

ARCHAEOLOGICAL ARCHIVES FORUM

Meeting Agenda

ADS, York

11:00 – 16:00, 29th November 2018

Amanda Forster (Digventures), Ben Donnelly-Symes (Cambridgeshire HER), Claire Tsang (Historic England) (Sec.), Duncan Brown (Historic England), Helen Parslow (FAME), Elizabeth Walker (Museum Wales/National Panel for Wales), Iain Fraser (HES), Katie Green (ADS), Lucy Creighton (York Museums Trust), Matt Thompson (English Heritage), Mike Heyworth (CBA), Nancy Grace (National Trust), Nicky Scott (SMA), Quinton Carroll (ALGAO) (Chair), Rhonda Robinson (NI Historic Environment Division, Department for Communities), Sam Paul (ClfA/ClfA Archives Group), Sarah Morton (ICON/AG)

Apologies

Caradoc Peters (University Archaeology UK), Helen Shalders (Historic England), John Lewis (Society of Antiquaries: London)

Minutes of Last Meeting

Outstanding actions:

DB to discuss with SMA the inclusion of accession registers as part of the HAIS project. This is now going to be discussed at the meeting by QC. Action: QC

CT to contact JL and SM to see if still relevant to be members. SM is to be replaced by Greer Ramsey. JL still wishes to be a member.

Website updates: CT to phrase and circulate. CT still to do. Action: CT

SMA report: Action: KG to provide ADS submission text. Completed.

Membership

Nicky Scott has stood down from the SMA committee, Lucy Creighton will replace her on the AAF. Thanks for all Nicky's input and hard work over the years are recorded.

News Updates

English Heritage (MT)

A new structure of collections managers has been put in place, specifically responsible for managing English Heritage stores; they have been in post for four months and getting up to speed. English Heritage's collections cover; archaeological archives, site clearance, furniture, art and social history. Not all sites archives are deposited with English Heritage; this is dependent on where previous archives are held.

CIFA and CIFA AAG (SP)

The selection tool kit will be discussed later. Currently the group is receiving a number of emails from museums regarding RO's not completing projects and depositing. CIFA AAG is raising this with CIFA and advising on them on how to manage the situation. A further issue is that RO inspections can be individualistic. The CIFA AAG are currently writing a statement to be given to CIFA regarding HS2, best practice and support for the project, when it is not clear archives are being considered. In March SP will be standing down as chair from the AA group, they are currently looking for a replacement. The call for papers for the CIFA AAG AGM and 1 day conference is out. The meeting is on 20 March 2019

(<https://www.archaeologists.net/sites/all/modules/civicrm/extern/url.php?u=1772&qid=195520>)

Wider work in CIFA has been dealing with ethical guidance and they have employed an external organisation to provide advice. The call for papers for the main conference closes on Sunday this week. They have a new member of staff working on standards – Jim Parker.

National Trust NG

Progress with archaeological archives management is being made, with Conservators Rachel Swift and Helen Lindsay undertaking the Making Space for Change Project: This will assess current storage needs of collections, investigate local, regional and national storage options, and provide an options appraisal and recommendations. This will cover house and archaeology collections. As part of the options review they will be visiting English Heritage's store at Temple Meads. They are also creating new system guidelines for archaeology.

Historic England

HE have been funding projects developed from the Mendoza review recommendations (<https://historicengland.org.uk/whats-new/news/new-plan-englands-archaeology-archives-challenge/>), most are discussed below. Not further on the agenda today is the survey of deposition charges being undertaken by Swindon museum. This has found costs vary £14 – 300, decisions are made based on the English Heritage/HE box grant (that's not what it was supposed to do – it was for English Heritage to provide money for more racking) or copying other institutions. The results will be published through the HE reports series.

Archaeological Archive Panel work on projects in response to the Mendoza review:

- Scott Furlong (Arts Council England)
- Quinton Carroll (Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers, England)
- Jeremy Hill (The British Museum)
- Jan Wills (Chartered Institute for Archaeologists)
- Tim Malim/ Nick Shepherd (Federation of Archaeological Managers and Employers)
- Helen Wass (High Speed 2, to represent big infrastructure development)
- Duncan Brown and Barney Sloane (Historic England)
- Alison Kentuck (Receiver of Wreck to represent the marine dimension)
- Gail Boyle of Bristol Museums (Society for Museum Archaeology)
- David Dawson of Wiltshire Museum (as project lead for Seeing the Light of Day)

They are looking at regional and national solutions to storage as it is clear there is no single museum able to take the collections. They meet three times a year. DB has also met with the Arts Council separately to discuss storage solutions.

DB represents England on the EAC archives working group, and is stepping down. CT will take his place. With the completion of Arches they are now looking at Selection and Digital Archives. DB is finalising a report on a Selection survey with David Bibby, his German Counterpart.

CBA

MH reported that there is an issue within community archaeology of a decline in knowledge and understanding of creating and preparing archives for deposition and publishing. The CBA is working at connecting groups and is working with the ADS with regards to digital archive support.

FAME

They have a new deputy CEO – Doug Rocks McQueen. They have also updated their contact list.

SMA

Both the Collecting Survey Year 2 (<http://socmusarch.org.uk/projects/hesma-annual-survey-of-museums-collecting-archaeology-reports/>) and the Rationalisation guidance (<http://socmusarch.org.uk/projects/guidance-on-the-rationalisation-of-museum-archaeology-collections/>) and supporting reports have been recently published.

The definition of a repository has also been published (<http://socmusarch.org.uk/publically-accessible-repositories/>) and the ADS have written model wording for digital archives for museum deposition guidelines which is available on their website. A standard GDPR data sharing agreement has also been written to support museums dealing with transfer of personal data (<http://socmusarch.org.uk/data-sharing-agreement-archives-template-sma/>).

SMA are applying to ACE for funding for a SMART project which is aiming to support museum training in collection care through a series of workshops and a mentoring scheme.

Gail Boyle has now stepped down as SMA Chair although is remaining on committee as ordinary member. Duncan Brown is the new Chair. Nicky will step down as SMA AAF rep, having left the SMA committee, and Lucy Creighton will take over the role from November 2018.

ADS

At request of staff a business review has been undertaken, this put back in place the deputy director post, has been filled by Tim Evans. KG's role has developed to collections developer and Ray Moore is now Archives Manager. There have been updates to ADS EASY, which will now cover projects with 1000 files. OASIS and HERALD are discussed below.

Historic Environment Scotland

Work continues on rationalising the number of stores and they are working with the Excavation Unit that did much of the work on their properties in care to deposit physical and digital archives. HES are also developing a new collections management system. Replacing their Oracle system with Apex,

and this will be followed up with upgrading Canmore. Emily Nimmo is finishing the Preservica project. HES are working towards their data seal of approval, digitising their photograph collection (Green boxes) and working on cataloguing their digital backlog.

Wales

The National Panel is still convening. They are providing training courses on preparing archaeological archives and digital archives. They are considering working on two new areas – Selection and Retention Guidelines, based on one Archaeology Unit's successful ones. They are hoping to develop a standard box charge across Wales, which will not be retrospectively applied.

NI

The NI Historic Environment Division are considering a rationalisation project, they are also working on stores improvement and backlog cataloguing. Currently they are still short of storage for archives held with contractors and universities. Licensing updates were published in June, which included archiving and OASIS recording. The National Museum and the Division are discussing a resource centre. They are also looking at how they enhance their monuments building records and best practice on how to do this.

ICON

There have been changes on the executive team, and there will potentially changes in AAF representative, as SM is now teaching. The ICON conference will be in Belfast in June 2019. FAFF is going to be revised and digitally published in 2019.

ALGAO

Currently undertaking the 'Planning for Archive' survey (see below). This has demonstrated a change in opinion in ALGAO officers' role in archaeological archive management. The drop in number of officers has slowed and is currently at 263 FT posts, leaving them responsible for an average of 2600 applications each a year. 3% of these have archaeological implications. 54 included archaeology in the reasons why applications were turned down. And two had archaeology as the only reason of turning down applications. Funding cuts to ALGAO and reduced members means they are looking at how they support their members; currently they are focusing on training.

HE Digital Archives in Archaeology Project

Amanda Forester (Digventures) gave an overview of the project and where it has got so far, with a through description of the findings so far that demonstrate a lack of consistency across the sector on how digital archives are dealt with. The aim is to develop up-to-date guidance for everyone working with digital data in archaeological. They have created a beta group which is generally representational of the sector for roles and organisations and currently there is a short survey to fill in with regards to knowledge and use of standards there is. This is being followed up with personal conversations to expand on replies. There is a six month turn round on the project so the first draft of guidance will be out in the New Year.

ALGAO Planning Project Report

Ben Donnelly-Symes (Cambridgeshire HER) gave an overview of the Planning for Archives project, which also has come out from the Mendoza recommendations and funded by HE. The project so far which has included a questionnaire for ALGAO members and the three regional workshops to discuss the results, this has resulted in draft recommendations for a best practice document on how archaeological archives are included in the planning process.

OASIS/HERALD

Tim Evans (ADS) gave an overview of the HERALD project. HERALD is the name of the project that is redeveloping OASIS. In 2019 there will be a prototype for the new OASIS forms and workflows will be developed, work will continue on the migration of the data. A major part of development is the inclusion of archives into this and ensuring terminology is controlled, this will include the development of terminology (as part of FISH). TE put out a call for specialist to help with cleaning the data for archival institutions.

SMA Collecting Survey Report

Lucy Creighton summarised the finding of the Year 2 (2017) survey, which seeks to quantify provision of staff, expertise and storage of archaeological archives across England. It reports that collecting continues to be affected by cuts. The results of which can be found here:

<http://socmusarch.org.uk/projects/he-survey-2017-final/>.

The main results from respondents show:

- 104/200 (52%) of respondents are still actively collecting archaeological archives:
- 64/104 (61.5%) of which charge for deposition
- 38/200 (19%) respondents that have previously collected archaeological archives have stopped collecting - 58/200 (29%) respondents to the survey have never collected archives, those that have stopped, when measured against the remaining 142, represent 26.7% of respondents.
- Of those collecting 71.9% have less than 20m3 of space left.
- Lack of space is the most common reason for stopping collecting. Local Authority funded museums are more likely to have stopped collecting and to have seen staff number reductions.

The third and final year of the survey is now underway targeting those who responded previously in last 2 years.

SMA Rationalisation Project

Lucy Creighton summarised rationalisation project which has led to the development of guidance which has been recently published and well received.

UAUK Archives Questionnaire

Because CP was unable to attend the meeting discussion on this was limited.

CIFA AAG Selection Toolkit Project

The Selection Toolkit was sent round before the meeting, this the final content but the format will develop as part of stage two; to dissemination and provide training, they are currently awaiting approval from HE.

AAG will remain responsible for the toolkit and will be responsible for updates. The AAG is looking for the AAF to ratify the documents.

ACTION: members to take the documents to their organisations and email Claire Tsang by the end of January. CT to send Feb reminder.

AAF Negative Archives Project

NS and HP's Review of the use of the term showed that the meaning of the term was confused, definition of the negative archives was near finalised, and would require OASIS recording and report upload as a minimum. Although the term 'negative site' is unpopular it is the most commonly used, and will be kept because of this to describe

ACTION CT to circulate. DB noted that this was something for the SMA to take on and promote
ACTION DB.

Later sent by NS:

The Negative Site archive definition we settled on was 'sites which, on investigation, reveal no archaeological record of any kind', ie there were no contexts.

We agreed that the report from these should still be lodged with OASIS, and include a plan of the site area. We also agreed that with certain exceptions - e.g. land drains archaeological record included modern contexts so that Cold War, WWI etc was covered.

The exception to this definition being sites investigated specifically to establish information on soil horizons e.g. topsoil, in these cases the subject of the investigation justifies the creation of the archive even though no archaeological record is encountered.

AAF Security Copying Project

The report was circulated before the meeting for discussing. CT raised the main issues; however it was considered a complex subject and potentially a wider issue for the cultural sector, and parked until fuller discussion at the next meeting. Action was given to all members to investigate contacts into the wider archives community to see if this had been researched elsewhere.

Action Plan Updates

These were not discussed and it was mooted that they may now be outdated by the Mendoza action plan.

A.O.B.

The Chichester Selection Guidelines were raised as an issue. HE has recommended they trial the CIFA toolkit. This had also been raised by RESCUE. Action QC to respond to RESCUE.

Attention was drawn to the HE funded PHD on curation of Palaeolithic environmental archives, which is concluding that museums do not have the resources for their specialist curation.

Attention was also drawn to Hertfordshire which is developing regional deposition guidelines.

Date & Location of Next Meeting

TBC