

Directories are very useful initial sources of information for researching various aspects of history. We have a long run of Bath Street Directories, and a selection from neighbouring counties, both of which are available in the searchroom.

They only list the main householder or business owner, not other family members. Often more than one person or business may occupy one address. The Bath directories for 1792, 1805, 1809, 1812, and 1833 are searchable on Bath Ancestors. The Bath Historical Directories website has a searchable database of Bath directories for selected years up to 1935.

Bath Directories

Bath street directories grew out of listings in the local guide-books of physicians, surgeons, apothecaries and boarding and lodging houses. Exactly the kind of listing that would be needed for a person visiting the city for their health. The directory section became independent publications and grew in size by the end of the 18th century as visitors wanted to know more about finding services in the city other than medical facilities.

The early directories are lists, in surname order only, principally of businesses with a few private individuals. There is additional information about churches, the baths and other amenities of interest to the visitor. But the volumes are thin and restricted to the higher end of society.

By the middle of the 19th century the directories had become much more useful for residents as well as visitors. More private individuals were being listed and street listings were introduced. These were expanded over time to include a Detached Villas list at the end of the streets, which can be very useful to find houses built at the extremes of the expansion of Bath's housing. Listings for the neighbouring villages were also introduced but are not comprehensive.

Business listings expanded and a commercial directory section listed these by trade and business-owner. The organisations section also grew, providing a lot of useful information regarding the structure and principal officers of the Corporation, hospitals, churches and many societies. This section was usually followed by extensive advertisement pages. The earlier directories often reused plates the printer might have for printing trade cards, but the section expanded greatly over time and became mostly text-based adverts.

County Directories

We hold a selection of directories for the neighbouring counties. These are alphabetical by village/town name, although Bath is excluded from the Somerset directory as the city had its own directory. Each entry starts with a section on the history and principal buildings of the locality followed by the list of the main

inhabitants, usually divided into commercial and private listings. These listings are very limited in their scope.

County Directories	
Location	Years
Bath	1783-1940; 1947-1973 (annual 1858-1940)
Somerset	1805; 1830-1939
Wiltshire	1830-1939
Gloucestershire	1805; 1830-1939
Bristol	1872-1940; 1944-73
Somerset and Bristol	1919
Somerset, Gloucestershire and Bristol	1931

Trade directories	
Somerset, Wiltshire and Dorset Directory [Trades]	1909-36
Bristol, Cheltenham and Gloucester Trades Directory, including Somerset and Gloucestershire	1935-38, 1969