SMR News

The Newsletter of the SMR Software Users Group

Welcome to the SMR User Group

Neil Lang, RCHME

Welcome to the first edition of SMR News. This is the newsletter of the SMR Software User's Group and will appear twice per year, approximately four weeks after the Spring and Autumn meetings. It is intended to carry news for and about SMRs, and like the meetings, is the only national forum to discuss SMR matters in England - so please support it!

I would like to thank all of you who sent in suggestions for the frequency and format of meetings and, of course, to all who came to our inaugural meeting held in London in September. This was very successful, with over 50 SMR staff in attendance, representing 43 organisations.

The meeting featured presentations on the MONARCH system, the Essex SMR MONARCH pilot, multi-user systems, the Heritage Database Project (computerising the lists of historic buildings), discussion of data standards, recording practice and a presentation on the Northamptonshire SMR system (featured in this issue).

Future meetings will be divided into a morning 'technical' session concentrating on MONARCH, primarily intended for its users, or those seriously considering taking it. In the afternoon, we will hold general sessions of interest to all SMRs, irrespective of their software and hardware environments. We hope to be able to include presentations from software vendors and service providers relevant to SMRs (for example, relational database design) and of course we hope you will continue to offer presentations on SMR projects.

Please keep sending in contributions, short or long, to Kate Fernie for the newsletter. We would like to see articles on current projects in SMRs as well as notice of conferences, seminars and staff changes.

Above all, SMR News is produced for you - so whether you feel able to contribute or not, please write in and tell us what you do and don't like about it - and what you would be interested in reading about in future.

We will be sending out a questionnaire in the near future, partly in connection with the development of our Internet service (see P.5), and partly to make sure our details of your hardware, software and databases are all correct. We will then issue an up-to-date SMR Directory to all members of the Group with the next issue of the Newsletter.

The SMR Software Users Group will, in many respects, follow on from the work of the old Superfile Software Users Group. All you who remember that group will doubtless recall that it was ably chaired by Andrew Woodcock from East Sussex. This is a tradition which I would like to continue. The duties involved are not terribly onerous, chairing the two or three meetings we will hold each year and a short piece for the Newsletter.

Do we have a volunteer, please? If anyone is interested, contact me at the NMRC.

The next meeting of this Group will be at York in the Spring, and will include the full panoply of local SMRs - Counties, Districts, UADs and National Parks, all of whom should, by then, come under the united umbrella of the Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers (ALGAO). I look forward to seeing you there.

CALENDAR

Events and Training

23-24 October 1995 'Beyond PPG16: What is Preservation?' Oxford University Professional Courses £130 residential tel: 01865 280349

27 October 1995 'Yorkshire Archaeological Forum - first meeting', County Hall, Northallerton tel: 01609 780780 ext 2331

17 October 1995 RCHME 'homepage' goes live on Internet

4 November 1995 'Life in the Early Modern Town', Leicester University; Paul Courtney 0116 2707999

11-4pm, 4 November 1995 'Metal detecting in Yorkshire: both sides of the story', Yorkshire Museum. Free

6-10 November 'Information: the hidden resource' Edinburgh 01223 242848

4-5 December 1995 'Archaeology and Sustainable Development' Oxford University £130 residential tel: 01865 280349

13 November 1995 'Neolithic Caves, Shafts and Mines' Neolithic Studies Group meeting, British Museum. Tim Darvill, Bournemouth Univ.

11am 15 December 1995 East Anglian SMR Regional Working Group. County Hall, Hertford.

January/February 1996 SMR Users Group meeting to be held in York

10-12 September 1996 IFA Conference, Manchester. SMR Users Group Meeting

Installing MONARCH

Monarch is a sophisticated database application and the ease of migrating data from existing SMR systems varies considerably from site to site. The process requires careful planning to ensure that MONARCH is the appropriate application for your organization and for efficient installation. Each SMR is offered a feasibility study to identify specific local issues, before either the SMR or the RCHME make a commitment:

Specification SMR data is audited to assess and quantify issues.

Preparation Computerized SMR data is configured for smooth migration.

Installation MONARCH application and SMR data are transferred to a PC.

Training Members of staff are trained to use MONARCH.

Review A joint review to decide if full implementation is appropriate.

Support

Users of the software are offered the support of a RCHME telephone help desk, the project management team and a MONARCH user group.

Contact Simon Walton (Software Project Manager) for more information : 01793 414709

Training for SMR officers

Edmund Lee, RCHME

In March the first intensive training course for SMRs using the MONARCH software was held for staff from the Bedfordshire, East Sussex, Essex and Northumberland.

The training course, presented by Simon Walton and Edmund Lee, will be offered to all SMRs taking MONARCH software.

All users are given an overview of the MONARCH software and the database, SMR officers then go on to have an in depth look at general enquiries and data entry. Training materials are provided for reference during the course and full user documentation will soon be available.

MONARCH: Technical Information

Hardware

IBM or 100% IBM compatible PC with an 80486 microprocessor running at 33Mhz or faster

A minimum of 16Mb of RAM

One 3.5-inch floppy drive

Colour VGA monitor

Tape cassette drive (0.25-inch) for backup to QIC-02 standard

500 MB Hard disc

Software

MSDOS version 5 or 6

ORACLE [tm] relational database version 6

SQR Report Writer

SYTOS or SYPLUS tape drive application

Software maintenance licences for ORACLE[tm] and SQR Report Writer

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SMR Monarch Pilot : Paul Gilman, Essex SMR

Essex is one of four counties which are testing 'Monarch for SMRs'. This system is closely based on the RCHME's own version of Monarch but has been specially adapted for SMR use. Although this system has been tested previously, this is the first time that it has been put through its paces in its intended working environment.

A test batch of 264 records, from Essex's current Superfile database, has been successfully migrated to Monarch. The test data, installed on a PC in Essex, has only been in use for several weeks. This is a relatively short period and so any conclusions must be tentative. Nevertheless, it is clear that Monarch offers the potential to record a broader range of archaeological data in a more consistent way. In particular, the provision of a module for development control and monument management, is very welcome indeed.

It is true that there have been problems - some areas of the system need streamlining to make them easier to use, and a number of 'bugs' have been identified.

However, these difficulties are being discussed with RCHME staff and it is expected that they will be resolved shortly.

Monarch News

A UNIX based multi-user version of the MONARCH software has been developed and will soon be piloted by Kent SMR.

The MONARCH software will be linked to Arch Info (GIS) at Essex and Kent SMRs.

A Portable SMR

Duncan Brown, Hereford & Worcester Archaeology Service

The County Archaeological Service in Hereford and Worcester operates within the County Libraries Service, alongside other information providers like the County Museum. As such we take our responsibility to keep the general public informed very seriously within a limited budget. We try to achieve this by running a series of talks and events around the county, with a quarterly Newsletter and by issuing regular press releases and radio interviews. However, in the past it has been very difficult to take the SMR into the community.

We are very grateful for the recent beneficence of the County Council in purchasing new computer equipment for the SMR. This includes a Toshiba laptop which can handle the whole SMR database (64Mb in size) with some ease. One of the principal uses of this is to provide a staffed public access point at our various public and educational events, and through periodic visits to public libraries around the county.

Currently the public information system used includes a short form SMR database on FoxPro, and WINGS, a windows based computer mapping system with vector mapping of the area of the county visited. Eventually, in the main SMR system, the database and computer mapping systems will be linked to provide a full GIS system, which may then be transferable to the laptop.

Despite teething problems, operating the system has been very successful. Problems mainly arise from lack of staff time both to correct and enhance the database for public access, providing a more user-friendly `front end' and developing the GIS links, and also to take the system out to the libraries. The system as it stands is currently on trial and, following further developments it may be that an edited version of the SMR will be available in all public libraries and information points in the county on the main Libraries Service computer system, or perhaps through the Internet.

Local Government Review

David Evans, Avon SMR

From April 1996 the services provided by Avon County Council will merge with those of the six existing District Councils to form four new Unitary authorities. There are likely to be major changes in the way in which central services are provided.

The archaeology section consists of the County Archaeologist, SMRO, Conservation Officer and Historic Buildings Officer, which might seem to conveniently match the four new areas. But things are not as simple as they might appear because the officers' skills are not interchangeable.

I will not go into detail as to the provision of a comprehensive archaeological service from next year but will concentrate on the SMR. At present there appear to be two distinct possibilities which might be considered as opposites, even extremes.

The retention of the SMR as a whole (under a sponsoring authority) on the one hand and the division of the SMR between the four new authorities on the other.

While it can be argued that the only sensible option is to keep a record covering a reasonable geographical area together, the case for moving the data closer to places where it is most of use, in local planning sections is also persuasive.

It is also true to say that both options have problems. A central SMR can only function properly if all the four new authorities continue to support this arrangement. A fragmented SMR is likely to suffer from archaeology officers in the new authorities being unable to spend enough time servicing the SMR, because of pressure of other duties. There is also the possibility that the various new databases will get out of synch.

This the current situation, for the future only time will tell.

Defence of Britain Project

from 'Defence Lines' July 1995

On 4 April *The Defence of Britain* was officially launched in a flurry of sausage rolls and things on sticks at the Imperial War Museum, London...

The purpose of the *Defence of Britain* is to compile a database of British twentieth century defence sites with a view to informing conservation strategies, encouraging further research and stimulating public interest in issues concerning the national historic heritage. The project relies upon fieldwork by individual volunteers and societies to gather, verify and augment information.

The *Defence of Britain* is overseen by a management panel consisting of representatives from ACAO, Cadw, CBA, Council for Scottish Archaeology, English Heritage, Fortress Study Group, Historic Scotland, Imperial War Museum, Public Record Office, RCHME, RCHAMS and RCAHMW.

SMR Data Management: The Northants Example: Christine Addison, Northamptonshire SMR

The Northamptonshire SMR was first set up in 1974, computerized in 1984, and significant computer enhancement was realised during 1994. Widespread improvement of the SMR's information systems is being augmented by a series of SMR data enhancement projects, most notably the National Mapping Programme for Northamptonshire, funded by RCHME, and the Urban Archaeological Database for Northampton, funded by English Heritage.

Computerized data mapping is undertaken on MAPINFO software, with individual licences to PCs, and data storage currently by means of network server. MAPINFO has a live link to the UNIX-based ORACLE system which has been developed as the SMR's core database, networked as appropriate to in-house users.

Site records are created on ORACLE; each recording activity is allocated a unique reference number which is then used for site archive purposes. Site-based data is then recorded on MAPINFO as appropriate to its character, and may include feature definitions e.g. A scanned earthwork survey, or a digitised cropmark plot. Each mapped record is labeled with its Site Number, so that a traceable history of features recorded therein is maintained. There may be multiples of feature analyses for a single piece of archaeology, but for the purposes of maintaining the security of this historical record and retaining the integrity of the source data, editing of this data is not permitted.

A glance at the RCHME/EH thesaurus of 'monument' types will reveal that monuments are necessarily hierarchical in nature; an Iron Age round house or a medieval dovecote is no less a monument by virtue of its association within the wider context of a settlement or manorial enclosure. Likewise, a manor or church or market place is no less a monument than the village or town within which it sits. Thus, a hierarchical framework within which all monument definitions sit is employed, based on ELEMENT, GROUP and COMPLEX components in ascending order.

Features identified from site-based data are brought together and rationalised to produce a dynamic, archaeological feature-based map of the county.

The features are edited on-screen, and because original data is manipulated to produce and amplify this layer, the site-based referencing system is abandoned at this stage of mapping, though still remains easily accessible for traceability of the source data.

This feature-based data layer is then utilised to produce a polygon-defined monument map. An assessment of monument importance is applied to each polygon which is linked to both national and county-based policies and effectively produces a constraints map, used mainly for development control purposes.

Each stage of SMR recording defined is managed as a separate data-set on MAPINFO, and each carries its own referencing system which enables linkage to parallel ORACLE data.

Use of GIS for SMR recording has lead to re-evaluation of the status of different levels of information. What is their use in the context of an SMR? How will they be archived? Where does responsibility lie for definition of data standards, both locally and nationally? Locally, corporate GIS is enabling the creation of more and more data-sets, many with specific applications to the management of the historic environment. To control this, a framework of standards is being established in Northamptonshire, which relies on a definition of responsibilities for key data-sets. Such issues should be tackled now and on a national basis.

Northants SMR: the record structure

The conceptual framework of the SMR is based on the principle that the record comprises of 'Sites', 'Monuments', 'Management-data' and 'Natural and Administrative data'.

Sites represent investigation processes employed to record archaeological remains. Site-based data comprises information about a recording event such as where it was, how, who carried it out, when and where the resulting archive is deposited. Each site has a finite beginning and end, and is inherently STATIC in character, as is its site archive. The integrity of the original data must be maintained for future analysis to be meaningful.

Monuments represent interpretations of recorded archaeological remains. Monuments comprise the basic building blocks of the archaeological and historic landscape and are constantly subject to re-interpretation, and are thus DYNAMIC in character. By breaking down monument records into their component parts permits flexibility in data-manipulation using currently available technology.

Management data. Management data includes details of conservation status such as Statutory designations, Properties in Care, Site of Special Scientific Interest, Ancient Woodland, monument importance and any related planning constraints. Information about current land use, ownership, and public access arrangements relate to this data set. Management data is DYNAMIC and is not monument specific.

Natural and administrative data provides the backdrop for the SMR and includes the modern Ordnance Survey map base, the National Grid, administrative areas such as local authorities and parishes, contour and geological information.

European Sites and Monuments

Martyn Barber, RCHME

As part of the Council of Europe's 'European Plan for Archaeology', a working party has been established to look at international documentation standards within archaeology. Work is currently underway on two initiatives.

The first is a European Core Data Standard for Archaeological Sites and Monuments, based primarily on a similar document produced by CIDOC, the international documentation committee of ICOM. This data standard was presented to, and endorsed by, delegates representing over 30 countries at the recent conference on 'The Archaeological Heritage: Inventory and Documentation Standards in Europe' held in Oxford on 20-22 September.

The second initiative is a multi-lingual glossary of archaeological terminology. A pilot project focusing on the sites and monuments of the European Bronze Age is currently in progress.

Council of Europe
Archaeological heritage

Conseil de l'Europe
Patrimoine archéologique

Thesaurus of Monument Types

The RCHME and English Heritage have just published their new 'Thesaurus of Monument Types', which, for the first time combines archaeological and architectural terms in one volume.

The Thesaurus is an invaluable tool which allows monument recorders to standardise terminology used in indexing records and thus to maximise information retrieval. It is being used as the standard for data capture in the national records curated by RCHME and EH, including the Heritage Database Project.

The Thesaurus has been compiled by a working party made up of representatives from RCHME, EH, the Association of County Archaeological Officers and the British Archaeological Bibliography.

This working party continues to meet, discussing amendments and enhancements proposed by monument recorders for inclusion in the computerized database held by the RCHME and in future published editions.

It is hoped that the Thesaurus of Monument Types will promote consistency of approach between national and local records and facilitate the exchange of information.

The Thesaurus is published in the form of updatable pages in an A4 ring-binder. A software package is currently being developed for computer users.

Heritage News on the World Wide Web

On 17th October the RCHME launched its information service on the Internet. Anyone with access to Internet will find *Information and News* at **http://www.rchme.gov.uk.**

Initially the service is focusing on the work of the Commission and the resources of the National Monuments Record. Users will be able to access information about the NMR and browse through a selection of pictures representing the different facets of the collections. Information on field survey work and emergency recording will also be available. Users will be able to request further information, order books or photographs and to send correspondence using e-mail.

For the future the Commission aims to broaden the service into a medium that archaeological and architectural organisations use to exchange news and information. *Information and News* already carries a list of heritage bodies on the Internet to enable users to 'surf' directly to their Web sites. *Information and News* will also carry news of recent project work and events in the heritage community.

For SMRs without direct access to the Internet the RCHME Service offers an opportunity to publish news about work in the SMR, field projects, developments, book releases and training courses.
More information about the service is available from Jon Cannon on 01793 414617.

Heritage Database Project

Nigel Clubb, RCHME

RCHME is responsible for the indexing of the statutory lists of historic buildings in England as part of the Heritage Management Database. This is a tripartite project between the Department of National Heritage (DNH), English Heritage and RCHME, mainly concerned with statutory data of which listed buildings are the first and biggest component to be tackled. Indexing software based on MONARCH and quality assurance methods related to a core data standard are now in use and 34 contract staff are being employed by the RCHME in Swindon for the indexing of listed buildings, due to be completed by March 1996.

SMRs will be interested in mechanisms for the supply of the data in digital form, with facsimile images and OCR text derived from the lists which should also be available. It is hoped that DNH will take a decision soon on who will be responsible for disseminating the data, although the time-scales for providing data depend on budget provision for putting the necessary information systems in place.

New Guidance to Local Authorities.

On the 8th August, the DNH issued Guidance to Local Authorities on Conservation of the Historic Environment. This set out the responsibilities of local authorities in the context of the national policy framework set by PPGs 15 and 16. It is intended to assist authorities with assessing the requirement and designing the structure of the conservation service for a particular area; ensuring that a comprehensive SMR of the historic environment is maintained and ensuring integration of conservation policy with broader planning policy. An important aspect of the Guidance is the requirement for new authorities to prepare and submit to DNH a management statement on their proposed arrangements for securing conservation advice, within one year of establishment.

The Guidance Note also gave advance notice of specific guidance from RCHME on the requirements for maintaining SMR services (termed the *Resource Inventory* in the Guidance Note). This is currently being issued to all County Councils and district authorities affected by the Local Government Review process, and to the shadow authorities which will succeed present arrangements in certain areas. It provides advice on the content and role of SMRs, their size and staffing, services RCHME are able to provide to new local authorities and offers assistance in preparing relevant parts of their management statement to DNH.

Further information on the Guidance Note can be obtained from the SMR Liaison Officer at the National Monuments Record Centre.

PEOPLE

Sarah Whiteley is Acting SMR Officer for South Yorkshire until January 1996 when Melanie Frances returns from an extended leave.

Greater London SMR is managed by Ian Morrison, Ian Greig is the SMR Officer, Paul Charlton and Lesley Mitchell are SMR Assistants.

Linda King and Jane Isaac now job-share the post of Gloucestershire SMR Officer.

Caroline Hardie, Northumberland County Archaeologist, has given birth to a baby boy.

The new SMR officer for Kent is David Eve.

Publications

Hall, E. 'Garden of England: Evolution of Historic Gardens in Kent', Kent County Council.

Heritage Group, 'Conserving Bedfordshire's Heritage - Annual Review' 1995 Bedfordshire County Planning Department.

Whiteley, SP & Cumberpatch CG (eds) 'Archaeology in South Yorkshire 1993-94', 1994 The South Yorkshire Archaeology Service.

Tyne & Wear Specialist Conservation Team 'Annual Report 1994-5'.

The RCHME will also be publishing a regular Information bulletin.

IFA Introduces Registration for Organisations

The Institute of Field Archaeologists is to introduce a register of archaeological units, consultancies and curatorial bodies. Registered organisations will be led by a full member (MIFA) who has personally signed up to the 'Code of Conduct' covering behaviour, conservation, reporting and dissemination of information. The designation 'IFA Registered Organization' will, the IFA hopes, become a benchmark of quality in an increasingly competitive discipline. The first published register will be available in late 1996. Copies of the regulations covering registration and the 'Code of Conduct' are available from the IFA: 0161 275 2304