

How to create a good site record

The site recording form is designed to make updating information about known sites and creating new coastal archaeological site records as straightforward as possible. The app form uses your smartphone GPS to collect accurate location information and tick boxes for useful information which can be simplified.

Your description and your photographs, however, are the most important and valuable elements of the site record. This guidance helps you with the free text fields in the form and photographs.

A good site record has:

- ✓ A name which includes the placename.
- ✓ A concise clear description based upon what you observe.
- ✓ 2 to 4 photographs which illustrate the site and its immediate coastal surroundings.

Site name

Include a placename.

Tip: you can give a holding name during your fieldwork, then check the historic map layer on the Sites at Risk Map when you get home. Here you will find detailed placenames referring to specific locations and features at the coast. Use the closest to your site in the site name.

*When **adding an update** Site name is not editable.*

Site type

Provide a one- or two-word description of the main category that would fit your site. E.g., WALL, MIDDEN, WRECK, etc. We align the site type with Canmore's thesaurus (<https://canmore.org.uk/thesaurus>) during moderation so don't worry if you're not sure of the exact category to use, we will use your description and photos to work it out.

*When **adding an update** Site type is not editable.*

Periods

If you can provide an estimate of what period your site may fall into, do so here. Say how sure or unsure you are. In the majority of cases assigning a period based on visual observation alone is difficult so it's fine to leave this section blank.

*When **adding an update** Periods is not editable.*

Description

Take time to look at your site and describe plainly what you see. Separate out your observations in the description from interpretation. In many cases, you will not be able to interpret what the site is. That's fine.

Answering these questions will help you write a clear site record. You may not be able to answer all of them.

Description

- Which part of the coast and foreshore is your site is located? E.g. At the coast edge? In the intertidal zone? Just behind the coast edge? Does it span one or more zones?

- What is the overall shape of your site? And its dimensions in metres, (length, width, height/depth)?
Tip: a pace is approximately a metre. Can you see layers and/or structures of your site exposed in the coastal section?
- If your site is a structure or building, what materials is it made of?
- Does your site contain archaeological layers, e.g., buried soils, burnt material?
- What is the relationship between the layers with other elements of the site, e.g., structures?
- Do layers contain archaeological finds, e.g., bone, pottery, glass, worked stone, shell? What are the relative proportions of different archaeological finds? What is their condition?

Interpretation

- Do you know what your site is? What is the evidence for this?

When **adding an update** read the existing description and improve it if necessary.

Photographs

Aim to take around 4 photos showing:

- Your site or feature with the shoreline in the picture to show its coastal context.
- The whole site (or as much of it as you can) in one image.
- Close-up views of informative elements.
- Specific photos of actively eroding parts of the site if they are not clear in your overall site photo.

Include scales where possible. **Tip:** people and dogs are good scales! You can also include the hand or finger of someone pointing to a subject of interest.

There is also a facility to upload files. Use this to upload your sketches, historic images, maps or other relevant information. Please make sure you have permission to share these.

Recommendations

We are interested in your views of what actions could or should be taken at a site. In most cases this will be 'keep an eye on' through regular site visits. But there are some sites that may be suitable for interpretation or where a case could be made for further investigation. Please tell us if this is the case and explain why. It's fine to leave this field blank.

Comments

Use the comments field to provide any additional information or observations that don't quite fit into the other fields. For example, this is the best place for ideas about interpretation that are not firm enough to go into the description, or ideas about the age of the site that are not definite enough to go into the period field. It's fine to leave this field blank.

Example site record

For an example of an all-round good site record see:

Sron Rubha na Gaoithe shell midden (13434) <https://scapetrust.org/sites-at-risk/site/13434>