

HOUSE HISTORY

Sources for detecting the origins of your house.

The aim of this leaflet is to guide you to sources that are available in the Local Studies Collection at Peterborough Central Library, and to suggest other documents that may be available at Local Archives Offices, which will help you to discover the history of your house. Peterborough Library has very few original documents, so it will be necessary to visit the archive offices for Northamptonshire, Huntingdonshire and Cambridgeshire to complete your research (*see end of leaflet for addresses*).

HOW TO BEGIN

Tracing the history of a house or other building is a very rewarding task and will involve many hours of detailed research. There are two ways in which this can be approached.

1. from architectural sources
2. from documentary sources

For an excellent guide to the subject read N. Barratt, *Tracing the History of your house*. Public Record Office, 2006, (2nd edition) ISBN 1903365902. The website www.hiddenhousehistory.co.uk provides useful information about starting your research.

THE BUILDING

1. It is a good idea to photograph the building and any distinctive architectural features such as doors, windows, staircases, fireplaces and brickwork. It is also useful to check all these features in books about architecture. Peterborough has many books about architecture in stock. A good website is www.building-history.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk as this lists many useful books on the history of buildings and related topics. Before visiting a library or archive office, draw a ground and a site plan of the building, as these will assist your research when you check this information against other documentary sources such as maps.
2. **Title Deeds.** Check the deeds of the property, as these may include a short description of the building and its location and provide a history of ownership. The abstract of title may provide extracts from deeds that may not have survived. Names of former owners and occupiers are useful, as these will lead you to other sources.

MAIN SOURCES AT PETERBOROUGH CENTRAL

MAPS

The Local Studies Collection has a comprehensive collection of maps. It holds Ordnance Survey maps at 6" and 25" to the mile for Peterborough dating from 1886, 1901 and 1927. For the former Soke of Peterborough and the northern part of Huntingdonshire these maps are on 35mm film. By checking your property on these maps, working from the most recent to the earliest, it may be possible to note any changes, such as alterations, changes of plot size and changes in use.

Enclosure maps c1750-1850. These are large-scale plans, which provide details of land ownership, highways, footpaths and boundaries. Photocopies of these maps covering some parishes surrounding Peterborough are available in the Local Studies Library.

CENSUS RECORDS 1841-1901

These records list the names and occupations of people who were present in a building on the night when the census was taken. The Local Studies Collection has most of the census records on microfilm for Peterborough, Stamford, Oundle and Whittlesey Registration Districts from 1841-1901. The censuses for the whole of the country, from 1841-1901, are available on the internet via www.nationalarchives.gov.uk. It is not always easy to identify an individual house, as house numbers are very rarely given.

ELECTORAL REGISTERS

Registers from the 1850's, relating to the City of Peterborough and the area of its Parliamentary Constituency are held here. These are held on microfilm for the following dates [see below] and in bound volumes from 1951. These record the names and addresses of people who were allowed to vote.

Registers held on film: Oct. 1854; Sept 1858-Sept 1868; Sept. 1885
Autumn 1918 – Oct. 1931; Oct. 1937 – Oct.1938

TRADE DIRECTORIES

Trade directories were published intermittently for Peterborough and the surrounding counties during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These are useful as a quick guide to identifying a property and its occupiers during that period and are available to browse through in the Local Studies and Archives Room.

PHOTOGRAPHS

The people most likely to have photographs of your house are former residents. Nevertheless, always check the relevant indexes at Local Archives Offices for the existence of photographs of your village or area of the town where you live as these *may* include a view of your property. Peterborough Local Studies Collection has an archive of over 1000 views of City street scenes taken in the early 1960's, many of which can be searched and viewed online at www.peterborough.gov.uk/page-5888.

SALES PARTICULARS AND ADVERTISEMENTS

It may be useful to check for advertisements in local newspapers for details of auctions and sales of houses, especially if the date of a sale of a property has been found from other sources. Before the mid-20th century, most properties were sold at auction so the advertisements provide details of a description of a property, numbers and type of room etc. The name of the tenants may also be given. Peterborough Local Studies Collection holds the following newspapers on microfilm.

Peterborough Advertiser	1854 - 1989
Peterborough Times	1865 - 1874
Peterborough Standard	1872 - 1987
Peterborough Express	1884 - 1917
Peterborough Citizen	1898 - 1946
Stamford Mercury	1800 - 1855

Peterborough Archives Service holds the Fox & Vergette Collection which contains sales particulars, catalogues and auction notices that date from **1896-1980**. This collection is particularly relevant to house historians because during the 19th and early part of the 20th century the majority of the City's business premises, along with many private properties, passed through Fox and Vergette's hands either for sale, valuation or letting. To use this collection contact the Archives Service (details listed below under useful addresses).

LISTS OF BUILDINGS OF SPECIAL ARCHITECTURAL OR HISTORICAL INTEREST

The schedule of listed buildings produced by the Department of the Environment provides an architectural description of a property but very little historical detail. The published surveys by the Royal Commission of Historical Monuments have very similar architectural descriptions but their coverage is limited. The volume for Peterborough New Town published in 1969 covers most buildings before 1850, but the 1800 to 1850 period is rather selective. There are also surveys for Huntingdonshire (1926), Stamford (1977) and North-East Northamptonshire (1984). A useful website is www.imagesofengland.org.uk; it provides photographs and details of all listed buildings.

WILLS INDEXES

Wills are a useful source for house history as bequests of property may be mentioned in them. The following indexes to wills are held at Peterborough Central Library:

National Probate Indexes: Archbishopric of Canterbury 1853-1857; England and Wales 1858-1943 (includes Ireland 1877-1927, then Northern Ireland only; Scottish confirmations 1877 onwards and Colonial grants 1893 onwards) **on fiche**.

Copies of Prerogative Court of Canterbury wills from 1384 to 1858 may be viewed and obtained online at www.nationalarchives.gov.uk.

PLANS AND ARCHITECTS DRAWINGS

Plans, which could include street layouts, new buildings or structural alterations and additions to existing buildings, are held on microfilm at the Planning Department of Peterborough City Council. These are plans which have been submitted to Peterborough City Council (for planning permission) and to the former Rural and Urban District Councils (for bye-law consent). For the original Municipal Borough these begin in 1874, but for all other Councils they survive from 1895/1900.

For access please contact Local Studies Librarian.

SOURCES AT LOCAL AND NATIONAL ARCHIVE OFFICES

Archives relating to Peterborough and District may be found in the following archive offices: Peterborough, Northamptonshire, Huntingdonshire and Cambridgeshire (see addresses at the end of this leaflet). It might also be useful to check all archive sources for Peterborough at www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/nra/.

MAPS

Tithe Maps c1836-1850. These are useful as they show individual building and field boundaries and usually cover the whole parish. The accompanying apportionment gives the names and occupiers of each property.

Enclosure maps and awards c1750-1850. These are large-scale plans, which provide details of land ownership, highways, footpaths and boundaries. They may not exist for all parishes.

Estate maps. If your property formerly belonged to a large estate, such as the Burghley Estate, then it is possible that it may be featured on a private estate map or plan. These may have been deposited with the local archive office or may still remain with the estate itself.

O.S maps of the late nineteenth century may be found on www.old-maps.co.uk/.

LAND TAX RECORDS

Where these have survived, they provide a list of owners and occupiers of land and the amount of tax that was paid. On rare occasions they may have survived from the 1740's but more usually from the 1780's to the 1820's.

LAND VALUES DUTY

In 1910-1911, following the Finance Act of 1910, the 1:2500 scale Ordnance Survey maps were used as the basis for a short-lived tax on incremental land values (known as "Lloyd George's Domesday"). Inland Revenue staff wrote survey numbers on the maps for each plot of land, which were then keyed to volumes containing details of owners, occupiers, extent and rateable values.

The Land Values Duty books for the Peterborough area are now held at Northamptonshire Record Office, but sadly not the working sheets, which are believed to have been destroyed in 1968.

The most useful records are Field Books, which are still held at the National Archives, class IR58. You can find out more about the Field Books from the National Archives website. www.nationalarchives.gov.uk

HEARTH TAX ASSESSMENTS

A tax on every hearth was made during the years 1662 to 1674. From these records where they have survived, details are provided of every householder and the number of hearths in the house. The records are held at the National Archives. Copies may also be found in local archives offices. The British Record Society has started a programme of publishing all the hearth tax assessments for each county. The Cambridgeshire Hearth

Tax Returns have already been published and are available from the Local Studies Library at Peterborough.

RATE BOOKS

These may be found among parish records and usually date from the 17th to the mid 20th century. The owners or occupiers for each parish are listed.

MANORIAL RECORDS

Manorial Records can include surveys, rentals, court rolls and maps. Manor Court Rolls record the transfer of copyhold land, by sale or by inheritance from person to person. They may begin as early as the 13th century, but more likely to have survived from the 17th until 1925 when copyhold was abolished. **Before 1733 the rolls were usually in Latin.** Entries describe the property, giving the names of the new and the previous tenants. It is therefore possible to trace the property back, owner by owner, and eventually come to the date when the house was built.

HUNDRED ROLLS

A hundred was a group of parishes. In the late 13th century enquiries were made by central government into local royal rights and privileges, and the documents resulting from these enquires are known as the Hundred Rolls. These Rolls (now held at the National Archives in Kew) list the villeins, freemen and cottage tenants, with their holdings and obligations, as well as the extents of the lords' own holdings.

The Hundred Rolls were published in full by the Historical Manuscripts Commission during the early 1800s. **Please note that the rolls are written in Latin.**

USEFUL ADDRESSES

Northamptonshire Record Office
Wootton Hall Park
Northampton
NN4 9BQ
Tel: 01604 762129
Email: archivist@nothamptonshire.gov.uk

Huntingdon Record Office
Grammar School Walk
Huntingdon
PE29 6FL
Tel: 01480 375842
Email: county.records.hunts@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

Cambridge Record Office
Shire Hall
Cambridge
CB3 0AP
Tel: 01223 717281
Email: county.records.cambridge@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

Lincolnshire Archives Office
St. Rumbold Street
Lincoln
LN2 5AB
Tel: 01522 525158
Email: Lincolnshire_archive@lincolnshire.gov.uk

Peterborough Archives Service
Peterborough Central Library
Broadway
Peterborough
PE1 1RX
Tel: 01733 742700
Email: archives.services@peterborough.gov.uk
Visit is by appointment only

Since 1998 the public search rooms for wills and letters of administration from 1858 onwards for England and Wales has been at:
Principal Registry (Family Division)
Probate Department
First Avenue House
42-49 High Holborn
London WC1V 6NP
Tel: 020 79476000

Orders by post
If you are unable to visit First Avenue House, or the appropriate probate Registry, you can order by post by writing to:
The Postal Searches and Copies Department
The Probate Registry
Duncombe Place
York, YO1 2E

Land Registry
www.landreg.gov.uk

British Architectural Library
Royal Institute of British Architects
66 Portland Place
London W1B 4AD
Tel: 020 7307 3708
Papers of architects and organisations. Personal and place name indexes. Drawings and photographs. Fees charged.

USEFUL BOOKS

The following books may help you to understand some of the records you want to use. Those marked with an * can be borrowed.

N. Barratt, *Tracing the history of your house*. National Archives, 2006, (2nd edition). ISBN 1903365902 *

P. Bushell, *Tracing the history of your house*. Pavillion Books Ltd, 1989. ISBN 1851453156

P. Cunnington, *How old is your house?* Alphabooks Ltd, 1988. ISBN 0713630221

A. Elton, B. Harrison and K. Wark, *Researching the country house: a guide for local historians*. Batsford, 1992. ISBN 0713464402 *

D. Stuart, *Manorial records*. Phillimore and Co Ltd, 1992. ISBN 085033821 *

S. Raymond, *Words from wills and other probate records 1500-1800 a glossary*. Federation of Family History Societies (Publications) Ltd, 2004. ISBN 1860061818

N. Alcock, *Old title deeds*. Phillimore and Co Ltd, 1986. ISBN 085033593

G. Beech and R. Mitchell, *Maps for family and local history : the records of the Tithe, Valuation Office and National Farm Surveys*. National Archives, 2004. ISBN 1903365503

The buildings of England series, available for each county.

Peterborough Central Library
Broadway
Peterborough
PE1 1RX

Tel: (01733) 742700

Fax: (01733) 555277

Email: libraryenquiries@peterborough.gov.uk

URL: www.peterborough.gov.uk/page5682

Monday	9.00-7.00
Tuesday	9.00-7.00
Wednesday	9.00-7.00
Thursday	9.00-8.00
Friday	9.00-7.00
Saturday	9.00-6.00
Sunday	10.30-4.30

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Marion Brassington (June 2006)