



**General Certificate of Education  
June 2011**

**Archaeology 1011**

**ARCH 2 Archaeological Skills and  
Methods**

***Report on the Examination***

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# ARCH2

## General Comments

This paper was accessible to most candidates, with the majority able to provide sensible, focussed and relevant responses. In Section A where sources were used well they were properly integrated into the answers rather than name checked. This said, there was, however, a significant minority of students, of all abilities, who did not use the sources at all. Inchtuthil allowed a range of questions on such fundamental themes as aerial photography, antiquarian sources, excavation, geophysical survey and dating methods. The questions in Section B tested the candidate's broader understanding of familiar topics, i.e., finds processing, environmental evidence and rural vs. urban excavation. The best candidates in this section read the question carefully and referred to case study material, including Inchtuthil. However, a significant minority either misinterpreted the question or wrote generic responses with no exemplification.

## Section A

- 01** This was a familiar topic, and most candidates were able to produce at least a level two answer. The best responses were able to consider why crop marks were showing up in this particular field, observing that size of feature, season, type of crop, type of soil would be important factors too, as well as referring to the disturbance from ploughing and landscaping mentioned in the introduction. However, a significant number failed to mention the source or develop points sufficiently making their response generic and limiting it to level two, and a striking number gave a generic response to aerial photography. A number of candidates misidentified crop marks as either soil marks or earthworks, limiting marks to level three, at best.
- 02** In the majority of cases this question was answered well. Candidates were able to talk about the pros and cons of the source itself, but too few made direct reference to parts of the source to gain access to the highest marks. A minority of candidates considered specific antiquarian sources, and when discussed, this was generally done well. A number of candidates wasted time by referring to Figures 1 and 2 and Map 2 unnecessarily, perhaps feeling that if they were asked to 'study' the source in the question, each source necessarily contributed to the answer. More worryingly, a significant number of candidates discounted the source as useless as it was an aerial view of the area and it would have been a difficult view to see in 1755. They seemed unaware of the fact that it could have been (and in this case actually was) a carefully measured map.
- 03** For what was a straightforward question, few candidates achieved the highest levels in this question, as again, direct reference to the sources was lacking. Most students were able to produce a good generic discussion of trial trenches and their pros and cons. A number of candidates misidentified the excavation technique and were therefore unable to access the higher levels. Too many candidates focussed on the ranging poles in the picture, and this highlights the need for candidates to read the question carefully.
- 04** There were some excellent, detailed responses to this question, using the source and justifying the methods chosen; many candidates had clearly engaged with the material. However some good responses failed to access the highest marks because of the lack

of source references. Poorer responses gave vague answers about how the techniques worked and lacked detail. Most candidates could discuss resistivity and magnetometry, whereas GPR was mentioned occasionally and was either done well or poorly – there seemed to be no middle ground here. Some candidates made irrelevant comments about aerial photography, LiDAR and fieldwalking in their answers. A significant minority of candidates were under the impression that as pottery was burnt, the magnetometer would pick it up, or that as the nails were metal, they would be picked up by the resistivity meter. Some candidates stated that resistivity would not work because the ground was flooded, and centres are again reminded of the importance of reading all the source material carefully. Although the area around Inchtuthil floods, there was no suggestion that the area of the fort which becomes an island during the flood was either waterlogged or submerged.

- 05** This question was answered reasonably well. Most candidates were able to recognise the existence of the postholes in the source and many were able to discuss how they would be used. Few candidates gained the highest level, due to a focus on either the bank *or* the timbers, but not both.
- 06** This proved to be an accessible question. Candidates considered a variety of dating methods including TL, C14 dating, dendochronology on the possibly surviving timber in the timber lined pit, and typology. Of these, typology was probably the best explained, although sometimes appeared as ‘typography’. The best responses were able to describe, technically and in detail, how TL and carbon dating works, and gave consideration to the types of artefacts and features in the sources, clearly identifying which methods were most appropriate where and why. Most candidates managed to make a reference to the sources, if only fleetingly. Candidates should note that the command word ‘outline’ requires both description and some explanation. In this case descriptions of dating methods with little or no explanation of why they were relevant to the finds and features on this site demonstrated some degree of knowledge, but little contextual understanding.

## **Section B**

As with the 2010 exam, the vast majority of candidates left sufficient time to complete this section properly, and again, a number of candidates attempted the essay question first. Good responses used a variety of case studies, whereas generic responses with no case studies could not achieve more than level 3. Exemplification is the way to gain access to the higher levels in this section, and centres are reminded that a large number of Time Team programmes are available on Channel 4’s ‘on demand’ service 4oD, and these provide a useful source of material.

The site used in Section A is sometimes relevant, but centres should not encourage a high dependency upon it. Indeed, future questions may not necessarily be limited to the Section A site.

It was disappointing to note that some candidates responded to trigger words in the question without reading it properly, and predictably, came unstuck.

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- 07** The vast majority of candidates attempted this question. The best responses were able to discuss the specific difficulties of urban (e.g. concrete, buildings, modern services) and rural (e.g., plough damage, less infrastructure, security) excavation *and* recognise that rescue digs happen in the countryside as well as towns. A variety of case studies were employed to exemplify points and Time Team's Gresham Street Dig featured widely. However, too many candidates saw rural/urban as the same as a research/rescue question, and accordingly failed to achieve as highly as they might have. Some candidates ignored the 'excavating' part of the question and talked about field walking, aerial photography, etc, thus wasting time and penalising themselves. Had the use of pre-excavation techniques been clearly linked to excavation, candidates would have been credited. However, few who chose this path did so. It was disappointing to see a significant number of candidates limited to level three because there was no exemplification.
- 08** Responses to this question tended to either be good or irrelevant. A frustratingly large number of students saw the word 'recreate' in the question and focused on experimental archaeology and reconstruction of buildings. Some managed to make some relevant points by default gaining access to Level 1. Where candidates did read the question carefully and respond appropriately, most were able to discuss generic ways in which archaeologists could recreate the landscape, but few could use relevant case studies. Oetzi was a good example to use, and candidates could have linked the remains of the food and pollen in his stomach to the contemporary landscape. Most however, wrote a few generic points about him, without any real links back to the question.
- 09** This question was attempted by the fewest candidates, but was perhaps the most straightforward. Candidates who answered well were able to discuss the techniques used and link to relevant case studies. A minority failed to register either that the question excluded dating techniques, or that as iron, ceramics and glassware are inorganic, references to wood, bones, etc, were irrelevant.

In summary, it is pleasing to see that centres are continuing to teach case studies and are using well-chosen DVDs, excavation reports and other original archaeological material to support learning in the classroom. Centres would be well advised to focus on how different case studies can be applied to different types of question. The Mary Rose, Oetzi and Seahenge featured in all three Section B answers with varying degrees of relevance! As always, the importance of using the sources in Section A is again stressed; too many good answers failed to get access to the higher levels because there was no reference to the source. Responses to Section B essays this year indicate how important it is for candidates to read the question carefully, not to assume that it is the same question as they have perhaps previously practiced, and to stop and think about its meaning before putting pen to paper.

### **Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.