

'The Portable Antiquities Scheme: an update on their work'. Talk by Amy Downes, Finds Liaison Officer for South and West Yorkshire.

Zoom meeting 10 November 2021

Amy Downes described with great clarity why the Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) was established in 1997 after the law pertaining to 'treasure' was updated in 1996. It became public in 2003. Covering England and Wales, it records 'chance' finds by members of the public. The database now holds information on 1,553,208 separate objects in 998,356 records, with over 2000 of those being in the Wakefield District.

As finds are brought in, detailed descriptions and images are recorded by Amy and her team of volunteers. The database is available online, but does not include exact locations to protect sensitive sites, and the landowner or farmer. The majority of sites are rural, and often on arable land. The PAS complements the work of archaeologists and forms a bridge between professionals and the general public. Significant and valuable finds are sent to the British Museum to be assessed and valued. If they are deemed 'treasure' and subsequently sold, the landowner and the finder take an equal share.

Amy described some of the recent finds in our area. An unusual find that spanned two centuries was found at North Elmsall consisting of a wine strainer, and four bracelets. These may have been moved and damaged by ploughing. These were declared as treasure, and have now been acquired by Wakefield Museum. An early 14th century piedfort (similar to a coin, but thicker) found at Pontefract was of national significance as it showed the head of Robert the Bruce. More common finds are items such as the pre-conquest spindle whorls found at Featherstone, and seventeenth century cuff links. An unusual ring found at Darrington was engraved with 'in memory of B C Coates, 9 Feb 1829 å 48'. In March an unusual mount depicting a Norman knight coming out of a snail and riding a goat was found, and it is hoped that Wakefield Museum will be able to acquire this.

Amy's excellent and interesting talk was much appreciated by the audience.

For more information: <https://finds.org.uk/counties/yorkshire/>