



YOUR 'HOW TO' GUIDE FOR WELL RESEARCH

1. Start by having a look at the modern mapping to see if there are any named wells, springs or pools still shown, or if there are any placenames which could suggest that such a feature was once there. Remember to double check any names that appear in blue lettering, as this will often denote a water feature. Also look for alternate spellings, such as 'wiel', or even the use of the word 'hole'. You can use Pastmap, www.pastmap.org.uk, for this – entering one of your corner coordinates into its search bar will take you straight to your location and zooming in will bring up more detailed maps.

PRO TIP

Keep an image of your map square close to hand (print it out, have it on your phone or open in a window on the computer) or write a note of the places in each corner to use as a rough guide for the area's extent when looking at the mapping.

2. You can also check in case there is an entry for your well in the available layers on Pastmap – although you'll likely find that most of them don't have one. Have a quick look though to see if there are any known sites in the vicinity which could relate to your well, such as a church or a particular farmstead.

PRO TIP

While viewing the maps on the National Library of Scotland, the grid reference for wherever your cursor is sitting appears in the bottom right corner – you can use this to get a more accurate location for your site if needed.

3. Keep a note of anything you find and their coordinates – click on the map and these will pop up under **Easting/Northing** on the left-hand side.

4. Now it's time to search through historical maps using the **National Library of Scotland's** digital library catalogue. There are several ways to search their catalogue, but we suggest heading to <https://maps.nls.uk/geo/explore/>.

Under **1. Select a category** – choose 'Scotland'. You change the transparency of the map overlay and also change the base map to help you orientate but, as with Pastmap, you can also search for specific coordinates via the **Search by National Grid Reference option**. Then work your way through the mapping – we suggest starting with the more recognisable modern mapping and working backwards through time to help you get your eye in a bit better.

5. Keep a note of which maps your wells appear on, and check for any older wells that might not appear on the modern mapping. It's good to try and establish the earliest and latest dates for when your site appears (if it's not still being mapped today). Also keep a note of any alternative spellings that you come across – this might prove helpful in later research.

6. By the time you reach as far back as Roy's Military Survey from the mid-18th century, it's unlikely that the mapping will be detailed enough to show the sites of wells, but if you've been chasing any placenames then it's worth a look to see if the name goes back that far.

7. Before you finish with the mapping, check through the other options under **1. Select a category** to see what others are available. Specifically, we suggest checking **Scotland, Estate Maps** as the **DAMP project** has ensured a great coverage of these in our area.

8. If you've managed to add any new wells to your list from the old mapping, then it might be worth checking **Pastmap** again to see if it has an entry or if there are any known sites in the vicinity that it could relate to.

9. Armed with your list of names, it's time to head over to Scotland's Places – <https://scotlandsplaces.gov.uk> – to check out the Ordnance Survey namebook. This contains a wealth of information on the placenames which appear on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey and can often give background information on their origins. You just need to enter the name of your site into the search bar in the top right. A few records from all over Scotland might appear but your best bet is likely to be the **Kirkcudbrightshire OS Name Books**. If you don't get any hits, then this is where you can try out some of the alternate spellings that you noted down or perhaps make your search more general by only trying a part of the name. If you find anything, then write it down and keep a note of the reference number that appears at the far right of the entry's name on the website e.g. OS1/20/46/21.

10. Next up – the **Place-Names of the Galloway Glens Database** at <https://kcb-placenames.glasgow.ac.uk/place-names/>. This database also references the Ordnance Survey Namebook but might contain additional information relating to the name's meaning. You can either search for your site in the search bar or select **Browse place-names**. You can then select your **Parish** and a map will appear showing all of the available entries marked as points. This might be a good option so that you can check your area for any other sites that you might not be aware of. Note that the database doesn't cover all of the Kirkcudbright area.

11. Lastly, it is always worth doing a **general internet search** for your sites – there is a wealth of websites and resources out there created by local people or others who are interested in specific areas of heritage. If you have identified your well or spring as being of a certain type e.g. holy or healing, then it's also worth having a search for any information about the background to that type of well which add further depth to your research.

PRO TIP

Be sure to include the **OS Six Inch, 1843-1882** map in your search – it is the earliest mapping to have a level of detail similar to what we see today and it is often the earliest appearance for many features. The OS surveyed different areas at different times – you can find the year of publication for your area in the bottom right corner as you zoom in.

If you find any other good resources while on your hunt, then we'd love to hear about them! We can then share them with your fellow researchers.

PRO TIP

We've picked out the resources that we think will be most helpful in your search, but there are many others out there which you might find helpful. For a full guide to what's available, have a look at

<https://gallowayglens.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Workshop-Notes-Web-based-Research.pdf>

Remember: Many of these wells are centuries old and the origins of their name may be long lost. For some you might not get more than a name and a point on a map – don't be disheartened. If your search is coming up empty, then move on to the next well. The name and location is enough to mark it as a site and there are plenty more to look at. Sometimes the information just isn't there. Remember as well that we're limited to what's available online for the time being - there might be more to find elsewhere when archives start opening up again!

HOW TO SUBMIT YOUR FINDINGS AND WHAT TO INCLUDE:

Once you've completed your research into a well, spring or pool, let us know everything you've found out by emailing it to **helen.keron@dumgal.gov.uk**. Whatever you find will be more than we had, although here's a wee checklist of information that you might include if you can – although remembering that some wells will have more records than others.

The **name** of your well, spring or pool, and any alternate spellings that you came across.

The **coordinates** that you were able to get from the mapping websites.

A list of **maps** that the site appears on, showing it's progression over time – see if you can establish the first map that it appears on and the last (or if it's still present on modern maps)

Does it have an entry in the **Ordnance Survey Namebook**? Take a note of what's written in its entry and also the reference number from the top of the webpage e.g. OS1/20/46/21

Any other information that you have been able to find about your well or possibly that type of well in general – include the website or book where you found it, and also maybe a link if possible.

VISITING YOUR WELL:

This project is aimed at online research with a hope to visiting some of the wells once the restrictions ease. But if one of your wells lives near you and you'd like to see if it's still there, then feel free - but **please keep safe!** These are old wells and they are not always well-defined features surrounded by a stone wall. Some are simply small ponds in the ground and many are likely to be so overgrown that you could easily step on them without realising. We can't guarantee that Lassie will always come to the rescue, so here are some tips to consider:

Take your time and watch your step – aim for good weather and clear visibility.

Take a walking stick or similar to prod the ground with to check it's solid before you step on it.

If you're heading somewhere away from public view, then maybe take someone with you or at least let them know where you're going.

Avoid walking into waterlogged areas and watch out for areas of rushes or reeds. Be particularly careful if there has been a lot of rain which will only add to water levels.

If you get to the well's location and the area is overgrown, waterlogged or covered by rushes/reeds, then don't wade in. Have a look from a safe distance and take a photo from there – even noting that the location of the well as waterlogged is a good indicator that you're in the right place.

Watch out for animals that might be lurking. Depending on the time of year, avoid bare ankles or legs in long grass – ticks are common, opportunistic & spread Lyme Disease. Tuck your trousers into your shoes!

Be wary of entering private land – please ask permission. You might find the owners are receptive to finding out more about what's on their land.

And despite historical accounts that a well has amazing curative powers, they're not quite up to the health and safety standards of the 21st century – however tempting it might be for that hangover, please don't try a sip!