

# Tracing the History of Your House



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Tracing the History of your House

Sheffield Archives and Local Studies services collect and preserve 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.

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# SHEFFIELD LIBRARIES, ARCHIVES AND INFORMATION

## Tracing the History of your House

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## Tracing the History of your House

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 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 were the owners or occupiers 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 re-building 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](http://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 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 the record office.

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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 Archives Service in Wakefield (Registry of Deeds, Newstead Road, Wakefield, WF1 2DE) ([www.archives.wyjs.org.uk](http://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.

## Tracing the History of your House



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

### b) Tithe Apportionments and Maps

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

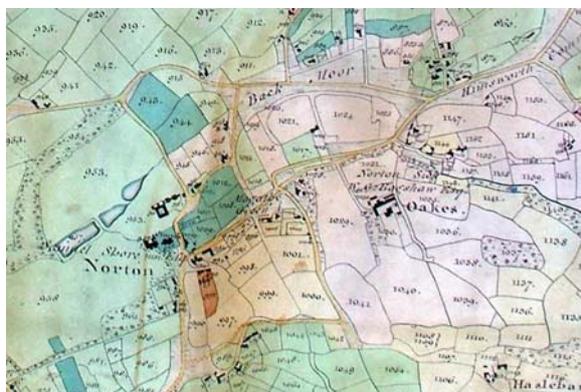
The enclosure of open fields and meadows into smaller field units for greater efficiency in farming began in the later Middle Ages but reached a peak between 1750 and 1850.

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).

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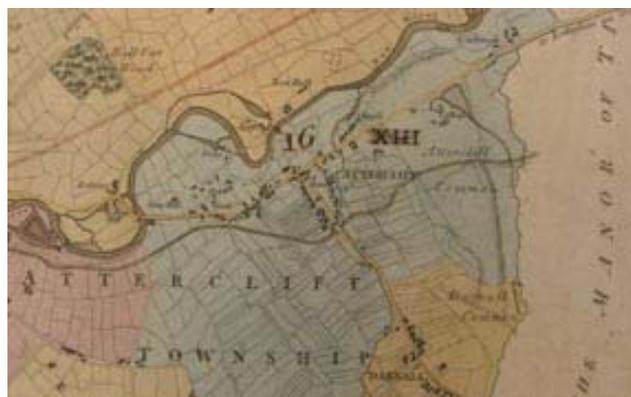
(Norton Enclosure Map, 1825.  
Sheffield Archives Ref: NSC/127)

d) Other Maps

Sheffield Archives holds a fine 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's estates by the Fairbanks. You can download a guide to the Fairbank Collection from our website ([www.sheffield.gov.uk/localstudies](http://www.sheffield.gov.uk/localstudies) - click on local history)

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 Archives Ref: FC/She 7b)

## Tracing the History of your House

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. Third, 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 Archives have a selection of directories and the Arts, Social Sciences and Sports Reference 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/localstudies](http://www.sheffield.gov.uk/localstudies) - click on 'What collections do we have?')

List of Streets, &c. in Sheffield,				
IN 1700.				
Balm green	Castle hill	High street	Pinfold lane	The Underwater
Broad lane	Church lane	Holbo lane or	Ratten row	Townhead st.
Bull stake	Far gate	Blind lane	Red croft	Waingate
Campo lane	Fig Tree lane or	Irish cross	Scargill croft	Water lane
Castle fold	New street	Mill sands	Saig hill	West bar
Castle green	Hartshead	New hall street	The Isle	West bar green
Castle grn. head				
IN 1821.				
Ainley Yard, 72, Newfield	Bishop Street, Tudor street			
Albion Row, Broad lane end	Black Swan Yard, 7, Burgess street			
Albion Square, 20, Solly street	Back Swan Yard, 3, Fargate			
Allen Street, Gibraltar street,	Blast Lane, Canal bridge			
Allen Yard, 13, Smithfield	Blank Street, Wicker			
Allot's Yard, 18, Porter lane	Blue Bell Yard, 43, High street			
Alpha Cottages, Highfield	Boot Yard, Redhill			
Alsop Row, 5, Porter lane	Boot and Shoe Yard, Pinstone street			
Andrew Street, Wicker	Bower Spring, Westbar green			
Andrew's Yard, 29, Furnace hill	Bower Street, Spring street			
Angel Street, Market place	Bower's Buildings, 27, Pye bank			
Appleyard's Yard, 21, Furnace hill	Bower's Yard, 33, Nursery			
Armitage Yard, 13, Gaol street	Bowling Green Street, Gibraltar street			
Arundel Street, Norfolk street	Bradley's Yard, 5, Hollis croft			
Arundel Lane, Arundel street	Bradow Row, 85, Rockingham street			

(Page from 1822 Trade Directory for Sheffield)



## Tracing the History of your House

**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.

**PARLIAMENTARY BOROUGH OF SHEFFIELD.**

Parliamentary Constituency ... .. HILLSBOROUGH DIVISION.  
Parliamentary Polling District ... .. CUTHBERT BANK—R.F.  
Electoral Division or Ward ... .. OWLERTON.

**SERVICE REGISTER (X).**

Index letters have the following meaning :—     **S**—Seaman.     **W**—War Worker.  
Where no index letter is printed the elector is a member of the forces.

Town Hall, Sheffield, 1.     JOHN HEYS,  
7th May, 1945.     Electoral Registration Officer.

No.	Name and Address.	No.	Name and Address.
1	Atkins, Arthur, 77 Chapel St.	58	Lake, Walter J., 23 Blackburne St.
2	Bacon, John, 66 Bamforth St.	59	Lamb, William G., 236 Langsett Rd.
3	Bailey, George, 39 Burton St.	60	Lawe, Albert, 84 Burton St.
4	Beal, Charles C., 23 Bamforth St.	61	Ledger, Herbert, 22 Cuthbert Bank Terrace.
5	Beal, Stanley, 23 Bamforth St.	62	Levy, Edith M., 9 High House Rd.
6	Beresford, Edna, 9 High House Rd.	63	Lote, Frank, 48 High House Terrace.
7	Berry, William H., 35 Blackburne St.	64	Marples, Frank, 11 Burton St.
8	Bridshaw, Douglas, 88 Bamforth St.	65	Marples, George A., 84 Bamforth St.
9	Brierley, Cecil, 49 Bamforth St.	66	Martin, John W., 12 Cuthbert Bank Terrace.
10	Broomhead, Fred, 153 Cuthbert Bank Rd.	67	Martin, Joseph, 286 Langsett Rd.
11	Brown, Leonard, 332 Langsett Rd.	68	Mellor, Joseph, 64 Burton St.
12	Burn, John, 354 Langsett Rd.	69	Moore, Ernest, 135 Bamforth St.
13	Carter, Stanley H., 53 Bamforth St.	70	Mynors, Michael, 2 Bilston St.
14	Cartwright, Alan R., 134 Cuthbert Bank Rd.	71	Naylor, Albert E., 62 Burton St.
15	Cartwright, George, 270 Langsett Rd.	72	Nichols, Percy, 260 Langsett Rd.
16	Castleline, Edward, 89 Chapel St.	73	Noble, George, 16 Montague Rd.
17	Chapman, Albert H., 89 Chapel St.	74	Pantling, Ronald R., 246 Langsett Rd.
18	Claxton, Ernest S., 126 Cuthbert Bank Rd.	75	Parkin, Harry, 69 Bamforth St.
19	Clethro, Ernest, 35 Chapel St.	76	Pashley, Arnold, 73 Bamforth St.
20	Colbridge, Harry, 24 Montague Rd.	77	Paxton, John W., 121 Bamforth St.

(Service Register for Cuthbert Bank Polling District , 1945 Ref: 324.241S)

Further reading:

- *Electoral Registers*, JSW Gibson (1996)
- *Electoral registers since 1832; and Burgess Rolls*, JSW 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 and 1901. The original returns are held in the National Archives in London, they are all available to search via the Internet at: [www.Ancestry.com](http://www.Ancestry.com). Free access to this online service is available at all Sheffield Libraries.

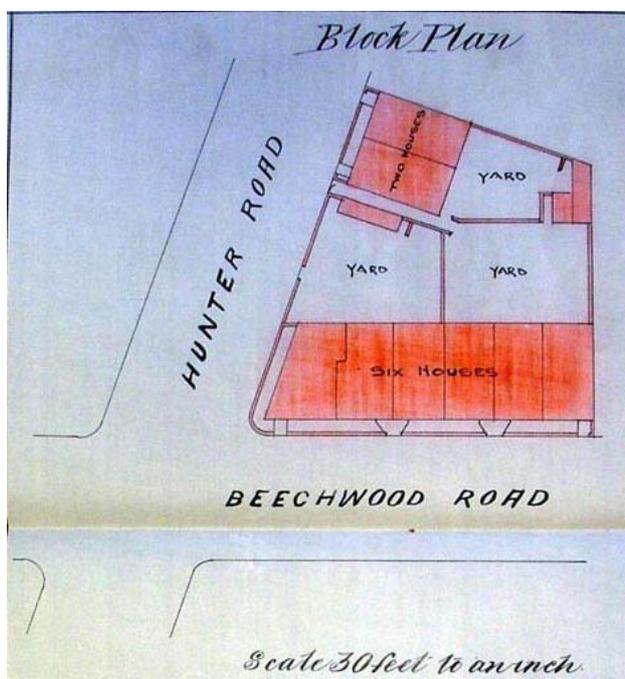
Microfilm copies for the whole of South Yorkshire for the above years are held in Sheffield Archives, and for Sheffield at the Local Studies Library.



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

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



(Beechwood Road Block Plan,  
Sheffield c. 1893  
Sheffield Archives CA 212/314)

c) Deposited Plans

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 Archives Service, West Yorkshire Archives Service (Registry of Deeds, Newstead Road, Wakefield, WF1 2DE) ([www.archives.wyjs.org.uk](http://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, EC2P 2EJ ([www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/libraries](http://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/libraries))

Sheffield Archives holds Goad Fire Insurance plans of central Sheffield for 1895-1906 (Ref: SY 674) and a microfilm of the records of the Thorne Agency of the County Fire Office 1818-1920 (Ref: SY134).

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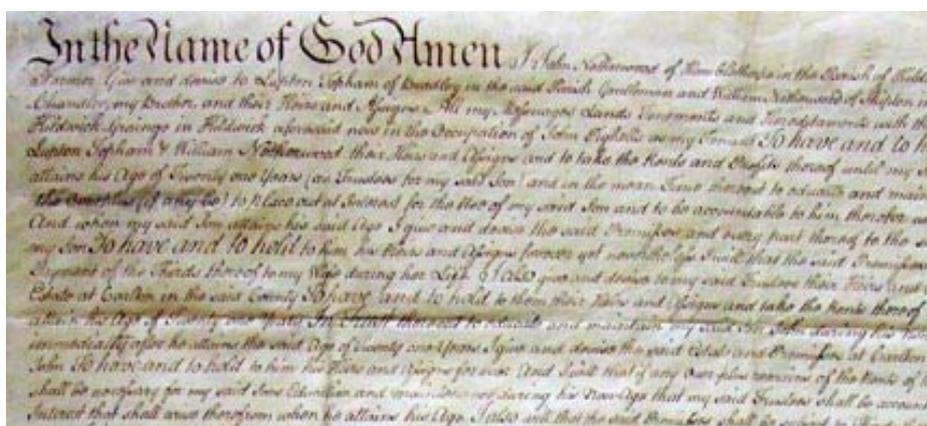
**Probate Records**

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/inst/bihr](http://www.york.ac.uk/inst/bihr)). For parishes formerly in Derbyshire (but now in Sheffield) original wills are deposited in the Lichfield Record Office, The Friary, Lichfield WS13 6QG ([www.staffordshire.gov.uk/archives](http://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/archives)), but Sheffield 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 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 Archives holds indexes to all wills proved in England and Wales between 1858 and 1943.



(Probate of John Netherwood of Kildwick, 1779  
Sheffield Archives Ref: MD 8)

## 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 Archives holds local land tax assessments from 1836 to 1899 – look under LAND TAX in the subject index in the searchroom. The earlier ones, from 1752, are with the West Yorkshire Archives Service in Wakefield (Registry of Deeds, Newstead Road, Wakefield, WF1 2DE) ([www.archives.wyjs.org.uk](http://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 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 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

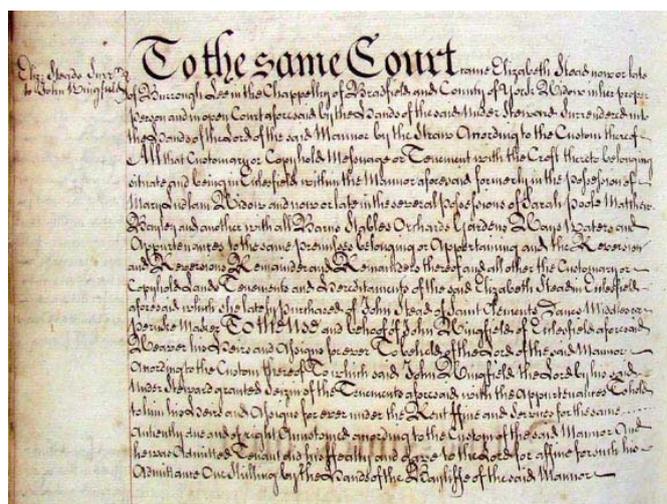
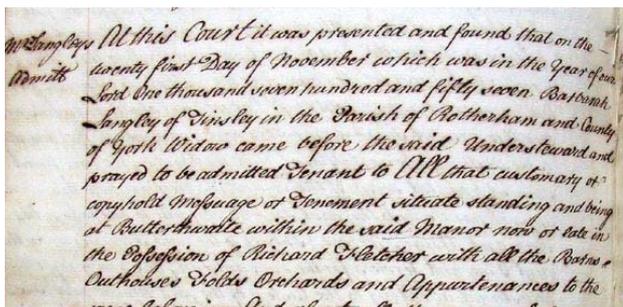
Some houses have at times formed part of a large estate, and information about the house you are researching may be found in the records of a local landed family, charity, church or business. Estate records include rentals, surveys, maps, leases and other documents such as building accounts which can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

## Tracing the History of your House

Many local manorial and estate records have been deposited in Sheffield Archives. The National Archives maintains a list of the whereabouts of manorial records, whether in private hands or deposited in a record office.

The largest estate collections in Sheffield 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 Archives MD 596 and 597)

Useful reading:

- *Using Manorial Records*, Mary Ellis (1994)
- *Manorial Records*, Denis Stuart (1992)
- *Manorial Records (Archives and the User)*, PDA 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 Archives has registers of beerhouses and licensed victuallers for c1870 - c1935 in the Magistrates Court records (Ref: MC). Earlier alehouse licences issued at the Quarter Sessions can be found at the West Yorkshire Archives Service in Wakefield Registry of Deeds, Newstead Road, Wakefield, WF1 2DE ([www.archives.wyjs.org.uk](http://www.archives.wyjs.org.uk)).

## Tracing the History of your House

## 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.

*Tapton Hill, near Sheffield,*  
YORKSHIRE.  
TO BE SOLD BY AUCTION,  
BY MR. ROBINSON,  
(Unless previously disposed of by Private Contract,  
At the King's Head Inn, Change Alley, Sheffield, afore-  
said, on Friday, the 9th day of June, 1815, at Four  
o'Clock in the Afternoon, in such Lots, and subject to  
such Conditions and other Arrangements as will be  
produced at the time and place of Sale;

THE FOLLOWING  
VALUABLE FREEHOLD ESTATE, situate at  
Tapton Hill, in the Township of Upper Hallam,  
near Sheffield; the whole of which is exonerated from  
Land Tax, in the respective occupations of George  
Dronfeld and Joseph Badger, who will shew the same.

VIZ.	A. E. P.
Dwelling House, Barn, Stables, Outbuilding and large Tanner Field	5 0 0
First Cow Hay	2 2 0
Second Cow Hay	2 0 0
Third Cow Hay	3 0 0
The Honey Poke Close	1 0 0
Ellys Storth	3 2 0
The Bank Close	1 0 0
	A. 18 0 0

A very valuable bed of Coal is supposed to be under  
the whole of the Estate.  
Further Particulars may be had of Mr. Bateur,  
Solicitor, Doncaster, or at the Office of the Auctioneer,  
in Mansfield.

(Sale Particulars, Tapton Hill, Sheffield 1815)

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.

Local Studies have a collection of over 60,000 photographs and most of the pre-1950 images are now available on the Picture Sheffield computer system. These are indexed by house name, street, etc and a selection of the images can be seen at [www.picturesheffield.co.uk](http://www.picturesheffield.co.uk). Illustrations may also appear in the books and other printed sources available in Local Studies.

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**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 LIBRARIES, ARCHIVES AND INFORMATION

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Fax: 0114 273 5009

localstudies.library@sheffield.gov.uk

Sheffield Archives  
52 Shoreham Street  
Sheffield  
Sheffield  
S1 4SP

Tel: 0114 203 9395

Fax: 0114 203 9398

archives@sheffield.gov.uk

General details: [www.sheffield.gov.uk/libraries](http://www.sheffield.gov.uk/libraries)

Local Studies catalogues (since 1997):  
<http://hip.sheffield.gov.uk>

Archives catalogues: [wwa2a.org.uk](http://wwa2a.org.uk)

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