

# Selecting for Archive

Duncan H. Brown  
Head of Archaeological Archives  
Historic England

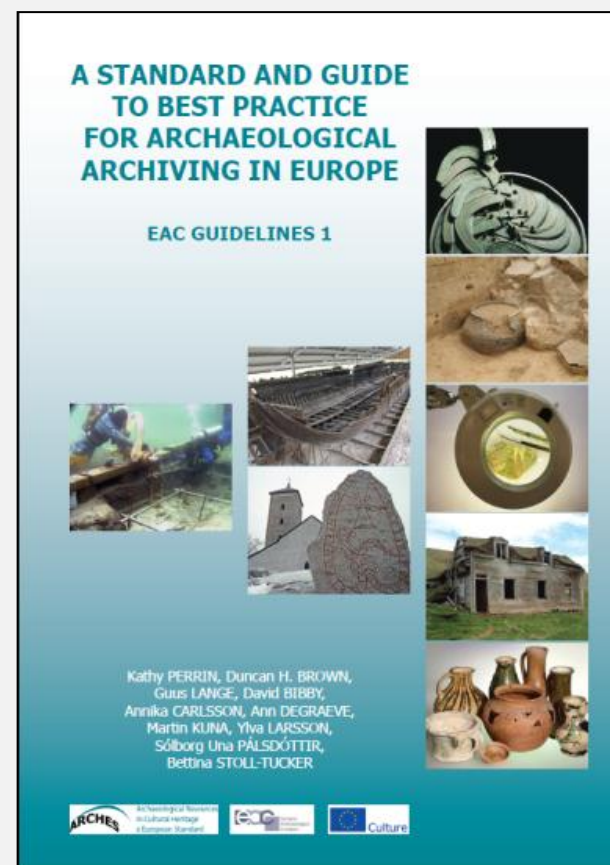


Historic England

<http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/arches/Wiki.jsp>

## 4.1 DEFINITIONS

An archaeological archive comprises all records and material objects recovered during an archaeological project and identified for long term preservation, including artefacts, ecofacts and other environmental remains, waste products, scientific samples and also written and visual documentation in paper, film and digital form.



**CIDOC  
Archaeological Archives Standard**



English Heritage  
englishheritageprints.com

## Working Project Archive

All the documentation and physical items gathered during an archaeological project.

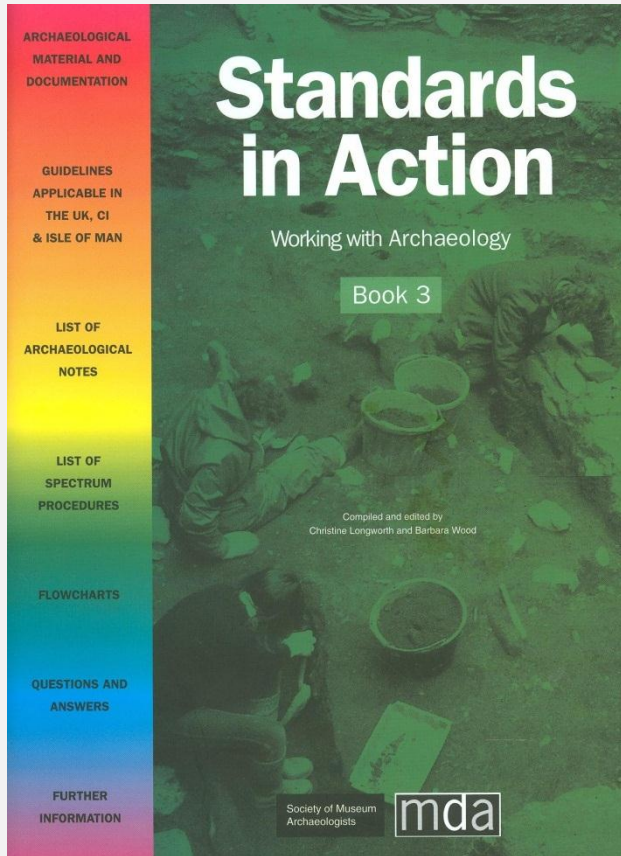
## Preserved Archive

Elements selected from the working project archive for curation beyond the duration of a project.

A key difference is that the responsibility for the maintenance of location information of archive elements will transfer from the archive creator to the curating institution.

# SPECTRUM

The UK Museum Documentation  
Standard



Our museum would like to dispose of some of our archaeological collections. What are the correct procedures to follow?

We have archaeological material which has been in the museum for some years and which has very little associated documentation. How should we go about disposing of it?

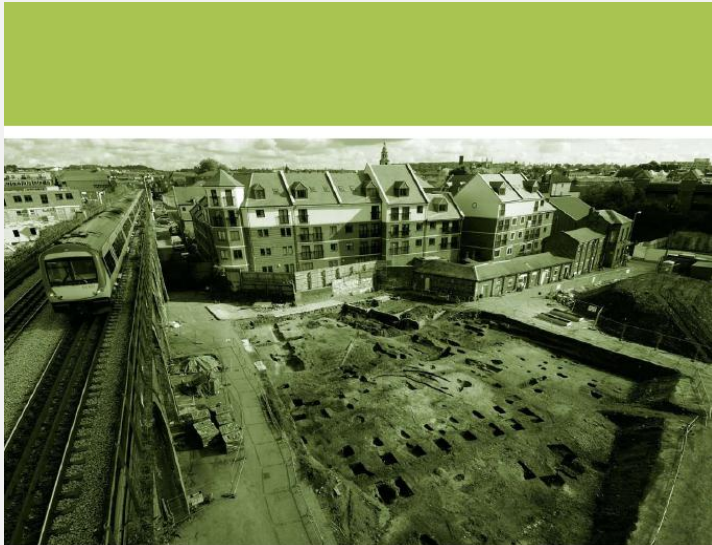
Ethical guidelines  
Ownership  
Inventory  
Collecting policy  
Other uses  
Consultation  
Transfer

How should the museum consider the issue of disposal of materials from a site which is currently under excavation?

Standards established from the start  
Procedures established in the museum's own conditions for transfer  
Liaise with collector or project director  
Consider museums own acquisition and selection strategy

mda 2000

## Establish the quantity of un-deposited archive material



Over 9,000 undepositable archaeological archives in England.

The estimated volume of undepositable archives was 1,160m<sup>3</sup>.

2,205Gb of data in c. 1.25 million digital files

### ARCHAEOLOGICAL ARCHIVES AND MUSEUMS 2012

Rachel Edwards  
Society of Museum Archaeologists

### Solutions:

Selection

Deep storage

Resource centres





## 4. SELECTION AND RETENTION OF FINDS

## 4.1 Principles

Project planning must consider finds selection.

The agreed procedure for selection must be fully described in the project design or associated documentation (e.g. archive repository guidelines).

Changes to the selection strategy must, where possible, be agreed by the project executive, the project team and the archive curator.

The finds assemblage should be assessed after fieldwork to determine which finds are to be retained.

The selection process must be adequately resourced.

The selection process must be completed before archive transfer.

[http://www.britarch.ac.uk/archives/Archives\\_Best\\_Practice.pdf](http://www.britarch.ac.uk/archives/Archives_Best_Practice.pdf)

The following factors were considered when making recommendations for selection for the material archive:

Was the object securely stratified?

Is the context well-documented?

How well preserved is the object?

What potential does the object have for analysis / interpretation, display, teaching?

Where it is recommended that objects be de-selected, the following three options should be considered:

Transfer to a reference collection

Transfer to a handling collection

Destruction

The decision of which option to follow is the responsibility of the Curator of Hadleyville Museums and Galleries, in consultation with finds specialists and the project team.

Before any dispersal takes place, it is recommended that the finds be catalogued by an appropriately trained finds specialist according to the current guidelines of specialist groups.



## Material type: Pipe clay

Context Number	Object type	Context type	Secure context?	Well documented?	Recommendation
I 2	Pipe stem	Fill of modern sewer-trench at E. end of trench, with sewer pipe.	Yes	Yes	On contextual grounds it is recommended the clay pipe be discarded.
I 4	Pipe stem	Cleaning layer depth of 34cm from surface. Contains 'later sherds'.	No	Yes	On contextual grounds it is recommended the clay pipe be discarded.
17	Pipe bowl	In north section. Sandy layer with mid-brown tinge. Excavated by Amy. May be part of shallow modern disturbance 6.	No	Yes	On contextual grounds it is recommended the clay pipe be discarded.



The amount of storage space available and levels of curatorial expertise

There are no museums collecting archaeological project archives in 47 local authorities.

There are specialist archaeological curators in around 30% of museums contacted (134).

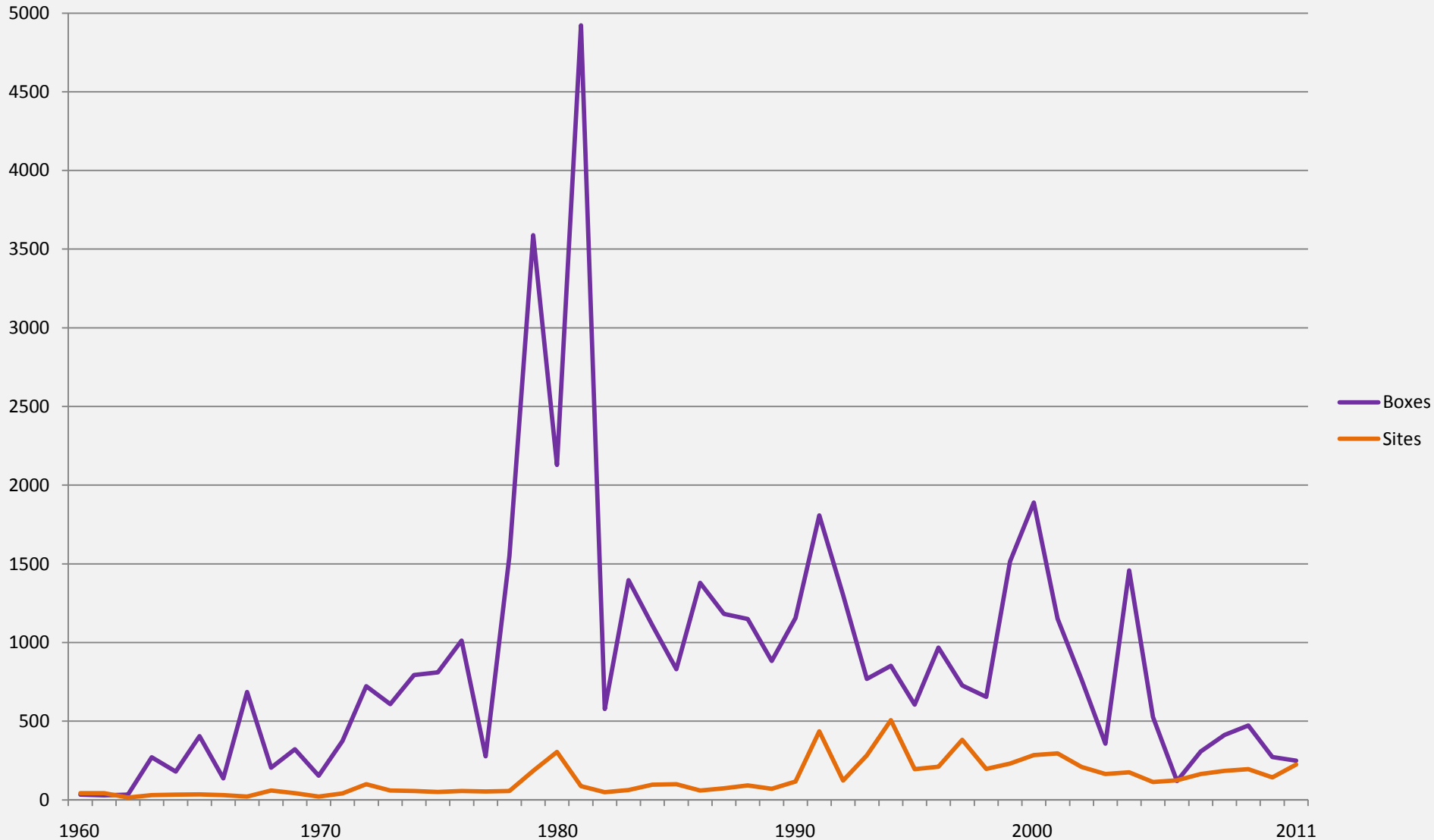


ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
ARCHIVES AND  
MUSEUMS 2012

Rachel Edwards  
Society of Museum Archaeologists

<http://www.socmusarch.org.uk/docs/Archaeological-archives-and-museums-2012.pdf>

# How much material has been collected since the advent of PPG16



**STANDARDS FOR THE CREATION, COMPILATION AND TRANSFER  
OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL ARCHIVES**

**Southampton City Council  
2007**



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## STANDARDS FOR THE MATERIAL ARCHIVE

All finds submitted for permanent storage must be in as stable a condition as current best practice permits.

Finds should be recovered according to procedures acceptable to SCC.

Finds must be cleaned to accepted standards or by a trained archaeological conservator.

Finds must be marked or labelled with the site code and context number, also the item number as appropriate.

Finds must be recorded using the standard method of classification, with fragment counts and weights and as appropriate x-rays, photos and drawings.

Project finds records should be submitted in digital form, with files structured as agreed with the Curator of Archaeology.

Certain objects will be recorded on a standard pro-forma (SMART 5) designed for entry into the SCC Archaeological Object Database.

Finds must be packaged to a standard specification.

Finds must be stored in boxes of a specified size and quality.

Boxes must be marked in a standard way.

## MONITORING

Every archaeological archive deposited with Southampton City Council will be checked by the Curator of Archaeology.

Communication with the Curator of Archaeology throughout the course of a project will help to ensure that standards are met.

Two meetings must be arranged with the Curator of Archaeology in the post-fieldwork stage of every project:

the Itemised Finds Assessment

the Collections Assessment

## The aim of the Collections Assessment is to

Carry out spot-checks on all archive elements to ensure that they are properly prepared for transfer to Southampton City Council. All elements of the archive must be available for inspection by the Curator of Archaeology.

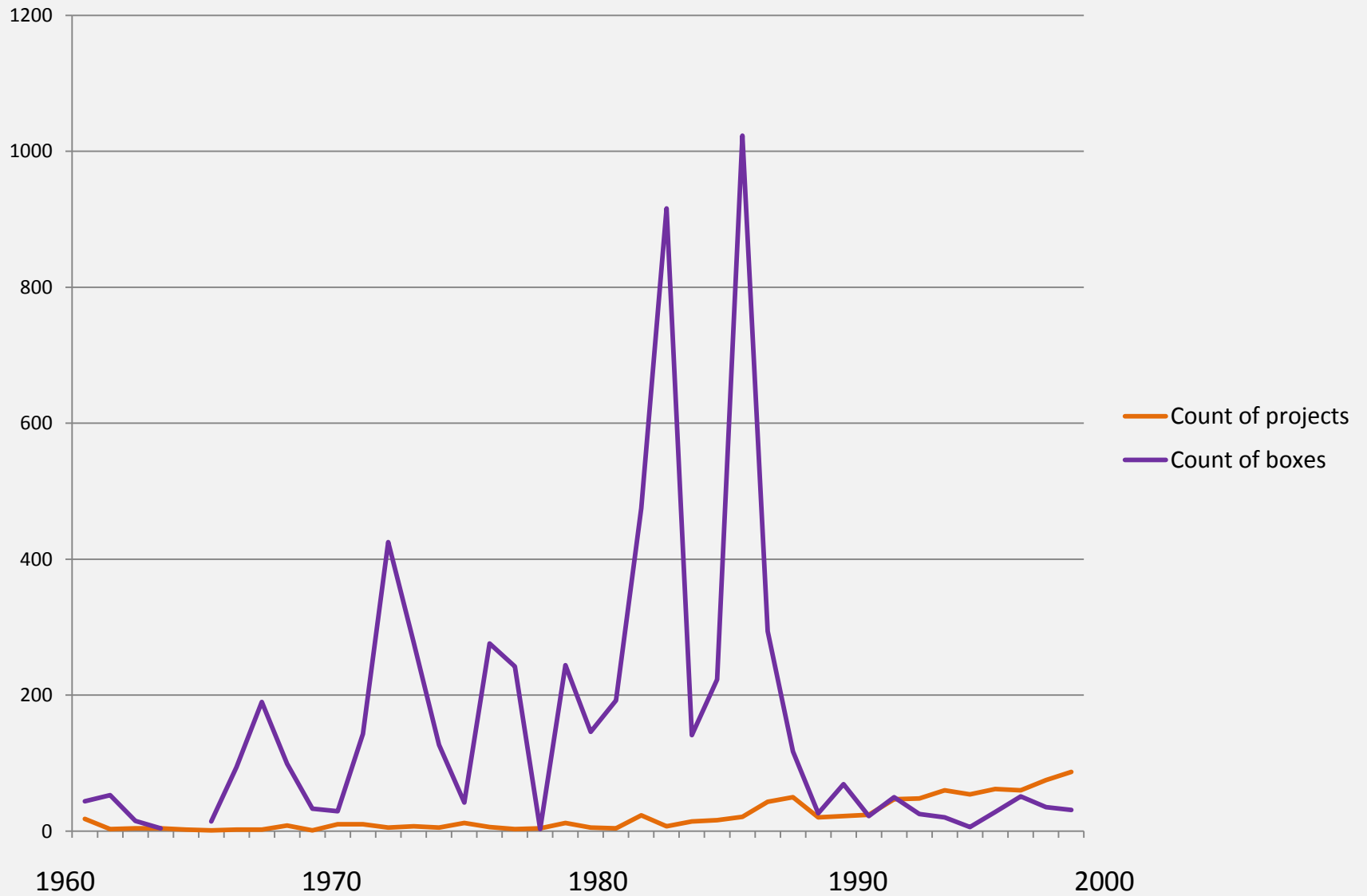
Review the digital archive and agree which elements are to be transferred.

Review the finds assemblage to decide what finds will be retained in the project archive and which may be dispersed elsewhere. Context finds record sheets, itemised finds record sheets, x-radiographs of metal objects, specialist reports, and phasing and context information must all be available to inform this process. The Project Manager and Finds Manager must be present to help interpret the site records.

Agree a timetable for transfer of the archive to Southampton City Council.

Agree the issuing of a Southampton Museums Accession Number for the project. Accession numbers will only be issued after the Collections Assessment has established that the archive will be prepared to these standards.

Of 9,069 boxes of bulk finds, over 7,000 were collected before 1997



## Numbers of boxes

Stone	828
Mortar / plaster	100
CBM	868
Burnt clay	466
Pottery	2,190
Pipe clay	60
Glass	284
Slag	555
Animal bone	2,577
Shell	790
Charcoal	45

## Southampton Archaeology Museum collections rationalisation programme

Three possible methods for rationalising the collections:

On a site-by site basis

Target different material types for disposal

Target sites with 'low-grade' archives for selective dispersal of finds.



## Southampton Archaeology Museum collections rationalisation programme

### Site-by-site basis

- Grade 1 sites with archives that meet current standards
- Grade 2a sites with acceptable archives compiled before current standards were put in place
- Grade 2b sites with archives that do not meet current standards
- Grade 3 sites with archives that are irretrievably below current standards

## Recording criteria for materials targeted for de-accessioning

Un-worked stone	stone type, size, fragment count and weight (where possible)
Mortar / plaster	material type, fragment count and weight
Ceramic building material	fabric type, object type, form of component parts, glaze, decoration, weight, fragment count, object count
Burnt clay	object type, weight, fragment count
Clay pipe	diameter, bore diameter, weight, fragment count
Smithing slag	weight, fragment count
Charcoal	wood type (if possible), weight.
Oyster shell	Select only if 100+ complete valves in a context For every context record shell type, weight and count

## GRADE 1 SITES

There are presently 144 boxes of targeted materials from Grade 1 sites.

It is not proposed to de-accession any finds from Grade 1 sites

Southampton Archaeology Museum collections rationalisation programme

Find type	Grade 2a		Grade 2b		Grade 3		Totals	
	Boxes	Days	Boxes	Days	Boxes	Days	Boxes	Days
Unworked flint	24	3	2	0.25	1	0.25	27	3.5
Unworked stone	188	30	28	4	66	11	282	45
Mortar / plaster	17	2	2	0.25	1	0.25	20	2.5
Ceramic building material	377	94	165	41	38	10	580	145
Burnt clay	118	10	96	8	20	1	234	19
Pipe clay	27	3	3	0.25	8	1	38	4.25
Slag	124	10	157	13	14	1	295	24
Charcoal	10	2	6	0.25	9	0.5	25	2.75
Shell	296	25	111	9	120	10	527	44
<b>Totals</b>	<b>1181</b>	<b>179</b>	<b>570</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>277</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>2028</b>	<b>290</b>

## Southampton Archaeology Museum metalwork audit

SOU 4				
Box	Item no.	Object type	Condition	Retain?
1	39	cylinder	intact	1
1	40	unidentified	flakes	3
1	41	nail	intact	2
1	42	unidentified	flakes	3
1	43	unidentified	lumps	2
1	44	unidentified	lumps	2
1	45	nail	intact	2
1 = select				
2 = unsure				
3 = de-accession				

## Preserved Archive

Elements selected from the working project archive for curation beyond the duration of a project.

Selection criteria must be based on:

- potential to inform future research
- potential for use in further analysis
- potential for use in museum activities.

Selection criteria must NOT be based on:

- demands of storage space
- economic resources
- commercial considerations.