

TREASURE FINDS LIAISON ASSISTANT, KENT

Background Information

Kent has a rich heritage of archaeological and historical remains, which the County Council gives high priority to conserving and making accessible. The geological diversity of the county, coupled with its proximity to mainland Europe and latterly to London, has left an incomparable archaeological resource for all periods.

Large numbers of archaeological small finds (or portable antiquities) are found in Kent every year. Most of these are found by people searching using metal detectors, or on the surface by field walkers and mudlarks, whilst some are found by chance. These objects represent a significant element of Kent's archaeological heritage, and it is important that they are recorded.

A very significant group of found objects are those qualifying as 'Treasure' under the Treasure Act which require legal reporting to HM Coroners Service. These finds are often significant due to intrinsic or historic value and can be numerous if found as a hoard. Kent has frequently placed within the top five counties for the number of treasure cases reported. This together with excavations of in situ finds has created a significant backlog of cases.

The Heritage Conservation Group has hosted a Finds Liaison Officer (FLO) for Kent, as part of the Portable Antiquities Scheme, since 1997 and has recently received funding from the British Museum to employ a Treasure Finds Liaison Assistant (TFLA) to assist with treasure processing in county. The Portable Antiquities Scheme is a voluntary scheme for the recording of archaeological finds made by members of the public and is funded by DCMS. The Scheme is headquartered at the British Museum, and with partner organisations maintains a network of locally based Finds Liaison Officers across England and Wales. Kent has about 14 metal detecting clubs, with a combined membership of over 400, together with as many independent detectorists and other finders, resulting in a high volume of significant finds available for recording as part of the Portable Antiquities Scheme.

The FLO plays a very important role in improving standards of recording of metal-detecting finds, facilitating cooperation between metal detectorists and archaeological contractors, providing talks to schools and other bodies and working with Kent Police's Rural Crime Unit to counter illicit metal-detecting. The TFLA will work with the FLO to help deliver the Portable Antiquities Scheme in Kent particularly in relation to reducing the backlog of treasure cases.

The Heritage Conservation team (with about 12 members of staff and several volunteers) is based in the Directorate of Growth, Environment and Transport at Kent County Council. The team plays a strategic role in conserving and promoting the historic environment of Kent, maintains the Historic Environment Record for the county and provides advice on archaeological matters to the County Council, Medway Council, Ebbsfleet Development Corporation and District authorities in Kent.