



Code of Practice for Responsible Metal Detecting in England & Wales

(2017 Revision)

If undertaken responsibly metal-detecting can make an important contribution to archaeological knowledge. This document aims to provide guidance for metal-detectors who wish to contribute to our understanding of the history of England and Wales. It combines both the requirements of finders under the law, as well as more general voluntary guidance on accepted best practice.

Being responsible means:

Before you go metal-detecting

1 Not trespassing; before you start detecting obtain permission to search from the landowner, regardless of the status, or perceived status, of the land. Remember that all

Obtain permission to search

land (including parks, public open-spaces, beaches and foreshores) has an owner and an occupier (such as a tenant farmer) can only grant permission with both the landowner's and

tenant's agreement. Any finds discovered will normally be the property of the landowner, so to avoid disputes it is advisable to get permission and agreement in writing first regarding the ownership of any finds subsequently discovered.

2 Obeying the law concerning protected sites (such as those defined as Scheduled Monuments, Sites of Special Scientific Interest or military crash sites, and those involving human remains), and also those other sites on which metal-detecting might also be restricted (such as land under Countryside Stewardship or other agri-environment schemes). You can obtain details of these sites

Protected sites

from several sources, including the landowner/ occupier, your local Finds Liaison Officer or Historic Environment Record or at www.magic.gov.uk / historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/ www.cadw.gov.wales – which will help research and better understand the site. Take extra care when detecting near protected sites since it is not always clear where the boundaries of these lie on the ground.

3 Familiarising yourself with the Portable Antiquities Scheme (including contact details for your local Finds Liaison Officer – see www.finds.org.uk / 0207

323 8611),

Conservation advice

and its guidance on the recording of archaeological finds discovered by the public; make it clear to the landowner that you wish to record finds with the Portable

Antiquities Scheme. Ensure that you follow current conservation advice on the handling, care and storage of archaeological objects (see www.finds.org.uk/conservation/index).

4 Obtaining public liability insurance (to protect yourself and others from accidental damage), such as that offered by the National Council for Metal Detecting or the Federation of Independent Detectorists.

Public liability insurance

While you are metal-detecting

5 Working on ground that has already been disturbed (such as ploughed land or that which has formerly been ploughed), and only within the depth of ploughing. If detecting takes place on pasture, be careful to ensure that no damage is done to the archaeological value of the land, including earthworks. Avoid

Working on ground that has already been disturbed

damaging stratified archaeological deposits (that is to say, finds that seem to be in the place where they were deposited in antiquity) and minimise any ground disturbance through the use of suitable tools and

Portable Antiquities Scheme

by reinstating any ground and turf as neatly as possible.

6 Stopping any digging and making the landowner aware that you are seeking expert help if you discover something below the ploughsoil, or a concentration of finds or unusual material, or wreck remains. Your

Seeking expert help

local Finds Liaison Officer may be able to help or will be able to advise on an appropriate person. Reporting the find does not change your rights of discovery, but will result in far more archaeological evidence being recovered.

7 Recording findspots as accurately as possible for all archaeological finds (i.e. to at least a one ten metre square – an 8-Figure National Grid Reference), using a hand-held Global Positioning Systems (GPS) device whilst in the field or a 1:25000 scale map if this is not possible.

Bag finds individually, recording the National Grid Reference on the bag with a waterproof/indelible marker. Archaeologists are interested in learning about all archaeological finds you discover, not just metallic items, because such finds contribute to knowledge.

Recording findspots

8 Respecting the Country Code (leave gates and property as you find them and do not damage crops, frighten animals, or disturb ground nesting birds, and dispose properly of litter: see www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-countryside-code).

Country Code

After you have been metal-detecting

9 Reporting all archaeological finds to the relevant landowner/occupier; and making it clear to the landowner that you wish to record archaeological finds to the Portable Antiquities Scheme, so the information can pass into the local Historic Environment Record. Both the Country Land and Business Association and the

National Farmers Union support the reporting of finds with the Portable Antiquities Scheme. Details of your local Finds Liaison Officer can be found at finds.org.uk/ contacts, e-mail info@finds.org.uk or phone 020 7323 8611.

Record archaeological finds

10 Abiding by the statutory provisions of the Treasure Act 1996, the Treasure Act Code of Practice (www.finds.org.uk/treasure) and wreck law (www.gov.uk/government/organisations/maritime-and-coastguard-agency).

Treasure Act

If you wish to take artefacts and archaeological material older than 50 years old out of the UK, you will

require an export licence (www.artscouncil.org.uk/). If you need advice your local Finds Liaison Officer will be able to help you.

Export licence

11 Calling the Police (101), and notifying the landowner/occupier, if you find any traces of human remains or a likely burial; human remains can only be disturbed further with a Ministry of Justice licence (www.gov.uk/apply-for-an-exhumation-licence).

Human remains

12 Calling the Police or HM Coastguard, and notifying the landowner/occupier, if you find anything that may be a live explosive, device or other ordnance. Do not attempt to move or interfere with any such explosives.

Explosive

13 Calling the Police if you notice any illegal activity whilst out metal-detecting, such as theft of farm equipment or illegal metal-detecting (nighthawking). Further details can be found by contacting Historic England/Cadw or the 'heritage crime' contact within your local police force.

Finding out more about archaeology and metal detecting

- You can find out more about the archaeology of your own area from the Historic Environment Records maintained by local authority archaeology services (in England) and the Welsh archaeological trusts. Also the Heritage Gateway – www.heritagegateway.org.uk (in England) and Archwilio – www.archwilio.org.uk (in Wales).
- For further information about the recording and reporting of finds discovered by the public and the Treasure Act 1996 contact the Portable Antiquities Scheme (www.finds.org.uk / info@finds.org.uk / 0207 323 8611).
- For further information about how you can become involved in archaeology contact the Council for British Archaeology (www.archaeologyuk.org / 01904 671417). They can also supply details of local archaeology societies.
- You can find out about metal detecting via the National Council for Metal Detecting (www.ncmd.co.uk) or the Federation of Independent Detectorists (www.fid.org.uk).

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