

CATALOGUE SYSTEM OF THE ARCHÆOLOGICAL SURVEY, UNION OF SOUTH AFRICA.

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1. ACQUISITIONS.—Acquisitions to the museum are recorded in an ACQUISITION BOOK which reflects the date of receipt, the name of the donor, catalogue number and a brief description of the acquisition and locality from which it originated. Each acquisition is given a serial number by years—a new series starting every year. The first acquisition in 1944 is numbered 1/44, the second 2/44 and so on serially, up to n/44. All specimens from the same geological horizon of the same site are given the same number. If a site has more than one horizon, or if it is necessary to differentiate between portions of a site, sub-numbers are given; such as 1/44/3 to specimens from the surface, 1/44/2 to those from a particular horizon below the surface, and 1/44/1 to those from a lower, specified stratum at say, bed-rock.

Except in the case of microliths, this catalogue number is written in Indian or Chinese ink on each specimen. When specimens are too small to be marked, they are placed in containers labelled externally and internally, with as far as possible, a few marked specimens in the container.

Except under special circumstances, subsequent acquisitions from the same site are given the same number. A surface site may have yielded Cat. No. 23/37 in 1937 and is not revisited until 1944 when more specimens are collected. Provided they belong to the same assemblage and occur on the same horizon at the same site, these later finds are also numbered 23/37.

When necessary to retain the identity of a collection by one donor, the collection is retained and, as often as possible, exhibited under the donor's name as, for example, "THE KISSACK COLLECTION," and given a serial catalogue number. In such cases each site and/or horizon is given a sub-number under the comprehensive catalogue number assigned to the collection.

The museum catalogue is linked with a record or filing system to facilitate reference to correspondence concerning any acquisition. The general ACQUISITION FILE covers all casual donations. Sub-files are opened for field workers who constantly submit material to the museum. Special files exist for the Geological Survey with which the Archæological Survey enjoys the fullest collaboration. File or sub-file numbers are recorded on the catalogue cards and catalogue numbers are endorsed on the relevant correspondence, so that the link between specimens and correspondence is maintained. This link is an important feature of the system followed by the Survey. It not only provides the date of acquisition, but also the donor's report on the place, circumstances, etc., of his discovery.

2. CATALOGUE.—Because it only deals with one subject, the museum of the Archæological Survey is highly specialised. Every specimen or group of specimens in the museum needs to be catalogued and cross-indexed in such a way that it can be traced by the number marked on

it, by the name of the donor, by its cultural horizon, by the scene of its discovery or by its position in the museum. References to publications and relevant correspondence must also be readily available.

A donor may visit the museum and ask to be shown the specimens he donated; one student may wish to study the remains of a particular culture, another the remains from a given locality, and so on. In each case the starting point is different, but there must be no hesitation or hitch—especially in the case of a donor wishing to see the material he sent. The catalogue, card indexes and cross-references must therefore be arranged in such a way that one is enabled to ascertain immediately all the available information about any specimen from whatever angle one may approach it. The system must therefore be foolproof, yet flexible.

The collections are neither classified nor catalogued typologically—in the general sense in which that term is employed. They are essentially “study collections” with as much emphasis on the technological and geological backgrounds as on the typological. A worker might conceivably wish to study a particular element or tool-type, as Goodwin has recently done in the case of bored-stones, but this approach is so seldom employed that special provision for it is not considered necessary.

3. CARD INDEX.—There are four card indexes. These are filed under (1) Catalogue number, (2) Locality, (3) Donor and (4) Culture.

Each card includes the Catalogue number, the locality of the discovery, geological horizon, material culture, the position in the museum, donor and a space for notes on (a) correspondence which bears the catalogue number, (b) publications and (c) comparable material.

Cards are of thin cardboard and measure 6 ins. by 4 ins. A typical specimen is:—

CATALOGUE NO. ...	9/43.
LOCALITY	“Rainbow Cave,” Makapansgat No. 317, Potgietersrust, Transvaal.
HORIZON... ..	Basic Breccia.
CULTURE... ..	Pietersburg.
MUSEUM POSITION...	Case 28, Drawers 12, 13 and 14.
DONOR	Archæological Survey.
REMARKS	See (a) File B. 20/3.
	(b) van Riet Lowe, C.: “The Makapan Caves: An Archæological Note,” S.A.J. Sci., Vol. XXXV, pp. 371-381. Illus. 1938.
	(c) van Riet Lowe, C.: “Further Notes on the Makapan Caves,” S.A.J. Sci., Vol. XL, pp. 289-295. Illus. 1943.
	(d) cf. 23/44.

All the information given on the CATALOGUE CARD is repeated on the cards filed under DONOR, LOCALITY and CULTURE.

4. SITE CHARTS.—Supplementary to the catalogue system are the site charts. These are of paper of foolscap size. Space is provided for

such details as appear in the Catalogue, but the real object of the chart is to provide space for brief descriptions of the site, the artifacts, their associations (faunal remains, etc.), a LOCALITY SKETCH and GEOLOGICAL SECTION. In the absence of a guide, the locality sketch is the only record that enables one to locate and therefore to visit the site. For example, the locality "Rainbow Cave, Makapansgat No. 317, Potgietersrust, Transvaal" given in the example of a Catalogue card reproduced above, is not very helpful to future workers unless they have access to a locality sketch that shows the position of the cave in relation to readily recognisable features in the vicinity. The main purpose of these charts is therefore to simplify and ensure identification of sites, to recognise geological horizons and to add brief additional notes.

Unless a co-worker or informant is known to be a sufficiently reliable observer, charts are generally confined to sites which have been examined by a member of the staff of the Survey; they can naturally not be completed for every acquisition, but are in regular use for all Survey field-work.

5. GENERAL.—All cataloguing is controlled by an expert who is personally responsible for filling in the first card. He leaves the typing and completion of the remainder to a typist. In similar fashion, the complete marking of specimens is left to a lay assistant under supervision. Specimens which have been described and illustrated are marked by an indelible red dot immediately below the number previously marked on them.

While the system generally works very well, it is by no means perfect. It is, however, sufficiently flexible to permit the prehistorian to cope with such fine and accurate records as are demanded of him. For example, material recovered from stratified deposits from an excavation demands special treatment. Cataloguing by sub-numbers is often clumsy and tedious and, on occasions, even impossible. Where the specimens are large enough to be marked, the level at which each specimen was found is marked on it; and objects from each level are stored in containers which are labelled (externally and internally) with the catalogue number, the grid number and the level concerned. Only a few specimens within the container are marked. In the case of small, especially microlithic material, the best containers are cloth bags. In this way, "x," "y" and "z" co-ordinates as measured from a fixed point of origin and datum line, are attached to the specimens and any future worker can readily place each individual specimen in its exact position in relation to that of any other recovered from the excavation. In this connection, see Mr. B. D. Malan's contribution on "Archæological Method in Cave Excavation" published in SAMAB, Vol. 3, No. 8, p. 224 of December, 1944.