

Exhibition reveals Saxon princess treasure

A STUNNING collection of 7th century treasure, shedding light on the extraordinary life of an Anglo-Saxon princess, is set to be revealed to the public for the first time.

The astonishing artefacts - found in Loftus, East Cleveland, between 2005 and 2007 at the only known Anglo-Saxon royal burial site in North-East England - have been hailed by archaeologists as some of the rarest ever discovered.

Some of the pieces from the collection are associated with a rare 'bed burial' in which a female body is laid out on a decorated wooden bed accompanied by fine gold jewellery.

The remarkable finds include a striking gold pendant - said to be "unparalleled" in the Anglo-Saxon world - that would have belonged to a princess, as well as glass beads, pottery, iron knives, belt buckles and other objects.

They were uncovered by Redcar archaeologist Steve Sherlock, together with members of the Teesside Archaeological Society, at a 109-grave site at Street House, Loftus, dating back nearly 1,400 years.

After their discovery the objects were declared treasure by a coroner and, following a debate in the House of Commons, they were allowed to remain in the Redcar and Cleveland area and purchased with the aid of a Heritage Lottery Fund grant.

Now, the spectacular finds are set to be showcased to the public in an exhibition at Kirkleatham Museum, Redcar, starting on Saturday, May 28.

The exhibition has been arranged by Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council and follows a painstaking process of conservation and research in recent years.

The Kirkleatham display will offer visitors an unprecedented glimpse into life in Anglo-Saxon times.

A film - narrated by Teesside-born actor Stephen Tompkinson - will be shown, while a 360-degree image of the excavation site can be viewed.

Visitors will be able to look inside an Anglo-Saxon house and there will be costumes for children to dress up in. Replica jewels and pots can also be decorated, while the museum's Lillies cafe is serving up Anglo-Saxon banquets.

Mr Sherlock said: "This is a spectacular discovery that has attracted the imagination and attention of people from all over the country. It is great for the region that these objects will go on display in Redcar."

Kirkleatham Museum curator Alan Pearce said: "Only 12 bed

burial sites have ever been discovered and this was the first of its kind in the North-East, so we are thrilled that these objects remained in this part of the world for public display.

"The importance of this exhibition is unprecedented for the museum and we can guarantee an amazing day out for all the family.

"The venue has truly been transformed to provide a fascinating insight into life in Anglo-Saxon times and the displays will allow people to take the closest possible look at findings of international repute."



Further information about the Anglo-Saxon Princess exhibition is available online at www.redcar-cleveland.gov.uk/rcbcmuseums or www.facebook.com/kirkleathamuseum

Alternatively, contact the museum on 01642 479500.

