



Tracing the History of your House at Peterborough Archives

The aim of this leaflet is to guide you to sources that are available within the collections held in **Peterborough Archives and Local Studies**, 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 Archives Service has many original documents, but it may still be necessary to visit the archives for Northamptonshire, Huntingdonshire and Cambridgeshire to complete your research.

How to begin

Tracing the history of a house or other building can be very interesting and rewarding but can involve many hours of detailed research. There are many guides that have been published to help you understand some of the records you want to use. We have some of these publications available within our local studies collection.

Architecture: To begin, it is a good idea to photograph the building and in particular any distinctive architectural features such as doors, windows, staircases, fireplaces and brickwork. You can then check these features in general books about architecture. A good website to help you get started is <https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/your-home/your-homes-history/how-to-find-out/>

Before visiting a library or archive office, draw a basic floor plan of the building, and a site plan, as these will assist your research when you check this information against other sources such as maps.

Title Deeds: Check the deeds for the property, as these may include a short description of the building, its location, and provide a history of ownership. The abstract of title may provide extracts from deeds that have not survived. Names of former owners and occupiers are useful, as these can lead you to other sources.

Main Sources at Peterborough Archives and Local Studies

Maps

We have a comprehensive collection of maps for the local area. This includes **Ordnance Survey maps** at 6" and 25" to the mile, for Peterborough, dated 1886, 1901 and 1927, as well as more recent editions in the late 1960s/early 1970s. Ordnance Survey maps are very detailed and accurate, and 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.

Inclosure maps are large scale plans which provide details of land ownership, highways, footpaths and boundaries. These cover the surrounding parishes of Peterborough. They date from c.1750-c.1890 and are useful sources for plans of individual villages prior to the early Ordnance Survey maps.

Census Records 1841-1901

These records list the names and occupations of people who were present in a property on the day when the census was taken. We have census records on microfilm for Peterborough, Stamford, Oundle and Whittlesey registration districts, from 1841-1901. The 1911, 1921 census and 1939 register are available online at ancestry.co.uk and findmypast.co.uk. It can however, sometimes be difficult to

identify an individual house, as quite often properties were not given a house number.

Electoral Registers

Registers from the 1850s, relating to the City of Peterborough and the area of its Parliamentary Constituency are held here. The earlier editions are held on microfilm, and from 1951 in bound volumes. These record the names and addresses of people who were allowed to vote. It is not possible to search these registers by name only. You need to know the street or at least be able to narrow your search down to a specific area of the city.

Street/Trade Directories

These directories were published intermittently for Peterborough and the surrounding counties during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. They are useful as a quick guide to identifying a property and the head of household, or owner/proprietor if it was a commercial property. Some directories list the streets alphabetically as well as listing by surname. Be aware that omissions and errors may occur, and street names or numbers may have been changed.

Photographs

The people most likely to have photographs of your house are former residents. Nevertheless, always check at local archives offices for any existence of photographs of your street or village. These may include a view of your property, but this is not guaranteed. We have a collection of over one thousand views of city street scenes taken in the 1960s, before re-development changed Peterborough from 1968 onwards. This collection of photographs, known as **The Kitchin Collection** was created by Mr Ramon Kitchin, and includes many city centre streets and the surrounding parishes. Many of these images can be viewed online at <https://peterboroughlibraries.org.uk/archive-collections>

Sales Particulars and Advertisements

It can be useful to check for advertisements and details of auctions and property sales in local newspapers, especially if you know the date of a sale. 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, for example. The name of tenants/occupiers may also be given. We hold the main **local newspapers** for Peterborough, dating from the mid 19th century onwards.

The Fox and Vergette Collection contains original sales particulars, catalogues and auction notices dating from 1896-1980. Fox and Vergette were auctioneers and valuers. 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 their hands, either for sale, valuation or letting. The properties are indexed by street or parish with names of vendors. The sales particulars will sometimes include floor plans and photographs.

Probate Inventories

Inventories were often made as part of the process of proving wills. They were lists of the belongings of the deceased, drawn up by the executors, and include the financial value of each item. They are often the only surviving indication of the sorts of possessions people owned and valued in the past. Pinning an inventory down to a specific surviving building is often very difficult though.

We have microfilm copies of wills proved in and granted by the Consistory Court of Peterborough from 1820-1858, and the National Probate Index for England and Wales 1858-1943, on microfiche. Copies of the Prerogative Court of Canterbury Wills from 1384-1858 may be viewed online at www.nationalarchives.gov.uk

Plans and Architects Drawings

A collection of plans, which can include street layouts, proposed buildings or structural alterations and additions to existing buildings, are held here on microfiche. These plans would 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. Many of the indexes to these plans are arranged alphabetically by street.

Rate Books

Rate books can be informative in providing details of occupiers or ownership, numbers of occupied buildings, when buildings were first occupied, or altered, as well as dates when street names came into use, introduction of street lighting and mains water supply etc.

We hold some rate books for a small number of parishes including Peterborough Within and Peterborough Without and mostly for the early part of the 20th century.

Buildings of Special Architectural or Historical Interest

Published surveys by the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments provide architectural descriptions, although their coverage is limited. The volume '*Peterborough New Town, a Survey of the Antiquities in the Areas of Development*', 1969, covers buildings before 1850, but the 1800 to 1850 period is rather selective.

We have old lists of 'listed buildings' produced by the Department of the Environment in the 1970s/80s, for the city and surrounding villages.

Sources held elsewhere and online

Archives relating to Peterborough and the surrounding area may be found in the following archives offices: Huntingdonshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire. You can also check online for sources relating to Peterborough, held at The National Archives.

Maps

Tithe Maps c.1836-1850 show individual building and field boundaries, and usually cover the whole parish. The accompanying apportionment gives the names and occupiers of each property.

Estate Maps may feature your property if it formerly belonged to a large private estate, such as the Burghley Estate. These maps may have been deposited with the local archive office or may remain with the estate itself in their private archives, in which case it is sometimes possible to arrange an appointment to view these archives.

A useful website is <https://maps.nls.uk/os/>

Land Tax Records

Where these have survived, they provide a list of owners and, sometimes occupiers of land and the amount of tax that was paid. On rare occasions they may have survived from the 1740s but more usually from the 1780s to the 1820s. Most of these records relating to Peterborough are held at Northamptonshire Archives.

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 Archives, 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. You can find out more about the Field Books from the National Archives online at www.nationalarchives.gov.uk

Hearth Tax Assessments

From 1662 to 1689 a tax was levied on every hearth in a house. Surviving records therefore indicate the size of a property, and also provide details of every householder. Original records are held at The National Archives and microfilm copies of the relevant series are held at Northamptonshire Archives.

Rate Books

Huntingdonshire and Cambridgeshire Archives hold many local authority rate books from the mid-19th century onwards. They vary greatly in detail, but at the very least they include lists of householders and the amount of rate paid.

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 are 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 enquiries are known as the Hundred Rolls. These rolls (now held at The National Archives) 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.**

Buildings of Special Architectural or Historical Interest

A useful website is <https://historicengland.org.uk/>

It is advisable to make an appointment prior to your visit:

Peterborough Archives and Local Studies

Central Library

Broadway

Peterborough

PE1 1RX

Tel. 01733 864160

archives.service@peterboroughlimited.co.uk

<https://peterboroughlibraries.org.uk/archives>

Website addresses were correct at the time of going to print

