Jigsaw Cambridgeshire Best Practice Users' Guide

An Introduction to Archaeological Report Writing

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1 WHY WRITE REPORTS?

- To fulfil a planning requirement (commercial project).

- To make the results of your work/research accessible to others.

- To place your results within a wider archaeological and historical context.

- When you submit your report to the Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Record (CHER), the information within it will be added to the HER database, which in turn will add to the archaeological knowledge about your town/village/parish (make sure that the landowner is happy with this).

- Remember: our heritage is a shared resource – others have a right to know what you found!

- At the very least you should submit an **HER Report form**: complete the Jigsaw HER Report Form found at http://www.jigsawcambs.org/resources/her-report-form

2 GETTING STARTED

What to do when you finish your fieldwalking/testpitting/excavation.

NB please refer to Jigsaw Best Practice Guide: *Introduction to Archaeological Excavation;* the *Step-by-step Guide to Testpitting* and the various finds-related Jigsaw Best Practice Guides (go to http://www.jigsawcambs.org/resources/downloads).

- Tidy and check your records (written records; drawings, photographs etc).

- Wash any non-metal finds, bag, label and quantify (catalogue, weigh and count by finds type).

- Decide who is going to record/report on the different finds.

- Decide who is going to write the main report (based on your written and drawn record).

- Decide who is going to do the research.

- Decide how you will illustrate your report (hand drawn; scans; digitised using QGIS or similar GIS programmes).

- Decide who will edit/check it.

What will you need?
- Access to a computer with word processing software (Word, LibreOffice etc.).

- The Jigsaw report template (http://www.jigsawcambs.org/resources/downloads).

- A scanner/photocopier (for producing your illustrations).

- A printer (and possibly a binder).

- Other software such as QGIS for producing figures.

- A CARN (County Archive Research Network) reader's ticket (if you plan to go to Cambridgeshire Archives/Record Office.

- If you are writing finds reports you may need additional equipment, including precision weighing scales, a ruler, pen/pencil and writing pad/spreadsheet.

3 DIFFERENT TYPES OF REPORT

Depending on the type of project that you have carried out, a different report template/layout may be required, but the basic layout/required information will be fairly similar.

Please download the report template (http://www.jigsawcambs.org/resources/downloads) and amend to follow the different types of report listed below.

If you follow the template then report writing should be a relatively stress-free experience.

The following are suggested headings/criteria for each type of report, with greater depth of information provided for the types of reports that you are more likely to produce:

Project Design/Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI)

This type of report is generally written before you go onsite and puts forward the case for why you want to undertake your project, what your research aims will be, what methods you will use and what your team will be. Please refer to Institute of Field Archaeologist (IfA) guidance online.

Desk-Based Assessment (DBA)

It is unlikely that you will need to write this type of report – if you do then please refer to the IfA guidance. The purpose of desk-based assessment is to find out about the known or potential archaeological resource within a particular area or 'site' in order to make an assessment of its merit in context (using the HER, historic maps and other resources)

Post-excavation Assessment (PXA)

It is fairly unlikely that you will need to produce one of these as they are generally a planning requirement and/or for large sites with lots of finds. A post-excavation assessment report should include a statement of the quantity and perceived quality of the data in the site archive, a statement of the archaeological potential of the data to answer the project research aims, and recommendations on the data storage and curation requirements.

Fieldwalking Report

This is probably one of the most common report-types that you will write. Reports should contain as a minimum:

- Non-technical **Summary** (summarise what you did, where and why; and what you found).

- **Introductory statements** including why you did the work and where it was (was it a scheduled monument? If so add in any permissions granted by English Heritage etc); acknowledgements.

- **Geological and topographical background** (see general notes).

- **Archaeological and historical background:** depending on what you found this doesn't have to be exhaustive but should be in archaeological/historical period order (see notes on information sources) and must be properly referenced - avoid plagiarism.

- General and specific **aims** of fieldwork (what you hoped to find and why: these should have been set out in your Project Design).

- **Methodology** (how you undertook the fieldwalking – distance of transects; how you numbered your finds; survey methodology; site conditions including whether the field(s) was/were ploughed/harrowed/weathered/seeded/had a crop on as this will have affected your results; weather conditions etc).

- **Results** (objective description of what you found including any obvious concentrations, by field and/or period if appropriate; finds summaries).

- **Discussion/Conclusion** (place your results in their wider archaeological and historical context; and in relation to any other pertinent surveys (geophysical; earthwork; aerial photographs etc).

- **Supporting data** (in tables or in appendices, including as a minimum a basic quantification of all artefacts (finds) and ecofacts (number and weight) and environmental remains.

- **Figures** (including site location, distribution plots by period/field).

- **Index** to and location of archive (digital and paper).

- **References** (see notes on bibliographies).

Testpitting/Trenching/Excavation Report

This is probably the main type of report that you will produce. Reports should contain, as a minimum:

- Non-technical **Summary** (summarise what you did, where and why; and what you found).

- **Introductory statements** including why you did the work and where it was (was it a scheduled monument? If so add in any permissions granted by English Heritage etc); acknowledgements (don't forget to acknowledge everyone involved including finds specialists, landowners etc).

- **Geological and topographical background** (see notes on where to source this information).

- **Archaeological and historical background:** depending on what you found this doesn't have to be exhaustive but should be in archaeological/historical period order (see notes on information sources) and must be properly referenced - avoid plagiarism.

- General and specific **aims** of fieldwork (what you hoped to find and why).

- **Methodology:** how you undertook the fieldwork – machining/hand-excavation; survey methodology; site conditions including weather conditions etc.

- **Results:** objective description of everything that you found by Testpit / Area / Trench etc and/or by period if appropriate; finds summaries.

- **Discussion/Conclusion** (place your results in their wider archaeological and historical context; and in relation to any other pertinent surveys (geophysical; earthwork; aerial photographs etc). This section will in general be more detailed/comprehensive for excavation reports; relate your results back to your project aims.

- Supporting **data** (in tables (e.g. context lists) or in appendices, including as a minimum a basic quantification of all artefacts (finds) and ecofacts (number and weight) and environmental remains.

- **Figures** (your illustrations should include site location, plans and sections, and photographs of test-pits, features, trenches etc; include working shots as well where possible, and any interesting finds); these are generally placed together at the back of your report for simplicity.

- **Index** to and location of archive (digital and paper).

- **References** (see notes on bibliographies).

Geophysical Survey Reports

Reports should contain as a minimum:

- Non-technical Summary: summarise what you did, where and why, and what you found.

- Introductory statements including why you did the work and where it was (was it a scheduled monument? If so add in any permissions granted by English Heritage etc); acknowledgements.

- Aims and purpose of the survey.

- Methodology: magnetometer/resistivity etc; type of grid; specifics of equipment used; survey methodologies and equipment; processing software including version.

- Results: objective description of any anomalies that you have identified and what they might be (modern; ridge and furrow; archaeological feature etc.

- Discussion and Conclusion: place your results in their wider archaeological and historical context; and in relation to any other pertinent surveys (fieldwalking; earthwork; aerial photographs etc).

- Plans/plots with key (raw plots and interpretation plots).

- Index to and location of digital archive .

- References (see notes on bibliographies).

Earthwork Survey Reports

Reports should contain as a minimum:

- Non-technical Summary (see above).

- Introductory statements (see above).

- Geological and topographical background (see above).

- Archaeological and historical background (see above).

- General and specific aims of fieldwork (see above).

- Methodology: off-set; plane table etc; specifics of equipment used; survey methodologies and equipment; processing software including version.

- Survey Results: objective description of everything that you surveyed.
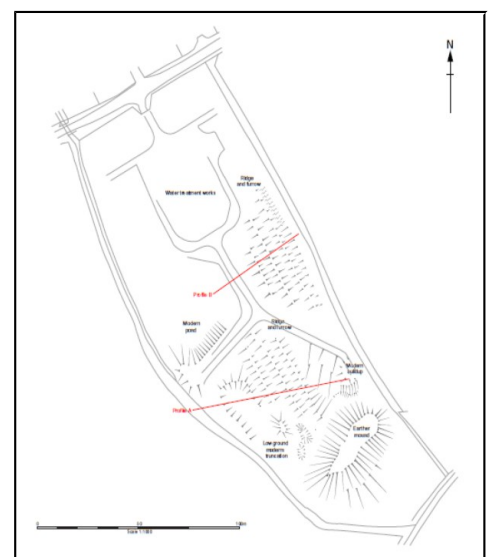
- Interpretation of what you have surveyed: is it modern; ridge and furrow; moated site; archaeological features etc.

- Discussion/Conclusion: place your results in their wider archaeological and historical context; and in relation to any other pertinent surveys (geophysical; aerial photographs etc).

- Figures, including site location, earthwork/hachure plans and interpretation plans; photographs.

- Index to and location of archive (digital and paper).

- References (see notes on bibliographies).

Standing Building Reports

As a minimum the report should contain:

- Non-technical Summary.

- Introductory statements.

- Project aims.

- Archaeological and historical background.

- Copies of all the maps and plans showing the building/s you have studied.

- General and specific aims of fieldwork.

- Methodology (specifics of equipment used; survey methodologies etc).

- Written descriptions of the building – inside and out.

- Show elevation drawings and room plans which correspond with the text.

- Discussion and conclusion: What have you learnt? Any new interpretations or discoveries? How does your building/s fit into the local setting? Are they of local or national importance?

- Include digital photographs of all of the main elevations and internal room shots. Include photos of significant or interesting features.

- Index to and location of archive (digital and paper).

- References (see notes on bibliographies).
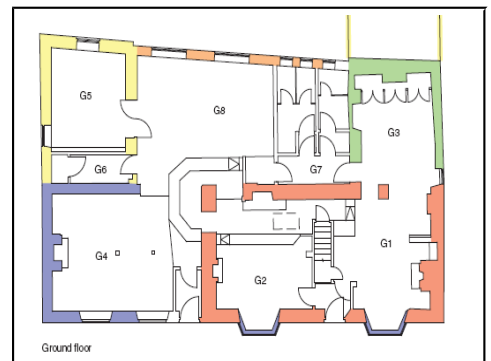
4   FINDS / ENVIRONMENTAL REPORTING

Often called **specialist reports** as these are frequently very 'specialist fields' where authors have years of experience and expertise in a particular finds or environmental category such as flint, pottery or animal bone. Please seek advice from Jigsaw if you feel that you are out of your depth identifying and reporting on your finds – you may need input from a particular specialist!

The need for commissioned specialist work should have been identified by your project design stage with a cost estimated and a funding source identified (such as a

Heritage Lottery Grant) – it is very unlikely that you would be able to apply for funding retrospectively.

Remember to report any pertinent finds to the **Portable Antiquities Scheme** [In England, Wales and Northern Ireland, all finders of gold and silver objects, and groups of coins from the same finds, over 300 years old, have a legal obligation to report such items under the Treasure Act 1996] Contact: Helen.Fowler@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

Finds reports range from being very brief notes to extensive analytical studies – decide what it is that you require and who will be cataloguing the finds and reporting on them. For some sites (such as fieldwalking or testpitting) many of the finds may be relatively recent – decide what you will keep/report on (you may need advice deciding what to keep in terms of the archive).

When cataloguing finds, please refer to the various Jigsaw Best Practice Guides for basic identification.

Finds Assessment Reports (initial/basic reports)
● Quantify (count and weigh) the assemblages by material and state their condition

● State their provenance, including how retrieved (hand excavated, metal detected, within soil samples), and contextual integrity (*ie* whether from a sealed fill within a pit or from cleaning over a trench or an area)

● Provide an identification and date range of the assemblages

● Identify both the extent to which the assemblages can contribute to each of the project's stated aims and any new aims which may be addressed

Type	No. of contexts	No. Fragments	Weight (g)
Brick/tile (Roman)	2	2	574
Brick (post-medieval)	7	10	888
Roof tile (?Roman)	1	1	113
Roof tile (Post-medieval)	3	9	145
Fired clay	2	7	176
Total		**22**	**1720**

Example of a basic finds catalogue (CBM)

Analysis and Report Preparation
● The assemblages must be analysed in accordance with the stated project research aims and agreed method statements

● This work will normally include the preparation of catalogues and publication reports. All reports from specialists should be acknowledged and retained as part of the research archive. You must respect the work of finds specialists: do not change their reports to suit your interpretations!

General finds report structure:
● Introduction

● Methodology

● The Assemblage

- Conclusion and Statement of Potential

- Catalogue/Quantification tables

- References (see notes on bibliographies).

5   WHERE TO GET INFORMATION FOR YOUR REPORT

Hopefully you will already have amassed much of your background information when compiling your Project Design/deciding where to carry out your fieldwork. This information should enable you to place your site within its archaeological and historical context and assess its significance. Here are some suggested sources:

Topographic, locational and geological data

- Ordnance Survey/landranger maps (also available digitally at http://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk): NGR grid refs (10 fig), height OD boundaries, topography, rivers, contours. Some free to use in reports.

- Google Maps / Google Earth and similar sites.

- Grid references: http://gridreferencefinder.com/

- www.magic.gov.uk - very good for scheduled monuments.

- Hand held GPS

- NB Beware **Copyright** – check what the limitations for reproduction of any maps or aerial photographs are; these should be stated on the websites.

- Printed **Geology** maps and on-line   (remember to reference this correctly) http://www.bgs.ac.uk/discoveringGeology/geologyOfBritain/viewer.html

Background Research

- HER, Shire Hall, Cambridge; email the HER team: archaeology@cambridgeshire.gov.uk for information.

- Heritage Gateway: http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/gateway

- Archaeology Data Service (ADS) for grey literature reports: http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archives/view/greylit

- Cambridgeshire Archives (Shire Hall, Cambridge and Huntingdon Library):holds historic maps, wills, deeds, photographs, newspapers, census, directories etc.

- Cambridgeshire Collection, Central Library, Cambridge: photograph collections, newspapers, audio-visual, local history material.

- Other local libraries/study centres.

- Online resources including English Heritage Guides and research frameworks

   (see http://www.eaareports.org.uk/index.html)

- CUCAP (Cambridge University Collection of Aerial Photography)

   http://www.geog.cam.ac.uk/cucap

- Victoria County History (**VCH**)

- Domesday Survey

- Placename studies (*e.g*. Reaney 1943)

- Pevsner (buildings)

- Local history books

6 The Basics of Report Writing

All reports should be written in a clear, concise and logical style and technical terms should be explained.

- Follow the **template**, free to download from
  http://www.jigsawcambs.org/resources/downloads

- It is important to have **structure** in your report: the 'bones' of this are provided by the heading hierarchy.

- **Descriptive material** (what you found) should be clearly separated from **interpretative statements** (what you think it was).

- Make sure that the report has been read through and edited/checked before you submit it to the HER.

Fonts and Formatting

If you are following the template it should have embedded **formatting** and **heading hierarchies**. Our reports at OA East are written (using LibreOffice/OpenOffice) in Arial font (mostly 11pt for text) for clarity but you can choose what suits you (as long as it is consistent).

Structure and Ordering

It is standard practice that archaeological evidence is presented in the **past** tense, with finds and environmental evidence described in the **present** tense.

The archaeological sequence elements of reports should normally be written from the **bottom** of the sequence **upwards** (starting with natural deposits/features). The only exceptions are normally very short pieces of work, where little was found.

Writing Fieldwork Results/Descriptions

This is often the weakest element of a report.

Trench/test-pit/excavation area descriptions need to include details of orientation, size and depth. You can either detail them in the text at the start of the archaeological description of each trench, or you can tabulate them (see the appendix in the template).

Basic feature descriptions form the basis of the stratigraphic/report text. Your text should include feature location, description (shape and dimensions) and the fill sequence (bottom to top). This is followed by any finds/dating evidence, followed by any necessary details of interpretation (*e.g.* if the finds assemblage suggests a rubbish pit).

Avoid using 'I', 'our' 'we' – use instead 'current understanding', 'the present author'

Make time for a final careful read through of your report, paying attention to small details. Try to read your report as if you know nothing about the project: if possible, leave your text overnight

and read it with fresh eyes in the morning … and get someone else to read/edit it.

Referencing within your report

Use correct internal (to figures, appendices *etc*) and external (publications, other reports *etc*) referencing (see guidance notes): it is recommended that you use the Harvard referencing system.

Discussion and Conclusions

This and the Summary are often the only sections that prospective readers/researchers will actually look at, so try to make it relevant and interesting (unless you didn't find anything!)

- If the latter think about why? – was the archaeology destroyed by ploughing/modern development, or perhaps you didn't go deep enough, were you digging in the wrong place?

- Place your results within their archaeological and historical context and reference your project aims.

- How significant do you think your results are?

Order of Specialist reports (Appendices)

Metalwork (Coins, Jettons and Tokens, Gold, Silver, Copper alloys, Lead/Pewter, Iron)
Metalworking waste (crucibles, slag, etc)
Non-Building Stone (flint, jet, shale, etc)
Glass
Pottery
Terracotta
Building Stone
Bricks
Tiles
Burnt Clay
Mortar
Plaster
Paint and Pigment
Bone (Artefacts)
Wood (Worked)
Leather
Textile

7 Illustration

- As a minimum your report should include an illustration (Figure) clearly showing the location of your site (with grid reference). Some free mapping is available from the Ordnance Survey http://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk (see above – but check licensing agreements)

- Site reports should also include plans, sections and photographs (plates) illustrating what you found to recognisable scales, also pertinent historic maps, old photos *etc* if relevant. These may simply be scans of your plans and sections but would preferably be digitised using QGIS or similar 'free' programmes.

8 Editing, Collating and Submitting your Report

Why is editing important?
- If your report is full of 'typos' and bad grammar it will significantly detract from the academic and professional value of your work.

- Be careful since many incorrect words will not be picked up by the spell checker.

- It is also the editor's job to check for consistency, correct use of House-style and any weaknesses in interpretation.

Collating your report

Once all your text has been written and checked (any remaining red text from the template removed), and your Figures and Plates have been produced and checked, you will need to collate your report

Generally for ease of production it is simplest to place all of the Figures and Plates in order at the back of your report, after the Appendices.

You can create .pdfs (portable document format) of your text and figures (either 'save as pdf' or through the print document function) for emailing/putting on CD for submitting to the HER, but this is best done after the final edit/check (see below)

Once the report has been collated, you may wish to print ('hard') copies of it for the various authors/contributors and for sending to the HER/local libraries etc. Check whether you need to print the figures in colour – this will obviously be more expensive. Depending on the size of your report you may be able to simply staple it (and/or use a sliding plastic spine binder), but if it is large consider using/purchasing a ring binder.

Submitting your report

When your report is complete and has been checked and collated you should lodge a copy with the HER. Check whether they want a printed paper copy as well as a digital copy (a pdf).

A digital copy of your report will uploaded by the HER to the Archaeology Data Service (ADS) via OASIS (**O**nline **A**cces**S** to the **I**ndex of archaeological investigation**S**).

8 Publication

If you have found significant results then it may be worth considering publishing a short note or article in the Proceedings of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society journal (PCAS), see website for advice/details: http://www.camantsoc.org/publ.html or contact the editor: editor@camantsoc.org. Short summaries will appear in the annual fieldwork round-up (assuming that you have submitted your HER summary and/or report)

There are many other publication outlets – such as Internet Archaeology – and more period-specific ones (e.g. Medieval Settlement Research Group)

You can find lists of journals and other publications on websites such as:

http://www.britarch.ac.uk/info/mags.html

9 ARCHIVING

Your project is not complete until it has been archived.

The archaeological archive represents the unique and primary record of an investigation and, as such, needs to be preserved and accessible in perpetuity. You must allow sufficient funds to pay for the archiving (*c.*£60 per box) and use the correct materials.

The material and documentary archive from your site should be deposited with the recipient museum or other approved repository according to their stated requirements. Digital archives (surveys, drawings *etc*) can be uploaded to ADS.

Seek to obtain (from the owner of the material archive, often the landowner) 'transfer of title' to the recipient museum or other approved repository upon deposition, if not already established.

Cambridgeshire County Council accepts archives prepared to the standards laid down in the guidelines for deposition of archaeological archives document.

For more information and advice on archiving, including the availability of antiquities conservation, please contact the Historic Environment Record on arch.her@cambridgeshire.gov.uk or 01223 728 569/570

FURTHER READING

Grant, J., Gorin, S and Fleming, N.	2008.	*The Archaeology Coursebook: An Introduction to Study Skills, Topics and Methods*. Routledge. London.
Greene, K. and Moore, T.	2010	*Archaeology: an Introduction*. Routledge. Abingdon,
Renfrew, C. and Bahn, P.	2008	*Archaeology: Theories, Methods and Practice*. Fifth edition. Thames and Hudson Ltd.
Ridout, H	2013	*Introductory Course to Historical Research Methods* Jigsaw

These are some suggested guidance documents produced by the Institute for Field Archaeologists (IfA): http://www.archaeologists.net/codes/ifa

Standard and Guidance for Field Evaluation

Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Excavation

Standard and Guidance for Historic Environment desk-based assessment (pdf)

Standard and Guidance for geophysical survey

Standard and guidance for the archaeological investigation and recording of standing buildings

Finds: http://www.archaeologists.net/groups/finds

And English Heritage:

www.english-heritage.org.uk/publications/geophysical-survey-in-archaeological-field-evaluation

http://www.helm.org.uk/guidance-library/understanding-archaeology-of-landscapes/

http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/publications/understanding-historic-buildings/