STONE

(including bulk finds)

STORAGE

- Keep heavy stones (including bulk finds) on lower shelves. Only fill boxes with small stone objects to a safe carrying weight.
- While stone is generally a stable material, some stones can be porous, so limit fluctuations in humidity and temperature wherever possible. Extremely damp environments can encourage mould and algae, which can stain and obscure detail.
- Stone is easily stained by contact with corroding metal artefacts. Use Plastazote to line shelves. Large stones should have a dust cover (Tyvek sheet is best).
- Stone tools should be padded so they do not chip or scratch.

Polished stone axe © Bristol Culture

LABELLING AND MARKING

Hard stones (e.g. flint) can be given surface markings.

- Undertake a documentation check to ensure that the information is correct before remains are marked.
- Ensure that marking is clear and legible.
- Use a layer of Paraloid B72, then ink, then a layer of Paraloid B72 to seal.
- For soft stones (e.g. sandstone and limestone) use an archive label attached with cotton tape, or label bag or box.

Alabaster figures © Museums Worcestershire

ENVIRONMENTAL DATA

- Temperature: 10–25°C.
- Humidity: 45–55%.
- Illuminance: 300 lux maximum.
- UV Radiation: 0–10 microwatts per lumen ideal. 75 microwatts per lumen maximum.

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STONE

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INDICATORS OF DECAY

- Efflorescence (salts leaching from the surface).
- Visible cracks and flakes.

WHERE YOU WILL COME ACROSS STONE

- In statues, carvings and architectural features.
- In general masonry.
- In stone tools.
- In archaeological excavation archives (bulk finds).

HANDLING

Be aware of soft stones (such as marble, limestone, soapstone and alabaster) which can be easily scratched with brushes, jewellery or even fingernails.

- Use nitrile gloves. Cotton gloves can catch on rough stone surfaces, and may not have enough grip for smooth surfaces.
- Stone artefacts are especially at risk from mechanical shocks, such as being dropped. Sedimentary and metamorphic stones can break along the bedding planes, while igneous stones can shatter. Always pack securely and handle over a padded surface.
- Avoid handling lithics on thin edges, they can be fragile and very sharp.

Petrie – General Stone © Catriona Wilson, Petrie Museum UCL

LOOK OUT FOR

- Painted surfaces, these can easily rub off if handled.
- Some stone objects contain other naturally occurring elements, e.g. pyrite, which corrodes like a metal.
- Some objects have metal components (e.g. hinges) that may need treatment if the stone is too large for protective packing.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

- Masonry is heavy. Store it on low level shelving and wear steel toe-cap shoes when moving it. Always plan the whole movement process before starting, and enlist extra help where needed.
- Stone tools can have sharp and broken edges. Handle with care!

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STONE

(including bulk finds)

SOURCES OF FURTHER INFORMATION

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