



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
020 8205 2266

Photograph Department
e-mail photographic@rafmuseum.org

Archive and Library Department
e-mail 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
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

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

The National Archives
Kew
Richmond
Surrey TW9 4DU
www.nationalarchives.gov.uk
020 8876 3444

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

National Archives & Records Administration
8601 Adelphi Road
College Park
MD 20740-6001
USA
www.archives.gov
301 837 3200

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