The Portable Antiquities Scheme
Annual Report 2023

The British Museum

Foreword

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Director of the
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I am delighted to introduce the PAS Annual Report for 2023. Last year was another impressive year for the Scheme, recording 74,506 archaeological finds made by the public, further advancing our knowledge of our past. This included 1,358 Treasure cases representing finds that will be acquired by museums across England, Wales and Northern Ireland for all to see, enjoy, and learn about.

This success is a testament to hundreds of people, mostly metal detectorists, who have reported their finds to the PAS. Most of these have been reported voluntarily, understanding that they should be added to the archaeological record and shared with as many people as possible. I would like to thank the Finds Liaison Officers, their assistants, interns and volunteers, who have recorded these finds on the PAS database. This database is the largest of its kind, providing a wealth of information about public finds in their landscape context, used daily by academics, archaeologists, communities and researchers.

The PAS is a partnership not only between archaeologists, finders and landowners but also between the British Museum in England and Amgueddfa Cymru – Museum Wales, as well as our local partners who employ and host PAS staff. I am immensely grateful to the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), which funds the Scheme in England with significant contributions also being made by the local partners. I would also like to thank the Hedley Trust, the Worshipful Company of Arts Scholars and Graham and Joanna Barker, who have funded assistants and interns. Not only have these posts added capacity, but they have given opportunities for people to gain valuable experiences and skills for their future. Lastly, I would like to thank Treasure Hunting magazine for printing this report and circulating it to the detecting community.

Left:
Ben Westwood (Co. Durham FLO) discussing finds with Durham University students.

Above: Photo © Zoe Law.

The Portable Antiquities Scheme records archaeological finds made by the public to advance knowledge, tell the stories of past communities and further public interest in the past.

Key points

PAS and Treasure in 2023

74,506
finds recorded on
the PAS database

1,358
Treasure cases
reported (England,
Wales & Northern Ireland)

3,877
finders who had their
finds recorded on the
PAS database

63,466
followers on social media

95%
of finds made through
metal-detecting

85%
of finds recorded
to the nearest 10m

993
research projects
(to date) using
PAS data

346,710
unique visitors to the PAS
website and database

59,026
registered PAS database
account users

1,855
outreach events, attended
by 29,087 people (26,851
adults & 2,236 children)

168
metal-detecting clubs
liaised with

91
training courses delivered

10,420
finds recorded by
volunteers

1,788
finds recorded by 84
self-recorders

Introduction

The Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) records archaeological finds found by the public to advance knowledge, tell the stories of past communities and further public interest in the past. It is a partnership project, managed by the British Museum (in England) and through Amgueddfa Cymru – Museum Wales (in Wales), working with at least 117 local and national partners across both countries.

In England, this work forms part of the British Museum's National Strategy, which is led by the Department of Learning and National Partnerships.

There are 38 locally based Finds Liaison Officers (FLOs) across England (see pages 40–43) whose role is to record archaeological finds made by the public; they are supported by five period specialists (National Finds Advisers), assistants, interns and volunteers. Also, 170 volunteers (including 108 'self-recorders' - detectorists who, with training, recorded their own finds directly onto the PAS database) contributed to the work of the Scheme in 2023, adding 10,420 finds to the database.

In England, the Scheme is funded through the Department for Culture, Media & Sport's (DCMS) grant in aid to the British Museum, with local partner contributions. Its work is guided by the Portable Antiquities Advisory Group (PAAG), whose membership includes leading archaeological, landowner and metal-detecting organisations (see page 39).

The objectives of the PAS are to:

- Transform archaeological knowledge
- Share new knowledge with the public
- Promote best archaeological practice
- Support museum acquisitions of finds
- Provide long term sustainability for recording new finds

These goals are taken forward by working groups involving PAS staff, managers and partners involved in running the PAS, as well as other interested parties.

PAS is a partnership project working with at least 116 local and national organisations across England and Wales.

Treasure Act 1996

Under the Treasure Act 1996 finders have a legal obligation to report potential Treasure finds to the local coroner in the district in which they were found, usually via their local FLO or relevant Treasure Registry. The success of the Act is only possible through the work of the PAS: its staff advise finders of their legal obligations, provide advice on the process, and write Treasure reports for coroners.

The Act allows a national or local museum to acquire Treasure for public benefit. If this happens, a reward is paid, usually shared equally between the finder and landowner. Rewards are fixed at the full market value, determined by the Secretary of State upon the advice of an independent panel of experts, the Treasure Valuation Committee (TVC).

In England, the administration of the Treasure process takes place at the British Museum. It involves the preparation of Treasure cases for coroners' inquests, providing the secretariat for the TVC, and handling disclaimed cases and the payment of rewards. Treasure cases from Wales and Northern Ireland have similar processes.

Important finds reported in 2023 included a Bronze Age gold *lunula* from Grassington, North Yorkshire (SWYOR-C95954), a hoard of 1,368 Roman *denarii* found in Worcestershire (WAW-96C6BA), and an assemblage of Early Medieval gold and garnet pendants from near Donington on Bain, Lincolnshire (LIN-1DABA5).

Under the Treasure Act 1996, interested parties may waive their right to a reward so that museums might acquire finds at no (or reduced) cost. Examples in 2023 include an Iron Age gold quarter *stater* and silver unit from Beech Hill, Berkshire (BERK-189CA0) donated by the finder and landowner to West Berkshire Museum, and a silver-gilt Carolingian mount from Quidenham, Norfolk (NMS-B0FF45) donated to Norwich Castle Museum after the finder and landowner both waived their claim to a reward.

LIN-1DABA5
Assemblage of Early Medieval gold and garnet pendants from near Donington on Bain, Lincolnshire.

Outreach and research

The Portable Antiquities Scheme reaches out to all those who might discover archaeological finds, and highlights the value of responsible metal detecting.

SWYOR-DA27A5
Medieval spindle whorl
recorded by PAS.

Finds Liaison Officers (FLOs) are the front line of the PAS. Through outreach events such as finds days, talks and displays they highlight the value of finds for understanding the past and encourage people to record their finds. They also provide advice on best practice, including the reporting of Treasure. This section provides a snapshot of this work.

Advancing knowledge

Detecting finds recorded with the PAS make an enormous contribution to archaeological knowledge. Archaeologists use this data for their research and to better understand past landscapes: it is an essential source of information that complements other sorts of archaeological works. In this respect, finders are encouraged to follow the *Code of Practice for Metal-Detecting in England and Wales* (2017), providing a baseline for best practice. Below are examples of how PAS data is advancing archaeological knowledge.

The Material Culture of English Rural Households

The recently published book *The Material Culture of English Rural Households c.1250–1600* is the culmination of the Leverhulme Trust funded research project 'Living Standards and Material Culture in English Rural Households', led by Chris Briggs (Cambridge University) and Ben Jervis (University of Leicester). The project combined archaeological finds and historical documents to better understand the material possessions of 'ordinary' medieval rural households in the later Middle Ages. While the primary archaeological evidence resulted from excavations, PAS finds were an essential basis for contextualising the historical and archaeological evidence gathered for the project. For example considerably more quantities of material, such as dress fittings and spindle whorls, were present in the PAS database than in the corpus of excavated finds.

The book *The Material Culture of English Rural Households* can be freely downloaded from https://doi.org/10.18573/book10. The project database can be explored on the Archaeology Data Service (https://doi.org/10.5284/1085022).

'The PAS database has proved invaluable for better understanding the distribution and use of objects not commonly encountered in archaeological excavations and, in many cases, not recorded in historical documents. Drawing together these sources of evidence has great potential for enriching our understanding of medieval consumption' (Ben Jervis, Co-Investigator Living Standards & Material Culture project, University of Leicester).

Top: Anglo-Saxon inhumation burial at Cammeringham, showing the jewellery worn.

Bottom: Students lifting an Anglo-Saxon cremation urn at Cammeringham.

Opposite: Andy Agate (Newcastle & Northumberland FLO) introducing finds to Durham University students.

PAS Publications

PAS staff are involved in various publications that engage with a broad range of audiences. Many FLOs contribute round-ups of important and interesting finds from their counties to local archaeology journals, and nationwide surveys are written for the period-based journals *Britannia* (Roman), *Medieval Archaeology* and *Post Medieval Archaeology* with coinage also covered in the *British Numismatic Journal*. Alongside these, staff also publish academic research on PAS finds, often with colleagues outside the Scheme. Last year, some focused on specific finds or object groups, including an assessment of zoomorphic hairpins from Roman Britain. Shorter articles included one considering the family history behind a medieval seal matrix. Research analysing large amounts of PAS data explored topics including the transformation of the character and availability of metalwork following the Black Death.

Sharing knowledge

Although academic outputs clearly illustrate the value of detector finds for understanding the past, the PAS is keen to share knowledge with as many people as possible. The public's fascination with the past is not only about the finds (as objects) but also about the stories they tell, including the circumstances of discovery, why they were lost or buried, and how they help us understand the past. Below are some examples of this work.

Community Excavation at Cammeringham

Lisa Brundle (Lincolnshire FLO) worked in partnership with the University of Central Lancashire to organise, manage and run a rescue archaeological dig for two weeks in September 2023 to excavate Phase II of the early Anglo-Saxon cemetery at Cammeringham, north of Lincoln. Students and local people from an archaeology community group were involved in the event. The cemetery was first brought to the attention of the PAS through the discovery and reporting of diagnostic 5th-6th century Anglo-Saxon grave goods by local detectorists. Many cremations and inhumations were recovered during the 2023 excavations, and it is hoped that the human remains will be sampled for ancient DNA to examine their ancestry.

Making an Entrance Exhibition

From April to September 2023, Oxfordshire Museums Service presented the 'Making an Entrance: Unseen Treasures' exhibition, displaying objects acquired over the last 10 years. Curated with input from Ed Caswell (Oxfordshire FLO), this exhibition included objects identified and recorded through the PAS, such as a Bronze Age axehead mould (BUC-7E5EA8), Iron Age brooches of the local 'Vale' type (OXON-B7A88D), and a Medieval work box (OXON-1A54A6) among many others. These finds enabled the exhibition to present new stories about Oxfordshire's past to the public. Videos on social media shone a spotlight on selected items for those unable to visit the museum. A program of summer activities aimed at families drew inspiration from items in the exhibition, attracting around 55,227 individuals.

Student Workshops at Auckland Castle

The PAS Team in the North East – Andy Agate (FLO), Caroline Smith (FLA), and Ben Westwood (FLO) – has strong links with the University of Durham. As part of the University's student excavations at Auckland Castle, home to The Auckland Project, they held workshops for students in July 2023. The first part of these introduced the PAS and the Treasure Act, with a discussion focusing on Treasure. The second part explored identifying finds using teaching collections and reference texts. Eighty-two students participated in the three two-hour sessions.

Promoting best practice

Most archaeologists recognise the benefits of metal-detecting, especially for retrieving finds from places where they are likely to be destroyed or damaged and learning about landscapes otherwise unlikely to be explored archaeologically, but also as a tool in professionally led archaeological works. The following gives examples of best practice use of metal-detecting – within and outside professional excavations.

Rutland Roman Villa Detecting Survey

In August 2020, Jim Irvine, engineer and son of a farmer, discovered the remains of a Roman villa beneath one of his family's fields in Rutland. It would later make headlines for its mosaic panels depicting scenes from the Trojan War, the first of their kind in the UK. A collaborative project of further investigation between archaeologists from the University of Leicester and Historic England, including geophysical survey and excavation, also saw metal detecting surveys undertaken in 2022 and 2023, carried out under a Section 42 agreement through Historic England, as the villa site is now protected as a Scheduled Monument. A small group of local detectorists were invited to participate, kindly sharing their expertise to recover unstratified artefacts. The 2023 survey spanned two weekends in September, which was co-led by Jennifer Browning (Project Officer, University of Leicester Archaeological Services) and Rachel Cubitt (Finds Specialist, Historic England) with Victoria Szafara (Leicestershire & Rutland FLO) there to assist with finds recording and identification. The survey aimed to locate further evidence and help better contextualise the newly discovered villa.

'The metal-detecting survey was so helpful, enabling us to retrieve many more artefacts than we would have found through trench excavation alone. It was also a chance to collaborate with a great group of people and forge more links between metal detectorists and archaeologists, benefiting everyone fascinated by the past'
(Jen Browning, Project Officer, University of Leicester Archaeological Services).

'Since the arrival of 'the Muddy Hoard' at the Norris Museum, the attraction to the newest treasure acquisition has been remarkable. In the first six months, there have been over 10,000 visitors, which is 300% up on average. Media interest has been outstanding, and this has continued through public events around the display. The Museum has also been pleased with the public response to our 'Adopt a Coin' fundraising campaign' *(Claire Hardy, Director, Norris Museum).*

The Muddy Hoard: Rulers and Their Coins
This case contains a selection of coins which represent the rulers of the Roman and Gallic Empires during the period that the hoard coins span. Alongside them are some of the fragments (sherds) of the double walled vessel the coins were contained in.

During the course of this exhibition we will have experts come in and assist us in the development of this collection - from further cataloguing and research of the coins, to reconstructing the vessels the coins were found in. Please see our website for more details, or speak to a member of staff.

Picture shows the majority of the hoard after primary cleaning. Photo credit: The British Museum

The Muddy Hoard Exhibition
On 14 September 2023, the Norris Museum, St Ives, Cambridgeshire, launched their temporary exhibition of a hoard of over 9000 Roman coins found near Huntingdon (CAM-A0ECFB) by detectorist John Hutchinson in 2018. Dubbed 'the Muddy Hoard' it was displayed for six months. John followed best practice by leaving the hoard in the ground (in situ) and contacting Helen Fowler (Cambridgeshire & Peterborough FLO). This allowed the hoard to be excavated archaeologically and sent to the British Museum for cleaning by Pippa Pearce and her team and identification by Curator Eleanor Ghey and Finds Advisor Andrew Brown. The exhibition was opened by the Mayor of St Ives, Philip Pope, and supported by three talks for the public by Andrew, Eleanor and Helen. Money raised from these and the 'Adopt a Coin' appeal will be used to permanently display the hoard.

Opposite: The Rutland Roman villa detecting survey team.

Above: Celebrating the Muddy Hoard display at the Norris Museum, St Ives.

Supporting museums and the heritage sector

The PAS, though the work of local FLOs and curators, contribute to and support the museum and heritage sector by identifying finds made by the public, increasing knowledge and engaging audiences. All FLOs are managed and based locally within museums and other heritage organisations so they also benefit from the support and expertise of colleagues within those organisations, the wider PAS community and the team of staff at the British Museum.

Donation to Swindon Museum

One way the PAS supports local museums is by facilitating the acquisition of new finds. This ensures important finds are made available to local people and helps museums tell stories that connect visitors with those who inhabited Britain before us. In September 2022, Lee Davies excavated a vessel full of soil whilst metal-detecting, partially revealing a jug within, still in situ. Fellow detectorists had advised him to leave the soil and finds intact within the vessel and report it to Sophie Hawke (Wiltshire FLO). She organised for Historic England to x-ray the vessel, revealing the find to be a Roman 'Hemmoor' bucket containing a 'wine service' dating to AD 250, with a spouted jug for heating water and other vessels (WILT-BD4B5F). There are very few of these from Britain, and it is likely to be part of a 'structured deposit', so deliberately buried to conclude a ritual, according to John Pearce (King's College London). The finder and landowner generously agreed to donate the hoard to Swindon Museum, which in turn agreed to fund the micro-excavation and conservation of the hoard. It will be displayed in Swindon's new museum and art gallery, opening in 2024.

Roman 'wine service' found near Swindon and donated to Swindon Museum.

Heather Beeton (Cheshire, Greater Manchester & Merseyside FLO) talking to 'emerging archaeologists' about Treasure.

Emerging Archaeologists Week

Heather Beeton (Cheshire, Greater Manchester & Merseyside FLO) and Aidan Lockwood (FLA) assisted colleagues at the Museum of Liverpool in delivering their new 'Emerging Archaeologists' programme, which was a week designed for young people aged 16–24 to gain direct hands-on experience of their local archaeology through workshops and projects. Participants gained insights into archaeology and practical hands-on experience as well as developed new transferrable skills. Heather and Aidan delivered a day on archaeological finds, focusing on the PAS and Treasure Act, and assisted with other activities that included mock site recording and wet sieving for prehistoric finds at Lunt Meadows and Wetlands, a nature reserve near Liverpool. The feedback from the young people was excellent, encouraging the Museum of Liverpool to continue offering this programme each year to help inspire young people interested in archaeology and heritage.

Export Licences

An export licence is required to take any archaeological find over 50 years old outside the UK, whether the finds are temporarily or permanently exported: the process is managed by the Export Licensing Unit, based at Arts Council England. Regarding detecting finds, licences are therefore required if someone sells their finds overseas or they are on a detecting holiday or rally in the UK and wish to take their finds back with them. Although it is not mandatory for exporters to record their finds with the PAS, some do, ensuring the information about these finds adds to our knowledge of Britain's past. In 2023, 412 licences were granted for 26,623 detecting finds, including 75 Treasure finds. Over 82% of applications were for finds destined for North America. Of the items going to Europe, 57% were to countries where metal-detecting is illegal or severely restricted.

'I enjoyed learning about the PAS and definitions of Treasure greatly and loved the hands on experience particularly'. 'It was really good to get to actually handle finds - especially the Huxley Hoard' (comments from participants attending Emerging Archaeologists Week).

Recording finds

Metal detectorists and others have contributed to archaeological knowledge by recording their finds with the PAS. This information is vital for learning about finds and understanding the places where they were discovered and is broadening our understanding of Britain's past. Below are just a handful of the thousands of finds recorded with the PAS in 2023. Information on the others can be found on the PAS database (finds.org.uk/database).

Flint and stone
800,000 BC–Present

NMS-D432F7
Mysterious stone object of uncertain date from a garden in Palgrave, Suffolk, consisting of a natural water-worn pebble of fine-grained siltstone. It has been recorded as a 'tally stone', suggesting that the notches were used to count things like livestock, but, alternatively, it might have been used as a musical instrument, with a stick being rattled over the grooves.

1,396 flints and 151 stone objects were recorded this year. Most were prehistoric in date, of which flint working waste (debitage) was common (413 items). 110 arrowheads and 342 scrapers were recorded, as well as 90 flint cores. Notably, 55 Lower Palaeolithic (c. 500,000–180,000 BC) hand axes and 22 flint and 36 stone Neolithic axeheads (4,000–2,500 BC) were logged onto the PAS database. Items of more recent date included 25 stone whetstones and 11 querns.

Volcanic Axes

Stone axes, like all archaeological finds, have their story to tell, but an example found five years ago in a garden in Worcestershire (YORYM-55A842) is particularly intriguing. Made from 'tuff', a lithified volcanic ash from Great Langdale in Cumbria, it has travelled over 240km (150 miles) to the spot where it was discovered. Seven further examples were found during 2023, adding further knowledge. Such axes were widely distributed during the Neolithic, though how this was organised is unknown. Some sort of exchange is possible but there must have been something special about this stone that persuaded people to go to such great lengths to obtain it, especially when perfectly adequate axes could be made from local materials. Unlike the finished axes, which were polished to give a smooth surface, the example from Worcestershire was left in its roughly flaked form. The PAS has recorded 46 unfinished stone axes' with concentrations around production sites in Cumbria, Cornwall and North Wales. These suggest that the axes were roughly shaped at the quarry sites before being passed on, with the eventual owner then polishing their own axe. This was an arduous process involving a block of sandstone and water (as a lubricant) to wash away the stone dust.

Kevin Leahy

YORYM-55A842
Neolithic stone axehead roughout from Lickey and Blackwell, Worcestershire.

NMS-B80676
Flint axe from Holme-next-the-Sea, Norfolk, dating to the Mesolithic. It is a type known as 'tranchet' because the cutting edge is formed by the removal of a single flake, giving it a sharp but somewhat fragile edge.

17

Bronze Age
2350–800 BC

1,552 Bronze Age finds were recorded in 2023, representing 2.14% of the dataset. Standard items were tools, such as axeheads (261 items), spearheads (79) and chisels (29). Less common were military equipment, including swords (13), rapiers (12) and dirks (7), as well as dress accessories and jewellery, especially those made of gold (76 in total).

Gold Ornaments

Bronze Age *lunulae*, flat gold crescentic ornaments, are rare in Britain. Only about 100 are known from north-west Europe, the majority from Ireland. In 2023, an example dated to 2400–2000 BC was found at Grassington, North Yorkshire (SWYOR-C95954), measuring approximately 180mm at its widest point and about 0.25mm thick, created from hammering out a single gold ingot. Only four other examples are recorded on the PAS database, and only this and a *lunula* from Tarrant Rushton, Dorset (DOR-2198F8), are preserved as more than small fragments. Despite the wear to the object's surface, some traces of decoration survive, as does the terminal at one end of the crescent, though twisted at a right angle to the crescent and formed into a quadrangular shape by folding the gold sheet. Other better-preserved examples demonstrate the complex linear ornament made by an awl-like tool on the *lunula's* surface. Worn at the neck, with the terminals perhaps helping to secure them, *lunulae* likely symbolised status, perhaps during ritual performances, and were likely kept over long periods as cherished objects. Like other *lunulae* from outside Ireland, this is likely a 'provincial' type, characterised by slightly thicker sheet metal and less extensively decorated.

SWYOR-C95954
Gold *lunula* from
Grassington,
North Yorkshire.

NMGW-A4A891
Fragments of a Late Bronze Age leaf-shaped sword of 'Ewart Park' type (1000–800 BC) found in Penlynn Community, Vale of Glamorgan. The hilt and longer blade fragment join, while the tip likely belongs to the same weapon.

Hambledon Hoard

A hoard of bracelets, torcs, necklaces and finger-rings from Hambledon, Hampshire (HAMP-BDFD5F) was found in June 2023, the findspot being archaeologically excavated after the hoard's discovery through metal-detecting. It illustrates the phenomenon noted during the Middle Bronze Age of depositing impressive groups of decorated bodily ornament instead of weapons, labelled by archaeologists as the Taunton Phase Ornament Horizon (1400–1275 BC). Within this hoard, the two Liss-type bracelets, one complete and half of another, and the two penannular torcs are standard components of such groups. The geometric patterning incised on both bracelets and one of the torcs also typify decorated metalwork of this type. The torc with the distinctive twist is of particular interest in this hoard. The threading of one finger ring onto the spiral torc is also locally paralleled. The copper-alloy necklace, formed from strands of wire, encased with a fine spiral roll, and threaded with two copper alloy beads, is more distinctive. This decoration is rare in Britain but better documented elsewhere in Europe, illustrating continental connections.

Sally Worrell

LANCUM-DF71D9
Early short-flanged axe of 'Type Bannockburn' dating to the Middle Bronze Age, c.1700–1550 BC, from Kirkby Thorp, Cumbria. This axe type is part of the early Middle Bronze Age Arreton Park metalwork assemblage, still closely resembling their Early Bronze Age forerunners of 'Bandon/Balbairnie' type.

LVPL-383FE1
Incomplete copper alloy Middle to Late Bronze Age (1500–800 BC) razor, leaf-shaped and double-edged, found in Llandegla Community, Denbighshire. The partly broken tang for the razor's handle projects from the blade.

HAMP-BDFD5F
Copper-alloy 'twisted' torc and finger rings, from Hambledon, Hampshire.

Iron Age
800 BC–AD 43

1,249 Iron Age finds were recorded in 2023, representing just 1.72% of the dataset. This included over 500 coins, which were introduced to Britain at this time. Otherwise, brooches (176 items) were most common, followed by horse gear (81) and ceramic vessel fragments (52). As such, the data represents a mixed group of items indicative of many aspects of Iron Age life.

Horse-gear

A well-preserved copper-alloy two-link bridle bit was found at Wem, Shropshire (WMID-1673AD). Comprising two rings, forming the cheek pieces, and two bar-like ridged mouthpieces, still connected, it illustrates the sophistication of horse harnesses of late Iron Age and early Roman date. The circular cheekpiece rings are threaded through narrow terminals or 'ring carriers' at one end of both mouthpieces. At the other end, the mouthpieces connect with interlinked circular terminals. This is the first complete example of a two-link bridle bit to have been documented by the PAS, although other incomplete mouthpieces have also been recorded, for instance, from Huxley, Cheshire (LVPL-34BA37), Llandegla Community, Denbighshire (LVPL-2E2D79), and Wellow, Somerset (SOM-A30F4A). In this case, the distinctive moulding on the ring carrier closely resembles the 'ears' on the same pieces from many of the two-link bridle bits from Polden Hill, Somerset – a spectacular hoard of early Roman metalwork. The similarity allows this bridle bit to be likely dated to the first century AD, spanning the last decades of the Iron Age and the first decades of the Roman period.

WMID-1673AD
Copper-alloy bridle bit from Wem, Shropshire.

Iron Age Cornwall

Iron Age coinage was produced in Britain from about the end of the 2nd century BC but was not adopted everywhere. As such, some regions remained non-coin producing with other means of trade taking precedence, as was the case for the area of modern Cornwall. Here, there is no evidence of Iron Age coin production; the PAS contains only 24 examples (excluding hoards and coins imported from the Celtic Coin Index). Each new find, including that of a plated gold quarter *stater* of the Trinovantes (North Thames region) found in St Anthony-in-Meneage (CORN-8F4E6D) during 2023, therefore, adds considerably to our understanding of the region, its internal development, and external contacts. Recording new discoveries helps our understanding of why Iron Age coins occasionally appear in a landscape that seemingly had no immediate need for coinage as a form of money.

Andrew Brown and Sally Worrell

YORYM-AD5204
Incomplete copper-alloy ribbed bracelet from Goodmanham, East Yorkshire, with a distinctive beaded appearance. Each 'bead' is separated by a banded ridge on this bracelet type, the date of which spans much of the Iron Age, specifically c. 650–100 BC.

WREX-4240BF
Silver *denarius* found at Poulton, Cheshire, dating to c. 150–115 BC. This is an extremely unusual British find as it was issued by an Iberian oppidum, Konterbia Karbika (Cuenca, Spain), with legends in the local Iberian language. Its similarity to Roman *denarii* might explain its circulation and appearance in the North of England.

CORN-8F4E6D
Quarter *stater* of the Trinovantes found in St Anthony-in-Meneage. It has a debased core and plated surface and so appears more silver than gold.

Roman
AD 43–410

32,301 Roman finds, accounting for 44.53% of the dataset, were recorded in 2023. Over 12,000 records are for coins or coin hoards; just over 50 coin hoards this year contained more than 7,300 coins. Otherwise, the most common objects are dress accessories, notably brooches (1,992 items), but also finger rings (219), and pins (93). The rest are a mix of artefacts, representing an array of evidence for life in Roman Britain and links with other places across the Empire and beyond.

Early Bronze Coins

Roman bronze coins struck before the Claudian invasion of AD 43 are found in very small numbers in Britain. These will likely reflect money carried across the Channel from Gaul and the Rhine, potentially with the invading legions. Two coins of Augustus (28 BC–AD 14) from Rotherhithe, London (PUBLIC-543CF1), and Hayling Island, Hampshire (HAMP-753937) possibly provide evidence for this or the later copying of early types. Both are coins of the Roman colony at Nemausus (Nîmes, France) and depict the busts of Augustus and Agrippa (obverse) and a chained crocodile (reverse), which references Augustus' victory over Antony and Cleopatra in 31 BC. The PAS has recorded just four single finds of this type, two of which (PUBLIC-543CF1 & IOW-00DA32) have been deliberately halved as is often seen in Continental examples and later 1st century AD copies.

HAMP-753937
Copper-alloy *as* of Augustus from Hayling Island, Hampshire.

SUR-A3A374
Copper-alloy *nummus* of Constantine II (AD 317–340) with VOTA PVBLICA (public vows) reverse type, depicting the Egyptian god Anubis and referencing the annual Festival of Isis in Rome. This is the only PAS example recorded to date and one of a few known British examples. It was found near Basingstoke, Hampshire.

Roman Goddess

Despite its wear, a copper-alloy figurine from South Cave, East Yorkshire (FAKL-0C66BB), recorded in 2023, can be identified as the goddess *Spes* or 'Hope', given parallels with a handful of other figurines and with images on gems and especially coins. The hair is elaborately arranged, best seen in the thick plait and the curls beneath the diadem. Spes's right hand, now lost, once held a flower, while her left arm hitches up the figure's chiton or tunic, visible beneath the mantle draped across the upper body. The carefully modelled fabric reveals the sculptor's skill. Whilst figurines showing female deities, such as Minerva or Fortuna, are not uncommon finds from Britain, this is a first from the province (Britannia) of a find type rare in the Roman Empire. Like other virtues turned into gods, Spes takes the form of a woman in archaic Greek dress, perhaps modelled on the statue dedicated by Germanicus in Rome in AD 17. Romans might seek help from Spes in times of desperation. Still, from the time of Augustus (27 BC–AD 14) onwards, she became closely linked to the emperor as *Spes Augusta*, associated with other imperial virtues like Victory and Fortuna, and thus appearing widely on coins, including examples found in Britain like a *denarius* of Hadrian from Merton, Oxfordshire (LEIC-296880).

Andrew Brown and Sally Worrell

SWYOR-3E8C66
Copper-alloy knife handle taking the form of an asparagus spear from Misson, Nottinghamshire. It is the only specimen from Britain of an object type documented around Trier, Germany, likely cast from an asparagus shoot. It is an example of making virtuoso knife handles in complex figural form.

FAKL-0C66BB
Copper-alloy figurine of Spes from South Cave, East Yorkshire.

Early Medieval
AD 410–1066

In 2023, 3,213 Early Medieval finds, representing 4.43% of the data, were recorded. 950 of these were coins, 637 being in eleven hoards. Many items are dress accessories, such as brooches (448 items), strap-ends (298) and buckles (90) and a large number are associated with the horse, including stirrup-strap-mounts (115), harness fittings (46), bridal bits (17), highlighting the importance of the horse in Early Medieval society. Many Early Anglo-Saxon finds come from ploughed-out graves. These are important for recognising lost cemetery sites, which need to be treated with respect and sensitivity.

Anglo-Saxon Strap-ends
Given the need to protect the end of leather and textile straps from damage and provide decorative finial, it is no wonder that strap-ends are relatively common metal-detecting finds: nearly 300 were recorded in 2023 – almost 10% of all Early Medieval objects. These are usually made of copper alloy, but some are lead or silver. They come in various shapes and sizes and are often decorated. Gabor Thomas (Reading University) classified those of the later Anglo-Saxon and Viking Age for his PhD in 2,000 based on 1400 examples then known: now almost 5,000 Early Medieval strap-ends have been recorded with the PAS to date!

Their distribution shows them to be found across much of the country, but more commonly in the east, from North and East Yorkshire, through Lincolnshire into East Anglia, with notable gaps in north-east and south-west England. Finds of note this year include one from High Easter, Essex (ESS-767965), Thomas' Class A, which, although made of copper alloy, is finely decorated in the Trewhiddle style, helping to date the object to the 9th century. Its motif is in the form of a curling creature whose tail forms the interlace pattern beneath. It also has a moulded zoomorphic terminal, showing a beast head with large ears, circular eyes and a pronounced snout. In short, it is a tiny but striking object.

OXON-0EB7C3
Gold *solidus* of Chlothar II, king of the Franks (r. 584–629), struck in Marseille (France), adapted into a pendant by adding a gold loop. Only the fifth example recorded from Britain, it was found at Middle Aston, Oxfordshire.

ESS-767965
Copper-alloy strap-end from High Easter, Essex.

LIN-59BBCC
Lead weight inset with a Viking-Age penny (issued in Danish East Anglia) commemorating St Edmund, King of East Anglia – killed by the Danes in 869. This coin dates to 895-910. It was found at Car Colston, Nottinghamshire.

OXON-59D0D6
Silver penny of 'bust facing/short cross' type of Edward the Confessor found at Crawley, Oxfordshire, and struck at Derby by Leofwine.

ESS-21ECD2
Gold finger-ring from near Harlow, Essex, with its bezel in the form of a bird in flight, constructed of five compartments, three inlaid with garnet, one with a white stone, and the other missing its setting. The ring is also lavishly embellished with gold beaded wire, including circles and coils. It dates from c. 550–650.

Small Mints in Late Saxon England

In the early 970s, a major reform of the coinage resulted in greater standardisation. This resulted in the same designs being used at all mints, which were changed regularly. Each coin also now named the mint and the moneyer. Over 100 mints are named on these coins, but most finds recorded come from just four: London, Lincoln, York and Winchester. Coins from smaller mints, some only open intermittently, are therefore important for archaeologists since they help us understand more about production outside of the main centres. Three pennies of Edward the Confessor (r. 1042–66) illustrate this well. A 'small flan' penny found at Over Wallop, Hampshire (SUR-45B905) was struck at Bedwyn, Wiltshire (now Great Bedwyn) in the late 1040s. A royal estate rather than a town or city, Bedwyn only operated during Edward's reign with a single moneyer, Cild. A 'sovereign/eagles' penny, struck at Wareham, Dorset, shows the king seated holding an orb and sceptre. Found at Aldbourne, Wiltshire (WILT-D572BB), it is one of only four PAS-recorded examples from this mint, originally a fortified *burh* founded as part of Alfred the Great's defensive network. A 'bust facing/short cross' penny from late in his reign from Crawley, Oxfordshire (OXON-59D0D6) is just the fourth PAS-recorded Late Saxon coin struck at Derby, its findspot the most distant from the mint. Recording these finds helps us to understand better the organisation and production of minting as well as how coins circulated.

Michael Lewis & John Naylor

Medieval
AD 1066–1540

14,810 medieval items were logged in 2023, accounting for 20.44% of the dataset. These represent many aspects of medieval life. The data included over 5,600 coins, some (just over 500) within 44 hoards. Otherwise, the most recorded object types include buckles (1,754 items), strap-ends (418) and spindle whorls (405). Also added to the dataset are religious items, such as *ampullae* (138), pilgrim badges (66) and papal *bullae* (40).

LIN-A2E372
Copper-alloy chape from
near Tathwell, Lincolnshire.

Protecting Blades

Bladed items were regularly carried upon the person in the Middle Ages. Weapons were used for protection, but it was also common for people to carry knives as tools or for eating. Such blades had to be covered, both to protect them from causing accidental damage and to protect the blades from being blunted. Therefore, bladed objects, such as swords, daggers, knives and scissors, were kept in sheaths or scabbards. 'Sheath' comes from the Old English word *sceæð*, meaning a 'case' or 'cover', usually made of leather. In the case of a scabbard, typically for larger blades, the 'cover' would have a wooden substructure to maintain the blade and an (invariably metal) chape to protect both the tip of the scabbard and the blade within, though some sheaths also had chapes. Given the rest of the scabbard or sheath is (usually) made of organic materials, it is the chape that usually survives and therefore located via metal-detecting. Over 60 examples of chapes were recorded with the PAS in 2023, of which about half are medieval. One of the earliest dates to the 11th or 12th century and was found near Tathwell, Lincolnshire (LIN-A2E372). This is solidly cast and decorated with an openwork 'fleur-de-lis' in late Viking-Age art style, linked to examples from Denmark. Many of the others on the PAS database are made of a single piece of cut and folded metal. Others resemble the Tathwell chape in form and construction, albeit have different designs and are later in date, including one from Chesham, Buckinghamshire (BUC-0780CE), which has within it some surviving organic material, presumed to be textile.

LIN-40E261
Silver *soldino* of
Doge Andrea Contarini
found near Welbourne,
Lincolnshire. It dates to
the early 1370s, so earlier
than the main influx of
these coins into Britain.

LEIC-19348F
Silver penny, 'bust facing/
cross-in-quatrefoil' type,
of Henry I (r. 1100–35),
found at Rempstone,
Nottinghamshire. It is
the first example struck
by the moneyer Sperlinc
at the Hastings mint.
The cut is an official 'snick'
to show the coin was
silver and not a counterfeit
made on a base metal core.

The Merchants of Venice

From the later 14th to early 16th centuries, small Venetian coins called *soldini* were imported into England in huge numbers, circulating illegally as halfpennies. Named 'galyhalpens' (galley halfpennies) after the types of ships that brought them, the PAS has recorded over 800 medieval examples transforming our understanding of how they circulated. Widely distributed and not simply found near their port of entry, they are most common in East Anglia and the Thames Valley from London into the South Midlands. Importation peaked pre-1500 for the issues of Doge Michele Steno (r. 1400–13), which account for half of the finds recorded, although an example found near Barnoldswick, Lancashire (LANCUM-534829) is a rare example from north-west England. Issues from the 14th century are far less common, with a *soldino* of Doge Andrea Contarini (r. 1367–82) from near Welbourne, Lincolnshire (LIN-40E261), one of only three recorded for this Doge, and therefore an important contribution to our knowledge. The letter F on the obverse is for the mintmaster Filippo Barbarigo and dates the coin to the early 1370s. The condition of these small fragile coins is often quite poor. One of Doge Agostin Barbarigo (r. 1486–1501) from Aldbourne, Wiltshire (WILT-421DA3), is a rare example surviving in very good condition.

Michael Lewis & John Naylor

SWYOR-37E516
Copper-alloy openwork
stirrup-strap mount
depicting a quadruped,
possibly dating to the 12th
century, found at Asterby,
Lincolnshire. It resembles
such mounts found in both
England and Scandinavia,
but it is unclear whether
it was made in this
country or imported.

LVPL-8523A9
Lead figurine showing
a seated male figure,
clothed in robes and a
cloak, found at Ledsham,
Cheshire, and thought to
date to the 13th or 14th
century. It is not known
who the figure might
represent or whether
it was part of a larger
object or not.

Post-medieval
AD 1540 onwards

DUR-B42D64
Modern (1930-50s) copper-alloy brooch reminiscent of Romano-British 'dragonesque' brooches, found near Darlington, Co. Durham. The five circular 'dimples' are likely settings for glass or enamel.

When recording finds dating after 1540, FLOs concentrate on items that are unusual or have local significance rather than common or mass-produced artefacts. Despite this selection, we still recorded 17,049 post-medieval and modern finds in 2023, representing 23.53% of the dataset.

War and coinage

During the first period of the English Civil War between Charles I (r. 1625–49) and Parliament, coinage was issued by both sides. Those struck at the Tower of London for Parliament - for centuries the premier, often sole, mint in England - maintained standard designs throughout. A silver half-crown found at Calbourne (IOW-E14E52), dated to 1645–6 from its sun initial mark, is barely changed from an example issued in 1636–8 found at Dumbleton, Gloucestershire (WMID-1316C1). The Civil War coinage of Charles I is more varied, some continuing the same bust-shield designs of the Tower mint, others being more explicitly political. The issues from his base at Oxford are a good example of the latter. A 1643 shilling found at Ruthin, Denbighshire (LVPL-898926), has a reverse carrying two inscriptions: an abbreviated one reading RELIG PROT LEG ANG LIBER PAR (The Protestant religion, the laws of England, the liberty of the Parliament), citing Charles' declaration in 1642 to uphold them, and EXVRGAT DEVS DISSIPENTVR INIMICI (Let God arise, let His enemies be scattered).

Another Oxford-minted coin, a threepence of 1646 with the same inscriptions, was found at East Cowton, North Yorkshire (DUR-E62DED). This has been pierced probably using a nail, the typical method to declare a coin false. Perhaps this was an act of mutilation by someone sympathetic to Parliament's cause.

Michael Lewis & John Naylor

CORN-306E77
One part of a two-part lead mould for a copper alloy pipe tamper, found at Landulph, Cornwall. The impression appears similar to some pipe tampers recorded on the PAS database, though of better quality.

LVPL-898926
Silver shilling of Charles I from the mint in Oxford, found at Ruthin, Denbighshire, including the king's Declaration given at the beginning of the Civil War.

Statistics

Table 1
PAS finds recorded, finds records and Treasure cases reported by traditional county (including any finds from unitary authorities as appropriate).[2]

Area	PAS finds	PAS records	Treasure cases
Bedfordshire	249	207	6
Berkshire (inc. Reading, West Berkshire, Windsor & Maidenhead, Wokingham)	1,976	1,774	9
Buckinghamshire (inc. Milton Keynes)	1,690	1,204	23
Cambridgeshire (inc. Peterborough)	2,798	781	19
Cheshire (inc. Stockport, Warrington, Wirral)	828	712	21
Cornwall	322	256	15
Cumbria	331	309	18
Derbyshire	366	317	12
Devon	313	273	27
Dorset (inc. Poole)	1837	820	24
Durham, Co. (inc. Darlington, Hartlepool, South Tyneside, Stockton-on-Tees, Sunderland)	364	354	13
Essex (inc. Thurrock)	2,263	1,525	85
Gloucestershire (inc. Bath & NE Somerset, North Somerset)	3,873	818	41
Hampshire (inc. Portsmouth)	2,155	2,006	93
Herefordshire	547	160	17
Hertfordshire	935	729	22
Isle of Wight	1,191	1,187	9
Kent (inc. Medway)	1,246	1,243	47
Lancashire (inc. Bury, Blackburn, Knowsley, Liverpool, Oldham, Rochdale, Salford, Sefton, St Helens, Trafford)	560	336	19
Leicestershire	478	438	18
Lincolnshire (inc. North & North East Lincolnshire)	6,674	5,631	78
London, Gtr	1,044	1,018	14
Norfolk	6,315	3,795	109
Northamptonshire	1,087	964	20
Northumberland (inc. Newcastle)	369	292	20
Nottinghamshire	1,513	1,235	18
Oxfordshire	2,444	2,381	60
Rutland	284	183	4
Shropshire (inc. Telford & Wrekin)	502	485	31
Somerset	6,849	755	35
Staffordshire (inc. Walsall)	1,247	1,003	28
Suffolk	4,254	3,268	63
Surrey	1,103	953	8
Sussex (inc. Brighton & Hove)	1,334	907	28
Warwickshire (inc. Birmingham, Solihull)	861	792	35
Wiltshire (inc. Swindon)	2,732	2,639	67
Worcestershire (inc. Dudley)	1,961	514	17
Yorkshire, East	1,719	1,620	22
Yorkshire, North (inc. Middlesborough, Redcar & Cleveland, York)	3,150	2,809	70
Yorkshire, South (inc. Barnsley, Doncaster, Rotherham, Sheffield)	624	599	7
Yorkshire, West (inc. Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees, Leeds, Wakefield)	776	390	6
Wales (all counties)	852	745	77
Northern Ireland (all counties)	n/a	n/a	0
data not yet available	2,490	2,123	3
Total	**74,506**	**50,550**	**1,358**

The above table gives information about where finds were made by county: it should be noted that FLOs will record finds from both inside and outside their area. The counties with the most finds records in 2023 were Lincolnshire (5,631), Norfolk (3,795) and Suffolk (3,268), all areas with vast agricultural land and popular for metal-detecting. The counties recording the most finds were Somerset (6,849),[3] Lincolnshire (6,674) and Norfolk (6,315). Most Treasure cases were reported from Norfolk (109), Hampshire (93) and Essex (85).

[2] Data downloaded 2 January 2024.
[3] Explained by a large hoard of 5,500 Roman coins.

Table 2
PAS finds records and the number of finders recording finds (by recording institution).

FLO Area	PAS records	Finders
Berkshire (BERK)	2,014	59
Bedfordshire & Hertfordshire (BH)	1,080	56
Buckinghamshire (BUC)	701	39
Cambridgeshire (CAM)	217	41
Cheshire etc (LVPL)	1,655	149
Cornwall (CORN)	213	34
Derbyshire & Nottinghamshire (DENO)	1,486	99
Devon (DEV)	299	71
Dorset (DOR)	955	76
Durham (DUR)	1,099	118
Essex (ESS)	1,221	165
Gloucestershire (GLO)	694	84
Hampshire (HAMP)	665	67
Herefordshire & Shropshire (HESH)	157	43
Isle of Wight (IOW)	1,322	54
Kent (KENT)	585	104
Lancashire & Cumbria (LANCUM)	810	118
Leicestershire (LEIC)	646	103
Lincolnshire (LIN)	1,901	118
London (LON)	645	105
Norfolk (NMS)	3,302	196
Northamptonshire (NARC)	1,221	85
North Lincolnshire (NLM)	3,558	150
Northumberland etc (NCL)	254	37
Oxfordshire (OXON)	2,302	119
Somerset (SOM)	461	51
Staffordshire & West Midlands (WMID)	1,529	154
Suffolk (SF)	3,471	199
Surrey (SUR)	3,453	170
Sussex (SUSS)	898	126
Warwickshire & Worcestershire (WAW)	1,080	119
Wiltshire (WILT)	2,357	125
Yorkshire, North & East (YORYM)	2,145	105
Yorkshire, South & West (SWYOR)	2,799	151
Wales (NMGW etc)	426	253
Finds Advisers etc (BM etc)	1,141	50
Public – self recorders (PUBLIC etc)	1,788	84

Recording institutions logging the most finds records in 2023 were NLM (3,558), SF (3,471) and SUR (3,453). 1,788 records were made by 84 (PUBLIC) self-recorders (detectorists given training to record their own finds). Finds made by 3,877 finders were added to the PAS database in 2023, though FLOs will have met other people whose finds were not recorded (e.g. they are of limited archaeological interest or FLOs were necessarily selective in what they chose to record). Recording institutions making records for the most finders (in England) were SF (199), NMS (196) and SUR (170).

[4] This is based on where the finds are made and does not include PUBLIC records.
[5] Most FLOs are fulltime but in some areas (such as the Isle of Wight, Hampshire and the West Midlands) they are part-time or job share. Most FLAs are part-time.

Table 3
PAS finds recorded by government region (England only).[4]

Government Region	FLOs[5]	FLAs	PAS finds	PAS records
North West	3	1	1,688	1,326
North East	2	1	742	653
Yorkshire	3	2	8,114	6,892
West Midlands	4	2	5,051	2,889
East Midlands	4	1	7,912	6,771
East	7	2	11,962	7,609
South West	6	3	15,627	5,262
South East & London	10	3	12,376	10,904

The English government regions creating the most finds records in 2023 were the South East and London (10,904), the East (7,609) and Yorkshire (6,892).

Table 4
PAS finds and finds records by period (where known/recorded).

	Stone Age	Bronze Age	Iron Age	Roman	Early-medieval	Medieval	Post-medieval
Finds	2,289	1,552	1,249	32,301	3,213	14,810	17,049
%	3.16	2.14	1.72	44.58	4.43	20.44	23.53
Records	1,150	855	1,013	16,282	2,530	13,510	13,943
%	2.33	1.74	2.06	33.04	5.13	27.41	28.29

Roman finds accounted for the highest number (and proportion) of individual items recorded in 2023 (44.58% of finds and 33.04% records), followed by those of Post-Medieval (25.76% and 28.29%), then Medieval (20.44% and 27.41%), date. This also shows that Roman finds are more likely to be found in an assemblage, especially a large assemblage (such as a hoard), than Medieval or later finds.

Table 5
Method of discovery where known/recorded (based on finds records).

	Metal-detecting	Chance find while metal-detecting	Field-walking/mudlarking	Other chance find/gardening	Controlled archaeological investigation	Building/agricultural work
Records	47,440	716	1890	430	41	25
%	93.86	1.42	3.74	0.85	0.08	0.05

More than 95% of finds made in 2023 were found through metal-detecting, with fieldwalking or mudlarking being the next most likely method of discovery.

Table 6
Findspot precision (based on finds records).

	4 fig	6 fig	8 fig	10 fig	12 fig
Records	83	6,983	4,140	36,915	18
%	0.17	14.50	8.60	76.69	0.04

Over 99% of completed PAS finds records in 2023 had at least a 6-figure NGR (National Grid Reference - precise to 100m), with over 85% having at least an 8-figure NGR (precise to 10m). This level of precision is essential for the data to be archaeologically useful.

Table 7
Land use (based on finds records), where known/recorded.

Land use	Finds Records	%
Cultivated land	29,592	94.30
Grassland/heathland	712	2.27
Woodland	59	0.9
Coastland	238	0.76
Open fresh water/wetlands	552	1.76
Other	228	0.72

Over 94% of finds records (where land use was recorded) were discovered on cultivated land. Here they are vulnerable to agricultural damage and natural corrosion processes.

Michael Lewis & Ian Richardson

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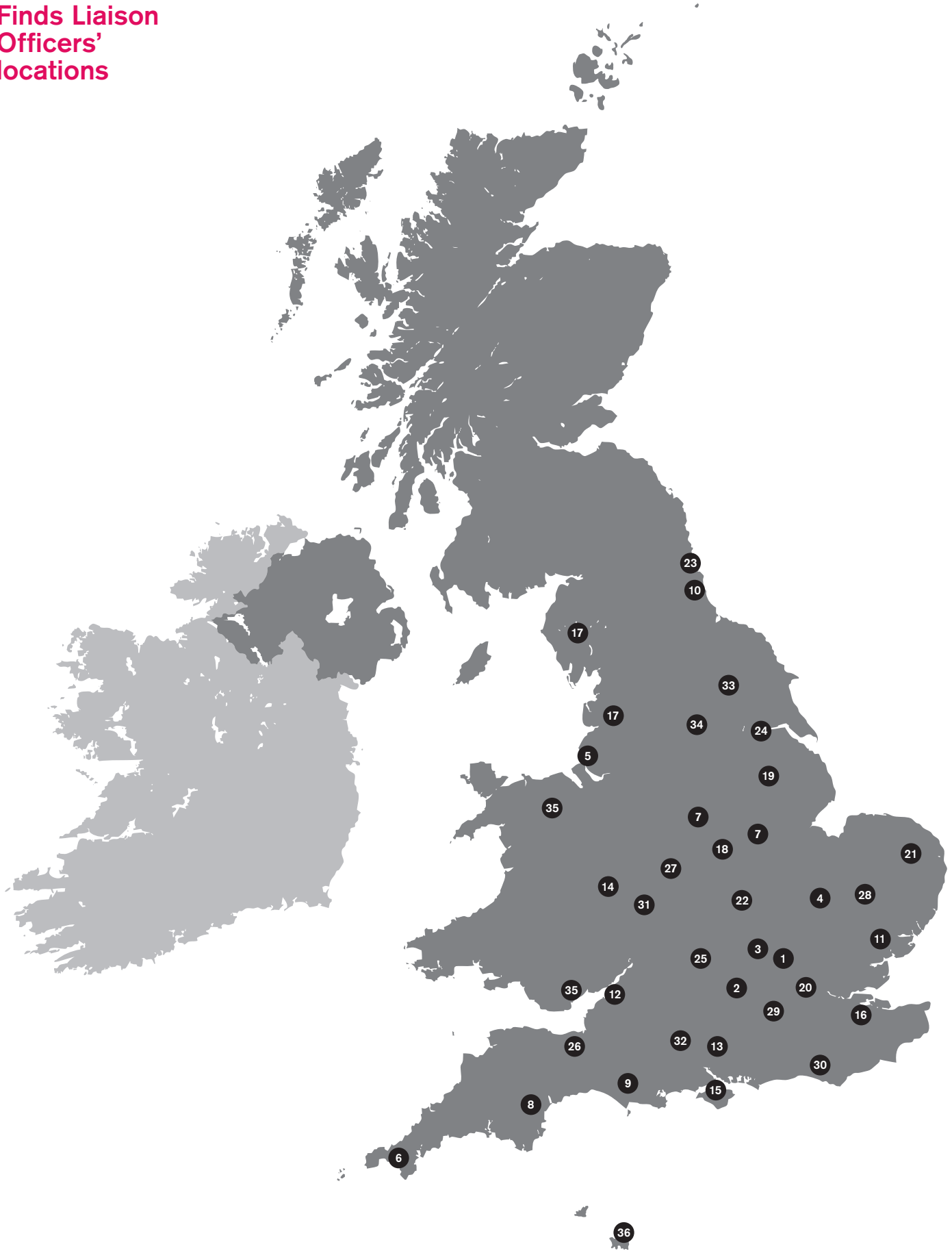**PAS Cymru Advisory Board (Wales)**

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