

BAHS GUIDE TO

FINDS

PROCESSING

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1. Introduction

This guide has been designed to provide comprehensive guidance for all aspects of finds processing and should inform decision making at project level. Key points are listed in the shorter version, the '*Quick Guide to Finds Processing*' designed for use by volunteers whilst working on site.

Finds processing begins as soon as a find is made and ultimately ends with a report, preferably published. Even then, finds suitably curated maybe subjected to future analysis.

Before finds are lifted, handled and processed, thought must be given to the potential requirements for analysis since even simple things such as packaging materials can preclude some types of analysis. This emphasises the requirement for following recommended practices when processing and handling finds in order that provenance is carefully recorded, finds are processed in such a way suitable to their composition/fabric and if to be kept, that they are curated/stored in an environment that does not compromise their quality or lead to degradation.

On an excavation site finds are usually discovered by trowelling, but in some instances the nature of the excavation might require sieving using a 6mm mesh sieve to ensure smaller items are not missed, or taking soil samples for further processing. Methods are decided beforehand as part of the project design. Fieldwalking also invariably produces finds. Stray finds, whilst out walking in the countryside, or perhaps later recovered from an excavation spoil heap are other sources of finds.

The principles in this guide are based on those outlined in the *Historic England Excavation Recording Manual (2018), Module 5 (The Excavation, Care and Recording of Finds)*. They are geared around excavation, but refer to other sources of finds such as from field walking, since once finds have been recovered processing is much the same. Nonetheless, a degree of flexibility according to the nature of the site may at times prove expedient.

2. Collection And Initial Recording Of Finds

Bulk Finds

All finds must be kept in clearly labelled trays or bags (or buckets if dealing with large fragments of CBM) from the moment they are excavated. All finds containers must be labelled before any finds are collected in them. It is the responsibility of the Trench Supervisors (or the Site Supervisor) to ensure that this is done, and that of the Finds Supervisor to check the containers when they are taken to the finds station.

The recommended labels to use are made from waterproof Tyvek. Black permanent marker pens should be used for labelling labels and bags. Labelling must always include the site code (and year if relevant), trench number and context number (the context number will always be a fill, deposit or layer (rather than a cut) and so the number is conventionally written within curved brackets). In the example in Fig.1 the site code is 'CS', the year 2017, the trench '02' and the context '003'. Labelling conventions might vary from site to site according to requirements at the time, but the most important thing is to always make sure labels are clearly marked to avoid any confusion. Labels should always be securely attached to trays and *never* left loose.



Fig.1 Always clearly mark the label and securely tie it to the finds tray.

In situations where there are extensive or deep contexts, these may be subdivided for finds retrieval purposes (if pre-agreed) using a 'divided into' relationship with the main context deposit number. For example, a very deep context could be divided into spits so you might end up with something like Context (023/1), Context (023/2), etc. Ensure that the system is explained in the documentation, e.g. on the context sheet together with a note of the dimensions of the subdivisions.

Take the finds trays and bags to the finds station once full (do not overload), or the excavation of a context is completed, or at the end of each day (or promptly in the case of Small Finds). Under no circumstances should finds trays or bags be left in the open overnight and it is recommended for security that Small Finds are removed off-site at the end of each day, even if brought back the following day. If a context is dug over more than one day, use a different finds tray for each day.

Fragile materials (including prehistoric pottery, human and animal bone, metals and waterlogged finds) should not be left exposed on excavated surfaces any longer than necessary. They should be covered in hot, dry or windy weather to give them some protection. The covering selected should not damage the objects or materials they are protecting (i.e. they should not abrade, crush or contaminate the archaeological remains). Suggested materials include plastic sheeting or Tyvek (depending on whether they are wet or dry) or more solid protection (such as an upside down sample bucket secured in place). Always seek advice from the Finds Supervisor or Site Director if you come across any unusual, fragile or waterlogged finds (including human bone, 'Treasure' or plant materials).

Individual animal bones that are likely to fall apart during excavation and processing should be always bagged up individually (all fragments in the same bag). This is particularly important for mandibles which might lose their teeth as they cannot be used for ageing unless we know which teeth belong to the mandible. For fragile finds and animal bones seen in situ, take a photograph before lifting them if it may be useful to a specialist to see how they were discovered.

Complete vessels should be lifted whole, with their contents and should be recorded as a Small Find (see below).

Small Finds:

Generally the following items are individually recorded: Most metal items, glass vessels, worked bone, worked antler and non-structural worked wood, leather objects and textiles, ceramic and stone objects, complete ceramic vessels and architectural stone. However, the nature of the site will bear on decision making and the proposed list should form part of the Project Design. Animal Bone Groups (ABGs) are also always recorded as Small Finds.

If a decision has been made to record the location of a particular find (or class of find) in three dimensions on site, the object is treated as a Small Find, regardless of the material from which it is made or if it would normally be classed as a Bulk Find.

Using the *Small Finds Register* allocate a number and record basic information about the find and its location. Give an initial description (e.g. copper alloy brooch; bone comb, in numerous fragments; three small sherds of prehistoric pottery). Normally each item has a separate number, but occasionally one number is given to a group of pieces, such as a few potsherds found close together and apparently from the same vessel. Items such as Animal Bone Groups, coins or beads should always have separate numbers even if found in groups. Make additional notes on the find spot, recovery and level of disturbance (e.g. disturbed by burrowing) as appropriate. Also record the name of the finder and the date.

Small Finds must be individually bagged and the bag labelled on the outside (the Small Finds number being conventionally written within a triangle) alongside the other usual information. Add the initials of the finder and the date (Fig. 2). A waterproof Tyvek label duplicating the information should also be placed within the bag. If the Small Find is from a 'soil sample' then the sample number is the primary relationship and must also be recorded and labelled. The exact recovery location of the Small Find should be three dimensionally recorded and details transferred to the *Small Finds Register*.



Fig 2. Example of a bagged and labelled Small Find.

Finds from Spoil Heaps:

Occasionally finds are recovered from spoil heaps, either inadvertently or by metal detecting, in which case deposit numbers should be assigned to the spoil heaps and their locations described (e.g. 'Spoil heap at west end of Trench A'). Finds from spoil heaps and metal detecting are recorded and processed in the same way as excavated material, as either Small or Bulk Finds, but are categorised as 'Surface Collected'.

Finds from Field Walking:

Material from field walking is usually collected by grid square or transect with a context or deposit number assigned as a unique identifier to each square or transect. In addition to the context number, the grid square or transect number (and usually a grid reference) must also be written on bag labels. Finds from field walking are recorded and processed in the same way as excavated material, as either Small or Bulk Finds, but are categorised as 'Surface Collected'.

Human Bone:

The recovery, initial recording and further processing of excavated human bone (whether inhumation or cremated remains), together with any associated grave goods, containers or coffin furnishings, require a different approach from that of Bulk or Small Finds and is not covered by this guide. The only exception is when a 'stray' bone is found, in which case treat it in the same manner as for a Small Find but keep it separate from the other finds in a category of its own.

Animal Bone Groups (ABGs):

Groups of associated animal bones (whether complete skeletons or just a few articulating bone elements, or unfused parts) have great evidential value. They should usually be excavated in their entirety, and as soon as possible after they are exposed and recorded, to prevent their deterioration.

ABGs are assigned Small Find numbers (each bone should have its own number) and should be recorded using an *Animal Bone Group Form* (use separate forms for mammals, birds and fish). They must be surveyed in (record an approximate outline round the group), photographed (including a photo (with photo targets which could be rectified if using drone photography) and planned (usually at 1:10), and the skeleton diagram on the back of the ABG form must be filled in. There also is space on the form for a sketch, which can be annotated with additional information such as any associated finds.

If the ABG is a complete/near complete skeleton or contains small bones, soil samples for coarse sieving should be taken. For small animals (birds, fish, cats or smaller mammals) sample the entire area of the ABG. For larger animals, sample the regions with small bones (feet, abdomen and head). Follow the bagging guidance on the ABG form. All bags must be labelled in the usual way for Small Finds.

If all or part of the ABG is fragile, it may be better to block lift it. ABGs that are block-lifted are recorded as 'specialist samples', and the sample must be related to the ABG record.

If you find any unusual or poorly preserved animal bone deposits (such as bone working waste or bone used in floors or well linings), seek advice from the Finds Supervisor or Site Director.

Collecting Finds for Residue Analysis:

Where finds such as pottery may be used for residue analysis, the item should be kept from direct contact with plastic and a small 'specialist sample' should be taken from soil around the item to act as a control. The sherds should be wrapped in foil and then placed within a labelled bag. Sherds should not be washed or marked. Where sampling for residue analysis has been planned as part of the project, details of the procedures will have been laid out in the Project Design.

Discard Policies:

In most cases discard or retention policies for finds are only formulated after excavations have begun in response to very large quantities of certain groups of material, usually fragmentary building materials of either ceramic, such as brick and tile, or stone. Material that is to be discarded usually has to be weighed and counted in order that it can be accounted for in the site report. A discard policy can only be instigated in consultation with the Site Director and Archaeological Advisor.

3. FINDS PROCESSING (DURING FIELD WORK)

Appropriate training and careful supervision will always be given to inexperienced members of the team. If you are uncertain about anything always ask. Knowing when to ask for help is important to ensure a successful outcome and to prevent the loss of important information. Nearly all material is damp to some degree when found. For most material this is not a problem, but care needs to be taken not to let organic material, such as wood, leather, cloth, amber, jet, shale and some types of glass, dry out any further. Never wrap damp finds in acid free tissue paper. Do not leave damp finds (except organic material) in sealed bags, unless absolutely necessary for short periods (e.g. for transport).

Bulk Finds:

Care must be taken not to confuse groups of material from different contexts. Ideally, trays will only contain material from one context. If it is necessary to put finds from more than one context in a tray, a roll of newspaper must be taped to the tray to act as a barrier between them.

As soon as excavation of a context is completed, or first thing the next day, finds trays should be checked prior to washing and any fragile items or metal finds that should not be washed should be placed in a labelled bag or container and stored to one side. At this stage the labelled finds tray should only contain bulk finds that can be washed. Usually pottery, building material, animal bone, clay pipes, architectural stone, flint and most metal-working slag can be washed (see Table 1).

You will need space to lay out a considerable number of objects, ideally a large waterproof work surface, covered with newspaper to absorb water splashes. Prepare enough spare drying trays by lining with newspaper and have plentiful supplies of spare labels available. If processing a large amount of CBM it is often more expedient to dry brush rather than to wash, choosing to detail clean only items of particular note (Fig. 3).



Fig 3. At this excavation of a Roman tile kiln it was expedient to skip washing and move straight to weighing as the brick and tile were fairly clean. A site discard policy dictated that after weighing only items of note were to be retained.

Washing should be done with copious and frequently changed lukewarm water and soft brushes such as soft toothbrushes. No cleaning products, such as detergents, should be used. No material should be scrubbed so vigorously that surface detail is removed, or surfaces scarred.

Where deposits such as sooting or carbonised residues are present on pottery or traces of paint or lime wash on architectural stone, the finds should not be washed.

Don't try to remove burning or staining from bones.

Don't be tempted to soak large objects of CBM, e.g. brick, in water – they will take days, sometimes weeks, to dry out!

During finds washing it is essential that one label always remains with the unwashed material and a duplicate label with the washed material. If more than one tray is needed, additional labels must be written at the time.

Drying washed finds should be spread out (not heaped) on trays lined with newspaper and left to dry naturally (Fig. 4). Materials such as brick and tile can take several days to dry if left to soak in water.



Fig 4. This test pit based project dictated finds to be washed at each test pit location before being taken to the finds station for further drying and secure storage.

Table 1: Initial cleaning prompts for Bulk Finds

Material	Wash	Keep damp
Bone - animal (unworked)	Yes	No
Bone - human	Yes	No
Ceramic building material	Yes	No
Ceramic clay pipe	Yes	No
Ceramic – pottery, except prehistoric or Saxon	Yes – but see below*	No
Ceramic -prehistoric or Saxon pottery	Normally not – check with finds supervisor	No
Ceramic -pottery with traces of organic residues	No	No
Fired clay/Daub	Check first	No
Glass	No	Dry, but keep damp if recovered wet.
Industrial debris	Check first	No
Slag	Yes – but see below*	No
Crucibles and moulds	No	No; see Small Finds
Leather and textile	No	See below
Metalwork – pre modern	No*	No
Metalwork -modern	No	Probably outside collection policy
Shell, unworked	Yes – but see below*	No
Stone, general	Yes – but see below*	No
Flint	Yes	No; see Small Finds
Wood	No	See below

***If traces of paint, pigments or lime wash survive, or sooting or food residues are present, do not wash.**

***If an object crumbles, erodes, or flakes on washing: stop!**

***If slag has any burnt clay or traces of furnace lining, hearth or crucible attached, or a ‘bubbly’ appearance, do not wash.**

***Do not wash or brush lead or pewter items**

Bagging should only be done once the finds are completely dry. You should aim to quantify and bag all the material from one context at the same time.

Material should be bagged in suitably sized polythene grip top bags. Each bag should be pierced top and bottom and should contain at least one label. Usually grip top bags with a top closure and white panels are used. All bags must be marked using black permanent marker pens (Fig. 5).

Bulk Finds bags and labels require the following information:

- Site name/Project Code
- Year of excavation (if relevant)
- Trench No.
- Context number
- Material group, e.g. 'Pottery', and type.
- Weight and Quantity as appropriate (see Table 2)

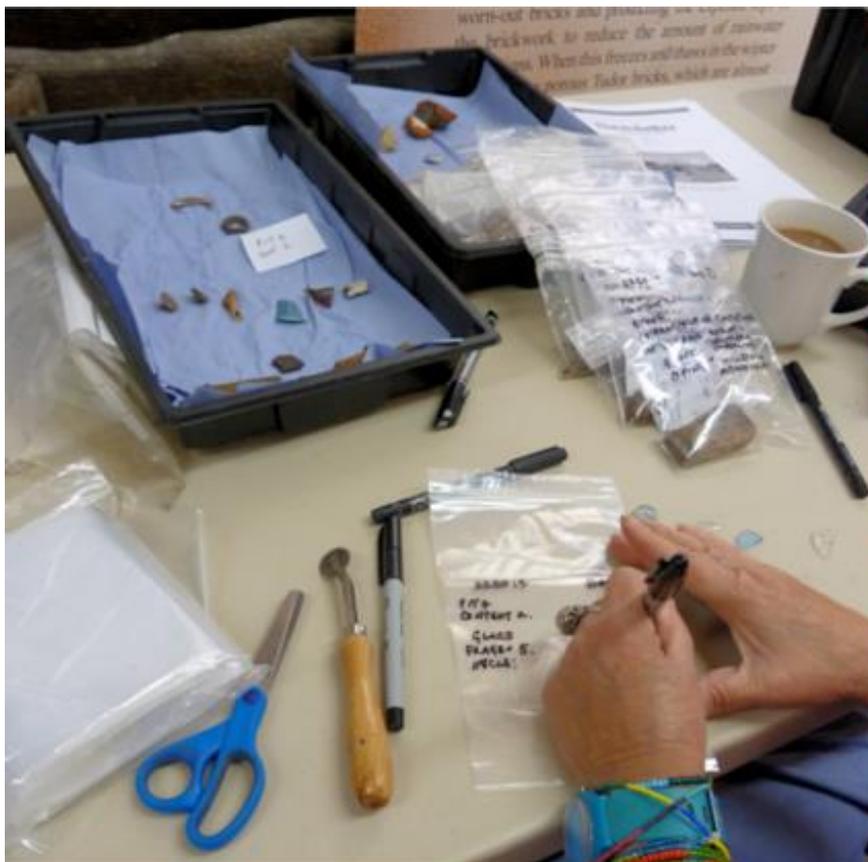


Fig 5. Bagging finds that have been washed and dried in the comfort of a barn.

Do not over fill bags, and if more than one bag is used each bag must carry an indication of the total number of bags (e.g. Bag 1 of 3). If larger bags without grip tops are used these should have two labels put in them, which can be read from the outside, and the tops must be secured with string.

It is unnecessary to attempt to separate pot sherds by fabric unless you have been asked to do so by the Finds Supervisor. It doesn't help the pottery specialist – when it comes to analysis it takes longer to record pottery if there are more individual bags to handle or if pottery has already been sorted but incorrectly. Accordingly bagging of Bulk Finds at this stage should be seen as an interim process. It is not necessary to apply detailed analysis at this stage, but sufficient to bag according to material type. Note that different metal types, e.g. Fe (iron), Pb (lead), should never be bagged together.

Table 2: Bulk Finds -Recording and bagging prompts

Material	Weigh	Count	Bag	Box type
Animal bone (unworked)	Yes	Yes	Perforated	Cardboard
Ceramic building materials	Yes	Yes	Perforated	Cardboard
Pottery	Yes	Yes	Perforated	Cardboard
Pottery for residue analysis	Yes	Yes	Wrap in foil before bagging and boxing	
Fired clay/Daub	Yes	No	Perforated	Cardboard
Clay tobacco pipes	Yes	Yes	Perforated	Cardboard
Glass				
Glass - if dry	Yes	Yes	Perforated	Cardboard
Glass - if recovered wet	Keep wet			
Human skeletal material *	Yes	Yes	Perforated	Cardboard
Industrial debris	Yes	No	Perforated	Cardboard
Metalwork pre-modern	No	Yes	Perforated	Cardboard
Metalwork modern	No	Yes	Probably outside collection policy – check the Project Design	
Shell	Yes	Yes	Perforated	Cardboard
Stone (inc. bulk flint)	Yes	Yes	Perforated	Cardboard
Wood				
Wood - if wet	No	Yes	Sealed	Polyethylene
Wood - if dry	No	No	Perforated	

*'Bulk Find' human bones only since bones from burials with human remains records are not weighed or counted on site.

Small Finds:

Key points:

- Do not wash.
- Do not mark (unless it is an architectural stone).

Store within an outer box along with other Small Finds in Small Find number order (do not store with Bulk Finds).

If safe to do so and with the agreement of the Finds Supervisor, consider dry-brush cleaning with a soft brush if appropriate. However this kind of work starts to fall within the realm of the conservator and nothing should be done that would compromise eventual conservation work or X-ray processing, or that might damage the object.

Generally, natural moisture in metal, stone, ceramic finds, etc. should be allowed to dry out slowly and thoroughly before bagging in perforated bags and boxing, but objects of amber, jet and shale should never be allowed to dry out. Fragile or delicate finds should be adequately protected and if necessary packed in a crystal plastic box with adequate packing. Metal objects may need to be packed with silica gel. Amber, jet and shale should never be allowed to dry out.

Bags and crystal boxes must be labelled with the following information.

- Site name/Project Code
- Year of excavation (if relevant)
- Trench Number
- Context number
- Small Find number
- Material group and type, e.g. bone pin
- Initials of finder and date

Waterlogged Finds:

If organic finds from wet contexts are recovered they should be stored within taped-up black plastic bags and kept in cool dark storage areas.

4. Boxing And Storage

Do not mix Small Finds and Bulk Finds.

Bagged Bulk Finds should be subdivided into appropriate materials and boxed in context order. If possible, use archive quality boxes such as the example in Fig. 6.

Ideally and if appropriate, bagged or boxed Small Finds should be subdivided into metals and non-metals at an absolute minimum. Further subdivision will depend on the number and size of finds and the weight of individual items. Do not mix heavy and light or fragile objects - create another box if necessary. Small Finds should be arranged by Small Find number.

All outer boxes should be allocated a unique box number. Use a single sequence of box numbers across the project and multiple seasons.

Individual small boxes (e.g. Stewart or crystal clear boxes – see Fig. 6) should be stored within a larger box, and do not usually require their own box number. Make sure they are labelled with the relevant details and have ‘belongs in Box XX’ on the box label, if one is used.

Each outer box should have a box label on both the lid and on the body. The label should have the following information on it:

- Site name/Project code
- Year of excavation
- Material
- Site sub-division e.g. Trench number
- Range of record numbers (e.g. Contexts (010 – 135), or Small Finds 001 – 084 (written within triangles))
- Box number
- Contents type e.g. ‘Bulk Find’, ‘Small Find’, ‘From Sample’, as appropriate.

The Box should also be labelled with manual handling advice where appropriate (e.g. heavy, fragile).

Do not over-pack boxes; 10kg is the maximum advisable weight. Do not put heavy bags on top of small bags.

Large items (such as architectural stone) that will not fit into a standard box are given their own box number and must have a label with their individual box number and site name/project code, year, context number, and Small Find number securely tied to them.

Metal finds (when thoroughly dry) should be placed in polypropylene boxes with snap-fit lids. The box must include sealed bags of silica gel (or loose in pierced plastic bags or in cotton or Tyvek® bags) placed alongside or underneath the finds. A humidity indicator strip should be clearly visible at the front of the box.

Fragile finds must be placed in a crystal plastic box with sufficient padding to keep the item stable and in position within the box. All crystal boxes must have a label face up in the lid of the box so it can be read without opening the box. Small crystal boxes (with a label) should be put in a Small Find outer box.

Never use acid free tissue paper with damp or wet finds; if necessary crumpled tissue paper in a sealed bag should be used to act as a cushion; if possible use bubble wrap but ensure that only the smooth surface is in contact.

Think about the next person opening the bag or box – they need to know how to open the bag or box and prepare for the contents. Never wrap finds as they can fall out when unravelling the packaging. The find should be clearly visible in the bag or upon opening the crystal box.

When all the finds have been bagged or boxed make sure they are stored in a secure and dry location.

The Box Index Form:

The *Box Index Form* is used to record box numbers and record box movements on site. Careful completion of this form is vital to the management of finds, as it tracks the whereabouts of both individual finds and boxes of finds. There must be a consistent Box Index system for all types of materials from the site.

As with all record sheets, the *Box Index Form* (example in Appendix III) must show the site name/project code and year of excavation. Individual index sheets should be numbered (e.g. 'Index sheet 7 of 9').

Besides the box number each entry should record what it contains and where it is stored.

There is a '*Sent to*' field on the Box Index Form and this relationship must be used when the box is taken away from store to go elsewhere, for example to a specialist. Add the reason and date and when the box is returned add the return date.



Fig. 6. Example of an acid-free cardboard archive box with brass staples and a clear 'Stewart' box.

5. COMPLETION OF THE FINDS SITE ARCHIVE

By the end of the fieldwork, ideally all finds should have been processed, packed and boxed as appropriate following the procedures set out above. All the necessary records (paper or digital) should have been created and completed to an acceptable level. The Finds Supervisor is responsible for the completion of this work. Exceptions would be small projects where no processing facilities are available in the field.

If finds work needs to be continued elsewhere after the excavation has finished this is still regarded as part of the 'fieldwork stage'.

The finds archive should contain as a minimum:

The material archive:

All the finds recovered, appropriately labelled and packed.

The documentary archive:

Small Finds ring binder, containing the Small Finds Index sheets.

Individual forms such as Animal Bone Group forms (if any completed).

Box index forms.

Notes about any uncompleted work or outstanding issues

6. Data Entry

Apart from the initial manual recording of Small Finds on the Small Finds index sheets, all finds should be recorded where possible directly into the project's finds database (Fig. 7).

At a basic level the database should as a minimum include the following fields:

- Record ID number (acts as a unique identifier)
- Site Name/project code
- Year
- Trench number
- Context Number
- Type (Bulk Find, Small Find, etc.)
- Material group e.g. bone
- Material type e.g. pin, or bone handled knife = bone % and metal %
- Weight
- Quantity

At a further level, subclass level attributes are specific to the material group being recorded – for example, pottery requires different fields to flint, therefore the fields to be completed will vary.

Subclass level attributes are usually completed by appropriate specialists or experts during the assessment stage of the project. This ensures finds are properly and consistently identified and that the correct information can be written up in the final report.

Occasionally, basic subclass-level quantification may be appropriate at fieldwork stage as shown by the Project Design or as directed by the Finds Supervisor during excavation. In this case record finds carefully and thoroughly – but **don't over-record**. But do feel free to flag up anything interesting.

The types of Bulk Finds for which additional on-site sorting and quantification may take place during fieldwork processing are as follows (although even brick may need further analysis to determine whether for example it might be Tudor rather than modern):

- Clay pipe (sort into stems and bowls, marked and unmarked)
- CBM (tile and brick)
- Glass (vessel and window)



Fig. 7 Chocolates are handy when entering data.

Remember that relationships link records – so if you record on the project database that a Small Find is shown on a photograph, the photographic record needs to mention that Small Find.

Finds need to be related to:

- The contexts or samples they are recovered from.
- All photographs, site drawings or sketches they are shown on.
- Any X-rays they are shown on.
- The box they are stored in.
- Any person or place they are sent to/date of return.

Appendix I – Material Groups And Types

The following material groups and categories are recommended when labelling archive boxes, bags and containers. The material group should where possible be used in conjunction with a type (e.g. 'CBM – Tile').

For Small Finds and metal finds, the find type should also be used (e.g. iron *nail*, copper alloy *brooch*, amber *bead*).

Material Groups And Types:

- Animal Bone (including teeth): all un-worked bone including fish - where possible specify animal types (e.g. Animal Bone – cow or bovine).
- Antler.
- Ceramic Building Materials: Baked and Fired clay, Brick, Tiles, Plaster, Concrete, Mortar, Opus Signinum, architectural materials.
- Building materials (including worked stone and wood).
- Unclassified.
- Copper and alloys (including brass and bronze).
- Environmental Samples: Processed flint residues, charred plant remains, faunal remains, charcoal, plant remains, mollusca, insect remains, charred foodstuff.
- Flint.
- Glass: Vessel, Window, Objects (e.g. Beads), Other, Unclassified.
- Gold and alloys.
- Human Bone (including teeth).
- Industrial residues: Includes clinker, hammer scale, slag and other waste products from metal working.
- Iron and alloys.
- Lead.
- Leather.
- Pewter.
- Pipe Clay: Clay pipe, Figurine.
- Pottery: Includes Figurines, Lamps, Crucibles – where possible specify pottery type (e.g. Pottery – Samian).
- Resin: Amber.
- Shell.
- Silver and alloys.
- Stone: Jet, Shale, Slate (specify other identified stones), Unclassified.
- Tin.
- Wood.
- Worked Bone.
- Worked Stone: Objects (e.g. tools including debitage).

Appendix Ii - Glossary

Assemblages: Where finds form a group of items deposited together at the same time, such as a coin hoard, or beads from a necklace, this is known as an 'assemblage'. It is always important to record and treat the components as a Small Finds Group, but number each item individually.

Block Lifting: A technique used to remove material remains and soil, together as one unit, for a later and more detailed excavation and processing in more controlled circumstances, such as in a laboratory. The unit should be recorded as a 'specialist sample' and related back to the appropriate record (e.g. Small Finds, Animal Bone Group).

Bulk Finds: This term is used for any material from a stratigraphic context that is recorded and bagged as a material group, e.g. pottery, flint, stone, ceramic building material (CBM), ferrous metals, glass, animal bone, clay pipe, etc. These are the materials which generally survive (depending upon the acidity/alkalinity of the soil) in the archaeological record. The categories may vary depending upon the site.

Ceramic Building Material: A term which covers brick, tile, etc.

Flotation: A method of processing bulk soil samples by using water that allows the extraction of fragile and hard-to-see objects such as charred seeds or fish bones that are essential to our understanding of diet and environment at a site but are nearly impossible to excavate in the trench. Flotation techniques are not covered by this guide.

From Samples: This is similar to bulk finds, but is used for finds recovered from 'soil samples' which are recorded and bagged as a material group. A decision on whether to regularly take soil samples may form part of the project design process. In any case, samples should be taken in certain situations, such as when recovering animal bone assemblages or when attempting to recover charred cereal grains. Samples can be processed by coarse sieving or 'flotation'.

Organic Materials: Organic materials such as wood or plant material, unless preserved in a waterlogged (anaerobic) or extremely dry (arid) environment or charred (carbonised), will decompose over time. Waterlogged materials can be found at the bottom of wells or in marshy areas whereas extremely dry materials are unlikely to be found in Britain. Processing of waterlogged or extremely dry materials is the realm of specialists and specialist equipment but should waterlogged materials be found they should immediately be sealed in polybags and kept in a dark cool place to prevent them from decay. Charred cereal grains and hazelnuts can survive in the archaeological record but due to their size would often be collected by soil sampling.

Small Finds: This is the term for items of special note, e.g. worked bone, beads, preserved items of clothing, coins, metal alloys, etc., but despite the name can be of any size. Small Finds are recorded individually and given a unique number. They should be three dimensionally recorded on site with the aid of a total station or very accurate GPS system. If

they are recovered whilst taking or processing a sample (see below) they should be recorded as coming from the sample, *not* directly from the context.

Treasure: What constitutes Treasure can be found on the PAS website <https://finds.org.uk/treasure>. Should material covered by the Treasure laws be found the Finds Supervisor and Site Director must be promptly informed.

Appendix Iv – Suggested Equipment List

Finds trays and/or strong and suitably sized PVC/rubble bags (useful for CBM)
Waterproof labels (Tyvek type)
Hole punch
Scissors
String
Permanent black marker pens
Newspaper
Kitchen roll
Tin foil
Washing up bowls
Toothbrushes and bamboo picks/wooden cocktail sticks or wooden skewers
Soft brushes for delicate dry brushing (e.g. small paint brushes)
Self grip write-on polybags (assorted sizes)
Skewer or similar pointy object to pierce polybags
Weighing scales
Magnifying glass
A ceramics reference collection is often handy for comparison and the basic identification of pottery
Ring binders
Spare forms (small finds, box index forms, etc.)
Stewart crystal storage boxes (variety of sizes)
Crystal clear small presentation cases for very small-sized Small Finds
Archive grade acid-free cardboard boxes with lids