

20th Anniversary Marks Record Year for Treasure Found by the Public

At the launch of the Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) and Treasure annual reports at the British Museum, John Glen MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Arts, Heritage and Tourism, announced that the number of new Treasure discoveries by members of the public had hit a record level, with **1,120** finds in 2016. This is the highest annual figure since the Treasure Act came into law exactly 20 years ago. In addition, there were a further **81,914** archaeological finds recorded through the Portable Antiquities Scheme across England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The vast majority of Treasure finds (96%) and PAS finds (88%) were discovered by metal-detector users.

Also announced was an updated *Code of Practice for Responsible Metal Detecting in England and Wales*, which provides guidance on best archaeological practice for finders.

The Treasure Act (1996) marks its twentieth anniversary this year, having come into law in 1997. The Act was created in order to make it easier for national or local museums to acquire important finds for public benefit. Of the 14,000 Treasure finds over the past 20 years, 40% are now in museum collections which can be enjoyed by local communities and the wider public. These include some of the most well-known archaeological objects in the country, such as the Staffordshire Hoard, a spectacular hoard of Anglo-Saxon gold and silver war gear which has been displayed across the UK and in the USA, and the Frome Hoard, the largest collection of Roman coins in one vessel ever found in Britain.

Over the past 20 years, Treasure and PAS finds have significantly added to our knowledge of the past. For instance, they have offered us a greater insight into ancient trade networks between England and Continental Europe during the Bronze Age, and have also provided the means for us to fundamentally reassess the nature of early medieval trade. Over 1.3 million (1,312,332) PAS finds have been recorded, from prehistoric stone implements to post-medieval buckles, and all are available online for free at finds.org.uk/database. To date over 600 research projects, including 126 PhDs, have made major use of PAS data.

Hartwig Fischer, Director of the British Museum, said “The PAS is a unique partnership between the British Museum and our national and local partners. Its main aim is to advance knowledge, but the Scheme reaches out to people across the country, and helps bring the past alive. The British Museum is passionate about the PAS and what it achieves, for archaeology and local people.”

John Glen MP, Minister for Arts, Heritage and Tourism, said “Twenty years after the Treasure Act came into force, it is fantastic that Treasure discoveries have reached a record high. Thanks to the PAS, every year thousands of found objects are recorded so we can learn more about our past. I am pleased that a large number of the finds have also been added to museum collections and are on public display.”

Michael Lewis, Head of Portable Antiquities & Treasure at the British Museum, said “Metal-detecting can make an immense contribution to archaeological knowledge, if practiced responsibly and the vast majority of people are keen that their hobby has a positive impact. The new *Code of Practice for Responsible Metal-Detecting in England and Wales* outlines exactly what is expected if people want to help archaeologists better understand our shared past.”

Finds on display at the launch

Two Late Bronze Age Hoards from Driffield, East Yorkshire which date to circa 950-850 BC. One hoard contains 158 axes and ingots and is the largest hoard of its kind discovered in Yorkshire. Another consists of 27 axes and ingots. The two hoards were discovered close to one another by Dave Haldenby and were excavated by Kevin Leahy (PAS Finds Adviser). It was first thought such hoards were collated to be re-used by metalworkers but now archaeologists think they might have been buried for ritual purposes. It is hoped that both hoards will be acquired by Hull and East Riding Museum, East Yorkshire.

Roman coin hoard from Piddletrenthide, Dorset, of 2,114 base silver radiates found in a pottery vessel. The coins date to 253-296 AD, of which the latest issues include the earliest products of the newly established Roman mint of London. The hoard was found by detectorist and author Brian Read, and block-lifted by Mike Trevarthen (a local archaeologist). It was unpacked and studied by conservators and archaeologists at the British Museum. This find was a rare opportunity to carry out a full archaeological excavation to try to discover more about why these coins were buried.

Anglo-Saxon grave assemblage from Winfarthing, Norfolk which was found by Thomas Lucking while metal-detecting, and excavated archaeologically. This grave proved to be the burial of a high-status lady buried between about 650-675 AD. It includes a necklace made up of two gold beads, two pendants made from identical Merovingian coins and a gold cross pendant inlaid with delicate filigree wire. Most remarkable was another large pendant worn lower down on the woman's chest. Made of gold, it has hundreds of tiny garnets inlaid into it in cloisonné patterns, including sinuous interlacing beasts and geometrical shapes. Comparable to gold and garnet jewellery from Sutton Hoo and the Staffordshire Hoard, it marks its wearer out as having been of the highest status in life, and through wearing a cross, among the earliest Anglo-Saxon converts to Christianity. Norfolk Museums Services are raising money to acquire this nationally-significant find for its collection at Norwich Castle Museum.

Notes to Editors

The Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS)

The PAS is a partnership project, managed by the British Museum working with at least 119 national and local partners to deliver the Scheme's aims. It is funded through the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport grant to the British Museum with local partner contributions. All the Finds Liaison Officers working for the PAS are employed locally, but work as a national team.

Thousands of archaeological objects are discovered every year, many by members of the public, particularly by people while metal-detecting. If recorded, these finds have great potential to transform archaeological knowledge, helping archaeologists understand when, where and how people lived in the past. PAS (www.finds.org.uk) offers the only proactive mechanism for recording such finds, which are made publicly available on its online database.

The PAS has also benefited from Internships funded by the Headley Trust, providing opportunities for people to develop a career in archaeology. Also, the Graham and Joanna Barker Fund, which has enabled extra support for the PAS in areas where resources are low. The PAS welcomes anyone interested in supporting its work locally to contact the British Museum.

As part of the HLF funded project PAST Explorers: finds recording in the local community, the PAS is working with volunteers across the country to record archaeological finds made by the public and to get people involved in archaeology. In 2016, 202 volunteers, including 102 metal-detectorists who record their own finds on the PAS database, have contributed to the work of the Scheme.

Many organizations have also supported the acquisition of Treasure finds, including Art Fund, the Headley Trust, the Heritage Lottery Fund, the National Heritage Memorial Fund and the V&A Purchase Grant Fund. Without these, as well as public donations, many important archaeological finds would not be in public collections.

The *Code of Practice for Responsible Metal Detecting in England and Wales* has been endorsed by: Amgueddfa Cymru - National Museum of Wales / PAS Cymru, the Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers, the British Museum / Portable Antiquities Scheme, the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists, the Council for British Archaeology, the Country Land & Business Association, the Institute for Archaeology (University College London), Historic England, the National Farmers' Union, the Royal Commission on the Historical & Ancient Monuments of Wales, and the Society of Museum Archaeologists.

The Treasure Act 1996

Under the Treasure Act (www.finds.org.uk/treasure) finders have a legal obligation to report all finds of potential Treasure to the local coroner in the district in which the find was made. The success of the Act is only possible through the work of the Portable Antiquities Scheme, advising finders of their legal obligations, providing advice on the process and writing reports for coroners on Treasure finds.

The Act allows a national or local museum to acquire Treasure finds for public benefit. If this happens a reward is paid, which is (normally) shared equally between the finder and landowner. Interested parties may wish to waive their right to a reward, enabling museums to acquire finds at reduced or no cost. Rewards are fixed at the full market value of the finds, determined by the Secretary of State upon the advice of an independent panel of experts, known as the Treasure Valuation Committee.

The administration of the Treasure process is undertaken at the British Museum. This work involves the preparation of Treasure cases for coroners' inquests, providing the secretariat for the Treasure Valuation Committee, and handling disclaimed cases and the payment of rewards.



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