

The Treasure process

A brief overview



The High Weald (Burwash) Hoard on display at Fishbourne Roman palace



Discovery:

14 days for finder to report the find, normally via Finds Liaison Officer

Finder needs to provide all relevant details, including findspot, find date, name and contact details for themselves and landowner.





Report writing:

90 days target time for report on the object to be written

In England this is usually done by the FLO (locally) and shared with relevant British Museum curator (which then requires time for checking)

In Wales this is done by Amgueddfa Cymru, and in NI by NMNI

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Depending on the circumstances, some finds will require much more time – for instance, they may have been left in the ground to be excavated and then brought to the national museum for microexcavation, cleaning and cataloguing, or to be scientifically analysed.

NB: As of Spring 2024 there are c.25 hoards in the British Museum in need of conservation work. A dedicated full-time conservator has just been appointed on a one-year contract to provide more support



The Bitterley Hoard, being excavated and at the British Museum for micro-excavation



Initial decision on acquisition:

28 days after report is finalised for museums (local and national) to decide whether to express an initial interest in acquiring.

Non-binding, but museums should have a reasonable expectation that they will be able to raise the money required and will be asked to supply short statement explaining reason for acquisition.

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No interest (or no response from museums) = DCMS asked to approve disclaimer of find, and it is returned to finder/landowner. DCMS also asked to approve disclaimer if both finder and landowner waive a claim to a reward at this stage.

Interest from museum = Coroner asked to hold inquest to declare find Treasure. Coroner should (ideally) hold inquest within **90** days of being asked.

Valuations cannot take place until inquest is concluded and BM sent relevant paperwork from Coroner's office.

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Provisional valuations:

- BM (or DCMS) commissions valuers
- Valuers produce report
- Report sent to interested parties



Cases should go to TVC as soon as is practicable after inquest.

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Treasure Valuation Committee:

Mixture of remote and in-person meetings

May consider upwards of 60-80 cases per meeting

Make recommendations to SoS on values as well as reward distributions and abatements



Committee recommendations vs. provisional valuations

Analysis of the last 10 meetings of the TVC show that in **518** cases where recommendations were made:

12.7% (66) were below the value suggested by a provisional valuer

66% (342) were within the range suggested by a provisional valuer

21.2% (110) were above the range suggested by a provisional valuer



Vessel from Vale of York hoard

Finalising Valuation:

Interested parties have **28** days to accept TVC's recommendation, or provide evidence to challenge it and ask for case to be reviewed.

Parties can provide their own 'private' valuations.

TVC will normally consider the case a maximum of 3 times, unless there is a compelling reason to revisit.

Parties can make representations to SoS.

Museum payment:

Should be within **90** days of valuation being agreed by all parties and museum being invoiced, or **120** days if pursuing outside funding.

Can be extended if museum actively pursuing acquisition.



Winfarthing assemblage at National Heritage Memorial Fund

Museum Acquisition



Finder Bob Greenaway with Shropshire Bull Terrier on display

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- A note on timings and communication: Target times for the completion of various stages of the process are highlighted in **yellow**. However, given the number of individuals involved in each step of the process and the number of variables to which a case might be subjected, these times may be exceeded. Rest assured that FLOs, museum staff, coroner's offices and civil servants will act as expeditiously as possible to progress cases.
- Interested parties are sent official communication at specific stages of the process, and it is not possible to provide general updates outside of these. Interested parties should not be alarmed or take offence if they have not had a communication in some time. Parties can always contact their FLO or treasure@britishmuseum.org for information on where a case is in the system.

Sources of information:

Treasure Act Code of Practice:

https://finds.org.uk/documents/treasure_act.pdf

Advice on PAS website:

<https://finds.org.uk/treasure/advice/discovery-and-reporting>

<https://finds.org.uk/treasure/advice/finders>

Advice for Finders Leaflet:

<https://finds.org.uk/documents/file/pa-and-t-leaflet.pdf>