Historic Environment Record

Guide to the HER's reference collections

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Introduction

The Durham County Council (DCC) Historic Environment Record (HER) holds a number of hard copy reference collections which are described in this document.

These reference collections are often the Sources for the digital HER data. The collections often contain more detail than the digital HER records they have been used to create. This is because the digital records are usually a synthesis and summary of the hard copy information, in most cases.

Not all these Collections have been fully accessioned into the digital HER, so to be sure no information is missed, HER Inquirers are encouraged to visit the offices to check the relevant files.

As HER enhancement carries on, the aim is to produce a more comprehensive digital index to the files ie to indicate where additional information exists in hard copy, with actual incorporation of data being a later phase.

It is likely that within the various collections a certain amount of unique material is held, and some collections are known to be largely unique material (eg the IRIS collection).

Parish files

These are stored in archival standard boxes. The files are currently organised by former District, and then Parish, in alphabetical order. The material in these files is a miscellany of research reports, newspaper articles, local histories, letters, photographs etc. Much of this information has been linked to records in the HER, even if the files have not been fully trawled for all relevant data.

Supplementary Files

This heading covers files of a more thematic nature within the HER collections. These can be period themes, or other themes such as Roman Roads, or Defensive structures.

Grey Literature Files

This is a collection of box files which hold all the Development Management Grey Literature reports. They are organised by year. These should all have been input into the HER as Events and Sources, and, increasingly, Heritage Features.

IRIS records (Index Record for Industrial Sites)

This collection represents the work of Don Wilcock who recorded the industrial remains of County Durham. Some of these records have been input into the digital HER, but not all. This is known to be a unique collection. The files mainly consist of standardised record forms, maps and some associated files of other material, and is organised by Ordnance Survey (OS) Quarter sheet.

Monuments Protection Program (MPP) files

This is a collection of material relating to the Monuments Protection Programme which has been deposited with the HER. It includes site note books, maps, and other assorted material. This archive has not been fully assessed for its usefulness to the HER, but it is anticipated that a certain amount of it will either add information to known sites or reveal new sites. None of this material appears to have been indexed, and although it is ordered, it is not very user friendly.

Scheduled Monument (SM) Files

These are files relating to Scheduled Monuments in the HER area. The files contain a limited amount of additional information for each Scheduled Monument, which varies from very old maps to more recent MPP standard maps and text descriptions. None of this material has been indexed, however, it is ordered and relatively easy to find relevant information if the Scheduled Monument Number is known.

Aerial Photographs (AP's)

The collection of Aerial Photographs held by DCC needs significant work on it before it is fully and usefully indexed. The AP's are stored in archival standard sleeves within archive boxes, which are organised by OS quarter sheet. Some of them are linked to HER records, but not all.

Photos and Slides

This collection is another miscellany of site photos, images used for talks or presentations and miscellaneous other shots. The collection is stored in archival quality materials, but it is not very user friendly, and is largely un-indexed.

Miscellaneous HER files,

This heading is used to refer to the large amount of material which has not been indexed, or covered by one of the other categories. It includes Maritime information, Defence of Britain information, various files obtained as a result of the authority going Unitary (eg files from the former City of Durham district offices, and also from clearing out old office space at Bowes Museum), miscellaneous records relating to different types of buildings, a collection of information relating to Nevilles Cross; and a number of files relating to the work of the Bishop Auckland Archaeological Research Committee. Much of this data has not been checked for its usefulness, and is not organised for easy checking.

Journals

The HER has a significant collection of Journals, both Local and National. It is known that not all the issues have material in them of direct relevance to the Durham HER. The journals are not full runs but partial and inconsistent collections in most cases. A list of coverage is available on request – though this is not a completely up to date list.

Books

The HER has a library of monographs, books, guidebooks and pamphlets relating to the history, archaeology and historic environment of County Durham and Darlington. This incorporates volumes which were formerly part of the Local Studies library. A list of coverage is available on request – though this is not a completely up to date list.

HER map base (hard copy)

A collection of maps were recovered from the Bowes Museum, in the offices formerly occupied by the Archaeology Section. Their coverage of the HER area is not complete, and the information on them has not been assessed for its accuracy or veracity, but they do have additional information to support the HER in places. A GIS coverage allows users to identify if any coverage is held for a particular OS quarter sheet.

Ordnance Survey (OS) Cards

The HER was originally based on the OS archaeology Section cards. The HER still has copies of these up to a certain date, and these have often been added to with locally produced cards. The Cards are organised by OS quarter sheet. Where the card is from the OS collection, the text of them is available via the Pastscape web pages. However, the local notes are unique (and of varying quality), and in some cases the OS cards have illustrations not available online.

Digital Collections

The HER has access to certain digital data sets which it cannot give out as part of an HER Search due to License restrictions. These coverages are available to access and view at the HER Offices during a GIS search of the HER. They include:
- LIDAR data for selected areas of the County
- Data from the Mills society relating to Wind and Water Mills
- Historic Mapping
- Aerial Photographic coverage

The HER also has copies of digital data which are also available from other sources and therefore not included in HER search data provision. These include:
- National Monuments Record data
- Excavation Index data
- Data from the Wessex Paleo and Meso Lithic project
- Portable Antiquities Scheme,

In all cases, the HERO will try and let inquirers know if any of the above datasets are present in their search area, except for the County wide coverages, which it is assumed Users will be aware of through the information in this guide.