

WHAT HAVE YOU FOUND IN YOUR GARDEN?

This was the title of the Local History Society's meeting on 17th March 2011. Julie Cassidy, the Finds Liaison Officer for Northamptonshire, talked to us about her work identifying old objects all over the county. Unless an object is identified as "treasure", the finder may keep it, but she explained that by being able to record items and where they are found, it is possible to understand more about our history and the way we used to live.



Following her talk there was an opportunity to see and handle examples of items which have been found in the county. Several people had brought items found in Whilton and these were examined. Although there was no official "treasure", those present were very interested to learn about what has been found and what may still be lying in the local fields and gardens.

Apart from fossils and water smoothed pebbles, the oldest item was probably a Stone Age arrow head, which had later been made into an awl for making holes, perhaps in leather. There was evidence of the Romans, who would have travelled along the two Roman roads in Whilton. This included some coins and a little Roman brooch. However there was also some pottery from about the first century, which came from the village, and suggests that there were already habitations on the top of Whilton hill, besides the town of Bannaventa on Watling Street.

There was a small Elizabethan silver coin with a hole in it. Perhaps it was worn around a neck, or stitched to clothing. Was it a Royalist or Parliamentary soldier who lost an unfired musket ball from the Civil War period? An 18th century thimble had been found in a field. Women used to sit and stitch in the fields, and this is not an uncommon find.

Glass and pottery found included everyday ware from the 1700s and 1800s and early 20th century bottles for water, beer and Bovril. There were also coins, clay pipe stems, an instrument for tamping down tobacco and a solidified spoonful of lead, which was once melted down to mend pots.

All who came were fascinated and went away determined to look more carefully as we dig our gardens or walk our dogs.