Selecting the Material Archive
or
What to look for in a selection strategy

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A rationale for selecting finds

Reducing the size of the archive while preserving the potential for re-use
- Research
- Analysis
- Interpretation
- Exhibition
- Education
- Communication.

Selection should not be determined by issues of
- Storage capacity
- Cost
- Project resources.

Project Stakeholders and their roles and responsibilities

Development control archaeologist

Ensure there is a selection strategy for the project

Ensure standards are met as required

Landowner / landowner's representative

Ensure that the rights of ownership are represented

Specialist researcher

Promote best practice in finds collection, study and selection

Analyse and record finds assemblages

Collections curator

Represent the collecting policy

Ensure curation of the preserved archive

Project team

Achieve the project aims

Disseminate the results

Create and transfer the archive

Project manager

Develop project strategies

Ensure project delivery

Keep everyone happy

The materials section of the selection template

This can be modified to suit specific requirements or methods.

3. MATERIALS

Material Type:		Page	3._

STAKEHOLDERS	Name the individual(s) responsible for the Materials Selection decisions (i.e. Archaeological Archive Manager, Project Manager, Repository Representative).

SELECTION STRATEGY

Describe your Selection Strategy for each material type and or object type. To do this you must:

3.1 State the Selection Strategy you are applying to each category of material, how this will be done, and why.
3.2 Identify the selection review points during the project (e.g. project planning, data gathering, analysis and reporting and archive compilation).
3.3 Reference all relevant standards, policies or guidelines (e.g. thematic, period, and regional, Research Frameworks, repository deposition policies) and specialist advice sought.
3.4 Identify any selection decisions that differ from standard guidelines and explain why.

The _Materials Selection Template_ may be useful in structuring this section.

UNCOLLECTED MATERIAL

If you are practising selection in the field, describe the process that will be applied. To do this you must:
- Detail how you will characterise, quantify and record all _uncollected material_ on site.
- Explain how you will dispose of, or re-distribute, uncollected material.

DE-SELECTED MATERIAL

Describe what you will do with the _de-selected material_. All processed material should have been adequately recorded before de-selection.

AMENDMENTS

Detail any amendments to the above selection strategy.

Date	Amendment	Rationale	Stakeholders Involved

What to look for in a selection strategy   part 1

1. A consistent approach to finds collection and recording with an established terminology (a practice manual?)

Example: the sample WSI states that:

3.2 The specific aims of the work are to:

• recover artefactual evidence to date any evidence of past settlement that may be identified.

4.7 Artefacts from topsoil and subsoil and un-stratified contexts will normally be noted but not retained unless they are of intrinsic interest (e.g. worked flint or flint debitage, featured pottery sherds, and other potential 'registered artefacts').

Questions:

What is meant by 'noted'? Is there a description of how to do that in the practice manual?

Is 'intrinsic interest' defined in the practice manual?

Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Excavation on Land at Slumber Farm, Dreamshire

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4.7 continued

All artefacts will be collected from stratified excavated contexts except for large assemblages of post-medieval or modern material.

Such material may be noted and not retained, or, if appropriate, a representative sample may be collected and retained.

Questions:

Is a 'large assemblage' defined?

Is a 'representative sample' defined?

Conclusion:

This does not look like a consistent approach with an established terminology.

Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Excavation on Land at Slumber Farm, Dreamshire

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Example: the sample selection template states that

Material on site will not be collected from topsoil or subsoil unless it is deemed to be a 'small find' as specified in the WSI.

Uncollected material will be assessed and noted on site by site archaeologists, supervised by the Senior Project Officer and the Project Supervisor.

De-selected material will be fully recorded before discard.

Questions:

The WSI does not define 'small find' and refers to 'registered artefacts'. Which is correct?

What is meant by 'assessed and noted'?

What is meant by 'fully recorded'?

Are those terms defined in a practice manual?

3. MATERIALS

| Material Type: | Bulk finds | | Page | 1 |

STAKEHOLDERS — On-site Bulk Archive selection strategy will be monitored by:

DA Senior Project Officer and DA Project Supervisor

Involved in the Selection of the Bulk finds for inclusion in the preserved archive will be:

Liela Moss, DA Archives Manager
Gretta Harley, DA Project Manager
Robert Forster, DA Finds Manager
Grant McLellan, DA Post-Excavation Archaeologist: animal bones
Miranda Joyce, Curator of Archaeology, Dreamshire County Museum

SELECTION STRATEGY

- Material on site will not be collected from topsoil or subsoil unless it is deemed to be a 'small find' as specified in the WSI.
- All artefacts will be collected from stratified excavated contexts except for large assemblages of post-medieval or modern material. Such material may be noted and not retained, or, if appropriate, a representative sample may be collected and retained as specified in the WSI.
- The site selected material archive returned to the DA offices will be reviewed following analysis: Stakeholders will make selection decisions based on DA finds managers/officers reports and selection recommendations. The selection will take place during archive completion.
- Should the excavation identify substantial quantities of wasters or other material relating to the postulated Snoozefield pottery industry, a retention strategy for such material will be agreed in consultation with the DA Finds Manager and Museum Curator.
- After discussion with the Museum Curator and the DA Finds Manager, it is likely that no material postdating AD 1800 will be retained for inclusion in the preserved archive unless relating specifically to the RAF station.
- Selection choices will also be outlined in the Project Review Form sent to the museum prior to deposition.

UNCOLLECTED MATERIAL

Uncollected material will be assessed and noted on site by DA archaeologists, supervised by DA Senior Project Officer and DA Project Supervisor.

On the agreement of the landowner, the county archaeologist and the museum curator the uncollected material will be left on site to be incorporated into the backfill.

DE-SELECTED MATERIAL

De-selected material will be fully recorded before discard.

With the agreement of the landowner, county archaeologist and the museum curator, deselected material will be disposed of accordingly. As part of this, the museum will be offered some examples for their handling collection. If the museum chooses not to take any material, it will be discarded/recycled.

Conclusion:

This does not look like a consistent approach with an established terminology.

What to look for in a selection strategy part 2

1. A consistent approach to finds collection and recording
    with an established terminology (a practice manual?)

2. A system of classification of types of materials and finds
    for the consistent recording of finds and include definitions of the
    terms used in your classification (metadata) to enable others to
    understand them.

Example: a definition of Registered Find in a museum archive deposition standard

REGISTERED FINDS are finds that require special recording, treatment or storage, including any finds which have been recorded in situ.

Each registered find for a project is identified by a unique item number.

Unless it is otherwise specified, register all objects of worked stone, metal, leather, textile, wood and worked bone, that are earlier in date than AD1800. Roman and medieval glass must also be registered.

Objects that are later than AD1800 may be registered, depending on the aims of the project, and any instruction in the Scheme of Investigation.

Example: a system of material type classification from a museum archive deposition standard. Developed to ensure materials are grouped to facilitate retrieval and packed safely.

STONE	All stone, flint, gemstones, slate; also mineral, aggregates, concrete, mortar, plaster
CLAY	Usually burnt clay, including daub, oven/hearth/furnace lining
CERAMICS	All ceramics; brick, tile, pottery, fired clay, pipe clay
GLASS	All glass; beads, vessel glass, window glass
METAL	All metals; copper-alloy, gold, iron, lead, silver, other metals
MINERAL WASTE	Slag, furnace lining, clinker, hammer-scale
LEATHER / TEXTILE	All leather and textile
VERTEBRATES	All vertebrate animal remains; animal bone, human bone, worked bone, other animal remains
INVERTEBRATES	All invertebrate animal remains; arthropods, shell
PLANTS	All vegetable matter; charcoal, seeds, wood, other plant remains
FAECAL MATTER	All digestive waste; cess, coprolites
SYNTHETICS	All compounds, polymers, synthetics
UNKNOWN	Anything unidentifiable

What to look for in a selection strategy part 3

1. A consistent approach to finds collection and recording
    with an established terminology (a practice manual?)

2. A system of classification of types of materials and finds
    for the consistent recording of finds and include definitions of the
    terms used in your classification (metadata) to enable others to
    understand them.

3. A recording policy
    to ensure information is collected consistently

Review of the Standard of Reporting on
Archaeological Artefacts in England

Alice Cattermole

Funded by
Historic England

CIfA | Chartered Institute for Archaeologists
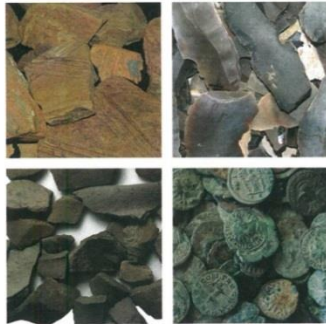
This project illustrates why a recording policy is necessary

The aims of the project included:

- develop criteria for evaluating the quality of finds reports

- conduct a survey of a selection of finds reports in grey literature form and measuring how they meet those criteria

- compile a report that summarises the findings of the survey and the conclusions of the survey, and sets out recommendations for the future.

Meeting the criteria: an overview

Fewer than 58% of the reports assessed met 60% of the criteria in the checklist.

39% met less than 50% of the criteria.

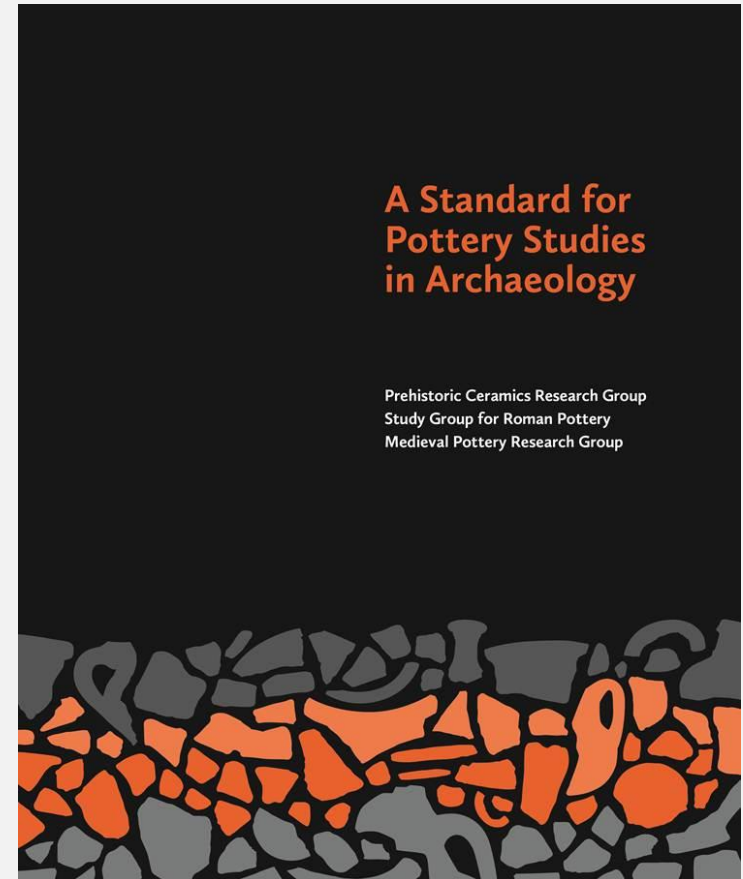| % of criteria met	% of reports	Cumulative %
>90	1%	100
80-90	5%	99
70-80	12%	94
60-70	24%	82
50-60	19%	58
40-50	16%	39
30-40	13%	23
20-30	6%	10
10-20	3%	4
0-10	1%	1

Example: a standard for the recording and reporting of pottery assemblages.
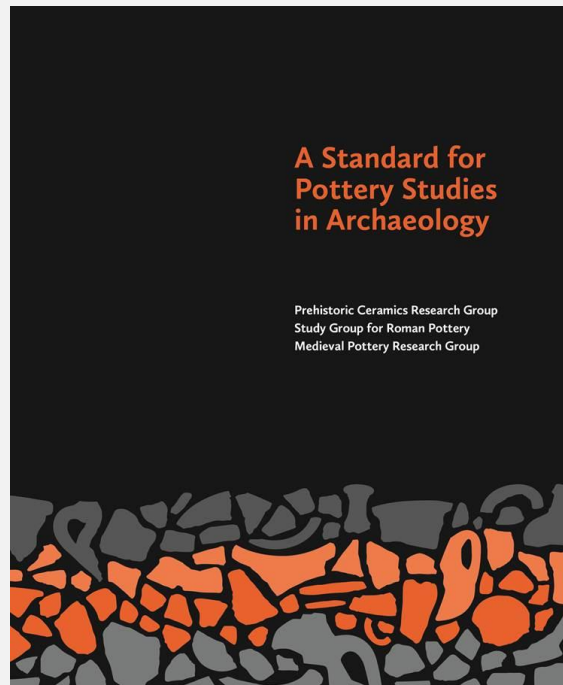
2.4.5 Basic Record
This is a rapid analysis that is detailed enough to produce a report that will inform an understanding of the site and any structural evidence, as well as the significance of the pottery assemblage as evidence for site activities, modes of distribution, and social and economic conditions.

2.4.6 Detailed Record
The purpose of the Detailed Record is to provide as much information as possible about the character and quantity of the assemblage, to a level sufficient to inform site-specific, local, regional, national and international studies of pottery technology, distribution, acquisition, use and deposition through time, at the levels of specific fabrics, through ware types to traditions and styles. Detailed recording should also enable the comparison of the pottery with assemblages of other types of finds, as well as informing interpretations of the site, the character of specific features and contexts, and the structural sequence.

A Standard for
Pottery Studies
in Archaeology

Prehistoric Ceramics Research Group
Study Group for Roman Pottery
Medieval Pottery Research Group

Example: the standard details the data that can be collected for pottery assemblages.

A Standard for
Pottery Studies
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2.4.6 Detailed Record

The purpose of the Detailed Record is to provide as much information as possible about the character and quantity of the assemblage, to a level sufficient to inform site-specific, local, regional, national and international studies of pottery technology, distribution, acquisition, use and deposition through time, at the levels of specific fabrics, through ware types to traditions and styles. Detailed recording should also enable the comparison of the pottery with assemblages of other types of finds, as well as informing interpretations of the site, the character of specific features and contexts, and the structural sequence.

Aims

1. Characterise an assemblage in as much detail as possible.
2. Quantify an assemblage to as high a level as possible.
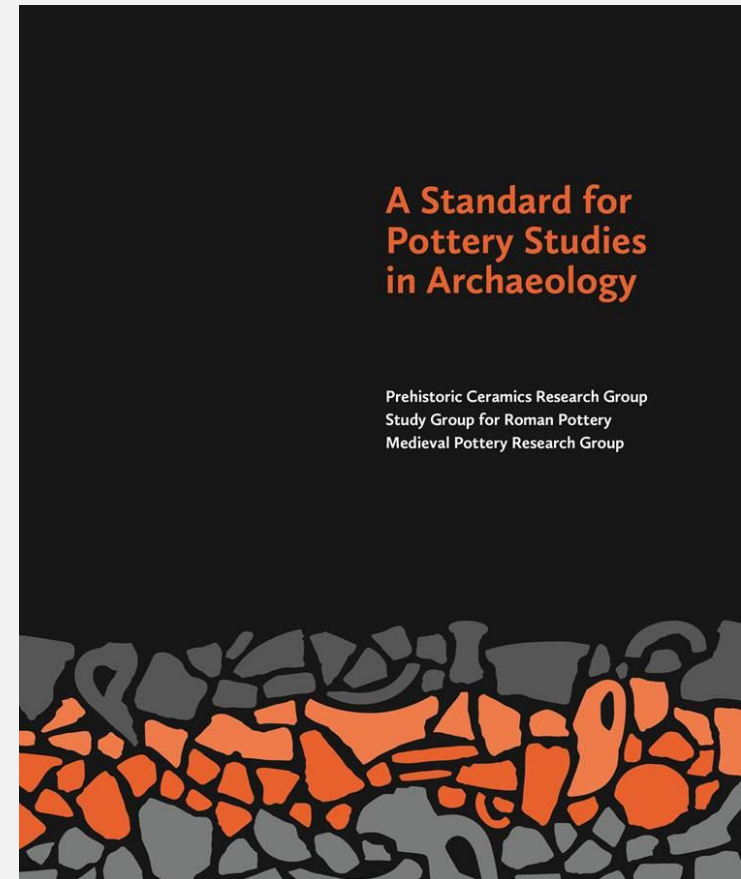
Method

The methods listed below are described in more detail in Appendix 1.

1. Characterise and sort the pottery according to these criteria:
   - contextual unit identifier
   - fabric type, in accordance with relevant Fabric Type Series
   - ware name/group to which that Fabric Type belongs
   - ware date range (the earliest date and the latest date)
   - sherd type (rim, body, base etc)
   - vessel class (bowl, flagon, jar, jug etc)
   - vessel form (carinated bowl, pear-shaped jug etc)
   - the form of component parts (rims, bases, feet, handles, spouts etc)
   - vessel size, by rim diameter, height (for complete profiles), and if it adds useful information, base diameter
   - vessel wall thickness and girth are recorded for prehistoric pottery
   - surface treatment (burnishing, glaze etc), by technique, character (eg glaze colour) and position on the vessel; for glaze also record whether it is splashed, run or covers the whole surface
   - decoration, by technique, motif, and position on the vessel (where this is not already defined by the form/sherd type)
   - non-decorative deliberate modifications such as potter's stamps, post-firing tally/merchant marks, graffiti or repairs
   - method of manufacture (handbuilt, moulded, wheelthrown), where not defined by the fabric type/description
   - evidence for use (sooting, limescale, wear marks etc)
   - cross-fitting sherds from different contextual units and joins within the same context
   - sherd condition (abraded, burned, water-worn, freshly broken).
2. Quantify the pottery by:
   - sherd count
   - sherd weight in grams
   - number of vessels (eg Estimated Vessel Equivalent or EVE, maximum vessel count, minimum vessel count; see Appendix 1)
3. Identify and separate pieces that require:
   - illustration or photography
   - scientific analysis.

Example: This definition of a pottery specialist could be amended to include all finds specialists, in order to identify the personnel required to develop an informed selection strategy.

A pottery specialist is defined as an individual who is competent in, and specialises in, characterising, quantifying, analysing, interpreting and reporting on pottery assemblages.

A pottery specialist will have developed expertise through the extensive study of pottery, and reporting in reputable, peer reviewed sources, with a demonstrable ability to work unsupervised. Membership of a pottery study group is a valuable way of acquiring and sharing knowledge, while formal accreditation and recognition of competence can be gained through membership of CIfA. Both are recommended.

A Standard for Pottery Studies in Archaeology

Prehistoric Ceramics Research Group
Study Group for Roman Pottery
Medieval Pottery Research Group

What to look for in a selection strategy part 4

1. A consistent approach to finds collection and recording
    with an established terminology (a practice manual?)

2. A system of classification of types of materials and finds
    for the consistent recording of finds and include definitions of the
    terms used in your classification (metadata) to enable others to
    understand them.

3. A recording policy
    to ensure information is collected consistently

4. A selection policy
    to inform the selection strategy (with anything that is different
    between the two)

Selection Policy

If a contractor or repository has a general Selection Policy, this can be the basis for most selection strategies (which are project specific).

The selection strategy will note any amendments to the overall policy that have been determined during project planning and consultation with relevant stakeholders.

In this example of a completed selection strategy template, there has been an amendment to the contractor's usual policy following consultation with the repository.

3. MATERIALS

Material type:	See following tables for each material	Page	4
STAKEHOLDERS	AA Project Team: Project Manager, Finds Manager, Archive Manager Repository Curator		

SELECTION STRATEGY

The strategy for selecting finds is based on the Awesome Archaeology (AA) Finds Recording and Selection Policy (attached to this document), which has been amended following consultation with the County Repository.

Bulk finds and Registered finds are defined in the AA Finds Recording and Selection Policy.

The selection strategy for each material type is shown in the tables below.

All Registered finds (as defined in the AA Finds Recording and Selection Policy) will be collected for assessment and analysis, after which a selection process will be applied.

UNCOLLECTED MATERIAL

Uncollected material, as defined in the AA Finds Recording and Selection Policy, will be recorded according to the AA Policy and left on site as backfill in the trenches.

DE-SELECTED MATERIAL

Finds that have been de-selected off-site, following assessment or analysis will be considered for inclusion in teaching or handling collections. If they remain unwanted they will pulverised.

Example: A completed selection strategy template based on a material type classification.

Material Group:	Stone		
Material /Find Type	Selection Strategy	Stakeholders	Review Points
Worked flint	All finds are registered. Collect all finds for assessment, analysis and to be considered for selection	Project team Lithic specialist	Assessment Analysis
Slate	All finds to be collected for recording, assessment and selection on site	Project team Slate specialist	Assessment
Moulded architectural stone	All finds to be collected for recording, assessment and selection on site	Project team Building stone specialist	Assessment
Unworked building stone	All finds to be collected for recording, assessment and selection on site	Project team Building stone specialist	Assessment
Worked stone objects	All finds are registered. Collect all finds for assessment, analysis and to be considered for selection	Project team Specialist(s)	Assessment Analysis

Example: A completed selection strategy template based on a material type classification . The amendment shown above is highlighted.

Material Group:	Ceramic		
Material /Find Type	Selection Strategy	Stakeholders	Review Points
Brick	All finds to be collected for recording, assessment and selection on site All stamped brick fragments to be collected for assessment	Project team CBM specialist Curator	Assessment
Tile	All finds to be collected for assessment and analysis	Project team CBM specialist	Assessment
Pottery	All finds to be collected for assessment and analysis	Project team Pottery specialist	Assessment Analysis
Fired clay objects	All finds are registered Collect all finds for assessment, analysis and to be considered for selection	Project team Specialist(s)	Assessment
Clay tobacco pipe	All finds to be collected for assessment and analysis	Project team Clay pipe specialist	Assessment Analysis

What to look for in a selection strategy

1. A consistent approach to finds collection and recording with an established terminology (a practice manual?)
    Stakeholders: DCA; Contractor (project team)

2. A system of classification of types of materials and finds for the consistent recording of finds
    Stakeholders: DCA; Contractor (project team); Specialists; Specialist organisations (e.g. study groups, CIfA Finds Group); repository curator

3. Definitions of the elements of your classification to enable others to understand them (metadata)
    Stakeholders: DCA, Specialists, Specialist organisations

4. A recording policy to ensure information is collected consistently
    Stakeholders: Contractor (project team)

5. A selection policy to inform the selection strategy (which notes anything that is different between the two)
    Stakeholders: Contractor, Repository