

**Photograph Department**

**Information Sheet 2 - Aerial Photographs**

This leaflet describes the many sources available for researchers wishing to find

* aerial photographs of locations in the United Kingdom or
* aerial photographs of locations overseas

taken by the Royal Air Force and other organisations.

**RAF MUSEUM AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHS**

The Royal Air Force Museum has a few small collections of aerial photographs. Most are held by the Photograph Department but some are in collections within the Archive and Library Department. The catalogue, available to the public in the reading room in London, provides access to many of these collections.

Coverage starts in 1890 with the Royal Engineers. There are some 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 not be included.

**OTHER SOURCES**

**Photographs of the UK**

Aerial photographs of the United Kingdom taken by the Royal Air Force were originally held by the Joint Air Reconnaissance Intelligence Centre (JARIC) at Brampton. They transferred those selected for preservation to repositories managed by Historic England, 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. JARIC no longer holds any historical aerial photographs. Some material has also been transferred to the repositories from the Ordnance Survey.

Aerofilms Ltd had an extensive archive of oblique and vertical photographs of the United Kingdom. The collection has been acquired jointly by English Heritage, the Royal Commission on the Ancient & Historical Monuments of Scotland and the Royal Commission on the Ancient & Historical Monuments of Wales. More information can be found at <http://www.britainfromabove.org.uk>.

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 at College Park, Maryland.

**Photographs Worldwide**

The Royal Air Force flew many reconnaissance flights during both World Wars. There is no single source of photographs from World War One but many are available from World War Two onwards. In 2008 the National Collection of Aerial Photography moved from the University of Keele to the Royal Commission on the Ancient & Historical Monuments of Scotland, with more material transferred from JARIC; details can be found at <http://ncap.org.uk>.

**Smaller Collections**

Additional collections can be found at The National Archives at Kew and in various museums, including the Imperial War Museum which has a large collection including aerial photography from both World Wars. 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 (<http://www.geog.cam.ac.uk/cucap/about>).

**ADDRESSES**

RAF Museum

Grahame Park Way

Hendon

London NW9 5LL

[www.rafmuseum.org.uk](http://www.rafmuseum.org.uk)

020 8205 2266

Photograph Department

e-mail [photographic@rafmuseum.org](mailto:photographic@rafmuseum.org)

Archive and Library Department

e-mail [research@rafmuseum.org](mailto:research@rafmuseum.org)

Archive Services

Historic England

The Engine House  
Fire Fly Avenue   
Swindon SN2 2EH

<http://archive.historicengland.org.uk>

01793 414600

Public Record Office of Northern Ireland

66 Balmoral Avenue

Belfast BT9 6NY

[www.proni.gov.uk](http://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](http://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](http://www.rcahmw.org.uk)

01970 621200

Imperial War Museum

Lambeth Road

London SE1 6HZ

[www.iwm.org.uk](http://www.iwm.org.uk)

020 7416 5320

The National Archives

Kew

Richmond

Surrey TW9 4DU

[www.nationalarchives.gov.uk](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk)

020 8876 3444

Customer Service Centre

Ordnance Survey

Romsey Road

Southampton SO16 4GU

[www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk](http://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk)

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National Archives & Records Administration

8601 Adelphi Road

College Park

MD 20740-6001

USA

[www.archives.gov](http://www.archives.gov)

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