

Useful Sources for House History in the Bath Record Office

Maps

Old maps can show the 'footprint' of a house, and - from the date of the map on which it first appears - suggest when it was built. The Record Office holds a wide range of maps; details can be found on our website.

Building Plans

When researching the history of a building, the original plans or plans of later alterations can provide significant information. The Record Office holds major series of building plans, mainly dating from the mid nineteenth-century to the end of the twentieth. Details can be found on our website.

Directories and Registers of Electors

Street directories and registers of electors can be very useful sources for house history. They list addresses and show the names of some of those living there. You can find out roughly when a house was built from the first time it appears in the directory or register, and see when it changed hands.

Street Directories

Directories list tradespeople and householders, rather like a present-day telephone directory. They also include useful general information, for example on schools, churches and charities. New editions were produced at intervals, usually every other year or every year. Areas which lay outside the city boundary until the 20th century such as Twerton and Weston, are included in the 'Village Directories' at the end of each volume. The Record Office holds directories for the period 1833-1974.

Registers of Electors

These were compiled annually from 1832 to the present day, except 1916-17 and 1940-44. They list only those entitled to vote: from 1832 until 1918, only men who owned or leased property of a certain value had the right to vote; from 1918 all adult males, and women aged 30 and over could vote; women over the age of 21 were given the right to vote in 1928. Lists are arranged by Wards: 1832-1885 in alphabetical order of surname; 1886-present, in alphabetical order of street.

Rate Books

Rate Books are a really useful source for house history. They are arranged street-by-street and name the occupier and sometimes the owner of each address. They also show the rates paid. There are two main series:

- City rate books, 1766-1963. The city rate was originally collected to provide amenities such as lighting, paving and policing. Until the twentieth century, the rate books cover only the city centre.
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- Parish poor rate books. The parish poor rate was collected from all householders to provide funds for poor relief. For most parishes, rate books survive from the late 18th/early 19th centuries.

List of Parish Rate Books

Parish	Dates
Abbey	1784-796, 1806-1901
St James'	1763-1901
St Michael's	1777, 1801, 1817-28. 1836-38, 1840-1901
Batheaston	1838-1904
Bathwick	1818-1901
Dunkerton	1855-1865
Lyncombe and Widcombe	1796-1901
Twerton	1821-1904
Walcot	1775-1901

Title Deeds

The Record Office holds a number of collections of title deeds, which can be useful for both house and family historians.

The principal collection is of about 2,500 leases of Corporation properties. Leases were usually for the lifetime of named persons, frequently relatives of the lessee, with ages given.

We also hold a number of smaller collections of deeds deposited by local solicitors and private sources, including the former Bathwick Estate Company.

All of the Corporation leases and most of the other deed collections are included in our online catalogue.

Photographs

Photographs and prints can be a prize find for the house historian. The Record Office holds a large collection of photographs mainly of the city centre, and mostly from the 1920s onwards. You can see some of these photographs on our website. Note, however, that street views tend to look along a street, and not face a building directly.

You can find other collections of photographs of Bath in:

[Bath Central Library \(Local studies Library\)](#)

[The English Heritage Archive at Swindon](#)

The website [Bath in Time](#).

Some useful books

General guides to house history can provide a useful starting point for research. Much has also been written about the architectural history of Bath, which can be very helpful to house historians.

The following books are particularly useful:

D. Iredale *Discovering Your Old House* (Shire Publications 1991)

N.W. Alcock, *Old Title Deeds: A Guide for Local and Family Historians* (Phillimore 1986)

Gill Blanchard, *Tracing Your House History. A Guide for Family Historians* (Pen and Sword, 2013)

W. Ison, *The Georgian Buildings of Bath* (Kingsmead, 1991)

J. Lees Milne and D. Ford *Images of Bath* (Saint Helena, 1982)

Michael Forsyth, *Bath. Pevsner Architectural Guides* (Yale 2003)