

A Guide to the Archaeological Field Recording of Historic Buildings

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Introduction

Why record?

Recording of Historic Buildings forms a crucial part of the process of cataloguing, and therefore enabling the interpretation and protection of, the Historic Environment. Extant historic structures form arguably the most visually prominent component of the Historic Environment, and are in themselves a great source of archaeological information. This guide presents a quick overview of the techniques and equipment necessary for carrying out basic visual recording of historic buildings.

Levels of Recording

Recording of historic buildings can be carried out to 4 different levels, set out by English Heritage's best practice guidance. At its most rudimentary, building recording can constitute a basic visual record as part of an assessment of a wider area, such as a Landscape Characterisation Survey. At its most detailed, it can be a comprehensive analytical survey of a single building, incorporating exceptionally detailed metric survey and in-depth review of all available documentary and historical evidence. The table below summarises the key features of the 4 levels.

	DRAWINGS	PHOTOGRAPHY	WRITTEN ACCOUNT
LEVEL 1	Sketch plan and/or elevation with dimensions, sketch of any significant architectural details	General view of the building in its wider setting or landscape & oblique shots of visible external elevations	Completed Building Recording form
LEVEL 2	Measured sketch plan & elevations, measured sketch plan of details and location plan if appropriate	As level 1, with addition of general shots of internal rooms and circulation area	As level 1, with an expanded description of form, function, status and development, including details of builder, architects & owners if known
LEVEL 3	Measured plan, elevation and detail drawings, sometimes cross-sections, 3-D projections or reconstructions	As 1 & 2, plus any structural or decorative details & inscriptions, contents or ephemera relevant to building's history	Detailed, analytic account of the building and consideration of context & setting
LEVEL 4	As level 3, with addition of further interpretive drawings looking at function and/or movement of people/materials	As Level 3	As level 3, with substantial consideration of wider context and inclusion of relevant testimony from a comprehensive list of sources

Equipment

Basic Equipment

In order to complete a basic, Level 1 building appraisal exercise, the following equipment is essential:

- Robust 5m retractable tape measure
- 30/50m metric measuring tape
- Magnetic compass
- Black BIC ballpoint pen
- Recording forms printed on high-quality paper
- Ruler: preferably scale rule
- Stiff clipboard
- Camera
- Ranging rods: 2 x 1m
- Camera
- 1:25,000 Ordnance Survey map

Advanced Equipment

For more detailed records in which measured drawings/sketches are required, the following additional equipment is useful:

- 6H Pencil
- Pencil eraser & sharpener
- Drafting film
- Graph paper (if drafting film isn't pre-printed with grid)
- Masking tape
- Planning board: stiff A3 size board with plain white backing
- An extra 30/50m metric measuring tape
- Line Level
- Plumb bob
- String/builders' line and masonry nails
- Bulldog clips
- Pair of compasses and/or set-square

Completing the WAAS Building Record Form

The 'Building Record' form is designed to comprise the primary record of a field survey. It is by no means exhaustive, but enables the recorder to note the key architectural and archaeological features of a building.

Site Code, Site Name & Date

Site code Building 12345	Site name House, Villageaton	Date 1/11/13
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Site Code/Project Number are identifying codes that tie together all the associated records. There are numerous conventions, but one common form is to assign each piece of fieldwork a 'site code' comprising three letters and two numbers, representing location and date. Thus, a survey of historic buildings in Pershore in 2013 might be coded **PER 13**.

Initials, Building Number, Type, NGR

Initials SRG	Building number 1 of 2	Type (agricultural, domestic, ecclesiastical, industrial) Domestic	NGR SD 1234 1234
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Where the building recorded is one of a series (for example, in a survey of all stone buildings within a given area), assign each building within that series a separate number. Give a broad description of the type category into which it falls. Categories include:

DOMESTIC, AGRICULTURAL, INDUSTRIAL, MILITARY, GARDEN, ECCLESIASTICAL, RETAIL, PUBLIC

If not noted elsewhere (eg on a site plan or map), give an OS Grid Reference to as great a degree of accuracy as possible.

Construction, Style & Materials

Construction, style and materials						
Walling	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Stone	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Brick	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Concrete	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Timber	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Plaster/Daub	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Weatherboard
Construction	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Rendered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mixed	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Irregular	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Regular	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Square panels	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Tall panels
Roof	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Hipped	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Gabled	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Gabled	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Half-hipped	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> M-shaped	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Single pitch
Materials	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Thatch	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Slate	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Plain tile	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Pan tile	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Stone flag/tile	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mixed - specify
Windows	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Lancel	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mullioned	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Square	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Elongated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Tall	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Multiple
Doors	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Pointed	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 4-centred	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Square head	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Decorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Semi-circular	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Wood frame
Other specify	Walling	Construction painted	Roof	Materials asbestos	Windows	Doors

This section allows the recorder to summarise the construction techniques and materials at a glance. Tick the relevant image for the building concerned – if multiple styles are present, tick each that occurs. Further details can be recorded in 'OTHER'.

Notes

Notes
2 bay central part is timber-framed.
Cotswold limestone extensions of kitchen and stable. Pigsty also limestone.
Limestone sections are matched.
Central timber-frame section is tiled.
The walls are a mix of timber with brick infill, stone and timber with plaster infill. Much of the plaster survives on the north gable wall of central part.
Almost all external faces are white painted.
Most of the windows are casements in pegged wooden frames.
Pig run converted to store has corrugated asbestos roof.
Dendrochronology carried out by Martin Bridge. Timber-frame is part elm and part oak.

This section allows the recorder to expand on any features not fully covered by the 'Construction, Style & Materials' box, such as evidence of alterations or cases in which multiple styles are used within a single building. Any information is relevant, including your thoughts as you record the structure.

Function

Function (current and original)
Probably originally a 2 bay house.
Now still a house but greatly extended
Extensions were a kitchen, still used; a stable, now converted to part of house; pigsty and run, now used as outbuildings.

Use this section to detail any evidence of current or past functions.

Provisional Date

Provisional date (give reasons)
Timber frame part is 17th C in architectural style. Stone extensions are 18th and 19th C in date.


Include any available evidence from historic maps, architectural details, date-stamps/stones or documentary sources.

Condition

Condition	
In use for original function ✓ <i>house still used</i>	Partial ruin
In use ✓ <i>Extensions have changed use now</i>	Ruin
Disused	Destroyed

Tick applicable description, with a short description if necessary

Architectural Details

Brick	Brick coursing	Flooring	Stone type	Arches	No of storeys	No of bays	Other
size/colour etc <i>8 3/4" x 4" x 2 1/2" red/brown</i>	draw <i>English Random Bond</i> 	tile, stone, etc <i>quarry tile</i>	Walls, roof, floor, etc <i>walls - Cotswold limestone (coursed rubble)</i>	windows	Inc. basement/cellar		specify

Fine details not recorded by the broad 'Construction, style and materials' section should be noted here, such as the sizes, coursing and bonding of component materials and details of types of material used. Other architectural details of interest, such as string courses or dentillation, can be included.

Other Features of Interest & Historical Information/Background

Features of interest (describe) / Historical information/background (eg. when last used/lived in, last/first owner, etc)

Space for further notes on architectural details or additional information not covered elsewhere.

Include a brief summary of any known historical context, current ownership status, any known designations (e.g. is the building listed or within a conservation area), and any other information of relevance to the specific project. Include anecdotal evidence from owner/occupiers and/or passers-by.

Photography

A high resolution digital camera, with at least 5 megapixel resolution, is an essential tool for a building survey. If possible, set the camera to save images in TIFF format rather than JPEG: although TIFF files are larger than JPEGs, they are 'uncompressed' and have the advantage that, unlike JPEGs, they do not deteriorate in quality with repeated opening and saving.

A lens with a focal length of 50mm or more is ideal for photographing building exteriors. If taking interior shots, a wide angle lens (28mm or less) may be necessary. Ensure that shots are in focus and well-lit. A tripod, if available, can be useful for composition. For shots in which a visual indicator of scale is beneficial, ranging rods can be a useful addition.

It is often useful to include a range of different views within the photographic record of a building. More detailed surveys may require more (see Table 1), but as a general rule any buildings survey should include:

- A general view of the structure in its setting or landscape
- Views of each visible external elevation. These can be within either general oblique shots or, if a particular aspect is deemed particularly complex or significant, a 'front-on' shot focusing on a single elevation may be more appropriate

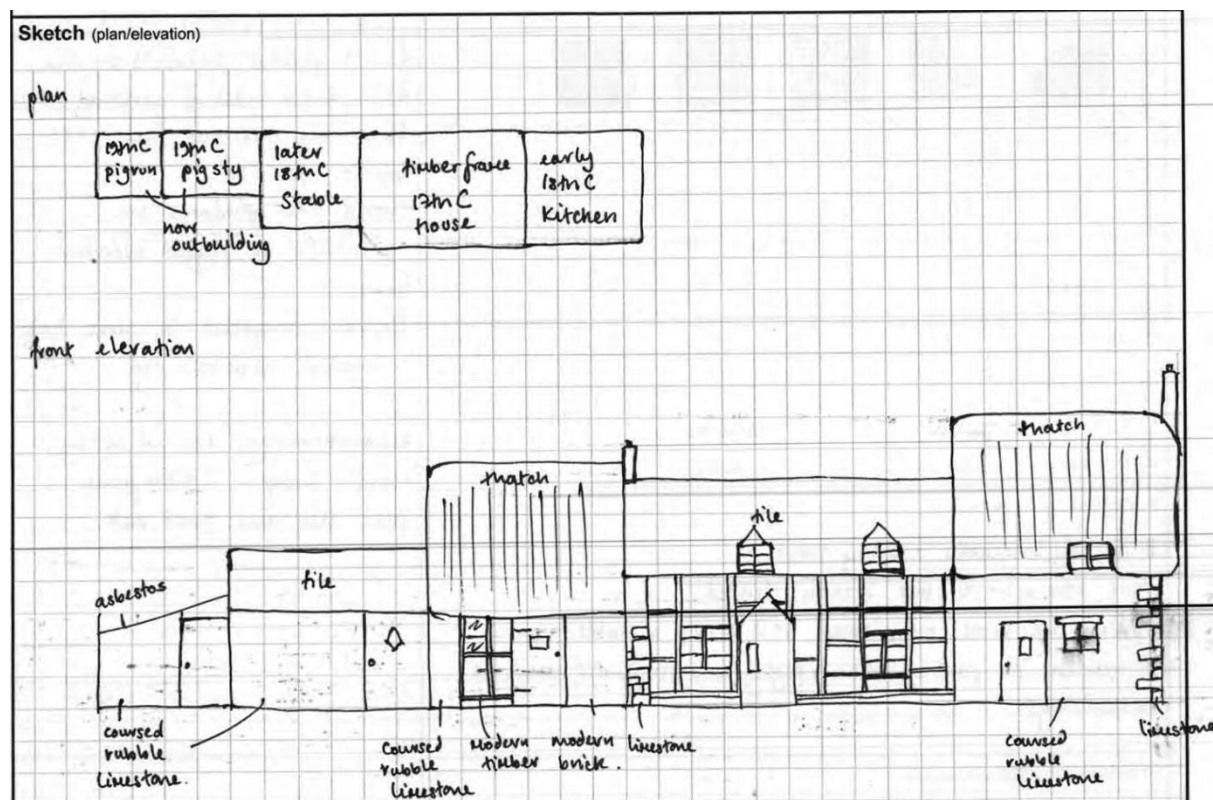


Drawing the Structure

Why Draw?

Drawing a structure by hand may seem anachronistic in the age of high-resolution digital photography and photogrammetry, but it still serves a useful purpose and is an invaluable skill for the recorder. Although in a professional context the use of EDM (electronic distance measurement) and laser-scanning survey equipment has largely superseded the measured drawing as the primary recording technique, most surveys will also still make use of the hand-drawn plan or elevation. Drawing is a remarkably efficient way of conveying evidence, and allows the recorder to capture and highlight subtle features and relationships that may be difficult to discern from a photograph or digital survey, and to annotate these appropriately. It also forms an important part of the interpretive process, compelling the recorder to methodically observe all aspects of the subject.

Producing a Basic Sketch Plan/Elevation



The gridded space on the recording form can be used for a basic sketch, denoting the rough layout of the building (where visible/accessible) and/or the key elevations. Sketches do not have to be works of art! A simple diagrammatic representation will suffice, with any relevant measurements annotated and any significant features included.

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Useful Websites/Apps

Looking At Buildings: <http://www.lookingatbuildings.org.uk/index.html>





































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Site code		Site name				Date	
Initials		Building number of		Type (agricultural, domestic, ecclesiastical, industrial)	NGR		
Construction, style and materials						Notes	
Walling							
	Stone	Brick	Concrete	Timber	Plaster/Daub	Weatherboard	
Construction							
	Rendered	Mixed	Irregular	Regular	Square panels	Tall panels	
Roof							
	Hipped	Gablet	Gabled	Half-hipped	M-shaped	Single pitch	
Materials							
	Thatch	Slate	Plain tile	Pan tile	Stone flag/tile	Mixed - specify	
Windows							
	Lancet	Mullioned	Square	Elongated	Tall	Multiple	
Doors							
	Pointed	4-centred	Square head	Decorated	Semi-circular	Wood frame	
Other specify							
	Walling	Construction	Roof	Materials	Windows	Doors	
Function (current and original)							
Provisional date (give reasons)							

Condition							
In use for original function				Partial ruin			
In use				Ruin			
Disused				Destroyed			
Architectural details (describe or draw)							
Brick	Brick coursing	Flooring	Stone type	Arches	No of storeys	No of bays	Other
size/colour etc	draw	tile, stone, etc	Walls, roof, floor, etc	windows	Inc. basement/cellar		specify
Features of interest (describe) / Historical information/background (eg. when last used/lived in, last/first owner, etc)							
Sketch (plan/elevation)							
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