

Assessment 2: Archaeological Database / Dataset

Construct a database or dataset of selected archaeological material / records, provide metadata statements in line with current Archaeology Data Service guidance, and a commentary explaining and justifying its structure and the categorisation / classification of the data.

The categorisation of the database / dataset collected follows the guidelines laid out in the Forum on Information Standards in Heritage (FISH) (Heritage Standards , 2023) whereby data can be described using specific terminology for dataset submission purposes covering a wide range of needs such as events, monuments, objects and time periods. This allows for data to be far more easily searchable in terms of the metadata submissions and allows for a standardised spelling and understanding. In the case of the park street material recovered for this assignment the documents referenced for the dataset compiled consist of the FISH periods list for specifying the date range of the artefacts, the FISH objects list with regards to actually describing the objects recovered and also the FISH monuments list which is used to describe what features (if applicable) the finds were recovered from.

This dataset is also compiled in line with the FAIR principals which are encouraged by the Chartered Institute For Archaeologists (CIFA) whereby archaeological data should be Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Reuseable. The material from park street is to be submitted to the Archaeological Data Service (ADS) which is done in accordance with most museum deposition guidelines to ensure standardisation (although ADS is the preferred and most often cited option for digital data deposition it is not mandatory) and which makes the data findable. Data deposited with ADS is publicly accessible and meets CoreTrustSeal accreditation requirements in addition to being accessible in different formats. The data is interoperable as it follows standardised formats such as those mentioned in FISH vocabulary guidelines to make it useable within a wider community. Datasets deposited with the ADS are widely reuseable as they come with standard metadata entry requirements and have clear usage license which is signed by the depositing organisation. (Cifa, 2016)

The database created as part of this project includes the following columns for the purposes of having a strong set of metadata to draw upon when submitted to the ADS:

ID: This is the unique identifier for the dataset as part of the standard for databases submitted to the ADS website. This allows for individual entries to be referred to by a single number.

Context: This entry refers to the context the find in question was recovered from. In cases where finds are recovered from unstratified contexts this is typically referred to either as U/S for 'unstratified' or simply as the number '0' depending on the preference of the database. For the purposes of this a numerical value has been applied.

Feature Type: This refers to what the feature is in terms of what it is drawn from. Every attempt is made to use FISH standardised terms drawn from the 'monuments' list though in rare cases where what is written on the context sheet does not match anything on the FISH terminologies then the former is entered.

Parent Context: Often referred to as the 'cut' of the feature in primary paperwork. If the find was recovered from a pit fill then this will refer to the pit fill's number though in the case of surface

deposits, unstratified contexts or other features that may not have a parent context this is given as '0' numerical value to represent this.

Small Find: The unique identifier given to individual small finds. This is distinguished from the 'ID' number mentioned earlier as not every individual find recovered from a project will be granted a small find number.

Sample: This field is used for finds that are recovered from post excavation rather than a field as part of the processing of environmental samples. When a 'flot' containing important environmental material has been sieved away the retent consisting of a typically gravelly mass will remain in a flotation tank, this is dried and sorted through to recover both artefacts and ecofacts, in the case of the former these will end up on this database and given a number in this entry to highlight it has been recovered through post excavation processes.

Quantity: The number of finds associated with this entry expressed as a numerical value

Weight: The total weight of finds associated with this entry expressed as a numerical value in grams.

Material: This entry details what the material is made from. Although there is no FISH standardised terminology for material types headland archaeology has its own internal list of material types utilised for such entries in databases that follow a standardised format such as Iron, Lead, Silver, Gold, Copper Alloy (which covers both bronze and brass) without using the elemental letterings for them (EG: Fe for Iron, Cu for copper alloy). In the case of mixed material this is referred to as 'Composite' (EG: a wooden object with a copper alloy ferrule attached)

Object: This entry on the database details what the find in question is using the FISH terminology standards for objects.

Description: This column is specifically for describing the object and often includes measurements detailing the perceived completeness of it

Spot Date: This column is where an initial date range can be given to an object either in the form of a period in line with the FISH standards for time periods or a numerical date range eg: 1345ad – 1485ad.

Period: This column is used to give an entry a date following analysis of the object. This follows the FISH standards for time periods and where an object for one reason or another cannot be dated it is marked with a uniform 'UNDATED' in this column as a standard.

Box: This column is utilised for archive purposes both for headland's internal archiving team and also to correspond with the box number granted at the time of deposition with the relevant museum so that the box containing this entry can be identified.

Notes: A column which is generally not drawn upon for use in extrapolating data in tables through excel / Microsoft access, this entry is used to highlight any information on the item(s) or can draw upon specific details relating to the conservation / illustration sections or include additional textual information elaborating on any of the other columns such as if a 'composite' object turns up in the material column it can specify what composites they are.

Conservation: This column notes any entries that may be of particular interest from a conservation point of view. This can be something as simple as additional cleaning such as a coin that could be further cleaned to help identify text or a bust of a monarch or it can be for more specialist treatment

such as Polyethelene Glycol (PEG) treatment for wooden artefacts. This can be simplified to a simple Yes / No entry with further details being included in the notes column.

Illustration: A column reserved for highlighting objects for illustration. This is primarily for internal purposes and further details for specific illustration requests can be added in the notes column.

Bibliography

CIfA, 2016. *FAIR Principles*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.archaeologists.net/digdigital/standards#>

[Accessed 17 January 2024].

Heritage Standards , 2023. *FISH Vocabularies*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.heritage-standards.org.uk/fish-vocabularies/>

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