The British Museum

The Portable
Antiquities Scheme
Annual Report 2015

Foreword

It is with great pleasure that I introduce the Portable Antiquities Scheme Annual Report for 2015, my first as Director of the British Museum.

It is well known that the Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) is a great British Museum success story, reaching out across the country to ensure public finds of archaeological interest are recorded for the benefit of all. In 2015 a further 82,272 items were discovered and recorded by the Scheme's 38 locally based Finds Liaison Officers, 14 interns generously supported by the Headley Trust, and the 259 volunteers working as part of the HLF funded project, PASt Explorers. The PAS is an amazing partnership, drawing together 119 local museums and other national organisations, to deliver the Scheme's aims. I would therefore particularly like to thank all those involved in making the PAS the success it is. Over the past year, PAS staff, partner organisations and others, have come together to help direct and deliver the Scheme looking to its future. The aim is to provide the PAS with a clear direction, based on broad consultation with stakeholders passionate about the Scheme and its work.

Crucial to the PAS are those that have offered finds for recording, of which a large percentage are metal-detectorists. I would particularly like to commend those who have become self-recorders and those who have worked closely with archaeologists when finding discoveries that needed careful excavation in the field. The Code of Practice on Responsible Metal-Detecting provides guidance on what people should do before detecting, whilst detecting and after making their discoveries and I would like to pay tribute to all those that make special efforts to follow this guidance, and therefore ensure metal-detecting has the maximum benefit to archaeology.

Recently projects have been established to record archaeological finds made by the public in Denmark (DIME), Flanders (MEDEA), and the Netherlands (PAN), and also a North Sea Area Finds Group has been formed to ensure pan-European co-operation where public recording systems exit. The aim is to share experiences and expertise, and work closely together on common issues for the advancement of archaeology and public interest in the past. Closer to home the PAS is now integrated within the British Museum's department of Learning & National Partnerships, to ensure join-up with other projects delivered through the Museum's National Programme in relation to British archaeology. Examples in planning for 2017 will include a touring exhibition on the Vikings, and a summer celebration of Treasure.

Looking ahead, I am keen to see the PAS develop and prosper.

Hartwig Fischer
Director of the British Museum

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Key points

The PAS in 2015

- 82,272 finds were recorded; a total of 1,211,201 on the PAS database (finds.org.uk/database) to date.

- Almost 90% of finds were found by metal-detectorists.

- 88% of finds were found on cultivated land, where they are susceptible to plough damage and artificial and natural corrosion processes.

- 99% of PAS finds were recorded to the nearest 100m² (a 6-figure NGR), the minimum requirement for findspot information for Historic Environment Records.

- New sites discovered through finds recorded by the PAS include a Roman villa complex in Wiltshire and a site associated with the English Civil War on the Shropshire/Worcestershire border (page 11).

- Currently 909 people have full access to PAS data for research purposes, and there are a further 8,846 registered users.

- To date, PAS data has been used in 528 research projects, including 25 pieces of large-scale research and 110 PhDs.

- 361,368 unique visitors visited the PAS websites and database, making 680,949 visits and 5,647,064 page requests.

- Publications associated with the work of the PAS include reports in *Britannia, British Numismatic Journal, Medieval Archaeology and Post-Medieval Archaeology.*

- 521 outreach events took place, including talks, finds days and exhibitions. These were attended by at least 32,568 adults and 1,586 children.

- Finds Liaison Officers had regular contact with 179 metal-detecting clubs, attending 748 club meetings.

The Treasure Act 1996 in 2015

- 1,008 Treasure cases were reported. It is hoped that many of these will be acquired by museums for public benefit.

- 95% of Treasure finds were found by metal-detectorists.

- Important new Treasure finds included a large Middle Bronze Age gold torc from Cambridgeshire (2015 T715), a Roman grave assemblage from Hertfordshire (2015 T909), an Anglo-Saxon *aestel* from Suffolk (2015 T33), and the Watlington Hoard of early medieval coins and Viking Age objects (2015 T759).

In 2014, 138 parties waived their right to a reward for 88 Treasure cases, allowing them to be acquired by museums at no or reduced cost. Most PAS finds are returned to their finders.

Anglo-Saxon *aestel* from Drinkstone, Suffolk (2015 T33).

Introduction

Portable Antiquities Scheme

The Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) records archaeological finds discovered 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 the National Museum Wales, working with at least 119 national and local partners across England and Wales.

The PAS consists of 38 locally based Finds Liaison Officers (FLOs), covering England and Wales, whose job it is to record archaeological finds and liaise with finders. This work is co-ordinated by a Central Unit (based at the British Museum) of two others, and five period specialists (three based elsewhere). Additionally, four posts are employed as part of PASt Explorers (finds recording in the local community). In 2015, 259 volunteers (including 100 self-recorders) and 14 Headley Trust interns also contributed to the work of the PAS.

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

Treasure Act 1996

Under the Treasure Act (finds.org.uk/treasure) finders have a legal obligation to report finds of potential Treasure to the local coroner in the district in which they were found. The success of the Act is only possible though 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, which is normally shared equally between the finder and landowner. Parties may waive their right to a reward, enabling museums to acquire finds at reduced or no cost. 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). The administration of the Treasure process takes place at the British Museum and involves the preparation of Treasure cases for coroners' inquests, providing the secretariat for the TVC, and handling disclaimed cases and the payment of rewards.

The PAS achieves its aims thanks to the British Museum's local partners, who host FLO posts and support the work of the PAS

Outreach and learning

The PAS's core objective is advancing archaeological knowledge, which is achieved through meeting local people and recording their finds. Equally, using the PAS to learn about these finds is something that everyone can enjoy.

Portable Antiquities Scheme 2020

Excavation at Little Carlton (Sheffield University).

Survey at Little Carlton.

In 2015 the PAS developed five strategic goals. To:

- Advance archaeological knowledge, to tell the stories of past peoples and the places where they lived.

- Share archaeological knowledge, so that people might learn more about the past, and the archaeology and history of their local area.

- Promote best archaeological practice by finders, so that the past is preserved for future generations to learn about and enjoy.

- Support museum acquisitions of archaeological finds, so that these discoveries can be saved for future generations, and enjoyed by local people.

- Provide the PAS with long-term sustainability, so that archaeological finds found by the public can continue to rewrite our history.

These goals are being taken forward by 'working groups', which include PAS staff and local managers, national and local partners, as well as other stakeholders.

Advancing archaeological knowledge

Through its online database (finds.org.uk) the PAS produces a virtual collection of public finds, with the aim of advancing knowledge and helping to protect and preserve the historic environment for future generations. This data is used to increase knowledge of the historic landscape and material culture across England and Wales, and through time.

Little Carlton, Lincolnshire

Over the last five years Lincolnshire FLO, Dr Adam Daubney, has recorded a significant assemblage of Middle Saxon finds from Little Carlton, Lincolnshire. This includes 548 metal finds, dating to c. 680–750, in addition to what is now one of the largest assemblages of 'Ipswich ware' pottery in the region. The finder, Graham Vickers, has meticulously recorded each find using GPS, and in the summer of 2015 geophysical survey and evaluation trenching was undertaken to further establish the context of these discoveries. The survey, undertaken by Dr Hugh Willmott and Peter Townend of the University of Sheffield, revealed associated Middle Saxon archaeology, including domestic and industrial activity, all located on a small isthmus (a body of land between water). Investigations continue.

'It's only through the cooperation between responsible metal-detecting and the PAS that such an important site has been brought to light, and its academic potential realised.'
Dr Hugh Willmott, University of Sheffield

Medieval markets

Over the last 18 months Dr Michael Lewis, Head of the PAS, and Dr Eljas Oksanen from University College London have gained £20k in research grants from the British Academy, the Society of Antiquaries of London and the Society of Medieval Archaeology to better understand trade and commerce in the Middle Ages through GIS analysis of PAS data, particularly in relation to market and fair sites. The project is still in its infancy, but it is clear that PAS data offers major new avenues of research in understanding urbanisation, commercial growth and the emergence of local and national trade and communication networks. Plans are in place to develop this study into a major research project.

PASt Explorers volunteer Dr Alan Cartwright at work in Shropshire.

Sharing archaeological knowledge

The PAS creates partnerships between all those interested in archaeological finds, in order to share knowledge about the past for public benefit. At the heart of this are the Finds Liaison Officers who connect with local people to share information about archaeology through outreach and learning events, and the media. Through PASt Explorers many more people are volunteering with the PAS and benefiting from its bespoke training programme.

Finds recording in the local community

PASt Explorers is a five-year Heritage Lottery Fund project to recruit and train volunteers to increase the capacity of the PAS to record objects found by members of the public. The modular volunteer training programme commenced in June 2015 and over 150 volunteers attended one of thirteen regionally based PASt Explorers training sessions in the first six months of the programme. These sessions focused on introducing and developing the skills required to record archaeological small finds, with modules on how to use the PAS database, take digital photographs and manipulate those images to publishable standard. PASt Explorers volunteers were also invited to attend finds identification training on Roman coins, lithics and seal matrices. The training programme will be extended to offer other period-specific finds recording and identification modules.

'Volunteering for the PAS gives you a hands-on approach to history, and has shown me how much understanding the past relies on using individual, often ordinary, objects to discover how people used to live, work, eat, drink, spend money, trade goods, wear their clothes and perform other similar tasks. The PAS and its network of FLOs and volunteers is vitally important in contributing to the global effort of preserving these little yet crucial pieces of history from being lost forever.'
Sophie Mander, PASt Explorers volunteer, Derbyshire

Archaeology at Summercourt Academy School, Cornwall

In June 2015, Cornwall FLO Anna Tyacke and Richard Mikulski, PASt Explorers volunteer, went to Summercourt Academy School to introduce the students to archaeology, the PAS and metal-detecting, with the help of Chris McLoughlin, PASt Explorers 'Club Captain' for the Cornwall Unearthed Metal Detecting Club. The students were given a talk about archaeology before trialling excavation in five 'test pits' set up in the school field. Sand trays were also available containing objects for the students to dig, discover and identify, enabling them to handle many different types of material commonly found by archaeologists. Chris then showed the children how to use his metal-detector in the test pits.

'This event was so enjoyable and the children learnt such a lot about archaeology. Although we found very little, each item was inspected and the different types of materials they were made from discussed. This was a very valuable lesson for the new history curriculum.'
Caroline Swann, teacher, Summercourt Academy School

Richard Mikulski with students excavating a 'test pit' at Summercourt Academy.

Celebrating recording

Over 100 delegates attended a conference – *Celebrating recording* – at The Collection, Lincoln, organised by Dr Adam Daubney, Lincolnshire FLO, and Denise Wilding, PAS Headley Trust intern, in March 2016. The aim of the conference was to bring archaeologists, heritage professionals and metal-detectorists together to explore the significance of PAS data in Lincolnshire. Papers charted a range of issues, from the importance of context, through to public engagement. The feedback was overwhelmingly positive, and there was a clear desire from all parties to form a regular liaison group and further work together.

'The highly successful conference arranged by Adam Daubney was sold out and a testament to the collaboration between metal-detectorists, Lincolnshire County Council services, both HER and museum, as well as the PAS, a number of academics from different universities and community volunteers. Bringing all these participants together has proved beneficial to mutual understanding and the part that all partners can play in furthering archaeological knowledge in the county.'
Beryl Lott, Historic Environment Manager, Lincolnshire County Council

Experimental archaeology

Following the discovery of a Roman furnace in Wiltshire, PAS volunteers were invited to participate in iron smelting, undertaken with the help of experimental archaeologist Jake Keen. This included sorting charcoal, as well as collecting, roasting, crushing and smelting the ore from the field where the furnace is located. Using the iron bloom produced, master blacksmith Hector Cole processed it into a billet to make replica objects of finds recorded on the PAS database. The training proved invaluable for understanding how iron was produced in the Roman period and to provide a better understanding of the archaeological evidence that would be visible when excavating the furnaces.

Wiltshire volunteers crushing iron ore.

Excavation of the Watlington Hoard.

Plot of finds from Civil War battlefield site in the West Midlands.

Promoting best archaeological practice

The PAS has an essential role in advising on and encouraging best practice, in order to preserve underlying archaeology. The plough-soil is a valuable archaeological resource where material culture is vulnerable to agricultural and environmental damage. The PAS, with its partners, has an important role in ensuring that archaeological finds from the plough-soil are recorded, so as to understand and manage that resource for future generations.

Exploring past landscapes in Wiltshire

Past Landscapes, a project directed by Wiltshire FLO Richard Henry and Dr David Roberts of Historic England, is re-evaluating Roman Wiltshire. The PAS has been involved with archaeological excavations and research through the project, including the surprise discovery of an unknown Roman villa in south-west Wiltshire, which was excavated in May 2015. The chance discovery highlights the importance of reporting discoveries and is a fantastic example of the PAS working in collaboration with other organisations. Julie Shoemark, former PAS Headley Trust intern, was the environmental supervisor during the excavation. She worked on specialist finds reports and designed an exhibition, with a wide range of small finds, displayed at Salisbury Museum.

'PAS data has been a fundamental building block of Past Landscapes' research in Wiltshire, providing both a uniquely informative base dataset for contextualising sites, and a deeply rewarding dataset to interrogate to reveal new sites, distribution patterns and landscape activities.'
Dr David Roberts, Historic England

Excavating the Watlington Hoard

Surrey and East Berkshire FLO David Williams responded to an urgent call from James Mather, the finder of a hoard of Viking Age objects and Anglo-Saxon coins in a field near Watlington, Oxfordshire. The finder was advised to cease digging as soon as possible and to await a response from David. The hoard was excavated a few days later, with the finder present, and transported as a soil block to the conservation studio at the British Museum. Here it was excavated with greater precision than would have been possible in the field.

Identifying Civil War battlefields

Shropshire-based PASt Explorers volunteer and self-recorder William (Bill) Burleigh, with the help of Peter Reavill, the Herefordshire and Shropshire FLO, has been meticulously recording two English Civil War 'battlefield' assemblages from Knighton-on-Teme, Worcestershire and Clows Top, Shropshire. Over 300 musket balls and other related finds have been individually plotted using GPS and recorded by him on the PAS database. The Worcestershire site is positioned on a raised easily defendable ridge and given the nature of the finds represents a muster point, probably for forces on their way to the Battle of Edgehill in 1642. Such a site is known within the literature of the period but the exact location within the valley has been lost until now. The Shropshire assemblage represents a small siege of a later medieval manor-like farmstead, but nothing is recorded about this event and it is only through Bill's work that this new site has been identified.

Rebecca Griffiths installing the PAS case in the Yorkshire Museum.

Stamping Roman coins in Cornwall 'Hands on History Hub'.

Supporting museum acquisitions

The most important archaeological finds should be acquired by museums, so that the public can enjoy them and learn about the past. The PAS is ideally placed to support museum acquisition of such finds, including Treasure, and also assist the work of archaeologists and museum curators in publicising, interpreting and displaying them.

Yorkshire finds

The Yorkshire Museum has a newly installed display – *Recording our past for the future* – which was developed by Rebecca Griffiths, North and East Yorkshire FLO. This shows recent finds, as well as items in the museum's collections, to highlight the range of archaeological material discovered by members of the public in North and East Yorkshire, and also to demonstrate how such finds can transform our knowledge of the past.

'As a regional partner for the PAS, it is an important part of what we do. There are finds reported to the PAS in almost every gallery of the Yorkshire Museum, including some of our star objects. As such, we were pleased to have a display highlighting the work of the PAS this year, which has proved to be popular with our visitors.'
Dr Andrew Woods, Curator of Numismatics,
Yorkshire Museum Trust

Hindu vessels from the River Colne, Essex

In September 2015, Essex FLO Ben Paites was notified of some ceramic vessels spotted by a member of the public in the River Colne, Castle Park, Colchester. Ben went to the site with Emma Hogarth, Conservation Officer for Colchester & Ipswich Museums Service, and PAS volunteer Katie Bishop to recover the objects. These were found to be Hindu offerings used in a funerary ritual, and are the first documented case of such practice in the town. After a ceremony at the Sri Ram temple, the objects were acquired by Colchester Museum.

Museum donations

Richard Seamark and his children found a Roman base silver *radiate* of Gallienus (r. 253–260), which was probably minted in Syria, while digging a post hole for a garden fence (CORN-4AEC17). They kindly donated it to the Royal Institution of Cornwall so that it could be used in the Roman coin making activity as part of the museum's 'Hands on History Hub'. The children were interviewed by BBC Spotlight about their find and how excited they were that it was going to be used to make Roman coins that other children could take away. The 'Hands on History Hub' was built as part of the Treasure Plus project, *Putting Treasure Back on the Map*, which was funded by the Art Fund and the Headley Trust.

Other items recorded with the PAS and donated to local museums include a Bronze Age 'Picardy' pin from the Isle of Wight (IOW-357A7A) to the Isle of Wight Heritage Services, a late Iron Age or early Roman 'fob dangler' from Berkshire (SUR-8328CA) acquired by Newbury Museum, and a Roman patera (pan) handle found in Cheshire (LVPL-39BCF5) and donated to the Museum of Liverpool.

LVPL-39BCF5
Roman pan handle from near Malpas, Cheshire.

Recording finds

Through the PAS archaeological finds discovered by the public are transforming our understanding of Britain's past. These finds not only shed light on past peoples, but also how they worked and lived in the historic landscape. Many of these finds are discovered in plough-soil, where they are vulnerable to damage, and also help identify archaeological sites that might otherwise remain unknown or be destroyed.

Prehistoric flint and stone
800,000–2100 BC

2015 proved a productive year for the recording of prehistoric flint, with 3,179 records (containing 5,794 flints), compared with 2,412 records (for 6,030 flints) last year. It is welcome that more finds are now being given individual records. Included among the stone finds recorded were 34 'flaked axeheads', some of which may have been unfinished, but others intended for use in their rough form (see for example FAKL-04D403).

Perforated objects

Seven 'perforated objects' were recorded during the year. Their name describes what we know about them – they have a hole through them and are often made of a very hard intractable stone, such as quartzite or flint. Making the hole was difficult, involving chipping from both sides of the stone, so giving the hole an 'hourglass' shape, narrowing in the middle. Some are shaped, while others are made from unworked cobbles (see PUBLIC-9FE98A & WAW-2BB7EE). They date from the Early Mesolithic to the Bronze Age (c. 9000 to 1300 BC) and their function is unknown. In the past they have been described as mace-heads, digging stick weights, loom or fishing net weights, or even bolas weights, so in view of this uncertainty describing them as 'perforated objects' makes sense.

Debitage

While the most commonly reported flint tools in 2015 were scrapers (882 were recorded), flint working 'debitage' – the waste left from the manufacture of flint implements – was still more common, with 955 records containing 3,165 flints. Groups of waste blades and flakes are combined on a single record. Records of cores, the other product of flint working, are also combined, with 246 records containing 1,016 finds. Although not the most exciting of finds, this material shows us areas where flint working was taking place.

It is notable that the introduction of the *PAS Lithic Guide and Protocol* has led to a great improvement in the quality of the records now being produced.

Kevin Leahy

SF-0BE51F
Impressive workmanship was needed to knap this 197mm flint blade from West Stow, Suffolk. Dated to the Upper Palaeolithic, the implement is between 36,000 and 40,000 years old.

LEIC-543148
Even broken items, such as this flint sickle fragment from Lutterworth, Leicestershire, are useful additions to the archaeological record.

FAKL-04D403
Flaked axehead from Iford, East Sussex.

WAW-2BB7EE
Prehistoric 'perforated object from Hartshill, Warwickshire.

Bronze Age
2350–700 BC

Bronze Age items are the rarest of finds by period, representing 1,406 objects recorded with the PAS in 2015 – just 1.76% of the total. Nonetheless, it has been a rich year for discoveries of Bronze Age weaponry, including axes of all types, daggers, dirks, knives, rapiers, spearheads and swords.

Votive weaponry

Bronze Age shields are rare finds, but a very unusual copper-alloy Middle to Late Bronze Age circular example, of Yetholm Type, dated between c. 1300 and c. 975 BC, was recently discovered near Lakenheath, Suffolk (SF-E0D9C8). It is of an insular British type of which only 26 examples are known, this being the only one from Suffolk. Shields such as this would have been wrought from a single ingot, before the bosses were raised by hammering from the underside. They were then decorated with double concentric grooves and dome-shaped bosses. This shield was from a fen-edge context and seems to have been bent or folded, although it is unclear whether this was deliberate or as a result of deposition. The thin metal of many shields of this type strongly suggests they were used as votive rather than defensive objects.

Embellishing the dead

Whitchurch in Hampshire (BERK-F548E6) saw the surprising discovery of two Early Bronze Age (Chalcolithic) 'basket', or hair ornaments, cut from thin gold sheet. This class of object belongs to the earliest phases of metallurgy in Britain (c. 2400–c. 2200 BC) and is usually associated with burials. Similar artefacts have been found in pairs in graves, and also as single finds, such as those from the Isle of Wight (IOW-B16625), Oxfordshire (BERK-0D1A05 & BERK-BBC489), Wiltshire (DENO-8DE07C) and Northumberland (DUR-02828D). Gold ornaments, in the form of beads, were also found with a burial of an adult, aged about 35 years, near Windsor, Berkshire (PAS-FCAE32), and excavated by Wessex Archaeology. Beads of amber and shale/jet, worked flint and a ceramic 'beaker' vessel were also discovered. The grave goods show it to be one of a small group of similarly rich burials discovered across Britain.

Sally Worrell

BERK-F548E6
Hair ornament from
Whitchurch, Hampshire.

SF-E0D9C8
Shield from near
Lakenheath, Suffolk.

HAMP-1ED162
A Middle or Late Bronze Age copper-alloy saw from Horndean, Hampshire. Saws are not very common finds in Britain during this period, although similar items are documented across Europe.

BERK-1C2022
A complete copper-alloy double-ended chisel or early flat-axe dating to the Early or Middle Bronze Age from the Oxfordshire parish of Kingston Bagpuize with Southmoor. Both ends of this object were designed to be used without being mounted or hafted into a handle.

Iron Age
800 BC–AD 43

Iron Age items are not common, accounting for 1,668 finds recorded with the PAS in 2015, of which 45% are coins. These discoveries provide important insights into human life in the eight centuries prior to the Roman conquest.

Feasting vessels

Among Iron Age objects recorded are discoveries which have enriched our understanding of feasting vessels, and their decoration. Tankard handles, from an uncommon piece of drinking paraphernalia, have been found in Wiltshire (WILT-07A3E3), Norfolk (NMS-8E40B7; SOM-D190D4), County Durham (BM-116C35) and Leicestershire (LEIC-5EB611), adding significantly to the corpus of known types. Some vessel mounts carry elaborate curvilinear 'La Tène' decoration, an art style typical of the later Iron Age. The large lentoid eyes and spiral flaring nostrils of a highly stylised animal on a mount from Scarning, Norfolk (NMS-178AE0) – a horse perhaps, or more likely a bull – provide an especially striking example. An escutcheon from Chitterne, Wiltshire (BERK-A9109A), on which symmetrical curvilinear decoration frames an anthropomorphic head, is large enough to have been attached to a cauldron or bucket.

WILT-9E5865
A fragment of a harness or vehicle fitting from Kingston Deverill, Wiltshire, which is a rare find for Britain.

NMS-8E40B7
Vessel-handle from Lingwood and Burlingham, Norfolk.

SOM-088DFF
A sword pommel in the form of a human head from Ruishton, Somerset. It closely parallels examples still attached to hilts from North Yorkshire and Norfolk.

NMS-178AE0
Zoomorphic vessel-mount from Scarning, Norfolk.

BERK-A9109A
Escutcheon from
Chitterne, Wiltshire.

LVPL-78F55A
A 'fob' or 'dangler' from
Woore, Shropshire with
an openwork 'triskele' within
a triangular frame, and a
suspension loop. So far,
it is an unparalleled find.

Fob-danglers

A group of objects variously known as 'fobs', 'danglers' or 'fob-danglers' are enigmatic discoveries, of which 27 have been recorded by the PAS. Their function is unknown, but they may have served as a dress or harness ornament or amulet. Most are of 'triskele' (triple spiral) form, but a 'dangler' from Streatley, West Berkshire (SUR-8328CA), takes the form of four curving arms, each ending in a stylised water bird and set in a swastika arrangement. The ring-and-dot motifs stamped (on one surface only) around the centre of the object and along each arm suggest this example dates to the middle of the Iron Age, although most other danglers are of later Iron Age, or early Roman date. The decoration is difficult to interpret but may combine symbols of water (the birds) and sun (the swastika) with dot motifs which are inspired, as some experts have argued, by the trance experiences of shamanic figures.

Sally Worrell, Vincent Drost and Sam Moorhead

SUR-8328CA
Fob-dangler from Streatley,
West Berkshire.

FASAM-5AB3FE
A gold *stater* from
Warwickshire, struck by the
Dobunni (c. 60 BC–AD 43),
a tribe established in
western Britain. It is
an extremely rare coin,
previously only known
from three specimens
in the Pershore Hoard.

Roman
AD 43–410

LIN-C6AFB3
Part of a Roman statue
from Lincolnshire.

More Roman objects and coins are recorded with the PAS than finds from any other period, accounting for almost 40% of the total – 31,174 finds in 2015. The array of items discovered enlightens our knowledge of all aspects of Roman society and culture.

Bronze monuments

Fragments of bronze statues are rare archaeological finds, but 'chance finds' found by the public and reported to the PAS are illuminating sculptural tradition in Roman Britain. One of the most striking objects of this type is a near twice life-size right index finger, bent as if holding a sceptre or spear found at Carholme, Lincolnshire (LIN-C6AFB3). Its discovery on the outskirts of Lincoln suggests it came from a statue in the Roman colony's forum, perhaps representing the city's founding emperor, Domitian (r. AD 81–96). The double layer of metal around the base where the finger and hand are joined gives it the appearance of a thumb. To the north of this findspot, a gilded horse's head (LIN-31B698) and further fragments of human statues from Yorkshire have come to light in recent years (YORYM-F46085; YORYM-DE4D53) adding to the corpus of such monumental bronze sculpture.

Roman hoards

Roman objects are often reported as single fragmentary finds but on occasion groups of intact objects are reported from hoards or burials. One such example is a hoard of metal vessels found at Pewsey, Wiltshire (WILT-0F898C). Within an iron-rimmed cauldron, four scale pans, a bowl and two other bronze vessels had been placed, each carefully packed around with plant material. Preliminary results show traces of black knapweed, from which the date and time of year at which the group was deposited may be established. Analysis of other vessel hoards suggests that they were offered as votives at the conclusion of a religious festival. The scale pans, used for weighing, are an unusual component of groups of this type and may suggest a connection with trade. The context of another hoard of vessels, documented by the PAS at Langstone, Newport (NMGW-9C0216), on the edge of a mere, illustrates the frequent burial of such groups near water, probably with votive intent.

WILT-0F898C
Roman cauldron from
Pewsey, Wiltshire.

IOW-DA5661
Openwork brooch from the
Isle of Wight, in the form of
a monogram reading *Roma*
(or backwards *Amor*). This is
the first find of a brooch of this
type from Britain, which was
possibly used as an element
of military dress.

LON-EBC4AF
Nummus of Galerius
from London, minted in
AD 301–303 at Lyon.

WMID-991F07
Nummus fraction of Diocletian
from Leamington Spa,
Warwickshire, minted in Trier
in AD 303.

HAMP-0F5F91
Contemporary copy of a
nummus of Constantius I
from Tichborne, Hampshire,
minted in AD 298–299.

IOW-51C398
An extremely rare *solidus* of
Julius Nepos (AD 474–475),
found on the Isle of Wight,
struck in the name of one of
the last rulers of the Western
Roman Empire. It is not an
official coin, but a copy;
his name is incorrectly spelt
Julius Nepus, and on the
reverse VICTORIA is spelt
VITVRIA. It is possible that
this piece was semi-official,
struck by some of Nepos'
supporters, or that it was
a copy made by Visigoths
in France.

Roman coins

PAS data provide essential information on coin use and supply
in Roman Britain, especially for periods when single finds are rare,
such as the Tetrarchic/early Constantinian period (AD 294–313).
Following the Tetrarch's victory over the British usurper Allectus
in AD 296, coins issued as a result of Diocletian's monetary reform
(c. AD 294) were introduced on the island. Although these good
quality coins were promptly hoarded and are therefore rare as single
finds, more than 1,300 coins of the period AD 294–313 are recorded
on the PAS database, thus providing a unique dataset across the
Roman Empire.

PAS finds show that gold and silver coins were barely available to
the general public – only one gold *aureus* (BERK-E53380) and two
contemporary copies of silver *argentei* (ESS-C83012 & WILT-CA45F1)
are recorded. Among copper-alloy coins, 95% are *nummi*, a large
silvered copper-alloy denomination (e.g. LON-EBC4AF). However,
the significant number of fractions of the *nummus* (48 specimens) shows
that these small coins, struck in imperial capitals and said to have
been distributed to the crowds on specific occasions such as imperial
anniversaries, made their way to Britain (e.g. WMID-991F07).

The newly established mint of London is represented in equal parts
with that of Trier in Germany. Altogether, these two mints provide
two-thirds of the coins. Apart from official supply, the discovery
of a significant number of contemporary copies of the *nummus*
(49 specimens) suggests that forgers were trying to take advantage
of these newly introduced coins (e.g. HAMP-0F5F91).

Sally Worrell, Vincent Drost and Sam Moorhead

Early medieval
AD 410–1066

Finds from the early medieval period are interesting and important to record, but are not particularly common. Only 3,085 finds of this period were recorded in 2015.

The Watlington Viking Hoard

One of the most spectacular finds of any period found in 2015 was the hoard of about 200 Anglo-Saxon silver pennies and fragments, seven items of precious metal jewellery – consisting of three complete arm-rings, four deliberately cut fragments and 15 ingots – from near Watlington, Oxfordshire (SUR-4A4231). Almost all of the coins date to a very short period and belong to two kings, Alfred the Great of Wessex (r. 871–899), and Ceolwulf II of Mercia (r. 874–879). The coins are divided into two main types, named the 'two emperors' and 'cross-and-lozenge' after the designs on the reverse. Both types were issued in the name of each king, suggesting an alliance between Wessex and Mercia, something not visible in the historical record. Few coins of this period are known and so the hoard will also help archaeologists better understand the development and chronology of the coinage and its mint locations. The mixture of the coinage with jewellery, hack-silver and ingots is typical of hoards attributed to the Vikings and it is possible that the Watlington Hoard was deposited when the Great Viking Army moved from their winter camp at Cirencester to East Anglia in 879. Here, their leader, Guthrum, ruled as king under his baptismal name Æthelstan.

DUR-79B856
A gilt copper-alloy pin-head from Bardney, Lincolnshire, with nonsensical runic inscription. The object probably dates to the 8th century.

SUR-4A4231
The Watlington Hoard.

SUR-4A4231
'Two emperors' silver penny of Alfred the Great from the Watlington Hoard.

SUR-4A4321
'Cross-and-lozenge' silver penny of Ceolwulf II from the Watlington Hoard.

IOW-43BDDE
Halfpenny of Edward the Elder from the Isle of Wight.

Anglo-Saxon small change

Throughout the early medieval period the coinage consisted almost entirely of a single denomination, the silver penny. Beginning with Alfred the Great (r. 871–899) a number of kings also issued round halfpennies suggesting the need for a smaller denomination. These coins are very rare finds but one was recorded in 2015 from Calbourne, Isle of Wight (IOW-43BDDE) – a two-line type of Edward the Elder (r. 899–924). This was produced in the same style as the larger penny. The round halfpennies do not appear to have been a success and from the later 10th century until 1279 fractions (halfpennies and farthings) were produced by cutting the coins into halves or quarters. Such a cut halfpenny of Æthelred II (r. 978–1016) was found at Hayle, Cornwall (CORN-0EB0AE) – an unusual find this far west. Of the 69 late Anglo-Saxon pennies dating after AD 973 recorded by the PAS in 2015, 27 were fractions, showing how important they had become.

John Naylor and Michael Lewis

WMID-0074DA
Late Anglo-Saxon brooch from Cotesbach, Leicestershire. Its striking design shows an enamelled cross motif.

SUSS-F9E7AA
A hanging-bowl mount, dating to AD 600–725, from Patching, West Sussex. The object featured in the British Museum exhibition *Celts: art and identity*, and was donated by the finder to Littlehampton Museum.

Medieval
AD 1066–1500

HAMP-B62E17
Ampulla from Overton,
Hampshire.

SOM-3E316A
Finial from Milverton,
Somerset.

PAS data provides fascinating information about the lives of ordinary people in the Middle Ages, not apparent in much of the historical record. Of the 18,518 medieval items recorded this year, most are single finds, presumably accidental losses.

Holy water containers

Lead *ampullae* were purchased by pilgrims visiting sacred sites, and were used to hold holy liquids (such as water or oil) noted for their healing properties or protection from evil. Common finds, though often damaged, are *ampullae*, which survive in a variety of decorated forms – most have rounded bases with elongated rectangular necks. An interesting example found at Overton, Hampshire (HAMP-B62E17), has upon it a representation of the mitred bust of St Thomas (Becket) of Canterbury, and perhaps it once contained 'Canterbury Water', liquid said to be tinged with the martyr's blood. A number of others (see NMS-D58D52 & SF-59BEE6) have upon them crowned 'W's, believed to denote the cult of Our Lady of Walsingham, an immensely important pilgrimage destination. *Ampullae* are typically decorated with a scallop shell design, associated with patron saint of pilgrims, St James 'the Great', whose shrine is at Santiago de Compostela in Spain.

Eagles in art

Eagles are important in the iconography of the medieval Church, being associated with St John the Evangelist. They also appear more generally in art, including medieval objects recorded by the PAS. Important, and without exact parallel, is a Romanesque finial, perhaps from a religious casket, found at Milverton, Somerset (SOM-3E316A). Its form is of a gilded copper-alloy eagle with glass eyes, grasping a doomed quadruped. Similarly intriguing is a pendant from Rathmell, North Yorkshire (SWYOR-DA7B83), showing a 'displayed' eagle. It has been suggested such items were used on livery collars, or (more commonly) horse harnesses. Decorating the centre of a lead pilgrim's badge from Clanfield, Oxfordshire (SUR-6DA5CB), is an openwork bird, considered to be an eagle. Given the surrounding legend – *ave maria* (Hail Mary) – this might in fact be a crudely crafted dove, a symbol for the Holy Spirit, and common in scenes of the Annunciation.

SUR-6DA5CB
Badge from Clanfield,
Oxfordshire.

SWYOR-DA7B83
Pendant from Rathmell,
North Yorkshire.

Edward III's earliest gold coinage

In 1343, following a pause in the Hundred Years' War with France, England began rebuilding the wool trade with Flanders – an important part of its economy. Gold coinage was regularly used in Flanders for such trade, and had become the common international trade currency, but English money was based on silver pennies and agreeing a rate of exchange was difficult. As a result, Edward III initiated a new series of gold coins in three denominations – the florin (also known as a double-leopard), half-florin (leopard) and quarter florin (half-leopard or helm). Production started in January 1344, based on the Florentine weight standard, but this overvalued gold in relation to silver in England, and the coinage was not accepted. It was withdrawn from circulation in August 1344. Only a handful of these early coins survive, so the discovery of a quarter florin in Colyton, Devon, only the third known example (FASAM-638757), is of national importance. The obverse shows a helmet surmounted by a crowned lion, based on heraldic symbols from Edward III's Great Seal of 1340, with the inscription EDWR R AnGL Z FRAnC D hIB (Edward, King of England and France, Lord of Ireland). The reverse is a floriated cross with the Biblical inscription EXALTABITVR IN GLORIA (He shall be exalted in glory).

Michael Lewis and John Naylor

ESS-1A3010
Finely made gilded copper-alloy mount from London, believed to be made as the backing for a pilgrim badge. Originally the empty squares would have contained enamel, producing a striking chequered design.

BERK-8B90E8
Found during building work at Warkworth, Northamptonshire, a 13th-century glazed floor tile showing a man, perhaps a jester or fool, or even a pilgrim, wearing a cowl, and holding a staff.

KENT-CF9AD8
Folding strap clasp from near Ringwould, Kent, showing the popularity of the royal image on dress accessories. This is similar to the image of the monarch's head on contemporary coinage.

FASAM-638757
Quarter florin from Colyton, Devon.

HAMP-545C3C
A Henry II 'Tealby' type penny from Damerham, Hampshire, made into a brooch. Here the cross is positioned to have the four small crosses in the angles of the larger cross upright. It is unusual to find Henry II's coins converted into brooches.

Post-medieval
AD 1500 onwards

LON-27CF2C
This toy lead tankard from London is one of a number of interesting toys found on the Thames foreshore in 2015.

BERK-3FD7B9
Gunflint from near Bicester, Oxfordshire.

The PAS is selective in recording objects produced after c. 1540, especially material produced on an industrial scale. Among the 19,713 post-medieval and modern finds recorded in 2015 are some very important and intriguing discoveries.

Kings and revolutionaries
Occasionally objects have been reused to carry messages, some of which may be political in nature and challenge the status quo. A good example of this is a penny of Edward VII (r. 1901–1910) from near Pontefract, West Yorkshire (SWYOR-CCA87E), the reverse of which has been stamped with a Soviet 'hammer and sickle', to the right of the seated figure of Britannia. Following the Russian Revolution of 1917, the hammer and sickle was adopted in 1918 as an official emblem of Soviet Russia, subsequently becoming an international symbol of communism. Its use on this penny may reflect the rise of left-wing politics in England during the 1920s, a time of poor economy and mass unemployment.

Gunflints
Not all of the flints recorded by the PAS are ancient. 15 gunflints have been added to the database this year, of which one from near Bicester, Oxfordshire (BERK-3FD7B9), is typical. These carefully worked items were clamped into jaws of the cock on a flintlock gun. When the trigger was pulled a powerful spring drove the cock forward, striking the flint onto an iron plate which sent a shower of sparks into the black powder, firing the gun. Oddly, gunflints are not nearly as common as we might expect. They were used for over 200 years (c. 1650–1850) and needed constant replacement, but the PAS recorded less than 300.

Michael Lewis, John Naylor and Kevin Leahy

SWYOR-CCA87E
Penny with hammer and sickle from near Pontefract, West Yorkshie.

GLO-0794E0
463 coin clippings and fragments from Littledean, Gloucestershire. During the English Civil War of the 1640s, the clipping of coins – illegally removed slivers of silver from the edges of coins, probably for use in the production of counterfeit coins – was endemic and occasionally hoards of such clippings are found.

Statistics

County	PAS finds	Treasure cases
Bath & NE Somerset	123	1
Bedfordshire	501	8
Berkshire	625	11
Buckinghamshire (inc. Milton Keynes)	1,394	30
Cambridgeshire (inc. Peterborough)	1,450	22
Cheshire	307	8
Cornwall (inc. Isles of Scilly)	695	5
Cumbria	513	10
Derbyshire	417	6
Devon (inc. Plymouth & Torbay)	710	19
Dorset	1,278	40
Durham, Co.	587	6
Essex (inc. Southend & Thurrock)	1,192	50
Gloucestershire (inc. S Gloucestershire)	1,865	14
Hampshire (inc. Southampton & Portsmouth)	2,658	42
Herefordshire	647	11
Hertfordshire	1,519	13
Isle of Wight	2,144	25
Kent (inc. Medway)	1,558	38
Lancashire	320	6
Leicestershire	923	13
Lincolnshire (inc. N and NE Lincolnshire)	6,707	54
London, Gtr	730	13
Manchester, Gtr	33	1
Merseyside	57	0
Norfolk	16,155	127
Northamptonshire	601	11
Northumberland	616	7
Nottinghamshire	923	22
Oxfordshire	2,167	46
Rutland	235	2
Shropshire (inc. Telford)	777	13
Somerset (inc. N Somerset)	2,349	28
Staffordshire	1,053	11
Suffolk	6,103	87
Surrey	606	8
Sussex, E	789	3
Sussex, W	651	8
Tyne & Wear	55	0
Warwickshire	1,007	14
West Midlands	52	1
Wiltshire (inc. Swindon)	5,440	36
Worcestershire	724	8
Yorkshire, E	1,751	24
Yorkshire, N (incl. Redcar & Cleveland)	2,181	49
Yorkshire, S	500	11
Yorkshire, W	1,373	7
Wales	983	37
Northern Ireland	0	2
data not yet available	6,228	0
TOTAL	**82,272**	**1,008**

The counties recording the most PAS finds were Norfolk, Lincolnshire and Suffolk.
Most Treasure cases were reported in Norfolk, Suffolk and Lincolnshire.

Table 2
PAS records by period, where known or recorded (2015).

	Stone Age	Bronze Age	Iron Age	Roman	Early medieval	Medieval	Post-medieval	Total
2015	4,570	1,406	1,668	31,174	3,085	18,518	19,713	80,134
%	5.7	1.76	2.08	38.9	3.85	23.11	24.6	

Roman finds accounted for the highest proportion of finds recorded, followed by post-medieval, then medieval finds. Finds found since the Norman Conquest account for almost 48% of PAS finds.

Table 3
Method of discovery, where known or recorded (2015).

	Metal-detecting	Chance find while metal-detecting	Field-walking	Other chance find/gardening	Controlled archaeological investigation	Building/agricultural work
2015	66,109	3,267	5,030	2,219	317	504
%	85.36	4.22	6.49	2.87	0.41	0.65

Almost 90% of PAS finds and 95% of Treasure cases were found by metal-detectorists, either while metal-detecting or spotted 'eyes only'.

Table 4
Findspot precision (2015).

	4 fig	6 fig	8 fig	10 fig	12 fig
2015	438	20,358	21,752	31,557	64
%	0.59	27.45	29.33	42.55	0.08

In 2015, 99% of completed records had at least a 6-figure National Grid Reference, which is the minimum level of precision necessary if public finds are to contribute to archaeological knowledge.

Table 5
Land use, where known or recorded (2015).

Land use	2015	%
Cultivated land	39,663	88.03
Grassland/heathland	1,753	3.89
Woodland	524	1.16
Coastland	709	1.58
Open fresh water	1,740	3.86
Other	668	1.48

88% of finds were discovered on cultivated land, where they are vulnerable to agricultural damage and natural corrosion processes.

Table 6
Number of unique visitors, visits and page views on the PAS websites and database over the last five years.

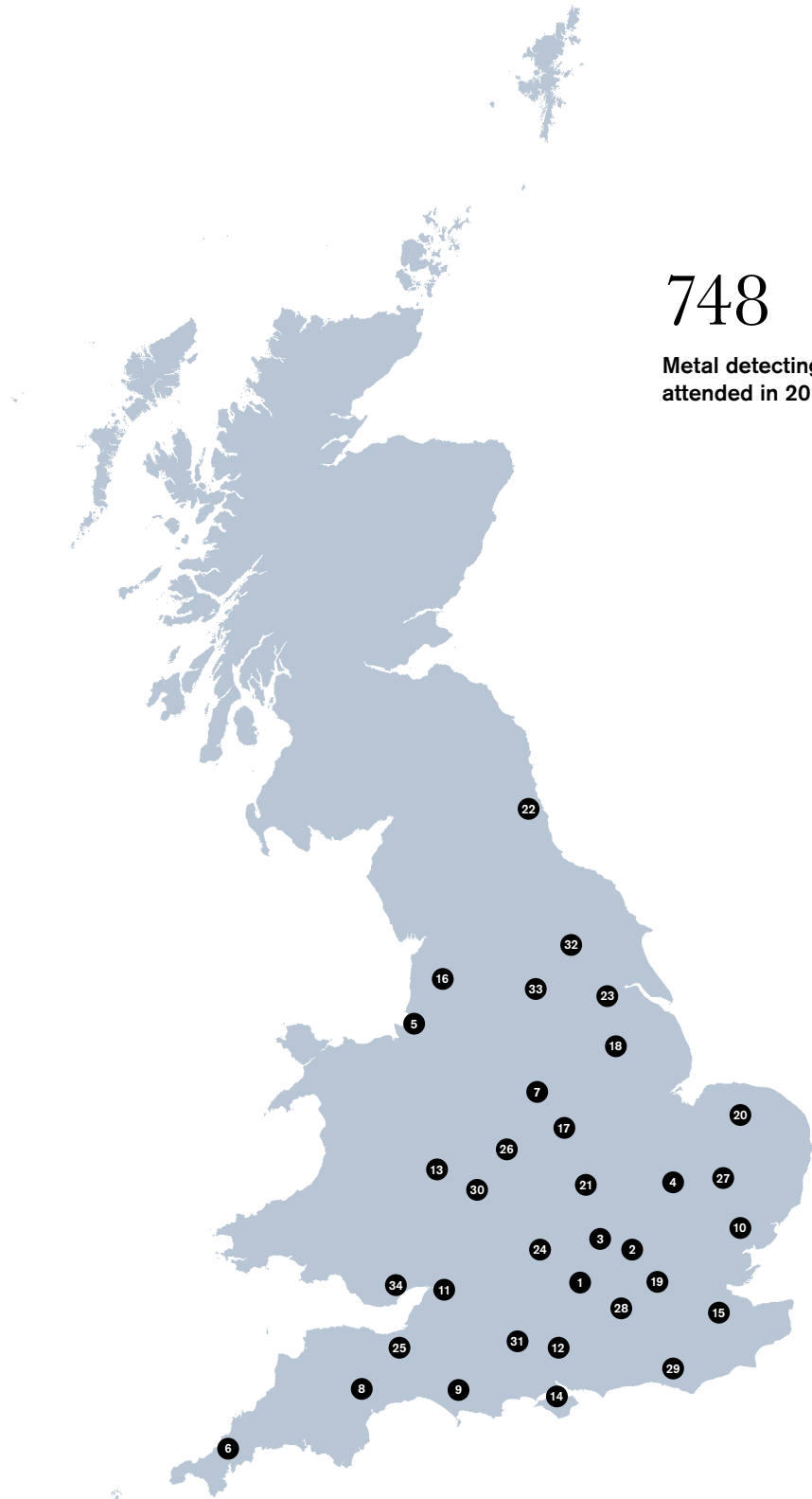| Year	Unique visitors	Number of visits	Page views
2011	463,160	677,965	4,485,956
2012	543,534	800,080	4,836,783
2013	505,793	767,340	4,775,018
2014	499,481	789,253	5,214,822
2015	361,368	680,949	5,647,064

Michael Lewis, Ian Richardson, Claire Costin and Stephen Moon

NMS-D58D52
Ampulla from Loddon, Norfolk.

Finds Liaison Officers' locations

748

Metal detecting club meetings attended in 2015

38

Finds Liaison Officers

34,154

People attending outreach events in 2015

521

Research projects have used PAS data

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