







'Secret Treasures' at the Ashmolean









In July 2012, an ITV documentary "Britain's Secret Treasures" featured the 50 most important archaeological discoveries that have been made in England, Wales and Scotland by members of the public and recorded by the Portable Antiquities Scheme.

The fifty top finds were selected by historian Bettany Hughes and a panel of experts from the British Museum and the Council for British Archaeology from the about 800,000 objects recorded by the Scheme in the past 15 years.

Three of those treasures are on display at the Ashmolean,

Explore the Ashmolean and see these three 'Secret Treasures' and other fabulous objects that have been found by members of the public.

<p>Start in gallery 7, 'Money' on the Lower Ground Floor where number 4 on the national list of 'Secret Treasures' is on display.</p> <p>This is the Chalgrove II roman coin hoard which contained a coin of Domitianus II, the lost emperor.</p>	
<p>In the adjacent case are other significant finds of Roman coins from Oxfordshire.</p> <p>A gold coin of Vespasian struck in AD 70 in Judea but found in Finstock.</p> <p>A hoard found in Didcot that contains gold coins struck from AD 54-160, which represents about 10 years salary for a Roman soldier.</p>	
<p>Also in the gallery is a hoard of silver European coins that was hidden at Broughton in the early years of the English Civil War, probably to prevent them from being looted.</p>	
<p>A 'Treasure of the Ashmolean' is the hoard of ninety eight gold coins that were discovered at Crondall in 1828. The hoard contains the earliest known Anglo-Saxon coins and represents the start of English coinage.</p>	

<p>Go to gallery 1, 'Exploring the Past'. Among objects on display found by members of the public is a jug made of gutta percha in the case on Wood. Gutta percha is natural latex, and its rubber-like properties were discovered in 1842. This jug was found at King's Meadow, Reading, about 2004.</p>	
<p>Go up the stairs and over the bridge to gallery 13, 'Rome' on the Ground floor, where number 24 is on display.</p> <p>This is the bronze head of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius found in Brackley in the 1970s and brought to a PAS Finds Surgery for identification in 2007.</p>	
<p>Go to gallery 15, 'Italy before Rome'. In the central case is an Etruscan figurine of Turms (Hermes) that was ploughed up in Uffington in the 1920s.</p> <p>How the figurine got to Oxfordshire is unknown, but it is presumed to have been collected in Italy, perhaps during a 'Grand Tour' trip, and later lost.</p>	
<p>Cross to gallery 17 'European Prehistory'. Here you can see a large bronze cauldron. It was found in the River Cherwell by swimmers in 1928 and dates to the Late Bronze Age.</p>	
<p>Other key objects in this gallery that were found by members of the public include the Late Bronze Age Wittenham Shield that was found in an old course of the river near Long Wittenham in the 1970s. The shield still bears the scars from being pieced by a spearhead during combat.</p>	
<p>Go up to gallery 41, 'England 400-1600' on the 2nd Floor, where number 28 is on display in the Anglo-Saxon 'Christianity and Learning' section.</p> <p>This is the 7th century Holderness Cross. It was probably made in Anglia during the early decades of the Christianisation of Anglo-Saxon England, and would have been owned by someone of high status.</p>	
<p>The gallery contains other finds reported to the Portable Antiquities Scheme, including a medieval silver gilt ring in the case on pilgrimage. This case also contains pilgrim badges commemorating Saint Thomas Becket, similar to the ones that were number 26 on the 'Secret Treasures' list</p>	
<p>Found just before the Portable Antiquities Scheme was started in 1997 are two Late Saxon silver and gold strap-ends from Ipsden, which were reported under the old Treasure legislation.</p>	
<p>Probably the greatest treasure in the Ashmolean, the Alfred Jewel, was found by a labourer in 1693.</p>	