# Former Norfolk police officer jailed for illegal sale of Anglo-Saxon gold coins



David Cockle, a former police officer, was sentenced to 16 months in prison in 2017 for unlawfully selling a collection of ancient gold coins. The ten Merovingian Tremissis coins, unearthed from a Norfolk field, dated back to the sixth or seventh centuries. Cockle's actions, which involved failing to report his finds both to the landowner and to the coroner, were deemed as clear violations of the legal framework governing antiquities, particularly the Treasure Act. Judge Rupert Overbury, presiding over the case, characterised Cockle's conduct as "pure greed" and underscored his gross breach of trust as a serving officer of the law.

The court found that Cockle had neglected the obligation to declare his finds, a requirement critical for preventing such violations within the metal-detecting community. The consequences of his misconduct were compounded by a personal crisis; at the time of his offending, Cockle was enduring a difficult divorce, which had been further complicated by his ex-partner demanding a £10,000 settlement. His actions led not only to his imprisonment but also to his dismissal from the Norfolk Police, where his integrity was irrevocably tarnished.

Cockle's case is particularly notable in light of the contrast with other detectorists at the same site. Another individual had discovered 35 coins but chose to report them correctly, exemplifying the ethical responsibilities within this hobby. The broader context of the incident highlights the evolving relationship between amateur archaeology and legal accountability in the United Kingdom.

Subsequent findings from the same site have transformed the narrative surrounding Norfolk’s archaeological heritage. A hoard discovered between 2014 and 2020, comprising 131 gold coins and additional gold artifacts, has been declared the largest collection of Anglo-Saxon coins ever found in England. This hoard, now housed in Norwich Castle Museum, has captured the public’s imagination and attracted attention for its historical significance, underlining the importance of responsible treasure hunting.

The landowner of the site is set to split a £367,200 reward with the finder of this significant treasure trove, showcasing the benefits that transparent reporting can yield. Had Cockle adhered to the same principles, he would have benefitted too, receiving a share of the reward that instead went solely to the landowner, who also gave permission for the field to be searched.

Despite his previous good character and a long-standing passion for metal detecting, David Cockle’s actions serve as a cautionary tale within the community. The legal system’s firm stance on such misconduct highlights the necessity for ethical standards in a field that blends historic appreciation with private enthusiasm. As the West Norfolk Hoard goes on display, it stands not only as a remarkable archaeological find but also as a testament to the importance of integrity in preserving the past for future generations.

Reference Map: - Paragraph 1: [[1]](https://www.edp24.co.uk/news/25182946.jailed-pc-made-thousands-stolen-coin-hoard/?ref=rss), [[2]](https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-norfolk-39211374)- Paragraph 2: [[3]](https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-norfolk-41283961), [[4]](https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-norfolk-39028660)- Paragraph 3: [[5]](https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2021/nov/03/norfolk-treasure-newly-declared-as-englands-biggest-anglo-saxon-coin-hoard), [[6]](https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/hoard-of-gold-coins-is-englands-largest-early-medieval-find-180979022/)- Paragraph 4: [[7]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/West_Norfolk_Hoard)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.edp24.co.uk/news/25182946.jailed-pc-made-thousands-stolen-coin-hoard/?ref=rss> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-norfolk-39211374> - In 2017, David Cockle, a 50-year-old police officer from Leigh, Greater Manchester, was sentenced to 16 months in prison for stealing 10 ancient gold coins, known as Merovingian Tremissis, from a Norfolk field. He sold the coins for £15,000 without informing the landowner or the coroner, breaching legal requirements for reporting such finds. Judge Rupert Overbury described Cockle's actions as 'pure greed.' Additionally, Cockle was dismissed from Norfolk Police for gross misconduct. Another metal detectorist had discovered 35 similar coins at the same site and reported them honestly, highlighting the contrast in behavior. ([bbc.com](https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-norfolk-39211374?utm_source=openai))
3. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-norfolk-41283961> - Following his 2017 conviction, David Cockle was ordered by Ipswich Crown Court to repay £15,000 or face an additional nine months in prison. Cockle had sold 10 Merovingian Tremissis gold coins, each valued at approximately £4,000, without reporting them to the landowner or the coroner. The court emphasized the severity of his actions, noting that another metal detectorist had discovered 35 similar coins at the same site and declared them honestly. Cockle's failure to follow legal procedures led to his dismissal from Norfolk Police for gross misconduct. ([bbc.co.uk](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-norfolk-41283961?utm_source=openai))
4. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-norfolk-39028660> - In 2017, PC David Cockle was dismissed from Norfolk Police after admitting to theft and handling criminal property. He had found 10 Merovingian Tremissis gold coins in a Norfolk field and sold them for £15,000 without informing the landowner or the coroner, violating the Treasure Act. The misconduct hearing described his actions as 'one of the grossest breaches of trust.' Cockle had agreed to share any valuable finds with the landowner but failed to do so, leading to his dismissal and criminal charges. ([bbc.com](https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-norfolk-39028660?utm_source=openai))
5. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2021/nov/03/norfolk-treasure-newly-declared-as-englands-biggest-anglo-saxon-coin-hoard> - In November 2021, an inquest declared a hoard of 131 gold coins and four other gold objects found in Norfolk as treasure. The majority of the coins were discovered by an anonymous metal detectorist between 2014 and 2020. However, 10 of the coins were found by David Cockle, a serving police officer at the time, who failed to report them and attempted to sell them illegally. Cockle was jailed for 16 months in 2017 for his actions. The hoard, dating to around 610 AD, is now considered England's largest Anglo-Saxon coin hoard. ([theguardian.com](https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2021/nov/03/norfolk-treasure-newly-declared-as-englands-biggest-anglo-saxon-coin-hoard?utm_source=openai))
6. <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/hoard-of-gold-coins-is-englands-largest-early-medieval-find-180979022/> - A hoard of 131 gold coins and four other gold objects, dating to around 610 AD, was discovered in Norfolk, England. The majority of the coins were found by an anonymous metal detectorist between 2014 and 2020. However, 10 of the coins were found by David Cockle, a serving police officer at the time, who failed to report them and attempted to sell them illegally. Cockle was jailed for 16 months in 2017 for his actions. The hoard is now considered England's largest early medieval gold coin find. ([smithsonianmag.com](https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/hoard-of-gold-coins-is-englands-largest-early-medieval-find-180979022/?utm_source=openai))
7. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/West_Norfolk_Hoard> - The West Norfolk Hoard is the largest hoard of Anglo-Saxon coins in England, comprising 132 gold coins and four gold objects dating to around 610 AD. The majority of the coins were found by an anonymous metal detectorist between 2014 and 2020. However, 10 of the coins were found by David Cockle, a serving police officer at the time, who failed to report them and attempted to sell them illegally. Cockle was jailed for 16 months in 2017 for his actions. The hoard is now considered England's largest Anglo-Saxon coin hoard. ([en.wikipedia.org](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/West_Norfolk_Hoard?utm_source=openai))