

National Council for Metal Detecting

Member of: The Central Council of
Physical Recreation.

NCMD News and Views. January 2005

The National Council would welcome replies and comments on the information contained in *News and Views*.

Email editor at.

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What is the National Council for Metal Detecting ?

The National Council for Metal Detecting is a representative body of elected volunteers formed in 1981 to provide a means whereby responsible metal detector users would have a democratic forum to discuss problems affecting the hobby and to provide an authoritative voice to counter ill -informed and frequently misleading criticism of the hobby.

It does not represent the trade or archaeological interests.

The NCMD has gained Government recognition as an organisation which represents metal detector users countrywide. It has played a major role in representing the views of those metal detector users to Government Departments regarding legislation affecting the hobby.

The National Council for Metal Detecting has a written Constitution which is available to all members. It is a member of the Central Council for Physical Recreation.

What are the benefits of joining the National Council?

(a) The National Council seeks the opinions of its membership on matters affecting the hobby as they arise and keeps them informed on developments. The NCMD offers advice on various matters via its national officers and

individuals with long experience in the hobby.

(b) The National Council provides a means whereby the consensus views of its membership can be represented both at Local and National Government level, with the Local and National Press, and any other organisations which may have an interest in hobby activities.

(c) The National Council provides excellent Civil Liability Insurance free of charge to all of its registered members.

(d) The National Council holds meetings attended by regional representatives at least quarterly. It has an Annual General Meeting for the election of officers, to give reports on its activities and to present examined annual accounts for the scrutiny and questioning of all of its membership.

(e) Various social events, rallies, exhibitions etc. are arranged by NCMD regions

(f) The National Council maintains an archive of documents relating to events affecting the hobby for the use of its membership.

NCMD Membership.

Information about the benefits of NCMD membership for individuals and clubs may be obtained from Trevor Austin, NCMD General Secretary, 51 Hilltop Gardens, Denaby, Doncaster, DN12 4SA.

E - mail: trevor.austin@ncmd.co.uk

NCMD Website: www.ncmd.co.uk

1. Portable Antiquities Scheme.

Great News.

The government have decided to fund the PAS Scheme. The funding announcement guarantees the future of the Portable Antiquities Scheme (www.finds.org.uk), the nation's largest community archaeology programme, which helps the public to record and find out about the

hundreds of hidden treasures they unearth every year.

Spokesman Mark Wood added: "We are pleased to have secured the future of the Portable Antiquities Scheme which has been an enormous success and has helped put countless priceless objects into the country's museums. The scheme enjoys huge popular support and provides a vital link between amateur archaeologists and metal detecting enthusiasts and the museums community."

The sixth *Portable Antiquities Report*, assessing the work of the scheme from 1st April 2003 until 31st March 2004 has recently been issued.

The Portable Antiquities Scheme is managed by a consortium of national bodies, who advise on policy, and includes the National Council for Metal Detecting among its members.

Issues discussed by this group include the transfer of Portable Antiquities data to the Historic Environment records, Countryside Stewardship Schemes and the future of the Portable Antiquities Scheme.

A Project Board is in place to make financial decisions.

The Scheme has now been extended to all parts of England and Wales and employs 36 Finds Liaison Officers.

The Scheme's website www.finds.org.uk allows public access to more than 64 thousand records and 21 thousand images on it's database.

2. Entry Level Stewardship Scheme (DEFRA)

The NCMD has received a reply from DEFRA regarding information about metal detecting under the new Entry Level Stewardship Scheme which is to be 'rolled out' nationally in 2005. The NCMD had asked to see a model copy of the proposed agreement and any associated schedules. DEFRA have explained that

there will be no 'agreement document' as such. The farmer will fill in an application form, complete two maps (one showing environmental features on the farm, and the other showing the location of the chosen management options) and sign a declaration agreeing to meet the scheme conditions as outlined in the scheme handbook.

With specific regards to metal detecting under the schemes heading "Metal Detecting on Your Land", notice is given that a licence is required from English Heritage before metal detecting can take place on Scheduled Monuments. On SSSI's written consent must be obtained from English Nature. On all land under the agreement, the farmer is required to protect and maintain archaeological sites and other environmental features, and must ensure that no damage is caused to these features wherever metal detecting takes place (authorised or otherwise).

3. NCMD Chairman.

It does appear that the ongoing subject of data transfer from the Portable Antiquities Scheme to the Historic Environment Records has stalled because of the intransigence of ALGAO (Association of Local Government Archaeological Organisation). The National Council for Metal Detecting has sought to reach a compromise agreement and has had a document on the table for the best part of twelve months. Even though we have not received a satisfactory reason why Internet publication is necessary.

The NCMD has been very active and are finding that we are becoming involved with more & more organisations and various bodies with their viewpoints and documents regarding detecting, such as the CBA - Code of Practice, ALGAO - Rally Code of Practice, DCMS Review of Heritage Protection, PAS Review, English Heritage etc. This is extremely difficult for a part-time, volunteer, organisation to cope with, even though we are endeavouring to expand our team.

The national & regional work becomes more entwined and I am pleased to report that a detectorist / archaeologist / PAS liaison group has now formed in Sussex; very similar to the one in Kent that has been in existence for over 14 years, with full involvement & support from the NCMD.

4. Public Relations Officer.

I am continuing to prepare NCMD News Bulletins, when we have sufficient and appropriate news to publish.

I intend to publish the finalised news bulletins on UK Detectornet and the PAS Forums on the Internet. I have taken this decision in view of the increasing amount of debate being carried out on discussion forums – UK Dectornet and the PAS Forum, much of which is related to the current topics – Code of Practice, Countryside Stewardship etc. To address this, I took the decision with committee approval, to post some of the information contained in the latest draft of the NCMD News Bulletin, on to relevant threads of the UK Detectornet forum.

UK Detectornet have launched a new 'Liaison Section' and the NCMD, FID, PAS & CBA have been invited to contribute information and views in this section of the forum. The general flow of discussion on the forums is resulting in a growing opinion that the UK Detectornet forum should be a conduit for channelling as much thought and comments from as wide a geographically spread audience as possible on those issues that are concerning the detecting community as a whole and pose a real risk to the hobby.

5. Treasurer.

We are currently in a reasonable position financially with healthy balances in the accounts held by the NCMD and subscriptions still coming in from clubs, regions and individuals.

All the accounts transactions are being administered using the HSBC's Internet Banking system which makes the transfer

of monies to and from accounts a quick and simple procedure.

The PC accounts files are backed up regularly onto CD to avoid complete loss of data should a problem arise. Hard copy accounts books are also kept for extra security so we have appropriate records should the PC system go down. These are a mirror image of the accounts spreadsheet pages and entries are duplicated in the books as the records are made on the PC spreadsheet.

6. General Secretary and Assistant Secretary.

Treasure Valuation Committee

Once a museum has expressed an interest in a find and it has formally been declared Treasure by the Coroner, the find is the property of the Crown and the finder/s and landowner will be entitled to receive an ex-gratia reward. The value of the reward to be determined by *the Treasure Valuation Committee*. The reward will correspond as closely as possible to the selling price that might be realised on the open (UK) market between a willing seller and a willing buyer. The valuation is the anticipated 'hammer price' and will not contain any deduction for commission or expenses.

It hardly seems like twelve months ago that I took up the position on the TVC. The number of cases the committee has to deal with each month has now reached a level whereby we are now looking at ways to accommodate the rise. This may include extra meetings.

I recently wrote a series of three articles which appeared in the "Searcher" magazine, outlining the work of the Committee and some of the problems it faces.

Next month I will be continuing with two more articles, the first will list some seventy finds from June and July 2004, and will compare the provisional valuations from the trade, and where

applicable finders, with the final valuation by the TVC.

The second article will list all the finds which for one reason or another have been abated, the amount of the abatement and the reasons for that abatement. It will also include a revised definition of what is *deliberate or reckless damage*.

As with most Government committees, minutes of the TVC meetings will be available online from January 2005.

PAS Reporting

The recent *PAS annual report* indicated that finders in the North of England were not reporting as accurate as finders in the South. Subsequently a press article which appeared in the *Yorkshire Post* claimed "Yorkshiremen secretive about their treasure".

This relates to the reporting of portable antiquities to 4 figures only or parish, which appears as "No NGR" (National Grid Reference) in the report.

Until such time as the NCMD get an agreement from ALGAO on the transfer of data, the Yorkshire Region will continue to recommend reporting to four figures.

7. Vice Chairman.

The Department of Culture Media and Sport has published its long-awaited review of heritage protection.

A weighty 68 page document. It deals with all aspects of protecting the historic environment, its aim being to tidy up the system using existing legislation and improve the remainder over the longer term through new legislation.

The rural historic environment attracted much attention, with the clear intent to use the new agri-environment schemes and their abundant finance to increase the conservation of the historic environment. Currently these constitute some 10% of farmland, so the expected increase to 60-80% under the new schemes to be rolled out in 2005 could have a huge impact on the hobby.

8. RAY HORTON

The Arley Detector Club of Warwickshire and the Midlands Federation is sad to announce the sudden death of its founder and previous Chairman, Ray Horton on the 25th December 2004

Ray had not been in good health for the last few years following an illness which took away most of his powers of speech, but never his irrepressible enthusiasm for his favourite pastime.

Ray felt strongly about the hobby and he served for many years as secretary to the Midland Federation of Metal Detecting and was a staunch supporter at the inception of the National Council for Metal Detecting, helping to formulate policy with his ideas, drive and enthusiasm. In 1979 he helped raise a petition to Coventry Council, which led to the overturning of a unilateral detecting ban on Council land.

Fiercely protective of his hobby, Ray could be a formidable opponent against policies and actions that he considered to be wrong, and always condemned those in the hobby that sought to destroy its credibility and use it for other than the fascinating study of history. He was a very intelligent, resourceful and creative man and for some years produced a detecting newsletter, as well as contributing articles to the two leading detecting publications.

Ray will be sadly missed by not only his club mates and those who knew him locally and nationally on the metal detecting scene, but also by those of us who knew him as a man you could rely on for support and advice. He will surely be rated as one of the key players in the formulation of the organised hobby here in the Midlands.

Our thoughts and sympathies go out to his family at this very sad time.