

## Tracing the History of a Building

### Where do you begin?

If you own the property in question, the first step is to consult the deeds to the house. If not held by you, they may be held by a bank or building society (there can be a charge for accessing them this way). If the deeds survive, they may provide a complete list of who owned the house and from when. Occasionally deeds are given to the local record office. In the case of a Leicestershire village, that would be the Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland – [http://www.leics.gov.uk/museums/record\\_office.htm](http://www.leics.gov.uk/museums/record_office.htm) It is also useful to talk to neighbours and other local people who may know something about the building and its previous occupants.

### Maps

Maps are a useful source for establishing the history of a building. Ordinance Survey maps in particular show individual houses. A series of maps drawn at different times can highlight changes to the structure of a house and to the surrounding area. Tithe maps with their identification of both occupiers and owners, can help to identify the property in the 1841 census and in the Land Tax schedules. An enclosure award for the area may also identify the owner and occupier of a property. However, even if that is not the case, the building may still show up on an enclosure map.

### Trade Directories

Directories are a useful source for the history of a building if that building falls into certain categories. Any house that has been a farm, a manor house, a rectory or any other easily identifiable building such as a shop or other business is likely to be recorded in a trade directory. The entry will usually show the name of the person who was living in the property and sometimes with their occupation. They are also a useful source for the history of the village or town itself.

### Tax Records

There have been a large number of tax records created over time but the survival rate can often differ from area to area. In Leicestershire there are Land Tax records that extend back to c. 1778. Although such records were recorded from Tudor times, they have not survived from that time in Leicestershire. The Hearth Tax for 1664 survives and is available in a volume in the searchroom at the Record Office.

### Local Government Records

Electoral registers are a useful source for establishing the occupants of a house and also, to some extent in dating the property. If the house you are looking at is very old or has some interesting features it may be "listed", which means that it is registered as a building of special architectural or historic interest. If the building has been listed, a report will have been lodged with the Department of the Environment. Copies of these listings are held locally by Leicestershire County Council ([http://www.leics.gov.uk/new\\_servicepagesaz.htm?initial=L&pid=514](http://www.leics.gov.uk/new_servicepagesaz.htm?initial=L&pid=514)). Many are also available at the Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland.

### **Church Records**

A building that has been a rectory may have been described in surviving glebe terriers. Such descriptions can be very detailed, pinpointing alterations to the building over time. Church records may also contain material relating to alterations and repairs to the church itself.

### **Other Sources**

Knowing the name of the people who lived in a house may help you to identify the house in a census and it is from the census that you can learn more about the people who lived in the house, their occupations, their family and their status. This is important because you cannot detach a house, or other building, from the people who live or work in it. For more about censuses and where to find them, see Family History. Early wills often had inventories attached to them, which provide a 'snapshot' of that house at that particular time. When you know who lived in the house, there is a chance that you might be able to locate an inventory.

### **Who can help?**

[www.leics.gov.uk](http://www.leics.gov.uk) the Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland is the archive office holding almost all of the records described above.

[www.nationalarchives.gov.uk](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk) for the 1901 census, for tithe maps if the local copy has not survived

[http://www.leics.gov.uk/new\\_servicepagesaz.htm?initial=L&pid=514](http://www.leics.gov.uk/new_servicepagesaz.htm?initial=L&pid=514) this link will take you to the department dealing with listed buildings