

# **Sunoikisis: Crowdsourcing in cultural heritage: a case study of the Portable Antiquities Scheme (England and Wales)**

**28<sup>th</sup> Nov. 2019. John Pearce, Classics, King's College London  
(john.pearce@kcl.ac.uk)**

# Summary

- Contexts of archaeological discovery – public finders and metal-detecting
- Treasure Act 1996 and the Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS); a ‘born-digital project’;
- A new research resource: general characteristics; Roman examples
- Role(s) of finders and crowd-sourcing
- Challenges: research, (digital) engagement and extension, ethics
- (NB a personal perspective)

# 1. Context

## Agents of archaeological ‘discovery’

- Archaeological contractors
- Government agencies / universities / museums / archaeology societies
- ‘The public’ (predominantly metal detector users)





An example collection: the Carlile Collection, South Ferriby, North Lincolnshire

# Metal detecting

- Metal detecting is legal in England, Wales and Scotland, provided:
  - (a) you have permission of landowner and
  - (b) avoid scheduled archaeological sites (c. 18,000 in England)
- Detector users find 96% of Treasure finds and 88% of non-Treasure PAS finds (2016)
- In most European countries, metal detecting is licenced, usually only granted for archaeological investigation
- c. 9500 active metal detector users in the UK (from early 1970s onwards) (estimated similar number in France)

# Treasure Trove before September 1997

- Common law of Treasure Trove (in England, Wales and Northern Ireland)
- All gold and silver objects to be reported to coroner
- Advice from national museum
- Three tests to be declared Treasure Trove:
  - Made of gold or silver
  - Buried with intention of recovery
  - Original owner or heirs unknown

# Treasure Trove: problems

- Many single finds not reported
- Few gold and silver objects were agreed to be Treasure Trove (burden of proof problematic, esp. intention of recovery)
- Votive deposits and burials not eligible (not deposited with intention to recover)
- Limited to precious metal items
- Splitting of deposits containing precious metal & other artefacts e.g. Snettisham jeweller's hoard (opposite)



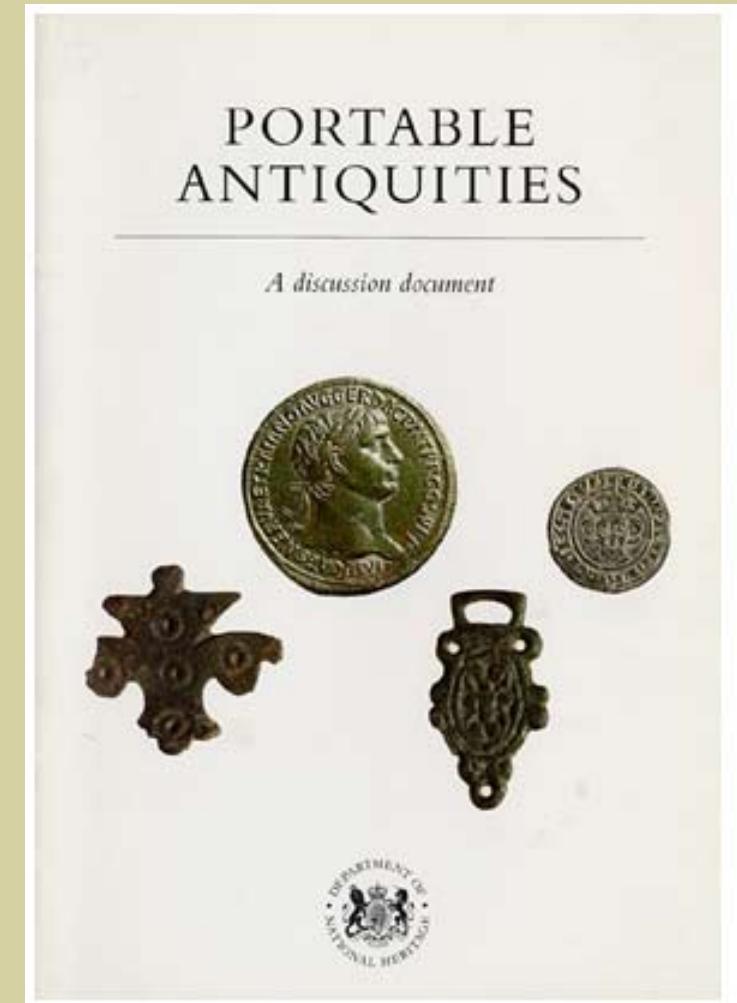
- Below: Snettisham hoard, Norfolk, found 1985 (*tpq* of AD 155), Treasure Trove 1986
- (silver coins, rings, carnelian gemstones, scrap gold and silver)

## 2. Treasure Act 1996

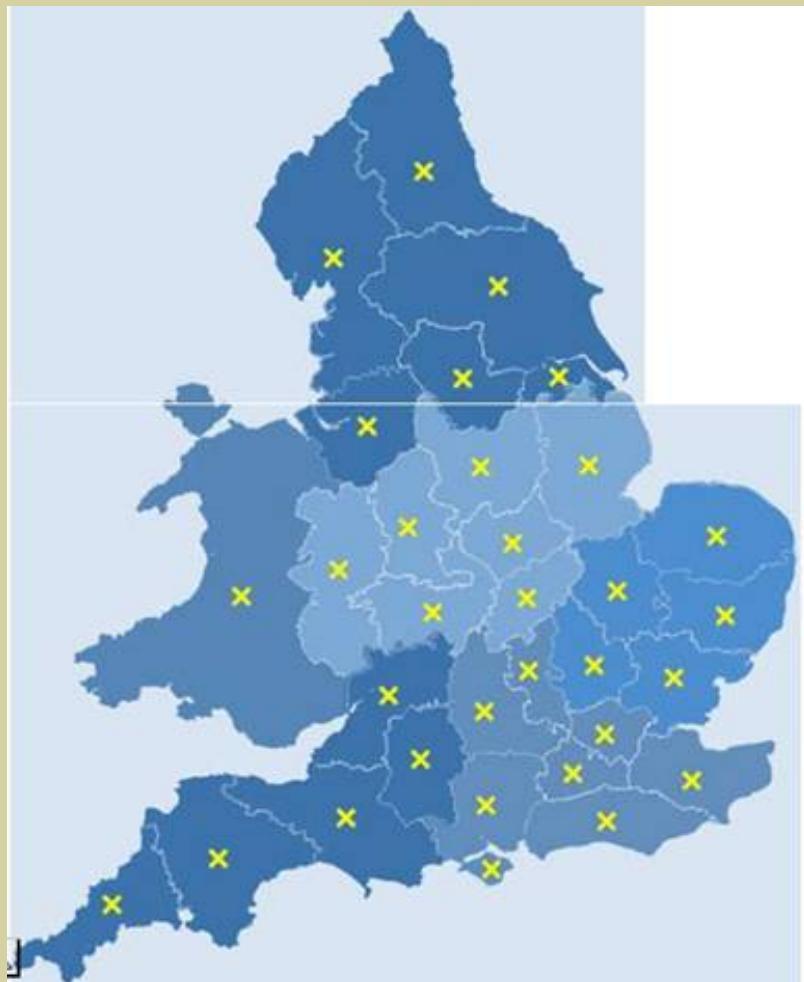
- From September 1997 replaces common law of Treasure Trove (England, Wales, NI) for objects found since Sept. 1997, requiring reporting by finders (and from 2009 acquirers) of objects believed to be treasure
- New definition of Treasure:
  - All objects, other than coins, at least 300 years old with at least 10% of gold or silver
  - All coins from the same find, provided they are at least 300 years old (if < 10% of gold or silver at least 10 coins must be present)
  - All objects found in association with treasure items
  - (extended 2003 to include prehistoric base-metal deposits)
- New reward and valuation system

# Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS)

- Voluntary scheme for recording archaeological objects found by public (supplementing Treasure Act)
- PA Discussion Document (1996)
  - failure to record finds made by the public  
*'represents a considerable loss to the nation's heritage. Once an object has left the ground and lost its provenance, a large part of its archaeological value is lost. The result is a loss of information about the past which is irreplaceable'.*
- Focus on recording finds in context, not on acquisition
- (builds on earlier local initiatives)



# Portable Antiquities Scheme (BM) : organisation



- 6 pilot schemes in 1997, 6 more in 1999
- National network from 2003
- Finds Liaison Officers, Finds Advisers (research, training, publication), other staff ('treasure team',) + interns and volunteer recorders
- 32 principal partners under MLA (Museums & Libraries Association) and British Museum (BM)
- Currently UK govt funding distributed through BM

# Aims of PAS

- To advance knowledge through records of archaeological objects
- To encourage finders to report their finds and promote best practice
- To raise awareness of the educational value of archaeological finds and facilitate research
- To increase opportunities for active public involvement in archaeology

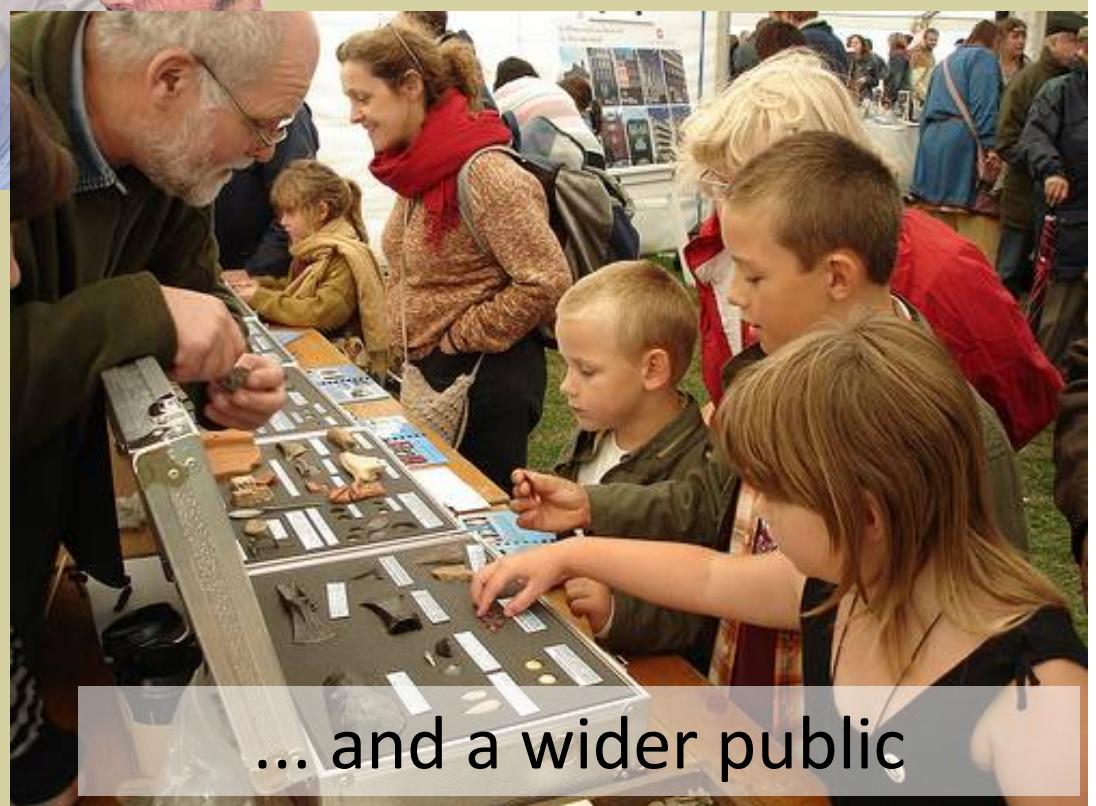
## Outreach to metal detector users..



2017:  
Contact with 133 metal-detecting clubs, attending 609 meetings.

644+ outreach events (talks, finds days etc), with at least 38,479 adults and 4,396 children attending.

<https://finds.org.uk/documents/annualreports/2017.pdf>



... and a wider public

**Best Practice –**  
To encourage all those  
who find  
archaeological  
objects to make them  
available for  
recording and to  
promote best  
practice by finders.  
(conservation; geo-  
referencing)

Code of Practice for Responsible Metal  
Detecting  
(agreed with md organisations)



This code of practice is voluntary, but the following organizations have endorsed it:



**NCMD**  
National Council for Metal Detecting



**MLA**  
MUSEUMS LIBRARIES ARCHIVES COUNCIL  
[www.mlac.org.uk](http://www.mlac.org.uk)



**FID**  
FEDERATION OF INDEPENDENT DETECTORISTS  
[www.detectorists.net](http://www.detectorists.net)  
[www.fid.newbury.net](http://www.fid.newbury.net)



**CBHMW**  
COUNCIL FOR BRITISH HERITAGE METAL DETECTORS



**CBA**  
COUNCIL FOR BRITISH ARCHAEOLOGY



**National Museum Wales**  
National Museum of Wales  
[www.nmgw.ac.uk](http://www.nmgw.ac.uk)

**Society of Museum Archaeologists**  
[www.socmusarch.org.uk](http://www.socmusarch.org.uk)



**Portable Antiquities Scheme**  
[www.finds.org.uk](http://www.finds.org.uk)



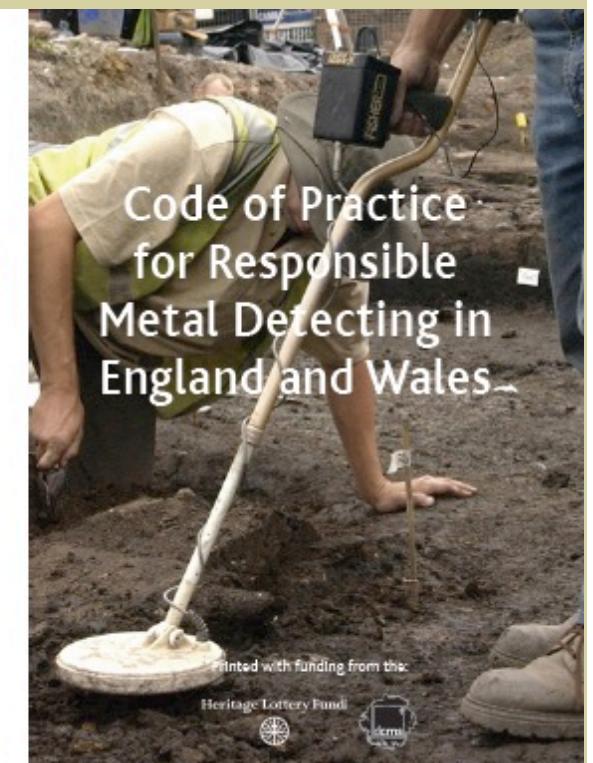
**NFU**  
[www.nfuonline.com](http://www.nfuonline.com)



**ENGLISH HERITAGE**  
[www.english-heritage.org.uk](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk)



**THE BRITISH MUSEUM**  
[www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk](http://www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk)



**Code of Practice  
for Responsible  
Metal Detecting in  
England and Wales**

Printed with funding from the  
Heritage Lottery Fund



Welcome to the Portable Antiquities Scheme website - Mozilla Firefox

File Edit View History Bookmarks Tools Help

Pearce, John - Outlook Web App   Archaeology & Historic Buildings Record -...   Welcome to the Portable Antiquities Scheme...   +

finds.org.uk

Home Contacts Get involved Conservation Database News & reports Treasure Research Photos Events

star C g staffordshire moorlands pan purchase

« »

## Welcome to the Portable Antiquities Scheme website

The Portable Antiquities Scheme is a DCMS funded project to encourage the voluntary recording of archaeological objects found by members of the public in England and Wales. Every year many thousands of objects are discovered, many of these by metal-detector users, but also by people whilst out walking, gardening or going about their daily work.



 Micropasts

A community platform for conducting, designing and funding research into our human past. The Scheme's latest partnership project in conjunction with UCL and funded by the AHRC.

Read more »

 Portable Antiquities Scheme  
www.finds.org.uk

Search our database

Try coin for example

Search



Latest tweets

- 6 days, 12 hours ago [findsorguk](#) said: RT @GGAT: Stunning Neolithic leaf shaped arrowhead brought in to @GGAT for me to photograph for @findsorguk <http://t.co/AmvEmu1ott>
- 6 days, 18 hours ago [findsorguk](#) said: Our visualisation "Lost Change: mapping coins from the Portable Antiquities Scheme" is live <http://t.co/HMCXp85LTk...> <http://t.co/EW7gRkcAPn>

finds.org.uk/database

start   KCL PAS 2012.ppt...   RAI Chester Sept...   capricorn.ppt [Co...   Welcome to the P...   UDISK 2.0 (E:)   USB2 (F:)   Search Results   Adobe Photoshop   Search Desktop   EN   11:40

PAS: a born-digital project ([www.finds.org.uk](http://www.finds.org.uk)): in total 1,455,523 objects documented in 935788 records 27.11.19)

# An example search – Roman brooches from Greater London (publicly accessible)

Screenshot of a web browser showing the results of a search for Roman brooches from Greater London on the Portable Antiquities Scheme website (<https://finds.org.uk/database/search/results/objecttype/BROOCH/broadperiod/ROMAN/countyID/41441>).

The search results page displays three records:

- Record ID: SUR-52045B**  
Object type: BROOCH  
Broad period: ROMAN  
County: Greater London Authority  
Workflow stage: On review  
A Roman copper-alloy Colchester brooch with two grooves on the side wings and a plain bow. The brooch pin and spring are missing.  
Created on: Wednesday 5th October 2016  
**Spatial data recorded.**
- Record ID: SUR-7264A3**  
Object type: BROOCH  
Broad period: ROMAN  
County: Greater London Authority  
Workflow stage: Awaiting validation  
The upper part of a Roman copper-alloy Colchester brooch with a single moulding on the side wings and a prominent spine.  
Created on: Wednesday 31st August 2016  
Last updated: Wednesday 26th October 2016  
**Spatial data recorded.** This findspot is known as 'Keston', grid reference and parish protected.
- Record ID: SUR-D39AE5**  
Object type: BROOCH  
Broad period: ROMAN  
County: Greater London Authority  
Workflow stage: Awaiting validation  
A Roman copper-alloy Colchester two-piece brooch, c.AD43-100, which is complete save for its pin. The brooch has two grooves on each of the outer wings, a boldly crested spine and a solid catchplate.  
Created on: Wednesday 24th August 2016  
Last updated: Tuesday 18th October 2016  
**Spatial data recorded.** This findspot is known as 'Keston', grid reference and parish protected.

Filters and settings on the right side of the page include:

- Records per page: 10, 20, 40, 100 (20 is selected)
- Only results with images: on (selected)
- Only results with 3D content: on (selected)
- Sort your search by: DATE CREATED (selected)
- Which direction? descending (selected)
- Total results available: 55  
Search server index: valhalla
- You are viewing records: 1 - 20.
- Search statistics:
  - Total quantity: 55
  - Mean quantity: 1.000
  - Maximum: 1
- Filter your search
- Object type

Browser taskbar at the bottom:

- start
- Dropbox Setup
- Database sear...
- Windows E...
- Found New Ha...
- Portable Antiqu...
- Document1 - M...
- Adobe Photoshop
- Dissertation su...
- [Klio] Financial ...
- Search Desktop
- EN
- 14:37

# An example search – a single Roman brooch from Greater London (publicly accessible): unique identifier BERK-2B92EA

Screenshot of a web browser showing the Portable Antiquities Scheme record for a Roman brooch.

The browser tabs are:

- internal.kcl.ac.uk
- Mail - Pearce, John - Outlook
- Record ID: BERK-2B92EA - ROMA

The address bar shows: finds.org.uk/database/artefacts/record/id/965105

The page navigation menu includes: Home, Contacts, Get Involved, Database (selected), Treasure, Guides, News & Events, Publications, Research, Counties, Forum.

The left sidebar features the Portable Antiquities Scheme logo and links: Log in | Register, Search database, All artefacts & coins, Hoard search, All images, More searches, Statistics.

The main content area displays the following information:

- BROOCH**
- Unique ID:** BERK-2B92EA
- Object type certainty:** Certain
- Workflow status:** Awaiting validation
- Description:** An incomplete and worn Roman copper alloy brooch, possibly a Colchester derivative type, dating to c. 43-100 AD. The surviving brooch consists of the lower half of the wing with a double lug attached which then curves down to the bow. The bow is slightly arched and ends in an old pointed break. The spring, catchplate and pin are missing. The brooch has a dark green to almost black patina.
- Dimensions:** 31.6mm in length, 18.2mm in maximum width, 9.2 mm maximum thickness and weighs 2.92g.
- Parallel:** A possible parallel can be found in Hattatt 2012, page 297, fig. 156, no. 872 dated to 1st century AD.
- Class:** Colchester derivative

**Subsequent actions:** Subsequent action after recording: Returned to finder

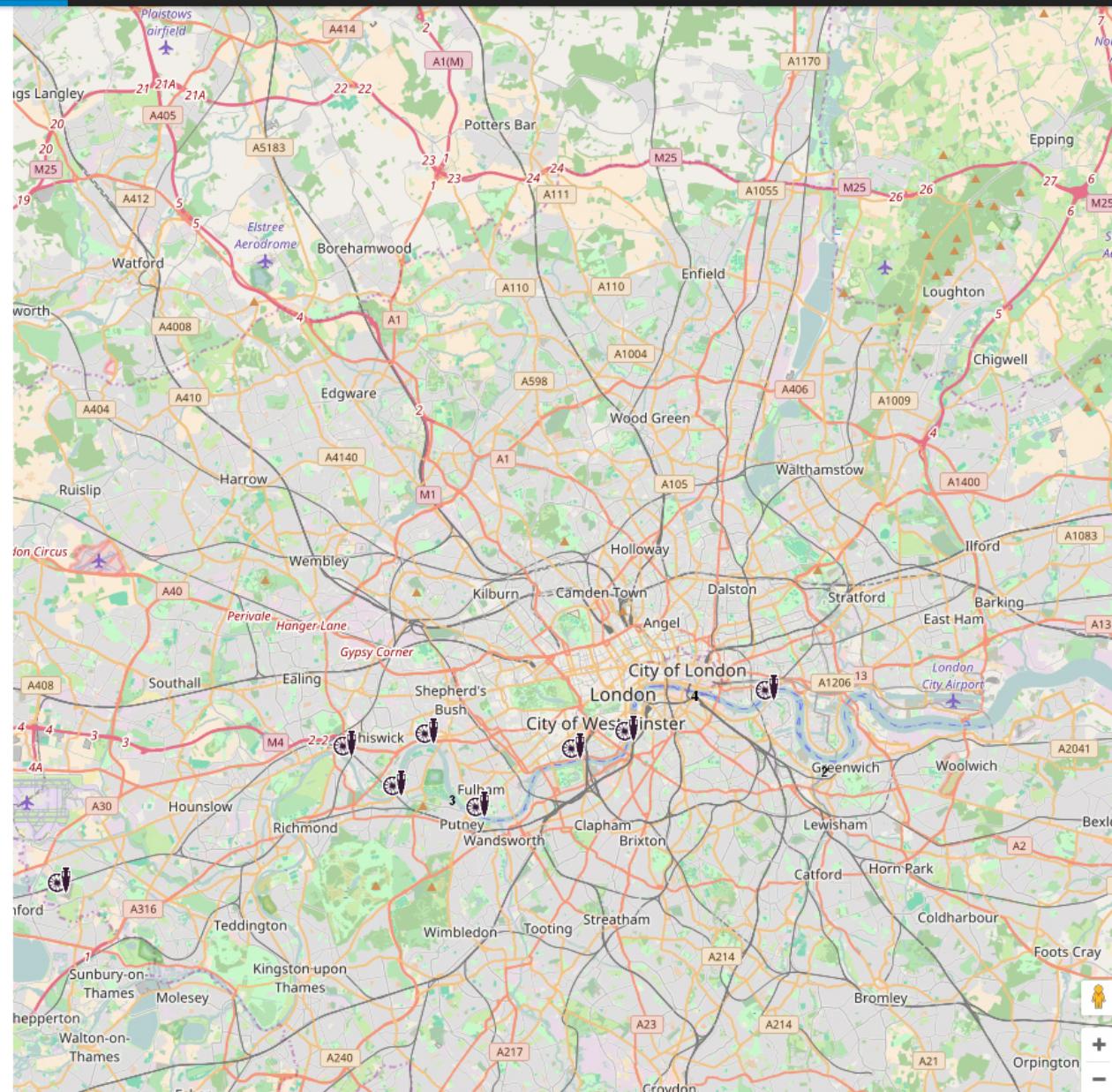
**Chronology:**

**Image:** Four photographs of the Roman brooch, showing its four sides. The brooch is made of dark metal with a green patina. It has a curved bow and two lugs. The CMS logo is visible on the images.

**Image use policy:** Our images can be used under a CC BY attribution licence (unless stated otherwise).

The taskbar at the bottom shows: Type here to search, File, Start, Task View, Edge, File Explorer, Google Chrome, Microsoft Store, Microsoft Teams, Microsoft Powerpoint, and a battery icon.

An example search – mapping results  
- Roman brooches from Greater London (publicly accessible)



## Search facets

## Object type

BROOCH (34)  
BOW BROOCH (1)

## County of origin

Greater London Authority (35)

## Broad period

ROMAN (35)

 Clear this facet

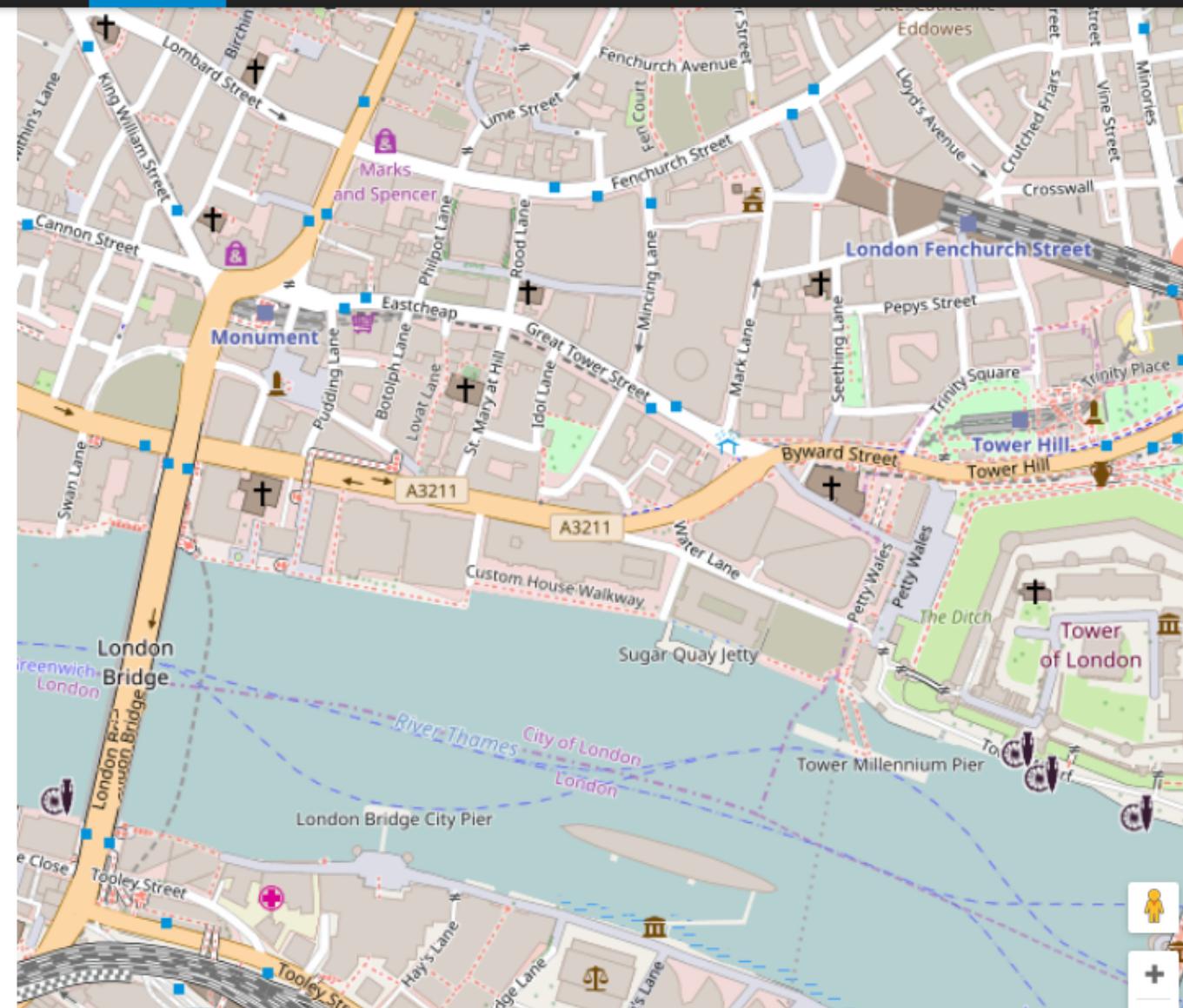
## Institution

LON (16)  
SUR (12)  
KENT (7)

## Workflow

Validation (27)  
Published (8)

An example search – Roman brooches mapping results from Greater London - (research access)



Instituti

LON (22)

SUR (15)

KENT (13)

BH (1)

Workflc

Validation (

Published (

Review (6)



Ask me anything



# PAS Activity 2017

79,353 finds recorded

93% of PAS finds made by metal detectorists

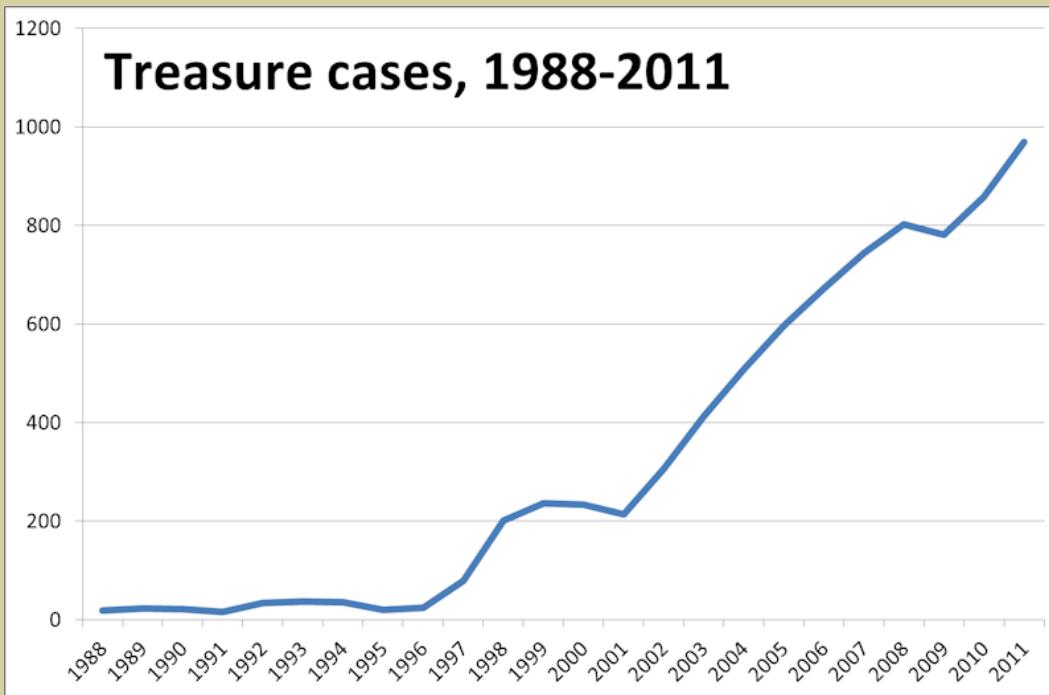
93% of PAS finds made on cultivated land

99% of finds recorded to nearest 100m<sup>2</sup> (Historic Environment Record (HER) – utility - now minimum recording requirement) (Compare 2010 – 88%)

1267 Treasure cases – the largest annual total so far (96% found by metal detectorists – compared to 1120 in 2016)

Data: PAS annual report 2017:

<https://finds.org.uk/documents/annualreports/2017.pdf>



### 3. A new research resource: general characteristics

#### Quantities

Bland 2013:

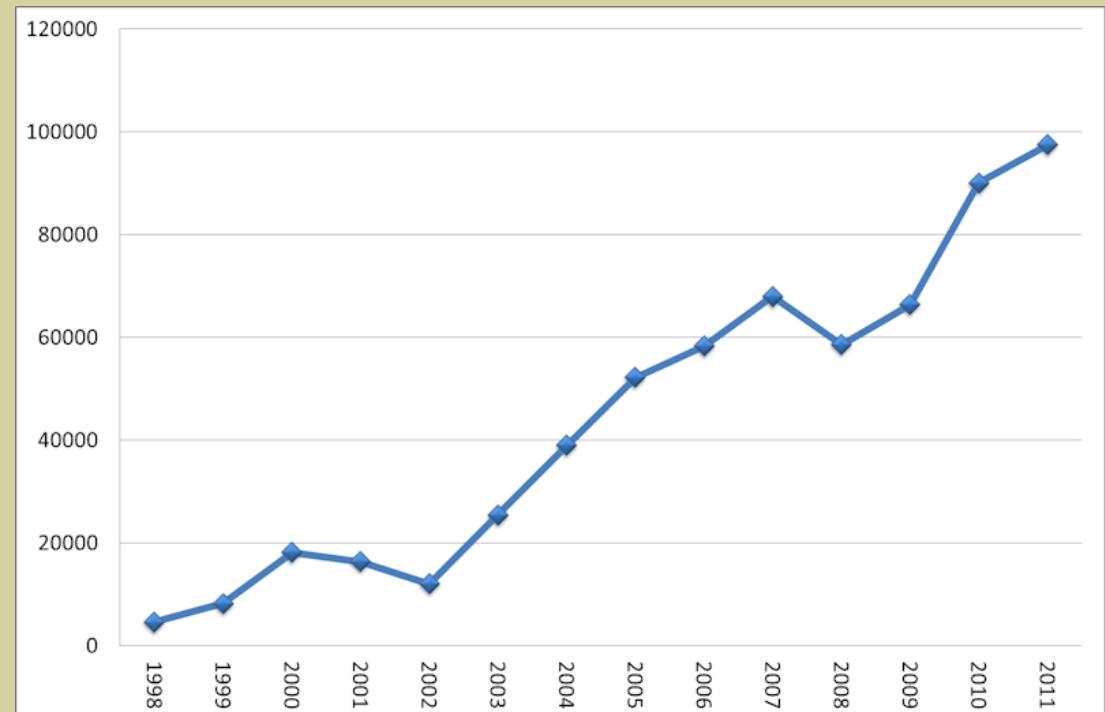
Figure 1: Finds reported as Treasure Trove (1988-97) and Treasure (since 1997)

Figure 3: Numbers of finds recorded annually on <http://finds.org.uk>

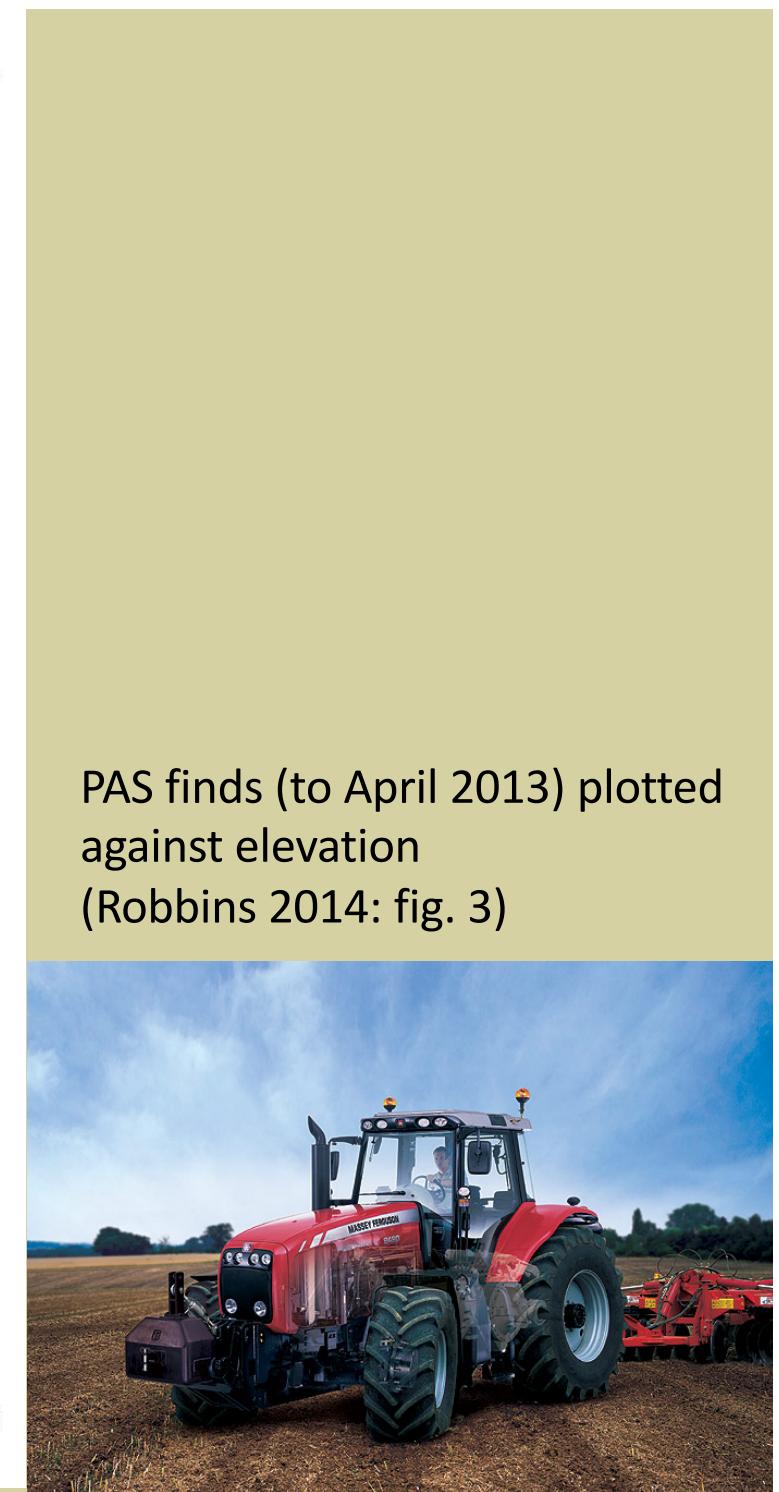
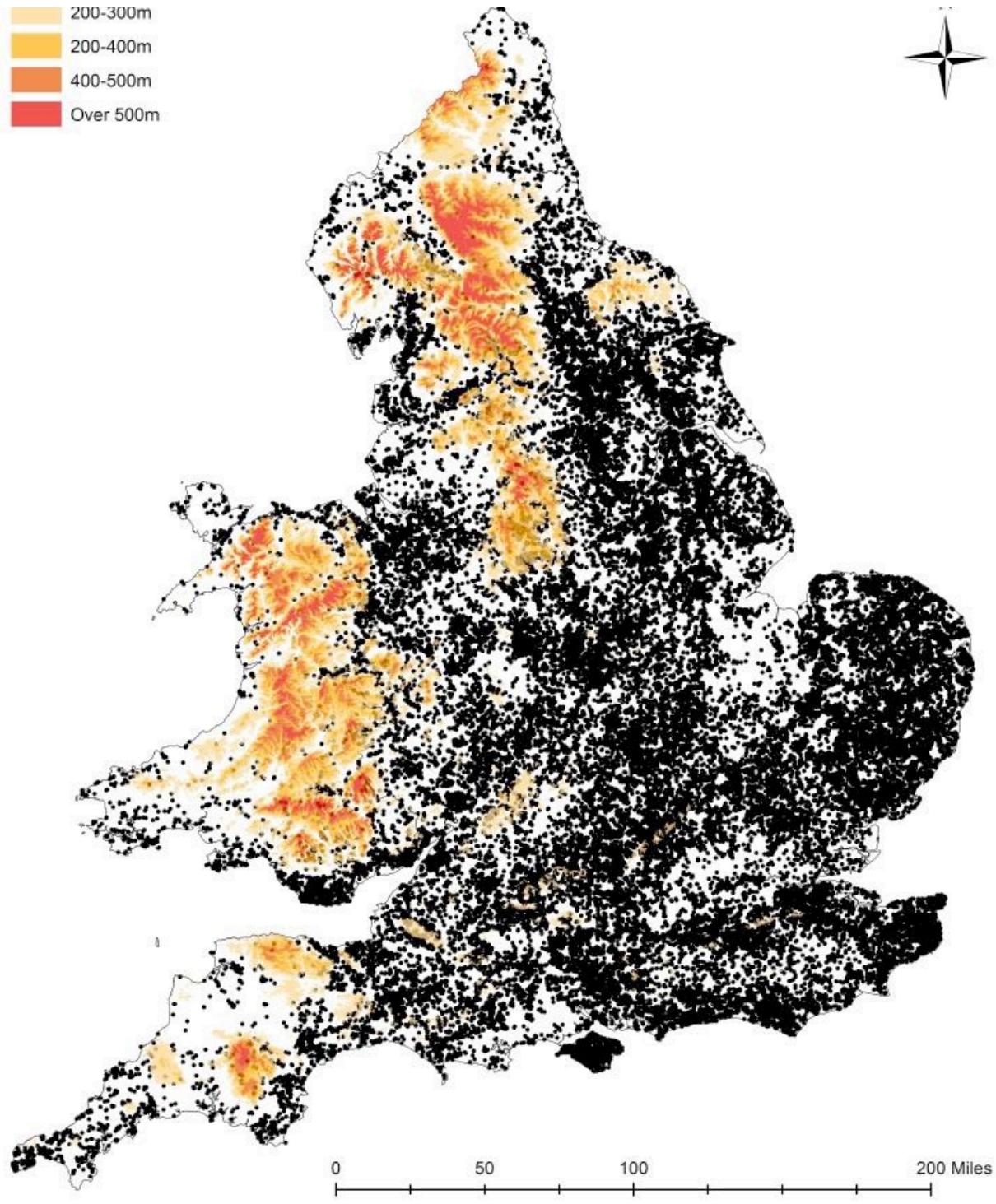
#### Dissemination of data (2017)

348,376 unique visitors visited the PAS websites and database, making 713,301 visits and 6,045,761 page requests).

399 individuals with full access for research purposes, a further 12767 registered users



200-300m  
200-400m  
400-500m  
Over 500m



A new research resource: Roman examples

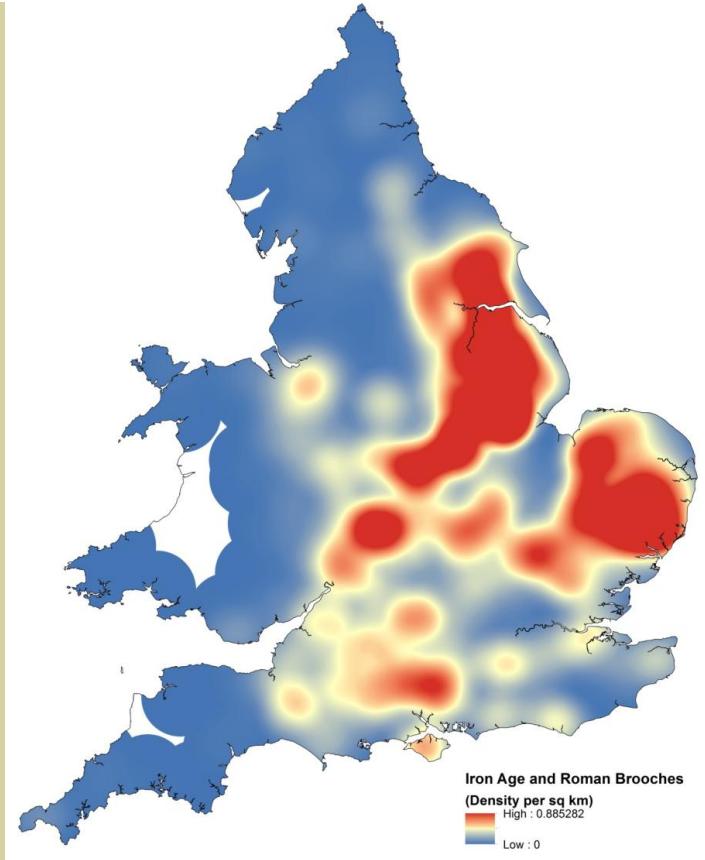


Above. Marcus Aurelius, Capitoline museum, Rome

Brackley, Northants, head of Marcus Aurelius(?)  
Finds Day, Banbury Museum 08.01.09  
(See now Walker, *Britannia* 46 2014)  
[BERK-E24C84](#)



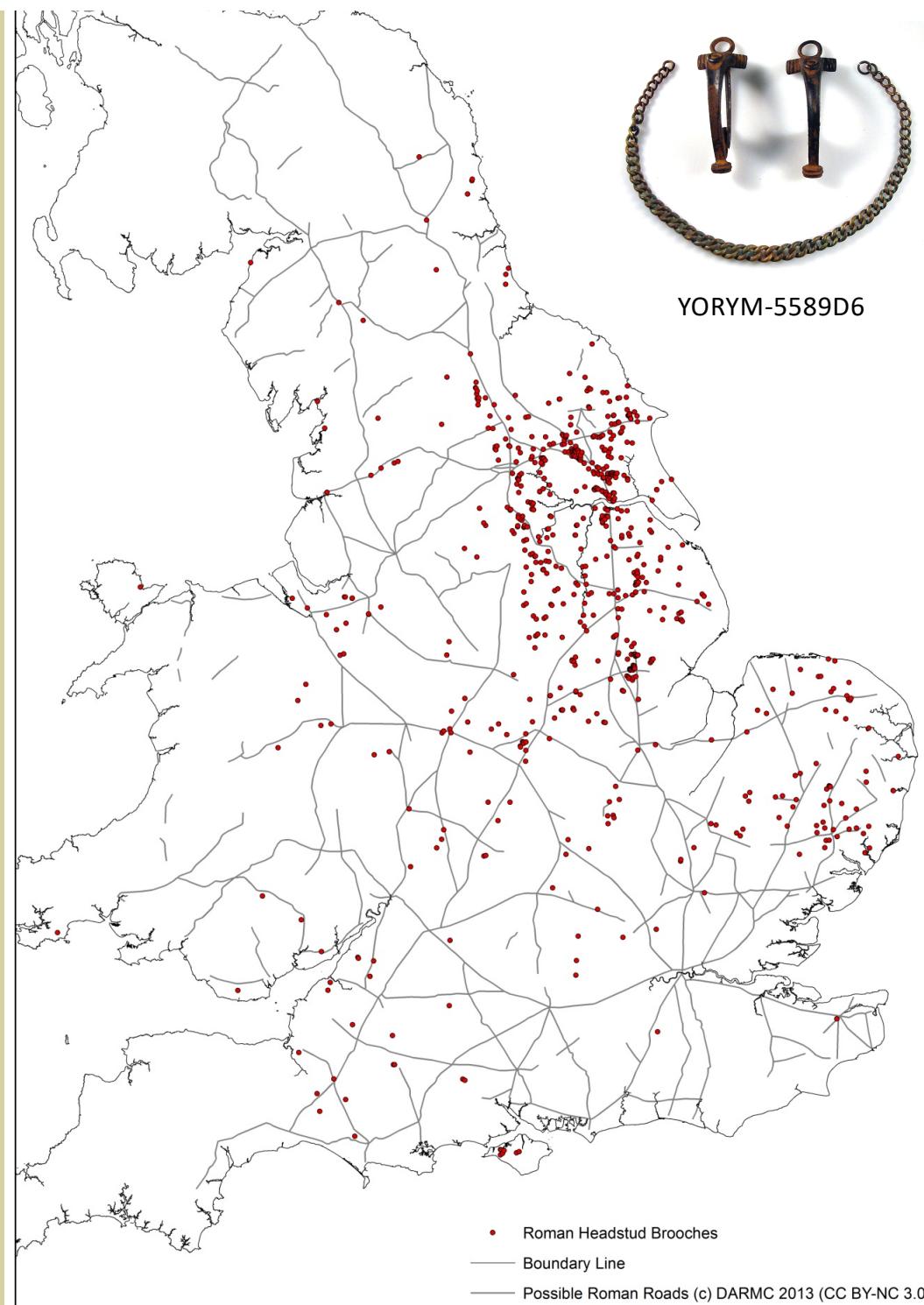
Frome Hoard, Somerset, c.  
52,000 coins, largest number  
of Carausian coins yet known  
from a single find, tpq AD 305



Above –17,970 Roman brooches 1997–2013, Kernel density plot

Right Findspots: headstud brooches (+ Roman roads) 1997-Sept 2013 PAS  
(Pearce and Worrell 2015)

(Mapping by Katie Robbins)



## 4. Public roles in the PAS: PASt Explorers

### *Finders as reporters*

- Best practice e.g. conservation; geo-referencing
- Informal advocates for PAS – involvement in public engagement
- Diversifies and enriches engagement with archaeology / heritage



‘Unsung heroes of heritage’ Annual *PAS and Treasure Report 2005* launch, with finder of Anglo-Saxon vessel from Isle of Wight, with Peter Peach, finder ((left), David Lammy, former Labour minister of state for culture (centre), Frank Basford FLO, Isle of Wight (right).

<http://www.theguardian.com/uk/2007/jan/18/artnews.arts>

*But – overlooks finders' expertise in objects and landscapes?*

- Conversion of objects to data done by subject experts
- Beneficiaries - academic research; e.g. 657 research projects (by 2017) making substantial use of PAS data (inc. 27 major projects and 132 PhDs; Historic Environment Records (HERs))
- Volunteers – practical limitations of staff time etc
- PASt Explorers <https://finds.org.uk/getinvolved>: 259 volunteers in 5 year Heritage Lottery Fund funded project, - 'Community Finds Recording Teams' with individual FLOs, in 10 regions, to assist in documentation (but now finished)

The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL <https://finds.org.uk/getinvolved/volunteering> in the address bar. The page title is "Volunteering opportunities with the Portable Antiquities Scheme". The page content states: "We don't have any volunteer opportunities available at present. You can contact us with your CV to be kept on file at the Department of the British Museum directly." Below this, it says "Other formats: this page is available as [xml](#) [json](#) [rss](#) [atom](#) representations." On the left side, there is a logo for the Portable Antiquities Scheme featuring two coins and the text "Portable Antiquities Scheme www.finds.org.uk". Below the logo is a button with "Log in | Register". At the bottom left, there is a link "Report your finds". The browser's top navigation bar shows multiple tabs open, including "Mail - Pear", "Wolfson", "Sunoikisis", "Mines, Terri", "Mines, Terri", "The Field", "The Field", "Epigraphis", "Les inscrip", and "Epigraphik". The browser's toolbar includes icons for back, forward, search, and refresh.

27.11.19

<https://finds.org.uk/getinvolved/volunteering>

## 5. Challenges

- An incomplete framework?
- Ethical questions
- Research complexity
- Sustainability

Challenges: gaps



Crosby Garrett helmet, £2.2 million, 2010

<https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2010/oct/07/roman-helmet-sold-two-million>



# Challenges: ethics

A pragmatic approach but has been argued by some indirectly to promote, encourage or legitimate:

- ‘ownership’/ commoditisation rather than ‘stewardship’;
- ‘artefact hunting’ in Britain and beyond
- illegal activity e.g. ‘nighthawking’ and damage to scheduled ancient monuments; non-reporting of Treasure (see next slide)
- a wider antiquities market (implications for an international legal framework?)
- (for exploration see Gill 2010 and related discussion, and for polemic: Paul Barford, [Focus on "Metal Detecting": Bitter and Stout \(1\)](#), 14.03.12, <http://paul-barford.blogspot.com/>

Mail - P | Wolfson | Sunoki | Mines, T | Mines, T | The Field | The Field | Epigrap | Les insc | Epigrap | King's C | King's C | Digital | TAG-54 | New Tab | Detecto | - | X

the guardian.com/uk-news/2019/nov/22/detectorists-jailed-for-stealing-12m-viking-hoard-of-gold-and-silver

Apps Remedyforce Self S... Rome on Rome » M... Walking Mussolini's... How Windsor Castl... Largest Roman city... Download Adobe A... Step Guide The Ashmolean Lat... on't worry Add to My Bookma... timetables.kcl.ac.uk Department of Clas...

Advertisement

Search jobs Dating My account Search UK edition

# The Guardian

News Opinion Sport Culture Lifestyle More

UK ► UK politics Education Media Society Law Scotland Wales Northern Ireland

Crime

## Detectorists jailed for stealing £12m Viking hoard of gold and silver

Judge tells Layton Davies and George Powell they cheated UK public of seeing rare treasure

Steven Morris  
@stevenmorris20  
Fri 22 Nov 2019 13.17 GMT

747

f t e



▲ Layton Davies and George Powell unearthed a hoard of gold and silver from the Viking era. Photograph: West

Advertisement

The UK's Biggest & Best Range of Tools, Findings & More

Gold Trusted Service Award ★★★★ feefo

Waiting for tps.doubleverify.com...

Type here to search

17:16 27/11/2019

Conviction, November 2019  
(*The Guardian*, Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2019)

<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2019/nov/22/detectorists-jailed-for-stealing-12m-viking-hoard-of-gold-and-silver>

# Challenges: a complex research resource

- An incomplete dataset, to be used in tandem with others
- (circulation of objects and resources in antiquity)
- Deposition; preservation; survival; exposure; recovery; reporting; recording
- Regional, site type & morphological bias? (Cool and Baxter, *Britannia* 47 2016)
- (*See further Robbins 2014*):

# Challenges: sustainability

- Resource requirements for object documentation and above all Treasure cases (1267 in 2017, vs 1008 in 2014)
- Durability of data, personnel, training (in a time of austerity)
- Estimated 40-70% of finds discovered are recorded on PAS database (Robbins 2014: 14)
- The role of volunteers: PASt Explorers  
<https://finds.org.uk/getinvolved> - now completed and no longer funded