

**PRESS RELEASE**

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## **Pitt Rivers Museum's Cook-Voyage Collection Redisplayed**

The Pitt Rivers Museum is delighted to announce that the art and artefacts in its care that were collected on Captain James Cook's famous voyages to the Pacific in the eighteenth century have been redisplayed on the Museum's lower gallery. The new permanent exhibition is in a purpose-built case purchased with a grant of £64,845 from the DCMS Wolfson Museums and Galleries Improvement Fund, with additional support from the Friends of the Museum. The new display has been made possible by the support of The Clothworkers' Foundation.

The collection includes twenty-seven objects collected by the naturalist Joseph Banks on the *Endeavour* on Cook's first voyage (1768–1771). Given to Christ Church, his old college, the collection was transferred to the care of the Pitt Rivers Museum in the 1880s. It also includes more than 200 objects collected by the naturalists Johann Reinhold Forster and his son Johann George on the *Resolution* on Cook's second voyage (1772–1775). The collection was housed at the Ashmolean in Broad Street until the 1880s, when it was transferred to the Pitt Rivers.

The new display includes one of the few surviving examples of a Tahitian mourner's dress and one of only two surviving examples of a Tahitian *fau*, or warrior's helmet. There are also shell and feather ornaments from the Marquesas Islands, a unique barkcloth quilt from Rapa Nui (Easter Island), baskets and necklaces from Tonga, musical instruments and spear-throwers from Vanuatu and New Caledonia, and Maori cloaks, belts and ornaments from New Zealand.

The new display illustrates and celebrates the remarkable cultural productions of Pacific Islander societies at the time of first contact with European voyagers. It draws on more than twenty years of research by members of the Museum's collections and conservation staff and builds on conversations and collaborations with academics, artists, cultural practitioners, curators, scholars, and students from the Pacific and around the world.

The opening of the new display was officially celebrated at a special event at the Museum on 21 April 2016. Special guest Sir David Attenborough gave a speech saying that Cook's voyages catalogued the "whole of mankind's interest in the environment" and served as "a benchmark of human activities in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century". The evening also included a speech by Dr Laura van Broekhoven, Director of the Pitt Rivers Museum, paying tribute to the excellent work of Jeremy Uden, Deputy Head of Conservation, and his colleague, Jeremy Coote, Joint Head of Collections, in conserving and researching the collection.



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Further information about the collection, its history, and significance is available in a dedicated website at <http://web.prm.ox.ac.uk/cookvoyages/index.php/en/index.html>.

## Notes for Editors

- The Pitt Rivers Museum is one of Oxford's most popular attractions, famous for its period atmosphere and outstanding collections from many cultures around the world, past and present. Admission, exhibitions and most events are FREE.
- The Pitt Rivers Museum was founded in 1884 when General Pitt-Rivers, an influential figure in the development of archaeology and evolutionary anthropology, gave his personal collection of some 30,000 items to the University on condition that a museum was built to house the material, and that a post was created to lecture in anthropology. Today the collection numbers some 600,000 items and the Museum remains an active department of Oxford University, doing and supporting research and teaching in archaeology and anthropology.
- The DCMS Museums and Galleries Fund was established in 2000 to improve the quality of displays, exhibition spaces, collection interpretation and disabled access in museums and galleries. To date, nearly £40 million has been allocated for the refurbishment of museum and gallery spaces through this award partnership.
- The programme is jointly funded by the Wolfson Foundation and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). Grants are made up to the value of £300,000.
- The Clothworkers' Foundation was set up in 1977 and aims to improve the lives of people and communities, particularly those facing disadvantage. The Foundation awards capital grants to UK charities and bursaries and fellowships to qualified conservators.
- Since its establishment, the Foundation has awarded grants of more than £120 million.

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