

Scientists looking for asteroid fragments in Shropshire

A spectacular fireball seen across the country last Wednesday night may have dropped a meteorite somewhere south of Shrewsbury, according to scientists from the UK Fireball Alliance (UKFALL).

Planetary scientists spanning the UK have spent the Easter bank holiday weekend searching the Shropshire countryside for fragments of the meteorite. They haven't found any space rocks just yet, and are now asking for the help of the local community.



Image caption: Fireball over Shropshire on Thursday 14th April at 00:45 am, Image credit: Gareth Oakey, UK Meteor Network

Dr Luke Daly of UKFALL and the University of Glasgow said “We think about 500 g of meteorite survived to the ground in approximately four fragments just south of Shrewsbury. Given the amount of wheat and oilseed rape in the area, we have been literally looking for a needle in a haystack. Now the UK Fireball Alliance are asking people in the area if they've found anything interesting in their back gardens or driveways over the bank holiday weekend to let them know”.

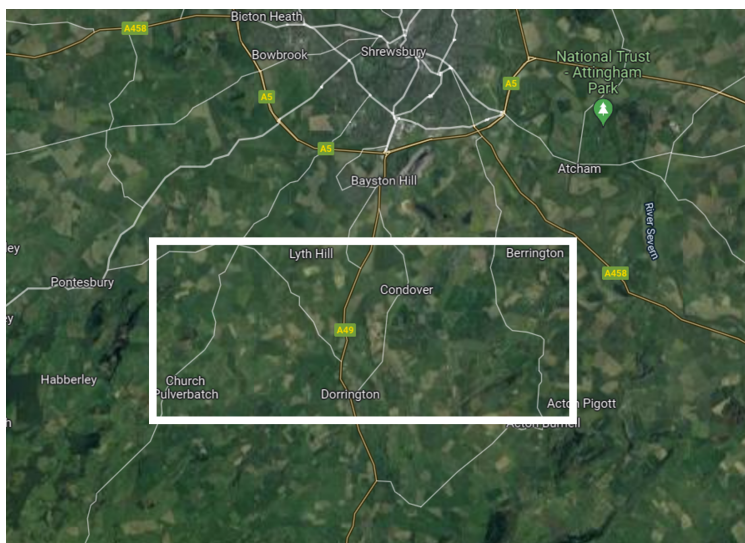


Image caption: Meteorite fall zone - if you live in this area please do look out for dark shiny rocks in places they shouldn't be, but don't pick it up with your bare hands, use aluminium foil or a sandwich bag!

Scientists at the University of Manchester offered tips for anyone who thinks they've found a piece. Professor Katie Joy of the Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences said “the

meteorite won't be hot and is as safe to handle as any other rock, but please don't pick it up with your bare hands as that would contaminate the stone. It's probably a glossy black or brown colour, maybe with the dark crust broken off in places. The largest pieces won't be bigger than an Easter egg, and the smallest could be the size of a mini egg! It may be in a place where rocks aren't usually found, like on a lawn or footpath. Don't take any risks looking for it and don't go where you shouldn't. But if you do find something out-of-place, we'll certainly be interested to check it out.”

The Shropshire meteorite fall comes just over a year after a meteorite was discovered in the town of Winchcombe in the Cotswolds after famously landing on a family's driveway!

If you think you've found a piece of last week's meteorite then please send a photo and the coordinates of the stone to shropshire@ukfall.org.uk

Guidance for Editors

The UK Fireball Alliance is a collaboration between academics and citizen scientists interested in meteor observation and meteorite recovery. It was established in 2018 and led to the successful retrieval of the Winchcombe meteorite in 2021.

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