READING MUSEUM PROCEDURES FOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL ARCHIVES

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Definitions

Archaeological archives are the archaeological records, including finds, produced in the course of archaeological projects collecting information about archaeological sites, assemblages or objects.

Reading Museum is referred to as "the Museum". Practices or Archaeological Bodies responsible for transfer of archaeological archives are referred to as "the Practice".

Contents

Section 1 – Procedures for the deposit of archaeological archives

This document sets out the requirements for the format of deposited archaeological archives and of the procedures for arranging deposition with the Museum. Failure by the depositing Practice to follow these procedures may result in the Museum refusing to accept the archive.

1.1 INTEGRITY OF THE ARCHIVE

There is an assumption that the integrity of an archive will be respected and that the whole archive (both data and objects) will be deposited with the Museum. The long-term value of an archive to future researchers and visitors is greatly enhanced if it is complete and compiled in a well ordered and accessible manner. (See also Section 1.4.3.)

1.2 IDENTIFYING THE APPROPRIATE ARCHIVE REPOSITORY

1.2.1 The Museum's Collection Development Policy 2016-2021 states that it will collect material from the post-1974 local authority boundary of Reading.

> 1.2.1.1 Since 2011 the Museum no longer collects archaeological archives from other authorities in Berkshire. The only exception is where an archaeological site straddles the boundary between Reading and a neighbouring authority. In this situation the Museum will acquire all material from the site to maintain the archaeological integrity of the site archive.
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> 1.2.1.2 For the built-up area of greater Reading to the west, which falls within the West Berkshire Council boundary, the Museum will liaise with West Berkshire Museum when considering acquisition of material.

1.2.2 The Museum will only consider requests for the deposit of archaeological archives in the Reading Borough boundary that are made up of **both an object and data archive**.

1.2.3 The Museum will **not** issue accession numbers or collect an archive that is only made up of the data archive, or where no finds are intended to be deposited. In this case the Practice should deposit a digital copy of the data archive with a recognised digital repository (refer to Berkshire Archaeology's General Standards for Historic Environment Projects document, dated September 2016).

1.3. PROCESS FOR DEPOSITING THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL ARCHIVE (SEE APPENDIX 1 FOR FLOW CHART)

1.3.1 The Museum will consider requests for an accession number to be given to a site **after work has begun and it is clear that the archive will be made up of both an object and data archive**.

1.3.2 The Practice will need to complete a notification form (see Appendix 2) and send it to the Museum. The notification form will then be considered by the Museum's acquisition group who will decide whether the Museum will accept the deposition of the archive.

1.3.2.1 The notification must include a realistic deposition date. This will be the date that the Museum expects the whole archive to be deposited. Failure to deposit by this date without good reason will result in the accession number being cancelled. The Museum will contact the Practice and Berkshire Archaeology to inform them that it will no longer take the archive.

1.3.3 After the Museum's acquisition group accepts the notification form the Practice will be notified of the accession number.

1.3.3.1 The Practice must ensure that this accession number is quoted in all subsequent correspondence. The accession number should also be quoted in all reports or publications concerning the site, including on any reports submitted to a digital repository and on all microfiches made by Historic England. The accession number must not be used for any other site or phase of work, even if part of the same project, without the agreement of the Museum.

1.3.4 The Practice is responsible for contacting the Museum to arrange a date to deliver the archive and agreeing the deposit charge. Archives must not be posted or delivered by courier. (See Section 2 for full details of the Museum's deposition standards.)

1.3.4.1 The Practice should not transfer partial site archives. Transfer should not occur until all material is ready for inclusion. The only exception to this will be when very large site archives are transferred according to an agreed phased deposit.

1.3.4.2 Retention by the Practice of type series samples from any site should not occur.

1.3.4.3 An archive deposition form will be signed by the Practice at the time of deposition.

1.3.4.4 The cost of transport and any necessary insurance cover for the archive whilst in transit to the Museum will be the responsibility of the Practice.

1.4 TRANSFERRING OWNERSHIP OF THE ARCHIVE AS A PHYSICAL ENTITY

1.4.1 In English law all material collected in archaeological projects (except Treasure as defined in The Treasure Act 1996) belongs to the landowner. Therefore, finds can only legally be transferred to the Museum with the written permission of the landowner.

1.4.1.1 The Practice should notify the landowner, when first contacted about the project, and obtain the landowner's agreement in principle. However, final permission cannot be elicited until site work is completed.

1.4.1.2 When work is completed and an accession number issued the Practice should write again to confirm that the landowner agrees to the transfer to the Museum. A detailed list of finds must be included for the landowner's inspection. A copy of this letter and any reply received should be included in the data archive. If no reply is received within two months, an additional letter should be sent as a recorded delivery. If there is still no reply after a total of three months, the archive can be transferred to the Museum, although replies received subsequently should be forwarded to the Museum.

1.4.1.3 The Museum accepts the responsibility of clarifying the legal ownership of material received, as long as the Practice follows these procedures.

1.4.2 The Museum cannot accept material on long-term loan. Loans can be considered for temporary display purposes.

1.4.3 The integrity of the archive is paramount. The Museum has a presumption against accepting an incomplete archive.

1.4.3.1 If the landowner has decided at the outset of the project to retain all finds, then it should be treated in the same way as a site with no finds and the Practice should not request an accession number. (It is recommended that the Practice deposits a digital copy of the data archive media with a trusted digital repository.)

1.4.3.2 If at the end of the project the landowner wishes to keep all the finds the Museum will cancel the accession number and the archive should be treated in the same way as a site with no finds.

1.4.3.3 If the landowner should choose to retain some finds, the Museum may still be prepared to accept the remaining material, although all efforts should be made to discourage a division of the site archive. In such a case, a clear list of material kept by the landowner should be included in the archive.

1.4.3.4 If the landowner has agreed to the deposit of finds at the Museum then it is expected that all finds for deposit will come to the Museum. If the Practice or the landowner agrees to deposit some of the finds with another repository at any stage, then the Museum will not accept the remaining archive. If an accession number has already been issued it will be cancelled.

1.5 TRANSFERRING OWNERSHIP OF THE ARCHIVE AS AN INTELLECTUAL ENTITY

1.5.1 Copyright in the archive will be transferred to the Museum upon deposition of the archive with the Museum.

1.5.2 The Museum must be informed in advance of any restriction of copyright that may apply to any part of the archive so that this can be agreed prior to deposition. Copyright restrictions may result in the Museum refusing to accept the archive.

1.5.3 The Museum will consider a joint copyright for the archive where the Practice is prepared to assign equal copyright.

1.6 CONSERVATION REQUIREMENTS OF THE ARCHIVE

1.6.1 Conservation work must be agreed in writing in advance and must be done to the satisfaction of the Museum and. It is expected that only first aid and analytical conservation work will be done on objects prior to deposition.

1.6.2 Any sampling of finds for analysis must be agreed with the Museum in advance and must comply with the Museum's Destructive and Invasive Sampling of Objects guidelines. If any work for display purposes is required by the Practice or the developer the methods must be agreed with the Museum beforehand.

1.6.3 Conservation work should only be carried out by competent and experienced staff. All work should be properly recorded. Original photographs, drawings, x-radiographs and laboratory notes must be included in the site archive. Objects should not be repaired using masking tape and pottery should not be deposited held together in this way.

1.6.4 All material, including waterlogged material, must be in a stable condition when passed to the Museum. It should be noted that the Museum does not have the facility to accept frozen material. Waterlogged material must have been treated so it can be stored in a dry state and does not require storage in water.

1.7 ARCHIVE CURATION CHARGES

In 2007 the Museum implemented a policy whereby it makes a deposit charge for all archaeological archives received. All Practices were notified in advance of the introduction of this policy. This charge will be reviewed annually. The Practice will be informed of the current charges when a notification is accepted, and this rate will be used to calculate the final payment provided that deposition is complete by the date given on the notification form.

Section 2 – Reading Museum archive deposition standards

To ensure the long term preservation of archaeological archives the Museum expects Practices to follow the guidelines laid out below in preparing for the archive's deposition. If an archive for deposition fails to meet the appropriate standards the archive will be rejected and the Practice asked to repack it.

2.1 NATURE AND CONTENT OF THE ARCHIVE: THE DATA ARCHIVE

2.1.1 Required Format for the Data Archive

2.1.1.1 The archive should be prepared in accordance with the principles set out in Brown 2007. It should be indexed and copied on microform and a microform copy should be included with the archive. The master silver copy should be deposited for safe keeping with the National Monuments Record.

2.1.1.2 Copies of all records compiled during the project should be included, whether as text, drawings, photographs, videos, microform or computer disk. Post-excavation records, such as site phasing details, interpretative plans, artefact analyses, specialist reports, conservation records and publication drawings should be included, as should documentation of the project strategy and agreed sampling strategies applied to the site and finds.

2.1.1.3 All primary data must be deposited **in hard copy**.

2.1.1.4 Site records and post-excavation records should be stored in archival flat document cases with dimensions of either 387 x 260 x 76 mm or 387 x 260 x 44 mm. The cases should have applied labels held in archival label holders on the outside.

> 2.1.1.4.1 Within these cases, documents and photograph envelopes should be held in archival file folders.
>
> 2.1.1.4.2 The first case must include a list of contents for the documentary archive and a clear list of all the finds held in the object archive and of any retained by landowner or otherwise dispersed.

2.1.1.5 Large site plans and section drawings should be suitable for storage in A0/A1-sized horizontal plan chests.

2.1.2 Photographic Records

2.1.2.1 Negatives, contact prints and slides should be inserted into archival filing sleeves. Slide mounts should all be labelled with the site accession number. Photographs should be stored in archival sleeves/envelopes.

2.1.2.2 Subjects of photographs should be clearly identified. Site photographs should include a chalk-board, or similar means of identification, marked with the site code/accession number, and object photographs should include a label marked with the site code/accession number and context/small find number.

2.1.2.3 Digital photographs may be included, but hard copies must be provided. **It should be assumed that digital originals will not exist in the long term.**

2.1.2.3.1 **If no analogue photographs were taken**, the Practice must make a representative selection of good quality images which it must have professionally printed on 10x8 photographic paper (not printed on office inkjet photo paper), in colour and black and white. These images should be provided on a separate CD, or in a separate folder on the CD, and clearly identified.

2.1.2.3.2 All other digital images may be laser printed in colour four to an A4 page. Duplicates and poor quality images should not be included.

2.1.3 Computerised Records

2.1.3.1 Computerised records should be deposited on archival CDs. These should be marked with the Museum's accession number.

2.1.3.2 Since the media for the storage of digital data are short-lived and would need constant refreshing, a complete printed hard copy of all computerised and digital data should be included in the archive.

2.2 NATURE AND CONTENT OF THE ARCHIVE: THE OBJECT ARCHIVE

2.2.1 Selection, Retention and Dispersal

The Museum expects the Practice to operate a strong presumption in favour of preserving all finds from archaeological fieldwork. However, it is recognised that a restricted dispersal of material of low research value enables more effective curation and use of the remainder of the archive. No sampling or dispersal should take place without the written agreement of the Museum. Where an agreed dispersal takes place a list and description of dispersed objects should be included in the archive along with the methods of dispersal. Any agreed disposal of human remains must follow the Museum's procedures for the disposal of human remains and must comply with all legal requirements.

2.2.2 Finds Labelling

Labelling is of vital importance in allowing all archaeological finds held by the Museum to be associated with their documentation - the written site archive. Finds which lack this association lose their value for research.

The Practice will usually have marked all finds, except those of sensitive materials or of a very small size, with site codes and context information, and small finds should have been marked with their small finds number. All bags and boxes and any large finds which cannot be bagged or boxed should also be marked with the accession number issued.

2.2.3 Small Find Numbers

Small finds will continue to be referred to in the Museum's documentation using the small find number issued by the Practice. It is therefore essential that each number is unique. The Practice should issue one set of small find numbers for the whole archive. It should not recommence numbering at the start of separate field seasons, nor have separate small find numbers for different classes of material.

2.2.4 Finds Packing Requirements

The archive should only be deposited in the Museum if packed correctly. It is the responsibility of the Practice to ensure that the correct packing materials are used. The Museum has the right to delay acceptance of the material until it is packed correctly. Boxes should not be over packed and small fragile items must not be packed with large heavy items.

The correct packing materials are outlined below:

Boxes. All bulk finds should be placed in cardboard boxes, with brass staples, preferably with lids with a depth between 60 and 100 mm. The designated box size for the Museum is length 480mm x width 240mm x depth 240mm. Only boxes of this size or fractions (quarters or halves) of this size will be accepted by the Museum. (Special arrangements can be made for skeletal material and other large items.) For large archives bulk finds should be divided up according to material, rather than context, and boxed separately.

Metal finds should always arrive in the Museum in sealed plastic Stewart boxes containing silica gel, the size of which should be dictated by the objects that they contain.

Human bone must be packed separately, not mixed with animal bone.

Bags. Only re-sealable polythene bags with write-on panels should be used. The bag sizes should be dictated by the size of the objects that they are to contain. On no account will material in paper bags be accepted. Fragile material such as metals and worked organic material should be placed in pierced bags, and they can be padded with Jiffy foam or acid free tissue.

Labels. All finds packing should be labelled with the Museum accession number. The bags must be marked on the outside using archival quality ink. Bags must not be stapled nor must labels be stapled to the bags.

The boxes should be labelled with a permanent pen or marker on one of the narrow faces. This label should be written directly on the box and not on a sticky label which may fall off. Lids that are very deep will need to be marked as well.
The box labels should follow this pattern:
Museum Accession Number (including Museum Identification Code)
Site Code
Site Name
Box Number
Number of bags/items
Material
Context range/notes
Date packed
Checked
Practice name

Oversize objects. All oversize large items should be marked and should also have a tie on label. This should be waterproof (e.g. Tyvek), written on with a permanent ink and tied with a strong polyester thread. The Museum must be consulted over how oversize objects will be deposited and agreement must be reached over whether they can be deposited unboxed or whether they should be crated.

2.2.5 Environmental Samples

Where it has been agreed that waterlogged environmental samples will be retained they should be stored in sealed containers of phenoxytol. These containers should be labelled in the same way as other archive material.

2.3 LOGISTICS OF TRANSFER

2.3.1 The archive should be prepared within a timescale agreed between the Practice and the Museum. The Practice will have notified the Museum in advance of the expected time limit for deposition.

> 2.3.1.1 For smaller sites, the Museum suggests a maximum time period of **one year** between the termination of fieldwork and the transfer of the complete archive.
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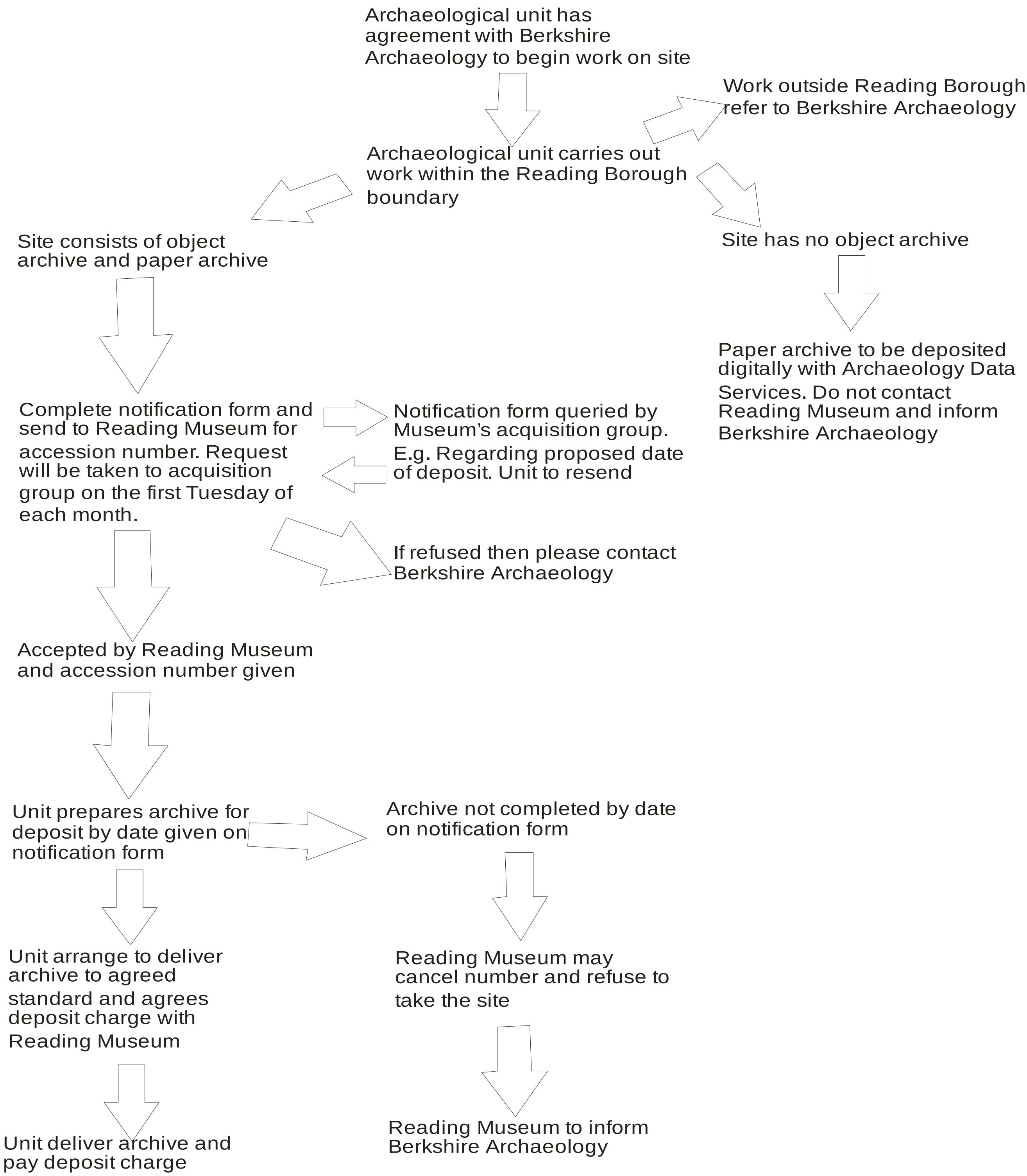
> 2.3.1.2 The Practice must inform the Museum promptly of any circumstances that are expected to delay deposition beyond the expected date on the notification form, as the project progresses.

2.3.2 For very large projects, incorporating separate sites that have been issued with different accession numbers, each site should be documented and deposited promptly with a copy of its associated reports. The Practice should not retain the archives of individual sites for several years pending completion of the whole project and the final report/synthesis.

2.3.3 The cost of transport and any necessary insurance cover for the archive whilst in transit to the Museum will be the responsibility of the Practice.

2.3.4 All archives must be delivered to the Museum Store by appointment by the Practice concerned. Archives must not be posted or delivered by courier.

Appendix 1 – Flow chart



Appendix 2 – Notification form

Deposit of Archaeological Archives: Notification Form

Notifications of archaeological projects and requests for accession numbers must be made when it is clear that the archive will be made up of an object and data archive.

Reading Museum can only accept archaeological archives where the procedures detailed in the Museum's Procedures for the Deposit of Archaeological Archives have been followed.

The accession number issued must be included in all correspondence about the site and in all publications and reports.

Archaeological Practice	
Site name	
Civil parish	
Unitary Authority	
Site code	
Grid reference	e.g. SU 8776 7793
Period of site	Prehistoric/Roman/Saxon/Medieval/Postmedieval
Type of fieldwork	field survey/evaluation/watching brief/excavation
Boxes of material expected	<5 / <10 / <25 / <50 / >50 or exact number if possible
Further details e.g. type of material, condition of material, number of boxes for each type of material, how many small finds	
Conservation problems identified/anticipated?	
Waterlogged material found/anticipated?	
Start date for the project	
Expected deposition date	
Project Manager	
Land owner	
Accession number	