Treasure and the Portable Antiquities Scheme

The British Museum

Portable Antiquities Scheme
www.finds.org.uk

HERITAGE FUND

Museum of Liverpool

Contents

Introduction

Welcome to the Treasure and Portable Antiquities Scheme resource and activity pack! Inside you will find information and activities to help you learn all about Treasure in archaeology and the role of the Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS). You will discover the exciting world of archaeological small finds and how they are helping to transform our understanding of the past. We will also introduce the PAS database and how you can use it to discover more about the archaeology and history of your local area.

This pack is the product of two different YAC leader training sessions at the Museum of Liverpool in January 2020 and February 2026. There are two parts to this pack.

The resources and information and activity outlines were written by Lauren Speed (PASt Explorers Outreach Officer) and Ayla Karaman (Treasure Registrar at the British Museum). The PASt Explorers project was funded by The National Lottery Heritage Fund. These resources were expanded with support from Vanessa Oakden (Curator of Archaeology at Liverpool Museums and Mersey & Dee YAC leader) and Heather Beeton (PAS Finds Liaison Officer Cheshire, Greater Manchester & Merseyside).

2) Activities to deliver as part of a YAC session (or in another educational setting)

The resource pack is split into five sections:

Section 1 - the Portable Antiquities Scheme

Section 2 - the Treasure Act

Section 3 - Recording Finds

Section 4 - Using the PAS Database

Section 5 - Activities

A slideshow created by the Museum of Liverpool can be used to accompany some sections of this resource pack (indicated where applicable). Download the slideshow here.

There are suggested discussion points throughout the pack to encourage you to delve further into various topics. We have also highlighted appropriate points at which to do the supplied activities as you work through the pack. However, these are just suggestions and you should use the activities in whatever way you wish. If you would like to create your own activities using the PAS resources, the PAS database is free to access and all images are made freely available for use under the Creative Commons license.

If you have any questions about the pack or would like further information about the Portable Antiquities Scheme, please visit: www.finds.org.uk where you will find the PAS database, guides and resources, and contact details for everyone who works for the Scheme.

Glossary

Context	The relationship of an object to the other objects and features within the same archaeological layer.
Coroner	A government official who conducts an inquest to decide whether an item is Treasure or not.
Finds Liaison Officer	An archaeologist who specialises in the identification and recording of archaeological objects.
Find spot	The precise location in which an object was found.
Hoard	A collection of objects deliberately grouped together and hidden.
Metal detecting	An activity that involves scanning the ground with a metal detector to find items made of metal.
Nighthawking	Theft of archaeological objects from protected sites, usually carried out under cover of darkness.
PAS database	Online catalogue where information about all the finds recorded by the PAS is stored.
Plough soil	Layer of soil disturbed by agricultural activity, primarily ploughing.
Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS)	A project to record archaeological finds discovered by members of the public.
Stratigraphy	The principle that archaeology is found in layers and that the lower layers are older in date that the upper layers
Treasure	Objects that meet the criteria outlined in The Treasure Act 1996
Treasure Valuation Committee	An independent advisory group of specialists who determine the final reward value of a Treasure find.

Section 1 - The Portible Antiquities Scheme

What is the Portable Antiquities Scheme?

Not all artefacts come from archaeological excavations or fieldwork. In fact, every year many thousands of archaeological objects are discovered by members of the public. We use the term "portable antiquities" to distinguish these objects from those found through organised archaeological fieldwork.

Portable
Antiquities
Scheme
www.finds.org.uk

The Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) is a project that encourages the recording of archaeological objects found by members of the public. It is run by the British Museum and by Amgueddfa Cymru.

Often these finds will be the only evidence for human activity in an area but once they have been removed from the ground that evidence is lost. That is unless it is properly recorded, which is where the Portable Antiquities Scheme comes in! By recording these archaeological finds onto our database, the PAS can preserve the archaeological information and make it available for everybody to research.

These archaeological objects are not only important for telling us about past peoples and the types of objects they used, but also about the places where they lived and worked. By sharing the archaeological information recorded by the PAS we can help people to learn more about the archaeology and history of their local area.

How are the finds discovered?

There are many situations in which a member of the public might come across an archaeological object. The most common is by using a metal detector. In fact, around 90% of the items on the PAS database were discovered in this way.

Discussion point:
Have you ever discovered an archaeological object?
Where did you find it?
How did you find it?

People also find artefacts when they are gardening, carrying out building renovations or simply out for a walk. Some finds are discovered by people who go looking for them whilst others are found completely by accident but no matter the method of discovery, each find has the potential to add to our understanding of the past.

Metal Detecting

A metal detector is an instrument that detects the presence of metal, either hidden within other objects or buried underground. If you've ever been to an airport then you will have walked through a metal detector before you got on the plane. Today, metal detectors are used both by archaeologists as part of their site investigations and by people involved in the hobby of metal detecting.

The first recorded use of a metal detector for archaeological purposes was in 1958 when military historian, Don Rickey, used one to map the site of the Battle of Little Bighorn (1876) in Montana, USA.

Discussion point:
What is a protected site?
Can you list any examples?

In England and Wales, metal detecting is legal providing that the landowner has granted permission and that the land is not a protected or restricted site. If done responsibly, metal detecting can make an important contribution to archaeological knowledge.

For example, metal detectors have been used to make important discoveries such as the Staffordshire Hoard and have helped to locate previously unknown archaeological sites. The metal-detected finds recorded on the PAS database are also being used by researchers to help us understand the lives of people in the past.

The Staffordshire Hoard, discovered by a metal detectorist near Lichfield in 2009. Source: Stoke Museums

The **Code of Practice for Responsible Metal Detecting** was created to help metal detectorists to carry out their hobby in a responsible way. This means:

- Getting the permission of the landowner before detecting on their land
- Working on ground that has already been disturbed, such as ploughed fields
- Avoiding damaging any in-situ archaeology and calling for expert help if something is found below the plough soil
- Recording findspots (the location of the find) as accurately as possible
- Reporting finds to the PAS so that the information can be recorded on its database for everyone to research
- Obeying the laws regarding Treasure and discovery of human remains.

For more information about responsible metal detecting, check out the Code of Practice:
https://finds.org.uk/getinvolved/guides/codeofpractice

Spotlight on Nighthawking

Nighthawking is the theft of archaeological artefacts from protected sites. It often, though not always, involves the use of a metal detector. It is called nighthawking because it is usually done under the cover of darkness. Nighthawking breaks the law in several ways:

- It is trespass (a civil offence) because it is done without the landowner's permission
- It is often done on protected archaeological sites
- Nighthawkers rarely report Treasure, a criminal offence under the Treasure Act
- It is theft (criminal offence) because any finds, with the exception of Treasure, belong to the owner of the land

Discussion point:
What is a heritage crime?

If you suspect nighthawking is taking place in your local area, call the Police on 999 (if taking place) or 101.

The consequences of these crimes can be severe and include a large fine or even imprisonment. As well as breaking the law, nighthawking is damaging to archaeology. Nighthawks do not detect responsibly. They will often dig down through archaeological layers to retrieve objects without recording anything, not even a findspot, so all the archaeological information is lost. They can also cause permanent damage to archaeological sites by destroying features to reach artefacts.

Where do the finds come from?

Most finds recorded on the PAS database come from cultivated land – that is land used for growing crops. This is because most of the finds reported to the PAS come from people using metal detectors and, as per the Code of Practice, they detect mainly on cultivated land. But we also get finds reported to us from all sorts of locations from back gardens to river foreshores and even molehills! Some of the strangest findspots come from people doing building projects. For example, there are several items on the database that have been found hidden inside walls and under floorboards. The most unusual location so far must be the hoard of gold coins discovered inside a school piano!

Cultivated
Grassland
Woodland
Coastland
River
foreshores
Other
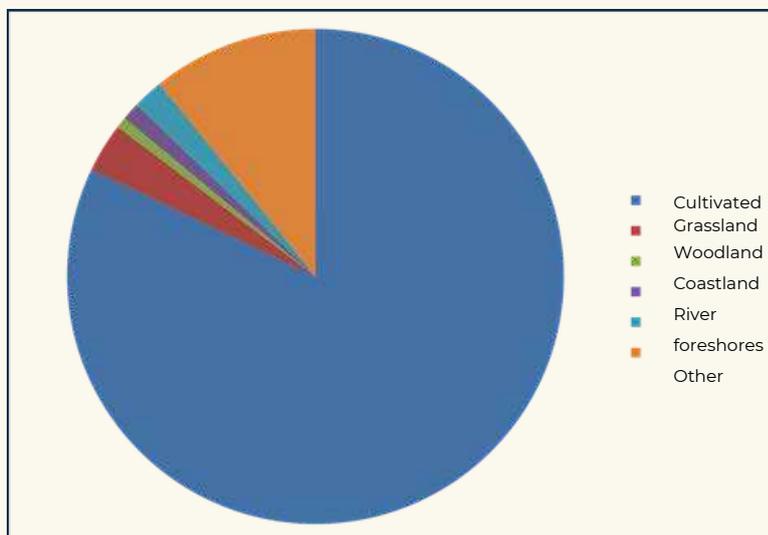
Correct for Jan 2020

Activity 1: Metal-detecting Debate

Use the information and materials in Activity 1 (see page 34) to hold a debate on the topic of metal-detecting.

How do archaeological finds end up in the plough soil?

To answer this, we first need to think about how archaeological deposits are formed in the first place. We know that soil develops in layers over time, with older things becoming buried as new layers develop over them. Objects and features found within the same layer are therefore considered to be related and to date to a similar time.

Discussion point: What other ways might objects end up in the soil?

This principle is one of the foundations of archaeology and is known as stratigraphy. The layer in which an object is found and its relationship to other objects and features in the layer is known as context. Context is very important in archaeology because it allows us to build the bigger picture of a site and the objects found within it.

LIN-A2D0A9 - An incomplete cast copper-alloy early Anglo-Saxon mount or harness mount dating from the late fifth to sixth century AD

Objects end up buried in soil layers in a variety of ways. For example, some are lost during daily life. Think about all the places you go during the day and how easy it is for something to fall out of your pocket. It was no different in the past.

An object may have fallen to the ground – perhaps a small buckle from a medieval horse harness or a brooch from an Iron Age cloak. This could easily be trodden into the mud by people walking over it. Over time, layers of mud and other materials build up over it and the object becomes buried.

Other finds were deliberately placed into the ground. For example, many objects were included in burials as part of funerary practices. Sometimes people also buried objects as part of a hoard. Some hoards were buried for safe-keeping – during times of trouble people would bury their valuables to keep them safe, hoping to retrieve them once peace returned. Others were buried as offerings to the gods.

There are over 4,850 hoards recorded on the PAS database!

The very top layer – the layer where current human activity takes place – may be undisturbed topsoil with pasture or roads and housing over it, or it might be plough soil. Plough soil (sometimes called the plough zone) is a layer of soil that is heavily disturbed by agricultural activity. The plough soil layer can be very deep, up to 45cm depending on the crop that will be planted in it.
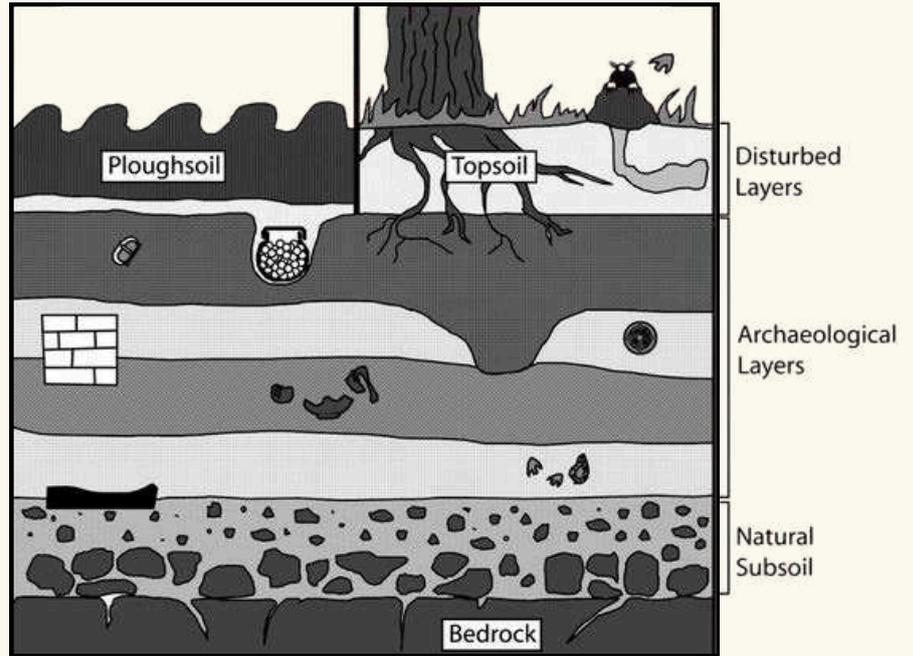
This means that if any archaeological layers are less than 45cm deep they are going to be damaged by the plough. Simply put, ploughing jumbles up stratigraphy. It mixes up the normal, orderly layers of soil which means that any objects deposited in the layers get moved around out of their original context. Objects can also be moved around to a lesser extent, as a result of natural action from tree roots and by animals like moles and badgers.
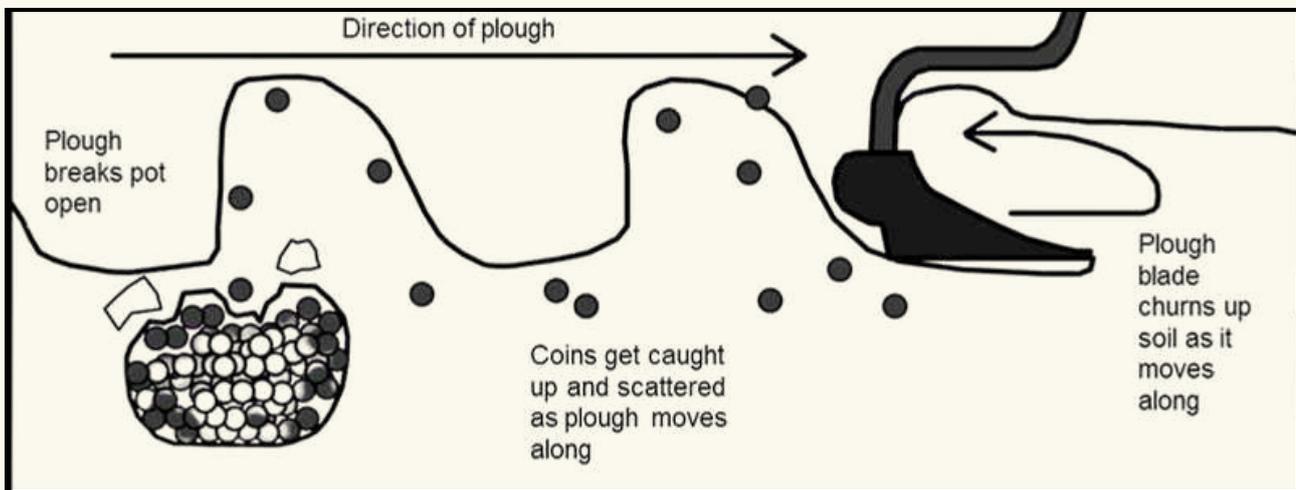
Archaeologists used to believe that objects found in ploughsoil are not very useful because they have been removed from their stratigraphic context. However, in recent years research has shown that whilst vertical stratigraphy is destroyed by ploughing, the horizontal or spatial distribution of objects is affected only minimally. This means that objects recovered from plough soil contexts are usually found close to where they were both used and discarded. This means that they can still tell us important information and it is why the findspot is so important for us to record – the findspot is what gives PAS objects their context.

Young Archaeologists' Club

What happens when an archaeological object is found by a member of the public?

When a member of the public discovers an archaeological object, they can bring it to their local Finds Liaison Officer (or FLO) to find out more about it. The FLO will help identify what it is and whether it should be recorded by the Scheme.

A Finds Liaison Officer is an archaeologist who specialises in the identification and recording of archaeological objects. They research archaeological objects found by members of the public and help them to learn about the archaeology of their local area.

The PAS employs 40 Finds Liaison Officers who are based in museums and heritage organisations across the country. You can find your nearest FLO here: https://finds.org.uk/contacts

A Finds Liaison Officer discussing a find with members of the public.

Individuals are not legally obliged to report all finds if they do not constitute Treasure (see Section 2). However by recording finds with the PAS, finders are contributing to our knowledge of Britain's past and adding to our publicly accessible database.

What sort of objects do the PAS record?

For an object to be recorded onto the PAS database it must:

- Date to 1540AD or earlier (usually)
- Be made or modified by humans
- Not be from an organised archaeological project

Discussion point: Can you think of any examples of types of finds that could be recorded on the PAS database?

An object does not have to be made of metal to be recorded, although most of the objects on the database are metallic. We are interested in seeing objects made from all materials. The database includes items made from stone, ceramics, wood, leather and bone.

The PAS also deals with a special category of finds known as Treasure, which you can find out about in the Section Two of this resource pack.

Sometimes, if an object dates to later than AD 1540 but is very significant or has a good local connection we will also record it because it adds important information to the history of an area. For example, this medal (pictured below) found in Lincolnshire was recorded by the PAS even though it dates to the 20th century.

NLM-C88CE1, North Lincolnshire Museum

It is a medal that was awarded to Gerhard Bersu, a German archaeologist who came to England during the Second World War after being sacked by the Nazis. He carried out many important excavations and was a huge influence on modern British archaeology. This medal is an important reminder of his contribution and part of our national story.

Activity 2: Portable Antiquities Scheme True or False?

Use the materials from Activity 2 (see page 37) to test your knowledge about the Portable Antiquities Scheme.

Activity 3: Be a Finds Liaison Officer!

Use the materials from Activity 3 (see page 40) to test your abilities as a Finds Liaison Officer.

What happens when a find is reported to the Portable Antiquities Scheme?

Object found by a member of the public

↓

Finder contacts their local Finds Liaison Officer

↓

Finds Liaison Officer identifies the object and decides whether it should be recorded onto the PAS database

If NO

Object is returned to the finder, with information about its identification

If YES

Finds Liaison Officer takes object in for recording

If the object is potential Treasure then it enters the Treasure process (see page 22)

Object is weighed, measured, photographed and a record is created on the PAS database

↓

Object is returned to the finder and the finder may decide to donate the object to their local museum

Section 2 - The Treasure Act

What is Treasure?

As mentioned in Section One, there is a special category of archaeological finds known as Treasure (with a capital 'T'). These are objects that meet a specific set of criteria as defined by law in the Treasure Act 1996. For detailed information on the Treasure Act see www.finds.org.uk/Treasure. The main criteria are explained below, with examples:

An object that is at least 300 years old and contains at least 10% silver or gold
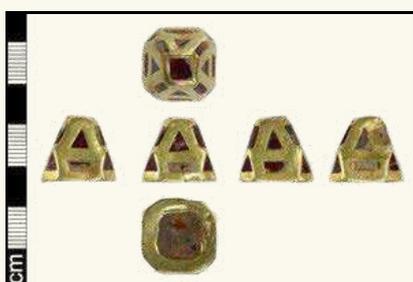
An Early Medieval gold and garnet pyramid mount from Norfolk (NMS-FCD6CD)

A Medieval silver annular brooch from Gloucestershire (HESH-497CD5)

A Post-medieval gold finger-ring from Dorset (SOM-9B91E8)

Two or more coins found together that contain 10% precious metal (a precious metal coin hoard)

Two Iron Age gold coins from Essex (ESS-817AAD)

Roman silver coins from North Yorkshire (YORYM-9157F4)

Post-medieval (but over 300 years old) silver coins from Cheshire (LVPL-025A25)

Single gold and silver coins do not currently qualify as Treasure. However, if a gold or silver coin is found on its own and at a later date another gold/silver coin is found nearby that is most likely associated with the first coin, these coins will be viewed as a hoard. The original coin will not be Treasure (because it was a single coin when initially discovered) but the second coin, and any others found in association, *are* Treasure.

Ten or more coins found together that are at least 300 years old, including those made of non-precious metals.

Sixteen Roman copper-alloy coins – Treasure because there are more than 10 found together (SUSS-BC6150)

A single precious metal coin that is over 300 years old and has been modified to become an object.

Early Medieval gold coin pendant from the Isle of Wight (IOW-27A7E8). A loop has been attached to the coin to turn it into a pendant. The coin can no longer be used as money and has therefore become an object.

Early Medieval silver-gilt coin brooch from the Isle of Wight (IOW-A6DB92). This coin has four rivet holes punched through it for attachment to a garment.

Medieval silver coin brooch from Kent (KENT-D69B27). The marks on the back of the coin show where a fastener was once attached to turn it into a brooch.

Not all single pierced coins qualify as Treasure. It depends on whether the coins continued to be used as money after they were modified. Iron Age, Roman and Early Medieval pierced coins *did not* re-enter circulation, making them objects and therefore Treasure. However, in the medieval and Post-medieval periods, pierced coins often went back into circulation and are therefore not usually considered to be Treasure. For further information see: https://finds.org.uk/treasure/advice/piercedcoins

Two or more Prehistoric objects of any metal found together (a hoard)

Iron Age vessel and bracelet hoard from Wakefield (SWYOR-1494DB). The four ribbed bracelets can be securely dated to the Iron Age making this hoard Treasure.
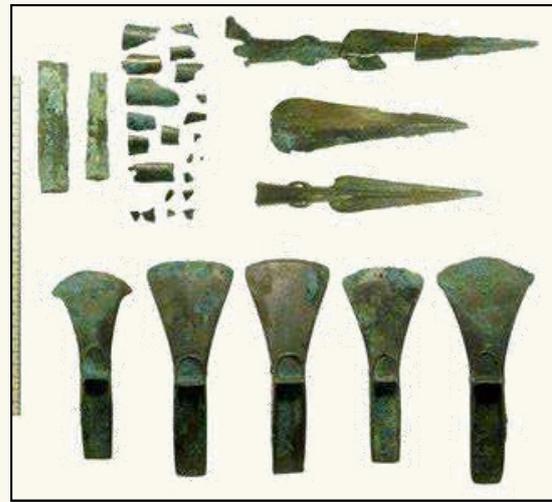
Bronze Age hoard from Suffolk (SF-13C7A2). The hoard contains a range of objects including axeheads and spearheads. If only one axehead was found, it would not qualify as Treasure.

Any object that would previously have been Treasure Trove (under common law in place prior to the Treasure Act in 1996) but does not fall within the specific categories given above.

To fall into this category an object must be less than 300 years old, be substantially (more than 50%) gold or silver, deliberately hidden with the intention of recovery and whose owners or heirs are unknown. This category is rarely used – mostly because one of the other definitions can be applied. Also, with more modern finds it is often possible to trace the owners or heirs.

Hoard of gold coins found inside a piano in a school in Shropshire (HESH-F5F412). This was an unusual case because the coins were all less than 200 years old and would not normally have been classed as Treasure. However, the coins were all substantially made of gold, they were carefully packaged and hidden inside the piano, and no owners or heirs have yet been traced; so the hoard was classified as Treasure.

An object that does not fall under the categories above but is declared an 'object of significance'.

To fall into this category an object must be more than 200 years old and provide an exceptional insight into an aspect of national ofrregional archaeology, culture or history because of one or more of the following factors:

1. It is a rare example of its type
2. Because of the location in which it was found
3. Because of its connection to a particular person or event

> Objects can only qualify as objects of significance if found on or after 30 July 2023.

The Crosby Garrett helmet (LANCUM-E48D73) is a Roman cavalry helmet discovered by a detectorist in Cumbria in 2010. As a an object made from copper it did not classify as Treasure under the 1996 act and was sold to a private collector in an auction.

If discovered after 30 July 2023 however it would likely qualify as Treasure as an 'object of significance'.

A Roman copper alloy plastic lamp, shaped like an anatomical human foot (KENT-EE88CA), discovered by a local archaeology society in Kent in 2023. The lamp is of considerable historical significance, being the first known example of its type to have been found in Britain.

The lamp is also highly significant due to the area in which it was found. Lympne, Kent, was the site of a Roman Saxon Shore fort, Portus Lemanis, and a nearby vicus.

Any object, whatever the material, that is found in the same place as, or had previously been together with, another object that is Treasure.

This might include:
- A vessel for a coin hoard, such as a lead, stone or textile container
- Other items included in a burial
- Other items in a hoard that are not gold or silver

For example, the foot lamp pictured on the previous page was discovered with 24 sherds of Roman pottery. These also qualify as Treasure.
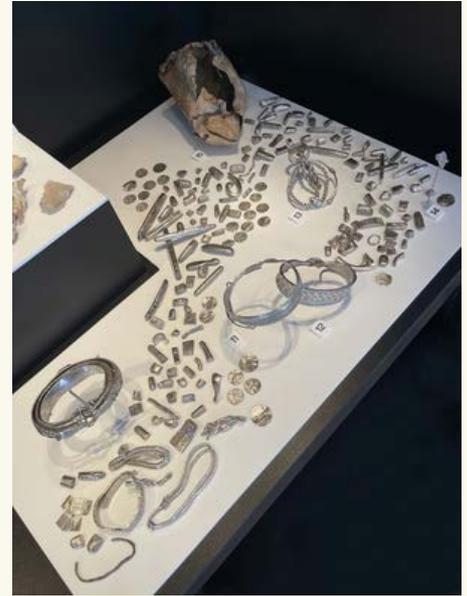
> The Silverdale Hoard, discovered in Lancashire in 2011, consists of 201 pieces of Viking-age silver as well as a lead container, which also counts as Treasure under the 1996 Treasure Act. Source: Liverpool Museums

< Post-medieval hoard of silver coin clippings in a ceramic jar from Derbyshire (DENO-060EAA). The ceramic jar counts as Treasure in this case because it was found with the silver coin clippings.

^ KENT-05D0ED, 35 Iron Age gold staters and a flint container

Activity 4: Hoard Containers

Take inspiration from Mersey & Dee YAC members and have a go at creating your own hoard containers with these fun activities!

Activity 5: Is it Treasure?

Use the materials from Activity 5 to identify which objects are legally Treasure, and why.

The Treasure Process – an overview

1) Discovery and Reporting of Treasure

As mentioned in Section One, when a member of the public discovers an archaeological object they can bring it to their local Finds Liaison Officer (FLO) to find out more about it. This is when some finds are identified as Treasure.

As soon as the finder or the FLO suspect the find might be Treasure, they must report it to the local county Coroner and the Treasure team based at the British Museum (this differs for Treasure found in Wales and Northern Ireland). Archaeological units must also report any Treasure they find during excavations.

Finders and landowners are eligible for rewards for reporting Treasure. If Treasure is found during any type of archaeological activity, then the finder is not eligible for a reward. However, the landowner may still claim a reward.

It is illegal to knowingly conceal Treasure by not reporting it to the Coroner, and can lead to prosecution and even prison.

2) Creating a Treasure report

Once the find has been reported as potential Treasure, the FLO or a curator at the British Museum will write up a report that will later be sent to the Coroner.

The report includes the area where it was found, a description of the find, the dimensions, and a conclusion of why it should or shouldn't be considered Treasure. These reports are also uploaded to the Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) database, where they are available for research.

3) Conservation and Scientific Analysis

In some instances, the find might be in a fragile state after being in the ground for so long. In this case, the find will be sent to the conservation department at the British Museum to be treated.

In addition, where there is uncertainty over the material of the find, such as the percentage of precious metal present, it will be sent to scientific analysis for testing.

A Post-medieval silver coin hoard from Hampshire (HAMP-8B9913). The hoard was block-lifted from the ground and treated in the Conservation Department at The British Museum. It was micro-excavated in the laboratory and each coin carefully cleaned. (Images courtesy of The Portable Antiquities Scheme).

3) Museum interest in the find?

After the Treasure report has been completed it is distributed to local museums to see if they would like to acquire the find for their collections. National museums, such as the British Museum, also have the option to acquire the find. This is an important part of the Treasure process because it enables important finds to be acquired for the benefit of the public.

> Since the Treasure Act 1996 was brought in, thousands of important finds have been acquired by public museums and are on display across the country.

4) The Coroner's involvement

Once an object has been offered to a museum, there are three possible outcomes:

1) Inquest request: If a museum is interested in acquiring the find, then the Treasure team writes to the Coroner to request an inquest. The Coroner will then hold an inquest to declare the find Treasure.

2) Disclaim: If there are no museums interested in acquiring the find, then the Treasure team writes to the Coroner to 'disclaim' the find. This means that the Crown gives up any claim to ownership it might have and the find can be returned to the finder, subject to the landowner's agreement.

3) Not Treasure: Sometimes after the find has been reported to the coroner as potential Treasure, it is then identified that the find is not Treasure. For example, the find cannot be securely dated or there is less than 10% precious metal content. In this case, the Treasure team writes to the Coroner to inform them the find is not Treasure, and the find is then returned to the finder (subject to the landowner's agreement).

5) Valuing the Treasure finds

If there is museum interest and the find is declared Treasure at the coroner's inquest, the find then proceeds to the valuation stage. The Treasure team commission a team of independent valuers who come to the British Museum to value the find. This provisional valuation is given to the finder, landowner and museum for comment, as well as the Treasure Valuation Committee (TVC).

The TVC is an independent advisory group of specialists who determine the final reward value of a Treasure find. The TVC meets around eight times a year to review finds being acquired by museums. Working from the provisional valuation and also any comments from the finder, landowner or museum, they recommend values to the Secretary of State.

The TVC's recommended valuations are then distributed to all interested parties. The finder, landowner and museum are welcome to submit any comments or challenges to the valuation and they can even submit their own private valuation. This keeps the valuation process open and fair.

The TVC also makes recommendations on how the rewards are allocated. In some cases, the TVC might decide to abate rewards to finders/landowners. This means reducing or taking away the reward payment. For instance, if a finder/landowner conceals any Treasure or damages the find, they could have their reward amount reduced or taken away. This is to encourage good practice in recording and reporting archaeological finds.

6) Acquisition and closure

As soon as all parties have agreed to the recommended valuation, the museum acquiring the find is invoiced. Once the museum has paid, they are free to collect the find from the British Museum and the reward payments are then distributed to the finder and landowner.

50%
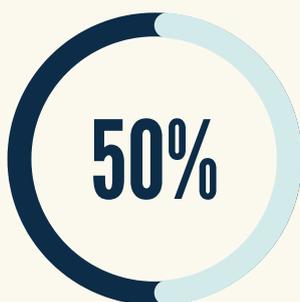
This is usually a 50/50 split unless an alternative arrangement has been agreed between the finder and landowner. If no one can agree to the recommended valuation, they can appeal to the Secretary of the State, where the matter will be dealt with by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS).

7) Donation

There are some instances where the finder and/or landowner decide to waive their share of the reward. This means that the museum can acquire the find for either a reduced amount or it is fully donated to the museum. In these cases, a donation certificate signed by the Minister of Culture is sent out to the finder/landowner to thank them.

Activity 6: Treasure Debate

Use the materials from Activity 6 (see page 55) to hold a debate about Treasure and what happens to it.

Further information

The flow chart on the next page shows the breakdown of the stages in the Treasure process. Due to the various types of Treasure finds and circumstances of discovery, not all Treasure cases are treated the same way. The Treasure Act is very detailed and the process has many stages. Further information and guidance can be found on:
https://finds.org.uk/treasure

The Staffordshire Hoard, discovered by a metal detectorist near Lichfield in 2009. Source: Stoke Museums. Now owned by Birmingham City Council and Stoke-on-Trent City Council in the care of Birmingham Museums Trust.

The Treasure and valuation process

Find reported to the FLO → Can the FLO identify the object?

If YES → FLO writes the report (approved by the British Museum curator)

If NO → Find brought to the BM → Scientific analysis or conservation if necessary → Curator writes report

Curator writes report → Does a museum want to acquire the find?

Does a museum want to acquire the find?

If NO → Disclaimed - FLO collects find

If YES → Find brought to the BM → Does the find include an unidentified gemstone?

Does the find include an unidentified gemstone?

If YES → Scientific analysis

If NO → Find is seen by provisional buyer

Scientific analysis → Find is seen by provisional buyer

Find is seen by provisional buyer → Valued by the TVC → Does the museum still want to acquire?

Does the museum still want to acquire?

If YES → Museum pays - find is released → Find collected by FLO or museum

If NO → Find collected by FLO or finder

Young Archaeologists' Club

Why is Treasure important?

The following images and discussion points are taken from the Museum of Liverpool's exhibition *Treasure* (2025-26).

Use slides 11-18 of the slideshow - click <u>here</u> to download.

Treasure can tell personal stories

Treasure can be memory – it can remind us of someone or somewhere, perhaps someone has left us something or given us a gift. We still wear rings on our fingers, often exchanged in love. Rings are small objects which are easily lost, both today and in the past. Often we call these chance finds, objects which are lost by chance and discovered by chance years later.

This post-medieval ring was found on the Wirral and is engraved with the words 'Favor as I Finde' which probably means something like, you are my favourite and I like or love you as I find you.

Although we live very different lives to people in the past, many of our thoughts and feelings are the same.

Source: National Museums Liverpool

> *Discussion point:*
> Think about your own memories, what do you treasure in your life? Perhaps your Treasure is less shiny and is something like a family recipe or perhaps something which reminds us of home or a loved one or a fun day out. Or it could be a piece of music which helps us to have fun or feel calm or excited.

Treasure can tell us about identity

Treasure can tell us about individuals' identity and how they saw themselves. Personal items such as jewellery were often more than just attractive accessories worn to look good but tell something about us; about who we are, what we might think or believe or the places and people that are special to us.

The object below is a silver Roman brooch which is also gilded. It is a trumpet brooch which is a type of Roman brooch we associate with the Roman army. Although it's an object linked to Roman military identity, it is decorated with swirls on the head of the brooch and a wave like pattern down the leg of the brooch.

This style is strongly associated with an Iron Age style of decoration called La Tene decoration, which was common in the north of England in the late Iron Age when the Romans first came to Britain. So here we have an object associated with Romans, but decorated in a local way.

Source: National Museums Liverpool

Discussion point:
Could it have been owned by someone who felt connected to both cultures, or perhaps a Roman just liked the look of it! What do you think?

Can you own any special objects that tell something about your identity? What conclusions might a future archaeologist make about you based on your special objects?

Treasure can tell us about significant events

The brooch is part of the Knutsford hoard (pictured below), found in Cheshire in 2012 and which was probably buried in the 190s. Roman coins in the hoard span the period from Hadrian (AD 117-138) to Marcus Aurelius (AD 161-180), a time of political and military uncertainty; perhaps that was why the hoard was buried.

The identity of the person or people burying the hoard is impossible to know for certain. However, we could speculate that this is the private wealth of a local person of importance burying their valuables for safekeeping.

The presence of the silver denarii, as well as high-quality silver brooches and finger-rings, may indicate a military veteran, perhaps a retired soldier burying their wealth for safe-keeping, although it could be anyone who had amassed personal wealth, a merchant, an official or a landowner. Perhaps the hoard was profits from the salt trade. Of course we would love to know for sure but sometimes it's more fun guessing!

Treasure can tell us how archaeology has changed

Spotlight on the Mold Cape:

The Mold cape is one of the most important examples of Bronze Age sheet-gold working and is quite unique in form and design. It was laboriously beaten out of a single ingot of gold nearly 4000 years ago and embellished with decoration which mimics multiple strings of beads amid folds of cloth.

The cape was found in Mold in 1833 by workmen quarrying for stone in a stony bank which we now know was a burial mound. It was found within a stone-lined grave around poorly preserved human remains. Amber beads were found laid in rows on the cape. At first it was thought the cape was a corslet, a type of armour worn on the chest of a horse however in the 1950s University of Liverpool archaeologist Terence Powell realised that the curves of the decoration mirror strings of beads draped over the shoulders and it was identified as a cape. This allowed the crumpled and torn cape to be put back together.

Image © Pete Carr

Archaeology has developed over time as a hobby that perhaps just the wealthy enjoyed before becoming a scientific discipline. We know that the finders melted some of the amber beads and discarded the human remains while today every small object would be collected and the soil sieved to check it all, change in the color of the soil, fibre and thread would be analysed. The cape, if found today, would also go through the Treasure Act system however in 1833 the law was Treasure Trove and so as a burial it was not considered Treasure Trove. To be Treasure Trove we would have to prove that the owner intended to return for the object. As an object with a burial we can say with certainty those who buried it did not intend to dig it back up.

Treasure can challenge our biases

The Mold cape can also lead to discussions about identity. At first people assumed a cape of gold could only be worn by an important man, probably a chieftain or leader.

If you are a 19th-century antiquarian looking at the past through your own perspective then its perhaps very easy to add a bit of your own identity to stories about the past. We are all shaped by our own experiences so in archaeology today its really important to be mindful of our own assumptions and biases and also to have a wide range of people getting into archaeology.
Image right © National Museums Liverpool
Image below © Trustees of the British Museum
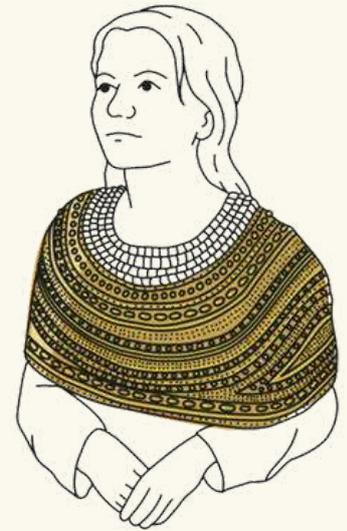
These ideas are often then represented in how we display objects or illustrate them. The older illustration on the left from the British Museum shows a man wearing the cape. Often we assume that leaders in the past were all male because leaders in the 19th and 20th centuries (and to some extent today) were nearly always men.

This can be contrasted with the Museum of Liverpool's illustration above. This image reflects how conservation and research to reconstruct the cape shows it is more likely to have fitted a small woman or teenager, not an adult man. It may have been worn by a young person of status. Life-expectancy was much lower in the Bronze Age and teenagers may have played a very active role in society as leaders and decision-makers. There is also no reason to assume that leaders in the Bronze Age were all male.

Discussion point:

Can you think of any other archaeological discoveries where biases influenced interpretations? A good example is the Birka Viking warrior - see this YAC activity to explore further!

Mersey and Dee YAC members got creative with imagining who might have worn and buried the Gold Cape and made peg dolls!

Section 3 - Recording Finds

How do we record an archaeological object?

All finds recorded by the PAS, including Treasure, will have a database record created for them. The best way to think about recording a find is to imagine that the object has vanished completely and all you have left is the database record. What information would you need for that record to be useful for research?

Discussion point: What information about an object do you think is important to record?

This is the information that we collect in order to create a database record:

- **Object Type** → What is the object?
- **Description** → What does it look like? This is important because researchers will not have the object in front of them so need a full and accurate description.
- **Date** → How old is the object? When was it made and used?
- **Measurements** → Size, weight and quantity (if more than one)
- **Materials** → What is it made of?
- **Discovery Details** → How was it discovered? When? Where? By whom?
- **Images** → Photographs of the objects from multiple angles to show all of the important features. Sometimes people include illustrations of the object as well.

Spotlight on find spots

Why is the find spot so important? The find spot is what gives the objects on the database context, particularly objects that have been removed from their original context through actions like ploughing.

Sometimes the findspot is more important to archaeologists than the find itself! This is because where something is found can offer important clues to past activities in an area. It can tell us about demographics, society, culture, manufacturing and trade. So the more accurate the findspot data, the more useful the record is to researchers.

The PAS asks finders to provide a minimum of a 6- figure grid reference (precise to 100m) but the majority of our finders supply 8-figure (10m) or even 10-figure (1m) grid references which is even better!

You can learn all about grid references here: https://getoutside.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/guides/beginners-guide-to-grid-references/

Describing an object

Writing the object description is often the trickiest part of creating a database record. Try to imagine that someone has to draw your object from just the description. You need to be careful to avoid words that could be interpreted in different ways.

Important information to capture for an object description includes:

Identification	A one sentence summary of what the object is
Material	Of each component of the find, including any rivets
Surface treatment	For example, any gilding, stamping etc
Method of manufacture	How it was made, for example, hand-carving, with a mould or a boss
Shape	A detailed description of the shape
Size and weight	In millimetres and grams
Decoration	Is the object decorated? How?
Reverse	The back of the object can be just as important as the front! For example, a brooch may have the remains of a pin.
Completeness	Is the object whole or broke?
Wear	Including wear on any breaks as this can tell us if the break is historic or recent
Colour	This can tell us about deposition conditions, for example

Corrosion and loss of surface	Has the surface been lost through corrosion or other processes?
Components	Is the object constructed in more than one part? How many parts?
Date and period	When was it made and used?
Parallels	Are there any other examples like this object?

You can find more help about writing database records by checking out our volunteer recording guide and our finds recording guides:
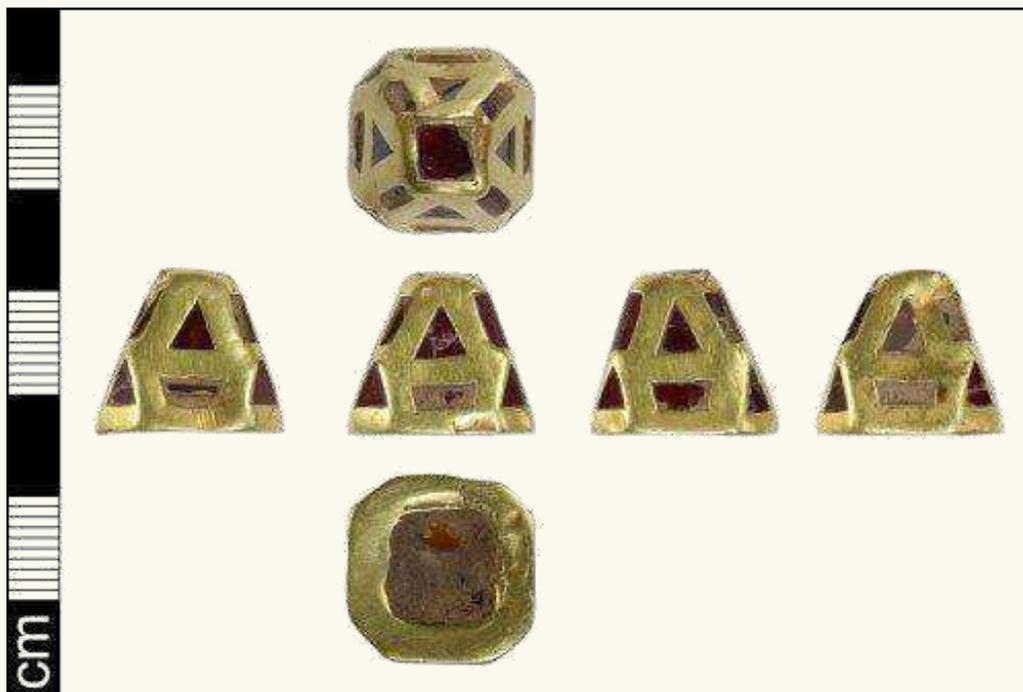
Volunteer Recording Guide: *https://finds.org.uk/volunteerrecording*
Finds Recording Guides: *https://finds.org.uk/counties/findsrecordingguides*

Activity 7: Writing Database Records

Use the materials from Activity 7 (see page 57) to write a database record for an object.

An Early Medieval gold and garnet pyramid mount from Norfolk (NMS-FCD6CD)

Section 4 - Using the PAS Database

What is the PAS database?

The PAS database is where we store the information about all the finds reported to us. Remember, we do not keep any of the actual finds, just the data about them. This is known as preservation by record.

The information on the database is available for everybody to use so that anyone can find out about the archaeology of their local area. The database is easy to search and your search results can be filtered to find just the data you need.

> The PAS database currently has more than 1.8 million objects recorded on the database – that is an average of almost 70,000 a year!
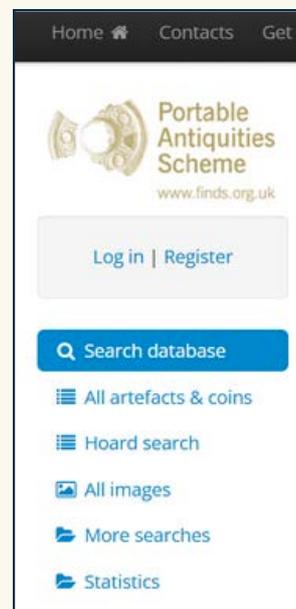
Searching the database

The PAS database is full of information but how do you find what you are looking for? There are many different ways to access the data depending on the type of information you are interested in. You can find all of the different search methods here: **https://finds.org.uk/database/search**

Browsing finds on the database

The quickest and most simple is the "All artefacts and coins" button on the left-hand side. This brings up everything on the database.

You can then narrow down your results using the filters on the right-hand side (see the screenshot on the next page)

This method is great for finding interesting statistics such as: how many Bronze Age objects are there on the database? It's a quick way to browse the most recent records that have been added and it is also a fun way to explore the data-base if you are not looking for anything in particular.
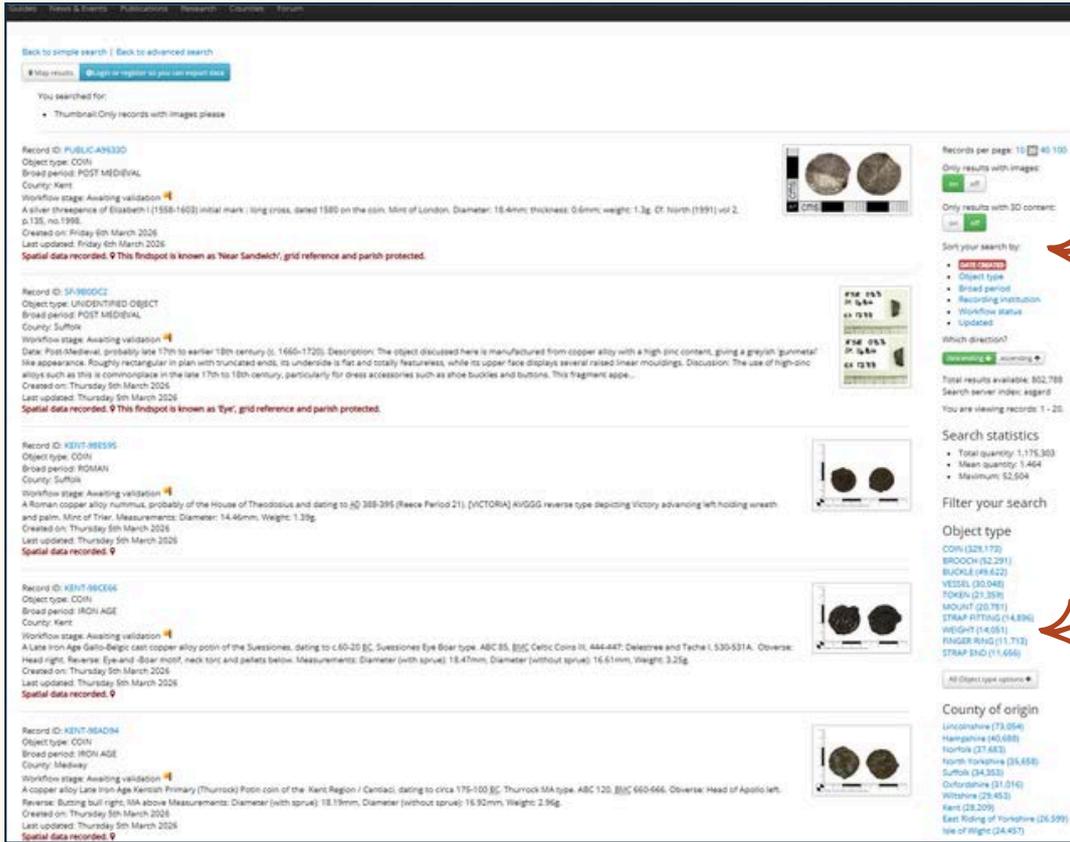
You can choose to only view finds with photographs or 3D content

Filters let you narrow down the data by object type, county and period

Searching for specific finds

However, sometimes you might want to search for something more specific. For example, if you are looking for a particular find and you have the record number for it; or you want to find all the records with a particular word in them. You can use the Basic Search Box for this. Simply type your chosen word into the box and press "Search!".

This will bring up all the database records containing that word. You can then use the filters on the right-hand side to narrow down your results as before. The Basic Search Box is useful for when you are not sure which database field the information has been put into because it searches all of them. However, it is not so good for words that are very common or have multiple meanings because it can be difficult to filter out the ones you do not want.

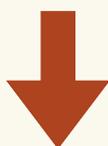*The Basic Search Box – not so basic!*

You can also use the Basic Search Box to carry out some quite complicated database searches, but you need to know how to construct your search to get the information you want. We will cover a few basic examples here but for a full explanation check out our handy guide to Searching the Database here:
https://finds.org.uk/counties/findsrecordingguides/searching-the-database

To boost the searching power of the Basic Search Box you can use something called an operator. The operators used on the database are AND, OR and NOT (must be capitalised). With these three you can conduct some powerful searches.

Here's an example using Roman coins:

Roman AND coins

Brings up all Roman coins

Roman OR coins

Brings up all Roman objects and all coins

Roman NOT coins

Brings up all Roman objects except coins

Advanced search

If you type multiple terms into the Basic Search Box without any operators between them, the database will treat it as if you have put AND between them. So, if you want to search for a phrase, such as coin weight, you must wrap them in speech marks like this: "coin weight".

Just remember that whatever you type into the box, the database will bring up all records containing that term, regardless of what database field they are in. If you know which database field you want to search, then the Advanced Search Form is the best approach.

There are lots of different fields that can be searched using the form, either on their own or in combination. For example, if you are looking for a specific object type or you want to find all the objects made of a particular material, or even both!
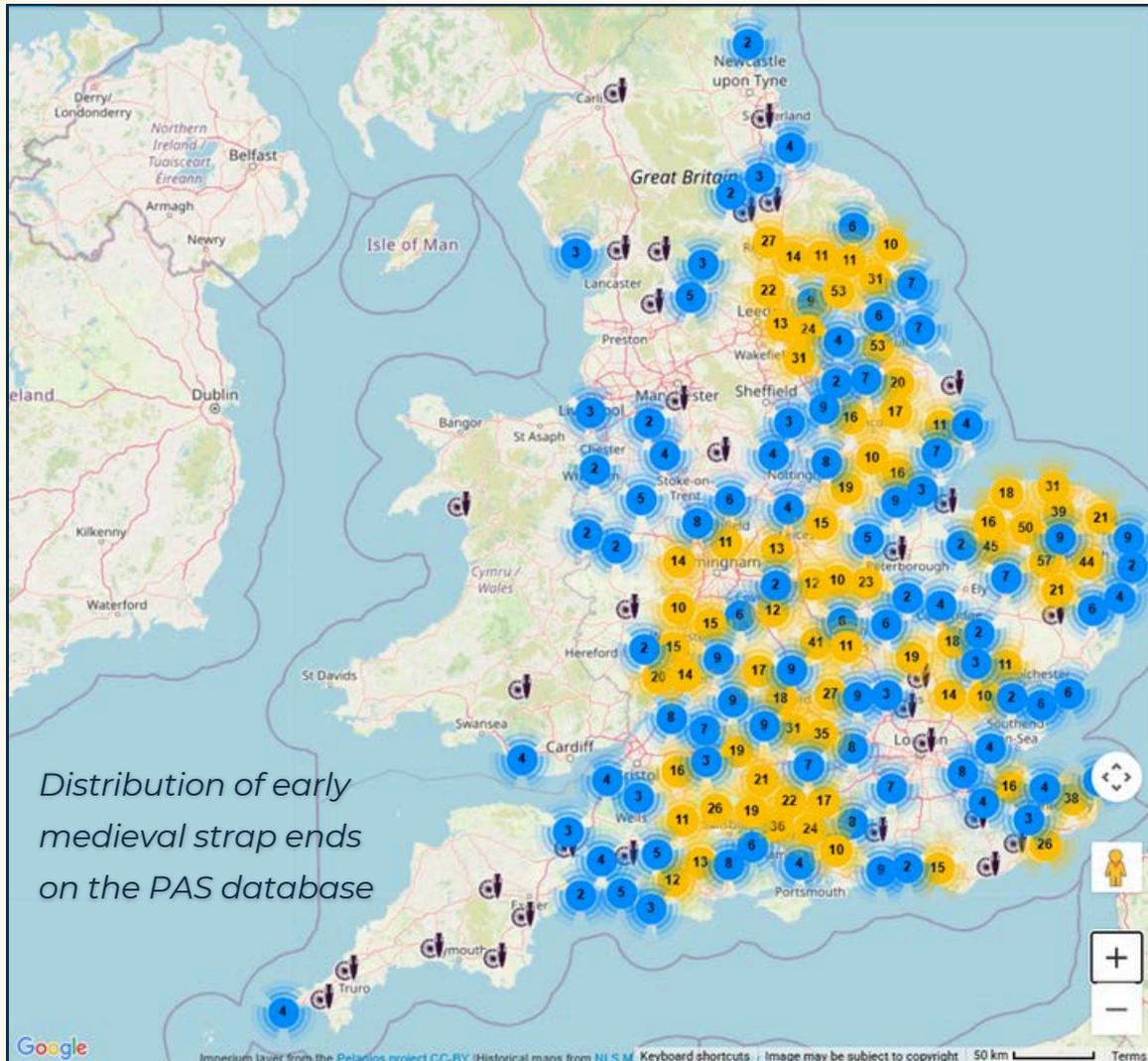
Searching by location

Finally, there are some fun geographical searches you can do. The first is the Map Search. This allows you to select an area on the map and search for all the finds that have been discovered there.

Distribution of early medieval strap ends on the PAS database

Alternatively, you can try the Postcode Search which allows you to search for all the finds discovered in a particular postcode area. Both of these searches are fun and great for promoting local archaeology because people can search for things found near their house!

Activity 8: Writing Database Records

Use the materials from Activity 8 (see page 61) to search the database and complete our scavenger hunt.

Section 5 - Activities

Activity 1 - Metal Detecting Debate

Overview: discuss the issues surrounding the practice of metal-detecting.

Learning objectives/skills: To encourage discussion and critical thinking of the issues surrounding the practice of metal-detecting. The activity uses verbal reasoning, comprehension and research skills too.

Materials: Newspaper clippings or case studies of metal-detecting that show the various issues involved. If you can find some local examples, even better! Your local FLO should be able to help with this. With older children, you might prefer to provide computers/tablets and have them research examples themselves.

Preparation: Prepare some debate questions/statements. We have provided two below to get you started but you may want to come up with some of your own, depending on the work you have been doing with the group. Use the information from the Resource Pack and your own discussions on the topic to provide the background to the debate. Set up the room for a debate, ideally with a lectern at the front and two separate areas for each group to work on their arguments.

Instructions

- Divide your group into two – one group will argue "For" and the other "Against".
- Appoint a moderator (this could be the YAC leader).
- Either hand out the clippings/case studies on the next page to each group or ask them to look up their own examples (try searching 'metal detecting' on the BBC News website).
- Give them adequate time to formulate their arguments.
- Each group will need to elect a speaker. Each speaker will then have an allotted time to deliver their argument.
- After both arguments have been presented, each group gets a chance to challenge the arguments made. You might also want to include questions from the floor.
- At the end a winner is decided – either the YAC leader can act as the judge or you could have a show of hands from the audience.
- After the debate is finished, you could continue the discussion to have a more in-depth look at some of the issues.

Example debate topics

Debate topic 1: Is metal-detecting good or bad for archaeology?

In the UK, metal-detecting is legal as long as you have the permission of the owner on whose land you are detecting. This means that anybody can, in theory, go out and discover archaeological objects without having to be part of an archaeological investigation. Some important sites have special protection, which means they cannot be detected on at all (for example, Stonehenge) but most land does not.

There is no legal obligation to record any of these finds unless they fall under the definition of Treasure. This means that potentially a lot of information about the past goes unrecorded. The Portable Antiquities Scheme aims to capture this information by recording metal-detected finds on its database and lots of detectorists do volunteer their finds for recording.

However, some do not and furthermore, others engage in the illegal practice of night-hawking (detecting without the landowner's permission). This has led to damage of some important archaeological sites and the loss of valuable information. On the other hand, metal-detecting has led to the discovery of some previously unknown archaeological sites, and the information on the database has added greatly to our knowledge of Britain's past.

An ancient Iron Age coin has been discovered that could show evidence of trading between two tribes thousands of years ago.
Unearthed by a metal detectorist in Lelley, East Yorkshire, the coin dates back to around 50-10BC - the Iron Age period. It is a variant of a Corieltauvi tribe gold stater, made by a Celtic tribe that occupied all of Lincolnshire, all the way up to the south bank of the Humber.
January 2026
https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/crk rend7051o

'Nighthawkers' in illegal dig at historic site
Police are investigating an incident of illegal metal detecting at the historic Lydford Castle and Saxon Town site in Devon. Individuals dug multiple holes at the protected 13th Century site, a scheduled monument managed by English Heritage. The site features a 13th Century tower on a mound, a Norman earthwork castle and Saxon town defenses.
May 2025
https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c n5yerwwv54o

Debate topic 2: All metal-detected finds should be recorded with the Portable Antiquities Scheme

Recording finds with the Portable Antiquities Scheme is not compulsory, so not all finds get reported. However, a vast number of finders do report their discoveries to help further our understanding of the past and, to date, over 1.8 million objects have been recorded. Arguably, this number would be even higher if all finds had to be reported and we could be missing out on valuable information.

But some finds do not actually tell us very much archaeologically, especially mass-produced objects from more recent periods. With so many finds being reported already, it is questionable whether all finds should, or even could be recorded, as it takes time to research and record each find.

✂ -

Record ID: LON-ED6E5D

Silver cufflinks like this were produced in large quantities during the Restoration Period (1660-1666 AD). Many of them are identical and have no personalisation or other additional information on them so do they actually tell us very much?

Record ID: SUR-9F774B

This blob of bronze might not look like very much; in fact it isn't even an artefact but the waste from the creation of something else. However, it is actually from the Bronze Age and is probably waste from the production of axeheads. It tells us that axes were being cast near the site that this object was found. Does this make it worth recording?

Activity 2 - True or False

Suitable for Ages 8+

Time: 10-20 minutes

Overview: This activity tests people's understanding of the Portable Antiquities Scheme. It can also be used as the basis for further discussion on some of the points raised.

Learning objectives/skills: This activity uses comprehension and verbal reasoning skills.

Use slides 27-46 of the slideshow - click here to download.

Materials: A list of True or False questions – you can use the ones provided below or add your own.

Preparation: Use section one of the resource pack to introduce the Portable Antiquities Scheme. Depending on how you run the activity, you might wish to set the room up in a quiz show format for example.

Instructions

- You can either hand out the list of statements to people, or you can run it as a quiz where you read out each statement or put them up on the PowerPoint.
- You can add some movement to the activity by having True and False sides to the room and getting people to run to the relevant side.
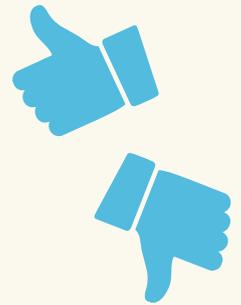
Quiz answers:

1) You must record all of your finds.

False – only Treasure finds have to be reported by law. However, the more finds people report, the more we can learn about the past.

2) You can metal-detect wherever you like.

False – you must always have the permission of the person who owns the land before you can metal-detect on it. And some land (such as Scheduled Monuments) you are never allowed to detect on.

3) You must tell someone if you find Treasure.

True – all Treasure finds must be reported by law.

Quiz answers (continued):

4) Gold and silver objects are the most important.

False – although gold and silver objects are Treasure, this does not make them more important. In fact, sometimes non-Treasure finds can tell us a lot more about life in the past than Treasure objects.

5) The PAS only records objects that are over 300 years old.

False – although the recording criteria prioritises objects that are more than 300 years old, PAS will record more recent objects if they have significant historical or local value.

6) It is important to provide an accurate findspot for each find

True – an accurate findspot is vital because in order for the data to be useful we need to know where it was found. The findspot gives the object context.

7) You only need to get permission to metal-detect on private land.

False – all land has an owner, even public land, and you must always have the landowner's permission before you go detecting.

8) If it is a common find, it doesn't need to be recorded.

False – every object is unique in its own way so even if there are many examples already on the database, another one may still add new information. For example, it might be the first one of that type found in a particular area. FLOs will make a judgement based on the object in front of them, rather than how many of them are already on the database.

9) If you find an archaeological object in your garden you don't have to tell anybody.

True – unless the objects are human remains or potential Treasure, in which case you must tell the relevant authorities.

*10) The PAS keeps all the finds reported to them.*

False – the PAS records all of the information about an object but does not keep the object itself. Objects are either returned to the finder or sometimes they go to a museum.

Treasure Quiz!

	TRUE	FALSE
1) You must record all of your finds.	TRUE	FALSE
2) You can metal-detect wherever you like.	TRUE	FALSE
3) You must tell someone if you find Treasure.	TRUE	FALSE
4) Gold and silver objects are the most important.	TRUE	FALSE
5) The PAS only records objects that are over 300 years old.	TRUE	FALSE
6) It is important to provide an accurate findspot for each find	TRUE	FALSE
7) You only need to get permission to metal-detect on private land.	TRUE	FALSE
8) If it is a common find, it doesn't need to be recorded.	TRUE	FALSE
9) If you find an archaeological object in your garden you don't have to tell anybody.	TRUE	FALSE
10) The PAS keeps all the finds reported to them.	TRUE	FALSE
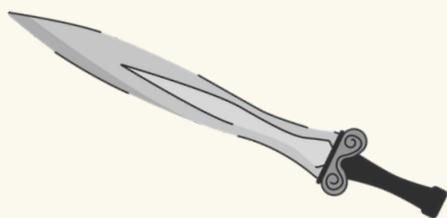
Activity 3 - Become a Finds Liaison Officer!

Suitable for Ages 8+	Time: around 1 hour

Overview: The role of a Finds Liaison Officer is varied and interesting. One of their jobs is to identify the archaeological finds that people bring for them to see. This activity gets people to have a go at identifying and dating some finds from the PAS database.

Learning objectives/skills: This activity uses critical thinking skills and knowledge of history/archaeology.

Materials: Examples of objects from the database. You can use the ones provided here or you can pick your own from the database.

Preparation: Cut out and laminate the object images and put them into a finds bag. If you have a large group, you may want to create several finds bags so you can split people into smaller groups. Or, if you have a selection of finds or replica artefacts arrange them onto trays. You will also need to create a sheet of the answers.

Instructions

- It is a good idea to have a quick refresher of the major archaeological periods (Prehistory to present, along with different periods of prehistory and history).
- Give a finds bag/tray to each group and get them to identify and date each of the objects within. You can add an element of movement to the activity by giving each person an object and asking them to line themselves up in the correct date order.
- Next, ask the young people to decide whether or not they should be recorded on the database according to the recording criteria (see right). Interestingly, all of the objects were recorded on the database due to the place and context of their discoveries, but some of them (e.g. gunflints) are very common finds.
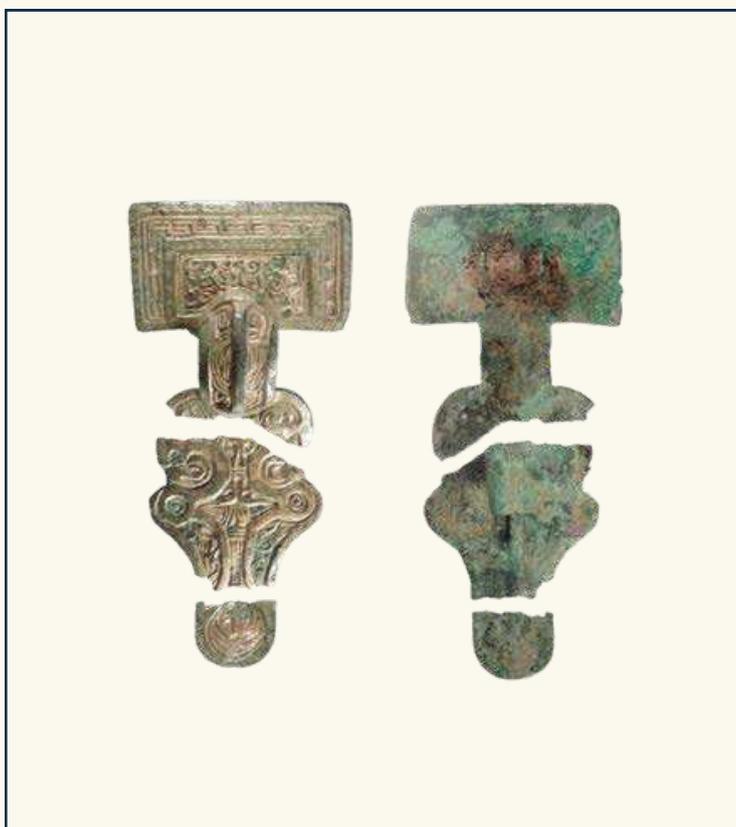- You can look up the objects on the PAS database to find out more about them.

For an object to be recorded onto the PAS database it must:

- Date to 1540AD or earlier
- Be made or modified by humans
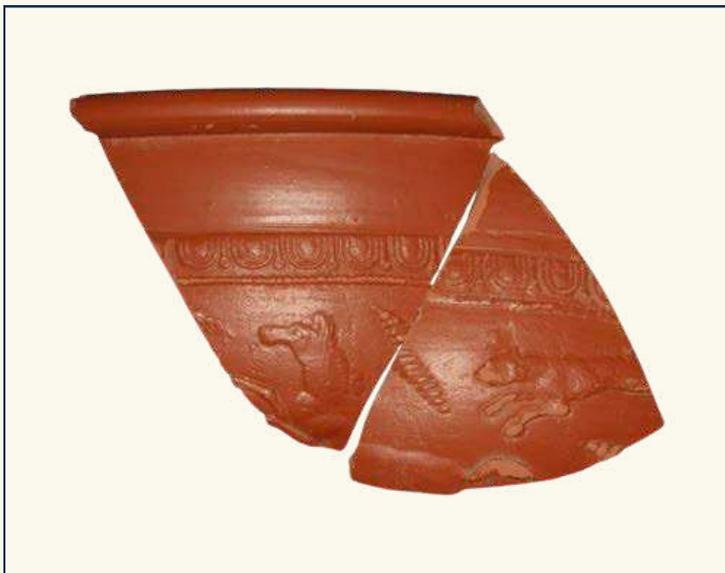- Not be from an organised archaeological project

Object examples to print and cut-out

Object examples to print and cut-out

PALAEOLITHIC

Flint handaxe; 600,000-150,000BC. Found in Norfolk. Recorded as NMS-558D58 on the PAS Database.

MESOLITHIC

Four flint microliths; 6000-3500BC. Found in Lincolnshire. Recorded as SWYOR-D04151 on the PAS Database.

NEOLITHIC

Polished flint axehead; 4000-2200BC. Found in Norfolk. Recorded as CAM-97F9E7 on the PAS Database.

BRONZE AGE

Socketed copper alloy axehead; 1000-800BC. Found in Shropshire. Recorded as LVPL-FA9A48 on the PAS Database.

IRON AGE

Gold stater of the Ambiani tribe; 60-55BC. Found in Essex. Recorded as ESS-D2002A on the PAS Database.

ROMAN

Samian ware pottery sherds; AD70-230. Found in Somerset. Recorded as SOM-20F51D on the PAS Database.

EARLY MEDIEVAL

Copper alloy Great Square Headed brooch; AD525-560. Found in Lincolnshire. Recorded as LIN-7AC173 on the PAS Database.

MEDIEVAL

Silver halfgroat of Henry VII; AD1486-1500. Found in Norfolk. Recorded as NMS-90B6B6 on the PAS Database.

POST-MEDIEVAL

Gunflint from a flintlock musket; AD1600-1900. Found in North Yorkshire. Recorded as YORYM-5F5645 on the PAS Database.

MODERN

Copper alloy regimental badge; AD1862-1966. Found in York. Recorded as PUBLIC-9FB54E.

Activity 4 - Hoard Containers

Suitable for Ages 8+

Time: up to 1 hour

Use slides 19-26 of the slideshow - click here to download.

Overview: We have learnt that a container found containing (or once containing) a hoard also counts as Treasure under the Treasure Act, but what did people in the past bury their wealth in? Have a go at crafting some different types of hoard containers, then fill your containers with chocolate coins!

Learning objectives/skills: This activity uses creativity for hands-on crafting whilst implementing learning about archaeology.

1. Containers inspired by finds

Examples of hoard containers:
- Ceramic pot
- Leather
- Wooden chest
- Purse
- Folder lead
- Flint nodule
- Post hole

Examples by Mersey & Dee YAC members at the Museum of Liverpool

Equipment:
- Empty toilet roll or crafting tube
- Paint or felt tip pens

Method:
- Take a look at some finds on the PAS database, in your local museum or collection and choose an object for inspiration.
- Decorate, paint or colour your tube
- Fold in one end of your tube
- Pop in your Treasure
- Close over the other end.
- Your Treasure is now secure in its container
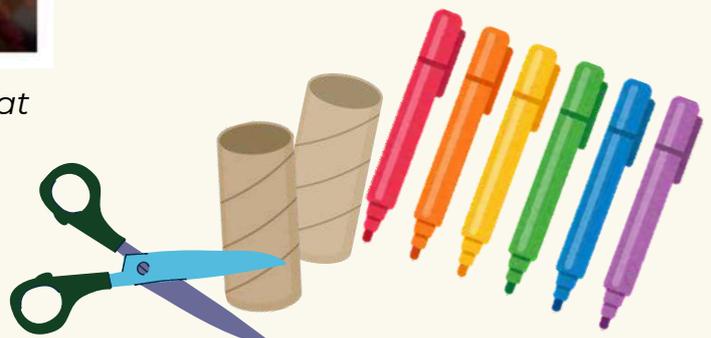
2. Flint nodules

Equipment:
- Empty tissue box (preferably a square one)
- Paint or felt tip pens

Method:
- Take a look at some flint hoard containers on the PAS database, such as KENT-05D0ED and BERK-EE5FDB.
- Decorate the issue box to resemble a flint container, and fill with chocolate coins!

3. Papier-mâché Roman pot

Equipment:
- Old newspapers or magazines
- Balloon
- Tape & scissors
- PVA glue,
- Paint & paintbrushes
- Empty tub, cup or beaker
- Protective covering for your table

Method:
Create a papier-mâché container for your hoard of chocolate coins! Detailed instructions can be found on the YAC website here.

4. Hoard basket

Whilst no baskets containing hoards have yet to be discovered, a hoard of early medieval copper coins discovered at Bamburgh Castle in 2009, plant material remains suggest that the coins were wrapped in or laid on a woven mat. Baskets are rare finds in archaeology as it is as organic materials decompose in most soil conditions.

Equipment:
- 2 or 3 colours of card
- Scissors
- Glue stick
- Stapler or Sellotape

Method:
- Take two different colored A4 sheets of paper.
- Cut them into even strips along the longer side
- Place one colour on a flat surface and one at a time weave the other color through until you are left with a chequerboard pattern.
- Glue the four corners of the 'chequerboard' to secure them.
- Take the ends of a single colour in your fingers, starting in the centre and overlap them, bringing the other pieces towards the centre. Then secure them with a staple.
- Repeat on each side.
- Each side of your basket should now curve upwards.
- Staple handles to the basket in a cross shape using two more strips of paper

The following video provides a useful how-to guide to weaving your paper basket:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zBCWVNDliQo

Activity 5 - Is it Treasure?

Overview: This activity invites participants to use their new knowledge about Treasure to work out whether or not a particular object constitutes Treasure.

Learning objectives/skills: To test understanding of the concept of Treasure and to use critical thinking skills to determine whether an object fits the legal definition of Treasure.

Materials: Image cards of a variety of Treasure and non-Treasure objects from the database. Alternatively, you can use the worksheet provided here and they can write their answers down, or you could present it as a PowerPoint quiz and have people shout out or vote for answers.

Preparation: Each example needs a good clear image and some basic accompanying information to provide some clues. We recommend including what the object is, what it is made of and what date, but you can provide more or less information depending on how difficult you want to make the activity! If you are creating image flashcards then you can put the answers on the reverse, along with the database record number so that people can look up the object on the database afterwards. If you are presenting it as a quiz then you will need to create an answer sheet.

Instructions

- If using the image flashcards, lay them out with the image facing up.
- Ask young people to choose which objects they believe are Treasure, based on the information provided and what they have learnt earlier in the session. For example, you could get them to sort "Treasure" to the left and "Not Treasure" to the right.
- When they are ready, you can simply turn over the cards to see how they've done.
- Alternatively, you could hand out the worksheets or present the images via PowerPoint.
- Start off with the easier definitions, such as gold rings, then move on to coin hoards and prehistoric base metals. Questions 1-5 are the easiest; questions 6-10 are medium difficulty; questions 11-12 are the most difficult.

Is it Treasure? worksheet

Image of object	PAS record and notes	Is this Treasure? Why is or isn't this Treasure?
	SF-9977A7 Post-Medieval (Date: c. 1550-1650) gold finger-ring.	
	DENO-38ABF2 Medieval silver annular brooch.	
	SUR-E39199 Roman copper-alloy brooch.	
	HAMP-06D639 Medieval copper-alloy finger- ring.	

Image of object	PAS record and notes	Is this Treasure? Why is or isn't this Treasure?
	CAM-21F97B Two Bronze Age gold torcs.	
	OXON-1EF012 Roman copper-alloy coin found on it's own.	
	BUC-56AD68 Medieval silver coin hoard.	
	YORYM-057F37 One Bronze Age copper-alloy axe head found on it's own.	

Image of object	PAS record and notes	Is this Treasure? Why is or isn't this Treasure?
	WILT-5EF569 Early Medieval silver pyramid mount.	
	SF-13C7A2 Bronze Age copper-alloy hoard.	
	WMID-D71A2E Six Roman copper-alloy coins found in the same area that nine other Roman copper-alloy coins were found.	
	GLO-EAA7E1 Three fused Roman copper alloy coins.	

SF-9977A7

Post-Medieval (Date: c. 1550-1650) gold finger-ring.

TREASURE

It is over 300 years old and contains over 10% precious metal.

DENO-38ABF2

Medieval silver annular brooch.

TREASURE

It is over 300 years old and contains over 10% precious metal.

SUR-E39199

Roman copper-alloy brooch.

NOT TREASURE

Even though it is over 300 years old, it is made of copper-alloy and contains less than 10% precious metal.

HAMP-06D639

Medieval copper-alloy finger-ring.

NOT TREASURE

Even though it is over 300 years old, it is made of copper-alloy and contains less than 10% precious metal.

CAM-21F97B

Two Bronze Age gold torcs.

TREASURE

It is over 300 years old and contains over 10% precious metal.

OXON-1EF012

Roman copper-alloy coin found on it's own.

NOT TREASURE

It is a single copper-alloy coin (10 or more copper-alloy coins qualify as Treasure)

BUC-56AD68

Medieval silver coin hoard.

TREASURE

It contains 2 or more precious metal coins that are over 300 years old.

YORYM-057F37

One Bronze Age copper-alloy axe head found on it's own.

NOT TREASURE

2 or more prehistoric copper-alloy objects found together qualify as Treasure, however, as this was found on its own, with no precious metal

WILT-5EF569

Early Medieval silver pyramid mount.

TREASURE

It is over 300 years old and contains over 10% precious metal.

SF-13C7A2

Bronze Age copper-alloy hoard.

TREASURE

2 or more prehistoric copper-alloy objects found together qualify as Treasure.

WMID-D71A2E

Six Roman copper-alloy coins found in the same area that nine other Roman copper-alloy coins were found.

TREASURE

These 6 coins are associated to a small coin hoard previously found, taking the total number of copper-alloy coins to over 10. Therefore, these 6 coins qualify as Treasure.

GLO-EAA7E1

Three fused Roman copper alloy coins.

NOT TREASURE

Even though it is over 300 years old, it contains no precious metal and comprises of less than 10 copper-alloy coins.

Activity 6 - Treasure Debate

Suitable for Ages 12+

Time: 30-45 minutes

Overview: The definition of Treasure, and how the Treasure Act works, occasionally comes under scrutiny and discussion, especially within the metal detecting and archaeological communities. This activity encourages young people to test their debating skills and examine the issues relating to Treasure.

Learning objectives/skills: To encourage discussion and critical thinking of the issues surrounding the practice of metal-detecting. The activity uses verbal reasoning, comprehension and research skills too.

Materials: Newspaper clippings/case studies relating to Treasure discoveries. We have provided some examples below.

Preparation: Set up the room for a debate, ideally with a lectern at the front and two separate areas for each group to work on their arguments.

Instructions

- Divide your group into two – one group will argue "For" and the other "Against".
- Appoint a moderator (this could be the YAC leader).
- Either hand out the clippings/case studies on the next page to each group or ask them to look up their own examples (try searching 'metal detecting' on the BBC News website).
- Give them adequate time to formulate their arguments.
- Each group will need to elect a speaker. Each speaker will then have an allotted time to deliver their argument.
- After both arguments have been presented, each group gets a chance to challenge the arguments made. You might also want to include questions from the floor.

- At the end a winner is decided – either the YAC leader can act as the judge or you could have a show of hands from the audience.
- After the debate is finished, you could continue the discussion to have a more in-depth look at some of the issues.

Example debate topics

Debate topic 1: Should finders and landowners receive rewards for reporting Treasure?

Rewards are given finders/landowners to encourage them to report Treasure finds, however, as the values of Treasure finds can fluctuate it means museums are not always in a position to be able to acquire Treasure. This can then lead to the Treasure entering the private market. However, as 'rewards' have been a component in the Treasure Act since 1996, if rewards are removed this could potentially lead to less Treasure being reported, especially as the values of Treasure are regularly highlighted in news articles. This is also a good opportunity to think about where the money for acquiring Treasure finds come from.

✂ -

A hoard of 18 Iron Age gold coins discovered in a field by a metal detector has sold for £33,200 at auction.
The coins are the largest known find from the reign of Iron Age king Dubnovellaunos, who ruled the Trinovantes tribe in eastern England between 25BC and AD10. Known as The Bury St Edmunds Hoard after the Suffolk town, the coins were sold at an auction to private collectors and will not be accessible by the general public. The money raised was shared with the landowner.
March 2026
https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c4g2284zx4jo

The Yorkshire Museum has succeeded in raising more than £265,000 to acquire the Melsonby Hoard.
The hoard contains over 800 iron-age artefacts discovered by a metal detectorist in Melsonby, North Yorkshire in 2021. The quantity and variety of objects in the 2000-year old hoard are unusual, including items such as chariot wheels, cauldrons, horse bridles and ceremonial spears. The museum purchased the fund with support from the National Heritage Memorial Fund and donations from the general public.
January 2026
https://www.museumsassociation.org

Debate topic 2: Not all Treasure is gold and silver, so should it be called 'Treasure'?

There is a debate among some archaeologists over whether we should define these finds as 'Treasure', especially as the word 'Treasure' has certain connotations linked to films and the media. Additionally, many new reports use Treasure to highlight the value of the finds. If the term 'Treasure' was removed, what would you replace it with and why?

Activity 7 - Artefact Recording

Suitable for Ages 8+

Time: 30-45 minutes

Overview: The PAS does not keep the finds that it records. Therefore, it is crucial to record all the information that we can about the object before it is returned to the finder. Writing a good database record takes practice which is exactly what this activity is all about!

Learning objectives/skills: This activity uses critical thinking, observation, literacy and numeracy skills.

Materials: Some examples of objects, real or replica. These can be real archaeological objects from a handling collection or you could ask people to bring in an object from home – it doesn't need to be old! You will also need some weighing scales and rulers (or calipers if you have them). If you choose to include the potato game warm-up activity, make sure you have a selection of potatoes (ideally a variety of shapes and sizes) at the ready)

Preparation: Give each individual/group a recording sheet and make sure they have access to the measuring tools.

Instructions

- Warm-up activity: Introduce young people to the importance of recording artefacts accurately with the Potato Game! This game challenges children to describe a particular potato in such a way as to make it possible to pick it out from a pile of potatoes!
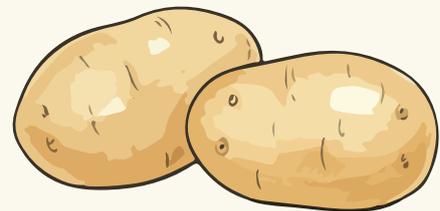
- Next, prompt young people to record their object using the recording sheet. The simpler sheet asks for a drawing and some basic information; the fuller version captures more details.
- As a fun follow-on you could get them to read out their object descriptions and see if the others can draw what the object is based on the description only.
- You could also get them to recreate their object in clay.

Recording Sheet - Simple

Object type

Sketch

What is it made of? (tick)

Ceramic ☐   *Stone* ☐   *Flint* ☐   *Bone* ☐   *Glass* ☐   *Wood* ☐

Gold ☐   *Silver* ☐   *Copper alloy* ☐   *Lead* ☐   *Iron* ☐   *Other* ....

How old is it? (tick)

Stone Age ☐   *Bronze Age* ☐   *Iron Age* ☐   *Roman* ☐   *Early medieval* ☐

Medieval ☐   *Post-medieval* ☐   *Modern* ☐   *Unknown* ☐

Dimensions

Length (mm) ☐   *Width (mm)* ☐   *Thickness (mm)* ☐

Height (mm) ☐   *Diameter (mm)* ☐   *Weight (g)* ☐

Recording Sheet - Full

Object type

Findspot

County

Parish

Grid reference

Date of discovery

Sketch

Dimensions

Length (mm) [   ]   Width (mm) [   ]   Thickness (mm) [   ]

Height (mm) [   ]   Diameter (mm) [   ]   Weight (g) [   ]

Primary material (tick)

Ceramic [ ]   Stone [ ]   Flint [ ]   Bone [ ]   Glass [ ]   Wood [ ]

Gold [ ]   Silver [ ]   Copper alloy [ ]   Lead [ ]   Iron [ ]   Other ....

Production

Manufacture method: [   ]   Preservation: [   ]

Completeness: [   ]

Does it have any marks or patterns on it? [   ]

Other notes on description:

[   ]

Period (tick)

Stone Age [ ]   Bronze Age [ ]   Iron Age [ ]   Roman [ ]   Early medieval [ ]

Medieval [ ]   Post-medieval [ ]   Modern [ ]   Unknown [ ]

Other notes on dating: [   ]

Young Archaeologists' Club

Activity 8 - Database Scavenger Hunt

| Suitable for Ages 10+ | Time: 45-60 minutes |

Overview: This activity aims to get people used to searching for objects on the PAS database, using the search methods discussed in the session. This activity works during an in-person or online session.

Learning objectives/skills: This activity uses computer skills and critical thinking skills.

Materials: A laptop, computer or tablet with internet access (the database is online). A list of items to search for – you can use the items below or pick your own criteria.

Preparation: You should have already discussed the "Using the Database" section of the resource pack (see pages 30-33) so that people are familiar with the different ways of accessing information on the database. It may be helpful to provide people with a printed copy they can refer back to. Make sure that everyone is online and has the database page open.

Instructions

- Hand out the worksheets for people to complete. You can run this as a proper scavenger hunt where people have to race to complete the activity.
- Depending on the criteria used, a good follow-on activity would be for people to present some of the objects they have found to the rest of the group.
- For an extra challenge you, give participants a mystery object (pictured on page 62) and let them use their database detective skills to try and find parallels on the database. Be warned, some of these are very tricky! As a follow on, they might want to research what some of these strange objects are following the answers on page 63.

- *Find an object that relates to you in some way.*
- *Find the oldest/youngest object you can*
- *Find something that there is only one of on the database*
- *Find something from near where you live*
- *Find something that relates to yourself*
- *Find something made of [pick a material e.g. flint]*
- *Find something used for [pick a function e.g. eating and drinking]*
- *Find something that has been re-used*
- *Find something with an animal on it*
- *Find something from your favourite period in history*
- *Find something you might wear*
- *Find something recorded on a specific date (e.g. your birthday)*

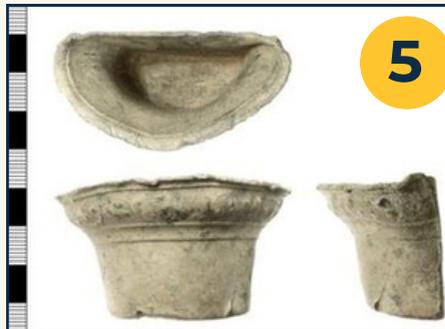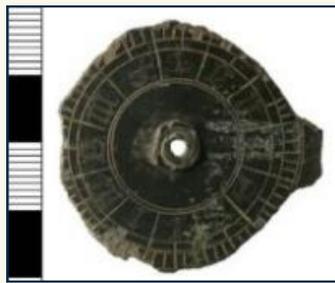## Database Scavenger Hunt - mystery objects
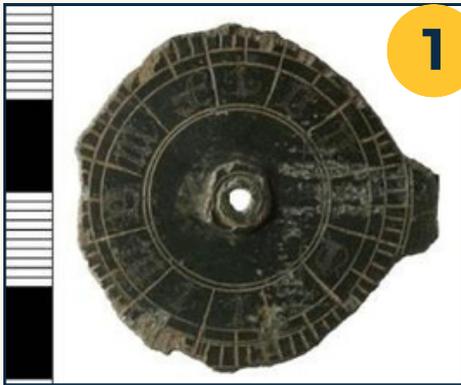
Nocturnal (an astronomical instrument for telling the time at night)
NMS-C00005
Medieval, circa AD1430-1510

Nutcracker
SWYOR-16E689
Post-medieval, circa AD1650-1750

Jetton (counting token)
LIN-B6E794
Post-medieval, circa AD1500-1550

Toy rifle
WREX-558BB3
Post-medieval, circa AD1600-1640

Bird feeder
IOW-FEB074
Medieval, circa AD1400-1600

Ampulla (container for holy water)
YORYM-973896
Medieval, circa AD1350-1550

Parchment pricker

LON-FA01A5 Medieval, circa AD1200-1600

Seal box

LANCUM-422083 Roman, circa AD75-250

Spur
DEV-1386CA
Post-medieval, circa AD1600-1700

Wig curler
SUSS-658A25
Post-medieval, circa AD1650-1800

Padlock
SUR-D02FD3
Medieval, circa AD1200-1400