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## **Largest ever Anglo-Saxon gold treasure unveiled**

Never-seen-before artefacts from the largest and most valuable ever find of Anglo-Saxon gold treasure, is set to go on show in The Potteries Museum & Art Gallery in Stoke-on-Trent.

The £3.285m artefacts, known as 'The Staffordshire Hoard', comprise in excess of 1,500 individual items, mostly gold, with some silver. Many are decorated with precious stones.

Most of the treasure appears to date from the seventh century, and the supreme quality of the craftsmanship on many items indicates royal ownership.

The vast majority of the items are martial – war materials from the battlefield. The artefacts were discovered in what had been the heartland of the Anglo-Saxon kingdom of Mercia, which was militarily aggressive and expansionist during the 7<sup>th</sup> century under kings Penda, Wulfhere and Aethelred. Some items are decorated in what is known as 'Anglo-Saxon Style II', which consists of strange animals, interlaced around each other, with intertwined jaws. Many are inlaid with garnets.

The hoard contains approximately 5kgs of gold and 2.5kg of silver. Sutton Hoo, the world-famous Anglo-Saxon burial ground in South East Suffolk, had 1.66kg of gold.

Leslie Webster, former keeper, department of prehistory and Europe at the British Museum, said: "This is going to alter our perceptions of Anglo-Saxon England as radically, if not more so, as the Sutton Hoo discoveries. It is absolutely the equivalent of finding a new *Lindisfarne Gospels* or *Book of Kells*."

The hoard was first discovered in July by metal detectorist Terry Herbert on private farmland in Staffordshire, with the written consent of the landowner. The hoard has been valued by the Treasure Valuation Committee at the British Museum, and around 80 of the most significant artefacts, including items that have never been seen before, are set to be displayed at the Potteries Museum and Art Gallery **from 13<sup>th</sup> February to 7<sup>th</sup> March**. Stoke-on-Trent is now working to jointly acquire the hoard with Birmingham to ensure the treasure remains in the region in which it was found.

Stoke-on-Trent City Council's museums service is the repository for archaeological remains recovered from across Staffordshire, including the area where the hoard was discovered. The Potteries Museum and Art Gallery holds a designated collection of archaeological material that is widely acknowledged as being of both national and international importance and the best in the region.

Local history collections officer Deb Klemperer is a specialist in Saxo-Norman Staffordshire pottery. She said: "I have been involved in archaeology for 34 years, the last 20 at the Potteries Museum and Art Gallery – one of the largest local authority museums. My first view of the hoard brought tears to my eyes – the Dark Ages in Staffordshire have never looked so bright nor so beautiful."

Further information about the Stoke-on-Trent, which is also celebrating 100 years of being a city in 2010, can be seen at [www.visitstoke.co.uk](http://www.visitstoke.co.uk).

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