



Press release

## Football and craft celebrate cultural heritage

An unlikely combination of football and craft have provided the inspiration for *Souvenirs from Home*, an exhibition at the Devon Guild of Craftsmen.

*Gilded football boots and decorated silk team shirts are amongst craftworks on display, made by artists working with football supporters across the UK.*

***Souvenirs from Home*** (Saturday 17 September- Sunday 6 November at Devon Guild, Bovey Tracey) is the culmination of [Home Ground](#), a 3-year project which celebrates the cultural heritage of 6 football clubs with nicknames inspired by the local craft industries that shaped their communities.

Stoke City Football Club takes its nickname from a close association with the ceramics industry. So Stoke fans are supporters of 'The Potters'. Other chosen clubs include Sheffield United – their team is also called *The Blades* – and *The Hatters* of Luton Town. Teams often grew out of their respective trades. Each football club worked with artists and makers to explore how their historic craft industry could be used to create new work about identity and place.

It all began with the Guild's 2014 [Home Ground](#) exhibition which led to a collaboration between the [Devon Guild of Craftsmen](#) and participating English league football clubs. It became a mini-touring show starring a traditional hand-stitched football made by Colyton-based leatherworker John Hagger. Along the way, supporters and community groups of all ages took part in workshops to make and display objects inspired by the craft heritage and skills which made their town's products and football teams, famous.

At Crystal Palace, artist Michelle Dawson worked with *The Glaziers* supporters and community groups to create one-off "souvenirs". Those taking part learned more about the history of the local area. Working with the artist, each participant designed and created a stained glass panel celebrating the club.

In Sheffield, local people created their own medals using traditional metalworking techniques. In Luton they learnt about hatmaking and decorated their own boaters. For Stoke City's *Potters*, a ceramic collage was created using individual shapes with images and lettering inspired by the city's heritage.

*Souvenirs* showcases distinctive work by communities across the country and specially commissioned pieces from each of the artists who worked with the football clubs. All explore a sense of place and identity through uniting craft, trade and sport - all with roots buried deep in the British psyche.

Melanie Tomlinson worked with the young *Saddlers* fans in Walsall who developed 'Jo', a fictional footballer with family links to the leather industry. She was inspired to make 'Jo Boxhall's Football Boots' – (top image) gilded 1957 boots displayed in a special casket, depicting the narrative of Jo and his family.

Zoë Hillyard created 'The Silkmen Cup', which celebrates Macclesfield's textiles industry and reflects the football club's determination and strength. The Cup is made with Zoë's own technique of reconstructing broken ceramics using fabric and stitch. The inaugural match played under the name Macclesfield Town Football Club, in 1876, was against Stoke City's *Potters*. These teams clash again in Zoë's celebratory piece through the mix of silk and ceramics.

Erica Steer, Director of The Devon Guild of Craftsmen said: "This exhibition celebrates the connection between tradition, contemporary craft and our six chosen football clubs. Our artists have used the story of the town's historic craft industries to connect people and places and build an understanding of the importance of craft in creating a distinctive sense of place, which in turn strengthens communities.

The *Home Ground* project has given us an opportunity to capture people's interest in craft through another passion – football."

The [Souvenirs from Home exhibition](#) is at Devon Guild of Craftsmen in Bovey Tracey from **Saturday 17 September- Sunday 6 November 2016** before touring the country. Entrance is free. Launch 6pm 16 Sept.

<Ends>

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**Notes to editors:** Home Ground is a three-year project initiated by Devon Guild of Craftsmen, which celebrates through a contemporary touring exhibition and participation programme, the cultural heritage of six National League Football Clubs that originated from a local crafts trade tradition. [More info...](#)

The participating football clubs are (links to heritage information websites):

[Sheffield United – The Blades](#)

[Macclesfield Town – The Silkmen](#)

[Stoke City – The Potters](#)

[Walsall Town – The Saddlers](#)

[Luton Town – The Hatters](#)

[Crystal Palace – The Glaziers](#)

The project has received National Lottery funding through [Arts Council England](#).

### Devon Guild of Craftsmen

The Devon Guild of Craftsmen is the leading contemporary crafts organisation in the South West, seeking to inspire creative excellence and to create opportunities for everyone to learn through making. The organisation's outreach education programme has been established for over 20 years, offering opportunities for community groups, schools and colleges to experience making with professional artists and craftspeople. The Guild also support makers through the provision of a membership scheme, exhibitions, retail spaces, events and development opportunities.

The Devon Guild of Craftsmen works in partnership with regional, national and international makers, audiences, venues and a diverse range of organisations to push the boundaries and perceptions around contemporary crafts practice. [More info...](#) [DGC Facebook](#) [DGC Twitter](#)