NEWS LESSON

Who Hid 934 Roman Coins in This Field?



BEFORE YOU READ

1 Warm up

Talk about these questions with a partner.

1. What would you do first if you found a pot of old coins?
2. Would you rather find one rare object or hundreds of ordinary ones?
3. What makes buried treasure exciting beyond the money?

2 Key words

These words are in the article. Write the letter of the meaning (A to H) in each box.

1	**specimen**	☐	A	a soldier in the ancient Roman army
2	**vessel**	☐	B	the movement of money from one person to another
3	**excavation**	☐	C	one example of something, taken to show what the others are like
4	**plausible**	☐	D	a container for liquid, such as a jar or bowl
5	**legionary**	☐	E	an amount of something left or placed in one spot
6	**circulation**	☐	F	being forced to leave your home or land
7	**displacement**	☐	G	the careful digging of the ground to find old things
8	**deposit**	☐	H	seeming likely to be true

3 Read

Read the article and underline the key words from task 2. The paragraphs are numbered.

Germany's largest hoard of coins from Hadrian's reign was found by a detectorist who followed the rules. What does it reveal, and what remains a mystery?

1 Oliver Riedl's metal detector kept sounding in a field near Wesseling in western Germany. He found Roman silver coins and alerted the regional authorities. Their investigation uncovered 934 denarii weighing about 3.1 kilograms. Found in October 2025 and announced in September 2026, the hoard is described as Germany's largest known from the reign of Hadrian.

2 The coins offer a compressed history of Roman power. The oldest specimen dates to 148 BC, when the republic still governed Rome, while the youngest was struck in AD 124 or 125, during Hadrian's reign. Most belong to the intervening imperial period. Archaeologists believe the collection was deliberately concealed in the second quarter of the second century AD, probably inside a vessel whose traces were examined during excavation. The hoard survived beneath ordinary farmland for almost nineteen centuries, outlasting the political system that gave the coins their value.

3 Its original purpose is much harder to establish. Money may have been buried to protect it from theft, disorder or simple misfortune, particularly in a world without the conveniences of modern banking. But an attractive explanation is not necessarily a demonstrated one. The owner's identity is unknown, as are the circumstances that prevented retrieval. Death, displacement and forgotten locations all remain plausible possibilities, and it is unlikely that the coins alone will ever clear up the mystery.

4 The scale of the deposit is nevertheless revealing. Regional specialists have compared it with the income of a Roman legionary, suggesting that accumulating a similar quantity of silver could have required years of saving. Such comparisons are necessarily approximate, but they help get across that this was not loose change. The coins also reveal the long circulation of money: pieces produced generations apart could remain in use together, carrying portraits and symbols from different phases of Roman history into the hands of later owners.

5 Of equal significance is the way the discovery was handled. Riedl was searching with permission and notified professionals as soon as he recognised the potential importance of his find. Archaeology depends on context as well as objects. The position of a hoard, the surrounding soil and the remains of its container may answer questions that isolated coins cannot. An impressive collection acquired without documentation can quickly become little more than a display of valuable metal; this one retained evidence about the act of concealment itself.

6 Now exhibited at the LVR State Museum in Bonn, the denarii are both public treasure and private mystery. Visitors can study portraits of rulers and the changing imagery of Roman authority, but the most absorbing figure is absent from every coin. Somebody accumulated the money, judged the ground a safe place to hide it and expected, presumably, to return. Almost 1,900 years later, the coins have come to light. The person who put them there remains beyond the reach of the metal detector, and perhaps of history itself.

Sources: LVR Office for Archaeological Monument Preservation. Picture: AI illustration.

4 True, false or not given

Circle **T** (true), **F** (false) or **NG** (the article does not say).

1. The hoard contains coins made under more than one system of government. T F NG
2. Archaeologists have established why the coins were buried. T F NG
3. The vessel that held the coins was made of pottery. T F NG
4. The political system that gave the coins their value had ended long before they were found. T F NG
5. Specialists describe the comparison with a legionary's income as exact. T F NG

5 Vocabulary

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed.

accumulating **approximate** **concealed** **disclosed** **documentation** **intervening** **reclaimed** **retrieval**

1. The smugglers _____ the stolen manuscripts behind a false wall for decades.
2. In the _____ years between the two wars, the town changed beyond recognition.
3. Despite repeated attempts, the _____ of the lost files proved impossible.
4. She spent decades _____ a collection of rare maps.
5. The architect gave an _____ cost, warning that the final bill might differ.
6. Without proper _____ , the sale of the painting could not be verified.

6 Word forms

Use the word in brackets to make a word that fits the gap.

1. Archaeologists were struck by the sheer _____ of the find. (SIGNIFY)
2. Without a written record, any claim about the owner's motives remains pure _____ . (SPECULATE)
3. It would be _____ to claim that one hoard explains how all Romans saved money. (WISE)
4. Such comparisons with a soldier's income are, by their nature, _____ . (PRECISE)
5. The owner's _____ to return left the question of ownership unanswered. (FAIL)

7 Language focus: collocations

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed. At C1, adjective plus noun pairs carry precise meaning. Choose the adjective that a writer would naturally use, not just one that fits the sense.

idle	ornate	scant	sheer	stark	tantalising	tentative

1. The coins offer a _____ glimpse of how money moved around the Roman world, but they leave most questions open.
2. Given how _____ the surviving evidence is, any claim about the owner's motives is conjecture.
3. The loss of the owner's name is a _____ reminder that most lives leave no record.
4. Historians have so far offered only _____ explanations for the burial.
5. The _____ scale of the hoard is what makes it so unusual.

SPEAK

8 Talk about it

Discuss in pairs or small groups. Give reasons for your answers.

1. Should a finder get to keep something that matters to a place's history?
2. What can ordinary objects tell us that grand buildings cannot?
3. Which object from your life would help a future historian understand today?

9 Role-play: what should we do with the old coins?

Work in pairs. Read your card, then have the conversation. Swap roles and do it again.

Student A · the neighbour who found the pot

While digging a flower bed by the shared wall, you found an old pot of coins. You'd like to sell them and share the money. Explain why, and answer your neighbour's worries.

Student B · the other neighbour

You think the coins may be important to the history of your town. You want to tell the local museum. Ask questions, then try to agree on a plan.

Useful phrases

- I'd like to find out what they're worth.
- We shouldn't sell them before an expert has looked.
- They might tell us something about the past.
- That's a fair point, but it's our garden.
- What if we told the museum first?
- Let's agree on a plan we're both happy with.

Afterwards, tell the class what you agreed and whether you both felt it was fair.

ANSWER KEY

2 Key words

1 C · 2 D · 3 G · 4 H · 5 A · 6 B · 7 F · 8 E

4 True, false or not given

1 T · 2 F · 3 NG · 4 T · 5 F

5 Vocabulary

1 concealed · 2 intervening · 3 retrieval · 4 accumulating · 5 approximate · 6 documentation

6 Word forms

1 significance · 2 speculation · 3 unwise · 4 imprecise · 5 failure

7 Language focus

1 tantalising · 2 scant · 3 stark · 4 tentative · 5 sheer

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