

Digging deep

NCMD
NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR METAL DETECTING

ISSUE 4

All the latest news from the National Council for Metal Detecting

Meeting with Ed Vaizey



On 16th March NCMD officers met with Ed Vaizey MP the then Shadow Minister for Culture at Portcullis House London. Since the general election Mr Vaizey has been appointed Minister for Culture, Communications and the Creative Industries.

The meeting was attended by John Wells, Steve Critchley and Trevor Austin and Mr Vaizey allocated us an hour to discuss a wide range of topics regarding the Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS), the Coroners and Justice Act implications, CBA policies towards metal detecting, Nighthawking, English Nature and the agri – environment schemes and the review of the Treasure Act Code of Practice.

Mr Vaizey was sympathetic to our concerns regarding the future

funding of the Portable Antiquities Scheme and showed particular interest in the need for a more secure 'ring fenced' budget in the future. His enthusiasm for detecting also became apparent, when he informed us that he was mystified by the lack of support from some quarters; for what he described as an army of dedicated hobbyists saving archaeological objects from destruction by the various agencies of artefact erosion at no cost to the public purse.

Mr Vaizey appeared sincere and



supportive of the hobby which was reinforced by his acceptance of the offer of a day out detecting with the Oxford Blues Metal Detecting Club. (see pg 8)

Trevor Austin

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NCMD Management Team meeting

The NCMD Management Team met on the 26th June to discuss the proposed Landowners Leaflet for those wishing to search for archaeological objects on private land by metal detection or fieldwalking.

Produced by the PAS in conjunction with the Country Land and Business Association (CLA) and the National Farmers Union (NFU), this document has been around for several years in one form or another. The final draft of which was presented to members of the Portable Antiquities Advisory Group (PAAG) at its meeting in May and as a member

the NCMD will provide comment on its content though it was stressed by the PAS that the leaflet is for landowners and not detectorists.

However the NCMD has a duty to its members to provide detailed informed comment to ensure the leaflets content is factually correct and appropriately worded with respect to metal detecting. As the leaflet production is in the hands of the PAS, CLA and the NFU and is a stand-alone document aimed at landowners, there is no assurance that any NCMD comments will be incorporated either in part or in full. A response

deadline of 30th June was set by the PAS.

On 27th June the NCMD AGM and OGM meetings were held. Election of officers took place and the following posts were filled:-

President: John Wells, Midland Region

Chairman: Steve Critchley, Midlands Region

Vice Chairman: Byron Tosh, Midlands Region

Treasurer: Dave Philpotts, Western Region

Membership Secretary: John Rigby, North Western Region
Steve Critchley

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Review of the Treasure Act Code of Practice – Part 1

In the last issue of *Digging Deep* I set out the timetable of events for the forthcoming review of the Treasure Act code of Practice, which will include the new arrangements for Treasure, set out in the Coroners and Justice Bill.

As the public consultation is going to take some time to complete I thought this a good opportunity over the next couple of issues to outline some of the proposed changes on which members may wish to comment when the consultation document is produced.

Proposed widening of the definition of Treasure to include gold coins from the Roman and Early Medieval period

This is probably the most contentious of the proposed changes and most detector users I have spoken to at best see no justification for this proposal or at worst an attempt to recover this class of gold coin on the cheap. So what is the background to the proposal and the feeling among metal detector users?

The Treasure Act under Section 2 makes provision for objects or classes of objects to be designated as treasure by the Secretary of State by order. However it also gives the Secretary of State a corresponding power to remove classes of objects from the definition and I will discuss the possibility for removing classes of objects further in the next issue.

It is well known that the British Museum (BM) considers that it paid well over the odds for the Coenwulf gold penny found in near Biggleswade, although some may argue that they paid a fair market value. This undoubtedly had an influence on their decision to endorse such a proposal, plus the fact that very few turn up each year has made it an attractive period to include in any wider definition without imposing too much extra burden on the treasure system.

However what is more worrying to the detector user is that the widening of the definition of treasure is being championed again at all. On the last occasion it was prehistoric metallic assemblages of any composition, although it must be said that there was justification for non precious metal hoards of this type being included in the definition of treasure. Nevertheless I think it fair to say that with *this* proposal detector users are more concerned with the fact the definition is to widen at all, rather than the actual category itself.

When we eventually come to the next review in a few years time, the fear is that there will be proposals to bring other classes of objects under the definition of treasure.

Some in the 'establishment' will tell you that they have no plans to widen the definition further, however history is littered with such statements, and if history teaches us anything, it is not to take such statements at face value. There will always be those pushing for an ever widening of the definition of treasure hopeful that somewhere down the road we will end up with all archaeological objects being treasure.

So if this proposal were adopted would there be any advantages for finders?

Well to be fair, yes. Let me try to explain. As the law stands at the moment any find in the proposed category would not be treasure

and therefore, as with other non-treasure finds the landowner would have greater title to possession, a subject I wrote about in Issue 2 of *Digging Deep*.

If the proposal adopted coins from this period as treasure it may offer the finder some protection as far as reward is concerned. An example of what could occur using the Coenwulf gold penny is this; In this particular case there were a number of joint landowners who owned the piece of land where the coin was found and as the landowners did not have any agreement with the finder, the landowners claimed the coin as their property, as they are entitled to do. The finder was initially told that he would receive none of the profit from its sale, but after much discussion with the finder, Spink and the NCMD they agreed to pay him a small percentage. If as proposed the coin had come under the definition of treasure, then the finder may well have received 50% of any reward; a much greater share of the £368.000 than he ended up with.

There is also the satisfaction of knowing that these rare coins will end up in a museum for all to see, rather than held in collections or sold abroad. How much importance individual finders accord to this will be down to their own personal mindset.

However the NCMD *does not* support this proposal which it feels, amongst other things, could prove counter productive to the numbers of coins reported each year under the Portable Antiquities Scheme.

I asked Dr Roger Bland, Head of Portable Antiquities and Treasure to give his reasoning on the proposal.

"DCMS has stated that it intends to carry out a review of the Treasure Act in early 2011. Amongst other things the review of the Act will examine whether there is a case for altering the definition of Treasure under the provision of section 2 of the Act. After the first review of the Act in



Roger Bland head of PAS

2001-2 the definition was extended to include groups of prehistoric base metal from the same find and that came into effect on 1 January 2003.

It has been suggested that the Act should be extended to include Roman base metal deposits and also single finds of some gold coins. This note looks at the case for extending the definition to single finds of Roman and early medieval gold coins.

Under the law of Treasure Trove it was necessary to demonstrate that a coin find had been buried with the intention of subsequent recovery before it could qualify as Treasure Trove. It was not uncommon for small groups of coins to be interpreted as lost purses and found not to be Treasure Trove. On the other hand in at least three cases single finds of Roman gold coins were declared to be Treasure Trove. In the Treasure Act all groups of two or more coins 'from the same find' providing they contain at least 10% of gold or silver qualify as Treasure.

From an archaeological and numismatic point of view gold coins are of equal interest whether found on their own or in a small hoard, but if they are single finds of course there is no obligation to report them and their fate varies. The gold coin of Coenwulf found near Biggleswade was eventually acquired by the BM for £368K, but only after the export licence had been objected to. A gold coin of the late Roman emperor Jovinus (411-13), the first coin of this emperor ever to be recorded from Britain, found in



© DCMS

Kent and reported to PAS in 2004, was subsequently sold at auction and bought by a dealer in Italy for £16K.

It is not uncommon for groups of two gold coins to be found and these would normally be Treasure, and yet the coins could be of equal interest to a museum if they were found singly. Thus when two gold aurei of Carausius were found in the Ashbourne area in Derbyshire in 2007 they were declared Treasure and have been acquired by the BM and Derby Museum for £200K, but the coins would have been of equal interest if they had been found individually, although they would not have been Treasure.

Single finds of gold coins which have been converted into jewellery by being set in a mount or simply pierced are normally interpreted as objects rather than coins and thus qualify as Treasure. However, if single finds of Roman and early medieval gold coins were categorised as Treasure, this would remove the need to determine whether they should be regarded as objects or coins.

Single finds of gold coins have been recorded by PAS since 1998 and 1,248 coins have been recorded. The average number of coins recorded each year is now about 150. These are most commonly Iron Age (825 examples) or medieval and post-medieval (316 coins) and it would not be practical for all these coins to be categorised as Treasure. The coins in which there is greatest interest are the much rarer Roman and early medieval gold coins – examples are cited above – and no more than 10-20 of these are recorded each year by PAS (2006: 12; 2007: 20; 2008: 9; 2009: 17).

Extending the definition of Treasure to include single finds of gold coins of the Roman and early medieval periods (that is Anglo-Saxon coins down to 1066, plus contemporary non-English coins) as well as hoards of Roman base metal objects would therefore represent only a modest increase in the likely number of Treasure cases, but it would add to our knowledge by ensuring that more of these finds are reported and it would simplify the administration of the Treasure Act while bringing within the definition of Treasure some very important finds which are of interest to museums.”

Proposed widening of the definition of Treasure to include Roman base metal deposits

I had to scratch my head a little as well on this one. What Roman base metal deposits have been found recently? Well it is a class of object that is not found very often; with the help of the PAS I can find only six occasions since 1996 where such depositions have come to light.

(Fig 1) Pewter hoard from Chelmsford PAS AR 2005/6, p. 60 <http://www.finds.org.uk/database/artefacts/record/id/128666>

(Fig 2) Hoard of paterae and bowls, Wilts PAS AR 2004/05, p. 38 <http://www.finds.org.uk/database/artefacts/record/id/108036>

(Fig 3) 3 miniature axe heads from Wilts PAS AR 2004/05, p. 36 a hoard <http://www.finds.org.uk/database/artefacts/record/id/80636>

Also, I know of two others:

Chettle, Dorset: assemblage acquired by BM – not yet recorded by PAS.

London: assemblage found by MoLAS – not recorded by PAS.

There is also one more very interesting find reported during the last couple of months, a Roman votive hoard of about 40 copper alloy objects in a pot.

Although contrary to the belief of the NCMD that the definition of treasure should not be widened further, it feels that this category of artefacts should indeed be classed as treasure and would not oppose its introduction. The fact that this class of object was not included in the (Designation) order of 2002 is somewhat of a mystery, although a look at the dates when the majority of the six known deposits were discovered may hint at the answer.

The NCMD has never opposed hoards being included in the definition of treasure, whatever class or composition. It believes that depositions should be kept as a whole, providing both the public and academic community the opportunity to view and study, while rewarding the finder and landowner with a fair market value.

Next time we will look at some of the proposals for the recording and reporting of treasure finds.

Trevor Austin



Figure 1 © PAS



Figure 2 © PAS



Figure 3 © PAS

An Update from Professor Norman Palmer CBE



Professor Norman Palmer CBE

*Professor Norman Palmer QC and
Chairman of the TVC.*

Professor Norman Palmer was invited to attend our AGM on 27 June to outline the proposed amendment to section 8 of the Treasure Act Code of Practice which places a duty on acquirers of portable antiquities to report any object where they believe or have cause to believe that it is treasure.

Professor Palmer spent the weekend meeting delegates

before giving an in depth hour long address on the history of the proposal, the reasoning and objectives behind it and how the amendment would work in practice.

Professor Palmer, who is distinguished in the field of art and cultural property law, had the audience captivated with his address before receiving questions from delegates which extended the allotted time by an extra half hour.

The NCMD Executive committee would like to extend its gratitude to Professor Palmer and also thank his family, wife Ruth and daughter Lil who accompanied him making it a relaxed and enjoyable weekend.

NCMD comments on the proposal will appear in the next issue of *Digging Deep* in our 'Look at the proposals' series.

Trevor Austin

Coroner for Treasure on Hold

The Ministry of Justice (MoJ) has informed interested parties, that the implementation of the coroners reform will be delayed due to the financial challenges facing the Government as a whole. The Minister for Justice and Lord Chancellor (Kenneth Clarke) has decided to look again at the Coroners Reform Bill.

The NCMD has also learned that he is to ask the MoJ to review the scope and timing of the plans to implement the coroner measures contained in Part One of the Coroners and Justice Act 2009, and to provide further advice to him and to the Minister responsible for coroner reform, Jonathan Djanogly MP.

The Minister will consider the financial implications of

implementing a Coroner for Treasure which may extend to scrapping the whole reform for coroners or finding a financially acceptable solution.

This will come as a disappointment to finders who were eagerly awaiting the appointment of a Coroner for Treasure. The service currently provided by coroners can lead to delays of a year or more and the creation of a dedicated coroner would greatly improve the time it takes for treasure items to come to inquest.

The inconsistencies of treasure inquest verdicts due to differing interpretation of the Code of Practice under the present system would also be eliminated.

Trevor Austin

Green Waste – Can you help?

Tasked with researching 'green waste' I set out to find how it was affecting our hobby. It seems likely that over time this will become more than the occasional nuisance. I believe the problem is nationwide but I need proof of what is pollution on a considerable scale.

Not being very computer literate I have asked Clive Coleman for help, we have formatted a letter which we previously trialled on detector forums. The initial response (back in March) was good but not numerically large and if allowances are made for possible exaggeration a large amount of metallic pollution seems to be the norm where green waste has been spread.

In order to standardise the data we

are collecting we need reports using the following methodology.

1. Mark out a 10 metre square in the affected area.
2. Detect within the square for 30 minutes.
3. Record all finds.
4. If possible photograph the finds as a group.
5. It would be helpful to record individual types of metal e.g. aluminium pieces, brass nuts and bolts, syringes etc.
6. Email all the information including the location, (district will do). To greenwaste@glemsford.net

Ken Willcox

MEETING DATES

The Next Treasure Valuation Meeting will be on the 12th August

The Next Portable antiquities Advisory Board meeting will be on the 30th September

The Next NCMD Executive meeting will be on the 14th November

GET IN TOUCH

For membership enquiries contact the Membership Secretary: **John Rigby**
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Blackpool, Lancs, FY1 6QJ
Tel: 01253 692313
jjrigby@sky.com

For all other enquiries please contact the General Secretary: **Trevor Austin**
51 Hilltop Gardens
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trevor.austin@ncmd.co.uk

The Robin and Karolyn Hatt Memorial Competition

Once again it is time for a reminder of the Competition

I enjoyed running things last year; it was very successful with some wonderful entries in all the three sections. Using the NCMD Forum encouraged entries from clubs on the central register and individual members. This facility ensured no

member could feel left out from show-casing their best finds and having them voted on by Forum members.

Entries for the Coin, Artefact and Hoard categories have to be found during 2009, January 1st -

December 31st, and must have won at their club's monthly competition. These go through a process of elimination, firstly judged at club level, then at regional level. Although hoards are not voted on as they all automatically go through to the finals.

Delegates from the regions will bring the winning entries along to the finals at the National Council Meeting held in November.

Later in the year, Central register clubs and individual members will be able to post photos and clear descriptions of their entries on the Forum.



This year, all photos of entries must be supplied as a digital jpeg of a high resolution to enable them to be easily published.

You are welcome to contact me with any queries you may have.

Hilary Fagen

Hilary Fagen
Competition Manager
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01253 312176

Metal detecting in Parks, Public Walks and Open Spaces

In previous issues we have looked at footpaths, beaches and common land, I thought in this issue I would take a personal and sometimes cynical view, on metal detecting in parks and public open spaces.

Anyone who is new to metal detecting will undoubtedly have considered trying out their new acquisition in their local park, nearby playing field or open space. Probably most of us, including myself, have had a similar urge at sometime during the past, but during the 1970's and early 80's detecting on areas such as these did not pose as much of a problem as it does today. Most people had never seen a metal detector, unless they took part in the battle of El Alemein, with local councils and parks department staff showing curiosity rather than the often condescending attitude taken today. And many of us still have mementoes of those times in the form of half crowns, two bobs and Vicky pennies which were the most common finds in our parks, although I did once find an Edward I penny quite out of the blue while showing a friend how

to set up and use a new machine. But finds from earlier Roman and Medieval times were normally non-existent and it did not take long to realise that finds from these earlier periods would be more prevalent and easier to recover from agricultural land.

As with all other land which is either owned or controlled by individual or collective land-owners, **permission must be sought** before venturing on to any

land. In this case that usually means contacting your local council and I will look at some of the problems that face anyone applying for permission to detect on these areas.

While some more enlightened councils will allow metal detecting on arable land under their control, most councils will rely on local byelaws as an administrative tool to protect public walks and open spaces and take the advice of the

local government archaeologist or local museum as to whether detecting should be allowed. Unfortunately this advice can be coloured by personal prejudice or 'dictat' from on high. The result is that many detector users whose local authority does not allow metal detecting on land under their control, operate a 'tit for tat' strategy and will not record anything found in the borough with their local museum.



In recent years more and more local councils have adopted byelaws, which not only restrict the use of metal detectors, but also a host of other recreational activities.

The government gives this advice to local councils wishing to apply for a byelaw which can also be viewed in full on their website at: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/localgovernment/doc/133580.doc>

"Byelaws should not be adopted en bloc, but only as genuinely required to address an existing problem. If councils are in doubt about the layout of the byelaws they are advised to use the standard scheme and not seal the byelaws until they have received the approval of the Secretary of State.

This set includes byelaws on aircraft, archery, bathing, boats and model boats, camping, children's play areas, climbing, cricket, field sports, fires, fishing, ball games, golf, grazing, hang gliding, horses, hot-air balloons, ice-skating, kites, life-saving equipment, metal detectors, missiles, model aircraft (power-driven), noise, obstruction, opening times, overnight parking, protection of flower beds, etc, public performances, removal of offenders, skateboarding and

roller skating, erection and removal of structures, provision" (DCLG 2006)

The model byelaw, which seems to vary little from one activity to the next, appears in the guidance notes as follows;

"Guidance notes for byelaws for Pleasure Grounds, public walks and open spaces

Metal detectors:

1. (1) *No person shall without the consent of the Council use any device designed or adapted for detecting or locating any metal or mineral in the ground.*

(2) *Byelaw 57(1) shall not apply to [insert name or description of land]."* (DCLG 2006)

As an unjustified blanket ban on any recreational activity will not be sanctioned by the Secretary of State, designated areas must be stipulated in any proposed byelaw.

Local Authorities are also advised to consult with interested parties and in our case that means the NCMD, and to be fair I do get quite a lot of requests of this type. However these are usually application for byelaws to specific areas such as children's playgrounds, planted areas or ornamental gardens, which the NCMD does not object to. It

seldom gets requests for byelaws for open spaces which have no areas of cultivation or other obvious areas where detecting may be inappropriate. Moreover I have rarely seen a byelaw which includes 2(2) in any document submitted to the NCMD. This could well be because detecting is indeed allowed in these areas, although the most plausible reason is that the byelaw would not be sanctioned.

So how does this translate for those who wish to detect on these areas?

Permission to detect in these areas must be sought from either the local council or parks department. However the response will usually be either that the council does not allow metal detecting on land under their control or that there is a byelaw prohibiting metal detecting on land under their control.

You would be within your rights to ask to see the byelaw which specifies that the area you wish to search is covered by such a byelaw, but whether this will make any difference to the council's ultimate decision is another matter. Clearly there are councils who operate en bloc regime on requests to metal detect on these areas against the government guidelines and it is becoming

more evident that permission to detect on these areas is becoming more difficult to obtain.

Let us look at a quote from York Council website:

"Metal Detecting is not permitted on any Council owned or managed site without the prior written permission of the Head of Parks and Open Spaces. Due to the archaeological status of many of York's open spaces, combined with public safety issues, approval is unlikely to be given."

This should be enough to put anyone off applying for permission to detect in or around York. It is also predetermining any request and certainly could be viewed as a blanket ban.

All This may seem quite negative and prohibitive, but if parks and open spaces are the only areas you can reach, there are local councils who do not operate such a restrictive regime and do abide by the recommended guidelines adopting a more consultative approach. Some NCMD Clubs have agreements with local council's to metal detect on certain areas under their control and have had good working relationships for many years, recording what is found with the Portable Antiquities Scheme. Perhaps yours is one such council.

Trevor Austin

Log on and get updated

Log on to our website at www.ncmd.co.uk and view the latest hobby news.

You will also find information on the benefits that we offer our members; including the latest Insurance Certificate and together with its Terms and Conditions. Information on the Treasure Act and the Portable antiquities Scheme and where to obtain your beach or foreshore permit. You can also download a handy landowner's agreement form and many other NCMD documents in our archive.

We also have a 'member's only' forum, where you can log on and discuss the latest on a wide range of topics pertaining to the NCMD and the hobby of metal detecting. Catch up on the latest forum chat including back issues of *Digging Deep* the recent Nighthawking Seminar and view the NCMD Presidents speech in full. <http://ncmd-forum.com/>



Consider your health when detecting

There are many potential problems arising from contact with soil, and in order to maintain healthy detecting for us all, it is worth noting the following information :-

Escherichia Coli (E Coli for short) is a living bacterium which can have devastating effects on the health of all ages but can be most severe in the young and the elderly, effects can range from mild intestinal irritation to death.

Most importantly, it occurs particularly frequently on pasture or fodder crop land recently grazed. It is present in the animal droppings and the surrounding vegetation and soil.

It is usually ingested with food or

drink after contact with infected material.

The risk of infection can be drastically reduced or eliminated by the wearing of gloves when handling any possibly infected material, and the washing of hands before contact with the food and drink.

If no washing facility is available a low cost bottle/dispenser of hand hygiene gel, available in most chemists or large stores, gives good protection.

You can't see E,Coli but it may be there, so stay clean, be safe, healthy, and enjoy our hobby.

Brian Pollard

Comment: The Portable Antiquities Scheme

A considered personal view of its progress to date and its future from an NCMD member.

The Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) when introduced as a pilot venture was supposed to address the often aired perceptions and criticisms amongst the archaeological establishment over the non recording of metal detecting finds. The 'establishment', which had for years tried to eliminate the hobby or 'practice' to use their preferred terminology, began to realise that detecting and the finds it made could not be ignored and wished away. So much scholarship was being lost by this battle of ideologies coloured by inherent prejudice and dogma on both sides. A pragmatic realisation, coupled with a desire to update the woefully inept and inadequate common law of Treasure Trove allowed common sense debate to endure and the PAS was born on the back of the Treasure Act 1996.

It was seen as a voluntary non prescriptive means to redress the endless loss of information on portable antiquities. A regrettable situation which had developed in response to decades of poor archaeological/metal detecting relations, punctuated by regular efforts of the archaeological establishment to damage and discredit the hobby in any way it could and ultimately eliminate it. To the politicians, academics and metal detectorists alike the PAS, it was hoped would end a conflict whereby archaeology refused to see the opportunity that metal detecting presented them with - an abundance of portable antiquities information which if used properly would change the archaeological understanding of this nation. These were heady days indeed when many detectorists thought we had turned a corner and our positive contribution to the heritage would now be recognised. How wrong we were: the old guard were still there and still called the tune and gradually this new dawn turned gloomy. Many archaeologists and their representative bodies continued with their long established agenda's towards metal detecting and the recovery

by non archaeologists of portable antiquities, but now with a more subtle edge; the PAS now seen as an additional obstacle to overcome.

The PAS had credibility then and its rationale given the benefit of the doubt by a still sceptical hobby. It was a refreshingly new initiative with laudable objectives, aims and qualities no system had ever possessed before. It also seemingly lacked the baggage of what had gone before with independence from local and national archaeological politics or so we thought. After a long determined campaign this underfunded and under resourced organisation has been brought increasingly under the control by some of the very organisations that had previously sought to eliminate metal detecting. The PAS is no longer independent. Its Finds Liaison Officer's (FLOs) are burdened by an unworkable bipartite and often tripartite management structure in return for a lowly percentage local partner funding contribution. Its budget is strictly controlled and in return for continued funding from the Museums Libraries and Archives (MLA), the PAS has to adhere to set targets or measurable outcomes and a dictated mission statement. It can support and promote all things archaeological and is tasked to support heritage environment legislation, yet it cannot promote metal detecting nor even demonstrate the benefits of responsible metal detecting to landowners or their organisations. In reality the PAS is there to record portable antiquities made by members of the public who are predominantly metal detector users, who have recovered this information by their own endeavours and at no cost to the public purse. The negative access policies of old remain in place with little opportunity, incentive or commitment to reverse them. Indeed there is continued evidence of attempts by the ethically challenged old guard to extend these and manipulate for

example the agri-environment schemes to aid this. Nighthawking thrives as a result of these negative access policies whilst bodies such as English Heritage continue to see that, in supposedly dealing with this problem, they can also use the practice as a vehicle to further restrict metal detecting as a part of the unspoken long term archaeological agenda towards the metal detecting.

To many detectorists the PAS is seen as a one way flow of information freely given from private land by finders up and down the country with little in return, but for how long will this be tolerated. Archaeology seems never to be satisfied with what it achieves with respect to the use of metal detectors and the recording of finds by a voluntary process: it always wants more restriction and control, a process which inevitably alienates finders and impacts on recording levels. The hobby entered into, agreed with and accepted a voluntary Code of Practice as a means to get rid of all the old archaeological Codes and Guidance Notes produced by all and sundry. Itself this was seen as something of an achievement to get broad agreement between so many organisations with differing viewpoints towards metal detecting. Yet this has also turned sour as the voluntary status of the Code is rarely mentioned and its content and intent abused by some of the very archaeological organisations who wanted it. Were we conned? I think we certainly were making the mistake of daring to trust the archaeological establishment that proposed it.

This aspect aside we must consider the lost opportunity of the PAS. It was doomed from the start as the miss match of resources to record what, at the onset of the Scheme was an un-quantified number of portable antiquities was, have never been balanced. The resource base of the Scheme was arrived at using the flawed data from the Council for British Archaeology (CBA) report into

metal detecting and archaeology published in 1995, a report produced by archaeologists for archaeologists to influence government with no input from the NCMD or the wider hobby. To be precise a mere unrepresentative 60 some metal detectorists provided information and comment to the data gathering exercise carried out during this reports preparation.

The PAS has been a qualified failure and in its current form remains totally unable to ever deal with the volume of portable antiquities it could attract if allowed to. With targets the FLO's can now tailor their efforts to achieving these and little more. After over 10 years it has only recently developed a usable database, a problem symptomatic of its resource poor status allied to a handicapped management structure. Gone is the opportunity to record pre PAS finds, never high on the PAS agenda and the subsequent loss of information to the disbenefit of both scholarship and archaeological development control. The future for the scheme looks bleak indeed and with the current and on going funding difficulties for all Government funded departments will the PAS rump survive beyond April 2011? The NCMD I understand and much of the informed hobby has viewed with increasing concern for some years the stuttering progress of the PAS with its management being placed time and again in the unenviable position of having to devote scarce resources to reinvent itself and fight to exist.

Changes to the agri-environment project called the Entry Level Scheme (ELS) from October 2008 imposes the mandatory reporting of all metal detecting finds from land covered by these agreements as a part of the requirements for metal detecting access. This will increase considerable from April 2010 as the majority of the older ELS agreements come up for renewal and will subsequently be subject to the new terms and conditions and according to

Natural England ELS agreements are expected to cover around 60% of the land in England by 2013. These agreements specify that all finds irrespective of age are reported only to the PAS. These mandatory requirements alone will inevitable cause problems for the PAS. The PAS do not record items less than 300 years old, record rubbish and modern dross yet the detectorist to ensure access must submit these for recording or else. Additionally the PAS are simply not resource capable of recording the large amounts of material generated by a compulsory recording directive. The landowner and finder have no say in what is to be recorded whilst the landowner as the owner of such material must agree to the recording of his property with third parties or detecting will not be allowed.

Currently the PAS has allocated resources and measurable targets from the MLA to record a certain number of portable antiquities per year. Any increase following the

changes to the agri-environment schemes is as yet unquantifiable, but is expected to quickly overwhelm the PAS resources. The estimated number of portable antiquities found by detectorist on a yearly basis quoted in the CBA 1995 report was around 400,000. Considering that the data used to arrive at this figure were derived from archaeological sources and relied very much on guess work, this total could very well be out by a large factor. However as it is the only figure we have to work with this value alone would be sufficient to overwhelm the PAS.

The difficulties and uncertainties imposed on the Scheme and its staff during the last spending round cuts did little to help morale and promote the effectiveness of the Scheme to the majority finders of portable antiquities, namely detectorists. To some extent the difficulties a relatively small budget cut caused were exploited by some and this scenario will return in 2011 if not sooner as the

Spending Review ordered by the current coalition government initiates further cuts. There is a grim realisation within the hobby and more worryingly talked about by the PAS political masters that the Scheme is unsustainable in its current form. What does this mean for its future? It is widely expected that the MLA and others will push for the Schemes functions and responsibilities to be absorbed into the better funded and politically promoted museums services. If they succeed the PAS experiment will be over and a full circle return to the recording of portable antiquities once again are at the mercy of local archaeological politics and policies towards metal detecting. What an absolute waste of effort on the part of all who supported the idea and brought it to fruition only to see it fail to satisfy the anti detecting archaeological agendas and prejudice of a few. And this is a scheme promoted as the envy of the world yet to date it is only one of a kind so someone is making

gross assumptions on that score. It is time for a complete rethink for the Scheme before it is too late and how it can be made successful. Give the PAS its independence with the re-establishment of a proper central management unit to return FLO's to a single accountable management structure by ditching the local partners. The new Culture Minister is on the record as describing the PAS as a politicians dream by achieving so much with so little. If that is the case then give it a bit more ring fenced funding independent from the MLA who view the PAS as a mere adjunct to their bigger museum projects. Let the PAS stand alone and run its own project without the interference experienced in the past. We are at a watershed where the PAS is concerned. The future and way forward from this point lie in the hands of the new government administration. Let's hope they make the correct decisions.

James Ellison

MIDLANDS REGION

Culture Minister tries his hand at detecting

Following the meeting in March between the NCMD officers and Culture Minister Ed Vaizey, where he was invited to spend a days detecting with one of our clubs. The Oxford Blues MDC kindly did the honors; Dave Connor picks up the story.

On 11 June, members of the Oxford Blues MDC (OBMDC) were delighted to welcome Ed Vaizey, as their guest for an afternoon's detecting. The meeting had taken a while to arrange, as obviously, Ed's schedule is an even busier one nowadays!

Club Sites Officer, Ken Marshall,



had arranged with one of our farmer friends, Mike Ryman for us to detect on his farm at Cholsey. Most of Mike's fields were under crop, but he did have the paddock next to his farmhouse to detect on.

The club had never detected on this area so we didn't know what might turn up but the fields around it had produced some great finds over the years, so we were keeping our fingers crossed that it might

give up some interesting artefacts and maybe a coin or two.

When Ed arrived, we chatted about things we had found over the years, and he was very impressed with the items we had brought

along to show him. We thought it best to bring a good selection of typical detecting finds, so as well as the more impressive hammered silver coins, Roman brooches and such, we showed him some of the things you're more likely to find while out detecting. Actually, a good assortment of the kinds of non-desirable finds we all make that won't ever see us making headline news! Having said that, Ed was keen to hear club member Bill Darley relate his story of the day he found The Didcot Hoard. Definitely the kind of story the rest of us hope we can tell our own version of, one day!

We had brought a range of detectors along with us, and decided the Laser Hawkeye would be best suited for a first timer to get to grips with. We donned our headphones, and with one eye set on the horizon, we all set off across the paddock. We knew that Ed only had a short time available before he would have to leave for his next engagement, so Bill Darley and Ken Bull went in search of targets for him to dig, in addition to the ones he was finding for himself. We were all impressed with how quickly Ed got the hang of it, he's clearly a natural!

Ed's first target was the right colour, but sadly, the wrong metal.

Isn't it amazing just how much aluminium foil there is in the ground, even out in the middle of nowhere. With some farmers now spreading 'green waste' on their fields, it will be interesting to see just how much more 'contaminated' some places may become, over the next few years. His second and third targets proved to be aluminium foil too, and we were getting a little concerned that his enthusiasm may begin to taper off at this rate. But he was clearly determined to soldier on and his next signal was round, silver and once adorned the top of a drinks can! We've all been there so many times, right? We'll never know for sure just how many tons of ring pulls detectorists have dug up over the years, but I bet together, they would all add up to some serious scrap metal value.

The minutes were ticking away, and we knew his busy schedule meant he would have to leave soon, even though he was clearly enjoying the experience. Just then, he got a good two-way signal that registered in the middle of the Hawkeye's meter. Ed and Ken Marshall got busy with the trowel and pinpoint, while the rest of us looked on, anxiously...and when Ed held aloft the 1971 two pence piece,

well, it might just as well have been Excalibur! Well...how many of us ever found a coin on our first outing with a detector?!

We would like to take this opportunity to thank Ed for taking time out to come and get 'hands-on' with metal detecting and clearly the fact that he has gone out of his way to experience our hobby first hand, demonstrates an open-mindedness that we should all welcome.

Sometimes, a story that shows our hobby in a good light doesn't have a hoard of ancient treasure involved in it. Who knows though, the next story you read might, and

it could be you that finds it! Metal detecting has come a long way over the last few decades, and it's great to see our hobby getting the recognition it deserves for the important role it plays in bringing the past into the present, for all of us, and for future generations.

You can find out more about The Oxford Blues MDC, via our website:

www.oxfordbluesmdc.co.uk where you can find contact details, along with all our upcoming events, etc.

Story and photographs
© Dave Connor



Ed with members of the OBMD. Left to right: Ken Bull, Bill Darley, Ken Marshall, Ed Vaizey and Dave Connor

Midlands Chairman's Annual Report 2010

At the last AGM on 25 February last year little did we suspect that Bob Baldock our Secretary for many years was to leave us suddenly six days later. It came as an enormous shock to all here in the Midlands and to his many friends on the national scene. Bob was a well respected ambassador for the hobby and a very good friend of mine. He is sadly missed. His role as secretary has been filled in by me and this report will summarise both the Chairman's and secretary's functions over the past twelve months

I would like to place on record the superb help given to me by your committee and to thank them for a difficult transitional period that faced us after Bob's untimely passing.

A new database was developed

that took account of all members, associates and clubs within our region, and steps were put in place to ensure that future records would be available should the worst happen again. This all took time and with the help of Ray and Joy Simpson it was accomplished and has since been kept up-to-date with security backups firmly in place. In order to ensure that the Secretariat could cope with the huge influx of enquiries and membership applications at certain times in the year we have imposed those guidelines set down by the NCMD on the distribution of membership cards and we trust that you will appreciate that the massive workload that the Secretary's role entails needed to be streamlined in order to be workable. We endeavour to be prompt whenever possible in

carrying out these roles.

The membership figures for our region remain fairly constant and this is reflected in our incomes and outgoings remaining stable with no subscription increases at either national or local level envisaged for the coming year. More of this will be heard from your Treasurer's report.

Last year our annual number of meetings was reduced in order to concentrate on quality rather than quantity and it is with this in mind that in future we will endeavour to obtain first class speakers on the hobby and associated interests, as was the case in previous years. We have added a few extra dates to this year's diary. They are August 3rd for Sam Moorhead of the British Museum who is coming to talk to us about Roman

coins. He will be accompanied by Angie Bolton, FLO and late of this parish. The following month on September 8th we hope to be the guests of RABI on a new site for our annual invitational charity dig along the Fosse. More details when they become available.

Our Annual quiz in May last year was once again held and keenly supported. The calibre of the competition was high and resulted in a new winning team from the Coventry Heritage Detector Society. This well organised event costs our members nothing to take part in and allows old friends to meet up, chat and take part in some intense but friendly rivalry.

English Heritage's preoccupation with Nighthawking in this country has dominated the last twelve months with £150,000 being

spent on finding out how widespread the perceived problem is. Fortunately the Midlands Area is not recognised as having a major problem with nighthawks and the resulting report from Oxford Archaeology, who carried out this survey on behalf of English Heritage, in fact came up with data that showed the number of incidences, nationally were down on previous years. This hasn't stopped English Heritage from implying at every opportunity that the problem is greater than it is and that further unspecified steps need to be taken to deal with these criminals whilst at the same time giving less credit to those law abiding detectorists that strive to make the Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) so successful. The

Staffordshire Hoard being a point in question.

Here in the Midlands we were astonished and delighted to hear news of a major find being made in Staffordshire and were equally amazed to learn that a member from the Bloxwich Club was the lucky finder. This hoard of Anglo Saxon treasure has made the headlines here and abroad and demonstrates the success of the PAS which has become the envy of other European countries.

Such was the interest in this hoard that TV Radio and the Press were clamouring to report on every aspect of this and other metal detecting related themes. I was contacted by the BBC TV Inside Out programme as the Chairman of

the Midlands Region to ask if I would appear with a sceptical Julian Richards, a well known television pundit on Archaeology to give my views on his perception of detecting. This interview took place on a cold and wet Wednesday afternoon in November in a muddy field in Warwickshire. The filming lasted two and half hours and later that day the film crew and Julian came along to a Coventry club meeting to see for himself the PAS in action. Julian left us only slightly less sceptical than when he had arrived saying only that he may use detectors in the future.

As Chairman I was asked to give a live interview on BBC Coventry and Warwickshire local radio. This was received rather well by the Interviewer and a request was

made for me to return at a future date for a longer programme for a theme on Metal Detecting.

This year has been a busy one for me personally and I suspect that it is going to get even tougher with many challenges to our hobby already in motion that would see the hobby transformed by those who have for a long time harboured designs on limiting or even banning it.

Finally, on behalf of your committee I would like to thank you the membership for your constant support and trust over the last 25 years and we look forward to that support continuing in the future.

John Wells

Chairman/Acting Secretary

Quiz Night

Various teams from the Midlands enjoyed an evening spent with fellow detectorists, their friends and partners. An excellent free buffet and cheaply priced drinks ensured that everyone was amply catered for.



A happy Steve Wright holds up the team's trophy and his prize while Mike rapidly disappears for more



A queue at the buffet table, tuck in folks



Coventry Heritage Detector Society's team 'A' Mike Evans, Steve Wright, Adrian and Stephen Quinn score a win. Well done! Mike and Brian present their prizes



Wyre Forest 'A' after a gruelling fight in the tiebreaker

The winning team, after a tie breaker with Wyre Forest 'A' team was the Coventry Heritage Detector Society (CHDS). Incidentally, the tie breaker question was "How long is the Suez Canal?" If I had been there my answer would have been very! But some bright spark in the CHDS team got the closest with 102km. The actual length, according to Brian Pollard who set the questions, is 162km. The losing team opted for some distance slightly less and not withstanding, had an excellent score to reach the cliffhanger at the end.

Brian did his best to confound all present with his usual arsenal of brain teasers, everyone enjoying a laugh and joke at some of his efforts with cries of dismay and disbelief at some of the answers. All in all, an excellent get-together, with everyone eagerly anticipating next year's quiz. The individual committee members are to be applauded for their efforts in arranging and running this super event.

The photos by Pam Finch and Ray Simpson.



Dave Gray, Mike Longfield and Brian Pollard expertly running the Quiz

Prestonpans: A Postscript

In Issue 3 of 'Digging Deep', details were given of the work carried out by members of the Scottish Detector Club and the Scottish Artefact Recovery Group to record finds made by their members at the site of the Battle of Prestonpans (1745). This was not an archaeological fieldwork exercise but simply a joint club outing on unscheduled fields in and around the location of the battlefield. All finds were carefully recorded.

The assemblage from this exercise was later analysed by Dr Tony Pollard and his colleagues at



Grenadier's copper alloy matchbox

Glasgow University Archaeological Research Division (GUARD) who were already involved in a study of this area funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund. As a direct result of the clubs' findings, GUARD were able to confirm that the main area



Ramrod cap end

of attack actually took place about 500m east of the spot where it had traditionally been sited. This important new information

received wide publicity following a press conference on the battlefield site on 20th April attended by Lesley Sleith, Chair of the Scottish Region, and coincided with publication of the final report on the Prestonpans project.

Dr Pollard paid tribute to both clubs who 'contributed significantly' to the project. Bearing in mind that the local authority's Heritage Officer and several archaeologists were always opposed to the clubs' proposal to detect in this area, both clubs can now feel vindicated by their actions, and take pride in



Prestonpans survey

the fact that their findings have enhanced our knowledge of this iconic battle.

Alastair Hackett

The press cuttings can be viewed at:

http://www.battleofprestonpans1745.org/heritagetrust/html/news/show_news.asp?newsid=2767

The full project report is available online at:

http://www.battleofprestonpans1745.org/heritagetrust/html/documents/2815finalreport_26Jan10_.pdf

Historic Environment (Amendment) (Scotland) Bill

In Issue 2 of 'Digging Deep', the Scottish Region reported on its consultation response to the above draft bill (originally entitled 'The Ancient Monuments and Listed Buildings (Amendment) (Scotland) Bill'). The draft bill contained a proposal to remove s42(7) of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 which reads:

'In any proceedings for an offence under subsection (1) or (3) above,

it shall be a defence for the accused to prove that he had taken all reasonable precautions to find out whether the place where he used the metal detector was a protected place and did not believe that it was.'

The finalised bill was introduced to the Scottish Parliament on 5th May 2010, and I am pleased to say that the Region's efforts have proved successful in ensuring that s42(7) will be retained with only

minor drafting changes, viz:

'In any proceedings for an offence under subsection (1) or (3) above, it shall be a defence for the accused to show that he had taken all reasonable steps to find out whether the place where he used the metal detector was a protected place and did not know and had no reason to know that that place was a protected place'

The bill now has to go through a committee stage before gaining

Scottish parliamentary approval, and further changes may yet take place, but in the meantime, the NCMD can take some satisfaction in chalking up a small victory for common sense.

Details of the bill can be found on the Scottish Parliament website at the following address: <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/s3/bills/43-HistoricEnvironment/index.htm>

Alaistair Hackett

NORTH WEST REGION

A Ring Story (with a twist)

On a sunny April morning a number of our members (North West MDC) had decided to attend a rally organised by the Lune Valley club, the venue was a hillside farm overlooking the river Lune in a very historic area.

As lunchtime approached one of our members Tracy White returned to her car and showed me a mans gold finger ring that she had found, not old but very beautiful, art deco in appearance and quite chunky, the initials PL engraved

on the top, she reported it to the organisers and placed it in the display case for all to see.

During the course of the afternoon the farmer visited the site and saw the ring on display he instantly recognised it as his 21st birthday gift from his parents, he had lost the ring the same year it was given to him, 52 years previous. The farmer did not tell anybody but returned home to tell his wife. When he returned to the site with his wife, Tracy had left for home

and obviously so had the ring. The farmer offered to buy back the ring at the full value, so it was left to the organisers to try to locate the finder.

Later that evening I received a call from William Hargreaves of the Lune Valley Club to inquire if I knew the lady who had found the ring, when I told him she was a member of our club William related the farmers story, I immediately called Tracy and explained, she reacted exactly as I



expected "The farmer must have the ring back" she said "I don't want paying for it, it belongs to him", I put Tracy in touch with William who in turn put her in touch with the delighted farmer.

Thanks to Tracy the ring is now back with a very grateful farmer having been in the ground for 52 years.

Kev Gorman

Roman and Early Byzantine Gold Coins found in Britain and Ireland

With an Appendix of new Finds from Gaul

By Roger Bland and Xavier Loriot

This is the first published corpus of all Roman and early Byzantine gold coins found in Britain and Ireland. It gives details of 782 single finds, and 130 hoards containing a further 2,280 coins, over 500 coins are illustrated; there are 15 maps and full indices. The book includes all gold coins from Julius Caesar (46-44BC) to the mid-8th century AD.

Two appendices list the coins struck from 491 to the middle of the 8th century: these include the official imperial and the pseudo-autonomous issues struck by the Visigoths and other successor states, but not the Merovingian royal and civic coins. Other appendices list the coins found in Ireland and the Channel Islands. A final appendix lists 237 single finds from Gaul and Germany which have come to light since J-P Callus and Loriot's corpus of finds of Roman gold coins from Gaul (*L'ormonnay'e 11. La dispersion des aurei en Gaule romaine l'empire*, 1990).

A detailed introduction discusses the history of research on the finds of Roman gold coins from Britain, analyses their date and method of discovery, and compares this with the pattern of the Continental finds; compares the British finds with those from Gaul and also with the coins recorded by the Portable Antiquities Scheme; shows the geographical distribution of these finds through a series of maps, and analyses the types of site from which finds have been reported. The introduction concludes with a discussion of hoards; of the coins of the fifth to eighth centuries; of contemporary copies, and of coins that have been pierced or otherwise reused as jewellery.

Copies are available from:
SPINK and Son Ltd
69 Southampton Row,
Bloomsbury, London, WC1B 4ET,
Telephone: 020 7563 4000
Fax: 020 7563 4066
Email: books@spink.com
Priced @ £60.00 each +
postage and packaging: UK £7.50

It soon became apparent that the book will quickly become a significant reference work and an invaluable tool to both academic and collectors of Roman and early Byzantine coins alike.

This groundbreaking book, which brings together all the known information on gold coins currently recorded from this period, is the first of its kind, and I can see it becoming a valuable addition to any club or individuals library.

Although the number of these types of coins that have been found is not as great as one may imagine when compared to coins from this period of other metallic composition, the summary tables list all the coins by county giving the reader a quick reference.

The introduction is an extremely detailed and informative account of the distribution, reporting and recording of these coins and the excellent detailed maps, graphs and charts; analysis of the types of sites from which gold coins have

been reported; make this section extremely interesting and informative reading.

The date and method of discovery of these types of coins I found particularly interesting; listing hoards and single finds; comparing not only method of discovery but also chronology, from the fifteenth century to the present day, revealing the sudden rise in finds by metal detector users from 1973 when the first coin was recorded by a detector user.

The "Catalogue", which takes up nearly two third of the volume gives all the relevant information on each coin listed, including a description of the coin, its current location, the method and date of discovery, and where available a four figure grid reference.

Priced at £60 the book is well worth the outlay given the information contained within its pages.

Trevor Austin



Metal Buttons

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The first edition of *Metal Buttons c.900 BC – c.AD 1700* proved a best seller and went out of print soon after Christmas 2009. Due to popular demand, a revised and enlarged 2nd edition was published on 28th April 2010. The format remains the same: 242mm x 172mm; four colour 240gm2 gloss board cover; 160 pp (an increase of 55) on 115gm 2 silk paper; archaeological line-drawings and many colour photos of 507 buttons and associated objects (an increase of 102); and

17 colour or black & white plates (an increase of 2). Principal illustrators are **Patrick Read & Nick Griffiths**; foreword by **Geoff Egan** of the Museum of London. Still the only available book specialising in the dating and manufacture of antique metal-buttons and button-like objects (mainly found by detectorists). A must for metal-detectorists, archaeologists, museum curators, button collectors, dress historians, button dealers or anyone interested in our history and archaeology.



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Format 249 x 172mm; four colour 240gm gloss board cover; 238 pp on 115gm silk paper; 831 objects described (mainly detectorists finds) and illustrated by colour photos and/or archaeological drawings, 43 other illustrations in colour or black & white. Principal illustrators Nick Griffiths & Patrick Read. Foreword by Geoff Egan of

the Museum of London. A never before attempted Classification. A must for metal-detectorists, archaeologists, museum curators, dress historians and anyone involved with historical re-enactment. Periods covered: Roman, early medieval, late medieval and early post-medieval.



Still available, Brian's other current book

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