Guide to Canmore

This document is not intended to be a manual for searching Canmore or to using the resources held by RCAHMS. Rather, it is a guide to understanding and interpreting the information presented within the *results* of Canmore searches.

The database of RCAHMS holds information on over 270,000 archaeological, architectural, industrial and maritime sites in Scotland. It also holds a related catalogue of RCAHMS' archive material (over 900,000 collection records at present, Nov 2008), including photographs, drawings and manuscripts.

The card index of the Archaeology Division of the Ordnance Survey formed the foundation of the current database; its records were transferred to RCAHMS in 1983 and were optically scanned in the late 1980s. Since then, the record has been continually enhanced with data from RCAHMS' own archaeological and architectural survey programmes, as well as by summary accounts of current fieldwork and excavation throughout Scotland published annually by Archaeology Scotland (formerly CSA) in *Discovery and Excavation Scotland*.

The database was made available to the public online in 1998, with the launch of Canmore, a publicly accessible and searchable web version of the RCAHMS database and is updated dynamically.

RCAHMS Database User Guide
Leanne McCafferty 2008

This document will attempt to explain the fields presented by Canmore and the conventions used in recording data within the RCAHMS database. Canmore is a web version of the Oracle database used by RCAHMS staff.

Site and Locational Information

The first information that a user will encounter on a site is a summary of locational information. This reflects the core information recorded on a site in the RCAHMS database:

On the Oracle site entry page there are a number of fields that will be revised in the near future, but the basic data available on Canmore will remain relatively stable. The recording of Parish, Council, Former Region, Former District and Former County reflects the range of ways in which information has been collected since RCAHMS' inception in 1908.

To the right of the locational information is a brief listing of RCAHMS' holdings on that site. See below for further information. A slideshow of thumbnail digital images, where available, will appear below these two columns.

A search in Canmore may result in site records with no attached notes, references or collections. These records have often been made within the database to hold a link to a Historic Scotland listed buildings record, which is visible to RCAHMS staff but not on Canmore.

Some collections items may be catalogued with no accompanying text. In most cases, these are archaeological sites recorded through aerial photography (RCAHMSAP).

Summary/Mediated text

Below the basic summary data the next text to appear, where available, is any summary or mediated text written about a site. This text is designed to be user-friendly and jargon-free, presenting a site description that is accessible to all Canmore users.

When written by RCAHMS staff (indicated by 'Information from RCAHMS (initials) Date', this text should have been through an internal editing process and can be considered authoritative at the date of publication.

Other sources of summary text include short descriptions from the RIAS *Illustrated Architectural Guides* series, input with agreement from the publishers. When this data has not been written by RCAHMS, it should be clearly attributed to the authors. Other forms of summary text are recorded as 'publication events' and include captions written for RCAHMS exhibitions and books. Again, authorship by RCAHMS should be clearly labelled.

Archaeology and Architecture Notes

The archaeology notes fields were first populated through the optical scanning, undertaken in the late 1980s, of the OS card indexes and RCAHMS card indexes. The first information listed is mapsheet, grid reference and related sites. Cross-references to other site records may also be listed. Architecture files were catalogued in a large-scale project that ran from 1996-2005.

The earliest information on a site is listed first, with each subsequent piece of information below. **Text in these fields does not automatically mean that RCAHMS staff have visited and recorded a site or that the text has been edited within RCAHMS.** Text in the Archaeology notes fields tend towards more formal descriptions of sites, sometimes edited before publication (see below). The Architectural notes are less structured, including references to documents in other archives, for example. This reflects the way in which the RCAHMS database has been formed by a bringing together of data originating not just within RCAHMS, but from the Ordnance Survey, the Scottish National Buildings Record (the body responsible for the NMRS until 1966) and the Scottish Industrial Archaeology Survey. For more information, see the 'Our History' section on the RCAHMS website: http://www.rcahms.gov.uk/our-history.html

There are a number of conventions used by RCAHMS staff in recording the sources of information. These will form the last sentence of a piece of text. The most common are listed below:

Visited by RCAHMS (Initials) Date	• A site has been visited by RCAHMS field investigators and the text has been through an internal editing process. • May also include the terms 'surveyed' or 'plotted', indicating the type of recording undertaken.
Visited by OS (Initials) Date	• A site was visited by staff from the Ordnance Survey Archaeology Division. • OS record cards form the core of the archaeological component of the RCAHMS database. Staff and records from the OS Archaeology division were transferred to RCAHMS in 1983.
Information from RCAHMS (Initials) Date	• This refers to information collated and/or interpreted by RCAHMS staff while desk-based, rather than data gathered in the field. • This information should follow RCAHMS writing conventions, but has not always been through the internal editing process.
As described above	• This refers to the entry immediately preceeding. It is a reflection of the card-index system previously used and will usually reflect two visits to a site, so a comparison can be drawn.
Information from OASIS	• This summary text has been submitted to RCAHMS via the OASIS reporting form. Designed to streamline reporting of developer-funded archaeological fieldwork to the Scottish SMRs/HERs and RCAHMS, OASIS is a partnership between the public and private sectors.
Salmond 1938, 152-2; Taylor 1976, 80-81	• Text of this kind follows a summary of two bibliographic references, usually written by RCAHMS staff. • The short Harvard-style referencing at the end of the paragraph should in almost every case be supplemented by bibliographic recording in the 'Books and References' listing on Canmore.
A full report has been lodged with RCAHMS. Sponsor: Cala Homes Ltd. M Middleton 1999	• This follows summary text entered as a result of developer funded archaeological work, often through *Discovery and Excavation in Scotland*. • The name of the archaeologist should refer to a bibliographic reference.

Always check both archaeology and architecture notes. The archaeology notes field was built first so may contain relevant architectural data.

The scanning of record cards accounts for the occasional references in the notes fields to 'see above' or 'see attached' – where a Ministry of Works Guidebook, for example, would have been stapled to the record card.

Events Recording

In 2008, RCAHMS implemented an Events table within the database.

> The concept of 'event' type data is a way of recording the constructional history of a building or the investigative history of an archaeological site. These are 'events' in the history or life cycle of a monument, for example, it can be used as a structured way of recording the excavation history of a site, with each season individually recorded. RCAHMS has adapted the idea of event recording to encompass other aspects of our data such as documentary evidence, and historical associations. It must be remembered, however, that this data does not exist for most of the records in the database.
>
> RCAHMS Events User Guide
> Leanne McCafferty 2008

When a site record has an event recorded, it will appear on the listing with collection items:

The events listing can be expanded to see what events have been recorded against a site. Most common will be summary records – the concise descriptions of a site mentioned above – and descriptions of archaeological fieldwork. It is anticipated that recording against events will gradually replace the insertion of text in the notes fields; ensuring information is recorded in a more structured way than has previously been possible.

Collections Recording

The RCAHMS database pulls together the significant functions of managing information about places with information on the extensive collections held by the organisation. As is the case with site information, collections have come into RCAHMS from many sources - in addition to the survey material produced in-house since 1908.

Collections held on a particular site will be linked to the site record, and the basic listings can be expanded to provide more details. In many cases, there will be no Archaeology or Architecture notes; the information RCAHMS holds on that particular place will be held within the archive item. Varying levels of detail within the description of a collection item reflect when an item was catalogued and whether it was catalogued as part of a specific cataloguing project.

Most of the information held on collections is self-explanatory, but it should be noted that a bibliographic listing does not guarantee the book is held in the RCAHMS library. If a book is within the collection, 'Held at RCAHMS' and the shelf number will be listed. Most journals listed will be held, although there are incomplete runs of some.

User-generated Comments

In August 2009, RCAHMS launched a facility allowing user-generated comments and images to be added to site and collection records within Canmore. Text and images added by users are clearly distinguishable from material generated through 'traditional' means. Registered users can also choose to customise their own view of Canmore, so can switch off the user-generated material.