

English city to show off Roman gold coins find (Update)

October 17 2012, by Robert Barr



In this undated photo released by St Albans City and District Council on Wednesday, Oct. 17, 2012, late Roman gold coins, examples of the solidus, a high-value coin struck in the late fourth century, are photographed before going on display at the Verulamium Museum, St Albans, England. A curator at the museum says the coins, found on private land north of St. Albans, would have been used for major transactions such as buying land or ship cargoes. (AP Photo/St Albans City and District Council)

(AP)—A large batch of 4th-century Roman gold coins found by an amateur treasure hunter will go on display in the English city near where they were discovered.

Staff at St. Albans' Verulamium Museum showed off the 159 coins for TV cameras on Wednesday. The coins are examples of the solidus, high-value coins that would be used for major transactions such as buying land or ship cargo, said David Thorold, a curator at the museum.

Officials say the coins were found on private land north of St. Albans, but have not identified the site. The town, which is 22 miles (35 kilometers) north of London, also boasts a Roman theater and ruins of ancient walls. Brick salvaged from the Roman city can also be seen in parts of the city's medieval cathedral.

The solidus coin, plural solidi, dates to the closing years of the fourth century and was issued under the Emperors Gratian, Valentinian, Theodosius, Arcadius and Honorius.

Thorold said coins typically were buried as a sacrifice to gods when the owner was going on a journey or in times of war.



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"Gold solidi were extremely valuable coins and were not traded or exchanged on a regular basis. They would have been used for large transactions such as buying land or goods by the shipload," he said.

Officials said it appeared that the hoard was disturbed in recent times by quarrying or plowing.

A date has not yet been set for the public to have a look, said Claire Wainwright, the city's communications and marketing officer.

While the find is significant, it is not as large as the hoard of nearly 15,000 coins plus 200 other pieces of gold and silver jewelry and tableware found by an amateur treasure hunter near Hoxne, England in 1992. That find included 569 solidus coins.

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