



Protecting and serving Essex

www.essex.pnn.police.uk



www.ncmd.co.uk



www.historicengland.org.uk



Operation Chronos is a National Operation tackling Unlawful Metal Detecting.

You can contact Operation Chronos via the following:

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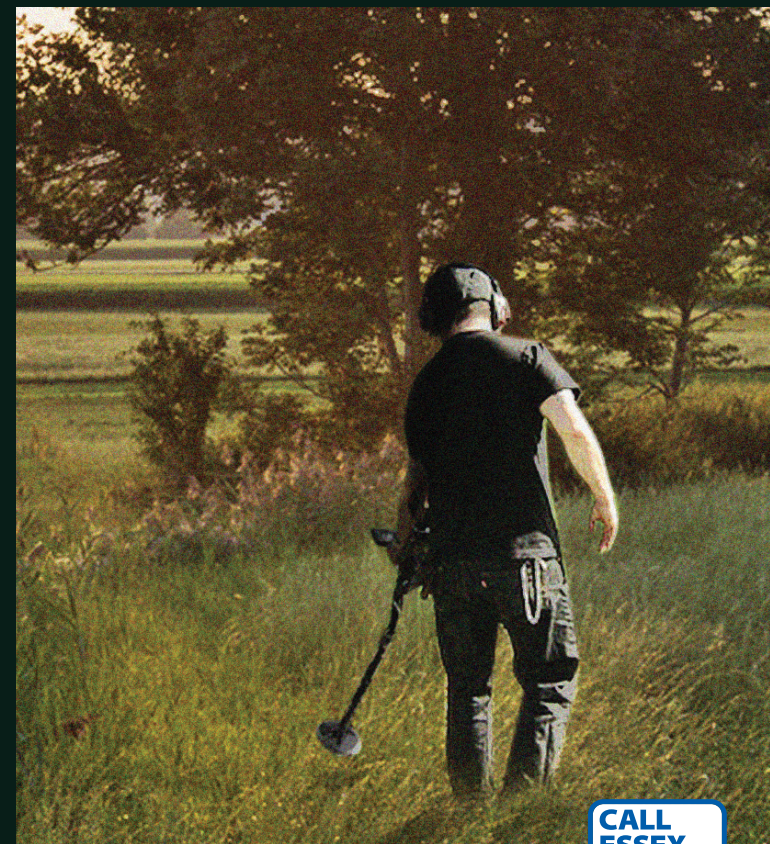
Your local Police Heritage Crime Officer on **101**



Scan this QR code with a smart phone to visit the Operation Chronos webpages.



Nighthawking Unlawful Metal Detecting A land owner's guide



What is 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. 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. It can occur anywhere in the country, but counties such as Yorkshire, Essex, Kent, Lincolnshire, Norfolk, Cambridgeshire and Suffolk are particularly vulnerable due to the rich heritage and large amounts of arable land that exist in these areas.

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 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?

Where 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 minority group of criminals.

The Legislation

Removal of any object from land without the landowner's permission may amount to an offence of theft. Travelling to a potential site with metal detecting equipment may amount to an offence of going equipped to steal. 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.

Are all detectorists the same?

Certainly not. The overwhelming majority of detectorists adhere to The Code of Practice for Responsible Metal Detecting (<http://finds.org.uk/getinvolved/guides/codeofpractice>) and report their finds to the landowner and the Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS). 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.

What should you do if you find Night Hawks on your land?

Whether day or night, if you find Nighthawkers on your land call the Police on 999, as there is a crime in progress. Do not approach them as this would scare them off or they may become aggressive towards you. Gather information by taking registration numbers of vehicles and descriptions of those involved and pass these details to the Police immediately.

What if I find evidence of Night Hawking?

Evidence of recent Nighthawking is usually discovered during day light hours and is often in the form of holes dug in fields with no obvious explanation. Other types of evidence that may be found are

- Footwear marks
- Vehicle tyre marks
- Cigarette butts
- Drinks bottles/cans
- other discarded items

Call the police on 101 and notify them of the incident. If evidence is left behind advise them of that and ask how they would like you to preserve the evidence.

