



RESEARCH

Resource 2: Historic Environment Scotland

This guide has been created by Scotland's Urban Past (SUP), a five-year community-engagement project from Historic Environment Scotland.

We support communities to record, research and celebrate the history on their doorsteps.

Through our free training and resources, people of all ages can discover and share the fascinating stories of Scotland's towns and cities.

www.scotlandsurbanpast.org.uk

HES resources

Historic Environment Scotland (HES) was established on 1 October 2015. It takes on the responsibilities of Historic Scotland and the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS) which have been managing and recording Scotland's archaeological, architectural and industrial heritage for more than a century. The Scottish National Collections, created and managed previously by RCAHMS, comprise some 3 million drawings, prints, maps, manuscripts and photographs and one of the world's largest and most important aerial photographic archives, made up of over 1.5 million images of Scotland, and over 20 million military reconnaissance images from across the globe. These continually growing collections are internationally important and help to connect people to places over time.

Search room at John Sinclair House

Everyone is welcome to visit the Historic Environment Scotland [search room](#) at John Sinclair House, 16 Bernard Terrace, Edinburgh. It is open Tuesday to Friday, from 0930 to 1700. Appointments are required to consult archive materials.

The search room holds books on architects and a wide range of current and historical journals. The collection has information on:

- building types
- industrial archaeology
- architectural styles and periods
- interiors and furniture
- building construction, materials, trades and crafts
- a wide range of current and historical journals
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Key library resources on open access also include the vast and invaluable collection of photographs of places across Scotland. These are arranged into green box files by region and then district (according to the mid-1970s to mid-1990s local-government structure) and by place, and then in larger urban areas, by street. The material includes imagery taken by Historic Environment Scotland staff and copies of historic drawings and photographs. These date from the late nineteenth century to 2007. Images taken after this date are available digitally on Canmore. The files also contain a wealth of pamphlets and other locally-produced documents on buildings and their histories.

Introductory tours and hands-on sessions using resources including maps, architectural drawings, archival materials and photographic prints, as well as books, journals and online resources, can be arranged for your group.



Online resources by Historic Environment Scotland (HES)

Canmore

[Canmore](#) is the main online resource for discovering and exploring sites and for obtaining details of related collections held by Historic Environment Scotland. Canmore includes a map-based search tool that allows you to find sites and monuments in a given area and pull up information about them, including digital images and reports in pdf format. Users must register to use the map-based search.

HES decisions and designations portal

The [HES decisions and designations portal](#) allows you to search for buildings and monuments that have been assigned protected status by the Scottish Government due to their historical or architectural significance. Via the map or a keyword search in the designations section you can explore and discover protected places in your area.

Dictionary of Scottish Architects (DSA)

The [Dictionary of Scottish Architects](#) is an online database which provides biographical information and lists of work for all architects known to have worked in Scotland during the period 1840–1980. The database can be searched by name or working location of the architect or practice, by building and also by client. It holds more than 15,000 records associated with architects and over 59,000 on buildings.

National Collection of Aerial Photography (NCAP)

The [National Collection of Aerial Photography](#) is one of the largest and most significant collections of aerial photography in the world. Its images were originally created for commercial or military purposes, and have now become an invaluable historical tool for archaeologists, geographers, conservationists, landscape historians and local history researchers. This unparalleled resource is made up of a number of distinct parts and is divided into two geographical areas: Scotland and worldwide. The Collections are curated by Historic Environment Scotland staff and can be accessed online. Payment of a fee is required to purchase digital and print copies of images.

SCRAN

[SCRAN](#) (Scottish Cultural Resources Access Network) provides access to more than 360,000 digital resources for discovering and exploring heritage and material culture. These resources include images, video clips, podcasts and teaching packs. Its online database can be searched and browsed by geographical area and via a wide variety of themes. Basic access to Scran is open to everyone, but subscribers are able to view full-size versions of images, download copyright-cleared resources free of charge for educational and personal use, and use a range of supporting services designed to make finding and using Scran resources easier.

SCRAN is currently one of the largest educational online services in the UK, supporting over 4,000 schools, public libraries, colleges and universities. Most local authority libraries in Scotland offer library users free access to Scran from their library buildings; some services also offer remote access.

Buildings at Risk Register for Scotland (BARR)

The [Buildings at Risk Register for Scotland](#), established in 1990, highlights properties of architectural or historic merit considered to be at risk or under threat. Historic Environment Scotland works with local authorities and the wider built-environment sector to ensure that the Buildings at Risk Register continues to provide reliable data for all users.

An entry on the Buildings at Risk Register is usually a listed building or an unlisted building within a conservation area which meets one or more of the following criteria: vacant with no identified new use; suffering from neglect and/or poor maintenance; suffering from structural problems; fire damaged; unsecured and open to the elements; or threatened with demolition.

PastMap

[PastMap](#) is an interactive digital map operated by Historic Environment Scotland and local-government archaeology curators. It provides a single point of access to layered map-based information about architectural and archaeological sites and landscapes in Scotland from a variety of sources including Canmore and the Listed Building search. Each layer is shown in relation to an underlying Ordnance Survey map and can be turned on or off, allowing you to explore heritage assets across Scotland. You can choose which datasets to view and use navigation tools to explore a geographical area of interest.

HLAmap

[HLAmap](#) is an interactive digital map that shows changing patterns of land use over time throughout Scotland. You can select specific areas of the country to research, view land-use trends by 'category', 'type', 'period' and 'relict period', and identify individual sites by their land use.

Scotland's Places

[Scotland's Places](#) is a part-subscription website that allows users to search across different national databases using geographic locations. You can enter a place name or a map coordinate to search across these collections or use mapping on the website to define and refine a search. The results provide data from each of the project partners which currently include Historic Environment Scotland, the National Records of Scotland, and the National Library of Scotland.

Notes

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