

## Online Images

Joe Saunders

One of the best sources for historical research to emerge in the last century or so has been the development of prints and photographs of the world around us. While people have long sought out images of the world around them the advent of modern printing techniques and photography from the nineteenth century was revolutionary. There are many ways for the historian to access these images which can be interesting and informative and allows us to learn about a place in the past.

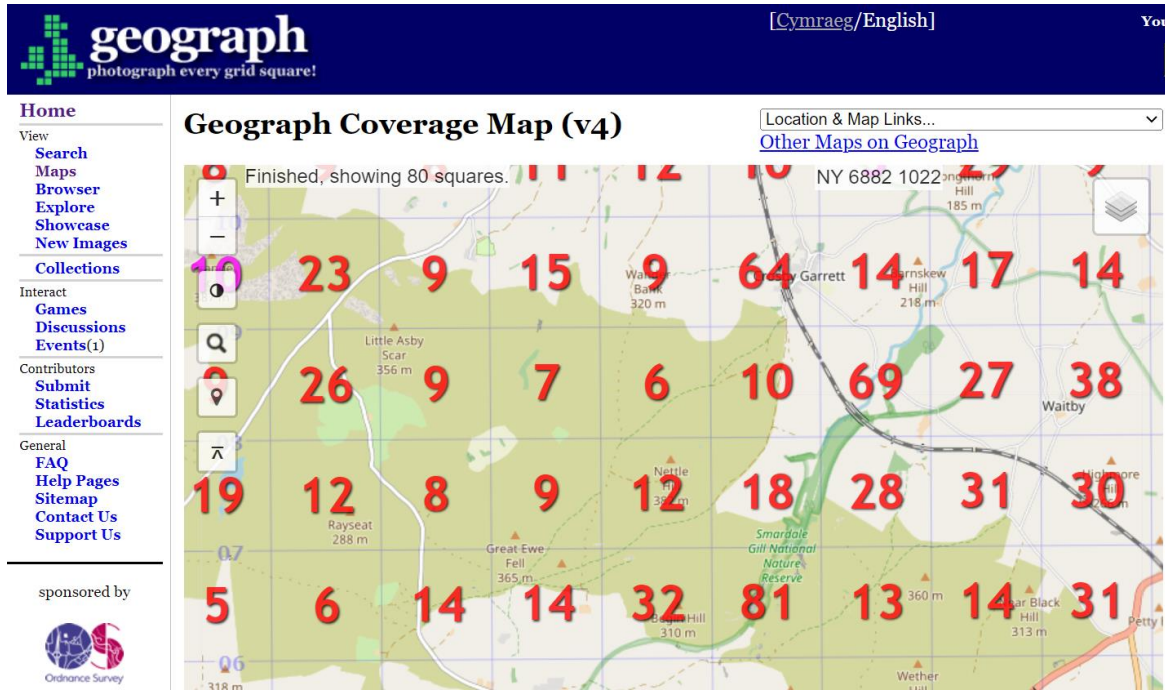


Crosby Garrett postcards, early twentieth century. Author's collection.

From the Victorian period onwards picture-postcards have been popular with visitors to beautiful scenes of the countryside, towns, and villages. A general search for a place on [eBay](#) will most likely result in a range of postcards. For bigger towns and cities these searches are more likely to gather a wide range of results the addition of the word 'postcard' will narrow things down. There are also specialist sites for historic postcards including [Old Postcards](#).

Your region of study may also have a dedicated photograph depository supported by a local archive service. For example, the [Cumbria Imagebank](#) which has tens of thousands of digitised images from across the area covered by the modern county.

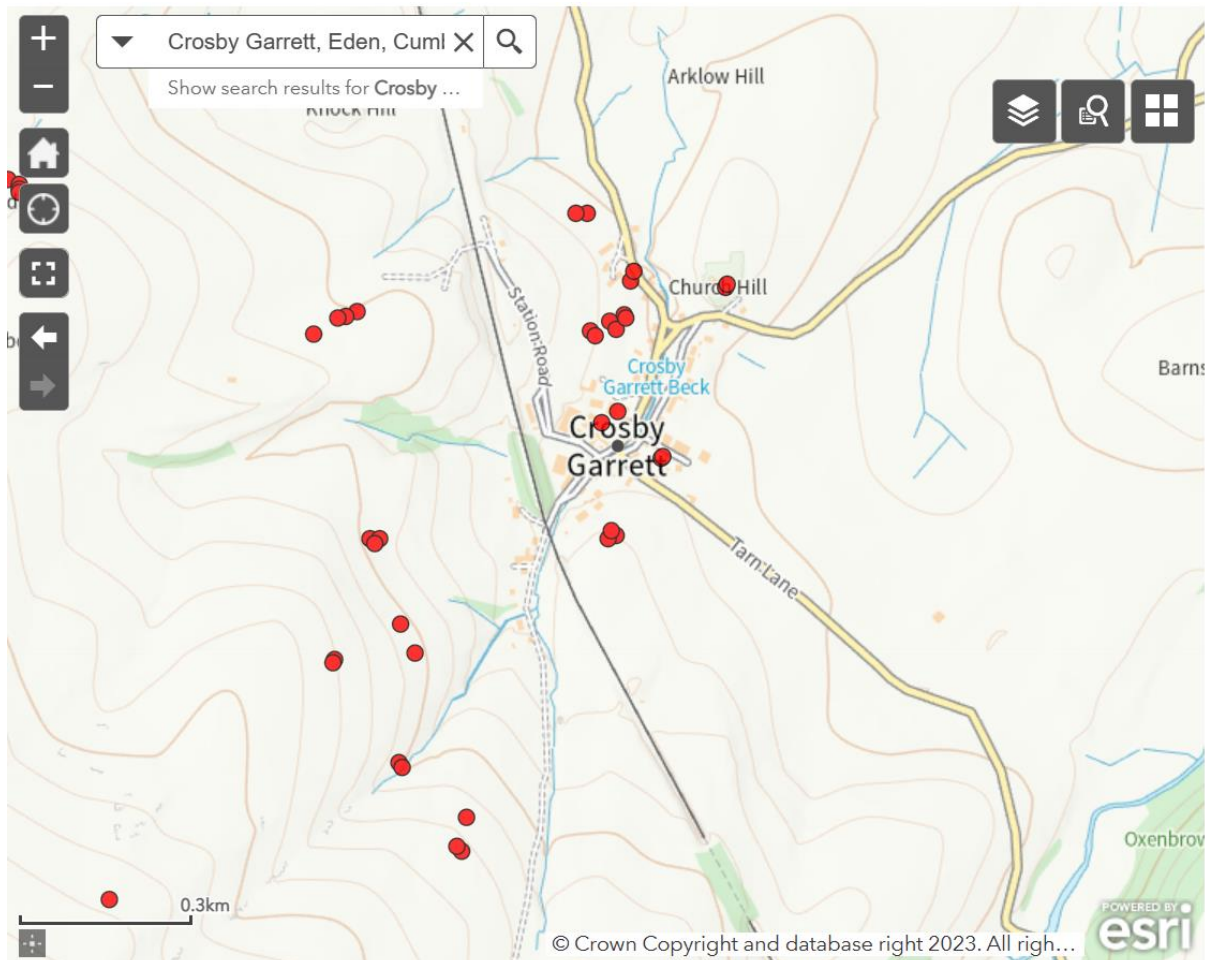
The [Geograph Britain and Ireland](#) project aims to collect representative photographs and information across Great Britain and Ireland. You can search the website for images of your place of interest. Most of these photographs are recent but you can trace changes over the past decade and occasionally older photos have been uploaded.



The [Coverage Map \(v4\) :: Geograph Britain and Ireland](#). The numbers refer to the number of photographs Geograph have for each grid.

Aerial photography began to be used in the middle of the twentieth century as flight became widespread, especially with the rise in military air flights. It is possible to view many images of Britain from the air online.

English researchers can explore over 400,000 digitised photos taken from the aerial photo collections of over six million photographs preserved in Historic England's [Aerial Photo Explorer](#). You can use their map function to manually search, or use the text box.



Crosby Garrett on the [Aerial Photo Explorer](#). Red dots indicate a photograph which can be viewing online.

The [Cambridge University Collection of Aerial Photography \(CUCAP\)](#) is the result of airborne survey campaigns which were started in 1947 by the pioneering aerial photographer, JK St Joseph. Since then, the collection has grown to almost half a million images of obliques and verticals in black and white, colour, and infra-red. Virtually the whole of Britain has been covered, with the obliques depicting a wide variety of landscapes and features and the verticals being of survey quality, which can be used in mapping projects.

Of course, the modern world is now full of photography and photo collections because of mobile phones and social media. It is easier than ever for ordinary people to capture and share the world around them and this has huge significance for historians. By taking photos ourselves, the historian is able to collect images of places as they are today. We also have at our fingertips historic images made accessible through the methods above, and many other means.

### References and Resources:

M. Barber, *A History of Aerial Photography and Archaeology: Mata Hari's glass eye and other stories* (2011)

E. Edwards, *Photographs and the Practice of History: A Short Primer* (2022)

*Local History Photographer of the Year 2023*. <https://www.balh.org.uk/photo>

[In Photographs Series](#) - Local History Series - Amberley Publishing

[eBay](#)

[Old Postcards](#)

[Cumbria Imagebank](#)

[Geograph Britain and Ireland](#)

[Aerial Photo Explorer](#)

[Cambridge University Collection of Aerial Photography \(CUCAP\)](#)