



## Archaeology Detectives – F. Sketching Your Site

### Activity plan

This activity has two parts, one classroom based and another outside activity.

#### Learning Intention

To be able to observe, interpret and depict the site you are investigating with a basic field sketch, in plan, elevation or topographic view.

This lesson will introduce / reinforce observation, interpretation and sketching skills to help you create an outline sketch of an historic place. The group will have the opportunity to discuss what detail they might want to capture in order to understand how a building or site was built and used.

#### Curriculum Links

Through observing and recording from my experiences across the curriculum, I can create images and objects which show my awareness and recognition of detail.  
**EXA 2-04a**

#### Heritage Hero Award

Investigate Activity  
Engage Activity

#### Resource List

- ◆ Digital / paper copies of field sketches to review (examples in **Learning Resource F**).
- ◆ Starter activity (in **Learning Resource F**)
- ◆ Set of guidelines to consider in making a field sketch (in **Learning Resource F**)
- ◆ Paper, pencils, erasers, pencil sharpeners, clipboards (for drawing a sketch on a site visit).

#### Research needed before session

Allow **30 minutes** for preparation time.

There are 3 items to review before this session.

##### 1. Review the example sketches in the learner resource, and online

Sample field sketches have been provided in the Learning Resource to help illustrate the guidelines provided. Many other examples of field sketches are available to view and download on **Canmore** and **SCRAN** (find these on our [links page](#)) - you might find something more relevant to your site.

##### 2. Review the differences between a plan, an elevation and a topographical view.

A **plan** view provides a bird's eye view of a site. It can be useful to draw a plan of unroofed, ruined buildings, the footings of archaeological remains, or earthworks which cover buried archaeological remains. A simple sketch, not to scale, can often reveal the shape and size of a complicated site, and the relationships between different features of a site.

An **elevation** is a side-on view of a building, drawn straight-on from the front, back, left or right. Depending on the view being drawn you can have a:

- Front Elevation
- Right or Left Side Elevation
- Rear Elevation

Elevations show what a building looks like from the outside. An archaeologist or architectural historian might draw a sketch to show the detail on each side of the building they are investigating.

A **topographical view** is a picture that shows how a site or building sits within its surrounding landscape to give an idea of the 'lie of the land'. It shows and describes what a site looks like. The site can be drawn in perspective, from any angle.

## 2. Review guidelines on sketching a site

Our Learning Resource has a set of guidelines to bear in mind when creating a sketch of a site or building. They are relevant to investigating a large number of different sites and buildings, and offer general advice.

## 3. General overview of resources

We suggest you always review our resources and amend or adapt as necessary before running the session.

## Timings

### Session 1. Finding out why archaeologists make field sketches.

Activity	Summary	Time
<b>Starter – why sketch something?</b>	Ask the group discuss the reasons why you might want to sketch your site in order to find out more about it. You could brainstorm reasons why archaeologists might want to sketch a site as well as photograph it.	<b>10 mins</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	Explain to the group that you will be using this information to find out about making simple sketches to record and investigate your site. Use <b>Learning Resource F</b> .	<b>5 mins</b>
<b>Main activity</b>	As a class, or in smaller groups, review the images of the different sorts of field sketch, ask the group to record what the image shows, what sort of detail it captures, and what each drawing type might be used for.	<b>30 mins</b>
<b>Plenary</b>	Group shares information, and decides on what sort of sketch they each would like to make of their site or building. It might be useful to have a variety of sketches drawn using different perspectives. Together, review the guidelines on making a good archaeological sketch.	<b>15mins</b>

### Session 2. Visiting a site to sketch

Using the background knowledge from session 1 you can apply your archaeological sketching skills to the site you are investigating. At the site allow up to one hour to make a detailed annotated sketch. This should include a walkover tour of the site to look at the built fabric, or surviving remains, and to think about what is important to show in your drawing, and how much detail you want to include.

A good supply of paper, pencils, erasers, pencil sharpeners and clip boards will be needed. In case of rain it might be worthwhile to draw onto a waterproof drafting film (also known as permatrace), overlying a sheet of paper and taped onto a clipboard with masking tape.

Sketches do not need to be to scale, should aim to depict key details, and should be annotated with observations, measurements and questions you want research later.

## Extra Activities/ suggestions on scaling up and down

To scale up this activity you could look at drawing conventions and symbols which archaeologists use in their drawings, and the different scales used to show individual buildings or entire landscapes. A useful guide to find out more is the **Scotland's Rural Past** publication – '**A Practical Guide to Recording Archaeological Sites**', which provides a wealth of advice on sketching and more advanced drawing techniques. This is accessible through the **Scotland's Rural Past** website, a link to which can be found on our [links page](#).

To simplify drawing an archaeological or historical site think about using simple geometric shapes to depict outline and detail. Remember, a sketch does not have to be accurate, but convey an overall impression of a site.