council - which runs the Potteries Museum & Art Gallery, said: “The Staffordshire Hoard continues to attract interest from across the world, amazing visitors with its dazzling glimpse into ancient Anglo-Saxon life. These reconstructions of the helmet are an extremely important development, and another example of the incredible skills and knowledge which are helping to bring the story of the Hoard to life.

“Thanks to funding from Historic England, partners have been able to work together to unlock the find’s secrets and we’re sure this stunning new display will capture the public’s imagination.”

Duncan Wilson, Chief Executive at Historic England, said: “Displaying the reconstructed helmet will capture the public’s imagination and link us to an age when armour creates an overwhelming impression of warrior splendour. I’m delighted that the research we have funded is helping to reveal the secrets of this unique archaeological treasure.”

Councillor Ian Ward, Leader of Birmingham City Council, said: “Thanks to the specialists at BCU’s School of Jewellery, Gallybagger Leather, Drakon Heritage and Conservation, and metalsmith Samantha Chilton, for the work they’ve done to recreate part of the region’s forgotten history.

“The Staffordshire Hoard put Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery on the map globally when these treasures were first displayed in 2009, capturing the world’s imagination. The latest secrets revealed by the Staffordshire Hoard will draw visitors to Birmingham again, nearly a decade after this fantastic discovery. I can’t wait to see it on display.”

The helmet reconstruction project was made possible through fundraising by Birmingham Museums Trust and The Potteries Museum & Art Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent, and is based on a major research project funded by Historic England and the museums. The research will be published in 2019 by the Society of Antiquaries of London and the Archaeology Data Service.

The helmet reconstruction project team included Birmingham Museums Trust, The Potteries Museum & Art Gallery, Birmingham City University School of Jewellery, Drakon Heritage and Conservation, Gallybagger Leather, Royal Oak Armoury and metalsmith Samantha Chilton. George Speake and Chris Fern were the specialists responsible for the research on which the reconstruction is based.

For more details visit the Staffordshire Hoard website at [www.staffordshirehoard.org.uk](http://www.staffordshirehoard.org.uk).

**ENDS**

Notes to Editors

For more information from Birmingham Museums Trust please contact: Zoe Turton, PR Officer on 0121 348 8281 / 07868 204 711 or [pressoffice@birminghammuseums.org.uk](mailto:pressoffice@birminghammuseums.org.uk)

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**The Staffordshire Hoard**

The Staffordshire Hoard is owned by Birmingham and Stoke-on-Trent City Councils, and is cared for on behalf of the nation by Birmingham Museums Trust and The Potteries Museum & Art Gallery. The Staffordshire Hoard was acquired with donations from members of the public following a huge campaign led by the Art Fund, the national fundraising charity for art. The acquisition was also generously supported by the National Heritage Memorial Fund, Birmingham City Council, Stoke-on-Trent City Council, Wartski, and many other trusts and foundations, and corporate philanthropy.

The Staffordshire Hoardis the most spectacular Anglo-Saxon find since the excavation of the Sutton Hoo ship-burial (Suffolk) in 1939. It was discovered in July 2009 by a metal detectorist, a mix of around 4,000 gold, silver and garnet items weighing nearly 6kg. Most of the collection consists of fittings from weaponry. These were stripped from swords and seaxes (single-edged fighting knives), at least one helmet and other items, and probably represent the equipment of defeated armies from unknown battles, of the late 6th and 7th century AD.

Although fragmented, damaged and distorted, the hoard’s remarkable objects represent the possessions of an elite warrior class, stunning in their craftsmanship and ornament. Why it was buried, perhaps before c.675 AD, is not certain. Significantly it was discovered close to a major routeway (Roman Watling Street), in what was the emerging Kingdom of Mercia. Warfare between England’s many competing regional kingdoms was frequent. The Staffordshire Hoard bears witness to this turbulent time in our history. [www.staffordshirehoard.org.uk](http://www.staffordshirehoard.org.uk).

**Birmingham Museums Trust**

Birmingham Museums Trust is an independent charity that manages the city’s museum collection and venues on behalf of Birmingham City Council. It uses the collection of around one million objects to provide a wide range of arts, cultural and historical experiences, events and activities that deliver accessible learning, creativity and enjoyment for citizens and visitors to the city. Most areas of the collection are designated as being of national importance, including the finest collection of Pre-Raphaelite art in the world. Attracting over 1 million visits a year, the Trust’s venues include Aston Hall, Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery, Blakesley Hall, Museum Collections Centre, Museum of the Jewellery Quarter, Sarehole Mill, Soho House, Thinktank and Weoley Castle. [www.birminghammuseums.org.uk](http://www.birminghammuseums.org.uk)

**The Potteries Museum & Art Gallery**

The Potteries Museum & Art Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent is one of the services delivered by Stoke-on-Trent City Council for its residents. It boasts a series of internationally-

renown exhibitions, including the world’s best collection of Staffordshire ceramics as well as the Staffordshire Hoard. All of the museum’s collections are categorised as designated collections, recognising their national importance. Galleries also include fine and decorative arts, costume, local history, archaeology and natural history. The museum provides an engaging programme of exhibitions, activities and learning experiences for the city’s residents, schools and visitors to the area. It has a number of national and international partnerships across Europe and from the USA to China, delivering world class activities and exhibitions.

[www.stokemuseums.org.uk/visit/pmag](http://www.stokemuseums.org.uk/visit/pmag)

**About Historic England**

We are [Historic England](http://www.historicengland.org.uk/) the public body that helps people care for, enjoy and celebrate England’s spectacular historic environment, from beaches and battlefields to parks and pie shops. We protect, champion and save the places that define who we are and where we’ve come from as a nation. We care passionately about the stories they tell, the ideas they represent and the people who live, work and play among them. Working with communities and specialists we share our passion, knowledge and skills to inspire interest, care and conservation, so everyone can keep enjoying and looking after the history that surrounds us all.

**The School of Jewellery, Birmingham City University**

Located in the heart of Birmingham’s famous Jewellery Quarter, Birmingham City University’s School of Jewellery was founded in 1890 and is the largest of its kind in Europe. The School of Jewellery boasts industry-standard facilities, including specialist horology labs, 3D printing, silversmithing, jewellery and gemmology laboratories. Courses at the School of Jewellery cover all aspects of jewellery from the conceptual fine art-based approach through to industry-focused, technology driven courses.