

A Norwegian man needed a hobby. His new metal detector found a showy 1,500-year-old gold necklace

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Erlend Bore poses with the gold treasure he discovered with a metal detector on the island of Rennesøey in Stavanger, Norway, Thursday Sept. 7, 2023. Bore found nine pendants, three rings and 10 gold pearls on a southern island in what was described as the gold find of the century in Norway. Credit: Anniken Celine

Berger/Archaeological Museum, UiS via NTB via AP

At first, the Norwegian man thought his metal detector reacted to chocolate money buried in the soil. It turned out to be nine pendants, three rings and 10 gold pearls someone might have worn as showy jewelry 1,500 years ago.

The rare find was made this summer by 51-year-old Erlend Bore on the southern island of Rennesøy, near the city of Stavanger. Bore had bought his first metal detector earlier this year to have a hobby after his doctor ordered him to get out instead of sitting on the couch.

Ole Madsen, director at the Archaeological Museum at the University of Stavanger, said that to find "so much gold at the same time is extremely unusual."

In August, Bore began walking around the mountainous island with his metal detector. A statement issued by the university said he first found some scrap, but later uncovered something that was "completely unreal"—the treasure weighing a little more than 100 grams (3.5 oz).

Under Norwegian law, objects from before 1537, and coins older than 1650, are considered state property and must be handed in.

Associate professor Håkon Reiersen with the museum said the gold pendants—flat, thin, single-sided gold medals called bracteates—date from around A.D. 500, the so-called Migration Period in Norway, which runs between 400 and about 550, when there were widespread migrations in Europe.



Gold treasure discovered by Erlend Bore with a metal detector on the island of Rennesøy in Stavanger, Norway, Thursday Sept. 7, 2023. Bore found nine pendants, three rings and 10 gold pearls on a southern island in what was described as the gold find of the century in Norway. Credit: Anniken Celine Berger/Archaeological Museum, UiS via NTB via AP

The pendants and gold pearls were part of "a very showy necklace" that had been made by skilled jewelers and was worn by society's most powerful, said Reiersen. He added that "in Norway, no similar discovery has been made since the 19th century, and it is also a very unusual discovery in a Scandinavian context."

An expert on such pendants, professor Sigmund Oehrl with the same museum, said that about 1,000 golden bracteates have so far been found

in Norway, Sweden and Denmark.



Conservator Hege Hollund at the Archaeological Museum, University of Stavanger looks at the gold found by Erlend Bore with a metal detector on the island of Rennesøy in Stavanger, Norway, Thursday Sept. 7, 2023. Bore found nine pendants, three rings and 10 gold pearls on a southern island in what was described as the gold find of the century in Norway. Credit: Anniken Celine Berger/Archaeological Museum, UiS via NTB via AP

He said symbols on the pendants usually show the Norse god Odin healing the sick horse of his son. On the Rennesøy ones, the horse's tongue hangs out on the gold pendants, and "its slumped posture and twisted legs show that it is injured," Oehrl said.



Professor Sigmund Oehrl at the Archaeological Museum, University of Stavanger looks at the gold found by Erlend Bore with a metal detector on the island of Rennesoey in Stavanger, Norway, Thursday Sept. 7, 2023. Bore found nine pendants, three rings and 10 gold pearls on a southern island in what was described as the gold find of the century in Norway. Credit: Anniken Celine Berger/Archaeological Museum, UiS via NTB via AP

"The horse symbol represented illness and distress, but at the same time hope for healing and new life," he added.

The plan is to exhibit the find at the Archaeological Museum in Stavanger, about 300 kilometers (200 miles) southwest of Oslo.

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