Problems of archaeological indexing

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Archaeology is a highly complex subject covering a very wide range of academic disciplines and demanding great flexibility and knowledge from its indexers. Some conventions customary in British archaeological indexing are mentioned, some dilemmas set out, and some good and bad examples cited.

'A good index is a great boon, and a good indexer of archaeological material is a person for whom all antiquaries have a great esteem''

'Hitherto most archaeological indexing would appear to have been done by chance volunteers'—so Sterling Dow wrote 30 years ago, but unfortunately the remark is almost equally true today. In this article it will be possible only to set out some of the commonest problems and to suggest some ways of tackling them. I hope to show archaeologists some things they need to know about indexing, as well as indexers some of the pitfalls into which insufficient knowledge of archaeology can lead them. Although I shall confine myself to the archaeology of the British Isles, the general principles should apply anywhere.

What is archaeology?

The first problem may be to define the subject! There is 'far more of it about' than most people realize; certainly there is more archaeology discussed in Parliament than the Hansard indexers ever note, and more in the newspapers than a cuttings agency will clip. Archaeology, as the study of the material remains of past human activity, covers a very long timespan, from the crude stone tools of the hominids of E. Africa some 2½ million years ago to the remnants of Cornish tin mining or the monuments of Art Deco like the Firestone factory in West London, or even yesterday's sardine tin on the corporation waste tip. In addition, however, archaeologists also recognize a bare downland, an ancient hedgerow or an Irish bog as archaeological evidence, since all these result from human activity as forests were cleared, fields delimited, or the land used to extinction.

The archaeologist has only such scraps of evidence as survive the normal processes of decay. Hence he must call on all kinds of other disciplines to fill out the bare outline of the past. Any archaeological report these days will almost inevitably contain information embracing any or all of the following specialisms: geology, climatology, botany, zoology, metallurgy, spectroscopy, radiocarbon dating, atomic absorption analysis, historical geography, place-names, statistics, Marxist theory, linguistics, and many more, as well as the traditional archaeological specialisms like pottery, coins, classical studies, and architecture. Few subjects can approach the complexities of modern archaeology, therefore. Since a report on a single site can easily be of monograph size these days, the indexer will have to cope with all these multifarious aspects. Figure 1 shows an extract from such a wide-ranging index (produced by our member Freda Wilkinson) to a volume of conference papers put out by my own organization. In some cases it will be advisable to obtain specialist help in clearing up uncertainties.

Who uses archaeological indexes?

Monographs and conference papers are of course academic level works demanding a high degree of special archaeological knowledge as well as expertise in indexing. Even textbooks in archaeology contain a very wide range of subjects and of course need good indexes; and while books for the general reader (for instance, Eric Wood's Field Guide to archaeology) may be simpler in content, their indexers need not only a sound appreciation of the subject but also a shrewd idea of what the reader wants to look up. (This 'obvious' point is not always fully appreciated!) The reader might be planning a holiday in Skye and want to do some home-work on the Iron Age structures there; or some humps and bumps in an Oxfordshire field, seen while walking the dog, might arouse curiosity; or an object in a Welsh museum prove intriguing. Four types of index users have been defined by Sterling Dow as follows:

The specialist himself, from his graduate school years on, has constant need of the results of other specialists. The amateur, on whom support ultimately depends in large part, should be able to find enough of what he wants. The teacher, perpetually forced to know something about many things, and to illustrate his teaching by forceful examples, is too often forgotten. Finally there is the synthesizer, the generalizer, the scholar who tries to extract the larger meanings. For specialist, for amateur, for teacher, and for synthesizer, indexes are one indispensable

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tool; and in making indexes, all four kinds of consultant ought to be kept in mind.\(^5\)

A tall order indeed! Regrettably, as one might expect, publishers often avoid the whole problem by the simple expedient of failing to provide any index. Particular offenders are the publishers of large conference volumes, containing perhaps 40-50 papers; to use these the searcher will just have to remember or deduce which contributor made a point and then hunt through that paper. Even if a symposium volume is allowed an index, perhaps only place- and personal names are entered; or a non-specialist indexer may be engaged, with rather unhappy results; or lax editing may force the indexer to search for a safe route through several conflicting systems of terminology.

A rather revealing variation on the refusal to supply an index comes from a very recent publication\(^6\) in which the authors state firmly that 'There is no index to this volume since we believe it would add nothing except expense; the lists of contents and of illustrations should be sufficient for any intelligent reader.' Here we see that old, old confusion between classification (the arrangement of material in the most helpful order for initial consultation) and indexing (the means of retrieving subjects which may be scattered throughout the classification). Hence it was possible to spot at least thirty terms which researchers might want to consult, but for which the otherwise excellent contents list was no help whatever. To produce such an index would in fact have been quick and cheap, and would have added greatly to the usability of the whole report.

**Unsatisfactory indexes**

Even when a volume has an index, this may be of lamentable standard; for instance the index to Hilary Turner's *Town defences in England and Wales* (John Baker, 1971) was described by one reviewer as a 'curiosity' and by another as a 'farce'. To start with, this index is far too short for a book of 220 pages and betrays little understanding of how it is likely to be used. The towns discussed in the book are not indexed unless they have been 'attacked' or 'besieged' (and I am not sure how one distinguishes between those), so that one has to guess which of several fairly arbitrary regions (e.g. Midlands) in the body of the text will contain the town sought. The crenellation entry needed breaking down, many more concepts should have been included, and in general this index has cost the book much of its usefulness.

Another category of archaeological work which often receives a raw deal in indexing is the county or district archaeological journal. H. St. George Gray had occasion to criticize them in 1929\(^7\) and there is still much room for improvement. A particularly naive specimen (Figure 2) breaks just about every rule in the indexer's book: look at all those indefinite articles, for a start! (Nor can you guarantee to pick up those items in their rightful places like *manors* or *rectors*, in compensation.)

This indexer was not aware of certain important archaeological facts, for instance that a 'Windmill Hill site' has nothing to do with windmills but refers to a conventional division of the Neolithic period.

Fortunately not many of our county journals produce indexes like that, but most of them could do with improved indexes. Some of them issue so-called indexes which are no more, or little more, than classified or rearranged contents lists. Even the British Academy has recently fallen victim to this confusion in producing a cumulative index to its *Proceedings*. Presumably alarmed by the splendidly comprehensive, but perhaps overfull model prepared for it by J. E. Holmstrom,\(^8\) the Academy went to the other extreme and contented itself with an alphabetical list of modified titles of articles. With such a sad example from the foremost organization concerned with the humanities in Britain, it is hard to ask county and local societies to try to do better. That numbers of them do produce quite good indexes to their journals is much to their credit. The dream I myself cherish is for all of them to adopt a common thesaurus of archaeological terms, and use it to the same rules, so that anyone conducting a search through several county journals would have many fewer problems.\(^9\)

**Typographical aids**

Sometimes a well compiled index is poorly served by the typographer, so that items do not stand out as they should; the use of italic or bold type can be very helpful in certain types of indexes, but needs careful use as it can be self-defeating if overdone. The indexer's recommendations may of course be overruled by the house editor or book designer, but it is always worth making suggestions from the indexer's intimate knowledge of the text.

In the commercial world, pressures of time may not allow the setting of a specimen page or half-page so that clarity can be checked and the design altered if necessary; but in the slightly more spacious world of academic publishing usually inhabited by archaeology it should be possible to do this.

Roman numerals (still often used for journal numeration) can play havoc with an index both in clarity and in accuracy, and I think no one looking at Figure 3 could have blamed the indexer had she bravely rejected them in favour of unambiguous bold Arabs. Unnecessary capitals tend to be avoided these days, and again Figure 3 would have looked better without them. The index to the first Wharram Percy report\(^10\) is very well set out with pottery types set in small capitals, as *Staxton ware*; area of site in which found is set in brackets (Area 6); subdivision of ware is in italic—*grass-tempered*; and building number is in bold—Building 6/1. By its content as well as its layout this index admits R. T. Porter, a novice indexer, to the highest class straight away.

**What constitutes a good archaeological index?**

Sterling Dow again: 'A complete index will proceed

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Note. Some references to items classified under sub-headings may not be separately indexed, but included in general headings.

The main entries for many objects are under materials, rather than periods, or individual objects, as follows: Bone objects; Bronze, Clay, Gilt, Glass, Horn, Iron, Ivory, Pewter, Silver, etc.

A Beaker from Ely, LI, 1
A Belgic and Roman farm at Wyboston, Beds., L, 75-84
A Boy Bishop Token from Bury St Edmunds Abbey, LXVI/LXVII, 126-7
A Bronze Bowl and other Vessels from Icklingham, Suffolk, LV, 6-7
A Cambridge Bell-foundry, XXVIII, 93-100
A Cambridge Seal-Box of the 17th Century, XXXIX, 59-76
A Cambridge Vintner's Accounts, c. 1511, XXXIV, 50-8
A Cambridgeshire Community: Chippenham... (Review of), LIx, 133
A Clay Lamp of the 1st Century A.D., XXXV, 139-40
A Derelict Railway... the Newmarket and Chesterford Railway, XXXI, 1-16
A Disorderly Rector at Ely, LX, 107-8
A Flat Axe from Chatteris Fen, CAMBS., LVI/LVII, 5-8
A 14th Century House in Linton, XXXII, 1-13
A Gaulish Coin from St Neots, XXXIX, 97
A Group of Romano-British Pottery with an owner's Mark, LI, 21-2
A History of Clopton, CAMBS., XXXIII, 3-60
A Hoard of Late Roman bronze coins from Stretham, XXXIX, 83-92
A Hoard of Romano-British Ironwork from Worlington, XLII, 89
A Late Bronze Age Urn-field and Grooved-Ware Occupation at Honington, Suffolk, XLV, 39-43
A Marriage Register at Queens' College, Cambridge, XL, 13-20
A May Day Garland from St Neots, XXXII, 57-8
A Medieval Leather Box from Ellington, HUNTS., LI, 56-7
A Medieval Squab, LIV, 109-11
A Medieval Windmill, Honey Hill, Dogsthorpe, LIx, 95-103
A Neolithic Site N.W. of Cambridge, XXV, 11-15
A New Hoard of Romano-British Fewer from Icklingham, LI, 6-10
A Note from Dr Lloyd's Inaugural Address, vol. XXXIII, 1-2
A Report on trial Excavations at Limlow Hill, Litlington, CAMBS., XXXVIII, 170-6
A Romano-British Settlement at St Ives, LI, 23-9
A Romano-British Settlement at Arbury Road, Cambridge, XLVIII, 10-43
A Romano-British Village near Littleport, CAMBS., XLIII, 7-13; Appendices I and II, XLIII, 13-20
A 16th-century Dole-Gate from Denny Abbey, XXIX, 72-5
A Stone-Age Site on Swaffham Prior Farm, XXXII, 17-23
A Sword of the Nydam type from Ely Fields Farm, XLII, 73-6
A 3rd-century Coin Hoard from Coldham, March, LXVI/LXVII, 124-5
A 13th-century Architectural Sketch from the Hospital of St John the Evangelist, Cambridge, LIV, 99-104
A Visitation of the Religious Houses in the Diocese of Ely... XXX, 54-9
A Wall Decoration at Linton, XXX, 60-2
A Windmill Hill Site at Burnt Fen, Mildenhall, XLVIII, 13-24
Abercromby, Hon. John, XXXIX, 50ff., 67; XLVII, 40; LI, 1; LX, 20
Abercromby, Sir Ralph, LXIV/LXVII, 106-7
Aberdeen Forestry Dept, XLVII, 38
Aberg, N., LXI, 13-14
Abingdon, Berks., XLVII, 18; L, 108; LV, 42; LIX, 145; LIX, 14
Aberingham, XXXVII, 19
Abermant, Gerts., XXXVII, 49; XXXIII, 10, 148; XXXVI, 54; XXXV, 4-5; XL, 56, 58, 60-70, 78; XLVI, 34, 39; L, 201, 23, 51, 96; LI, 8-9; LIV, 41, 48-9; LX, 30-6 pass.; LXII, 84
Abitingtons, The, XXXII, 21; XXXIII, 28; XXXV, 81; XXXII, 17; XL, 6, 12, 56, 68, 79; LI, 9, 30; LIV, 58
Aca Cress, XXX, 65
Acceptus, LX, 66
Accounts: Argentine's Manor, Melbourn, XXXV, 50; Cambridge Castle building, XXXVI, 66-89; Lordship Farm, Melbourn, XXXVIII, 30, 43; 17th-Century Harvests*, XLII, 27-32; Summaries of C.A.S. See beginning of each volume; Vintner's, XXXIV, 50-8
Acland, C. L., XL, 26
Act: Ancient Monuments, XLV, 69-70; Conservators*, XXXVIII, 128; Corporation, L, 69; Militia, XL, 53; 'Pretended', XXXVIII, 96, 120, 122, 132, 139; Resumption, LI, 50; Sheriffs*, XXXVII, 5; Toleration, L, 62; Uniformity, of, LIV, 126
Acton Scott, XLIV, 16
Adam, interior designer and architect, XXXVII, 18
Adam and Eve, XXXII, 37, 41
Adam the Cellarer, XXXV, 30; Addicts, XXX, 65
Adam the Chaundler, XXXII, 3, 8-10
Abeys, East Anglian, XXIX, 25-49
Abeys Delph, XXXIV, 27
Abeys Ripton, HUNTS., LXI, 60, 63
Abeysley, HUNTS., XXXVI, 27; LXI, 66.
Abbott, Alderman, XL, 1
Abbott, George Wyman, XXXVI, 153; XLIII, 2; LI, 45-8, 54-5, 64; LIV, 1
Abbott, S. E., LXIV/LXVII, 101
Abercromby, Hon. John, XXXIX, 50ff., 67; XLVII, 40; LI, 1; LX, 20
Abercromby, Sir Ralph, LXIV/LXVII, 106-7
Aberdeen Forestry Dept, XLVII, 38
Aberg, N., LXI, 13-14
Abingdon, Berks., XLVII, 18; L, 108; LV, 42; LIX, 145; LIX, 14
Aberingham, XXXVII, 19
Aberington, XXXVIII, 49
Aberington Pigotts, Herts., XXXVII, 49; XXXIII, 10, 148; XXXVI, 54; XXXV, 4-5; XL, 56, 58, 60-70, 78; XLVI, 34, 39; L, 201, 23, 51, 96; LI, 8-9; LIV, 41, 48-9; LX, 30-6 pass.; LXII, 84
Abitingtons, The, XXXII, 21; XXXIII, 28; XXXV, 81; XXXII, 17; XL, 6, 12, 56, 68, 79; LI, 9, 30; LIV, 58
Acca Cress, XXX, 65
Acceptus, LX, 66
Accounts: Argentine's Manor, Melbourn, XXXV, 50; Cambridge Castle building, XXXVI, 66-89; Lordship Farm, Melbourn, XXXVIII, 30, 43; 17th-Century Harvests*, XLII, 27-32; Summaries of C.A.S. See beginning of each volume; Vintner's, XXXIV, 50-8
Acland, C. L., XL, 26
Act: Ancient Monuments, XLV, 69-70; Conservators*, XXXVIII, 128; Corporation, L, 69; Militia, XL, 53; 'Pretended', XXXVIII, 96, 120, 122, 132, 139; Resumption, LI, 50; Sheriffs*, XXXVII, 5; Toleration, L, 62; Uniformity, of, LIV, 126
Acton Scott, XLIV, 16
Adam, interior designer and architect, XXXVII, 18
Adam and Eve, XXXII, 37, 41
Adam the Cellarer, XLVII, 1
Adam the Chaundler, XXXII, 3, 8-10

Figure 2. Extract from cumulative index to Proceedings of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society, vols. XXVI-LXII, 1923-69. With acknowledgements to Cambridge Antiquarian Society.


Carbon 14 Dating, see Radio Carbon Dating.

Cardial, see Impressed Ware.

Carp's-Tongue Sword Complex, XXXI, 369; XXXIII, 414—6; XXXVII, Pt. 2, 154—66.

Carts, see Wagons.

Catacomb Grave Culture, XXXIV, 298—301, 312.

Cauldrons, XXXVII, Pt. 2, 162—3; 39, 423.

Causewayed Camps, XXXII, 355—6; 39, 478, 484.

Cavalry, XXXIII, 391, 417—8.

Cave Paintings, see Palaeolithic Art, Rock Art.

Celtic Art, see also La Tène Art, 40, 220—1.

Celtic Ritual Enclosures, XXXVII, Pt. 2, 218—27.


'Celts', see Hoes, Stone.

Cereals, see also Grain Impressions, XXXIV, 112, 114—16, 146, 355; XXXV, 16, 381; XXXVI, 3, 17, 21, XXXVII, Pt. 1, 189; XXXVII, Pt. 2, 35—8, 48—9, 52, 67—74; 38, 21, 90, 187, 192; 39, 92—3, 152—3, 157, 161, 167, 174; 40, 132—5, 209, 211.

Cernavoda Culture, XXXV, 13, 17, 19—20, 26—8; XXXVI, 302.

Chambered Tombs, British, see also Clyde-Carlingford, Court-Cairns, Passage Graves, Portal Dolmens, Severn-Cotswold, XXXI, 376; XXXII, 347—8; 357—8, 372; XXXIII, 464; XXXVI, 116—24; XXXVII, Pt. 1, 248—9; 38, 434; 39, 344; 40, 223.
heroically to analyse the material, and to consider how various students might wish to come at it by trying as it were to see all around the subjects involved.11 There are few ‘heroic indexers’ in British archaeology today, in my view. The first to come to mind is Ann Morley, who for years has indexed two major national periodicals, *Archaeological Journal* (cumulatives) and *Medieval Archaeology*, as well as numerous other works, to a very high standard. Another is an academic author, Professor Leslie Alcock, whose own impatience with other people’s indexes has led him to insist on providing very full examples to his own works, of which *Arthur’s Britain* (Penguin, 1973) is the most accessible example. But it was the late Vera Dallas’s magisterial indexes for the Society of Antiquaries of London from the 1920s onwards that set standards for us all, as Beatrice de Cardi has acknowledged.12 (Both she and Miss Dallas had to face the peculiarly difficult task of retrospective indexing of Victorian periodicals, which entails many decisions on how far to interpret in modern terms the obsolete usages of their predecessors.)

A truly ‘heroic indexer’ would recognize, for instance, that ‘causewayed camp’ ought to be cross-referenced not only to ‘interrupted-ditch enclosure’ but also to ‘henge’, a type now thought to be a formalized Late Neolithic development of the Middle Neolithic causewayed camp. It is complexity like this that suggests it is more realistic to turn archaeologists into good indexers than to expect indexers to acquire such omniscience.

**Terminology**

A development of the ‘synonym problem’ hinted at in the previous paragraph is that of the specialized thesaurus, which has been well compared to a gearbox on a car—it indicates the preferred gear for efficient operation of the index, and allows for smooth shifts from the user’s own preferred gear into that of the index. Such a thesaurus is currently in preparation for archaeological use at the National Monuments Record (23 Savile Row, London W1) in two parts, one for site types and one for artefacts. It is really intended for retrieving information from archaeological data bases, but there is no reason why its use should not spread into publications and assist the standard of indexing to rise all round, simply by providing a means of reconciling differing terminologies. It could certainly form the basis of the ‘county journal thesaurus’ mentioned earlier.

Here I should also mention the British Museum Research Laboratory’s keyword scheme, which originated as a retrieval system for information on the conservation and analysis of museum objects. It was then adapted to form the regular index for *Art & Archaeology Technical Abstracts*, for the *Journal of Archaeological Science*, and for some publications originating within the Laboratory itself. Some of the author-chosen keywords are poor—*reidentification* and *species lists* seem inadvisable choices—but the scheme is a very welcome step on the way to some kind of uniformity between publications.

Some of the problems of developing and changing terminology are mentioned by Bridget Trump.13 She points out that recent years have seen an increase in theoretical archaeology and the consequent introduction of new terms like social organization, settlement patterns, transhumance, ethnographic parallels, and experimental archaeology. Some of her solutions to these problems might be argued over, but it is refreshing to have an archaeological indexer making a public statement about them! (For other indexers’ statements see references14).

**Indexing of ‘parallels’**

Mention of ethnographic parallels in the preceding paragraph gives a reminder that one of the thorniest problems confronting the archaeological indexer is that of ‘parallels’. These (non-Euclidean) entities are, or have been, the life-blood of archaeology in that the advance of the discipline depends on classifying like, or parallel, examples together and studying their family resemblances, habitual accompaniments and so on. It is not uncommon for a single artefact under discussion to have 30 objects—from as many different places or museum collections—cited as its parallels. Is the indexer to make entries for all 30? For the discovery in particularly favourable circumstances of just one new object may suddenly illuminate the whole function or *raison d’être* of the other 30. The reader ought to be able to discover that the fragmentary object X, puzzled over for years, is now securely identified as (say) a bridle cheek-piece by virtue of its similarity to a newly discovered complete object Z. However, indexing *all* the parallels in a given work could run the indexer into alarming space problems, and selection may have to be exercised; this is really a job for the author, or at least a highly specialized indexer.

If selection has been practised to any great degree, the indexer’s prefatory note should say so. This will warn the user that the absence of index references does not necessarily mean absence of any mention in the work.

**Sub-entry order**

A frequent cause of stumbling by indexers unaccustomed to archaeology is the order of sub-entries. The archaeologist works very much in a chronological framework—Palaeolithic, Neolithic, Romano-British, medieval and the like—and he therefore tends to expect sub-entries to be made in chronological rather than alphabetical order. This convention has operated at least since the 1920s and yet one still finds indexers putting, say, pottery subentries into alphabetical order. A sub-entry order like this—

Deverel-Rimbury, Food Vessel, Grimston, Windmill Hill — makes the archaeologist blink, because the order goes backwards in time over a couple of millennia! The preferred order would be—
Neolithic: Windmill Hill, Grimston
Bronze Age: Food Vessel, Deverel-Rimbury—
(although there would be a case for allowing alphan- 
tetical sub-entry once the needed division Neolithic, 
Bronze Age (etc) had been made: the order would then 
run
Neolithic: Grimston, Windmill Hill
Bronze Age: Deverel-Rimbury, Food Vessel)
Obviously this needs good knowledge of the subject 
which the text itself may not necessarily supply.

Similarly, brooches, coins and the like are best 
entered in chronological order, if only because such 
pieces are themselves often the principal criteria for 
dating objects associated with them. However, this 
chronological rule has to be applied with discretion: for 
instance Dennis Harding's book on the Iron Age in 
Britain¹⁶ contains no pottery except that of Iron Age 
date, so the pottery entry quite reasonably lists the sub-
entries in alphabetical order: 'furrowed bowls; globular 
wells; globular jars; haematite slip' and so on. In the 
same way a whole work devoted to medieval pottery 
could list the fabrics alphabetically: 'Cistercian; 
Midland Purple; St Neots; Surrey White; Tudor Green' 
 etc. This is simply because dating of each pottery type 
is only vaguely defined, one fading out gradually as 
another gains popularity. For medieval pottery 
undoubtedly the best model to follow is Ann Morley 
in her indexes to the journal Medieval Archaeology. These 
are admirably clear and easy to use; her breakdown is 
first by broad date, e.g. medieval and later; the next is 
the type of site producing such pottery (castles; moated 
and manor sites, etc); then follows a more precise dating 
by century. Hence it is easy for someone who has 
pottery excavated from a castle and believed to date to 
12th-13th century to find the most likely sources for 
comparison. This is 'heroic indexing', surely.

In contrast, Bridget Trump's method of scattering the 
pottery all through her index to Proceedings of the 
Prehistoric Society¹⁶ does not seem to me the best 
solution; not only does it separate types that are closely 
related, such as Beakers (under B) and Rusticated ware 
(under R), but it dodges the uncomfortable fact that 
pots can be highly individual creations which researchers 
may have difficulty in assigning firmly to one category 
or another. If all the pottery entries are kept together it 
is easier to allow for pots 'migrating' from one type to 
another as knowledge increases.

Undated material, or multi-period entries, are best 
put at the beginning of an entry, before the dated series.

Other types of sub-entry are best ordered alphabeti-
cally by place-name; castles or churches would be 
obvious candidates for this treatment because they are 
usually complex structures which continue developing 
over the centuries, and chronological order of sub-entry 
would be rather meaningless for them. Kilns on the 
other hand, since they tend to be short-lived affairs, are 
potentially good sources of dating information; they 
may be grouped either chronologically by century of 
operation—13th century, 14th century, etc—or alphan-
tetically by site name; the nature of the work must be 
the guide to which is best. As so often, strict rules are 
inadvisable and common sense, based on assessment of 
how the work is likely to be consulted, must be used 
instead. Nonetheless, some kind of order should always 
be imposed on sub-entries, since they are difficult to 
search if randomly entered.

Materials
Archaeological materials such as bone, iron, bronze, 
glass etc. are all liable to be used as entry points by the 
searcher and should (for any given index) either be the 
main entry for those materials or refer the reader on to 
more specific entries, e.g. axes, brooches as references 
from bronze. Material can also form a useful sub-
division, e.g. beads, glass/gold/jet/shell (etc); however 
it will often be found that archaeological period forms the 
better subdivision (beads, Neo/Bronze Age, etc).

Periods
An entry such as 'Romano-British' will not often be 
needed, since the arrangement of the work may give 
more direct access. However, in an essentially non-
Roman work an entry like this is extremely helpful:
Romano-British, see under banks & ditches; farms; 
field patterns; lynchets; pottery; settlement¹⁷

'Taxonomic' indexing
Concepts often need to be pulled together in an index, 
because (as with the parallels cited above) it is by putting 
like things together and comparing them that knowledge 
increases. Some indexers fail to understand this important 
fact and seem to think it adequate to regard the site 
name as the subject entry. (Or, to be fair to them, 
perhaps they are not allowed the space!) This really is 
unsatisfactory for the user. For instance, Newgrange is a 
famous site in Ireland, but it is also a passage grave and 
needs to be listed under passage graves along with others 
of the same type. This is because the user cannot 
possibly guess which sites have been mentioned indi-
vidually and look them all up, especially if they are 
newly discovered sites! He is doing systematic research, 
for which he needs our help. (One researcher I know 
regularly looks up helmets, weapons, swords, stone 
circles, and henges.) For this reason, reluctant though I 
am to utter even a breath of criticism against a Wheatley 
Medallist, I believe that M. D. Anderson's cumulative 
index to Antiquity¹⁸ is greatly diminished by its failure 
to include generic entries like this. The same point is the 
subject of complaint by Sterling Dow¹⁸ when he finds 
the shield from Pylos mentioned in the Hesperia index 
only under the place-name, not under shields. The point 
is far from trivial. All the significant references to round 
barrows, farmsteads, villas and so on should be trace-
able by a reference under their genus as well as their site-
name. Only thus can the index provide 'lists of material 
for consultants who wish to inspect . . . a whole body of
items’, and such an index can be ‘almost the outline of several systematic books’ to come. In this context, however, Hadrian’s Wall is a difficult problem. It was designed by Hadrian as a system, and all the forts along it interlock in the sense that one fort might be strengthened at the expense of (or at the same time as) another elsewhere in the system. Ideally perhaps the Hadrian’s Wall entry should include sections for its milecastles, turrets, and Vallum, and should also give see also references for all the forts mentioned which belong to it. This can become cumbersome, so once more the indexer must use knowledge and discretion according to the nature of the work.

Stonehenge, in any case, is enough to tax anyone’s ideas of system, since it could be listed under so many heads: henge, megalithic setting, stone circle, archaeo-astronomic calculator, ceremonial monument, and so on and so forth! Here again the nature of the work must be the guide.

Archaeology itself will often be needed as an index entry, particularly in the more philosophical works. The index to Antiquity gives an idea of the range, though here one could argue that more of the scattered items under that heading could have been fruitfully brought together: for instance the following scattered sub-entries could have been collected under some such heading as theoretical: ‘aims in, approach to, common sense in, definitions of, explanation in, idiom of, modern principles and practice in, the New’, new perspectives in, rethinking, what is it?’ Similarly most indexers could see how to improve the entries for Anglo-Saxons, Romano-British etc in the same index. (It should be noted however that this index appears with exemplary speed, only a year after the last volume it covers, and there could be indefinite debate about the virtues of speed versus coherence; there is an inevitable trade-off here, and each indexing organization must resolve the dilemma in its own way. For myself I would rather have waited a year for a really complete index.)

Entry specificity

The problem of general versus specific entries is a common one, but I would always recommend emphasis on specific entries such as brooches, ear-rings, pins, strap-ends, and so on, because such minutiae are very often the basis of research. All of these should also receive see references under the generic term ornaments. Conversely, some researchers are interested in all aspects of bronze artefacts, and like to see an entry bronzes giving see references to the individual types of bronze artefact (axes, bowls, collars, figurines). Entries like these, to quote Sterling Dow once more, ‘invite one to explore, as a good index should, with the feeling that the index is a reliable guide’. At the same time, of course, you are introducing an element of preferred terminology by guiding your reader to look up (say) bowls rather than vessels. Similarly, ‘bracers see wristguards’ offers a movement towards more readily understandable technical names. Specific entries can be particularly helpful when an item has been reclassified, as sometimes happens: ‘purse-mounts reidentified as firesteels’ should entice anyone to explore, and it is undeniably more useful than ‘iron objects’ could be.

Geographical entries

The revision of local government boundaries in 1974 (for England and Wales) and 1975 (for Scotland) threw every library catalogue into confusion, and indexers will be living with this time-consuming problem for evermore. Often a large-scale Ordnance Survey map is needed to find out whether a barrow group is still in Yorkshire or has ‘migrated’ to Humberside North. The county basis of so much British archaeology is deeply ingrained, particularly among the part-time archaeologists who do so much to assist the profession; and this fact must be recognized by giving access via the index not only to site names but also to counties. The Bedfordshire worker needs to know that (say) sites in Dunstable, Luton and Odell have been mentioned, so these must be collected under the county; and then there may need to be new/old county entries, e.g. Warwickshire see also West Midlands; Pembrokeshire see now Dyfed.

Another problem that can arise with place-names is that a newly discovered site may be named either after its nearest village, or its parish, or the farm where it lies. Sometimes names take years to settle down within the discipline; the Iron Age site at Tollard Royal is often called Berwick Down, thus needing double indexing. Fortunately this does not happen too often, but vigilance must be observed. Historical changes need noting by some such method as this:

Suth Warrom, Suth Wharram and Suth Wharrum, see place-names, Wharram Percy

Illustrations

Figures and plates should be indexed, as the user may want to turn straight to the plan of the Chesters bath building or find the photograph of the North Leigh villa cropmark.

Cumulative indexes

Indexers are sometimes asked to make cumulations for journals of past annual indexes, which may have been compiled by several different hands. This is well known to cause problems at the best of times, and unless the annual indexes have been compiled to exceptionally high standards it will be advisable to start again from scratch. (Failure to realize this was at least part of the reason for the unsatisfactory index shown in Figure 2.) The cumulative indexer has a marvellous opportunity, however, of making all manner of connections between hitherto unrelated facts which could lead to real advances in research. Scholarly indexes of this order really will be treasured by every archaeologist, and their
makers will be given the recognition that is their proper due. Certainly users of *Britannia*, the journal of Romano-British studies, will be eagerly awaiting the superb cumulated index to volumes I-X currently in preparation by another 'heroic indexer', Professor Leo Rivet.

**Conclusions**

It could be said, of course, that we get the indexes we deserve. Some research I did among the various reviewing journals for archaeology a few years ago revealed that fewer than one in six reviewers mentions the index even in passing, let alone gives it serious consideration. One reviewer who did can usefully be quoted here:

>'The index is decidedly perfunctory and one begins to wonder at the use of the curtailed indices [sic] which many books now have. If it is solely a question of cost, then it might be better to do without. Although *Oxford region, mortaria from*, rates a mention, there is no entry for other Oxford wares under *Pottery*; moreover on looking up *Pottery: sources*, one finds that it is devoted entirely to samian. But at least an entry: Young, C J, *pottery identification by will tell the cognoscenti where to look. If we are going to have an index in a report of this size, as surely we ought, then let it be a proper one.'

It should be apparent by now that archaeology is not a subject into which absolutely anyone can venture after reading a book about Nineveh, one on Egypt, and another on Stonehenge! It is a highly complex and demanding subject, one of the most difficult on the university curriculum. Moreover it is developing so fast that a reference book more than five years old is already suspect and anything earlier than about 1965 is usable only by an expert. Nonetheless it is a fascinating subject where the specialist indexer will find the intellectual rewards are great even if the financial ones barely exist. If, as Alice Edmunds told us recently 27 'indexing is a series of perpetually difficult decisions, many of them calling for real intellectual courage', then archaeology carries that statement to its ultimate. William Oldys in a famous remark quoted by H. B. Wheatley 28 wrote of 'the labour and the patience, the judgement and the penetration' required, but he also found an index 'indispensably necessary, to manifest the treasures of any multifarious collection'. There are few subjects as multifarious as archaeology, and to 'manifest its treasures' is one of the toughest challenges an indexer can take on. Do not accept it lightly; but once hooked on it, and properly prepared for it, you may stay with archaeology for life!

If we are to be taken seriously as a profession, we must produce indexes of the highest quality which contribute not merely to the finding of extant information but also to the revelation of new chains of thought. Thirty years ago Sterling Dow hoped that the day of great indexes was at hand; alas, it is not quite with us yet, although the 'heroic indexers' I have identified have assuredly shown us the way, and nothing would please me more than for some of our own membership to join their number.

* * * *

**Acknowledgements**

My thanks go to the organizers of the Second International Conference on Indexing, who asked me to lead the workshop on archaeological indexing which was the genesis of this paper. I would also like to thank Elizabeth Fowler for discussing some ideas with me, and Beatrice de Cardi and Ann Morley for reading a draft of my text and contributing some thoughtful comments. Henry Cleere volunteered some emendations, and A. L. F. Rivet saved me from a blunder. None of them is to be assumed to approve my final version.

**General Notes**

Sterling Dow's article, which I have quoted throughout, is the only substantial discussion in print that I have been able to find on the subject of archaeological indexing. His article, which was prompted by the need to review the cumulative index to *Hesperia*, is mainly concerned with Mediterranean (classical) archaeology, but it raises many points of general archaeological (and other) interest.

The Council for British Archaeology provides a brief for the guidance of indexers of its own publications. Part of this brief is certainly usable in the context of other archaeological publications, and interested people may obtain copies of it from the CBA (112 Kennington Road, London SE11 6RE) for 30 pence plus stamped addressed envelope large enough to take folded foolscap paper. For indexing scientific aids to archaeology the annual index to *Art & Archaeology Technical Abstracts* may be consulted; but this computer-produced index has the faults as well as the virtues of its kind (the sub-entries are liable to be wrongly indented, for instance!) For problems concerned with historical documents as they may affect archaeological research, *Indexing for Editors* (R. F. Hunnisett, British Records Association, 1972) may be found helpful.

For indexing monographs concerned with excavations within a town, a cautionary example is Paul Bidwell's *Exeter Archaeological Reports* Volume 1 (1979). This index, although at first sight appearing well laid out, produces some very odd puzzles when looked at in detail. The sites excavated within the town are given under a main heading *Exeter* (which could be taken as read from the book's title) but there is little consistency in the way they are treated. The author-indexer has made a very praiseworthy attempt to be exhaustive, and has seen the virtue of grouping certain categories.
together; but there are lacunae and the index as a whole does not quite gain our confidence. All the same, I'm glad he aimed too high rather than too low!

Postscript

We had hoped to include a facsimile of the index to Town defences of England and Wales, but its publishers found themselves unable to give permission for reproduction. Interested readers may care to seek this book out for themselves.

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Suitable words

'Thematicity, language is the basic tool of both translating and indexing. Linguists and indexers make in-depth analyses of the texts on which they are working in order to assess the significance, exhaustively inventorize and maintain the unity of the author's concepts before moving on to their different tasks of selecting terms in the target language or for the appropriate subject heading. The indexer uses semantics in choosing indexing terms which are appropriate to the intended reader of the book (general or specialist) and then selecting suitable cross-references.'

This thought-provoking assertion comes from an article by our newly elected Vice-President, Ken Bakewell, 'The Society of Indexers' in The Incorporated Linguist 20 (2) Spring 1981, 73. He has written much of our society and craft in recent years, including also, 'Why are there so many bad indexes?' (Library Association Record 81 (7) July 1979, 330-1); 'How to let your fingers do the walking, and not lose the way' (The Times Higher Education Supplement No. 412, 26 Sept. 1980, 12); the entry, 'The Society of Indexers' in Encyclopedia of library and information science Vol. 28 (New York: Dekker, 1980); and the paper, 'The index: access or barrier to information?' given at the Aslib/IIS/LA 1980 conference and now published in the conference proceedings (see review, p. 200).

For his article in The Incorporated Linguist, Ken was helped considerably by advice from four members of our Society who are also linguists—John Gibson, Grace Holmes, Brian Hunter and Joyce Line. The paragraph quoted above owes a great deal to Mr Hunter and Mrs Line.

The UK government has decreed that 1982 will be Information Technology Year.

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