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DGHM 150

2/6/19

Studio Assignment 1 – Part 2: Digital Project Review

Metadata

Title: Portable Antiques Scheme

Description: A crowd-sourced archive of ancient artifacts found by the public in England and Wales

URL: <https://finds.org.uk>

Author(s): **Daniel Pett (website designer)** Matthew Fittock, Helena Costas, Arwen Wood, Helen Fowler, Ben Jones and 35 others serve as Finds Liason Officers

Place: The British Museum and Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum of Wales

Date: 1996-2019

Date Accessed: Feb 3 2019

Availability: free

Content

Introduction

The [Portable Antiques Scheme](#) (PAS) is a public Scheme and archival site that records the archaeological findings of the public in England and Wales that would have otherwise been left unrecorded. Every year, thousands of archaeological objects are found by members of the public, mostly by using metal detectors, but also by people out walking, digging their gardens, or just going about their everyday lives. These findings have the potential to tell more about ancient

British civilization and society. Since 1997 the Portable Antiques Scheme Finds Liaisons Officers have examined over 100,000 objects that may have otherwise gone unrecorded.

The aims of the Scheme, which can be found on the website, are:

1. To advance the knowledge of the history and archaeology of England and Wales by systematically recording archaeological objects found by the public.
2. To raise awareness among the public of the educational value of archaeological finds in their context and facilitate research in them.
3. To increase opportunities for active public involvement in archaeology and strengthen links between metal-detector users and archaeologists.
4. To encourage all those who find archaeological objects to make them available for recording and to promote best practice by finders.
5. To define the nature and scope of a Scheme for recording Portable Antiquities in the longer term, to assess the likely costs and to identify resources to enable it to be put into practice.

The Archived Material

The PAS records all types of archeological finds dating prior to 1650. Details of how the artifact was found, a description, weight and measurements, are collected in addition to information about the land in which the artifact was found in. Finds Liaison Officers will aid in the documentation of the artifact.

How the Collection Works

The PAS artifact collection is based entirely on volunteering, meaning individuals are not obliged to report their findings unless it falls within the objects described in the Treasure Act of 1996.

The Treasure Act of 1996, which replaced the medieval law of Treasure Trove in England and Wales, decrees that all finders of gold and silver objects older than 300 years as well as prehistoric materials found after January 1st 2003 have a legal obligation to report their findings. The Treasure Act does not apply to Scotland or the Isle of Man.

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. Rewards are set at the full market value, determined by the Secretary of State who is advised by an independent panel, the Treasure Valuation Committee. Finders or landowners sometimes do not claim their reward, thereby enabling museums to acquire finds at reduced or no cost.

In order to report a finding, a full list of contact information for the liaison officers in each area is provided on the website. The site also provides guides for caring and conserving artifacts and a link to the [Code of Practice for Responsible Metal Detecting in England and Wales](#) for prospective finders.

The PAS records finds discovered in England and Wales and the data is available to the public, but only legitimate researchers are able to view precise findspots. The Scheme consists of 40 locally based Finds Liaison Officers (FLO) covering the whole of England and Wales. Their job is to liaise with finders and record their finds. While FLOs are interested in seeing all

artifacts found, they need to be selective about what gets archived. Finds will be borrowed from the finder, but will be returned once they have been identified and recorded. It is important that finders supply a precise National Grid Reference (at least to 6-figures) for all finds, as without a location, they have little archaeological value.



Website Navigation and Design

The website has 11 main sections: Home, Contacts, Get Involved, Database, Treasure, Guides, News & Events, Publications, Research, Counties, and Forum. The site was built entirely on open software and uses PHP language, specifically Zend Framework and jQuery javascript framework. Users can download and manipulate the data presented as well as contribute their own findings to the archive. Many of the resources that academic researchers use has come from the contributions of the public.

Home

The home screen plays host to information on many different ways to start navigating through the Scheme, such as the recent launch of a new application, [Lost Change](#), which maps coins to their discovered location along with a link to their Flickr photo stream. There is also a search bar that searches the Scheme database, a link to their Twitter, and some other links that can take viewers directly to their most popular artifacts: ancient coins, Staffordshire Horse Papers, and the Bronze Age Object Guide. At the bottom of the home screen, one can also navigate the menu pictured below to find more information about the PAS, the site itself, the

Data Labs, and the tech used to create the website with their GitHub source code.



About Us

- [About the Scheme](#)
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Data Labs

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- [Controlled vocabulary](#)
- [OAI interface](#)
- [RSS feeds](#)

Tech

- [Source code on Github](#)
- [Technology](#)

Find us

© MMIII - MMXIX » [CC-BY](#)
The British Museum, Great Russell Street,
London WC1B 3DG.
T: +44(0) 20 73238618

Contacts

The contacts section lists all of the current Finds Liaison Officers along with their contact information.

Matthew Fittock

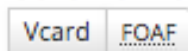
Finds Liaison Officer - Bedfordshire & Hertfordshire

Verulamium Museum, St Michael's Street, St Albans, Hertfordshire, AL3 4SW

Work T: 01727 751826

E: Matthew.Fittock@stalbans.gov.uk

Other formats:



Get Involved

This section of the website goes into detail about how everyday British residents can go about participating and contributing to the Scheme and provides a background to the Scheme and the steps taken to collect and record the artifacts being found across the U.K.

Database



[Log in](#) | [Register](#)

- [Search database](#)
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Search our database:

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1,391,348 objects within 892,804 records.

The Database is the jumping off point to accessing all of the recorded artifacts in the Scheme. When searching, the user can keep the search as broad or as specific as they would like. Categories for specification include object type, county of origin, broad period, institution, ruler/issuer, denomination, mint, material, workflow, and Reece period.

An example of a search result looks like this.

Record ID: [SF4136](#)

Object type: HOOKED TAG

Broad period: POST MEDIEVAL

County: Suffolk

Workflow stage: Published

Incomplete silver hooked tag, gilded on both front and reverse. The plate is rectangular and three-dimensional; in the centre is a large raised (apparently solid) rectangular area with a central circular boss. On the top of the boss is a tiny projection which brings the plate's thickness to 5.5 mm. Around the boss, the raised area is filled with unclear relief decoration, including eight pellets around the edge, within a cabled border. The outer flange is undecorated; around the edge are six projecting knobs, one at each corner (lower left one now missing - fresh break) and one in the...

Created on: Thursday 7th December 2000

Last updated: Monday 8th September 2014

Spatial data recorded. This findspot is known as 'SUFFOLK PARHAM', grid reference and parish protected.



When selecting an artifact, more information is provided about the artifact, where it was found, its age, material, size, weight, date of discovery, spatial metadata, and subsequent action of where the artifact was placed after recording (either back to the finder or in an institution).

Treasure

The Treasure tab goes over the Treasure Act of 1996 in detail and provides information for residents outside of England and Wales as well. There is information about the nature of Treasure, the process of Treasure identification, validation, and acquisition as well as contact information for the various government departments in charge of Treasure acquisition.

Guides

Scheme guides are provided in this tab, categorized by age and artifact type. There are guides for finds conservation, Bronze Age artifacts, Iron Age coins, Roman coins, Greek and Roman coins, Byzantine coins, Early medieval, medieval coins, and post medieval coins. The Finds Recording Guide is currently being revised and expanded.

News and Events

In this tab, announcements for upcoming events, conferences, and press releases are available for the public as well as any website maintenance notifications. The most recent posts have been about the PAS Conference 2018, which took place in London in October. The events page looks like it is being regularly updated.

Publications

The Publications tab holds information about any publications released by the Scheme, the Scheme's annual reports, the Treasure reports, commissioned reviews, and a listing of research publications that they have contributed to in Britannia, Medieval Archaeology, and Post Medieval Archaeology.

Research

The Research tab details the various projects the PAS has been a part of since its conception as well as the academic level of research they contributed in from undergraduate to doctoral research. The tab also details their future research plans in GIS mapping, and funding for long term research projects. Contact details for their Project Leader, Dr. Michael Lewis, and their Research Assistant, Dr. Eljas Oksanen are provided.

Counties

The County Pages provide local information on artifacts, coins and volunteering in each county. The page has links to each county's individual page as well as the PAS explorers blog, which allows users to easily connect with other finders in their area. Blog activity depends on the county itself, as some are more active than others.

Forum

The Forum page allows users to post questions, start threads, and respond to other users within PAS to gain knowledge, troubleshoot problems, and discuss findings with each other. The forum seems underutilized as there are very few threads on display.

Critique of the Project

The data itself has found a great home in PAS. Artifacts that are typically kept in the archives of museums are free to view in the comfort of one's home through the internet. The data itself needed to be digitized in order to be accessible to a wider audience. The website itself is easy to navigate and offers a wide variety of information and materials that anyone can access from the comfort of their own home, whether it's for official research purposes or personal interest. While the site's mission and purpose is clear, the execution and validity of the PAS is less uncertain.

There is not a single head-person with a reputable title that adds legitimacy to the PAS. While there are 39 different Finds Liaison Officers, we are not made aware of their qualifications to aid others in the archaeological excavation and record keeping process. The only credible affiliation is that the Scheme is run by the British Museum, but it doesn't list any point person within the British Museum.

While the site seems to still be active, the PAS department has been downsized within the last seven years and functions solely through the British Museum. According to the events page, there were still events being planned in the 2018 year, but no further updates have been added. The Forum is largely quiet, with sporadic activity recorded over the last five years.

There is no one-way to identify the main contributors to the archive. The only names users have access to are those of the Finds Liaison Officers. The identities of the finders and researchers as well as the exact location of where the artifact was found remain largely

confidential in order to ensure the privacy of the finder as well as the preservation of the archaeological site in which the artifact was found.

Conclusion

The idea itself is novel and innovative. Having the public interact directly with findings raises awareness of the importance of archaeological discovery and also elicits excitement within the public about being part of the process. And unless the artifacts fall under the description of treasure from the Treasure Act of 1996, then the finder of the artifact is able to keep it after the piece has been properly digitized. However, one must be aware of the qualifications of the site. While it is being run by the British Museum, there needs to be more information about the process of recording and digitizing as well as more information about who runs the PAS and the qualifications of the Finds Liaison Officers.