



Northumberland National Park

Archaeological Recording Practices

Guidelines for archaeological excavation
and recording techniques



Council for
British Archaeology



www.northumberlandnationalpark.org.uk

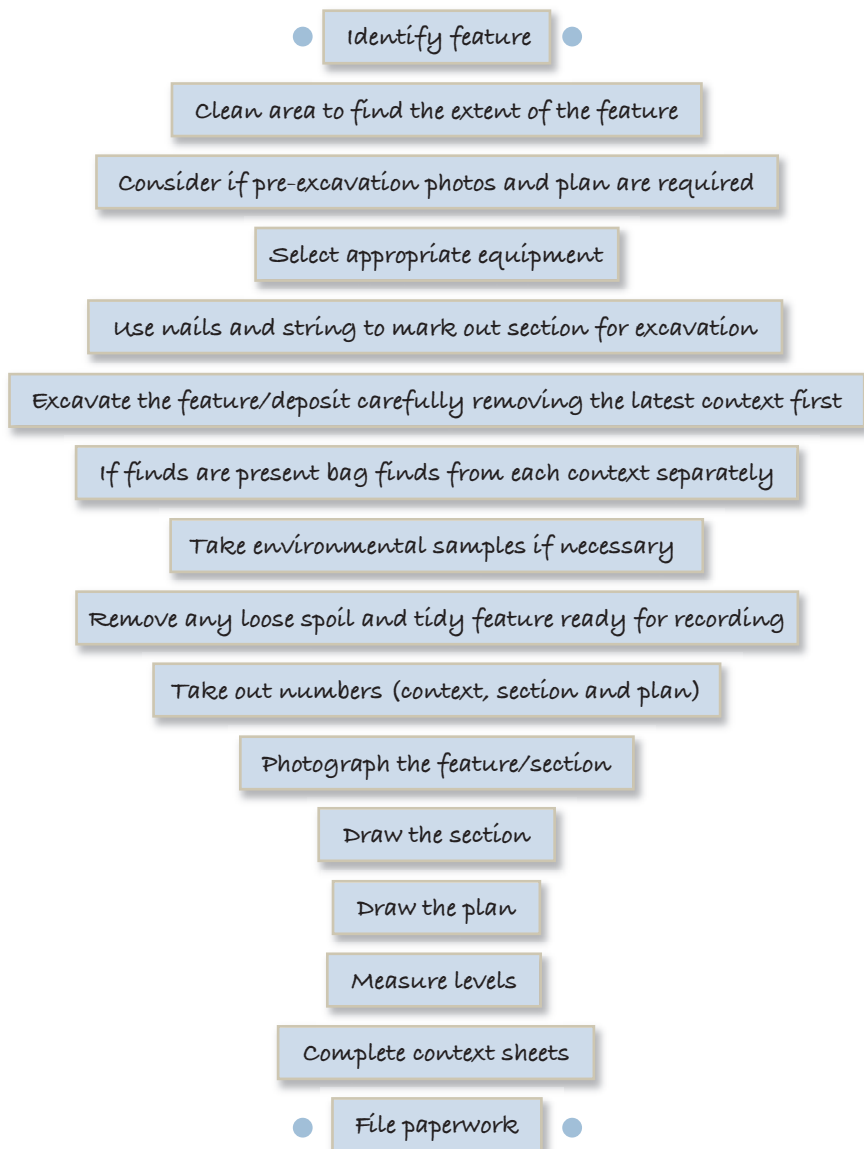
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This field training pack aims to support you with archaeological recording processes. These will include:

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Excavating a Feature

Archaeological excavation is the primary means in which we gather information. It is critical that it is carried out carefully and in a logical manner. The flow chart below has been provided to show the steps required for fully excavating and recording a feature.



Recording Introduction

Excavation results in the destruction of contexts, therefore, a detailed and correct record of the archaeology discovered is required in order to produce and maintain a permanent archive. This written account is the only evidence of the archaeology present after excavation so unique context, section and plan numbers are essential as well as photographic verification.

Remember that both the cutting and filling of a feature are separate contexts. Each of these separate events should have an individual context number and context record completed. It is important to understand a context's formation and for it to be considered within the wider landscape.

Equipment

- Black biro
- Rubber
- Ruler
- Spirit line level
- String
- 4 – 6H pencil
- Pencil sharpener
- Nails
- Minimum of 2 tapes

Handy hints

- Write clearly on the context sheet in black ink – print or use block capitals
- Decide description, interpretation and key points prior to commencement
- Always use a sharp pencil whilst drawing
- Use a nail file to re-sharpen the edges
- When drawing to scale remember 1 cm equals the value of the scale ratio
For example at 1:20; 1 cm = 20 cm of the subject
- Be sure to leave section points in (normally marked with a nail) to aid in planning
- On plans and sections all writing should be at least 3mm high
- Cross reference all relevant information
e.g. section, plan, sample and photographic numbers

General registers

Registers are an important sequential list of numbers that are used for the purpose of archiving the archaeological information from site. Each individual aspect of recording requires its own register with allocated numbers. You should be aware that some sites may have separate zones where different numbers series are employed. Or that each test trench may have its own associated numbers. To use a register you simply take out the following number(s) in the sequence.

The main registers you are likely to use are:

- Context
- Section
- Plan
- Photographic
- Geo-rectified photograph
- Skeleton Rectified Photography Sheet
- Level
- Small find
- Environmental



Recording using Photography

Photographs can illustrate complex visual information better than either drawings or words. A photograph should not be used as a substitute for other records, but to supplement the archive. These images may also be used for publication. Therefore, any images should be of high quality and the best you can produce.

Record shot

A record shot should be taken of every section or feature. A minimum of one photo with the board and one without is required. An appropriate sized scale should also be used in every photo. For example if a post hole is only 20 cm in diameter do not use a 2 m scale.

A photo board should include:

- Site code
- Section number
- Context number
- North arrow

Site code
Section number
Context number
Shot number
North arrow



Photograph with the record board

Photograph without the record board

Working shots

Working shots should be taken on every archaeological site. The numbers should be taken from the main photographic register. These can display:

- People working
- Public visits
- The overall site conditions – is the site extremely dry? Waterlogged?
- An area of specific interest
- Information that cannot easily be conveyed in other records



CCA at Barrowburn 2011 | working shots

Geo-rectified photographs

- Face the same direction for each photo and take a minimum of 2 photographs
- A square or a rectangle of at least 4 targets is required for each photograph. Except for human remains, which require a minimum of 6.
- If multiple photographs are used make sure they overlap and 2 targets from the previous photo are visible
- Targets must be on the same level as one another and what is to be rectified.
- Hold the camera lens vertical using spirit levels for guidance
- Complete record sheets and cross reference. Ensure targets are surveyed on the same day



Always

- ✓ Think about the outcome that you want to achieve
- ✓ Place a scale truly horizontally or vertically to the camera viewpoint.
If it is at an angle then it is distorted and therefore cannot be used as a scale
- ✓ Boards are useful for identifying different features. Write neatly and legibly.
Always ensure the board is readable. Take a separate photo of the board if necessary
- ✓ Ensure uniform lighting conditions. Ask for assistance with shading if necessary
- ✓ A photo needs a unique number. Fill in the register for every photo taken
- ✓ Check the quality of your photographs and retake if necessary
- ✓ Consider photographing the feature in its wider context



Never














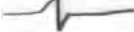
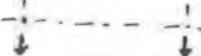
- ✗ Delete a digital photograph. This can un-synchronise the way the shot register and photographic number from the camera correspond. If it is not to a high standard just retake
- ✗ Leave objects in view. Always clear area of tools/fence/buckets/clothing/spoil etc
- ✗ Leave the board in for all of your photo shots

CHECKLIST




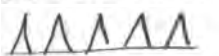

- Clean and clear area
- Scale(s)
- Check lighting conditions
- Shot with the board
- Shot without the board
- Cross-reference photo numbers onto record sheets

Drawing Conventions

Archaeologists use standard drawing conventions when recording. This is to ensure uniformity in the written archaeological record so it can be understood by all.

	Cut Number
	Deposit Number
	Structure Number
	Small Find
	Soil Sample
	Series/Monolith Sample
	Drawing Point
	Drawing Point with Orientation (minimum of 2 per plan)
	Grid Point (minimum of 4 per plan)
	Certain Extent of Context
	Extrapolated Extent of Context
	Truncation Affecting Context
	Limit of Excavation
	Continuation
	Section Line on Plans (Direction of arrows showing orientation of section)

HACHURES

	Shallow Slope
	Moderate Slope
	Near Vertical Edge
	Vertical Edge
	Under Cutting

HACHURES - Break of slope is indicated by the Hachure tail ends and their proximity to each other (like contours on an OS map)

Drawing Sections

Section drawings are done to scale. They record the vertical cross section through archaeological features/deposits. Presenting, an accurate profile of a cut feature or elevation and the relative depth.

In order to draw a section

- 1 Clean up the area you wish to draw
- 2 Set up a base line using a tape measure, with a minimum of 2 points
- 3 Set up a string line using a spirit line level
- 4 Measure along the base line - the horizontal measurement (“across the corridor”) and using a second tape measure the vertical measurement (“up or down the stairs”). This should be from your sting line not ground level
- 5 Mark each recorded measurement with a point
- 6 Repeat this process at regular intervals
- 7 With fluid lines connect the recorded measurements
- 8 Draw any inclusions present and label in the key

Section CHECKLIST

- | | |
|----------------------------|------------------------------------|
| ● Site code | ● Orientation |
| ● Section number | ● Scale bar |
| ● Drawn by (name) | ● Levels |
| ● Date | ● Key |
| ● Title (e.g. Ditch [100]) | ● Context numbers clearly labelled |
| ● Scale (e.g. 1:20) | ● Context matrix |

S. NUMBER

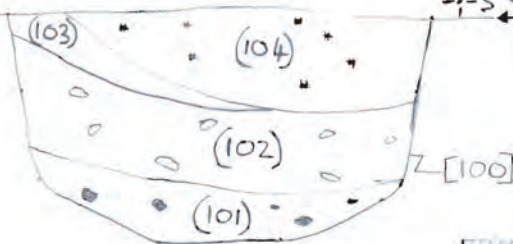
SITE CODE
SECTION NUMBER
DRAWN BY
DATE
TITLE
SCALE

LEVEL

+ 26.21 ^{NO. 1} N

ORIENTATION

← STRING LINE HEIGHT
← GROUND LEVEL



KEY

= CHARCOAL
o = FLINT
• = CHALK

SCALE 1:20

0m

1.0m

MATRIX

TOPSOIL

SUBSOIL

104

103

102

101

[100]

NATURAL

Drawing Plans

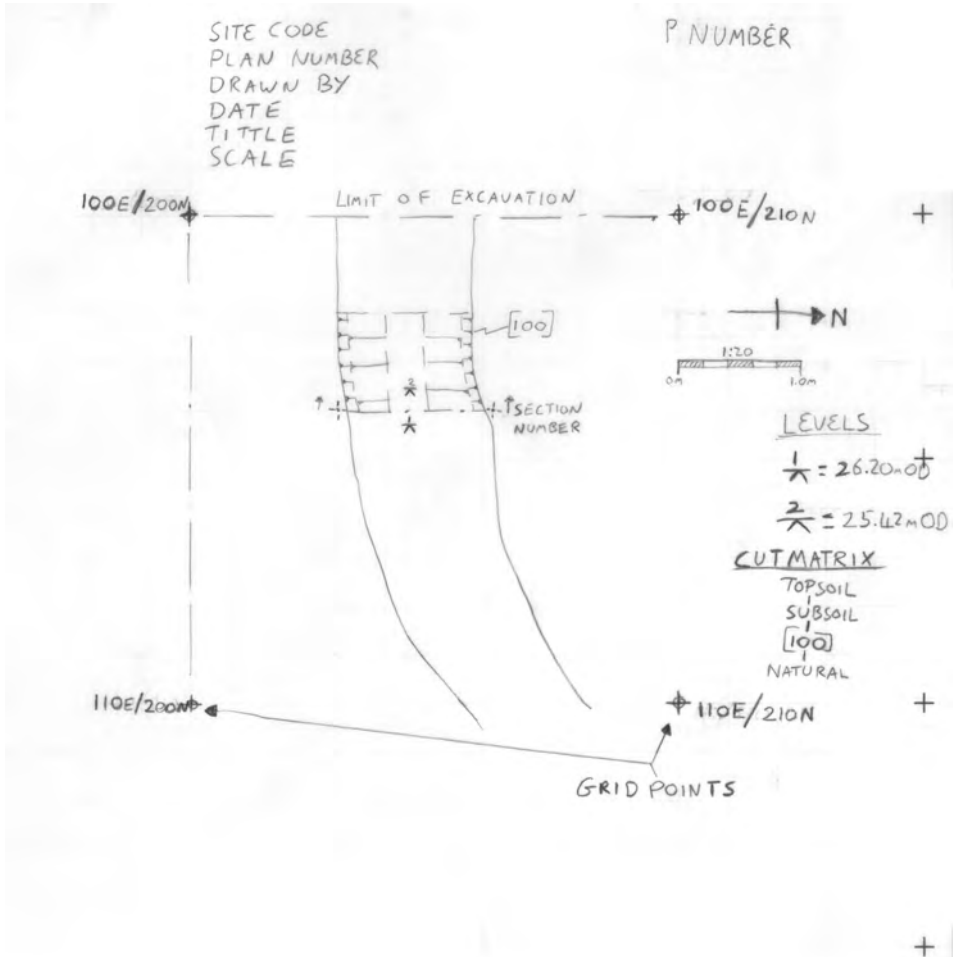
Plan drawings are done to scale. They create a bird's eye map of the feature(s) excavated or present in the area of investigation. Plans show both relationships with other features (where present) and help locate the excavated area geographically.

In order to draw a plan

- 1 Clean up the area you wish to draw
- 2 Set up a base line using a tape measure, with a minimum of 2 points. If a site grid is in place, use those reference points. If not, use the plan number for the drawing points (DPs), for example if the plan number is 102 use DP 102.1 and DP 102.2. If arbitrary drawing points are used these need to be logged geographically. Either by a surveyor (here you would leave tags marked in the ground with the DP and cut number clearly labelled) or by plotting the DPs with reference to local landmarks
- 3 Measure along the base line - the horizontal measurement ("across the corridor") and using a second tape measure the vertical measurement ("up or down the stairs")
- 4 Mark each recorded measurement with a point
- 5 Repeat this process at regular intervals
- 6 With fluid lines connect the recorded measurements
- 7 Always plan the unexcavated half of features
- 8 When drawing ditches plan at least 1m beyond the excavated slot
- 9 If present ensure truncation, relationships, limit of excavation and feature shape are accurate
- 10 Display break of slope (using hachure's)
- 11 Section lines should be marked correctly with the section number and correct convention

Plan CHECKLIST

- Site code
- Plan number
- Drawn by (name)
- Date
- Title (e.g. Ditch [100])
- Scale (e.g. 1:20)
- North arrow
- Scale bar
- Levels
- Grid points/drawing points
- Section line and number
- Cut matrix
- Key (if required)



Levelling and Coordinates

Levelling is required on archaeological excavations to find out the relative level of deposits and features in comparison to others.

Levelling Terms

TBM = Temporary Bench Mark


BS = Backsight

IH = Instrument Height

FS = Foresight

RL = Reduced Level

Levelling

- Set up the dumpy level ensuring that the feet are pushed firmly into the ground, the level head is secured to the tripod and is level with the bubble in the centre of the spirit level
- Put the TBM number and value on the Level Register
- Take a backsight reading on the TBM
- Take levels on your section line and a minimum of the top and bottom of your feature/deposit (which is the foresight)
- Show the location of each level with this symbol 
- Write the reduced levels on all drawings
- Check your results – this is done by comparing them with previous measurements and the TBM – are your calculations correct?

How to reduce levels

The formula is $TBM + BS = IH - FS = RL$. Which looks scary but if you stick by the formula you will be fine.

An example of the formula in practice is if the TBM height is 7.41 and the BS is 2.56 the IH will be 9.97 (the values of the TBM and BS added together and gives you the height of the instrument head). If the FS is 3.76 then the RL will be 6.21 (the FS being subtracted from the IH to produce the RL).

TBM +	BS =	IH -	FS =	RL
7.41	2.56	9.97	3.76	6.21

Please note that all reduced levels are in metres above Ordnance Datum (mOD)

Coordinates

- When using coordinates the Eastern coordinate is written first, followed by the Northing. For example, 4000E/5000N (remember “across the corridor and up the stairs”).
- If you are using a site grid ensure that every grid peg and drawing point on every plan and section is clearly labelled with the correct coordinates.



Recording Cuts

The purpose of recording your cut is to discuss what the feature might be and to verify your evidence for this interpretation.

CHECKLIST	KEYWORDS
Shape in plan	Circular Square Irregular Linear Oval Rectangular Curvilinear Add 'sub' if the shape is not completely regular Other
Dimensions	Length (L) Width (W) Depth (D) Diameter (DIAM) In metres (m)
Sides	Vertical Steep Moderate Shallow
Base	Concave Convex Straight /flat Irregular Sloping V-shaped Undercutting
Orientation	Alignment of the feature e.g. north to south
Truncation	Is it truncated? If so, by what?
Other comments	Any relevant information to assist description or justify interpretation
Sketch	Show contexts, dimensions, truncation and annotate with useful information. Include a north arrow

Recording Deposits

The purpose of recording a deposit is to create a permanent record of the nature of the deposit and to help determine whether the formation process was anthropogenic or natural. It should be done in enough detail that comparisons can be made between one deposit and another.

Compaction

Refers to the amount of force needed to excavate the layer

<i>Sediment type</i>	<i>Term</i>	<i>Definition</i>
Coarse grained	Compact	Requires mattock for excavation
	Loose	Can be excavated with hoe or trowel
Fine grained sediment (including peat)	Firm	Moulded only by strong pressure
	Soft	Easily moulded and spreads between fingers
	Friable	Crumbles, will not hold together

Colour

When describing the colour of a deposit use one word from each of the columns below:

<i>Modifier</i>	<i>Hue</i>	<i>Colour</i>
Light	Pinkish	Pink
Mid	Reddish	Red
Dark	Yellowish	Yellow
	Brownish	Brown
	Greenish	Green
	Bluish	Blue
	Greyish	Grey
		White
		Black

Composition

Composition is a description of the type of sediment which forms the deposit, with each component accumulating to more than 10% of the total deposit. Consider the size of the different grains present. Generally it will be a mixture of one from the first column and one from the second.

Clayey	Clay
Sandy	Sand
Silty	Silt
Peaty	Peat

For example if there is more clay than sand it would be 'sandy clay' meaning that the deposit is not pure clay but has some sand in it.

Grain sizes

Type of Grain	Grain Size
Clay	
Silt	
Fine Sand	0.02 mm – 0.06 mm
Medium Sand	0.06 mm – 0.20 mm
Course Sand	0.20 mm – 2 mm
Fine Pebbles	2 mm – 6 mm
Medium Pebbles	6 mm – 20 mm
Course Pebbles	20 mm – 60 mm
Cobbles	60 mm – 200 mm

Inclusions

Components that are less than 10% of the total deposit.

Questions	Possible answers
What type of inclusions are they?	Chalk / flint / stone / charcoal
How frequent are they?	Frequent / moderate / rare
What is their shape and roundness?	Angular / sub-angular / rounded / sub-rounded
How well sorted are they?	Well sorted / moderately sorted / poorly sorted

Thickness / Extent

- The thickness is the maximum depth of the deposit
- The extent is a lateral measurement of the deposit, for instance north to south and east to west
- Note any variations
- Do a sketch if necessary

Comments

Is there any further information that you wish to put that can help determine the deposit?

For example, what conditions were you excavating in and what tools did you use? If you were using a trowel on frozen earth the compaction may be described as 'firm' but could have been 'soft' in wet conditions. Note if the deposit is disturbed, for example, rooting and how clear the deposit is, for example, sharp or diffuse.

Recording Interpretation

The purpose of interpretation is to consider the most reasonable explanation for the feature. It is used to help us understand not only what the feature looks like but the purpose of it. For example, a feature may be linear but not always a ditch.

Keyword - CUTS	Keyword - DEPOSITS
Beam slot	Alluvial layer
Construction cut	Colluvial layer
Cremation cut	Cremation burial
Ditch	Deliberate backfill
Grave	Floor surface
Gully	Inhumation burial
Hearth	In situ burning
Inhumation cut	Layer
Kiln	Midden deposit
Natural feature	Natural
Oven	Occupation layer
Paleochannel	Other fill
Pit	Placed deposit
Plough furrow	Plough soil
Pyre	Post pad
Posthole	Post pipe
Quarry	Primary fill
Ring ditch	Remnant topsoil
Robber cut	Secondary fill
Stake hole	Subsoil
Stoke hole	Tertiary fill
Structure	Topsoil
Tree throw	
Water hole	
Well	

Formation Categories

Categories I, II and III correspond roughly to Primary, Secondary and Tertiary Fills – if unsure of these terms seek further clarification. Remember, you may have more than one of each category in a single feature.

Please note that a primary fill is not necessarily the first deposit in a feature. A primary fill is the formation process of the deposit, like erosion or trample. Therefore, if the first fill in a feature is a dump of charcoal, this is not a primary deposit, but a secondary, even though it is the first context in the stratigraphy.

Category	Description
Ia	Initial erosion/collapse of the feature edge by natural processes
Ib	A 'primary' placed deposit, e.g. burial, ox skull, cremation, grave goods (the main reason for constructing the feature)
IIa	'Secondary Fill' formed by natural processes e.g. erosion of surrounding topsoil/subsoil/bank etc
IIb	'Secondary Fill' formed by human processes e.g. dump of charcoal from a fire, cess etc
IIc	Collapse or destruction layer or fill – can be human or natural processes
IIIa	Very slow silting period, usually the final silting of a feature by natural processes
IIIb	A final backfilling of a feature by human agency
IV	Other – elaborate in interpretation box



General Discussion

In the general discussion you should be contemplating the complexities of the feature and how it relates to the site in a wider context.

There are many things you can notice whilst excavating a feature that cannot be covered by the interpretation or other areas on a context sheet. See below for questions with examples you could consider:

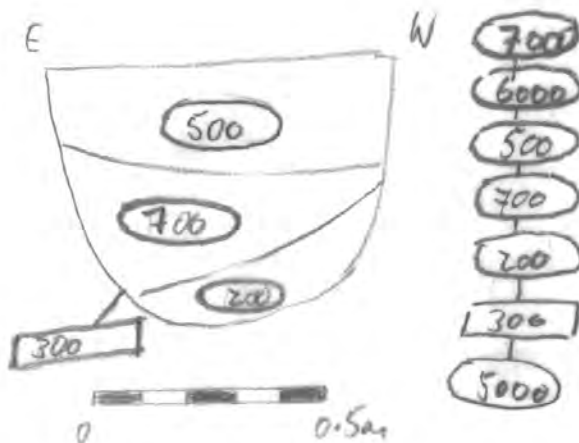
<i>Question</i>	<i>Example</i>
Can you expand on your previous interpretation?	Do you think that the ditch was used for drainage or as a boundary marker?
How was the feature excavated in the past?	Is there any evidence that it was created by more than one person?
Do you think the feature indicates continuous use over a period of time?	Is there evidence of re-cutting?
What has happened to the material removed from the feature?	Do any of the fills appear to be dumped or washed back in?
For deposits, how did they form?	Was it natural silting or deliberate backfilling?
Does the deposit / feature link into the landscape / other features around it?	Is the ditch circling high ground?
Do you think the finds were deposited into the feature or have they been washed in?	What size are the finds and how abraded are they?
Do the inclusions suggest anything about the creation of the deposit?	Do they suggest anthropogenic or natural origin?
Any other information that you think might be relevant? Remember that this feature has not been excavated before. Therefore it is important to record as much information as possible.	Is the posthole part of a structure, like a roundhouse?

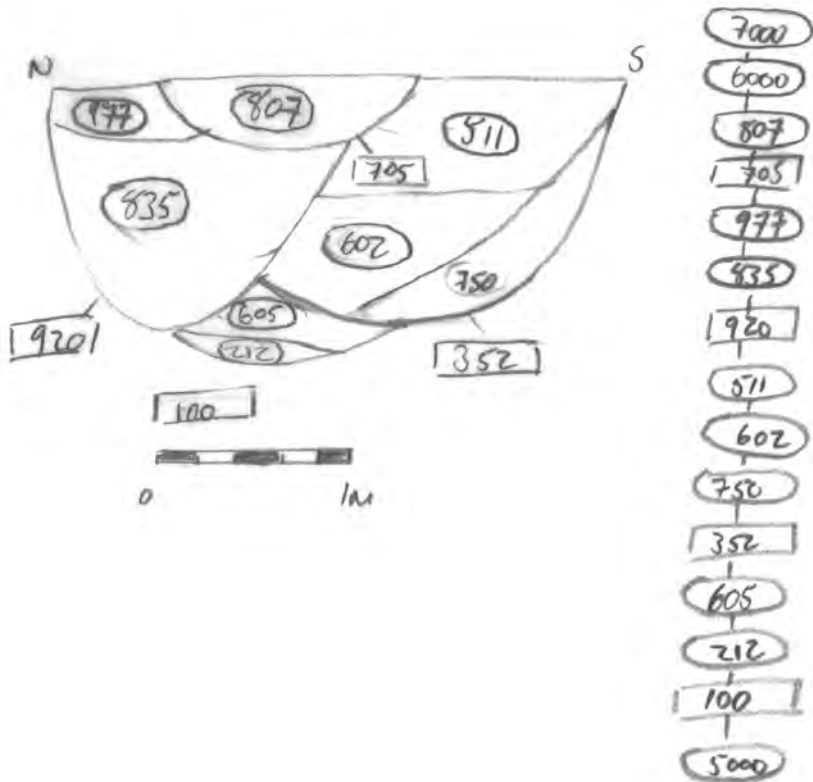
The Harris Matrix

The Harris Matrix is a way to view stratigraphic sequences, depicted in diagram form. The lowest contexts are the earliest (oldest) and the upper contexts are the latest (youngest). They can look extremely confusing at first glance but if you take it a step at a time you will be fine. Firstly, do not panic! Secondly, work from the bottom up, recording each cut or deposit in sequence. If possible take your context numbers out in sequence as this can be easier when completing your matrix. Thirdly and an extremely important point to remember is that a cut cannot cut a cut - it is a physical impossibility! A cut can only cut a deposit. So no cut should cut another in your matrix. If you have given context numbers for the natural, subsoil, topsoil, these should also be included in your matrix.

For the examples shown here the context numbers are not sequential (as recommended). This is so you can test yourself to see if you have completed the matrix correctly. The natural is 5000, subsoil, 6000, topsoil, 7000.

Simple





Finds

Finds can be used as dating evidence and provide information about activities carried out in the past at particular locations. For example, waste pottery on a site may indicate that kilns are located nearby. Finds evidence can also signify economic or social status and demonstrate trade patterns by comparing the finds evidence from different locations.

When retrieving finds:

- Check if all finds are being individually recorded and/or given a unique identification number or if they are being collected as 'bulk finds'
- Retrieve as many finds as possible. Do not be selective about what you bag; this can lead to a biased interpretation.
- Size does not matter; a small object may be just as important as a large one
- Be alert for worked flint/stone. What may appear to be a 'just a rock' could have evidence of human manipulation
- Consider the finds fragility. Does it need support as it is being removed from the ground or extra packaging during transportation?
- Do NOT wrap finds. Use cushions and layers.
- Keep the find in the same condition it was found in. For example, with damp or wet finds, keep them damp.
- Where possible separate finds by material, pot, bone etc.
- Use a permanent marker and write clearly to label the bag with the site code and deposit/fill number
- Keep finds in a safe place

Small finds record

- Each object needs a unique number
- Take a level on the object if instructed
- Locate on section/plan/site grid where appropriate
- Label bag clearly
- Cross reference on your context sheet
- As a rule you would store small finds separately from 'bulk finds'



Environmental Samples

Environmental samples are used to study the environment throughout history, using techniques from biology and geology. It focuses broadly on the effects of subsistence, agriculture and industry on humans and their environment. They are used to target naturally infilling negative features like ditches to give you environmental background and/or organic rich deposits associated with anthropogenic activity. Samples can be used to discover small artefacts (e.g. beads), small bones (e.g. from a cremation), seeds, pollen, snails, insects and charred and/or waterlogged plant remains. Processes that used for this can be sieving and flotation. Sampling techniques can include bulk, series or monoliths.

General points which apply to each sample:

- Use sturdy plastic bucket or bag
- Each sample requires a unique number
- Should be clearly marked with a permanent marker
- Never mix context / cross context boundaries
- Sample numbers should be written on your context sheets for cross referencing

Bulk Samples

Bulk samples are a sample of a single context of interest. They are taken for charred plant remains, waterlogged plant remains and small bones and artefacts.

When taking a bulk sample:

- Use the general points which apply to each sample

Series Samples

Series samples are a small amount of each context present within a feature. These are normally a smaller quantity than bulk samples. They are taken for snails, insects and waterlogged plant remains.

When taking a series sample:

- Use the general points which apply to each sample
- Draw the location of the sample in the section

Monoliths

Monolith samples are a sample of the soil profile/stratigraphy. They are taken for pollen, diatoms and soil micromorphology.

When taking a monolith sample:

- Use the general points which apply to each sample apart from you will need to use 50 cm runs of white square plastic drain pipe with one face cut off, rather than a sturdy bucket/bag
- Clean the section to avoid contamination
- Take pre sampling and monolith in situ photos
- Draw the location of the sample in the section
- Clearly label with a permanent marker, marking the sample number, the top, bottom, context changes (with each context number being marked) and if there are any overlap points
- The top of each monolith should have a height marked in mOD and the depth from the ground surface
- If more than one container needs to be used when taking a monolith sample, ensure there is an overlap of at least 5 cm
- Once removed wrap securely in cling film and black plastic



Human Remains

The excavation of human remains can only commence once a Burials Licence has been obtained. Where applicable, there is also the question of reburial. Therefore, there are not many instances where community groups are dealing with human remains. Below are a few tips and hints for you to be aware of.

- Treat human remains with dignity and respect at all times
- There is no shame in not feeling comfortable excavating human remains. Remember, you always have the option to say no and excavate something else.
- Use paintbrushes, wooden tools, leaf trowel, dental tools etc.
- Avoid scraping bones

Inhumations

- Excavate in plan
- Position yourself outside the grave to avoid damage to the skeleton, grave goods etc
- Excavate in 5 cm spits until reaching bone – usually the skull is seen first. Then excavate from the skull downwards
- Uncover hands and feet last – these bones are easily disturbed
- Sample during excavation. The recommended sampling areas are the skull, chest, abdomen/pelvis, hands and feet (both left and right)
- Lift and bag skull, jaw, arms, legs, hands, feet and chest region. Where possible bag left and right sides separately.
- Label bags with the site code, skeleton number and contents, for example, left leg
- Ensure the grave is bottomed
- Unique numbers should be assigned to the grave cut, skeleton, grave fill, coffin (if remaining), coffin fill (if different from grave fill), grave goods (some sites require all grave goods to be given a small find number, check before you begin)
- After recording, trowel through the base of the grave to ensure all bones are recovered

Cremation burials

- Photograph all cremation burials before excavation (some sites may also require geo-rectified photographs) and hand plan at 1:10 (or 1:5)
- If an urn is present lift whole whenever possible – do not excavate contents
- If an urn is not present, see site specific guidelines for excavation and sampling
- Give unique numbers to the cut, fill(s) including the cremated deposit as a whole (bone, ash, charcoal together), the urn (if present) and associated small finds.
- Once excavated draw the profile of the feature at 1:10

Health and Safety

- Make sure there is a Health and Safety Policy

- Ensure there is sufficient insurance for the activities you are commencing

- Read through the Risk Assessment prior to commencement of work (insurance companies require that all risks and hazards are identified).

- Is a Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) Assessment needed? This covers anything from asbestos, anthrax, diesel to radioactive material.

- Be aware of any underground services (electricity cables, pipes - gas or water)

- Be aware of any overhead services (power lines)

- Identify who the first aider is and where the first aid kit is kept. Alert them if you have any medical condition that may be relevant to your safe working.

- Ensure there is safe access and egress from site

- Do you have the correct Personal Protection Equipment (PPE)? Sturdy footwear, waterproofs, warm clothing, hat, gloves and sun screen. You may also want eye protection, ear defenders or a hi visibility vest

- When manual handling (for example, wheel barrowing or moving heavy objects) always lift correctly. Lift with your knees and not your back. If an object is too heavy for you to move on your own, ask for assistance.

- Change you position regularly to prevent wear on your joints. Adopt a position that minimises any strain. You may wish to use a kneeling pad

- Equipment should be in good condition and not faulty. These should be cleaned and stored safely at the end of each day

- Do not dig too deep without stepping or shoring (1 metre is the safe maximum depth however, take care ground conditions into consideration)

- Fence off deep and water filled excavations

- Welfare facilities – is there car parking, toilets, somewhere to wash your hands? You may wish to carry your own hand sanitiser gel. Where possible wash your hands before eating, drinking or smoking

Glossary of Terms

Alluvium: Is loose unconsolidated soil or sediments which has been eroded, reshaped by water in some form and is deposited in a non-marine setting

Anthropogenic: Caused or produced by humans

Bulk finds: The general finds associated with a context that have not been given a small finds number

Colluvium: Is loose, unconsolidated sediments that have been deposited at the base of hill slopes by rain wash, sheet wash, slow continuous down slope creep, or a variable combination of these processes

Context: A number associated with an individual archaeological event, for example, a feature and its cut and fill(s).

Cut: A physical action which has created a hole/void

Deep stratified archaeology: Is archaeology, normally in an urban area where multiple deposits have created substantial amounts of stratigraphy

Deposit: These can be natural (e.g. windblown or water deposited material) or manmade (e.g. dumps, fills, layers, masonry). Deposits can be on or in the ground. Note; there can be more than one deposit in a feature.

Diatoms: A preserved microscopic biological material, for example, algae

Elevation: A drawn sample (usually 1 metre) of the components and construction of upstanding archaeology. For example, a wall

Feature: An event that has occurred in the past and been preserved in the archaeological record. For example, ditches, pits, post holes, walls, kilns, hearths, furrows, foundations, wells, floors, tree throws

Fill: Material filling a hole/void. This can either be filled intentionally or be the result of natural silting. Note; there can be more than one fill in a feature.

Geo-rectified photographs: Can be taken of features, objects and human remains. They are scale images which are used for digital drawings.

Harris Matrix: Is a way to view stratigraphic sequences, depicted in diagram form.

Inhumation: Is an un-cremated human burial

mOD: Metres above Ordnance Datum

Open area excavation: Requires a machine to remove the topsoil and subsoil down to the natural and/or archaeological layers. Note; in rural areas archaeological features generally truncate the natural geology.

Plan: Birds eye map of the feature(s) excavated or present in the area of investigation

Profile: A drawing of an archaeological feature where no fill is present

Section: Vertical cross section through archaeological features/deposits.

Small find: A find of importance either of value or significance, which has been given a unique number and possibly needs particular preservation and care

Soil micromorphology: The microscopic make up of soil, including, organic and inorganic components

Spoil: Any loose material which has been disturbed during excavation

Stratigraphy: Is the series of archaeological events. Phases of activity can often be seen through stratigraphy. Therefore, soil stratigraphy is used to better understand the processes that form archaeological sites.

Test pits: Are small excavation(s) normally only a couple of metres in size

Truncate: The action of cutting. For example an Iron Age ditch is truncated by a Roman pit.

