



Archaeology Detectives –

A. Using Maps

Activity plan

Learning Intention

To be able to identify key features on a map and be able to use these to work out reasons why a particular location is suitable for your site.

This lesson will introduce / reinforce key map reading skills.

The group will have the opportunity to identify different map features and work out how they informed the siting of their site / building.

Resource List

- ◆ Digital / paper copies of maps to review (you will need to prepare)
- ◆ Starter activity (in **Learning Resource A**)
- ◆ Set of questions to answer (in **Learning Resource A**)

Research needed before session

Allow **1 hour** for preparation time.

There are 3 items to prepare before this session.

1. Identify and duplicate maps of your site/ building

You can look at either historic maps or modern maps to investigate the features and landscape around your site. If your organisation has paid and subscribed to it, you may want to look at modern maps using Ordnance Survey's Digimap for Schools. Alternatively, high quality, modern Ordnance Survey maps can be viewed through the Historic Environment Scotland **Pastmap** website – the link can be found on the Archaeology Scotland [links page](#).

For this activity we are going to suggest using the **National Library of Scotland's** (NLS) digital map library – again, find the link on our [links page](#). There are many ways of searching for and using maps on this website. Here is a quick guide to the easiest way to get individual maps of your site / building:

- I. Select the '*Geo-referenced overlays*' option from the main website – this means that you see historic maps of Scotland accurately positioned in a single continuous sheet overlaying current satellite photographs, rather than having to painstakingly search for any location page by page.
- II. Type in the place name in the box on the top left.
- III. Use your mouse / keyboard to zoom and position yourself in the correct area – you can use the sliding transparency button to help you locate your chosen site on the modern satellite photo.
- IV. Choose a suitable map for your site. Looking at the Scotland and Great Britain categories you will be able to explore OS maps dating from the mid 1800s to the 1960s. You will also be able to look at a range of older (but often larger scale) maps. Choose the map(s) that show the features you want, or are most interesting to you.

Curriculum Links

I can interpret historical evidence from a range of periods to help to build a picture of Scotland's heritage and my sense of chronology.
SOC 2-02a

Heritage Hero Award Investigate Activity

- V. Copy the image – right click to save and copy. NLS are happy for people to do this for educational purposes – the correct wording to acknowledge the image is in our Learning Resource.

2. Preparing a suitable set of questions about your site

Our Learning Resource has a generic list of questions relevant to investigating a large number of different sites and buildings. Not all of them will be relevant to your site, its time period or its location. We recommend you select the relevant questions and delete the others to avoid confusion.

3. General overview of resources

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

Timings

Activity	Summary	Time
Starter – identifying key features	Using Learning Resource A ask the group to create a list of some of the reasons why that feature might be useful for a site / building, and some of the reasons it might be a problem (possible answers included in Learning Resource).	10 mins
Introduction	Explain to the group that you will be using this information to create a table of reasons for the positioning of your site	10 mins
Main activity	In pairs / groups or individually study the map of the site and identify the relevant features – hills, water etc. Then decide which of these they think are relevant to the site and what they might suggest.	20 mins
Plenary	Group share of information	15mins

Extra Activities / suggestions on scaling up and down

If you are looking at a modern site / building (dating from the mid 1800s to the present day), you may want to consider using several NLS maps to show how the area and building has changed progressively over time. This can reveal a lot about how people have used the same site over the years.

If your group have not worked with maps before, or are very rusty, you might want to start with a simple quiz of map symbols and what they mean – cutting and pasting images of contour lines, churches, roads, waterways, battle sites or whatever may be relevant to you.

If you need more help / advice on maps – do have a look at the **Mapping History** resource we produced with NLS – it can be found on our [links page](#).