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## Jigsaw Cambridgeshire Best Practice Users' Guide

# Metal Detecting Policy

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Portable Antiquities Scheme



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## 1 PORTABLE ANTIQUITIES SCHEME

The Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) is a national initiative funded by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport and host organisations. The scheme is based at the British Museum and was set up to work with - and extended - the 1996 Treasure Act by recording non-treasure finds made by members of the public.



## Portable Antiquities Scheme

[www.finds.org.uk](http://www.finds.org.uk)

The Scheme came to Cambridgeshire in 2003 and has its own Finds Liaison Officer (FLO) part-funded by Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough Museum and Art Gallery as a part of Vivacity, Peterborough's Cultural Trust.

The current FLO is based in Cambridge four days per week and in Peterborough one day per week.

### What does an FLO do?

- Identify archaeological artefacts found by members of the public in England and Wales that are more than 300 years old. This excludes items found through archaeological projects either professional or amateur.
- Assist in the reporting and processing of treasure cases.
- Provide advice and guidance (including to professional and amateur archaeological groups).

A FLO liaises with:

- Professional/Amateur Archaeologists (inc. English Heritage & National Trust staff)
- Metal detectorists
- General public
- Museum professionals
- Coroner & their staff
- Treasure Registrar & his staff
- Landowners/tenants
- Police

### Useful links

<http://finds.org.uk> The Portable Antiquities Scheme – this includes a page of contacts to help you find your local Finds Liaison Officer.

<http://finds.org.uk/conservation> PAS information on looking after your finds.

<http://finds.org.uk/treasure> PAS information on the Treasure Act 1996 - this page contains a link to the "Advice for finders of treasure" leaflet, and another link to details of the "full code of practice for the administration of treasure". It also has information on: Advice on buying antiquities, the scheme, eBay and Export Licences.

[www.ncmd.co.uk](http://www.ncmd.co.uk) National Council for Metal Detecting

[www.detectorists.net](http://www.detectorists.net) Federation of Independent Detectorists

Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Team 01223 728564  
email: [archaeology@cambridgeshire.gov.uk](mailto:archaeology@cambridgeshire.gov.uk)

## 2 METAL DETECTING POLICY

### Main points to remember

- Get Permission.
- Know the Site Status.
- Have Public Liability Insurance.
- Know the Treasure Act 1996.
- Know what to do and what not to do if you find bone.

### Before you begin

- You must have permission from the landowner before detecting - all land is owned: including grass verges and beaches.
- If there is a tenant on that land you must have permission from both. If you have permission from a tenant but not the landowner you cannot go on the land.
- Stay safe: get your permission in writing even if the landowner is a close/long term friend.
- Know the Treasure Act 1996 and make sure the landowner is also aware of it/what your legal obligation is if you find something that may be an item of treasure.

### Check the site status

Some land has special status to protect it by law. Make sure that your site is not a Scheduled Ancient Monument, Site of Special Scientific Interest etc. Start by asking the landowner/farmer. Land in the Higher Level Stewardship Scheme also cannot be detected on. Your local FLO, Historic Environment Record or County Archaeologist might also be able to advise you on this.

### Insurance

- Getting Public Liability Insurance is very much recommended.
- Becoming a member of a metal detecting group sometimes includes Public Liability Insurance cover.

[www.ncmd.co.uk](http://www.ncmd.co.uk) National Council for Metal Detecting

[www.detectorists.net](http://www.detectorists.net), [www.fid.newbury.net](http://www.fid.newbury.net) Federation of Independent Detectorists

## Getting started

- Know your machine, check that you have all of the equipment with you that you will need (bags/pens/note book/proof of permission etc).
- Work on land that is ploughed or has previously been ploughed (try to avoid pasture etc. see point 5 in the leaflet).
- Don't dig below the plough depth.
- Follow the Country Code.
- Do carefully fill in your holes.
- Use suitable tools.
- Do not damage earthworks or stratified archaeological deposits.

## Record keeping

- Keep detailed records. Note the date and location that you go detecting, some people even record the weather conditions and how they had their machines set.
- Bag each find in an appropriate bag and label it with a permanent pen (date, precise location, depth).
- Your FLO can help you with how to record your find locations. Use OS map grid references or GPS readings to record as accurate as possible location information. Treasure items have to be recorded to at least a six figure grid reference.
- GPS readings – check the accuracy! Readings taken with the Easting and Northing setting are normally more accurate. Find spot security is important to PAS, and we can hide the find spot from public view. County/District/Parish/Grid Reference/To Be Known As.
- If you decide to gift, donate or sell any of your finds it is important that the find spot information stays with the artefact. It is understandable that you or the landowner might be concerned about find spot security. If you ask your FLO to record the artefact onto the PAS database you can provide a detailed findspot that can be hidden from members of the public. If you pass the unique record number for your artefact along with the artefact this provides a secure way of the provenance of the artefact staying with the object with out you having to reveal the findspot to the new owner of the item.

**Remember:** Find spot security? = pass a PAS number!

Note that an artefact loses value and meaning without provenance.

## Know what to do and what not to do if you find bone

- If you find bone whilst out metal detecting you should leave it where it is and report the discovery to your FLO.
- If you think that it is human skeletal material you must ensure that you report it to your FLO, or contact the police directly, providing an accurate find spot. Often the police will contact a professional archaeologist for their opinion as to the age of the bone.

## Remember:

- You have to have a Home Office License before dealing with Human remains even on an archaeological site.
- Remember that some diseases can remain active over long periods of time.
- Be particularly careful if white powder is present in association with the bone. If an animal died of a potentially nasty disease, such as anthrax, lime may have been sprinkled over the corpse in an attempt to kill off the anthrax spores. Even if the lime successfully killed off the spores, it is corrosive to skin so ensure that you do not come into contact with it and wash thoroughly as soon as you can.

## 3 TREASURE

### Treasure Act 1996

The 'Treasure Act 1996' replaced the old 'Treasure Trove' law.

The following finds are Treasure under the Act, if found after 24 September 1997 (or, in the case of category 2, if found after 1 January 2003):

1. Any metallic object, other than a coin, provided that at least 10 per cent by weight of metal is precious metal (that is, gold or silver) and that it is at least 300 years old when found. If the object is of prehistoric date it will be Treasure provided any part of it is precious metal.
2. Any group of two or more metallic objects of any composition of prehistoric date that come from the same find.
3. All coins from the same find provided they are at least 300 years old when found (but if the coins contain less than 10 per cent of gold or silver there must be at least ten of them). Only the following groups of coins will normally be regarded as coming from the same find:
  - a) hoards that have been deliberately hidden (including those that have been hit by a plough and scattered across the field).
  - b) smaller groups of coins, such as the contents of purses, that may have been dropped or lost.
  - c) votive or ritual deposits.
4. Any object, whatever it is made of, that is part of the same find as another object that is Treasure. An object or coin is part of the 'same find' as another object or coin if it is found in the same place as, or had previously been together with, the other object. Finds may have become scattered since they were originally deposited in the ground.

Bear in mind landscape focuses. For example a causeway across a landscape might have been the focus for prehistoric ritual deposition this could therefore count as 'part of the same find'.
5. Any object that would previously have been Treasure Trove, but does not fall within the specific categories given above. Only objects that are less than 300 years old, that are made substantially of gold or silver, that have been deliberately hidden with the intention of recovery and whose owners or heirs are unknown will come into this category.

## Not Treasure

The following types of find are not Treasure:

- Objects whose owners can be traced.
- Unworked natural objects, including human and animal remains, even if they are found in association with Treasure.
- Objects from the foreshore which are wreck.
- Single coins found on their own.
- Groups of coins lost one by one over a period of time.

**If you are in any doubt, it is always safest to report your find.** Your local Finds Liaison Officer will be glad to record all archaeological objects that you find.

### Examples discussed at the Jigsaw Training Course included:

The Saxon bed burial that Cambridge Archaeological Unit found in 2012. A gold and garnet pendant was found around the neck of the skeleton (more than 300 years old and at least 10% by weight precious metal = treasure). The non-precious metal fittings of the bed were therefore treasure by association as detailed in point 4 above however the skeletal remains are not treasure.

A discussion took place covering the problems posed by items discovered that are not covered by the Treasure Act 1996 or the old Treasure Trove laws but which are of national or international importance and thus have no protection in law. We looked at the discovery of the copper-alloy Roman lantern found in Suffolk in the autumn of 2009 (at the time of discovery the only other known example was in Pompeii) and also the Crosby Garret Helmet (a copper-alloy Roman cavalry helmet found in 2010 in Cumbria).