

Aerial Photographs

This leaflet describes the many sources available for researchers wishing to find aerial photographs of locations in the United Kingdom or wishing to find aerial photographs of locations overseas which were taken by the Royal Air Force and other organisations.

Researchers wishing to view material held by the RAF Museum should make an appointment by telephone, fax or e-mail with the Department of Research and Information Services **well in advance** of their proposed visit. Enquiries should be made in writing (enclosing an SAE) and should contain as much information as is already known, in particular the place name, country and the date.

Research & Information Services

RAF Museum, Grahame Park Way, Hendon,
London NW9 5LL Tel: 020 8205 2266 Fax: 020
8200 1751

RAF Museum website: www.rafmuseum.org
RAF Museum e-mail: research@rafmuseum.org

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FORCE MUSEUM 2005

MAJOR SOURCES OF AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHS

Aerial photographs taken by the Royal Air Force were originally held by the Joint Air Reconnaissance Intelligence Centre (JARIC) at Brampton. It transferred the photographs selected for preservation to various repositories in the UK; JARIC no longer holds any historical aerial photographs.

Photographs of the UK

Aerial photographs of the United Kingdom taken by the Royal Air Force have been transferred to repositories in the appropriate part of the UK. They are English Heritage, the Royal Commission on the Ancient & Historical Monuments of Scotland, the Royal Commission on the Ancient & Historical Monuments of Wales and the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland. Some material has also been transferred to these institutions by the Ordnance Survey.

One company which has a long history in aerial photography is Aerofilms Ltd. This company has been active since 1919 and has an extensive archive of oblique and vertical photographs of the United Kingdom.

The Luftwaffe flew many reconnaissance missions over the United Kingdom. These aerial photographs were recovered after the war and taken to the United States. They are now preserved in the US National Archives.

Photographs of Europe

The Royal Air Force flew many reconnaissance flights during both World Wars. There is no single source of photographs from World War One but examples are available at a number of Museums and archives.

Reconnaissance photographs of Western Europe from World War Two were held by the University of Keele until early 2008 but the collection is being transferred to the Royal Commission on the Ancient & Historical Monuments of Scotland. It is hoped that more from World War Two will become available soon.

MINOR SOURCES OF AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHS

There are collections which include aerial photographs at the British National Archives and in various national museums.

The Imperial War Museum has a large Department of Photographs which has examples of aerial photographs from both World Wars. Other museums such as the National Army Museum and National Maritime Museum have various small collections.

Some county record offices hold photographs for public inspection. Many universities also have collections of aerial photographs, both of the United Kingdom and overseas, notably the University of Cambridge.

RAF MUSEUM AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHS

The Royal Air Force Museum has a number of small collections of aerial photographs. Most are held by the Photographic Section but some are in archive collections within the Department of Research & Information Services. The Collections Management System provides access to many of these collections.

Coverage starts in 1890 with the Royal Engineers. There are photographs of the trenches in World War One, bombing photographs from World War Two and aerial photographs used for surveying from the 1920s onwards. Most areas in which the RAF operated are represented. It should be remembered, however, that this is not a comprehensive collection and some locations at some times will be omitted.

ADDRESSES

Aerofilms Ltd
Gate Studios
Station Road
Borehamwood
WD6 1EJ
www.aerofilms.com
020 8207 0666

English Heritage
National Monuments Record Centre
Great Western Village
Kemble Drive
Swindon
SN2 2GZ
www.english-heritage.org.uk
01793 414700

Imperial War Museum
Lambeth Road
London
SE1 6HZ
www.iwm.org.uk
020 7416 5320

Joint Air Reconnaissance Intelligence Centre
RAF Brampton
Huntingdon
PE18 8QL
01480 52151

The National Archives
Kew
Richmond
Surrey
TW9 4DU
www.nationalarchives.gov.uk
020 8876 3444
National Archives & Records Administration
8601 Adelphi Road
College Park
MD 20740-6001
USA
www.archives.gov
301 837 3200

Customer Service Centre
Ordnance Survey
Romsey Road
Southampton
SO16 4GU
www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk
08456 05 05 05

Public Record Office of Northern Ireland
66 Balmoral Avenue
Belfast
BT9 6NY
www.proni.gov.uk
028 9025 5905

Royal Commission on the Ancient & Historical
Monuments of Scotland
John Sinclair House
16 Bernard Terrace
Edinburgh
EH8 9NX
www.rcahms.gov.uk
0131 662 1456

Reader Services
Royal Commission on the Ancient & Historical
Monuments of Wales
Plas Crug
Aberystwyth
Ceredigion
SY23 1NJ
www.rcahmw.org.uk
01970 621200