

The land
century.
among a
area is de
1609 (Co
Lamma
document
earthwor
Durringt
area of
east.

SAFEGUARDING ARCHAEOLOGICAL INFORMATION

*Procedures for minimising risk to
undeposited archaeological archives*

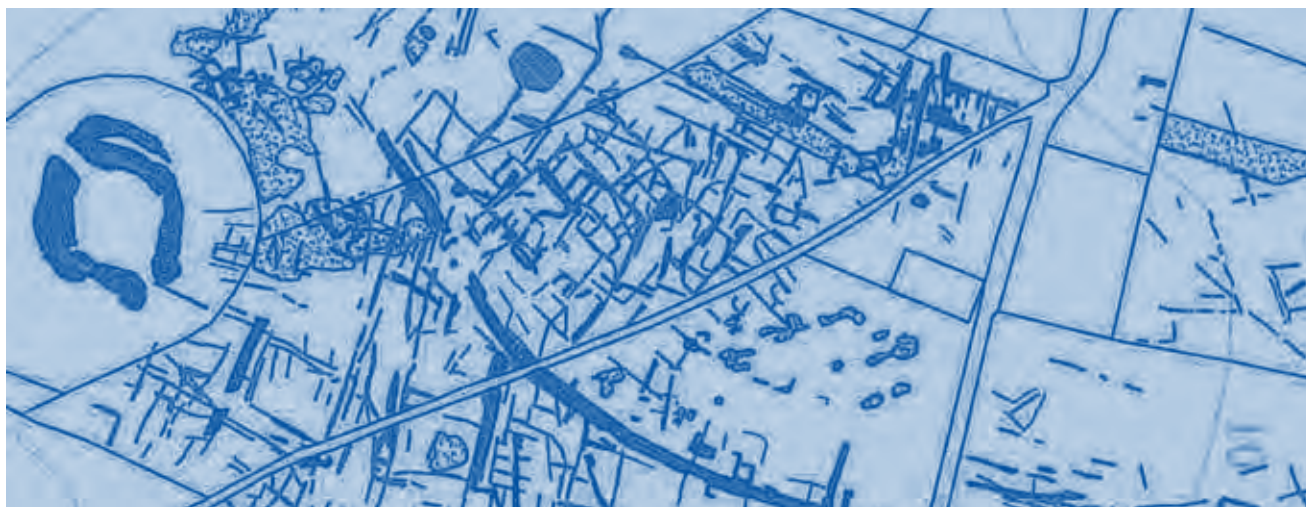


SAFEGUARDING ARCHAEOLOGICAL INFORMATION

*Procedures for minimising risk to
undeposited archaeological archives*

Duncan H Brown
for English Heritage

Contents



SECTION 1	INTRODUCTION	1
1.1	DEFINITIONS AND STRUCTURE.....	2
1.2	MANAGING ARCHAEOLOGICAL ARCHIVES.....	2
SECTION 2	GOOD PRACTICE.....	3
2.1	DEVELOPMENT CONTROL ARCHAEOLOGY (DCAs).....	3
2.1.1	ISSUES	3
2.1.2	GOOD PRACTICE.....	4
2.2	ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTRACTORS	5
2.2.1	ISSUES	5
2.2.2	GOOD PRACTICE.....	6
2.3	REPOSITORIES (CURATORS)	7
2.3.1	ISSUES	7
2.3.2	GOOD PRACTICE.....	7
SECTION 3	RESPONDING TO RISK	8
SECTION 4	BIBLIOGRAPHY & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	10
APPENDIX I	A FICTIONAL EXAMPLE.....	11



I Introduction

The advent of severe economic recession in 2008/9 increased the unwelcome risk of insolvency amongst commercial archaeological organisations in Britain. In the event of an organisation ceasing to trade, undeposited archive material could be lost as offices were cleared and computers claimed as assets. In response, English Heritage commissioned a project that aimed to reveal the issues affecting the security of archaeological information and produce a guide to good practice in data management.

The first stage of the project was to gain an understanding of existing procedures from development control archaeologists (DCAs; those archaeologists working within planning authorities to enable archaeological responses to planning applications), archaeological contractors and curators of archaeological archive repositories (museum curators). A questionnaire survey, supported by individual interviews revealed that there is no consistent approach to the initiation, management or conclusion of archaeological projects in England. This is partly dictated by local circumstances, such as the presence or absence of a county museum service, but it was found that it would be possible, in most cases, to introduce measures to minimise risk to undeposited archaeological archives. The aim of this document therefore, is to recommend procedures and strategies which will achieve that. The survey has shown that contractors are managing their archive material very well and the recommendations here are more to do with procedure rather than day-to-day activities. One key element is the need for improved communication between all parties and that forms the basis for most of the recommendations set out here.

This document therefore outlines a management method designed to minimise the risk to undeposited archive material, including documents, digital files and finds. It is designed to inform the management of archaeological projects and archive material and should be used by all those involved in archaeological work, especially DCAs, contractors and curators.

1.1 DEFINITIONS AND STRUCTURE

An archaeological archive has been defined previously as:

all parts of the archaeological record, including the finds and digital records as well as the written, drawn and photographic documentation (Perrin, 2002, 3; Brown 2007, 3).

The framework for planning-led archaeology in England provides the structure for this guide and the present procedures are understood to be as follows, although the specific terminology may vary.

A planning application is viewed by the DCA, who advises the planning authority of the appropriate archaeological response. A project brief is prepared, usually by the DCA, and issued on behalf of the developer to contractors interested in carrying out the work. A contractor will submit a tender, which if successful will be followed up with a scheme of investigation setting out, among other things, the proposed methodology, working practice and the identity of external specialists. The project can commence once all parties have agreed the scheme of investigation and it is usually divided into fieldwork and post-fieldwork phases. At some point during the project the appropriate archive repository will be identified by the contractor and sent details of what the contractor proposes to deposit as archive. Transfer of title to the finds and licence to copyright are often sorted out at this stage. Archive deposition is usually the last part of a project to be completed and can take place a long time after the project is deemed to have been finished in respect of the submission of a report. At that point the archive is no longer 'in transit' and is secured for future research. This document is explicitly but not exclusively aimed at archaeological projects that follow the structure outlined above, although any part of it can be followed as general good practice by archaeologists involved in other types of project.

1.2 MANAGING ARCHAEOLOGICAL ARCHIVES

Archaeological Archives. A guide to best practice in creation, compilation, transfer and curation, (the Archive Guide; Brown 2007) sets out current best practice in the management of archaeological archives and should be available to all archaeologists at any stage of a project. It should not be necessary to re-iterate the standards presented in that document. This guide is designed as a supporting statement of good management practice.

Throughout the life of a project, that is before the archive has been deposited, collected materials, including documents, digital files and finds, seem to be most at risk from system failure. Bad practice is always a threat, but anyone who follows the Archive Guide will be ensuring that the archive is protected from avoidable harm.



2 Good Practice

Separate sections aimed at different archaeological practitioners include a review of current issues around the management of archaeological archives and good practice that will minimise the risk of losing data or finds.

Appendix I is a fictional project that serves as an example of how the recommended system as a whole could work.

2.1 DEVELOPMENT CONTROL ARCHAEOLOGY (DCAs)

2.1.1 ISSUES

The principal element of risk to the archaeological archive in the area of development control is likely to stem from a lack of information management. It is recognised that few DCAs will have the expertise, or the resources, to monitor standards of archive compilation or deposition but there should be the potential for establishing systems of communication and project reporting.

The survey into current practice revealed that there is no universal method for the management or monitoring of archaeological projects. There is considerable variation in the detail of project briefs, the level of reporting required and the conditions for archive deposition. The general view is that issues around archives are the concern of the repository rather than the planning office.

These problems seem to be further complicated in 'infrastructure projects' such as pipelines or road schemes, which traverse the boundaries of more than one planning authority. In such instances there may be confusion around project briefs and monitoring, with Consultants taking a lead role in such issues. In such cases those Consultants should follow the good practice set out below.

2.1.2 GOOD PRACTICE

	Recommendation	Rationale
1	DCAs issue project identifiers with project briefs. This may be in line with their own project management systems, or an existing identifier such as the planning reference.	It is easy to identify, within a contractor's information management system, projects related to that planning authority among (potentially many) others from different areas.
		There is potential for confusion if a contractor's numbering system is followed, especially when several different contractors are working in the same area.
		Such a number will act as a single project reference for communications between DCAs, contractors and repositories.
		Such a number will be more simply cross-referred to OASIS and HER records and also with repository accession numbers.
2	<p>DCAs ensure that museum curators know when a project has commenced, as well as the identity of the contractor.</p> <p>NB The responsibility for informing the museum curator of the commencement of a project may lie with the contractor. It should remain however, a requirement of the project that the DCA knows the museum curator has been informed.</p>	This confirms with the DCA the awareness of the repository and ensures that museum curators will be able to maintain communication with contractors as appropriate.
		Museum curators will be able to ensure that the contractor is aware of their standards for archive deposition.
		Museum curators will be able to monitor during the project if necessary.
3	Project briefs should reference the archive deposition standards to be followed throughout the project. These will usually be those issued by the appropriate repository, perhaps supported by national standards.	The contractor will know from the outset what is required by the repository and can set out their project design and estimate costs accordingly.

	Recommendation	Rationale
4	Project briefs should require contractors to communicate with repositories whenever they start a project, including if they take over the post-fieldwork stage.	This establishes lines of communication, preferably between the same individuals, regarding archive management and deposition.
5	DCAs should require contractors to inform them when they have deposited the archive.	This will signify the end of the project.
6	Project briefs should advise that title to the material archive should be transferred to the appropriate repository, or its governing body, at the beginning of fieldwork or as soon as possible thereafter.	In the event that an archive may have to be deposited before project completion there will be no confusion over ownership and it will be possible to deposit the finds appropriately.
7	DCAs should regard Recommendations 3, 4 and 5 as monitoring points.	If the archive is at risk, the DCA will know which projects require intervention and will also know what level of information the museum curator possesses.

2.2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTRACTORS

2.2.1 ISSUES

The principal element of risk here arises where nobody outside the organisation is able to identify what projects are ongoing, and what stages they have reached.

The survey revealed that contractors have to comply with much variation in project briefs and repository deposition standards. This has led to them developing their own systems and standards so that there are almost as many different ways of managing a project as there are contracting organisations. This is not good in terms of managing risk, especially if those managing that risk have come in from outside the organisation.

A further issue is the absence of a repository with which to deposit material collected in a particular area. This is becoming increasingly common and results in archives remaining in the hands of contracting organisations indefinitely. In such cases the contractor should inform DCAs that archives cannot be transferred. They should also communicate with HERs to ensure that they accurately register the location of archive material. Project management systems should be kept updated so that archive material can be easily identified and located within physical or digital storage facilities.

2.2.2 GOOD PRACTICE

	Recommendation	Rationale
1	If an internal project identification system is in use, notify the DCA of the relevant project code at the outset of the project. Follow this up with a project entry on OASIS (ADS 2004).	This facilitates cross-referencing with planning references or other project identifiers and ensures that the project can easily be identified with a particular planning authority.
2	At the outset of a project notify the appropriate repository that they have won the contract and when fieldwork is due to commence.	The repository will know where archive materials are prior to deposition.
3	At the outset of a project inform the appropriate repository of the relevant internal project code.	This allows cross-referencing with repository accessioning systems and facilitates access to undeposited archive materials.
4	Manage the project in a way that makes it clear which stage a project has reached eg fieldwork, post-fieldwork, analysis, report writing, archive compilation. Such systems should also identify personnel involved in each project phase and the location of archive materials. NB Digitised management system files should be supported by hard copy indexes.	This ensures that it is easy to establish what tasks are outstanding should it become necessary for the project to be completed by another person.
5	Material sent to external specialists should be listed and their destinations logged. The return of materials should also be logged.	It is important to know the location of every element of the project archive.
6	Establish procedures for securing digital material.	Off-site storage of regularly backed up data will make it easier to secure digital files if they are at risk.
7	Arrange for title to the material archive to be transferred to the appropriate repository at the earliest possible time, either when the contracts are signed at the beginning of a project, or after fieldwork when the nature of the finds is apparent.	This ensures the security of the material archive even if the project has not been completed.
8	Notify the DCA when the archive has been deposited.	This will ensure that everybody knows where the archive is and close the project.

2.3 REPOSITORIES (CURATORS)

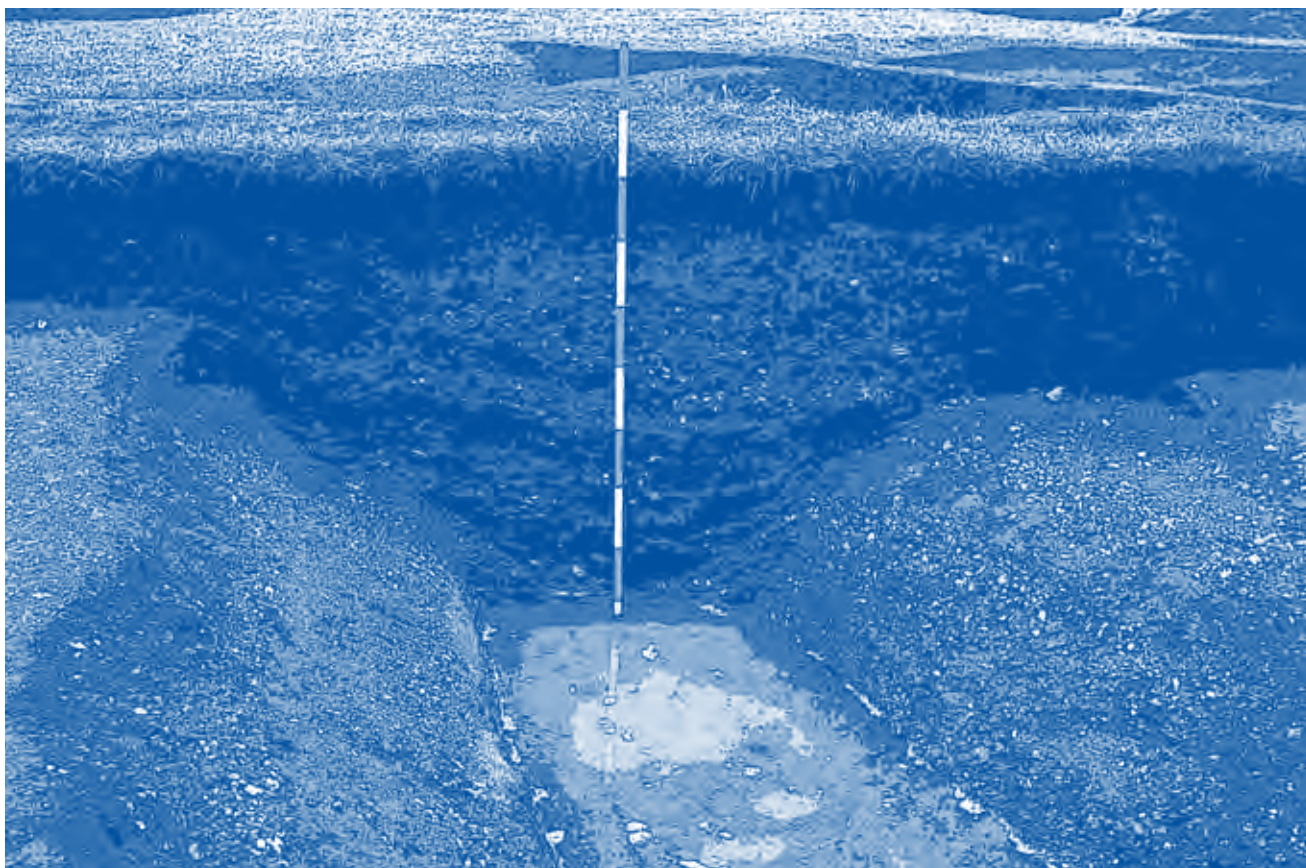
2.3.1 ISSUES

The main element of risk here arises from lack of communication.

The survey has shown that curators often do not know what projects are in progress in their collecting area, what stage they have reached, or when the archive might be ready for deposition; nor do they always require that knowledge. Some repositories do not ask for project information until the archive has been prepared for deposition but in the interests of reducing risk it is vital that all parties are aware of how projects are progressing.

2.3.2 GOOD PRACTICE

	Recommendation	Rationale
1	Liaise with DCAs to ensure local and national archive deposition standards are referenced in project briefs.	This should ensure that at any stage of a project the archive is in a good state, should it become necessary to find other personnel to complete the project.
2	Issue an accession number at the beginning of the project.	This identifies the project within collections management systems.
3	Require DCAs to inform them of the identity of a contractor and when they have commenced work on site.	This may initiate project monitoring procedures, or at least make the curator aware that an archive is being created.
		This also ensures that all contractors are aware of their responsibilities towards archaeological information.
4	Require information on project identifiers from the DCA and contractors.	This facilitates communication and the identification of project archive material.
		This also enables cross-referencing with repository accessioning systems.
5	Require contractors to inform them when the post-fieldwork stage has commenced.	This locates archive material and informs monitoring procedures.
6	Request information on the likely size of the archive as soon as possible after the commencement of the post-fieldwork stage.	This enables a proper response should the archive be in danger of loss.
7	Inform the DCA that the archive has been successfully deposited in compliance with required standards.	This ensures that all parties know that the project has been completed.

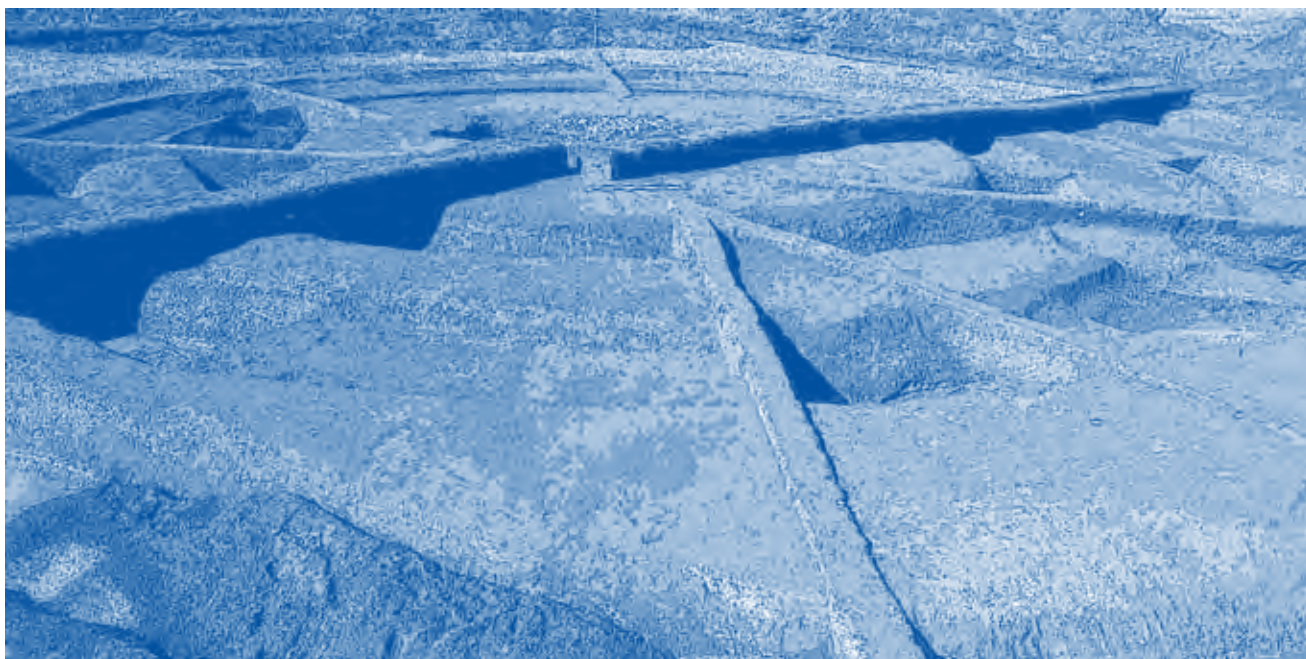


3 Responding to risk

This section sets out procedures to follow for all parties in the event that a contractor is unable to complete a project to archive deposition.

	Issue	Response
1	Awareness that the archive is at risk.	<p>The contractor must inform the DCA, the developer and the curator as soon as they are aware that a project may not be completed. This will ensure an early response to the situation by all interested parties.</p>
2	Making provision to complete the project.	<p>The DCA must consult with the developer (or whoever is funding the project) to discuss ways of transferring the project to another contractor.</p> <p>The management systems of the original contractor should be accessible for consultation to determine the quantity, nature and location of information and finds, and the stage the project has reached.</p>

	Issue	Response
3	<p>Rescuing archive material if it is not possible, or there is insufficient time, to bring in another contractor.</p> <p>NB in some cases it may be that the original contractor cannot facilitate access to the archive.</p>	<p>The DCA and curator must share responsibility for securing all project information and materials, working with the contractor if possible.</p> <p>The DCA should have managerial responsibility over the transfer of the archive to a secure temporary store.</p> <p>The DCA and the curator should have managerial responsibility over ensuring an archive assessment, leading to an index of all documentary, digital and material elements.</p> <p>The curator should, if possible, agree to store unfinished archive and make it available to any contractors hired to complete the project.</p> <p>The DCA and the curator should take responsibility for ensuring that all elements of the archive are recovered and kept together during transfer from the offices of the original contractor.</p>
3.1	<p>Digital material is especially in danger of being lost as IT hardware may be viewed as a potential asset.</p>	<p>From the outset the contractor must create security copies of all digital material using appropriate transfer media and widely readable file formats.</p> <p>The curator must require all back-up copies of digital archive.</p>
3.2	<p>Transfer of title.</p>	<p>If title to the finds was transferred to the repository at the beginning of the project then there should be no issues of ownership.</p> <p>If title to the finds has not been resolved before they require to be secured then the DCA must take responsibility for negotiating this with the landowner.</p>
3.3	<p>Copyright.</p>	<p>The contractor must issue to the curator a licence to copyright for all documentary and digital information as soon as it is apparent that the archive material will be transferred prior to completion of the project.</p>



4 Bibliography & Acknowledgements

Archaeology Data Service 2004 *OASIS: Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations*. via <http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/project/oasis/index.cfm>

Brown, D H, 2007, 'Archaeological Archives. A guide to best practice in creation, compilation, transfer and curation' AAF.

Perrin, K, 2002, 'Archaeological Archives: Documentation, Access and Deposition. A Way Forward' English Heritage.

See also:

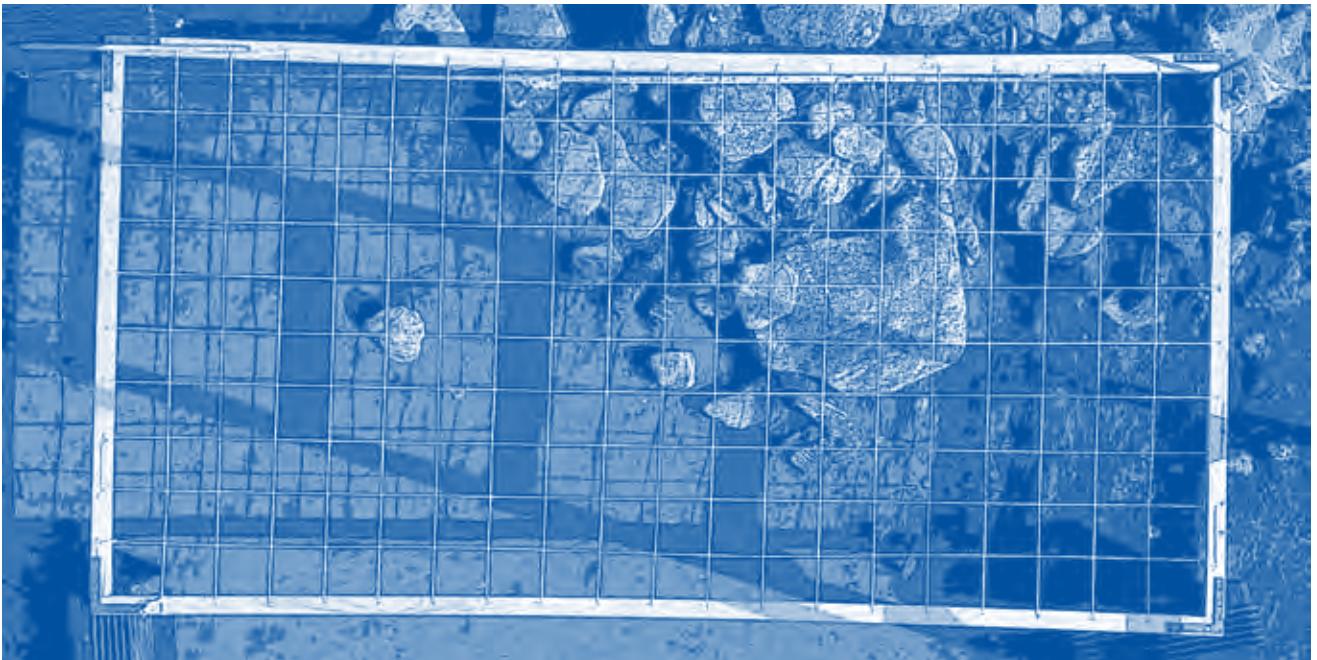
Kerr, B. 2007 'MoRPHE Project Planning Note 3. Archaeological Excavations'. English Heritage www.english-heritage.org.uk/morphe

Lee, E. 2006 'Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment. The MoRPHE Project Managers guide'. English Heritage www.english-heritage.org.uk/morphe

Archaeological Archives Forum at <http://www.britarch.ac.uk/archives/>

IfA Special Interest Group for Archaeological Archives at <http://www.archaeologists.net/groups>

Thanks to Kathy Perrin for her helpful project management and Vince Griffin for the design. I am grateful to anyone who answered the questionnaires and especially to Nicola Betley, Mark Brennand, Peter Cox, Lisa Donel, David Evans, Emma Firth, Frank Giecco, Jon Hoyle, Joanne Levey, Ed McSloy, Andrew Mudd, David Mullin, Tim Padley, Louise Rayner, David Rice, Jonathan Smith, Caroline Wilkinson and Jan Wills, who all attended meetings and commented on the first draft.



Appendix I: a fictional example

This section follows every stage of a fictional, successful project, highlighting in **bold** the procedures that should be followed to minimise risk to all elements of an archaeological archive.

A developer has submitted a planning application to build close to the site of a known Iron Age farmstead in Albionshire.

The DCA for Albionshire determines an archaeological condition of evaluation with provision for excavation, which the developer accepts.

The project is numbered ALB 1983 in the Albionshire County Archaeological project management system and a project brief for the evaluation is prepared and distributed.

Two non-local contracting organisations that have not worked in Albionshire before are interested in the project and have requested copies of local archive deposition standards. The DCA sends out the standards and copies the correspondence to the curator of the local repository, Albionshire Museums Service.

The contract is won by Binney-Hart Archaeology (BHA), a commercial unit operating from a town some 200 miles from Albionshire.

The DCA informs the museum curator of the nature of ALB 1983 and that it will be carried out by BHA.

The archaeology curator at Albionshire Museums issues an Accession Number for the project and informs the DCA, the Albionshire HER manager and the project manager at BHA.

BHA sign contracts with the developer but the landowner declines to sign transfer of title forms.

BHA log the project into their computer-based project management system as BHA 689, cross-referred with the identifier ALB 1983.

BHA also logs the on-site start date.

The BHA project manager contacts the Albionshire DCA and the museum curator at Albionshire Museum Service, informing them that fieldwork has started.

Fieldwork is completed successfully.

BHA update the project management system to show that BHA 689 is in the post-fieldwork phase.

The BHA project manager informs the DCA and the museum curator that the project is now in the post-fieldwork phase and all documents and finds are at the unit offices.

The DCA updates the Albionshire CC archaeological project management system to show that ALB 1983 is in the post-fieldwork stage.

The BHA project manager receives an assessment of the material archive and uses this to secure transfer of title to the finds on behalf of the museum. This is entered on the project management system.

The BHA project manager informs the DCA and the museum curator that title has been transferred.

BHA identifies material for analysis by external specialists. The sending out of finds, the people and places to which they have gone and their return, is logged on the BHA project management system.

BHA back up all digital material created during the project on tapes or discs that are stored off-site.

The client report is written and accepted. It is agreed that no further fieldwork is required. At this stage the planning condition is deemed to have been met and the DCA signs off the reporting stage of the project.

The DCA updates the Albionshire archaeological project management system to show that the report has been completed for ALB 1983.

BHA log the project as entering the archive compilation phase.

The BHA project manager informs the DCA and the museum curator that the project archive is being compiled. The museum curator decides whether or not to visit and monitor adherence to local archive deposition standards.

The BHA project manager contacts the museum curator when the archive has been compiled, providing information on the size and composition of the archive.

A date for transfer is agreed and logged into the BHA project management system.

Following transfer the BHA project management system is updated to show that the archive has been deposited.

The BHA project manager informs the DCA that the archive has been deposited.

Once the archive has been deposited and checked and licence to copyright secured, the museum curator contacts the DCA to confirm deposition in accordance with the museum's standards.

The DCA updates the Albionshire archaeological project management system, indicating that the archive has been deposited and signs off the archive transfer stage of the project.

The project is closed.

For copies of this document, or if you would like this document in a different format, please contact our Customer Services Department:

Telephone: 0870 333 1181

Fax: 01793 414926

Textphone: 01793 414878

Email: customers@english-heritage.org.uk

Product Code: 51681

Freedom of Information

English Heritage is subject to the Freedom of Information Act. All information held by the organisation will be accessible in response to a Freedom of Information request, unless one of the exemptions in the Act applies.

