

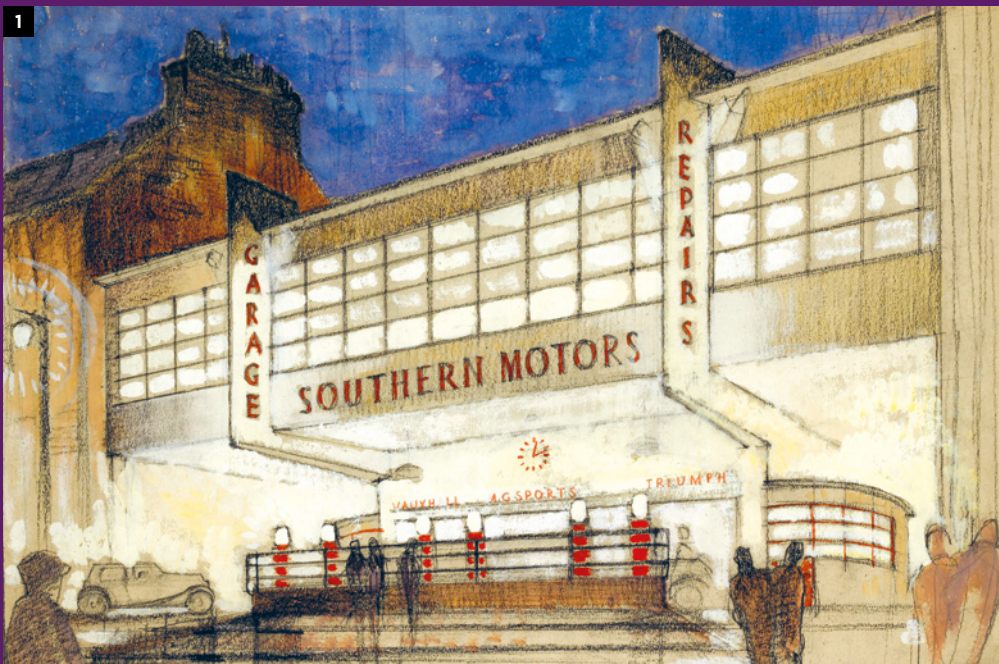


HISTORIC  
ENVIRONMENT  
SCOTLAND

ÀRAINNEACHD  
EACHDRAIDHEIL  
ALBA

# RESEARCHING HISTORIC BUILDINGS





1 'Southern Motors' garage at Causewayside, Edinburgh, designed by Basil Spence, 1933. The top image is the architect's contemporary drawing. © HES (Sir Basil Spence Collection)

2 While some of the detailing, such as the signage, has changed, and the pumps have been removed, the building is still easily recognisable today. © HES



# RESEARCHING HISTORIC BUILDINGS



Do you want to find out more about the history of your house or another building? Here are some of the resources we use when researching buildings. Many of them are free; however, some will charge for their services.

## **What should I do first?**

One starting place is here at Historic Environment Scotland (HES). We curate the National Record of the Historic Environment (NRHE), part of the HES Archives held in Edinburgh. Our search room and library are open to all, and free to use.

We hold the HES Archives of Scottish architecture, archaeology, industry, historic gardens and landscapes, covering the widest timescale up to the present day. This includes photographs, manuscripts and plans, related to the spectrum of buildings nationwide, as well as a library themed on these same topics.

All this material can be searched through our online database, Canmore. Not all of our material is digitised but anything listed on Canmore can be viewed in our Edinburgh search room and library. Alternatively, we can provide copies of most of the material in our archive.

If you have any questions regarding the HES Archives, contact details can be found at the end of this booklet.

If Canmore is unable to provide the information you are looking for, there are other resources you can use. Some of these are detailed below.

We also curate the online Dictionary of Scottish Architects. This provides biographical information and job lists for architects known to have worked in Scotland from 1660–1980. You can search by name or address of architect, practice, or building, as well as by client, and you can see what other works are known to have been designed by the same architect or practice. We always welcome new information about Scottish architects to add to the website.

Another good starting point is ScotlandsPlaces, which allows you to search by place. This free website draws together resources from the HES Archives, the National Library of Scotland and National Records of Scotland, and the wide range of material includes maps and historic photos, taxation records (including window tax, hearth tax, servant tax and dog tax), Burgh Records, and Ordnance Survey name books (cartographers' notes of the 1st edition OS survey).



# HISTORIC MAPS

Historic maps and plans provide another way to start researching a building's history. Historic maps can help to narrow down the date of a property and show how an area has developed over time. The National Library of Scotland has an extensive range of maps of Scotland dating from 1560 to 1964. Many of these maps have been digitised and can be viewed online, free, via the National Library of Scotland and ScotlandsPlaces websites.

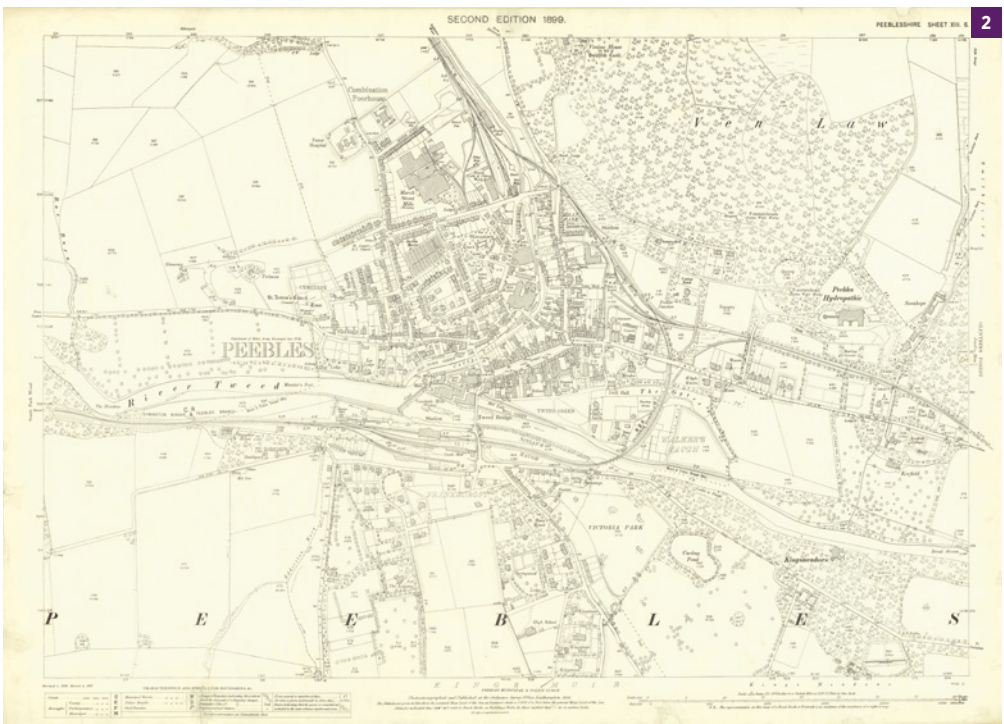
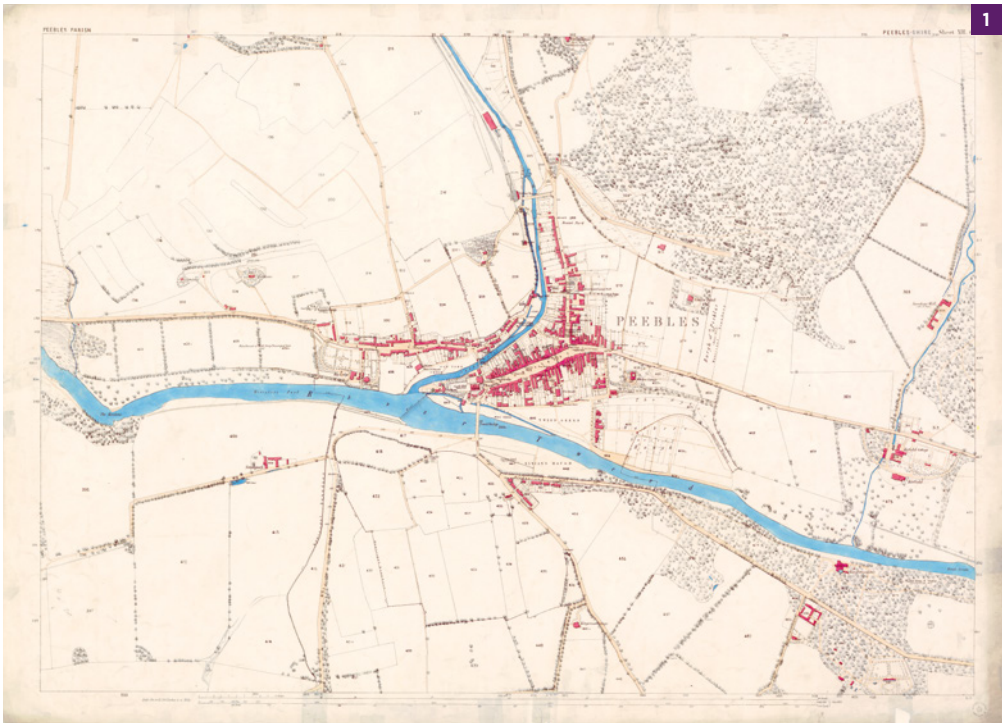
The most accurate and detailed historic maps are the 25-inch and 6-inch Ordnance Survey (OS) maps. The former sometimes even show the internal layout of public buildings, such as churches and banks.

Survey and publication dates for OS maps vary, but as a general rule the 1st edition maps normally date from the 1850s and 1860s, the 2nd edition from the late 1890s, with further editions in the twentieth century. Urban areas were resurveyed more often – for example, parts of Edinburgh were resurveyed almost once a decade between the 1890s and the Second World War.

Earlier maps tend to be less detailed and less accurate. They can nevertheless be very helpful, though the lack of detail means that they are often more useful for researching buildings in rural areas.

General Roy's Military Survey of 1747–55 is the most detailed early map available for most parts of Scotland. The quality of the detail varies, but used with caution, that survey can normally be relied upon to a fair degree.

Peebles, Scottish Borders. A comparison between the 1st Edition Ordnance Survey (1856) (1 – Reproduced by permission of the National Library of Scotland) and the 2nd Edition (1898) (2 – Reproduced by permission of the National Library of Scotland) illustrates the town's growth during the second half of the nineteenth century. Clear changes over the period include a substantial industrial area developed at the northwest, with associated housing, and a south-facing villa area to the east.



# ARCHITECTURAL DRAWINGS

A good way to find who designed a building, its design date, and whether it has been altered, is by finding architects' drawings. While many drawings and plans will have been lost, where available they are likely to identify the architect's name and sometimes also name the client for whom the property was built. The HES Archives holds drawings, and copies of drawings, by numerous architectural practices.

Architectural drawings can also be found in the National Records of Scotland, particularly their Register House Plans (RHP) series, and in local archives.

Another good source of information and of drawings is the Dean of Guild records, which are normally held in local Council archives. The Dean of Guild was the burgh official responsible for ensuring that burgh regulations were adhered to.

From 1892–1970 the Dean of Guild Courts were responsible for assessing proposals for building work within the burghs, though in some instances (notably Edinburgh) this function had existed long before then.

The process required the submission of a 'petition', which included architectural drawings and a description of the work. Because the Dean of Guild was only responsible for regulating work within the burgh boundary, the records do not usually include information for buildings in rural areas or villages.

The following book will help you to identify what's likely to be available:

Iain Gray, *A Guide to Dean of Guild Court Books* (Glasgow, 1994)

**1** 1886 date-stone on Dingwall Railway Station, Highland. As well as showing the building date, the carved initials 'HR' tell us the Highland Railway was responsible for the station's construction. © HES

**2** Cairnhill House, South Ayrshire. Drawing of the west elevation showing alteration and extension to the original tower (centre of the image) by William Burn in 1843. Part of the William Burn Collection held by Historic Environment Scotland. © HES

**3** (Overleaf) Scottish National Housing Co Ltd., Housing Scheme, Rosyth. This is one of a number of standard house types designed for Rosyth Garden City from 1916. Many of the original drawings survive and illustrate the original appearance of the development. © HES



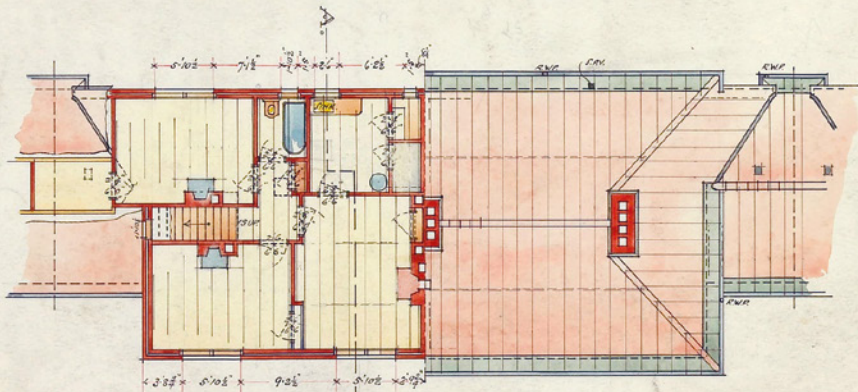


# SCOTTISH NATIONAL HOUSING COY. LTD. HOUSING SCHEME ROSYTH.

TYPE JJ.

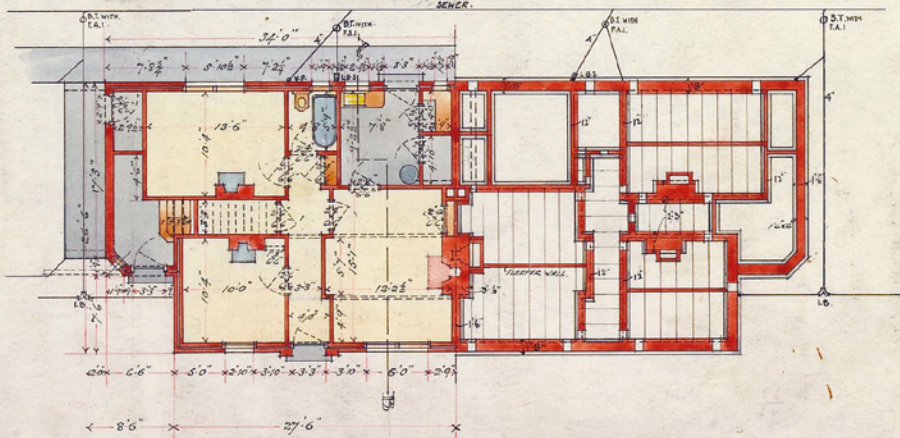
№ 1.

NOTE. DIMENSIONS MARKED ARE  
TO ROUGH BRICK SIZES.



PLAN OF UPPER FLOOR.

PLAN OF ROOF.



PLAN OF GROUND FLOOR.

PLAN OF FOUNDATIONS.

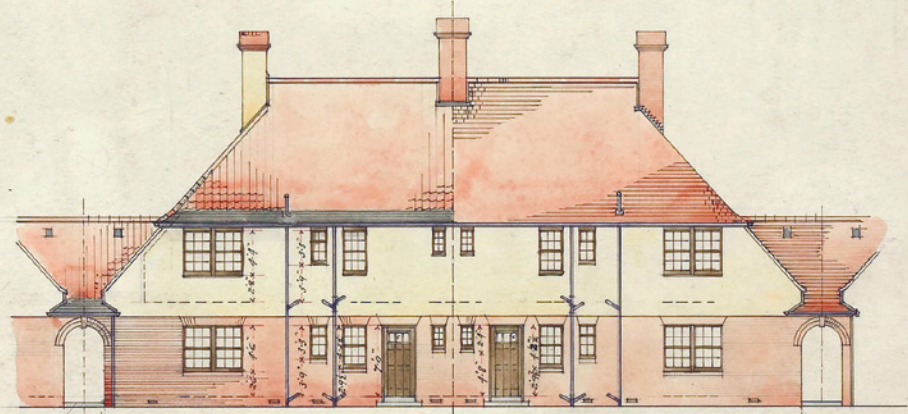


13  
 Signed with reference to and along with the Contract between the  
 Scottish National Housing Company Limited and Messrs Holloway  
 Brothers (London) Limited, dated eighth and nineteenth March nineteen  
 hundred and nineteen.

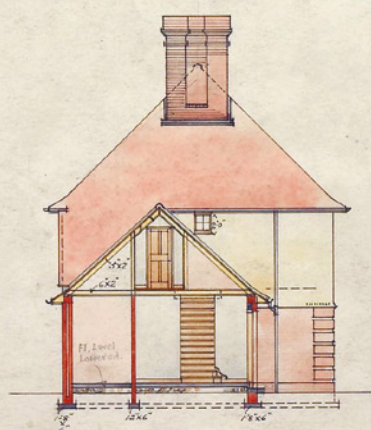
Henry Holloway  
 Samuel Holloway  
 Architects  
 John R. Lindley  
 Robert H. Suckles  
 Engineers



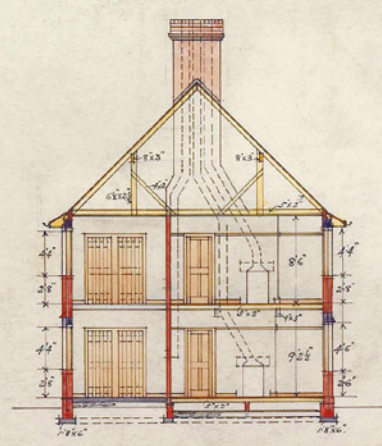
← ALTERNATIVE.  
 FRONT ELEVATION.



← ALTERNATIVE.  
 BACK ELEVATION.



SIDE ELEVATION.



SECTION ON LINE A.B.

111, GEORGE STREET,  
 EDINBURGH, DEC. 1916.

BP 008687  
 B 32841  
 PD 2446

Acc. No. 195510

# WHO LIVED OR WORKED IN THE BUILDING?

The National Records of Scotland hold the records of the population census which has been carried out every decade since 1841. Census returns provide information about the occupants of a house at specific times, such as their name, age, sex, marital status, birth location, relationship to the head of the household, and occupation. You can search the census records for 1841–1911 through the ScotlandsPeople website.

To identify who lived in a house, and to supplement census searches, you can search the Valuation Rolls. These have been created annually since 1855. They record each property in Scotland, and name the owners, tenants and occupiers.

A complete set of valuation rolls is held by the National Records of Scotland, with those for the years 1855, 1865, 1875, 1885, 1895, 1906, 1915, 1920, 1925 and 1930 available to search via ScotlandsPeople. Many local archive services also hold valuation rolls for their areas.

Another useful source of information about properties can be found in Post Office directories. Produced annually, the directories have an alphabetical list of a town's or county's inhabitants, though not all people were listed. As well as the general directory, most of them include a street directory and a trades' directory and they list people alphabetically by their address and professions. The National Library of Scotland has put many of these online.



**1** Decorated Arbroath shopfronts, around 1915. This image of the building on the corner of Millgate Loan and West Grimsby, Arbroath, shows it then contained D. Y. Walker's, butchers, and Barnetts, a public house. The decoration illustrates the heightened patriotism people wanted to display during World War I (1914–1918). Perhaps a specific significant event was being marked, as the staff of both businesses posed outside for the photograph. The contrast in staff clothing between the two businesses is striking. © National Museums Scotland

**2** Window Tax records. These records can help you identify when a property was built, and give an indication of its size. This extract, from 1791, shows parts of Morton, Closeburn and Durisdeer Parishes in Dumfriesshire and includes Drumlanrig Castle. © Crown copyright, National Records of Scotland, E326/1/36, p. 97







# HAS THE BUILDING CHANGED?

The sources already mentioned can also help you discover whether or when a building has been extended, modified, or even demolished.

For instance, the maps mentioned above can help you to see if a building's ground plan, or outline, has changed over time. Historic photos or images can sometimes more readily show if or how a building has evolved. There are many sources for historic photos, from books to online collections.

Our Canmore website has over 350,000 digital images of photographs and architectural drawings. Canmore also contains information about the thousands of non-digitised photographs, drawings, and manuscripts in the HES Archives. The digital images can be viewed online for free, and you can view the non-digitised material in our Search Room, or request copies for research, publication, or display.

Scran is an online learning resource base with almost 500,000 photographs, moving images, and sounds, drawn from museums, galleries, and archives. You can search the whole resource base for free and gain subscription access to detailed information either through purchase or through your local library membership.

If you are interested in seeing what a building or a wider local area looked like from the air at different times, then you can see aerial photographs on our Britain From Above website and through the National Collection of Aerial Photography.

Napier University: Merchiston Campus, Edinburgh. Photographs can illustrate the sometimes radical alterations of places and buildings. Here, Merchiston Castle is recorded c.1920 (**1** - © HES (Scottish Colorfoto Collection)) with its nineteenth century frontage, which was removed c.1959 (**2** - © The Scotsman Publications Ltd); leaving the original fifteenth century tower (**3** - © HES) which was incorporated into Merchiston Campus of Napier University.

1



2



3



# IS THE BUILDING LISTED, OR 'DESIGNATED'?

Our listed building records can provide you with more information about historic buildings. Our older records tend to be brief, though sometimes contain references to where more information may exist. The more up-to-date records have photographs and fuller documentary references. You can search these and other types of designation, such as scheduled monuments, by text or map on our website. This map search will help you see if a property is in a conservation area or a World Heritage Site.

## **What is the history of the area?**

More general information about an area can be found in a wide range of modern and historical resources. Detailed histories of most counties, towns or parishes were written in the 19th century. The old and new Statistical Accounts of Scotland provide a useful and easily-accessible source. The old Statistical Account was published between 1791 and 1799 and the New Statistical Account was published between 1834 and 1845.





1 St Enoch's Square and Station, Glasgow. This area image of 1953 shows St Enoch's Station, which was demolished in 1977. © HES

2 Neb Battery, Flotta, Orkney Islands. This battery was built during World War II as one of several defending Cantick Sound, one of the entrances to Scapa Flow, from hostile motor torpedo boats and other fast-moving craft. For more modern buildings, built within living memory, first hand evidence of a building's construction and use can potentially be found. © HES

Ministers (sometimes helped by others) wrote about their parishes, and their essays are an encapsulation of each parish's aspects of contemporary interest. Topics covered include geography and topography, population, agriculture, industry and local authority.

There are many books about the history of Scotland and its regions and places. For architectural history, the Buildings of Scotland series provides detailed information about significant buildings in specific areas. This has nationwide coverage, with individual books covering Glasgow and Edinburgh, the others covering wider regions. The Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland (RIAS) has also produced a regional series of illustrated architectural guides to Scotland's buildings.

National and local newspapers can also be a great source of information, and the widest collection of these is held by the National Library of Scotland which can be accessed online. There are other websites where you can access historic newspapers for a fee.

Local libraries, archives and museums will be able to help you find out more about your area. Contact details for local archives can be found by looking at the list maintained by Scran.



# LOOKING TO DELVE DEEPER?



If you want to pursue your research further, you should explore the documentary archive resources available to you.

## **Local sources**

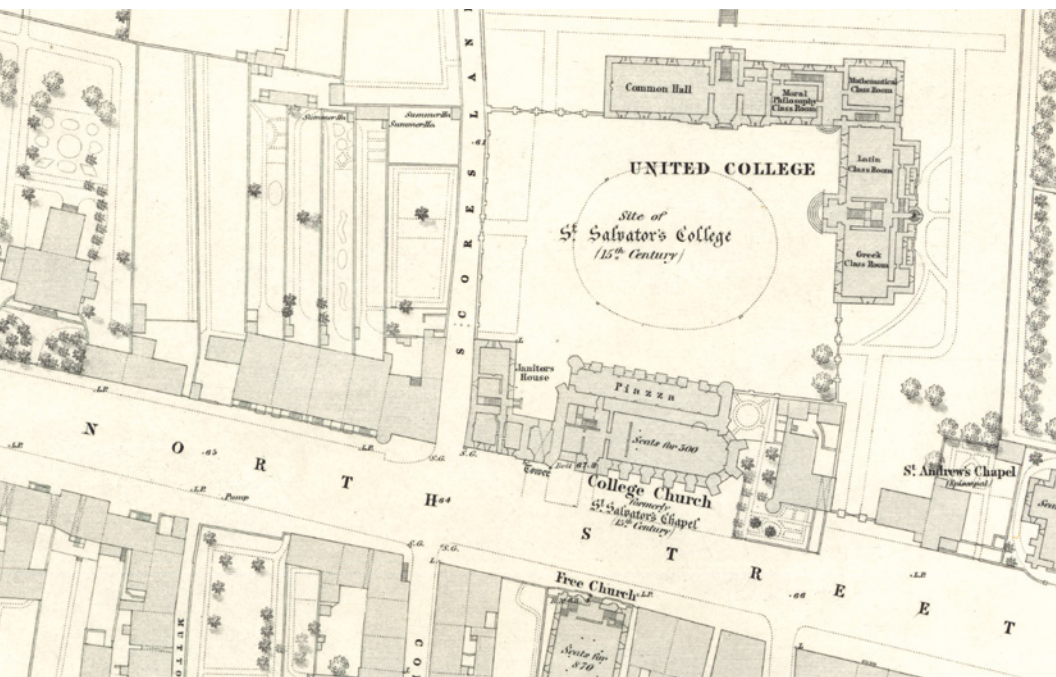
Your local library, archive or museum will provide help and advice. This can include searching not only council archives, but university, and sometimes business archives.

## **The National Library of Scotland and the National Records of Scotland**

We have already mentioned the National Library of Scotland and the National Records of Scotland as the two most important national archival/documentary resources.

The National Library of Scotland holds both books and manuscript collections – over 24 million items – and you can explore what interests you, search the catalogues, and order material online for consultation.

1 St Andrews, Fife. Detailed 1854 map that shows the internal layouts for some public buildings and churches. Reproduced by permission of the National Library of Scotland



The National Records of Scotland collection is primarily a documentary archive consisting mainly of government, church, family and other archives. For example, it is the official place of deposit for Church of Scotland records, and the archive includes many of the Heritors' Records (heritors were the landowners charged to pay for churches and manses), from the 17th to the 20th centuries. Burgh and council records (held locally and/or centrally) include information on public buildings;

and many estate/landowners' records have been gifted to or deposited with either the National Records of Scotland or local archives. See the National Records of Scotland Search Guides A-Z.

The catalogue can be explored online, and documents can be requested for consultation in the search rooms there. Through ScotlandsPeople, the National Records of Scotland also offers a wide range of records online, including valuation rolls, and burgh records.



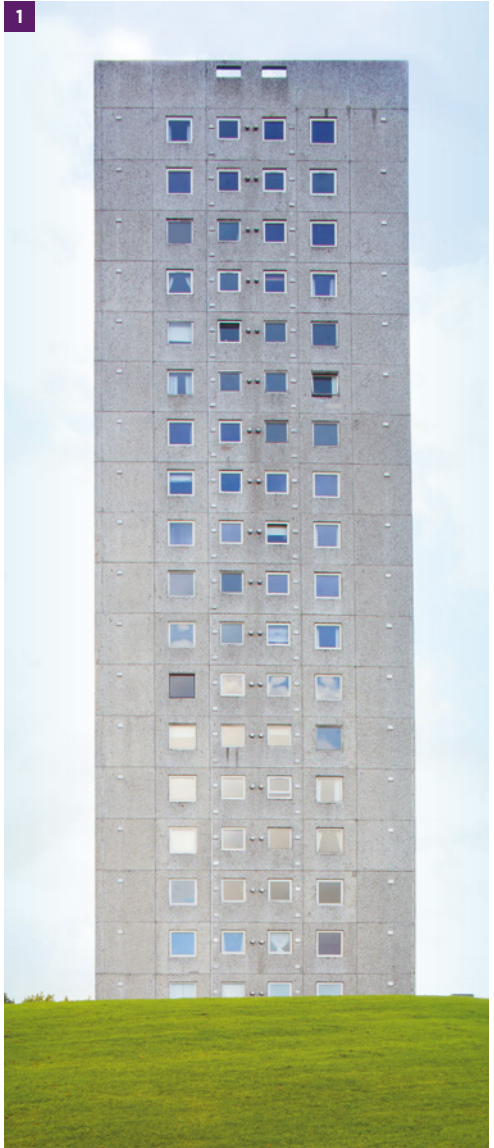
# CONTACT US

We are always pleased to help with inquiries and to offer our advice. There are three ways to get in touch.

Firstly, you are welcome to visit our archive search room and library at:

**HES Archives and Library**  
Historic Environment Scotland  
John Sinclair House  
16 Bernard Terrace  
Edinburgh EH8 9NX

Alternatively, you can either contact us by phone at **0131 651 6872** or email at **[archives@hes.scot](mailto:archives@hes.scot)**



**1** Stuart House, Cumbernauld (1967-9). Because the postwar new towns were a government-driven project, the relevant archives are held both centrally, in Edinburgh, and locally. © HES

# USEFUL LINKS

## **Britain From Above**

[britainfromabove.org.uk](http://britainfromabove.org.uk)

---

## **Canmore**

[canmore.org.uk](http://canmore.org.uk)

---

## **Canmore – Search Room**

[canmore.org.uk/content/search-room](http://canmore.org.uk/content/search-room)

---

## **Dictionary of Scottish Architects**

[scottisharchitects.org.uk](http://scottisharchitects.org.uk)

---

## **Historic Environment Scotland – Designations Search**

[portal.historicenvironment.scot/designations](http://portal.historicenvironment.scot/designations)

---

## **Historic Environment Scotland – Designations Map Search**

[historicscotland.maps.arcgis.com/apps/Viewer/index.html?appid=18d2608ac1284066ba3927312710d16d](http://historicscotland.maps.arcgis.com/apps/Viewer/index.html?appid=18d2608ac1284066ba3927312710d16d)

---

## **Historic Environment Scotland – National Record of the Historic Environment**

[historicenvironment.scot/archives-and-research/archives-and-collections/our-collections/national-record-of-the-historic-environment](http://historicenvironment.scot/archives-and-research/archives-and-collections/our-collections/national-record-of-the-historic-environment)

---

## **National Collection of Aerial Photography**

[ncap.org.uk](http://ncap.org.uk)

---

## **National Library of Scotland**

[nls.uk](http://nls.uk)

---

## **National Library of Scotland – Map Images**

[maps.nls.uk](http://maps.nls.uk)

---

## **National Library of Scotland – Newspapers Collections**

[nls.uk/collections/newspapers](http://nls.uk/collections/newspapers)

---

## **National Library of Scotland – Post Office Directories**

[nls.uk/family-history/directories/post-office](http://nls.uk/family-history/directories/post-office)

---

## **National Records of Scotland – Register House Plans Series**

[nrscotland.gov.uk/research/guides/maps-and-plans](http://nrscotland.gov.uk/research/guides/maps-and-plans)

---

## **National Records of Scotland – Research Guides**

[nrscotland.gov.uk/research/guides](http://nrscotland.gov.uk/research/guides)

---

## **National Records of Scotland – Scotland's Census**

[nrscotland.gov.uk/statistics-and-data/census](http://nrscotland.gov.uk/statistics-and-data/census)

---

## **ScotlandsPeople**

[scotlandspeople.gov.uk](http://scotlandspeople.gov.uk)

---

## **ScotlandsPeople – Valuation Rolls**

[scotlandspeople.gov.uk/record-guides/valuation-rolls](http://scotlandspeople.gov.uk/record-guides/valuation-rolls)

---

## **ScotlandsPlaces**

[scotlandsplaces.gov.uk](http://scotlandsplaces.gov.uk)

---

## **Scottish Archive Network – Directory**

[scan.org.uk/directory/contactdetails.htm](http://scan.org.uk/directory/contactdetails.htm)

---

## **Scran**

[scran.ac.uk](http://scran.ac.uk)

---

## **Statistical Accounts of Scotland**

[stataccscot.edina.ac.uk](http://stataccscot.edina.ac.uk)

---

## **The National Archives – Find an Archive**

[discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/find-an-archive](http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/find-an-archive)

---

**Cover:** Ainslie Park Secondary School, Edinburgh. Designed in 1939, but only completed in 1949 because of the outbreak of World War II. This building changed radically when it fell out of educational use. The original architectural drawings show what the school once looked like. © HES



© Historic Environment Scotland 2018

You may re-use this information (excluding logos and images) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence v3.0 except where otherwise stated.

To view this licence, visit [nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3/](https://nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3/) or write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gov.uk)

Where we have identified any third party copyright information you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

Any enquiries regarding this document should be sent to us at:

**Historic Environment Scotland**

Longmore House  
Salisbury Place  
Edinburgh  
EH9 1SH

+44 (0) 131 668 8600

You can download this publication from our website at [historicenvironment.scot](https://historicenvironment.scot)

Historic Environment Scotland is a registered Charity (SCO45925)