

RESEARCH & FIELD PLANNING · FREE RESOURCE

Land Research Checklist

Work through old maps, aerial images, LiDAR, field names and local history before choosing where to search.

What's inside

- ✓ Clear, practical steps you can use straight away
- 📄 Written for real UK detecting, not theory
- 📄 Plain-English guidance, checked against official sources
- ☆ Free to print, keep and share



**Written by
detectorists**



**Checked against
UK guidance**



**Free to print and
keep**

Good research turns a random field into a plan. Work through these stages before your visit, and record what you find so you can search the most promising ground first.

✓ Research stages

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☐ Confirm legal access and permission first | ☐ Check LiDAR where available |
| ☐ Identify the land accurately (parish, OS grid) | ☐ Review aerial photos and Google Earth history |
| ☐ Compare historic and modern maps | ☐ Search local archives, newspapers, heritage records |
| ☐ Look for former buildings and settlements | ☐ Mark likely activity zones on a plan |
| ☐ Track old roads, footpaths and river crossings | ☐ Create a field search plan |
| ☐ Review field names and place names | ☐ Record every source and its date |

Where to research

Old maps

National Library of Scotland maps, tithe and enclosure maps

LiDAR

A height map that can reveal subtle banks, ditches and changes in ground level. Vegetation and data quality affect what you see.

Heritage records

The Historic Environment Record (HER): a local record of known archaeological sites nearby

Words explained

OS grid reference a code from the Ordnance Survey national grid that pinpoints a location on a map.

HER Historic Environment Record: a local authority record of known archaeological sites and finds.

LiDAR a laser-based height map of the ground surface, useful for spotting earthworks under crops or grass.

Research does not override the law

Old maps and clues do not grant access. You still need permission from someone with authority to give it, and must avoid scheduled monuments and other protected sites.

Record what each source told you, so you can build a picture and revisit it later.

SOURCE	DATE / EDITION	FEATURE FOUND	CONFIDENCE	FIELD / PRIORITY

This resource is provided for general information and personal record-keeping. Rules, official guidance and access arrangements can change. Check the current requirements for the place where you intend to detect.

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