

Press release: Exceptionally rare Roman figurine at risk of leaving the UK

Arts Minister John Glen has placed a temporary export bar on an exceptionally rare bronze Roman figurine to provide an opportunity to keep it in the country.

The figure may be wearing a hooded woollen cloak known as the birrus Britannicus, which is specifically noted as being British in the Edict of Diocletian in 301AD.

It is extremely unusual for portable art from this period of Roman rule to depict a distinctively British character. Figures are usually shown wearing hooded garments of a different style common to Gaul and the North-Western provinces.

The level of detail displayed in this figurine and the quality of its execution are particularly fine.

Arts Minister John Glen said:

This exceptionally rare figurine is a fascinating representation of a distinctly British character.

I hope that a buyer comes forward to help keep this unique object in the UK so that current and future generations can continue to enjoy it.

The decision to defer the export licence follows a recommendation by the [Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art and Objects of Cultural Interest \(RCEWA\)](#), administered by The Arts Council.

RCEWA member Leslie Webster said:

This small bronze figurine gives an important new glimpse into the clothing of our Romano-British ancestors.

It has been suggested that he wears the distinctive birrus britannicus, or hooded British woollen cloak, which, with the quiver on his back, identifies the male figure as a hunter, suitably kitted out for cold and rainy weather.

Both the style and the braided decoration of the cloak is unparalleled in art, supporting the thesis that this is a unique depiction of a specifically British garment, recorded in the early

4th century AD as a significant export within the wider Roman Empire.

The RCEWA made its recommendation on the grounds of the figurine's outstanding significance for the study of provincial Roman costume in the province of Britannia.

The decision on the export licence application for the figurine will be deferred until 23 September 2017. This may be extended until 23 November 2017 if a serious intention to raise funds to purchase it is made at the recommended price of £550.

Organisations or individuals interested in purchasing the figurine should contact the RCEWA on 0845 300 6200.

An image of the figurine can be downloaded via our [flickr site](#).

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Notes to editors

1. Details of the figurine are as follows: A figurine of a man wearing a hooded cloak, made of copper alloy 65 mm high, 48mm wide and 17 mm thick, weight 65.8g. Maker unknown, probably Romano-British. Dated between 43-410 AD. In good but incomplete condition; the lower parts of the legs and arms are missing.
2. The Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art and Objects of Cultural Interest is an independent body, serviced by The Arts Council, which advises the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport on whether a cultural object, intended for export, is of national importance under specified criteria.
3. The Arts Council champions, develops and invests in artistic and cultural experiences that enrich people's lives. It supports a range of activities across the arts, museums and libraries – from theatre to digital art, reading to dance, music to literature, and crafts to collections. www.artscouncil.org.uk.