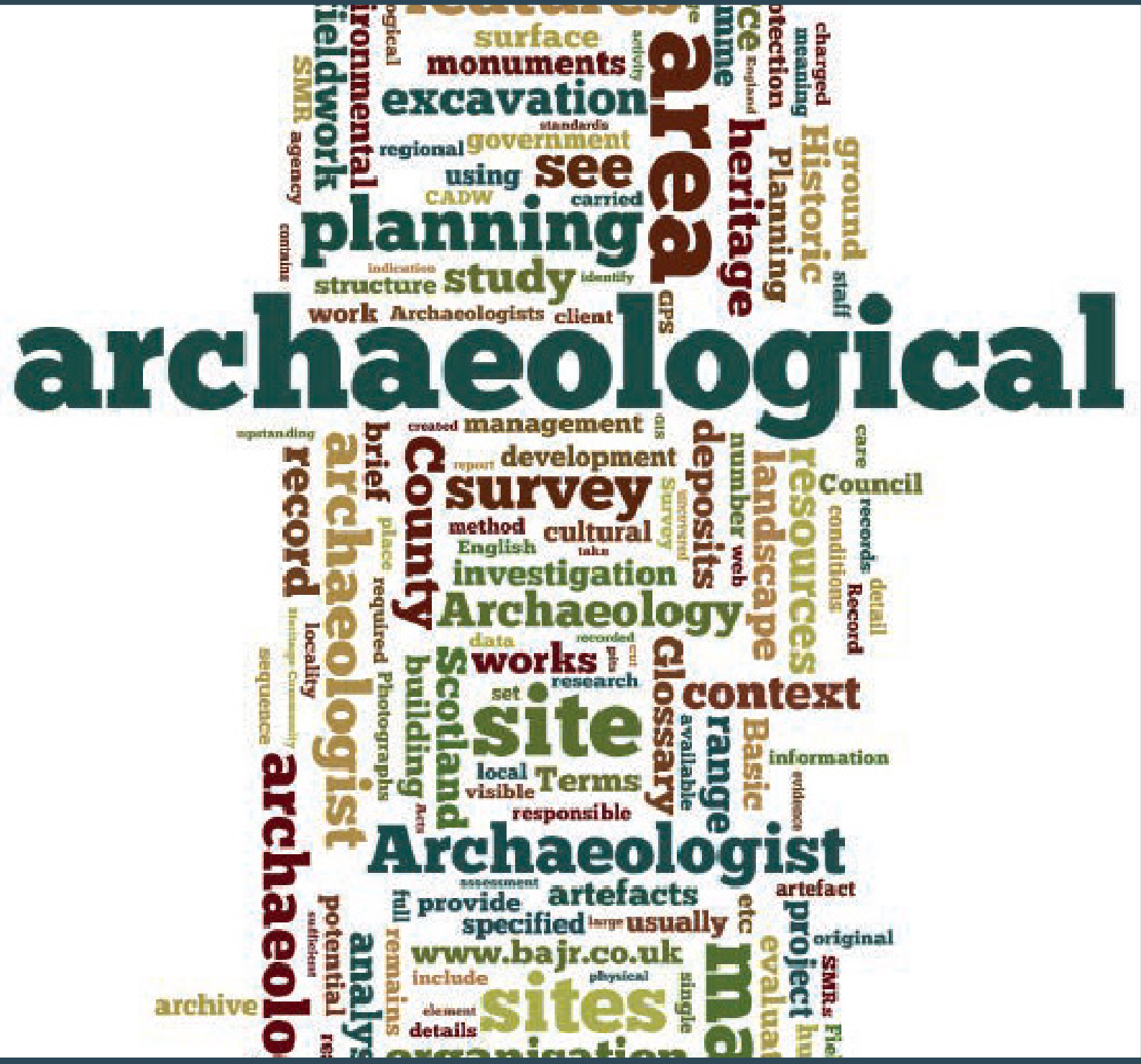
BAJR

Guide 2

Glossary of Common Terms



BAJR Practical Guide Series

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British Archaeological Jobs & Resources

Glossary of common archaeological terms : compiled 28/04/2004

absolute dating: Absolute dating is based upon a specific date range in years that the site or artefact can be dated to. *(see Relative dating)*

***appraisal*:** Brief review (often within the planning framework) of the SMR and Historic Maps etc, to decide whether a development application has the potential for archaeology. The appraisal may or may not become a condition.

archaeology: The scientific study of past human life and change through analysis of material remains that humans have left behind (from the Greek root *archaeo,* meaning ancient and *logos*, meaning study)

***archaeological monitoring*:** Archaeological monitoring involves an archaeologist being present in the course of carrying out development works (which may include conservation works), to identify and protect archaeological deposits, features or objects which may be uncovered or otherwise affected by the works. (*See Watching Brief*)

aerial photograph (APs): Photographs taken from the air and used to identify archaeological sites either by low light for upstanding monuments or by differential crop growth on sites within arable fields.

artefact : An object or part of an object which has been used or created by a human and provides physical clues to the activity carried out by humans in the area of discovery (This can range from Pottery, Metalwork, Woodwork, Worked Stones through to mortar samples) (See Ecofact)

***assemblage*:** a group of **artefacts** found together in a single **context** such as a grave or pit.

BAJR *(pronounced* ***•Badger•)*** **:** British Archaeological Jobs Resource; an independent web based organisation concerned with employment, development assistance, heritage resources and information.

brief : Often created to provide an outline of the requirements that must be addressed together with an indication of the scope of works that will be required. This allows the Contracting Archaeologist or Company to prepare a Written Scheme of Investigation detailing their approach to meeting the Brief Requirements. Can be called Project Outline.

CADW *(pronounced* ***Cadoo:)*** The government agency charged with the protection and care of the monuments and heritage resources of Wales

C14 **:**Dating technique using the half-life of ***Carbon 14*** from organic or former organic matter such as charcoal or bone.

CSA **:** Council for Scottish Archaeology. A charitable organisation established to preserve and promote archaeology in Scotland.

CBA *:* Council for British Archaeology. A charitable _rganization established to preserve and promote archaeology in England and Wales.

client *:* The individual or organisation that has undertaken to fund the programme of archaeological works. Often the Client is the Developer or Applicant seeking planning permission.

conservation **:**The careful protection, preservation, restoration, and management of cultural resources, including artefacts, features, and even whole or partial archaeological sites.

consultant : An expert providing objective and independent advice to the applicant/developer on the basis of professional standards. Their work often entails seeking the best solution for their client through negotiation with the planning archaeologist. It is possible for a Contractor to be hired as a Consultant.

context : A single unit of excavation, which is often referred to numerically, and can be any feature, layer or single element of a structure. A pit for example would have a context number for the cut and a separate number for each fill within the cut.

contractor : A person or organisation commissioned to undertake archaeological research and fieldwork either to a brief or general requirement for archaeological investigation set by a planning archaeologist. The Contractor may be a sole trader or a large Unit with specialist staff.

county Archaeologist *:* An archaeologist employed by a County Council as the curatorial archaeologist responsible for that local government area. The County Archaeologist is responsible for archaeological matter within the County and will maintain the Sites and Monuments Record. (See also Curatorial Archaeologist, Planning Archaeologist and Heritage/Community Archaeologist.)

cropmark : An archaeological site no longer visible on the ground due to the removal of upstanding remains (often by ploughing). The sites are recorded from Aerial Photographs by differential crop growth over buried features such as pits, ditches and walls

cultural Resource **:** Broad definition of a feature, site, structure or other form of heritage element that is deemed to be of value to the country either on a local, regional or national level. As with all resources, this term relates to both the fragile and irreplaceable nature of the resource.

curatorial Archaeologist : An archaeologist with responsibility for management of the archaeological resource. The work of such organisations or individual is one of cultural resource management. County Archaeologists, Planning Archaeologists, Sites and Monuments Record staff, English Heritage, Historic Scotland and CADW are all within this role. (See also County Archaeologist, Planning Archaeologist and Heritage/Community Archaeologist.)

data structure report (DSR): The • Structure Report •, as defined by Historic Scotland, is designed to be the immediate product of excavation: an intermediate summary to define the questions and funding of post-excavation analysis.

desk-based assessment (DBA) : An assessment of both the known and potential archaeological resource within a specified area. A study is carried out on available sources such as SMRs, Map Evidence, Documentary Sources Aerial Photographs. The study will provide a background for a decision to be reached on the potential archaeological resource in a local, regional, national context within the review area.

development control: under the Planning Acts, the functions of the planning authority in deciding on planning applications and enforcing compliance with the planning laws.

ecofact : Material which can demonstrate the interaction between the environmental of the locality and the human exploitation within the locality, such as pollen samples, grain, nuts, fish etc. (see Artefact).

English Heritage (EH) : The government agency charged with the protection and care of the monuments and heritage resources of England

environmental archaeology : The study of the interface between the environment of a locality and the human activity within the area, accomplished through the study of soils, plant and animal remains.

excavation **:** Intrusive fieldwork with a clear purpose, which examines and records archaeological deposits, features and structures and recovers artefacts, ecofacts and other remains within a specified area or site. This will lead to both a further programme of Post Excavation and Publication and perhaps further excavation.

evaluation : A limited programme of non-intrusive and/or intrusive fieldwork, which determines the presence or absence of archaeological features, structures, deposits, artefacts or ecofacts within a specified area. This may take the form of an intrusive investigation of a percentage of the site, geophysical or topographical survey. The results of this investigation will establish the requirements for any further work. (see also Field Survey)

field survey: multi-disciplinary study of the long-term settlement history of a region and its environmental setting; closely related to **landscape archaeology**.

fieldwalking**:** A form of evaluation that provides details of surface features visible during a physical search of the site area and is a systematic observation of the ground surface during. The recovery of **artefacts** that may indicate periods of occupation is also an important part of this evaluation (also termed walkover survey)

geophysical survey **:** A method of seeing beneath the ground surface using a number of methodologies, including Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR), Resistivity and Magnetometry. It takes a specialist to both uses the field equipment and interpret the data. When used with Topographic survey the results can be very effective, though it is very dependent on soil and geological conditions within the site area.

GIS**:** (Geographical Information System): a range of techniques using the graphic capabilities of computers for an integrated analysis of maps, images, sites and finds. GIS has rapidly become essential in the interpretation of fieldwork data and is used within Units and County archaeological offices to interpret the landscape to asses potential for archaeology within an area.

(GPS) Survey : (**Global Positioning Satellite)** Very often this can be used for both Field Survey to provide accurate location of newly discovered sites and also as a tool for topographic survey, to provide a fast method for recovering thousands of 3D coordinates. There are a range of GPS receivers available, from the handheld (with a accuracy of 20m+/- to the Satellite base station variety that can be millimetre accurate). It should be remembered though that GPS could be affected by the landscape, such as tree cover, mountains, tall buildings etc •

IFA **:** Institute of Field Archaeologists. It is an organisation for archaeologists in the United Kingdom that promotes professional standards and ethics for conserving, managing, understanding and promoting heritage.

in situ**:** in its original place.

historic building record : A structure that contains historic fabric or is of cultural significance may require an HBR to a number of Levels of detail. The levels range from a simple photographic and sketch survey to a detailed record that may even include paint analysis, dendrochronology, mortar sampling and full drawn record of every stone. (same as standing building record)

Historic Scotland (HS) : The government agency charged with the protection and care of the monuments and heritage resources of Scotland

landscape archaeology: placing sites into a wider context using a full range of archaeological, environmental and historical information to interpret them on a regional basis on a long time scale.

method statements: see brief or project design

planning archaeologist : A person or organisation responsible for the conservation and management of archaeological evidence by virtue of official or statutory duty, including for example County or District Archaeological Officers and staff of national bodies such as English Heritage CADW and Historic Scotland.

planning conditions: conditions attached to a planning permission under the Planning Acts.

project design : A written statement on the project's objectives, methods, timetable and resources; providing the framework for the execution of the project, set out in sufficient detail to be quantified, costed, implemented and monitored. This would normally be prepared by an archaeologist or organisation undertaking the fieldwork, frequently in response to a brief or specification.

project outline: Another term meaning a Brief.

relative dating: Relative dating is the simpler dating technique of stating; • *this is older than that* • - If you have a context dated to the 17th century then deposits beneath will be earlier though you may be uncertain how old precisely. (see also Absolute Dating)

remote sensing: the use of aerial or satellite reconnaissance and photography to discover and interpret archaeological sites and landscape features, whether visible on the surface or buried, and the use on the ground of geophysical instruments to locate buried sites.

research archive : Derived from the work done during the analysis phase the research archive will comprise: stratigraphical/structural, artefact, environmental and other catalogues and all other records as well as details of the methods and selection strategies used. (often this can be called the Deposited or Primary Archive)

sections: vertical records of stratigraphy revealed by excavation and recorded in drawings and photographs as evidence of the sequence of contexts on a site.

site : An area specific description of the area for an archaeological investigation, this is usually defined as an area of excavation but could refer to a building, or survey area.

site archive : This contains everything that is gathered during fieldwork and will be catalogued, ordered and indexed. It represents the original record of the project's results and will include the original photographs, plans, recordsheets, sample registers, notebooks etc. *(very often muddy!!)*

sites and monuments record (SMR) : A database (usually computerised and sometimes online • see web SMRs) of all archaeological sites and find locations from a given area, usually a county, maintained by the County Council, and adopted by formal resolution.

specification : A written schedule of works required for a particular project (by a curator, planning archaeologist or client), set out in sufficient detail to be quantified, costed, implemented and monitored. Normally prepared by or agreed with the relevant curator.

standing building record : (see Historic Building Record)

stratigraphy : the building block of archaeology, where careful excavation and recording determines the precise sequence of events that took place to create the deposits, cuts and features that have been uncovered.

terminus ante quem, terminus post quem: reference points in the dating of a stratigraphic sequence on a site **before** which (ante) or **after** which (post) a context was formed. (similar to relative dating)

test pits : a series of small (usually 1m x 1m) excavations to give an indication of the underlying soil / deposit profiles. These may take place prior to full evaluation, or may be all that is required on the site.

topographic survey : A detailed analysis of the ground surface of the site, a contour plan (from a flat 2D plan to a 3D computer model) is produced and can help to recognise buried landscape features or features that are too slight or too large to see with the naked eye.

trial trenches : see evaluation

watching brief : A formal programme of observation and investigation conducted during any operation carried out for non-archaeological reasons within a specified area or site on land or underwater, where there is a possibility that archaeological deposits may be disturbed or destroyed. The programme will result in the preparation of a report and ordered archive.

web SMR : The online version of the county/national SMR giving details of the sites, find spots and other information known about the heritage of that area. (a list of Online SMRs is available on BAJR in the resource section))