

A GUIDE TO CONTEXT SHEETS

Context is a term used to describe any deposit, cut or structure recorded during an excavation. These are recorded on context sheets; you will fill in a number of these as you excavate your test pit! As you dig you are destroying archaeology so it is important to get everything down on these sheets, so that the archaeology can exist as a record.

<p>PROJECT CODE: Every project has its own unique code, usually made up of the initials of the name of the site and the year in which the excavation began. Our project code is BVD 11</p>	<p>TEST PIT NO.: Each test pit also has its own number.</p> <p>SPIT NO.: Each spit will be given a letter.</p>	<p>CONTEXT NO.: As stated above, a context is any deposit, cut or structure. Each context is given a number which is then used to describe it on photos, plans, section drawings and other records.</p>
<p>PHOTO NO.: Each context and each spit should be photographed. There should not be any tools, mugs or archaeologists in the photo! There should be a metric scale and a sign with a north arrow, site code, context/spit numbers and the date. Each photo also has a number and should be recorded in the photo register and the relevant context sheets.</p> <p>It is also quite nice to take working shots which do include archaeologists as a record of your work. These should also be recorded in the photo register.</p>		
<p>PLAN NO.: Plans should be drawn for any features in your test pit. A plan needs to include a title (what is it showing?), a number, the context numbers it shows, a north arrow, a scale, the name of the recorder and the date of the drawing. A plan is usually drawn on a scale of 1:20.</p>	<p>SECTION NO.: A section is a vertical slice through the site showing deposits. They are drawn wherever they can be seen, e.g. the wall of a test pit or trench, across ditches or through half of a pit or a post hole. A section needs to include a title (what is it a section of?), a number, the context numbers it shows, orientation, a scale, the name of the recorder and the date of the drawing. As well as showing layers you can also draw in artefacts, stones, charcoal and anything else visible in the section. If you use symbols to represent these remember to also include a key. A section is usually drawn on a scale of 1:10.</p> <p>When you have finished excavating your test pit you should draw one of the walls of your pit as a section.</p>	
<p>MATRIX: This is a diagram that shows interrelationship between the context that you are recording and the ones that occur before and after it. What you enter can later be added to a much larger diagram on a bigger excavation.</p>	<p>DIMENSIONS: Measure the size of the area you have excavated in metres, giving length x width x height/depth.</p>	<p>SKETCH: Draw a simple sketch of the context and related contexts. It does not have to be to scale but you should include measurements and a north arrow.</p>
<p>FINDS: Tick off the types of find you are getting on the card if you are recording a deposit. Finds only come from deposits, not cuts.</p> <p>INTERPRETATION: Your chance to wax lyrical about how you think this context was formed or what is might be, taking into account your description of the context, associated finds and its relationship with surrounding contexts.</p>		