



Staffordshire.

Conservation in the spot light: *maintaining public access to the Staffordshire Hoard while delivering a conservation program*



Ellen Promise installing object in display case.

Graduate fellow, Ellen Promise
Hoard Conservation Project Manager, Deborah Cane

Context

In 2009, a cache of Anglo-Saxon artifacts, now known as the Staffordshire Hoard, was discovered by a metal detector enthusiast in a farmer's field. The Hoard comprises at least 1,700 fragments and objects of gold, silver and precious stones, estimated to date between the 6th and 8th centuries CE. The objects are mostly martial in nature, including sword pommels, hilt collars and possible helmet components.



K843 lentoid on site.

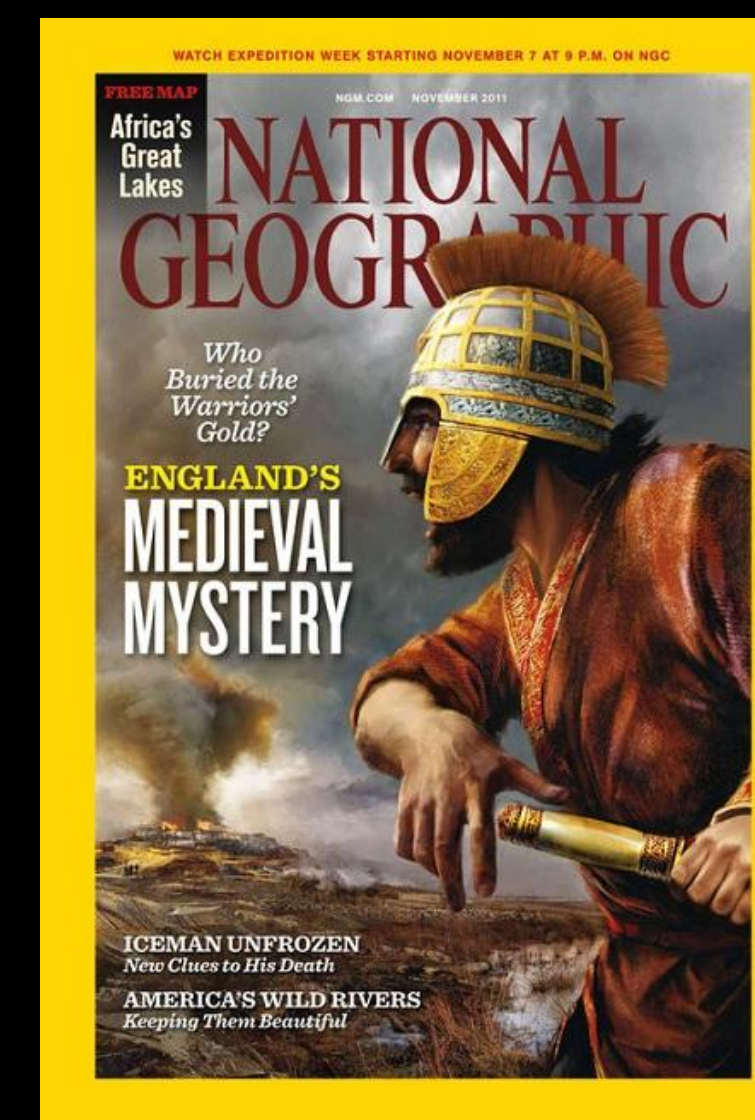


Discoverer of the Hoard, Terry Herbert, with his metal detector.



Outreach

In a deviation from the typical protocol, the objects were put on display at the Birmingham Museum and Art Galleries prior to their acquisition. Members of the public were allowed to see their cultural heritage immediately. Since this time, continued efforts have been made to keep the public updated on this project, with monthly tours, filmed and written blogs, and ample news coverage. A key partnership was forged with the National Geographic Society, and this has resulted in filmed specials, magazine articles, and an exhibition at the National Geographic Museum in Washington, D.C. Local exhibitions have also brought the hoard objects to venues such as Stafford Shire Hall, Lichfield Cathedral, and Tamworth Castle.



Hoard objects displayed in Lichfield Cathedral.

Conclusions

- Continually updating the public has reinforced the idea that the Hoard artifacts are shared cultural heritage.

- This has promoted a sense of mutual responsibility for the preservation of the objects.

- One benefit of heightened awareness is increased sponsorship and funding.

- A further benefit is the fostering of a collaborative community, which includes interested members of the public and professionals.

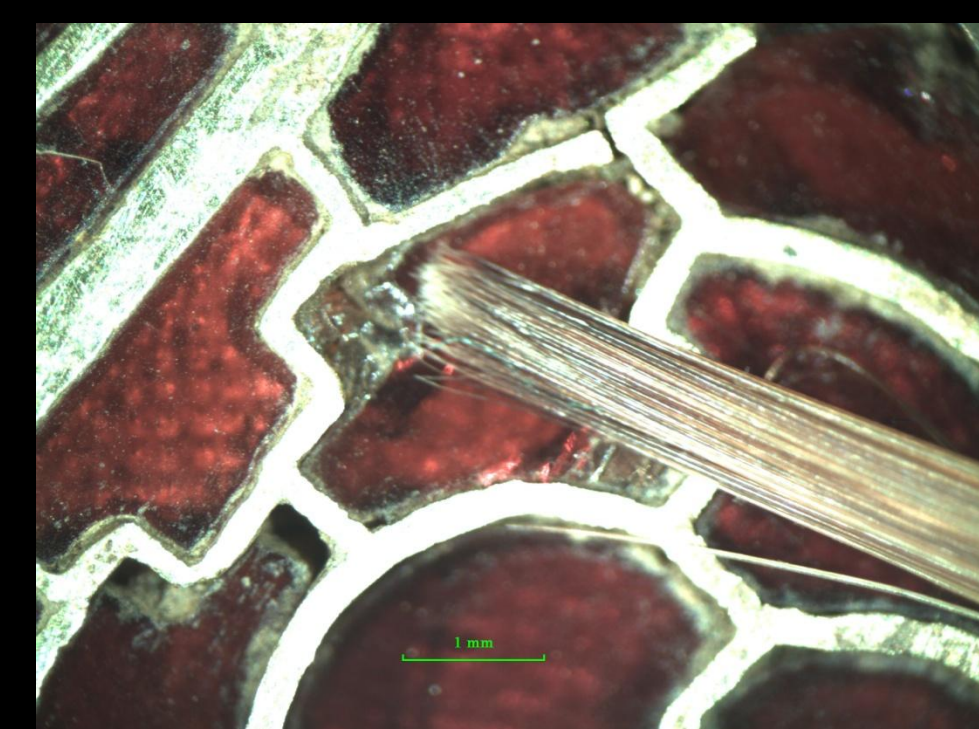


Conservation

A core team of three conservators, Deborah Cane, Cymbeline Storey, and Deborah Magnoler, work to document and treat the artifacts, but collaboration has been essential to the continued success of the project. Conservation scientists, researchers, jewelry makers and other conservators have contributed their time and expertise. The project is also committed to education, taking on a number of student placements for durations from two weeks to two months.



Cleaning with natural thorn K843 245x.



Consolidation of garnet K843 25x.



K843 lentoid before treatment.



Hoard conservation team.



K843 lentoid after treatment.

Public Response

Developing a symbiotic relationship with the public has yielded noticeable results for the Hoard project. The public played a critical role in raising the 3.3 million pounds necessary for the Birmingham Museum and the Stoke-on-Trent Potteries Museum to jointly acquire the artifacts. Promotion has helped to elevate the profile of the Hoard, and consequently, visitorship to exhibitions has been outstanding. Individuals, trusts, businesses and other sectors have been willing to support the project financially. Conservation work has been funded for a guaranteed two years, and needed equipment, such as a suite of microscopes, has been acquired.



Working under microscope.

Acknowledgments

Photos courtesy of Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent Potteries Museum, and Portable Antiquities Scheme