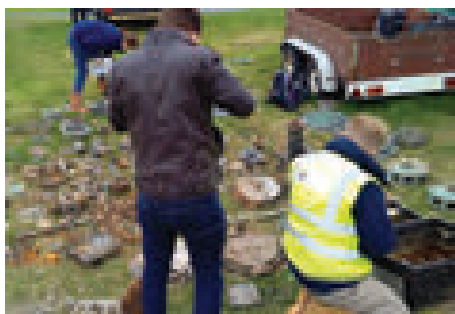
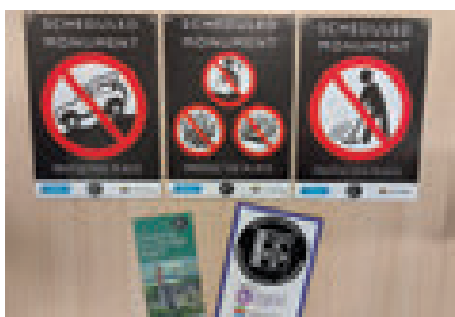


# EDITORIAL



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Welcome to this Heritage Crime-focused issue of *The Archaeologist*, guest edited by ClfA's Heritage Crime Special Interest Group. It includes updates from around the UK and articles on some exciting developments in technology and partnership practice.

Heritage crime prevention and investigation is arguably the fastest growing area of practice for heritage professionals and for law enforcement agencies. As you will see from the articles which follow, this has created some exciting opportunities and highlighted the need for developing mutual guidance and understanding.

This was the driver behind the ClfA Heritage Crime Special Interest Group (HCSIG), which had its inaugural AGM last May. Since then we have had a successful session at the ClfA 2024 conference in Chester, attended by over 60 delegates including Police Officers from a number of forces. We have started to work with partners and members to develop new initiatives. The aims of the HCSIG are to

- raise awareness of the impact of heritage and cultural property crime
- help prevent heritage and cultural property crime through signposting of resources including training and guidance
- bring together interested parties to identify partnerships and opportunities across heritage and law enforcement
- explore with the ClfA Board of Directors the establishment of a register and panel of experts in heritage and cultural property crime

## In the beginning...

In 2011 a need to recognise crime affecting the historic environment was identified as a specific area of concern. This led to the partnership now known as the National Heritage and Cultural Property Crime Working Group, which is chaired by the National Police Lead for Heritage and Cultural Property Crime. Mark Harrison, the driving force behind the recognition of Heritage Crime in England, tells us more on page 5.

Things have come a long way since then. Today, there are heritage crime officers in most UK police forces and the heritage agencies have trained some of their staff to assist police forces in investigations and prosecutions as well as in developing prevention strategies. Historic England staff have assisted police colleagues and the Maritime & Coastguard Agency on search warrants related to both terrestrial and underwater heritage crimes. Many of these have led to prosecutions or other sanctions against offenders. This includes significant prison sentences and confiscations of property and funds under the Proceeds of Crime Act.

Recently published research in England by Historic England (spring 2024) has identified a number of key findings.

An area of concern remains theft of historic metals and historic stone. Investigation of these cases has led to prosecutions of members of organised crime groups (OCGs). These can be very brazen and as Andy Bliss (page 13) explains, Heritage Watch and engaging local communities and partner agencies can be a very effective prevention and detection approach.

Paul Jeffery MClfA (576), Chair of ClfA Heritage Crime Special Interest Group (HCSIG)



Graffiti on interpretation boards at Lower Gillingham Park, Kent. Credit: Jonathan Gladwin

**There is good news, though...**

Of particular interest to ClfA members will be that there has been a reduction in unlawful metal detecting. This is in part due to some high-profile prosecutions. It is also the result of the work of heritage crime officers, often part of rural crime teams, who have engaged with owners on prevention strategies. They have improved responses to incidents through better knowledge of potential offences and with the support of heritage crime advisers as well as new technology including drones, night vision and forensic techniques.

Engaging with the metal-detecting community and providing heritage crime awareness training via the main national groups has also been a key to prevention through education.

**Developing shared training and standards**

A key driver behind the HCSIG is the need to develop shared training and operational standards. This requires partnership between different specialist groups and across borders; see Aisling Nash's article on page 26.

Partnership and cross-ClfA Special Interest Groups are also an area we all need to develop. Criminals do not recognise borders, so there is a need to engage with our regional and international group members as well as with key specialist groups such as that for forensic archaeology.

**Becoming part of the solution**

We hope you find the following articles inspiring rather than troubling. Prevention is always better than cure so please do think about how you might get involved in helping to protect our past.

**Paul Jeffery**

Paul has spent over 30 years in various roles at English Heritage and Historic England. Prior to that he worked on excavations in southern England. Since 2008 part of his remit has included leading the team which manages activities related to the Protection of Wrecks Act. This has included helping to develop and provide training and operational support to police forces and the Maritime & Coastguard Agency.

He is the current Chair of the ClfA Heritage Crime SIG ([www.archaeologists.net/groups/heritagecrime](http://www.archaeologists.net/groups/heritagecrime)) and was one of the first cohort of internal Maritime Heritage Crime Advisers within HE.

