

A Blast from the Past.....An interesting story from 'The Ipswich Journal', 29th April 1843

The article was entitled TREASURE TROVE and followed the case of the discovery of a purse and an inquisition held by the county coroner at Somersham to determine who the money belonged to:

--A purse was found by a boy called Beaumont Church from Offton whilst he was searching for birds' nests in the hedgerows around Somersham. Thinking he had found a nest of a dormouse under some old grass he put his hand into a hole about a foot deep and pulled out a canvass purse. This he showed to another boy called James Grimsey and they found inside it sixteen sovereigns and 6 bank notes of £5. The boy Church took the purse home and showed it to his grandmother. Word got around about the find and the authorities were called. Enquiries were made as to who might have lost the property and a poor man from Offton came forward. William Scofield, a labourer for Mr. Kistruck, claimed that his house had been broken into whilst at church some 5 weeks prior. He had been robbed of his lifetime savings of £90. The coroner asked how he should have so much money and how he came to have bank notes. Scofield replied that he had been saving for 30 years and that he sometimes exchanged his coins for bank notes from his employer. However when he was shown the money by the coroner he could not identify it as his. He could not read or write. The amount that had been found was exactly half the amount of the poor man's savings.--

But there is no happy ending to the story. The coroner explained the complicated law about treasure trove and determined that the money must be held by the Crown. The coroner and the jury were strongly of the opinion that the money was William Scofield's property, but it had to be referred to the proper authorities.

So there were no winners: the owner of the money lost out, the finders lost out, even the thief lost out ---- except for the 'taxman'.