

Tracing the history of your house at Wirral Archives Service

There are a number of sources held at Wirral Archives Service that may help you trace the history of your house or other local buildings. This leaflet lists the main resources that we hold.

Wirral Archives Service

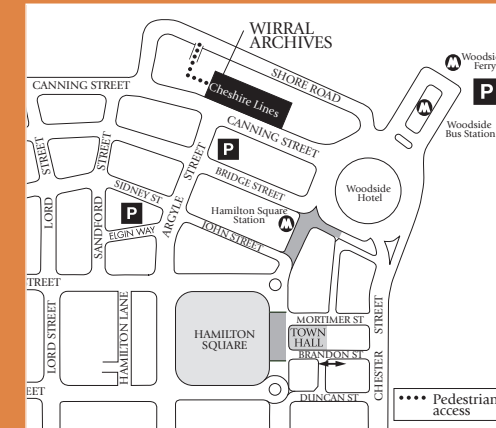
Contact Details
Wirral Archives Service
Cheshire Lines building
Canning Street
Birkenhead
Wirral CH41 1ND
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Email: archives@wirral.gov.uk
Website: www.wirral.gov.uk
(please go to Leisure and Culture -> Records and Archives).

Opening hours

Monday - Friday, 9.30 - 16.30
Saturday, 10.00 - 13.00

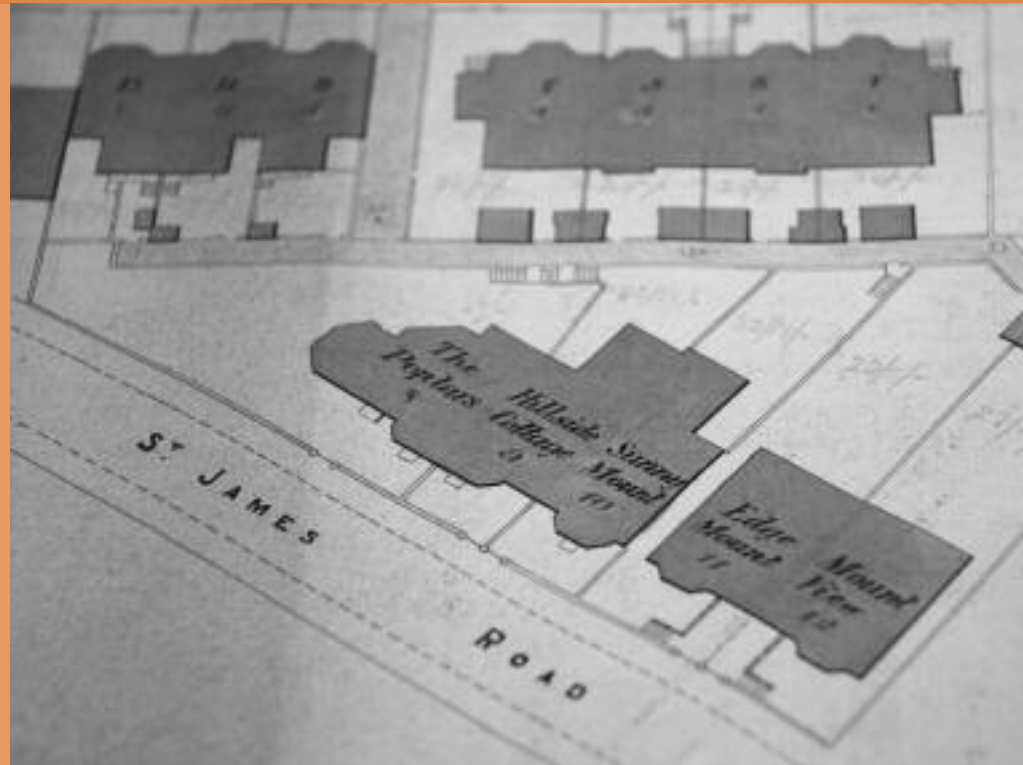
Please note that access to the Service is via Shore Road.



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Tracing the history of your house

A guide to house history records at Wirral Archives Service



Title Deeds

These can be one of the oldest sources of information relating to the sale or lease of land and property. The oldest title deed held by Wirral Archives Service is also our oldest document, dated 1447.

Wirral Archives Service holds various collections of title deeds received from different sources, including solicitors' offices and private donations. They are listed under the reference number YDX in our Title Deeds catalogue.

Building plans

From the middle of the nineteenth century local authorities required the submission for approval of plans for new buildings, or alterations to existing buildings.

Wirral Archives Service holds a large number of these plans, which are listed in Building Plan Registers. The Registers vary in detail and generally list the name of the road, the type of building work to be done, the names of the owners and the builders, and the date of application. Actual house numbers are not always recorded.

The earliest plans date from 1855 (for Wallasey) but most date from the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Unfortunately some plans listed in the Plan Register may no longer be in existence.

Rate Books and Valuation Lists

Rate books record the collection of rates from property owners or occupiers by local authorities. These were based on the value of the property, which is detailed in the Valuation Lists.

For this reason all buildings in the area covered by the Rate Book or Valuation List are recorded, with details of the occupier (head of the household only), the owner, the type of building, the rateable value of the property and the sums collected.

Wirral Archives Service holds rate books dating back to 1836 (for Bebington). However survival of these records is inconsistent for the nineteenth century.

As the population grew so did the size of rate books, and for this reason they began to be divided into smaller sections. Birkenhead rate books, for example, are divided by political ward.



Maps

Maps were produced for various reasons and in varying detail, but some, particularly large-scale Ordnance Survey maps, can provide valuable information on the size, layout and even former usage of properties.

Wirral Archives Service holds a wide range of maps, some of which date back to the early nineteenth century. They include a set of the Ordnance Survey 6 inch to the mile maps of the Birkenhead area from 1875, which are very detailed. Another useful resource is the CD-Rom of the 1900-1912 Ordnance Survey 25 inch to the mile maps of Cheshire, which covers the whole of Wirral.

Census Returns

Census records can reveal who lived in a property, giving the names of all household members as well as their ages, occupations and places of birth. The first national census for Britain took place in 1801, and they have taken place once every ten years since (apart from 1941). The first census to record details of occupants, however, was 1841.

Wirral Archives Service holds census returns for the Wirral area from 1841 to 1901. (The census is closed for 100 years.) They are on microfiche, with the exception of the 1881 census, which is on CD-Rom.

Earlier census records do not tend to provide as much detail as later ones, and may not list house numbers or even street names. However, we do hold certain street and surname indexes to the census, mainly for Birkenhead and Tranmere. The archives staff can guide you on use of these indexes.

Auctions and Sales Catalogues

Printed auction and sales catalogues can provide descriptions of a property and details of its rooms and contents.

Wirral Archives Service holds the records of Corkhill and Job, auctioneers, which include a series of sales catalogues dating from 1882 to 1974, most of which are covered by a street-name index. The sales catalogues itemize furnishings room by room. These records are listed in our Business Records catalogue under reference number ZCJ.

Another collection of sales catalogues for the Wirral area, formerly held in the offices of Edmund Kirby and Sons, Liverpool Architects, is listed under reference YPX/87, in our Small Private Deposits catalogue.

Street Directories

Street Directories are a useful source of information for local addresses. They are generally divided into sections including an alphabetical list of street names, an alphabetical list of residents by name, giving address and occupation, a list of householders by street, a classified list of people and businesses by trade or occupation, as well as lists of public buildings, and even annals listing significant local events.

Wirral was covered by the Gore's and later Kelly's Directories of Liverpool and its surrounding districts, although generally speaking the earlier the date

of the directory the fewer Wirral localities are included. Wirral Archives Service holds a series of microfilms of these directories for the nineteenth century.

Records Held Elsewhere

Birkenhead Reference Library holds printed copies of street directories up to 1974 as well as local maps and photographs. The address is:

Birkenhead Reference Library
Borough Road, Birkenhead
Wirral CH41 2XB
Tel: 0151 652 6106 ext. 7
birkenhead.ref@wirral-library.net

Cheshire Record Office holds title deeds and maps relating to the Wirral area, which was part of Cheshire before 1974. The address is:

Cheshire and Chester Archives and Local Studies Service,
Cheshire Record Office, Duke Street
Chester, Cheshire CH1 1RL
Tel: 01244 972574
recordoffice@cheshire.gov.uk

Useful Websites

Land Registry:
www.landreg.gov.uk
The Land Registry is the government agency which holds the register of state-guaranteed landowners in England and Wales, including details of the extent of the land in the title.

English Heritage:
www.imagesofengland.org.uk
This database contains photographs of listed buildings.