

Maps for Family and Local History

National Library of Scotland - Map Collection

The National Library of Scotland has the right to claim a copy of everything published in the UK. The map collection holds over 2 million items.

- The Library has a particular interest in maps of Scotland, but our collection includes detailed mapping of the rest of United Kingdom, and world mapping, star charts, and even maps of imaginary places.
- Printed maps from the 1500s onwards
- Detailed, large scale Ordnance Survey maps for the whole of Britain, from the 1800s to the present
- Wide range of types of mapping – from sea charts to geological maps, estate plans to road networks, railways to battle plans.
- Over 250,000 historical maps now available to view on Library website <https://maps.nls.uk>

Ordnance Survey 6-inch to the mile Maps

- Maps at the scale of 1:10,560 <https://maps.nls.uk/os/6inch/>
- Series covers all of Scotland, and published by County.
- First edition surveyed 1840s – 1880s.
- Second edition re-surveyed 1890s-1900s, then revisions for areas with greatest change until the 1940s.
- These maps detail: street layout, roads, paths, walls, railways, contours to show heights, tree cover, significant buildings are named, e.g. Post Offices, banks, schools etc.
- After Second World War, replaced by 1:10,000 National Grid mapping.
- National Library of Scotland also holds 6-inch mapping for England, Wales and Ireland

Ordnance Survey 25-inch to the mile Maps

- Maps at the scale of 1:2,500. <https://maps.nls.uk/os/25inch/>
- Similar publication dates to 6-inch maps, and again published by County.
- First 6 Scottish counties surveyed were only mapped at 6-inch scale for first edition:
 - Wigtownshire,
 - Kirkcudbrightshire,
 - Edinburghshire,
 - Haddingtonshire,
 - Fife
 - Isle of Lewis.
- 25-inch mapping only exists for cultivated areas of Scotland (not moors, rocky coasts).
- More detailed than 6-inch, and details all individual buildings, and often includes more information on house names, and information on prominent businesses such as banks, Post Offices etc.
- After the Second World War these were replaced by 1:2,500 and 1:1,250 National Grid mapping.
- The National Library of Scotland also holds 25-inch mapping for England and Wales, but not for Ireland.
- No house numbers on 25-inch maps, but these were added to the National Grid 1:2,500 and 1:1250 series.

Ordnance Survey Town Plans

- Very detailed mapping of 62 Scottish towns. <https://maps.nls.uk/townplans/>
- Published 1847 – 1895.
- Some towns have two editions (3 for Dundee and Edinburgh).
- Coloured and uncoloured editions were published.
- Very detailed, including information such as garden layouts, the position of street lamps, names of wynds and closes, or the capacity of churches and theatres.
- The Library also holds these plans for towns in England and Wales.

Earlier Town Plans of Scotland

<https://maps.nls.uk/towns/>

- **Wood Plans**
John Wood published 50 plans of Scottish towns between 1818 and 1826. For the smaller towns, these often include names of property owners.
- **County Maps**
County maps published from the 1500s to 1800s might include a small plan of the County town in one corner.
- **Slezer's Views**
John Slezer created detailed engravings of Scottish views, published in Theatrum Scotiae in 1693. This includes views of several Scottish towns, as well as Castles, Abbeys etc.
- **Scottish cities**
There is a sequence of detailed plans of Edinburgh from the 16th century onwards, as well as plans for other Scottish cities.
- **Goad Plans**
Fire insurance plans by Charles Goad were published from the 1890s onwards. These provide fascinating detail of how buildings were being used – residential, retail, industrial etc, as well as naming the companies occupying them.

County Maps of Scotland

<https://maps.nls.uk/counties/>

- **1700s – 1850s**
For rural areas, County maps are usually best source of information in the centuries before Ordnance Survey mapping.
- **Blaeu Atlas of Scotland**
In 1654 the first Atlas of Scotland was published in the Netherlands by Joan Blaeu. Includes the first maps of Scottish counties. Many names appear on a map for the first time.
- **Timothy Pont**
The Blaeu Atlas was based on the survey work of Timothy Pont, a Scottish minister, who in the 1580s and 1590s carried out the first detailed survey of Scotland. His manuscripts are one of the treasures of the National Library of Scotland.

Military Maps of Scotland

<https://maps.nls.uk/military/>

- **18th Century Scotland**

During the 18th century, the Board of Ordnance made numerous maps and plans for the use of government troops. They provide valuable information about 18th century Scotland.

- **Types of Plans**

- Road Maps
- Town Plans
- Plan of fortifications and barracks
- Battle plans
- Maps showing clan leaders who were involved in 1715 rebellion

- **Roy's Military Survey of Scotland, 1747 - 1755**

Detailed survey of mainland Scotland, which survives as water-colour manuscripts in the British Library.

Estate Plans

<https://maps.nls.uk/estates/>

Estate plans are maps commissioned by land owners or as part of a possible sale of land. They can be a great source of detailed mapping – but can also vary greatly, and be difficult to track down.

- They can be beautifully detailed engraved maps, or scrappy back of the envelope scribbles.
- They often relate to possible improvements – which may or may not have ever been made.
- They may be held on the estate, with other estate papers. Or they may be in local archives, in the National Records of Scotland or the National Archives at Kew, or in private hands. We have a small number in the National Library of Scotland.
- Often indexed by parish, so helpful to know the parish name before you start your search.
- They may have been annotated

Sea Charts

<https://maps.nls.uk/coasts/>

For Scottish Islands, and locations on the coast, charts can be a great source of information.

- **Board of Admiralty**

From 1795, the Board of Admiralty mapped the coasts around Scotland – often regularly updating charts for busy estuaries and harbours.

- **Murdoch Mackenzie**

In the 18th century, Murdoch Mackenzie charted the West coast of Scotland, and the Orkney Islands with much greater accuracy than before.

Maps Website - <https://maps.nls.uk>

Explore over 250,000 historic maps on the Map Images Website. You can browse by category or search for maps for a specific place using our MapFinder <https://maps.nls.uk/geo/find/> or Georeferenced Map <https://maps.nls.uk/geo/explore/> Viewers.

Explore our help pages for tips and advice on finding and comparing historic maps. <https://maps.nls.uk/guide/>