SESSION ABSTRACT

What is Buildings Archaeology, and how can we expect others to value what we do? It is a sub-topic within the wider archaeological discipline, although buildings are an integral part of how landscapes and settlements have developed since the medieval period. We use the same principles of stratigraphy, the same techniques of survey and photography, the same methods of intrusive investigation, and yet Buildings Archaeology is often placed on the periphery of the archaeological profession. Our role is viewed as being to record, and not to discover. Thereby our findings are rarely reported in standard archaeological media.

This seminar aims to engage with the question of how we can better integrate with the wider archaeological profession, to encourage greater collaboration, and, as an extension, how we can promote buildings archaeology to the wider conservation industry and for others involved in planning for and discovering places.
Buildings Archaeology is often seen as one of only recording but that doesn’t make that record any less important nor does it diminish its ability to allow for new discoveries.

Today I’m going to be talking about what the Archaeology Data Service is and how it fits into the archaeological profession in the UK, how it accepts data, what types of data it gets, what all of that means for built heritage, and the implications of all of that for re-use.
The archaeology data service is based at the university of York and was established in 1996, 6 years after Tim Berners-Lee developed the world wide web and two years before Google.

ADS is the only certified digital repository in the UK for heritage data, with over 20 years of experience supporting research, learning and teaching with free, high quality and dependable digital resources. Over those years we have gained the trust of the archaeology community through our policies and guides as well as projects like OASIS, which more counties are listing as a requirement for Historic Building Recordings.
There are three main ingest methods to get your data into our archive: OASIS, ADS-easy, and directly to an archivist through some kind of physical medium. These methods allow for differences in workflows, technological experience, infrastructure, budgets, and individual/organisational preferences.
Each ingest method allows for different data to be deposited. OASIS for example only accepts documents, whereas ADS-easy allows for all of these data types to be uploaded except for 3D data and models.
I’m going to focus on OASIS.

The overall aim of OASIS is to provide an online index to the mass of archaeological grey literature created in the UK and to help in the flow of information from data producers, such as contracting units and community groups, through to local and national data managers, such as Historic Environment Records (HERs) and National Historic Environment Records (eg. Canmore, Coflein, National Heritage List for England) and receiving repositories such as museums and archives.
OASIS is an online form used to record event level metadata for fieldwork.

These records can then be shared for validation with HERs and NMRs, its then archived and preserved by the ADS.

These records are then disseminated for wider consumption through portals like the ADS Library or online indexes such as ArchSearch and Heritage Gateway.

Best of all, its free to use for both those preserving their records and those reading those same records.
OASIS – issues and corrections

• Problems with workflows
  • Backlogs in records being reviewed
  • Data input not optimised
  • It was created in 2004, over 15 years ago

• Corrections and changes
  • Review, survey of user needs and redesign 2015-2018
  • Redevelopment has been completed
  • Users are now being invited and moved into the new system

That said the OASIS IV has issues. It’s over 15 years old and not optimised for things like built heritage.

As such a review was created to see what improvements were needed and a new OASIS was created based on those findings.
For those who may not be familiar with OASIS IV, this is what it looks like. It was good for when it was created but current technologies allow for a much better system.
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That’s where OASIS V comes in. This version of OASIS is entering its first review period to see how its meeting the communities needs.

OASIS V has been updated to allow for better reporting of current practices as well as just making the form easier to use. The transfer of reports to the public domain is easier and editing of these reports requires significantly less back and forth with reviewing bodies and the ADS.

Additionally, Built Heritage has a form that has been created specifically for them. The hope is that if the form is easier to use, more people will use it. This will in turn increase the visibility of built heritage within the wider archaeological profession. The more reports that are out in the in the public domain, the easier it is for collaboration and visibility of this important subset of the archaeological profession.
I’m now going to quickly go through OASIS V and highlight ways that it’s been tailored for built heritage. Please note that this will be specific to England. OASIS complements and encourages the continued reporting of fieldwork to the wider public through Archaeology Scotland’s annual publication – *Discovery and excavation in Scotland* (DES). As such, OASIS has a Scotland specific workflow that I will not be showing in this presentation, though it is similar.

Firstly, an organisation is created within OASIS V. This organisation has two types of users, admin and general. Admin can see and edit/approve all records within an organisation while general users can only edit their own records though they can see all of an organisation’s records once approved.

From here, it can be reviewed before being released into the ADS Library and beyond.
This is what the new home screen looks like for the individual and the organisation.
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You will have a status bar on the side that will show what sections of the form have been completed.
From there, the activity type has been specifically modified for Built Heritage to only ask for things that a buildings archaeologist would be expected to work with and other parts have been removed.
We’ve improved the location section to help reduce the number of errors when reporting where a project took place.
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The work that was done on site has been tailored to built heritage when it comes to the types of tests that may have been carried out.
We’ve added checks for when you upload a report. These checks will scan the report for things like the report title, author surname, publication date, and site name. Hopefully this will help as an additional check that the correct report is being uploaded.
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Its now easier to identify who was involved with the project.
You can match keywords, currently only from FISH Thesaurus of Monument Types, and select a time period for each of those keywords. We are constantly reviewing the need for new thesauri that suit the needs of users and the wider community so the number and type of thesauri we use can and likely will change based on input so feedback is welcome.
There is now a dedicated results page where you can list the outcomes of the project and flag your record for national and regional Research Frameworks.
You can now specify what was sent to an archive or museum as a part of the record.
Finally, you can like this record to other projects outside of OASIS.
Once all sections have been completed you’ll have a summary page and then that’s it. The page is always open for you to go back and make edits to if needed unlike OASIS IV.
Through the OASIS form, the ADS receives a lot of level 2/3 Historic Building Recordings. Additionally, some areas require other digital records such as photographs or elevations to be preserved as well which we receive through ADS-easy.

As the digital technologies improve and become more accessible and easy to use, the re-use potential for different types of Historic Building Recordings grows. That said, most required records are a report and minimal additional data which is then hopefully archived somewhere that is readily accessible. And while when this is done, it's great, the reuse potential of a text document vs a 3D model is quite different.

So I will leave you with this final question, where are all the amazing laser scanning projects?
If you want to keep up to date with oasis development you can find out more on the OASIS website or blog. You can also contact the HERALD project directly or follow on Twitter.
Thank you for listening, are there any questions?