

THE TREASURE ACT 1996— LOCAL ARRANGEMENTS IN THE ADMINISTRATIVE COUNTY OF SOMERSET

The Treasure Act 1996 came into effect on 24 September 1997. To provide finders with a 'user friendly' arrangement and to ensure a rapid archaeological response to discoveries, the following local arrangement has been agreed with the Department of Culture, Media and Sport, the Somerset coroners and museums in Somerset. These local arrangements should be read in conjunction with the *Treasure Act 1996 Code of Practice (England and Wales)* and the leaflet *The Treasure Act Information for Finders of Treasure (England and Wales)*.

- When an object of possible treasure is reported to the appropriate coroner the latter will normally request that it be delivered to the local archaeological adviser. The Principal Adviser to both the Eastern and Western District Coroners is the Somerset County Museum, Taunton Castle, Taunton TA1 4AA (telephone 01823 320200) where the primary contact will be Stephen Minnitt, Assistant County Museums Officer and Keeper-Archaeology. The Principal Adviser will be responsible for identification of objects, provision of information and advice to the coroner and for advice on conservation and packaging of finds.
- The coroner will give the finder the option of delivering the object(s) directly to the Somerset County Museum or, if more convenient, taking the discovery to one of a network of four museums and Exmoor National Park from where the find will be transferred to the County Museum. All organisations in this network are open to the public all year and have access to full or part time professional staff. They comprise:
 - Somerset Rural Life Museum, Abbey Farm, Chilkwell Street, Glastonbury BA6 8DB. Telephone 01458 831197. (Somerset County Council Museums Service)
 - Museum of South Somerset, Hendford, Yeovil BA20 1UN. Telephone 01935 424774. (South Somerset District Council)
 - Admiral Blake Museum, Blake Street, Bridgwater TA6 2NB. Telephone 01278 456127. (Sedgemoor District Council)
 - Wells Museum, 8 Cathedral Green, Wells BA5 2UE. Telephone 01749 673477.Exmoor National Park, for the attention of the Archaeologist, Exmoor House, Dulverton TA22 0HL. Telephone 01398 323665.
- Transfer of the object(s) to the Somerset County Museum should take place within 7 working days. It is the responsibility of the network recipient to contact the County Museum and agree the arrangements for the transfer.
- On receipt of an item of possible treasure the purpose-made receipt form must be completed as fully as possible and signed by the finder. The opportunity must be taken to acquire as much information on the find, circumstances of discovery and provenance as possible. It should also be ascertained whether any immediate archaeological response is necessary, if so the Somerset County Museum or County Field Archaeologist

(Architectural and Historic Heritage Section, Environment and Property Department, County Hall, Taunton TA1 4DY. Telephone 01823 355620) should be contacted at the earliest opportunity and be given full details. One copy of the receipt should be sent to the coroner forthwith for information and as confirmation that the find has been delivered for reporting purposes. A further copy should be handed to the finder.

If the person delivering the find is unable or unwilling to give any of the details required on the receipt (except the identity of the landowner) the coroner and the Somerset County Museum should be informed.

If for any reason a receiving museum needs to use one of its own entry forms when taking in an object any disclaimer for liability for loss or damage on that form must be deleted.

If the person delivering the find asks the receiving organisation to sign a receipt which that person brings along and to which are attached conditions you are directed by the Somerset coroners not to sign that receipt.

- When taking in an item of possible treasure the recipient should ensure that the finder has notified the appropriate coroner. If they have not they should be strongly encouraged to do so with the offer of the use of a telephone there and then.
- In the case of items being handed by the finder directly to the coroner or police arrangements will be made for these to be transferred directly to the County Museum.
- The Somerset coroners' jurisdictions comprise:
 - Western Coroner's District comprises the districts of Sedgemoor, Taunton Deane and West Somerset. Contact: Mr. M. R. Rose, Coroner, Police Station, Shuttern, Taunton TA1 3QA. Telephone 01823 363271. Fax 01823 363215.
 - Eastern Coroner's District comprises the districts of Mendip and South Somerset. Contact: Mr. N. L. Rheinberg, Coroner, Avon and Somerset Constabulary, Horsey Lane, Yeovil BA20 2AA. Telephone 01935 402128. Fax 01935 402184.
- This local arrangement was agreed at the meeting of Museums in Somerset on 22 September 1997. All museums in the county not mentioned by name are asked to ensure that their staff and volunteers are made familiar with these arrangements.
- The museum authorities operating these local arrangements have bound themselves to the advice of the Ethics Committee of the Museums Association in that all who work in or for these museums are expected to waive any right to personal financial reward that might arise during the course of the administration of these local arrangements.

David Dawson
County Museums Officer

1st October 1997