

N.C.M.D. - NORTH WEST

A REGIONAL ARM OF THE NATIONAL
COUNCIL FOR METAL
DETECTING



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METAL DETECTING AND THE COMMUNITY

Foreword:

The contents of this small booklet have been compiled from data submitted by the sixteen member clubs of the *NCMD Northwest Region*, and relate to just some of the activities undertaken by those clubs. Earlier records, already held centrally on a computer database, were updated during the winter of 1998 and spring 1999.

This venture is a relatively new one and, because some clubs have not retained archive material and some individual detector users have either left the hobby or moved to other locations, the full scale of activities recorded herein are far from complete. Only information which can be supported by documentary evidence has been used.

The catchment area for the Northwest Region ranges from North Lancashire to South Cheshire, bounded to the east by the Pennines and to the west by the Irish Sea where it meets the North Wales coast. *NCMD - Northwest* is just one of nine regional members of the National Council for Metal Detecting, the national hobby organisation recognised by the government, museums and archaeology, the National Farmers' Union and The Country Landowners' Association as *The Voice of Responsible Metal Detecting*

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR RESPONSIBLE DETECTOR USERS

Do not trespass. Ask permission before venturing on to any private land.

Respect the Country Code. Do not leave gates open when crossing fields, and do not damage crops or frighten animals.

Do not leave a mess. It is perfectly simple to extract a coin or other small object buried a few inches under the ground without digging a great hole. Use a sharpened trowel or knife to cut a neat flap (do not remove the plug of earth entirely from the ground), extract the object, replace the soil and grass carefully and even you will have difficulty in finding the spot again,

Help to keep Britain tidy - and help yourself. Bottle tops, silver paper and tin cans are the last things you should throw away. Do yourself and the community a favour by taking the rusty iron and junk you find to the nearest litter bin.

If you discover any live ammunition or any lethal object such as an unexploded bomb or mine, do not touch it. Mark the site carefully and report the find to the local police and landowner.

Report all unusual historical finds to the landowner.

Familiarise yourself with the law relating to archaeological sites. Remember it is illegal for anyone to use a metal detector in a protected place unless permission has been obtained from the appropriate Secretary of State or designated Authority. A protected place is defined in the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979.

Acquaint yourself with the definitions of Treasure contained in the Treasure Act 1996 and its associated Code of Practice, making sure you understand your responsibilities if you find Treasure. Also acquaint yourself with the definition and practice of Treasure Trove and the special circumstances in which it will now be applied.

Remember that when you are out with your metal detector, you are an ambassador for our hobby. Do nothing that may give it a bad name.

Never miss an opportunity to show and explain your detector to anyone who asks about it, be friendly. You could pick up some useful clues to another site. If you meet another detector user, introduce yourself. You may learn much about the hobby from each other.

These items were not treasure material and were, therefore, not reportable in law. Nevertheless, like much more archaeological material recovered by metal detector users with a respect for their heritage.. they were placed with museums near their find spots to enhance local knowledge.

METAL DETECTOR USERS AND THE POLICE

Police Authorities have not been slow to recognise the skill and expertise contained within metal detecting clubs. On fourteen occasions in the recent past members of Northwest clubs have been of invaluable assistance to the Police in searches relating to crimes of robbery and murder. Incidents have included:-

Protracted searches connected with the Moors Murders and the hunt for the missing body of Helen McCourt.

The recovery of a stolen Rolex watch discarded on rubbish-strewn waste ground by thieves.

The recovery of a buried watch and jewellery from a farm field.

The recovery of a large cache of ammunition from a woodland site.

The recovery of a valuable diamond ring at Lytham St Annes.

METAL DETECTOR USERS AND THE PUBLIC

Nationally, throughout the hobby, clubs offer a Free Search & Recover Service to the public, industry, local authorities, and public utilities. Recently in the Northwest, we have had one hundred and forty seven confirmed requests to search for lost items, with one hundred and twenty two positive results. A success rate of over 82%. By far, the majority of searches involved the recovery of rings and other items of personal jewellery. Seventy one objects of gold and precious stones have been returned to their grateful owners.

Other items on the successful recovery list include:-

Personal effects of passengers and crew of fatal helicopter crash.

Agricultural machinery parts shed during use in ploughed fields.

Keys to a mediaeval church, lost in the grounds.

Overgrown manhole covers on a public park for a local council.

Piece of metal in cows stomach... for local farmer and vet!

Thirty-two kilo's of rubbish and a tractor chain from a farm field.

The location of nails in bulk timber for a furniture manufacturer.

DETECTOR USERS PROTECTING OUR ENVIRONMENT

Metal detecting clubs frequently assist in environmental projects..... Clearing water areas frequented by swans and other wildlife of lead weights, fish hooks and discarded line.

Removing dangers like metal drinks cans, shredded by grass-cutting equipment from public parks and other recreational areas.

Carrying out "Beach Clean" projects, thus contributing to the health and safety of all who use them.

Removing all the casual rubbish recovered during metal detecting wherever the site may be.

DETECTOR USERS AND CHARITIES

Ever mindful of their own good fortune in having both the health and the opportunity to take part in an interesting and energetic outdoor pursuit, metal detecting clubs invariably support national and local charities. Here in the Northwest the latest figure to hand totals, £31,320 made in donations by our clubs.

Fifty three national and local charities have received support including:-

- . The Spinal Unit Action Group
- . The Spastics Association
- . Multiple Sclerosis Society
- . Rett Syndrome Association
- . R.N.L.I.
- . Save the Children
- . RESCUE - for the Brain Damaged Infant
- . A large variety of local hospices and appeals.

Many charity organisations contribute to their own success by negotiating sites on which to hold fund-raising metal detecting rallies from amongst their land-owning supporters.

Clubs in the Northwest have also contributed to the Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institution, known as "The Fanner's Own Charity", in recognition of the generosity shown in the provision of sites.

DETECTOR USERS SHARING THEIR KNOWLEDGE

Individual clubs, and individual club members, are always prepared to attend functions with portable displays of their finds and to talk on their activities in the field. Such displays are usually accompanied by metal detecting equipment, photographs, and a wide array of hobby related literature.

In the recent past, clubs in the Northwest have put on a total of forty-three public displays and exhibitions. The public to whom they have been addressed has included:-

- Local History Societies
- Schools
- Rotary Clubs
- Round Table Groups
- Various Church Groups
- Fete and Open Days
- Town and County Fairs
- Joint Hobby Exhibitions
- Coin Clubs

Always conscious of their responsibilities to our national heritage, metal detector users are urged to share the knowledge they gain in the field with local and national archaeological and museum services.

The Northwest Region has, for fifteen years, staged an Annual one day Public Exhibition of Metal Detecting Finds. The venue has varied from year to year but has included:-

- The Town Hall, Chester
- The Winter Gardens, Blackpool
- The Guildhall, Preston

In order to be able to stage such exhibitions, the metal detector user has to be skilled in many areas in addition to the technology of the equipment: Site Research, identification and classification of finds, preservation/ conservation and top quality display techniques..... all to professional standards. Metal Detecting is a legitimate, knowledgeable and responsible family pastime which contributes to our heritage and quality of life.

RELATIONSHIPS WITH ARCHAEOLOGY/MUSEUMS

The National Council for Metal Detecting was consulted by the government prior to its introduction of the Treasure Act 1996 and, in several face-to face meetings, was instrumental in shaping both the content of the act and the wording of its accompanying Code of Practice. The national president of the NCMD has been appointed to the independent Treasure Valuation Committee which meets when necessary, in London, The NCMD has also supported the introduction of pilot schemes for the Voluntary Reporting of Portable Antiquities, with the Northwest Region being one of the six areas selected in the first phase. Archaeologist, Nick Herepath, the Finds Liaison Officer based at Liverpool Museum, is now a frequent and welcome visitor at the meetings of member clubs, and their social events, with good working relationships established and mutual respect and trust the norm.

During the recent past, member clubs and their individual detector users have put their skills at the disposal of those responsible for many archaeological digs throughout the region; projects which have helped cement lasting relationships, and brought **good** press and media coverage to these cooperative activities.

Working as individuals, metal detector users in the Northwest have rescued many thousands of coins and artefacts from ground laden with destructive nitrate fertilisers and drenched with acid rain, although the majority of material recovered has been mundane and of no great significance to anyone other than the finder.

Nevertheless, **fourteen coroner's inquests relating to treasure finds are now on record**, two of which have resulted in finds of **a board of Viking silver brooches** and **a hoard of over a hundred Celtic staters** being lodged with the **British Museum**, whilst many other treasures are now in local museums, some donated by their finders without seeking reward.

Amongst a total of **twenty five base metal finds** we have on record, which could be classed as *of great historical significance* are: -

A hoard of **six Bronze Age axes**, now with Clwyd County Museum.

A **Roman cart decoration**, now with Ribchester Museum.

A **votive decorative key**, now with Stoke-on-Trent Museum.

A **Bronze Age Axe**, now with Skipton Museum.

A **Celtic short sword**, now with Harrogate Museum.