C.6 Events

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[MIDAS](#) defines a diverse range of activities as events, all involving the collection of information or judgements about the monuments at a particular location. [ALGAO](#) has agreed a more precise definition of events as being 'A single episode of primary data collection over a discrete area of land. This event can only consist of one investigative technique and is a unique entity in time and space' ([Bourn 1999](#)).

All events have the following unique characteristics:

- **They involve some form of activity or work**: Under the ALGAO definition this involves collection of primary data in the field. This includes activities aimed at yielding either positive or negative archaeological results and that collect data about artefacts, ecofacts, features or landscapes as a by-product. In addition to these activities the MIDAS definition includes activities involving the interpretation of primary data and those involving management or interpretation of the site.
- **An activity is undertaken in relation to a defined geographic area**: For example, the area of an excavation trench or survey, the area covered by an aerial photo or a series of evaluation trenches.
- **An activity is undertaken at a fixed moment in time**: All events are unique and once completed their exact circumstances can never be repeated. However, although the date of modern events is normally known, the precise date of historical events can be more difficult to identify.
- **An activity is undertaken by a person or organisation**: All events are carried out by specific individuals who bring to the activity their personal skills and experience. Again, although identifying the individuals responsible for organising a modern event is normally easy, this is not the case with past events.

When creating event records HER managers should bear in mind the following points:

Negative events: Some archaeological surveys, evaluation and other investigations take place but find no evidence for human activity (referred to as negative evidence). However, information about the methods and techniques used and the circumstances in which these events occurred is valuable to archaeologists planning subsequent events on the same or adjacent sites. Therefore, it is recommended practice to create event records whether or not the event produces evidence for human activity on the site. For example, a watching brief that produces no results should be recorded as an event, as would a watching brief in which archaeological deposits are observed. Negative events are equally as important in evaluating the archaeological resource as events that find traces of human activity and both should be recorded with the same rigour.

Events carried out for purposes other than archaeological or architectural investigation: Events such as aerial surveys or geotechnical test pits are often carried out for purposes other than archaeological investigation. However, such activities can also produce useful information: for example aerial photographs taken for map-making reveal crop-marks and earthworks, cores taken for geological purposes contain palaeobotanical remains and sediments. Events which produce results that are useful to archaeological or historical investigations are worth recording.

Projects: A project may involve different techniques of survey or excavation carried out at different times, by different people/organisations on different pieces of land. For example, a programme of

research into a hill fort and its hinterland, such as at Danebury, may span a period of years and involve several excavation seasons, geophysical and aerial surveys and programmes of field-walking, As each of these activities is carried out at a distinct time and place and by a particular organisation, a series of related event records should be created and possibly linked together as a project.

Interpretation of primary data[#](#)

Much research involves interpretation of primary data collected during one or more events. For example, aerial-photographic interpretation, desk-based assessments and documentary research all involve examination of primary data and produce secondary sources such as plans and reports. Source records should be created in HER databases (see [C.8](#)) for any air-photo transcriptions, plans or reports that are produced as a result of this research. These source records may then be linked to any associated monument records thus enabling the materials to be retrieved for future reference and further research.

As well as creating a source record, it is also useful to record information about the act of interpretation itself. Details about the person or organisation that carried out the work, when and in what circumstances, are of value in assessing the validity of the interpretation in future. Although activities involving the interpretation of data (whether primary or secondary) do not fall within the ALGAO definition of an event, they are included in the MIDAS definition. HER managers may wish to record 'Interpretation events' in their databases but alternatively might incorporate a description of how the source was created in the text of the source record.