



Book Reviews

50 FINDS FROM HAMPSHIRE. OBJECTS FROM THE PORTABLE ANTIQUITIES SCHEME BY KATIE HINDS

Amberley Publishing, Stroud, 2017. 96pp including numerous colour illustrations and maps, ISBN 978-1-4456-6234-3, pb, £14.99

In this book Katie Hinds has written about 50 of the 43,000 objects recorded by the Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) since 1999. In the Acknowledgments page she rightly points out the significant contribution to our understanding of the past made by metal detectorists who record their finds through the Scheme.

This compact 96 page well-illustrated book describes the 50 objects in seven chronological chapters from Stone Age to Later Hampshire, with a Foreword written by Dr Michael Lewis, the Head of the PAS and Treasure at the British Museum, who highlights the unique way of understanding the past offered by the finds recorded through the Scheme. The author has been employed by the PAS as the Finds Liaison Officer for Hampshire for the last four years and previously played the same role in Wiltshire. This local expertise is reflected well in the context given for the objects described and is strength of this book.

A detailed and useful four page Introduction sets out of origins of the PAS, the brainchild of Dr Roger Bland, the Scheme's former Head. The Scheme has now been adopted in other parts of Europe which is testament to Dr Bland's vision and its success. The author also refers to the importance of object recording for both treasure and non-treasure items and the value of the database to researchers. She has chosen some of the 50 objects (which include four hoards, nine gold items, 10 coins, three brooches and many other types) based on their national importance and others as they typify the everyday items recorded by the Scheme. There are two useful maps in the Introduction showing the distribution of the 50 objects, although it would have been more valuable if the 50 objects were numbered.

Each subsequent chapter of the book starts with a useful well-written and detailed overview of the main developments in each chronological period, outlining the wider context to developments in Hampshire compared with elsewhere. Each object described has a date and its PAS database number, and usefully their dimensions. Within each chapter most objects have one to two pages devoted to them with a brief description and a photo and/or illustration and in some cases x-ray images. The illustrations and images are rather good and one of the most attractive elements of the book.

It is good to see that the first two objects are from the Palaeolithic, an elusive period for finds in most places, but Hampshire has a relatively high distribution of them. Object 1 is a toffee-coloured ovoid hand axe from the Lower Palaeolithic, an evocative object to start the book off with. This contrasts nicely with the smaller Neolithic polished stone axe (Object 4) by which time tools will have been hafted into wooden or antler handles and many would have been traded from some distance away.

Of the six Bronze Age objects described, my favourite is Object 6, a pair of Early Bronze Age decorated sheet gold 'basket ornaments' from Whitchurch which probably came originally from a Beaker grave. These are quite rare and similar to the pair found in the Amesbury Archer grave, excavated by Wessex Archaeology, and now on display in Salisbury Museum.

The first of four hoards described in the book is a stunning collection of two twisted torcs and two bracelets belonging to the Middle Bronze Age and found in 2016 in Buriton, illustrated with beautifully detailed photography. Another fascinating collection is the Early Iron Age hoard of 68 Armorican bronze socketed axes found in Fawley. As they appear not to have been

used, they may have been manufactured for ritual purposes rather than practical. The author describes the Winchester Hoard (Object 15) as the most important find of Iron Age gold in a generation, and this collection of nine pieces of jewellery deservedly get a two page spread. They are now on display in Winchester City Museum.

The only weapon featured in the book (Object 12) is a Late Bronze Age bronze spear found in water near Brockenhurst. This is a well-preserved object with a leaf-shaped blade which had probably been used for hunting.

The author refers to Roman coins as the most frequently recorded item on the PAS database and they account for one in three items recorded in Hampshire. However, Roman gold coins are quite rare so it is good to see that Object 22 is a well preserved example of a Roman gold *quinarius* of Septimius Severus (who ruled AD 193–211). This would have been worth roughly two weeks' pay of a legionary soldier.

One of the rarest and most significant of the later objects described in the book is a Saxon copper-alloy Byzantine bucket found in Breamore (Object 29). One of only three of its type from Britain, it has an inscription in Greek below the rim with a decorative hunting scene. Found in a cemetery, the meaning of the inscription implies it may have originally been used for bathing.

The book concludes with a page on useful online resources which is a bonus.

The PAS, funded by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport aims to encourage the public to report objects they find so they can be added to the PAS database. It has been in existence for 20 years now and this book helps to celebrate the success of the Scheme for which funding must be sustained into the future. The development of expertise in artefacts for a particular county, as well demonstrated by the author of this book, is hugely valuable.

The point made by the author on page 50 that metal detectorists who record their finds and add to the record can transform our understanding of the past is well made. This well written and illustrated book is a little gem and if read by detectorists amongst others will I am sure encourage much more recording to go on in the future in Hampshire and beyond.

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