

Archaeological Archive from a Sterile Project

Definition

A Sterile **Archaeological Project** is one that produces nothing of **Evidential Value**.

Examples of sterile projects are sites truncated to the natural through recent development or clearance, or trenching that records nothing beyond topsoil, subsoil and features interpreted as valueless, such as land drains.

Archive

By definition the archive from a sterile project will contain no material objects, and the expectation is that it will be solely in digital form.

The archive compilation process should follow current standards, with the application of a **Selection Strategy** and **Data Management Plan** as agreed at project planning and developed through the course of the project. The requirements of local or national **Collecting Institutions** should also be met.

The **Working Project Archive** from a sterile project comprises records that could include:

- A Project Report
- Specialist reports and data such as geophysical survey
- Descriptive data (e.g. soil layer records)
- Spatial data (e.g. location plans)
- Drawings (e.g. trench plans)
- Photographs
- Project brief
- WSI, including selection strategy
- Data Management Plan

The report that describes the processes and results of a sterile project may incorporate all the relevant records from the **Working Project Archive**. The report may therefore represent the preserved **Archaeological Archive** in the form of a single digital document that can be curated digitally by a trusted digital repository.

Curation

Where the project report comprises the **Archaeological Archive**, curation should be with a Trusted Digital Repository in line with local or national guidelines or requirements eg in Scotland with HES; in Wales with RCAHMW and in Northern Ireland with HED. In England, the report could be uploaded to OASIS as a means of submitting it for curation.

The local collecting institution (eg a regional museum) may wish to collect individual elements from the working project archive (eg photographs). In such cases, the preserved archive will be compiled in accordance with their own standards for archive deposition.

Glossary of relevant terms

<p>Archaeological Archive</p>	<p>All records and materials 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 (Perrin et al. 2014, 20).</p>
<p>Archaeological Project</p>	<p>Any programme of work that involves the collection and/or production of information about an archaeological site, assemblage, or object in any environment, including in the field, under water, at a desk or in a laboratory. Examples of an Archaeological Project include intrusive projects such as excavation, field evaluation, watching brief, surface recovery and the destructive analysis of objects; non-intrusive projects such as landscape or building survey, aerial survey, remote sensing, off-site research such as desk-based assessment and the recording of objects or object assemblages. (Perrin et al. 2014, 20). One product of an Archaeological Project will be an Archaeological Archive.</p>
<p>Collecting Institution</p>	<p>Receives an Archaeological Archive from the Depositor for long-term curatorial care.</p>
<p>Data Management Plan</p>	<p>A Data Management Plan, or DMP, is a document which describes how you are planning to manage the data gathered through the delivery of a project, and what will happen to that data (eg. plans for sharing and preservation) once the project is complete.</p>
<p>Evidential value</p>	<p>Evidential value derives from the potential of a place to yield evidence about past human activity. Physical remains of past human activity are the primary source of evidence about the substance and evolution of places, and of the people and cultures that made them. These remains are part of a record of the past that begins with traces of early humans and continues to be created and destroyed. Their evidential value is proportionate to their potential to contribute to people’s understanding of the past. In the absence of written records, the material record, particularly archaeological deposits, provides the only source of evidence about the distant past. Age is therefore a strong indicator of relative evidential value, but is not paramount, since the material record is the primary source of evidence about poorly-documented aspects of any period. Geology, landforms, species and habitats similarly have value as sources of information about the evolution of the planet and life upon it. Evidential value derives from the physical remains or genetic lines that have been inherited from the past. The ability to understand and interpret the evidence tends to be diminished in proportion to the extent of its removal or replacement. (Historic England 2008, sections 35-38)</p>
<p>Selection Strategy</p>	<p>The methodology detailing the project-specific Selection process, agreed by all Stakeholders, which will be applied to the Working Project Archive in order to create the Archaeological Archive. The Data Management Plan is a separate document to the Selection Strategy but should be developed in conjunction with it. Both documents</p>

	should be included in pre-project documentation (eg. Project Design and/or WSI).
Working Project Archive	The records and materials gathered during an Archaeological Project and retained for analysis prior to Selection for the Archaeological Archive.

Historic England (2008) *Conservation principles policies and guidance for the sustainable management of the historic environment* Swindon: Historic England

<https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/conservation-principles-sustainable-management-historic-environment/conservationprinciplespoliciesandguidanceapril08web/>

Perrin, K., Brown, D.H., Lange, G., Bibby, D., Carlsson, A., Degraeve, A., Kuna, M., Larsson, Y., Pálsdóttir, S.U., Stoll-Tucker, B., Dunning, C. and Rogalla Von Bieberstein, A. (2014) *The Standard and Guide to Best Practice for Archaeological Archiving in Europe (EAC Guidelines 1)*

<http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/arches/Wiki.jsp?page=The%20Standard%20and%20Guide%20to%20Best%20Practice%20in%20Archaeological%20Archiving%20in%20Europe>