



## **PRESS RELEASE**

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17 November 2017

### **ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY IN AYLESBURY UNEARTHES CANAL TOWPATH HISTORY**

The charity, Canal & River Trust, is working with a team of local metal detectorists on a one off project to help uncover the 200-year history of the Grand Union Canal in Aylesbury.

The volunteer detectorists, engaged through the British Museum's Portable Antiquities Scheme and under special licence from the Canal & River Trust, are working along the stretch of the Aylesbury Arm Canal towpath whilst it is currently being resurfaced.

The towpath works are being carried out by the Canal & River Trust thanks to funding received from Buckinghamshire County Council. Once completed local people will have easy access to their local waterways and enjoy a puddle free commute to work or walk to school.

By removing layers of the existing towpath, the detectorists, working in a strictly controlled environment to ensure services running within the towpath aren't damaged in any way, search for any metal items that have been accidentally dropped or deliberately discarded throughout the life of the canal from its construction in 1815 to today. From analysis of these finds, heritage experts from the Canal & River Trust will build up a picture of how the towpath was used in the past, and by whom.

Phil Emery, heritage advisor at the Canal & River Trust, said: "This project is providing a fascinating insight into the canal's rich history. There is a great sense of anticipation as we simply don't know what we will find. We have already recovered an early chisel, possibly used for repairs to a narrowboat, a number of coins, and a cap-badge of the Royal Green Jackets. This last find begs the question: were soldiers from this infantry regiment training on the towpath?"

"Whilst of no monetary value these items are of archaeological interest because they tell us about everyday life on the towpath. Each find is helping us to unlock the social history of the waterways."

"Whilst we don't want people taking it upon themselves to dig up and damage the towpath we would be keen to hear from local people if they have found items when visiting the Aylesbury Arm. Each archaeological find is another puzzle piece of canal history and we are keen to try and piece this jigsaw together."

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Once the project is finished it is hoped to display the finds in a local museum.

For more information on the work of the Canal & River Trust, including how you can volunteer or donate money to support the work we do visit [www.canalrivertrust.org.uk](http://www.canalrivertrust.org.uk)

## **ENDS**

For further media requests please contact: Sarah Rudy, National Press Officer on 01908 302 584 / 07788 361 219 or email [sarah.rudy@canalrivertrust.org.uk](mailto:sarah.rudy@canalrivertrust.org.uk)

### **Notes to editors:**

The Canal & River Trust is the guardian of 2,000 miles of historic waterways across England and Wales, caring for the nation's third largest collection of listed structures, as well as museums, archives, and hundreds of important wildlife sites.

We believe that *living waterways transform places and enrich lives* and our role is to make sure there is always a place on your doorstep where you can escape the pressures of everyday life, stretch your legs and simply feel closer to nature.

[www.canalrivertrust.org.uk](http://www.canalrivertrust.org.uk) @CanalRiverTrust @crtcomms

The **Portable Antiquities Scheme** is a DCMS funded project to encourage the voluntary recording of archaeological objects found by members of the public in England and Wales. Every year many thousands of objects are discovered, many of these by metal-detector users, but also by people whilst out walking, gardening or going about their daily work <https://finds.org.uk/>