

**THE MUSEUM ARCHAEOLOGIST**

**No. 2**

**January 1979**



## CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
Editorial Comment	2
Museums and Field Archaeology: The View of an 'Independent' Unit Director - T.G. Hassall, Director, Oxfordshire Archaeological Unit	2
Excavation Recording at St. Albans - Sheila M. Stone, Research Assistant (Documentation), St. Albans Museums	10
Above-Ground Archaeology - Frank Cottrill, Former Curator, Winchester City Museum	15
The Restitution and Return of Cultural Property, a note by Geoffrey Lewis, Director, Department of Museum Studies, Leicester University	17
The Annual Conference of the Museums Association, a note	20
The Committee	21

## EDITORIAL COMMENT

It has been decided by the Committee that the Museum Archaeologist shall for the time being appear twice a year: once in September, when it is intended to include papers read to the specialist group meeting at the Museums Association Annual Conference, and the second issue in April/May so that it can be sent out with the Agenda for the Annual General Meeting. As you will be aware, Gareth Davies' paper 'Museums and Archaeology - A Lost Cause?' has been published in the Museum Journal in December. Helen Adamson's article 'Storage of Archaeological Collections: The Problems' will be published in the next number of the Museum Archaeologist: it has not proved possible to include it in this issue as she did not have sufficient notice of publication and was unable to re-write it in time for this number due to other commitments. There has been considerable difficulty in obtaining material for the present issue. Only the article by Frank Cottrill, which was sent to the former Editor in April, 1977, came without promptings from the Editor. It is essential, if this publication is to have any validity, that the profession should be prepared to write for it. The Committee considered that the Museum Archaeologist should include reports of activities in the regions and also that advance notice of forthcoming exhibitions of an archaeological nature might be included, together perhaps with reviews of similar activities. The Committee has also decided to have a cover design which will be used in all future issues to improve the appearance.

Unlike perhaps most other specialist groups, SMA came into being more as a result of the need for museum archaeologists to have a political voice than to have an opportunity to discuss the museum applications of their discipline. Whilst obviously this is still of importance, the time may well have come to widen the scope of our discussions to include such things as the problems of documentation, in particular in relation to site recording and museum recording, and also possibly of display. An article on Recording is included in this issue and it is hoped that this may stimulate some discussion. The Society is also going to hold a meeting to discuss this subject in the spring. I would emphasise that the real value of the Museum Archaeologist depends not upon the Editor, but upon the Society's members. I know only too well how busy we all are, but I hope you will make an especial effort to find a little time to write, and that contributions for the Spring edition will be forthcoming shortly.

\*

\*

\*

## MUSEUMS AND FIELD ARCHAEOLOGY: THE VIEW OF AN 'INDEPENDENT'

### UNIT DIRECTOR

A paper read to the Society of Museum Archaeologists at Bradford on July 15th, 1977, by T.G. Hassall.

On the 16th March, 1976 the Standing Conference of Unit Managers was formally established. Harold Wilson, the then Prime Minister, announced his resignation on the same day. One likes to think that the events were connected.

What is of more significance to museums, however, is that of the eighty or so archaeological units who are members of the Conference (membership being confined to archaeological organisations in receipt of public funds), about thirty are 'Independent'. 'Independent' that is in the sense that they are not affiliated to a pre-existing, 'undying' organisation such as a Museum, a University, a Local Authority planning office or the Department of the Environment (DoE). The view that one can call 'Independent Units' (IU's) 'Independent' has recently been challenged on the grounds that they are so dependent on government funding and government policy that they should really be called Archaeological Quangos (Quasi-Autonomous non-governmental organisations). However, recent experience, in the case of the Oxfordshire Archaeological Unit at least, has shown that, while IU's are closely tied to central government, central government is only too happy to deny all long-term financial responsibility for such organisations.

But, however one defines IU's the fact remains that they represent over a third of those archaeological organisations which are actively creating archaeological archives in the widest sense of that term. They would appear to represent a number only slightly less than archaeological units based in museums. The interrelationship between IU's, which for the most part do not claim long-term curatorial responsibility for their archives, and museums is obviously of fundamental importance both to these IU's themselves and to museums.

From the point of view of museums the IU's are clearly an anomaly. It is therefore worth considering something of the origins, structure, functions, strengths and weaknesses of the IU's before coming on to consider the more specific problem of the relations between IU's and museums.

The IU's grew up as a direct result of local, often part-time, initiatives, taken in the late 50's and 60's to respond to local rescue archaeological crises. The fact that such initiatives were required reflected the apparent state of archaeological organisation and funding which existed at the time.

The earliest independent units usually took the form of individuals employed on an ad hoc basis by various excavation committees. By the late 60's these rather casual arrangements began to be replaced by committees employing full-time staff to ensure (a) the capability of all-year-round excavations and (b) the possibility of reports being written up. The Winchester Research Unit became the exemplar that was followed. Indeed it was Martin Biddle, the Director of that Unit, who has the dubious distinction of having given the word 'Unit', in its various manifestations, to the archaeological world. That full-time IU's could exist at all was due largely to the Department of the Environment which was prepared to make available funds for rescue excavations but not for more Civil Servants. Whether the DoE was actively pursuing a policy to encourage such organisations is not clear.

The actual structure of the IU's is very variable. The units themselves are for the most part the executive arm of a committee. The committee's objects will usually be defined as being "to promote for the public benefit the study of archaeology" or some such similar phrase which will allow the committee to fall within the area of a Registered Charity. However charitable status does not also give a committee a legal entity in its own right when it comes to legal

liability. Accordingly many committees have recently become Limited Liability Companies in addition to having charitable status.

The committee structure itself usually takes the form of a main committee, often representative of local and national archaeological interests, while bread and butter issues are usually the responsibility of an executive committee or specialist committees concerned with matters such as academic advice, fund-raising or publication.

The sources of finance for independent units is again variable but most are heavily if not entirely dependent on DoE funds. DoE grants are project-orientated, although some units receive establishment grants. The grants are given for the most part on an annual basis and only announced to the grant receiver in the actual financial year in question. They are specifically for projects concerned with survey, excavation and post-excavation but not usually for the essential back-up like conservation, although the Ancient Monuments Laboratory does service some units. Recently additional funds from the Manpower Services Commission have been an essential ingredient of unit budgets. Funds are also provided by Local Authorities who sometimes provide substantial help in kind such as financial servicing. A very few independent units have also succeeded in raising funds through industry and appeals.

The geographic areas of operation of IU's range from small areas such as an historic town to covering several counties or an entire river valley. While the size of staffing can extend from one man and a bucket to staff of a dozen or more.

The functions of an independent unit are the same as those of a museum-based unit. They have to carry out planning liaison in their area using a Sites and Monuments Record housed either by the unit or a museum or a planning office. They conduct general surveys where there is no pre-existing Sites and Monuments Record or more specific surveys of archaeologically sensitive areas. They assess the threats to those same areas. They indulge in the national archaeological game of attempting to define priorities. They excavate at various levels from major set-piece operations to salvage work. Finally they create an archive of site data, although how usable such an archive is may again be debatable. They publish reports at whatever they consider to be the appropriate 'level'. Like their colleagues in the 'non-independent sector', the IU will also be actively raising funds and may be involved in a range of communications exercises which those archaeologists viewing the world from a secure financial base may find bizarre.

Various arguments have been put forward both for and against IU's. It is argued that IU's are the British amateur archaeological tradition brought up-to-date. They grew up out of part-time interests realising that a full-time response to rescue archaeology was required; a response which was not met by existing organisations. If these organisations had been uniformly facing the archaeological problems of the last decade there would have been no room for the IU's. Many IU's have begun as part-time organisations which converted as funds became available into full-time organisations.

It can be claimed that the committees to which IU's are responsible are often more representative of archaeological interests at all levels than, say, a Museums and Libraries Committee made up of elected representatives. Furthermore, since the independent committee and its units will be concerned solely with aspects of archaeology, usually rescue archaeology, it may have a greater motivation to further the cause specifically of archaeology. The unit will not have to compete with other interests in the budgeting and man-power provisions of an organisation with wider responsibilities.

It is suggested that IU's as Charitable organisations may have a greater private fund-raising potential than the local authority sector. This ability has probably not actually been borne out in practice but, if IU's are to survive as totally independent, they will have to diversify their resources and exploit this facility.

A final strength of the IU is that they are potentially as flexible, if not more flexible, than units based on an undying institution. They can probably be expanded or contracted to meet particular problems. This facility is of course a double-edged weapon in the hands of the chief pay master, the DoE.

While one can detect the possible strengths of IU's after a good press early in their history there has recently been mounting criticism of them. It is easy to detect the weaknesses of IU's. They all have an insecure financial base. This weakness poses uncertainties for staff who do not have in front of them an obvious career structure. The administrative problems for unit managers planning on an uncertain annual budget are immense. It is difficult to see how independent units can ever be more than ephemeral institutions while the financial insecurity remains. The future for them may lie in attaching themselves to parent bodies, but where that process does not take place the unit may have to be disbanded. The question has been asked, 'how do you run a unit down?' The answer can be seen in most of the IU's at the present time. So far as DoE funds are concerned they are kept on a budget which is notionally project-based but in reality is more akin to an annual block grant and during a time of high inflation the grants have been kept virtually static.

The IU's are accused of not being fully independent and of being simply 'creatures' of DoE. Certainly DoE is crucial in policy making, since most work indirectly for the Department. On the other hand recent experience has shown that the Department feels little moral responsibility for the employees of independent units at least in practical terms. Presumably the fact that these satellite bodies can so easily be cut off from DoE is one of the virtues of the independent unit to DoE. Therefore the people who see in IU's creeping socialism in archaeology are very much mistaken. The IU's in no way represent an incipient State Archaeological Service.

If one body of critics accuses the IU's as being too dependent, another accuses them of being too independent. It is said that they are not sufficiently responsible to the taxpayers and ratepayers who, by and large, finance them. They are also accused of being monopolies. While it is true that IU's may have the sole use of DoE rescue funds in some given areas, the DoE Central Unit has carried out a significantly large proportion of its excavations in those areas well-served by existing units while excavations on DoE guardianship sites appear to be carried out by and large outside the unit structure. Furthermore contrary to the growing



popular belief units of whatever complexion have no power of veto over excavations carried out by other bodies.

IU's are said to be very expensive to run. This criticism largely stems from the fact that an IU has difficulty in concealing the total costs of projects including all aspects of overheads. Thus the university which claims to have carried out a rescue excavation from only a few hundred pounds from the DoE's Rescue Allocation is in danger of grossly distorting the actual cost to the taxpayer of the salaries of the university staff involved, of the grants of the students working on the excavation and of the departmental overheads. The real rather than the apparent cost of an excavation may well be lower than an 'In house' organisation.

Other critics point out to the vested interest inherent in units to excavate rather than to preserve, to excavate rubbish for rubbish sake and to be 'unadventurous' in the topics chosen for investigation. These questions are of course not unique to the independent sector and raise questions of 'Cultural Resource Management', of 'Rescue Versus Research' excavations and of Academic Priorities. Of more relevance to this discussion is the criticism of the poor relationships which exist between IU's and other sections of the archaeological community, not simply museums. For instance part-time archaeologists accuse the staff of full-time units of excluding them. Some part-timers appear to expect the full-timer to be really full-time. In other words to work 365 days a year both at what he is paid to do during the working week and to aiding part-timers at the weekend on sites of their own choice, however trivial. Meanwhile university based archaeologists maintain that academic standards within units are low and that units are too inward-looking. Units are criticised for not increasing the public awareness of archaeology and yet unit directors are equally berated for being more akin to TV personalities and property tycoons and keeping their own brand of archaeology too much in the public eye.

What of the actual relations between IU's and museums? A caricature would be as follows: the IU's see museums as moribund institutions, incapable of appreciating the true significance of archaeology and society, worthy of only housing replicas but actually seeking only the displayable loot from sites; the museums see IU's as brash, self-seeking, irresponsible organisations only concerned with excavating sites in the face of bulldozers and TV cameras with the possible long-term intention of producing a prestigious report but not concerned with the long-term future in terms of conservation and archival storage of the total data so recorded. We must all search our own heart as to the truth of these distorted views.

Any museum director who has in his area an IU which he finds an embarrassing irritant should probably look into his own institution's past short-comings to understand why the unit became established at all. The failure of some museums, for whatever reason, to take the initiative in rescue archaeology is more often than not the reason why relationships between 'independent' units and museums are at times so fraught. Conversely other museums actively encouraged the establishment of IU's. In these circumstances relations have tended to be far better.

The difficulties of the relationships between IU's and museums hinge on three critical areas: policy making, implementation and data storage. So far as

policy making is concerned the IU and the museum may view the choice of sites to be excavated from totally different standpoints, completely regardless of whatever academic criteria may be applied. An example of the potential conflicts which might arise would be a situation in which an IU had the resources to excavate only one site in a given year, but it had the choice of excavating either a site which was likely to produce few conventional finds but was itself capable of providing key data in understanding a particular problem, or a site which would provide information of a familiar nature but the finds so derived would fill a gap in a particular museum collection. On a more practical level, a museum already short of space may suddenly find itself faced with the burden of housing an enormous collection of material without itself having in any way instigated the excavation which produced the material. No space or budgetary provision will probably have been made and yet the museum finds itself morally bound to receive the material.

In the area of implementation of policy where a museum and a unit exist side by side, 'who does what' disputes seem certain to arise. For instance both institutions may wish to speak for archaeology on a given subject such as metal detectors, but both may have a different standpoint. What museum director actually does not mind an IU acquiring publicity for a Rescue Archaeology which, as we all know, is often on the 'show-biz' end of the archaeological spectrum. A skeleton being dug out of the ground in the teeth of a bulldozer (apparent or threatened) is news. A skeleton in a (museum) cupboard is not. Educational projects and temporary exhibitions are also obvious problem areas. Ruffled pride on both sides and no clear-cut division of responsibilities lies behind much of the ill-feeling which can be seen to exist between IU's and museums.

But probably the most critical area concerns the treatment and long-term storage of the archive. There seems no immediate solution to the problems of conservation in spite of some recently proposed remedies. The DoE who, as we have seen, has often been the unwitting architect of IU's, largely ignore conservation in their rescue grants. Only IU's with special arrangements with the DoE or large extra funds can carry the financial burden of conservation. Many IU's would like to have conservation under their own control. Equally museums argue that since the long-term stability of objects will eventually devolve on museums they should be responsible for conservation from the outset.

Apart from the long-term storage of objects the long-term storage of the entire excavation archive poses an additional problem area. Since the publication of the Frere report excavators have had to seriously consider their archives. There is no justification for IU's to dump uncollated and unusable archives on a museum. However IU's still do it. Equally, however, not many museums themselves are generally in a position to receive, house and service a continuous flow of excavation data. Some museums might like to press DoE for financial help towards long-term storage. But this might be dangerous ground for museums since DoE might wish to encourage the formation of 'Independent' museums linked to IU's. Certainly some IU's are thinking on these lines. IU's and museums have probably got to review their mutual philosophies with regard to the archive if a compromise is to be reached.

Surely it is a working compromise which we should all strive for and such a situation can exist. The case of Oxfordshire can be cited, not necessarily as



a model but as an example of a working relationship between a unit and several museums. The general problems still exist but at least the basic organisational structure has been created to lessen their effects.

The museum situation in Oxfordshire is fairly complicated. The traditional museum involvement in Local Rescue Archaeology has been through the Ashmolean Museum which was itself a leading inspiration behind the local 'independent' involvement in Rescue Archaeology. For a brief while the Ashmolean also opted out of the collection of local archaeological material after the formation by the local authorities of the Oxford City and County Museum, now the Oxfordshire Department of Museum Services (ODMS) based at Woodstock. This new museum, apart from being active in acquiring local archaeological material, also pioneered through its Field Department the County Sites and Monuments Record and it has also established a strong tradition of non-excavational fieldwork. The museum has also become increasingly involved in planning matters particularly at the County level. There are of course other museums in the County but since local government reorganisation most of the old Borough museums such as those at Abingdon and Banbury have established direct links with the Department of Museum Services.

The formation of the Oxfordshire Archaeological Unit (OAU) has been discussed elsewhere. It is responsible to the Oxfordshire Archaeological Committee, a registered charity which was founded by, amongst others, the Ashmolean Museum and the ODMS, both of whom therefore have a direct say in the running of the Unit (the converse is of course not true since the Unit has no say in the running of either museum!) Unlike many IU's the OAU's budget is only dependent on the DoE for about 50% of its total. The Unit has been one of the more successful IU's at gaining support in cash and kind from the Local Authorities, notably the Oxfordshire County Council and Oxford City Council, industry, notably the Amey Roadstone Corporation, and other sources of grants.

At all stages of its operations the OAU has to mesh in with the local museums. When the Unit was established it was axiomatic that it would not duplicate facilities and services which were to be found in museums. Thus the OAU relies totally on the ODMS for its Sites and Monuments Record. In the increasingly important area of planning, although the ODMS is the County's official advisor on such matters, advice on archaeology and planning is usually given after joint consultation. It is possible for the ODMS to have its advice ignored. In such instances the OAU, as an independent voice, can make its own opinion heard. The actual mechanics of planning liaison is carried out by means of a regular fortnightly meeting when the lists of the entire County's planning applications are scanned by the Keeper of the Field Section and the Director of the OAU. A further element has been the joint production of development control sheets for two and eventually four of the District Councils. When the OAU undertakes specific Rescue Surveys the Unit is again deeply dependent on the ODMS Sites and Monuments Record. The keynote has again been one of co-operation as is to be seen in the joint authorship of the Survey of the Upper Thames Valley crop-marks and the County's Historic Towns, both published by the Unit but relying on ODMS involvement and part authorship. Even closer co-operation is envisaged in a projected survey of specific villages in the County. Inevitably conflicts of interest have arisen but on the whole the relationship seems to work even if the actual arrangements may at times appear to the outside world as somewhat Byzantine.

So far as excavation is concerned both the Ashmolean and the ODMS have no apparent wish to go back into the field to conduct major Rescue Excavations. Both institutions have reserved the right to do so. The OAU certainly has no monopoly of DoE funds or excavations. Thus the Ashmolean has been in receipt of DoE post-excavation funds while the ODMS is involved with its own specific research excavation at the new Rural Life Museum at Cogges. But while neither museum is actively excavating rescue sites in the area, both are actively acquiring material from the OAU's excavations. It has therefore become established that the eventual home of any excavated material is decided, subject to the owner's wishes, before an excavation begins. The decision is usually arrived at between the museums themselves. In the event of the museums disagreeing the constitution of the Oxfordshire Archaeological Committee allows for such decisions to be made by the Committee itself, and where the normal decision making is not possible emergency procedures have been established. The object of the exercise is for the ultimate curator to establish a working relationship with the site director, the site and the archive. The success of this relationship obviously depends very much on the personalities involved.

With regard to post-excavation work conservation of objects from a particular site is carried out by the museum to whom the material will eventually go. From the OAU's point of view it would undoubtedly be more convenient if the Unit had its own conservation laboratory but with no less than four conservation laboratories in Oxfordshire such provision would be clearly indefensible. Meetings are held at fairly frequent intervals to monitor progress.

The first major transfer of archive material will shortly take place. Already problems are apparent owing to the fact that two museums are involved sometimes with sites contemporary in date, while the OAU is itself likely to be the most frequent user of the archive. Experiments are being conducted with the National Monuments Record to microfilm the written records so then at least they can still be consulted on the OAU's own premises. Adequate storage facilities is a problem with both museums. A long-term solution to the needs of the museums and the Unit might be the establishment of a joint store and archive.

Finally, close co-operation exists between the OAU and both museums over the organisation of both temporary and permanent displays of material from OAU excavations. For instance the ODMS new displays, especially those at the Oxfordshire County Museum and the Museum of Oxford, both lean heavily on OAU finds in the archaeological sections. An obvious benefit for the OAU is that both museums provide a 'shop window' of the Unit's activities. The OAU also organises its own small exhibitions for site open days. Similar areas of co-operation exist in putting over archaeological material to schools. Again there is a close link between the OAU and the ODMS Schools service.

Given the 'archaeo-political' peculiarities of Oxfordshire the relationship which exists between the OAU and the museum worlds is a very close one. Symbiosis would be too strong a word. There are undoubtedly problems and the observant reader may have detected them reading through the lines, but where problems exist they arise more through problems of personality rather than institutional problems. Personality problems would exist even if the OAU was an in-house organisation.

What the future of the OAU may be, or indeed the future of any IU, is open to doubt. The DoE's proposed new antiquities legislation, the resurrected proposals for regional organisation and the Holy Grail of Priorities will all affect IU's and museums alike. For the present the best advice to museums who have to deal with IU's is to try to sympathise with their problems so that IU's can provide the archives of the quality that museums expect. IU's for their part must attempt to understand museums so that museums can provide them with proper custodial arrangements and interpretation of the archive. There is no inherent reason why IU's and museums should not strive together to preserve, whether physically or in archive form, and to interpret our national archaeological resource which is surely our common goal.

\*

\*

\*

## EXCAVATION RECORDING AT ST. ALBANS

Sheila M. Stone.

The recently published Dimbleby Report draws attention to the desirability of establishing compatible systems of recording and data retrieval between museums and excavation units (recommendation 13). One cannot help but feel that this resolution on the part of a DoE committee comes some ten years too late, and that careful consideration of this problem should have been made by the DoE before it channelled massive amounts of central government money for excavation into the creation of independent excavation units. These units, faced with the problem of publishing the results of sizeable rescue operations, developed their own recording and data retrieval systems to deal with the problem. The state of documentation in museums in 1968 (and I suspect that there has been little improvement in many cases over the last ten years) was so bad that they were in no position to offer guidance to units setting up recording systems. Coupled with this, a certain passive attitude among curators has emerged in relation to units of which I found much evidence when visiting units and museums in 1977 for the preparation of a thesis on this very problem of integration. I saw several examples of curators who had studiously avoided contact with units during the formative stages of the relationship (and good manners prevents me from naming any names) and who seemed prepared to adopt an ostrich-like attitude until that fateful day when hundreds or thousands of boxes of material would arrive at the museum's back door ready for archival storage. Of course, curators were not always at fault here and some units have remained staunchly independent of museum assistance out of choice, but it would be fair to say that in this situation the curators have not always approached the problem in a tactful manner. For many of these museums, that day is now drawing nearer as more and more unit publications appear, and one wonders at the extent of preparation made by the museums for when the whole collection comes under their control.

In St. Albans where the field archaeology section, which was set up in 1972, is an integral part of the museum we have also been faced with the problems of establishing compatible recording systems to meet the different functions of field department and museum. In 1977 the field department, embarking on a comprehensive programme of publication of eleven sites, decided to establish

an information retrieval system for its records to ease the task. As a research assistant working for the field department at that time, and being involved in the design of that system, we sought guidance from the curatorial staff so that integration would be possible, but since there was no developed museum accession system this proved impractical. The lack of a centralised accession system for the museum was rectified in January 1978 when a twelve-month documentation project was set up (1) but it still meant that we had a totally free hand when designing the field department system in 1977, and it is described below. A copy of the context card used in the indexes may be found at page 12. The 'museum accession' card used in the finds indexes was an existing stock of cards which were adopted for reasons of economy only.

## 1. Excavation Record

Since April 1974, all sites excavated by the field department have been assigned a site number (last two digits of the year, followed after a decimal point by the site number within year). Therefore 74.6 (Six Bells site) was the sixth site excavated in 1974. On-site recording is centred around the context record sheet on which information about each archaeological context (feature or layer) is recorded. The context recording system is alphabetical on the AA-ZZZ system, each context being given an identifying alphabetical code. It is also possible to subdivide an archaeological context into layers, where the context is a feature with recognisable stratified layers within it. The context record sheet, filled in by supervisors on site, contains the following information:

1. Site number, location name and National Grid Reference.
2. Dimensions and description of context with relationships to other contexts.
3. Samples, general finds and small finds excavated from the context.
4. Drawing and Photograph numbers.

Other elements of on-site recording include supervisors notebooks, pottery and small finds books. These form part of the archive, along with context sheets, plans and sections.

## 2. Post-Excavation Record

This comprises three elements - the context index  
- the small finds index  
- the general finds index.

### (i) The Context Index

The context card contains the information recorded on the context sheets, but in an expanded and synthesised form after analysis of sheets, plans, sections and photographs has taken place. The reverse of this card contains a tabulated classification of finds by material and is designed for use as a presence/absence indicator for categories of material in the context, including small finds with small find numbers; and also provides a basic introduction to the classification system in operation in the two Finds Records. This information is stored by

1 SITE CODE	2 SITE NAME	3 N.G.R.	4 CONTEXT	5
DIMENSIONS		9 S.G.R.	10 Type	6
DESCRIPTIONS			11 Date	7
			Pub. No.	8
			Cuts/ Over	12
			Cut By/ Under	13
			Contemp.	14
			Same As	15
			Plan Nos.	17
INTERPRETATION			16 Photo-B/W	19
			Photo-Colour	20
			COMMENTS	

MATERIAL	22	P	SMALL FIND/SAMPLE NOS.	SLAG	33		
COARSE P.	23			COINS	34		
SAMIAN	24			Bldg. MATERIALS	35		
GLAZED P.	25			STONE	36		
OTHER P.	26			WORKED BONE	37		
CLAY PIPES	27			OTHER BONE	38		
GLASS	28			SHELL	39		
IRON	29			ORGANIC	40		
Cu ALLOY	30			SOIL	41		
Pb.	31				42		
OTHER METAL	32				43		
COMMENTS							

site in alphabetical and numerical order. Any material discarded after rationalisation will be recorded on blank cards and filed at the end of the context index.

(ii) The Small Finds Index

Each small find is recorded on a museum accession card and filed in alphabetical and numerical order within the classification categories.

(iii) The General Finds Index

All material from a context which has not been assigned a small find number is recorded on a museum accession card as a group accession in the classified category of material. The information is also arranged in alphabetical and numerical order.

The system of indexing by site context and by find type allows material to be reassembled into context, or contextual information about finds to be obtained.

The classification system is comprised of nineteen basic categories with provision for two further categories to be introduced should the nature of the site require it. These are deliberately broad and relate to material rather than type of object. Pottery and metal have been divided into more specialised categories to facilitate handling of the quantity of data. Addition of categories, e.g. kiln furniture for a kiln site, or further subdivisions of categories, e.g. organics for a waterlogged site, give the classification system a degree of flexibility.

Other types of material do not happily fall into the basic divisions already set out. The 'other pot' category has been introduced for reference to such types as mortaria/amphora/colour coated wares/clay lamps/modern ceramic material/stonewares/crucible, etc.. Intaglios may be filed under stone if they are gemstones or glass if they are enamel. Wall-plaster, tile, tesserae, op sig, etc., is classified as building material. Composite objects, that is where the functional parts of the object are in more than one type of material, e.g. iron knife with bone handle, will have a card in each category, cross-referenced. Where an object has an inlay/gilding/inset or other decoration in another material, the object card will be filed under the material category the object was made of, i.e. a silvered bronze brooch would be classified under Cu alloy.

This system has worked very well in facilitating publication as information may be retrieved by context or find type, but the development of a centralised accession system means that we had to examine the problems of integration once again in order to avoid unnecessary duplication of information. Before designing indexes two important questions must be asked as these will determine the form of the indexes:

1. What type of questions do we need to be able to answer about the collection?
2. Who will be the main users of the indexes?



The answers to these two questions vary considerably between field department and museum. For the field department the type of questions to be asked will be very specific and may be anticipated by their recurrence - the main users of the indexes will be the field department staff, and just occasionally researchers. For the museum as a whole many different types of questions about the collections may be asked by the consumers of museum services such as museum staff, research students, teachers, the general public, and very different indexing techniques are necessary to answer the range of questions, from the most general to the very specific. With these thoughts in mind we identified two distinct processes for the assimilation of excavation material into the museum collections which are ideally served by different indexing strategies. The first of these should be geared specifically towards analysis and publication of the site by specialists, the second should enable excavated material to be used for research, display, enquiries, exhibitions, and popularising publication by a wide range of people. Any attempt to perform both these functions using the same indexing techniques can only lead to a situation in which the needs of neither party are being fulfilled adequately. I propose to describe a possible solution to the problem of integration which, if it is found to be tenable, will avoid unnecessary duplication of effort.

The central museum accession register is comprised of IRGMA cards covering the range of disciplines represented in the museum collections, and one way of avoiding duplication of effort would be to use the IRGMA Archaeology cards for the field department finds indexes instead of the unsatisfactory cards used at present. We are experimenting with ways to do this, and if we conclude that IRGMA Archaeology cards are suitable for site use then they may be filed in the present system of field department indexes with the filing criteria, i. e. material classification and context code, written in the 'file' box on the top left-hand side of the IRGMA card. The range of materials listed on the back of the context card would need to be extended (for example the 'building materials' category used at present would need further refinement into wall-plaster, tile, tesserae, mortar, etc.). When publication has taken place, or before if possible, a typed copy of these cards could then be produced for the central museum accession register and an accession number assigned to each small find, box of wall-plaster, bag of colour coated sherds or whatever and marked on the accession card. Bags or boxes of material will need marking with the new accession number, but for the material inside the bag this should not be necessary if each sherd has been marked with a context code by finds processing staff on site. The original handwritten cards may be filed in the curatorial archaeology department index, and the new accession numbers will need to be written on the back of the context cards so that cross-referencing may take place. The only remaining field department index will be the context index and the record of discarded material. The finds from an excavation will thus be fully assimilated into the museum collections and indexing in a variety of ways will be possible with the aid of a computer, e. g. by stratigraphical unit, typology, materials, object date, store location, etc..

It may be more convenient to use A4 recording sheets on site and transfer the processed information on to A5 cards at the post-excavation stage, but until the system has been tested this will not be possible to determine. We are proposing to do some trial runs using this system during October, and by

December we should know if it will work as envisaged. If this system does prove to be feasible than it will be written up in detail, with examples, in a future issue of the 'Museum Archaeologist'.

### References

1. Stone, S.M., Museums Journal, 77(3) 1978, 117-119 'St. Albans Museums Documentation Project'.

\*

\*

\*

### ABOVE-GROUND ARCHAEOLOGY

Frank Cottrill

We all know that field archaeology is not synonymous with digging. We pride ourselves on being fully aware that it also essentially includes systematic survey of what is already visible on the surface, the compilation of records of previous discoveries, fortuitous or otherwise, that can be plotted on the map and the study of relevant data provided by other disciplines. Excavation in fact is, or should be, the technique that is finally resorted to when all the evidence that can be obtained from other sources has been taken into account. Yet one may suspect a tendency even among professionals to forget this principle, and to be indeed so preoccupied with the possibilities of excavation for revealing the unknown that the habit of keeping a fresh eye for what can be seen above ground is not cultivated as it should be.

That this can apply to such prominent and familiar monuments of antiquity as churches has been brought home to us by a very perceptive article by Richard Morris on 'Rescuing Churches' in Rescue News of Spring 1976 (there is now a CBA Research Report on the subject). He lays great stress on the fact that 'in a church, or for that matter in any historic building, the laws of stratification apply just as much to the fabric as to the site'. It may seem extraordinary that after all that has appeared in print in the last century as well as in this about what is Dec. and what is Perp., or the detailed records of visible features given in the descriptions of churches in RCHM volumes, we are discovering that church buildings can be made to yield yet more evidence that is not only vital to the understanding of their history but also can be overlooked and destroyed in works of restoration or improvement. Obviously the greatest amount of information can be expected from a combination of conventional excavation inside or outside the walls and systematic stone-by-stone examination of the superstructure, but in the absence of the former attention should still be given to the latter. This applies especially in cases where adaptation to another use or, of course, demolition follows redundancy. Even nineteenth century churches on older sites should not be disregarded, for there is the possibility that stonework from a predecessor, or even structural elements in situ, were incorporated in the walls of the new building.

The destruction of country houses has been the subject of an exhibition at the Victoria & Albert Museum, and the loss of buildings and the dispersal of their contents is properly deplored. But has there been a realistic and enterprising response to this situation? Any country house of some age, however uniform or otherwise its external appearance, may have a more or less complicated structural history, and the process of demolition provides a unique opportunity for obtaining the evidence for this - and of course for rescuing any removable features of architectural or decorative interest, either already known or that may come to light. This is certainly not to say that we should abandon these buildings to the housebreaker simply in order to get knowledge or museum specimens as by-products of their destruction; but it is an argument for gleaning what we can in all those cases where demolition has become inevitable.

If the site of a Roman villa is threatened by development, there is a fair chance that it will be investigated at public expense by the appropriate technique, i. e. excavation, which will be directed to recovering the features and structural history of the building and any evidence of contemporary social or economic changes; there is even some possibility that the results of the excavation will eventually be seen in the local museum. How odd it is, therefore, that if a Tudor or Georgian counterpart of the Roman villa is doomed, it is apparently nobody's business to see that there should likewise be a detailed record made of all indications of the history of its standing structure during controlled demolition under expert supervision. There seems to be here some compartmentalised thinking, for which museum people must bear some of the responsibility; the Roman villa is 'archaeology' (and therefore something that you dig) whereas the country house of more recent centuries is 'art' (and therefore, once any move for preservation in toto has been defeated, something that you write off as a dead loss). Such ludicrously stereotyped and inadequate concepts do nothing for the advance of historical knowledge in general, or the creative development of museums in particular.

As for lesser buildings, the field is very wide indeed. The indications now are that a great deal of our heritage of this kind is only briefly mentioned or is omitted altogether in the volumes of the Victoria County History and of Pevsner and in the lists of graded buildings - while of course the RCHM has only done some counties. During the last few years, the Surrey Domestic Buildings Research Group has recorded over 800 mediaeval houses in that county, while the latest issue of the members' magazine of the Weald and Downland Open Air Museum says that again and again buildings not listed under the 1947 Act have been revealed during demolition 'as buildings of great if not unique, interest'. It is well known that mediaeval houses in towns sometimes have Georgian fronts, but it is becoming clear that in parts of the country where building stone was not readily available there are important examples of mediaeval timber construction surviving behind even more unlikely exteriors, and it would seem desirable to extend scrutiny even in the stone districts. We are rightly concerned with the recording and sometimes the excavating of deserted mediaeval villages, especially in view of the destruction of these sites that is going on, but a comprehensive view of the relevant evidence surely requires that we should also know fully what there is in undeserted mediaeval villages - not forgetting the houses and barns of outlying farmsteads.

Other categories of above-ground archaeology might be thought of, but I have suggested at least some of the opportunities that now lie open to museums for extending their scope and influence. It is especially important that these should be remembered in the context of the resolution passed at the Museums Association Conference in 1976 on Environmental Record Centres; and of course the account given by Richard Foster of the Oxfordshire Sites and Monuments Record, and printed in the conference proceedings (pp. 22-3), is highly relevant as presenting an outstanding example of the sort of enterprise that is required and the advantages that it can have for a museum. In accordance with the objectives set out in the constitution, our Society must be especially concerned in this whole issue; for if we are to campaign effectively for 'increased museum involvement in field archaeology, either in close collaboration with archaeological units or by assuming responsibility for the totality of the field programme in their areas', it is up to us to show that museums are uniquely suited to deal with that 'totality' - and not just with those elements of it that happen to be revealed by spade and trowel.

\*

\*

\*

## THE RESTITUTION AND RETURN OF CULTURAL PROPERTY

A Note by Geoffrey Lewis

This note was prepared for the Museums Association and has been circulated to specialist groups for their comments. The subject is of importance to those museums with collections of foreign archaeological material. If anyone has any views which they wish to express, they are asked to write to the Secretary, who will be making comments to the Museums Association.

### BACKGROUND

1. The issue of the return of cultural property to its country of origin is of long standing. More recently however, particularly with post-war decolonisation, the matter has figured larger amongst museums and has also become of political concern, particularly amongst certain ex-colonial states and countries that have experienced foreign occupation.
2. Various resolutions, etc., directly or indirectly concerned with this have been approved at the General Assembly of UNESCO. These have been aimed at strengthening international co-operation, recognising the need for the protection of cultural property in occupied countries together with the obligations of countries that have occupied foreign territory in the past as well as preventing the illicit export and import of such material.
3. The Museums Association with other relevant bodies have issued a supporting statement in regard to the UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, 1970. This has not, however, been ratified by Her Majesty's Government. The Government has normally abstained from voting when this

issue has been discussed more recently by UNESCO but it is believed to support the principles behind this, the Convention of 1972 concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage and a recommendation concerning the International Exchange of Cultural Property, in 1976.

4. The current discussions, which commenced in 1974 and will be the subject of further debate at the forthcoming UNESCO General Conference are particularly concerned with the creation of a UNESCO inter-governmental committee with special responsibility for:

- (a) promoting multilateral and bilateral co-operation with a view to restituting or returning cultural property to its country of origin;
- (b) encouraging the research and the studies necessary for drawing up coherent programmes for the assembly of representative collections in the countries whose cultural heritage has been dispersed;
- (c) stimulating a public information campaign on the nature, the order of magnitude and the significance of the problem of restitution and return of cultural property;
- (d) guiding the conception and implementation of the programme of activities of UNESCO in the field of restitution or return of this cultural property to its country of origin;
- (e) promoting exchanges of cultural property in conformity with the Recommendation on the international exchange of cultural property;
- (f) encouraging the establishment or strengthening of museums or other institutions for the conservation of cultural property and the training of the necessary scientific and technical staff;
- (g) reporting on its activities to the General Conference of UNESCO.

5. While the museums of many member states are under direct government control, this is not the case in the UK. It is necessary therefore for debate on the issue, both at professional and governing body level, in order that the views of both are known to government and its representatives at UNESCO. The present document has been prepared for this purpose and draws heavily on discussions that have taken place within UNESCO and ICOM.

#### PARAMETERS

6. The UNESCO Resolution of 1976 (4.128) relates to "the restitution and return of cultural property to the countries having lost them as a result of colonial or foreign occupation".

7. The UNESCO meeting at Dakar (1978) defined cultural property as "objects and documents of historical and ethnological interest, works of fine art and decorative art, paleontological and archaeological objects as well as zoological, botanical and mineralogical specimens". This will be considered at the November 1978 General Conference of UNESCO.

8. The 1978 General Conference of UNESCO will also consider the suggestion from the Dakar meeting that the goal should be "to ensure the return to its countries of origin cultural property which has a fundamental significance from the point of view of the spritual values and cultural heritage of the people".

## SOME ISSUES

### Attribution

9. The notion of "country of origin" in its generality is ambiguous and may relate to the manufacture of the item, the nationality of its creator or the last location of the item before removal. Similarly cultural attributions may be the subject of dispute amongst specialists. Clearly requests for the return of an item should be accompanied by evidence to support the claim for return.

### Scientific Collections

10. Special consideration will be necessary in cases where a request relates to an item in, or part of, a scientific collection, the scientific value of which is in the collection as an entity.

### The Primacy of the Object

11. The presence of an object in a public collection presupposes that it has been acquired to ensure its preservation and availability to the public at large. It would be reasonable to seek assurances on continuation of these in the context of material to be returned. However, public availability may conflict with certain religious constraints in the requesting country and may apply to certain types of object and material could be sought for its scientific rather than its display value.

### Legal Considerations

12. The legal position of museum collections and their disposal varies with their governing instruments. However, particular attention is drawn to para. 5 of the Code of Practice for Museum Authorities (published by the Museums Association) and the implications that this may have on the outright gift or exchange of museum material to another institution.

13. The act of restitution by a museum might be construed as an admission of the illegal holding of the item(s) with consequent legal implications for other foreign holdings. Legal advice is necessary on this point.

### Documentation

14. The evidence supporting a museum object is often in documentary form and constitutes part of the total record. This may be in field notes/books or internal records and the form in which such information is provided must be determined as part of any intended transaction.



## THE MUSEUM EXCHANGE PROGRAMME

15. ICOM, as a result of private funding has recently established the Museum Exchange Programme (MUSEP). This, which is quite separate from the UNESCO initiatives, is concerned primarily with encouraging the exchange of specimens between museums on an international basis and is therefore of interest in the present context. The programme commenced on 1st September 1978 is headed by Mr. T.A. Hume, lately Director of the Museum of London, and administered by the Paris headquarters of ICOM.

\*

\*

\*

## MUSEUMS ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE

The specialist sessions at the Museums Association Conference will be held on Wednesday, 11th July. The provisional programme of the Society's meeting includes visits to God's House Tower, Southampton, and Southsea Castle, Portsmouth, to study the collections.

COMMITTEE

Chairman	K.J. Barton	Director, Hampshire County Museums Service
Secretary	D.P. Dawson	Curator in Archaeology, Bristol City Museum and Art Gallery
Treasurer	R.A. Rutland	Keeper of Antiquities, Leicestershire Museums, Art Galleries and Record Service
Editor	C.N. Gowing	Curator, Buckinghamshire County Museum

Representatives

National Museums	I. A. Kinnes	Assistant Keeper, Department of Prehistoric and Romano- British Antiquities, British Museum
Scotland	Miss H. C. Adamson	Depute Keeper, Department of Archaeology, Ethnography and History, Glasgow Art Gallery and Museum
Museums North		
N.W. Federation	Mrs. D.M. Downes	Keeper of Antiquities, Merseyside County Museums
Yorkshire and Humberside	Mrs. E. Hartley	Keeper of Archaeology, The Yorkshire Museum
W. Midlands	Mrs. R. Taylor	Deputy Keeper of Archaeology, Birmingham City Museum & Art Gallery
E. Midlands	A. White	Keeper of Archaeology, Lincoln City and County Museum

S. Midlands	C. Saunders	Keeper of Field Archaeology, St. Albans Museums
London Museums	Miss P. Wilkinson	Senior Assistant Curator, Archaeology and Local History Section, Passmore Edwards Museum
Welsh Affiliated	C.J. Delaney	Curator, County Museum, Carmarthen, Dyfed
S.W. Federation		
S.E. Federation	T. Schadla-Hall	Keeper of Archaeology, Hampshire County Museum Service
Co-opted	G. Davies	Director and Keeper of Archaeology, St. Albans Museums