



Anton Rotary Club Spring Weekend Rally

Daniel Spencer

CLOCKWISE Finds recording tent, man in field, selection of coins. Barry Hawgood, Vice President Anton Rotary Club



Following on from the success of their previous rallies, the Anton Rotary Club decided to speak with their landowners once again and seek permission for another Spring weekender. Luckily for all involved, the farmer offered 200 acres of undetected land just to the north of Andover in Hampshire.

At the heart of this year's rally was to be their chosen charity, The Junction Andover. This charity offers a safe space and an advice service for 13-25 year olds, providing information on a range of issues including housing, employment, education, health and sexual health. They are also a first point of contact for 16-17 year olds who are homeless or at the risk of becoming homeless. I think you'll agree, this is a very worthy charity.

Detectorists have long had a fascination with the county of Hampshire and its many historical landmarks, which is why along with helping a charity out, it received so much support this year! With its Celtic connections, crossing of two major Roman roads and to the north, the Harrow Way (described in some documents as the oldest road in Britain) it sounded very promising to all who saw the adverts.

The Rally was open to day ticket detectorists and campers alike. Come Friday night and into Saturday morning, the motorhomes had rolled up and the tents popped up. The Saturday morning breakfast queue started to grow and everyone was getting acquainted.





The forecast for the weekend was hot, very hot and with blue skies above it was turning out as planned ... let's hope the detecting gods were feeling as gracious as the weather ones.

It was time to gather round to view the map of land available to us over the two days. Day 1 would see three fields in play, field one was the highest point and the adjoining fields sloped down gently to the road fields. After Mike explained the way to and from the fields, everyone was allowed to head off in whichever direction they pleased.

Day 1: The fields were rolled beautifully flat and in great detecting condition. The recent warm weather had hardened them up a little but it was still soft under the first inch of soil so digging was easy. The machines all seemed to be coping with the ground balancing and there was barely a sign of mineralisation so little machine adjustment was required.

My first finds came in form of the usual suspects, a button and a few bits of lead of which one was a bale seal. I carried on searching around my chosen field whilst catching up with other detectorists as we came within chatting distance. It seemed I wasn't alone finding lead as it was prolific in this field. Small white bits of lead can indicate habitation so we were still optimistic.

It wasn't long before I saw a little hammered coin that had popped up in the field I was in. A lovely little Elizabeth I. Then shortly after came a Roman coin which had little detail but enough to figure out it was Constantine II. I carried on mooching around and was now the proud owner of two grotty Romans, a partefact and a few George bronzes. By lunchtime a lot of detectorists had wandered back to base camp. The heat was tremendous and I saw a few red faces and necks already so a suncream pit stop was in order.

Organised refreshments came in form of an all day breakfast and any combination of a breakfast in a roll. To ensure everyone was well hydrated during the day, drinks were free of charge and included, tea, coffee and cold drinks. This was just one of the things this well organised rally was responsible for. It had come to my attention early on how well planned and setup this rally was. Parking, camping and recording of finds were all top draw and a very pleasant surprise.

I decided to head back out and carry on where I left off. The afternoon came and went without any pleasant surprises for me but I was hearing about finds coming up in other fields that I couldn't wait to see so I headed back a little early and awaited the finds to appear.

Whilst enjoying some shelter from the sun under the gazebo's, I was next to the recording table as the first of the finds started to come in. Edward and Elizabeth I hammered, Roman bronzes, Roman brooches and more modern items were coming in thick and fast.

My interest turned to the Roman items and I had a look at the finds map where the location of finds was being recorded. It seemed that the higher ground was producing these finds. It wasn't long before I saw a beautiful Roman brooch. Finder Pete 'Husky' Anning was over the moon and I could see why! This was his first brooch and it was a beauty a beauty, a hinged dolphin type still with pin!

CLOCKWISE Central tent, Pete Husky holding his Roman brooch, James Forster holding his bird find, George III 1818 silver sixpence coin, two Roman coins





Numerous good condition Roman bronzes were now getting recorded and they were all coming from the same area. Although tomorrow would mean new fields, my plan was to make sure I got up onto this top field for a morning reccy to see if anything had been missed.

Now, if a well organised dig wasn't enough, how about a well organised dig opposite a pub! As the last of the first days detectorists came back, those who were staying for day two were getting ready for a trip across the road to enjoy the food and entertainment the pub had on offer for the evening.

Day 2: Sunday morning started off pretty much the same as Saturday. Beautiful weather, a queue for breakfast and lots of anticipation. There were new fields which were two of the biggest available to us and so we scoured the large printed maps for any signs of markings that could give a clue in which field to go to or direction to head. After breakfast the troops were rallied and once again details of access to the fields were mentioned. With a blink of the eye, the majority had gone, heading off in the direction they felt would be best for the days searching ahead.

I stuck to my original plan and decided not to follow the masses and instead head towards the 'Roman' field that produced yesterday. I marched up to the top of the hill and got everything ready, then started over the now even drier soil and to see what would pop up.

As I detected I could see out over the other fields and had a look to see if I could work out if it was already being productive. I couldn't see many on their knees digging so didn't panic too much and carried on.

Before long I had my first Roman of the day, this was followed up by a few bits of lead then another two Roman bronzes. Midway through the day I was most of the way down towards the first new field when I had a very positive ringing in my ear. Plunging my digging tool into the soil and flicking it up, out popped a lovely condition George III 1818 silver sixpence. It always ticks a box when you find something silver and it doesn't matter about its age, it's just knowing you have a precious metal in your hand!

I headed off into the new field where quite a number of detectorists were still searching around. I managed another Roman coin and a thimble before stopping to chat to my fellow detectorists. It seems that from the few people I had already spoken to, a few hammered coins had been found along with another George III sixpence from 1816.

I caught up with Jason and Iain who looked like they were enjoying themselves. I say this because Jason was gleaming from ear to ear. "So, what you found?" I asked. Jason pulled out not one but two complete crotal bells. To many this might have not have been that exciting but in all his years detecting, Jason had never found a complete one so two in a day was something to smile about.

I decided that before people started to head off I would get back to base camp and see what was being recorded. I got to the finds table to see a flurry of activity as Herbert was doing his best to photograph the finds being pushed onto his scaled paper. I was watching eagerly at what was being put down when I got a tap on the shoulder, "What you think about this Dan?" Well, it was James Forster holding what looked like an indistinct green blob. As he held it up you could make out the shape of a little bird.

It turns out it is a little Bronze Roman eagle which maybe would have adorned a brooch or pin.

By now cars were starting to head off and most of the tents were down so I caught up with Mike to discuss the support they offer The Junction Andover. Mike told me that recently The Junction has had a substantial grant taken from them and have lost their premises. This made them the perfect choice for this fundraiser and all proceeds would be sent to them after the event.

The final total raised was just under £4,000 for The Junction!

Thank you to Mike Walton and his very professional team of volunteers that made this one of the best organised rallies I'd ever attended. To support future events and find out more about their charity work, please visit

www.antonrotary.org.uk