



CLASP TRO9 - Guidelines for the retention and disposal of artefacts

This paper was agreed by the CLASP Organising Committee at its March 2016 meeting.

Artefacts can be obtained:

- **On an Adhoc basis** – from donations or from field walking and/or metal detection where precise location details are not known **or**
- **From Systematic research** arising from field-walking in grids, metal detection where the precise location of finds is recorded, research excavation, trial trenching, test pitting or a rescue dig.

Systematic Research

Before any activity commences at any site it is important that the Objective for the research should be stated. This will inform everyone as to what artefacts should be retained (unless what is found leads to the formal amendment of the Objective).

- **Research Excavation / Trial Trenching / Test Pitting / Systematic Field Walking and/or Metal Detection** - All Finds should be retained at least initially, analysed and archived. An interpretative report should be published before any artefacts are discarded. Any decision to discard artefacts should be based on these not being required to meet the Original (or Amended) Objectives for the research.
- **Rescue Dig** - the emphasis here will be on identifying the character of the site including any structures, the chronology and the status of the archaeology. Coins, Small Finds and Pottery will be retained. Other artefacts will be analysed at the site if possible and only selectively retained.

Retention of Artefacts

For the purpose of retention, artefacts can be grouped into two categories

- Retention is **Non-Discretionary**: It is presumed that Coins, Small Finds & Pottery will all be retained.
- Retention is **Discretionary**: The amount of Tile, Bone & Building Material to be retained will be according to their contribution to meeting the Objectives behind the research. It is appropriate to document why artefacts are being kept or are being disposed of. In the case of artefacts obtained on an Adhoc basis there will be a tendency to dispose of such material once an archive has been made.

Accessibility of Artefacts

It is important to determine which artefacts we are most likely to want to retrieve and for what purpose. We also need to determine criteria for which artefacts can be put on display and how we can protect them from deterioration.

Disposal of Artefacts

Where retention of artefacts is not necessary to achieve the original or amended research objective or possible future research agendas, thought must be given to the appropriate means of disposal as follows:

- In the first instance the landowner should be asked whether they want them.
- If the landowner does not want them we need to enquire whether anyone else might be interested.
- If no one wants the artefacts, there is a need to decide whether there could be a potential wish to retrieve in the future. If yes, then agree with the Landowner that the artefacts can be left onsite and ensure that they are left in a manner that protects them from erosion, enables them to be retrieved and cannot be disturbed inadvertently. Relevant bodies such as HER should be informed.
- If retention on the site is not possible they should be taken to landfill to avoid corrupting the site.

Immediate Next Steps

- Ensure for all future projects that the research Objective is clearly stated at the outset.
- Review for each past project the research Objective to see whether some items can be discarded.

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