

“History, Historical Archaeology and Science”

Vocabulary

Archaeology - is the science of learning about the past through *material remains*

History - is the discipline of learning about the past through *documents and written records*

Historical archaeology is the archaeology of the time we have written records of the past.

Screening – passing excavated dirt through a wire screen to recover artifacts and other archaeological materials

Research Design - is a set of research questions that the historical archaeologist would like to answer

Hypotheses – informed guesses about how people in the past may have lived – that they want to test; and, based on the questions and hypotheses the things they think would be present at an archaeological site if their informed guesses are true.

Surface Survey -One way a historical archaeologist can answer questions about a site – WITHOUT digging.

Transects- In surface survey, the archaeologist walks across the surface of a site in regular lines to see if there are areas at the site that have artifacts or features.

Artifact - is anything *made by people* that can be moved out of its context.

Context – The place where the artifact is found.

Feature - anything made by people that *can't* be moved out of its context without destroying it.

LiDAR – a word which is short for “Light Detection and Ranging”. LiDAR works by using a laser flying overhead to strike the earth's surface and reflect upwards to a receiver.

Ground-penetrating radar or GPR for short - images can give a historical archaeologist an idea about what kinds of things may be below the surface at a site.

Site Datum - Setting up a place to measure from

Grid – a pattern of squares, usually between 10m and 20m apart, laid out over the surface of a site.

Profile – A map drawing of the different levels of soil and any features they found and of the places they found artifacts and what kinds of artifacts they found.

Block Excavations- larger square or rectangular *units*, usually 2m x 2m (or roughly 6 feet by 6 feet) square, that are dug in *levels* – the layers of soil going downwards as they're dug. As an archaeologist excavates each level, the soil is screened to recover artifacts

Levels - the layers of soil going downwards as they're dug.

Law of Superposition - This law states that (unless someone or something comes along and disturbs the soil later) the *deeper* you dig – the *older* the soil.

Concentrations - or groupings of artifacts, where they are located, and how many of each kind are in different areas.

Conserve - means treating artifacts so that they will survive longer.

Electrolysis – conservation of iron artifacts

X-ray fluorescence, or pXRF for short - a new technology available to know what elements are part of an artifact.