

Metal Detecting

INFORMATION FOR FARMERS & LANDOWNERS



Metal detecting is an activity enjoyed by thousands of people across Essex which, when undertaken responsibly, can provide valuable insights into our past. Many landowners have excellent relationships with the people who metal detect on their land. Others suffer the problem of illegal metal detecting. By making sure any metal detecting which takes place on your holding is done responsibly, you can help to ensure that information about our past is not lost forever. This leaflet explains what to do if you metal detect, how to respond to requests to metal detect on your land, and where to go for further advice.

Why record and report finds?

All objects recovered from the ground offer an important source of information for understanding our past. If finds are not reported and recorded properly, this information is lost forever.

Even single objects found in the plough soil have an archaeological setting and will contribute to our knowledge of past human activity.

Who owns metal detecting finds?

Objects recovered through metal detecting are normally the property of the landowner unless declared Treasure, or unless an agreement has been drawn up between the landowner and finder which stipulates otherwise.

If a find counts as Treasure under the Treasure Act (1996), a museum will have the option to acquire it, with any reward normally split between the landowner and finder.

What is Treasure?

Treasure is: objects (other than coins) more than 300 years old which are over 10% gold or silver by weight; two or more gold or silver coins, or ten or more base-metal coins, found together and over 300 years old; finds of two or more Prehistoric base-metal objects found together; objects of any material found associated with Treasure.

Will my land be scheduled?

Only sites of national importance are designated as scheduled monuments, after a careful assessment by English Heritage. Metal detector finds alone would not normally be enough to lead to a site being scheduled.



Restrictions on metal detecting

It is illegal to detect on scheduled monuments. A list of these in Essex is held in the Essex Historic Environment Record. **Telephone: 01245 437637**

Metal detecting may be permitted on agri-environment land but Agreement Holders are reminded that they are under an obligation not to damage any archaeology on their holding. Restrictions will vary but need to be followed. Contact your Defra RDS Project Officer for advice.

Recording and reporting finds

It is important that the find spot of an object is recorded as accurately as possible. All finds of Treasure must be reported to a coroner of the district in which they are found within 14 days. The Essex Finds Liaison Officer can advise on any finds, including Treasure, and will be able to help you report them (see opposite).

Illegal metal detecting

If you witness illegal metal detecting, record information such as: vehicle registrations, the number of people, descriptions, time and any damage. Dial 999, ask for the Police and arrange to meet them at a location a short distance away so you can guide them to the spot.

Do not approach or attempt to take action yourself against the suspects. The best evidence is a Police Officer finding them 'at work'. Try to avoid disturbing the ground until the field has been examined for evidence.

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Portable
Antiquities
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What can farmers do to help?

By ensuring responsible metal detecting on your land, you can make a significant contribution to the history of our county. The best way to do this is to encourage people who detect on your land to follow the Council for British Archaeology's guidance for responsible metal detecting. Setting up a more formal agreement helps to clarify permissions for access and the ownership of objects. Guidelines for responsible metal detecting and specimen licences are available from Essex County Council's Countryside Archaeological Adviser (see below) and the Country Land & Business Association - **Tel: 020 7235 0511** or search at: www.cla.org.uk
Reporting the discovery of new archaeological sites on your land can provide opportunities under Defra's agri-environment schemes.

Guidelines for responsible metal detecting on your land:

- 1/ Check for legal restrictions on where metal detecting can take place on your holding and prevent detecting on, or in close vicinity of, any land where restrictions are in place.
- 2/ Only allow metal detecting on ground already disturbed and within the plough depth. Avoid undisturbed pasture or other grassland where there are likely to be significant archaeological remains.
- 3/ Before granting permission for metal detecting seek assurance that the searcher will report all finds, including detailed find spots, to the Essex Finds Liaison Officer.
- 4/ If large, fragile or complex finds below the plough depth are discovered, ask that they are left in place and reported to the Essex Finds Liaison Officer who can arrange for professional archaeological assistance. This will not affect your rights in the discovery.

Further information and advice:

The Essex Finds Liaison Officer can provide you with advice on all aspects of metal detecting, including searching your own land and the identification, recording and conservation of finds. **Telephone: 01206 282929** or email: Caroline.McDonald@colchester.gov.uk

For details of the Treasure Act and Code of Conduct see www.finds.org.uk/background/treasure.asp
A useful 'Guide to Conservation for Metal Detectorists' by Richard Hobbs and others is published by Tempus. You can search their web site at: <http://www.tempus-publishing.com/>



The Portable Antiquities Scheme

The Portable Antiquities Scheme is a voluntary recording scheme for archaeological objects found by members of the public. Each county's Finds Liaison Officer will identify and record all objects made before 1700 but may be selective in recording finds of later objects. Find out more by exploring the web site: <http://www.finds.org.uk/>

Essex Finds Liaison Officer, Caroline McDonald

If you would like to know more about the heritage on your farm and how to care for it, contact Essex County Council's Countryside Archaeological Adviser: Telephone **01245 437293** or email: agascoyne@essexcc.gov.uk