

Historical Search Room Information and Regulations



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The National Archives of Scotland (NAS) is the government agency entrusted with the preservation of the public records of Scotland and with making them accessible to the public. This leaflet sets out the rights and responsibilities of readers using the services in our Historical Search Room at HM General Register House (GRH) in Princes Street.

The search room is open 0900-1630, Monday to Friday. Closures for public holidays are advertised in advance on our notice boards and website.

General enquiries

The National Archives of Scotland
HM General Register House
Princes Street
Edinburgh EH1 3YY
Phone: 0131 535 1314
Fax: 0131 535 1360
www.nas.gov.uk

Historical Search Room
Phone: 0131 535 1334
Fax: 0131 535 1328
Email: enquiries@nas.gov.uk

1. REGISTRATION / TICKETS

Records open to public examination are made available to you without charge for purposes of historical research, provided that you hold a current reader's ticket.

- Readers' tickets are valid for up to 3 years.
- A reader's ticket will *only* be issued on your personal application at GRH, after you have produced satisfactory proof of your identity (photographic e.g. passport, driving licence, student matriculation card), and proof of address such as a recent utility bill or bank statement and provided two colour passport-sized photographs.
- Once issued, your ticket is valid in the Historical Search Room but *not* the Legal Search Room at GRH, although you may consult catalogues and indexes there.
- When entering GRH, you must present your ticket. On your first visit, you will receive a temporary pass to allow you access to the search room to obtain a reader's ticket. This pass must be surrendered on leaving the building.
- Because your ticket acts as a security pass into the search room, you must not lend your ticket to someone else. Any change of the details recorded on it, or any loss of the ticket, must be reported immediately.
- Your ticket remains the property of NAS. We may charge you for the replacement of a lost or mislaid ticket.
- Unreasonable behaviour towards other readers or staff may result in the withdrawal of your reader's ticket.

2. SEARCH ROOM REGULATIONS

Before you reach the search room

- Before entering our search room, you must leave all bags (including briefcases and handbags larger than 20cm x 15cm) laptop bags, outdoor garments and umbrellas in the lockers. Larger bags and luggage cannot be left in the locker room and alternative arrangements should be made. You can be provided with a transparent bag for any items you wish to take into the search room.
- NAS staff reserve the right to search materials being taken by you to or from the search room.

In the search room

- The following are strictly forbidden in our search rooms or any other public area: Eating, Drinking, Pens, Scissors, Knives, Scanners, Video Cameras
- In the interests of other readers, please observe silence in the search rooms except, of course, when consulting a member of staff. Pagers must be switched off. Mobile phones may only be used for still photography.
- There is no booking system for seats in the Search Room. These are allocated to you on a first come, first served basis.
- If for any reason you leave your seat unattended for more than an hour and do not inform staff, NAS staff reserve the right to re-allocate it to another reader and may also return the records that you are consulting to store.

Computers

You may only use a pencil or a portable computer for taking notes when in the search rooms and other public areas.

- The use of portable computers is permitted at owner's own risk. The National Archives of Scotland accepts no responsibility for loss of information, theft or accidental damage.

Record Handling

Records must not be removed from the Historical Search Room. If you need advice about a record, please consult staff.

- You are responsible for all records issued to you until these are returned to the custody of a member of staff and checked. Any incidence of wilful damage or theft of the records will be treated as a police matter. You should draw any evidence of existing damage to records to the attention of staff.
- Records must be handled with great care. Please follow the instructions on the sheet Record Handling Guidelines for Readers placed at each search room desk.
- You are not allowed to enter strong rooms or other non-public parts of the buildings, except in the company of a member of staff.

Complaints / Compliments

- If you experience incivility from NAS staff, please bring it to the attention of the Search Room Supervisor.
- If you have a compliment, comment or complaint about the NAS, please use one of the 'comment forms'.

3. PRODUCTION OF RECORDS

Record Ordering

- Records are only issued to readers holding a current reader's ticket. You must hand this in at the Search Room desk and ask to be allocated to a seat before any documents are issued. Your ticket will be given back to you by a member of staff when all records have been returned and accounted for or if you leave the search room for a break.
- To order records, use the electronic ordering system. Type your surname when prompted and ensure the seat number and surname displayed is correct before proceeding. Then type the full reference numbers for each item and submit your order. Staff will bring the records to your seat in the search room. On no account should you remove records from the production or return points, or pass records to another reader.
- If you are consulting loose bundles or papers, you may be required to sit at a specially designated desk.
- You may order six items at a time. No more than three of these items will be *issued* to you at any one time. In the case of papers which have not yet received individual piece numbers, only one bundle will normally be issued at a time. If you wish to examine a large quantity of material, it may be possible by prior arrangement with the staff for you to *order* more than three items.
- Only 12 items per reader per day will be brought in from the NAS's out-store, except with the consent of the officer in charge of the search room. These can also be ordered on-line using the NAS catalogue.
- Records held within the building will be delivered to your seat within 30 minutes of a request being made. Records held at the NAS's outstore will be produced within 24 hours of an order being placed
- You can arrange for records to be kept out for further consultation for up to 5 days by filling in a reservation slip (available at the production desk).
- Uncatalogued or partly catalogued papers may be available, but only on condition that you take the greatest care not to disturb any existing arrangement. Permission to use such material may be withdrawn if this condition is not observed. If you require a copy of any item, it must not be removed from its bundle or box. The whole bundle or box should be presented by you when placing the order.
- From May 2011 Register House Plans may be viewed electronically or by appointment.

Library

The catalogues and reference books on the open shelves in the search room areas are self-service. Please leave an order slip in place of any volume removed, giving your name, seat number and the date. Please return any volumes to their proper places as soon as possible after use.

Restrictions on access

Any restrictions that have been placed on access to, or use of, particular records must be strictly observed. Staff will inform you of any such restrictions and advise you concerning applications for access.

- You are not allowed access to private collections for legal purposes without the prior written permission of the owners or depositors.

- It may be necessary periodically to withdraw material from public use for reasons such as stocktaking, conservation, display or copying. The NAS also reserves the right to withdraw any document in poor or fragile condition.

Data Protection

The Data Protection Act (1998) allows certain classes of records that contain personal data of living people to be accessed only for research and statistical purposes providing that the following conditions are met:

- That the data is not processed to support measures or decisions regarding particular individuals
- That the data is not used in such a way that will cause damage or distress to any living person.

The National Archives of Scotland makes such records covered by this area of the Data Protection Act available for public access on the basis that readers will undertake to follow these conditions. However, it is your responsibility to ensure that you do so.

You are reminded that by signing the Declaration at the bottom of the Readers Ticket form you are undertaking to obey the conditions of access relating to records that contain personal data about living individuals.

A fuller explanation of your responsibilities under the Data Protection Act is provided in our leaflet 'Research Use of Personal Data in The National Archives of Scotland.'

4. COPIES, SELF SERVICE PHOTOGRAPHY AND PUBLICATION

Copies

Copies of Records can be provided, subject to the preservation needs of the material and any copying restrictions placed on it by depositors. The NAS reserves the right to refuse to provide copies, for instance on preservation grounds and also reserves the right to specify the reprographic process to be used.

- The NAS will not supply you with copies from its printed library books.
- It is up to you to ascertain whether an item is covered by copyright.
- Some collections have copying restrictions placed on them. Staff will advise you about applying for permission to get copies.

Self Service Photography

You may be allowed to use your camera to photograph documents provided there are no restrictions and certain conditions are met. You should consult the Search Room Officer who will provide advice.

Publication

Some collections have publication restrictions placed on them. Staff will advise you about applying for permission for publish information from such collections and about the form of acknowledgement to be made.

- If you intend to publish information from a collection where there are no special restrictions, you may still need permission. You should contact the NAS for advice.
- The NAS reserves the right to charge a publication / reproduction fee for information or images taken from records in its care for publication purpose.