Guidance for applicants undertaking general photographic surveys for planning purposes

Introduction

Gwynedd Archaeological Planning Service has established the principle of requesting photographic surveys, or photographic records, from applicants as part of the planning process in order to preserve by record the original form or specific character of our historic buildings.

It is important to understand that these photographic survey records serve as the only surviving documentation of buildings prior to alteration, restoration, conversion or demolition. As such it is important that the below guidelines are followed in order to allow the Regional Historic Environment Record (HER) held by Gwynedd Archaeological Trust, and the National Monuments Record archive held by the RCAHMW, to curate a unique record that will be publicly-available for future study and reference.

Costs

Planning applicants are expected to pay for and complete the photographic survey.

Professional photographers or archaeologists may be appointed, especially where there is no access to suitable camera equipment, or if technical difficulties are encountered, but it is likely that this will significantly increase the cost of the survey.

Methods

Appropriate lighting conditions must be taken into account in order to produce a clear photograph. The use of a standard flash is recommended indoors to light the interior views, however off-camera flashes are considered to produce the best images, where available. Use of a tripod is recommended, especially in poor light conditions.

Wet (traditional) Photography

Traditional photographs should be taken using 35mm format high quality colour print film. ASA 200 film is a good standard for most light conditions but ASA 400 should be used where light conditions are poor.

Digital Photography

A high resolution photograph should be taken, using a camera with a minimum of 10 megapixels. Image quality should be set as high as possible. Ideally cameras will take images as TIFF or RAW and the resulting files will be saved in tiff file format (uncompressed) for archival stability. If this is not possible then a high quality jpeg image will be acceptable. RAW files must not be supplied. The files must be saved to a CD / DVD with accompanying plans and photograph/photographer information.

Hard copy (i.e. printed) photographs are welcomed by the Historic Environment Record, but they are not essential. The digital images will be considered as the master copy.
If you wish to supply a printed copy, use high quality photographic paper, no larger than A4 in size. The paper should be a minimum of 250gsm. Commercially produced photobooks are also welcomed.

How to create a photographic record

Photographs

Photographs should be taken of all exterior and interior wall elevations, interior spaces, and detail photographs of the roof interior.

The record should include general photographs to locate the building(s) within the site and relate the building or group of buildings to its grounds and associated buildings, where appropriate.

Features of particular interest (e.g. staircases, date stones, obvious differences in wall fabric, windows and doors whether blocked up or not, fireplaces, machinery and other fittings, timber framing, decorative details) should be fully photographed.

If available, a scale of noted measurement should be placed within any detailed shots but this is not essential.

Annotated Plan

The photographs should be accompanied by at least one annotated plan – if available, an architect’s floor plan of the building as existing. Where many photographs are taken, or where extensive or multiple buildings are being recorded, it may be advisable to use more than one plan for clarity.

The plan(s) should be labelled with the name and address or grid reference of the site, the date that the photographs were taken and the planning application number. If more than one plan is produced, this should also be indicated (e.g. plan 1 of 3).

Ideally the plan(s) will also be supplied as a digital file.

Results

Photographs should be numbered for ease of reference, whether taken digitally or on film. These numbers should be used to locate the photographs on the plan(s). The plan(s) should indicate the points from which photographs are taken and the direction photographs are taken in. Photograph reference numbers should be copied onto the backs of prints together with brief descriptive details of the location; or for digital images, reference numbers should form part of the file name with any additional descriptive information provided in a cross-referenced document. Poor quality or blurred images should not be supplied. Replacement images should be taken for inclusion in the completed record.

Submitting photographs

Three copies of the photographic survey should be produced. These should be sent to:
- the relevant planning office
• the NMRW Archivist, National Monuments Record of Wales, the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments, Plas Crug, Aberystwyth, SY23 1NJ (01970 621200)
• the Development Control Archaeologist, Gwynedd Archaeological Planning Service (GAPS), Craig Beuno, Ffordd y Garth, Bangor, Gwynedd LL57 2RT (01248 370926).

Approved photographic records

Receipt of the photographs and annotated plans by GAPS will be confirmed and the planning authority will be informed that the condition has been satisfied.

Deposition of records

Records received by GAPS will be deposited with the Regional Historic Environment Record (HER). The HER requests that a Deppositor Licence is completed to allow future use and dissemination of the images and will supply one in response to any photographic record received. Alternatively a covering letter containing appropriate conditions can be used (please see examples in Frequently Asked Questions). Where an appropriate covering letter has been supplied there will be no need to supply a depositor licence.

Help

Please consult the Frequently Asked Questions for more information

Summary

• Professional expertise is not necessary
• Costs must be borne by the applicant
• Traditional (wet) or high quality digital photography may be used
• Prints are not necessary for digital images – these should be supplied on CD/DVD
• A flash should be used for internal spaces or low light conditions
• Digital images should be supplied as Tiff files where possible
• Photographs should show all external/internal elevations, interior spaces, and detailed photographs of roof interior
• Wider images to show the setting of the site are required
• An annotated plan must be supplied
• 3 copies of the record are required
• Records are approved by Gwynedd Archaeological Planning Service

Checklist

| PR1 – Relevant Council | Photographs, Annotated Plan, Planning Reference |
| PR2 – RCAHMW | Photographs, Annotated Plan, Photograph/photographer details, NMR Covering letter, Planning Reference |
| PR3 – GAPS | Photographs, Annotated Plan, Photograph/photographer details, GAPS/GAT HER Covering letter, Planning Reference |
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Frequently Asked Questions

Who do I send my completed photographic survey record to? Why?
1) You need to send one copy to the Council dealing with your application. This will be held in their planning files.
2) You need to send one copy to the National Monuments Record. They are the official archive repository for archaeological records in Wales.
3) You need to send one copy to Gwynedd Archaeological Planning Service. They will approve the record and acknowledge that you have fulfilled the condition placed on your planning application. They will pass this copy of the photographic record on to the Regional HER.

What will happen to my photographic record when I have submitted it?
1) The relevant council will deposit the record with the planning files and retain it in accordance with their policies. This can mean that records are kept in perpetuity (*i.e.* forever).
2) The RCAHMW will incorporate the information into the National Monuments Record for Wales and deposit the records supplied in the archives for future study and consultation.
3) The Regional Historic Environment Record will retain your photographic record and incorporate the information into the HER database and wider collections. The records will be available online to the public through Archwilio if you have indicated that this is acceptable.

Why is it important to create a photographic record?
It will form part of a unique archive for future generations. Although development proposals may result in the loss of original fabric, the *information* will not be lost if it is recorded and submitted as a photographic record.

Can I submit my photographic record as a photobook?
If you would like to submit the results of your photographic survey as a commercially-produced photobook, the HER would welcome this as it is an easy way to consult the records created. It should incorporate the plan(s) created to locate the images. However, the submission of hard copy images is not essential as the digital files will be taken as the master copy.

How do I create a tiff?
Tiff/Tif (Tagged Image File Format) images can be created by at least 2 methods:
1) Your camera may allow you to take images in this file type – check the menu on your device.
2) You can use imaging software (proprietary software such as Adobe Photoshop, or other software supplied with your camera, or you can use freeware such as GIMP or Irfanview) to convert from RAW or JPEG.

How do I take a high quality jpeg?
Using the menu on your digital camera, check the “image quality” is set to the highest possible standard.

What is a wall elevation?
A wall elevation is simply the visible vertical extent of the wall from the ground/floor to the roof/ceiling.
Will my photographic survey be kept forever?
Yes. The HER and the NMRW would want to permanently retain the information resulting from the photographic survey record. Some councils may retain the information in perpetuity, others may be subject to a retention schedule (i.e. they will be disposed of at a defined point in time according to council policy).

Who retains copyright?
The photographer will retain copyright of the image. It is important that the name of the photographer and the date of the photograph are included with the photographic record.

How can I allow other people to see the photographic record I have made?
By submitting your record with a covering letter allowing the use of the images, or by completing a depositor licence from the HER/NMRW, you will allow others to see the images you have taken.

What is a depositor licence?
A depositor licence is used to specify exactly how your images can be used and distributed. It also provides the HER with written permission for the use of images that are the copyright of an external individual or organisation. You do not need to complete a Depositor Licence if your covering letter includes the wording below. The HER complies with the Data Protection Act 1998.

Should I undertake the work myself?
Unless you feel that the work is too complex or you do not have the correct camera equipment, the work can be carried out by the applicant. These guidelines aim to help individuals undertake the work without the need to employ professional archaeologists.

Should I ask my architect to undertake the work?
If you wish to employ your architect to undertake the work you are able to do so, as long as they adhere to the guidelines provided here.

Should I employ a professional archaeologist to undertake the work?
If you wish to employ a professional archaeologist to undertake the work you are able to do so, as long as they adhere to the guidelines provided here.

Can I use the camera on my phone?
Phone cameras are not recommended. The depth of field required to satisfactorily create a building record image is not usually possible when using a phone camera due to the small lens.

Who are the Gwynedd Archaeological Planning Service?
Gwynedd Archaeological Planning Service (GAPS) is an autonomous section of Gwynedd Archaeological Trust. GAPS officers deal with any development-related archaeological matters in north west Wales. They are the unitary authorities’ advisors on archaeology, and monitor archaeological work being undertaken in the area (http://www.heneb.co.uk/gaps.html)

Who are the Gwynedd Archaeological Trust?
The Trust was formed in 1974 as an educational charity to inform the public on archaeological matters, to respond to increasing threats to the archaeology of the area, and to educate in the broadest sense. It now offers a wide range of archaeological services and has a depth of local knowledge about the archaeology and historic landscapes of north-west Wales (www.heneb.co.uk)
Who are the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments in Wales?
The Royal Commission is the investigation body and national archive for the historic environment of Wales. It has the lead role in ensuring that Wales’s archaeological, built and maritime heritage is authoritatively recorded, and seeks to promote the understanding and appreciation of this heritage nationally and internationally
(http://www.rcahmw.gov.uk/HI/ENG/Home/)

What is the Historic Environment Record?
The Historic Environment Record (HER) underpins any archaeological work in north west Wales. It holds information, principally in a computerised database linked to digital mapping, relating to all aspects of the historic environment from the earliest evidence of human activity to the present day including sites, buildings, landscapes and archaeological objects. It is continually updated, and is available to consult either at the Gwynedd Archaeological Trust offices in Bangor or online via Archwilio. The HER is supported by a reference collection including maps, books, journals, images and other digital and hard copy files.

What is Archwilio?
Archwilio is the website providing access to data from the four Welsh HERs. Web-based simple search tools can be used to investigate HER records for non-commercial research. The data shown represents a selection of fields recorded in the internal system (http://www.cofiadurcahcymru.org.uk/arch/)

Do you have any further recommendations about taking photographs?
Consider the end use of the image when you take a photograph. It is of utmost importance to ensure that photographs are in focus and are neither too dark nor too over-exposed. Do not take photographs directly into the sun, this can result in lens ‘flare’ and may damage the camera. Unless there is any specific structural or decorative detail on the walls, it is generally preferable (and easier) to take photographs of interior spaces rather than elevations.

Can I annotate the plans myself?
As long as the information is legible and clear it is acceptable for you to annotate the plans to show location of photographs. Plans should be provided as a digital file if the photographs are supplied digitally.

I want to supply printed photographs – how should I do this?
The Historic Environment Record (HER) is happy to receive printed photographs in addition to digital files. Print the images using good quality photographic paper with a minimum gsm of 250. The HER will be happy to accept a commercially-produced photobook if you would like to submit in this format, but would request that a digital copy of the plan is also included with the planning reference and GAPS reference (e.g. D1234). Digital files MUST also be submitted.

Do I need to submit a method statement or specification to the Council?
This type of work does not usually require a method statement or specification to be submitted. If this is included as part of your condition please contact GAPS.

Where can I get more information about recording historic buildings?
Will anyone check the photographic record I have made prior to submission?
Staff at Gwynedd Archaeological Planning Service will be happy to provide feedback on a draft copy prior to submission of the final record. GAPS have an email attachment limit of about 7MB so supplying information on CD/DVD or via a file transfer website might be more appropriate. Please contact GAPS directly to discuss the use of file transfer sites.

Who is in charge of approving my photographic record?
Staff at Gwynedd Archaeological Planning Service will inform you if your photographic survey record meets the required standards. If it does, they will inform the relevant council and the condition will be discharged.

What should my covering letter say?
Examples of covering letters including a paragraph to allow the use and dissemination of the images are shown below. These can be amended and sent to the appropriate institution with the completed and approved record. If you would prefer to receive an HER and/or RCAHMW deposit licence agreement instead of sending a letter using this wording, please indicate this and GAT and RCAHMW will be happy to send one to you for completion.

Covering letter – GAPS/GAT HER:

Dear [GAPS Officer],

Planning Reference [application number]; GAPS reference [D-number]; [Planning Application Name]; [Planning Authority Name]

Please find enclosed the photographic record created to meet a condition attached to the above planning application. The photographs were taken by [Name] on [Date].

I wish to donate the items to the Gwynedd Archaeological Trust Regional Historic Environment Record (HER). The items may be placed within the HER collections and be made available or copied to third parties for the purposes of private research and study. Copies of all items may be made available by Gwynedd Archaeological Trust for non-commercial purposes via the World Wide Web at the absolute discretion of the Trust. I wish to retain copyright.

[OPTIONAL: I wish to be contacted each time an enquirer wishes to use the item(s) other than for private research.]

I look forward to receiving your confirmation of receipt and acknowledgement of the acceptance of the record. I will assume that the condition has not been discharged until I hear that this is the case.

Yours faithfully,

[Applicant Name]
Covering letter – RCAHMW:

Dear NMRW,

Planning Reference [application number]; [Planning Application Name]; [Planning Authority Name]

Please find enclosed the photographic record created to meet a condition attached to the above planning application. The photographs were taken by [Name] on [Date].

I wish to donate the items to the National Monuments Record of Wales, Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales. The items may be placed within the public archive and be made available or copied to third parties for the purposes of private research and study. Copies of all items may be made available by RCAHMW for non-commercial purposes via the World Wide Web at the absolute discretion of the RCAHMW. I wish to retain copyright and be contacted each time an enquirer wishes to use the item(s) other than for private research.

I look forward to receiving your confirmation of receipt.

Yours faithfully,

[Applicant Name]

Example Photographic record with accompanying plan

Please see associated document.
Example Photographic Record

This document aims to guide applicants in providing a good photographic record and consists principally of advice and commentary. The essential components required by Gwynedd Archaeological Planning Service and the Gwynedd Historic Environment Record (HER) are simply the annotated plan and high quality images.

Context

The building proposed for conversion to a dwelling at Ynysgain Ganol, a Grade II listed farmhouse dating to the early- to mid- 19th century, was an ancillary agricultural building probably contemporary with the farmhouse, and now owned separately. It is clearly shown on the Ordnance Survey 1889 map and as such is considered to be of historic interest. Gwynedd Archaeological Planning Service (GAPS) requested that a photographic record was undertaken in order to create an archive record prior to the conversion to ensure that the information inherent in the building was not lost although the building itself would inevitably be altered as part of the planned works.

The applicant and the photographer have given consent for this use of their record to produce this guidance.

Annotated Architect’s plan showing the location of each photograph supplied

We welcome plans that show all images forming part of the photographic record, even those that are taken from a distance, as image 151 is shown in this plan. We are happy to receive plans that are labelled digitally or by hand.
Photographs labelled with the numbers shown on the plan
Photographic records should include wider context images to show the building in its landscape setting. They should also show the external and internal elevations, interior spaces, and details that define or enhance the character of the building(s) subject to application. The name for each image (or the labelling, if traditional photography has been used) must correspond to the numbers used on the plan. The file names in the Ynysgain Ganol outbuilding photographic record have been displayed in this document to highlight the image number in order to link with those shown on the annotated plan. As long as the link between the two is clear in photographic records supplied to GAPS/Gwynedd HER, the file names are not of critical importance.

This document includes a selection of the 68 images supplied as part of this photographic record. The images were supplied digitally, and the average file size for these high quality jpegs is 9 MB. The date of the images was recorded by the camera. The applicant and photographer have given consent for this record to be placed within the Gwynedd Historic Environment Record collections.