

Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales

National Monuments Record of Wales Collection Policy

1. The Organisation

This Collection Policy governs the archive collections of the National Monuments Record of Wales (NMRW). The NMRW is the public archive of the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales (RCAHMW), which is the investigating body for the historic environment of Wales. It has the lead role in ensuring that Wales' archaeological, built and maritime heritage is authoritatively recorded and understood, and seeks to promote appreciation of this heritage nationally and internationally. Our address and contact details are as follows:

The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales
Crown Building
Plas Crug
Aberystwyth
Ceredigion
SY23 1NJ

Tel: +44(0)1970 621200

Fax: +44(0)1970 627701

nmr.wales@rcahmw.gov.uk

2. Legal Status

The RCAHMW is established under a Royal Warrant, which empowers it, sets out its prime responsibilities, and charges it to:

... provide for the survey and recording of ancient and historical monuments and constructions connected with, or illustrative of, the contemporary culture, civilisation and conditions of the life of the people in Wales from the earliest times (including the ancient and historical monuments and constructions in, on or under, the sea bed within the United Kingdom territorial sea adjacent to Wales) by compiling, maintaining and crating the National Monuments Record of Wales as the basic national record of the archaeological and historical environment.....

Accordingly, this policy sets out our aim, under the Royal Warrant, to:

....maintain and make available a comprehensive record of the archaeological, architectural and historical monuments of Wales (including its territorial waters) from the earliest times to the present day...

3. Scope

Relevance

In order for the NMRW's archive holdings to be relevant to its remit, in relation to content they should:

- *Record archaeological, industrial and maritime sites and landscapes, and architecture within Wales. In terms of period, such sites can date from the earliest time of human occupation in Wales, to the present day.*
- *Be primarily concerned with the fabric, structure, design, development and present condition of such sites, and/or their historical background, interpretation, and legal status.*
- *If not site specific, provide relevant historical and technical background information on such sites in Wales, placing them in a UK-wide or international context and providing comparative information relevant to their study.*
- *Where collections are concerned, the majority of records within a collection must relate directly to Welsh sites, as previously described.*

Categories

- *Archaeological Excavation Archives* – complete records of full archaeological* excavation.
- *Contract Evaluation Archives* – complete records from any form of archaeological or architectural evaluation (e.g. desk top survey, watching brief) carried out by contract archaeologists or other specialists.
- *Publication Archives* – records from the production of published volumes on archaeological or architectural topics.
- *Commercial Archives* – records relevant to architecture or archaeology produced by commercial firms in the course of their work (e.g. architectural practices, civil engineering or industrial companies).

- *General Survey Records* – records from the survey of archaeological or architectural sites, that are not part of full excavation archives or contract archives, (e.g. field notebooks, reports).
- *Academic Records* – records ensuing from purely academic work (e.g. dissertations, doctorates, etc.) on archaeological or architectural topics.
- *Statutory Protection Records* – records produced through the legal protection, care and monitoring of sites (e.g. listed buildings, scheduled ancient monuments).
- *Personal Collections* – collections of archaeological or architectural records created or collected by specialists, both professional and amateur, in the course of their research.
- *Grey Literature* – unpublished reports, often ensuing from contract work, on archaeological or architectural surveys, evaluations, or thematic studies.
- *Specialist Ground Photographs* – photographic records of archaeological sites, monuments and buildings produced for recording purposes.
- *Historic Ground Photographs* – photographs with architectural or archaeological content, produced for various original purposes (e.g. postcards, personal photos).
- *Oblique Aerial Photographs*
- *Vertical Aerial Photographs*
- *Maps* – cartographic records which are not part of our general published map collections, but which constitute unique archive records.
- *Architectural Drawings* - graphic records of buildings, produced either by commercial architects or through architectural recording, reconstruction and interpretation.
- *Archaeological Survey Drawings* – graphic records of archaeological sites and finds, produced in the course of survey, excavation, reconstruction and interpretation.
- *Artworks* – graphic records of relevant buildings, monuments and archaeological sites, produced for artistic or non-specialist reasons.
- *Background Records* – records not necessarily relating to particular sites, but which supply historical or technical background to the subject, including national and international comparative studies, subject based articles, or related historical documents.

- *RCAHMW Historic Records* – records relating to the history of the Royal Commission, its work, development and staff (e.g. selected RCAHMW administrative documents, records of prominent former staff)
- *Sales Particulars*

**The term “archaeological” refers to all types of archaeology, including industrial, maritime, and landscape, throughout.*

The above categories of records may be either hard-copy or digital in format, where the original records are digital we undertake to hold the records in that format, where possible.

Origins

We undertake to collect records produced by RCAHMW, Cadw, and the Welsh Archaeological Trusts. We will also collect records from other public organisations and academic institutions, such as the National Trust, Ordnance Survey and university departments. In addition, we will take records from private and commercial bodies, particularly archaeological contractors and architectural or civil engineering practices. We are also interested in records produced by individual specialists, including archaeologists and architectural historians, and members of the public who have produced records through research or collecting on relevant topics.

Overlaps and Co-operation with Other Bodies

We undertake to liaise with other appropriate national archive bodies within Wales and the UK, including the National Library of Wales (NLW), the Scottish and English National Monuments Records (NMRS and NMRE), and the National Museum Wales (NMW), over the acquisition of records. We will maintain ongoing contact with such organisations to ensure that, where we are offered collections that are more relevant to their remit, they will have first refusal. For example, if we are offered an archive for which the majority of records relate to English sites, the NMRE will be contacted; where a collection is largely made up of material more relevant to Welsh politics, we will consult the NLW. Through discussion and good working relationships with these organisations, we reliably expect to be afforded the same treatment.

Where there are large collections, which can be easily split along geographical lines and include substantial relevant Welsh material, we may agree to divide such collections between ourselves and our sister organisations in Scotland and England.

We also undertake to liaise with local organisations in Wales, such as county record offices and local museums, over the acquisition of records and alert them to collections which may

be more relevant to their holdings, or take archives to which they may direct us. In specific relation to local museums, we will collect archaeological excavation archives where such collections are entirely documentary, but will direct depositors to local museums where the archive includes finds and other artifacts. If such archives include a majority of paper records and few finds, we will liaise with the relevant museum and offer to hold the documentary portion of the collection. Where local museums are unwilling to take such mixed archaeological collections, we will contact NMW.

4. Processes

Methods of Acquisition

The NMRW will respond to offers of, and actively seek, relevant material as gifts, or where necessary purchases. NMRW may draw up acquisition strategies to govern the active acquisition of records. These can ensue from RCAHMW projects on certain geographical areas or site types, or from identifying gaps in our collections, or areas of concern, e.g. Welsh architectural practice records. Such strategies will provide further detail on the types of records to be collected, how they should be sought, and the resources required to deal with them. Likewise, detailed guidelines may be promulgated for the donation of particular record formats or types, particularly in relation to digital records. These may be technically detailed and prescriptive about how certain records and accompanying metadata must be presented to us.

Where practical the NMRW may seek grant aid from bodies such as the Heritage Lottery Fund to purchase major collections, or work in partnership with sister organisations to fund, or bid for funds for the purchase of major collections which can be split amongst partners.

Where possible ongoing agreements will be reached with major regular depositors of material, for instance, a Memorandum of Agreement is in place between the National Archives, Cadw, the Welsh Government and the Royal Commission to cover the transfer of records from Cadw to the NMRW, and the use of similar agreements and programmes by other organisations will be encouraged.

Conditions

All gifts to the NMRW should be accompanied by a completed official transfer of title form. Any conditions attached by the donor will be considered carefully before acceptance, particularly if these affect public access or prevent inclusion of the item on web based public access system Coflein. Loans and deposits may be subject to specific agreed conditions.

Where records are acquired, gift of copyright will be sought or purchased, though retention of copyright by owners will not bar collections from being donated. The NMRW will be guided by the principles of public access, and will endeavour to ensure acquisitions can be made as freely accessible as possible, including via Coflein. We may acquire records that must be embargoed for a reasonable period, but will not hold records that cannot be made accessible to the public within a realistic time frame.

The NMRW aims to comply with the National Archives' (TNA) Standard for Record Repositories (2004) and undertakes to conform to the Public Records Act, seeking guidance from TNA when acquiring public records. The NMRW will not seek to acquire any item or collection unless it is satisfied that it is able to acquire a valid title to the material and it has not been acquired in, or exported from, its country of origin in violation of that country's laws.

De-Accession and Destruction of Records

The collections held in the NMRW are designated for permanent preservation and there is a strong presumption against disposal of any material that has been collected under the terms of the Collection Policy, accessioned and made available to the public. However, the Royal Commission undertakes to review collections and may, in certain circumstances, consider a collection or individual items for de-accessioning. An example of this may be a set of identical mechanical copies of a particular drawing. The Royal Commission will transfer items or a collection to another suitable repository where possible and appropriate. No archive collections or individual records will be offered for sale.

Material will be considered for destruction if it is in such a poor condition that there is no prospect of the original information contained within it being retrieved now or in the foreseeable future. It will be identified as a priority for destruction if it requires isolated storage because of the potential risk to other archival material. Duplicate mechanically copied items, where it is not possible or appropriate to transfer them to other organisations, may also be destroyed.