



Institute of
Archaeologists of
Ireland

Code of Conduct for the Treatment of Archaeological Objects

**in the context of an archaeological
excavation**

First edition – May 2006

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The Code of Professional Conduct has been adopted by the Board of the Institute of Archaeologists of Ireland as the standard by which all members should achieve and adhere to. The Code was ratified by the membership at the membership at the Annual General Meeting in Spring 2006.

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1. Objectives

1.1 The objectives of the Treatment of Archaeological Objects, uncovered as part of an archaeological excavation, are;

- (a) to archaeologically investigate, recover and interpret the Archaeological Objects (including artefacts and ecofacts) at a given site;
- (b) to establish a record and archive of the Archaeological Objects excavated;
- (c) to ensure that the Archaeological Objects from an excavated site are properly analysed, conserved and appropriately available for deposition at a designated or agreed repository;
- (d) to report and publish the results.

1.2 The Code described here should be read in conjunction with the IAI Code of Conduct for Archaeological Excavation.

2. Scope of Works

2.1 The archaeological works to be carried out in relation to the Treatment of Archaeological Objects are as follows;

- (a) Project Planning;

- (b) Archaeological recovery and on-site care of Archaeological Objects;

- (c) Curate, document and analyse Archaeological Objects;

- (d) Conservation of Archaeological Objects;

- (e) Creation of Archive;

- (f) Provide storage facilities.

3. Project Planning

3.1 The Treatment of Archaeological Objects for any archaeological commission or project requires careful and considered project planning. This planning shall involve the following:

- (a) Project Familiarisation

- (b) Project Design

- (c) Liaison Framework

3.2 As part of the **Project Familiarisation** for a given archaeological commission or project, consideration should be given to the potential for Archaeological Objects to be discovered. Particular attention should be given to the type of Archaeological Objects anticipated, and the preservation qualities of the soil conditions.

- 3.3 Provisions for the care, storage and conservations of Archaeological Objects should be described as part of the **Project Design** for a given archaeological commission or project. Particular attention should be given to any specific provisions anticipated.
- 3.4 A **Liaison Framework** shall be established as part of a given archaeological commission or project and shall define the overall reporting and consultation procedures for the project. Where a Finds Supervisor, Specialist, or Conservator has been appointed as part of the Project Team, their role(s) shall be defined within the Liaison Framework. This document should outline the reporting structures and procedures between each party, in the event of;
- (a) any conservation, storage or other resource requirements not previously identified,
 - (b) archaeological material being put at risk,
 - (c) any other.
- 3.5 Where necessary, Discovery Reports (see Section 7.3) should be submitted as part of this Framework.
- 3.6 In order to ensure the secure and efficient processing of Archaeological Objects during a large-scale archaeological commission or project, such as an Archaeological Excavation, it is essential that preparations have been made for all on-site requirements, including;
- (a) qualified and experienced personnel;
 - (b) recording and surveying equipment;
 - (c) temporary storage facilities for the Archaeological Objects, for their initial care and curation;
 - (d) off-site facilities should be considered for large-scale excavations with longer term storage needs;
 - (e) sufficient supplies of recommended materials for the care and packaging of finds are available during the course of the project.
- 3.7 For large-scale projects such as an Archaeological Excavation, a Finds Supervisor shall be appointed as a member of the Project Team. In special circumstances, it may also be necessary to commission a relevant Specialist and/or Conservator as a full time member(s) of the Project Team. Elsewhere, any anticipated requirements for specialist or conservation advice should be secured in advance and made available for the duration of the project.
- 4. Archaeological Recovery and On-Site Care of Archaeological Objects**
- 4.1 The Archaeological Excavation shall be carried-out in accordance with the Project Design, and in particular the agreed Methodology. Any changes to

- the agreed Methodology shall be communicated under the Liaison Framework.
- 4.2 Archaeological objects are most vulnerable to damage at the point of recovery. To reduce the risk of damage during excavation the following fieldwork procedures shall be applied;
- (a) access to the Area of Operation should be kept to a minimum in order to reduce the impact of compression forces,
 - (b) the Area of Operation, or part thereof, be appropriately protected from the weather - consideration should be given to the use of temporary shelters from weather conditions,
 - (c) measures should be taken to protect the Area of Operation where it is to be left unattended for any length of time.
- 4.3 The technical treatment, recording, and recovery of the archaeological objects shall be carried-out in accordance with the guidelines for the treatment of archaeological objects and ecofacts from time to time adopted by the Institute.
- 4.4 Registration;
- (a) maintain a register of finds, documenting general information about the objects,
 - (b) a Discovery Report should be compiled and submitted as part
- of the Liaison Framework for objects of special interest or in particular need of conservation/stabilisation (see Section 7.3).
- 4.5 The on-site care and storage of archaeological objects shall be carried-out in accordance with the guidelines for the treatment of archaeological objects and ecofacts from time to time adopted by the Institute. In particular;
- (a) secure and dedicated storage facilities should be available on-site for the immediate storage and processing of archaeological objects,
 - (b) off-site storage facilities should be made available where there is any doubt as to the security of the on-site facilities.
- 4.6 Where specialist and or conservation advice has not been made available on-site during the course of an excavation, the services of the relevant specialist(s) shall be sought immediately it becomes apparent that such advice is required.
- 5. Conservation**
- 5.1 During the course of a project, it may be appropriate to forward to the appointed Conservator artefacts in urgent need of conservation or stabilisation. Otherwise, artefacts retrieved during a given project should be selected for conservation in consultation with the appointed Conservator at the completion of the on-site phase of works. The Conservator should supply a

- Conservation Needs Assessment, to include the following;
- (a) recommended conservation processes,
 - (b) proposed time schedule,
 - (c) costs.
- 5.2 In the Republic of Ireland, conservation work on an archaeological object is subject to licence issued by the National Museum of Ireland. A licence to alter is also required for any destructive analysis of an archaeological object. Furthermore, a licence is also required to export, for any reason, an archaeological object outside the jurisdiction of the Republic of Ireland. In Northern Ireland the export of artefacts requires a licence issued by the Museums, Libraries & Archives Council.
- 5.3 On completion of the conservation work, the conservator shall provide a Conservation Report, describing the methods, treatments, and materials used. Recommendations may also be made as to the conditions for the long-term storage requirements of certain artefacts.
- 6. Post-Excavation Analysis**
- 6.1 The detailed analysis of artefacts and ecofacts retrieved during a given project should await the completion of the on-site phase of works. The nominated Specialist(s) should supply a Specialist Analysis Assessment(s), to include the following;
- (a) recommended level of analysis,
 - (b) proposed time schedule,
 - (c) costs.
- 6.2 The Specialist Analysis Assessment(s) should inform the overall Post-Excavation Design for a project.
- 6.3 On completion of the commissioned analysis, the Specialist(s) shall provide a Specialist Analysis Report(s), describing the results of the analysis.
- 7. Reporting**
- 7.1 The commission or project may involve some or all of the following types of reporting for Archaeological Objects;
- (a) Discovery Reports
 - (b) Interim Finds Report
 - (c) Conservation Report
 - (d) Specialist Analysis Report(s)
 - (e) Finds Report
- 7.2 In addition, in Northern Ireland potential treasure objects must be reported to the coroner.

7.3 **Discovery Reports** are appropriate where finds or features of significance are discovered. For example, a rare artefact, or an artefact in urgent need of conservation/stabilisation. Include photographs of the initial discovery and, in the case of artefacts, the subsequent recovery. The context of the find should be described.

7.4 In the case of large-scale projects, and immediately following the completion of on-site works, an **Interim Finds Report** should be submitted, outlining the progress of the finds processing and the outstanding processing of finds, in particular any specific or special measures. This should specify;

- (a) Conservation Needs Assessment;
- (b) Specialist Analysis Assessment, including dating samples;
- (c) curation and boxing;
- (d) storage requirements;
- (e) Finds Archiving schedule.

7.5 The Interim Finds Report should inform the Post-Excavation Statement that will be included in any Preliminary Report for the overall commission or project.

7.6 **Conservation Report(s)** shall be provided by the commissioned Conservator(s) on completion of the work, and can be incorporated in full or in part within the overall Finds Report.

7.7 **Specialist Analysis Report(s)** shall be provided by the commissioned Specialist(s) on completion of the work, and can be incorporated in full or in part within the overall Finds Report.

7.8 Following the completion of all finds processing, conservation work and specialist analysis, a **Finds Report** shall be compiled. This may form an appendix to the Excavation Report, or as a supplementary report. The report should provide a catalogue of all the Archaeological Objects from an excavation, and should include the Conservation Report(s) and Specialist Analysis Report(s) in full or in part.

8. Creation of Archive

8.1 The Finds Archive should contain all the data gathered during the course of the fieldwork and must be ordered, indexed and internally consistent. It must contain the following:

- (a) Finds Register,
- (b) Illustrations and photographs,
- (c) Discovery Reports,
- (d) Interim Finds Report,
- (e) Conservation Needs Assessment,
- (f) Specialist Analysis Assessment,
- (g) Finds Report,

- (h) a catalogue of all artefacts and ecofacts,
- (i) Conservation Report(s),
- (j) Specialist Report(s).

9. Long-Term Storage Facilities

- 9.1 As soon as is practically possible, the artefacts retrieved during a commission or project should be transferred to long-term storage facilities, pending their transfer to a designated or agreed repository. These storage facilities should be;
- (a) secure and dedicated;
 - (b) climate controlled;
 - (c) regularly monitored;
- 9.2 If, for any reason, conditions are found to be unsuitable an alternative store should be sought.