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**R E C O R D**

# SMR News

## The Newsletter of the SMR Users Group

Issue 10 - January 2001

09 January 2001

SMR News is produced by English Heritage and is distributed free of charge to members of the SMR Users Group twice a year.

Editor Claire Attridge phone: 01793 414732; e-mail: [claire.attridge@rchme.co.uk](mailto:claire.attridge@rchme.co.uk)  
English Heritage, National Monuments Record Centre, Swindon, SN2 2GZ

### A Note from the Chair

**Emma Jones, Warwickshire SMR Officer**

The recent meeting of the SMR Users Group held in Swindon was a useful and interesting day. A number of key issues emerged, largely as a result of the presentations on the Portable Antiquities Scheme. These issues are summarized below:

As the Scheme heads towards expansion to cover the whole of England and Wales there are unresolved issues relating to the use of Portable Antiquities data within SMRs (covered in more detail in the articles following). It was suggested that a working group should be formed to resolve these issues and SMR Officers present agreed that this would be a positive move. The membership representation for the group is outlined in Richard Hobb's article, with plans for an initial meeting in January.

Also, there are problems relating to the new exeGesIS PA-SMR link, which highlights emerging concern amongst exeGesIS SMR Software users over the relationship between SMRs and exeGesIS SDM Ltd regarding future system development and upgrades. To improve communication between all interested parties, a small liaison group is to be formed. To this end, the Chair of the exeGesIS Users Group (Jim McNeil - South Yorkshire) will attend a liaison meeting to be held between ALGAO, English Heritage and exeGesIS SDM Ltd, on the future strategic direction of the system. This should enable a better flow of information between interested parties, and Jim and the NMR will be able to feed this information back to users.

#### Changes to the SMR Users Group?

For some time I have thought that it would be interesting to vary the format of the Users Group meetings to include scope for more debate and issue solving. The wide range of views aired in relation to

the publication of grid references over the internet certainly supports this opinion. There are logistical problems to overcome but I think this is worth pursuing. I would appreciate the views of other SMR Officers before I develop this idea. I would also like to learn of any themes that SMR Officers want to discuss. I propose that the next meeting should be used to debate two themes/issues and it should take the form:

Welcome

Introduction to themes approx. (15 mins per theme)

Split into two groups for discussion (1 hour)

Open discussion until lunch

Lunch

Further discussion approx. (30 mins per theme)

Summary and proposed actions (10 mins per theme)

Ideas for future themes

Close

Please let me know if this is sensible, because if I do not hear (through SMR Forum or otherwise) I will go ahead. In the New Year I will circulate a list of possible themes unless I am told you are not keen on this formula. In the future I think we might alternate this style of meeting with presentation led meetings.

We have not yet organised a venue or date for the next meeting. If anyone has any suggestions for where it could take place, North, South or in the middle of the country? Please let me know.

Finally, a number of people have expressed dissatisfaction with the title "SMR Users Group". Do we want to change it? If so, what should the new title be?

I hope you all had relaxing festive holidays and are going to have a happy 2001.

# The Portable Antiquities Scheme

## A Progress report

**Roger Bland, Department of Culture Media and Sport**

The Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) stems from the appreciation that members of the public, especially metal detector users, find a great wealth of archaeological objects and only a relatively small proportion of these have hitherto been recorded. A survey by the CBA in 1995 estimated that detector users might find as many as 400,000 archaeological objects a year, with only a small proportion of these recorded by archaeologists. The result is that a great deal of potentially important information has been lost to the archaeological record.

Exceptions to this overall picture are Norfolk and Suffolk. Since the 1970s both archaeological services have been systematically recording finds. The gain to the archaeological record has been immense: for example, 18 out of 20 Anglo-Saxon cemeteries discovered in Norfolk since 1973 came to light as a result of metal detector finds. These initiatives have served as the model for the current pilot schemes.

The present pilot schemes were intended to complement the Treasure Act. Six pilot schemes were started in Kent, Norfolk, the North West, North Lincolnshire, the West Midlands and Yorkshire in autumn 1997. These were joined by a further five schemes in spring 1999, funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, in Dorset and Somerset, Hampshire, Northamptonshire, Suffolk and Wales, with an Outreach Officer post starting.

Outreach and education are two vital elements underpinning the work of the liaison officers both through their contact with detector users and on a wider scale through talks they give to local archaeological and historical societies and schools, through publicity they generate, especially in local media, and through other events aimed at the general public, such as finds days. These provide opportunities to get across the message about the importance of recording finds. The long-term aim is to establish a situation where recording archaeological finds becomes accepted by public as the normal thing to do to.

Exploiting the educational potential of the Scheme is crucial, and the website ([www.finds.org.uk](http://www.finds.org.uk)) is the key to demonstrating this potential. It contains basic information about the Scheme, lists of contacts, links to other websites, illustrations of some finds, and most importantly the first 9,000 records with images of some 500 objects. Findspots are recorded on the

website to parish level. We want to develop the educational potential so that schools doing projects on, for example, the Romans will be able to download information about Roman artefacts found in their area.

The Scheme is committed to passing data on to the relevant Sites and Monuments Records. This is made clear in the leaflet, *Finding our Past*, that is given to finders, and Richard Hobbs discusses below how it is proposed to achieve data transfer to SMRs.

The Scheme is currently managed by a consortium led by Resource: including English Heritage, the British Museum, the National Museums and Galleries of Wales and the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales. It is also supported by the CBA, ALGAO, the Society of Museum Archaeologists and the National Council for Metal Detecting. A bid has been made to the HLF for three-year funding for a national scheme which would include 36 locally-based finds liaison officers, three finds specialists and a central support team of three. This bid enjoys the support of 67 local partners, including 20 SMRs. The funding package envisaged in this bid comprises 65% from HLF, 25% from the DCMS and 10% from local sources.

Consideration of this bid has been deferred by the HLF pending further assessment of the current pilot schemes and it is hoped to resubmit it in spring 2001. In the meantime the DCMS and HLF will continue to fund the current pilot schemes until at least April 2002. I believe passionately there is a need to do this work and that its potential to enrich our knowledge of our heritage is very great.

## Portable Antiquities/ SMR Users Working Group to be established

**Richard Hobbs, Portable Antiquities Outreach Officer**

The Portable Antiquities Scheme is committed to the transfer of all data gathered under the Scheme to all relevant Sites & Monuments Records. This is by no means a straightforward task. Each liaison officer has to deal with a number of different SMRs, and SMRs themselves are using a number of different systems. The Scheme also only currently covers about half of England and the whole of Wales, so there are a number of areas where we have no information recorded about portable antiquities.

Some steps have been taken to begin the process of data transfer. A conversion programme has been developed by exeGesIS SDM Ltd which will allow Portable Antiquities data (which is in Access 97 format) to be transferred into the relevant fields on v1.5 of the SMR Software system. The conversion

programme is being piloted in Kent, and although it works very well, it has run into some problems, outlined by Paul Cuming below.

In order to manage the process of transfer more effectively, a working group is to be set up to oversee this responsibility. It is proposed that the membership of the group will be drawn from the following constituencies:

- ◆ The PA Scheme central co-ordinating unit and a representative of the finds liaison officers;
- ◆ SMR users from the pilot scheme areas using a variety of different systems including the exeGesIS SMR Software; we also need to ensure that Wales is represented;
- ◆ Representatives from other interested parties, eg the National Monuments Record.

At the meeting in November an invitation was extended to members to put themselves forward as possible group representatives, to which a very positive response was forthcoming. The group is currently therefore in the process of formation with an inaugural meeting planned for the New Year.

The group will be expected to look at the following two key areas:

- ◆ practical ways of transferring data to SMRs, given the fact that there are a number of different systems in use and the fact that liaison officers have to deal with a number of different SMRs. The group will work closely with exeGesIS SDM Ltd in order to provide the technical solution to this issue.
- ◆ provide advice and guidance on the issue of access to data: both finders and professional archaeologists are concerned about the misuse of findspot information if SMRs are made publicly accessible. However, this has to be reconciled against the fact that SMRs are maintained as a public record with open access to all.

For more information about the group and the Portable Antiquities Scheme, please contact Richard Hobbs, Outreach Officer, on 020 7323 8611, or write to c/o Dept. of Coins & Medals, British Museum, London WC1B 3DG. Please also visit the Portable Antiquities website at [www.finds.org.uk](http://www.finds.org.uk).

## **Portable Antiquities Database to exeGesIS Conversion Software**

**Paul Cuming, SMR Officer, Kent County Council**

Over the last 8 months Kent County Council has been helping to test the software which exeGesIS SDM Ltd have produced to convert the data from the Portable Antiquities database to the exeGesIS SDM Ltd SMR database.

The conversion software runs under Access v2.0, the same as exeGesIS v1.5 and works in two stages. First, the data is extracted from the Portable Antiquities database and then imported into the SMR database. This actually proved slightly problematical as the software had problems picking up the data from the Portable Antiquities folder and placing the SMR files in the SMR database, but hopefully this is a small problem which can be ironed out. When the conversion is carried out, the data from the fields in the Portable Antiquities database are automatically translated into the appropriate SMR field such that when seated in the SMR database, the data are structured as Findspot monuments linked to individual Find records. No Event or Source records are compiled (Figs 1-3).

The conversion software is easy to use. The data is mapped across accurately and consistently and is clearly represented in the exeGesIS SDM Ltd SMR Software using a simple data structure. As it stands, therefore, the software enables SMRs to rapidly incorporate their Portable Antiquities data into the SMR in a usable form. It is therefore very much to be welcomed. There are a few issues however which require further discussion.

The program, at the time of testing, imported the unique identifiers from the Portable Antiquities database and used them as the Monument unique identifiers within the SMR database. This has the unfortunate effect of forcing one field in the database to take on two tasks - that of unique identifier and pointer to an external record. If the SMR were to be re-ordered at some point and the identifiers changed, then the ability to refer to the appropriate record in the Portable Antiquities database would be lost. In fact, this approach is to be modified with the Portable Antiquities reference stored in the 'Site Status & Coding' field within the 'Type & Class' tab. It does throw up the increasingly important issue of database discipline however.

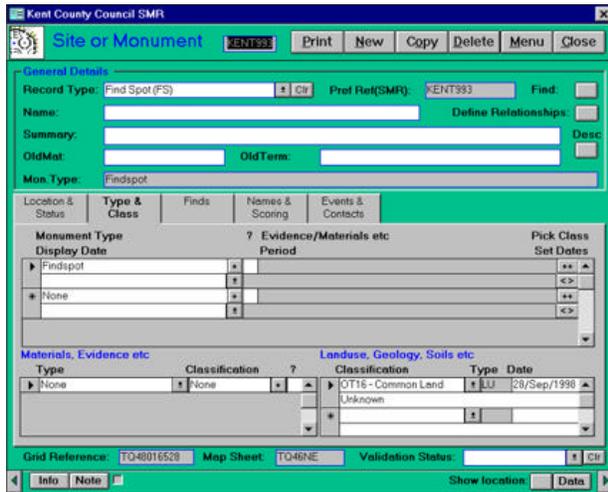


Figure 1

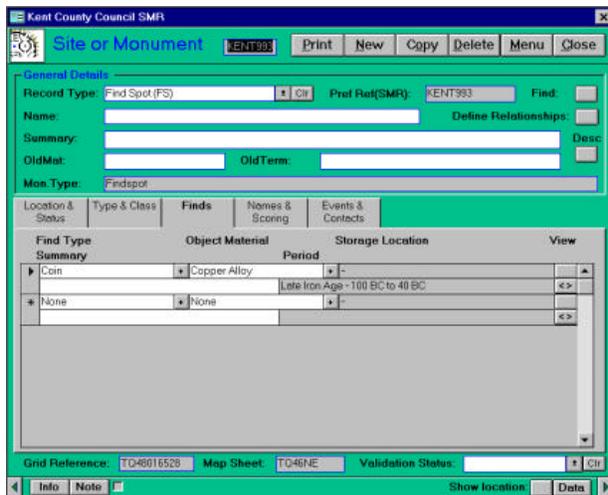


Figure 2

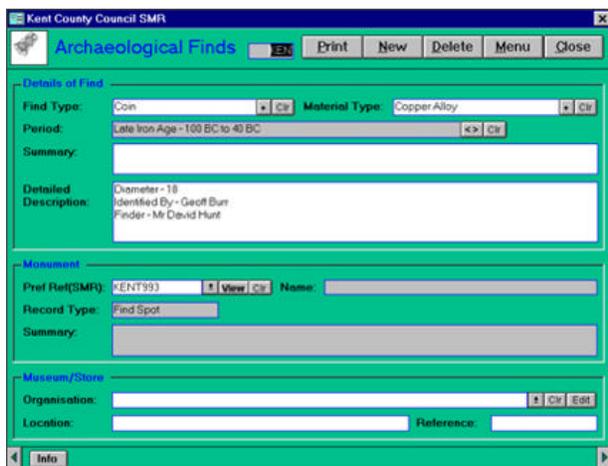


Figure 3

The increased sophistication and complexity, and in particular the increased accessibility, of the exeGesIS SDM SMR Software compared to previous SMR databases allows us to make changes

to the data that can have fairly profound consequences later on. Hopefully the guide to database practice currently being produced by the ADS will help forewarn us against these dangers.

An important issue which remains to be fully addressed is that of SMR numbers. In addition to the identifiers used in the SMR database, SMRs usually maintain alternative numbering systems, often linked to OS 1:10,000 map sheets eg, TQ 75 NE 1. The conversion program does not create SMR numbers for the imported Findspot monuments. These have to be added manually later. As this could involve thousands of records it would be preferable if this could be automated and the conversion program could detect the next SMR number in sequence and add it to the 'PrefRef' field .

The final major issue which needs to be resolved is that, at present, it is planned that the conversion program will over-write all pre-existing Portable Antiquities records in the SMR. This means that SMR officers cannot alter any Portable Antiquities record once created because the alterations will be overwritten next time around. For the same reason it means that SMRs cannot delete any Portable Antiquities data as it will simply be re-imported at the next update. It also means that the SMR numbers will have to be generated all over again with each new update.

The conversion program is very much still under development and these issues will presumably be resolved in due course. As discussed previously in this issue, a new working party consisting of SMRs, the Portable Antiquities scheme, the NMR and other interested organisations will help to focus attention on these rather fundamental points such that this great wealth of new archaeological data can be fully integrated, and the information it brings fully exploited.

**Edmund Lee of English Heritage DSU Standards team writes: 'Paul identifies some issues here that will become more important as we start to develop sharing of information between different projects and software. The MIDAS data standard makes recommendations concerning cross-reference to other inventories: see the online version at <http://www.rchme.gov.uk/midas/sitemap.html> (follow the link to the Information scheme 'Names and References' for a review of the issue) or in the paper copy on pages 37-38.**

# Images of England - Putting Heritage Information on the Web

Catherine Brown, Survey Co-ordinator, *Images of England*

## Background

*Images of England* is the first comprehensive photographic survey of England's listed buildings. The project is supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund, English Heritage and private sponsorship and is managed by a team based in the NMR, in Swindon. This groundbreaking project provides an opportunity to review some of the issues faced by anyone aiming to put information about our heritage onto the web.

## Objectives

The objectives of the project are to create a publicly accessible digital image library with free access for all via the internet. The project aims to capture

370,000 images, taken from 1999 to 2002 using volunteer photographers. The images will be linked to the Listed Building System texts. The prototype website [www.imagesofengland.org.uk](http://www.imagesofengland.org.uk) with currently 15,000 images, is up and running now, and we are seeking feedback from potential users. The site is to be completed by the end of 2002.

## History

The idea for *Images of England* came from the RCHME. A pilot project using eight volunteers was run in 1996, followed by the preparation of a business plan and market research to establish the potential users of such a website. A bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund was made in 1998 and one year's development funding was granted. The HLF grant of £3.1m was confirmed in April 1999.

## Who will use the website?

The market research study, undertaken as part of the business plan identified a wide range of potential users (Figure 1).

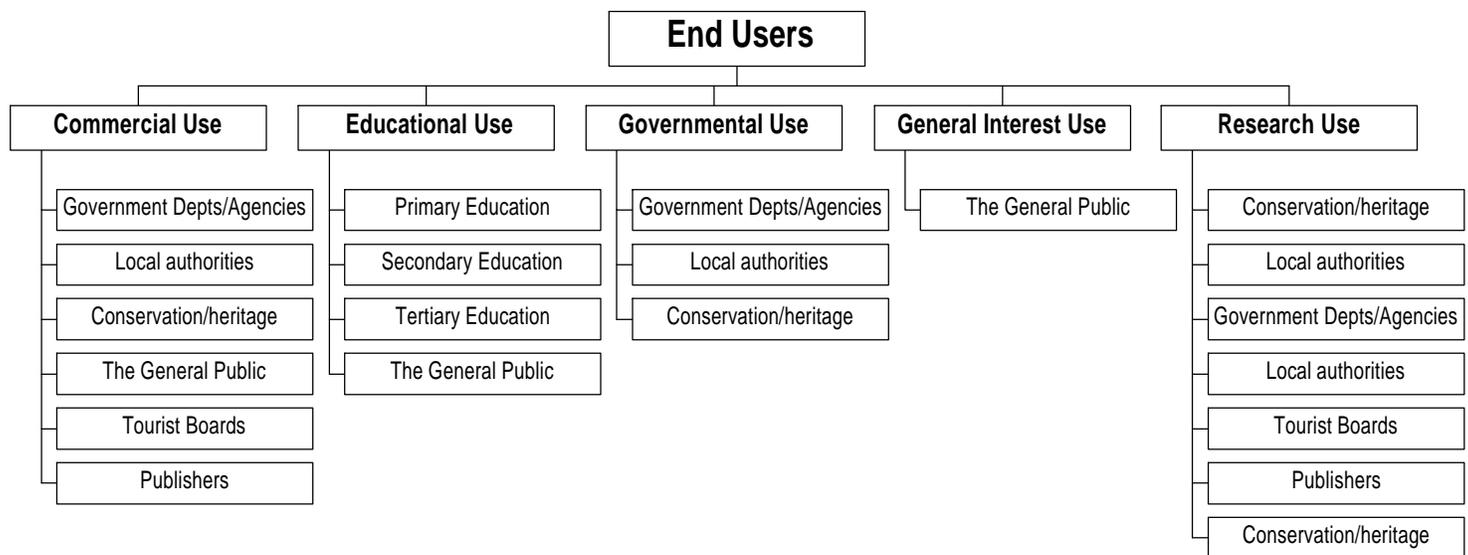


Figure 1 Potential Users of the website

## Image Capture Process

*Images of England* is utilising over 550 volunteer photographers from the Royal Photographic Society to capture the images. *Images of England* gives all volunteers a full briefing before they start work, and provides them with a list of target buildings (usually in their local community), 35mm colour negative film, free film processing & prints and pay their travel expenses. The volunteers sign a copyright agreement licensing use of the digital images to English Heritage, and receive the negatives once these have been scanned.

## Photography

The project has established a number of ground rules for the photography:

- All photographs must be taken from publicly accessible land unless with express permission of the building owner.
- The photographer is limited to **one** image per building (due to the limited resources of the project).
- The concept of one photograph being the 'defining' image of that listed building: a single photograph which should:
  - show its **architectural character**
  - indicate its **function**

- suggest its **context**
- be of high technical **quality** (lighting, exposure, focus etc)
- provide as much visual information about the subject as possible

### After photography

*Images of England* holds only digital images – the negatives are scanned at 2,200 pixels per inch to produce the highest possible quality of record for the archive. Each image is quality assured to ensure that the scan is of high quality, it's the correct building and that the image meets our defining image criteria. Giving feedback to volunteers whose images do not meet quality standards is essential to the survey process.

### What can we learn?

- The quality of the background data is a key factor: everyday users may be familiar with idiosyncrasies, but making information available over the web and presenting it to non specialists highlights any problems or anomalies. This may include data indexing or poor quality geographic data such as NGR's.
- There are perceived security issues relating to making data available over the internet. *Images of England* has undertaken a security review which has indicated that there is no evidence of increased security risks to listed buildings by making information available over the web. However, there may be the need for registration for users to access detailed and sensitive information over the internet.
- Any project relying on volunteers involves considerable management skills!
- Budget for 'hidden' costs in the construction and design of websites and associated software.

## The Defence of Britain Project

### William Foot, The Defence of Britain

The Second World War had one of the largest impacts ever on the British landscape. By 1944, the military controlled under various of the Defence Regulations 11 million acres of land (20% of the total land surface of the UK). Tens of thousands of military structures were constructed. This militarisation of the landscape created many long-term effects (for example in the construction of some 600 airfields which was like the building of so many new towns in areas of the country that had often seen little change for centuries).

The Defence of Britain Project was set up in 1995 under the auspices of the Council for British Archaeology, using mass observation field work to record the surviving condition of 20<sup>th</sup> Century military sites. Some 700 volunteer recorders have submitted records to the Project. I was appointed in January 1998 to convert the records to a computerised database. This has proved an enormous task, not only in terms of the physical input of the data but also in the corresponding development of a thesaurus of site types and other controlled vocabularies. A great deal of research at the Public Record Office, and elsewhere, has also been necessary to understand the sites better in their original context. We now have some 19,000 paper records, as well as 10,000 records received in a digital format. Also, many thousands of sites have been gleaned from secondary sources (for example, previous localised surveys) and from primary archival material.

From September 1998, we decided to concentrate principally on anti-invasion defences of the Second World War. This was one of the major categories of sites for which English Heritage could not obtain the data they required under their Monuments Protection Programme by the use of documentary sources and a study of recent aerial photographs. After March 2002 (when our database will be complete) we will be advising English Heritage on individual defence structures, as well as whole defended landscapes, that might be considered for permanent preservation. Currently, we have 11,500 anti-invasion sites on the national database, and we hope to reach 18,000 by March 2002 (when the current Project funding ends). At that time, for the two site type categories of 'pillbox' and 'anti-tank obstacle' we should have recorded some 70% of what survives.

We have just obtained a GIS capability and can show for the first time our records spatially. This work has been developed by the second staff member - Clara Thomson, who joined the Project in September this year. She also has the task of creating a computerised index to the 10,000 or so records of all the other categories of military sites other than anti-invasion - many of these records are very substantial, with plans, drawings, photographs, and the reminiscences of people involved in their construction and use.

We hope by 2002 to host our databases on the Internet, and the eventual long term aim is data exchange with each SMR. The Swindon NMR will be mapping our custom-built database against that of the Exegesis software in order that the exchange may be effected as efficiently as possible. Some SMRs have excellent records of 20<sup>th</sup> Century military sites, and have worked in active collaboration with the Project, e.g. Hereford & Worcestershire, Essex, and

Devon. In others, however, these categories of sites are under-represented, and one of the prime aims of the Project has been to raise the profile of the subject so that it is taken seriously as a valid part of the archaeology of the British landscape.

## The Church Heritage Record Project

**Richard Gem, Cathedrals Fabric Commission**

The Council for the Care of Churches (CCC) and Cathedrals Fabric Commission for England (CFCE) are national bodies with a range of legal and statutory responsibilities under the arrangements by which the Church of England takes care of its heritage of historic buildings and sites. The documentation of the C of E's heritage is an important part of our concerns, not only for management but also for educational purposes, and the Church Heritage Record project is an expression of this.

At the outset it is important to define what is meant by the "Church Heritage Record" (CHR). It is essentially **the aggregation of all information about the Church's heritage, wherever it is held and in whatever form**. As an entity, therefore, the CHR is at present largely conceptual: but our aim is to make it something more concrete by the forging of linkages and filling of gaps.

In 1999 the CCC and CFCE, supported by the Archbishops' Council, by DCMS and by English Heritage commissioned a Needs and Options Study from the consultants David Baker and Gill Chitty. Following delivery of their Report, the CCC, CFCE and English Heritage have now completed their preliminary consideration of it. We are about to embark on the second stage of consultation.

### The Needs and Options Study

The Needs and Options Study was undertaken to address three sets of questions. Who needs what information about which aspects of church heritage, and for what purpose? What information is already available, how accessible is it, and what are the main gaps? Finally, what are the options for improving accessibility and filling gaps?

The Report distinguishes users who require original information in full, and those who require interpreted or "mediated" data.

The Report goes on to analyse the range of existing information resources, their content and currency, and their accessibility and intelligibility.

### Proposed Strategy for Future Development

The Report accepts the concept of the Church Heritage Record, while arguing that this should not

be a single monolithic database. Rather it should be a **distributed** system, with data collection and management building upon existing varied arrangements. It should also be a **shared** system, involving both ecclesiastical and secular partners -- including most notable NMR and SMRs.

### National and Local Levels

Within this distributed system, the report recommends that there should be responsibility at the **national level** for a number of initiatives. This includes the appointment of a Church Heritage Record Standing Committee, bringing together representatives of relevant organisations, to devise an overall strategy for the Church Heritage Record, to agree technical advice and standards, and to facilitate the search for resources.

The report sees the most extensive tasks, however, as lying at the **local level**, with dioceses and parishes, with cathedrals, and with SMRs and other secular partners, coming together to devise a local strategy appropriate to the conditions in their area

### Resources

The report identifies and discusses the resource issues that might flow from its proposals. In particular it notes that at the local level dioceses and cathedrals are already seriously stretched in relation to other commitments, while at the same time SMRs are also under-funded in relation to their tasks.

### The Next Steps

The CCC and CFCE have accepted the main strategic conclusions of the Report as representing the best way forward, subject to achieving a consensus behind both the overall strategy and the detailed manner of its implementation.

The CCC and CFCE have now agreed with English Heritage that we should jointly establish a National Standing Committee to form a focus for the process of consultation on the Report, preparatory to devising a national strategy.

Following on from the appointment of this Standing Committee, we anticipate that it will be circulating the Report and its own focussed set of questions arising from it. So when this comes, please be ready to think about the issues and contribute your views.

### SMRFORUM

The NMR and the Archaeology Data Service jointly run an e-mail discussion group for SMR professionals. It is used by members to discuss a wide range of subjects and issues of particular interest to all involved in SMR work. If you have an email account and wish to join the group please email a request to Martin Newman at [martin.newman@rchme.co.uk](mailto:martin.newman@rchme.co.uk) with Join SMR Forum in the title of the message

## **FISHEN evolves into FISH**

**Edmund Lee, Data Standards Supervisor, NMR**

Many in the SMR community will be aware of the work of the Forum on Information Standards in Heritage (England) - FISHEN - in developing standards for the content and indexing of historic environment records. ALGAO is represented on FISHEN by Alison Tinniswood from Herts and Nigel Pratt from Essex. At its creation in 1998, FISHEN deliberately limited itself to work on standards for English inventories. For the most part its membership was drawn from organisations who worked exclusively in England, and it was not appropriate for those organisations to make recommendations for the wider U.K. It was, however, always recognised that standards issues were U.K. wide in scope.

Since 1998, two developments have led FISHEN to develop beyond this stance. First, FISHEN has been joined by several heritage organisations with a U.K. wider remit, for example the Archaeology Data Service, mda and the British and Irish Archaeological Bibliography. Secondly, the technology to support co-operation has progressed. In particular the use of email discussion lists offers the opportunity for simple and effective dialogue between those involved in standards work. More recently the installation of video-conferencing at some English Heritage offices offers the prospect of U.K. wide face-to-face meetings. Support for a standards forum with a wider remit has also come from HEIRNET.

In the light of these developments FISHEN voted during the Summer to poll opinions on developing into 'FISH', removing its geographical focus on England. This move has been widely welcomed and FISHEN adopted its new title at its November 2000 meeting.

This change in name is only the start of the process however. New members are needed to ensure that the agenda of work for FISH reflects the interests of the whole U.K. A new set of terms of reference for FISH is needed. The promise of new ICT such as video-conferencing needs to be put into practical use.

If you would like to be involved in this process of developing FISH, or have suggestions for work that the new forum should take on, please contact the forum co-ordinator, Edmund Lee ([edmund.lee@rchme.co.uk](mailto:edmund.lee@rchme.co.uk), or direct dial 01793 414791). Find out more about the work of FISH by joining its discussion list.

To do this simply send the following two lines as a message to [jiscmail@jiscmail.ac.uk](mailto:jiscmail@jiscmail.ac.uk)

```
join fish [Firstname Lastname]
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replacing [Firstname Lastname] with your full name, and remembering the double hyphen.

Join up and join in!

### **FREE MODEMS FOR ARCHIVES**

From 1-12-2000, Resource has extended the successful "Free Modems for Museums" scheme to include UK archives. SMRs may either find this scheme useful themselves or know of local archives, which might benefit. To be eligible, archives must fulfil the following criteria: they must be a not-for-profit organisation, they must be publicly accessible, and they must not have an existing Internet connection via modem or fixed line. They can be a local authority service, charity or trust, or a private archive. Specifically excluded from this scheme are higher education archives and for-profit business archives. Archives taking advantage of this scheme receive a modem plus instructions how to set up the system. The archives will need a PC capable of supporting a modem, and an Internet service provider (ISP). The scheme does not cover the cost of the telephone calls to the ISP. To receive a free modem, archives must send a voucher to the central distribution point. Vouchers are obtainable from Regional Archives Councils in England, The Scottish Society of Archivists, and the Archives Council Wales. Archives in Northern Ireland should contact Resource directly. To find out more about the scheme or how to get in touch with the appropriate regional contact for the scheme, contact Justin Frost, Archives Policy Adviser Resource, 16, Queen Anne's Gate, London SW1H 9AA, Tel: 020 7273 1423 or 1471, or e-mail: [justin.frost@resource.gov.uk](mailto:justin.frost@resource.gov.uk)

## **A Review of SMR Data Audits**

**Hugh Borrill, Data Standards Supervisor, NMR**

The Data Services Unit started undertaking a review of SMR Data Audits in November, 5 years after the inception of the programme in 1995. These audits have been prepared by SMRs to agreed specifications. SMRs were required to examine and evaluate:

- 1 Management and resources
- 2 Use of the SMR
- 3 Archives
- 4 The computerised SMR
- 5 An information audit
- 6 Spatial data
- 7 Action plan and recommendations

The aims of this review are:

- To assess what has been achieved to date;
- To assess the value of continuing the programme;
- To gauge the responses of SMRs to the programme;
- To make recommendations for the future of the programme.

Preliminary results indicate that there are many grounds for optimism following positive responses from a sample of 10 SMRs. The report should be ready for dissemination early in 2001.

## **Report on the User Testing of version 2 of the exeGesIS SMR Software**

**Martin Newman, Heritage Information Partnerships Officer, NMR**

The first user test version was sent to English Heritage at the beginning of October for initial comment. This was tested at the NMR whilst exeGesIS SDM Ltd continued their own testing. This resulted in the fixing of a number of bugs before the system was sent out to the SMR user test sites.

The test versions were sent out to four SMRs on the 6<sup>th</sup> October, namely, Essex, South Yorkshire, South Gloucestershire and Oxfordshire. A list of new features was sent out with the CDs explaining features such as the tree control and the listing form. Rather than having specific test scripts users were asked to replicate normal work on the system and to focus in on the list of changes.

Because of the delays and installation problems at some sites the deadline for comments was extended to 25<sup>th</sup> October. exeGesIS SDM Ltd compiled a master list of 133 queries and errors received from the test sites. All these have now been addressed. On the whole the general comments received on the new version were very favourable.

I would just like to take this opportunity to thank all the users at the four test sites who have taken the time to contribute to testing.

## **Launch of 'Informing the Future of the Past - Guidelines for SMRs'**

**Claire Attridge, Heritage Information Partnerships, NMR**

The desk manual was launched at the NMRC on 17 November 2000. This publication was a major landmark and a tremendous achievement for all involved – especially for its tireless editors.

The purpose of the manual is to provide a set of working guidelines appropriate to all SMRs, large and small, and for all staff, volunteers and students involved in managing, running or supporting an SMR.

An assessment of the condition and state of development of the SMRs maintained by local authorities in England, carried out by David Baker and published in 1999, highlighted the achievements and potential for SMRs to become local environmental management systems and to provide a wide range of services to the communities they serve and to the planning process. However, the report also highlighted variations between SMRs in resources, work practices and standards and identified a need for support for the professional infrastructure for SMR staff.

This manual offers an overview of the standards, services and systems that are already in place in SMRs and shares ideas about best working practices in the SMRs of today. It includes case studies to illustrate recording practices and model procedures. It is the result of a collaborative partnership between English Heritage, ALGAO and the ADS. It is intended to provide a platform for training and continuous professional development for SMR staff.

One copy of the guidelines has been sent to each English SMR.

Product code: XB20008  
ISBN: 1 873592 55 8  
Price: £25  
Published: November 2000

Further copies of the manual are available from:  
English Heritage Postal Sales  
Knights of Old Ltd,  
Kettering Parkway  
Kettering,  
Northampton,  
NN15 6XU  
Telephone: 01536 533500

## SMR Liaison at the NMR

### Claire Attridge, Heritage Information Partnerships, NMR

As reported in the last issue of SMR News there have been a few changes regarding liaison with SMRs. In addition to those previously reported, Neil Lang, who many of you will know, is moving on to pastures new at the end of January.

### Farewells

#### Neil Lang, Data Services Unit Manager, NMR

After 8 years with the RCHME and English Heritage, I am leaving to join the Public Trust Office in London to develop their new Information and Records Branch. This is an exciting new opportunity, but also a sad one, as the new post takes me away from the Heritage Sector. I hope to keep in touch with this area, and with my former colleagues but I know that I will miss the work, and the friendship (and sometimes even the challenges) that I have enjoyed during this time.

The SMR world is one that has been transformed over the last fifteen years. With the added stimulus of Lottery Funding, the continuing development of SMR software and other new information technology, and the advanced discussions on how best to record the historic environment, this trend shows every sign of continuing.

I wish you all the best, and success in the future.

Neil.

#### Claire Attridge

I am also moving on, to take on the role of Data Training and Documentation Supervisor within the Heritage Data Management Unit of the NMR. It has been a very brief period for me in the world of SMRs, but I would like to thank those of you that I have met, who have all been welcoming and encouraging, and I'm sorry I didn't get to meet more of you. Best wishes and a happy New Year.

With the impending changes, there will be a rearrangement of duties, which are outlined below. Also, following the completion of the re-structuring of Heritage Data Management (HDM) into two sections - Data Services Unit (DSU) and Data Management Unit (DMU) - the following is a brief list of the people you may deal with:

**Gillian Grayson**, Head of Heritage Data Management (Tel: 01793 414845, email: [gillian.grayson@english-heritage.org.uk](mailto:gillian.grayson@english-heritage.org.uk)), represents HDM on the EH-ALGAO Working Party and the SMR Working Party, and is the convenor of FISH. She can be contacted for information and advice on SMR Heritage Lottery Bids.

**Martin Newman**, Heritage Information Partnerships Officer (Tel: 01793 414718, email:

[martin.newman@rchme.co.uk](mailto:martin.newman@rchme.co.uk)), is responsible for managing the exeGesIS SDM Ltd SMR contract, co-ordination of national themed projects, liaison with SMRs and SMR working parties, liaison for SMR Heritage Lottery bids, and is List owner for SMR Forum.

**Hugh Borrill**, Data Standards Supervisor (Tel: 01793 414726, email: [hugh.borrill@rchme.co.uk](mailto:hugh.borrill@rchme.co.uk)), amongst other duties, is the contact for the SMR Data Audit programme.

**Phil Carlisle**, Data Standards Supervisor (Tel: 01793 414824, email: [philip.carlisle@rchme.co.uk](mailto:philip.carlisle@rchme.co.uk)), amongst other duties, is responsible for thesauri creation and maintenance.

**Edmund Lee**, Data Standards Supervisor (Tel: 01793 414791, email: [edmund.lee@rchme.co.uk](mailto:edmund.lee@rchme.co.uk)), amongst other duties, is responsible for Spatial and Archive standards, FISH (Forum on Information Standards) and MIDAS (Monument Inventory and Data Standard).

Other members of Data Services Unit are **Agnes Bell**, Data Standards Team Member, and **Brian Hopper** and **Ken Davies**, the OS-GIS Liaison Team.

The Data Management Unit is responsible for the management and development of the NMR Heritage Data Sets, the national historic environment databases of buildings and archaeological sites in England and its territorial waters. The section is managed by **David Graty** (Tel: 01793 414762, email: [david.graty@rchme.co.uk](mailto:david.graty@rchme.co.uk)) and comprises three teams.

In addition to their day to day task of maintaining the record, each team has a particular focus. The Projects Team, Team Leader **Louise Goldie** (Tel: 01793 414725, email: [louise.goldie@rchme.co.uk](mailto:louise.goldie@rchme.co.uk)), is responsible for liaison with the EH survey teams and ensuring that the results of survey work are available in the NMR; the Protected Places Team, Team Leader **Valerie Wilson** (Tel: 01793 414745, email: [valerie.wilson@rchme.co.uk](mailto:valerie.wilson@rchme.co.uk)), is responsible for liaison with National Programmes (the management of scheduling, listing, update of the LBS etc.); and the Maritime Team, Team Leader **Steve Waring** (Tel: 01793 414719, email: [steve.waring@rchme.co.uk](mailto:steve.waring@rchme.co.uk)) is responsible for recording in territorial waters.

## PEOPLE

**Margaret Rylatt** has retired from Coventry as Museum Archaeologist.

**Hal Bishop** is the Archaeological Officer at Torbay Council.