

## STANDARDS FOR THE PREPARATION AND DEPOSITION OF ARCHAEOLOGY ARCHIVES

This document should be read in association with the current Shropshire Museums Collections Management Policy. A copy of this document may be downloaded at [www.shropshire.gov.uk/museums.nsf](http://www.shropshire.gov.uk/museums.nsf).

### BACKGROUND



Archaeology provides the only evidence for the majority of human history. However, archaeological fieldwork is a destructive process. The documentation produced and the finds collected during a project are the only record of a site to survive. It is, therefore, vital that this unique material can be examined, researched and reassessed in the future.

This resource needs long term curatorial care within a museum. Here it can be preserved and made accessible much in the same way as a Record Office acts for documents.

However, the storage and curation of an archaeology archive is a time consuming and costly process. In order to maximise the museum's available resources and storage space and to ensure that archives can be easily accessible the following basic guidelines for depositing archaeology archives have been introduced.

Shropshire Museums is prepared to accept material from archaeological fieldwork provided the conditions set out below are met by the depositor. However, Shropshire Museums reserves the right to refuse to accept any archaeological material which has been retrieved without regard for these conditions or national guidelines and standards for fieldwork and archive generation as set out by The Institute of Field Archaeologists, The Museums and Galleries Commission and English Heritage.

### FURTHER INFORMATION

Anyone seeking further information or clarification regarding the deposition of archaeological archives should contact the Team Leader (Collections & Curatorial Services).

[emma-kate.lanyon@shropshire.gov.uk](mailto:emma-kate.lanyon@shropshire.gov.uk)  
(01743) 258891

Shrewsbury Museum & Art Gallery, Barker Street, Shrewsbury, Shropshire SY1 1QH

Further details of the archaeology collection can be found on the Museum Service's website:

[www.shropshire.gov.uk/museums.nsf](http://www.shropshire.gov.uk/museums.nsf)

## **ARCHAEOLOGY ARCHIVE STANDARDS**

### **Location of Fieldwork**

- The fieldwork site should fall within the boundaries of the historic county of Shropshire as defined in Shropshire Museums Collections Management Policy.
- Where there are compelling arguments for material from outside the county to be deposited (for example if they form part of a geographically wide-ranging survey which includes the county or the donor expresses a precise wish) an archive may be accepted following discussion with the Curator.

### **Contact with Shropshire Museums Prior to Fieldwork**

- Arrangements should be made with Shropshire Museums prior to the commencement of fieldwork to arrange the deposition of the archive. This made be done by phone, email or letter using the contact details above.
- The Curator must be kept fully informed of commencement dates, progress of the project and proposed date for deposition.

### **Deposition Agreements**

- Before an archive can be accepted by Shropshire Museums the depositing organisation / individual must complete and sign a museum entry form and agree to any additional special conditions.
- A complete inventory of the archive should be attached to this form by the depositing organisation / individual. This can include a list of bags rather than individual finds.

### **Ownership of Finds**

- The ownership of the material within the archive should be fully documented and title transferred to Shropshire Council, fully and freely, in perpetuity at the time of deposition.
- The museum will forward two entry forms for the transfer of tile of the archive to the museum service. The unit / individual undertaking the fieldwork will sign over the title to the paper archive whilst the landowner will sign over the title to the finds archive.
- The finds archive transfer of title form may be signed by the fieldworker if written agreement has already been given by the landowner/s for the fieldworker to deposit the finds archive as he sees fit.
- It will be the responsibility of the depositor to demonstrate that the person(s) or body, in whom title to the material rests, consents in writing to the transfer of ownership to Shropshire Council. Full documentation of consent must be included in the archive.

### **Intellectual Copyright**

- The museum service requires the right to research, study, display, publish and provide public access to any archive in its care. Therefore licence to undertake the above is a requirement of deposition.

### **Incomplete Archives**

- There should be a presumption against splitting an archaeological archive. Only complete archives or groups of excavated or recovered material will be considered except in special circumstances. If any part of the archive is to be deposited elsewhere this should be stated in advance of deposition and fully documented.
- Any material from the archive which has been discarded, lost or destroyed should be recorded.
- Any items which have been removed from the archive for conservation work or specialist analysis / identification should be returned to the archive before it is handed over to Shropshire Museums unless other arrangements have been made between the depositor and the Curator.

### **Selection, Retention and Unacceptable Material**

- Shropshire Museums will not accept unprocessed soil samples or highly unstable items such as waterlogged organic material unless an arrangement has been made prior to deposition between the depositor and the Curator.
- Shropshire Museums will not accept Christian Era human remains (Medieval onwards) except where there is a scientific justification for retention which has been agreed in writing with the curator prior to deposition.
- Environmental samples will only be accepted where appropriate for display or where analysis has been delayed or is still to be undertaken. A time-scale for this work must be agreed with the Curator prior to deposition.
- The table below provides guidance on Shropshire Museums' Selection and Retention Policy for Archaeology Archives. However, any decision to dispose of part of the archive should not be made unilaterally but through discussion between the depositor, Shropshire Museums and any relevant specialist.
- All such disposals must be fully documented within the project archive.

### **Costs**

- Shropshire Museums charges for the deposition of archaeology archives as follows:
  - Findspots within the local authority area of Shropshire
    - Standard Finds Box: £60 380mm x 250mm by 305mm.
    - Standard Paper Archive Box: £40 A4 rigid archival box-file
    - Standard Plan Tube or equivalent: £10
  - Findspots within the local authority area of Telford and Wrekin
    - Standard Finds Box: £90 380mm x 250mm by 305mm.
    - Standard Paper Archive Box: £60 A4 rigid archival box-file
    - Standard Plan Tube or equivalent: £15
- An additional administration charge for staff time and materials may be made if an archive does not meet the standards set out in this document at £50 per hour.
- The Museum Service will not cover the cost of transporting an archive.

### **Policy Revisions**

- This standard was last updated on the 31 January 2013 and applies to all archives for fieldwork started on or after the 01 April 2013.

**Shropshire Museum Service**  
Collections Factsheet 1

Material	Retention Standards	Disposal Standards
<b>Ferrous Metals</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All stratified identifiable (complete or fragmentary) objects.</li> <li>• Typological samples of bulk finds from each context.</li> <li>• Stratified finds bearing impressions of organic materials such as textiles or wood.</li> <li>• Small samples from significant contexts or objects for destructive analysis.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unidentifiable fragments.</li> <li>• Objects too corroded and/or unstable to be conserved.</li> <li>• Deselected samples of bulk finds.</li> </ul>
<b>Non Ferrous Metals</b>  <b>Note: Items subject to the Treasure Act should be declared and discussed with the Curator.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All stratified identifiable (complete or fragmentary) objects.</li> <li>• All fragments and debris from Prehistoric hoards.</li> <li>• Objects of intrinsic interest.</li> <li>• Typological samples of bulk finds from each context.</li> <li>• Stratified finds bearing impressions of organic materials such as textiles or wood.</li> <li>• Small samples from significant contexts or objects for destructive analysis.</li> <li>• Samples which represent significant evidence of metallurgical technology.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unidentifiable fragments.</li> <li>• Objects too corroded and/or unstable to be conserved.</li> <li>• Deselected samples of bulk finds.</li> </ul>
<b>Numismatics</b>  <b>Note: Items subject to the Treasure Act should be declared and discussed with the Curator.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All coins (complete or fragmentary).</li> </ul>	
<b>Glass</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All complete (whole or fragmentary) vessels.</li> <li>• All diagnostic or decorated shards.</li> <li>• All samples which are, or suspected to be, of unusual composition.</li> <li>• All examples of applied stamps.</li> <li>• Samples for destructive analysis.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Repetitive examples of common forms or undecorated window glass (without cames) which are post-medieval or later in date.</li> </ul>
<b>Ceramics</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All complete (whole or fragmentary) vessels.</li> <li>• All Prehistoric pottery.</li> <li>• All Roman Samian Ware.</li> <li>• All Post Roman and Medieval pottery.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Repetitive examples of common forms which have either been deselected from large assemblages or are unstratified.</li> <li>• Repetitive examples of floor tile, wall tile and roof tile which have either been deselected from large</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All brick believed to be pre 1500 in date.</li> <li>• All examples of applied stamps.</li> <li>• A representative sample of all forms, fabrics, decorative treatments (minimum of 20 sherds).</li> <li>• All complete clay pipes, bowls and stamped fragments.</li> <li>• Representative samples of clay pipe stems and tobacco residues.</li> <li>• All complete or incomplete identifiable objects</li> <li>• Fragments and unidentifiable objects from good contexts.</li> </ul>	<p>assemblages or are unstratified.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plain clay pipe fragments from poor contexts or unstratified finds.</li> <li>• Unidentifiable fragments from poor contexts or unstratified finds.</li> </ul>
<b>Stonework</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All Prehistoric stone artefacts including burnt flint and debitage.</li> <li>• All worked stone objects (complete and incomplete).</li> <li>• All decorative and/or inscribed stonework.</li> <li>• Examples of architectural stonework complete in at least one dimension.</li> <li>• All semi precious stones, jet and amber.</li> <li>• Objects of intrinsic interest.</li> <li>• Samples showing evidence of reworking, tool marks or wear.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unworked, undiagnostic material from poor contexts or unstratified finds.</li> <li>• Unstable samples of shale which cannot be meaningfully conserved or used for scientific analysis.</li> </ul>
<b>Organics</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All stratified worked examples including bone, horn, ivory, tortoiseshell, textiles, shell, leather, wood and antler.</li> <li>• All samples from unusual species.</li> <li>• All decorated, coloured, inlaid or inscribed samples.</li> <li>• All samples showing tool marks, reuse or wear.</li> <li>• Typological samples from bulk finds from each context.</li> <li>• Stratified samples for scientific dating.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Very fragmentary and poorly preserved examples from poor contexts or unstratified finds which cannot be conserved or used for destructive analysis.</li> <li>• Deselected samples of bulk finds.</li> <li>• Unprocessed soil or micro flora / fauna samples.</li> <li>• All Christian era human remains (medieval onwards).</li> </ul>
<b>Industrial By Products</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A representative sample of all waste products (minimum of 20 samples).</li> <li>• All industrial artefacts.</li> <li>• All material associated with clay pipe manufacture.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deselected samples of bulk finds which are Post Medieval or later in date.</li> <li>• Repetitive, undiagnostic fragments.</li> </ul>

## **PREPARATION OF THE ARCHIVE**

### **Preparation of Finds**

- All finds and samples must be physically prepared (for example finds should be cleaned, conserved where appropriate etc.) and numbered in a manner appropriate to their material.
- All finds must be bagged in archival grip-top polythene bags with write-on panels.
- Where appropriate individual sensitive finds must be packed in acid-free tissue nests or inert foam insets and packed in bags or polythene boxes.
- All ferrous artefacts should be recorded on X-ray film and copies of the radiographs included in the archive.
- Records of any specialist conservation work should be included in the archive.

### **Preparation of Paper and Digital Records**

- All records (text, plans etc.) should be supplied in standardised sizes.
- A paper copy of the full archive must be provided at A4 format with plans reduced or folded to A4 size. This must be bound or secured in a rigid archival box-file and fully labelled.
- A digitised copy of the full archive must be provided on a PC compatible CD-ROM. Files should be saved either as either as word documents or text rich documents and a jpegs or tiffs. Any other format must be agreed with the Curator.
- All permissions and licences relating to the fieldwork must be included in the paper archive.

### **Packing: Finds Archive**

- All finds should be bagged in perforated archival grip-top polythene bags and marked with the site code and context number as a minimum.
- Finds bags should be arranged in context order and boxed by material type.
- Fragile finds should be packed separately and should be buffered against damage.
- Finds should be boxed in new archival quality boxes approximately 380mm x 250mm by 305mm. All unstable finds such as metalwork, glass etc. should be packed within airtight polythene boxes (plastic food savers) with a perforated bag of conditioned self indicating silica gel.
- Finds boxes should be packed to a maximum of 8 Kg.
- All bags, boxes and other containers should be clearly marked with the site name, code and museum identity number in permanent light safe black ink.
- A number of small related archives may be packed in one internally divided box in agreement with the Curator.

### **Packing: Paper and Digital Archive**

- All paper records should be presented in appropriate acid free bindings.
- Photographs and negatives should be packed in archival polyester sleeves.
- Any information submitted on CD-ROM or any other electronic media should be accompanied by a paper copy of that information.
- The paper archive should be boxed in a new archival quality flat box, rigid box file or a document case approximately 380mm x 250mm by 150mm.
- Plans should be rolled and boxed in an archival quality plan box or tube. If necessary plans should be secured with an inert material such as a horizontal section of polythene bag rather than an elastic band.

### **Documentation of the Finds Archive**

- The depositor should provide two copies of an inventory listing the contents of the paper and finds archive. One copy of this inventory should be attached to the archive's Museum Entry Form. The other should be included within the Paper Archive.
- The depositor should provide two copies of the final report.

# Shropshire Museums

## ARCHAEOLOGY ARCHIVE DEPOSITION AGREEMENT

Archive Name:	
Museum Entry Number:	

*In respect to the above Archaeology Project Archive I agree to the conditions set out in Shropshire Museums' **STANDARDS FOR THE PREPARATION AND DEPOSITION OF ARCHAEOLOGY ARCHIVES.***

*I accept that, should it become clear after deposition that these standards have not been complied with, Shropshire Museums reserves the right to return the entire archive at our cost or to invoice us for staff time and resources to prepare the archive to the aforesaid standards.*

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Print Name \_\_\_\_\_

on behalf of \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Please submit this agreement with the Museum Entry Form/s and inventory.