

Greater London Historic Environment Record

Information and Recording Policy



Historic England

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1. Geographic area covered by the Greater London Historic Environment Record (GLHER)

The GLHER covers the 33 Greater London boroughs which make up the historic county of Middlesex and parts of the historic extents of Essex, Kent and Surrey. The GLHER is hosted by Historic England rather than an individual local authority, or by the Greater London Authority.

2. Data exchange with neighbouring records

Historic Environment Record Information from a buffer zone (500m) can be provided to neighbouring authorities every 12 months as GIS shapefiles.

In addition, the new online GLHER Arches system went live in September 2024, and access accounts offered to the surrounding HERs:

- Buckinghamshire
- East Berkshire
- Essex
- Hertfordshire
- Kent
- Surrey

3. Subject coverage

The table below provides information regarding the resources available from the HER and the form in which they can be accessed. Please note that the HER is not itself an archive repository for primary site records deriving from excavations or surveys undertaken for commercial or research purposes. This material should be deposited in the relevant record office or museum to ensure its long-term conservation and access by all. (See the HER Disposals Policy for further details)

HER Content and Availability:

Resource Type	Database	Original Source material	GIS
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Monuments Records (Prehistoric/Historic Sites & Monuments)• Area Records (Prehistoric/Historic Sites & Monuments)	Yes	Partial	Yes

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Historic Aircraft (Historic Sites & Monuments) • Maritime Vessels (Prehistoric/Historic Sites & Monuments) 			
Activity Records (Archaeological Investigations, excavations etc)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Research and fieldwork reports, including 'grey literature' reports	Yes	Yes	Yes
Aerial Photographs	No	Partial	No
Local archaeological journals	N/A	Yes	N/A
World Heritage Sites	Yes	No	Yes
Scheduled Monuments	Yes	No	Yes
Listed Buildings	Yes	No	Yes
Battlefield Register	Yes	No	Yes
Historic Parks and Gardens Register	Yes	No	Yes
Conservation Areas	Partial	No	Partial
Conservation Area Appraisals	Partial	No	Partial
Locally Listed Heritage Assets	Partial	No	Partial
Protected Hedgerows	No	No	No
Protected Wrecks	N/A	N/A	N/A
Tree Preservation Orders	No	No	No
Artefacts	Yes	Partial	Yes
Portable Antiquities Scheme finds	Partial	No	Partial
Historic Landscape Characterisation	Partial	No	Partial
Historic Seascape Characterisation	N/A	N/A	N/A
Extensive Urban Surveys	No	No	No
Urban Archaeological Database	Partial	Partial	Partial
NMP	No	No	No
Historic Area Assessment	No	No	No
Atlas of Rural Settlement in England	No	No	No
Other material relating to the results of professional and private research as and when accessioned	Yes	No	Yes

The subject coverage of the record corresponds to the recommendations outlined in:

English Heritage/Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers (2002) *Historic Environment Records: Benchmarks for Good Practice (v1.1)*, 2.1b, p6, Historic England (2019) *A Guide to Historic Environment Records (HERs) in England* and

Department of Culture Media and Sport (2008) *Historic Environment Records (HERs): Draft guidance for local authorities in England*, 24, p9

These state (respectively) that: “Coverage should aim to be inclusive of subject and period for all archaeology and aspects of the historic environment” and that “There should be no temporal limits on the information recorded in an HER: it should include data relating to all periods, from the earliest human activity to the present day”.

It should be noted, however, that there is a tremendous disparity in the volume of evidence across the range of prehistoric and historic periods with which the record deals. Consequently, this has often necessitated a variety of approaches to recording and a correspondingly varying level in the detail made available within the record.

Similarly, it should be remembered that an HER can never be a definitive record, and the scope of the information that it contains will vary according to the area covered, the extent of the archaeological research undertaken, and the character of the local historic environment (Institute for Archaeologists, 2012, *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Advice by Historic Environment Services*, 6.4, p7).

3.1 Heritage Assets

The term ‘Heritage Asset’ traditionally encompasses, in the main, physical remains such as sites, monuments, buildings, maritime craft and artefacts, spanning landscape-scale areas at one end of the scale to individual artefacts or ecofacts at the other (*MIDAS Heritage*, 2007, p22). More recently, however, this definition has been extended to include aspects of the intangible heritage relating, for example, to “places perceived as a source of local identity, distinctiveness, social interaction and coherence” (*EH Good Practice Guide for Local Heritage Listing*, 2012, Table 1 p16).

(The UNESCO Convention on Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003) defines “*intangible cultural heritage*” as “*the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage*”. It should be noted, however, that the UK is not presently a signatory to this convention).

Decisions regarding the suitability of a heritage asset (or category of heritage asset) for inclusion within the HER record are based on guidance provided by the following sources:

Good Practice Guide for Local Heritage Listing (English Heritage, 2012, section 2, pp 14-16)

Historic Environment Records (HERs): Draft guidance for local authorities in England (Department of Culture Media and Sport, 2008, subsection 3.2, item 28, pp9-10)

Informing the Future of the Past (Gilman, P & Newman, M (eds), 2007, [subsection C.4](#))

Standard and Guidance for archaeological advice by historic environment services (Institute for Archaeologists, 2012, subsections 6.4-7, p7)

In practical terms the heritage asset proposed for inclusion should be capable of being recorded in such a way as to satisfy the criteria set out in the UK Historic Environment Data Standard: *MIDAS Heritage* (Forum for Information Standards in Heritage (FISH), 2007, subsection 4.1, pp29-42).

3.2 Events (Activities)

The term ‘event’, or ‘activity’ in the GLHER, as it is used in the context of the Historic Environment Record constitutes “*A single episode of primary data collection over a discrete area of land. This...can only consist of one investigative technique and is a unique entity in time and space*” (Bourn, R, 1999, SMR News 8, pp3-7).

In recording terms this means that the HER aspires to include the full range of surveys, investigations of standing buildings, excavations, core sample collection and other fieldwork (whether on archaeological sites or on standing buildings) undertaken within its geographical remit (*MIDAS Heritage*, 2007, p45). [However, for practical reasons the GLHER also records as events a number of activities which do not fall under the umbrella of the above definition: Desk Based Assessments, Environmental Impact Assessments and Historic Area Assessments].

Decisions regarding the suitability of an event (or category of event) for inclusion within the HER record are based on guidance provided by the following sources:

Historic Environment Records (HERs): Draft guidance for local authorities in England (Department of Culture Media and Sport, 2008, subsection 3.2, item 28, p10)

Informing the Future of the Past (Gilman, P & Newman, M (eds), 2007, [subsection C.6](#))

Standard and Guidance for archaeological advice by historic environment services (Institute for Archaeologists, 2012, subsections 6.5-6, p7)

In practical terms the event proposed for inclusion should be capable of being recorded in such a way as to satisfy the criteria set out in the UK Historic Environment Data Standard:

MIDAS Heritage (Forum for Information Standards in Heritage (FISH), 2007, subsection 4.2, pp45-47)

3.3 Sources (Bibliographic and Archive)

The term 'sources' covers various materials that provide information about the heritage assets and events in a locality. They include: documentary archives, maps, plans, antiquarian books, photographs, drawings, aerial photography interpretation plots, publications, reports, journal articles, digital data and geophysical survey data ([Informing the Future of the Past C.8](#)).

Details regarding the framework used in identifying sources to be integrated into the HER, assessing their relevance and how they should be recorded and made available are outlined in section 3 below.

In the GLHER database, Sources are divided into: Bibliographic Source and Archive Source.

3.4 Research Frameworks

A Research Framework for London Archaeology was produced by the Museum of London in 2002 and stated three aims: to realise the potential of the London Archaeological Archive and Research Centre; to manage the archaeological resource more effectively; and to facilitate better focused archaeological research. The GLHER (then the Greater London Sites and Monuments Record) is stated in the document as being regarded as "the top level of enquiry" on previous archaeological research (Nixon T et al, 2002: 14).

3.5 Other sources of information about the historic environment

The size and structure of Greater London means that there are many other organisations which hold information about the historic environment of London that complements the holdings of the GLHER:

- [London Metropolitan Archives](#)
- [Guildhall Library](#) (principally covering the City of London, but also holding information on the Greater London area)
- [Bishopsgate Institute](#) (social history within Greater London)
- Local studies libraries within the London Boroughs.
- Local archaeology/history society libraries within the London Boroughs. A full list can be found on the London and Middlesex Archaeology Society website: <http://www.lamas.org.uk/>
- [Layers of London](#)
- National Heritage List for England. Information in the GLHER regarding nationally designated heritage assets (including: Listed Buildings, Scheduled Monuments, Registered Parks and Gardens, Registered Battlefields and World

- Heritage Sites is regularly updated using data drawn from the [National Heritage List for England](#) (NHLE) (maintained by Historic England).
- OASIS. The GLHER is a participant in the [Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations](#) (OASIS) scheme. The overall aim of the OASIS project is to provide an online index to the mass of archaeological 'grey literature' (reports which are either unpublished or which achieve only limited circulation).
 - Portable Antiquities Scheme. The [Portable Antiquities Scheme](#) is a DCMS funded project to encourage the voluntary recording of archaeological objects found by members of the public in England and Wales.

3.6. Principal organisations from which the GLHER collects information

Many archaeological units work within Greater London and contribute reports to the GLHER, among which are: Museum of London Archaeology, Pre-Construct Archaeology, RPS Group, and L-P Archaeology.

There are also number of local archaeology or history societies within Greater London which produce material which contributes to the GLHER. For example, Enfield Archaeological Society, Hendon and District Archaeological Society and Bexley Archaeological Group.

A major source of information for maritime London was provided in the late 1990s by the Thames Archaeological Survey. New survey work is currently carried out by the [Thames Discovery Programme](#).

4. Acquisitions Policy

The GLHER has a requirement that unpublished excavation and research reports are provided by commercial units in digital format, pdf, only. These digital files are then proceeded and added to the GLHER.

Paper copies may be accepted from contributing organisations where necessary. Individual, or small numbers of reports can be scanned by the GLHER, but larger contributions would need to be through an external contractor, and would require discussions with the contributing organisation on how best to facilitate this.

Supporting archive material is added to the GLHER where it conforms to the archive categories stated below (see section 8). Archive material is initially catalogued on the GLHER database, and then attached to any relevant Monument or Activity Records.

5. Categories of archive held by the GLHER

- Unpublished excavation and research reports produced by archaeological units, academic work, or local heritage group work.
- Publications by archaeological units working within Greater London, particularly the Museum of London, which supplement excavation reports already held by the GLHER.
- A limited library of books relating particularly to the archaeology of Greater London.
- A more complete collection of books, journals, articles and pamphlets relating to the historic environment of London is held by the [Historic England Archive](#) in Swindon.

6. Databases and information systems maintained by the GLHER

The GLHER data is held in an online system ([GLHER](#)) based on the open-source software platform for Cultural Heritage Management, [Arches](#), developed jointly by the Getty Conservation Institute and the World Monuments Fund, and used by heritage organisations around the world.

The development of the GLHER system has been part of a collaborative effort between the Getty Conservation Institute, Historic England, and the City of Lincoln Council to develop a new heritage management system for use in the UK: Arches for HERs, and the GLHER will be updating to this newer version shortly.

7. Digital resources held on the corporate intranet

The GLHER has access to the National Monuments Record Library online catalogue. Other library resources available also, such as bibliographic databases and selected online journals. The GLHER also has access to JSTOR through the Heritage England corporate intranet.

8. Statement on intellectual property rights

The GLHER holds an extensive digital library of grey literature which is accessible to commercial archaeological units and the general public. The copyright holders' intellectual property rights are respected. The GLHER will allow up to a chapter of a report to be reproduced, in accordance with copyright law. However, if the copyright holder gives their permission, an entire report can be copied.