

**National
Museums
Scotland**

Treasures of the Viking Age

The Galloway Hoard



Available from
late 2026



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Cover image: The great range of materials in the Galloway Hoard – here photographed pre-conservation – makes it unlike any other Viking-age hoard

Left: Anglo-Saxon runic inscriptions on Viking-age silver arm-rings show the unusual cultural mix in the Galloway Hoard

"Nothing like this has ever been found in Scotland... research so far is pointing to a new understanding of Scotland in the international context of the earliest Viking Age."

Dr Martin Goldberg, Curator, National Museums Scotland

Introducing the Galloway Hoard

Treasures of the Viking Age: The Galloway Hoard presents one of the most exciting archaeological finds this century, and the richest and most varied trove of Viking-age objects ever found in Britain or Ireland.

Discovered in 2014 in south-west Scotland, the Hoard had lain buried for over a thousand years. Now, after a decade of fundraising, careful conservation and an international research project, this treasure has transformed our understanding of the early medieval world.

Curated by a specialist team led by Dr Martin Goldberg, Principal Curator of Early Medieval and Viking Collections at National Museums Scotland, this exhibition takes visitors on a journey deep into the intricate secrets of the Hoard. Watch as centuries of dirt is cleaned from a rare Anglo-Saxon cross to unveil stunning symbols of the Four Evangelists, learn how material analysis is used to trace the exact location silver was mined, and decode runic inscriptions to reveal the names of the Hoard's possible owners. An intriguing picture emerges – of an interconnected world, where cultures mingled, communities evolved and real people made, traded, treasured and buried the Galloway Hoard, over a thousand years ago.

After a successful tour around Scotland in 2021–22, the exhibition has been updated to showcase the latest research findings, which have attracted worldwide interest. This international tour is a unique opportunity to host the most significant medieval treasure unearthed in a generation, and to offer visitors an insight into the science behind the ground-breaking discoveries.



1

1. A unique golden bird-pin

Opposite: Gold filigree detail on the black-stone pendant



A journey through the exhibition

Full of unexpected twists and turns, this exhibition mirrors both the unearthing of the Hoard from the ground, and the journey of the researchers and scientists as they uncover its secrets. More and more unusual material is revealed, from upper layers of silver arm rings inscribed with runes, to a lidded vessel containing a host of curious and personal treasured heirlooms.

The exhibition opens by situating the visitor in time and place – 900AD, a critical moment in history when Viking raiders ransacked coastlines and the nations we now know as Scotland, England and Ireland were just beginning to take form. But as the visitor continues through the exhibition, uncovering the Hoard layer by layer, it becomes clear that these objects are taking us beyond the shores of Scotland to mainland Europe, Western Asia and on to the Silk Roads.

Large-scale photography, bespoke films, interactives and expressive design play an integral role in the exhibition journey. Visitors are invited to hear directly from the project researchers, play with 3D digital models of the objects, and examine exquisite details, enlarged in stunning high resolution. Through this exploration characters from the distant past begin to emerge – names, possible family relationships, and hints of the people who buried their greatest treasure in the earth of Galloway at the dawn of the Viking Age.



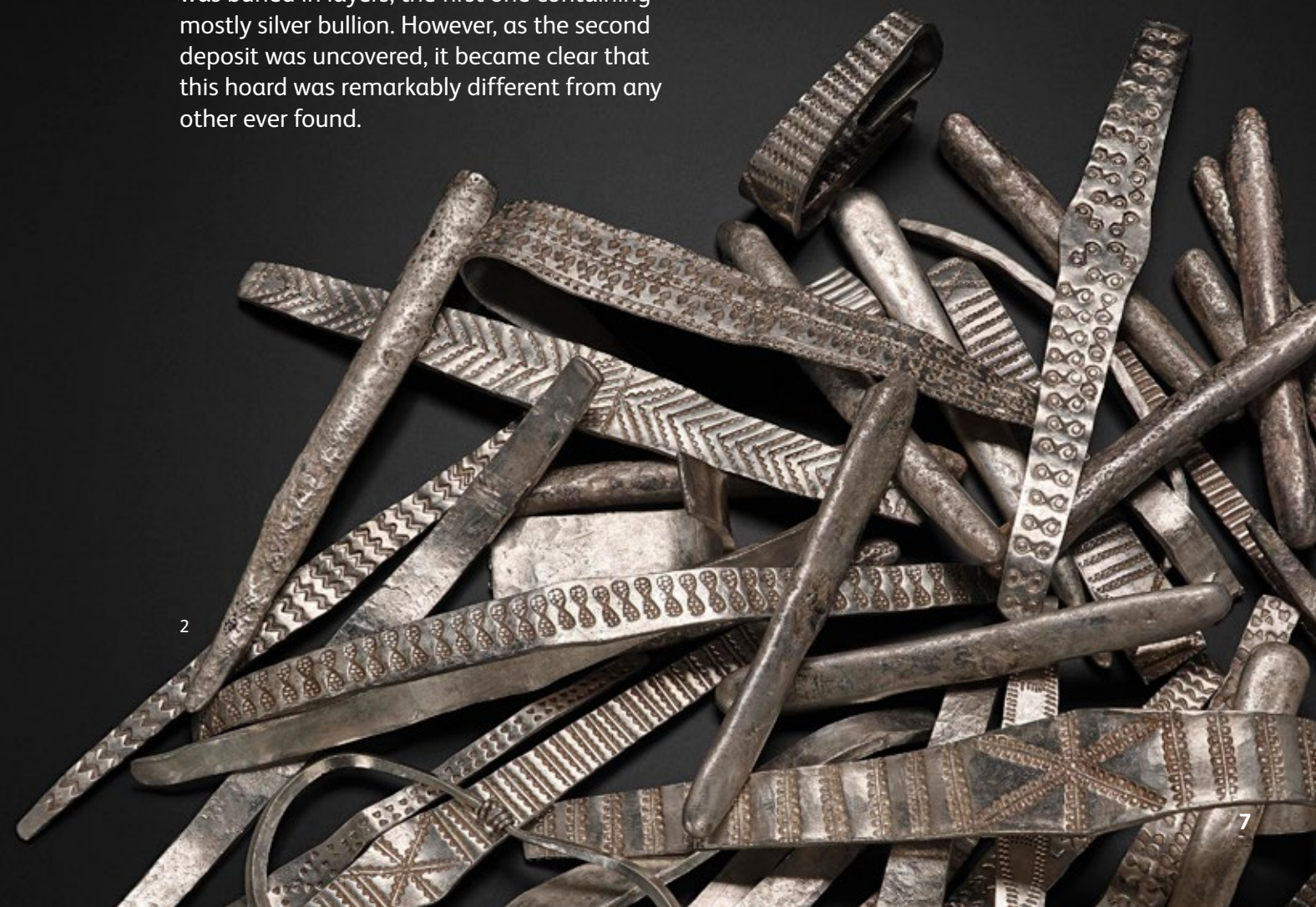
1. The largest single collection of Late Anglo-Saxon brooches
2. Over 5kg of silver bullion and arm-rings

1 Introduction

The exhibition begins by introducing the historical context in which the Galloway Hoard was buried, about 100 years after the first Viking attacks in Britain and Ireland. With the support of a film, this section presents a society driven by silver, the main component of most Viking-age hoards. The Galloway Hoard was buried in layers, the first one containing mostly silver bullion. However, as the second deposit was uncovered, it became clear that this hoard was remarkably different from any other ever found.

“We like to think of objects as having lives...Our research will trace the stories of the objects back to when and where they were made, as well as why they were buried at that time and in that place.”

Dr Martin Goldberg, Curator, National Museums Scotland





© Ruth Armstrong Photography

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2 A hoard of Viking silver?

Visitors embark on a journey to discover why the Galloway Hoard is a much more complex discovery than the initial findings indicated. A film about the value and use of silver bullion contextualizes the groupings of ingots and arm-rings which made up the bulk of the top and lower layers of the Hoard.

Objects featured here include an Anglo-Saxon cross found among the bullion, displayed alongside a film about the careful conservation process which revealed depictions of the Four Evangelists. Other highlights include arm-rings with runic inscriptions on them. Rather than the Norse runes we might expect in a 'Viking' hoard, they are Old English name elements. Four inscriptions in the lower bullion group hint at four owners, as does a cluster of four large, decorated arm-rings bound together, which surrounded a little wooden box that contained a gold ring, an ingot and an exotic-looking bird-shaped pin.



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1. Anglo-Saxon cross (detail showing St Matthew)
2. Ribbon arm-ring cluster
3. Gold ring, bird-pin and ingot



1

© Historic Environment Scotland



2

© Ruth Armstrong Photography

1. The textile-wrapped vessel, as it looked when discovered
2. Film of the vessel
3. A 3D printed replica of what the vessel looks like underneath the textile wrapping

3 The vessel

Despite the very unusual aspects of the silver found in the upper deposit, the objects that truly make the Galloway Hoard uniquely curious among Viking Age treasures are found tightly packed in a silver-gilt lidded vessel buried in the lower deposit.

The vessel itself is wrapped in two layers of textile – an incredibly rare survival of organic material which provides important clues about how the Hoard was brought together over time. To protect the textiles, CT scanning was used to reveal the decorated surface of the vessel. Tigers, leopards and religious motifs associated with Central Asia hint at an origin very distant from the shores of Scotland.

The real vessel cannot be displayed because of the fragility of the encrusted textiles, but the exhibition features a life-sized 3D printed model complete with its own silver gilt, and a film in which researchers explain what makes this object so special.



3



4 Unpacking the vessel

Visitors can now explore the various mysterious and clearly cherished objects that were packed inside the vessel, many carefully wrapped. Among these are unique examples of precious Anglo-Saxon metalwork, such as brooches with characterful faces symbolising hearing and sight, or intricate carvings of fantastical beasts and flora.

Not everything inside the vessel is made of precious materials. A collection of curios made of glass, rock-crystal, and even balls of dirt were nestled among silks. They were likely to have been handed down for generations as heirlooms, as shown by the only coin in the hoard, minted for Coenwulf, King of Mercia, who died in AD821. This older coin was incorporated into a pendant with an heirloom bead. A film delves into these objects in greater detail.

1. Graphic showing the items contained in the vessel

2. Image of the base of the original rock crystal jar with Latin letters spelling out 'Bishop Hyguald made this'



2

5 A changed view

This final section showcases some of the most bizarre and intriguing treasures in the Galloway Hoard. A trio of gold, jewelled beast heads, threaded together with the remnants of a silken cord, has shed new light on how these objects may have been used. A curious pendant made of ordinary black stone, normally used as a tool to test the purity of gold, has been treated as a ritual object and encased in golden filigree. Meanwhile, a replica of a rock crystal jar tells the story of an object that has travelled thousands of miles and been repurposed by a 'Bishop Hyguald' who had his name spelled out in gold letters.

Visitors are left with the knowledge that an air of mystery still surrounds the Galloway Hoard. With every answer more questions emerge, and research on this spectacular treasure will continue for decades to come.



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1. Dr Martin Goldberg

2. Gold animal-headed mounts

Star objects

The exhibition presents extraordinary objects from the Galloway Hoard, capturing a variety of styles, materials, and origins. Each object provides a unique insight into the wider world of the Viking Age.



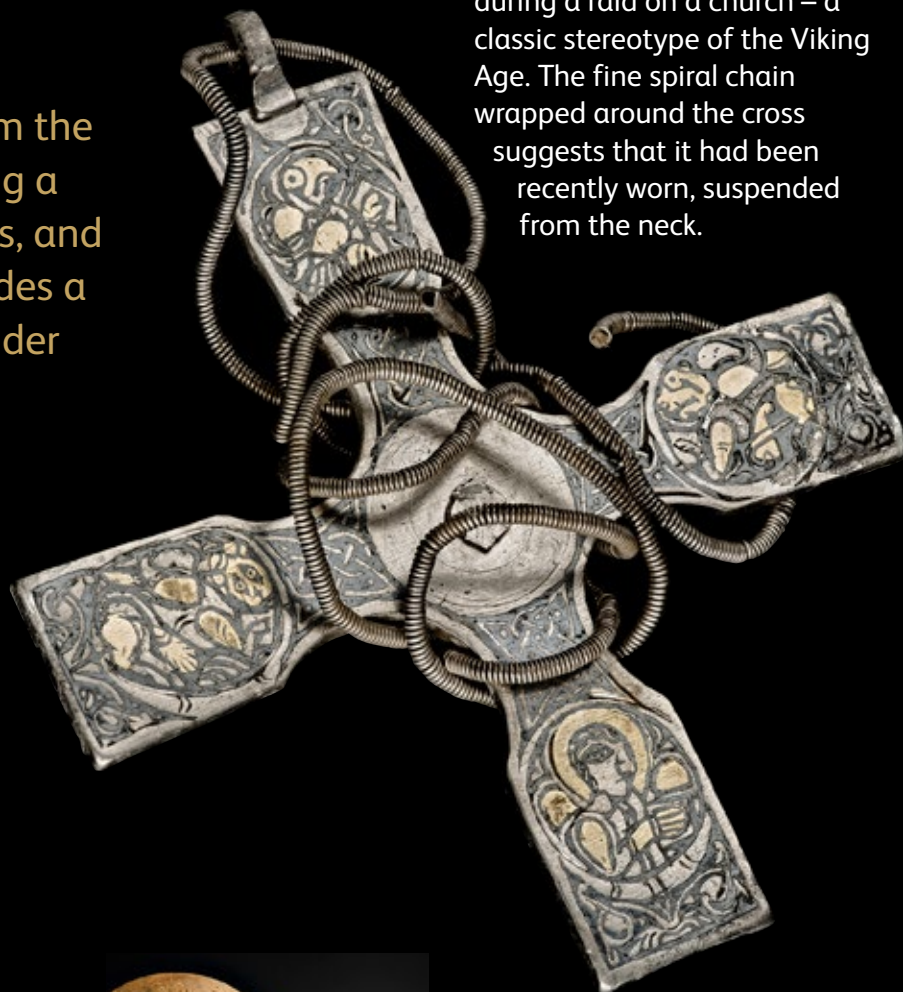
Bird-pin

Gold is much rarer to find than silver in Viking-age hoards. The gold objects in the Hoard are distinct and individual, perhaps coming from distant places and different manufacturing traditions. This bird-pin is beautifully crafted, but its meaning is enigmatic. Reminiscent of a flamingo, it could represent a phoenix symbolising Christ's resurrection.



Pectoral cross

Christian objects are unusual in Viking-age hoards. We can easily imagine this cross being robbed from a Christian cleric during a raid on a church – a classic stereotype of the Viking Age. The fine spiral chain wrapped around the cross suggests that it had been recently worn, suspended from the neck.



Relic beads and pendants

The vessel contained glass beads, pendants and curios. Some were probably strung together and most are heavily worn from use. Such beads are more commonly found in burials from the sixth and seventh centuries AD. They were valued for their age and passed down for centuries before they were carefully wrapped and placed in the vessel.



Pendant touchstone

The gold filigree framework of this pendant contains a carefully shaped metamorphic rock. Traces of gold on the stone suggest it was used to test the purity of precious materials. This large pendant was strung on a silk cord and bundled together with other gold objects. The silk cord would have originated in Asia and is the earliest known example found in Scotland.



Entangled arm-rings

There are four elaborately decorated silver ribbon arm-rings that are bound together, as if in a contract. Four arm-rings suggest four people, probably the owners of the silver. The largest is a double arm-ring, twice the size of the others, decorated with beasts, probably meaning one of the owners had a considerably higher status than the rest.



Quatrefoil brooches

Within the vessel was the first collection of late Anglo-Saxon brooches from Scotland, containing three pairs of non-identical brooches. Two brooches are cross-shaped, a design unique to the Galloway Hoard. The iconography depicts two of the five senses – sight and hearing. On one, all the emphasis is on the eyes and on the other (pictured left) the ears are exaggerated – they are ringing because blast horns are being blown.

Specifications

The exhibition premiered at the National Museum of Scotland in 2021, before touring Scotland. It has been updated with the latest research for its international tour.

Size

The exhibition is highly adaptable.

To make the most of the exhibition, a minimum of 300m² is recommended.

Objects

Over 90 objects from the Galloway Hoard. These include decorated silver arm-rings, Anglo-Saxon metalwork such as a cross pendant and brooches, and precious objects decorated with gold filigree.

The exhibition requires high-security display cases and environmentally controlled galleries with constant invigilation.

Target audience

With a breadth of content re-interpreting what is known of the earliest Viking Age in Britain, Ireland and beyond, this exhibition will appeal to wide-ranging audiences interested in archaeology and early medieval history.

The exhibition toolkit includes handling kits and teaching notes designed for school workshops.

Schedule

Remaining opportunities to host are available from late 2026 onwards.

Publication and merchandise

The accompanying book *Treasures of the Viking Age: The Galloway Hoard* by the exhibition curatorial lead, Dr Martin Goldberg, and project conservator and researcher, Dr Mary Davis is available.

License to use specially-commissioned merchandise designs is also available.

Agreement to sell the publication and merchandise is by separate arrangement with National Museums Scotland Enterprises.

Included in the hire fee

- Curation and exhibition concept
- The loan of objects
- The object display mounts
- Collections crating
- The services of our couriers to install and de-install collections
- Exhibition text (in English)
- A selection of audio-visual films and interactive software (in English)
- Project management, including the services of an experienced project manager onsite during exhibition install and de-install
- A toolkit from our Design Studio, including colour palettes, artwork and object layouts
- Press, marketing and digital toolkit including a selection of images
- Support from a leading curatorial specialist around the exhibition launch period
- An educational support and handling kit complete with bespoke-made reproductions.



Our mission is to preserve, interpret and make accessible for all, the past and present of Scotland, other nations and cultures, and the natural world. Around 2.5 million people visit our four venues each year. The National Museum of Scotland, in Edinburgh, is the UK's most visited museum outside London.

Through our touring exhibitions, we offer our internationally important collection and diverse research to audiences worldwide, revealing the many fascinating stories these objects tell.

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