

Records of Buckinghamshire: Style Guide

Few of those who read *Records* are professional archaeologists, historians, geographers, etc, so please make your text and illustrations intelligible to the general reader. Where possible, avoid technical jargon (this applies particularly to professional archaeologists!). If you cannot avoid jargon, please include a brief explanation following its initial appearance, e.g. 'tumulus (burial mound)'. Give the text to someone else to read for clarity before you send it in. Don't be offended if your text is 'improved' or reduced in length by the Editors: that's their job.

The following sections provide a basic guide to the grammatical conventions preferred for *Records*. That said, we do not expect submissions to *Records* to conform to a particular style of writing, as long as they follow the basic conventions set out below, and are consistent in the use of punctuation, abbreviations, capital letters, etc.

Abbreviations and Contractions

Do not use full stops after *contractions*, e.g. Mr, St, Dr, MSS

Remember to use full stops after *abbreviations*, e.g. Fig.

It is preferred that full stops are not used in conjunction with abbreviations and contractions, except where their inclusion prevents ambiguity (e.g. with *in* and *no*). Thus:

e.g. *i.e.* *et al* *op cit* viz fig pl am pm mm c cf

Incidentally, full stops are only necessary after abbreviations when the abbreviation ends with a letter different to the last letter of the full word: e.g. *esq.* [esquire], but *Dr* [Doctor], *St* [Saint].

Spell out abbreviations the first time you use them, e.g. 'Early Bronze Age (EBA)', 'Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies (CBS)'.

Write 'and' in full, rather than using an ampersand (&). These may be used in references (e.g. 'Smith & Jones 1923'), or in something like a company name, where it is normally used (e.g. 'Jones & Sons').

Write county names in full, e.g. Buckinghamshire, not Bucks.

Punctuation

Commas: These should be used with care to separate phrases within sentences. Too many commas and the text will appear distinctly Germanic: too few, and the meaning may be difficult to follow. If in doubt, read the sentence to yourself: the 'natural' breaks where commas go should be apparent.

Inverted commas: Use single inverted commas whenever inverted commas are needed: doubles should only be used only for quotations within a set of single inverted commas. Extended quotations should be indented with a line space above and below to distinguish them from the main text. They do not require inverted commas.

Brackets/parentheses: Square brackets should be used for editorial insertions or comments within quotations. Parentheses (curved brackets) should be used primarily for references in text, e.g. (Fig. 1), (Smith 2003). Avoid the use of parentheses (and dashes) for textual asides: often commas can be used here.

Apostrophes: Avoid the modern tendency to use an apostrophe on every word ending in 'S'. Only apostrophise where there is an amalgamation of two words: *doesn't* (does not), *it's* (it is), or possession is indicated (e.g. *Cunliffe's*). Remember the plural possessive apostrophe goes after the 'S'. Be extremely careful with *its* and *it's*: the former (without an apostrophe) indicates possession.

Ellipsis: Omissions from quotations should be represented by an ellipsis of 3 dots, regardless of the length of text omitted.

Capital Letters and Titles

Avoid excessive use of capitalisation. Capital letters within sentences should only be used for proper nouns, personal or place names, not for compass points (e.g. North-West) or types of archaeological work (e.g. Evaluation).

Give a capital initial to titles prefixed to names, e.g. King Charles, Bishop Odo, Earl Godwin, but lower case otherwise, e.g. the king, the archbishop of Canterbury, the duke of Buckingham, William, duke of Normandy. Similarly, 'the river Ouzel', not 'the River Ouzel'.

If referring to members of the clergy by use of the title 'the Reverend ...', avoid the solecism 'the Reverend Harding'. It should be 'the Reverend Septimus Harding', 'the Reverend S. Harding' or 'the Reverend Mr/Dr/etc Harding'.

Hyphens

Hyphens should be used as little as possible, and then mainly to avoid ambiguity. For example, *six year-old children* does not mean the same as *six-year-old children*. Compound adjectives (*reddish-brown fabric*) are usually hyphenated. Dates are only hyphenated when used adjectivally (*16th-century cup*, but *in the late 16th century*: NEVER *late-16th century*). Words beginning with *-co* or *-re* should only be hyphenated when there is a possibility of ambiguity. Preferred examples of the use (or not) of hyphens are as follows:

posthole	earring	hillfort	hilltop	hollow-way
ploughsoil	slingstone	trackway	layout	right-angles
stonework	potsherd	drainpipe	coexist	type-site

Compass Points

The four cardinal points (north, south, east, west) should normally be written in full. Subdivisions may be abbreviated, especially if an alignment is being described (*i.e. north-west* and *NW* are both permissible, but *north-west to south-east* is cumbersome, and can be succinctly expressed as *NW-SE*)

Numbers, Dates, Time, Money

In text the numbers 1-20 are usually written out: higher numbers are expressed in figures unless beginning a sentence, when they are written out in full.

Figures are always used when describing features (*Ditch 7*), and for giving measurements.

Express elements of dates in this order – day of week/date/month/year – without commas and without th/st/rd/nd suffixes in ordinals, e.g. Saturday 4 March 2000. Numerical abbreviations (4.5.77) should be avoided, as they are expressed differently in Britain and America, and can be confused.

There should be no apostrophe in decades, e.g. 1340s, not 1340's.

Do not use full stops in BC or AD: e.g. 55 BC but AD 1066. Don't forget that *BC* follows the year and *AD* precedes it. If in doubt, remember that the full versions are:

1234 years before Christ (*BC*), and: in the year of Our Lord (*AD*) 1234

Monetary values should always be written consistently throughout a paper, for example:

£2 3s 6d, £5.95, £0.93 (but not 93p): alternatively, pre-decimal values may be written £2/3/6

When quoting percentages, always use numbers followed by the % sign. Do not write *per cent*.

Spelling & Word Use

When in doubt, use a good dictionary (Shorter Oxford English, Chambers).

On completion of a document, ALWAYS spell-check it. However, remember that most word-processor packages are of American origin, so the spelling of some words may differ. Having said that, don't rely solely on the spellchecker, as they have their limitations: read the text through, and/or get a colleague to scan it also.

Spellings for place names are best taken from the relevant Ordnance Survey map where there is any confusion.

Avoid repetition unless using it for emphasis, or listing similar items or features. Use of a thesaurus (e.g. Roget's, or the one in your word-processing software) will help with this.

Italics

Italics are commonly used for the following:

For the titles of books, plays, films, periodicals, long poems

Names given to ships, planes and vehicles (but not their make or model)

Genera, species and varieties of plants, insects etc (but orders, families, etc. are plain text)

Foreign phrases not yet fully anglicised, within an English sentence (e.g. *sub judice, vice versa*)

Directions to the reader (*see below, overleaf*). *Et al, ibid, i.e., op cit* and *c* (circa) are the only abbreviations that should be italicised.

For emphasis (sparingly!).

Measurements

ALL measurements should be in metric (SI) units. Imperial measurements should only be used when dealing with work carried out using that system, when quoting documentary sources, and when describing features or artefacts where the imperial measurement is of particular significance. In these cases, the metric equivalent should be given in parentheses.

When using SI units for measurement, use only millimetres and metres: do NOT use centimetres.

Abbreviations for SI units (*km, m, mm, kg, g* etc.) do not require a following full stop (*see above*), or an 's' to make them plural.

And Finally...

Further and more detailed guidance regarding the preparation of text for publication can be found in a number of publications, notably the *MHRA Style Book*, published by the Modern Humanities Research Association.