Registers of Scotland
Unlocking Sasines dataset
Information Sheet

Contents

1. Introduction

1.1. The Registers of Scotland

The Registers of Scotland is the non-ministerial body responsible for keeping the public registers of land, property, and other legal documents in Scotland.

1.2. The Sasine Register

The General Register of Sasines - also known as the Sasine Register - is the oldest national land register in the world, dating back to 1617. Its name comes from the old French word 'seiser', which means 'take or seize'.

In the 13th century before official records began, the ancient ceremony of Seiser marked the official transfer of land ownership. The ceremony involved the handing over of a clod of earth and stones to represent the transfer of one owner to another.

The sasine register is a text-based, chronological list of land deeds, which contain written descriptions of properties. It is gradually being replaced by the map-based land register.

We no longer record dispositions, standard securities, leases etc. in the sasine register (other than for dual registration or servitude purposes) but there are still a variety of deeds we continue to process.

Searching the Sasine Register is a specialist and large manual undertaking. The deeds relating to a specific property can be traced by reference to a search sheet which contains the history of all transactions over that property (prior to transfer to the Land Register).

In many instances, Registers of Scotland will not be able to provide a plan for sasine-registered titles, as its registration may predate the requirement for mapping and/or the use of digital records. Instead, we will be able to provide you with a deed that contains a narrative boundary description of the property or area.

1.3. The Land Register of Scotland

The Land Register of Scotland is our main register, recording ownership of land and property in Scotland. It provides owners with a state-backed guarantee of title.

First introduced in 1981, the Land Register is gradually replacing the General Register of Sasines. The Land Register comprises the title sheet record, the cadastral map, the archive record, and the application record.

The cadastral map is a map showing the totality of registered geospatial data in Scotland. For each cadastral unit, the map shows the cadastral unit number (title number), the boundaries of the title, registered leases and otherwise depicts registered rights and burdens in such manner as the Keeper considers appropriate.

The cadastral unit (title) represents a single registered plot of land and this will directly correspond with a title sheet, subject to certain exceptions (e.g. areas in shared ownership that were previously included in separate title sheets, tenements/flats etc.). Mapping of the Land Register is based on Ordnance Survey (OS) map data.

1.4. Unlocking Sasines Project

The Unlocking Sasines project aims to make the information held within the General Register of Sasines more accessible. It makes use of spatial data to help "unlock" the historic information in the Sasine Register.

Unlocking Sasines polygons are not guaranteed but are indicative of the likely ownership of areas not on the land register with a variable degree of certainty. Please refer to section 4.1 (Data Quality – Confidence Levels) for more information on confidence levels.

The project links indicative unregistered property extents to search sheets and gathers them into a geospatial dataset which can then provide information on spatial searching of the Sasines. This makes the data visually more useful, accessible and helps to fill in any information gaps. The Unlocking Sasines dataset complements the Land Register to support a location-based view of land ownership in Scotland.

This will help us answer the questions around land ownership in Scotland more easily and provide useful insights in working towards land register completion and functional completion of the land register.

Internal RoS colleagues and external customers will potentially benefit from access to the data set when searching the Sasine register. See section 6.2 Use cases for further details.

2. Specification

2.1. Delivery

The RoS Unlocking Sasines dataset is made available as a snapshot of un-styled vector polygons in ESRI shapefile format. The data is projected to the British National Grid (EPSG:27700). The dataset contains only polygon data.

Access to the data and license agreement can be obtained via the RoS Land & Property Data Team (Data@ros.gov.uk).

2.2. Metadata

The attribute fields contained within the data are set out in Table 1.

Table 1: Unlocking Sasines attribute fields

o_id	Polygon identifier
county	The RoS Land Register County that the polygon relates to.
pssn	Potential search sheet number. The Sasine Register search sheet number(s) potentially relating to the area of land covered by the polygon. The same area of land can be referenced on multiple search sheets.

s_of_s	Subjects of search. This is which part (aka subjects) of the search sheet we believe the polygon relates to. This may not always be captured and in this case the column will be blank.
cl	Confidence level – there are three separate confidence levels - see section 4 below.

2.2.1. Polygon Selection Criteria

The dataset contains polygons which represent areas of known ownership, primarily obtained from a variety of external sources.

Polygons are searched as received and included in the dataset where ownership can be confirmed within a range of confidence as described in section 4. The spatial data is presented as sourced, with no geometry enhancements or modifications to the boundaries beyond the removal ("cookie cutting") of areas registered in Land Register titles.

Polygons may also have been generated by RoS staff using information held within our records.

Some Unlocking Sasines polygons conform to the intuitive idea of a 'title', but others do not. It is possible to arbitrarily group Unlocking Sasines polygons into larger areas based on search sheet or ownership attributes in ways that are not possible with Land Register titles.

2.2.2. Geographic Coverage

The dataset covers most of the land mass of Scotland that is not already covered by the Land Register.

The primary mechanism for transferring land from the Sasines to the Land Register is transfer of ownership. Certain types of properties, like rural land or large estates, do not change hands very often and remain recorded in the Sasines.

The Unlocking Sasines dataset therefore primarily includes polygons covering rural areas of Scotland. Beyond this, the types of properties searched has been determined by the polygon data that we have been able to source from third parties.

The Unlocking Sasines Project searchers have not yet searched all unregistered areas of Scotland. Work is progressing on a roughly county-by county basis, which means that Unlocking Sasines data is not geographically evenly distributed across Scotland. Please also refer to section 4.5 (Data Quality – Completeness).

2.2.3. Temporal Aspects

The RoS Unlocking Sasines dataset is a one-off publication of the set of polygons to which a sasine register search sheet has been associated, as on the day that the RoS Unlocking Sasines dataset was generated.

There are currently no plans to publish updates beyond the initial dataset publication. Searching activity will continue, and options for alternative future delivery mechanisms will be explored in the long term.

3. Data Quality

The polygon boundaries included within the Unlocking Sasines dataset have been generated by a range of third parties, for a variety of purposes and using a variety of digitisation rules and sources etc.

The polygons represent unregistered areas of identified ownership, the boundaries of which have been categorised with a set level of confidence by RoS Sasine search staff, within the limits of a time-bound search of the Sasines Register.

Unlocking Sasines polygons **provide no legal certainty or authority** in relation to ownership boundaries.

3.1. Confidence Levels

Each polygon is assigned a confidence level ranging from one to three, with Level 1 being the most confident and Level 3 the least. Confidence levels are a suggested and indicative marker and are not guaranteed as accurate. They are assigned as follows:

Level 1:

There is frequently a deed on the search sheet stated that includes a plan. The plan contains the polygons displayed and no parts have subsequently been removed, apart from those that have moved over to the Land Register.

Level 2:

There is frequently a deed on the search sheet stated that includes a plan. The plan contains the polygons displayed but parts have subsequently been removed and these may need to be taken into consideration when establishing the extent of the title.

Level 3:

We have not seen a plan that matches the polygon area on the search sheet, but we have multiple pieces of evidence to suggest that area is or was associated to the search sheet number(s) displayed. Some search sheets may have parts removed that will need to be considered and some will remain whole.

3.2. Topological gaps and overlaps

Overlaps between polygons are not present. Polygons may not meet each other thus small underlaps' may be present.

Polygon geometries undergo mathematical validation checks during the production of the Unlocking Sasines dataset. The vertices of geometries in the dataset are snapped to a grid with 1cm precision.

Where small overlaps existed between different source datasets, these have been removed while processing the data. In such cases, the resulting boundaries are generally based on the source dataset captured to the higher level of accuracy.

3.3. Positional Accuracy

The polygon boundaries included within the Unlocking Sasines dataset have been generated by a range of third parties, for a variety of purposes and using a variety of digitisation rules and sources etc.

This means that different polygons will have different levels of generalisation and may have been mapped at different scales and with different positional quality requirements.

3.4. Logical Consistency

Polygon boundaries may not align exactly with that of the land recorded in a specific search sheet. Boundaries may not reflect all removals from a search sheet, or may only cover a part of the area contained within a search sheet. They may not follow features on current OS mapping data, may deviate from actual ownership boundaries, or may include areas where a right other than ownership is present.

This is more likely to occur in large areas with a complex history of land ownership.

3.5. Completeness

In the context of data quality, 'completeness' should be understood as a measure of the land mass area that is not present in the Land Register of Scotland but is present in the Unlocking Sasines dataset.

Missing areas (i.e. incompleteness) result where we have not yet confirmed the ownership of sourced polygons, or polygons have not yet been sourced.

A very small percentage of land ownership records predate the General Register of Sasines and is recorded in local Burgh Registers. These areas are not included in the Unlocking Sasines dataset.

Implementation of the Land Register was staggered by Registration County with operational dates between 1981 and 2003 (see Table 2). This means that some Registration Counties are closer to completion than others. Counties that are closer to completion in the Land Register will have fewer unregistered areas to include in the Unlocking Sasines dataset.

Table 2: RoS Registration County operational dates

Renfrew 6 Apr 1981	Kirkcudbright 1 Apr 1997	Midlothian 1 Apr 2001
Dumbarton 4 Oct 1982	Wigtown 1 Apr 1997	Inverness 1 Apr 2002
Lanark 3 Jan 1984	Angus 1 Apr 1999	Nairn 1 Apr 2002
Glasgow 30 Sep 1985	Kinross 1 Apr 1999	Banff 1 Apr 2003
Clackmannan 1 Oct 1992	Perth 1 Apr 1999	Caithness 1 Apr 2003
Stirling 1 Apr 1993	Berwick 1 Oct 1999	Moray 1 Apr 2003
West Lothian 1 Oct 1993	East Lothian 1 Oct 1999	Orkney & Zetland 1 Apr 2003
Fife 1 Apr 1995	Peebles 1 Oct 1999	Ross & Cromarty 1 Apr 2003
Aberdeen 1 Apr 1996	Roxburgh 1 Oct 1999	Sutherland 1 Apr 2003
Kincardine 1 Apr 1996	Selkirk 1 Oct 1999	Seabed 8 Dec 2014
Ayr 1 Apr 1997	Argyll 1 Apr 2000	
Dumfries 1 Apr 1997	Bute 1 Apr 2000	

The current land mass coverage for the Land Register and the Unlocking Sasines Dataset this dataset is detailed on our performance pages at https://www.ros.gov.uk/performance/land-register-completion/land-mass-coverage-in-scotland

4. Data Production and Maintenance

4.1. Third Party Data

The polygon boundaries included within the Unlocking Sasines dataset have been incorporated and refined from data supplied by a range of third parties.

4.2. RoS Unlocking Sasines Dataset

Polygon data from third party sources are processed to remove areas already covered by the Land Register. Any overlaps between data sources are reconciled and removed, and time-bound searches of the Sasine register are conducted to assign a search sheet and where relevant the subjects of search within that search sheet. A confidence level is assigned to each polygon using the criteria outlined in 4.1 above. A final processing step removes any areas of land which have been registered in the Land Register during the searching period.

For best results view the data overlaid on Ordnance Survey mapping products.

Unlocking Sasines searching activity will continue until the currently available stock of polygon data has been exhausted. Any future data sourcing and maintenance schedules are still to be determined.

There are no current plans to publish updates to the dataset after the initial snapshot. Future delivery mechanisms will be explored in the longer term.

5. Other useful Information

5.1. Relationship to other RoS datasets

The RoS Cadastral Parcels (INSPIRE) dataset contains a sub-set of the spatial information held in the Cadastral Map, which forms part of the Land Register of Scotland. There is no overlap between the RoS Unlocking Sasines dataset and the INSPIRE dataset.

ScotLIS displays the polygon data contained within the Cadastral Map. Members of the public can view the polygons associated with an individual title at scotlis.ros.gov.uk. Users with an online services account also have access to a searchable map on ScotLIS. The data on ScotLIS is updated nightly. There is no overlap between the RoS Unlocking Sasines dataset and the data displayed on ScotLIS.

Ownership Information held within the Land Register or General Register of Sasines may not clearly show who ultimately controls decisions about land. The purpose of the new (as of April 2022) Register of Persons Holding a Controlled Interest in Land (RCI) makes this information more transparent. Ownership information held within the RCI therefore complements information held within the Land Register and General Register of Sasines.

5.2. Use Cases

The Unlocking Sasines dataset does not define ownership boundaries, nor does it represent the totality of ownership information contained within the General Register of Sasines. The dataset provides indicative extents where it is possible to identify ownership at ground level with reasonable certainty.

The dataset provides information on where to look in the General Register of Sasines for information on the land denoted by a specific polygon. It is a helpful tool in uncovering land ownership which is not recorded in the Land Register - and which may remain in the General Register of Sasines for the foreseeable future.

The data can be used to help answer questions around ownership of unregistered land, subject to the limitation that it offers a land-based view rather than a party-based view of land ownership in Scotland. It can be used to investigate how land ownership interacts with other spatial phenomena at the local, regional, national or European scale, bearing in mind the limitations of working with an incomplete dataset.

The data is indicative and cannot be used to determine the exact boundaries of ownership or non-ownership rights in a specific location. The dataset should not be used to make planning decisions relating to individual parcels/properties.

Unlocking Sasines polygons provide no legal certainty or authority in relation to ownership boundaries and cannot be used to definitively determine legal land ownership.

RoS does not guarantee the completeness or accuracy of the Unlocking Sasines Data set provided to you (including Confidence Levels) or that it will be fit for your particular purpose.

5.3. Licensing/General

The Terms and conditions of use of the RoS Unlocking Sasines dataset is set out in the license agreement.

You may use and copy this guidance document within your organisation or business as a reference guide when using the RoS Unlocking Sasines dataset, but the data must only be used for the purpose for which it is has been specifically licensed to your organisation. You may not copy or incorporate this document in free or paid for products, services, publications or support materials, without prior written permission.

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5.4. Contact Details

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Your feedback about the dataset and your use case(s) is welcome.

5.5. Links

General Register of Sasines

https://www.ros.gov.uk/our-registers/general-register-of-sasines

The Land Register

https://www.ros.gov.uk/our-registers/land-register-of-scotland

Register of Persons Holding a Controlled Interest in Land

https://www.ros.gov.uk/our-registers/rci

Unlocking Sasines

https://www.ros.gov.uk/about/publications/governance-and-corporate/2022/unlocking-sasines

RoS Data and Statistics

https://www.ros.gov.uk/data-and-statistics

RoS INSPIRE Download Service

https://ros.locationcentre.co.uk/inspire/

RoS INSPIRE View Service

http://ros.datafeed.locationcentre.co.uk/geoserver/wms

ScotLIS

https://scotlis.ros.gov.uk

5.6. Document Revision

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