

## Archaeological Archiving – Taking a Leap

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## My shed's bigger than your shed



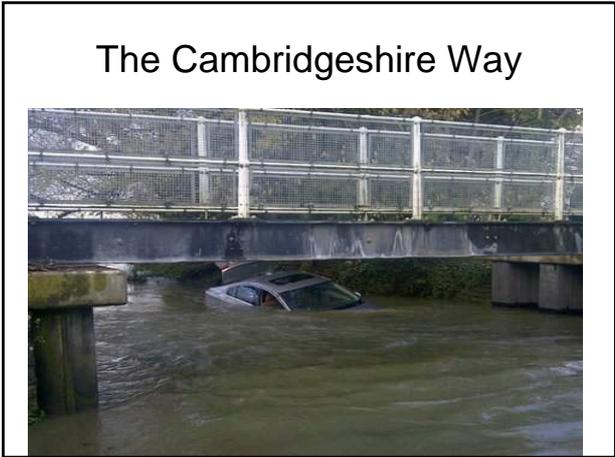
## Archiving Or Collecting?

- Archives can be massive and a drain on resources: storage is expensive!
- Archiving is different from museum collecting
  - Assumption that museums will take it
  - No control over creation
  - Driver is record of site NOT enhancing collections
- Need to bridge the gap between the two and get sensible archiving working together with museums
- Need policies and understanding, plus a change in perception

## Cambridgeshire Archaeological Stores

- We are not a museum!
- Solely archaeological store opened in 1992 so little legacy material
- Acts as a repository for the county as part of the Historic Environment Record
- Supports local museums by storing material from developer funded excavations: main focus is collection of archives
- Whole archives are taken in and 'choice' material is loaned out for display FOC
- Looking to expand – options?





The Cambridgeshire Way

### Our Own Options

- 1991/2: current store opened in response to PPG16 pressures
- 1990s: CCC funded heritage centre (combined with CRO)
- 2001: PFI funded cultural centre
- 2006: CCC funded independent store
- 2007: CCC funded joint services store
- 2008: Cross-border museums and archaeology store
- 2010: Develop own solution

### Space Requirements

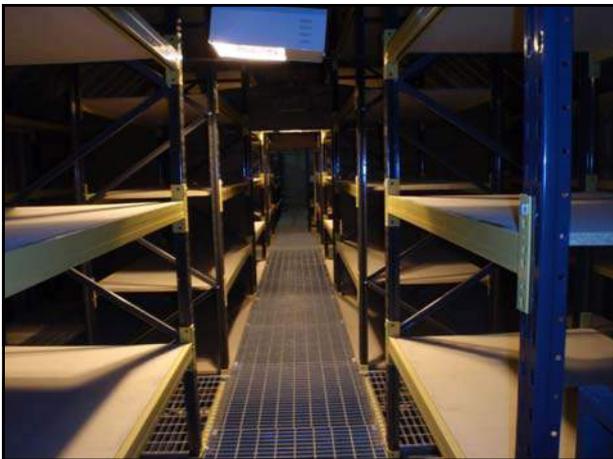
Storage	Requirement (shelf space m <sup>2</sup> )
Current Landbeach storage	240
Storage Backlog (held elsewhere on a temporary basis)	190
Annual Accrual of storage (reduced from 40 m <sup>2</sup> per annum)	24
Total Storage requirement (including 10 years accrual space)	670
Additional storage capacity required	430

**Based on holdings estimated at 13,000 boxes (held at various locations), accrued at 500 - 750 boxes per annum**

### Our Adopted Solution

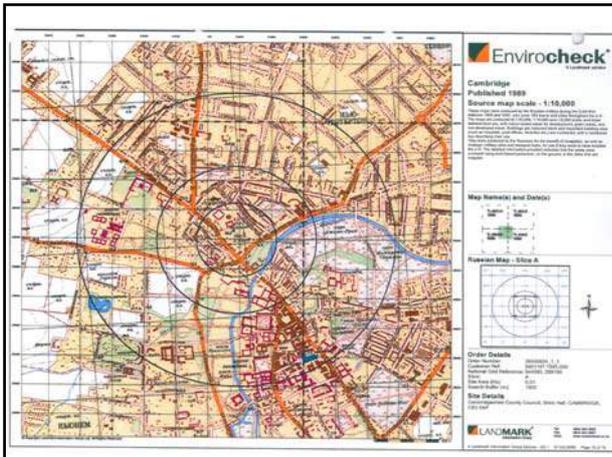
- Vacate the current premises in Landbeach
- Move bulk material that does not require active monitoring (eg pottery) to an 'outstore'
- Move material that requires active monitoring (mainly metalwork), fragile and regularly used items to a converted store in the Castle Court bunker
- Catalogue and make available through HER
- Storage must be cost effective and provide for rapid record retrieval
- Solution is DeepStore in Cheshire plus digital archiving at ADS
- How did we do it?





**Cambridge Nuclear Bunker**

- Built 1987 as local government control centre; now redundant
- Secure and on site; a very hard building to use but readily upgradeable
- Now has secure, environmentally controlled storage that holds fragile material, anything that requires active conservation PLUS our handling and display packs



## Outsourcing

- Pros
  - No capital cost
  - Better standards of storage
- Cons
  - Not local
  - Need a d\*\*n good catalogue
  - Transportation issues
  - Higher and increasing revenue costs
  - Loss of control over materials
  - Accessibility
  - Lack of awareness of market

## Deepstore Ltd

- Established in 1998 to use underground void that was created by mining at Salt Union's rock salt mine
- 150 metres underground, has consistent temperature and humidity levels (13 degrees and 58% RH); no danger of ultraviolet light, vermin or flooding
- Current space over 200 million m3 over the area of 700 football pitches and growing (1 million tonnes salt p/a)
- PD5454 compliant or non-compliant, or bespoke options
- Art works, historical records and architectural models are among the items currently stored underground.
- Archives are maintained for financial institutions, police departments, universities, architects and hospitals.
- Some small scale museum use already





## Retention & Discard

- Not everything should be kept
- Keep relevant material only
- Role of specialists
- Smaller archives
- Very hard to be uniform: define significance



## The challenge...

To re-catalogue over 13,000 boxes

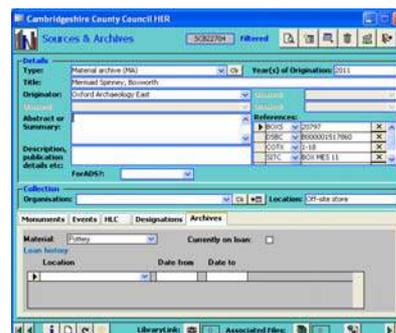
- quickly
- reliably
- in a standardised but flexible format
- that would allow us to pinpoint and retrieve individual items without having to lift box lids!



DEEPSTORE  
B000001503680



Example record:  
Pottery from contexts 1-18 from an evaluation carried out in 2011 by Oxford Archaeology East at Mermaid Spinney, Boxworth. If we wished to examine this pottery we would recall the box barcoded B000001517860



## In summary

- Archives are a sector-wide problem not a museums' one
- Solution must be a sector-wide one – does not have to be a traditional museums approach
- Each area can have own solution or share
- Sort the solution then concentrate on benefits
- Use archives as resources not stumbling blocks



Cambridgeshire  
County Council

Cambridgeshire, a great place to call home