Introduction to Recording and Archiving

How we know what we know, how we put that to best use

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http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk
Introduction

• NPPF, HERs and Archives
• What do HERs do?
• What do HERs enable?
• Where do HERs and Archives meet?
• What do Digital Archives do?
• What do Digital Archives enable?
• Case studies in working together
“Local planning authorities should make information about the significance of the historic environment gathered as part of plan-making or development management publicly accessible. They should also require developers to record and advance understanding of the significance of any heritage assets to be lost (wholly or in part) in a manner proportionate to their importance and the impact, and to make this evidence (and any archive generated) publicly accessible. * However, the ability to record evidence of our past should not be a factor in deciding whether such loss should be permitted.”

*Copies of evidence should be deposited with the relevant Historic Environment Record, and any archives with a local museum or other public depository.
“Historic Environment Record: Information services that seek to provide access to comprehensive and dynamic resources relating to the historic environment of a defined geographic area for public benefit and use.”

Archives – preserve information (data) for research and for posterity (see later).

Everything that has gone before informs everything that comes next
HERs make sense of it all...
... then make it accessible
What do HERs enable?

- HERs are the *living* resource, or evidence base, used for decision-making.
- They are indicative of archaeological potential...
  - ...but require specialist interpretation for reliable inference and assessment (e.g. significance).
The ADS: Who we are and what we do

• Founded 1996
• Department of Archaeology, University of York
• Collections
  o 1,100,000 metadata records
  o 34,535+ unpublished fieldwork reports
  o 700+ rich archives
• Guides to Good Practice
• DPC Decennial Award 2012

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December 2010: Transnational Access Summer School

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"The rate of change in computing technologies is such that information can be rendered inaccessible within a decade..."

Joint Information Systems Committee: Why Digital Preservation?
Hardware failure / obsolescence

“...erm, does anyone have a floppy disk drive...?”

Format failure / obsolescence
Lack of Documentation

“Have we got the box with the picture on?”

Access Failure

“Dear former employer / supervisor,

I need my project from a few years ago as my laptop met with an accident, can I have a copy please...?”
How do you know you can trust the way we preserve our data?

- We hold a Data Seal of Approval
- We follow the Open Archival Information System (OAIS) reference model

Datasealofapproval.org
What are the benefits of digital archiving?

- Permanency of primary data
- Free and open access
- Risk transfer
- Showcases potential re-use of HER and other data types
- Joined-up approaches
- Innovation
Birkham Wood, Knaresborough
Archaeological Excavation and Survey

November 1990

West Yorkshire Archaeology Service

Evidence: EARTHWORK
LINEAR SYSTEM (Medieval to 19th Century - 1066 AD? to 1900 AD?)

Description and Sources
Description
Fieldwork on a bank and ditch on the edge of the wood, prior to road construction, suggested the features were contemporary, though the dating is highly speculative. The work also identified a possible larger system of related earthworks extending into the woods (1)

Sources
   Source Location: http://dx.doi.org/10.5284/1025392

   Source Location: Linear Projects

Location
National Grid Reference
SE 35758 54947 (point) SE35SE Point

Administrative Areas
Civil Parish: Plompton [6108]; Harrogate
Address/Historic Names: None recorded
“We’ve almost found ‘another Roman Britain’” – Prof M Fulford