Historic Environment Record News

ENGLISH HERITAGE

NATIONAL MONUMENTS RECORD

Contents

A View from the Chair
Niel Lockett, Worcestershire County Council

This edition of HER News follows soon after a very successful winter meeting of the Group at Cambridge. This session followed the format of earlier meetings by having a broad theme reflecting current issues and developments within the HER community.

The title for the day was "A landscape of Archives", and the morning session focussed on landscape projects, both national and regional / local. Stimulating papers were presented by: Lynn Dyson-Bruce (Essex CC) on the integration of Historic Landscape Character (HLC) assessments with Historic Environment Record systems and Bob Middleton (DEFRA) on HER data requirements for the Entry Level and Higher Tier schemes being introduced by DEFRA. Ben Bennetts (Hampshire CC) presented the

final paper of the morning session on the development of an on-line land information system for use within the agri-environment sector.

A Landscape of Archives
ENGLISH HERITAGE

The paper by Lynn Dyson-Bruce outlined some different approaches to HLC assessments, focussing mainly on those in the east of England. This demonstrated that such assessment, whilst detailing a tremendous amount of information on landscape morphology within a study area, were often incompatible with assessments undertaken in adjoining counties. This suggestion is of tremendous value to those about to undertake assessments as an awareness of the wider

regional and national landscape may enhance the research potential of HLC studies. Lynn demonstrated an HLC assessment where one methodology was applied to several counties and it was clear that the process contributed greatly to the understanding of the historic landscape for that region.

The paper was a timely reminder that HERs need to work in an interoperable system. We have recently seen discussions within the community about the scope of a further release of and update to MIDAS, which should be welcomed by all HER managers. In addition, recent developments by exeGesIS SDM Ltd to their HBSMR system have given us a customisable module for HLC projects, fully integrated with their main system, as well as a morphological module for National Mapping Programme data.

The papers presented by Bob Middleton and Ben Bennetts demonstrated how HER data could be integrated with other data as part of agri-environment schemes. The GeniSYS system intends to incorporate core data, supplied by HERs to facilitate easier searching and management advice which can be used as part of the application process for Entry Level and Higher Tier agri-environment schemes. These schemes offer a tremendous opportunity for HERs to integrate validated data into national initiatives

and so reap benefits of an enhanced dialogue with DEFRA as well as influencing the management of rural archaeological sites.

The afternoon sessions saw the presentation of a number of papers on heritage archives and the standards necessary to fully realise the potential of these important resources. Papers from Elizabeth Stazicker (Cambridgeshire CC), Bruce Howard (Hampshire CC) Matthew Stiff (English Heritage) and Philip Carlisle (UK Archival Thesaurus Project, University of London), gave fascinating perspectives and insights into the management of archival collections, particularly those of an archaeological nature.

Finally, David Graty presented the interim findings of the data comparison project of HER and NMR data. This, combined with the recently begun assessment of HER compliance with the national benchmarks with, I am sure, form the basis of a detailed understanding of the current limitations of all HERs. It is inevitable that the process of transforming a SMR into a HER will be protracted. However, we can all hope that the improvements in understanding of the Historic Environment within a local, regional and national context will promote a dynamic and cyclical research cycle which places national and local HERs at the core.

Initial Results of the HER Consultation

Martin Newman, English Heritage

Representatives of EH and ALGAO attended a meeting last week with the DCMS officials to be told the initial findings from the HER Consultation. One hundred and fifty questionnaires were returned including responses from National Organisations, local societies, museums, universities and HERs themselves.

The replies themseves were very positive showing HERs were highly valued by their users. Other themes to come out of the consultation were support for statutory status and standards, with an *accompanying Benchmarks for Good Practice* welcomed as an appropriate and sustainable way forward. Concerns were expressed about moves toward regionalisation, as being potentially too remote from the communities served by HERS.

The final analysis of the questionnaires will be produced by the end of March. Recommendations will then need to be considered by ministers. Some of the recommendations are likely to be implementable without legislation. Any legislation resulting is unlikely to be put forward until the middle of the next parliament.

Is there a Point in the Polygon?

Lynn Dyson-Bruce, HLC Coordinator, East of England Region

Summary

This paper debates the issues and problems associated with developing a new integrated approach from a series of heterogeneous situations and disjointed approaches. The challenge must be to effectively implement new solutions that satisfy all stakeholders, but with appropriate co-operation, application and curtailment of costs.

The proposed development in the management of heritage records, from multiple datasets, each representing a different aspect of the historic environment, to a single, all encompassing Heritage Environment Record (HER), poses many questions. This paper addresses some of the basic principles that must be clarified prior to any such amalgamation. The main issue seems clear: how to effectively and efficiently combine, traditional point data, such as found in most Sites and Monuments Records (SMR's), with polygonal data of the sort provided by Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC), or Extensive Urban Survey (EUS). The goal is very worthwhile: a combined repository of archaeological and historical information, uniform in structure within the UK, offering a suite of benefits for understanding and managing the resource at national, regional and local levels. But it will not be easy to implement. No easy route is proposed here, rather the suggestion that a change of paradigm might be a helpful step, and a collection of questions and points that should be considered along the way.

Introduction

This paper examines the principles of combining HLC with SMR data to inform and assist in the creation of a wider, more encompassing strategic set of heritage records, such the proposed HER. SMRs are widely recognised as the fundamental source of information within the heritage sector at County, District and Unitary level. These records are commonly held in digital format (within a variety of databases), and are increasingly incorporated within a GIS, albeit most frequently in the form of point data with associated text fields.

HLC has a different genesis and a different approach to the capture and portrayal of information. It treats landscape as material culture, seeking patterns which, when examined with the eye of an archaeologist or historian, provide insight into the processes underpinning present appearance and the 'time-depth' of major elements which survive, intact or fragmented, to this day. Derived from the now widely accepted methods of Landscape Character Assessment, HLC is a process of interpretation at a generalised level, heavily reliant on GIS and expressed through polygonal 'character types' linked to relational data and metadata. It is geographically comprehensive for rural areas across more than half the counties of England (with more on the way), and the method is in the process of being refined for use in urban contexts. HLC's total-coverage GIS model fills the blank spaces between SMR sites, which might otherwise be seen as having little or no heritage value and complements the SMR data by providing, among other things, setting and context for individual sites.
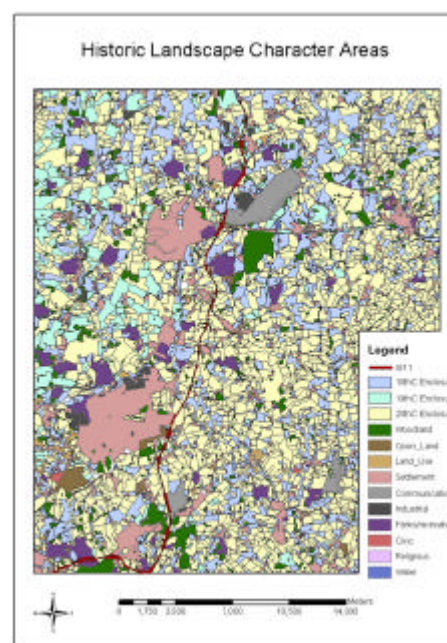

Fig 1 The complexity of HLC polygonal data

Although capable of research applications, HLC is essentially a management tool, and the applications in this respect are many, varied and under constant development. It being

used to focus agri-environment scheme grants in support of rare or characteristic historic landscape components, especially in areas currently undergoing trials for the 2nd pillar Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) reforms. It has been and continues to be used to strengthen landscape management strategies at county or regional scale, for example in Lancashire (Ede, J & Darlington, J. 2002) and Northamptonshire (Holmes, M., pers comm.), and as the framework for the heritage sectors responses to development capacity modelling in the new growth areas and economic regeneration zones identified under the Government's *Sustainable Communities* agenda. Nevertheless, HLC can only go so far as a single application. An holistic approach is the key to the future for sustainable management; an approach which incorporates data on historic landscape, built heritage and archaeological knowledge. Hence the importance of combined data structures – HERs – wherein all three themes can be examined in a meaningful spatial format.

There are, however, many questions to be considered before embarking on the journey towards integrated data management. We must examine what we wish to achieve, why we wish to achieve it and how the product might be used in the future. We must give serious consideration to the pragmatic, logical and effective steps needed to create this useful universal tool, and to the manner in which it might subsequently be developed and applied.

Incompatible Data Sets
Archaeological, architectural and landscape information systems have different histories, reflecting different priorities and management methods, and these are reflected in the very different processes, which exist today.

Current data consists of -
- Traditional SMR point data, which is site specific, but often within a GIS, which provides spatial location in real world geography. The data is wide ranging in quality and form, including find spots, surveyed or recorded sites and evidence from excavation. It is inconsistent across England.
- Innovative forms of HLC polygonal data, providing complete coverage using GIS within participating counties/areas. Often generic, based on professional judgement in combination with factual data and morphology. Some HLC's now take into account the wider urban context. This is also an inconsistent dataset across England.

- EUS and UAD data combines detailed point, line and polygonal data on historic urban cores of towns and in some cases villages. This also has differing methodologies.
- The Listed Buildings inventory consists of point data, maintained in national databases (English Heritage) which is shortly due to become available as a GIS layer (HSIS, MAGIC, LBS)
- Scheduled Monuments (SMs) - point and polygonal data maintained by English Heritage, shortly to become available as a consistent GIS layer (HSIS).
- Crop mark data, which may in some authorities be a raster dataset, not easily incorporated into nor compared to vector data (points, lines, polygons). In others it may be line or vector data. Again an inconsistency.
- Conservation Area – inconsistent, sometimes GIS, often not, maintained by District LPAs
- Register Parks and Gardens (RPGs) (as SMs)
- Registered Battlefields (as RPGs)
- Archaeological Notification Areas (LPAs – very inconsistent – GIS, Paper etc)

The SMR is mostly point data, which is often complex in nature, data formats etc. Methods of storing and managing that data differ from county to county. SMRs differ in nature, quality and form, they are not all the same. The same may be said for HLC's. There is great variation between phases in the development of the methodology and their application across England. Although recent projects have shown that the assimilation of different HLCs to create cross-border models can be achieved (e.g. Green, D. & Kidd, A. forthcoming), the East of England (EofE) HLC project which covers Suffolk, Cambridgeshire, Bedford, Essex and Hertfordshire, is the only application of HLC in England that uses a single but evolving methodology to ensure a consistency of application, analysis and thus results (Dyson-Bruce 2002).

This begs the question; *"What is in the 'point' and what is in the 'polygon'?"* and can they be effectively combined for the purpose envisaged? A nationally established HER protocol could extend the range and effectiveness of current methods of heritage management, contribute further to conservation, landscape management, development control work, research and so forth, and allow the heritage sector to operate on the same national basis as other environmental bodies in areas such as LAMiS system, Regional Spatial Strategies, Strategic Impact Assessments and change indicators such as 'Countryside Quality Counts'. Only if we can resolve the problems of inconsistency and incompatibility inherent in the current suite of datasets, may we achieve a nationally consistent dataset. This would have the added advantage of adding credibility to heritage asset management and records.

Mixed Approach

If this data is to be combined, one must consider how this should be effectively managed. Currently applications are being developed to combine SMR and HLC data within GIS, for example within the HBSMR system provided by exeGesIS, resulting in a separate module.
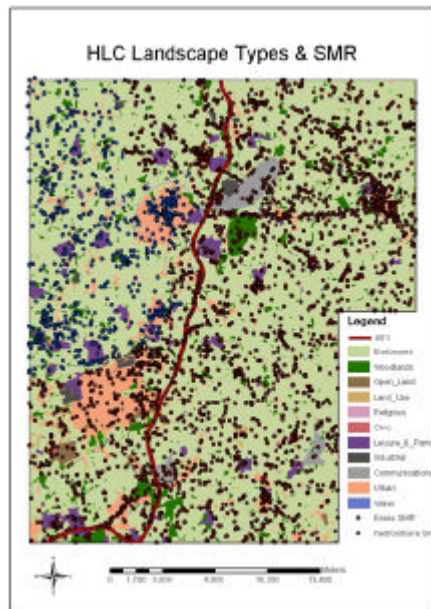

Fig 2 Distribution of SMR sites across Hertfordshire & Essex highlighting the problems in combining two differing SMR datasets.

In addition various methodologies of incorporating the SMR and other point datasets with HLC have been examined within the LSC (Went & Dyson-Bruce 2003), Milton Keynes South Midlands (MKSM) (Kydd & Green 2004) and Thames-Gateway (Blandfords & EH, forthcoming) work. Each approach has handled the SMR and HLC datasets in differing ways, in response to differing issues and scales of application.

The London Stanstead and Cambridgeshire (LSC) - M11 work highlighted the problems in taking two radically different SMR's (one monument based, the other primarily event based) in adjacent counties and incorporating them into two county-based HLC's, which were conducted with the same EofE methodology. The results confirmed that a certain screening or filtering of the SMR data was required, (which was unfortunately out with the remit of the project). The MKSM work took a different approach, using comparative analysis. HLC has also been used as a backdrop to selected SMR data to compare distribution patterns in Suffolk (Martin per com.) and in Scotland (Dyson-Bruce et al 1999). The HLC has also been compared to various Landscape Character Assessments (LCAs) across the UK with varying results and conclusions (Dyson-Bruce et al 1999, Odell per com, Wakelin per com). In some areas the HLC conforms with the LCA, whereas in others there are significant differences, but it is becoming increasingly the case that the more detailed HLC informs the broader LCA.

Whichever application has been tried it is apparent there are real methodological problems in combining these differing datasets consistently across the UK.

Better Way Forward

The author feels that perhaps there should be a paradigm shift in how these various datasets are managed. One does not propose any solutions, but reasoned considerations as to some of the issues involved.

The SMR data needs to be held within a common digital format and approach to enable national synthesis using a common methodology. To effectively do this various data cleansing and filtering processes must be applied to ensure compatibility, remove unwanted or not particularly useful data and ensure conformity across county boundaries. Maybe the SMR data could also undergo a change in format, and be converted to polygonal data, which may then nest within the HLC or HER in an hierarchical manner, currently under discussion with DEFRA for entry-level Agri-Environmental schemes. This would be time consuming, but SMR data is spatial & perhaps would be better reflecting real world geography, rather than the current symbology. This approach has been tried in Ware, by HCC resulting in a nesting hierarchy of polygonal data, which proved very time consuming, and thus may not be practicable. A similar

approach could also be applied to listed buildings, although problems as to what comprises the 'listed building' as to its spatial footprint, need to be established e.g. building, curtilage, outbuildings etc. Likewise incorporating the SAMS datasets, as to extent and nature of these statutory boundaries and how they fit within, conform to, or conflict with other polygonal datasets. The OS MasterMap, being a polygonal dataset, may help or hinder this process, due to differences in the spatial extent of the data.

An alternative approach, maybe to take similar data types and form groups or clusters e.g. crop mark data. This would require an interpretation of the data, by type or period or synthesis thereof. These clusters could form 'management layers', representing a new layer of generic information within the SMR. This could perhaps be more easily understood and assimilated by other users that are non-archaeologists.

The HLC assessments undergo constant development, change and enhancement, reflecting not only improved methodologies, but also an increased understanding of landscapes and enhanced GIS functionality. The various HLC datasets also require bringing into a consistent national strategic HLC dataset to facilitate this synthesis of spatial data (Dyson-Bruce 2002). Like the SMR the HLC

reflects various data holding formats and a wide variety of methodologies. The HLC, although representing at times generic areas of landscape, may often be a synthesis of line and point data. Perhaps for SMR's and HLC's, there should be, at a national level a set of common standards to reflect these differences of specific and general datasets to enable full and consistent interoperability, application and analysis. The caveat is that this may stymie future development and change, but on the other hand would ensure national conformity in data gathering, collation and management. Whilst this process is being initiated and implemented, it would be opportune to fully consider future applications e.g. Agri-environmental entry-level schemes. With appropriate thought the data cleansing and manipulation could provide the answer to a wider variety of remits and end uses, i.e. a more useful streamlined management tool.

Other issues include that of data maintenance and update, of not only the basic records but also the subsequent synthesis. Another issue is that of dissemination, training and use of such records within the wider community, costs or fees for use, web access and management. Who is going to provide the resource for this data synthesis and maintain it?

The SMR and HLC's are all undergoing change, with appropriate foresight and sensitivity in data handling the

SMR may nest within the HLC or the HLC may form a backdrop against which the SMR may be iteratively or comparatively modelled. Then questions may be asked, such as if SMR data sits within a landscape that correlates either in time-depth or spatially. The HLC may form a similar backdrop or form part of the HER.

Combination or integration of these datasets are basic issues for consideration. Whichever is the chosen path or a combination of approaches, the fact is that GIS is the tool, the fulcrum that will enable this synthesis, analysis and application of data. However to effectively apply this, as stated above, there must be full interoperability and consistency, both between and within these datasets.

Conclusions

The SMR and HLC are very different datasets with all the problems that go with each. In addition a complicating factor is that across England, the SMR's and HLC's differs, we not only have different species but different genotypes. To facilitate some form of synthesis of these two basic but variable datasets a genetic modification may be necessary, painful though that thought maybe, especially to under-resourced and currently over-stretched SMR and HLC officers across the country. Appropriate resources must be made available for this work to be carried out at the required

high standards. However the author feels that with appropriate data standards, cleansing and handling one can have a fully integrated and interoperative application, which will inform and support the future development of HERs. This will effectively assist in appropriate holistic management of change in our heritage resource, for a sustainable future.

Acknowledgements

I should like to acknowledge encouragement and support from Dr Stewart Bryant, Paul Gilman, David Green, and David Went.

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A Window on Hampshire's Past
Bruce Howard, Hampshire County Council

In these days of digital cameras and computer imaging we think we are very advanced in terms of picture quality. But fragile glass-plate negatives dating from the 1890s are one of the sources currently providing an insight into everyday life in Hampshire's past. The quality of these images has to be seen to be believed…..and now it can be.

BEFORE: A broken glass plate negative before scanning.

The same glass plate after scanning – the picture shows Lyndhurst High Street around 1900. (HRO TD696/6)

The Hampshire Photographic Project is an innovative community project run by Hampshire Archives Trust, based at Hampshire Record Office, with £78, 000 funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund and volunteer aid. It aims to revolutionise access to a superb but currently scattered resource by providing internet access to 10,000 historic photographs of life in Hampshire spanning 100 years, including village and street scenes, people at work and leisure, transport, and 'then' and 'now' images.

Touring Exhibition of the Hampshire photographic project

These photographs are from Recreation and Heritage Department collections at Hampshire County Council and over 30 countywide partner organisations including local history groups and independent museums. The project will also help protect this vital part of Hampshire's heritage through repackaging in archival materials.

At the touch of a button people in Hampshire - and the world over - will be able to view the photographs, while to access the minutest detail that escapes the naked eye, high resolution copies will be available at Hampshire Record Office.

A touring exhibition will circulate Hampshire community-based venues, generating interest locally, and getting people involved in identifying unknown scenes.

Historic photographs give fascinating glimpses into the lives of the people who shaped Hampshire; this exciting project will help give people a sense of place and support lifelong learning.

More details of the project including a sample of the photographs can be found at www.hants.gov.uk/record-office/photo/. The project can be contacted by emailing archives.trust@hants.gov.uk

Archaeological Science Data and the SMR/HER
**Dominique de Moulins EH Archaeological Science Adviser for the South-East**

Background
Archaeological science data consist of information obtained from the application of a number of techniques. These can be grouped into five main areas: geophysics (various types of survey), dating (C14, dendrochronology, OSL etc.), environmental studies (analyses of micro and macro plant remains, human and animal bones, invertebrates, soil science techniques, isotope analyses etc.) and conservation (thin sections, xray etc.). In the past, archaeological science data have been entered on the SMR in a very haphazard fashion, basically only if the technique appeared in the summary received by the SMR from the unit. More recently, with the development of HBSMR by exeGesIS and other databases dedicated to the SMR, some SMR officers have individually perused the reports received from the contracting units for each site and made their own selection of what to enter on the database. Most, however, continued to rely on the summary and in most cases, the only way to obtain archaeological science information via the SMR is still through the words appearing in these summaries. The system is to say the least very uneven and if one tries systematically to look for information such as whether all the sites in an area with monoliths for the study of pollen have been a) taken and b) analysed, or the list of all the animal bones studies for a certain period from a sub region, it is simply not possible.

For instance, a review of the environmental work undertaken in one south-eastern county has been underway for some time and the only way the initial search was possible was through the

examination of each paper report delivered to the SMRs of that county, the SMR could only provide minimum information on the presence or absence of the environmental data being sought.
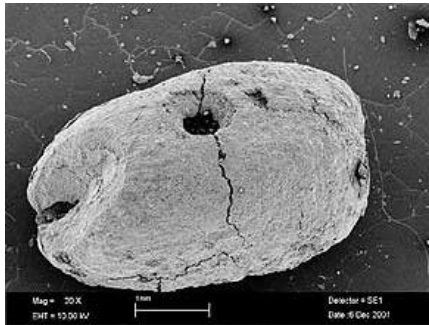

Scanning Electron Microscope image of a burnt grain of Roman Wheat with a hole made by a weevil*

Recent Developments

English Heritage has committed itself to the greater use of archaeological science techniques in all archaeological interventions including those carried out under PPG16. To that effect, nine archaeological science advisers have been appointed, one for each of the nine English Heritage regions. One of the remits is to ensure that through the archaeological curators and the EH inspectors, archaeological science is treated in all interventions, whether commercially driven or not, as an essential part of archaeology, a status it has increasingly acquired over the last twenty years. It is therefore incumbent on us to make sure that these data are available in the most useful way possible through the SMR, as is the rest of the archaeological information. As the regional adviser for the south-east, I

have taken charge of trying to move this forward and, as a number of SMR officers know, without any significant results.

The recent HER review has given a new lease of life to this topic and a number of questions about environmental entries specifically which came to the SMR/HER Forum in the autumn have indicated that there was a new opportunity to raise this subject again. Following the Forum thread, a workgroup (more of an interest group really) in the form of an e-mail list was formed and the first workshop issued from this workgroup took place on the 18th of December 2003 at the Institute of Archaeology in London.. The workshop was composed of thirteen people including a few SMR/HER officers, a representative from EHs Data Standards Unit, other Archaeological Science regional advisers, an EH representative from CFA at Fort Cumberland and representatives from universities.
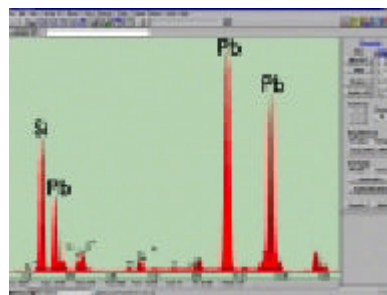
XRF Spectrum for a sample of yellow glass*

It has become clear to me through investigating this question that a number of conditions have to be met: there should be a national consensus on the best way to

enter the data, on the terminology and on the level of details of the information. Budgetary implications should be identified and finding an organisation ready to support the implementation at a national level is crucial. The workshop addressed all these points and a few proposals were made.

The issues:
Technical aspects of entering the data. After consulting various SMR/HERs, their officers and attending SMR/HERs meetings, there appears not to be much of a problem with this aspect: HBSMR and all the other customised databases can handle most of the archaeological science data through the events field or its equivalent. This was confirmed at the workshop. During the workshop, it emerged that, because of the vast number of possible entries (see use of EAB list below), a sort of hierarchical structure would be useful: a main term supported by a look up table giving the secondary terms. This is technically feasible.

Level of details: It does not seem appropriate to go into a great deal of details for each item of data. The SMR/HER is not the appropriate vehicle to carry details such as number of items or samples or their sizes. At the workshop we settled for the following fields for each main aspect: site, material, potential on a scale of 1-3 (poor to very good potential to answer questions) which also

indicate the size and importance of the item/material, period, recovery methods where appropriate and bibliographical reference. A searchable notes field will accommodate all important exceptional details.

Nomenclature: It is important that the terminology used in these entries should correspond to existing lists and thesauri such as those elaborated by FISH and MIDAS. There is scope for amplifying those with archaeological science terms not already present. Another list specifically designed for environmental aspects has been elaborated by English Heritage personnel and it was suggested during the workshop that this should be used as much as possible in order not to duplicate efforts. The list in question is that of the Environmental Archaeology Bibliography, it is very thorough and detailed and could only be used in a hierarchical way as mentioned above. This list has been amended by the Data Standards unit and can be found on the FISH e-mail list. Other lists need working out: the list of artefacts for the conservation table by an UKIC member and the list of possible scientific methods of datation.

Implementation: The active participation of several people along the chain of communication which goes from the gathering of information on site to entry on the SMR/HER databases is

needed in order to make the whole project possible. The contracting unit should ask their specialists to fill simple tables with the few items of information described above which will be incorporated into the report going to the SMR/HER where the data will be entered quite easily by the SMR/HER officer. This can only happen if the archaeological curator makes a specific request in his/her brief for such forms to be filled in. A system is already in place to maintain word lists and the EH Standards Unit would be updating the lists of archaeological science terms alongside the rest.

Financial Considerations: The implementation of the day to day entries of the data from the time an agreement about the additional fields needs commitment from exeGesIS and from local databases to add these fields to the existing systems. Some commitment is also needed from the local SMR/HER for an initial period of installation and for allowing extra times for the entries although this should be comparatively minor if the forms described above are filled in by the specialists.

Definite financial implications are inherent to the backlog of data which will eventually need to be added to the new fields. The backlog will have to be tackled as a separate exercise through the examination of each separate report. This is quite a lengthy and time consuming task which will

probably need the help of specialists. The only way to tackle this backlog is through extra resources such as a special grant allowing the employment of extra staff for several months in each SMR/HER. Such a grant may be produced by the government, applied for to scientific research bodies or to the Heritage Lottery Fund. A pilot study has been planned and should establish parameters for realistic funding applications.

Summary of the Workshop Findings:
- Archaeological science data can be accommodated within the present systems in the events field or its equivalent.
- Existing lists of terms should be used and adapted and the Data Standards unit of English Heritage will ensure standardisation and update.
- The information for environmental aspects would include: name of site, material type, potential, period, recovery method and notes. For conservation: artefact type, research potential, investigative technique, period, bibliographical reference and notes. The dating information would include: date type, number of dates, period, reference and notes.
- Specialists should append to their reports

simple tables including the information above.

- Contractors should include this information to the site report sent to the SMR/HER..
- Curators would make a request for this information in their brief.
- Time and some extra funding will be necessary for the first stage of implementation: i.e. updating of systems. After this initial step, the day to day entries should only require some extra limited time from the SMR officer.
- More resources will be needed for the entry of backlog of the archaeological science data and grants should probably be applied for.

The level of extra resources needed will hopefully be indicated as a result of a pilot study planned by one SMR/HER officer.

* Images courtesy of EH Centre for Archaeology

The UK Archival Thesaurus: Setting the Standard for Subject Indexing

Phil Carlisle, University of London Computer Centre

The UKAT project is working to create a subject thesaurus for use by the archive sector in the UK. The project has been supported by a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund, with additional funding and support from the University of London

Computer Centre and the National Archives. The project will run until the end of June 2004.

UKAT is being constructed by adding terms to, and amending the structure of, the UNESCO Thesaurus (www.ulcc.ac.uk/unesco). Great interest has already been shown in the project and over 8000 candidate terms have been submitted from a variety of sources including archives, archive projects and users of archives. This has doubled the size of the original UNESCO thesaurus. These candidate terms are edited using software supplied by Adlib Information Systems Ltd.

UKAT aims to promote greater consistency in the subject indexing terms being used by archives and archive projects, in order to facilitate easier and more reliable subject searching of resources in the National Archives Network.

Phil Carlisle presentation to the HER Forum at Cambridge

Contributions received so far include terms from the Access to Archives project (A2A), the Archives Hub, Archives in London and the M25 Area

(AIM25), the CASBAH project, Gateway to Archives of Scottish Higher Education (GASHE), the Modern Records Centre at the University of Warwick, the MUNDUS project, the National Archives, the National Digital Archive of Datasets (NDAD), Britten/Pears Archive and Warwickshire and Gloucestershire County Record Offices

Another key goal of the project is to promote the involvement in archives of groups which have previously been under-represented among archive users, by incorporating terminology relating to their histories and experiences.
For further information about the project, see the UKAT website (www.ukat.org.uk/).
The website allows you to browse the latest version of the thesaurus and you can also register as a contributor and submit candidate terms online.

The project team can be emailed at support@ukat.org.uk

OASIS Training Update
Mark Barratt, English Heritage

The Training Days for the OASIS Online Form are currently being held around the nine English Heritage Regions, drawing together HER Officers and units working in each area. To date Yorkshire (Jan 6th), the North-East (Jan 15th) and North-West (Feb 4th) have

been completed and dates are confirmed for the South-West (NMRC, Feb 26th & 27th), London (Savile Row, March 5th), the West Midlands (Coventry University, March 11th), the South-East (Savile Row, March 17th) and East Midlands (York, March 31st). We are on course to complete training by Easter and anticipate the national roll-out of the Form thereafter.

Feedback from each of the completed days has been very positive, and following the session in Newcastle on January 15th, HERs in the North-East are already taking the project forward by including the completion of the form in their briefs.

I would like at this stage to thank all the attendees of the completed days for turning up and providing useful discussion on the form and its flowlines. See the rest of you soon!

The FISH Interoperability Toolkit

Edmund Lee, English Heritage

As described in the last Issue of HER News ('What do you want to do with your data?') FISH, the Forum on Information Standards in Heritage, has started work on a project to address the problem of moving digital records around the heritage sector. The title the 'FISH Interoperability Toolkit' has

been chosen for the project to summarise the objective, and also highlight the expandable, flexible nature of the project.
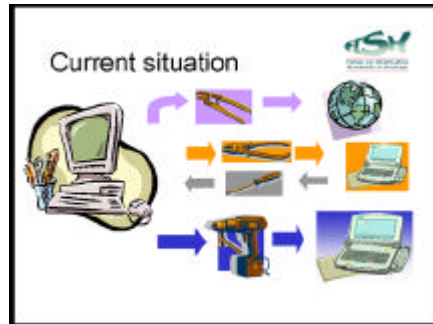

Fig 1, Current Situation

The aim is to improve upon the current situation (Fig. 1) in which one-off data migration routines (symbolised by the variety of tools) are needed each time data needs to be shared between systems. This might be for example:

- records supplied by a local HER to a national thematic project or survey (e.g. the AgriEnvironment schemes),
- or between a national record (such as the National Trust SMR) and a local HER,
- or between an HER and an online portal (such as the ADS HEIRPORT system).

These routines are expensive to create, and easily become redundant if design changes are made to either system, or information or management needs change. They are often specific to one pair of systems, so can't be easily adapted to cater for the diversity of HER software.

The first 'tool' in the FISH Interoperability toolkit will be a common format for export and

import of data. This format - FISH.xml - will use eXtensible Mark-up Language (XML) to hold the data and to identify what each piece of data is. It will incorporate the FISH standards for content and indexing, MIDAS and INSCRIPTION (see www.fish-forum.info for background to these). To establish links between all the HERs / SMRs and other systems adopting the Toolkit, each will just need two routines: one to export records into FISH.xml format, and one to import them from FISH.xml (Fig 2). The FISH Interoperability Toolkit project will develop sample routines for testing purposes, but realistically won't have resources to create all the necessary import and export routines for every system in the sector. However it does aim to document the FISH.xml specification for developers and users to allow import and export routines to be built efficiently. Hopefully FISH.xml compliant' will become as common feature of specifications for new systems or system improvements as MIDAS and INSCRIPTION compliance is now.
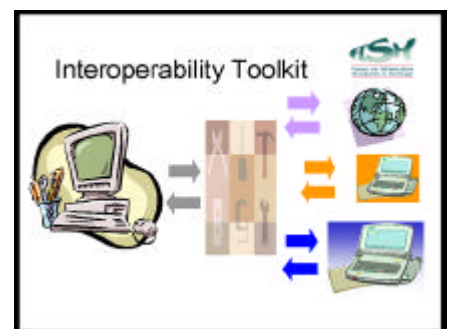

Fig 2, The Vision

Future 'tools' may include ways of processing data held in

FISH.xml format, for example to assist with the concordance of records held by different organisations.

FISH.xml will be designed and built for FISH by a consultant retained by English Heritage. Current plans are for initial development work to be complete in Summer 2004. For more information contact the Project Executive, FISH Convenor Jason Siddall jason.siddall@nationaltrust.org.uk, Project Manager Edmund Lee edmund.lee@english-heritage.org.uk, or FISH Toolkit user group contact Chris Wardle chris.wardle@staffordshire.gov.uk

Digging Archives: The Archaeological Archives Forum

Matthew Stiff, English Heritage

The Archaeological Archives Forum was established in 2002 with the aim of bringing together organisations with an interest in archaeological archives in order to develop common approaches to the management of the material in their care. The Forum has also set itself the aim of identifying ways in which this best practice can be further disseminated.

The Forum is chaired by Hedley Swain of the Society of Museum Archivists with David Morgan Evans from the Society of Antiquaries as the Vice Chair. Kathy Perrin of English Heritage is the Secretary. Members participate as nominated representatives of their organisations, these include the Archaeology Data Service, the Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers (ALGAO), CADW (Welsh Historic Monuments), Council for British Archaeology, the Department of Environment and Heritage Northern Ireland, English Heritage, Historic Scotland, the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA), the IFA Finds Group, mda, the Museums Association, the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historic Monuments of Scotland, the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historic Monuments of Wales, the Museums Libraries and Archives Council, the Society of Antiquaries and the Standing Conference on Archives and Museums.

The work of the Forum grew out of the Hedley Swain's 1998 report *A survey of Archaeological Archives in England – A report prepared for English Heritage and the Museums and Galleries Commission.* Set in the context of the growth in rescue archaeology in the 1970s, the government's Manpower schemes in the 1980s and developer-funded archaeology in the 1990s, this report highlighted the problem of the huge growth in archaeological archive material being destined for museums that are often ill-equipped to deal with it.

Kathy Perrin's 2002 report *Archaeological Archives: Documentation, Access and Deposition, A Way Forward* sought to establish a vision for tackling the problems that have been identified. These include tackling issues such as what should be kept, how should it be stored, how does the law affect archives and how do we get the most of this material? Particular concerns focus on the deposition of archaeological material. There is a shortage of suitably resourced museums and their relationship with local record offices is often ill defined. There is recognition of the need for consistent policies for archival accession, as well as clearer strategies for dealing with digital material.

The Archaeological Archives Forum aims to play a significant role in bringing key organisations together to develop common approaches to the development of areas such as selection policies, disaster management planning, standards fro archival process and standards in deposition policies, standards for temporary archive storage and training in archiving processes. The Forum seeks to influence government policy, to facilitate the development of archaeological resource centres and to promote and develop access to archives.

The results of the Forum's first year of operation can be found

in its annual report which can be found, along with minutes of meetings and the terms of reference, on the Forum's website: www.britarch.ac.uk/archives.
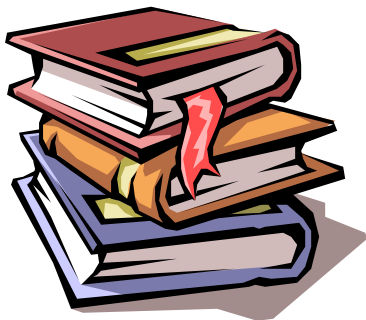
For further information about the work of the Archaeological Archives Forum contact Hedley Swain or Kathy Perrin

News in Brief

Sandwell is now a separate Record to the Black Country SMR.

North Hertfordshire and Test Valley SMRs are no longer separate SMRs. They have become part of Hertfordshire and Hampshire records respectively.

Publications

Heritage Data Information Sheet Series:
- *Historic Environment Records: A Guide for Users*
- *Services for Historic Environment Records from the NMR*

For copies email mailto:HDMinfo@english-heritage.org.uk

Paul Gilman, *Sites and Monuments Records and Historic Environment Records in England: is Cinderella finally going to the Ball?* in *Internet Archaeology, Issue 15: Archaeological Informatics* http://intarch.ac.uk/journal/issue15/index.html

OASIS User Guide, ADS and EH, available online to download as three pdf files http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/project/oasis/

People

Bruce Howard has gone on a 19th month secondment (which started in August) to Hampshire Record Office to manage their Hampshire Photographic Project. He has been replaced by Debbie Langley.

Also at Hampshire County Council Ian Wykes has left his post as Senior Archaeologist to take up the position of Historic Environment Manger at Staffordshire County Council.

Louisa Matthews has left Warwickshire County Council to become the Assistant Archaeologist (SMR) at South

Yorkshire Archaeology Service.

Kate Fernie will be leaving English Heritage next month to join the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council.

Mike Pringle has left EH to become the Head of AHDS Visual Arts.

Jo Mackintosh is the new Historic Environment Records Officer at Cumbria County Council, Bette Hopkins has retired.

Gill Stroud is the new SMR Officer at Derbyshire, AndREW Myers is now concentrating on Development Control work.

Verionica Fiorato and Teresa Hocking have left West Berks, Veronica has joined EH as an archaeologist in the SE and London Region

Melanie Solik, has started working for ALGAO as their Rural Development Policy Support Officer, based at Hampshire County Council.

Martin Horlock has left Norfolk Landscape to join for the the Suffolk Biological Record Centre.

Diana Holmes has left the Canterbury Archaeological Trust where she had been the UAD assistant

David Petts has left Northumberland County Council where he Was the Keys to the Past Officer and joined Durham County Council

as Project Officer for the North-East Regional Research Framework for the Historic Environment.

Anna Stocks has joined Warwickshire County Council as the Assistant Historic Environment Officer, she was previously working for the Archaeological Investigations Project in Bournemouth.

Diary
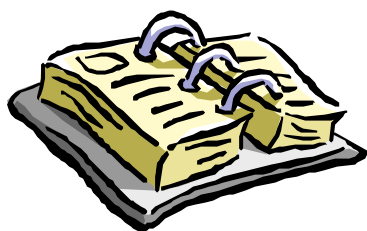
10 March 2004
Local Heritage Initiative Conference, British Museum

OASIS Training:
26 & 27 February 2004
South West Region, NMRC Swindon

5 March 2004
London Region, Savile Row,

11 March 2004
West Midlands Region, Coventry University,

17 March 2004
South-East Region, Savile Row,

31 March 2004
East Midlands Region, York

6-8 April 2004
IFA Conference, University of Liverpool

12 May 2004
FISH Meeting, RCAHMS Edinburgh

May 2004
HBSMR User Group, date and venue to be confirmed

Late May/Early June
HER Forum Meeting, tile, date and venue to confirmed

Apology

Sorry this Issue was a bit late, been a bit busy

The editor and two of the contributors discussing the latest issue