

## THE PORTABLE ANTIQUITIES SCHEME IN THE IOW

**Frank Basford**

The Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) is a voluntary scheme for the recording of archaeological objects found by members of the public. It was established following the passing of the *Treasure Act* 1996 when the Government recognised that there was an urgent need to improve arrangements for recording all 'portable antiquities', particularly those which fell outside the scope of the new Act. In 1997 the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) provided funding to institute pilot schemes in six regions. Another five pilot schemes funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund were established in 1999 and further funding in 2003 enabled the Scheme to be extended to the remaining areas of England and Wales. In 2006 funding was provided by the DCMS to guarantee the operation of the scheme nationwide for two more years. By the end of February 2007 250,000 finds had been recorded nationwide.

A fundamental aim of the PAS is to advance knowledge of the history and archaeology of England and Wales by systematically recording archaeological objects found by the public. The Scheme aims to encourage all those who find archaeological objects to make these objects available for recording and promotes best practice by finders. It seeks to increase opportunities for active public involvement in archaeology and, in particular, to strengthen the links between metal-detector users and archaeologists. The Scheme also seeks to raise awareness among the public of the educational value of archaeological finds in their context and to facilitate research into these finds. Some even say that the PAS is 'the largest community archaeological project this country has ever seen'!

The PAS is operated by Finds Liaison Officers (FLOs) throughout England and Wales (and there is one for the Isle of Wight). Finds reported to the FLOs are recorded on an online database which contains both text and images and can be viewed by the public at [www.finds.org.uk](http://www.finds.org.uk). The data is made available to Historic Environment Records throughout England and Wales

The Isle of Wight joined the Scheme in October 2003 and the majority of objects reported locally since that date have been finds made by metal detectorists. The Isle of Wight County Archaeology & Historic Environment Service has had a good relationship with metal detectorists since the late 1970's. Currently, the Island has three metal detecting clubs with about one hundred members in total. Each club organises rallies which are frequent and regular. It is common practice for clubs to pay the landowner a fee, per head, per day. The Local FLO, Frank Basford, is based within the Archaeological Service and is able to attend rallies, club meetings and other social functions. He encourages club members to record the location of all finds using a Global Positioning Systems (GPS) device and these locations are recorded as Ordnance Survey grid references on the finds bags at the time of discovery. Each club has a rule within its Codes of Conduct that the FLO is given access to examine all finds.

In the Isle of Wight, artefacts have been recorded dating from the Palaeolithic to the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Finds post-dating AD 1700 are not normally recorded but some of these later finds are recorded if they are of particular local interest. For example, an aluminium flare cartridge of German origin, found at Godshell, close to where a Junkers Ju 88 crashed in August 12 1940, has been entered on the database.

All Treasure finds have to be reported to the Coroner under the *Treasure Act* 1996. In these cases the FLO serves as the Coroner's Officer and attends inquests when necessary. 'Treasure' is defined in the 1996 Act as any gold or silver object at least 300 years old, two or more gold or silver coins at least 300 years old found together, ten or more base-metal coins at least 300 years old

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found together, prehistoric base-metal assemblages, and objects found in association with Treasure items.

The overall effect of the PAS has been a substantially increased knowledge of Isle of Wight archaeology. There has been an increase in the number and known distribution of recorded artefacts within nearly all classes of metal finds from the Bronze Age onwards. For the Early Medieval and Medieval periods this increase in knowledge has been especially significant. Moreover, the increase in recorded finds has not been limited to metal artefacts. Flint implements and debitage of the Palaeolithic, Mesolithic, Neolithic and the Bronze Age periods have been reported by metal detectorists and also by other members of the public. The FLO has also recorded prehistoric flint-work when noted during metal detecting rallies.

Not many mainland finds are reported on the Island. However, an assemblage of Mesolithic blades and microliths has been recorded from the garden top-soil of a house at Rowlands Castle, Hampshire. A Neolithic polished axe originating from Great Langdale has been reported although the find-spot is uncertain. Another Neolithic polished axe found in the inter-tidal zone of the north-west coast is of Cornish greenstone and an Early Bronze Age axe-hammer made of dolerite (not an Island stone) has been found in a fisherman's net whilst oyster dredging in the Solent.

The oldest object of precious metal to be recorded has been a gold "basket" ornament of Early Bronze Age from Calbourne Parish. This had been folded flat several times, so when it was found it did not form a basket shape and resembled a milk bottle top rather than a very important find. This find is similar to a pair found with the Amesbury warrior on Salisbury Plain. Objects of this type have been identified as earrings in the past.

A Middle Bronze Age base metal scatter of three palstaves and one socketed axe has been recorded from Yarmouth Parish. The socketed axe conforms in all respects to the Taunton-Hademarschen type, the earliest regular socketed type in Britain and neighbouring Europe. More specifically, the precise form and decoration match a newly recognised regional variant, of which only a handful of examples are known from Dorset and Hampshire.

Offshore, a complete Middle Bronze Age rapier has been recovered from the seabed by a local fisherman. The specific features at the hilt end of this example are characteristic of Type Wandsworth, the predominant type within Group III. The type seems to belong largely to the Taunton stage of the Middle Bronze Age, currently dated circa 1400 - 1250 BC.

Near Sandown, a Late Bronze Age base metal scatter of implements has been found at the base of eroding cliffs. The scatter comprises six socketed axes, two gouges, two knives and one socketed hammer. In South Wight a Late Bronze Age penannular gold ring known as a lock-ring (hair ornament) was found in a rock-pool in the inter-tidal zone.

Other artefacts of Bronze Age metalwork include gold-coated penannular rings formerly known as "ring money" or "nose rings" and a gold penannular composite ring which may have been associated with a torque or necklet. Bronze Age implements have also been discovered as single finds, including an Arreton Down type spearhead.

A plough-scattered Iron Age coin hoard consisting of gold and base silver staters contained within a ceramic vessel has been discovered in Shorwell Parish. Three large hemi-spherical ingots were found close to the staters, one of base silver and the other two of copper alloy. Another Iron Age coin hoard consisting of almost one thousand base silver staters, also associated with a ceramic vessel, has been found in Brighstone Parish.

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A considerable number of individual gold and base silver staters (coins) have been discovered. The vast majority of staters found on the Island have been attributed to the Durotriges tribe. However, a small number of Armorican gold and silver staters have been recorded from one area in the West Wight.

Other than coins, few Iron Age objects have been reported and these consist mainly of brooches and sherds of pottery. An unusual find of Late Iron Age or early Roman date is a copper alloy crescentic-headed linch-pin, similar to one found at Brading Roman Villa during the 19<sup>th</sup> century excavations.

Metal detectorists have identified several new Roman occupation sites which have included ceramic building material. Roman coins are found during most metal detecting rallies as individual finds. Three dispersed coin hoards have been found, one of 2<sup>nd</sup> century date consisting of thirty eight coins, a radiate hoard of fifty four coins deposited about AD 270 and a late hoard of two solidii and five siliquae. One of the solidii (of Eugenius) was minted in Lyon AD 393-394. Brooches have been found in great variety and some of these are very interesting unclassified types. A complete tinned copper alloy 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> century spoon has been reported from the West Wight. The stem of this elegant example is embellished with two twisted baluster mouldings. Another complete Roman artefact is a shale spindle-whorl found on eroding cliffs close to a Roman occupation site near Newtown.

A particularly important Roman find is a copper alloy long-nosed hound figurine of probable 4<sup>th</sup> century date. Small bronze dogs designed for votive offering are known from elsewhere in Britain and seven of these have been recorded from the late 4<sup>th</sup> century temple at Lydney in Gloucestershire dedicated to Nodens, the Celtic god of healing (see: Toynbee, T. M. C. 1964. "Art in Britain under the Romans". 126-7. Oxford: Clarendon Press). The Isle of Wight hound is very similar in style to one of the hound figurines from Lydney, although having a different pose.

A previously unrecorded Anglo-Saxon cemetery discovered in Shorwell Parish had been deep ploughed in the recent past but one definite (although damaged) grave containing grave-goods was identified. The inhumation within the grave had not survived due to the acidic nature of the soil but the grave contents included an iron sword, shield fittings, a copper alloy hanging bowl, a glass vessel, an iron vessel and a D-shaped buckle, all in poor condition. In addition to the items associated with this grave about seventy other scattered metal finds were found over a period of time and their positions were plotted using a GPS device. As a result of accurate plotting it could be determined that these finds came from about eight ploughed graves. The finds included sword pommels, a multi-faceted rock-crystal sword bead, a silver sword-ring, buckles and brooches. Two of the brooches are a pair of great square-headed type. These are silver and are each jewelled with garnets. However, both of these brooches were found in fragments, probably the result of continual ploughing.

A single ploughed-out grave of 6<sup>th</sup> century date in Freshwater Parish is represented by a silver sieve spoon, a rock-crystal ball and fragments of two square-headed brooches. These grave-goods indicate a wealthy female grave. There is a good parallel for the spoon from grave 45 at Chessell Down Anglo-Saxon cemetery, Isle of Wight (see Arnold, C. J. 1982. "The Anglo-Saxon Cemeteries of the Isle of Wight". Pl. 1c. Trustees of the British Museum).

A gold Anglo-Saxon, 7<sup>th</sup> century "pyramidal" sword belt fitting found in an inter-tidal context at Bembridge has been acquired by the Isle of Wight County Museum Service. The surface of the

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fitting is decorated with pentagonal panels filled with cell-work which originally accommodated cut plate garnets. Only one of these garnets has survived. A rare find from Calbourne Parish is a pair of copper alloy divinational rods of 6<sup>th</sup> or early 7<sup>th</sup> century date (the first to have been found in Britain).

Anglo-Saxon brooches and coins have been reported as individual finds. A rare coin, from Calbourne Parish, is a halfpenny of King Eadwig King of all England AD 955-957, of Wessex AD 957-959. The coin was minted at Winchester.

An exceptionally important find is the complete copper alloy Early Christian skillet found in Shalfleet Parish. The vessel is thought to be a baptismal vessel and dates from c. AD 600 – c. AD 800. Further details of this find can be seen on the PAS website (see find number IOW-0D5540 at [www.finds.org.uk](http://www.finds.org.uk)). The skillet is also featured in the PAS Annual Report for 2004/05 which can be viewed on the website and in *Current Archaeology* 203, May/June 2006.

Medieval and Post Medieval silver coins are found at almost every metal detecting rally. A highly attractive gold angel of Henry VIII has been found in Godshill Parish and a half-angel from the same reign has been recorded near Newtown. A significant find made near Yarmouth is a scatter of about ninety coins dating from Henry II to Edward II. It is thought that these finds may represent the site of a fair. Close liaison with members of the metal detecting club which discovered the finds has enabled the location of each coin to be recorded accurately using GPS. A Medieval copper alloy weight box that once contained a nest of cup-weights has also been discovered at this site.

A large number of Medieval and Post medieval dress accessories in the form of buckles, brooches, mounts and dress-hooks have been recorded. Other finds include pilgrim ampullae, Papal bullae, finger rings, seal matrices and harness mounts and pendants. A particularly interesting find from Brighstone Parish is a small copper alloy figurine of the Madonna and Child of 14<sup>th</sup> century date. Such figurines are generally considered to be fittings from Precentors' staffs or croziers. They may also have been used in association with tabernacles. Another religious object from Newport is an alabaster carving of a bird, probably an effigy of the Dove as the Holy Spirit. The outline profile of the mount is coffin-shaped and the object may possibly have formed a lid for a miniature coffin which served as a reliquary.

A particularly rare find from near Arreton is a thirteenth or early fourteenth century silver seal matrix containing a Roman intaglio made of red jasper. The inscription reads **Walter of Longdown**, and the intaglio of the first century AD depicts Victory standing on a globe.

A remarkable Tudor huntsman's silver whistle has been found near Shalfleet and is decorated with zones of waffle-work edged with a border of emblematic rose and pomegranate motifs. Another Tudor object from Arreton Parish is a silver-gilt cap badge. A later, but unusual find from near Shalcombe is a silver plated copper alloy sixpence of the Sommer Islands (now known as the islands of Bermuda). The obverse depicts a hog and the reverse depicts a fully rigged sailing vessel. This coinage, the first struck for the English Colonies in America, was issued about 1616. The coins were known as "Hogge Money" or "Hoggies" and were probably not minted after 1624.

A wide variety of ceramic vessel sherds dating from the Iron Age to the 20<sup>th</sup> century are reported by fishermen who have been dredging for oysters in the Solent. However, the majority of this material is Medieval and later although a complete Roman vessel has been found in this manner. A

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large amount of ceramic building material including Roman tile has also been recovered from the seabed.

Very large numbers of bottle tops, cans, modern coins and tent pegs were found during a metal detecting rally in a field near Afton Down, Freshwater. This came as no surprise to the FLO who remembered it as the site of the Isle of Wight pop festival which he attended in 1970!

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Portable Antiquities Scheme  
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### **Illustrations: (all by Frank Basford)**

IOW2003-91 - Middle Bronze Age Taunton-Hademarschen type socketed axe. Length 120mm.

IOW2005-135-1 - Iron Age or Early Roman linch-pin. Width 54mm.

IOW2006-23-15 - Roman "long-nosed hound" figurine of probable 4<sup>th</sup> century date.  
Length 39mm.

IOW2006-26-2 - Early Roman insect brooch. Length 38.5mm.

IOW2006-40-59 - Anglo-Saxon 6<sup>th</sup> century equal-armed brooch. Length 81mm.

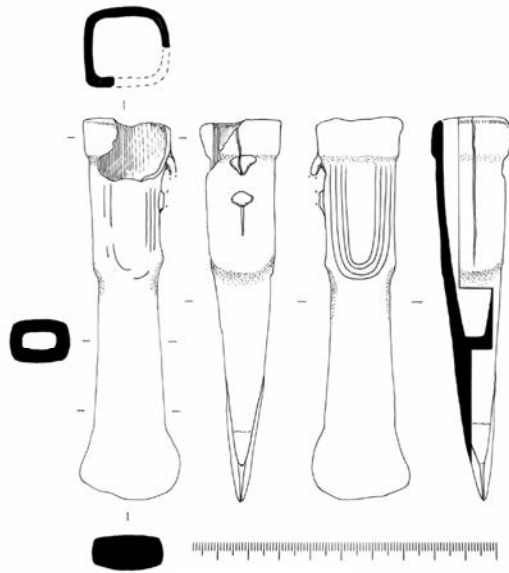
IOW2005-168-3 - Anglo-Saxon, late 5<sup>th</sup>/ early 6<sup>th</sup> century button brooch. Diameter 18mm.

IOW 2003-32-2 - Papal bull (lead seal) of Pope Gregory X (1271-1276). Diameter 38 mm.

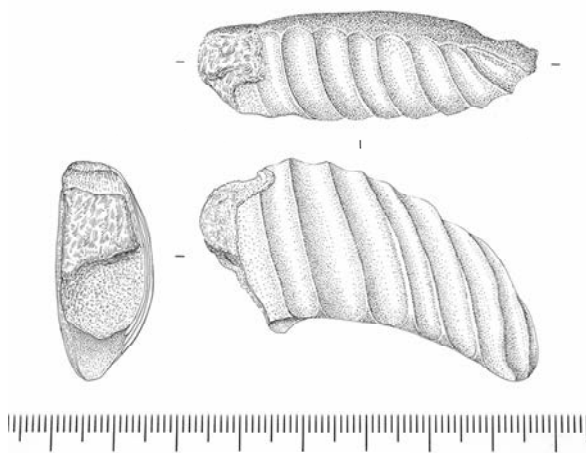
IOW2005-164-14 - Medieval, 13<sup>th</sup> century annular brooch. Length 27mm.

IOW2005-45 - Post Medieval, 16<sup>th</sup> century dress-hook. Length 33mm.

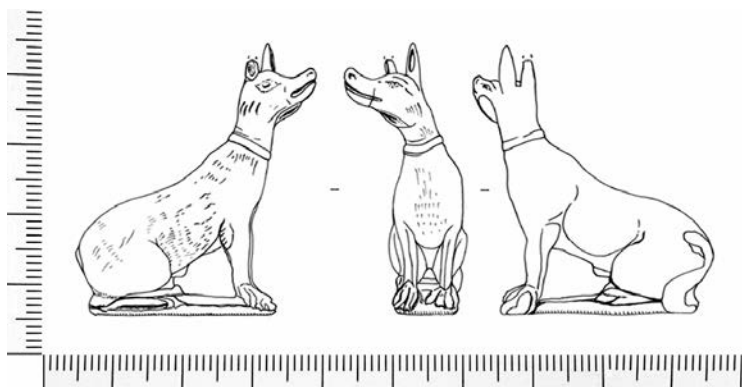
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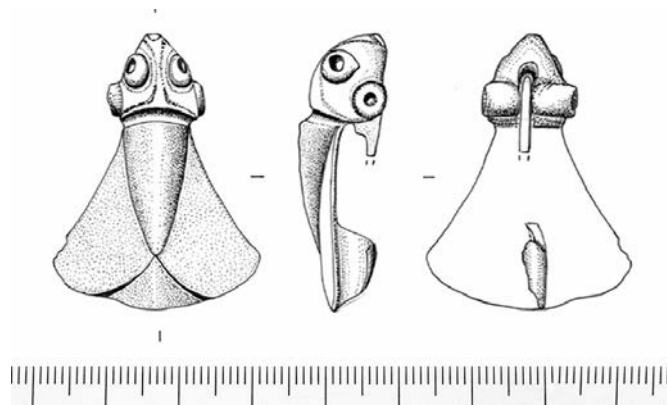


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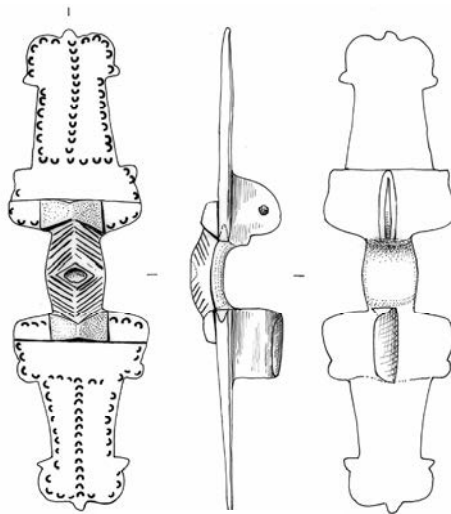


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IOW 2006-40-59

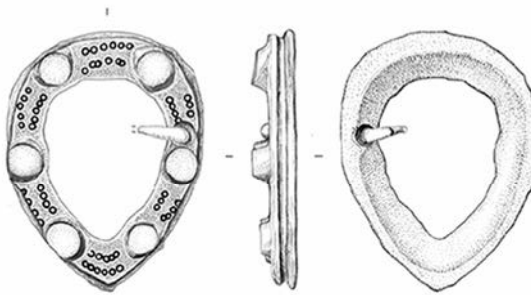


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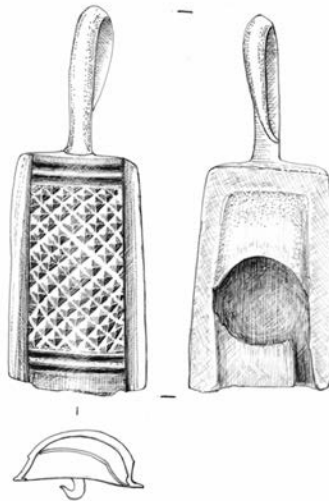
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IOW 2003-32-2



IOW 2005-164-14



IOW 2005-45