

# Standard and guidance for the creation, compilation, transfer and deposition of archaeological archives

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## **The Standard**

All archaeological projects that include the recovery or generation of data and/archaeological materials (finds) will result in a stable, ordered, accessible archive. All archaeologists are responsible for ensuring that the archive is created and compiled to recognised standards, using consistent methods, and is not subject to unnecessary risk of damage or loss. It is the responsibility of all curators of archaeological archives to ensure that archives are stored to recognised standards for long-term preservation and made accessible for consultation.

### **Definition of archaeological archives**

The archaeological archive is defined as all parts of the archaeological record, including the finds, samples and digital records as well as the written, drawn and photographic documentation.

### **Purpose of archaeological archives**

Archaeological archives represent a researchable resource generated by archaeological investigation. The archive from an archaeological project is the key to understanding any published interpretations of the results. Records of all archaeological remains, however collected, as well as retained archaeological materials (finds and samples), must be kept for future analysis. The archive must also include descriptions of contents, relevant indexes, descriptions of methodologies, project planning information and keys to specific terminologies. Curation of the archive in a recognised repository will ensure the survival of archaeological evidence for future use. This may extend to the reanalysis of data, re-interpretation of evidence, renewed understanding of events, objects or structures, republication of findings or the presentation of evidence or materials in a public context.

### **Occurrence of archaeological archives**

Archaeological archives may be created:

- as part of a programme of intrusive data-gathering, such as excavation, field evaluation, fieldwalking, watching brief or building investigation and recording
- as part of a programme of non-intrusive survey or analysis such as landscape survey, aerial photography or remote sensing
- as part of off-site research such as desk-based assessment
- as part of a programme of investigation of archaeological materials within a programme of research not generated by a specific threat to the archaeological resource
- within the context of the interpretation and presentation of sites or finds to the public
- as a result of the requirements of planning and heritage legislation

Work leading to the creation of archaeological archives may therefore be instigated or commissioned by a number of different individuals or organisations, such as local authorities,

archaeological trusts and units, museums, national bodies, government agencies, educational establishments, private owners, local societies, members of the public, developers or their agents, or archaeological researchers.

## **GUIDANCE**

### **1 Introduction**

This guidance seeks to define best practice in the creation, compilation, transfer and deposition of archaeological archives, in line with the regulations of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (in particular the *Code of conduct*). It seeks to expand and explain general definitions in the *Code* for best practice in the treatment of archaeological archives.

The Standard and guidance applies to all archaeological projects involving archives, irrespective of research objectives and size. The guidance has been compiled so that all those involved with archaeological archives, whether excavators, finds research staff, archaeological curators, museum curators, site owners, developers, their agents, or others, have an agreed framework within which to define the range and extent of activities that must be undertaken in the creation, preparation, transfer or deposition of archaeological archives, thus setting a standard against which compliance can be measured. Compliance necessarily requires resources to be adequately allocated.

In addition, this guidance seeks to amplify directions given in national planning guidance (see Appendix 6) and to be compatible with current guidelines issued by other authorities, such as the Archaeological Archives Forum, the Archaeology Data Service, CADW, Department for the Environment of Northern Ireland, Historic England, Historic Environment Scotland, ClfA, the Museums Documentation Association, Museums Libraries and Archives and the Society of Museum Archaeologists.

Consideration of archaeological archives must be fully integrated into all stages of the archaeological process, from the earliest stage in project planning. All persons expected to contribute to the archive of an archaeological project should be fully involved with archive creation and care throughout the life of the project. All persons responsible for the long-term curation of the archaeological archive should be aware of existing storage requirements and standards.

This document provides guidance for work carried out in the United Kingdom and Isle of Man, although the principles will apply elsewhere. Although general guidance is given, this document cannot be exhaustive, particularly in its treatment of legislative issues. Archaeologists must ensure they are familiar with the specific legislation and common law pertinent to the area of the United Kingdom and Isle of Man in which they are working. Archaeologists, commissioning bodies and others may find it useful to consult the relevant documents listed in Appendix 6 and can obtain further guidance from the appropriate advisory bodies listed in Appendix 7.

### **2 Principles: the Code of conduct and other regulations of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists**

An archaeologist undertaking the creation, preparation, transfer or deposition of archaeological archives must adhere to the principles enshrined in the ClfA *Code of conduct*, and the rules governing those principles. The archaeologist shall adhere to the highest standards of ethical and responsible behaviour in the conduct of archaeological affairs:

- an archaeologist has a responsibility for the conservation of the archaeological heritage
- an archaeologist shall conduct his/her work in such a way that reliable information about the past may be acquired, and shall ensure that the results be properly recorded
- an archaeologist has responsibility for making available the results of archaeological work with reasonable dispatch
- an archaeologist shall recognise the aspirations of employees, colleagues and helpers with regard to all matters relating to employment, including career development, health and safety, terms and conditions of employment and equality of opportunity

Following rule 1.4 of the *Code of conduct*, an archaeologist shall not undertake work for which he or she is not adequately qualified.

### **3 Procedures**

#### **3.1 Preamble**

3.1.1 The usefulness of an archaeological archive is conditional on its completeness, stability and accessibility. The following sets out good practice in the creation, compilation and care of the archive.

The following principles must be accepted as fundamental to the creation of an archaeological archive:

- All archaeological projects must result in a stable, ordered, accessible archive
- All aspects of the archaeological process affect the quality of the resulting archive
- Standards for the creation, management and preparation of the archive must be understood and agreed at the beginning of any project
- Ensuring the security and stability of the archive is a continuous process and a universal responsibility
- A project has not been completed until the archive has been transferred successfully and is fully accessible for consultation
- All archaeological archives must be stored in repositories that maintain proper standards of care and accessibility

#### **3.2 Project identification**

- 3.2.1 An archaeological project is defined as any programme of work that involves the collection of information about an archaeological site, feature, deposit, assemblage or object. Examples of an archaeological project are aerial survey, building recording, conservation, desk-based assessment, evaluation, excavation, seabed recovery, surface recovery, finds analysis, finds collection, on-site survey, remote sensing, resource management projects, scientific analysis, watching brief.
- 3.3 Project initiation
  - 3.3.1 Project specifications, research designs or similar documents should include a project-specific Selection Strategy and a Data Management Plan.
  - 3.3.2 Project specifications, research designs or similar documents should identify the repository where the archive will be deposited for long-term curation.
  - 3.3.3 Project designs, schedules of works, etc should outline the methodology used in recording all information, in order to demonstrate that all aspects of archive creation will ensure consistency; for instance in terminologies and the application of codes in digital data sets, highlighting relevant data standards where appropriate.
  - 3.3.4 Project designs, schedules of works, etc should outline the measures that will be taken to assure the security of archive material, such as records, plans, photographs, digital material and finds throughout the life of a project, both in the field and afterwards. Project personnel must also be aware of existing standards for the care of archaeological records and materials.
  - 3.3.5 If external specialists are involved in a project and identified in project designs, schedules of works, etc, then the standards to which they will be working should also be stated. Specialists should produce a consistent data set suitable for inclusion in the project archive.
  - 3.3.6 Project designs, schedules of works, etc should state how the project team will achieve transfer of title and copyright from the original owners to the archive repository.
  - 3.3.7 Documents associated with project initiation should be retained for inclusion in the archive as appropriate.
  - 3.3.8 The curator of the relevant archive repository should make available local archive deposition standards.
- 3.4 Project execution
  - 3.4.1 All material likely to be incorporated into the project archive, including written records, drawings, photographs, x-radiographs, digital material, finds and samples, must be managed to minimise the risk of damage, deterioration, loss or theft.
  - 3.4.2 Appropriate materials should be used for making written records, drawings and photographs and in cleaning, marking, labelling and packing finds.

- 3.4.3 A consistent, well-documented terminology should be used in making all paper and digital records.
- 3.4.4 All drawings and photographs should be marked with the project identifier, and where relevant have a key to identify the subject, scale, location and orientation.
- 3.4.5 Digital material should be fully documented and created according to recognised standards and guidelines as made available by the Archaeology Data Service.
- 3.4.6 The digital archive should conform to recognised standards and guidelines on how data should be structured, preserved and accessed as made available by the Archaeology Data Service.
- 3.4.7 Security copies of all digital material should be created and managed as appropriate.
- 3.4.8 Finds and other materials should be collected, sorted, cleaned, marked or labelled, recorded and packed in accordance with recognised standards.
- 3.4.9 Metal finds should be x-radiographed in accordance with recognised guidelines.
- 3.4.10 Suitably qualified and experienced conservators should be employed to clean and treat objects as required.
- 3.4.11 All archaeologists should treat human remains in accordance with recognised standards for collection, treatment, analysis and storage.
- 3.4.12 Analytical and interpretative activities should be documented so that all procedures and terminologies can be clearly understood.
- 3.4.13 All personnel engaged in the specialist analysis of archaeological records or objects must be suitably qualified and experienced, and be familiar with, and follow, recognised standards of recording and treatment.
- 3.4.14 Health and Safety takes priority over archaeological requirements. All people working on archaeological archives should do so under a defined Health and Safety policy. Archaeologists undertaking archives work should observe safe working practices; the Health and Safety arrangements should be agreed and understood by all relevant parties before work commences. Risk assessments should be carried out and documented for every project. All archaeologists have a professional and moral responsibility to report unsafe practice.
- 3.4.15 Project reports (including grey literature and OASIS and other on-line entries) and publications must identify the archive repository and provide the accession number issued by the repository or, if this is not available, the site code.
- 3.5 Archive compilation and transfer
  - 3.5.1 The archive should be prepared for transfer by marking or labelling archive storage materials appropriately, packing material for archive appropriately, providing an index of archive components and compiling a list of contents.

- 3.5.2 Relevant drafts of all reports, usually including the first and last versions as well as any others of particular significance, should be retained for inclusion in the archive.
- 3.5.3 Security copies of the documentary archive should be created and deposited as appropriate or as required.
- 3.5.4 All born-digital material should be included in the archive, together with appropriate digital material compiled from paper records.
- 3.5.5 Digital archive material should be deposited with a trusted digital repository, where data migration and backup procedures are in place, and the integrity of the digital archive is maintained.
- 3.5.6 Finds and other materials should be packed for archive in accordance with existing accepted standards and the requirements of the archive repository.
- 3.6 Monitoring
  - 3.6.1 Where the creation, preparation and deposition of an archaeological archive forms part of a fieldwork project it should be included in the overall project monitoring process. Archaeologists should also expect representatives of the planning authority to ensure that standards are met. In Northern Ireland, where any search for archaeological objects must be licensed, this monitoring will be undertaken by representatives of the licensing body, and in some parts of the UK (but not Scotland) representatives of the receiving institution may also have a monitoring role.
  - 3.6.2 Specialists may also be monitored by project managers to ensure the requirements of the project design are met. A monitor should be suitably experienced and qualified, or have access to appropriate specialist advice, according to the specified purpose of the monitoring.
  - 3.6.3 Project monitors should not certify the completion of a project until the archive is successfully transferred to the archive repository.
- 3.7 Curation
  - 3.7.1 All elements of the archive should be stored in accordance with recognised standards of curation and care.
  - 3.7.2 Archive repositories are responsible for ensuring the continuing stability and accessibility of archives in their care.
- 3.8 Ownership
  - 3.8.1 The proposed recipient museum or other approved repository must be contacted at the project planning stage and arrangements for deposition of the material archive should be detailed in the specification and/or project design. Requirements for archive deposition vary across jurisdictions, therefore the specific requirements for the country or region being worked in must be consulted.
  - 3.8.2 In England, Wales, Northern Ireland and the Isle of Man ownership of objects rests with the landowner, except where other law overrides. In Scotland, in the absence of

an original owner or his/her demonstrable heir, ownership of objects rests with the Crown. The archaeologist undertaking the fieldwork, or the planning archaeologist, must make this clear at the inception of the project (in the brief/project outline, specification or project design).

- 3.8.3 It should be noted that in England, Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland and the Isle of Man there are differing finds reporting and deposition procedures. Archaeologists are advised to seek specific advice on excavation and export procedures, as in some instances licences are required. The archaeologist undertaking the fieldwork or the planning archaeologist must make this clear at the inception of the project (in the brief/project outline, specification or project design).
- 3.8.4 Except in Scotland, it is the responsibility of the archaeologist undertaking the fieldwork to endeavour to obtain the written consent of the landowner for finds donation and deposition with the recipient museum.
- 3.8.5 Except in Scotland, in the event that the landowner is unwilling, for whatever reason, to donate the finds to the appropriate recipient museum, the archaeologist undertaking the fieldwork must endeavour to ensure all artefacts and ecofacts are recorded, safely packaged and conserved where appropriate before transfer to the owner, and that their location and ownership are stated in the site archive and public record. It should be noted that the owner's explicit (written) permission is required before entering such personal information in the public record.
- 3.8.6 In Scotland, all archaeological artefacts, irrespective of raw material, may be claimed on behalf of the Crown under common law.
- 3.8.7 The rules of ownership applicable to material that has come from a vessel (ie all those classified as 'wreck') are dealt with under the Merchant Shipping Act 1995 (see Appendix 6). In cases of wreck material, the Receiver of Wreck, in the Maritime and Coastguard Agency, should be contacted.
- 3.9 Copyright
- 3.9.1 Archaeologists should be aware of, and fulfil, their legal obligations with regard to copyright. It is normal practice for both copyright and ownership of the paper and digital archive from archaeological work to rest with the originating body (the archaeological organisation undertaking the work). Upon archive deposition the archive repository should obtain either a written assignment of copyright, or a copyright licence, from the copyright holders. These arrangements may be varied by contract, and for the avoidance of doubt it is advisable to include statements on ownership and copyright in a written contract or agreement.
- 3.9.2 Archaeologists should pay due consideration to legislation about copyright and intellectual property rights and plagiarism, and to issues of accessibility to research.

## **ANNEX 1:**

### Checklist for the archaeological archive

An archaeological archive should be compiled to include the following elements, as relevant to the nature of the project.

- The project specification or research design
- The schedule of works or similar documents
- All original written records created throughout the course of the project
- All original drawings, whether created during fieldwork, in analysis or for publication
- Indexes to the drawings
- All photographic negatives
- An original copy of every transparency
- A copy of every photographic print
- Indexes to the photographic archive
- All born-digital material
- Digital material created from written, drawn or photographed original records
- Documentation accompanying the digital archive, either in digital or written form
- All finds and other archaeological materials selected for retention, and associated documentation
- All scientific samples suitable for curation, and associated documentation
- All original x-radiographs
- All specialist reports
- Drafts of the final project report
- The final project report
- Other work published during the life of the project
- Relevant correspondence and incidental material
- An index to the archive
- A list of contents of the archive