



THE PIRATE FLAG FLYING FROM THE WINDOW OF NO. 41 RUSSELL SQUARE

July 29, 2011 Hilary Orange Anglo-Saxon, Community Archaeology, Day of Archaeology, Day of Archaeology 2011, Iron Age, Medieval, Museum Archaeology, Post Medieval Archaeology, Brighton, British Museum, county archaeological unit, http, legal secretary, London, Museology, Museum Archaeology, National Finds Advisors, official, part archaeologist, Portable Antiquities Scheme, Russell Square, Treasure, Treasure Act, Treasure trove, United Kingdom, Wales

Well, there isn't one. But if any Georgian townhouse in London deserved a pirate flag flying from the window it would be No. 41 Russell Square. This is the central HQ for the Portable Antiquities Scheme, one of the most successful public archaeology projects in the world (<http://finds.org.uk/>). We, and National Finds Advisors and Finds Liaison Officers (FLOs – posted in the counties (for England and Wales)), help the public to report and record objects that they find. Usually these are metal-detecting finds but not always. As you'll see from my blog objects can be found in rather unusual ways.

I work in the Treasure Section of the Portable Antiquities Scheme. Sometimes it's tempting to answer the phone and say 'treasure' in a pirate accent. But I don't. But I do wish we had that flag.

The job is part archaeologist and part legal secretary. The Treasure Team administers the 1996 Treasure Act on behalf of the Crown. Our 'home' is the British Museum and we occupy one of the townhouses overlooking Russell Square.

Highlights of the day

8.45am – Badger.

Got in at around 8.45am and opened up my emails. There was an email from one of the south-east FLOs, a post medieval silver finger ring had been found in the spoil of a hole dug by a badger in a garden. A new case number was allocated. I briefly discussed (jokingly) with my boss the fact that the Treasure Act doesn't actually say that finders have to be human but in this case the human owner of the garden was named as the 'official' finder. We'll now arrange for a report to be written, for digital images to be taken and if the object is Treasure the FLO will investigate whether any local museum is interested in acquiring it.

Pigs have found treasure before, whilst truffling. Not sure about other animals though.

11.30am – A small strip of Iron Age gold.

I deal specifically with archaeology cases, archaeologists are not exempt from reporting potential treasure and I currently have about 80 'live' cases dealing with potential treasure found during archaeological investigations. The cases can be complicated (large assemblages, sometimes multiple landowners) and they are often lengthy to administer as post-exc and sometimes conservation need to happen at the local level before a report for the Coroner is written. It's a good day if I get to close an arch case and today I've closed an Archaeology South East case (the UCL fieldwork unit based in Brighton). A small gold strip is going with the rest of the site archive to a local museum and the landowner in this case has kindly waived his right to a treasure reward.

2.11pm – Anglo Saxon grave goods and digital images.

Prepared a letter, and numerous digital images, to send to a Coroner to ask for an inquest to be held. Detectorists searching on cultivated land found a grave. They notified the police and subsequent excavation by the county archaeological unit uncovered an Anglo-Saxon grave with grave goods including two silver pendants.

4.32pm. The Hackney Double-Eagles.

Wondering whether to go and see [this exhibition](#) at the weekend. It's an artists' interpretation of an unusual treasure find from last year – the [Hackney double eagle gold coins](#). Investigations into the history of its deposition in the garden of a block of flats in North-East London during the Second World War revealed a fascinating but tragic story. For once, the Treasure team could put a name to the person who originally owned the objects. I don't think that's ever happened before.

5.15pm. My day at work is done. Switch off the computer. Archaeologists across the world – have a good weekend all.