

Accompanying booklets to
special exhibitions at the State
Museum of Prehistory Halle
Volume 8

THE WORLD OF THE NEBRA SKY DISC – NEW HORIZONS

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Sun standard from Jutland (Denmark) 1200–500 BC

This miniature standard, only 7 cm high, shows how larger cult discs may have been attached and used in the past. If the standard is held up to the light, it reveals the shape of a wheel cross as a symbol of the sun.

National Museum of Denmark Copenhagen



**Trassem hoard, Trier-Saarburg district
(Rhineland-Palatinate) 1625–1550 BC**

The Trassem hoard is one of the few hoards in central Europe contemporaneous with the Nebra find.
(sword: length 42 cm)

Rheinisches Landesmuseum Trier – Generaldirektion
Kulturelles Erbe Rheinland-Pfalz

Greetings

Hartwig Fischer, Director of the British Museum, London

It is exciting that the British Museum and the renowned Landesmuseum für Vorgeschichte, Halle are collaborating on the creation of ground-breaking exhibitions to bring together stimulating new ideas about the period 4,500–3,000 years ago. This was a time when complex settled societies emerged in Europe. Using modern archaeological research and science, these exhibitions share a dazzling and informative array of objects to bring this era to life.

Looking back from the present, it is easy to imagine that people living some four thousand years ago who did not write down their histories or beliefs have little to reveal to the modern world. Consequently, this deep human past is often regarded as a simple story for children, the infancy of civilization rather than a formative phase in the origins of European societies. Often referred to as the Bronze Age, as if the use of bronze was the only significant aspect of this time, the collaboration of The British Museum and Landesmuseum für Vorgeschichte tears the subject away from nineteenth century tropes that used common object types of artefacts to categorise the lives of people thought of as little more than savages. Through our teams dedicated to researching this period of deep history, the public will find a new past emerging, starting in Halle with *The World of the Nebra Sky Disc – New Horizons*.

From distant, long forgotten times these new horizons reveal a picture of stable, well-connected communities linked by trade and as committed to joint social enterprises as their better-known contemporaries in Egypt and Mesopotamia. The centre pieces of each exhibition exemplify this. Professor Meller and the accomplished research team in Halle has shown that the Nebra Sky Disc is made from gold mined in Cornwall. It serves as a powerful symbol of the connection between our respective museums and past cultures. It is fascinating to think that journeys, connections, and friendships involved in moving materials over such long distances also took place 4,000 years ago. These connections



Necklace from Exloo-Eerste Exloërmond,
Borger-Odoorn municipality, Drenthe province
(The Netherlands) 19th–16th century BC

The necklace made of amber, faience, and tin beads
was discovered while cutting peat in 1881 and
probably originally came from southern England.
Bronze Age objects made of pure tin are extremely
rare, because of its poor preservation.

Collection Drents Museum Assen



Two gold armlets from Lockington,
Leicestershire (Great Britain)
2100–1900 BC (diameter 8.3 cm)
British Museum London

were not just based on ideas and trade. People moved too. In Britain, scientific studies show that a man buried with honour and ceremony close to Stonehenge 4,300 years ago known as the Amesbury Archer, probably started his life in continental Europe, possibly even in Germany. The wonderful gold-covered burials from near Stonehenge have some of their closest parallels among the collections of Landesmuseum Halle. This may have been a route well-travelled as one of the great treasures of the British Museum, a golden cape from Mold in North Wales, has its best parallels in the equally remarkable and hard to wear Goldene Hüte of Germany.

European links were not limited to trade and migration. Stonehenge, a leitmotif in the British Museum exhibition, was once thought to be a unique, idiosyncratic insular expression of extraordinary social

endeavours, but archaeological investigations in Saxony-Anhalt have revealed similar monuments built in wood at Goseck and Pömmelte stretching the network of shared symbols of power and community. This network also reached beyond Europe to Egypt and Mesopotamia and the British Museum is delighted to be able to lend objects that contextualize the knowledge expressed in the Sky Disc so masterfully interpreted by Professor Meller and his team.

This period of deep history from 2,500–1,000 BCE was a formative time of strong beliefs symbolically expressed, stable but perhaps not always peaceful communities, trade, and migration. The collaboration between the British Museum and the Landesmuseum für Vorgeschichte Halle, is a reiteration of these ancient links that over the last decade has enabled our visitors to enjoy great objects through our commitment to lending and exploring the many connections between world cultures.

We look forward to working closely together as colleagues bound by our shared fascination with deep history for many years to come.

**Gold cup from Ringlemere-Woodnesborough,
Kent (Great Britain) 1950–1650 BC**

Unfortunately ploughed up and only discovered by a metal detectorist in 2001, the cup probably comes from a burial mound. It is hammered from a single piece of gold. (width 10.5 cm)

British Museum London

