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EDITORIAL COMMENT

As there is to be a change of Editors after this number, it might be an opportune moment to consider the aims of The Museum Archaeologist during the last two years. When S.M.A. was originally set up, it was I think intended that the publications of the Society should provide a place where articles on matters of substance relating to museum archaeology, as opposed to other aspects of archaeology, could be published and also where news of events likely to interest museum archaeologists could be published. As the journal has been produced only twice a year, this last aim has obviously not been achieved. Unless it is possible either to produce The Museum Archaeologist four times a year or to produce a newsletter twice a year and the journal twice a year, publication is not sufficiently frequent for up-to-date news. Whether there is, in fact, a call for this information is perhaps doubtful.

With regard to the contents of The Museum Archaeologist during the last four numbers, five papers have been lectures delivered to the Society either at its A.G.M. or at the Conference of the Museums Association, three of them delivered before the period under discussion. Five papers have been requested and four papers and several notes have been submitted by members. In the current number, only the papers by Pauline Beswick and Frank Cottrill have been unsolicited. It would seem from this that if even two numbers a year are to be published, it is necessary for S.M.A. to organise its meetings so that papers suitable for publication are read and also for members to feel an urge to publish. The seminar on archaeological storage which has been organised is perhaps a hopeful sign for the future.

It will no doubt be suggested that there is insufficient time for people to write; however a number of the lectures published have had to be revised for publication by busy members of the profession and Bill Manning, who is not even a member of S.M.A. nor working in a museum, has found time to write a stimulating paper when requested. It is to be hoped that members will therefore support the new Editor by submitting suitable articles for publication.

THE BRITISH MUSEUM AND BRITISH ARCHAEOLOGY: AN ACQUISITIONS POLICY

A paper read to the Society of Museum Archaeologists on the 2nd June, 1978, by Ian Longworth

Setting aside the Department of Prints and Drawings, the British Museum has eight departments concerned with antiquities together with a Department of Conservation and Technical Services, and a Research Laboratory. Of these, two departments, those of Prehistoric and Romano-British Antiquities and Medieval and Later Antiquities are concerned to a significant degree with British archaeology; Coins and Medals, Conservation and the Research Laboratory to a lesser extent. It is worth stressing however that no section of the BM has British archaeology as its sole brief. In the case of Prehistoric and Romano-British Antiquities, our interests lie with the palaeolithic of the world and for much of later prehistory with Europe to the Arctic and to the Urals. For Medieval and Later Antiquities, the range is Europe in its entirety after the collapse of the Roman Empire. Like all museums our work is divided between various functions, though these are largely interrelated. Put quite simply, we see our role as curators of study collections, by which I mean collections to be studied in depth by students, scholars and staff. From these are selected our display material. It may be felt that too little space in our galleries is at present devoted to British archaeology. The departments most concerned would certainly agree and so would our Trustees. We must, however, await the liberation of space which the exodus of the British Library will create.

In terms of collections devoted to British archaeology - or rather English archaeology, for the national museums of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland look after their own - we are guided by two overriding principles. Firstly, we wish to have study collections representative not simply of the main trends and cultural developments in English archaeology, but also of regional variations where these can be defined. To have such a representative series brought together in a single institution is of tremendous assistance to the research worker, and here we have a unique role to play. Secondly, we wish to be able to place these cultural developments and variations in a broader, essentially European, setting.

Our efforts to achieve these ends have been to date somewhat patchy. Historical accident has made us rich in some areas and poor in others. Developments in British archaeology, especially since 1945, have left us wishing to change the emphasis of our collections in order both to keep pace with current research, and to attempt to predict future trends. In particular we wish to develop our collections in the spheres of the history of technology, organic artefacts and settlement-site collections.

Like most institutions, I imagine, we have suffered in the past from a position of chronic understaffing. We have consequently suffered our share of jibes, some of which were perhaps a little too close to truth to be altogether amusing. Times and conditions have fortunately changed. When my colleague, Gale Sieveking, joined the then sub-department of Prehistory and Romano-Britain in 1956 he became the third of a fairly select band of musketeers curating prehistory and Roman Britain. Our strength has now risen to 11 graduate academics supported by 7 non-graduate museum assistants, 4 draftsmen and an administrative support staff of 6. We feel that we can now claim to be in a good position to monitor and assess developments in British archaeology and to make some contribution ourselves to those developments.

Our acquisitions policy should then be viewed against this background. In relation to British archaeology we are essentially trying to fill gaps in our existing collections and to extend the range of our study material in order to offer a better service for the future to colleagues in other museums, specialists, students and the general public. We seek material under five principal headings:

1. Objects of outstanding national importance.
2. Objects representing primary research material, e.g. site collections from metalworking sites, hoards, key grave groups and closed associations which are always likely to remain fundamental to any assessment of that area of archaeology to which they relate.
3. A wide range of organic artefacts, especially of wood and leather, which are largely absent from our collections and which we are in a very good position to conserve.
4. Representative samples of material culture obtained mainly by the acquisition of discrete units, e.g. pit groups, sections of ditch fill, etc., but occasionally by way of total site collections.
5. Sherd collections to extend the sherd library which we have formed and which we hope will become representative on a national scale. This will be supported by thin-sections to enable fabric analysis to be conducted on a micro- as well as macroscopic level.

Our methods of acquisition are, I imagine, familiar. For outstanding objects we rely first and foremost on gifts, but occasionally we have recourse to the sale rooms, dealers and sales by private treaty. For objects of gold and silver declared Treasure Trove, we have first option, but our records show that since 1965 the Departments of Prehistoric and Romano-British Antiquities and Medieval and Later Antiquities have exercised that option on only 50% of the finds, the remaining objects we have usually been successful in passing on to the appropriate regional museum.

We also rely heavily for all other requirements on gifts from landowners and long may their generosity continue. However, signs are already detectable that landowners may wish in future to exercise their right to sell rather than present archaeological material to museums. Undoubtedly the advent of metal detector users offering to go fifty : fifty with the landowner on any proceeds will have brought home to many that they have an asset which increasingly they may be anxious to exploit. The extrapolation of such a sentiment from stray finds to collections from organised excavations is one which would be as logical as it would be dismaying. Suffice it to say that at present most of our needs can be met through the proceeds of rescue archaeology, and we have been able in a number of cases to help with grants either to the excavation itself or to the museum receiving the site collection in return for a representative sample of the material recovered.

When our needs fall outside the areas covered by rescue archaeology we have the capability to finance our own excavations in order to recover the necessary data. In this connection we have in recent years, for example, mounted excavations at High Lodge and Grimes Graves to obtain a precise context and supporting evidence for large but ill-documented collections of artefacts which would otherwise have remained of very little research potential.

In pursuing our aims we have no 'natural catchment area' which is not in some way also an area husbanded by a museum closer to hand. We would therefore like to extend our thanks to those of our colleagues who, while discussing and agreeing amongst themselves mutually acceptable collecting areas and collecting policies, have retained a thought for the national collection and continue to assist us in our search for material to satisfy its needs. In return we hope to be able to increase the effectiveness of our help to those who seek it.

UNIVERSITIES AND MUSEUMS

W. H. Manning

The functions of a university are usually defined as teaching and research, the former mainly applying to undergraduates, the latter, theoretically, to all levels from the first-year student to the most distinguished professor. Obviously not all have research interests which involve their working in museums at all frequently, but it is probably true to say that at some time or other most will require information and help from their colleagues in the museum service. In discussing this relationship it is highly unlikely that I can say anything that is not perfectly obvious to the museum archaeologist; perhaps the most that is possible is to present the familiar problems from a slightly different viewpoint. Such a discussion will almost inevitably dwell on the needs of university students and staffs, and may in consequence appear unduly critical of museums and largely unaware of their problems. Many, although certainly not all university archaeologists appreciate these problems, at least as far as people not directly involved in them ever can, and if they are not discussed in this article it is because it is already quite long enough. I am mainly concerned with those university departments which specialise in British archaeology; the problems of Aegean or Near Eastern archaeology, for example, impinge on few British museums.

University courses are essentially academic, and are rarely intended to be a form of vocational training. Their aim is not to produce museum assistants, field archaeologists, or any other type of specialist, but to produce a graduate who has the basic knowledge on which a more specialised training can be built. In particular it should be remembered that the vast majority of graduates in archaeology will not make a career in that field, either because they lack the inclination or the opportunity. It is a regrettable fact that between them any two of the larger university departments could fill most of the archaeological posts suitable for new graduates which arise each year. But this does not alter the basic fact that a great deal of academic archaeology is dependent on the study of artefacts; indeed for some periods they form almost the only source of information available. In consequence it is necessary for students to have at least some familiarity with the raw material on which so much of their studies are based. Few university departments have teaching collections which are adequate for this purpose, and it can be argued that a collection which covered British archaeology at all adequately would in reality have become a museum. The acquisition of such a collection would be extremely difficult under modern conditions, and would almost certainly bring the university into conflict with museums which might reasonably wish to acquire much of the material themselves. Admittedly a few universities do have museums, some of them of great distinction, but most have been long established and none can be regarded, first and foremost, as teaching collections. Indeed their very success as collections has usually forced them to become in one form or another public museums. For these reasons a university department is normally dependent on the collections of existing museums if its students are to see and handle a wide range of material, and few museum curators would wish it to be otherwise.

In most cases this means that the main burden will fall on the museum or museums nearest to the university; particularly if arrangements are to be made for students to handle material. Often the problem can be partially resolved by making long-term loans to the department, provided that the university can provide some degree of security and that the museum is

willing to accept a few, inevitable, losses. For teaching collections of common materials, such as pottery, this is undoubtedly the best arrangement for it gives flexibility in teaching and reduces the work for museum staffs. For rarer types, however, it is seldom possible, and then the museum visit becomes inevitable. Organised visits by groups of students can take two forms, a detailed examination of material from the reserves, or a tour of the exhibition galleries. In many ways the former is more useful, particularly when pottery is being examined, but unless the displays are first denuded it is unlikely to include the cream of the collection. Inevitably it involves the museum staff in additional work, but it can familiarise the students with a far wider range of material than would otherwise be possible. It may also provide some idea of the behind the scenes workings of a museum which could be of value when deciding on a future career.

Perhaps the commonest criticism of new graduates voiced by museums staffs is that they are unfamiliar with the specimens which are the main concern of museums, and it is a valid complaint provided that the corollary is accepted, namely that it is the museums which must provide the material for the student to study, and on occasion also the expertise to explain it.

Most of what has been written so far has been concerned with the group visit, but most university teachers assume, not always on any very firm evidence, that their students will make independent visits to as many museums as possible. Indeed with the regional interests of most provincial museums this is the only way of gaining an overall view of a wide range of British material. Whether the present trend in museum display will provide the student with the information which he requires is another matter. Obviously museum displays are not designed with the needs of university students in mind, but it is certainly true to say that a surprisingly large number fail to give any real picture of the archaeology of their area, perhaps mainly for fear of overburdening the public with too many objects and too much printed material. This is a matter on which the museum profession is itself divided, but from the viewpoint of the university teacher the pendulum has swung too far in some museums, apparently resulting in design assuming a greater importance than the objects being displayed. In particular, labels can be reduced to the point at which they cease to become a source of information; or be so placed that relating them to the object becomes a feat of intelligence. The logical end of this development can be seen in certain West German museums where the label has been effectively exterminated.

Equally disconcerting is the other end of the spectrum, exemplified by the site museum at Fishbourne, where the attempt to assess the palace in terms of the history and culture of the Roman world has effectively driven most of the objects found there out of the display, to replace them with photomontages and large areas of text. Any student wishing to take a closer look at the objects illustrated in the report will have wasted his time if he goes to the site museum. Admittedly this is an extreme case, and there are good arguments for attempting to explain the significance of local material in a wider context, but as with most things there is a happy medium, and it would not be difficult to cite a number of other museums which have advanced quite a long way down this particular road.

It is probably relatively rare for a student to go to a museum expressly to see a particular piece in the reserves, unless they are undertaking some form of research. But with the decreasing amount of material on public display this, together with the class visit, may become more frequent in future.

Archaeology is a subject rarely studied in schools, and one of the most useful services which many museums provide for universities is in encouraging an interest in archaeology among school children. In a rather passive way they do this by being there, but many provide a more active stimulus by allowing

interested children access to their collections and libraries, and most of all by offering sympathetic encouragement. The writer still remembers with considerable gratitude the help which he received whilst at school from the late Charles Freeman and his staff in the Luton Museum. For a student to arrive at university with a practical understanding of at least some aspects of archaeology is a great advantage, and one which will stand him in good stead throughout his course.

Perhaps the point of most frequent contact between museum staffs and university archaeologists is in the field of research, and for anyone whose interests are centred on artefacts, museums hold a key position. In Britain we are undoubtedly fortunate in it being exceptionally rare for a researcher to be denied access to material which he wishes to study, although this is not always the case on the Continent. The more common problems arise from an object having been temporarily mislaid (they are never lost); or having been so effectively built into the display that its removal involves dismantling the whole case. Usually one accepts the apologies with good grace, but it can lead to opinions being advanced which are based on a wholly inadequate examination of the object. The possibility that specimens may have to be removed from exhibition from time to time should surely be envisaged when a display is being designed; as should the need to be able to open cases without having to impress the entire staff of the museum to move what appears to be several hundred-weights of glass and metal. The conditions under which a researcher has to work are often less than ideal, but the museum staff are often no better housed themselves. The main requirements are normally warmth and light. The close and detailed examination of artefacts under bad conditions can rapidly reduce research to a form of trial by endurance; while making impossible an adequate photographic record without recourse to flash and the resultant flat, unrevealing pictures.

In some cases museums can provide facilities which make photography considerably easier. Floodlights, for example, or even a cleared area by a window can make the difference between photographs of a standard suitable for publication, and those which, at best, are useful only to refresh the memory. Few students can afford elaborate photographic equipment of their own, nor do they have the vehicles necessary to carry floodlights, extension cables and the like, and any help in this field is usually much appreciated.

Museums vary greatly in the reception which they give to the research student. The vast majority of museums clearly do their best to help, and it is the small details such as showing an interest in the student's research, or providing him with a cup of coffee, which are most appreciated. Many students undertake extensive museum tours staying for long periods in towns which they do not know, usually in relatively cheap accommodation, and the only people they have much contact with are those they meet in the museum. Under these circumstances a friendly interest may become an act of real kindness. The contrary is seen in such practices as putting the researcher in a storeroom at 9.15 and ignoring his existence until it becomes necessary to evict him at 5.00. Other less than satisfactory experiences include not bothering to mention that the museum holds documentary material which is of direct relevance to the material being examined; and being put in a reserve store without any attempt to explain where the relevant material is; a practice which I was amazed to hear of, if only because it must run contrary to all common sense on the part of the museum staff. The poor relations which sometimes exist between the curatorial staff and their own field unit can also become disconcertingly obvious. Students, being young and relatively naive in such matters, tend to assume that an approach to a museum will include its field unit, only

to discover when they arrive that both have to be contacted separately, as the staff of one rarely speaks to the other. One of the more frequent duties of the supervisor of a research student is to explain this kind of thing.

From a museum's viewpoint repeated visits by university students or staff may appear to be a nuisance, although it usually reflects the importance of their collections. But it is only by continued research that our knowledge of the subject will be advanced, and the traffic is not entirely one way. Difficult queries can be passed to specialists working in universities and often are. A point on which the museum worker's patience is often strained is the habit which researchers at all levels have of sending written requests for detailed information. Often the response is that they should do their own research, and at times this is entirely justifiable. On the other hand a researcher has to know if a visit to a museum will justify the time and cost involved, or if the answer can be obtained by a short note. This applies as much to a member of staff as to a student, for they will usually have less time and certainly less money for travel than a research student with a state studentship. Few British universities have large funds with which to defray the expenses of research and it is difficult to raise the money needed for museum visits from outside sources. At present prices, four day-return tickets to London would exhaust the writer's research allowance for the year! By contrast a research student can travel widely providing that his supervisor certifies that such travel is necessary for the preparation of his thesis; something which cannot be done if the student has not confirmed the value of a visit with the museum in question.

Archaeologists, whether working in museums or universities, are rarely noted for the rapidity with which they reply to letters. Unfortunately when a student is preparing a museum tour, replying to his letter suggesting a date for a visit just before that day arrives will almost certainly mean that the letter is delivered after he has begun the tour; in consequence he will either appear on that day, convenient or not, or he will have crossed the museum off his list.

In the main archaeological research is still carried out on traditional lines, and the only risks to the objects are the inevitable ones which arise from handling them. However, there are projects which may require at least the partial destruction of museum objects. Questions of origins, methods of manufacture, authenticity or otherwise, and date can all often be answered by the removal of a sample from the object. Here a balance must be maintained between advancing knowledge and safeguarding the specimen, which is after all one of the prime functions of a museum. In some fields, thin sectioning of stone axes, for example, it is generally accepted that the knowledge which has resulted justifies the slight, and easily concealed, damage which is done to the axe. Other cases are less clear cut, and problems arise if the damage is likely to be considerable, or when the piece is unique. With new techniques there is always the possibility that later work will lead to refinements which will reduce the size of the sample needed, or that it will be found to have problems which may render the results suspect. In some cases the museum curator may lack the specialist knowledge necessary for a realistic assessment of the advantages and disadvantages of the technique, or even of the validity of the question being asked. In an ideal world the researcher would not have proposed taking the sample if there was any doubt of the need for it, or of the value of the result, but in reality he is more likely to be concerned with his research than preserving the specimen, probably arguing that this is the museum's concern. Under these circumstances a second, informed opinion should be sought, but if it is to be a frank opinion it must be asked and given in confidence. If the arbitrator suspects that all the blame for a refusal is going to land on him, the answer will, at best, be carefully ambiguous and of use to no-one.

One reason why anyone undertaking research on museum objects has to write frequent letters and visit many museums of marginal relevance to the project is the almost complete lack of published catalogues of museum collections. Indeed, this is now so universal as to be taken as the normal state. Not since the years before the First World War has it been at all common for museums to publish catalogues and since the Second World War they have become an absolute rarity in both provincial and national museums, with a few honourable exceptions, and those mainly outside the local government sector. In this we see a striking contrast with art galleries, many of which still regard the production of catalogues of their permanent collections as a matter of course. Yet catalogues are a uniquely successful way of telling the archaeological world what a museum contains, and with modern offset lithography it does not need to be an exorbitantly expensive process. Nor need such catalogues be detailed works of scholarship, adequate illustrations and descriptions are all that are required.

To some extent the explanation must lie in the difficulty of convincing museum committees that publication is part of a museum's function, the problem of finding time to prepare them, and the fact that whilst few aspects of a museum's work are expected to cover their costs, publication usually is. Nor, one suspects, are they very high on the list of priorities of the museum staff themselves. One of the regrettable things about provincial museums is how infrequently their staffs publish papers on the objects under their care.

But it would be ungenerous of me to end on a note of criticism, for as a member of a university department I have received almost invariable help and kindness from many museum colleagues. When talking or corresponding with archaeologists working in museums one realises that the division between us is not really very meaningful. It largely lies in the ancillaries of our work, in the differences between museum and university administration, between the routines of answering the queries of the public and arranging displays, and undergraduate teaching. But behind these lies the basic fact that first and foremost we are all archaeologists.

INTEGRATED EXCAVATION AND MUSEUM RECORDING SYSTEMS: METHODS, THEORIES AND PROBLEMS

A paper read at an AMSSEE seminar on Archaeological Recording in Museums on the 18th March, 1980, by Jennifer Stewart

Under this title, I propose to evaluate the past and current problems of compatible recording between site and museum. To this end I will present a survey in four sections.

1. The current situation, how excavators and curators deal with excavated material, particularly the numbering sequences for finds.
2. A brief historical survey to attempt to show how the major dichotomy between the curatorial and excavational methods of dealing with finds has evolved.
3. A description of the current problems which have arisen from these two differing methods of registering finds.
4. Some possible solutions between the people who produce the excavation material and those whose duty it is to house this material.

What I say does not necessarily represent the views of the Museum Documentation Association. Part of my job remit at the M.D.A. has been to investigate extending the range of M.D.A. Archaeology cards to encompass excavation recording. To do this, I visited many units and museum excavating departments in addition to letter enquiries to journals, S.C.U.M. members, and museum departments. I should like to take this opportunity to thank all those who helped me in this work. From this research, we hope to extend the M.D.A. card range to include recording sheets for stratigraphy and finds, and possibly an archive card.

Within a title which encompasses so many possible diverse topics, it is probably just as worthwhile to state what will not be covered in the talk, as defining its structure. Related aspects such as Sites and Monuments Records, archaeological storage, museum collecting policies and archaeological data banks cannot be discussed in detail here. Nor can many computerised archaeology topics such as the use of 'micros' on site - this is covered to some extent in recent proceedings of conferences on Computer Applications in Archaeology - or the use of automated archaeological classification systems, (see Sparck-Jones, 1970, (a) and (b)).

Just as the life of an object from excavation to the museum shelf is one continuous sequence so its recording in these two environments should form a continuous integrated process. This does not necessarily mean utilising the same media to record finds on site and in the museum, but rather the recording media for both comply with the same minimum data standards with flexible areas for the different research or administrative requirements of site and museum. While the obvious way would be by on-line computerised methods, the location of many archaeological sites, the financial and mental attitudes of either the excavating body or the finds-receiving body will preclude these methods. Computer compatible systems utilising standardised sheets or cards backed up with various manual inventory checks and site notebooks would appear to be a possible structure for the compromise.

Here one should distinguish between:

- (a) fully integrated systems where the material from an excavation can be totally absorbed into the museum numbering and documentation systems. To my knowledge, such formal integration has not yet been achieved for all excavation collections within an Archaeology department, but could be possible for one-off, small-scale excavations using a Type 1 numbering system (see later).
- (b) Integrating current site and museum material: methods of absorbing information and finds into a museum by standardising and formalising the hand-in process. One cannot be deterministic here. No one system could accommodate every site's archives. Within the four aspects of an integrated system as defined below, adaptations would have to be developed to cater for the exigencies of each museum and each site.
- (c) The physical process of dealing with backlogs or rationalising storage space. Valid and immediate as these problems are to archaeological curators, my feelings here are that the solutions will be as varied as the problems: the three handmaidens of Time, Money and Staff Expertise will have to be utilised in unison according to the dictates of the problems and the needs of the users.

So to define the title: integrated excavation and museum recording systems encompass not only numbering systems, data standards and an archival policy but also the physical transition of finds and documents from site to museum. We will return to these four aspects later.

As far as possible I shall try to stay out of the 'archaeo-political' arena of the funding of British archaeology, policy statements by the various archaeological bodies (or their lack), the need of a State Archaeological Service, etc.. I will leave this to braver individuals than myself.

1. Current Situation

There is no easy solution to integrating excavation and museum recording: if the ideal, workable system existed, we would all be using it.

The major problem of integrated systems is that the excavator's method works for his/her aims just as the traditional museum accession system works, more or less, for the curator. The two systems work in isolation but not together and each cannot see why they should compromise. To define: the excavation system is to assign each small find - an item deemed worthy of separate recording depending on research strategies, dating value, etc. - a number within a single continuous numerical sequence linked to a site code, e.g. K.M. 21 or a site and year code, e.g. 22.1979. 21. Group materials, such as pot, bone, iron nails, are usually marked and stored via one unique context number (or a layer/feature system), together with site code and year, e.g.

L.L.1970.52	unique numerical context
S.A.S.71.AA	unique alphabetical context
T.N.1969.H1F3	layer and feature system

More rarely, several independent continuous numbering systems are developed for different material types or bag and box numbers, thus:

L.L.1970.P52	L.L.1970.I52
(pot bag no.)	(iron box no.)

Numbers may be added to a particular material type, such as leather or mortaria fragments, retrospectively by a researcher to the original context numbers - so

NAB.'55.25/1
site/year/context/item no.

Thus depending on the type and period of site, volume of finds and their assigned importance, the total finds may encompass at least half a dozen separate number sequences which serve to conveniently record their stratigraphic provenance (which would otherwise be lost on prolific sites) and as an inventory check for finds management. The museum accessioning system usually depends on one continuous date-linked sequence, e.g. 1971.345. Occasionally departments within a large museum have separate sequences, so an Archaeology Department may have A.1971.345, Prints and Drawings P.D.1971.345. The six or more various excavation sequences have somehow to be absorbed into this single sequence: most commonly by the whole site obtaining one global accession number. This can be added to small finds (if large enough) or to box labels. If and when the site's material is 'worked over' by the curatorial staff, extension numbers are added to the finds and the objects or bags or boxes themselves:

A.1971.345/1, 2, etc.
department/year/accession no./extension no.

This whole number is termed item, catalogue or register number. Unless this open system of incremental growth accessioning is backed up with cross-referencing indexes and inventory checks, researchers wanting to see all the Black Burnished pottery from distinctive levels at a site, are merely shown the storeroom and stacks of context defined bags. Finer retrieval is impossible without searching through all bags.

2. Historical Survey

Few of the publications concerned with collection management detail the problems of volumes of excavated materials, likewise few of the excavation manuals are concerned with the fate of finds after deposition.

The methods of nineteenth century barrow diggers are too well known to require further amplification here. They made the contribution of General Pitt-Rivers to archaeology even more noteworthy: not only in the establishment of scientific methods of digging and recording but for valuable contributions to typological studies. As an excavator, Pitt-Rivers realised the necessity of accurate plans and sections as well as detailed drawings and descriptions of the objects which he recovered. As Atkinson was to note, Pitt-Rivers was one of the earliest excavators to realise the importance of the interpretation of stratigraphy and the need to record all finds, however 'dull' (Atkinson, 1946, 9). Woolley and Evans too, by establishing typological study and publishing frequently, introduced method and refined the technique of excavation (Crawford, 1953, 30), and the study of excavated finds.

Likewise our debt to Petrie is now acknowledged, especially by Near Eastern archaeologists, particularly for that superbly emotive quote, 'our museums are ghastly charnel-houses of murdered evidence' (Petrie, 1904, 48). In his 1904 publication he was, with equal gusto, to emphasise the need of accurate recording of stratigraphy and finds. Perhaps even more importantly he was to suggest the innovation of 'intelligent recording', a considering of all the recordable facts before removing the evidence. 'Everything seen should be mentally grasped, and its meaning and bearing comprehended at the moment of discovery, so clearly

that a definitive statement can be made, which shall be as certain and as absolute as anything can be which depends on human senses' (Petrie, 1904, 50). This notion of comprehension while recording extended to publication: 'to empty the contents of notebooks on a reader's head is not publishing', (Petrie, 1904, 50).

Atkinson's 1946 classic publication on field archaeology is still a much-loved reference book. His suggested method of recording and labelling finds and pottery has been used and has changed little, in essence, in the intervening thirty years. The same can be said for his system of site notebooks and finds registers, (Atkinson, 1946, 155). Wheeler's 'Archaeology from the Earth', while following some of Atkinson's tenets, extended some aspects such as 'indexing small-finds' - creating a card index by material in tandem with the finds register, (Wheeler, 1954, 189). However, it took another twenty years until the publications of Webster, Coles and Barker to consider even the arranging of the deposition of finds, (Webster, 1974, 58; Barker, 1977, 96; Coles, 1972, 123). The handing-in of site documents was not considered. David Browne (Browne, 1975) was probably one of the first to suggest a structured method to recording stratigraphy, one page per layer, the precursor to standardised context sheets.

To turn now to curatorial publications: I do not intend to conduct a historical survey of curatorial methods - the contributions of Woodward (1728), Hoyle (1891), Hiley and Wallis (1936), Lowe (1903), Coleman (1927), Codrington (1931) and Allan (1960) are well known to a British museum audience and that of Reibel (1978), Guthe (1964), Lewis (1976) and Dudley and Wilkinson (1979) to an American audience. Few, however, tackle the problem of either the storage of vast amounts of excavation material or the need for a generally applicable archaeological classification scheme to assist storage and retrieval.

However, it is interesting to note that Hoyle (1891), a natural historian, used an example from an archaeologist (Flinders Petrie) to substantiate his ideas on classified museum ordering.

In a letter to 'Nature', Petrie suggested a system of classified numerical cataloguing for all museums:

- '56' being global code for parrots from all museums.
- '56.1' being the parrots of the same kind in
- '56.2' an individual museum,

(Hoyle, 1891). Lewis (1976, 161) adopts a similar method for type series of flint arrowheads, body sherds, etc.. He considers this permissible only 'with groups of archaeological specimens collected at one place and time . . .', i.e. having identical data as well as identical temporal and cultural affinities and no significant differences, (Lewis, 1976, 161). He sees this as a secondary stage of registering archaeological collections after an initial 'culling' process - weeding out less informative items, such as abraded body sherds.

The method of assessing large collections of biological and geological material - the only other museum collections with comparable volumes of material - as suggested by Allan (1960), was also adopted by Dudley and Wilkinson. Here it is implied that it could be used for a variety of collection types, including archaeology presumably. Dudley and Wilkinson used an accession number consisting of year number + collection number (or single item) + sub number:

1978.6.22

(Dudley and Wilkinson, 1979, 26-27). The collection number is added

immediately on donation. The sub-number is added once the collection has been accessed, sherds joined, etc.. The actual mechanics of whether this sub-number is added to context groups or ware groups or whether the whole number is added to each sherd or bone fragment, or just the box label with full cross-referencing, are not discussed. Many archaeological curatorial staff have considered these problems and some have developed or suggested possible solutions. Adrian Rance of Southampton Museums wrote of such a solution in 1973.

Here the site would get the next free accession number: 321. Small finds were numbered in one continuous sequence: 321.66. Group material such as bone or pot would be marked by stratigraphic unit within the site accession number: 321.2.3 (Rance, 1973). This proposal was further extended in his 1976 publications and 1978 C.B.A. lecture, to include other problematic areas of archaeological curatorship: storage by stratigraphy or typology and the arrangement of the archive. Essentially he suggests that the archive structure should reflect the stratigraphic sequence of the site and that the stratigraphic unit be the basis of site-to-museum recording. The problem of stratigraphic versus typological storage does not exist, if one's main accession catalogue reflects stratigraphy and cross-referencing indexes are arranged according to user's needs - typology and chronology, etc.. The need of a keyword thesaurus to maintain consistency of terminology and thus aid efficient retrieval is emphasised, (Rance, 1976, 1978).

3. Current Problems

To take these problems within a chronological sequence of the life of the finds we can define many such problem areas:

- i. The ownership of finds which will affect the choice of numbering of finds and their deposition in a museum.
- ii. Methods of absorbing site sequences into museum sequences.
- iii. Reconciling the needs of a variety of users of such an archive with the existing framework.
- iv. The cost of storage and of indexing an archive to make it fully usable.

An appreciation of the cost-effectiveness of the museum's information retrieval system: a local museum may have five enquiries a month while a university museum may have ten per week.

- v. The need of a workable classification scheme and indexes to the archive which will enhance the museum's service to researchers - most museums store excavated material by stratigraphic unit within material types yet 90% of enquiries are typologically based.
- vi. Auditors' needs.

i. Conveyance of excavated finds

In England, all excavated finds are the property of the landowner unless proved to be Treasure Trove (Coles, 1972, 46; Webster, 1974, 58). As we are concerned here with the main bulk of excavated material, and not individual items of gold or silver we will not be considering these latter items, (Coles, 1972, 46-48, deals with this subject and the ownership of Scottish excavated materials). Likewise we are not here concerned with material found using metal detectors on 'protected places' as defined by the recent Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 (Part III, Section 42). The disposal of finds is

entirely up to the landowner but in most cases he is willing to hand them over to a local museum (or back to the excavator). To assist this transfer of title, a written statement from the landowner to the recipient or a formal receipt form made out by the museum and countersigned by the donor is required by some museums, but this is not usually mandatory. Nor, as far as I know, has there been a test-case to prove the legal base of such documents. There are no examples of these forms in British museological literature but several in American books, e.g. Dudley and Wilkinson (1979, 187, figs. IV.B.1; A1; A4; G4) or Reibel (1978, 131, fig. C1) where they are termed 'deed of gift' and 'transfer of title' respectively.

Receipt forms are discussed in Lewis (1976, 22) which provides examples of 'museum donor certificates', (figs. 1a and 1b) and in Dudley and Wilkinson (1979, 248 and fig. G) there are examples termed 'certificate of gifts'. (Information from G. Lewis, Director, Museums Studies Department).

ii. Absorbing site sequences into museum sequences

Within the disparate methods of absorbing site sequences into those of museum accessioning, three main methods become apparent. These reflect the degree of museum co-operation, the nature of the site, the volume of finds and decisions on ownership of finds.

Type 1 - The total museum approach. This can be used for units attached to museums or excavations carried out by museum staff. Ownership of finds must obviously be completely decided in favour of the museum before marking objects. Small finds, pot or bone bags get the next free accession number within the block allocated by the museum, and are not distinguished. (Lewis, 1956, describes such a method). Within the sequence two adaptations (at least) exist:

for prolific sites -

59 . 135 . 1

year/context/pot or bone bag from a context; or a pot ware or bone species within a context; or a small find.

for less prolific sites -

59 . 2102

year/pot or bone bag from a context; or each pot ware within a context; or a small find.

(Each gets the next free number).

All types of finds in the last system then form one continuous sequence. 'Context' code here can be the actual context number or a code for a feature and level. (In the latter case a concordance table would have to be maintained).

Type 2 - This can be termed the incremental-growth method and reflects an important initial co-operation with the receiving body and thereafter a flexible system to accommodate research needs or volumes of material. The site receives one museum accession number and this is then sub-divided at will. So small finds can be recorded:

22.1972.1

collection or site no./year/item no.

Group materials are then marked with year, site number and context number, e.g.

22.1972.1365.

There are various methods used to sub-divide this context group. The recipient museum can record for the accession number the total numbers of bags of pottery from that context as an inventory check. Wares within the context can be physically separated within the box, or be assigned extension numbers.

Here the whole number acts not only as a unique identifier but also as an inventory check for bags.

Type 3 - The most common method is used when there has been little dialogue before the dig about the deposition of the finds, or there have been some problems over the ownership of finds, or in the handing-in process. Here the dig assigns small finds numbers and records group material by their provenance. The museum then reworks this material to a greater or less extent occasionally only giving the site a global accession number. Alternatively the sites' material may be completely worked over, fragments joined to form complete vessels, sorting into wares, etc.. Museum accession numbers can be allocated to these objects and as global numbers for boxes, ware groups, etc., all within one sequence. These new numbers may be added to individual objects or to box labels as time permits. So

TM21

TM23

may be joined to form 1979.3 or 1979.3.1.

As will be appreciated small finds can be absorbed fairly readily into the museum accession system, but group materials are more problematical.

Bone

Coy (1978, 24) suggests every bone should carry the site code and the unique code for the smallest archaeological unit from which the bone was retrieved. Very large amounts of bone fragments need only have their container marked with this information.

As with other excavated collections, bone material is equally problematical in the decisions to be made on the integrity of the whole collection. (Most archaeologists would probably agree with Coy (1978, 37) in keeping all bone, but would all curators?) Coy in addition provides a list of some bone categories most likely to be reworked and requiring careful thought in storage and retrieval (Coy, 1978, 34-5). Whether to store by stratigraphic bag number or species is felt to be a decision to be taken individually for each site (Coy, 1978, 34).

Flint

The Lithic Study Group has provided some guidelines on the treatment of excavated flint: each flint should be marked with the site code and the find/context designation and numbered in one single sequence - not year based, (Saville, 1979, 3). Storage order of flints is not discussed. Saville, on behalf of the Lithic Study Group, has argued for the full specialist report to accompany the flint assemblage to the recipient museum (Saville, 1979, 4).

Pottery

Despite a lot of work by individuals and various study groups, there does not appear to be any published guidelines on the recording, marking and processing of pottery which can be seen as universally applicable as the basic minimum for all wares.

Excavation Documentation

Most excavations now use some kind of standardised recording forms, most often for context or finds recording. I think it goes without saying that these forms, of whatever colour or persuasion, should be used in conjunction with the site notebooks. The forms are for recordable data within standardised categories; the notebooks for full-scale interpretation. Occasionally there is a danger that these forms are a substitute for clear thinking, that once the task of filling in the form is completed the interpretative faculties seize up.

Complex forms trying to record too many different kinds of data usually collapse under their own weight. Basically one needs two types of form:

- (i) to record the basic 'raw' data: stratigraphy on context sheets, finds on small finds cards or finds processing forms for group materials like pottery, clay pipes, etc.. These then form the core for site recording.
- (ii) inventory check forms or cross-referencing summaries such as a summary list of group materials, one per context.

Two of the most useful forms for both 'writing up' and archive management which are less common are: (a) cross-referencing lists - this method was suggested by Wheeler (1954, 189) for small finds. If the pottery is stored and processed by context, one sheet to each ware can be maintained easily during processing to list the context numbers which contain that ware. These can be quite brief listings which act as pointers to the main data store:

BLACK BURNISHED
Context 21
23 etc.

Where the museum maintains a fabric collection classified according to a numerical sequence, this number could form the heading. Such a manual system could become unwieldy when dealing with volumes of material but a similar structure can be adopted using computerised methods. Several excavations maintain such cross-referencing lists during excavation processing, e.g. CRAAGS, and many excavators draw up such forms as an aid to writing up but few deposit these with the finds.

(b) The second form is a list of the different categories of documents and finds which encompass the total archive, whether one uses Frere levels or not (A.M.B.1975).

Type I Interim Site Reports
1973 Smith, 'Excavations at Site Y in X Town' -
1974 Young, J., 'Interim report of excavations at ZZ'.

Type II Context Sheets
1-230.

These basic listings act as a contents page to the total archive, an inventory check and the basis for more detailed cross-referencing.

Most stratigraphy forms are similar in content once the decision to record by unique stratigraphic unit or layers and features - whether negative or positive - has been reached. This decision depending on the dictates of the site does appear to be taken in favour of unique context numbering increasingly nowadays.

In order to explain the forms and to maintain consistency of the terms to be used, some sort of handbook is required. York, Winchester, the Central Excavation Unit (Jeffries, 1977) and Northamptonshire County Council (Boddington, 1978) have developed such handbooks; more are being written. In order to increase their usefulness and particularly if computerisation is intended, the minimum of a dictionary-type listing of terms and definitions, at best a thesaurus-like structure can be developed.

iii. Users' needs

Ask any archaeologist what his/her requirements are for carrying out research using museum collections, and they are sure to say, not altogether in jest: free run of the stores and a strong, willing assistant to fetch and carry! Renfrew, writing in 1967, was to describe this more succinctly. Archaeological research requirements, he felt, should include not only those items common to a data retrieval system in all disciplines: accessibility and knowledge of store location, but also purely parochial archaeological needs. These include association, material type, grid location and what he terms 'archaeological taxonomy' (Renfrew, 1967, 112-3), a classificatory ordering of 'type' and 'culture'. Within the first part of these requirements, accessibility and knowledge of store location, frequently published museum catalogues are the prime necessity and the first step to a national index of collections (Atkinson, 1955). The curator's needs are far more multivariate: he or she requires pre-excavation dialogue so that storage space can be allocated for the finds: the archive of site notes needs a basic minimum of cross-referencing retrieval: finds should be deposited in clean, standardised boxes to fit into the museum storage scheme, and if possible one single early deposition of finds. We will return to some of these aspects later.

iv. Costs

Let us consider for a moment the cost of housing and curating excavated material: for cataloguing, indexing, storing and retrieval.

It is difficult to cost the curating expenses for accessing and cataloguing operations, particularly to compare manual and computerised systems. It appears in both that the intellectual effort and skilled labour to create the original master card for both types of systems are the most problematical to calculate yet are the most expensive commodities. Both methods have 'hidden costs', such as lighting or heating for staff, or the development and refinement of software, which, while near impossible to cost, may be the determining factor in cost-effective retrieval. The following examples of costings from the literature are intended only to show the range of costs for different processes in accessioning and cataloguing collections. Useful comparison between these examples cannot therefore be made. Cutbill, writing in 1973, gives costs of accessioning and curating new material based on average costs kept by the Sedgewick Museum staff over five years. According to his calculations, the average cost of manually documenting a museum object would be on average 66.6p for a standard collection of 12,000 items. This included preparing the manuscript catalogue; typing indexes and labels and basic equipment.

Hereford Cider Museum has recently come up with some indexing costs: 40p per item to create 3-4 index entries often with a ten-word summary. (This included

paper, staff time and card cabinet costs; but not fixed overheads, heating and lighting for staff or of actually creating the master card. These figures were based on records kept for a STEP project. (Information from M. Quinion, Curator, Hereford Cider Museum).

A recent library study by Overton and Seal (1979) provides the figure of £2.71 to £3.70 for the average unit cost for a developed computerised cataloguing system - staff time, computer costs and media, (Overton and Seal, 1979, 10). (These costs can be compared with a 1976 American study in manual and computerised museum operations which suggest considerable savings using a computerised method once the system has 'got off the ground' (Van Devender, 1976)). According to commercial rates for storage space in a typical town, it would cost £1.00 a year to house a shoe-box of pot sherds. (Many sites can have over 500 boxes of pot, bone and finds per year).

To take another budget item, Cutbill estimated it cost £1.17 to retrieve items - 50p of staff time to find it and the rest in handling and preparation.

Thus the cost of keeping one shoebox of sherds in a museum is well in excess of £2.00 per annum in perpetuity and this does not include conservation costs. (One can understand why Professor Cunliffe, in his valedictory lecture to the C.B.A., suggested regional stores financed by the DoE to house all the units' material, (Cunliffe, 1979)).

v. Classification systems

In order to fulfill most museum enquiries into archaeological collections, classification systems are required (Borhegyi and Marriott, 1958; Murdock, 1975). By archaeological classification systems I do not mean here the defining of archaeological culture groups by artefacts (Heizer and Graham, 1967, 158-161), but a general museum-orientated system which encompasses all material objects from all culture groups to act as an aid to information retrieval be it all bronze rapiers in the collections from the Thames or all Neolithic rim sherds from S. England. Very few archaeological typological studies, such as Dragendorff or that for Mycenaean pots have gained widespread credance. Of museum-based systems, Chenhall's functional thesaurus with hierarchical overtones or Murdock's (1975) work are the only available methods, as yet not widely tested in Britain. Thus such a classification would group like objects together and provide a retrieval term to each group or class. Within classification schemes, three main types have been developed: simple word lists (such as those used in the Oxfordshire Sites and Monuments records, Benson, 1972), thesauri, the National Monuments Record thesauri for sites and portable objects, the Wessex thesaurus (Rance, 1976 (a) and (b); Rance and Magee, 1977) and hierarchical classification schemes (the Hunterian Museum, Human History hierarchical classification), (Mackie, 1978 a and b; Pole, 1979; Mackie, 1979); or the Ordnance Survey listing (O.S. n.d.).

Of the above, a thesaurus-like system is most useful for an archaeological archive for consistent retrieval, so if the excavator records an object as a 'statuette', a museum request for 'figurines' would not miss this item or other synonyms. (By thesaurus we mean here an alphabetic listing of terms which shows the relationship of words - related terms, more general or more specific terms - and allows the searcher to check possible alternatives (Light, 1979)). The main requirements of such a scheme for archives and museums is that it be simple to use and practical, but that its 'point of view' (be it material, function or chronology) be decided

at the beginning and kept separate. Multi-purpose systems which encompass two or more 'points of view' usually become too unwieldy to be useful.

However, to be more generally useful such a thesaurus requires hierarchical overtones as general searches for all slashing weapons would be tedious. (Otherwise each possible type of this weapon would have to be checked as would its related items. A hierarchy would list such terms together under the appropriate title). So a manual or computer generated thesaurus listing as one document and a hierarchically based card index would be required to maintain consistency and at the same time facilitate general searches of the archaeological archive.

vi. Auditors' requirements

Local authority auditors do not always require that excavated finds form one sequence of numbers for small finds, pot and bone bags. For example, all pottery from context AB, from a site numbered 23 can be marked '23.1980.AB' and a continuation card to the main accession '23', record the number of bags or boxes from this context 'AB'. Thus the pottery continuation card acts as an inventory check to the main accession. (Note too that cards here can be used to back up, or as a substitute for, a bound accession book). (Information from D. Dawson, Curator of Archaeology, Bristol Museum).

4. Possible Solutions

(With reference to the definition of integrated systems, page 11).

i. Numbering systems

I think in most circles it would be accepted that compatible numbering systems are an impossible dream: ownership of finds or even non-selection of finds cannot be guaranteed; the stratigraphy of finds has to be respected for their excavation recording, and for auditing purposes, a single museum sequence, even with pointers to amounts of finds, has to be maintained. Only where ownership is assured and a museum unit or staff is conducting the excavation can a museum-based system be adopted (Type 1).

ii. Data standards

By this I mean the definition of the categories used in recording and the relationship of these categories within a particular discipline, such as the MDA Data Standards, (MDA, 1980). As stated elsewhere, the actual recording media for site and museum need not be physically identical - but the theoretical structure to all the information and the means of retrieving it should be developed if possible at the inception of the excavation. If this is not possible, a minimal archival policy as outlined below should then be developed.

iii. Archival policy

Many units are now arranging their paper and finds archives according to Frere levels but different interpretations of what constitutes certain levels, particularly III, could mean eventual non-standardisation. However, the curator, if taking permanent custody of the finds and their costly storage and conservation, should maintain his/her curatorial standards by providing guidelines on the format and content of the archive. As the minimum shopping list, one could suggest: a listing of the separate items in each category of the archive, cross-referencing indexes and the legible numbering of all group material by their context. If the museum is not equipped for paper conservation, climatology, or security and there are nearby organisations which can provide these facilities, I do not think, in all fairness to posterity, that the museum should accept site documents. I realise that this is not a popular view. Many

units now microfilm these documents and a copy of these, deposited with the finds, should complete the archive. As long as the museum notes the location of the original paper archive and has a microfilm set, the problem of the actual location of such documents is more academic than real.

iv. Transition of finds and documents

These have already been discussed in the 'Users' Needs' section. These procedures form an integral part of a museum's archival policy. As in other aspects of this topic, the site will probably dictate the structure and time-tabling of these processes.

Several excavation teams in Britain and the continent are now using microcomputers for the on-site registration of stratigraphic or finds information. Most commonly PET/APPLE 2 'micros' programmed using BASIC are utilised. Used 'intelligently' and with foresight, these machines could be the vital link in integrated site and museum recording systems, as a cross-referenced, fully usable paper archive could be generated and deposited simultaneously with the finds. Prices are decreasing every day - the 'Computing News' recently mentioned a 'personal computer' for about £100 (without peripherals, such as a screen or printer to produce paper copies) which would mean about £2,000 - £3,000 for a working machine - less than the cost of a finds assistant for one year? But lack of software to run these machines is now the main hurdle and one aspect that the MDA is currently researching. But development in the microelectronics field is rapid. To prevent the duplication of efforts and mistakes, to say nothing of the multiplication of differing recording methods and numbering systems, there needs to be far more research into this field, if not an actual moratorium.

Conclusions

It is customary at this stage to say in loud, firm tones that what is required to solve all our problems is more money and awareness. I disagree. Money without expertise, awareness without a well-formulated plan of campaign are recipes for wasted millions and frustrated users or makers of systems entrenched in ancient mistakes. In 1975, we were introduced to archives, and especially 'archival integrity'; in 1978 Rance reappraised the archive argument and emphasised the 'properly structured archive'. What we need now is the 'well-tempered archive'. According to our definition of integrated systems as stated earlier, this would encompass numbering systems, documentation and data standards, an archival policy and the actual transition of finds and documents to the museum. As Rance rightly noted in 1978, the reforming spirit for archival thinking was, and is, developing independently of museums. The CRAAGS unit for example has already appointed a person, part of whose job remit is to organise their archaeological documents. To maintain this 'well-tempered' archive, curators must be more assertive and clear in their own minds what they want from excavators: the structure of the archive, the minimum amount of cross-referencing to objects, the inventory checks and 'delivery plans', the methods of numbering to prevent duplication or backlogs. Archival integrity does not merely mean the non-fudging of context sheets, or respecting stratigraphy but as far as possible, dialogue between the landowner, the excavators and the curator, so the archaeological archives can maintain a pleasing whole from the inception of the 'dig' to the eventual deposition of the finds in the museum. This is surely what is meant now by archival integrity. Nowadays, it is a common part of job descriptions for curatorial staff to talk of 'collections management'. Without a well-formulated archival policy, to include provision for integrating excavation and museum recording, we are storing not managing our archaeology collections.

NOTE

The following comments have been added in response to questions during the discussion.

MDA Computing Service

The MDA is establishing a Computing Service, able to data prepare and process records such as those on MDA record cards. This service will be operational from July, 1980. Details are given in MDA Information, 4 (1), April, 1980.

GOS Program Package

This service will use the GOS Program Package developed by the MDA. GOS has been implemented on five computers (including two minicomputers) during the last two years. It is now available for use at one of these implementations or may be acquired for a fresh implementation at a new centre. A series of publications about GOS is being finalised, and will be issued in June. Further details may be obtained from Richard Light.

MDA Excavation Media

Work on card design and development has now started: it is hoped to conduct some field tests on these first drafts in the 1980 digging season. When the refinements and reassessments suggested by these trials are incorporated into the card design, hopefully the new cards will be available by 1981. I would be very grateful for some help from excavators to try out a small batch of the recording media on a variety of sites. These trials will be computerised (gratis) to provide catalogues and cross-referencing indexes. Please contact J. Stewart for further details.

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SOME THOUGHTS CONCERNING THE DEFINITION OF AIMS AND OBJECTIVES IN THE

DEVELOPMENT OF EXCAVATION ARCHIVES

A paper read at an AMSSEE seminar on Archaeological Recording in Museums on the 18th March, 1980, by Michael Rhodes.

Among its many achievements, the Frere report (A.M.B. 1975) must be accorded the distinction of introducing the term 'excavation archive' to the archaeological fraternity. Despite the enormous success and popularity of this novel piece of jargon there has been little discussion about what exactly an excavation archive should aim to do and what exactly it should contain.

Most dictionaries define an archive as either a place in which public or institutional records, records relating to law or business and historic documents are kept, or the historical records or documents preserved therein. In addition, one source (Chambers 1966) mentions the need for such documents to be kept in an orderly system and that documents other than those produced by statutory or corporate bodies may attain an archival character 'if they are kept in the form in which they accrued'. Another authority also stresses this 'organic character', and sees two uses for archives in that they 'perpetuate the memory of the rights and activities of their creator and assist him in maintaining his rights and planning his actions', and 'furnish information on the past . . . which cannot be understood by the scholar unless he has access to . . . the archives' (Encyclopaedia 1978). This seems to be relevant to us in that an excavation archive gives an excavator the right to claim his discoveries as his own (as does publication in printed form) and to make public statements about his findings based on the evidence of his activities in excavating and researching the site as recorded in the archive, and secondly it allows scholars to have access to primary data from which further evidence of the past may be obtained. To summarise, it seems that we are justified in calling excavation records 'archives' in that (and if):

- (i) They are of use in understanding the past.
- (ii) They are systematically-produced records of an organic character which are kept in the form in which they accrued (i.e. primarily the stratigraphic sequence), (Rance 1975, v).
- (iii) They are institutional or public records (i.e. the result of what has been called 'official archaeology' (Hebditch 1979) and/or are held in public ownership for the benefit of the public) kept alongside similar items in a recognised centre.

Whether or not excavation archives can be taken to embrace the finds (by which I mean not only loose artefacts, but samples and parts of the site - such as kilns - which are preserved and committed to storage) as well as the documentation seems to depend on whether the former can be regarded as records. As this question demands a lengthy philosophical discussion, may it suffice to say here that for the present purpose I shall include them as did Dimbleby (A.M.B. 1978, 7.2), although they were excluded by Frere (A.M.B. 1975, 3.7).

It is beyond this skeletal definition that differences of approach become manifest, as revealed by recent statements and current practices. There are different ideas concerning both what in theory an archive or part of an archive should aim ultimately to do, and how far we should move towards these goals in practice in view of our ever-limited resources. I venture to suggest that three broad aims are apparent, each of which implies a certain level of documentation and each of which may be valid depending on the circumstances. I shall now attempt to build these into three models, although, like the archive we are creating in London, I imagine that most archives will embody elements of all three since each may be regarded as a suitable resting-place in the same process. My purpose in presenting these ideas is to focus attention on what our priorities should be in forming our archives (at present they seem to be shaping themselves by default) and to initiate some debate towards the establishment of a set of basic requirements.

Model I

I define this as a store of largely uncatalogued, uncollated and partially (perhaps mostly) unresearched and unpublished primary documentation and finds which will allow future generations to reconstruct sites as perceived by their excavators and to use the evidence as a basis for primary research.

I suggest that the ideal basic requirements of such an archive might comprise:

- (i) Documentation relevant to a full understanding of the excavations and subsequent activities (e.g. correspondence with site owners, minutes of meetings at which research projects were planned, etc.).
- (ii) A full set of excavation records (notebooks, recording sheets, sequence diagrams, plans, photographs, etc.) produced for each site according to uniform, predetermined standards as recommended by the Frere Committee (A.M.B. 1975, 2.7), along with details of those standards.
- (iii) A properly-maintained store of non-perishable finds with details of preservative processes, if any, to which they may have been subjected.
- (iv) Records of perishable finds as recovered, in the form of drawings, X-ray plates, photographs, etc.. (Both the durable finds and these records should be labelled in such a way that the original positions of the objects in the ground, as recorded in the site records, may be determined).
- (v) Details of the finds which were discarded on site and a check-list of the records and finds committed to storage which may be used in the future to demonstrate whether or not the collections are still intact.

There can be little disagreement that, having undertaken to excavate a site, a failure to produce an archive along these lines would be a failure to fulfill one's professional responsibilities, although whether a limited archive of this sort is sufficient is by no means so clear an issue. Those who argue that it is sufficient say that present resources are so limited that archaeologists should concentrate upon excavation, recording and conservation, restricting interpretative research to a bare minimum and cutting back on what is published. This, they feel, should take the form of synthesised 'interim' descriptions which, aside from their intrinsic value for wider research, should draw attention

to what is contained in the archive. The task of conducting a full programme of research and publication should be left to some utopian future age. With regard to London, for example, it has been said that archaeologists have until the end of the century to examine the evidence beneath the ground, after which the only available opportunities for primary research will be provided by the museum stores¹.

Although archaeologists have long deplored the backlog of unpublished sites, the improved funding for rescue archaeology over the past decade has by no means rendered this sort of archive extinct. Instead it seems to have established itself even more securely as the dominant species, due to the fact that given a choice between falling behind with the post-excavation work and less digging, most of us have chosen the former. In taking this decision it is surely incumbent upon us not only to request more funds but to pay much more attention to ways of improving the quality and usefulness of this sort of archive. One way in which this might be achieved is by admitting to ourselves during the course of an excavation that it might not be published for years, and to plan the records accordingly. This raises the ethical question, not pursued here, of whether we have any right to restrict student access to our unpublished site records where we have planned our work in such a way that we have allowed no time for post-excavation analysis. At what point in fact should our records become public? (Schofield 1979, 2).

By suggesting that we must accept that a high proportion of current excavations will result only in the production of a Model I archive I do not suggest that we should be content with the situation. It is clear that without fully evaluating what has been recovered it is very difficult to re-order excavation priorities, to demonstrate the need to preserve sites of a certain type, to evaluate the methodology, to assess whether value for money has been obtained by individual excavations and to display the competence of those involved. On this nearly all archaeologists will be agreed, but it is depressing to hear some excavators argue that whilst a full analysis and publication of the site must take place soon after excavation, the finds can be placed in archives so that they can be researched at some future date. This is in my view both shortsighted and somewhat naive, for the reasons just given and also because of the need to establish priorities for conservation (since we cannot preserve everything). There is also the fact that until you have completed, say 70% of the basic research on some classes of object, for example bones and pottery, you cannot catalogue them so that any useful retrieval is possible. The result will be that scholars are unlikely to be able to extract the items they need from storage so that the number of visitors to our stores will be small, giving the impression that the collections are of little interest. When someone notices how much we are spending on rent and asks why they cannot be discarded we will have little definite to say in their defence, and if we somehow manage to retain them we will find it increasingly difficult to add similar collections of material. In fact, the resistance we are likely to meet may well be justified, since it is arguably a primary aim of museums to encourage the use of their collections (Hebditch 1979, 7) and a curator who is unhappy at accepting an unclassified (and so largely unusable) archive of this sort, surely has a right to prevent his museum being turned into a warehouse and his role as curator into that of a caretaker (Davies 1978). Hence it is this sort of archive which, in my opinion, is most likely to cause problems between excavators and museums.

Another factor of relevance here is the current emphasis among scholars upon a study of the totality of the evidence; every find, layer and feature - not simply the interesting one - is seen to have significance in the search

for more and more sophisticated patterns in the data, using increasingly elaborate statistical techniques (Pearce 1974). In view of this the idea that we will ever understand the full implications of what we have found by pooling the conclusions of successive generations of individual scholars, nibbling in an unco-ordinated way at the edges of our archives, is manifestly absurd (Rhodes 1979).

As a qualification to these arguments, it must be recognised that from time to time there are excavations which produce disappointing results and in a climate of financial restraint it is sensible to evaluate the quality of the information produced at each stage in the process of archaeology. There may well be a case for cutting one's losses or for proceeding only in selected areas.

Model II

This is defined as a collection of comprehensively researched and catalogued records and finds from individual excavations, or from a number of excavations undertaken as co-ordinated projects, processed in conjunction with the preparation of a published account, which reflect not only the processes of excavation, but the subsequent analysis of the records and finds. An archive of this kind aims to provide a firm basis for the conclusions and synthesised descriptions of the published reports and to allow future scholars thoroughly to reassess each excavation and the work underlying the original interpretations.

A set of ideal basic requirements for such an archive might include those of a Model I archive, plus:

- (vi) Classified indices of all finds, along with a full explanation of the classification system used for each site.
- (vii) A comprehensive registration system to allow these indices to be linked to the individual finds and to published accounts of them.
- (viii) Location records which, with a well-organised store of finds and documents, will allow any item to be procured for study within a few minutes (and preferably seconds).
- (ix) A store of documents produced in the course of the post-excavation research (e.g. correspondence, tables, notes, unedited specialist reports, etc.).
- (x) Fully published reports, be they at level III or IV, in which excavated features are cross-referenced to their records, and finds, with their registration numbers, to their position of recovery.

It is this sort of archive which was foremost in the minds of the Frere Committee (A.M.B. 1975, 2.6, 3.6 - 3.8), and which most excavators seem to advocate. Its attraction lies partly in the fact that (according to the theory) it need not involve much work over and above that involved in producing a publication, there being 'no difference between the excavator's requirements of information systems serving his operations and those of the museum', (Rance 1975). There are, however, a number of difficulties with this sort of archive which we are beginning to recognise in London. These derive from the fact that this sort of archive is geared to the understanding of individual sites. With regard to the indices, for example, whilst it may be possible to devise a museum-based registration system which will satisfy the immediate requirements of the excavation staff and museum (Stone 1979), it is possible that a much more detailed level of classification and indexing will become necessary as the

archive grows. On a medium-sized site the building materials may well have been classified under headings such as Roman, medieval and post-medieval floor-tiles, roof-tiles and bricks, etc., which on amalgamation with fifty other sites will by no means be subtle enough to steer researchers to useful groups of material.

The idea that the primary use of an archive is to back up the interpretation of individual sites and to allow them to be interpreted anew (Rance 1975), is also too narrow. There are a number of other basic uses to which archives should be put (Schofield 1979), not least the comparative study of types of finds and of features; the latter may well not have been indexed at all in individual site records.

The scope and detail of any further indexing must be suited to individual circumstances and will require careful consideration. A sensible approach might be to make selective provision on the basis of recurring requests for objects and information (Stone 1979, 14). On the other hand experience shows that scholars (students and professionals) naturally tend to ask the questions which will provide them with the best-looking thesis or publication with the minimum amount of effort. Scholars also tend to be cautious of creating a fuss when they cannot get the information they want, nervous perhaps of losing the curator's goodwill and hence what assistance is available. The idea that the museum's only contribution to research is to provide scholars with the materials they need is also too limiting. Are not museums sometimes in the best position to decide what research is most required? Should they not consider establishing their own priorities for research, and actively encourage the work to be done (even if only by suggesting to students some useful lines of enquiry)? If so, should they not also arrange their excavation archives to make answers available to the sorts of questions which ought to be asked?

Another questionable presupposition underlying this sort of archive is that archaeology must of necessity go forward in a series of violent lurches in the form of widely-spaced projects. This has of course been the predominant pattern due to an uneven cash flow and the pre-eminent role of the individual researcher. Post-excavation finds-research then involved sending each class of material (be it Roman ironwork or medieval cloth) to a specialist who, six months later, would return the finds along with a report, asking nothing in return except that it be published. Nowadays, however, the flow of certain finds (notably pottery, building materials, medieval leatherwork, and skeletal remains) is often so great and so constant that independent specialists cannot cope, and there is no alternative to teamwork over a number of years (perhaps indefinitely).

In these circumstances, the work must be done in such a way that there is a minimal loss of information when an individual leaves the team, so that detailed records of the sort which individual researchers used to keep in the form of handwritten notes must now be standardised and introduced into the primary record. This tendency towards more detailed records is also strengthened by the greater quantity of available material, since the more data available the more sophisticated the analysis can be - providing, of course, that all the material has been classified according to the same system. This is a serious problem for long-term projects since for some (if not all) classes of material, classification systems are being altered and improved with such frequency that the data will probably have to be up-dated during the course of a project, based on a reinterpretation of the primary records and original materials.

The establishment of specialised post-excavation research teams employed on a long-term basis allows us to look at alternatives to the site-by-site approach to research and publication. This may not always be appropriate for both academic and practical reasons. As Dimbleby has pointed out: 'certain types of investigation are best tackled by formulating problems or hypotheses and examining them on a broad front over a wide geological or chronological spectrum', (A.M.B. 1978, 5.3, 6.3) and, on a practical level, editorial restrictions on the publication of pages of basic data may also discourage the site-by-site system. It may be far more economical to wait until the detailed investigation of a number of similar objects, site or features may be combined, and a synthesis of their characteristics and interpretation prepared for publication (Schofield 1979). Whatever the case, we must continue to discourage the still-prevalent notion that there inevitably comes a stage soon after 'final publication' when the research team will have completely finished with its material and can simply bequeath it to posterity.

Model III

This differs from Model II in that the interpretative data relating to recorded features and objects, and even the descriptive data relating to the latter, is continuously under review, up-dated when necessary and integrated with as many similar archives as possible. An archive of this sort aims to reflect the totality of available knowledge relating to its contents, providing a reservoir of knowledge for its own sake and a firm starting point for further research.

The ideal basic requirements for such an archive might be those of a Model II archive plus:

- (xi) A means of determining a consensus about what basic information is usefully recorded and indexed, and what terminology is to be used.
- (xii) Standardised data useful for primary research, relating to the diagnostic characteristics of all common classes of finds and features.
- (xiii) A ready means of up-dating the recorded classifications of objects, features, their characteristics and other evidence.
- (xiv) Provision for adding new types of information to existing indices and tables.
- (xv) Procedures for assessing the implications of such changes for existing interpretations which, in turn, may necessitate changes in other catalogues (e.g. the reassessment of the date of a mediaeval jetton may alter the date of a layer and so the possible date-range of a number of features and groups of finds).
- (xvi) Obsolete records with details of obsolete classifications and interpretations and a means of relating out-dated tables and indices to the finds and primary records to which they refer. If we omit this facility, we damage the value of the archive as evidence of the quality of past research and obscure the concepts which underlay previous work, invaluable to an understanding of past ideas and our own preconceptions (Rhodes 1980).

The aims of this sort of archive, although only now theoretically practicable through the use of computers, are by no means new. A national index of museum collections was one of the original aims of the Museums Association (Atkinson 1955, 257) and the ability to inter-relate museum records has been stated as a long-term aim of the Museum Documentation Association (Stott 1977). The Frere Committee saw a strong case for a central archive for the whole of England (A.M.B. 1975, 3.8), and for encouraging the use of computer storage of quantifiable information which could perhaps be centralised in the National Monuments Record (A.M.B. 1975, 3.10), although they stopped short of spelling out the full implications of this with regard to the documentation.

Apart from the expense, the main problems facing this sort of archive relate to the difficulty and desirability of obtaining a consensus on how we should record and classify finds, features and other information. Some people argue that attempts to impose standard classification systems will lead to a rigidity of approach detrimental to the expansion of knowledge. To this one might reply that there is no reason why more than one classification cannot be used with the same objects, providing that everyone uses them, and that there are many who for the purposes of their research see the need for a standardised approach as a matter of utmost concern (A.M.B. 1978, 7.7; for problems of non-standardisation in pottery research, see Rhodes 1980).

There may also be organisational problems with this sort of archive, since it is evident that it must be maintained by those involved in the research on its various parts (another argument for museum-based post-excavation work)?

In practice, as stated earlier, our archives will consist of a mixture of these three models. They will probably include site-records worked up to Model I which future generations can develop further; the finds records for other sites may be based firmly on Model II whereas there may be no immediate need for a classified index of features and layers; Model III archives for the time being will probably only be practicable in the larger units and associated research organisations for studying the most abundant types of finds. There is nonetheless a unity of approach in the study of the material evidence of the past (see Brown 1975) which allows us to predict that some of the problems we encounter today in the preparation and handling of records and data relating to medieval footwear and clay tobacco pipes, for example, will recur in another hundred years of archaeology in the study of medieval mooring-posts or Romano-British temples. We should therefore not be afraid of developing a theoretical framework within which to think about our records and, from this, a list of minimum requirements for our ever-expanding archives. Having satisfied the needs of scholarship it should then be possible to move with confidence into secondary questions such as what future work will be necessary to allow the collections to be utilised for purposes other than research, such as display, education and non-archaeological enquiry, and the extent to which excavation archives should be amalgamated with other museum collections and vice versa.

Footnote

- 1 A half-serious dictum of Ralph Merrifield's. I am grateful for his permission to use it here.

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DOES THE DREW REPORT GO FAR ENOUGH?

Frank Cottrill

The latest official statement on the future development of museums in the United Kingdom is the report by the Standing Commission on Museums and Galleries, 'Framework for a System for Museums: Report by a Working Party' (HMSO 1978) - commonly known as 'the Drew Report'. Its general purpose may be expressed by a sentence in the foreword: 'Our object has been to seek various ways to improve local museums and to enable the increasing number of visitors from this country and abroad to enjoy and benefit from their contents'. As its recommendations are intended to attract support from central government they should be given some scrutiny, not least by archaeologists who work in museums.

The main text of the report runs to sixty-three pages. In it, archaeology is specifically referred to eighteen times (including two references to industrial archaeology). Looking for references to archaeology as a process which is producing new material or information, one finds it as one of the disciplines to be served by recording and information centres (para. 9.10 (4), repeated in the summary of recommendations in 15.17 (4)), as a matter for co-operation 'with the Department of the Environment in arranging for the conservation and accommodation in museums of material from rescue and other archaeological excavations' (9.10 (5) and 15.17 (5)) and as providing material which may be deposited in a local museum but could sometimes be 'shown in museums in the capital cities' (11.12). If one enquires what is suggested for improving and extending accommodation for such material one may turn to chapter 5, 'Local Authority Museums', where (5.14) the key sentence is: 'We have therefore recommended that approved schemes to house or rehouse major collections which otherwise would not be adequately cared for or worthily displayed should occasionally be eligible for a one-time capital grant'. However, that such grants would indeed be occasional and hardly, in present-day terms, substantial may be gathered from the figure - admittedly not an estimate but still an indication of order of magnitude - allowed for them of £125,000 a year based on a ten-year programme, this being for a 50% contribution from central government (13.4). Does this reflect a realistic assessment of our present and future needs?

It cannot be recalled too often that the statement on museums and field archaeology which was adopted as official policy by the Museums Association in 1974 accepted the widely held belief that by the end of this century much of our archaeological past as it has hitherto survived in situ will have been lost forever. The redevelopment of historic town centres, the extension of housing and industry, the construction of motorways, the afforestation of uplands, the conversion of ancient pasture to arable, the deep ploughing of farmland, the draining of wetlands, the extraction of minerals, the disturbance of historic wrecks in coastal waters, the depredations of treasure-hunters and the demolition or alteration of period buildings are all changing or destroying the historical and natural environment with a speed and a thoroughness which are quite unprecedented, and they put a new and far-reaching responsibility on museums to record and preserve a significant sample of all that is under threat. Even if ecological or economic restraints within the next few decades slow down the pace of destruction, there will still be an enormous mass of salvaged material to be processed and used for the public benefit; indeed, there is a sizeable mass already. The responsibility is of course matched by the concomitant opportunity to initiate or develop activities in the fields of public communication and participation.

All this calls for substantial and indeed revolutionary advances in staffing and accommodation at what might well be a majority of provincial museums, but one would hardly get such an impression from what has been quoted above or from the scale of expenditure proposed. In what follows I concentrate on the implications for archaeology in particular, but it will be obvious that the arguments that apply here also apply to all other disciplines that contribute to an understanding of the environment and for which the basic material is equally under threat.

Throughout the report the emphasis is on institutions and collections as they exist now, and the recommendations relate to improvements thereto. Even so, the proposed improvements have definite limitations, for we are warned (9.1) that, if the recommendations are adopted, in the early years hardly more than a dozen museums will be directly affected, whilst most of the others ('a thousand or so') will either not benefit at all, or only indirectly and gradually, as the effects of higher standards 'seep out' from the few lucky ones - although how higher standards are to be effectively applied in premises which in a large number of cases are too small or otherwise unsuitable is not explained. The main concern seems to be 'to develop the quality of the great collections outside the capital cities' (11.20).

Maybe it would be unconstructive to retort that this means merely aiding the collections that happen to have the highest sale-room values, for in the fine and applied arts, which are especially in question here, we should have good and well-presented collections. The fact remains that the report's preoccupation with these inhibits proper attention being paid to an increasing volume of museum material to which ideas of evaluation based on the intrinsic merits, aesthetic or other, of individual artefacts quite simply do not apply; nor is it profitable in this context to attempt a distinction between what is of 'national' and what of 'local' importance or 'quality', for we are dealing with a nationwide resource of infinite variety that we are in danger of losing. A realistic response to contemporary circumstances requires new attitudes and engenders new opportunities, taking full account of all the possibilities of acquiring groups of material each one of which is an archive comprising documentation as well as museum specimens in the more conventional sense. Moreover, such acquisition will logically and desirably accompany a more significant connection between what is in the museum and the related features of the local environment. To ensure full development of the possibilities we need adequate buildings - not always necessarily mere extensions of existing ones - and an increase in the number of outstations.

It is disappointing that the report makes no real attempt to assess what such development calls for, and in the absence of such an attempt the indications given of required expenditure are little more than figures picked out of the air. It is not enough just to hint (as in 5.14) at expected 'new buildings or extensions to include back-up facilities such as air-conditioning, workshops and storage areas' nor (as in the previous paragraph) to refer to proposals for new museum buildings at St. Albans and Reading, for the occasional museum such as these which has got as far as putting down on paper details of the accommodation it needs only leaves us wondering about all the others.

Take the case of Carlisle, where an opportunity to excavate five acres of the city centre has been taken. Is there hope that a reasonably permanent and adequate exposition of the results of this work will be accommodated in the museum? Apparently not, for Carlisle is cited (5.14) as one of 'many cases' where the museums' permanent collections have to be stored out of sight in order to show temporary exhibitions. In the last number of The Museum Archaeologist, Max Hebditch declared that museums have not received anything like adequate resources to meet the need for more space to accommodate the products of excavation, and I think it is fair to add that too many of the museums in our historic towns and cities are unable to cope acceptably even with what they had before the rescue explosion. Their buildings, whether designed for the purpose in the last century or for other uses in earlier times, are now

too small and unadaptable, and their displays vary from the tolerable to the downright higger-mugger; and one suspects that the same goes for their arrangements for administration, storage and other behind-the-scenes facilities (how many of them have, for instance, lecture-rooms)? We could very well do with having some idea of the size of the problem that faces us here.

The development of outstations - the term is preferable to 'branch museums' as being more comprehensive - has begun but needs to be taken much further. Here are included preserved sites and monuments relating to archaeology, social history and natural history, administered by a parent museum. The fact that at present the development of these is too much subject to the uncertainties of financial provision is illustrated by the case of the Roman legionary bath-house excavated by the Archaeological Field Unit of Exeter Museums, on a site later occupied by the principal public building of the Roman city. A scheme for displaying the impressive remains of both buildings had to be abandoned for lack of funds.

Open air museums are dealt with in chapter 4, 'Museums with Specialised Collections', but there is no specific reference to those which specialise in reconstructed buildings, such as Singleton and Avoncroft, although there is now need for more of them.

In view of considerations such as these, I submit that the Drew Report is not radical enough in its basic philosophy and not bold enough in its recommendations for what is needed for the museums of this country in the remaining years of this century. While one may welcome what it has to say on the training and remuneration of museum staff and on a proposed Museums Council, its survey of the possibilities for development and improvement is inadequate and reflects too much a conventional opinion that museums will continue to be concerned mainly with individual objects of intrinsic worth or interest. The situation that actually faces us demands a wider view.

THE ANTIQUITIES BILL

A report presented to the Committee of the Society of Museum Archaeologists on the 25th January, 1980, by Pauline Beswick.

The Antiquities Bill was introduced by Lord Abinger as a private member's bill under the ten minute rule on the 5th February, 1979, but failed to reach a Second Reading because of the fall of the Labour Government. The Bill, sponsored by the Council for British Archaeology, was worded by their legal adviser Charles Sparrow, and will be re-introduced, it is hoped, in the autumn of 1980.

The Bill consists of five sections, summarised below:

1. Any object of gold, silver or an alloy containing either, together with any associated object, 'lying in the earth or other private place without the owner being known' shall 'belong to the Crown'.

Part 3 of this section would enable the Secretary of State for the Environment to extend the Bill to other classes of object.

2. Formal abolition of Treasure Trove.
3. Finds to be reported within forty-eight hours to the Coroner or police and as far as practicable to be left undisturbed.
4. (1) An order made under section 1 (3) would be subject to Parliamentary approval and later may be varied or revoked.

(2) Penalty for contravention of section 3, a fine of up to £500.
5. Cited as Antiquities Act and applicable to England and Wales only.

The intention of the Bill is simply to rationalise Treasure Trove by avoiding any enquiry as to the intention of the original owner and by clarifying the classes of object concerned. In the C.B.A.'s view a fully comprehensive antiquities legislation for the reporting and care of archaeological finds is not at present practicable (Sparrow, 1979).

Legislation to protect portable antiquities was the subject of vigorous debate in the late 1960's when Charles Sparrow for the C.B.A. produced at least nine drafts of an Antiquities Bill, none of which received total support in archaeological circles and were abandoned in 1969. In 1970, after a lengthy struggle, the C.B.A. and the Museums Association made some progress when they succeeded in having regulations governing the Export of Works of Art and Antiquities amended to include differential treatment for archaeological material. This meant that an export licence had to be obtained for any article recovered at any time from the soil of the United Kingdom, with the exception of coins.

In 1972 the Committee on Death Certification and Coroners recommended that there be no change in the Treasure Trove law and that Coroners continue with their duty of enquiring into finds until comprehensive legislation be introduced to deal with the question of portable antiquities. The British Museum Trustees

sought to revise Treasure Trove legislation in the mid-1970's but were not supported by the C.B.A. or the Museums Association on the grounds that the solution was not a revision of Treasure Trove but a simple comprehensive statute which would ensure complete protection for all antiquities. Ironically the new Bill is no more than a revision of Treasure Trove and that comprehensive statute is still awaited.

At the same time as the C.B.A. was preparing the new Antiquities Bill, the Department of the Environment were drafting the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act. Although not aimed directly at protecting portable antiquities the Act's success has welcome effects in that it forbids the use of metal detectors without consent on Scheduled Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas and allows for the temporary custody of finds from excavations for study and recording.

The Antiquities Bill is politically the more sensitive of the two and when re-introduced to Parliament is unlikely to have as smooth or as swift a passage. Violent reaction against it has come from treasure hunters who have described it as 'the biggest ever threat to our hobby' and declared that they will be forced to break the law in pursuit of their hobby. Their objections will no doubt receive strong representation in Parliament.

In contrast to their reaction in the 1960's, archaeologists have been less vociferous. Partly this is because of the Bill's limited objectives and partly because of a general acceptance of the need to iron out anomalies in the Treasure Trove legislation in face of the increasing threat from metal detector users. Some worries have been voiced regarding the possible development of a black market in antiquities, but if the present convention of a rewards system is allowed to continue it is hoped this threat will be alleviated. Clarification from the government on this point might also help to lessen the violence of the reaction from the treasure hunters. Disquiet has also been expressed regarding the possible implications of section 1 (3) for the amateur archaeologist if the law were extended to cover other classes of finds, thereby introducing licensing for excavation and possibly field walking by the back door (Selkirk, 1979).

The Museums Association gave formal approval to the Bill at the consultative stage, but the Bill's publication has generated little comment from the museum profession as a whole. This is a matter for some concern as museums are more directly concerned with portable antiquities than any other archaeological body. Max Hebditch in a recent edition of The Museum Archaeologist drew attention to the dilemma museums face regarding objects recovered by non-archaeological methods - i.e. by treasure hunters or by chance - and asked if we were going to abandon them to the art market or try to obtain them for museums. The current emphasis in archaeology is on the site and its interpretation in relation to the landscape and not on the objects. Museums, however, approach archaeological interpretation through the display of objects using 'their inspirational quality' and 'their power to act as symbols' (Hebditch, 1979). It is an acknowledged fact that the bulk of the visually spectacular material in our museums has been found by non-archaeological means, and there can be little doubt that the museum profession has a responsibility to continue to obtain such material. At the same time we have responsibilities to make the public aware that portable antiquities, whether of precious metal, pottery, flint or stone are all part of our national heritage rather than the property of any one individual, and also to try to ensure that the country's laws apply the best possible protection to those antiquities.

Questions the Society should be asking are:

1. Should we actively support the proposed Bill?
2. Is it acceptable that the Coroner and Police should act as archaeological agents?
3. How would the new law be administered? Treasure Trove does not act on precedent and the rewards system is administered by the British Museum. Would we be happy to see the new law operate in the same manner?

After some discussion the Committee proposed that SMA back the Bill but ask to be represented at discussions when Instruments advising on the Bill's operation are drawn up. It was accepted that to operate section 3 a statutory body easily available (i.e. Coroners and the Police) would have to be used, but that guidelines should stress the desirability of an archaeological and local museum involvement at an early stage. Concern was expressed about the ignorance of the present law shown by some Police and Coroners and the need to remedy this situation. Regarding administration of the law and the British Museum's part, it was felt that here more information on the government's intentions was required, but that a museum involvement at local as well as national level will be essential.

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THE STOP CAMPAIGN

A note by Ken Barton

On the 12th March a campaign was launched by the C.B.A. in conjunction with the Museums Association who were represented through the Society of Museum Archaeologists to encourage the restriction on the use of metal detectors. For some time now S.M.A., in conjunction with other like bodies has been promoting the anti-metal detector campaign and this culminated in a meeting of minds in which other organisations associated with the C.B.A., Rescue, S.C.U.M., U.K.I.C. and the A.C.A.O. have come together to press for a greater public awareness of this mischief. This launch took place at the Society of Antiquaries where members of the National Press, particularly the 'heavies', were present and members of the Committee have given interviews individually to local press, radio and television. A badge has been printed, copies of which will be made available to S.M.A. members and others can be ordered from the Museums Association Headquarters. There is an abundance of literature on the subject; that too can be obtained through the Museums Association Headquarters, and members are pressed to draw the attention of their own committees both in Local and National Government, and the Archaeological Societies in their own particular areas to the dangers of indiscriminate use of metal detectors. S.M.A. will continue to press at both national and local level for legislation, and will endeavour to see that the archaeological areas Bill is not only carried out as far as the areas are concerned, but that prosecutions will take place on people using metal detectors in those specified regions, and we will also do our best to promote the idea of by-laws at both district and county level. It is worth noting that both the Association of District Councils and the Association of County Councils have agreed to support this measure.

This must be a continuing and developing campaign and it is estimated that it will take at least ten years to become fully effective.

OFFICERS (May, 1980)

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