

## How do I report 'Nighthawking' activity?

Evidence of recent 'Night Hawking' is usually discovered during daylight hours and often consists of numerous holes dug in fields with no obvious explanation. Other types of evidence are:

- Discarded items/scrap metal.
- Footprints and tyre marks.
- Cigarette butts.
- Drinks bottles/cans.

When reporting a crime include a GPS or What3Words location. What3Words is a free smartphone app pinpointing your location anywhere in the world using three words. (what3words.com)

### For the latest crime prevention advice visit:

[www.westmercia.police.uk/cp/crime-prevention/](http://www.westmercia.police.uk/cp/crime-prevention/)

 @westmerciapolice  @westmerciapolice  @WMerciaPolice

### For crimes in progress call 999.

For non emergencies report online: [www.westmercia.police.uk/report](http://www.westmercia.police.uk/report)  
If you are unable to report online, you can contact the police via the 101 non-emergency number.

## How to report finds that are treasure

You can report finds to a voluntary scheme called The Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS). Finds Liaison Officers work for PAS, recording all objects made before 1715. They record details on a database and return the object to the owner. The database is on their website [www.finds.org.uk](http://www.finds.org.uk)

### West Mercia Heritage Watch Team

The Heritage Watch Team raise awareness of 'Nighthawking' and other types of crime and anti-social behaviour such as the theft of metal from historic buildings and graffiti.

It is important to report all evidence of illegal metal detecting, no matter how small.



## Nighthawking

'Nighthawking' is a term used in the United Kingdom to describe illegal metal detecting on farmland, archaeological sites and other areas of archaeological interest, usually in order to steal coins and other artefacts for their historical and financial value.



Sign up to receive alerts from  
your local policing teams  
[www.neighbourhoodmatters.co.uk](http://www.neighbourhoodmatters.co.uk)



**‘Nighthawking’ refers to the fact that such illegal activity is often undertaken at night to avoid detection and arrest. Although this is deceiving as it also occurs during the day.**

### **How do ‘Nighthawkers’ operate?**

‘Nighthawkers’ will enter land with metal detectors and without permission from the farmer or other landowner. Consequently all finds removed by them while trespassing may amount to an offence of theft. The coins and artefacts that they recover are often kept in private collections or sold for personal profit. Because they are stolen property, the finders are unlikely to report their finds and valuable historical data is lost for good.

### **What is the impact of ‘Nighthawking’?**

‘Nighthawkers’ operate on farmland they often cause damage to crops and seedlings, gates are left open or damaged and livestock is disturbed.

Where ‘Nighthawking’ occurs on protected archaeological sites known as Scheduled Monuments, they may commit additional offences contained within the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 namely – damage and using metal detecting equipment without a licence from Historic England. ‘Nighthawkers’ have a complete disregard for the law and experts warn that we are losing the priceless heritage of our nation, simply to satisfy the greed of a small criminal minority.

### **What if a metal detecting group ask permission to survey a landowner’s field?**

A responsible group will ask the landowners permission, at this point a written contract should be drawn up. This should state the metal detecting group’s permission to be there, and that all objects recovered belong to the landowner, with the exception of ‘treasure’.

[www.finds.org.uk/getinvolved/guides/guidancelandowners](http://www.finds.org.uk/getinvolved/guides/guidancelandowners)

All objects believed to be treasure need to be reported to the local coroner within 14 days and are the property of the crown. If you are unsure if an object is ‘treasure’ see the following website for advice: [www.finds.org.uk/treasure/advice/summary](http://www.finds.org.uk/treasure/advice/summary)

### **The legislation**

Travelling to a potential site with metal detecting equipment may amount to an offence of going equipped to steal. Removal of any object from land without permission can be classed as theft. It is also an offence to damage a protected archaeological site, known as a Scheduled Monument, or to use metal detecting equipment on a Scheduled Monument without a licence from Historic England or failing to report objects that are potential treasure.

[www.historicengland.org.uk/listing/what-is-designation/scheduled-monuments](http://www.historicengland.org.uk/listing/what-is-designation/scheduled-monuments)

### **Are all detectorists the same?**

Certainly not. The overwhelming majority of detectorists adhere to The Code of Practice for Responsible Metal Detecting and report their finds to the landowner and the Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS).

[www.finds.org.uk/getinvolved/guides/codeofpractice](http://www.finds.org.uk/getinvolved/guides/codeofpractice)

They have a love of the outdoors and history and respect farmland. Many previously unknown archaeological sites have been identified through the PAS and it has contributed greatly to our knowledge of the past.

Nighthawkers seriously damage the good reputation of responsible metal detectorists. Responsible detectorists are often members of local clubs and the National Council for Metal Detecting and assist police in combating the offences by nighthawkers and other rural crime.