Part 2: Finds Reported under the Portable Antiquities Scheme

by Ben Jones and Vanessa Oakden[‡]

Introduction

he Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) is a project run by the British Museum to encourage the voluntary recording of archaeological objects found by members of the public in England and Wales. Every year many thousands of objects are discovered, many of these by metal-detector users but also by people whilst out walking, gardening or going about their daily work.

Overview

69,698 artefacts (represented by 50,719 records) were recorded on the PAS database, www.finds.org.uk/database, in 2018. Of these, 1,419 (663 records; a hoard of multiple finds equates to one record) were from the North-West, 211 objects relating to the pre-1974 county of Cheshire (excluding the 'panhandle' but including Warrington). These objects were mainly found within the ploughsoil by metal-detector users, and grateful thanks are extended to the finders for reporting them to the PAS. The numbers of records are summarised below by modern local authority area, period and function in Tables VI.2.1-.2. The functional categories used and their alphabetical designation are standard within the national Portable Antiquities Scheme. The majority of the finds discussed in this article have the LVPL-prefix assigned to objects recorded by the Finds Liaison Officer (FLO) at the Museum of Liverpool. Items with the prefix WREX- have been recorded by the FLO for North Wales based in Wrexham Museum but were found within Cheshire, while objects with the prefixes LANCUM- and SWYOR- were recorded by the FLOs for Cumbria and Lancashire and for South and West Yorkshire respectively and were found in Greater Manchester. Reference numbers XXXX TXX are those used to track potential Treasure cases submitted under the 1996 Treasure Act. The lower than usual number of finds recorded in the North-West during 2018 can be attributed to vacant FLO posts in the regional areas of Cumbria, Lancashire and Cheshire, Greater Manchester and Merseyside. This emphasises the need for the work of the Portable Antiquities Scheme within the region and the importance of the continuation of the scheme.

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Table VI.2.1 PAS finds from Cheshire in 2018 quantified by local authority area and period

Period	Cheshire East	Cheshire West and Chester	Halton	Warrington	Wirral	Total
Palaeolithic	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mesolithic	1	2	0	0	0	3
Neolithic	0	1	0	0	0	1
Bronze Age	1	2	0	0	0	3
Iron Age	2	3	0	0	0	5
Roman	6	33	0	1	2	42
Early medieval	3	3	0	0	0	6
Medieval	17	38	0	1	0	56
Post-medieval	28	40	0	9	0	77
Modern	1	5	0	1	0	7
Unknown	3	7	0	1	0	11
Total	62	134	0	13	2	211

Table VI.2.2 PAS finds from Cheshire in 2018 quantified by local authority area and function

Area	Α	В	С	D	Ε	F	G	Н	1	J	K	L	М	Ν	0	Total
Cheshire East	2	20	0	12	1	1	1	2	0	0	5	1	3	14	0	62
Cheshire West and Chester	12	21	1	25	2	1	3	9	1	3	0	7	2	46	1	134
Halton	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Warrington	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	8	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	13
Wirral	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Total	14	41	1	41	3	2	4	19	1	3	6	8	5	62	1	211

Key

- A Brooches
- B Other objects of dress and personal adornment
- C Toilet and medical equipment
- D Household utensils, furniture fittings, copper alloy vessels, keys, weights, textile equipment
- E Objects associated with religious beliefs and practices
- F Harness equipment

- G Studs, mounts
- H Weapons, spears, axes and tools
- I Bells
- J Figurines and toys
- K Miscellaneous objects
- L Objects of unknown function
- M Tokens
- N Coins
- O Hoard

A selection of objects has again been included from neighbouring areas – Greater Manchester and Flintshire. There are more objects worthy of note found just outside Cheshire's borders, but because of the volume of material it has not been possible to mention them all here. To research both local and national finds recorded with the Portable Antiquities Scheme, visit www.finds.org.uk/database.

Finds of note

The entries below highlight the most important discoveries reported during 2018 from Cheshire and a number of finds from the surrounding counties. They are organised alphabetically by findspot within broad historical periods. Because of the angles at which they were photographed, the dimensions of objects cannot always be accurately extrapolated from the scales in the images; more accurate dimensions are recorded on the PAS database.

Bronze Age

Near Whitchurch, Cheshire West and Chester (LVPL-392749)

A partially complete copper alloy Bronze Age (possibly 1800–1400 BC) dagger blade was found near Whitchurch but within the borough of Cheshire West and Chester (Illus VI.2.1).

The blade is bilaterally symmetrical and lozenge-shaped in cross-section, this shape becoming stretched laterally from tip to tang, where the thickness is nearly uniform. The edges are broken and jagged but it can be inferred that they originally tapered smoothly. There are similarities in the curvature of the blade with other objects on the PAS database (eg BERK-2C1328). The base of the blade has two smooth semicircular cutaways that extend into the tang. The surface is pitted overall with corrosion and has an olive green patina.

Near Whitchurch, Cheshire West and Chester (LVPL-3983EA)

A nearly complete cast copper alloy Bronze Age spearhead with paired loops, probably dating to between 1300 and 1100 BC (Illus VI.2.2). The spearhead is lozenge-shaped in cross-section, with approximately the last sixth of the blade missing; the head is very small. The object has an uneven flaking patina that varies from a rustic brown to an olive green.

Wrenbury, Cheshire West and Chester (LVPL-322B3B, 2016T41)

A late Bronze Age (1150–750 BC) gold or gold-plated copper alloy penannular ring, circular in cross section (Illus VI.2.3). 'The penannular ring belongs to a class of artefact which has been termed "hair-rings" and "ring-money". Their function remains uncertain, although it is likely that they were personal adornments, possibly worn on the ears or nose, rather than being hair-ornaments or items of exchange', as Mark Lodwick and Mary Davis record for a similar item in National Museums and Galleries Wales ownership, numbered NMGW-04216C.

Iron Age-Roman

Chorlton, Cheshire East (LVPL-8F38B0)

A copper alloy Iron Age or Roman bucket mount in the shape of a bull's head (Illus VI.2.4). The design is almost bilaterally symmetrical and is longitudinally stretched, with a central ridge along the top of the head. The almond-shaped eyes are positioned about halfway along the length of the head and are enclosed within slightly larger almonds that represent eyelids. The ears and horns are positioned at the back of the head and moulded together but separated by a small indentation. The left horn is now broken at the midpoint, but the right extends upwards in a loose clockwise spiral. The underside of the head is hollow and possibly was part of, or shielded, the attachment point to the bucket. The object is in very good condition except for the missing section of horn.



Illus VI.2.1 Bronze Age dagger blade from near Whitchurch. © Museum of Liverpool



Illus VI.2.2 Bronze Age spearhead from near Whitchurch. © Museum of Liverpool



Illus VI.2.3 Late Bronze Age gold or gold-plated copper alloy penannular ring from Wrenbury. © Museum of Liverpool

Eaton, Cheshire East (LVPL-FE149D)

Half of a possibly Iron Age (200 BC-AD 200) cast copper alloy strap fitting or mount (Illus VI.2.5); the presence of the remnants of probable attachment points makes the latter function more likely. The object would originally have been roughly bilaterally symmetrical, consisting of blade-like spokes supporting triangular spacers with concave circles enclosing a raised dome; the mirroring line would have passed down the centre of the half triangle. The back is concave and appears to have two former attachment points, although any protrusions they may have supported are now broken away. Similar to YORYM-686B90 and FAKL-19312B but less complete. The surface is pitted and corroded, but not to an excessive degree.

Roman

Ashton Hayes: Cheshire West and Chester (LVPL-9AEAF3)

A copper alloy hinged Wirral-type brooch (Illus VI.2.6). The damaged head is stepped and the headloop is missing. Cells containing orange and red enamel survive in the central of three panels along the spine of the bow. Below the panels is a raised central knop, made uneven by damage. The foot curves leftwards slightly, separated from the rest of the bow by two inward-pointing raised triangular sections. This find is in good condition for the region in which it was found; Cheshire soils are very harsh on metallic objects.



Illus VI.2.4 Late Iron Age or Roman copper alloy bucket mount from Chorlton. @ Museum of Liverpool



Illus VI.2.5 Iron Age or Roman copper alloy strap fitting from Eaton. \odot Museum of Liverpool



Illus VI.2.6 Roman copper alloy Wirral-type brooch from Ashton Hayes. © Museum of Liverpool

Tabley Superior, Cheshire East (LANCUM-1053F5)

Silver *denarius* of Vitellius, AD 69 (Illus VI.2.7). Obverse: A VITELLIVS GERM IMP AVG TR P with laureate head of the emperor, right. Reverse: LIBERTAS RESTITVTA. Libertas standing facing right, holding sceptre and pileus. *RIC* 1 (Vitellius), no 105, Rome. Vitellius was the last of the three short-lived emperors who reigned in AD 69, the 'Year of the Four Emperors', and was defeated by Vespasian. Whilst the upper surfaces of the coin have been worn, the more recessed areas and the lettering in general are in good condition.

Tattenhall, Cheshire West and Chester (LVPL667E13)

Copper alloy radiate coin, possibly of Claudius II (AD 268–70) (Illus VI.2.8). Obverse: [IMP?] CLAUDI[VS AVG] with head of bearded emperor wearing radiate crown and facing right. Reverse: legend illegible; draped female figure standing, her left hand pointing upwards and her right hand holding indeterminate object. Coins of this period in such good condition are rare in Cheshire, possibly because the material used for the flan was susceptible to damage by local soil types.



Illus VI.2.7 Roman silver denarius of Vitellius from Tabley Superior. © The Portable Antiquities Scheme



Wirral (LVPL-3A24F6)

An almost complete small fine pottery jar of probable Roman date (Illus VI.2.9). The vessel is well made with occasional inclusions of mica and with a red slip coating on the outside. The everted rim is chipped and worn in one place. Throwing marks are visible on the inner wall, as are marks on the base where the vessel was cut from the wheel; the base is uneven because of wear.



Illus VI.2.9 Roman pottery jar from Wirral. © Museum of Liverpool

Early medieval

No early medieval items of note were recorded within the boundaries of Cheshire East or West.

Medieval

Hampton, Cheshire West and Chester (LVPL-77AA08)

A copper alloy sword pommel dating to c 1250–1500 (Illus VI.2.10). This is a Type VIII wheel-shaped sword pommel (Ward-Perkins 1940, 22). The object is sub-circular in plan with opposed flattened sections where the handle would have passed through it. The pommel is undecorated with a green patina that is slightly scuffed in places.



Illus VI.2.10 Medieval copper alloy sword pommel from Hampton. © Museum of Liverpool

Malpas, Cheshire West and Chester (LVPL-43A6A2)

A gold quarter noble of Edward III (1327–77), treaty B type, probably minted in London between 1361 and 1369 (Illus VI.2.11). The coin has been folded with the reverse innermost. The obverse depicts a shield of arms surrounded by a thin, petal-like, eight-arched tressure with lis on its cusps. The legend surrounding the imagery reads + EDWARD [DEI] GRA R[EX A]nGL. The reverse face is hidden.

Marbury-cum-Quoisley, Cheshire East (LVPL-822AD8)

A complete lead alloy pilgrim ampulla of costrel type (Illus VI.2.12). The body is decorated on both sides with shields in rectangular borders. The neck is flanked by two right-angled lug arms with square cross-sections. On one side, corrosion has made the design of the first two shields unclear. The one on the right contains a T shape infilled with narrow diagonal lines. The central shield is topped by an arch of raised dots, surmounted by three fleur-de-lis,



Illus VI.2.11 Medieval gold quarter noble of Edward III from Malpas. © Museum of Liverpool



Illus VI.2.12 Medieval lead alloy ampulla from Marbury-cum-Quoisley. © Museum of Liverpool

which stretch up towards the neck of the vessel. The other side is not damaged by corrosion but has some wear. The left shield contains a cross. The central panel seems to contain the letters R and P. The right shield on this side has two parallel lines running diagonally from the top left to the bottom right and two more parallel lines perpendicular to these, running from the bottom left of the shield to the centre of the shield where they meet the first set.

Shocklach, Cheshire West and Chester (WREX-E93829)

A copper alloy vessel mount from the thirteenth or fourteenth century (Illus VI.2.13). The mount is in the form of a human head and may have been attached to a chafing dish. The head shows no hair and is wearing a distinctive cap that rises to a point over the forehead. There is a worn area on the top of the head. The back of the mount is hollow, and the edges show signs of breakage. The object has a brown patina with some wear on edges of the hat and the nose.



Illus VI.2.13 Medieval copper alloy vessel mount from Shocklach. © National Museum Wales

Tabley, Cheshire East (LVPL-C1212B)

A copper alloy seal matrix in the form of a pointed oval (Illus VI.2.14) The die depicts a seated figure, dressed in robes, with its feet on a shield displaying a heraldic beast facing left. A legend runs around the edge of the matrix but is worn and is only partly legible, [...]THVSIS[...]. The back of the matrix is flat with a central ridge that expands into a lug pierced for suspension at the top end.

Post-Medieval

Baddiley, Cheshire East (LVPL-2D45A7)

A large copper alloy buckle, probably to be dated 1600–1700 but without parallels in the available literature (Illus VI.2.15). The buckle is composed of a one-piece cast set of double loops, the cross bar formed at their join supporting the now part-broken pin. The design can be split into two parts with a rough bilateral symmetry; each is composed of two small uneven moustache-shaped sections attached at the smaller end by the cross bar and at the larger by a small integrated bar.



Illus VI.2.14 Medieval copper alloy seal matrix from Tabley. © Museum of Liverpool



Illus VI.2.I5 Post-medieval copper alloy buckle from Baddiley. © Museum of Liverpool

Handbridge, Cheshire West and Chester (WREX-A920C9)

A copper alloy trade token dating to 1667 (Illus VI.2.16). The obverse depicts the iron-mongers' arms at the centre with the legend HENRY WILLIAMS surrounding it. On the reverse is the lettering HIS 1^D at the centre with a flower motif either side of the 1^D. The surrounding legend reads IN CHESTER 1667.

Hurleston, Cheshire East (LVPL-F1FAEA)

A collection of 657 probable lead round shot all found within the same pit (Illus VI.217). The balls are of two main sizes, the larger making up the majority of the group, and one



Illus VI.2.16 Post-medieval copper alloy trade token from Handbridge. © National Museum Wales



Illus VI.2.I7 Post-medieval lead round shot from Hurleston. © Museum of Liverpool

ball more closely resembles a shot plug. The larger balls are approximately 17mm in diameter and many have mould lines. The smaller balls, of which there are four, are roughly 13mm in diameter and do not have obvious mould lines, but in other respects are smaller versions of the previous type; they were possibly for a pistol. The plug-like object is around 19mm in length and 18mm in diameter. It appears to be a collared version of the larger balls. There is a variation across the group in the level of oxidation, but this may be due to varying soil conditions throughout the pit.

Threapwood, Cheshire West and Chester (WREX-313DE5)

A copper alloy object, possibly a parchment pricker from an eighteenth-century drawing set (Illus VI.2.18). Below a rectangular terminal and collar are two identical thin plates that widen at the centre before tapering to a broken end. The small rowel that would mark the parchment is missing, as is the pin/spindle that would have held it in place.



Illus VI.2.18 Post-medieval copper alloy parchment pricker from Threapwood. © National Museum Wales

Finds from surrounding areas

The present borders of Cheshire are a modern construction, and in any case borders have never stemmed the flow of ideas or exchange of goods. The following objects were not discovered within the present county but are of local relevance and are considered to be finds of regional importance. They have therefore been included in this survey. They are listed in chronological order.

Rochdale (SWYOR-8938E3)

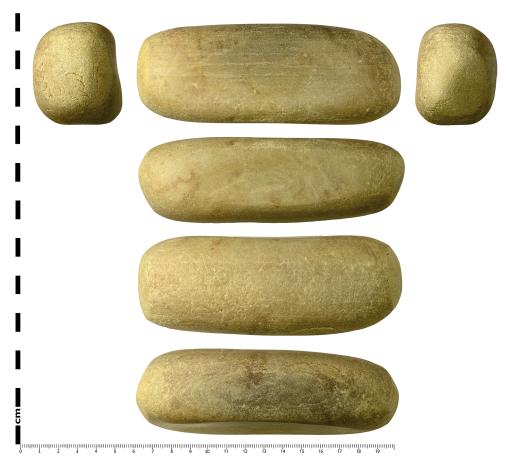
A chert core of probable later Neolithic or Bronze Age date, c 3300–1000 BC (Illus VI.2.19). The core has been formed from dark grey opaque chert. It is discoidal with multiple platforms and many different striking angles.



Illus VI.2.19 Later Neolithic or Bronze Age chert core from Rochdale. © West Yorkshire Archaeology Advisory Service

Rochdale (SWYOR-03C3AA)

A fine grained sandstone cobble which has been used as a whetstone on three faces (Illus VI.2.20). The cobble is of unknown date and could have been used from the Bronze Age onwards (2350 BC-AD 1900). The stone is fine grained and is a pale yellow grey colour. It is rectangular in plan, sub-rectangular in cross-section and has rounded ends. One long face is extremely worn, polished and concave. The two neighbouring long faces are also polished, but less so.



Illus VI.2.20 Undated sandstone whetstone from Rochdale. @ West Yorkshire Archaeology Advisory Service

Bolton (LANCUM-2F1041)

A copper alloy early medieval styca, dating c AD 685–855 (Illus VI.2.21). The inscriptions on each face of the coin run around a pelleted circle with central pellet. The obverse reads +E[....]H. The reverse reads [...]VR[..].

Bury (LANCUM-DF1FDC)

A silver hammered groat of Edward IV, first reign, type VII with the initial mark a crown on the obverse only (Illus VI.2.22). The coin is from a London mint and dates to 1466–7. The obverse legend reads EDWARD DI GRA RE[X A]nGL [Z F]RAnC and depicts the crowned king facing forwards. The reverse legend reads CIVI/TAS/LOn/DOn and POSVI/DEVm A/DIVTORE mEVm and depicts a long cross with three pellets in each angle.



Illus VI.2.21 Early medieval copper alloy styca from Bolton. ©The Portable Antiquities Scheme



Illus VI.2.22 Medieval silver groat of Edward IV from Bury. ©The Portable Antiquities Scheme

Bolton (LANCUM-2E917D)

A copper alloy strap fitting or bar mount of post-medieval date (*c*1550–1700) (Illus VI.2.23). The mount is broadly rectangular with an oval expansion at the middle and knopped terminals at each end. The back of the mount is slightly concave. Rectangular-sectioned integral pointed rivets extend from the back and curve inwards, one at each end. The expanded section is decorated on the front of the mount with grooves that extend radially from centre to the outer edge on each side.



Illus VI.2.23 Post-medieval copper alloy strap fitting or bar mount from Bolton. © The Portable Antiquities Scheme

Discussion

Prehistory

Two of the three Bronze Age items listed at Table VI.2.1 are weapons, and this tends to be a recurring theme across Bronze Age finds presented to the Liverpool Finds Liaison Officer; axes and in particular spears are the most frequently seen, although no Bronze Age object is common. It is therefore a welcome change to see a Bronze Age piece that is not only Treasure but completely non-martial: LVPL-322B3B is a very useful and rare example of a late Bronze Age piece of gold-working from Cheshire. Only 322 records of golden objects from the Bronze Age have been created for the whole of the United Kingdom, and they are mostly of a similar morphology to the featured object. Their exact purpose is not currently known.

Iron Age bucket mounts are often zoomorphic in nature, the horned cattle head being a popular form. The particular example shown here is of an abstract style, the main elements reduced in complexity to curvilinear three-dimensional forms suggestive of features. It is also hollow and is likely therefore to have been a decorative feature placed over a utilitarian fastening.

Curvilinearity tends to be a recurring feature in Iron Age objects and is present in the other find of note from the period: a section of a larger cast copper alloy object that was possibly a strap fitting or other decorative fastening. A similar, more complete example can be found on the PAS database under FAKL-19312B.

Roman

Coins and brooches are the most common Roman objects recorded by the Portable Antiquities Scheme, and the North-West is no exception. It should not be a surprise, then, to see that the majority of the finds of note from this period belong to these two groups. The two coins described here, of Vitellius and Claudius II, have been selected for their rarity and, in the case of the latter, also for its condition. Roman coins are often regarded by detectorists as too common to record, especially those in poor condition, but even an almost blank flan can still provide information regarding the weight and volume of coinage that was circulating in a given area.

The Wirral-type brooch was identified by Philpott (1999) with a distribution pattern that focuses mainly on the North-West of England, an area not renowned for a large amount of surviving material culture in archaeological contexts. This example is not the most spectacular or best preserved from Cheshire but it does still have some enamelling intact. The fact that the finder resisted the urge to clean the object in any way beyond a light dusting has helped keep in place the delicate cut sections.

The complete pottery vessel is an unusual find and was recovered during a beach comb, the rim being visible in the sand. Once uncovered the finder identified remains of soot, possibly indicating that it had been in a fire. The vessel has been examined by Gill Dunn and Jeff Speakman who agree that it is likely to be of Roman date on the grounds both of form and fabric. Gill Dunn notes that the fabric is similar to fabric 472 in the Grosvenor Museum's reference collection; although the latter is less micaceous, has more of an orange/brown slip and is without provenance. Colour-coated ware from Germany is similar to this example but does not usually have mica inclusions. This object has kindly been donated to the Museum of Liverpool by the finder.

Early medieval

No objects from this period of note were recorded in Cheshire East or West during 2018.

Medieval

Currently ten medieval sword pommels have been found to date in the North-West, but only one was recorded within the study area during 2018. Of these ten, seven can be classified as Ward-Perkins (1940) Type VIII wheel-shaped pommels, common in the thirteenth–fourteenth century. Another example from Betchton was published in Oakden 2017, 180 and ill VII.2.13.

There are twenty-six folded gold nobles recorded on the PAS database. Richard Kelleher (2011) assembles documentary evidence for the folding of coins and associates the practice with miraculous healing. Most references to the bending of coins to seek healing refer to pennies, but PAS data shows that a wider range of coins was used, including gold. Gold

coins would not have been available to all levels of society, and the majority of the population would not have been able to afford to bend one for this purpose. Finders of folded coins are often tempted to straighten them for identification, but the PAS encourages finders not to unfold coins or at least to record them before an attempt is made.

Medieval ampullas have been discussed by Oakden (2016, 150). Typical finds of ampullas in the North-West have a circular bowl rather than a 'chasse' or costrel shape like the Marbury-cum-Quoisley example. The 'chasse' or 'church' type is so called because the shape possibly represents a reliquary casket. Only seven examples of this shape have been recorded on the PAS database across England and Wales to date, including DUR-694C08 and YORYM-9CBEB2.

The possible vessel mount from Shocklach is unusual and an exact parallel has not yet been found. The majority of the 357 vessels recorded to date on the database from the North-West consist of small fragments of rim sherds, body sherds, handles or feet. Of these the majority are ceramic while 137 are metal.

Currently over seven thousand seal matrices have been recorded on the PAS database. Many are worn examples which are difficult to interpret while others which can be read are often linked with a religious phrase or a personal name.

Post-medieval

Buckles are some of the most common objects recorded – widely used, small, easily separated from their organic backing and lost, they add a substantial amount of data to the archaeological record. The example from Baddiley, however, is more unusual because of its size and decoration.

Over 290 post-medieval tokens have been recorded from the North-West on the PAS database. Although frequently found, tokens are not always recorded because many date after the 1700s, and this period is not currently prioritised in terms of recording because of the use of mechanical manufacturing methods which inevitably led to an increase in the numbers of certain types of item.

Lead shot, often referred to in casual parlance as 'musket balls', is found throughout the county either as a single object or in small groups. However, six hundred shot from a single findspot is a more unusual find. At Hurleston, 657 shot were discovered, eight of which were given to the landowner by the finder. The shot was all found in the same pit, which was about 50cm deep and 60 cm in diameter, and was removed in two stages on two separate dates. A collection or 'hoard' of this size suggests they were either stockpiled for use or shot manufacture was taking place within the area. However, no fragments of casting waste or other material associated with manufacture was found. The location of the shot to the north-west of Nantwich supports the theory that the find may be related to preparations for the Battle of Nantwich in 1644 during the Civil War.

The Threapwood parchment pricker from a drawing set is an object type which can easily be misidentified. These objects are often found with the rowel missing, as with this example, which has led to them being identified as Roman objects such as tweezers or dividers. The recording of a complete example from Surrey, SUR-AC2505, has allowed these misidentifications to be corrected.

Finds from surrounding areas

Because the majority of recorders are metal-detectorists, relatively few finds on the PAS database are made of other materials. However detectorists are actively encouraged to record non-metal objects such as chert, flint, stone and ceramic. The flint core recorded from Rochdale suggests that flint-knapping was taking place in an area where Mesolithic flint scatters are known. A total of 345 whetstones have been recorded on the PAS database to date, of which 106 are undated. Sixteen examples have been recorded from the North-West, the majority from Lancashire.

Only eight early medieval stycas have been recorded from the North-West, all except the example from Bolton being from Cumbria. The groat of Edward IV found in Bury is a relatively commonly found denomination, but the infrequency of finds recorded by the PAS from the Greater Manchester region made it and the later post-medieval strap fitting worthy of note.

Acknowledgements

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