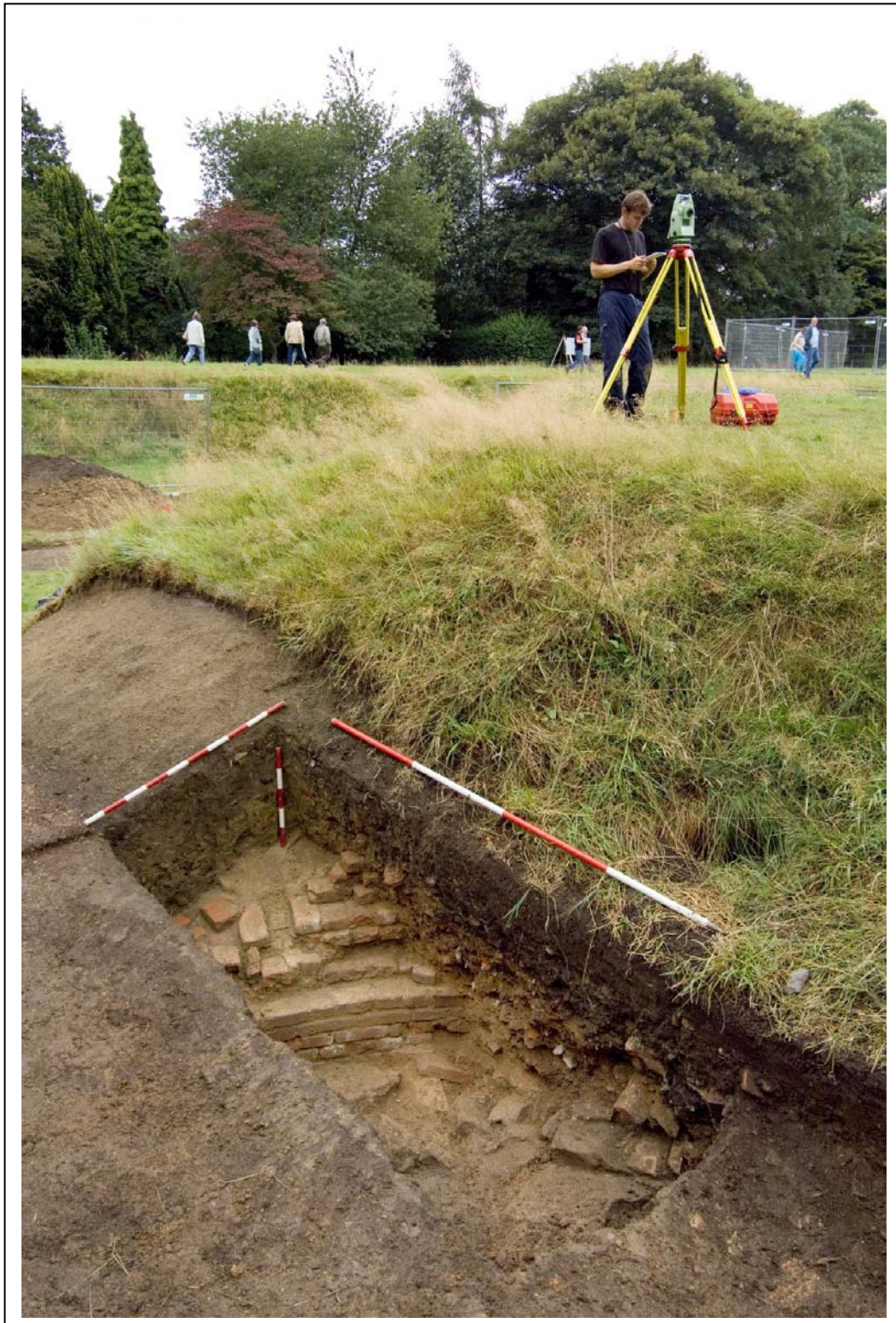


NMR Event Types Thesaurus



Edited by Paul Adams

English Heritage 2009

Cover photograph: Ashby de la Zouch Castle, Leicestershire.
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Acknowledgements

Data Standards Unit would like to thank the many people who have been very generous with their time and advice during the construction of this thesaurus.

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Event Types Thesaurus

Introduction and non technical summary

Background

The aim of this introduction is to provide the reader with a background and general developmental overview of the thesaurus, its scope and the terminology contained within. For those who wish to read further regarding thesaurus structure and the issues surrounding thesaurus development, a more technical guide can be found in Appendix I.

This thesaurus represents the Data Standards Unit's response to numerous requests from individuals and organizations within the heritage sector for a standardized terminology that can be applied to archaeological and architectural fieldwork types and techniques and our response to a 'terminology gap' that was recently identified by the MIDAS Heritage, Historic Environment Record (HER) Compliance Profile. It is hoped that the thesaurus will be of use to anyone involved in the recording of events, be that at local or national level.

For the purpose of this thesaurus an event is defined as:

A single episode of primary data collection over a discrete area of land. This single recording event can only consist of one investigative technique and is therefore a unique entity in time and space¹

The terminology contained within the thesaurus has drawn upon and expanded the word list developed by the Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers (ALGAO) during 1998-9. It represents the result of an exercise collating commonly used UK terminology into a meaningful structure that will allow users to identify and apply standardized indexing to intrusive and non intrusive archaeological and architectural investigations, whether they be terrestrial or maritime.

It must be stressed that, as with any thesaurus, this resource is intended as a tool for the indexing, retrieval and exchange of data. Whilst it does map current practices within the sector it is not necessarily intended to represent a definitive classification scheme for archaeological and architectural investigation types and techniques.

Foreign language and regional terms are excluded unless they have passed into common English usage or provide the sole description for an event. Where a regional term does not fulfil these criteria the user will be guided to a term which has wider currency and is synonymous with the regional term.

¹ Steve Catney SMR News 7, 1998

Thesaurus terms and structure

The Event Types Thesaurus includes 128 terms. Of these, there are 83 preferred terms, 37 non-preferred terms and 8 non-index terms.

The terms are divided into two classes: INTRUSIVE EVENT and NON INTRUSIVE EVENT. The former covering events that have a physical impact upon the archaeological resource and the latter covering events that record the resource but do not have a physical impact upon it. In order to ease retrieval the terms sit in hierarchies under a number of non index grouping terms, for example ARCHAEOLOGICAL INTERVENTION, ENVIRONMENTAL INTERVENTION, HERITAGE ASSESSMENT and REMOTE SENSING etc.

This work has been carried out by English Heritage, with further suggestions arising from work undertaken by other organizations and individuals including:

Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers (ALGAO)

Archaeology Data Service (ADS)

The Institute for Archaeologists (IfA)

The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS)

(For a full list of all those who participated in the peer review please see the acknowledgements).

Specific issues arising during the creation of the thesaurus

In standard thesaurus construction terms are grouped hierarchically underneath the broadest noun term (or Top Term). This thesaurus deviates from this by grouping terms under classes which do not appear in the hierarchy. If standard thesaurus construction had been applied, then all event types would have a Top Term of ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION. However, by introducing the concept of Class, event types can be grouped together into particular themes to facilitate the searching and retrieval of records. For example, the various types of archaeological interventions that have a physical impact upon the archaeological resource are placed in the INTRUSIVE EVENT Class.

When selecting terms for inclusion it was decided that laboratory based archaeological science terminology should be largely excluded, as the primary focus of this thesaurus are site/landscape based archaeological and architectural data gathering exercises and techniques. The English Heritage 'Archaeological Science' thesaurus has comprehensive coverage of laboratory based terminology used for recording the techniques, recovery methods and materials associated with archaeological sciences; however, there are overlaps in terminology between the two thesauri where scientific archaeological techniques are practiced in the field, specifically terms relating to geophysical techniques and those relating to the collection of samples for phosphate and dendrochronological analysis.

On the other hand, the thesaurus does include a number of terms that relate to activities that strictly speaking do not fall under the umbrella of an event as it is defined on page 1. Desk Based Assessment, Environmental Impact Assessment and

Historic Area Assessment are some of the terms that fall into this category as they do not necessarily contain a field work element. Despite this it was felt important that these terms should be included as they are of use to those in the heritage sector who, in addition to recording events, also record episodes of secondary source data gathering. In order to differentiate these terms they have been assigned a grouping term of Heritage Assessment.

The thesaurus does not cover events of a historic nature, such as 'Built', 'Demolished', 'First Mentioned' as they are not instances of data collection and therefore do not fall within the scope of this thesaurus. It is hoped that such terms will be covered separately at a future date.

Further information

The thesaurus is available to browse online by visiting <http://thesaurus.english-heritage.org.uk/>. In addition if users wish to incorporate the thesaurus into their database electronic copies can be supplied free of charge on request.

The thesaurus is intended to be a dynamic indexing tool which will evolve with further use; the Data Standards Unit welcomes suggested additions and/or amendments these can be sent to us by using our online form that can be found at <http://thesaurus.english-heritage.org.uk/comments.htm> Every attempt will be made to respond to any suggestions within a reasonable period of time. Anyone requiring further information on the thesaurus or data standards should contact:

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