



Preparing Your Field for an Archaeological Survey

Fact Sheet for Landowners & Project Proponents

Why does my field need to be ploughed?

Before an archaeological survey can take place, archaeologists must be able to clearly see the ground surface. Ploughing exposes the soil so artifacts can be identified during field inspection. If the ground surface is not visible, important archaeological evidence may be missed.

What is an archaeological pedestrian survey?

A pedestrian survey involves archaeologists walking back and forth across a field at regular intervals, carefully scanning the ground surface for artifacts. This method requires most of the field to be bare soil.

What areas need to be ploughed?

Ploughing is typically required in:

- Agricultural fields and large open areas
- Land that has been farmed within the last 50 years
- Areas between orchard rows or grape vines
- Any areas accessible by farm equipment

Areas that should not be ploughed include permanently wet areas with standing water or dense cattail growth that do not seasonally dry out.

What is the required standard?

At least 80% of the field surface must be bare soil. Bare soil means visible earth with no crops, grass, weeds, or plant debris.

Equipment requirements

A **mouldboard plough** (or equivalent capable of fully turning over the soil) must be used, followed by discing. All vegetation must be ploughed under. Dragging heavy metal bars or plates behind equipment is not permitted. Note: **A chisel plough is NOT accepted by MCM.**

What is weathering?

After ploughing and discing, the field must undergo weathering. This typically involves one significant rainfall or several lighter rain events to break down soil clumps and improve surface visibility. Fields should not be surveyed before weathering has occurred or while standing water is present.

Timing matters

Fields should be prepared no more than three weeks before the survey. If crops are harvested after preparation, the field must be ploughed and disced again. The final condition must meet bare soil requirements.

Key takeaway

If a field does not have at least 80% bare soil visibility, it cannot be properly surveyed. Proper preparation helps avoid delays, additional costs, and repeat fieldwork.

Field preparation requirements are based on provincial archaeological standards and guidelines.