

Please note we are closed to the public during the first full week of every calendar month to enable staff to catalogue collections. A full list of these collection weeks is available on request and also on our website.

The reduction in our core funding means we can no longer produce documents between 12.00 and 14.15 although the searchroom will remain open during this time.

There is no need to book an appointment, but entry is by CARN ticket so please bring proof of name, address and signature (e.g. driving licence or a combination of other documents) if you do not already have a ticket. There is a small car park with a dropping off zone and disabled spaces. Please telephone us if you would like to reserve a space or discuss your needs in any detail.

Last orders: Documents/Photocopies 30 minutes before closing.

RESEARCHING YOUR HOUSE

Introduction

The County Record Office (CRO) holds a large and varied collection of archival material which may help you in your house research. However, research is time-consuming and you should not expect to discover everything on your first visit. The Search Room staff can only help and advise; a list of private researchers is available if you cannot carry out your own research. We must emphasise we cannot give legal advice.

First Steps

Decide precisely what you want to know; is it the date your house was built, (you may not be able to establish this precisely), or its architectural history, or the history of its owners / occupants and uses?

It may be helpful to your research if you carry out some background reading to familiarise yourself with relevant terms. There are many books available on the subject of house history and architecture from local libraries. Examples that can be consulted at the record office include the following:

1. *Documenting the History of Houses* by N.W. Alcock CRO Ref: D.690 Alc(P)
2. *Discovering this Old House* by David Iredale CRO Ref: D. 690 Ire(P)
3. *Sources for the History of Houses* by J.H. Harvey CRO Ref: D.720. HAR(P)

It will also be helpful if you have looked at the house deeds. These tell you the story of the ownership of the property and often record if it has been divided into more than one unit; they may also include names of the occupants. If they are not in your possession, do you know where they are? They could have been deposited with us. The Land Registry will hold information on many properties particularly from the 20th century onwards; details are available on their website. If your house is mortgaged the deeds may be with the lender who will give you sight of them but may require a fee.

Now think about the following questions:

- How old is the house? e.g. 1960s, 1920s, 1900, Victorian, Georgian, earlier? Is it similar to its neighbours?
- Has it a number or a name? Do you know if either has been changed?
- How big is it? If it is called a "cottage" this may be a misnomer.
- Can you see any signs of alterations? e.g. blocked windows, new roof, extensions, evidence of chimneys.
- What materials have been used in its construction? What is the roof made of?
- Are there any distinctive features? e.g. external decoration, timber framing, type of windows, porch.
- Do you know if the garden is its original size?
- Have you talked to established neighbours or inhabitants?
- Have you contacted any local history society or seen its publications?
- Has your house been converted from a specialised building, e.g. school, parsonage, etc.?

In the Record Office

It is always useful to bring a photograph or sketch of your house with you to the Record Office. This is where you will use the **documentary sources**. Having established which parish your house is in you will need to consult original documents.

They may include:

Maps and Plans: Ordnance Survey, (19th-20th century), both 6", 25" & 50" scale; tithe maps, (19th century); inclosure maps/plans, (18th-19th century); estate and other maps, (17th-20th century); deposited plans re public/private schemes, (19th-20th century). Building regulation plans for towns are often available from the 1880's onwards, and for some rural areas for this century. See 'User Guide No.3 – Maps'

Deeds: Their survival is very patchy; most have come from local solicitors and landowners. You should bear in mind, however, that identification of a bundle of deeds with an actual property may be difficult before house names and numbers became common. Try consulting the property card index or our online catalogue '**Warwickshire's Past Unlocked**'.

Census Returns: Although they are full of information it can be difficult to be sure that you have identified your property correctly. They should be used in conjunction with other evidence. They are taken every ten years and are currently available for 1841 - 1911. Coverage is fairly complete.

Tax records: Land tax assessments, (18th-20th century); Hearth tax returns, (late 17th century).

Registers of Electors: This is particularly useful for 20th century buildings. We hold registers for Warwickshire from 1832. Please check with staff for the latest available years.

Surveys and valuations: These are not common or comprehensive in their cover. Some date from the 16th century. You can use the general card index by looking up a place name or referring to **Warwickshire's Past Unlocked**.

Sale particulars: These come from estate agents and again are not comprehensive. They date mainly from the mid-nineteenth century. Some have inventories of house contents and room descriptions. These are listed in the property card index.

Rate Books: There is nearly a complete set for 1910 relating to the Public Finance Act (see CR 1978), but survival for other periods is patchy. Please see separate finding aids for parish and general rates

Probate inventories: These are lists of contents of houses, often room by room, which usually accompany the wills of the occupants, (late 16th to mid-18th century). However, we are not a probate registry, so we do not have the main wills series.

Manorial records: Particularly useful for very old houses, Medieval and Tudor, but can be relevant into the 19th century for a small number of places. They are largely a record of people rather than buildings, but may give useful clues. See also the Manorial Documents Register online through The National Archives catalogue 'Discovery'

Photographs and prints: We have an excellent collection of over 200,000 images, particularly for the 19th century. Some of these images are available to view online at **Windows on Warwickshire**.

While you are waiting for documents to be brought you may like to consult some of the printed material available on the Record Office library shelves. These are self-service.

- *The Buildings of Warwickshire* by Niklaus Pevsner CRO Ref: WAR/PEVS. - Good architectural glossary at the back.
- *Victoria County History of Warwickshire* – Reference Shelves
- Listed Buildings List – in Twinlocks. See also <http://www.britishlistedbuildings.co.uk/>
- Books and pamphlets on your village / locality – consult the Library Card Index
- Trade and Post Office Directories – Reference Shelves

You may be particularly interested in the following types of documents if your house was a specialised building that has been converted into a house. Indexes you may find particularly useful are the General Index, the Schools Index and the Property Index.

School: Parish Records (if a Church School), County Council records

Parsonage: Parish records, Glebe terriers, Churchwardens' accounts and presentments

Non Conformist Meeting House or Manse: Quarter Sessions Ref: QS 10

Public House: Quarter Sessions Alehouse Registers and Recognizance's Ref: QS 36 & 37, late 19th century onwards Petty Sessions licensing registers, directories.

Large Estate: If your house belonged to a large estate the relevant estate / family records may provide information. Ask for the Estate Maps Guide.

Parish Charity: If it belonged to a parish charity the relevant parish records or charity trustees' records may have been deposited and be available.

Please ask the searchroom staff if you require further information on how to access these resources.