

Glamorgan Archives

~Become a House Detective~

Tracing the history of a property and finding out about the people who lived there can be exciting and rewarding. Knowing where to begin can be difficult, and the method of research will vary according to the type of house, its location, date and the survival of relevant records. Preliminary work, particularly in libraries, can save you time and effort.

Before you start...

- Decide what you want to find out about your property. Are you interested in the people who lived there or the building itself?
- Establish some background information. Was the building a school, church, pub etc? Which ecclesiastic parish is it in? Which local authority area is it in and has that changed?
- Consider whether the building itself can provide you with any architectural or archaeological evidence
- Look at a general book on house history e.g. Nick Barratt's *Tracing the History of your House*, published by the Public Record Office.

FIRST STEPS...

The building

The style, location and materials of a building can provide useful clues to its date.

Look carefully at its shape and size. Draw a measured plan and take a photograph of its exterior. Are there similar buildings in the area? A dateable house of similar design may suggest a date for your own house. Ask older neighbours or residents of the street if they can tell you anything about the house. Beware of date stones - these may be unreliable or have been moved from an earlier building on the site.

Does the house have a name? Waterloo Villa may date after the battle of Waterloo (although the name may have been changed). Make a note of the name of the street or road: these might recall a builder, councillor or king or queen. Look at the adjoining or nearby buildings. Location near a crossroads may suggest a former tollgate or inn; an isolated building in open landscape may suggest a late building on former common land. An isolated building may be easier to research than one in a densely packed village or town.

Listed Buildings

If your house has been scheduled for preservation, its architecture and approximate age will be briefly noted in the *Statutory List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest* which is issued by the Department of the Environment, and the National Assembly of Wales. Copies of these lists are kept by the Planning Departments of local authorities and can be seen at Council offices or most large local libraries.

Title deeds

An important first step for the house detective is to gain access to the title deeds of the property. From these you can obtain a short description of the house, its position, the size of the plot and the names of one or more previous owners and occupiers.

If it is registered with the land registry, the older deeds may be with the current owners. If the property is mortgaged, then the building society or bank may allow access to copy them, although they are likely to charge for this. It is possible that the older deeds and related papers may have disappeared or perhaps been destroyed. Sometimes they may already be with the Archives, especially if the property was once part of a larger estate.

STARTING YOUR RESEARCH

Armed with this information you can now turn to some primary and secondary information. The next few pages give details of the kinds of material you will need to look at to build up a history of a property, and what you can expect to find out from them.

Printed Sources

Most town and many villages have written histories and can be found in local studies collections in libraries. These can provide important clues about your house and its occupants. The Record Office Library contains a number of parish and town histories. Libraries will also have postcard and photograph collections and secondary sources such as copies of census returns. Libraries also have copies of local papers, either on microfilm, or in the original

Directories

1822-1972

Printed commercial directories issued irregularly were produced in the early 19th century in Wales, but are thin on information until about 1880 when Kelly's and other directories appear. They give general information on a town or village, record notable buildings including chapels and churches, and list tradesmen and private residents. General area directories give only limited information, but many town directories list inhabitants street by street. It is worth noting that because people had to pay to be included in the directory the lists may be incomplete.

The Archives hold directories for South Wales for the years:

1822; 1830; 1835; 1849-1850; 1852; 1859; 1865; 1871; 1875; 1884; 1891; 1895; 1901; 1906; 1910; 1914; 1920; 1923; 1926; 1929.

Directories for particular towns and localities are also held, as follows:

Barry: 1897; 1906; 1914

Caerphilly: 1813

Cardiff: 1795; 1813; 1829; 1855; 1858; 1882; 1891; 1893; 1897; 1902; 1905; 1908; 1911; 1913; 1915; 1920; 1922; 1924; 1927; 1929; 1932; 1937; 1949; 1952; 1955; 1961; 1964; 1967; 1970; 1972

Merthyr Tydfil: 1873

Penarth: 1908

Pontypridd: 1882

Swansea: 1816; 1823; 1826; 1830

Vale of Glamorgan: 1912

Ordnance Survey Maps

1880s-1980s

These printed maps are a good starting point for any researcher. The successive editions of large scale OS maps can reveal the approximate date when a building was erected and establish the block plan of the house as it was at the time the map was surveyed.

The most useful scale for tracing a house is the 1:2500 or 25 inch to 1 mile survey. The larger towns in Glamorgan were surveyed additionally during the 19th century on a scale of 1:500 or 10 feet to 1 mile.

Tithe Maps and Apportionments

c. 1840

These date from the 1840s in Glamorgan and as these pre-date the large scale OS maps they are extremely useful. The maps and accompanying apportionments were drawn up to show ownership of and the amount of money due on each piece of land. Three copies were produced, one for the parish (kept at the Archives), one for the diocese (kept at the National Library of Wales) and one for the Tithe Commissioners (kept at the Public Record Office).

Each plot shown on the map is numbered and these numbers can be traced using the apportionments which list the owners' names alphabetically, the occupiers, the description of the property including field names, state of cultivation, acreage and rent charges. The researcher can see from these maps whether his house existed at the time, whether it had more or less land attached to it and who owned and occupied it.

Building Regulation Plans

1859-1972

From the late 19th century onwards many local authorities took advantage of new powers available to them requiring developers to submit plans for approval. Some of the surviving plans have been deposited at the Archives.

The Cardiff Borough building regulation plans have been fully catalogued as part of the 'Cardiff: the Building of a Capital' project, and can be searched through an on-line database available via the Glamorgan Archives website. Work is currently underway to catalogue the building plans of other local authorities.

Sales Particulars

19th-20th Centuries

Notices of house sales were commonly issued from the middle of the nineteenth century, and detailed catalogues produced where estates or larger houses were sold. Notices of house sales also appear in local newspapers and changes of street names are also reported here. These types of documents are found in several collections, particularly the papers of Stephenson and Alexander, Auctioneers and Chartered Surveyors (**DSA**), whose business interests covered the whole of South Wales.

Census

1841-1901

The Archives hold microfiche copies of census returns, including the most recently released 1901 census. A census was carried out every 10 years from 1801, although only individual returns from 1841 survive. It can sometimes be difficult to pinpoint an individual house because house numbers and names are not always included, although the census entries are in house order, street by street. Look for 'markers' like adjoining streets, road junctions and proximity to identifiable buildings like inns and hotels.

Electoral Registers

1840-

These list all those entitled to vote at elections. Electoral registers can be useful for information about inhabitants of a property, although the arrangement of entries by polling district, ward, street, property and occupier can make research time-consuming. Until 1918 very few men and no women could vote in parliamentary elections. Do not be surprised if your property and its occupants do not appear. See our *Electoral Registers* leaflet for further information.

Poll Books

1756-1868

These record votes cast at Parliamentary elections. This process was ended by the 1872 Ballot Act, which introduced secret balloting. Poll books give the names of voters, how they voted and occasionally, their residence. See our *Electoral Registers* leaflet for further information.

Estate and Manorial Records

15th-20th Century

The Glamorgan Archives hold many estate and manorial records for the Glamorgan area. Some others are held at the National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth. Until this century many houses would have belonged to either an estate or a manor. Many manorial tenants held property by copyhold which meant that they had to attend court whenever the ownership of the property changed, including when the property was inherited on the death of the owner. Manorial court records may have survived which give information about the transfer of property, names of occupiers and rent paid. Rentals usually list tenants, the nature of their tenure and how much rent is paid. Estate records may also include title deeds, estate maps and surveys.

Estate Maps and Surveys

15th–20th Century

Written descriptions of an estate can often be found, usually predating a map and are known as surveys, extents or terriers. Maps usually show the estate of a single landowner. The surveyor was employed by the estate owner to map his land only and to include information as instructed, so the maps do not have any set form and their accuracy varies. Estate maps exist from the 17th to the 19th centuries and later maps and plans are often based on the Ordnance Survey. If a particular property is identified on the tithe plan, it should be possible to look for any surviving estate maps and plans. The published *Catalogue of Glamorgan Estate Maps* can help to identify existing records and their location.

Finance Act (1910) Records

1910

This act required the valuation of land throughout England and Wales and led to the creation of various records relating to individual properties. Valuation books (**DVAL**) include a plot number, details of occupiers/owners, a description of the property and its value. They are accompanied by valuation maps which are annotated copies of the second edition OS maps (25 inch scale), showing the plot numbers. Although the Archives hold the valuation books only a limited number of valuation maps have survived for Glamorgan.

Land Tax Records

1780-1831

Land tax records (**QLTA**) are arranged by hundred, an ancient division of the county, and date from about 1780 to about 1831. In isolation they are of limited value since they record only the owner, occupier, property and the tax assessment but they can be an important resource when used in conjunction with deeds, estate maps and the earliest census returns.

Wills, Administrations and Inventories

17th-20th Century

Wills may be of use once the names of previous owners of the property have been established. There are few original records held by the Glamorgan Archives, although some probate records can be found in family, estate and solicitors collections, but probate indexes for 1858-1950 are held here. Wills from before 1858 were processed by the Bishop's administration and are kept with the Diocesan Records in the National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth. The Archives has a name index to wills from the diocese of Llandaff between 1568-1857. For details of how to obtain copies of wills see our leaflet '*Useful Addresses*'.

Photographs and Pictures

19th-20th Century

Illustrative material can show alterations to a building or a change in its function. A card index to our pictorial records is available at the Archives.

SOURCES FOR PARTICULAR TYPES OF PROPERTY

Schools

Several types of school records are held at the Record Office, including a collection of school building plans at **DPROEBG** and **G/DE/57-60**.

Alehouses

1740-20th Century

Alehouse Recognizances may be of use, which will give the name of the licensee and the property. These can be found for the Glamorgan area in the Quarter Sessions records for the dates 1779-1828 (**Q/S/E**) and for Cardiff for 1740-1742, 1745-1747, 1763, 1772-1773, 1781 (**DA/107-117**). After these dates, licensing registers can be found with the Petty Sessions records (**PS**). See our leaflet *Court Records* for more information.

Former Chapels

1974

The Archives hold a survey taken in 1974 of chapels in the Mid-Glamorgan area. These include chapel histories, plans and photographs.

Former Churches

19th-20th Century

Documents relating to rectories and vicarages, including faculties, plans and accounts may be found in parish records. For parishes in the Diocese of Llandaff the office holds a series of returns from the Diocesan History Project of 1959 including information about parish buildings. Other relevant records can be found in the diocesan archives kept at the National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth.

Property near a railway or canal

19th Century

The Quarter Sessions records include an extensive series of deposited plans relating to public undertakings such as railways, canals and turnpikes (**QDP**).

....FINALLY

This guide is not intended to provide an exhaustive list of sources for the house detective. If you would like more information on researching your house or locality, please contact the Archives.