

= Hoxne Hoard =

The Hoxne Hoard ( / ˈhɒksən / HOK @-@ sən ) is the largest hoard of late Roman silver and gold discovered in Britain , and the largest collection of gold and silver coins of the fourth and fifth century found anywhere within the Roman Empire . Found by Eric Lawes , a metal detectorist in the village of Hoxne in Suffolk , England , on 16 November 1992 , the hoard consists of 14 @, @ 865 Roman gold , silver and bronze coins from the late fourth and early fifth centuries , and approximately 200 items of silver tableware and gold jewellery . The objects are now in the British Museum in London , where the most important pieces and a selection of the rest are on permanent display . In 1993 , the Treasure Valuation Committee valued the hoard at £ 1 @. @ 75 million ( today £ 3 @. @ 21 million )

The hoard was buried as an oak box or small chest filled with items in precious metal , sorted mostly by type with some in smaller wooden boxes and others in bags or wrapped in fabric . Remnants of the chest , and of fittings such as hinges and locks , were recovered in the excavation . The coins of the hoard date it after AD 407 , which coincides with the end of Britain as a Roman province . The owners and reasons for burial of the hoard are unknown , but it was carefully packed and the contents appear consistent with what a single very wealthy family might have owned . Given the lack of large silver serving vessels and of some of the most common types of jewellery , it is likely that the hoard represents only a part of the wealth of its owner .

The Hoxne Hoard contains several rare and important objects , including a gold body @-@ chain and silver @-@ gilt pepper @-@ pots ( piperatoria ) , including the Empress pepper pot . The Hoxne Hoard is also of particular archaeological significance because it was excavated by professional archaeologists with the items largely undisturbed and intact . The find has helped to improve the relationship between metal detectorists and archaeologists , and influenced a change in English law regarding finds of treasure .

= = Archaeological history = =

= = = Discovery and initial excavation = = =

The hoard was discovered in a field of a farm , about 2 @. @ 4 kilometres ( 1 @. @ 5 mi ) southwest of the village of Hoxne in Suffolk , on 16 November 1992 . Peter Whatling , the tenant farmer , had lost a hammer and asked his friend Eric Lawes , a retired gardener and amateur metal detectorist , to help look for it . While searching the field with his metal detector , Lawes discovered silver spoons , gold jewellery and numerous gold and silver coins . After retrieving a few items , he and Whatling notified the landowners ( Suffolk County Council ) , and the police , without attempting to dig out any more objects .

The following day , a team of archaeologists from the Suffolk Archaeological Unit carried out an emergency excavation of the site . The entire hoard was excavated in a single day , with the removal of several large blocks of unbroken material for laboratory excavation . The area within a radius of 30 metres ( 98 ft ) from the find spot was searched using metal detectors . Peter Whatling 's missing hammer was also recovered and donated to the British Museum .

The hoard was concentrated in a single location , within the completely decayed remains of a wooden chest . The objects had been grouped within the chest ; for example , pieces such as ladles and bowls were stacked inside each other , and other items were grouped in a way consistent with being held within an inner box . Some items had been disturbed by burrowing animals and ploughing , but the overall amount of disturbance was low . It was possible to determine the original layout of the artefacts within the container , and the existence of the container itself , due to Lawes ' prompt notification of the find , which allowed it to be excavated in situ by professional archaeologists .

The excavated hoard was taken to the British Museum . The discovery was leaked to the press , and on 19 November , the Sun newspaper ran a front @-@ page story , alongside a picture of

Lawes with his metal detector . Although the full contents of the hoard and its value were unknown , the newspaper article claimed that the hoard was worth £ 10 million . In response to the unexpected publicity , the British Museum held a press conference at the museum on 20 November to announce the discovery . Newspapers lost interest in the hoard quickly , allowing British Museum curators to sort , clean and stabilize the hoard without further disruption from the press . The initial cleaning and basic conservation of the hoard was completed within a month of its discovery .

= = = Inquest and valuation = = =

On 3 September 1993 , a Coroner 's inquest was held at Lowestoft , and the hoard was declared a treasure trove , meaning that it was deemed to have been hidden with the intention of being recovered at a later date . Under English common law , anything declared as such belongs to the Crown if no one claims title to it . However , at the time , the customary practice was to reward anyone who found and reported a treasure trove promptly with money equivalent to the market value of the treasure , with the money being provided by the national institution that wished to acquire the treasure . In November 1993 , the Treasure Trove Reviewing Committee valued the hoard at £ 1 @. @ 75 million ( today £ 3 @. @ 21 million ) , which was paid to Lawes , as finder of the treasure . He shared his reward with the farmer , Peter Whatling . Three years later , the 1996 Treasure Act made it a legal requirement that the finder and the landowner should be rewarded equally .

= = = Subsequent archaeological investigations = = =

In September 1993 , after the field of the hoard find was ploughed , the Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service surveyed the field , finding four gold coins and 81 silver coins , all considered part of the same hoard . Both earlier Iron Age and later mediaeval materials were also discovered , but there was no evidence of a Roman settlement in the vicinity .

In 1994 , in response to illegal metal detecting near the hoard find , a follow @- @ up excavation of the field was carried out by the Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service . The hoard burial hole was re @- @ excavated , and a single post hole at the southwest corner was identified ; this may have been the location of a marker post to enable the depositors of the cache to locate and recover it in the future . Soil was removed in 10 cm ( 3 @. @ 9 in ) spits for analysis in the area 1 @, @ 000 square metres ( 11 @, @ 000 sq ft ) around the find spot , and metal detectors were used to locate metal artefacts . This excavation recovered 335 items datable to the Roman period , mostly coins but also some box fittings . A series of late Bronze Age or early Iron Age post holes , which may have formed a structure , were found . However , no structural features of the Roman period were detected .

The coins discovered during the 1994 investigation were spread out in an ellipse centred on the hoard find spot , running east ? west up to a distance of 20 metres ( 66 ft ) on either side . This distribution can be explained by the fact that , in 1990 , the farmer carried out deep ploughing in an east ? west direction on the part of the field where the hoard was found . Previously ( since 1967 or 1968 , when the land was cleared for agricultural use ) , the farmer had ploughed in a north ? south direction , but the absence of coins north and south of the find spot suggests that the ploughing before 1990 had not disturbed the hoard .

= = Items discovered = =

The hoard is mainly made up of gold and silver coins and jewellery , amounting to a total of 3 @. @ 5 kilograms ( 7 @. @ 7 lb ) of gold and 23 @. @ 75 kilograms ( 52 @. @ 4 lb ) of silver . It had been placed in a wooden chest , made mostly or entirely of oak , that measured approximately 60 × 45 × 30 cm ( 23 @. @ 6 × 17 @. @ 7 × 11 @. @ 8 in ) . Within the chest , some objects had evidently been placed in smaller boxes made of yew and cherry wood , while others had been packed in with woollen cloth or hay . The chest and the inner boxes had decayed almost completely after being

buried , but fragments of the chest and its fittings were recovered during the excavation . The main objects found are :

569 gold coins ( solidi )

14 @,@ 272 silver coins , comprising 60 miliarenses and 14 @,@ 212 siliquae

24 bronze coins ( nummi )

29 items of jewellery in gold

98 silver spoons and ladles

A silver tigress , made as a handle for a vessel

4 silver bowls and a small dish

1 silver beaker

1 silver vase or juglet

4 pepper pots , including the " Empress " Pepper Pot

Toiletry items such as toothpicks

2 silver locks from the decayed remains of wooden or leather caskets

Traces of various organic materials , including a small ivory pyxis

= = = Coins = = =

The Hoxne Hoard contains 569 gold solidi , struck between the reigns of Valentinian I ( 364 ? 75 ) and Honorius ( 393 ? 423 ) ; 14 @,@ 272 silver coins , including 60 miliarenses and 14 @,@ 212 siliquae , struck between the reigns of Constantine II ( 337 ? 40 ) and Honorius ; and 24 bronze nummi .

The most significant coin find from the end of Roman Britain , the hoard contains all major denominations of coinage of the time , and many examples of clipped silver coinage typical of late Roman Britain . The only find from Roman Britain with a larger number of gold coins was the Eye Hoard found in 1780 or 1781 , for which there are poor records . The largest single Romano @-@ British hoard was the Cunetio Hoard , of 54 @,@ 951 third @-@ century coins , but these were debased radiates with little precious @-@ metal content . The Frome Hoard , unearthed in Somerset in April 2010 , contains 52 @,@ 503 coins minted between 253 and 305 , also mostly debased silver or bronze . Larger hoards of Roman coins have been found at Misrata , Libya and reputedly also at Evreux , France ( 100 @,@ 000 coins ) and Komin , Croatia ( 300 @,@ 000 coins ) .

The gold solidi are all close to their theoretical weight of 4 @.@ 48 g ( 1 ? 72 of a Roman pound ) . The fineness of a solidus in this period was 99 % gold . The total weight of the solidi in the hoard is almost exactly 8 Roman pounds , suggesting that the coins had been measured out by weight rather than number . Analysis of the siliquae suggests a range of fineness of between 95 % and 99 % silver , with the highest percentage of silver found just after a reform of the coinage in 368 . Of the siliquae , 428 are locally produced imitations , generally of high quality and with as much silver as the official siliquae of the period . However , a handful are cliché forgeries where a core of base metal has been wrapped in silver foil .

= = = Historical spread and minting = = =

Coins are the only items in the Hoxne Hoard for which a definite date and place of manufacture can be established . All of the gold coins , and many of the silver coins , bear the names and portraits of the emperor in whose reign they were minted . Most also retain the original mint marks that identify where they were minted , illustrating the Roman system of regional mints producing coins to a uniform design . The coins ' manufacture has been traced back to a total of 14 sources : Trier , Arles and Lyon ( in Gaul ) , Ravenna , Milan , Aquileia , Rome ( in modern Italy ) ; Siscia ( modern Croatia ) , Sirmium ( modern Serbia ) , Thessaloniki ( Greece ) , Constantinople , Cyzicus , Nicomedia , and Antioch ( modern Turkey ) .

The coins were minted under three dynasties of Roman emperors . The earliest are the successors of the Constantinian dynasty , followed by the Valentinianic emperors , and finally the Theodosian

emperors . The collegiate system of rule ( or Consortium imperii ) meant that imperial partners would mint coins in each other 's names at the mints under their jurisdiction . The overlapping reigns of Eastern and Western emperors often allow changes of type to be dated to within part of a reign . So the latest coins in the hoard , of Western ruler Honorius ( 393 ? 423 ) and his challenger Constantine III ( 407 ? 11 ) , can be demonstrated to belong to the earlier parts of their reigns as they correspond to the lifetime of the Eastern Emperor Arcadius , who died in 408 . Thus , the coins provide a terminus post quem or earliest possible date for the deposition of the hoard of 408 .

The siliquae in the Hoard were struck mainly at Western mints in Gaul and Italy . It is unknown whether this is because coins from further East rarely reached Britain through trade , or because the Eastern mints rarely struck siliquae . The production of coins seems to follow the location of the Imperial court at the time ; for instance , the concentration of Trier coins is much greater after 367 , perhaps associated with Gratian moving his court to Trier .

=== Clipping of the silver coins ===

Almost every silver siliqua in the hoard has had its edge clipped to some degree . This is typical of Roman silver coin finds of this period in Britain , although clipped coins are very unusual through the rest of the Roman Empire . The clipping process invariably leaves the imperial portrait on the front of the coin intact , but often damages the mint mark , inscription , and the image on the obverse .

The reasons for the clipping of coins are controversial . Possible explanations include fraud , a deliberate attempt to maintain a stable ratio between gold and silver coins , or an official attempt to provide a new source of silver bullion while maintaining the same number of coins in circulation .

The huge number of clipped coins in the Hoxne Hoard has made it possible for archaeologists to observe the process of coin @-@ clipping in detail . The coins were evidently cut face @-@ up to avoid damaging the portrait . The average level of clipping is roughly the same for coins dating from 350 onwards .

=== Gold jewellery ===

All the jewellery in the hoard is gold , and all gold items in the hoard , other than coins , are jewellery . None of the jewellery is unequivocally masculine , although several pieces , like the rings , might have been worn by either gender . There is one body chain , six necklaces , three rings , and nineteen bracelets . The total weight of the gold jewellery is about 1 kilogram ( 2 @.@ 2 lb ) , and the average metal content of the jewellery pieces is 91 @.@ 5 % gold ( about 22 carat ) , with small proportions in the metal of silver and copper .

The most important gold item in the hoard is the body chain , which consists of four finely looped gold chains , made using the " loop @-@ in @-@ loop " method called " fox tail " in modern jewellery , and attached at front and back to plaques . At the front , the chains have terminals in the shape of lions ' heads and the plaque has jewels mounted in gold cells , with a large amethyst surrounded by four smaller garnets alternating with four empty cells , which probably held pearls that have decayed . At the back , the chains meet at a mount centred on a gold solidus of Gratian ( r . 375 ? 383 ) , which has been converted from an earlier use , probably as a pendant , and which may have been a family heirloom . Body chains of this type appear in Roman art , sometimes on the goddess Venus or nymphs ; some examples have erotic contexts , but they are also worn by respectable high @-@ ranking ladies . They may have been regarded as a suitable gift for a bride . The Hoxne body chain , worn tightly , would fit a woman with a bust @-@ size of 76 ? 81 cm ( 30 ? 32 in ) . Few body chains have survived ; one of the most complete , from the early Byzantine era and found in Egypt , is also in the British Museum .

One of the necklaces features lion @-@ headed terminals , and another includes stylized dolphins . The other four are relatively plain loop @-@ in @-@ loop chains , although one has a Chi @-@ Rho symbol ( ? ) on the clasp , the only Christian element in the jewellery . Necklaces of similar lengths would normally be worn in the Roman period with a pendant , but no pendants were found in the hoard . The three rings were originally set with gems , which might have been natural gemstones ,

or pieces of coloured glass ; however , these were taken from the rings before they were buried , perhaps for reuse . The rings are of similar design , one with an oval bezel , one with a circular bezel , and one with a large oblong bezel . The 19 bracelets buried in the hoard include three sets of four matching gold bracelets . Though many similar bracelets have survived , sets of four are most unusual ; they may have been worn two on each arm , or possibly were shared by two related women . One set has been decorated by corrugating the gold with lateral and transverse grooves ; the other two sets bear pierced @-@ work geometric designs . Another five bracelets bear hunting scenes , common in Late Roman decorative art . Three have the designs executed in pierced @-@ work , whereas two others are in repoussé . One bracelet is the sole gold item in the hoard to carry an inscription : it reads " VTERE FELIX DOMINA IVLIANE " in Latin , meaning " Use [ this ] happily , Lady Juliane " . The expression *utere felix* ( or sometimes *uti felix* ) is the second most common inscriptional formula on items from Roman Britain , and is used to wish good luck , well @-@ being and joy . The formula is not specifically Christian , but it sometimes occurs in an explicitly Christian context , for example , together with a Chi @-@ Rho symbol .

The jewellery may have represented the " reserve " items rarely or never used from the collection of a wealthy woman or family . Some of the most common types of jewellery are absent ; brooches , pendants , and ear @-@ rings for example . Items set with gems are notably missing , although they were very much in the taste of the day . Catherine Johns , former Senior Curator for Roman Britain at the British Museum , speculates that the current or favourite jewellery of the owner was not included in the hoard .

= = = Silver items = = =

The hoard contains about 100 silver and silver @-@ gilt items ; the number is imprecise because there are unmatched broken parts . They include a statuette of a leaping tigress , made as a handle for an object such as a jug or lamp ; four pepper @-@ pots ( *piperatoria* ) ; a beaker ; a vase or juglet ( a small jug ) ; four bowls ; a small dish ; and 98 silver spoons and ladles . The beaker and juglet are decorated with similar leaf and stem patterns , and the juglet has three gilded bands . In contrast , the small bowls and dish are plain , and it is presumed that the owners of the Hoard had many more such items , probably including the large decorated dishes found in other hoards . Many pieces are gilded in parts to accentuate the decoration . The technique of fire @-@ gilding with mercury was used , as was typical at the time .

= = = Piperatoria = = =

The pepper @-@ pots include one vessel , finely modelled after a wealthy or imperial lady , which soon became known as the " Empress " pepper @-@ pot . The woman 's hair , jewellery , and clothing are carefully represented , and gilding is used to emphasize many details . She is holding a scroll in her left hand , giving the impression of education as well as wealth . Other pepper @-@ pots in the hoard are modelled into a statue of Hercules and Antaeus , an ibex , and a hare and hound together . Not all such spice dispensers held pepper ? they were used to dispense other spices as well ? but are grouped in discussions as pepper @-@ pots . Each of those found in this hoard has a mechanism in the base to rotate an internal disc , which controls the aperture of two holes in the base . When fully open , the containers could have been filled using a funnel ; when part @-@ open they could have been shaken over food or drink to add the spices .

Piperatorium is generally translated as pepper @-@ pot , and black pepper is considered the most likely condiment these were used for . Pepper is only one of a number of expensive , high @-@ status spices which these vessels might have dispensed , however . The piperatoria are rare examples of this type of Roman silverware , and according to Johns the Hoxne finds have " significantly expanded the date range , the typology and the iconographic scope of the type " . The trade and use of pepper in this period has been supported with evidence of mineralized black pepper at three Northern Province sites recovered in the 1990s , and from the Vindolanda tablets which record the purchase of an unspecified quantity of pepper for two denarii . Archaeological sites

with contemporary finds have revealed spices , including coriander , poppy , celery , dill , summer savory , mustard , and fennel .

They just couldn 't get enough of it , wars were fought over it . And if you look at Roman recipes , every one starts with : ' Take pepper and mix with ... ' ( Christine McFadden , food writer )

When the Romans came to Britain they brought a lot of material culture and a lot of habits with them that made the people of Britain feel Roman ; they identified with the Roman culture . Wine was one of these ? olive oil was another ? and pepper would have been a more valuable one in this same sort of ' set ' of Romanitas . ( Roberta Tomber , British Museum Visiting Fellow )

So regularly filling a large silver pepper pot like ours would have taken its toll on the grocery bills . And the household that owned our pepper pot had another three silver pots , for pepper or other spice ? one shaped as Hercules in action , and two in the shape of animals . This is dizzying extravagance , the stuff of bankers ' bonuses . But the pepper pots are just a tiny part of the great hoard of buried treasure . ( Neil MacGregor , British Museum Director )

= = = Other silver pieces = = =

The tigress is a solid @-@ cast statuette weighing 480 grams ( 17 oz ) and measuring 15 @. @ 9 cm ( 6 @. @ 3 in ) from head to tail . She was designed to be soldered onto some other object as its handle ; traces of tin were found beneath her rear paws , which have a " smoothly concave curve " . She looks most aesthetically pleasing when the serpentine curves of her head , back , rump , and tail form a line at an angle of about 45 ° , when the rear paws are flat , allowing for their curve . Her gender is obvious as there are six engorged teats under her belly . She is carefully decorated on her back , but her underside is " quite perfunctorily finished " . Her stripes are represented by two engraved lines , with a black niello inlay between them , in most places not meeting the engraved lines . Neither her elongated body , nor the distribution of the stripes are accurate for the species ; she has a long dorsal stripe running from the skull along the spine to the start of the tail , which is typical of tabby cats rather than tigers . The figure has no stripes around her tail , which thickens at the end , suggesting a thick fur tip as in a lion 's tail , which tigers do not have , although Roman art usually gives them one .

The large collection of spoons includes 51 cochlearia , which are small spoons with shallow bowls and long , tapering handles with a pointed end which was used to pierce eggs and spear small pieces of food ? as the Romans did not use forks at the table . There are 23 cigni , which are much rarer , having large rather shallow spoons with shorter , bird @-@ headed handles ; and about 20 deep round spoons or small ladles and strainer @-@ spoons . Many are decorated with abstract motifs and some with dolphins or fanciful marine creatures . Many of the spoons are decorated with a Christian monogram cross or Chi @-@ Rho symbol , and sometimes , also with the Greek letters alpha and omega ( an appellation for Jesus , who is described as the alpha and omega in the Book of Revelation ) . Three sets of ten spoons , and several other spoons , are decorated with such Christian symbols . As is often the case with Roman silver spoons , many also have a Latin inscription on them , either simply naming their owner or wishing their owner long life . In total , eight different people are named ; seven on the spoons , and one on the single beaker in the hoard : Aurelius Ursicinus , Datianus , Euharius , Faustinus , Peregrinus , Quintus , Sanctus , and Silvicola . The most common name is " Aurelius Ursicinus " , which occurs on a set of five cochlearia and five ladles . It is unknown whether any of the people named in these inscriptions would have been involved in hiding the hoard or were even alive at the time it was buried .

Although only one of these inscriptions is explicitly Christian ( vivas in deo ) , inscriptions on silver spoons comprising a name followed by vivas or vivat usually can be identified as Christian in other late Roman hoards ; for example the Mildenhall Treasure has five spoons , three with Chi @-@ Rho monograms , and two with vivas inscriptions ( PASCENTIA VIVAS and PAPITTEDO VIVAS ) . The formula vir bone vivas also occurs on a spoon from the Thetford Hoard , but whereas the Thetford Hoard spoons have mostly pagan inscriptions ( e.g. Dei Fau [ ni ] Medugeni " of the god Faunus Medugenus [ the Mead begotten ] " ) , the Hoxne Hoard does not have any inscriptions of a specifically pagan nature , and the hoard may be considered to have come from a Christian

household ( or households ) . It often is assumed that Roman spoons with Chi @-@ Rho monograms or the vivas in deo formula are either christening spoons ( perhaps presented at adult baptism ) or were used in the Eucharist ceremony , but that is not certain .

There are also a number of small items of uncertain function , described as toiletry pieces . Some are picks , others perhaps scrapers , and three have empty sockets at one end , which probably contained organic material such as bristle , to make a brush . The size of these would be appropriate for cleaning the teeth or applying cosmetics , among other possibilities .

The average purity of the silver items is 96 % . The remainder of the metal is made up of copper and a small amount of zinc , with trace amounts of lead , gold , and bismuth present . The zinc is likely to have been present in a copper brass used to alloy the silver when the objects were made , and the lead , gold , and bismuth probably were present in the unrefined silver ore .

= = = Iron and organic materials = = =

The iron objects found in the hoard are likely to all be from the remains of the outer wooden chest . These comprise large iron rings , double @-@ spiked loops and hinges , strap hinges , probable components of locks , angle brackets , wide and narrow iron strips , and nails .

Organic finds are rarely well documented with hoards , because most coin and treasure finds are removed hastily by the finder or have previously been disrupted by farm work rather than excavated . The Hoxne organic finds included bone , wood and other plant material , and leather . Small fragments from a decorated ivory pyxis ( a cylindrical lidded box ) were found , along with more than 150 tiny shaped pieces of bone inlay or veneer , probably from a wooden box or boxes that have decayed . Minuscule fragments of wood adhering to metal objects were identified as belonging to nine species of timber , all native to Britain : wood traces associated with the iron fittings of the outer chest established that it was made of oak . Silver locks and hinges were from two small wooden boxes or caskets , one made of decorative cherry wood and one made of yew . Some wheat straw survived from padding between the plain silver bowls , which also bore faint traces of linen cloth . Leather fragments were too degraded for identification .

= = Scientific analysis of finds = =

The initial metallurgical analysis of the hoard was carried out in late 1992 and early 1993 by Cowell and Hook for the procedural purposes of the coroner 's inquest . This analysis used X @-@ ray fluorescence , a technique that was applied again later to cleaned surfaces on specimens .

All 29 items of gold jewellery were analysed , with silver and copper found to be present . Results were typical for Roman silver in hoards of the period , in terms of the presence of copper alloyed with the silver to harden it , and trace elements . One repaired bowl showed a mercury @-@ based solder .

The large armlet of pierced gold ( opus interrasile ) showed traces of hematite on the reverse side , which probably would have been used as a type of jeweller 's rouge . This is the earliest known and documented use of this technique on Roman jewellery . Gilt items showed the presence of mercury , indicating the mercury gilding technique . The black inlay on the cast silver tigress shows the niello technique , but with silver sulphide rather than lead sulphide . The settings of stones where garnet and amethyst remain , in the body chain , have vacant places presumed to be where pearls were set , and show elemental sulphur as adhesive or filler .

= = Burial and historical background = =

The Hoxne Hoard was buried during a period of great upheaval in Britain , marked by the collapse of Roman authority in the province , the departure of the majority of the Roman army , and the first of a wave of attacks by the Anglo @-@ Saxons . Attacks on Italy by the Visigoths around the turn of the fifth century caused the general Stilicho to recall Roman army units from Rhaetia , Gaul , and Britannia . While Stilicho held off the Visigoth attack , the Western provinces were left defenceless

against Suebi , Alans , and Vandals who crossed the frozen Rhine in 406 and overran Gaul . The remaining Roman troops in Britain , fearing that the invaders would cross the Channel , elected a series of emperors of their own to lead the defence .

The first two such emperors were put to death by the dissatisfied soldiery in a matter of months , but the third , who would declare himself Constantine III , led a British force across the English Channel to Gaul in his bid to become Roman Emperor . After scoring victories against the " barbarians " in Gaul , Constantine was defeated by an army loyal to Honorius and beheaded in 411 . Meanwhile , Constantine 's departure had left Britain vulnerable to attacks from Saxon and Irish raiders .

After 410 , Roman histories give little information about events in Britain . Writing in the next decade , Saint Jerome described Britain after 410 as a " province fertile of tyrants " , suggesting the collapse of central authority and the rise of local leaders in response to repeated raids by Saxons and others . By 452 , a Gaulish chronicler was able to state that some ten years previously " the Britons , which to this time had suffered from various disasters and misfortunes , are reduced by the power of the Saxons " .

= = = Burial = = =

Exactly who owned the Hoxne Hoard , and their reasons for burying it , are not known , and probably never will be . However , the hoard itself and its context provide some important clues . The hoard evidently was buried carefully , some distance from any buildings . The hoard very likely represents only a portion of the precious @-@ metal wealth of the person , or people , who owned it ; many common types of jewellery are missing , as are large tableware items such as those found in the Mildenhall Treasure . It is unlikely that anyone would have possessed the rich gold and silver items found in the Hoxne Hoard without owning items in those other categories . Whoever owned the hoard also would have had wealth in the form of land , livestock , buildings , furniture , and clothing . At most , the Hoxne Hoard represents a moderate portion of the wealth of someone rich ; conversely , it may represent a minuscule fraction of the wealth of a family that was incredibly wealthy .

The appearance of the names " Aurelius Ursicinus " and " Juliane " on items in the Hoxne Hoard need not imply that people by those names owned the rest of the hoard , either at the time of its burial or previously . There are no historical references to an " Aurelius Ursicinus " in Britain in this period . While a " Marcus Aurelius Ursicinus " is recorded in the Praetorian Guard in Rome in the period 222 ? 235 , a soldier or official of the late fourth or early fifth century would be more likely to take the imperial nomen Flavius , rather than Aurelius . This leads Tomlin to speculate " The name " Aurelius Ursicinus " might sound old @-@ fashioned ; it would certainly have been more appropriate to a provincial landowner than an army officer or government official " .

There are a number of theories about why the hoard was buried . One is that the hoard represented a deliberate attempt to keep wealth safe , perhaps in response to one of the many upheavals facing Roman Britain in the early fifth century . This is not the only hypothesis , however . Archaeologist Peter Guest argues that the hoard was buried because the items in it were used as part of a system of gift @-@ exchange , and as Britain separated from the Roman Empire , they were no longer required . A third hypothesis is that the Hoxne Hoard represents the proceeds of a robbery , buried to avoid detection .

= = = Late Roman hoards = = =

The Hoxne Hoard comes from the later part of a century ( c . 350 ? 450 ) from which an unusually large number of hoards have been discovered , mostly from the fringes of the Empire . Such hoards vary in character , but many include the large pieces of silver tableware lacking in the Hoxne Hoard : dishes , jugs and ewers , bowls and cups , some plain , but many highly decorated . Two other major hoards discovered in modern East Anglia in the last century are from the fourth century ; both are now in the British Museum . The Mildenhall Treasure from Suffolk consists of thirty items of



silver tableware deposited in the late fourth century , many large and elaborately decorated , such as the " Great Dish " . The Water Newton Treasure from Cambridgeshire is smaller , but is the earliest hoard to have a clearly Christian character , apparently belonging to a church or chapel ; the assorted collection probably includes items made in Britain . The Kaiseraugst Treasure from the site at Augusta Raurica in modern Switzerland ( now in Basel ) contained 257 items , including a banqueting service with sophisticated decoration . The Esquiline Treasure , found in Rome , evidently came from a wealthy Roman family of the late fourth century , and includes several large items , including the " Casket of Projecta " . Most of the Esquiline Treasure is in the British Museum , as are bowls and dishes from the Carthage Treasure which belonged to a known family in Roman Africa around 400 .

The Mildenhall , Kaiseraugst , and Esquiline treasures comprise large items of tableware . Other hoards , however , such as those found at Thetford and Beaurains consist mostly of coins , jewellery , and small tableware items ; these two hoards probably are pagan votive offerings . A hoard from Traprain Law in Scotland contains decorated Roman silver pieces cut up and folded , showing regard for the value of their metal alone , and may represent loot from a raid .

= = = Local context = = =

Hoxne , where the hoard was discovered , is located in Suffolk in modern @-@ day East Anglia . Although no large , aristocratic villa has been located in the Hoxne area , there was a Roman settlement nearby from the first through fourth centuries at Scole , about 3 @.@ 2 km ( 2 @.@ 0 mi ) north ? west of Hoxne , at the intersection of two Roman roads . One of these , Pye Road , ( today 's A140 ) , linked Venta Icenorum ( Caistor St Edmund ) to Camulodunum ( Colchester ) and Londinium ( London ) .

The field in which the hoard was discovered was shown by the 1994 excavation to probably have been cleared by the early Bronze Age , when it began to be used for agriculture and settlement . Some settlement activity occurred near the hoard findspot by the first half of the first millennium BC , but there is no evidence of Roman buildings in the immediate vicinity . The field where the hoard was deposited may have been in cultivation during the early phase of the Roman period but the apparent absence of fourth @-@ century coins suggests that it may have been converted to pasture or else had reverted to woodland by that time .

The Hoxne Hoard is not the only cache of Roman treasure to have been discovered in the area . In 1781 some labourers unearthed a lead box by the river at Clint Farm in Eye , 4 @.@ 8 km ( 3 @.@ 0 mi ) south of Scole and 3 @.@ 2 km ( 2 @.@ 0 mi ) south ? west of Hoxne . The box contained about 600 Roman gold coins dating to the reigns of Valens and Valentinian I ( reigned 364 ? 375 ) , Gratian ( 375 ? 383 ) , Theodosius I ( 378 ? 395 ) , Arcadius ( 395 ? 408 ) , and Honorius ( 393 ? 423 ) . This was the largest hoard of Roman gold coins ever discovered in Britain , but the coins were dispersed during the 18th and 19th centuries , and cannot now be easily be identified in coin collections . As a result , the relationship ( if any ) between the Eye hoard and that in Hoxne cannot be determined , even if the proximity suggests they may have been related .

Soon after the Hoxne Hoard was discovered , there was speculation , based on the name " Faustinus " engraved on one of the spoons , that it may have come from the " Villa Faustini " that is recorded in Itinerary V of the Antonine Itinerary . The exact location of Villa Faustini is unknown , but as it was the first station after Colchester , it is believed to have been somewhere on the Pye Road ( modern A140 ) and one of the possible locations for it is the modern village of Scole , only a couple of miles from Hoxne . This early theory has since been rejected , however , because " Faustinus " was historically a common name , and it only occurs on a single spoon in the hoard . Furthermore , the logic of using inscriptions on individual items in the hoard to determine ownership of the hoard as a whole is considered flawed . Based on the dating of the coins in the hoard , the majority of which belong to the period 394 ? 405 , it also has been speculated that the contents of the hoard originally belonged to a military family that accompanied Count Theodosius to Britain in 368 ? 369 , and which may have left with Constantine III in 407 .

= = Acquisition , display , and impact = =

The hoard was acquired by the British Museum in April 1994 . As the Museum 's entire purchase fund amounted to only £ 1 @. @ 4 million at the time , the hoard had to be purchased with the assistance of donors that included the National Heritage Memorial Fund , the National Art Collections Fund ( now the Art Fund ) , and the J. Paul Getty Trust . The grants from these and other benefactors enabled the museum to raise the £ 1 @. @ 75 million needed for the acquisition .

Items from the hoard have been on display almost continuously since the treasure was received at the British Museum . Some items were displayed at the Museum as early as September 1993 in response to public interest . Much of the hoard was exhibited at Ipswich Museum in 1994 ? 1995 . From 1997 , the most important items went on permanent display at the British Museum in a new and enlarged Roman Britain gallery ( Room 49 ) , alongside the roughly contemporary Thetford Hoard , and adjacent to the Mildenhall Treasure , which contains large silver vessels of types that are absent from the Hoxne Hoard . Some items from the Hoxne Hoard were included in " Treasure : Finding Our Past " , a touring exhibition that was shown in five cities in England and Wales in 2003 . A perspex reconstruction of the chest and inner boxes in which it was deposited was created for this tour , showing the arrangement of the different types of items with sample items inside . It is now part of the permanent display in London , along with other items laid out more traditionally .

The first comprehensive research on the Hoard was published in the full catalogue of the coins by Peter Guest in 2005 , and the catalogue of the other objects by Catherine Johns in 2010 . The hoard was third in the list of British archaeological finds selected by experts at the British Museum for the 2003 BBC Television documentary Our Top Ten Treasures , which included archive footage of its finder , Eric Lawes , and the " Empress " pepper @- @ pot was selected as item 40 in the 2010 BBC Radio 4 series A History of the World in 100 Objects .

The discovery and excavation of the Hoxne Hoard improved the relationship between the archaeological profession and the community of metal detectorists . Archaeologists were pleased that Lawes reported the find promptly and largely undisturbed , allowing a professional excavation . Metal detectorists noted that Lawes ' efforts were appreciated by the archaeological profession . The 1996 Treasure Act is thought to have contributed to more hoards being made available to archaeologists . The act changed the law so that the owner of the land and the person who finds the hoard have a strong stake in the value of the discovery . The manner of the finding of the Hoxne Hoard by metal detector , and its widespread publicity , contributed to changing the previous system of common law for dealing with treasure trove into a statutory legal framework that takes into account technology such as metal detectors , provides incentives for treasure hunters to report finds , and considers the needs of museums and scholars .