

16 March 2011

Three thousand years of treasure underfoot: ancient finds go on display in new exhibition

Treasure Under Your Feet

29 March – 4 September 2011 at The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge

- Ancient treasure uncovered across the East of England goes on display in Cambridge
- Exhibits range from a Prehistoric torc and Viking silver to a Tudor jewel and gold Civil War coins
- Display gives insight into lives of ancestors who either buried or lost these treasures

From the Bronze Age to Tudor times, a new exhibition opening this month at The Fitzwilliam Museum showcases the wealth of ancient treasure discovered under our feet.

Treasure Under Your Feet brings together discoveries spanning three thousand years, from coins and jewellery to weaponry and everyday items such as ornaments and culinary vessels – as discovered by archaeologists and enthusiastic amateurs alike. This exhibition invites visitors to explore the stories behind the discovery of these objects: from the life savings of an anonymous figure, hidden underground hundreds of years ago, to a jewel accidentally dropped and lost by its owner.

The exhibition particularly focuses on examples of coin hoards and precious savings from as early as the Iron Age, whose owners never returned through personal misfortune or even sheer forgetfulness. Many of the objects on display were discovered with the use of metal detectors – a popular and widespread hobby that has been the subject of much debate within the archaeological community.

Treasure Under Your Feet draws on public and private collections in the region including Colchester Castle Museum and Norwich Castle Museum, as well as from the Fitzwilliam's own holdings, and will present:

- Antiquarian finds, including Roman bronze vessels probably from the grave of a wealthy Celtic family near Cambridge
- Money and metalwork from the Torksey 9th-century Viking settlement in Lincolnshire
- Gold coins from the Civil War discovered in the Old Hall of Pembroke College, Cambridge
- A Bronze-Age axe hoard, an Iron Age torc, a Viking-Age gold finger ring and a Tudor pendant of gold, diamond & ruby – a collection used to explore Britain's treasure laws which define exactly what the finder can keep for themselves

The exhibition will also explore the intriguing underworld of ancient coin forgery, as revealed by metal detector finds from the region, including discoveries from a Roman forger's workshop uncovered in Cambridgeshire.

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“As well as showcasing the interest and beauty of these finds, *Treasure Under Your Feet* shows how these discoveries contribute to our understanding of the life and times of those who owned them,” said Dr. Timothy Potts, Director of the Fitzwilliam Museum. “This exhibition offers a unique glimpse into the lives of our predecessors, creating an evocative picture of the East Anglian region all the way back to antiquity.”

Dr. Mark Blackburn, exhibition curator and Keeper of Coins and Medals at the Fitzwilliam Museum, said: “The thrill of finding precious objects last seen thousands of years ago is intense. This exhibition will tell the fascinating stories behind their loss and more recent discovery.”

- ENDS / ... Notes for Editors -

Details for publication:

Treasure Under Your Feet

29 March – 4 September 2011

The Fitzwilliam Museum, Trumpington Street, Cambridge CB2 1RB
OPEN: Tuesday – Saturday: 10.00 – 17.00
Sundays and Bank Holiday Mondays: 12.00 – 17.00
Closed Good Friday and 29 April 2011

ADMISSION FREE

Further information and images:

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Notes for Editors

The Fitzwilliam Museum

The Fitzwilliam Museum houses the University of Cambridge's art collection and is a public museum and art gallery with an international reputation. More than half a million objects and works of art are held in five curatorial departments: Antiquities, Applied Arts, Coins and Medals, Manuscripts and Printed Books and Paintings, Drawings and Prints. The Fitzwilliam's treasures range from Ancient Egyptian, Greek and Roman antiquities to the arts of the 21st century and include masterpieces by Titian, Canaletto, Stubbs, Constable, Monet, Renoir and Picasso, one of the world's foremost Rembrandt print collections, Handel music manuscripts and the famous Fitzwilliam Virginal Book, one of the most significant collections of Korean ceramics outside South-East Asia, medieval illuminated manuscripts and outstanding collections of pottery, porcelain and medieval coins. The Fitzwilliam Museum welcomes over 380,000 visitors a year, offers a wide-ranging programme of temporary exhibitions and events, and has an award-winning Education Service. The Museum is open Tuesday – Saturday: 10.00 – 17.00, Sunday and Bank Holiday Mondays: 12.00 – 17.00. Free admission.

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