

Archaeological Archives Forum
Minutes of Meeting 5th Feb 2008
The British Academy, Carlton House Terrace, London

The 12th meeting of the Archaeological Archive Forum was held at 1.30pm on the 5th Feb at the British Academy, Carlton House Terrace.

In attendance: Philip Wise: SMA (PW), Duncan Brown: IFA Finds Group (DB), Kenneth Aitchison: IFA (KA), Julie Satchell: HWTMA/ IFA Maritime Affairs Group (JS), Mike Evans: EH (ME), Quinton Carroll: ALGAO (QC), Kathy Perrin – EH (KP)

1. Apologies

Noel Fojut, Brian Williams, Hilary Malaws, Mike Heyworth, Nick Merriman, Hedley Swain, Lesley Ferguson, Vince De Vine.

2. Minutes of last meeting

Agreed as record of previous meeting.

3. Matters arising from previous minutes

PW still to write to John Sheppard to request representation from the Academic sector on the AAF.

ICON representation on AAF – yet to be formally invited but contact with ICON archaeology group is being maintained.

Reaching out to the voluntary sector – yet to be followed up.

One day meeting on Grey Literature – CH reported that it was a very interesting event with wide ranging discussion. There was general agreement that grey literature must be made more accessible, this should include the development of standards in grey literature. KP added that there will now be a similar conference for the built historic environment sector which should happen in May 08. ME thought that on-line access would be the way forward for the future – the easiest way of dealing with the problem. KP – The result of the two meetings would be the development of an action plan for the future.

Big data project – project results will include a guide to good practice.

Actions: PW to write to John Sheppard and ICON regarding representation on the forum.

4. AAF Implementation Group

The bi-annual meetings of the AAF often have to be supplemented with separate meetings of part of the committee and/ or those involved in projects being undertaken on behalf of the Forum. There are two possible solutions for taking this situation forward:

- The full AAF to meet on a quarterly basis
- The development of an AAF 'Implementation Group' (open to anyone on the Forum) which could meet between full Forums to ensure project were progressing.

KP outlined that she and Hedley used to meet quite regularly to ensure things were moving forward. There is a need for this as every six months is not often enough to keep projects moving forward.

PW would like to meet every three months, and suggested that having an Implementation Group might be a way to ease pressure on diaries for the full group.

DB outlined that there are two types of projects – those that are externally funded which have a defined timetable and those that are not funded which the forum are trying to take forward.

There was general consensus that the main forum would continue to meet every six months and interim meetings would be arranged as and when required.

It was noted that the attendance at the meeting, as with the last meeting, was disappointingly low.

Action: JS to include a notice in the covering email with the minutes reiterating that membership of the forum is at an organisational level and if an individual cannot make the meeting they should send a representative in their place.

Review of minutes of the Implementation Group on the 7th December
Ministerial meeting – James Parnell has now left DCMS and has been replaced by Andy Burnham. Progress had been made with James Parnell and now the relationship needs to be re-established. KP advised that there is good contact with the people who brief the minister. Actions have arisen from the ministerial meeting which have included DCMS asking the MLA and EH to take forward actions discussed.

5. AAF Terms of Reference

KP outlined that there is a need to broaden the AAF to include the built historic environment. This is being made imperative by the political climate, DCMS have formally asked the AAF to consider widening its remit. The built environment is some way behind the archaeological sector in terms of definitions of archive. A variety of historic building environment organisations have expressed an interest in involvement with the AAF. KP suggested a special meeting with key built environment individuals for them to explain what their principle issues are to take things forward.

QC outlined that a study in Cambridge revealed that there isn't that much overlap between archaeology and the built environment. KP responded that although there isn't much overlap in operational terms there is no difference in the definition of what should be archived. Largely paper records are the overlap. Many built environment records are in planning control for a certain period and then are either thrown away or put in an archive.

KP suggested a change in terms of reference to the 'Historic Environment Archives Forum'.

ME – there is a difference between records of relevance to the historic environment that have ended up in record offices and records that have been created specifically for recording the historic environment. Thinks that there is a need for recognition of what is best practice for creating archive. There is a risk that an expanded group will mean that focus is lost.

DB – the MLA should be the ones pulling this together. If a meeting is held it is imperative that there is a representative from MLA there.

It was agreed that there was a need to develop a strategy to take this forward that won't impact on the effectiveness of the AAF.

Actions: A preliminary discussion meeting will be held in the morning prior to the next AAF meeting on the 9th of September to which key representatives of the built historic environment will be invited. This will aim to define the key issues and develop a forward strategy.

JS to attach terms of reference for the group to the minutes.

6. Archives Guide to Best Practice - Update

The IFA still hold over 900 copies of the Guidance in their offices.

Distribution – after an enquiry about distribution of the guidance in Scotland it appears that only SMA institutional members have received copies. DB has also recently sent out a questionnaire to ALGAO and SMA members regarding use of the Guidance and is getting responses that SMA members have not received them.

CH suggested sending a copy to all Archaeology Departments.

Actions: IFA to post 200 copies to PW to send to all SMA members & 50 to ADS.

Actions: ADS to post copies to Archaeology Departments (note this has now been actioned)

KP suggested that it would be possible to approach EH for funding another print run if required. A further print run would enable a copy to be sent out to all IFA members, this could accompany the forthcoming IFA Standard and Guidance.

Action: KA to find out how much printing another 2000 copies would cost and let KP know.

There is a need to raise the profile of the Guide to Best Practice through publication and advertising. It would be timely to write an article in The Archaeologist that will also coincide with the S&G. Should also send out copies of the Guidance for review in appropriate magazines and journals.

Actions: Next TA deadline will be for the June edition – PW and DB to liaise to write article.

KA to post Current Archaeology and British Archaeology copies with a cover letter asking them to review the Guide.

7. AAF Forward Agenda

KP has produced an excellent summary document as the basis for the forward agenda.

Training programmes – suggested that a meeting is held to push this forward.

The Archives Best Practice document could be used as the basis to develop one day training courses. These would need to be focused on the whole archive process and reinforce that it isn't about packing finds in boxes. The course would link into the IFA S&G which should help involve RAOs. An initial pilot course was suggested and DB offered to host it at Southampton. A tentative date of Sept or Oct 08 was suggested with funding to come from participant fees if possible.

Action: KA, DB, PW and CH to take this forward via email to work up a programme for the training day. DB to send round initial bullet points as basis to take forward. Draft programme with then be circulated to the AAF.

EH box grant/ museum charging policies – this issue is yet to be addressed. There is still no standard for box grant charging, this needs examining on a national level. Museums need to develop common policies on a county or regional basis; if there was a published recommendation for charges this may help. It may be possible to make it a requirement for Museums Accreditation that you must have a statement on costs for boxes and sizes. This is an area that the MLA should be encouraged to push forward.

Action: HS to meet with PW to help push. DB to be kept in the loop due to relevance to archaeological resource centre guidance.

Archaeology and the Law – this is an area that is far beyond the remit of the Forum. While of relevance it is not a current priority.

Grant procedures and model briefs – this is on the ALGAO forward agenda. QC reported that model briefs do occasionally get raised.

Action: Need to get agreement on the Forward Agenda. KP to add the following to the document:

- *Development of training*
- *Need to move forward on box grants and museum charging.*

- *Explore relationship to wider historic environment archives*

8. Ongoing projects

8a. Archaeological archive resource centre guidance

DB – project is in data gathering phase at the moment. Contact has been made with the HLF in relation to funding opportunities etc.

8b. Guidance on selection and retention

Previous attempts to gather opinion on selection and retention have been unsuccessful. It is now suggested that a guidance document is developed that outlines the selection and retention process which is a signposting route map that considers the process right from project design to deposition and curation.

It was highlighted that there is a need to clearly separate issues of selection and retention in relation to collections already held by museums and those being created now and in the future. This may help gain support for the proposed guidance.

Action: KP to revisit Project Design that was produced previously, circulate to AAF for comment and respond.

8c. Maritime archives

The maritime archives project is in its early stages and should have some initial results to report at the next meeting. There is a need to clarify the position of the MLA in relation to maritime archives.

Action: JS to arrange meeting with HS

9. National Reports

No national representatives were present. Attendees discussed issues raised by Welsh developments.

Wales

National Standard for Wales on Archaeological Archives has been produced for comment. This states that it is a compliment to the AAF Guidance.

KP has received an email from Vince Devine saying that CADW will no longer be part of the AAF as they feel they are developing their own approach.

Significant concern was raised by AAF members in response to this.

Action: PW to write to CADW to ask whether they have officially withdrawn from the Forum.

10. AOB

European Archaeological archives group – KP reported this is being taken forward through Heads of State archaeologists who have asked for a project design for a European Archive Standard & Guidance Project. This document would outline the archaeological process in Europe including Best Practice. The monitoring standard being developed will be a Council of Europe standard.

QC highlighted that IFA guidance for use and preservation of digital photographs had been issued. ALGAO have raised concerns about elements of the guidance which was shared by AAF attendees who had not seen the document previously.

Action: KA to investigate further and report back to AAF.

Thanks were offered to the CBA and British Academy for the use of the facilities.

11. Date of next meeting

9th September, British Academy, Carlton House Terrace, London.