

ENGLISH MUSEUMS AND THE COLLECTING OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL ARCHIVES

A Mapping Exercise by the Society of Museum Archaeologists

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Purpose

- 1 The purpose of this mapping exercise was to obtain information about the collecting areas of English museums which accept archaeological excavation archives, in order to create an interactive map.

The survey and methodology

- 2 Responses to the survey questionnaires were obtained from 141 museums or museum services from the original sample of 145, a response rate of 98%.
- 3 Of these respondents 65% provided copies of policies for the project archive.
- 4 Staff in some smaller museums are unfamiliar with the terminology of "archaeological archives", despite the fact that they hold such material.
- 5 The sample surveyed did not provide information for all English local authority areas so additional museums were contacted by telephone or e-mail to identify coverage of excluded areas.

Collecting areas revealed by the survey

- 6 (89.5%) of the respondent museums actively collect archaeological archives.
- 7 Once follow up research had been completed to supplement the survey information, it was possible to match collecting activity to local authority areas. This indicates that a substantial part of England is covered, but gaps remain and some material remains with county units or contractors for want of space.
- 8 The *North East*, the *South West* and *Yorkshire & the Humber* are covered but much Yorkshire material remains with the Yorkshire Archaeological Trust.
- 9 In *Eastern England* Bedfordshire and Norfolk are covered. So is most of Essex, apart from Basildon, and substantial archives from Braintree cannot be housed by the museum there. Parts of Hertfordshire are covered by small independent museums which would find it difficult to take substantial archives. The western third of Suffolk and the town of Ipswich are covered but much of the county is not. In Cambridgeshire the County Council is creating a special new store for both the county's records and its archaeological archives.
- 10 In the *East Midlands* Derbyshire, Leicestershire and Rutland are covered. There are difficulties in Nottinghamshire, where no museums take archives from Ashfield, Gedling or Mansfield, and only limited material can be taken in Bassetlaw and Newark. In Northamptonshire only the museums in Kettering and Northampton collect, and then only from their own local authority areas. Much material remains with contractors.
- 11 The whole of *Greater London* is covered by the Museum of London, but it works in partnership the small number of London Borough museums which are able to take in archaeological archives.
- 12 Most of the *North West* is covered, though some archives in Cheshire and Greater Manchester are managed by county units rather than museums.

- 13 In the *South East* Buckinghamshire, Berkshire, Hampshire, Oxfordshire, Surrey and Sussex are covered. However, the Kent districts of Ashfield, Sevenoaks, Swale, Thanet, Tonbridge & Malling, Tunbridge Wells are not covered and the museums, covering Canterbury, Dover, Maidstone and Rochester, cannot take the substantial archives which remain with contractors
- 14 In the *West Midlands*, Herefordshire, Shropshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire and Worcestershire are covered. The Birmingham City Museum now only collects from within the City boundary, leaving problems for Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton, whose museums cannot accommodate archives. Solihull has no archaeological coverage of any kind.

Approaches to collecting

- 14 Museums which collect, whether part of the sample surveyed by questionnaire or by telephone and email, work primarily within the local authority area that they serve, or collect from a specific site.
- 15 In some counties museums have agreed upon collecting areas to ensure co-operative coverage of the entire county. This appears to be the case in Durham, Essex, Somerset, Surrey, Sussex and Wiltshire. Elsewhere the existence of a county museum service ensures coverage; this applies to Hampshire, Lancashire, Lincolnshire, Norfolk and Oxfordshire. In the Tees area, the local authorities have continued to fund the archaeological service after the abolition of the metropolitan county and this houses the archives for the area.
- 16 In some cases collecting practice is related to sites already represented in a collection; this affects collecting practice at Tullie House in Carlisle, the British Museum, some Yorkshire metropolitan boroughs and the relationship between Oxfordshire Museums and the Ashmolean Museum.
- 17 Oxfordshire has already established a major museum service store and is planning to develop it further. In a number of counties the potential for creating a major store with public access to take such material, in some cases to house the county's records as well, has begun to be considered and reports and proposals have been prepared for museums in the Black Country, Kent, Northamptonshire, Suffolk and York. Only in Cambridgeshire has funding been identified and work begun on creating a county store of this kind. In addition, the Sussex Archaeological Society is raising funds for a join store for Fishbourne and Chichester Museums.

Curatorial and conservation skills

- 18 Levels of expertise remain low. 100 (71%) questionnaire respondents have curators with archaeological expertise, but 19 of these have less than 1 FTE post of this kind. 29% of the respondents have no archaeological expertise.
- 19 Conservators with archaeological expertise are employed by 37 (26%) of the questionnaire respondents but 7 of these (5%) have less than 1 FTE post. Many use external bodies and freelancers for advice and contracted work
- 20 38 (27%) of the respondents have neither curatorial nor conservation expertise in this field.

I.0 INTRODUCTION

This Survey was commissioned in September 2002 by the Society of Museum Archaeologists. Funding for the project was provided by English Heritage.

The research was carried out by Val Bott, a museum consultant. She was supported by a steering group which comprised Amanda Loaring, Hedley Swain (who oversaw the project) and Philip Wise. Much of the work was completed during the autumn of 2002, but further research into collecting areas not covered by respondents to the questionnaire survey was undertaken during the early weeks of 2003.

The success of the research was heavily dependant upon a large number of busy curators finding the time to complete the questionnaire, respond to follow-up questions and supply policy documents. The steering group is enormously grateful to all of those who contributed material to the project.

2.0 THE BRIEF

This mapping project builds upon *A Survey of Archaeological Archives in England*, a joint Museums & Galleries Commission/English Heritage project, published in 1998.

That study looked at both museums and excavation units and revealed that

"museums in England do not provide a complete coverage for the whole country. An already patchy coverage has been made more complex by local government reorganisation and there are a number of regions where there are no suitable museums to accept archives".

One of the recommendations of the *Survey* was that museum collecting areas should be defined based upon existing collections and expertise, resources and organisational viability.

The same issues arose in the review of the Treasure Act published by the Department of Culture Media and Sport in 2001, and was highlighted more recently in Kathy Perrin's paper *Archaeological Archives: Documentation, Access and Deposition, A Way Forward*, published by English Heritage in March 2002 .

This new survey, carried out during October to December 2002, updates what we know about collecting areas and collecting practice, as well as the availability of archaeological expertise (both curators and conservators) to museums holding such material. The research was carried out by Val Bott, and overseen by a steering group chaired by Hedley Swain.

The key objectives of the brief were the following:

- 1 to identify archaeological collecting areas for English museums and, by so doing, to develop an actively curated database of collecting areas and a map showing museum collecting areas,
- 2 to identify areas where there is no museum currently collecting archaeology or areas where there is more than one museums collecting archaeology,
- 3 to provide a list and a library of existing museum collecting and disposal policies for archaeology, including archive deposition guidelines,
- 4 to provide a list of English museums which employ archaeological curators and conservators, and
- 5 To produce a report listing the results of the survey for publication by the Society of Museum Archaeologists.

This Report is accompanied by an electronic map-based information resource, prepared by the Archaeological Data Service at York University, which relates collecting practice to local government boundaries, as revealed by the research.

3.0 THE SURVEY & METHODOLOGY

3.1 A short questionnaire was sent to 145 museum addresses in England which had been agreed with the steering group. The 1998 Survey helped in the identification of those museum most likely to be collecting actively. The text of the survey questionnaire appears as Appendix 5. One museum proved to be a part of a larger service also included in the sample, so it was inappropriate for it to send a separate return. Two museums were closed to visitors: Boston Guildhall Museum and the University Museum at Nottingham. Both provided information, however, and have been retained in the sample for analysis. The final sample on which the questionnaire survey is based therefore totalled 144 museums or museum services.

3.2 The response rate

About a quarter of the questionnaires were returned very quickly and before the deadline given. Since the highest possible return was essential, those which had not been returned were followed up immediately after the deadline had passed with telephone, postal or email reminders. In some cases second and even third copies of the questionnaire were supplied. Responses were eventually obtained from 141 museums or museum services.

3.3 Though questionnaire surveys often result in a response rate of around 35%, this approach, with its short simple questionnaire and the personal follow-up, proved to be very effective. The result was an actual response rate of 98%.

3.4 Failure to reply

Of the three that failed to reply, the relevant staff at the Horsham Museum and the University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology at Cambridge reacted with hostility when contacted by telephone. The Bexley Museum, in the London Borough of the same name, was awaiting the appointment of a new curator and had no member of staff able to complete the form.

3.5 Policies and guidelines

Respondents were asked to supply copies of policies relating to acquisition and disposal of archaeological material and guidelines on the deposition or transfer of archaeological archives. 92 (65%) provided such papers; most have general rather than specific acquisition and disposal policies.

3.6 Respondents were also asked to define the area from which they collected. Some respondents provided specific descriptions of the areas from which they collected, relating them to local authority boundaries as requested and some supplied maps. A small number gave less precise descriptions, such as "within a radius of 12 miles". This presented problems in the compilation of the maps, and follow-up telephone conversations and emails were needed to define the local authority areas or parishes concerned. Material relating to collecting areas from these sources has enabled the map to be created (Appendix 2).

3.7 Accuracy

A small number of respondents only vaguely understood the meaning of the term "archaeological archives", assuming that the survey related to papers rather than artefacts. One said that they took them into the museum library, for example.

Others wrote descriptions which suggested that they only took chance finds though they ticked the "yes" box for archive collecting. The analysis of responses has used the respondents' "yes" or "no" responses as given, unless other evidence made clear that this was an error.

In addition, there was some confusion about acquisition and disposal policies. Many respondents whose museums do not have specific archaeological collecting policies said that this was so, but also sent extracts showing the extent of the policy in relation to archaeology. Some sent very full documents, with detailed guidelines on deposition. The tables in Appendix I attempt to show these variations. The policies and guidelines now form part of the project archive together with the returned questionnaires.

3.8 Completeness

The survey provides information which shows archaeological archive collecting practice for a very large area of England. Because it was based upon a limited sample, however, some local authority areas were not covered and the mapping exercise was incomplete. To resolve this difficulty a short follow-up study was carried out to determine which museums, if any, collect for these omitted areas, though full information for these museums was not obtained. The information resulting from this element of the project is included in the commentary in Section 4.0 of this report, though it does not form part of the formal analysis of the returned questionnaires. The local authority listing in Appendix 4 summarises the information obtained from both elements of the research.

3.9 Discussions with museums and archaeological units during this study and other sources such as local authority web-sites and professional publications revealed that in some areas schemes for new or improved joint storage are being considered. A brief description of these has also been provided in Section 4.0.

4.0 MUSEUMS ACTIVELY COLLECTING ARCHAEOLOGICAL ARCHIVES

4.1 Questionnaire respondents collecting archaeological archives

Table 1.1 shows that a substantial number of the respondents, 129 out of 141 (89.5%), say that they are actively collecting archaeological archives. This is a high proportion of the total but it was not unexpected, as the sample for the study was defined as being those institutions most likely to be collecting.

Table 1 Questionnaire respondents collecting archaeological archives		
Yes	129	89.5%
No	13	10.5%

4.2 Questionnaire respondents not collecting archives

Of the thirteen respondents which are not collecting archaeological archives, several gave reasons for not doing so. Some specified that they collected only stray finds. Most did not have accommodation in which they could store bulky archives. In the London Boroughs most museums do not collect archaeological archives not simply because of lack of resources, but also because the Museum of London provides the best means of preserving them.

Table 2 lists the museums/museum services in this group, together with their descriptions of collecting practice in relation to their holdings.

4.3 Gaps in collecting

The maps of collecting areas have been prepared in relation to the English regions. The regional agencies may provide advice and support from and, with the proposed museum "hubs" for each region, could broker future partnerships to manage archaeological archives. Once assembled on draft maps, the information revealed a series of areas where either no museum is collecting or no information had been obtained about collecting responsibilities.

4.4 Before collecting practice across England could be mapped fully further information was needed. Another short study was carried out during late January and February 2003 by means of web searches and telephone interviews. Museums and archaeological units were contacted in areas where there appeared from the questionnaire survey to be no active collecting of archaeological archives. As a result it has become clear that some other local authorities are covered by museums which were not included in the original sample, and that some local authorities with museums are covered by other museum which offer a more appropriate home for the archaeological archives. In addition, some county field archaeology units and joint stores provide accommodation for this material.

Table 2 Questionnaire respondents with archaeological collections which do not collect archaeological archives

Museum name	Collecting practice
Boston Guildhall Museum, Lincolnshire	Museum closed for refurbishment. Lincoln City & County Museum collects for the area by agreement
Calderdale Museums, West Yorkshire	Archaeological collections on long-term loan to Kirklees Museums. By formal agreement neither museum collects archives from Calderdale
Chertsey Museum, Runnymede District	Museum does not collect archaeological archives
Church Farm House Museum, L B Barnet	The museum holds 9 Roman items from Hendon on behalf of Hendon & District Archaeological Society and does not collect archaeological archives
Dartford Borough Museum, Kent	Currently moving collections to new store; not able to accommodate archaeological archives, though the local archaeological group has substantial holdings which may need a home in the future. Would like to see a county archaeological archive
Greenwich Borough Museum, LB Greenwich	Although the museum does not have the storage accommodation to accept archives from current excavations, it continues to acquire stray finds from the borough
Keswick Museum, Allerdale District Council	Only passive archaeological collecting, not archives or results of fieldwork. Discussions are underway on a Cumbria-wide policy
Borough Museum, Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffordshire	Potteries Museum manages archives for the whole county; this museum has items on loan for display
Norton Priory Museum	Curates only the trust's own collections from excavations on site in 1970s and '80s
Museum of Oxford, Oxford City	Oxfordshire Museum manages archives for the city; this museum has items on loan for display
Museum of Richmond	Does not collect archaeological archives
Museum of South Somerset, Yeovil	Collects individual finds and small groups of items from South Somerset area
World of Glass, St Helen's	Does not collect archaeological archives

- 4.5 Analysis of both elements of the mapping exercise suggests the following patterns of collecting:
- 4.5.1 **East Midlands**
Derbyshire, Leicestershire and Lincolnshire are covered. In Nottinghamshire the districts of Mansfield and Newark & Sherwood collect archives on a small scale, but it appears that no museum is collecting from the districts of Ashfield and Gedling. Apart from Northampton Museum, no others in Northamptonshire were surveyed. Kettering Museum will take some small archives, but decides each one case by case. The county archaeology unit is working slowly towards the creation of a joint county archive with the districts, but much material remains with contractors for the time being. Rutland is still sorting out its disaggregation arrangements with Leicestershire.
- 4.5.2 **Eastern England**
The Museum & Archaeological Service in Norfolk cares for the county's archives and Bedfordshire is covered by the museums in Bedford and Luton by agreement. Most of Essex is covered by agreements brokered through the county's museums group. Basildon district is not covered, however, and there is a substantial amount of material from Braintree with contractors, which the museum may not be able to house. From the survey it appeared that no archives were being collected from Cambridgeshire since the only museum surveyed, the University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, did not respond. However, Cambridgeshire County Council has announced the construction of a new resource centre which will house both the county record office's collections and the county's archaeological archives.
- 4.5.3 Ipswich Museum collects from within the local authority boundary, and historic West Suffolk (that is St Edmundsbury, Forest Heath and parts of Mid Suffolk and Babergh) is covered by the museum at Bury St Edmunds. The Suffolk Archaeological Service (SAS) accepts archives from the rest of the county if it has excavated them, but the parts of Babergh and Mid Suffolk, and the whole of Suffolk Coastal and Waveney districts have no museum coverage. The SAS staff are developing a scheme for a joint store alongside the rural life museum in Stowmarket for both record office and archaeological archives collections. In Hertfordshire the districts of North Herts, East Herts, St Albans, Stevenage and Watford are covered but Broxbourne, Dacorum, Hertsmere and Three Rivers have small independent museums which, though willing to consider acquisition of archives, have limited accommodation for this purpose.
- 4.5.4 The whole of **Greater London** is covered by the Museum of London, which works with those London Borough museums that also accept archives.
- 4.5.5 In the **North East** a number of local authorities were not covered by the questionnaire survey. However, Darlington is covered by County Durham and special arrangements were made on the abolition of the metropolitan authority so that excavation archives from Middlesbrough, Redcar & Cleveland and Stockton on Tees go to Tees Archaeology, a unit funded jointly by the districts. Thus all local authorities in the region are covered.
- 4.5.6 In the **North West**, there are some overlaps and some gaps. Both the National Museums & Galleries on Merseyside (NMGM) and the Manchester Museum say they collect from "the North West". The Lancaster Museum collects from a wider area than Lancaster alone, overlapping with the Lancashire County Museum, but

Lancashire is covered. Merseyside local authorities are also covered by a combination of NMGM and local museums. Tullie House Museum concentrates on Carlisle but also continues to take in material sites elsewhere in Cumbria which are already represented in their collection. These respondents report that in practice there are no real difficulties as a result.

- 4.5.7 The Keswick Museum collects other material from Allerdale District but does not take in archives. The Districts of Barrow-in-Furness, Copeland (Whitehaven Museum) and Eden (Penrith Museum) in Cumbria were not included in the questionnaire survey. The museums for Copeland and Eden accept archives but have very limited space available for this purpose, while the Dock Museum in Barrow in Furness does not collect archaeological archives (historically Barrow has been covered by the Lancaster Museum).
- 4.5.8 Archaeological archives from the Cheshire districts of Congleton, Crewe & Nantwich, Macclesfield and Vale Royal, which were not surveyed, are housed by the Cheshire Archaeological Store which continues to accept archives from excavations in these areas. The Manchester Museum takes material from excavations by what is now the University Field Archaeology Unit. However, it accepts archives from the City of Manchester (which has no other suitable museum) and from Alderley Edge in Cheshire.
- 4.5.9 In the **South East** Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Hampshire and Oxfordshire are covered. Surrey is covered because the Guildford Museum acts as the museum of last resort, while the Sussex Archaeological Society seems to take a similar role for parts of East and West Sussex.. While Horsham Museum failed to return a questionnaire, its curator has confirmed that it collects from the whole of Horsham District but can only take small archives. Eastbourne was not surveyed but most archaeological archives from this district are held either by the local archaeological society or by the Sussex Archaeological Society. At Fishbourne a new archaeological store with visitor facilities is planned by Sussex Archaeological Society and Chichester Museums, with HLF funding (a stage 2 bid is now being completed).
- 4.5.10 In Kent, Canterbury, Dartford, Dover and Maidstone were surveyed and have museums which accept archives. However, Rochester Museum (Medway), which was not surveyed, holds one of the four biggest archaeological collections in the county (with Dover, Canterbury and Maidstone). The recent study¹ of archaeology in Kent was generously made available for this project in draft form. This indicates that more than one third of Kent museums' collecting policies "either do not include archaeology or provide only partial coverage of the local authority area in which the museum is located." Substantial archives from excavations in Ashford, Swale and Thanet have no potential home; museums in the districts of Tunbridge Wells, Sevenoaks, Ashford and Tonbridge & Malling together hold only 1% of the total volume of Kent archaeological collections.
- 4.5.11 In the **South West** Cornwall is covered by the Royal Cornwall Museum and Devon, Dorset, Gloucestershire, Somerset and Wiltshire are covered by means of mutual agreement between the area's museums. Torbay and Weymouth & Portland were not sent questionnaires. However, Torquay Museum, run by the Torquay

¹ *The Collected Archaeology of Kent, a Survey and Review*, Museum of London Archaeology Service Feb 2003, for Kent County Council: Museums.

Natural History Society, collects from Torbay, and archaeological archives from Weymouth go to the County Museum in Dorchester rather than Weymouth Museum. All local authority areas in the region are covered.

- 4.5.12 In the **West Midlands** most local authority museums collect archives from within their local government boundaries. Stoke-on-Trent covers Staffordshire, while the counties of Herefordshire, Shropshire, Warwickshire and Worcestershire are also covered. However, the fact that Birmingham City Museum no longer accepts archives from, Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton has created a problem for the museums in these local authorities. As a result they have recently commissioned a study to consider how this issue (and that of storage for the record office collections for these areas) may best be resolved. In addition, Solihull has no archaeology service of any kind and neither Birmingham Museums nor the Warwickshire Museum will take in archives for that local authority.
- 4.5.13 The whole of the **Yorkshire & Humber** region is covered, primarily because the Yorkshire Museum aims to act as a museum of last resort. In practice, however, much Yorkshire material remains with the Yorkshire Archaeological Trust (YAT). In this area plans have been prepared for a joint store for many of the region's collections, including those of local and national museums, the record office and YAT, but this has not yet been funded or implemented.
- 4.6 A map of the UK's local authorities appears in Appendix 3 of this report, and all are listed in Appendix 4 with the bodies accepting archives from each one if known. This information has been prepared for the production of an interactive map by the Archaeological Data Service at York University to make possible on-line searching.
- 4.7 **Factors influencing collecting areas of respondent museums**
Some respondents simply collect from within the boundaries of the local authority which owns and funds the museum or museum service; while this practice is an obvious one for local authority museums, some independent museums also use this approach. The changes in local government of the late 1990s have influenced this. In many cases current collecting areas relate to the new local authorities. Some museums, however, collect from only a part of their new authority's area while others continue to collect from a wider area by agreement with neighbouring authorities. In Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland the complex process of disaggregating collections is still in progress, but includes service level agreements as well as the definition of collecting areas. In some cases policy changes have resulted in a reduction in the collecting areas of larger museums, as for example in Birmingham and Carlisle. This has left neighbouring authorities without an appropriate home for archaeological archives from excavations within their boundaries.
- 4.8 From the descriptions of collecting areas provided in the questionnaires it is possible to identify some counties where responsibility for archaeological archive collecting has been agreed between the Registered museums able to take it on. This is evident in Lancashire, Somerset, Wiltshire, Essex and Sussex,, and in some returns respondents have expressly mentioned such agreements. In other counties, such as Nottinghamshire and Yorkshire, the descriptions show evidence of overlaps and, though some respondents suggest that there is co-operation, others in the same area say that they would welcome more formal arrangements. This issue is covered in

some detail in the recent studies of archaeological collecting carried out for the Yorkshire Museums Council² and the Kent Museums Group.

- 4.9 Some respondents included references to their historic collections where they influenced current collecting practice. This is an area where overlaps are most likely to occur, given the need to keep material from specific sites together. A number of museums accept archives from outside their current collecting areas where they relate to a site already represented in their collections. This is the case with Tullie House, Carlisle, is common in Yorkshire museums services and influences the relationship between the Ashmolean Museum and Oxfordshire Museums. The British Museum only accepts archaeological archives from English sites for which it already holds excavated material.
- 4.10 Discussions with both questionnaire respondents and the organisations contacted after the questionnaire survey had been completed revealed progress in a number of areas on the development of joint storage. This was considered as a possible approach to future care and management of these archives following the 1998 Survey and investigated further by the MGC with the assistance of the same consultants. At that time it was thought that the interest in regional development agencies and regional assemblies might influence thinking on the provision of some regional facilities such as storage for collections. In practice the regional agencies for museums, libraries and archives are only now being implemented and solutions to storage/access problems appear more likely to be found on a county basis.
- 4.11 The Museum of London has created an HLF-funded store for Greater London's archaeological archives, alongside its existing collections store in Hackney. Though this is by far the largest collection of archaeological archives in the country, it may still offer a model for others. The large project aiming to house museum and record office collections in York, including those of the National Railway Museum and the York Archaeological Trust as well as the then local authority museum collections, and estimated to cost over £25 million, was developed. However, it has been put on hold for the time being as the City's museums find their feet after transfer to a new charitable trust.
- 4.12 Museums and archaeological units in Suffolk, Northamptonshire, Somerset and Kent have been considering the provision of large stores for their areas. Others are beginning to do so, including museums in Dorset. Some have commissioned studies from external bodies. The process is slow, funding is limited and there remains anxiety about removing collections from existing museums and finding fair ways to pay revenue costs for new facilities. There is greater recognition that joint solutions may offer economies of scale and open up access to the stored material. During this mapping exercise, Cambridge-shire announced a PFI-funded store to be built just outside Cambridge to house both the county's records and its archaeological archives. This imaginative project is planned with good quality access in mind. Full details can be found on the county's web-site at cambridgeshire.gov.uk/hrcc. If successful it may also provide a model for others to follow.

² *Increasing Antiquity: Archaeological collections and collecting in Yorkshire*, a report on the Yorkshire Museums Council's Archaeological Collections Project, Blaise Vynner, 2000

5.0 CURATORIAL AND CONSERVATION SKILLS

5.1 The questionnaire sought information about the number of archaeologists and conservators who managed and cared for the archaeological archives held by the respondent museums. A full list of respondents, together with details of their access to curatorial and conservation expertise for archaeological collections, is given in Appendix 2. This chapter provides a short analysis of this information. No further information about specialist expertise was sought from the additional museums consulted about collecting practice.

5.2 Archaeological expertise in respondent museums

5.2.1 Though a large proportion of respondents currently accept archaeological archives, they do not all have curators with archaeological expertise on their staff. 100 respondents (71%) employed curators with relevant expertise, though 19 (13.5% of the sample) of these represented less than one full-time post. The 1998 Survey showed 91 staff in 92 museums, but 31% of those museums had no archaeological staff at all.

5.2.2 The most common descriptions of limited access to expertise referred to postholders with relevant experience and qualifications who were employed primarily or wholly upon other duties, most often as the manager of the museum or museum service or as a curator which much wider responsibilities for collections than archaeology alone.

5.2.3 An analysis of access to expertise by region does not reveal any particularly strong results. Only 3 (25) of the 12 small museums in London who responded have archaeological expertise on their staff, though 8 (60%) of these claimed to collect archives, often in a limited way. The fourth respondent, the Museum of London,

Table 3 Archaeological expertise in museums by region								
	Respondents with Archaeology curators		Respondents with Archaeology conservators		Respondents with no specialist staff		Total respondents per region	
REGION	No	% in region	No	% in region	No	% in region	No	% in region
East Midlands	6	66	4	44	3	33	9	100
Eastern England	12	71	6	35	5	29	17	100
London	4	38	1	14	7	50	13	100
North East	3	43	1	14	3	43	7	100
North West	12	75	5	31	3	19	16	100
South East	20	77	8	31	7	27	26	100
South West	20	87	5	22	3	13	23	100
West Midlands	9	75	3	25	3	25	12	100
Yorkshire & the Humber	12	75	2	13	4	25	16	100
National bodies	2	100	2	100	0	100	2	100
Overall Totals %	100	71	37	26	38	27	141	100

which has very substantial collections of archaeological archives, has 6 curators to care for them. In the South West by contrast 20 (87%) of the respondents had archaeological curators, while over 70% of respondents Eastern England, the North West, the South East, the South West, the West Midlands and Yorkshire had them.

- 5.2.4 The recent Kent survey examined levels of available expertise in more detail. It identified just over 2 full-time equivalent archaeological curatorial posts for the whole of the county's museum, confirming the low level of qualified and experienced staff caring for these important collections.

5.3 **Conservation expertise in respondent museums**

- 5.3.1 37 (26%) employed conservators, of whom 7 (5%) represented less than one full-time post.
- 5.3.2 38 (27%) of the respondents had neither an archaeological curator nor a conservator.
- 5.3.3 A number of respondents found advice and support through qualified volunteers, their regional museums council or freelance specialists. The conservation centres in Merseyside, Lincolnshire and Wiltshire and English Heritage's centre at Fort Cumberland were quoted by a number of respondents and appear to provide a valued and important service. More centres of this kind may be needed to support other regions where respondents usually use "freelance" or "external" conservation advice.

6.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 In broad terms, the situation has improved since the 1998 Survey. The detailed follow up work to the questionnaire survey has made it possible to allocate responsibility for collecting for the majority of local authority areas in England. Only a few areas still have overlaps between museums, especially where old-fashioned concepts of collecting areas are used, such "within a radius of x miles of the museum".
- 6.2 In practical terms, it is clear that there are still problems despite the good intentions of so many museums and museum services. The greatest problems remain much the same - the lack of appropriate storage and the absence of archaeological expertise across the country.
- 6.3 An interesting development, which may contribute to future solutions to these problems, is the increased and increasing interest in large, usually county-wide stores with public access. The pioneers of this approach were Oxfordshire, which is considering an extension to its Standlake store, and the Museum of London, which had the biggest archaeological archive in the country. Many of those interviewed expressed enthusiasm for such a solution, especially on a county basis. In those counties like Kent, where there has been substantial development-related excavation in the last decade, the situation is close to crisis; in others, such as Cambridgeshire, which has no county museum service, a solution has been found which will house the county's records together with archaeological archives.
- 6.4 There is good awareness of the issues involved amongst most museum people involved in the care of archaeological archive collections, and a will to find solutions. The biggest problem remains funding, not only for the capital developments which would provide the necessary premises but also for the running costs of such stores where local authorities will have to work closely together.