

Iron Age Gold on display at National Museum of Scotland

✘ Scotland's most significant gold hoard goes on display at the National Museum of Scotland today, following a successful fundraising campaign to acquire them for the National Collections.

The National Heritage Memorial Fund, the Art Fund, the Scottish Government, and National Museums Scotland have all generously contributed funds to acquire the Iron Age gold found in September 2009 at Blair Drummond, near Stirling.

The gold torcs will now join the National Collections, and an ex gratia reward payment of £462,000 will be made by the Queen's and Lord Treasurer's Remembrancer (QLTR), Catherine Dyer, to the finder, David Booth.

The four gold neck ornaments date from between the 1st and 3rd century BC, and excavations showed they were buried inside a wooden building, perhaps a shrine. They are exquisite examples of Iron Age craftwork and include a unique braided gold wire torc which shows strong Mediterranean influences. The torcs reveal the wealth and connections of people in Scotland at that time.

Dr Gordon Rintoul, Director, National Museums Scotland, said:

'We are delighted to have secured this stunning hoard for display in Scotland's national museum. We already attract over 600,000 visitors a year from Scotland and across the world, and expect many more when the fully redeveloped Museum opens this summer. The Hoard is certain to become one of the highlights of a visit to the Museum.'

The funding breakdown is:

The National Heritage Memorial Fund £154k, The Art Fund £100k, National Museums Scotland £123k and Scottish Government £85k.

Fiona Hyslop, Minister for Culture and External Affairs, the Scottish Government said:

‘These four gold torcs are a significant find for Scotland’s national collection and this government is delighted to help acquire these impressive items for the nation.

‘This is the most important hoard of Iron Age gold ever found in this country and I congratulate the National Museum of Scotland on its successful fundraising campaign to ensure that it remains here and will be on free display for the general public.

‘The opening of the redeveloped Museum this summer will be one Scotland’s cultural highlights in 2011 and this display will enjoyed by visitors from home and across the globe.’

Speaking of the find, the Queen’s and Lord Treasurer’s Remembrancer (QLTR), Catherine Dyer said:

‘I am pleased to announce that I accept the recommendation of the Scottish Archaeological Finds Allocation Panel (SAFAP) and these wonderful items have been allocated to National Museums Scotland.

‘This is a very significant find, the most important hoard of Iron Age gold ever found in Scotland. That these stunning artefacts have been unearthed in such excellent condition after being buried for 2000 years is simply amazing.’

Dame Jenny Abramsky, Chair of the National Heritage Memorial Fund, said:

‘These torcs are absolutely extraordinary, offering unprecedented insight to Iron Age skill and craftsmanship. I am delighted that crucial funding from the National Heritage Memorial Fund has now secured these most precious Scottish

heritage treasures for future generations to enjoy.”

Stephen Deuchar, Director of the Art Fund, said:

“We are thrilled that the money has been raised to enable these fascinating torcs to go on public display in Scotland. They are going to absolutely the right place where generations can learn, enjoy and be inspired by them, and experts can carry out important research. This is a great example of how private and public funds work together to save important heritage items.”

The torcs will go on temporary display in Hawthornden Court, the main courtyard of the National Museum of Scotland, before permanent display in the Early People gallery, which tells the story of the earliest people in Scotland.