OASIS:

Online AccesS to the Index of archaeological investigationS

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How to use this guide

The aim of this guide is to provide a detailed breakdown of the OASIS form and guidelines for its use in the recording of archaeological investigations. The main body of this guide consists of a detailed tour of the OASIS form from three different perspectives, that of the Archaeological Unit, the Historic Environment Record (HER) and the National Monument Record (NMR). The three sections reflect the submission process of archaeological information and grey literature from its creation within a contracting unit to its validation by the relevant HER and, finally, NMR

With the archaeological investigation forming the start of the OASIS submission process, the majority of the form's detail is explained from the archaeological unit's view. Although additional features of the form specific to HER and NMR views are explained in their relevant sections, the form layout and field definitions described in the unit view section outline the basics of the OASIS form across all three views.

Contact Details

For general enquiries about the project aims and the use of the form please contact:

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York YO1 7EP

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Email: oasis@ads.ahds.ac.uk

A digital version of this user guide is available at http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/project/oasis/

Note

We have used the term Historic Environment Record (HER) throughout this text; we include in this term Sites and Monuments Records (SMRs), Historic Environment Information Resources (HEIRs) and Historic Environment Record Centres (HERCs).

Project Aims

The overall aim of the orginal OASIS project was to provide an online index to the mass of archaeological grey literature that has been produced as a result of the advent of large-scale developer funded fieldwork. As part of this overall vision, the OASIS data capture form was designed to help in the flow of information from data producers, such as contracting units, through to local and national data managers, such as HERs and NMRs. The resulting information will be validated by the relevant HER/NMR and passed onto the ADS for inclusion in its online catalogue ArchSearch. The inclusion of information in ArchSearch will enable users to search for the latest information about a particular site, type of monument and either provide direct web links through to the grey literature reports or act as a pointer to the location of a report or archive. It is hoped that the OASIS project will facilitate the rapid flow of information from producer to user.

The original OASIS project was a collaborative venture between the Archaeology Data Service (ADS), English Heritage (EH) and Archaeological Investigations Project (AIP) which provided access to information about archaeological 'grey literature' reports, especially those produced as a result of PPG16 related fieldwork. Funded by the Research Support Libraries Programme (RSLP), OASIS saw the concordance of the EH National Monuments Record (NMR) Excavations Index with the data collected by the AIP, which created an up to date index to the developer funded 'grey literature' in England. This index, and subsequent re-loads, have now been supplied to the ADS and helps to form the 'back bone' of its online catalogue, ArchSearch. ArchSearch provides a high level index to the built and buried heritage of Britain and Ireland and also allows users to drill down into more detailed site based data sets where available (http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/catalogue/).

During the project it was recognised that although the concordance exercise cleared the existing backlog within the NMR, bringing the English Heritage Excavation Index up to date, it would subsequently need to be repeated if structures were not developed to allow the flow of information from archaeological contracting units, to the local and national monument records and then to the interested public via the ADS. To this end an electronic data submissions form was developed by a consortium of bodies led by the ADS and including EH, AIP and the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS). The data submissions form allows users to notify the relevant authority of the completion of specific elements in a project's field or post-excavation tasks, such as the deposition of 'grey literature' reports or archives.

The OASIS project aims to use IT to ease the flow of information from those undertaking fieldwork to the wider archaeological community. OASIS aims to capture the data once, hold it in a database, and then to allow all those parties who have a legitimate interest in it to access it. An on-line web-based Data Submission Form has been created, which is being used to inform the relevant monument records of the completion of specific field or post-excavation tasks, such as the deposition of 'grey literature' reports or of archives. Monument records then participate in checking and enhancing the records on-line. It is recognised that the diversity of local practices will mean that the information flow may vary according to region and the OASIS form and database holdings modules are to be flexible enough to accommodate the various roles required by the different organisations involved. At six-monthly intervals a copy of all new validated Excavation Index records will be supplied to the ADS and made available on-line via ArchSearch.

The design team

The OASIS form was originally designed by a committee with representatives drawn from the Archaeology Data Service (Jo Clarke and Damian Robinson), The Archaeological Investigations Project (Bronwen Russell and Gareth Talbot), English Heritage (Mark Barratt and Keith May) and the Royal Commission for Ancient and Historic Monuments of Scotland (Diana Murray). Subsequent changes to the design of the form were made by the ADS (Jo Clarke, Catherine Hardman and Jenny Mitcham) after consultation with those HERs involved in the pilot project.

Using the OASIS form

The OASIS form has been designed in such a way as to offer a flexible and intuitive method of entering data. An archaeological unit does not have to wait until a project is finished before they start the process of completing the OASIS form. Once they have basic details such as site name and location and HER number they can start to enter this data into the system and then revisit their project form as often as they like to fill in other details such as information about site type and artefacts found, bibliographic references, details of archive deposition and to attach a digital copy of the project report (grey literature).

Sections of the OASIS form can be visited in any order and revisited as often as necessary until the form is complete. Once the initial record has been saved on to the OASIS system it will be available for the local HER to view and perhaps enter additional information such as an HER event number. All relevant parties are able to revisit the form and view the data within it until the process of updating is complete and the project data is signed off by the NMR.

The OASIS form has been designed as an online method of sharing data between organisations without duplication of effort in entering data. A paper copy of this form has been produced and can be downloaded from http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/project/oasis/downloads.html or requested from oasis@english-heritage.org.uk. However, we would strongly discourage people from using the paper form unless they are unable to access the online version.

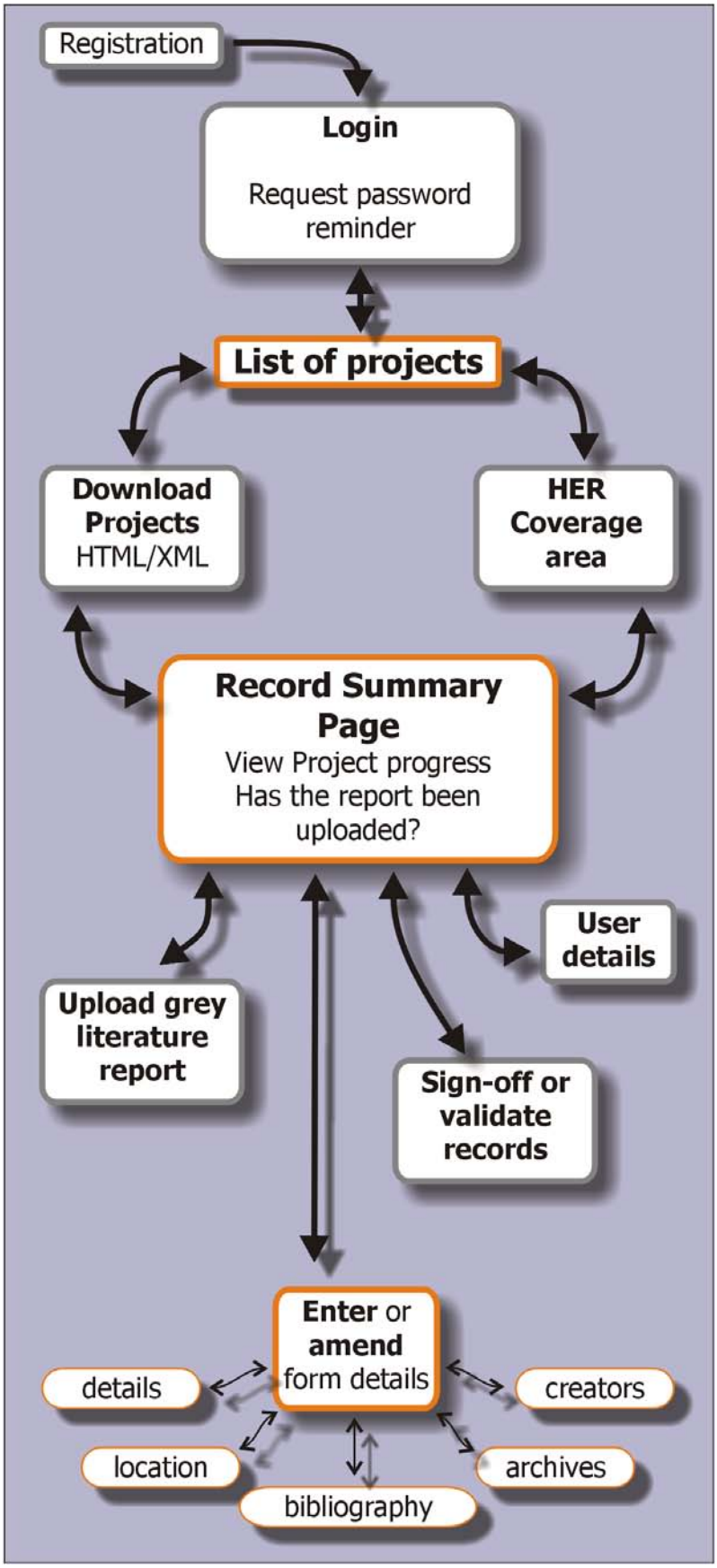

Figure 1 The OASIS form: information flow

A guide to the buttons

Button	*Function*
	Clicking the question mark button will provide the user with comprehensive and targeted online help. A pop-up window will appear, offering specific help depending on what section of the form the user is in. The help pages provide guidelines on how data should be entered into the OASIS form.
	Clicking the plus button adds another information box to the OASIS form. For example, in the Project Details section of the form there is only space to enter two monument types and their periods. Clicking the plus button will add another set of boxes to the form allowing the user to enter further monument types as required.
	Clicking the minus button will remove an information box from the OASIS form.
	The *Store details* button is found at the bottom of each section of the OASIS form. Clicking on this button will store the details entered in that section of the form and return the user to the main OASIS form. This is not the same as saving the data. Data will only be saved by clicking the Save record button on the main form (see below).
	The *Save record* button on the main page saves all the data entered to the OASIS database and triggers an e-mail to the relevant HER informing them of the new record. An OASIS record does not have to be complete before it is saved, though a small number of compulsory fields (project name and location) must have been filled in.
	The *Clear all* button deletes all unsaved data, allowing the user to begin filling in the form again. Use this button with caution.

A tour of the OASIS form

This tour of the OASIS form is designed to give an impression of the look and feel of the OASIS form and an overview of the information flow (**Figure 1**). It is divided into three different sections that demonstrate the form from the perspective of the three types of user:

- Archaeological units
- Historic Environment Records (HER)
- National Monument Records (NMR)

Users of OASIS should read all three sections to follow the process of entering a new project on to the OASIS system, through to checking and validation by the HER and final completion by the NMR and the subsequent download of the project information from OASIS for use in other databases.

The login screen

All users have to log in to OASIS to be able to access the site. This step is essential to ensure that only authorised users are able to view and amend project records held within OASIS. The login structure will give different types of user different permissions on the site depending whether they are an archaeological unit, a Historic Environment Record (HER) or a National Monuments Record (NMR).

HERs and NMRs are provided with an individual OASIS username and password by the Archaeology Data Service, but archaeological units must go through a self-registration process online. For ease of administration, units are strongly advised to maintain only one username and password per organisation.

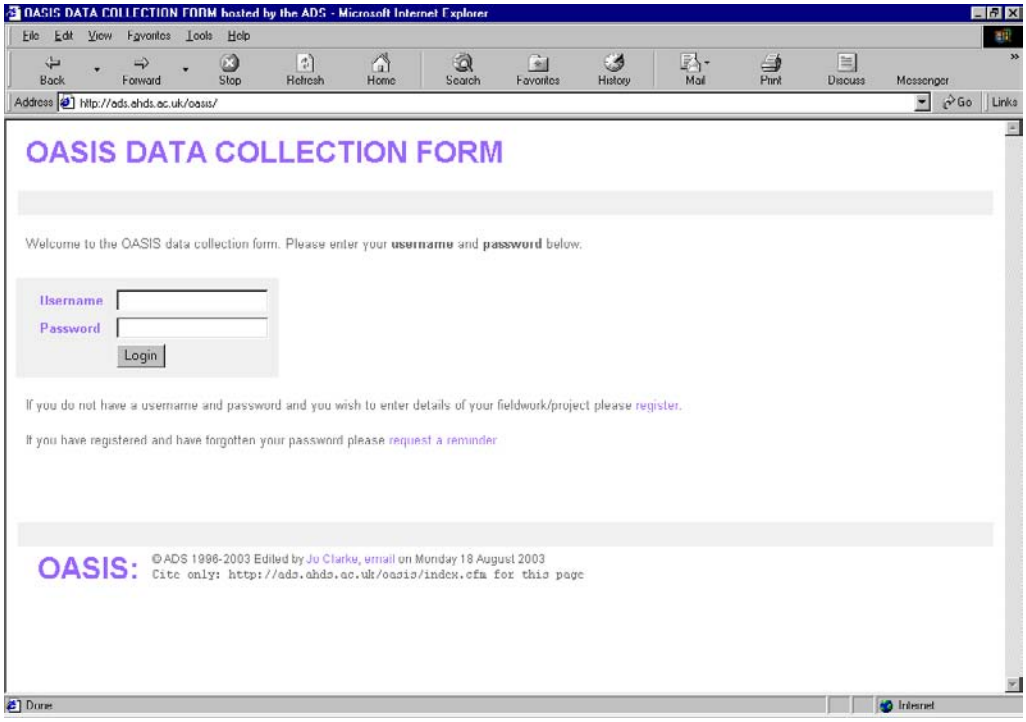

Figure 2 The OASIS login screen

THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTRACTING UNIT'S VIEW

Registering

In order to obtain a user name and password, individual archaeological contracting units are required to register with OASIS. To begin this process the user should select *register* from the OASIS home page (**Figure 3**).

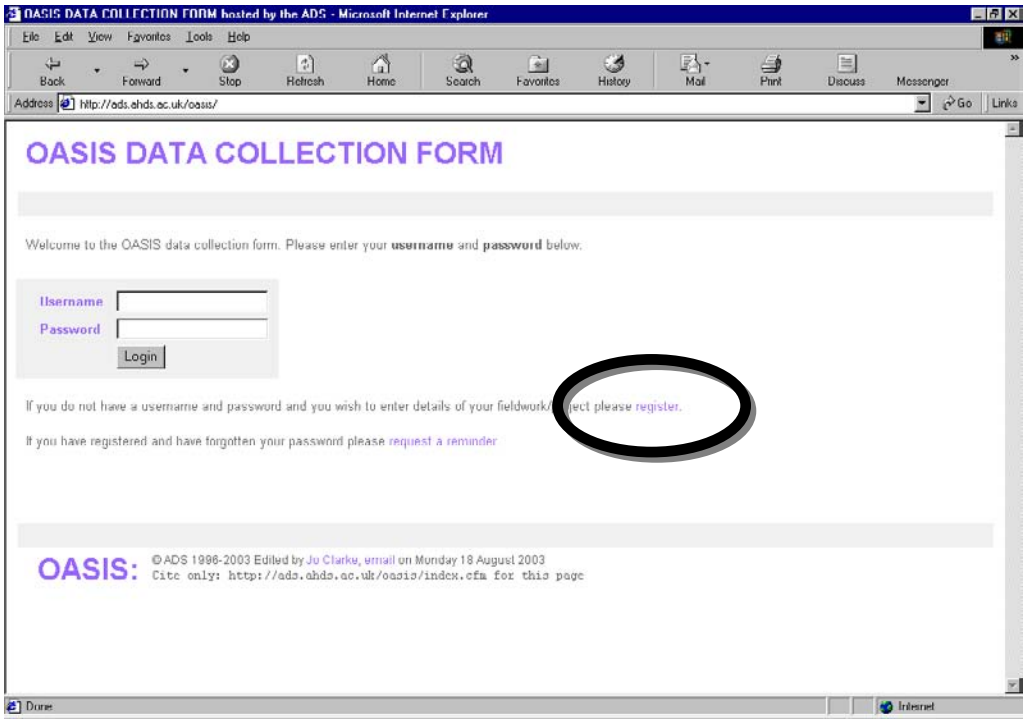

Figure 3 The register link on the OASIS login screen.

The first step of the registration process requires the submission of the unit's full name, details of address and telephone / fax numbers together with relevant email and web site addresses (**Figure 4**). Once these details have been submitted, step two of the registration process allows the user to confirm these details or make any necessary amendments (**Figure 5**). Step two also provides the user with a username based upon the unit's Company / Contractor name. The final element of the registration process requires the user to select and confirm a case sensitive password with which they can securely log into the OASIS system.

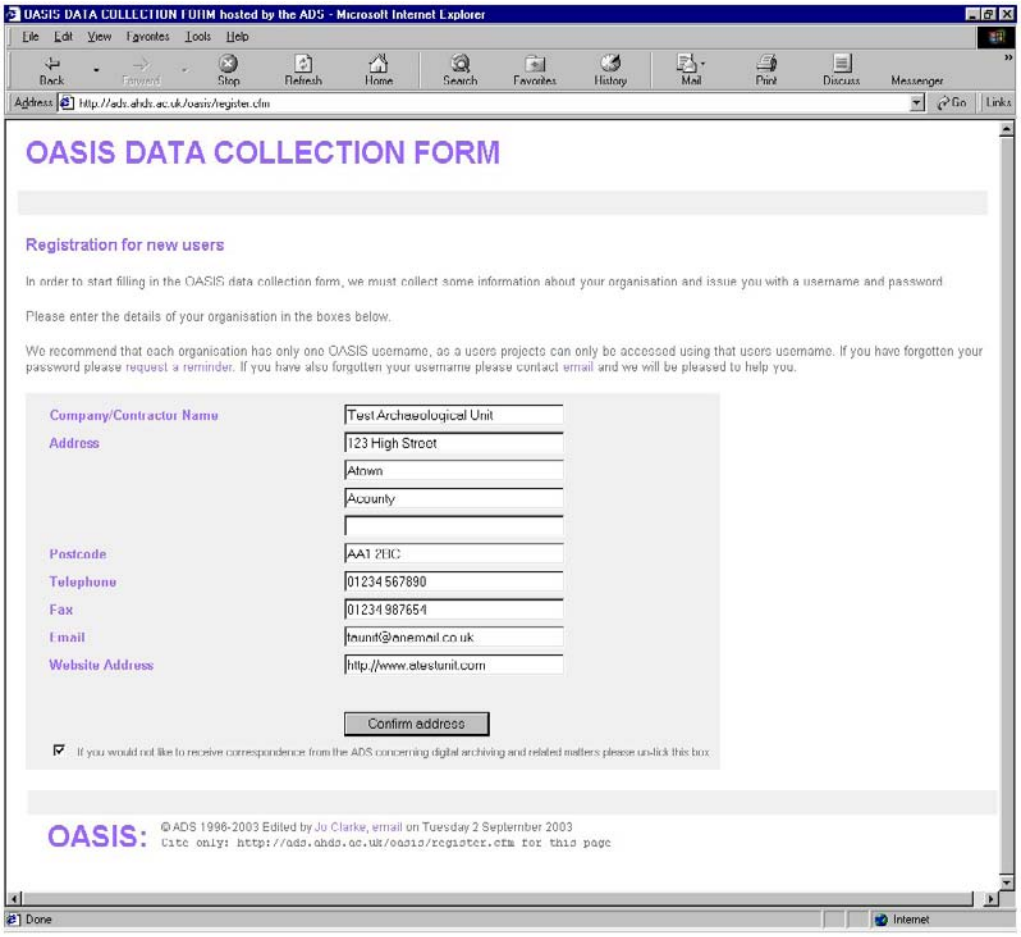

Figure 4 Registration of organisation and contact details

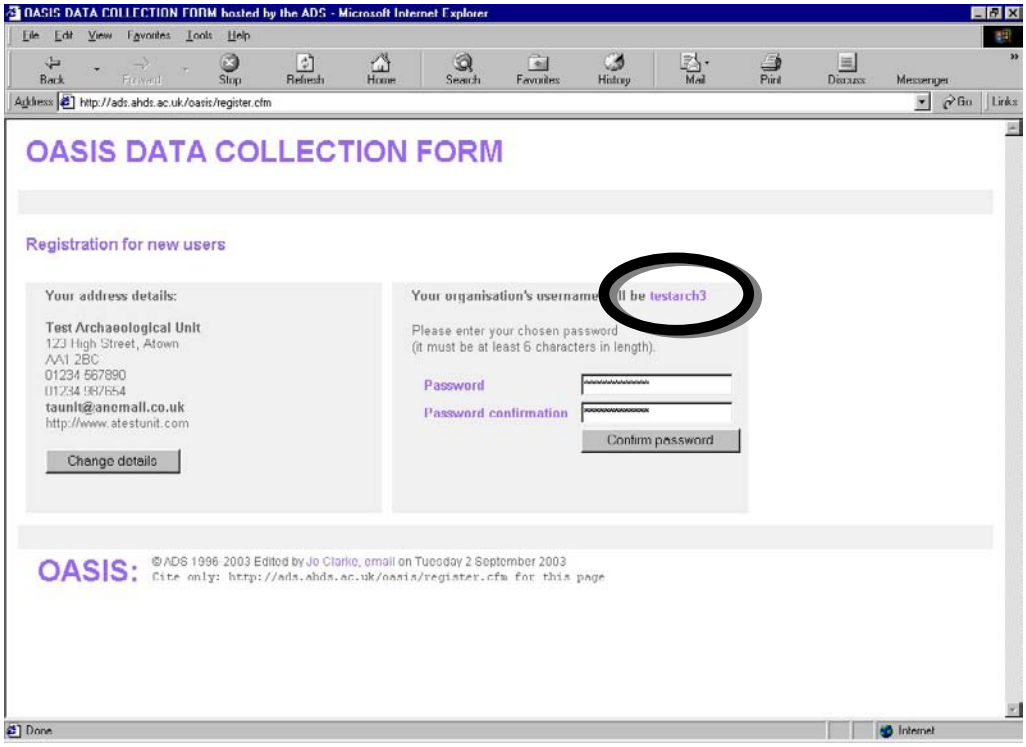

Figure 5 Address confirmation (left), assigned OASIS username (circled) and password selection and confirmation

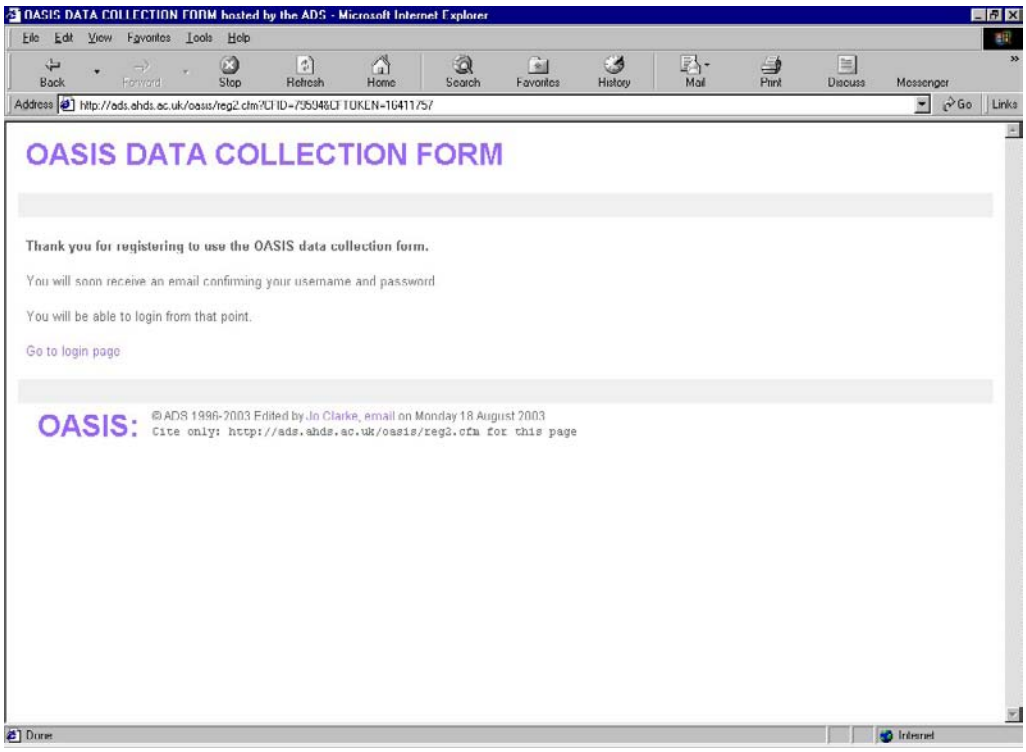

Figure 6 Completion of the registration process

Once a password has been selected, the user is presented with a screen confirming the registration process and providing the option to return to the OASIS login page (**Figure 6**). Together with this screen, an email is sent to the user's email address confirming the user's registration and login details (**Figure 7**).

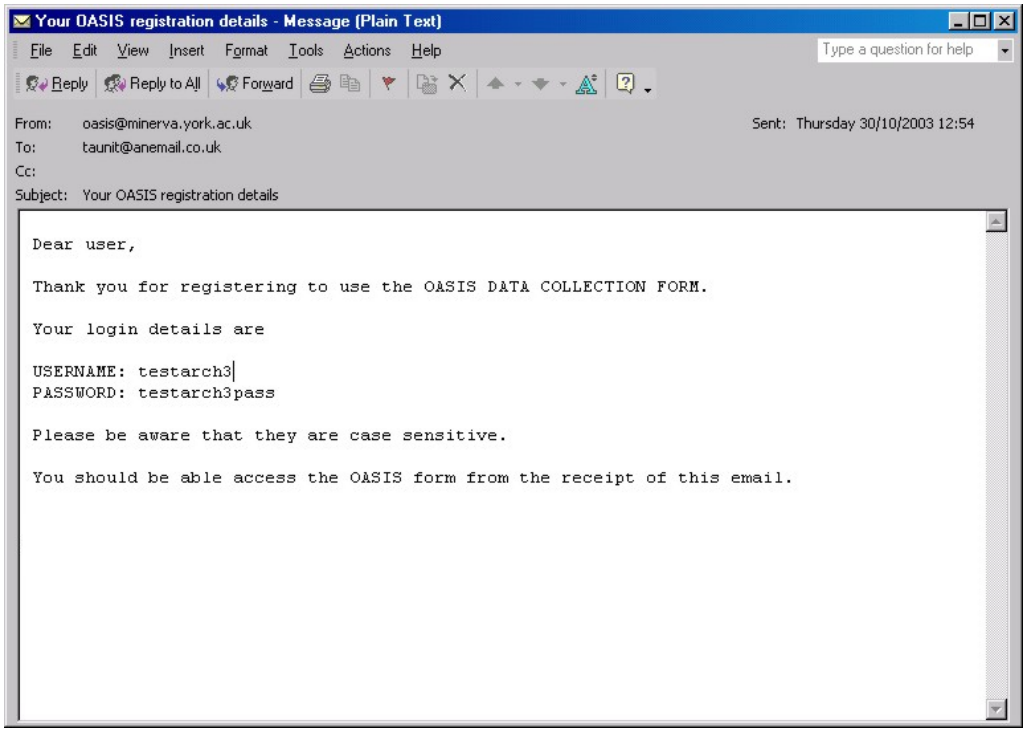

Figure 7 Email confirmation of registration

Once the registration process is complete the unit will be sent a copy of the ADS deposit licence to sign, this will enable the ADS to archive and disseminate any 'grey literature' the unit produces, should it choose to (see p.34 for instructions on the submission of grey literature).

Changing your details

Units, HERs and NMRs have the ability to change their contact details and passwords at any time from within the OASIS system although user names will remain fixed. In order to update details or change a password, the user should select the *Change your details* option from the top menu bar after logging in to OASIS (**Figure 8**).

Figure 8 The *Change your details* option

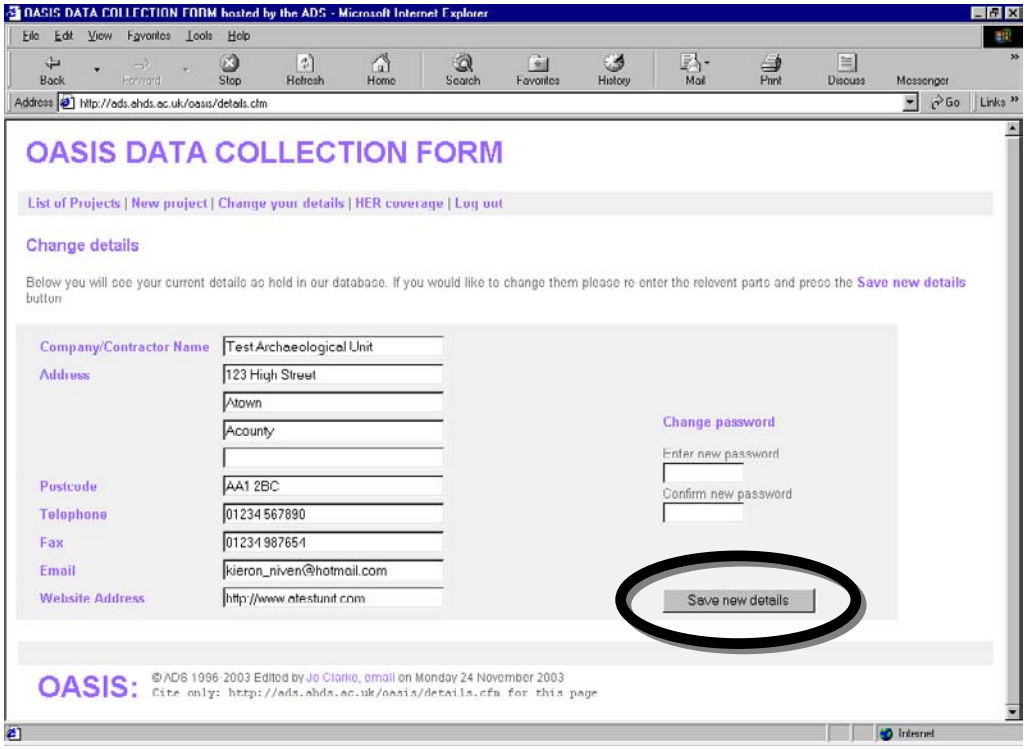

Figure 9 The *Change Details* screen: Address and unit name (left) and password (right). The *Save new details* button is circled

The user will then be given the option to edit their unit name and contact details or change their password (**Figure 9**). Once all changes have been made, the user should save them using the *Save new details* button (circled in **Figure 9**). Users should be aware that all correspondence will be reliant upon the details provided in this section and thus it is important that all information is kept up-to-date.

List of Projects

This fictional archaeological unit (**Figure 10**) has just logged on to OASIS and is presented with a list of projects they have previously entered into the database. They are able to return to these records and complete sections that have not yet been filled in. For example, some units may not wish to fill in the sections on 'Archives' or 'Publications' until some time after the completion of the fieldwork.

One of the most useful features of this screen is the *status* column - the unit can quickly see at a glance if they still need to complete details of their records, or if the record is in the process of being validated by the relevant HER or NMR. Once the record has been validated by the HER and NMR, the originator of the record will still be able to return to their record to view it though they will be unable to make further alterations to it.

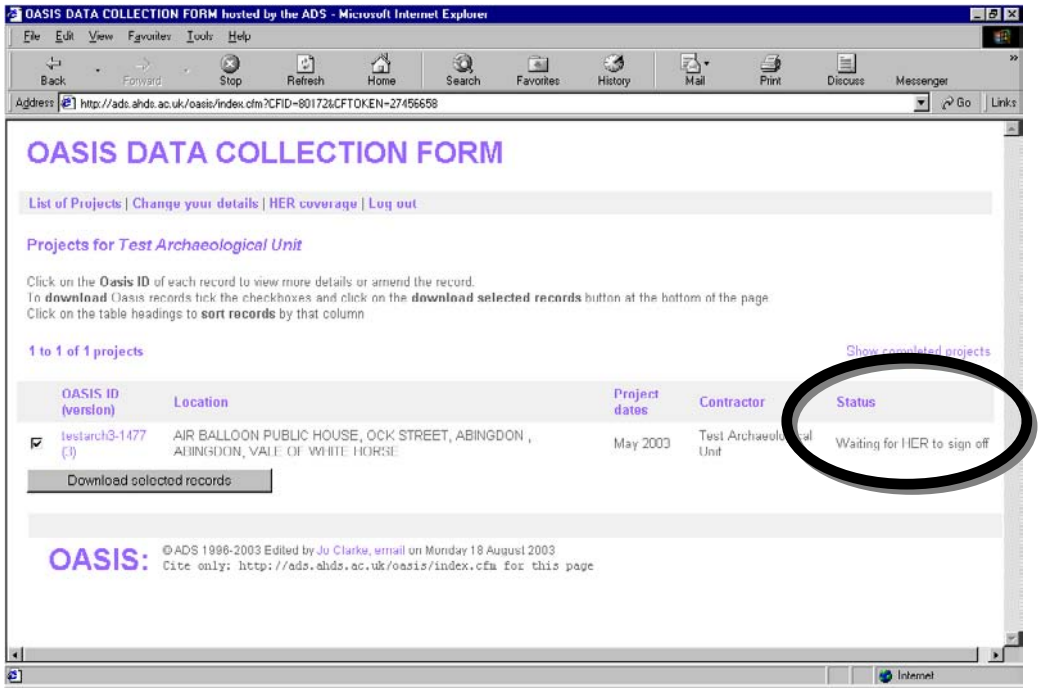

Figure 10 The *status* column, highlighting the record's position in the submission process

The list of projects can also be ordered differently by clicking on the relevant heading e.g. the list of projects can be ordered by date by clicking on the *Project dates* header.

Starting a new record

To enter details of a new project a unit can click the *New project* button (**Figure 11**).

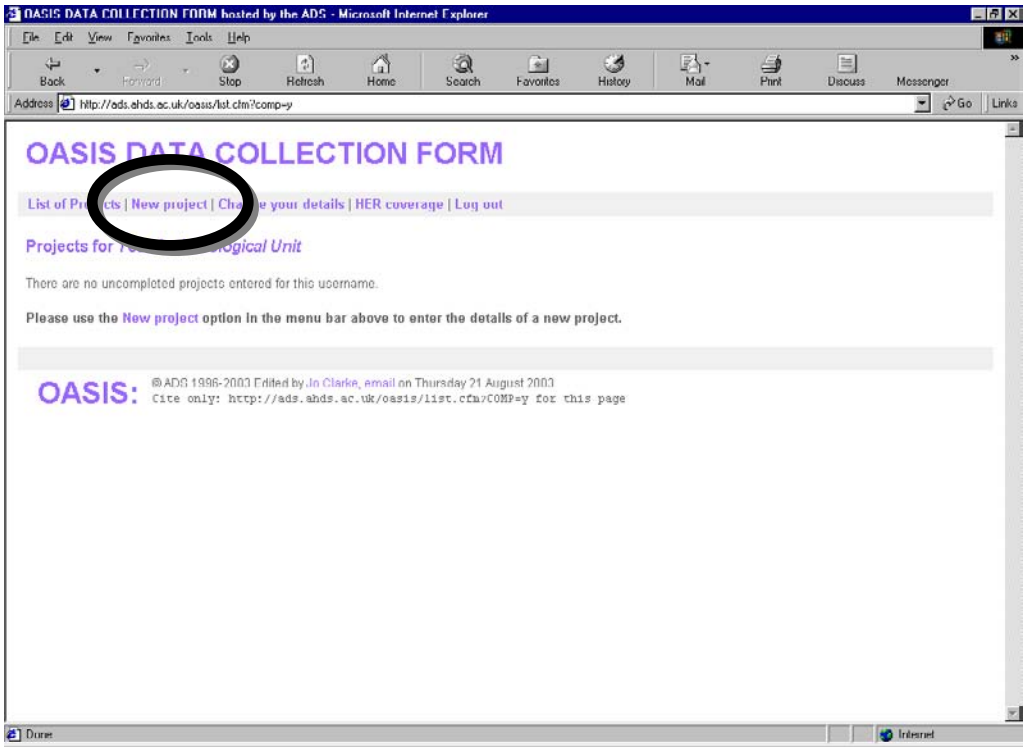

Figure 11 The *New project* button

There are five different sections to the form that can be filled in in any order. The unit can enter as much or as little data as they wish in each section at any one time. Once a section has been completed, the completed 'box' at the bottom of that section can be ticked and the form will then check to see that all the mandatory fields have been filled in, if the fields have not been completed, the user will be prompted to complete the missing fields.

The OASIS form is split into five sections; project details; project location; project creators; project archives and project bibliography. The unit can complete these in any order but are required to fill in a minimum number of mandatory fields before the form can be saved and a unique OASIS identification number is allocated to the record (**Figure 12**).

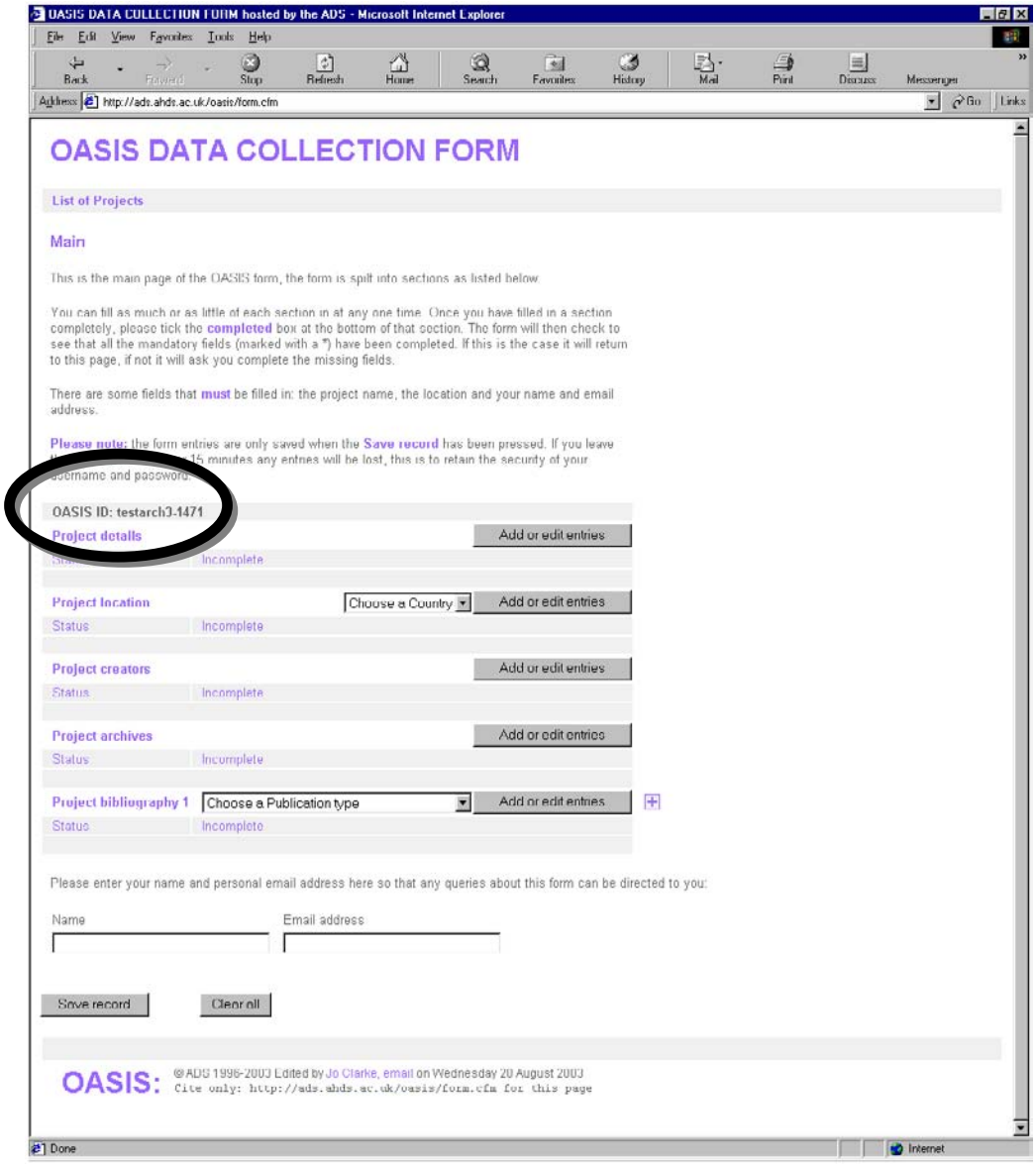

Figure 12 The five main sections of the OASIS form with the record ID highlighted

The fields that must be completed to be able to save a new project record are the *project name* field (found in the *Project details* section of the form) and the *Project location* (found within the *Project location* section of the form) together with the name and email address of the person filling in the form.

Once a section has been filled in to the satisfaction of the unit, they should tick the 'completed' box at the bottom of the screen (**Figure 13**).

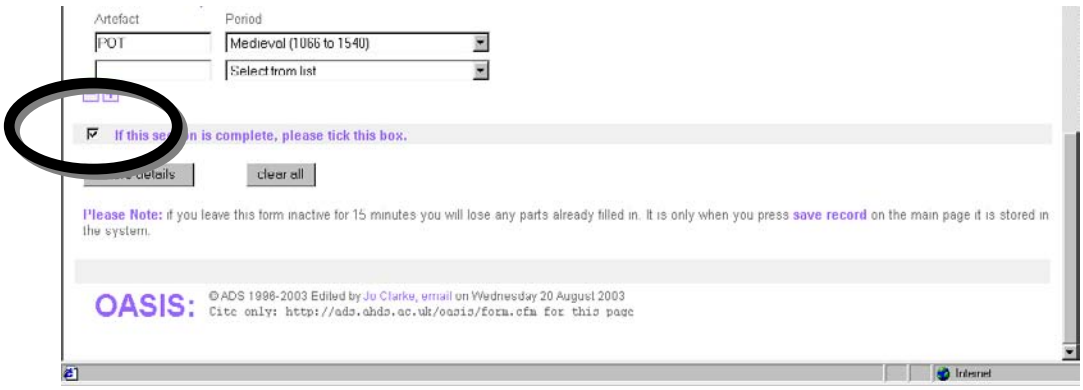

Figure 13 The 'completed' tick box

Once this box has been ticked the system checks to see that all the mandatory fields (marked with a *) have been completed in the appropriate fashion. If the system finds that a mandatory field has not been filled in appropriately then a prompt will appear which guides the user to the specific field (**Figure 14**).

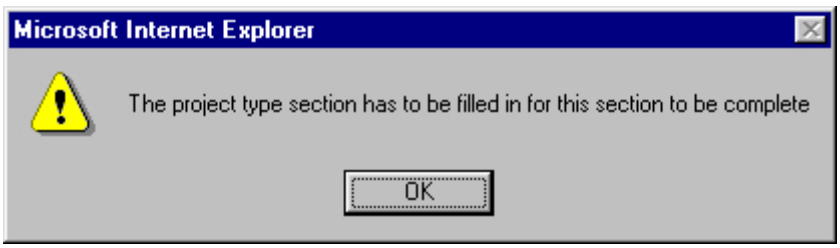

Figure 14 Prompt indicating that a mandatory field has not been completed

Filling in the OASIS form

Most of the fields on the OASIS form should be relatively self explanatory though context specific help can be accessed by clicking the ? button if necessary. The help section also includes a glossary of terms used in the drop down lists. This glossary can be found in **Appendix 2**.

The data fields

Project details (Figure 15)

This section of the OASIS form is designed to provide general information about the project and to gather information on the project aims, the type of work undertaken, project dates and results. The following section aims to provide an explanation of each of the fields within the form together with guidance on how to complete them.

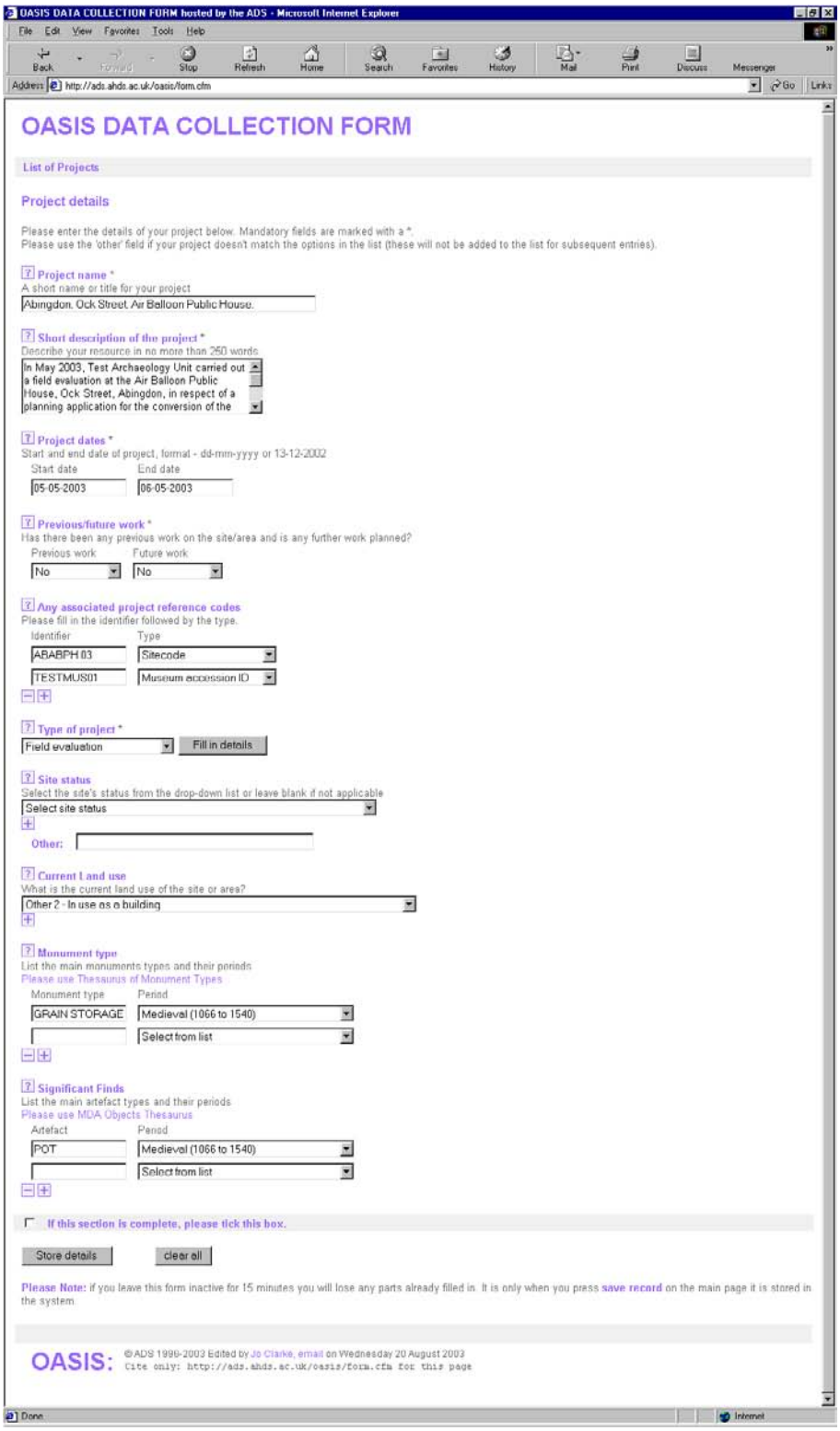

Figure 15 The *Project Details* form