

NCAP DIGITISATION POLICY

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to outline the National Collection of Aerial Photography (NCAP) digitisation policy, to document which aerial imagery and associated records are scheduled for digitisation and the reasons for its selection.

NCAP is the official repository for UK Government declassified and released aerial imagery of Scotland and the World (except England, Wales and Northern Ireland). Digital technology has enabled NCAP to employ innovative ways of providing access to its collections and to assist Historic Environment Scotland (HES) in meeting three of its Strategic Priorities, as set out in the Scottish Government document *Our Place in Time, the Historic Environment Strategy for Scotland* (2014):

A. Strategic Priorities: to encourage high-quality collaborative working at all levels and facilitate the creation of partnerships to achieve outcomes that enhance the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of Scotland.

We will achieve this by:

Increasing the range of imagery that can be sold to existing NCAP customers

Growing non-government income through the sale of products and services

Raising the profile of Scotland whilst ensuring that as many people as possible benefit from, and are inspired by, our shared cultural and historic wealth.

B. Investigate and Record: to investigate and record our historic environment to continually develop our knowledge, understanding and interpretation of our past and how best to conserve, sustain and present it.

We will achieve this by:

Ensuring that the internationally important collections of historical aerial photography are pro-actively managed in a way that maximises public good and their long-term sustainability

Developing our aerial photography collections, one of the largest and most significant archives of its type in the world, so that they can be used and enjoyed by an increasing number of people

C. Care and Protect: to care for and protect the historic environment in order to both enjoy and benefit from it and to conserve and enhance it for the benefit of future generations.

We will achieve this by:

Using digital technology to capture data, to maximise public access, and to ensure long-term preservation of digital archives

Broadening access to historic environment information and increasing our capacity to deliver data to people's homes, offices and schools worldwide

Increasing the quality and quantity of information and images available online

1. Why we digitise

Digitisation is an integral part of NCAP activities. By digitising archive aerial imagery and associated finding aids, NCAP aims to:

- Enable people around the world to access archive aerial imagery and associated documents, and to use and publish them, with an appropriate licence, without having to visit the search room
- Preserve rare and fragile photographs and documents, while also improving access to these by providing digital surrogates of the items for use by the public, thereby reducing physical handling of vulnerable original records
- Build a critical mass of digital content to support research in a variety of fields as well as the HES education, publishing and exhibition programs
- Engage with new audiences by making NCAP imagery available in the online environment for use by different communities and new technologies
- Service commercial and private orders for copies of imagery not already digitised or at higher resolutions than available on the NCAP website

2. How we digitise

2.1 Considerations when digitising

The following considerations are made when records are digitised at NCAP:

- Digitisation of records is undertaken in-house by trained NCAP staff.
- NCAP employs national and international standards and practices for digital capture, metadata, storage, preservation and access.
- Digital master images are created by digitisation of rolled photographic films, photographic prints and documents from the NCAP archives. NCAP is committed to managing the master images for long term access.
- Digital master images are created to a resolution appropriate to the item and the type of use it is likely to attract. Quality assurance is undertaken routinely to ensure adherence to NCAP standards.
- Digital master images are not digitally manipulated or enhanced.
- Records are digitised once only and the digital copy images can be licensed for reuse. Where lower quality master images exist, created using early digitisation practices and standards, the original images are re-digitised to the current standard when requested by an internal or external customer.
- When partial digitisation of a record group (such as a roll of film or box of prints) is required, NCAP prefers to digitise the roll or box in its entirety. For practical reasons this is not always possible. The decision to digitize whole films or boxes is made by staff, taking into account significance, fragility, ease of cataloguing, and available resources.
- Collection Level Descriptions and metadata are created using established international bibliographic standards and standard protocols.
- Digitisation takes account of UK copyright law and other relevant legislation and protocols.
- The digitisation of records does not diminish NCAP's commitment to the preservation and care of these records. Digital surrogates assist in the preservation process by reducing the need for repeat handling of the original records, which are maintained in appropriate preservation conditions.

2.2 Care and handling of records

Digitisation activities undertaken by NCAP take into account the preservation requirements of the original records. Digitisation procedures ensure that material is not damaged during the digital capture process. NCAP staff are trained in the care and handling of records. Digital capture is undertaken using equipment appropriate to the format of material being digitised. This may be a copy-stand, flatbed scanner or photogrammetric scanner.

NCAP aims to digitise records in the best possible physical condition. Therefore, a preservation assessment and any remedial treatment of records is undertaken prior to digitisation whenever possible.

3. What we digitise

3.1 Records selected for routine digitisation

NCAP routinely digitises records selected by collection managers. The following selection criteria are applied:

- historical and/or cultural significance of the record
- uniqueness and/or rarity of the record
- level of demand for the record
- existence of good quality finding aids
- potential to generate income through online image sales
- out of copyright status or permission to digitise obtained
- restricted access to the record due to its condition, value, vulnerability or location

3.2 Records in a fragile state

NCAP records may be selected for digitisation to reduce the risks associated with physical handling of fragile or valuable material, or where there is a high risk that the original would deteriorate. NCAP may also digitise material unable to be kept in its original format or at high risk of not being able to be accessed into the future.

3.3 Records used in public outreach programs

NCAP records are digitised to support HES activities, such as exhibitions, publications, and educational activities. Digitisation for these purposes is carried out when capacity allows and enables the archive to engage new user communities and target a range of audiences.

3.4 Records demanded by commercial customers

NCAP records are digitised to order by commercial customers. Due to the requirement for the archive to generate a commercial income to offset its costs, digitisation for orders is prioritised over all other digitisation work and is carried out within 15 working days from receipt of the order. Material ordered for digitisation is processed in the same way as all other items, however, and is handled in accordance with the standards outlined at paragraph 2.2, above.

4. Access to digitised records

NCAP provides access to digital copies of records items but does not generally interpret them. Instead, the digital copies are made available for others to use as required. The use and reproduction of items from NCAP archives incorporates a requirement that the user attributes the work, acknowledges NCAP as the source, and complies with any copyright or other licence restrictions.

4.1 Online galleries and search room service

NCAP's digitised imagery and finding aids can be searched and accessed through the NCAP website: <http://ncap.org.uk>

Access to original prints (Scotland) and surrogate microfilms (ACIU) is provided through the GIS catalogues in the search room. It is intended that when surrogate digital copying of Scottish prints has been completed, visitors will be able to access digital images and the original prints will then be withdrawn from the search room.

4.2 Sustainability of digital archive

Digital images are stored initially in uncompressed TIFF format on a department RAID system before being copied to data tape, logged in a database and stored in a Fireproof Safe. No copy is currently held off-site. Since it is more efficient to digitise whole record groups in their entirety, and for data protection reasons, digital images created for customer orders are deleted after 3 months.