

For Immediate Release
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CHRISTIE'S

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THE CROSBY GARRETT HELMET

**A REMARKABLE ROMAN BRONZE HELMET
- FOUND WITH A METAL DETECTOR -
TO BE OFFERED AT CHRISTIE'S IN OCTOBER 2010**



Antiquities

7 October 2010, Christie's South Kensington

London – The auction of *Antiquities* on 7 October at Christie's South Kensington will offer an exceptional survival from Roman Britain discovered by a metal detectorist. Discovered in Cumbria, in May 2010, the Crosby Garrett Helmet dates from the late 1st-2nd Century A.D. and is one of only three comparable examples ever to have been discovered in the United Kingdom complete with face-mask in the last 250 years. It will be on public display for the first time at the King Street salerooms from 14 September and again at South Kensington from 2 to 6 October before being offered at auction on 7 October where it is estimated to realise £200,000 to £300,000.

Georgiana Aitken, Head of Antiquities at Christie's, London: *"This helmet is the discovery of a lifetime for a metal detectorist. When it was initially brought to Christie's and I examined it at first-hand, I saw this extraordinary face from the past staring back at me and I could scarcely believe my eyes. This is a hugely important discovery and we expect considerable interest at both the public preview and at the auction where it is sure to generate great excitement from museums and collectors alike. The market for Antiquities continues to show great buoyancy fuelled by new collectors entering the category - the sale in April here at Christie's achieved a total of £3 million/\$4.6 million/€3.4 million — the highest grossing Antiquities sale in London since 2004."*

With its enigmatic features, the Crosby-Garrett Helmet is an extraordinary example of Roman metalwork at its zenith. It is one of only three that have been discovered in Britain complete with face-masks, the others being the Ribchester Helmet, found in 1796 and now in the British Museum, and the Newstead Helmet, in the Museum of Antiquities, Edinburgh, found *circa* 1905.



The Crosby Garrett Helmet sets itself apart by virtue of its beauty, workmanship and completeness, particularly the face-mask, which was found virtually intact. In addition, the remarkable Phrygian-style peak surmounted by its elaborate bronze griffin crest appears unprecedented.

These helmets were not for combative use, but worn for *hippika gymnasia* (cavalry sports events). The polished white-metal surface of the Crosby Garrett face-mask would have provided a striking contrast to the original golden-bronze colour of the hair and Phrygian cap. In addition, colourful streamers may have been attached to the rings along the back ridge and on the griffin crest. Arrian of Nicomedia, a Roman provincial governor under Hadrian, provides us with the only surviving contemporary source of information on cavalry sports events. He describes, in an appendix to his *Ars Tactica*, how the cavalymen were divided into two teams which took turns to attack and defend. He suggests that the wearing of these helmets was a mark of rank or excellence in horsemanship. Participants would also carry a light, elaborately painted shield, and wear an embroidered tunic and possibly thigh-guards and greaves, all of which would contribute to the impressive spectacle. These events may well have accompanied religious festivals celebrated by the Roman army and were probably also put on for the benefit of visiting officials. The displays would also have been intended to demonstrate the outstanding equestrian skill and marksmanship of the Roman soldier and the wealth of the great empire he represented.

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Images available on request
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