

An Iron Age warrior found buried on a housing estate has gone on public display in Chichester thanks to National Lottery players.

The warrior's grave, which was discovered in North Bersted, is the most elaborately equipped ever found in England.

> “In more than 30 years of archaeology this is the most spectacular discovery that I have witnessed.”
>
> *James Kenny, archaeologist*

Chichester District Council was awarded £50,000 of National Lottery funding to conduct DNA tests to establish the man’s origins and appearance and to make the archaeological finds available to the public through a free exhibition.

Local schools, universities and community groups have been involved in workshops, activity days and lectures series which are set to continue this year.



The warrior's helmet. Credit: Novium Museum/Chichester District Council

Visitors can now explore the life, health and death of this fascinating man and his lavish burial possessions in an exhibition opening on 25 January 2020 until 25 September at The Novium Museum in Chichester.

A unique discovery

Over the past 12 years, this find from 50BC has been analysed and interpreted by a team of world-class experts.

James Kenny, Chichester District Council's archaeologist, said: "In more than 30 years of archaeology this is the most spectacular discovery that I have witnessed.

> "What distinguishes this discovery from any other burial in Britain is the breath-taking quality and beauty of the artefacts and the range of his possessions."

Because of that, it's presumed that the warrior held one of the most prestigious roles in the country. It is thought that the mystery warrior was a great resistance figure who may have even fought alongside King Commius during Julius Caesar's wars with the Gauls.



Sword in scabbard, bent in half. Credit: Novium Museum / Chichester District Council

The warrior took a full suite of his weapons to the grave with him. Among them, “a stunning sword in a decorated scabbard, a spear and a shield with large bronze boss” describes Kenny. He continues: “One of the most spectacular finds within the burial is the helmet. This is decorated with an exquisitely designed bronze openwork crest – a completely unique discovery.”

Critical point in Britain’s history

The exhibition illuminates a key time period - the years immediately preceding the Roman invasion, when the south coast was at the heart of the great events that ultimately shaped Britain as a nation.

It also helps tell a unique story about West Sussex and the community which now lives where the warrior was discovered.

Stuart McLeod, The National Lottery Heritage Fund Director of England, London & South, said: “The life of the Mystery Warrior and the stories he can tell of Iron Age Britain have been revealed thanks to money raised by National Lottery players.

"It is a part of our heritage with international significance and now one that the community in which he was found can finally get to the heart of.”

Note: this news article, first published on 23 July 2019, was edited on 24 January 2020 to coincide with the exhibition's opening.



Volunteers wanted for one of North East's largest-ever archaeology projects