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# ARCHAEOLOGICAL ARCHIVES FORUM ANNUAL MEETING minutes

## Bristol City Museum and Art Gallery

17<sup>th</sup> October 2013

11am – 15-30pm

Present: Quinton Carroll (QC); ALGAO [Chair], Caradoc Peters (CP); SCFA, Katie Green (KG); ADS, Duncan Brown (DB); English Heritage, Elizabeth Walker (EW); Wales - Museum Wales/RCHMW, Scott Furlong (SF); Arts Council, Kirsty Lingstadt (KL); RCHMS Collections, Sarah Morton (SM); ICON/AG, Helen Shalders (HS); EH, Nicky Scott (NS); SMA, Sinéad McCartan (SMc); National Museums : Northern Ireland, Gail Boyle (GB); Bristol Museum [Host], Helen Parlson (HP); FAME, Claire Tsang (CT); English Heritage [Sec.]

1. **Apologies:** Amanda Forster (AF); IfA, Iain Fraser (IF); RCAHMS, Catherine Hardman (CH); ADS, Jim Spriggs (JS); ICON, Claire Foley (CF); DOENI
  2. **Minutes of last meeting:** Actions outstanding: Recommendation 8 QC to respond to Prof. Charlotte Roberts, Durham University – Done
  3. **News updates**
    - 3.1. ADS – Easy Beta is now available – it is a cheaper, easier way for depositing small archives (currently max 300 files) with the ADS.
    - 3.2. Scotland: Work is continuing on the merger of RCHMS and Historic Scotland, this new body will be formalised in legislation. The review is slowing work on strategic projects, but a review of storage in Scotland suggests that units are storing archives, further work has been halted as a PhD student is undertaking similar research and although results are slightly different to the survey undertaken by Rachel Edwards of behalf of the SMA, they are also finding that there is a lack of specialist knowledge and storage issues
    - 3.3. Wales: Welsh Government's Historic Environment Group's (HEG) review of storage of the archaeological archive is soon to be completed (November 2013). There is expectation that the merger of CADW and the Commission will take place 2016/17. A review of storage and access in Wales also highlighted loss of curators and orphaned projects.
    - 3.4. England: The National Collections of English Heritage are to be moved into a charity, from the effects of this are currently unknown. The English Heritage Archive will go back in to NHPS (working title). English Heritage Archive is currently working on a digital archiving strategy and putting out to tender for the systems.
    - 3.5. Arts Council have been through a restructuring, and produced a strategy available from their [website](#). Priorities include orphaned collections, security and wider advocacy of collections.
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3.6. ALGAO noted that staffing of officers was down from 380 to 330 and on continued decline, that there was increased areas of no coverage and in areas where there had been ability to provide strong service this was being reduced. The location of reduction of staff correlates to areas where there is less development.

Discussion of the reviews taking places led to note that for England what hadn't been surveyed and quantified was the archives held by Academic bodies. The AAF request that SCFA undertake this survey. **Action:** CP to take to SCFA

4. **Membership.** There has been quite a bit of change on the board, we now have full coverage. New members : Caradoc Peters - SCFA, Helen Parslow – FAME (replacing Roland Smith) Scott Furlong, Arts Council (replacing Hedley Swain), Claire Foley – DOENI (replacing Rhonda Robinson)
5. **Northern Ireland.** The size of Northern Ireland is equivalent to NW England and has 1.8 million people. There are 38 accredited museums. In NI there is a slightly different structure to England as there is no regional tier. There are 27 councils, the government are looking to reduce this to 15. This will potentially lead to over and under provision of local museums, which could lead to review. The archaeological profession based in Ireland is fluid and works on both sides of the border. This means there is a requirement for export licences, but the responsibilities for that have been unclear in recent years. Another difference to England is that NI's equivalent to the Portable Antiquity Scheme is covered by legislation. The National Museums are a non-departmental government body and the Historic Environment team is a government body, part of the DOE. There is also the Northern Ireland Archaeology Forum (<http://www.niaf.co.uk>) that promotes archaeological archives to government; it consists of academic, commercial and public bodies. Recent research into archaeological archives in NI by the NI assembly, suggested that 50% of archives are being held by units. The National Museums hope to use this research to develop a collections resource centre. The Royal Irish Academy has also produced a paper (*unable to find link*).
6. **Transfer of Title.** This was raised by the SMA, who discussed it at their previous meeting. Discussion focused on the point at which a museum actually becomes the legal owner of the finds, as there has been cases where museums have required accession numbers to be used and then not accepted all or part the archive. A transfer of title form should be used and signed by both parties (museum and landowner).

AAF guidance is that Landowner agreement to transfer of title as early as possible, and that this is in the guidance, however the guidance is generic as it covers different countries that have different legislation. **Action:** DB to review Transfer of Title section of AAF Guidance, a standard transfer of title form should also be developed.

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7. **Recommendation 2.** At the previous meeting every member of the forum was asked to consider how the AAF can contribute to this and put forward recommendations, opportunities and current activity, for September 2013. By email Catherine Hardman (ADS), noted that the ADS does have an academic focus but they currently:

Make everything available on line and for free  
Give users information about how to reuse resources  
Do promotional work around all university departments re digital archives

The ADS are working on:

Creating 'data papers' with their sister service Internet Archaeology which will point the way for interesting reuse cases of our resources  
Trying to forge closer relationships with 'physical' museums e.g. we did a joint launch with Yorkshire Museum on some Star Carr resources recently.

In an attempt to engage all communities the ADS could promote their resources/services in museums through leaflets, or a joint archaeological archives leaflet for all museums with arch collections may be an option that could be developed.

Andrew Jones (IFA finds group) suggested annual open day at archive sites, perhaps during Heritage Open Days or during National Festival of Archaeology.

The AAF is taking the opportunity to comment of NPPFs through the HE forum, of which the CBA is the secretariat, the HE forum was producing guidance to support the NPPFs, and Beta guidance was brought out by DCLG in August.

Claire Tsang (EH) said she had reviewed online resources for finding archaeological archives England and stated that, there is:

- Little explanation of what an archaeological archive is, and no central point to access this information
- Limited information on how these archives can be used; comparable to this would be how the CBA website explains archaeology and how to get involved with it
- Although there are online resources which can assist find archives they are mainly designed to find site data, but the resources are there to be better utilised to encourage use of the archives – such as being able to search for archives at a repository

It was decided that such a resource should list all events, not just archives deposited in museums.

Creating an accessible list of archives would be assisted by work towards Recommendation 3 for this enhancement of OASIS and the development of a national recording system would assist.

It was noted that it was a very large project and it was unclear whether varied resources could be merged, and thus a regional scoping exercise could be done. This could be done by the SMA and a NHPP proposal

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seemed the most suitable funding application. **Action:** SMA to discuss at next meeting (November)

### **8. Other Recommendations**

R1: EH (DB) and ACE (SF) to liaise

R2: See above

R3: Response to request for standards had been limited. **Action:** NS to chase and list

R4: Review of HLF bids has been dropped as there have been criteria changes, but work would continue in a different form. **Action:** SMA. Review of retention and selection guidelines is continuing.

R5: Ongoing (QC)

R6: Discussion on cheaper storage options did not come to any conclusions

R7: Work on this is ongoing

R8: SMA currently ironing out a few issues, which is delaying promotion of the map.

### **9. A.O.B.**

OASIS is now a standing item on the AAF agenda.

### **10. Date & location of next meeting**

March 6<sup>th</sup> Ulster Museum.

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