Guidance for recording Registered Finds

The recording of Registered Finds on a pre-printed 4”x6”card has ceased and henceforth will be entirely digital. The information on the card is already recorded in the Finds Inventory (Standards 2.4.3.1); the sketch is to be replaced by a digital image.

Replacing the sketch of registered finds with a digital photograph has many advantages. A photograph is a simple, accurate and quick method of recording objects, both for contractors and the museum. It provides a usable tool, which can be zoomed, printed and shared between individuals. Unlike drawn objects, variations in colour, preservation and decoration can be seen with ease. It allows specialists to view objects without the need to retrieve the objects and provides an accurate record of the condition of the object after processing.

Record shots do not need to attain to a professional standard, however with some initial training and a reasonable digital camera, good quality photographs can be taken with ease.

Since these photographs are for record purposes they may be saved as jpeg images.

Equipment:

- Camera stand: This is essential, it will hold the camera in place whilst taking numerous photographs and avoid blurred images when using long exposures. It allows multiple objects to be photographed leaving both hands free for object handling.

- Scales: Essential to allow approximate measurements to be made from the photographs alone. A plastic, 5cm black and white scale (1cm divisions) is perfect for most small finds. A 50/30cm long (10cm sections) large scale for large objects.

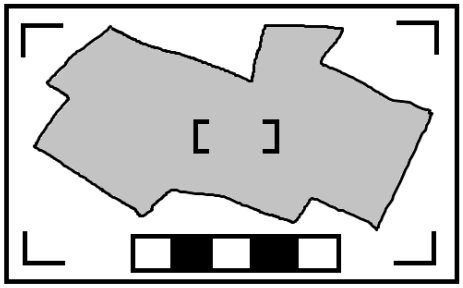
- Camera: A good quality digital camera is needed. A camera with zoom, macro, adjustable exposure and adjustable focus point would be beneficial. MOLA currently use a Nikon, Coolpix P510, 16.1Megapixel with 42x zoom.

- Background: All objects should be placed upon a white background to ensure the object stands out. Exceptions to this are glass and white objects, which can blend into a white background, such items should be placed on a black background. The background should be matt not shiny; kept clean from dust and cleaned (blown free of dust) after each photo, this being especially important when working with iron objects. Wet objects should be patted dry before photographed- ensuring less residual shine.

How to:

- Set up: Have the camera mounted, ensure the scale and object are the correct way round (eg. the camera is mounted upside down, the scale and objects are laid out upside down to ensure the overall image is the right way up). Ensure the Macro  setting is used on the camera. Auto focus should also be put on if available- this ensures all pictures are focused.

- Positioning: The object should be placed in the middle of the background with the scale directly underneath. Use the zoom and the general camera position to ensure the object fills the screen.



The camera focuses on the object; the colour of the object effects the quantity of light available to the camera. The more screen available the more the camera focuses on the background rather than the object and results in darker pictures. A tight shot on the object and minimum background will allow a better picture where the background appears whiter.

The focus point of the camera **[ ]** should always be placed on the object. In cases where the object is clear (ie. Glass), the focus point may not fix upon the object, in such cases it should be manually placed on the scale.

- Exposure: 

The lighting in the room and the colour of the object affect the final outcome of the picture. Some objects can appear too dark on auto settings. To counteract this, the photographer should adjust the exposure. This is an important skill to acquire; with every object a slight adjustment to the exposure should be made. Adjusting the exposure allows the shutter of the camera to stay open longer; this allows a greater amount of low intensity light to be recorded. Higher exposures are beneficial in lower lit rooms. A photographs stand is essential to reduce movement of the camera. Most objects require +0.7-1 over exposure to appear crisp with a white back ground. For wet objects (leather, wood) an under exposure is more beneficial.

- Quantity: One photographs per object. Two photographs are only necessary for highly decorated objects or coins. Coins should only be photographed after cleaning with the exception of items which do not require cleaning.

- Shine/reflection: use card/polystyrene boards to block out shine, especially for green glass and samian. Never use flash

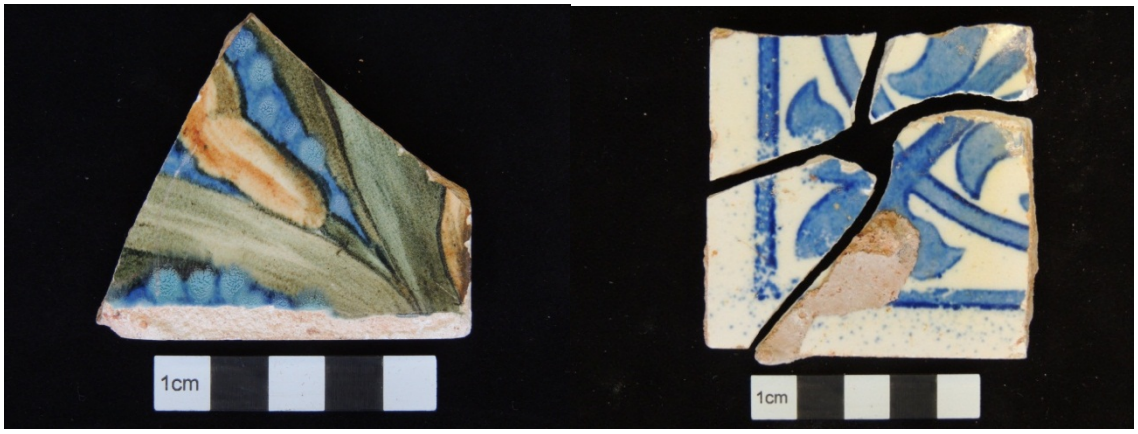
- Scale: The scale should always be completely in shot.

- Focus: By pressing halfway down on the shutter button the camera is forced to focus on the object. This is normally accompanied by the focus bars turning green (turning red suggests the camera is unable to focus and settings should be adjusted). Once the **[ ]** focus point turns green the shutter button can be fully pressed to take the photo. This should be completed in a two stage process, not two separate actions.

Examples:

Picture One: Roman Coin, Two sides

Picture Two: Worked bone



Pictures Three and Four: White decorated tiles. Taken on black background to ensure objects stand out

Picture Five: Decorated leather. Decoration and stitching can be seen in a photograph.

Picture Six: Glass Bottle Seal. Boards used to avoid reflection from lights in room and window.

Documentation

The images should be labelled by site code, context number and registered find number (eg. XYZ13_4398_32). If there is more than one view of an object the files should be identified as va, vb etc (eg. XYZ13_4398_32_va). See Standards 2.7.

The image reference should be entered into a separate column in the Finds Inventory (Standards 2.4.3.1); a semi-colon should separate two or more images per registered find. There is no need to add them to the Images Register as well.