

## Workshop 1 Archaeological Archives

7<sup>th</sup> April 2017, 10.30 – 16.30

The Board Room, Remark, 18 Leather Lane, London, EC1N 7SU

<http://www.remarkevents.co.uk/Location>

### Draft programme

#### Archaeological archives: new models for archive creation, deposition, storage, access and research

What can the sector do to redefine the archaeological archive and realise its public value?

10.30 – 10.45	Arrival and tea/coffee
10.45 – 11.00	Introduction and briefing
11.00 – 12.30	Group work: define issues and identify any current initiatives to address them
12.30 – 13.00	Workshop: Share priority/most pressing issues with workshop
13.30 – 14.00	Lunch and view outputs from other groups
14.00 – 15.00	Group work: What needs to be done and by whom?
15.00 – 15.15	Tea/coffee
15.15 – 16.30	Workshop: discuss and agree recommendations

Workshop leads: Jan Wills (ClfA)

Steve Trow (Historic England)

Workshop facilitator: Hedley Swain (Arts Council England)

## **Workshop 1**

### **Archaeological archives: new models for archive creation, deposition, storage, access and research**

What can the sector do to redefine the archaeological archive and realise its public value?

Through on line discussion on **29-31<sup>st</sup> March** and in the subsequent workshop on **7<sup>th</sup> April** we will be asking the following questions. The objective of the discussion is to produce recommendations that can be taken forward by the sector. The results of the online discussions and the workshop will be collated and made available for comment and consultation.

- 1. Do we know why we are creating and keeping archives, what their archaeological value is and how they are actually being used? What is their potential for future research, display, public access?**
- 2. Is the existing legal and policy framework sufficient to enable the archaeological archive to be created, deposited and curated?**
- 3. Are there fieldwork and analysis practices we could improve that would refine our approach to selection?**
- 4. Should we keep everything forever, irrespective of the significance of the sites that the archives represent?**

#### **Under each of the above themes we want to consider:**

- What are the issues?
- What are the current initiatives for each issue and are they sufficient?
- What needs to be done, by whom and how in an era of reducing public expenditure?
- Do we have the right structures in place to make progress? Who leads?
- Who pays?

## Workshop 1

### Archaeological archives: new models for archive creation, deposition, storage, access and research

#### Background

The successful management of archaeology through the planning process over the last 25 + years, since the introduction of PPG 16 *Archaeology and Planning*, has led to a huge increase in the numbers of archaeological investigations in England carried out each year. These projects range from small evaluations or watching briefs during householder developments, some of which may have identified little or no significant archaeological deposits, to major housing or infrastructure projects generating results of national significance.

Government policy as expressed in the *National Planning Policy Framework* indicates that the archives generated from these investigations should be deposited in the relevant local museum or other public depository; further advice on deposition 'as an integral part of any recording project' is contained in Historic England and sector-supported guidance *Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 2, Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment*.

However, no holistic provision for archive deposition has ever been planned for or established. Local museums are, therefore, faced with volumes of material that they may have neither the physical capacity to store nor the specialist staff to curate and, as a consequence, backlogs of archives have built up with the archaeological companies that have carried out the investigations. These difficulties are increasing as cuts to local authority budgets continue, expert curatorial staff are lost and the prospect of investment in additional storage diminishes.

In 2011 the Southport Group report envisaged:

*'a network of resource centres related to existing museum structures and supporting appropriate expertise, that curate archaeology collections (records and material) and provide access to all types of information on the historic environment for a wide variety of users.'*

The recommendations made to support realisation of that vision and progress towards them are summarised in the *Southport Review 2017*.

Although that vision has not been realised progress has been made on some of the detailed recommendations. Archives issues now have a higher profile within the sector, particularly following the 2012 surveys by the Society for Museum Archaeology and the Federation of Archaeological Managers and Employers. Together these documented the collecting policies of museums, their collecting areas, space constraints and the numbers of specialist curatorial posts (SMA), and identified c 9000 undeposited archives held by archaeological organisations in England (FAME). The statement by FAME in 2016 underlines, however, that the problems documented in 2012 remain.

In 2017 we anticipate the findings of the DCMS Museums Review, although any implementation of its recommendations will take place against a backdrop of intensifying public expenditure restraint. In addition, a number of initiatives are underway that seek to document further the problems or to explore solutions in specific areas:

- An Historic England funded project in five museums to explore the potential for rationalising existing museum archaeology collections.
- Society for Museum Archaeology/Historic England surveys of current museum collecting practice: three annual surveys commencing 2016-17, exploring collection policy, capacity and specialist expertise. The Year 1 report (November 2016) is now available – see below.
- ‘*Seeing the light of day*’ – a project led by the Wiltshire Museum in a partnership with the South West Museum Development Partnership, South West Museums Federation, Historic Environment Teams and the Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers in the South West, Historic England, the Chartered Institute for Archaeology Archives Group, the Society of Museum Archaeologists and the five largest archaeological contractors active in the South West. The aim is to develop business models and guidance on how to deliver funding for archaeological archives from developer contributions, models for sustainable shared storage and public access.

## References

*National Planning Policy Framework*, DCLG 2012, paragraph 141:

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/6077/2116950.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/6077/2116950.pdf)

*Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 2, Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment*, Historic England 2015, paragraphs 36 – 40 <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/gpa2-managing-significance-in-decision-taking/>

*Archaeological archives and museums 2012*, Rachel Edwards for the Society of Museum Archaeologists <http://socmusarch.org.uk/socmusarch/gailmark/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Archaeological-archives-and-museums-2012.pdf>

*A survey of archaeological archives held by archaeological practices in England, Scotland and Wales*, FAME 2012: <http://www.famearchaeology.co.uk/download/archaeological-archives/FAME-Report-on-Archaeological-Archives-Final.pdf>

FAME statement on archives, June 2016: <http://www.famearchaeology.co.uk/2016/06/fame-position-statement-on-archaeological-archives>

*Realising the benefits of planning-led investigation in the historic environment: a framework for delivery*, Southport Group 2011, 3.3, 6.3.3, <http://www.archaeologists.net/sites/default/files/SouthportreportA4.pdf>

*Southport Review* 2017, Taryn Nixon (available shortly before workshop)

Review of museums in England, government consultation:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/review-of-museums-in-england>

Museums and Archaeological Archives: Evidence for the DCMS Museums Review from Historic England (attached).

*Museums Collecting Archaeology (England) Year 1 Report*: November 2016, Historic England/SMA, <http://socmusarch.org.uk/socmusarch/gailmark/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/HE-SURVEY-2016-FINAL.pdf>