Sources for Tracing the History of Your House









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This booklet is intended as a guide for anyone wishing to trace the history of their house. Details are given of the various kinds of records you can use, and where you are likely to find them. In the case of houses in the Sheffield area many of the documents are available in Sheffield City Archives and Sheffield Local Studies Library.

How to Begin

Your house does not have to be large or important for you to discover something of its history. Documents alone however cannot tell the full story of a house and you will find that not all the sources listed here are relevant to your research. If your house is more than 200 years old it will not normally be possible to discover when it was built - you are more likely to find out who the owners or occupiers were at a particular period.

Normally you should start with the present owner or occupier and work backwards. As it is not always possible to identify your exact property in some sources, it is important to trace the succession of ownership because this is the only way to be sure you are dealing with the same house at different periods.

Some of the history of your house may already have been researched, particularly if it is a building of some interest. The catalogues in Local Studies will help to locate any books or journal and newspaper articles which deal with the history of a house or the local family who may have lived there, the development of a particular estate or area or the story of buildings such as churches and chapels which may have been converted.

Architectural evidence is needed to supplement the documentary sources, especially before the 19th century when sources are less plentiful. Start by noting the materials and the style of the windows, doorways, chimneys and fireplaces for example. Various books can help you to date these features. Your house may even have a date stone giving an indication of when it was built, although this may only be the date of some rebuilding work and it may in fact be older. Your house may have featured in an old painting or have been photographed in the last century. The Local Studies Library has a large collection of local photographs, many of which are available on the Internet at www.picturesheffield.com - all of these details will help complete the picture of your home.

If you think your house might be a listed building you can consult the *Lists of Buildings* of *Special Architectural or Historic Interest*. Sheffield City Archives has a set of the lists for South Yorkshire, and the lists for Sheffield and the areas covered by Bradfield and Ecclesfield Parish councils and Stocksbridge Town Council; those for Sheffield, Bradfield and Ecclesfield and Stocksbridge are also available at the Local Studies Library.

Title Deeds

These are the most obvious and useful source, if they survive, because you have a potted history of your house straight away. You may have the deeds to your house already or know where they are, e.g. in the hands of your solicitor, or still in the possession of a previous owner or their solicitor. Alternatively, the deeds may have been deposited in a record office.

Deeds have to be treated with caution, and to interpret them correctly it is necessary to have some background knowledge of the legal forms used. Nevertheless they can provide vital information about the owners and occupiers, the uses to which the property has been put, any extensions and alterations and even when it was built.

Amongst a bundle of conveyances, mortgages and leases you may also find other useful documents such as plans, sale particulars and probate records which can help to fill in more details.

A Registry of Deeds was established in 1704 to register deeds relating to freehold (but not copyhold) property in the West Riding (which included Sheffield and South Yorkshire) and several million deeds were registered before the closure of the Registry in 1970. Users can search the indexes of names, places and wills to trace their house. The Registry of Deeds is now the responsibility of the West Yorkshire Archive Service in Wakefield (Registry of Deeds, Newstead Road, Wakefield, WF1 2DE) (www.archives.wyjs.org.uk).

Similar registries exist for the East Riding in Beverley and the North Riding in Northallerton.

Useful reading:

- Old Title Deeds, Nat Alcock (2001)
- An Introduction to Reading Old Title Deeds, Julian Cornwall (1993)
- Title Deeds, A A Dibben (1968)
- How to Read Old Title Deeds, J Cornwall (1964)

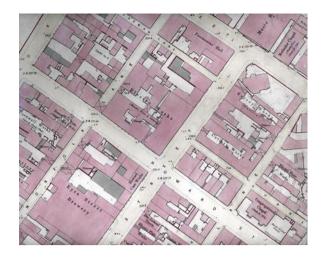
Maps

Care should always be taken in using maps because unless it is at a large scale you cannot be certain that the building shown is actually your house - it could be an earlier building on the same site - and you will need to cross-check with other sources.

a) Ordnance Survey Maps

The value of Ordnance Survey maps lies in their coverage of areas over a period of time from the mid-nineteenth century onwards. There are various scales, with the first six-inch to the mile maps appearing in 1840. The larger the scale the more detail - every road, field, stream, house and shed appears on the large scale maps, and many fields, woods and houses are named. It is advisable to use the most recent editions first to identify your property and then work backwards to earlier ones.

The Local Studies Library has a large collection of Ordnance Survey maps, both 6 inch and 25 inch scales for Sheffield and north Derbyshire. Of particular use are the very large scale Town Plans of Sheffield, the 5 feet to one mile produced in 1850-1851 and the 10 feet to one mile produced in 1889-1890.



Ordnance Survey 1:500 plan 294/8/21, 1890

b) <u>Tithe Apportionments and Maps</u>

If there is a tithe award for your village or town it may provide you with an accurate large-scale map for the period 1840-1850. They are usually 25 inches to one mile in scale, coloured and show individual fields and often buildings as well, all separately numbered. The numbers on the plan can be checked in the apportionment which will tell you the name of the owner and occupier of the property at that time, together with the acreage and use of the land.

Note: tithe awards were not made for all places because in some villages the tithes had been commuted by an agreement before 1836.

c) Enclosure Awards and Maps

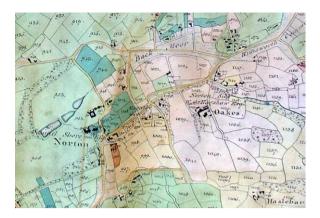
The enclosure of open fields and meadows into smaller field units for greater efficiency in farming began in the later Middle Ages but reached a peak between 1750 and 1850.

Enclosure maps often cover a whole village or township, showing the buildings, fields and roads, with the parcels of land to be enclosed numbered.

The accompanying award lists the freeholders in the township and indicates which pieces of land were allotted to them.

A useful guide to the whereabouts of local enclosure awards and maps is *Yorkshire Enclosure Awards*, Barbara English (1985).





Norton Enclosure Map, 1825. (Sheffield City Archives Ref. NSC/127)

d) Other Maps

Sheffield City Archives holds an extensive collection of manuscript maps dating from the mid-eighteenth to early-nineteenth centuries, compiled by the Fairbank family of surveyors. The Fairbank Collection also includes many note books with sketch maps, surveys and measurements, plans of buildings and a series of Building Books (with an index) which record the construction of and alterations to buildings by the Fairbanks.

Manuscript maps can also be found in other deposited collections, most notably in the Arundel Castle Manuscripts which include maps and surveys of the Dukes of Norfolk estates by the Fairbanks. You can download a guide to the Fairbank Collection from our website (www.sheffield.gov.uk/archives - click on 'Research Guides A-Z', then 'F').

A comprehensive card index, arranged by parish, is available in the Archives searchroom for both the Fairbank Collection and the maps in the Arundel Castle Manuscripts. For other maps see the general map index and the place index.



Fairbank map (Sheffield City Archives Ref. FC/She 7b)

Useful reading:

- Maps for Historians, Paul Hindle (1998)
- Ordnance Survey Maps, A Concise Guide for Historians, Richard Oliver (2005)
- Enclosure Records for Historians, Steven Hollowell (2000)

• Tithes - Maps, Apportionments and the 1836 Act, Eric J Evans (1997)

Directories

Directories can be a useful source of information but they must be used with caution. Some of the information may be out of date and they are unlikely to be comprehensive, particularly in poorer districts where only a few properties may be listed. There are also some years when no directory was published.

The first directory for Sheffield appeared in 1774 but this was purely a list of the more specialised Sheffield trades. Through the 19th century most directories adopted a standard format. First, an alphabetical list of personal and business names for which there is no comparable listing elsewhere. Second, an alphabetical street listing which gives the occupant of each property, although it should be remembered that house numbers were a relatively late innovation in some areas and other properties were sometimes re-numbered. The third and final section contains a classified trade list.

Districts that now form part of the city but were once separate communities, sometimes appear in a 'Suburbs' section or in one of the County Directories which usually exclude the major urban areas. Entries in these sections are not as useful as they only give selective lists of inhabitants.

The last Sheffield directory appeared in 1974 but by this time there were significant gaps in the coverage.

Local Studies has a comprehensive collection of Sheffield directories, a few West Riding county directories and a set of Derbyshire directories on microfiche. Sheffield City Archives has a selection of directories, and the reference section of Sheffield's Central Library has some county directories.

You can download a list of trade directories available at Archives and Local Studies from our website (www.sheffield.gov.uk/archives - click on 'Collections A-Z' followed by 'T').

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Black Swan Yard, 4, Flustone street
Black Swan Yard, 4, Flustone
Black Swan Yard, 5, Flustone

Page from 1822 Trade Directory for Sheffield

Sale Particulars

Notices of house sales were often inserted in local newspapers or nailed on a house wall prior to a sale. Of greater value are estate agents' or auctioneers' sale particulars which give a description of the property, its rooms, grounds and outlying buildings. There may even be an illustration or plan of the property attached as well. Where a

whole estate was for sale this would include descriptions of the tenants' farms and cottages in addition to the owner's house.

The main collection of sale particulars in Sheffield City Archives is in the Bush Collection (a firm of local auctioneers), but there are others besides, and a card index is available in the searchroom. The Local Studies Library has a general collection of local sale plans.

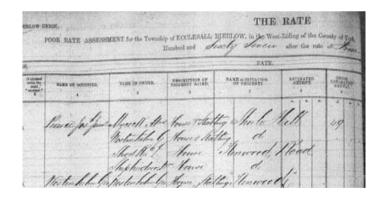


Sale plan for the Firvale Estate, 19 May 1885 (Sheffield City Archives Ref. Bush Sale Plans)

Rate Books

Parish rate assessments for poor relief can provide a list of owners and occupiers of a property over a lengthy period, sometimes from the 17th century. The first time that a house appears is a fair indication that it had recently been built, and a changed rateable value can imply alterations, additions or even rebuilding.

Separate series of rate books exist for each township in Sheffield on an annual basis from the eighteenth century. Some of the early rates included levies for land tax or window tax as well. Rate books are available at Sheffield City Archives.

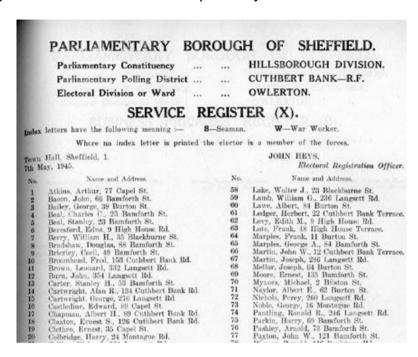


Rate Book, Ecclesall Bierlow. Sheffield City Archives Ref., Microfilm

Electoral Records

Electoral registers give the names and addresses of electors in each municipal ward, the earliest for Sheffield being 1843. The number of names increases considerably with the extension of the franchise under Acts of 1867 and 1884.

The electoral registers for Sheffield are held by the Local Studies Library, whilst those for the other districts, such as Barnsley, are held in their respective libraries. Registers for areas which used to lie outside Sheffield, such as Norton and Stannington, can be found in Derby and Wakefield libraries respectively.



Service Register for Cuthbert Bank Polling District, 1945 (Local Studies Library Ref. 324.241S)

Further reading:

- Electoral Registers, J S W Gibson (1996)
- Electoral registers since 1832; and Burgess Rolls, J S W Gibson and Colin Rodgers (1989)

Census

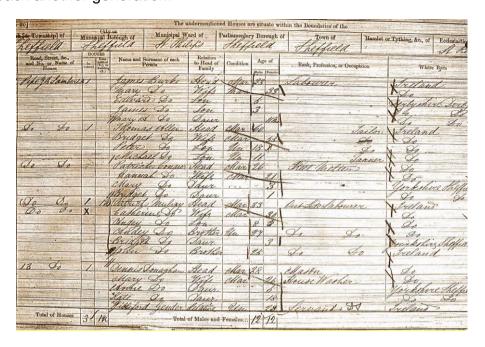
Census returns provide complete lists of inhabitants of every town and village in the country for the years 1841, 1851, 1861, 1871, 1881, 1891, 1901 and 1911. The original returns are held in the National Archives in London, and copies can be searched on the genealogy websites www.ancestry.co.uk and www.findmypast.co.uk (free access to the latter service is available in all Sheffield libraries).

The 1939 Register - compiled in September 1939 to aid the production of identity cards and ration books during wartime - is not a census, but it is arranged along similar lines and includes information on all householders in England and Wales. This too is available to search on the Ancestry and Find My Past websites.

Microfilm copies for the whole of South Yorkshire for censuses 1841-1901 are held in Sheffield City Archives, and for Sheffield at the Local Studies Library.

Street indexes for Sheffield, Rotherham, Barnsley and Doncaster are available in the Sheffield Archives' searchroom annexe. For more rural areas, however, addresses are not always given in the returns and it may be necessary to use them in conjunction with

a tithe map, for example, to work out the route which the census enumerator took through the village. Checking each census year is also useful for determining family relationships, which may be important in tracing the ownership or occupation of a property back another generation.



1861 Census return for Pipe Yard, Lambert Street, Sheffield (RG9/3480, ED5, Folio 86)

Useful reading:

- Making Use of the Census, Susan Lomas (2002)
- Census Returns on Microfilm: Directory to Local Holdings, J S W Gibson (1994)

Plans

a) Architectural Plans

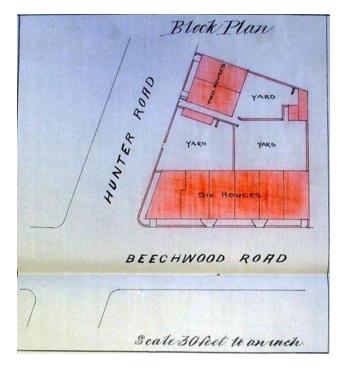
Various local firms of architects have deposited plans and drawings in the Sheffield City Archives, many of which include private dwellings.

b) <u>Building Bye-Law Regulations</u>

From October 1864 anyone intending to build or alter a dwelling house in Sheffield had to seek permission from the Town Council. Registers were kept of the plans which were submitted to ensure that the proposed buildings complied with the local building bye-law regulations. From 1875 similar powers were given to urban and rural district councils, and when these districts - Norton, Handsworth and Hillsborough - were taken inside Sheffield's boundary their records were transferred to Sheffield.

Not all the plans have survived, but there are lists available at Sheffield City Archives.

Sheffield City Archives also holds the registers and plans for Wortley Rural District Council up to 1936.



Beechwood Road Block Plan, Sheffield c. 1893 (Sheffield City Archives Ref. CA212/314)

c) <u>Deposited Plans</u>

From 1792 onwards, whenever an authority planned public works like a canal, railway or turnpike road the project had to be properly surveyed and a plan left with the Clerk of the Peace. Where property was affected by such a development it would appear on the plan. Deposited plans for the West Riding which included Sheffield and South Yorkshire are now held by the West Yorkshire Archive Service (Registry of Deeds, Newstead Road, Wakefield, WF1 2DE) (www.archives.wyjs.org.uk).

Fire Insurance

Many buildings have been insured against fire since the 17th century and original policies survive in some collections of title deeds. People would also fix a numbered plaque, called a fire-mark, to an outside wall so that the insurance company's fire brigade could be sure they were attending the correct house. The numbers on the fire marks can be checked in the records of that particular company, which usually give details of the construction of the house. The records of some of the older insurance companies have been deposited in the Guildhall Library, Aldermanbury, London EC2V 7HH (now administered by London Metropolitan Archives, https://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/things-to-do/history-and-heritage/london-metropolitan-archives).

Sheffield City Archives holds Goad Fire Insurance plans of central Sheffield for 1895-1906 (ref. SY674) and a microfilm of the records of the Thorne Agency of the County Fire Office 1818-1920 (ref. SY134).

Probate Records

When you have discovered the names of some of the owners or occupiers of your house you can check to see if any of them left a will, which might describe the property more fully and say to whom it was left. Many 17th and early 18th century wills are accompanied by probate inventories of the deceased's property, describing each room and its contents with values, so that you gain an impression of the layout of the house.

Before 1858 wills were proved in ecclesiastical courts. For parishes in Yorkshire original wills are deposited at the Borthwick Institute for Archives, University of York, Heslington, York YO10 5DD (www.york.ac.uk/borthwick/). For parishes formerly in Derbyshire (but now in Sheffield) original wills are deposited in the Staffordshire Record Office, Eastgate Street, Stafford, ST16 2LZ (www.staffordshire.gov.uk/archives). Sheffield City Archives holds photocopies of a number of wills and inventories for Beighton, Dore, Mosborough and Norton - see the relevant list in the searchroom.

There are copies of wills and inventories in many family and solicitors' collections in Sheffield City Archives. Check the personal name index or under WILLS in the subject index.

Since 1858 wills have been proved in district probate registries and Sheffield City Archives holds indexes to all wills proved in England and Wales between 1858 and 1943.



Probate of John Netherwood of Kildwick, 1779 (Sheffield City Archives Ref. MD8)

Useful reading:

- Yorkshire Probate, E L Withers (2006)
- Wills and Their Whereabouts, A J Camp (1974)
- Wills and Where to Find Them, J S W Gibson (1974)

Taxation

a) Land Tax

Land tax assessments were made across the whole country by valuers who surveyed all property and made returns every spring to the local magistrates.

The assessments were arranged by parish and give details of the owners and occupiers together with a description of the property.

Sheffield City Archives holds local land tax assessments form 1836 to 1899 - look under LAND TAX in the subject index in the searchroom. The earlier ones, from 1752, are with the West Yorkshire Archive Service in Wakefield (Registry of Deeds, Newstead Road, Wakefield, WF1 2DE) (www.archives.wyjs.org.uk).

b) Hearth Tax

The hearth tax was introduced in the seventeenth century as a tax on all hearths in every household. A parish official made a list of all the houses, naming occupiers and noting the number of hearths. The originals are kept at the National Archives in London, but Sheffield City Archives holds a microfilm of the assessments for 1672 together with a few original documents - look under HEARTH TAX in the subject index in the searchroom.

c) Window Tax

This tax was introduced in the late seventeenth century and detailed returns were made house by house providing the name and address of the taxpayer, the number of windows on which tax was paid and the amount of money paid. To avoid the tax many householders blocked some of their windows up, but these assessments together with the hearth tax do give some indication of the size of a house.

Sheffield City Archives holds some records relating to the window tax - look under WINDOW TAX in the subject index in the searchroom.

Useful reading:

• Local Taxation, J V Beckett (1980)

Manorial and Estate Records

Some houses have at times formed part of a large estate, and information about the house you are researching may be found in the records of a local landed family, charity, church or business. Estate records include rentals, surveys, maps, leases and other documents such as building accounts which can all be useful in tracing the history of a house and its occupiers.

If there are no early title deeds relating to your property it could be because it was formerly "copyhold", that is held by copy of court roll. The records of manorial courts contain details of how copyhold property was transferred from one person to another. Many local manorial and estate records have been deposited in Sheffield City Archives. The National Archives maintains a list of the whereabouts of manorial records, whether in private hands or deposited in a record office (http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/manor-search).

The largest estate collections in Sheffield City Archives are the Wentworth Woodhouse Muniments and the Arundel Castle Manuscripts. The latter collection includes a series of registers of building leases for Sheffield. Detailed lists are available in the searchroom.





Ecclesfield Court Roll c. 1730 (Sheffield City Archives Ref. MD596 and MD597)

Useful reading:

- Using Manorial Records, Mary Ellis (1994)
- Manorial Records, Denis Stuart (1992)
- Manorial Records (Archives and the User), P D A Harvey (1999)

Converted Dwellings

Some buildings created for special purposes may have been adapted for domestic use at a later date, for example if a former chapel has been converted to a house it would be necessary to check local Nonconformist records. For former Church of England property, such as a vicarage perhaps, try the lists of parish records, in particular glebe terriers. For an old almshouse try parish or poor law records. For a former, or indeed still current, public house, Sheffield City Archives has registers of beerhouses and licensed victuallers for c.1870 - c.1935 in the Magistrates' Court records (Ref: MC). Earlier alehouse licences issued at the Quarter Sessions can be found at the West Yorkshire Archive Service in the Wakefield Registry of Deeds, Newstead Road, Wakefield, WF1 2DE (www.archives.wyjs.org.uk).

Other Sources

Newspapers are an invaluable source of local information, including details of property available for sale or to rent. Photographs of houses began to appear as part of property advertisements by the 1920s.

Newspapers for the Sheffield area from the 1780s to the present day are available on microfilm at Local Studies. However, you will need to have some idea of the date before you begin to search. Indexes or cuttings files are only available for some years and even these are unlikely to include reference to houses unless they are particularly important.

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Sale Particulars, Tapton Hill, Sheffield 1815

The British Newspaper Archive (<u>www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk</u>) includes copies of the *Sheffield Independent*, 1819 - 1900; *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 1855 - 1903; and the *Sheffield Evening Telegraph*, 1887 - 1897.

Archives of some national newspapers are available on the internet, notably *The Times* (http://archive.timesonline.co.uk) and *The Guardian* (http://archive.guardian.co.uk)

Photographs and other illustrations can offer a unique visual record of houses that have now disappeared or whose surrounding have changed dramatically. They can also help to confirm evidence found in other sources such as maps or show how buildings have changed over a period.

The Local Studies Library holds an extensive collection of photographs, a large proportion of which can be searched online at www.picturesheffield.com. Illustrations may also appear in the books and other printed sources available in Local Studies.

Further Reading

- Tracing the History of Your House: The Building, The People, The Past, Nick Barratt (2006)
- House Histories for Beginners, Colin and O-lan Style (2006)
- Discovering Your Old House, David Iredale (1977)
- Sources for the History of Houses, John H Harvey (1974)
- Sources for Local Historians, Paul Carter and Kate Thompson (2005)
- English Architectural History: A Guide to Sources, H M Colvin (1976)
- A Bibliography on Vernacular Architecture, R de Zouch Hall (1972)

- The English Farmhouse and Cottage, M W Barley (1961)
- The English Terraced House, Stefan Muthesius (1982)
- Timber Framed Buildings in South Yorkshire, Peter Ryder (1979)
- Sheffield: Pevsner Architectural Guides, Ruth Harman and John Minnis (2004)

Sheffield City Archives and Local Studies service collects and preserves original records and printed material relating to Sheffield and the surrounding area.

The information dates from the 12th century to the present and relates to Sheffield, South Yorkshire and north Derbyshire.

Included are extensive collections of books • pamphlets • photographs • church registers • newspapers • census records • minutes • diaries • films • maps • deeds • records from schools • hospitals • businesses and charities • family estates • personal papers etc.

Our facilities include:

Study areas • expert staff on hand to help you make the most of your visit • a library of reference books • photocopying and photography services • free Internet access • free WiFi • microform machines and printers • catalogues and indexes • on-line image library.

Adding to our collections

Sheffield Libraries and Archives seek to preserve information about events in our city's history. If you have photographs or personal papers that may be worth preserving please consider safeguarding them for current and future generations by placing them in the care of Sheffield Libraries and Archives. It is only through the generosity of individuals and organisations that we are able to have a complete record of important events in the history of Sheffield and the nation. We are interested in photographs, flyers and posters, minutes of meetings etc. For advice on record keeping and the facilities we offer please us (archives@sheffield.gov.uk or 0114 203 9395).

Sheffield Local Studies Library

1st floor Central Library Surrey Street Sheffield S1 1XZ

Sheffield City Archives

52 Shoreham Street Sheffield S1 4SP

Tel: 0114 273 4753

archives@sheffield.gov.uk

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Search our catalogues

(not all of the collections are fully catalogued so if you can't find what you are looking for please contact us for further advice)

Local Studies Library: http://library.sheffield.gov.uk/uhtbin/webcat

City Archives: http://www.calmview.eu/SheffieldArchives/CalmView/

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