

Landscape recording of metal detected finds assemblages.
(Reference PAS initiative to pilot Landscape Recording in Kent)
Discussion Paper



1. Introduction

The aim is to foster closer cooperation between the MD Hobby, PAS and archaeology.

i.e., to change attitudes from object-oriented recording, to landscape orientated recording.

1.1 Archaeologists may take more interest in detectorists that record ALL finds over 300 years old, thus helping the PAS as volunteer recorders (including retired archaeologists).

1.2 Detectorists that join the hobby are mainly object orientated; the PAS by default of having limited resources, has encouraged this.

Therefore, mainly only 'selected objects' are shown to FLOs and recorded.

Finders believe they are being responsible, but this overlooks the value of recording or noting minor or lesser intrinsic historic finds, to help interpret the historic landscape.

1.3 As much as we all have interest in objects, finders can also gain site information by interpreting and understanding the landscape as well as learning a basic finds knowledge along the way which may in turn lead to more finders recording finds in greater detail. This knowledge of the landscape can be especially valuable to field archaeologists and turns conversation away from object orientated towards landscape orientated.

Kent Field Archaeologist – Keith Parfitt comments ref Shepherdsweil” hearsay or basic notes of finds made in a field is still valuable information “.

1.5 More communication of landscape information between finders and field archaeologist leads to further knowledge for all, as well as the heritage record. It can bring all parties together PAS/archaeologist/finders.

2. The Proposed System

To start at a basic level.

2.1 Record a finds assemblage from each field using a recording sheet (either paper or digital based) to record all finds over 300 years old, including broken buckles, Roman unidentifiable coins, even vessel legs etc, together with basic ID, photos (group or single). The recording sheet to be accompanied with a field map highlighting the field boundary and a centre of field grid reference.

2.2 There are differing views on how to proceed e.g., everything fully recorded with 8/10 fig grid ref, maybe cut off at 50 years not 300 because of WW1 &2.

However, to encourage as many people as possible, the system should start at a basic and easy understandable level. Finders would hopefully find their own level of competence and some will increase their information accuracy going forward.

2.3 Mobile phone app/W3W should be strongly encouraged as a secondary step for finds location recording.

A photo of the find and GPS grid reference printed on the photo would be an ideal solution to all finds recording. Widening the range of finds recorded with grid reference to help interpret the landscape should be encouraged, even though many of the coins and artefacts may not be fully identified.

2.4 This system empowers/encourages finders with a limited finds knowledge to make records/ notes, it also may encourage those with “limited to good “find’s knowledge in helping newcomers who join the metal detecting hobby onto the ‘first rung’ of the ladder with help & guidance. The hobby then displays increased responsibility and elevates its standing in the heritage community).

3. Proposed procedure for PAS Finds Liaison Officers (FLO’s).

3.1 FLO’s see finds assemblage sheets and photos direct from finders/clubs. FLO’s to select items from the assemblage for the PAS database, and liaise with local field archaeologists and finders as necessary, regarding various sites.

The records are then preferably archived by the PAS centrally, or alternatively on a HER, (e.g., Norfolk) for future access by archaeologists and researchers.

(Discussion is required about who can gain access of location/information)

3.2 If the PAS had central archive control and encouraged finds assemblage recording, field archaeologists should gain more value from the PAS; in turn this may give more weight for increased PAS funding as the PAS would have a greater role in archiving the nations heritage records.

3.3 Importantly, Landscape Recording can and does capture metal detected collections from BEFORE the inception of the PAS and before finds location information dies with the finders.

i.e., from the 70 s / 80s / 90s.

3.4 This self-recording method should be promoted for Rally Organisers to consider adopting, as well as the rally attendees themselves, who could make a basic record with photos, together with a site map and forward to an FLO, either in the county of the rally or their own FLO.

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