



Heritage Science – an introduction

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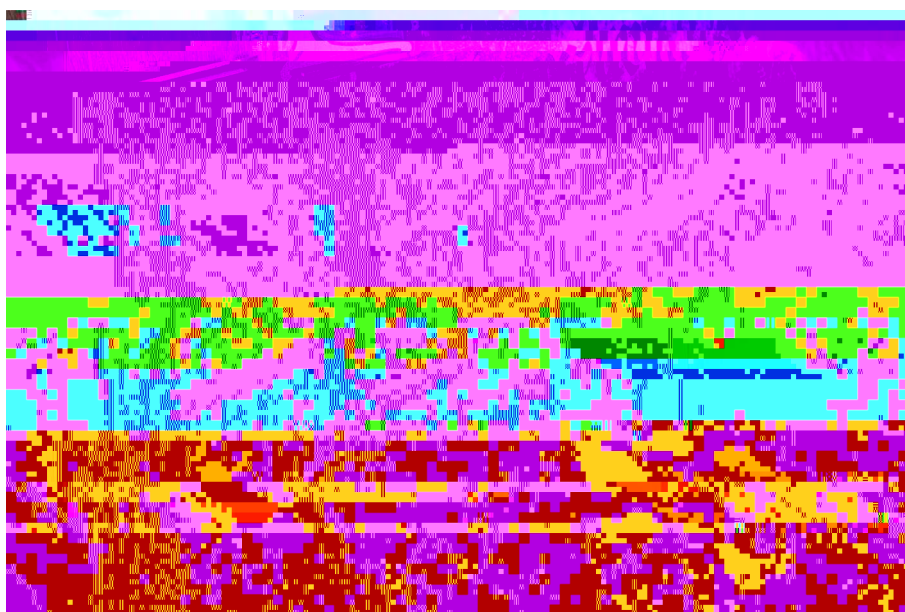
Heritage Science is a field of study that has emerged within the last 15–20 years. It is principally the scientific study of cultural and historic artefacts to assist their conservation and preservation, to enable public access to our heritage, and for overall collection management. It uses analytical science to identify the composition of objects, to determine how they change and degrade over time, and how conservation treatments affect them. Analytical science is also used to understand anthropological issues and enhance the wider public understanding of heritage.

The emergence of Heritage Science has been heralded by several notable actions. These include the 2006 House of Lords Science and Technology committee report on Science and Heritage, the appearance of journals dedicated to Heritage Science and the

establishment of a new Gordon Research Conference on Scientific Methods in Cultural Heritage Research.

The Analytical Methods Committee has now created a new sub-committee for heritage science. This expert group aims to help develop the knowledge of analytical science requirements for those working within the sector. In terms of improving the understanding of analytical methodology this sub-committee has identified the following areas that can be developed:

- Technical briefs that outline the principles of different analytical techniques, or explain how historic artefacts need to be sampled and how to interpret results.
- Greater awareness of the benefits of scientific analysis within conservation.
- Greater understanding of the needs of conservators by scientists.



Challenges

To meet the global challenges of conserving our heritage, researchers from many disciplines have used recent develop-