# Metal detectorist uncovers Elizabethan coin hoard near Banbury under Treasure Act



Mark Dignam, a dedicated metal detectorist from the Oxford Blues Metal Detecting Club, recently unearthed a remarkable hoard of coins dating back to the Elizabethan era in a field in Claydon, close to Banbury. This exciting discovery included 18 coins found over an area of merely two square metres. Initially, Dignam believed he had encountered just a single coin, but with each signal from his detector, more coins revealed themselves. He mentioned, “I thought it was only one coin and then got another signal... there were 18 in total.”

Metal detecting has gained popularity in recent years, partially fueled by the charming BBC comedy-drama series "Detectorists," which resonated with audiences between 2014 and 2017. The show, set in the fictive town of Danebury, follows two characters navigating life and their shared passion for metal detecting. Its cultural impact seems to have inspired a new generation of enthusiasts to take up the hobby, as evidenced by the increasing number of finds across the UK.

Dignam's Elizabethan coins have been classified as treasure under the Treasure Act of 1996, which outlines the criteria for such designation. According to the Act, items are classified as treasure if they are at least 300 years old and if there are 10 or more items in a finding. Consequently, the ownership of discovered treasure transfers to the Crown. While treasure hunters may not retain ownership, they can receive financial compensation from the government for significant finds. Dignam has been informed that his find will be purchased, ensuring the coins will be preserved for public benefit.

The Treasure Act not only provides a framework for reporting significant discoveries but also intends to foster public access to the nation’s historical artefacts. Recent government proposals have sought to broaden the definition of 'treasure,' now including objects over 200 years old made of metal, further safeguarding our heritage. Such legislative changes aim to ensure more important discoveries are acquired by museums, enriching public understanding of historical contexts.

However, becoming a successful metal detectorist requires understanding legal obligations and proper conduct. Detectorists must obtain permission from landowners before searching and must be especially cautious in protected areas where metal detecting is largely prohibited. The National Trust, for instance, permits detecting only as part of defined archaeological projects, emphasising the importance of responsible practices and ethical reporting of findings.

Experts and enthusiasts alike adhere to a Code of Practice for Responsible Metal Detecting, which provides guidance on best practices, ensuring that detectorists contribute positively to the learning and appreciation of our shared history. Reporting findings not only aligns with legal requirements but also aids archaeological understanding, thereby enriching the historical narrative of the areas explored.

As detectorists like Dignam continue to uncover buried treasures, the dialogue around metal detecting remains pertinent. Such discoveries not only provide a glimpse into our past but also invite a broader community of amateur archaeologists to participate in preserving and sharing Britain’s rich cultural heritage.

### Reference Map

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Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25166887.metal-detectorist-digs-hoard-elizabethan-coins/?ref=rss> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25166887.metal-detectorist-digs-hoard-elizabethan-coins/?ref=rss> - An article detailing Mark Dignam's discovery of a hoard of Elizabethan I coins in Claydon, near Banbury. As a member of the Oxford Blues Metal Detecting Club, Dignam found 18 coins over a two-square-meter area. The coins have been classified as treasure under the Treasure Act, and plans are in place for their purchase. The article also discusses the Treasure Act's criteria and the responsibilities of metal detectorists in reporting finds.
3. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/thousands-more-treasures-to-be-saved-for-the-nation-as-rules-about-discoveries-are-changed> - A government announcement detailing changes to the Treasure Act 1996, expanding the definition of 'treasure' to include objects over 200 years old containing metal. This aims to ensure more significant finds are acquired by museums, enhancing public access to historical artefacts and deepening understanding of the nation's history.
4. <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/who-we-are/about-us/metal-detecting-on-national-trust-land> - The National Trust's policy on metal detecting, stating that it is only permitted on their land as part of a clearly defined archaeological project. The policy outlines conditions under which metal detecting may be allowed and emphasizes the importance of reporting finds, especially those considered 'treasure' under the Treasure Act 1996.
5. <https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/culture-heritage/metal-detecting-faqs/> - The South Downs National Park Authority's guidelines on metal detecting, highlighting that it is illegal to detect on land with legal protections, such as Scheduled Monuments and Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The page provides information on reporting finds to Finds Liaison Officers and the importance of adhering to the Treasure Act 1996.
6. <https://www.amds.org.uk/code-of-practise> - The Code of Practice for Responsible Metal Detecting in England and Wales, adopted by the Association for Metal Detecting Sport. It offers guidance for metal detectorists on legal obligations and best practices, including obtaining landowner permission, reporting finds, and adhering to the Treasure Act 1996.
7. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-55179360> - A BBC News article discussing the UK government's plans to redefine 'treasure' under the Treasure Act 1996. The changes aim to protect more artefacts of historical or cultural significance, ensuring they are acquired by museums and made accessible to the public.