



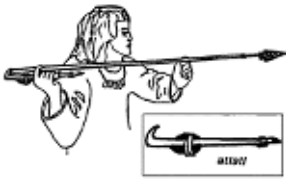
Heritage Education Program Glossary For Archaeology Programs



Illustration of Roman
Glass working shop.

Annealing oven or **Lehr**
in shown at the far left.

© David Hill, 2010



Atlatl. Drawing by
Sue Ann Sinay



Bedrock Mortar



**Colum Furnace style
Bloomery**



This photo of an
archaeological
excavation shows the
context of a cobbles wall
foundation and a tile
floor feature

Absolute Dating

Dating an artifact or feature by a measure of time, such as years, so that you can say, for example, "This pot is 2,500 years old plus or minus 250 years." (Compare with cross dating.)

Annealing (glass) Process of slowly cooling hot glass objects after they have been formed, to relieve residual internal stresses introduced during manufacture See Lehr

Antiquities Market

The buying and selling of archaeological and ancient items.

Anthropology

The scientific study of human cultures and physical traits; includes ethnology, linguistics, archaeology, biological anthropology and other sub-disciplines.

Archaeology

The scientific study of past cultures through their material remains. Archaeology seeks to describe and explain the nature and evolution of cultural systems.

Artifact

Any product of human cultural activity; more specifically, any tools, artwork, or objects found in an archaeological context.

Assemblage

A group of artifacts found together that represent human activity in a particular place and time.

Atlatl

An Aztec term for spear-thrower; a wooden device with a handle at one end and a hook or spar at the other end that fits into a concavity at one end of the spear shaft. In North America, atlatls were replaced circa 1500 B.P. by the bow and arrow.

Bedrock (mortar) Milling Station

An outcrop of rock containing one or more milling areas, mortar cups, or grinding features.

Biface

Any stone artifact worked on both obverse and reverse faces.

Bioturbation

The disturbance of the soil by burrowing animals or other organisms.

Bloomery

The bloomery was the earliest form of smelter capable of making iron. It first appeared as early as 4,000+ B.P. (before present) It produces a "bloom" of low quality sponge iron. A bloomery could have several shapes such as a tube, dome or pit with a hole or "tuyere." in the bottom to bring in air (oxygen).

B.P.

Before Present, by convention, before A.D. 1950.

Burial

Human remains disposed of by interment. Burials may be simple (containing the remains of one person) or complex (two or more individuals), primary (including the remains as originally interred) or secondary (where a re-interment follows a temporary burial).

Cairn

A pile of rocks, milling stones, or other materials. Sometimes a cairn or a cairnfield was built to cover a burial or to protect valuables. Historically, in the western U.S. cairns were sometimes placed to indicate the corners of a mining claim.

California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)

The 1970 act which requires that state agencies regulate activities with major consideration for environmental protection.

Clovis Point

A North American concave-base leaf-shaped projectile point or knife, 4-12 cm long, with characteristic bifacial flutes extending about half the length of the artifact; most are about 12,000 to 11,000 years old. Named for the original finding site at Clovis, New Mexico.

Context

In archaeology, context is where an artifact is found. This includes, but not limited to: soil, other artifact and features nearby and know "history" the site and area. An artifact that is "out of context," is of very limited or no archaeological value. Artifacts that have been looted from archaeological sites are out of context.

Cremation

Disposal of the dead by burning; a feature consisting of ash and small pieces of burned human bones and teeth.

Cross Dating

Determining the age of an artifact or feature by comparison to others already dated, instead of using a precise date. (Compare with absolute dating.)

Cultural Resources

Prehistoric and historic properties, sites, artifacts and art.



Curate. Chipped stone tools are stored in individual boxes in drawers.



Flakes. Two pieces of chipped stone debris (chert and metavolcanic).



The grinding area is the recessed center portion of this groundstone. This lithic artifact is shaped around the edges and on the bottom.



Handstones in situ



Hypocaust systems was developed in ancient Rome.

Curator

A person who cares for a collection of artifacts or art works in a museum, repository, or library

Curate

To take care of artifacts, or art works and to preserve them.

Data Recovery

The systematic removal of the scientific, prehistoric, historic, and archaeological data that provides an historic property with its research value.

Datum Point

A reference point on an archaeological site from which measurements are taken and to which all finds are related by way of horizontal and vertical mapping.

Debitage

Stone debris produced during flaked-stone tool manufacture.

Ecofact

Naturally occurring item whose location or context indicates that it has been used by humans, such as seeds bones, pollen, etc.

Effect

Any change or damage to a historic property including any activity which could alter the setting or environment surrounding a historic property, if that setting might be a factor contributing to the importance of the site.

Faunal Remains

Animal remains.

Feature

A large complex artifact or part of a site such as a wall, hearth, cairn, house pit, rock alignment, or activity area.

Field School

A class applying knowledge obtained in the class room to activities in the "field". Archaeology class to learn the methods of excavation and/or survey.

Fire Affected Rock

A rock that shows signs that it has repeatedly been exposed to fire.

Flakes

Small pieces and chips of rock and stone that have come off a larger rock, as a result creating stone tools.

Folsom Point

A North American concave-base, leaf-shaped projectile pint, 2-7 centimeters long with broad flutes extending nearly the full length on both sides. Most Folsom points appear to be 10,000 to 11,000 years old.

Grinding Slick

A area of a rock that has been worn smooth by grinding with a handstone.

Groundstone

A lithic tool made by grinding rocks or stones together. These include tools such as hand stones, milling stone and pestles. (See metate or millstone)

Hammerstones

Usually hard, tough, fist-sized rock used as a hammer to work chert and other stone materials, or to break bones, shells, or other materials. They tend to be shaped through use and show battered edges.

Handstone (mano)

A round-shaped or oval-shaped stone used for grinding seeds, pigments, bones, on a grinding slab or milling stone.

Hematite (ochre)

An earthy iron oxide usually red to brown in color; used by Native Americans as a pigment.

Hearth

Location that shows evidence of fire used by people such a fire ring or fire affected rock and soil.

Historic

The historic period refers to human activities associated with the advent of written records.

History

The study of the past, using written or oral records.

Holocene (Recent)

The post-Pleistocene geologic epoch characterized by fluctuating but generally moderate climates and modern fauna assemblages; from about 11,000 B.P. to the present.

Hypocaust

The open space under a floor where hot air is used to heat the structure. Hypocaust systems was developed in ancient Rome.

Hypotheses

An concept or assumption based on observation and inference. A proposed answer to a question that can be tested.



In Situ (Latin)

In place, applied to archaeological remains found in their original, undisturbed location or position.

Inference

A reasoned conclusion from evidence or observation.

Kiln

A type of oven, that produces temperatures sufficient to complete some process, such as making or melting glass, "firing" clay, or making metal.

Knapping

Manufacturing stone tools by controlled flaking.

Lehr

A temperature-controlled kiln for annealing objects made of glass to make them stronger.

Levels

Excavation in an archaeological site is conducted by arbitrary levels or by stratigraphic levels. Arbitrary levels are typically ten centimeters thick. Stratigraphic levels follow the thickness of the identifiable layers of soil and cultural materials.

Linguistics

The study of the origin and structure of language.

Lithics

Artifacts or ecofacts made of stone or rock. Sometimes the term lithics refers to the raw materials used to make stone tools.

Looting

The destruction of archaeological resources to obtain artifacts for personal use or for sale.

Material Culture

All "things" made or used by humans.

Metate

In the Southwestern U.S., a common term for an unshaped or shape stone slab or basin, upon which seeds, plants, pigments, or other materials are ground with the use of a handstone. (Also called groundstone or millingstone)

Midden

A deposit marking a former habitation site and containing such materials as discarded artifacts, bone and shell, food refuse, charcoal, ash, rock, human remains, structural remains.

Millingstone

An unshaped or shaped stone slab or basin upon which seeds, plants, pigments, or other materials are ground with the use of a handstone. (Also call a groundstone or matate.)

Mortar

A stone bowl or bowl-shaped depression in which seeds, berries, nuts, meats, and other items are ground or pulverized with an up and down motion rather than a back and forth motion used with a handstone and millingstone.

Munsell "Chart"

A chart (more like a book) used to describe colors. The Munsell color system was created by Albert H. Munsell and adopted by the United States Department of Agriculture as the official color system for soil research in the 1930s.

Observation

Viewing and noting facts about items being studied.

Percussion Flaking

Precision stone tool manufacturing with blows struck by a stone, antler, or bone hammer.

Pestle

An elongated often cylindrical stone or wooden artifact used to pulverize food or mineral products in a stone bowl or mortar.

Petroglyph

A design or motif pecked or scratched into a rock surface; usually unpainted rock art.

Pictograph

A design or motif painted on a rock surface; painted rock art.

Pithos

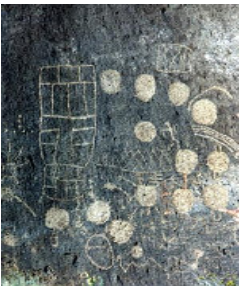
A Greek name for a large storage jar.



Stratigraphic levels are outlined in this wall profile. There is an upper, disturbed layer; a middle, midden layer; and a lower layer of midden and sterile soils above bedrock.



The Munsell "chart" was adopted by the United States Department of Agriculture as the official color system for soil research.



Petroglyphs found in the Owens Valley area,



Pictograph elements found on the ceiling in a rock-shelter in Los Angeles County.



Two **Pithos** found in situ at Tall al Umayri, **Jordan**
Madaba Plains Project.

Points (projectile)

Tools used for arrow or spear. They are not referred to as "arrowheads" unless it is known that the point was hafted to a shaft and used with bow and arrow.

Post-Depositional

What happened to an artifact or feature after it was discarded or stopped being used by humans.

Pot Hunting

Looting an archaeological site. Specifically digging in an archaeological site to obtain pots to sell on the antiquities market. Often this digging is done at human burial sites.

Pressure Flaking

The manufacturing of stone tools by the removal of stone material with pressure applied with a bone or metal knapping tool. Usually, the final stage in shaping a projectile point.

Provenience

The recorded location of where an artifact or feature was found.

Relative Dating

Organizing a sequence of items from youngest to oldest, which lets you say, for example, "This pot is older than that one."

Remote Seining

A variety of technologies used to "see" through soil without excavation. Remote sensing tools include ground penetrating radar, magnetic resonance, electro resistance surveying and LIDAR

Research Plan

A written document that outlines "who, what, where, when, how, and why" the fieldwork is being carried out. This important document is reviewed before archaeologists are granted permission to excavate a site..

Retouch

Resharpener a stone tool by removing small flakes from the working edge.

Samian Ware

A kind of bright, glossy orange-red Ancient Roman pottery. Its distinctive smooth red surface was created by dipping the unfired pot in slip before putting it in the kiln. It often had raised designs.

Screen

An archaeology tool used to recover small artifacts and ecofacts. Excavated soil is put on a metal mesh (screen) so finer soil falls through and the coarser material can be examined for artifacts. A "dry screen" is shaken to get soil through. A "wet screen" uses stream of water.

Shard

Broken piece of glass.

Sherd

Broken piece of earthen ware/pottery.

Site

The location of past cultural activity; a defined space with mainly continuous archaeological evidence.

Sterile

Devoid of any archaeological evidence; non-cultural; no evidence of past human use.

Stratigraphy

The study of cultural and natural strata or layers in the archaeological deposit or geological deposits. It indicates relative age.

Survey (archaeological)

The process of finding and recording the location of archaeological sites. Sometimes, the ways that people in the past used the land is evidenced by archaeological features such as agricultural terraces and roads. An archaeological survey does not involve formal excavation (digging).

Traditional Cultural Properties

A geographic area or historic resource that embodies important cultural values. It is a place associated with cultural practices or beliefs that are rooted in the history of a living community. This place is important in maintaining the cultural identity of the community. Examples include cemeteries, sacred places, gathering sites, and places of tradition.

Trinomial

Identification given to a recorded archaeological site. It identifies the state, county and a number is given in the order the site is recorded, i.e. CA (California)-SBR (San Bernardino County) and the 309th site recorded = the trinomial CA-SBR-309.

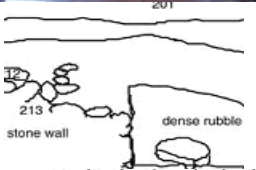
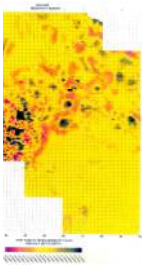
Unit

A square or rectangle of an archaeological grid system used to measure the horizontal location of archaeological resource being studied.



"Potted" Archaeological site

Results from a electro resistance **Remote Seining**



This **site** map detail shows the contour lines and the one by one meter excavation **units** for a site in Los Angeles County

A 1meter by 1 meter **unit**.

