# Metal detectorist unearths 18th-century gold mourning ring linked to Norfolk’s Gawdy family



A remarkable discovery has captivated local communities and history enthusiasts alike, as a metal detectorist unearthed a gold and enamel mourning ring thought to have been lost for centuries. The ring, found gleaming in the sun by 53-year-old Malcolm Weale in August, was located in a field near Thetford, Norfolk. This exquisite piece of jewellery, linked to the Gawdy Hall Estate, commemorates Sir Bassingbourne Gawdy, the third baronet of Harling, who tragically died in a hunting accident in 1723 at the age of 56.

The inscription on the ring reads “B.G. Bart. ob: 10. Oct: 1723. aet: 56”, which translates to “B.G. Baronet, died 10th October 1723, aged 56.” Helen Geake, a noted historian, has confirmed the significance of this find, noting Sir Bassingbourne’s status in society as a bachelor known for his sporting exploits, which have been described in The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography as ‘rackety.’ The ring has been declared treasure by Norfolk Coroner's Court and is set to be evaluated by the British Museum, which plays a critical role in preserving the nation's heritage.

Weale, an avid detectorist since childhood, has spent 18 months searching the area, an endeavour that has yielded various finds, including a hoard of late Roman coins and other rings. In recounting the moment of discovery, he expressed his excitement: “I knew this was something very special and I did a bit of a dance.” This sense of joy is not uncommon; metal detecting can often yield significant historical finds, sometimes after extensive searching or unexpectedly in a matter of minutes.

The recent find adds to Weale’s impressive collection of historical artefacts, including a Viking penny minted for Guthrum, a 9th-century warlord who became the first Viking king to convert to Christianity. Such discoveries highlight the vital contributions that amateur treasure hunters make to British history. The artefacts found are classified as ‘treasure’ under UK law, allowing them to be valued and, if appropriate, offered to local museums, thus enriching public understanding of the past.

The Gawdy family, associated with Gawdy Hall, has a storied heritage that dates back centuries. Sir Brews Gawdey, an ancestor, was a French knight captured during the Hundred Years' War, who eventually settled in Suffolk following his naturalisation. The Gawdy lineage is notable, featuring members such as Sir Thomas Gawdy, High Sheriff of Norfolk in 1627, underscoring the family's long-standing significance in the region.

With recent finds like Weale’s ring, there is a growing appreciation for the stories that these artifacts can tell. Each item carries with it not only historical value but also a connection to the lives of those who lived in England centuries ago. Weale’s delightful discovery serves as a reminder of the hidden treasures that lie beneath the earth, waiting to tell their tales.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/gold-ring-found-detectorist-norfolk-mourning-b2760701.html), [[2]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/gold-ring-found-detectorist-norfolk-mourning-b2760701.html)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/gold-ring-found-detectorist-norfolk-mourning-b2760701.html), [[4]](https://www.voanews.com/a/with-metal-detectors-treasure-hunters-unearth-pieces-of-british-history-/7974646.html)
* Paragraph 3 – [[3]](https://www.wsls.com/entertainment/2025/02/11/with-metal-detectors-and-patience-amateur-treasure-hunters-unearth-pieces-of-british-history/), [[5]](https://www.thetelegraph.com/entertainment/article/with-metal-detectors-and-patience-amateur-20160679.php)
* Paragraph 4 – [[6]](https://www.houseofnames.com/gordey-family-crest)
* Paragraph 5 – [[6]](https://www.houseofnames.com/gordey-family-crest), [[7]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bassingbourne_Gawdy_%28MP_for_Eye%29)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/gold-ring-found-detectorist-norfolk-mourning-b2760701.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/gold-ring-found-detectorist-norfolk-mourning-b2760701.html> - In August, 53-year-old Malcolm Weale discovered a gold and enamel mourning ring in a Norfolk field. The ring, linked to Gawdy Hall Estate, commemorates Sir Bassingbourne Gawdy, the third baronet of Harling, who died in 1723. The inscription reads 'B.G. Bart. ob: 10. Oct: 1723. aet: 56'. Weale, a detectorist since age seven, has previously found medieval silver coins and a Viking penny. The ring has been declared treasure and will be valued by the British Museum.
3. <https://www.wsls.com/entertainment/2025/02/11/with-metal-detectors-and-patience-amateur-treasure-hunters-unearth-pieces-of-british-history/> - Amateur treasure hunters, like 54-year-old Weale, unearth historical artefacts using metal detectors. Weale, introduced to the hobby at seven, found a Viking penny minted for Guthrum, a 9th-century ruler. His discovery was showcased alongside other artefacts at the British Museum's annual treasure launch. These finds, officially classed as 'treasure', are independently valued and offered to local museums, shedding new light on British history.
4. <https://www.voanews.com/a/with-metal-detectors-treasure-hunters-unearth-pieces-of-british-history-/7974646.html> - Amateur treasure hunters, such as 54-year-old Weale, use metal detectors to uncover historical artefacts. Weale, introduced to the hobby at seven, found a Viking penny minted for Guthrum, a 9th-century ruler. His discovery was showcased at the British Museum's annual treasure launch. These finds, officially classed as 'treasure', are independently valued and offered to local museums, providing new insights into British history.
5. <https://www.thetelegraph.com/entertainment/article/with-metal-detectors-and-patience-amateur-20160679.php> - Amateur treasure hunters, like 54-year-old Weale, unearth historical artefacts using metal detectors. Weale, introduced to the hobby at seven, found a Viking penny minted for Guthrum, a 9th-century ruler. His discovery was showcased alongside other artefacts at the British Museum's annual treasure launch. These finds, officially classed as 'treasure', are independently valued and offered to local museums, shedding new light on British history.
6. <https://www.houseofnames.com/gordey-family-crest> - The Gawdy family, associated with Gawdy Hall Estate in Norfolk, has a rich history. Notable members include Sir Thomas Gawdy of Gawdy Hall and Sir Bassingbourne Gawdy, High Sheriff of Norfolk in 1627. The family's lineage traces back to Sir Brews Gawdey, a French knight captured during the Hundred Years' War, who was naturalised and lived in Suffolk after his capture in 1352.
7. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bassingbourne_Gawdy_%28MP_for_Eye%29> - Bassingbourne Gawdy (d. 20 January 1590) was an English landowner, magistrate, and Member of Parliament for Eye, Suffolk. He was the second son of Thomas Gawdy and Anne, daughter and coheiress of John Bassingbourne. Gawdy was educated at Trinity Hall, Cambridge, and trained in law at the Inner Temple. He served as High Sheriff of Norfolk for 1578–1579 and was buried at West Harling.