

# **London Diocesan Advisory Committee**



## **LOOKING AFTER THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF YOUR CHURCH**

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### **1. INTRODUCTION**

(a) The Church of England has several archaeological responsibilities. These are a consequence of its custodianship of a large number of historic buildings and their sites, among which are many that are of pre-eminent importance to the nation. The church site and its buildings form an archaeological resource which is both fragile and irreplaceable. A policy on the management of archaeology, particularly during changes to a church or its setting, should be of assistance to parishes, and to the Chancellor (who has authority over faculty proceedings for the Bishop). Under the *Care of Churches Measure* (1991), the Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC) has explicit responsibility for advising on, among other things, 'the architecture, archaeology, art and history of places of worship.'

(b) The archaeology of a parish church is important for several reasons. The church is a physical embodiment of the beliefs of generations of past parishioners, in its decoration, architecture and monuments inside and out. It is a physical record of changing styles of worship. The church is often the oldest building in a town or village, and therefore provides an

anchor for the present in reminding the community of its history. Inside central London, the church often has a history going back a thousand years, though its visible fabric is more recent.

(c) Archaeology is not just about holes in the ground, or the physical traces of the past which happen to be underground today. A church's archaeology stretches from below ground to the roof. Any historic part to be affected, wherever it is, deserves to be recorded before being altered, replaced or removed. Archaeologists may therefore become involved in many kinds of work: alteration of living churches, redevelopment of redundant churches, graveyards and crypts, tombs and monuments, or former church sites. The role of archaeological advice, which comes from several sources (the DAC, English Heritage and the local planning authority) is to mitigate radical change to the historical resource, by pointing out its significance and extent; it is also to record what is to be affected before it is changed, so that the information can be put in a public place for posterity.

(d) In recent years there have been considerable developments in the management of archaeology in the secular world. These have been generally followed and interpreted by church guidelines. The chief documents are two government policy guidance notes, Planning Policy Guidance Note 16: *Archaeology and planning* ('PPG16', which deals with archaeology generally; 1990) and Planning Policy Guidance Note 15: *Planning and the historic environment* ('PPG15', which deals with historic buildings; 1994) [these two are currently (2003) being revised]; and the Church of England's *Care of Churches and Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction Measure Code of Practice* (1993). There are also several recent international conventions (the most important of which are listed in the bibliography) which underline our changing view of the significance of historic buildings in their settings.

(e) This document has three main sections. The first is the statement of policy which will guide the DAC's advice to parishes and to the Chancellor on archaeological considerations when they are relevant to faculty applications. It alludes to stages in the process, and uses some technical terms, which are explained in the second section, on procedures and guidelines. This second section also includes notes on special aspects which may arise, for instance the treatment of human remains. The third section comprises a brief listing of some of the archaeological considerations when contemplating repair, maintenance or extensions to a parish church or changes to its churchyard.

## **2. POLICIES**

(a) According to the Care of Churches and Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction Measure 1991 (clause 1), 'Any person or body carrying out functions of care and conservation under this Measure or under any other enactment or rule of law relating to churches shall have due regard to the role of a church as a local centre of worship and mission'. The function of the Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC) is, among other things, to act as an advisory body on matters relating to the use, care, planning, design and redundancy of places of worship (Measure, Schedule 2).

(b) When a proposal for a change to a historic church or its surroundings is made the DAC will be concerned about any adverse impact of that proposal on historic fabric and strata.

(c) When a proposal may have archaeological consequences, an assessment (or 'desk-top assessment') should be made by an archaeologist with experience of church work. The desk-top assessment, being a prior assessment, is without prejudice to the DAC's decision.

(d) If the assessment concludes that there are archaeological consequences to the proposal, then it may be advisable to have an archaeological evaluation undertaken. A method statement for this work is usually written by the archaeologist who will carry out the evaluation. This will result in an evaluation report.

(e) The DAC may require either an archaeological assessment, or an archaeological evaluation, or both documents to accompany an application. The DAC may not be able to determine an application until the assessment has been provided, or may advise against the granting of a faculty if an assessment is required but not present.

(f) All archaeological fieldwork should follow the standards outlined in the GLAAS Archaeological Guidance Papers (revised 1998, reprinted 1999) and the standards of the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA).

(g) From every archaeological project involving fieldwork (i.e. evaluation, excavation or building recording) there should be the following outcomes:

- (i) a post-excavation assessment report;
- (ii) a summary report in the relevant archaeological journals;
- (iii) a record of the investigation in the Greater London Sites and Monuments Record;
- (iv) publication, where appropriate.

(h) A policy for the deposition of archaeological artefacts and archives (records, photographs, computer files) with an appropriate local museum (usually, but not necessarily the Museum of London) is being devised and separate guidelines will be issued in due course.

(j) The post-excavation assessment report will be the basis of proposals for publication, usually in an archaeological journal, of the results from the work if they merit it. The DAC encourages parishes to sponsor the publication of results, particularly when they are important.

*It is recommended that when the final form of revisions to the secular procedural notes PPG15 and PPG16 is known, a revision to this policy document may be required. Further policies will be devised to take account of special circumstances such as the treatment of human remains, the clearance of crypts, and to cover the treatment of archaeological aspects in Conservation Plans.*

### **3. PROCEDURES AND GUIDELINES**

(a) Following the procedures set out in the government's procedural note *PPG16* of 1990, archaeological involvement in the planning process goes through the following stages; these have already been incorporated in the Code of Practice (1993) of the 1991 Measure. In this way the Church of England can continue to claim its exemption from some, though not all, secular planning controls. The following notes explain how the policy is implemented in the diocese. Planning permission may also be required for work to a church or churchyard, in addition to a faculty. An archaeological assessment and archaeological evaluation (where appropriate), as described above, should be submitted with an application for planning permission.

#### **3.1. What is historic?**

(a) Since history starts yesterday, where does archaeological recording stop? There is no crystal-clear answer to this question as standards of what is worth recording continue to improve, and the more recent past is seen to have significance. From the 19th century, also, there are far more records, such as plans, drawings and photographs of many churches. We can say that in the London area, archaeologists wish to record changes to fabric or features which date from before 1800, and may on occasion argue for the recording of selected important features after that date.

#### **3.2. Assessment**

(a) The object of the archaeological assessment (a report for the parish produced by a professional archaeologist or archaeological firm) is to use all available information to assess the presence, extent, quality and character of the features or deposits to be affected. This assessment might conclude that no further archaeological monitoring is necessary, but usually it assesses the future works and their impact, outlines what archaeological work might be necessary, and if possible how the impact

might be mitigated or diminished. The nature of this document is described in Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA) and English Heritage (Greater London Archaeological Advisory Service, or GLAAS) guidelines. The assessment is a statement of existing knowledge drawn from all available sources, and does not involve any intrusive fieldwork (e.g. digging of trial pits), though it might involve a non-intrusive survey of the building or the part to be affected. Usually the works whose impact is the subject of the assessment are, or should be, on the architect's drawings.

(b) The assessment would be required by the local planning authority, if it has a locus in the determination of the proposal (particularly where a church lies in an area of archaeological importance designated by the local planning authority).

(c) By the time an application with archaeological consequences reaches a developed stage, and certainly by the time a faculty is formally applied for, there should be an archaeological desk-top assessment. The assessment should be prepared as early as possible in the period of dialogue and consultation leading to an application, but usually when the scheme of works is clear. In some cases an archaeological assessment could be useful in helping to decide between alternative courses of action, by pointing out the archaeological consequences of each.

(d) Changes to a parish church involves altering the above-ground fabric even more often than new works in the ground, for instance for foundations. The church should be seen as a historic document in three dimensions. If the roof has to be repaired and partly replaced, and it is old, then the parts to be affected should be assessed for their significance. The archaeologist may assist by proposing what is generally called 'mitigation', i.e. measures to make intrusions into the historic fabric as small as possible. An example would be to suggest that a doorway should be made through a more recent wall, not through an older one. The same purpose can often be achieved just by rearranging the layout of a church so as to avoid ancient or significant fabric.

(e) The DAC Archaeological Advisor, English Heritage's Greater London Archaeological Advisory Service and the local planning authority give advice to parishes and their architects about the significance and suggested treatment in individual cases.

(f) An assessment may conclude that there is no consequence to archaeological deposits (or historic fabric) from the proposal. Where this is not the case, an evaluation is recommended.

### **3.2. Evaluation**

(a) Archaeological evaluation involves exploratory work on the fabric or on the site, often in conjunction with test pits or exploratory work by the

architect (for example, to design foundations) or conservator for the parish. Wherever possible, the historic fabric or deposits (including human remains) are left untouched by the evaluation work. Human remains can be uncovered and recorded, but then temporarily covered over. The purpose is to find the limits and nature of the archaeological feature or strata to be affected (for example, historic walling, wall paintings, roof timbers, graves, or underlying buildings). Evaluation work should be carried out with the minimum intrusion into historic strata or fabric, and sets out to map the historic fabric in three dimensions. Some evaluation work is often necessary before a detailed faculty application can be made, and should be set out in an archaeological evaluation report.

(b) The format of an evaluation report, like the assessment, is covered by English Heritage and IFA guidelines, but in certain cases a detailed brief may be useful and requested by the DAC. Guidance and advice may be sought from the DAC Archaeological Advisor or English Heritage. The evaluation report should be sent to the DAC as part of the faculty application, so it can be assessed by the DAC and especially the DAC Archaeological Advisor.

(c) The DAC, using PPG16 as a model, may not be able to determine its advice on an application without an evaluation, where this is required. Where proposals are acceptable in archaeological terms, the DAC would legitimately advise the Chancellor that the granting of a faculty should be made conditional upon suitable provision being made for the archaeological investigation of all deposits to be disturbed.

### **3.4. Trial work by architects**

(a) Does a parish need a faculty for trial work, such as architects' test pits and similar exploratory work by other contractors? This will be decided on the merits of each case. The DAC, with advice from its archaeology advisor, will assess whether investigations are sufficiently invasive to require a separate faculty, or whether it is sufficient to have the authority of the archdeacon and/or the Registry, to be confirmed later by faculty for the principal works. Agreement of the DAC to investigations does not imply agreement to the project as a whole.

### **3.5. Required documentation**

(a) This note does not explain faculty procedure in general, or all the information required by the DAC. It highlights only the implementation of the archaeological policy and describes what usually happens in cases which have an archaeological dimension. It may however be useful to underline the special documentation required in archaeological cases. Two copies of the desk-top assessment report, and two copies of the evaluation if carried out, should be sent to the DAC secretary. The parish will find it useful to print several more copies of each, for its own

information and to be used in any application to the local planning authority (and English Heritage in the case of a listed building).

### **3.6. Human remains and burials**

(a) Some churches and churchyards in the London area have been used for burials for over a thousand years. The way people were buried, and their skeletal remains, can tell us much about them and their beliefs. A churchyard with its monuments is therefore just as much an historical document as the church building.

(b) There are a number of special considerations when proposals will disturb burials, either within the church or in the churchyard, for instance for an extension or a church hall. Several, such as health and safety and legal requirements, are covered in guidelines cited in the bibliography below. Following a major working party report, guidelines were published in 2005 on best practice for the treatment of human remains excavated from Christian burial grounds in England (The Church of England and English Heritage, 2005). These are bound to reflect a wide consensus of agreement. It is essential that a parish should make sure that if human remains are to be disturbed, these remains whether of former parishioners or any others are recorded so that the information about them is not lost.

(c) A special problem concerns the clearance of crypts, usually of 17th-century and later date. Many church crypts were cleared of coffins in the 19th century, but not all. In the DAC view, there should be archaeological recording in a crypt clearance. A crypt often contains hundreds of coffins and skeletons. The health and safety considerations are significant and affect the nature and extent of archaeological work. National guidelines are available and continue to be developed. The archaeological project which excavated 18th and 19th-century coffins in the crypt of Christ Church Spitalfields in the 1980s has become a national standard of what can be achieved (Reeve & Adams 1993). Early consultation with the DAC, English Heritage and the local planning authority is recommended if crypt clearance is contemplated.

### **3.7. Disabled Access**

(a) The parish should be aware that arrangements for access for disabled people, especially ramps, lifts and specially graded pathways, often have an archaeological dimension.

### **3.8. Conservation Plans**

(a) An historic site will benefit from the writing of a Conservation Plan. A Plan summarises the historic significance of the building, its contents and its surroundings, outlines how that significance may be affected, and sets out policies to retain and enhance that significance. Some funding agencies already require a Conservation Plan to be written before they will

consider giving grants for a new project. Conservation Plans have so far been thought appropriate for major religious buildings such as cathedrals and the larger parish or collegiate churches. But parishes should be aware of the encouragement to write such Plans from bodies like English Heritage and the amenity societies. Many of the long-lived parish churches in the London diocese would benefit from a Conservation Plan; and there is a clear archaeological component in such a plan, which should consider both the building and its churchyard. Buried strata can have as much significance as the building on top of them. Guidance can be obtained from English Heritage (and in Clark 1999); the DAC has a guidance paper on Conservation Plans, available from the Secretary.

### **3.9. Faculty determination**

(a) The Chancellor determines the petition for a faculty, having regard to the DAC's advice. The Faculty Jurisdiction Rules require consultation with English Heritage, the local authority and relevant statutory amenity societies when the work affects the archaeological importance of a church, archaeological remains or significant alteration to the church. If this has not already happened, the Chancellor is required to direct that they be specially notified and given further time to respond. It is therefore to the applicant's advantage to make sure all the necessary consultations have taken place first.

(b) The Chancellor may attach conditions to a faculty which require archaeological work to be carried out as part of the development proposal, or the presence of a professional archaeologist to observe the works and make appropriate records (a 'watching brief'). A project design or method statement, written by the archaeologist who will carry out the work, should be submitted for approval by the DAC. The project design or method statement should include methodology for all the work, including publication and archiving.

### **3.10 The local planning authority**

(a) Some proposals for alteration to a church or its setting will require secular planning permission, and sometimes Listed Building Consent. In either case the local planning authority, which takes its own archaeological advice (often from English Heritage), may attach conditions concerning the archaeological requirements to the permission. Such conditions may on occasion be stronger than any required by the faculty system, for instance a requirement to fund publication of the archaeological work when justified.

### **3.11. Plan for archaeology**

(a) It is prudent to plan for an archaeological component in any restoration, repair or rebuilding programme affecting an historic church.

(b) This means bringing in professional archaeologists as part of the team from the beginning. Archaeological recording can inform

conservation, help choose what to repair and how. In this way the parish maintains and manages its historic asset and hands it on to the future in the best possible condition. Archaeological reports are also useful as parts of Conservation Plans, and as an educational resource.

#### **4. A BRIEF LIST OF SOME WORK THAT MAY HAVE ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

**4.1.** Here is a representative list of the works of refurbishment, repair and new building on church sites which merit archaeological assessment and if necessary recording work. Whenever recording takes place, whether by archaeologists or conservators (for instance, before repairing a major monument), the records made on site (drawings, photographs, samples) should be placed in a public archive (usually a local museum). Copies of all reports deriving from those records should be sent to that archive, to the DAC and to the local planning authority.

<b>Work</b>	<b>Significance and impact</b>
<b>REPAIR</b>	
Repointing	Old repointing may obscure different phases in the historic building; new pointing should not obscure historic features. Different kinds of pointing may indicate different phases in the building's history or maintenance
Replacement of stonework or ancient brickwork	Walls provide evidence of the building's history and past repairs; doors and windows have mouldings which should be recorded. Historic fabric should be conserved if possible
Remedial structural works	Underpinning or strengthening of floors may destroy remains of the earlier church(es) and burials
Redecoration	Earlier decorative schemes should be recorded, and conserved if possible
Repairs to roof, spire and tower; bell frames	Study of old timbers, aided by tree-ring dating, will provide information on the history of the building possibly not available elsewhere. Replacement should be kept to a minimum
<b>SERVICES</b>	
Heating	Installation of a below-ground heating system or refurbishment of an old one can damage traces of the former church(es) and burials
Drainage and cable trenches	Drains around the building destroy vital archaeological connections between the church building and its churchyard and should be avoided.

	New drains and manholes usually merit archaeological watching, though if drains are only at the surface and not deep, archaeological observation may not be required. This is the same for cable trenches, e.g. for floodlighting
<b>CHURCHYARD</b>	
Repairs to walls	Treat as though it were part of the church building
Monuments	Records should be made before any monument is moved; conservation of major monuments should involve photographic recording, including at the new location
<b>NEW BUILDINGS</b>	
Extensions and buildings in the churchyard	A major archaeological issue; the least damaging foundation techniques must be used, to avoid damage to the generations of burials in the churchyard. Space requirements in existing buildings, including the church, should first be assessed and the implications of all other options considered
Lavatories and kitchens	Drains, new foundations and floor slabs may cause archaeological damage or damage to historic fabric

## 5. BIBLIOGRAPHY

This lists standards, documents of relevance and some recent archaeological reports on churches and burial grounds in the London area.

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Cox, M, [ 2001?] *Crypt archaeology: an approach*, Institute of Field Archaeologists Paper No.3, available from the IFA website, [www.archaeologists.net](http://www.archaeologists.net).

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Mays, S (Ed): *Guidance for best practice for treatment of human remains excavated from Christian burial grounds in England*, The Church of England and English Heritage, 2005

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Museum of London, 1998: General standards for the preparation of archaeological archives deposited with the Museum of London

Reeve, J, & Adams, M, 1993 *The Spitalfields Project, 1: The Archaeology, Across the Styx*, CBA Res Rep 85

Richards, J, and Robinson, D (eds), 2000 *Digital archives from excavation and fieldwork: a guide to good practice*, Archaeology Data Service

Schofield, J, 1994 'Saxon and medieval parish churches in the City of London: a review', *Trans London Middlesex Archaeol Soc*, 45, 23–146  
Relevant international standards:

Venice Charter (1964): [www.icomos.org/venice\\_charter.html](http://www.icomos.org/venice_charter.html) (with reference to the UNESCO recommendation of principles, Delhi 1956)

Valetta Convention (1992): [conventions.coe.int/Treaty/en/Treaties/Html/143.htm](http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/en/Treaties/Html/143.htm). This replaced the 1969 European Convention for the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage. It was ratified by the UK Government on 21 September 2000 and came into force on 21 March 2001. It contains provisions for the identification and protection of archaeological heritage, its integrated conservation, the control of excavations, the use of metal detectors and

the prevention of illicit circulation of archaeological objects, as well as for dissemination of information.

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