



DHRG

**Dartmouth History Research Group:
Guidance Note 1 – Edition 1 (November 2023)**

**Researching the history of a house
in Dartmouth and the surrounding area**

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Researching the history of a house in Dartmouth and the surrounding area

Introduction

Every house is different, and every house history has a different starting point and will take you on a different journey into the past. Firstly, your research will depend on what you want to achieve – are you researching your own house, a house your ancestors lived in, or a house which interests you for some other reason, perhaps because of its association with someone well-known? Do you want to research the building itself, or the people who owned or lived in it?

Secondly, as with family history, where you start depends on what information you already have. For example, there may be original deeds or plans which tell you who built the house, and who owned it. Or the house itself might provide a clue - one house we researched was discovered during repairs to have a datestone with the initials of the couple who built it. It had been covered up for many years, so all memory of the construction date had been lost. Some houses have had former lives as other buildings - as a lodge, school, church, chapel, vicarage, pub, shop, or warehouse, for example. Sometimes your neighbours may have deeds, especially when a group of houses was built at the same time, or their houses may have useful information – for example, the datestone for a terrace may be on another house in the row, or perhaps the names of the houses provide a clue.

So there's no single standard approach to researching the history of a house. Your aims, your starting point, and what you uncover, will determine where your journey takes you, not to mention your own enthusiasm and the time and funds available! There are already some excellent general books available on this sort of research, and this guide is not intended as a substitute for them. Our aim is to give you an idea of some of the most useful sources for starting your research into a house in this area, and to provide information about how to access them.

Sometimes this will involve going to archives or museums to consult original records or view other items such as old photographs. However, more and more information for family history, and by extension house history, is becoming available online. In the wider world of historical research there are many projects involving the digitisation and/or transcription of archive material. Our own project, the "Dartmouth Archives", set up in 2007 and now part of our updated website www.dartmouth-history.org.uk, aims to put online as much information as possible about the history of the area. We assume here that you have access to the internet, via your own desk computer, laptop, tablet or smartphone, or in a library or other free resource.

In this note we have mentioned websites which are likely to be useful because they include specific document sets or features. Mention of commercial websites does not mean that we recommend them. Nor does this paper attempt to provide a comprehensive evaluation of family or house history websites. We have tried to ensure that descriptions of website coverage, features and links are correct at time of writing, but websites change all the time so they may be different by the time you read this. Finally, this note is itself "work in progress" and we expect to update it from time to time. We hope it will be the first of a series of guidance notes on resources relevant to researching the history of Dartmouth and the surrounding area.

We hope you find this guidance note helpful. Good luck with your house history research!

The context: how Dartmouth and the surrounding area has developed over time

Before beginning your research journey, it helps to have some idea of how the local area has developed. This section provides a summary of the local context for house history.

Dittisham, Townstal and Stoke Fleming appear in Domesday Book in 1086 as three contiguous manorial estates on the west side of the Lower Dart valley, with no obvious connections across the river. The growth of the harbour and port at the river mouth, and the development of Dartmouth and Kingswear as settlements on the west and east bank of the river, seems to have begun during the following century.

The name “Dartmouth” was used from an early date to describe the port, harbour, and associated settlement on the west bank of the Dart.¹ In the parish of Townstal, settlements developed north and south of a tidal inlet, becoming known as Hardness and Clifton respectively. By the mid 13thC they were connected by a causeway, in which there was a tidal mill. Settlement also developed along the river in the neighbouring parish of Stoke Fleming, which later became known as Southtown.

By the 14thC, though Dartmouth was only half as wealthy as Exeter or Plymouth, the number of ocean-going vessels based in the port was substantially larger than that of any other port in Devon. Land was gradually reclaimed at the water’s edge, with the process gathering pace from around 1550-1640, a time of considerable prosperity due to the resurgent Devon cloth trade and growing Newfoundland fish trade. In a pattern that persisted for many centuries, merchants built their warehouses, quays and houses along the river to the south; shipbuilding and ship repair yards were clustered along the river to the north.

Edward III had recognised the importance of Dartmouth’s shipping fleets in 1341, when a charter was granted allowing the community to elect a Mayor (and extending other privileges also). In 1463, Edward IV granted the borough the right to annex Southtown, to enable access to Dartmouth Castle and the coast where watch was kept. In 1604, the borough, known as “Clifton Dartmouth Hardness”, received a charter of incorporation from James I. The town remained a borough until local government reorganisation in 1974, when responsibility for most local functions passed to South Hams District Council. The Town Council retains the privilege of electing a Mayor.

Though its hinterland was not as large as Exeter or Plymouth’s, Dartmouth became a market town for villages in the surrounding area, while the local, national and international trade in goods carried by Dartmouth ships provided employment for people all over south Devon. Population estimates for 1670 and 1750 show that Dartmouth was the fifth largest town in Devon, at 2,900 and 3,350 respectively.²

But unlike Plymouth, and to a lesser extent Exeter, Dartmouth saw no major growth in the latter part of the 18thC. Shipbuilding and ancillary trades continued, but there was little new industrial development. By the time of the 1831 Census, the population had reached 4597, but the town’s physical extent at the time of parliamentary and municipal reform in the 1830s remained well within its medieval boundaries (see discussion of maps below).

¹ Grant of “a messuage at Dertemue [Dartmouth]”, c1210, Dartmouth Vol 1 Pre-Reformation p5, Hugh R Watkin, Parochial Histories of Devonshire no 5, 1935, The Devonshire Association.

² Towns and Processes of Urbanisation in the Early Modern Period, Jonathan Barry, in Historical Atlas of South-west England, 1999, Exeter. For sources of population estimates for 1660 and 1750, see his companion article, Population Distribution and Growth in the Early Modern Period, same volume.

At about that time, further reclamation of land in the centre of the town began when the tidal inlet (known as the “mill pool”) was filled in. Construction of the New Road (now Victoria Road) enabled a better connection to the wider road network, the Market was built, and land was created for new houses and shops. This period also saw the beginnings of tourism and the leisure industry. Dartmouth became increasingly popular with wealthy people taking up the international sport of yachting; the first official Regatta was held in 1834, becoming the Royal Regatta in 1856. Larger houses taking advantage of the best sea and river views were built in Dartmouth, Kingswear and the surrounding area.

Nonetheless during 1830s and 1840s the population fell. It began to rise again in 1851, but by 1861 had barely reached the levels of thirty years before. The town then began to grow. Though the traditional mainstays of the Devon cloth trade and Newfoundland fish trade had disappeared or declined, shipowning and shipbuilding remained important. The arrival in 1863 of HMS Britannia, the Royal Navy’s officer training ship, was reported in 1868 to have brought 440 additional residents to the town. The coming of the railway in 1864 was also seen at the time as very important, though all attempts to route the railway across the Dart and directly into Dartmouth failed. The terminus was built in Kingswear with a ferry connection to Dartmouth, and the harbour was improved. Coal-bunkering in the harbour developed as a new industry, as maritime steam power became widespread.

The 1860s also saw the destruction of 35 of the town’s houses for street improvement, mostly between Higher Street and Lower Street to build the Newcomen Road, though due to financial constraints the new road reached only half the length originally planned. A Parliamentary Boundary report in 1868 noted that 40 new houses had been built since 1861, with 22 under construction.

In a third phase of reclamation, the Embankment was constructed in the 1880s and extended northwards in the 1920s, so building at or nearest the water’s edge is often more recent than that immediately behind it. Shipbuilding was concentrated upriver to the north of both Dartmouth and Kingswear, at Sandquay and Noss, though some smaller yards remained downriver for a while. Development began to extend either side of the New Road (now Victoria Road) and up towards Townstal, often in small terraces. The new Naval College buildings, begun in 1898 and completed in 1905, occupied much of what had been a large parkland and rural estate immediately to the north of the old Borough, but also prevented any significant housing development there.

In the 20thC the centre of Dartmouth saw some new building following slum clearance and wartime bombing damage, but escaped the wholesale redevelopment which characterised the centres of many larger towns and cities. Expansion and development (from the 1930s onwards) took place in Townstal, historically the oldest part of Dartmouth (as noted above) though for many centuries entirely rural and very lightly populated. New businesses in small industrial units were also encouraged. This is expected to remain the pattern for the foreseeable future. But the total resident population of Dartmouth today (5259 in 2021) remains well below the highest levels reached in the early decades of the 20thC (6710 in 1931) (while boundaries have remained broadly the same), and the town retains a rural setting.

This area of Devon has a rich history, and the port, town and surrounding villages frequently figure in the story of wider national and international events (such as the Hundred Years War, the English Civil War or aspects of maritime history such as privateering or the Newfoundland trade). A full bibliography would take up many pages! In the “Further Reading” section we have listed some general histories of Dartmouth and the surrounding area, and DHRG and other local publications giving more details about specific areas.

Sources for house history

In the rest of this paper, we describe a variety of original records to explore, which may provide information about a house or its occupants:

- Borough of Dartmouth archive, Devon Heritage Centre
- Deeds
- Maps
- 1910 Valuation Survey
- Census records and the 1939 Register
- Electoral Registers
- Local Newspapers
- Trade Directories
- Photographs and Topographical Prints
- Tax Records
- Civil Registration records and parish registers
- Wills and Probate records

The growth in family history in recent decades has meant that, broadly speaking, it tends to be easier to research a person than a house as such. However, researching a house is easier if it has a name, especially if the name has remained the same. Finding an unnamed house which only acquired a number in recent decades presents more challenges but is not impossible!

Before looking at original records, however, it is helpful to see whether the house you are researching has already been studied. The “Dartmouth Archives” section of the DHRG website has some short studies of the history of some local houses (see the “Property” category or search for the house or street by name) and our publications include some individual house histories (see Further Reading).

Another useful place to look is the National Heritage List for England, the official list of all nationally protected historic buildings and sites in England. Listing marks a building’s special architectural and historic interest and ensures it can be protected. The older and rarer a house (in terms of preservation of original fabric) the more likely it is to be listed as having special historic interest. According to the Historic England website, “all buildings built before 1700 which survive in anything like their original condition are likely to be listed, as are most buildings built between 1700 and 1850. Particularly careful selection is required for buildings from the period after 1945. Buildings less than 30 years old are not normally considered to be of special architectural or historic interest because they have yet to stand the test of time.”

The list shows the local area is rich in historic buildings (some listings cover more than one address):

192	Dartmouth
57	Dittisham
19	Kingswear
20	Stoke Fleming

It is always worth checking to see if a house you are researching is listed, as the entry will provide an idea of the period in which the house was built and may give further sources to follow up, such as articles that have already been published. Even if the house is not itself listed, the listing of a neighbouring house may provide useful information about the immediate area. The List can be searched by keyword, postcode or list entry number, or use the map search and zoom in until you can

see all the listed houses in a geographical area. The map shows individual property boundaries (using OS data) and pointers link to individual listings.

The earliest surviving documentary records referring to a house in Dartmouth date to around 1210³. However, it is unlikely that any house you are researching will be older than the 15thC. According to the list, “the oldest complete house still standing in Dartmouth and one of the oldest town houses in the south-west” is the building now known as The Cherub, in Higher Street⁴. It is a pub and restaurant today but according to the listing was built as a merchant’s house, probably in the second half of the 15thC, though, given its distinction, surprisingly little is known about it. Since Higher Street is one of Dartmouth’s oldest streets, it is likely that it stands on the site of a much older house. The listing also notes several houses in Dittisham dating from the late 15thC or early 16thC⁵. Such houses frequently have many additions and alterations as successive owners or occupiers modified them to fit changing needs.

Older domestic or “vernacular” buildings display structural and decorative features characteristic of the local area, and use materials sourced locally. From the 18thC, local builders in different parts of the country began to copy designs in pattern books, bringing similar fashions to different regions, though locally sourced materials were still used. For more information on how domestic buildings in urban and rural areas in Devon have developed over time, see the Further Reading section.

Borough of Dartmouth archive, Devon Heritage Centre

An important source for many older houses in Dartmouth is the collection of documents held in the Devon Heritage Centre (DHC) in Exeter which form the archive of the historic borough of Dartmouth. Over the centuries the borough acquired a lot of property, typically let out on long term leases to generate a steady revenue. These leases, together with other relevant records such as annual accounts of rental income, form part of the borough archives.

There are about 8000 documents in the collection in total, dating from around 1200-1900. The collection is *not* included in the DHC’s on-line catalogue (though a small number of items appear under other references – see, for example, reference R9/1/Z Dartmouth Borough Council 1571-1972). To find out what you may want to look at, it is necessary to consult the eighteen typed and bound volumes of the “Calendar of Deeds and Documents for Dartmouth”, accessible on the open shelves in the DHC searchroom. In broad terms, the Calendar is arranged chronologically - lower numbers relate to older documents. Items are identified by the prefix “DD” and a five-figure number from 60501-68522.⁶ A full or partial transcript (translation for earlier documents written in Latin) is included in the Calendar for all documents up to around 1540. Some later documents have also been transcribed, but if not, you will find a brief description of what the document is, with the date.

Many documents from the collection have been used by historians (for example, see Ray Freeman’s history of Dartmouth, listed in Further Reading). Abstracts of the early property records (and much else) were published in 1935, in “Pre-Reformation Dartmouth” compiled by Hugh R Watkin, see

³ Dartmouth Vol 1 Pre-Reformation p4, Hugh R Watkin, see Further Reading section.

⁴ List entry number 1209644, The Cherub, 13 Higher Street

⁵ For example, list entry numbers 1108285, Bruckton Farmhouse; 1324999, Chipton Farmhouse

⁶ Many items previously had an “SM” reference number, standing for Stuart Moore, the first person to archive the collection in the late 19thC. SM reference numbers appear in older works. Stuart Moore’s Calendar is on the open shelves in the searchroom in the Devon Heritage Centre (it is a large leather-bound handwritten volume). It has been annotated by a later hand to show the DD number corresponding to each SM number. For more information and background, see the Further Reading section.

Further Reading. Together with other material, they form an important resource for what we know about medieval houses and streets in Dartmouth.

For material after 1540, if a transcript is not in the Calendar, it is necessary to consult the original document, which must be ordered up and brought to you in the reading room. Whilst this may sound daunting, the archivists at the Devon Heritage Centre are always ready to help; they also run an outreach service at Torre Abbey four times a year, where documents ordered in advance may be viewed, and expert advice provided from the visiting archivist.

Deeds

Title deeds are legal documents covering past transfers of land or property, which were retained by later owners to prove their ownership. In 1925 the requirement to prove descent of title as far back as possible was removed and replaced by a limit of 30 years, reduced in 1970 to 15. Consequently, many people saw these old documents as of no use and disposed of them, sometimes in rather odd ways – in 2002 Ray Freeman of the DHRG was asked for advice on one Dartmouth deed which had been made into a tambourine!⁷

Title deeds will vary from one house to another – you may be very lucky and find a trail which stretches back for many centuries and across many owners, or you may find none, or anywhere in between. Finding title deeds is difficult because there is no single place to look; but try the following to begin with:

- The DHRG website section “Dartmouth Archives” has a category called “Property” which includes summaries of deeds relating to some houses in Dartmouth and the surrounding area. Alternatively, put the name of a house (if applicable) or street into the search box.
- Dartmouth Museum holds some deeds for local houses in its collections. Their catalogue is not available online so you will need to contact them to ask what they have.
- Many deeds for the local area have been deposited in the Devon Heritage Centre as the county record office. Deeds relating to properties in Dartmouth and the surrounding area are found in many different collections, depending upon how ownership has passed and where they were last privately held (including, for example, firms of solicitors). For guidance on searching the DHC online catalogue, see the links in the Further Reading section.
- Similarly, deeds may turn up in other archives. The National Archives online catalogue Discovery links to the online catalogues of more than 2500 archives across the country so this is another a good place to search. For guidance on how to search it, see the links in the Further Reading section.

As well as the property in which you are interested, it is worth looking out for deeds of properties nearby. For many centuries a property’s location was described not with a plan or map, but in words describing adjacent property to the north, south, east and west, or features such as streets “the Kingsway” or the “mill pool” (in Dartmouth) or the river. Urban boundaries often remain stable for extended periods (though there was often sub-division within them), so by tracing the deeds of a neighbouring property, you might be able to find out much about your own, even if deeds to your own property have not survived. Later documents will probably use street names, house names, or even house numbers if these are in use, but bear in mind these change over time.

⁷ DHRG website “Dartmouth Archives”, document number 103019

As legal documents, deeds covering property transfers take many forms, reflecting changing law and practice. Furthermore, they may be far from straightforward to understand on first acquaintance! For this reason, they have been described by one expert, Nat Alcock, as “the ugly ducklings of the record office – bedraggled, dirty and ignored ... by far the most numerous but the least used source of historical evidence”. However, there is excellent guidance in specialist publications, general books on house history and on some websites (see the Further Reading section).

Such documents will also be handwritten – like handwriting today, sometimes this is easy to read, sometimes not! Whilst this adds to the challenges of using this sort of material, reading old documents becomes easier with practice and there are many books and online guides to help (see the Further Reading section).

Maps

Locating an older house on a modern map can be difficult because much may have changed in intervening years. Older maps are therefore an essential source as they show buildings, roads and other features at the dates at which they were surveyed. There are several on the “Dartmouth Archives” section of the DHRG website, see the Maps category.

Several historic maps or plans exist of Dartmouth harbour. They provide a broad indication of the extent of settlement, but even though this is often indicated with naturalistic miniature houses, they cannot be used to identify specific houses. See the Further Reading section for some examples.

The maps described here date from 1765 to 1936. If you are researching a present-day house, you should be able to derive at least an approximate date for its construction by comparing its location with the same location on the maps. If you are researching a house which no longer exists, historic maps may enable you to identify roads and streets named in other documents, and possibly where the house was.

Benjamin Donn’s Map of Devon, 1765

The first accurate and comprehensive survey of the whole county of Devon was carried out by Benjamin Donn in 1758-1763, for a map drawn at a scale of one inch to the mile. The map was published in 1765, in the form of 12 sheets. Two further sheets provided plans of Exeter and Plymouth, at a larger scale. Dartmouth and the surrounding area form part of sheet 11.⁸

The map shows towns, villages, “seats or noted houses”, farms or cottages, and principal (but not all) roads. A commemorative facsimile edition of the whole map was produced in 1965, see details in the Further Reading section. While the overall pattern and extent of settlement is clear, buildings in towns and village are shown in block form, so individual houses cannot be identified. Farms and cottages in rural areas can be seen more readily, though “cottages lying out of the road” were not shown.

The gentlemen’s “seats and noted houses” are marked. Those in Dartmouth and the surrounding area were (original spelling retained):

Mount Galpin, Holdsworth Esq
 Mount Boon, Seal Esq
 Nethway, Fownes Luttrell Esq

⁸ See DHRG website “Dartmouth Archives” document number 102913

Lupton, Hayne Esq
 Court, Yard Esq
 Watton, Rogers Esq
 Sandridge, Gilbert Esq
 Widdecombe, Holdsworth Esq
 Lower Fuge, Holdsworth Esq
 Higher Fuge, Hayne Esq
 Cotterbury, Mr Penny
 Oldstone, Cholwich Esq
 Kingston, Mr Full
 Draiton, Perring Esq

First Ordnance Survey map of Devon, 1809

The origins of the Ordnance Survey lie in military mapping carried out by William Roy in the mid 18thC. In 1784 he began a “Trigonometrical Survey” of south-east England for the Royal Society, and this survey was taken over for the government by the Board of Ordnance in 1791. To the survey was added the task of making a topographical map of the whole country at a scale of one inch to one mile.

Around 1800 the Board of Ordnance decided to concentrate work in the west country. In the area around Dartmouth the survey was carried out in 1803-4. The Ordnance Survey map covering Devon was published in 1809 and was the third to appear for any county, taken as a whole. Dartmouth and the surrounding area was shown on sheet 23.

The scale is small but clearly shows the pattern of settlement, and the fine engraving shows much detail. Some individual houses, farms and cottages can be seen, though contiguous buildings in the centres of towns and larger villages are shown in block form.

There were several prints of this map in succeeding decades. Sometime between 1826-1836, the sheet including Dartmouth was re-engraved, making some changes to the coastline and adding the “New Road” running from the centre of the town and up the side of the valley towards Townstal.

The 1809 OS map was printed in reproduction in 1977. It can be viewed on the Vision of Britain website, see the Further Reading section.

Boundary Commission Maps 1831, 1835 and 1868

In 1831 discussions about parliamentary reform identified the need to review the boundaries of ancient boroughs to take account of expanding or contracting populations, due to the huge changes being brought about by industrialisation and urbanisation. A Boundary Commission reviewed every English and Welsh borough planned to remain or become enfranchised under the proposed reform. Dartmouth had sent two MPs to Parliament regularly since the 14thC. Under the reform proposals the borough’s representation was to be reduced to one.

The commissioners undertook up-to-date cartographic surveys to establish boroughs’ ancient boundaries and identify the number of £10 householders (the people to whom the franchise was to be extended) in the borough and immediate surrounding areas. Where there were more than 300, they recommended new boundaries reflecting the modern extent of a borough and allowing for future expansion. In Dartmouth, the commissioners concluded that little room was required for expansion – the town was still accommodated “within the limits of the ancient borough”. They

recorded 411 houses worth £10 per annum “in borough and town” ie the extent of the town including any potential for expansion.

Their map captures the extent of the town at this date, mostly in block form, and shows some individual houses. Dartmouth (as a settlement) spread across four parishes: Townstal, St Saviours, St Petrox and a small part of Stoke Fleming. The map also shows Kingswear.⁹

In 1835 more Commissioners reviewed municipal boundaries for the purpose of municipal reform. They did not undertake their own surveys but relied on current OS maps. They differed from their predecessors as to the ancient boundaries, reporting that “the ancient limits of Clifton Dartmouth Hardness are more extensive than they appear to be from the Report and Plan of the Parliamentary Boundary Commissioners” – reaching as far as Longcross on the Totnes road. However, the “ancient limits” (however defined) were of little relevance (according to the report) as the municipal limits were in 1835 the same as those of the Parliamentary Borough.

The Commissioners reported that “Colonel Seale” (ie Sir John Henry Seale, elected MP in 1833) considered that “all the land in the Borough may be considered accommodation land, or it will probably become so, and looking forward to a considerable extension of the Town and to the erection of Marine Villas on the western side of the Harbour, his opinion is against any contraction of the present Boundary” but also noted that “a difference of opinion prevails as to the probable extension of building”.¹⁰

At the 1867 Reform Act, Dartmouth lost its remaining Parliamentary seat as a Borough. A further boundary review was undertaken in 1868. The Commissioners made no recommendation for change, since “building has in no part reached the Boundary of the Borough and there are no persons resident beyond the boundary who can be said to form part of the Town Population.”¹¹ For the extension of the franchise, see the section on Electoral Registers.

1841 Tithe Maps

Tithe Maps are a significant source of information when researching older houses (and indeed for many other lines of historical enquiry). Even if a house itself is not shown, later property boundaries often relate to or reflect previous field or land boundaries, enabling the prior history of the site and setting of a house to be explored in some detail.

These special purpose maps were created following the Tithe Commutation Act of 1836, which commuted all historic tithe payments in kind (that is, in the form of various sorts of agricultural produce) to money payments. The amount to be paid was determined by a standard formula relating to land use. Land subject to tithes was surveyed to determine how money payments should be “apportioned”; tithe maps were drawn up for each tithe district, usually equating to parishes.

In Dartmouth and the surrounding area, tithe maps were drawn up for the parishes of Townstal, Dittisham, Stoke Fleming and Kingswear. However, no survey was carried out for the parishes of St Saviours or St Petrox because land in those parishes was not subject to tithes, so the most populous parts of the town were not covered. The parish of Stoke Fleming included a small part of Dartmouth.

Tithe maps varied in terms of detail but had to show every parcel of land subject to tithes. “Parcels” were defined by the boundaries of fields, orchards, gardens, parks, plantations, woodlands etc; they

⁹ DHRG website “Dartmouth Archives” document number 103196

¹⁰ DHRG website “Dartmouth Archives”, document number 100157

¹¹ DHRG website “Dartmouth Archives”, document number 103197

also showed individual buildings. Each parcel was individually numbered, and an accompanying “Tithe Apportionment Document” showed the owner, occupier, size, and use of each numbered parcel, together with the tithe payment due.

The Townstal tithe map shows the part of Dartmouth in the parish of Townstal – after the reclamation of the mill pool and construction of the New Road the parish boundary was adjusted slightly so that Townstal included buildings to the north of the New Road as far as the Market. Because of the level of detail, individual houses and buildings are clearly shown and using the accompanying Tithe Apportionment, you can identify the names of the owner and occupier. This information can then potentially be cross-referenced to the 1841 Census, taken at a similar time (see discussion of Census records below).

Similar levels of detail were shown on the maps covering Dittisham, Stoke Fleming and Kingswear. A small part of Kingswear, including Brookhill House, was part of the parish of Brixham. However, Brookhill House was still shown on the Kingswear map.

The Act required an original map and two statutory copies to be made for each tithe district. The original was retained by the Tithe Commissioners in London, one copy went to the relevant diocesan office, and the tithe district itself kept the third, so it could be consulted locally.¹² There are thus at least two versions of each map. They differ slightly in detail, in colouring and in decoration, but (for our area) were all at the approved scale of three chains to the inch and were well-drawn.

The diocesan copies are now held by the Devon Heritage Centre. However, it is usually not necessary to view the originals (which are large, sometimes fragile and difficult to handle), because images are available online. Devon County Council’s website includes a dedicated section with high resolution digitised images of the maps, images of the original Tithe Apportionments, and a transcript (see the Further Reading section). The Maps category of the “Dartmouth Archives” section of the DHRG website includes images of the Townstal and Stoke Fleming tithe maps, and our own transcripts of the Tithe Apportionments, providing a useful comparison.

The Tithe Commissioners’ maps, held in The National Archives, have also been digitised, and are viewable and searchable on The Genealogist family history website (subscription required). The “Map Explorer” view allows easy movement across map/parish boundaries, which is helpful when parish boundaries are irregular, or the land you are researching covers more than one parish. Each parcel of land on the map links via a pointer to a transcript of the relevant details in the tithe apportionment. Further, Tithe Map information can be overlaid on a series of historic OS maps, enabling parcels of land on the Tithe Map to be located on the OS map.

OS Town Plan of Dartmouth, 1888

Town Plans were the most detailed mapping ever undertaken by the Ordnance Survey, carried out for all towns in England and Wales with populations greater than 4000. The survey of Dartmouth was done in 1885 and 1887. The Dartmouth map was at a metric ten-foot scale of 1:500, or approximately one inch to 44 feet - at that scale the town extended across thirteen sheets. Images of the two sheets covering most of Dartmouth are in the Maps category of the “Dartmouth Archives” section of the DHRG website. They are marked in bold on the list below.¹³ The others may be viewed (at no charge) on the website of the National Library of Scotland, see the link in the Further Reading section. The

¹² The Borough of Dartmouth copy may be that held at DHC R9/1/C/110; it includes some altered apportionments dating to 1906 and 1913.

¹³ Document numbers 102830 (Dartmouth North) and 102831 (Dartmouth South)

NLS website also enables the sheets to be viewed “seamlessly” together, overlaid on a modern map if required.

The maps show clearly individual houses and buildings at a very high level of detail (and indeed many other features, including letter boxes, flagstuffs, individual trees, and the latrine on the New Ground!). Garden layouts are included and glass-roofed buildings indicated with cross-hatching. Street names, public buildings, and named houses and terraces are given, potentially enabling cross-referencing with Census records (see below). For discussion of street names and numbers, see the section on Census records.

The Dartmouth sheets and their coverage are:

Sheet number	Coverage
CXXVII.12.25	Part of Sandquay
CXXVII.16.5	Part of Combe
CXXVII.16.9	Townstal to St Clement’s Church (marked as St Mary Magdalene)
CXXVII.16.10	Centre of Dartmouth, north
CXXVII.16.14	Ford and top of New Road
CXXVII.16.15	Centre of Dartmouth, south, extending to St Barnabas’ church
CXXVII.16.20	Part of Above Town and South Town
CXXVIII.9.21	Part of Sandquay
CXXVIII.13.1	Part of Sandquay, Combe Mud, Ship in Dock, Paintworks
CXXVIII.13.6	Gasworks, New Ground, Railway Pontoon
CXXVIII.13.11	Southern Embankment to Ferry Slip, portion of Bayards Cove
CXXVIII.13.16	Part of Bayards Cove, South Town
CXXVIII.13.21	Part of Above Town, South Town and Warfleet

OS 25-inch maps, late 1880s

For the rest of the country not covered by Town Plans, the nearest equivalent was the OS 25-inch to the mile County series. This allowed all features of the landscape to be shown in accurate detail, including individual buildings. Sheets for our local area were surveyed and published at slightly different dates in the late 1880s.

Principal maps for the area are:

CXXVII.16	Dartmouth (less waterfront) and Townstal
CXXVIII.13	Dartmouth waterfront including Warfleet, river and Kingswear
CXXXIV.1	Warfleet, rivermouth and coast to Willow Cove, Kingswear Castle to Froward Point
CXXXIII.4	Little Dartmouth, Swannaton
CXXXIII.8	Stoke Fleming
CXXVII.12	Old Mill Creek and Sandquay
CXXVIII.9	Noss

Sheets are viewable (at no charge) on the website of the National Library of Scotland (NLS), see the link in the Further Reading section. The NLS website also enables the sheets to be viewed “seamlessly”, overlaid on a modern map. Composite images formed from parts of the sheets above may be found on the Maps category of the “Dartmouth Archives” section of our website.

Revised editions of the 25-inch OS maps were published in 1904 and, for the more populous areas, 1936. These can also be viewed on the NLS website. When the maps are compared, the extent of development in Dartmouth between the late 1880s and 1936 can be seen clearly.

1910 Valuation Survey

The 1910 Valuation Survey, also known as the “Lloyd George Domesday”, was carried out when David Lloyd George, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, introduced a new tax called “increment value duty”. No duty was payable on home improvements paid for by the owner, but any other increase in market value was taxable. The survey thus valued all property to provide a baseline against which to assess increased value. The tax was not popular and was repealed in 1920.

The survey was the most comprehensive set of property records ever compiled in the UK, enabling owners and occupiers of every property to be identified at the time of the survey. It is therefore a very important source for house history, but currently, it is not straightforward to access specific records for Dartmouth and the surrounding area.

England and Wales were divided into 118 valuation districts. Dartmouth and the surrounding area fell within the Torbay district. Unlike the Tithe Apportionment process, special purpose maps were not drawn up. Instead, surveyors annotated existing large-scale OS Maps to show property boundaries. Each property or land unit (such as individual houses or buildings, or large fields) was given a number, which was marked on the map. Information about each property or land unit, called a “hereditament”, was then officially recorded in a “Field Book”, each containing 100 hereditaments. The information recorded always included the name of the owner and occupier, plus the full street or other address, and sometimes a lot more about the property.

To locate a specific property, it is necessary to find:

- (1) The right record map, to obtain the hereditament number;
- (2) The field book covering that hereditament.

The official record maps and the Field Books are held at the National Archives (TNA). There is a project underway to digitise and index them, partnering with The Genealogist website. But the project has yet to reach Devon - so far (October 2023) records have been released covering Greater London, Middx, Bucks, Berks, West Herts and Oxfordshire. In the meantime, the records can only be consulted in person at the National Archives.

The reference numbers of the OS 25-inch maps and Field Books for Dartmouth and the surrounding area can be identified in the National Archives online catalogue. The maps have the following references:

IR 128/10/20	CXXVII.16 NE	Dartmouth (less waterfront) and Townstal
IR 128/10/21	CXXVII.16 SE	
IR 128/10/24	CXXVIII.13 NW	Dartmouth waterfront including Warfleet, river and Kingswear
IR 128/10/25	CXXVIII.13 SW	
IR 128/10/281	CXXXIV.1	Warfleet, rivermouth and coast to Willow Cove, Kingswear Castle to Froward Point
IR 128/10/270	CXXXIII.4	Little Dartmouth, Swannaton
IR 128/10/274	CXXXIII.8	Stoke Fleming
IR 128/10/208	CXXVII.12	Old Mill Creek and Sandquay
IR 128/10/219	CXXVIII.9	Noss

The accompanying Field Books for Dartmouth, Kingswear, Dittisham and Stoke Fleming have the following references (obtained by searching on series reference IR 58 + “Torbay” plus the name of the specific location):

Covering Dartmouth assessment nos 1-100	IR 58/83477
101-200	IR 58/83478
201-300	IR 58/83479
301-400	IR 58/83480
401-500	IR 58/83481
501-600	IR 58/83482
601-700	IR 58/83483
701-800	IR 58/83484
801-900	IR 58/83485
901-1000	IR 58/83486
1001-1100	IR 58/83487
1101-1200	IR 58/83488
1201-1300	IR 58/83489
1301-1400	IR 58/83490
1401-1500	IR 58/83491
1501-1600	IR 58/83492
1601-1700	IR 58/83493
1701-1751	IR 58/83494
Covering Kingswear assessment nos 1-100	IR 58/83582
101-200	IR 58/83583
201-273	IR 58/83584
Covering Dittisham assessment nos 1-100	IR 58/83518
101-200	IR 58/83519
201-239	IR 58/83520 (duplicate is IR 58/83521)
Covering Stoke Fleming assessment nos 1-100	IR 58/83273
101-200	IR 58/83274
201-215	IR 58/83725

Working books used by the valuers to prepare the Field Books are called the “Revenue Books,” (sometimes known as “Domesday books”). These are generally said to contain similar information to the Field Books, but “less detailed”. However, they are more locally accessible, being held in county record offices. The Revenue Books for Torbay district, with accompanying OS sheets, are held in the Devon Heritage Centre (uncatalogued, see reference 3201V). We hope to explore this collection to find out whether it might provide an acceptable substitute for the material held at TNA.

Census Records and the 1939 Register

With census records and the 1939 Register you may be able to take your house history research considerably further. Further, from there, you can move into other family history records. Discovering more about the lives and work of the people who owned a house or lived in it will help to explain much about when and where a house was built, why it was altered, what form those alterations took, and much else about a house’s history. Beyond this, you will gain much insight into the history of the wider community of which the house is, or was, a part.

The first national census in the UK was taken in 1801 and thereafter was repeated every ten years until 1931, resuming after the second world war in 1951. The purpose was to provide a population count; and to do so, it was decided to take a head count of everyone in the country on a single night.

From 1801-1831 inclusive, only the most basic information was recorded, and few returns have survived (nothing for Dartmouth and the surrounding area). From 1841, the returns become more useful since, for the first time, names of all occupants were recorded for each property. However, ages of everyone over 15 were rounded down to the nearest five years, and relationships between the members of the household were not given.

From 1851 onwards, exact ages were recorded (so far as possible) along with the relationship of all occupants to the head of household, and more detail was required about place of birth and about occupation and employment. The questions to be answered varied with successive censuses, reflecting governments' changing needs for information and particular concerns at the time.

From 1841-1901, answers given by heads of household were copied into "enumeration books" by local census enumerators. The household schedules were destroyed and the record we now see is the enumeration book. In 1911 and 1921, the individual household schedules were kept and are now viewable. There is a one-hundred-year limit on the release of census information; the 1921 Census was released in 2021.

Census records are a well-established resource for family history and are now widely available on many commercial genealogy websites and extensively covered in family history books and articles. For details of what is available where, see the link to The National Archives guidance on census records in the Further Reading section. The National Archives partner for the 1921 Census is Find My Past; their website has a section devoted to it, with much guidance about the best way to search the records. The Family History category of the Dartmouth Archives section of our website includes full transcripts of the 1861 census for Dartmouth and the 1891 Census for Dartmouth, Kingswear and Dittisham. These need to be browsed to find streets and house addresses.

If you already know the names of the people who owned or occupied the house in which you are interested (for example from deeds or other legal documents), searching indexed census returns on a website for a person's name, given location and approximate date, is relatively straightforward (though transcription errors in the indexes may still cause problems).

It is possible to use census returns for house history without first having occupiers' names. For example, Find My Past has an address search function covering the censuses from 1841-1921 and the 1939 Register (described below); The Genealogist website also has an address search function for the same set of records, apart from the 1921 Census (at time of writing).

In the 1841 Census, exact addresses were not required, only "place". In Dartmouth, returns included some individual house names and most street names, though in the returns for the parish of St Saviours there is no mention of Smith Street, Crowthers Hill or South Ford Lane by name. Farm names were also given in the rural parts of the parish of Townstal.

From 1851 onwards, an exact address was required, including the house name or house number if there was one. However, house numbering was the responsibility of local government authorities, not central government or the postal service. Although some terraces were individually numbered, a comprehensive system of house numbering was not formally implemented in Dartmouth until well into the 20thC – investigation of the Electoral Register (see below) for 1931 shows that even at that date, houses in several of the principal streets remained unnumbered. House numbering was also rare in rural areas. Many houses had neither names nor numbers for some considerable time. And even named houses quite frequently changed their names with different owners, while numbering systems (where there were any) also changed as new houses were built.

If there is no street number, it is still possible to derive an idea of the number of houses in a street by looking at the way the returns are annotated. Because more than one household might inhabit a single property, returns in all Census years from 1861-1901 distinguished between households *within* a single property using a single slash "/" after the last name of each household. A double slash "/" under the last name in the house marked where one property ended and the next began.

A further clue to multiple-occupancy is the number of rooms occupied by a household. In 1891 and 1901 the number of rooms in a dwelling was shown if fewer than five; in 1911 and 1921 the number of rooms was reported on every household schedule. In 1911, for example, householders were told to count “Number of rooms in the dwelling (house, tenement, or apartment). Count the kitchen as a room but do not count scullery, landing, lobby, closet, bathroom; nor warehouse, office, shop.”

Finally, returns also noted buildings which were uninhabited or under construction. By browsing through the return for the whole street, or part of a street (for example, between or close to named houses or other landmarks, such as pubs) it may be possible to relate households to buildings on the OS 1888 Town Plan for Dartmouth, or to OS 25-inch maps elsewhere.

Where there is Tithe Map coverage, it can be cross-referenced with the 1841 Census. For example, neighbouring plots 64 and 65 on the Townstal Tithe Map are identified on the Tithe Apportionment document as:

	Owner	Occupier	Plot name
Plot 64	Sir John Henry Seale	Richard Langmead	Island Cottage and yard
Plot 65	Sir John Henry Seale	Richard Langmead	Garden and old quarry waste

Using Find My Past, a search on the 1841 Census in Devon for “Island” (entered in the field “street name”) brings up as an option “Island House” in the parish of Townstal. The record matches the Tithe Apportionment, showing Richard Langmead and his family (presumably) as the occupants:

Name	Age	Occupation	Born in same County
Richard Langmead	40	Carpenter	Yes
Sarah Langmead	35		Yes
George Langmead	70	Carpenter	Yes
George Langmead	10		Yes
John Langmead	8		Yes
Richard Langmead	7		Yes
Sarah Langmead	10		Yes

1939 Register

Because the 1931 Census for England and Wales was destroyed by fire in 1942 and no Census was taken in 1941 due to the Second World War, the 1939 Register now provides the most complete population survey between 1921 and 1951. It was taken on 29 September 1939, only a few weeks after the start of the war, to provide information for identity cards and, when rationing was introduced, ration books.

Although it was not a census it covered some of the same information: name, address, gender, date of birth, marital status and occupation, for the civilian population of England and Wales – military personnel were not included. The 1939 Register is only available in digital form – the original records cannot be consulted. For more information on coverage and how to access it, see the link to The National Archives guidance on the 1939 Register in the Further Reading section.

By the time of the 1939 Register, all houses in Dartmouth had either a name or a number (though these might not be the same as those of today). The 1939 Register can be searched by street name and cross-referenced with the OS 25-inch maps of approximately the same date. However, some addresses might not appear because records remain “closed”; people’s records are “closed” for 100

years from their date of birth or until proof of death. From time to time the digital version of the Register is updated and “closed” records are opened.

In general, the later the record, the easier it is to use for house history, so if you are researching the history of a house likely to have been built sometime before the Second World War, it makes sense to start with the 1939 Register and work backwards. Taken together, the censuses and the 1939 Register form a series of records stretching back very nearly a century. When these are combined with historic maps, it is possible to build a rich picture of a house’s place in the development of the wider community.

Electoral Registers

Electoral Registers may also be helpful in supplementing census records and the 1939 Register, by helping to fill in gaps between censuses and the years between 1921 and 1939. Before 1832, the number of people entitled to vote was very small, but as the franchise increased during the 19thC, electoral registers covered an increasing number of people and gave information about where they lived and the property qualifying them to vote.

As noted above, in the parliamentary reforms of 1832, Dartmouth lost one of two Members of Parliament. The reforms also created a uniform borough franchise, by which all male owners and occupiers of property worth £10 in annual value were able to vote. Though this was a long way from universal male suffrage (let alone universal suffrage) it produced an increased number of electors. Published lists were produced of all those entitled to vote, with a brief description of the property giving them eligibility.

The earliest published electoral register for the “borough of Clifton Dartmouth Hardness” available online appears to be that for 1859 (available on Find My Past, digitised from the collection of Electoral Registers held at the British Library, and called “England & Wales, Electoral registers 1832-1932”). Earlier registers are held at the Devon Heritage Centre.

Electoral registers for this period for Dartmouth list voters alphabetically in each parish, giving their “place of abode” by street, and describing the qualifying property as (for example) “house”, “house and garden”, “warehouse” etc, in the “street, lane, or other like place in this parish, and number of house (if any) where the property is situate” (1859 Electoral Register). At that date there were about 250-270 electors in Dartmouth. Mostly the “abode” and property description refer only to a street, and no house numbers are given, though house names are used.

In the counties, franchise was given to those paying £10 per annum on copyhold land, and £50 per annum leaseholders; the long-standing rights in county elections of 40-shilling freeholders were preserved. In the parishes in Dartmouth and the surrounding area in 1862-3 (which appears to be the earliest surviving county electoral register viewable online) there were 147 electors voting in the Southern Division of the Parliamentary County of Devon:

Dittisham	33
Stoke Fleming	40
St Saviours DM	32
St Petrox DM	19
Townstal DM	15
Kingswear	9

The Reform Act of 1867 finally disenfranchised Dartmouth as a borough. However, the franchise was extended to include all male householders of property rated at £12 or more. Dartmouth voters polled in the county elections in the South Devonshire division. The electorate in Dartmouth and the surrounding area increased as follows (1875 Electoral Register taken as example, selected at random). Kingswear polled in the Brixham polling district, part of the East Devonshire Division, with 30 voters. Included in the Dartmouth polling district were:

Dittisham	43
St Petrox DM	50
St Saviour DM	118
Stoke Fleming	60
Townstal DM	112 ¹⁴

In 1884 further reform established a uniform voting qualification across all constituencies, to include all male householders of property rated at £5 or more. Although large boroughs still returned two members of Parliament, the rest of the country was divided into single member constituencies. In Devon, eight new divisions (constituencies) were created. Dartmouth, Kingswear and that part of Stoke Fleming parish which fell within the Borough of Dartmouth were allocated to the Torquay division. The remainder of Stoke Fleming and Dittisham formed part of the Totnes division.

Number of voters increased as follows (1885 Electoral Register):

DM St Petrox	128
DM St Saviours	381
Stoke Fleming (part)	20
DM Townstal	299
Others	2
Kingswear	95
Others	37
Dittisham	105
Stoke Fleming	105
Other	6

The Electoral registers provide more detail for the address of the voter, and about the property which provide the qualification to vote, which potentially increases the value of the register as a source for house history. Registers can be searched by person but not by address, though registers can be browsed on Find My Past. No registers were produced for the war years 1915-1917.

In 1918 the Representation of the People Act substantially extended the householder franchise of 1884, requiring only a simple six-month residency qualification for men, and for the first time enfranchising some women (those over 30 who were householders, the wives of householders, occupiers of property worth £5 or more, and graduates of British universities). The Electoral Register of 1918 for the Torquay division lists voters in the “parish of Dartmouth” (covering all Dartmouth’s historic parishes), organised in alphabetical street order. House names are given and some numbers (particularly for houses forming part of terraces) though, as noted above, there was no comprehensive house numbering system yet in place. Nonetheless it is possible to view most, if not all, of the adult residents in a street, providing a useful cross-check with 1921 census records.

¹⁴ Also registered to vote in Dartmouth were three “Persons whose qualifications are situated in other Districts”.

The parish of Kingswear formed part of the Torquay division and the parishes of Dittisham and Stoke Fleming were part of the Totnes division. Their voters were listed alphabetically by name, and so are less helpful as a source for information about houses, unless you are searching for a particular person you know to have lived in the house in which you are interested.

Finally, the Representation of the People Act 1928 lowered the voting age for women to 21, with the same residency qualification as men. From this date therefore the Registers cover virtually the entire adult population. The latest available Electoral Registers covering Dartmouth and the surrounding area viewable online on Find My Past are those for the year 1931-1932. Later years to 1939 are understood to be held at the Devon Heritage Centre, as are registers for the post-war period (no registers were produced during 1940-1944), though, as there are some gaps in the collection, please enquire first before making the trip to Exeter.

Local Newspapers

Local newspapers, particularly the Dartmouth Chronicle¹⁵, can be very useful when researching the history of a house. Houses were frequently advertised for sale, rent or lease, and advertisements often provided considerable detail about owners, occupiers and about the way the property was being used. Personal announcements of births, marriages and deaths often included house names or addresses, as did articles about social and community events, or advertisements for shops and businesses (see also Trade Directories below).

New house building and other commercial and economic developments were matters of great local interest, reported in some detail (as well as many other issues, such as local politics and religious matters). For example, in a long article of 26 April 1895, the Dartmouth Chronicle reported on the considerable amount of new building going on – providing useful information for anyone researching the history of any of the properties mentioned:

- progress on the new Flavel Memorial Congregational Chapel, by Mr R T Pillar
- construction of the new George & Dragon Inn, by Mr F J Voisey and Mr E Pike
- construction of a new building next to York House on the Embankment, by Mr Voisey and Mr E P Veale for Mr R Cranford, to be let to the coaling company Renwick & Wilton
- completion of semi-detached villas, adjoining Fair View Road, with work beginning on two more, by Mr Robert Row, on land between Fair View Road and New Road
- completion of two new terraces to the south of the upper part of New Road, called Elmgrove and Ferndale, by Mr Watts
- rebuilding of “Maintop” in South Ford Road, by Mr Watts, for the owner
- completion of three new houses by Mr E J Henley, near Ferndale Terrace
- completion of several houses by Messrs R Pillar and G Row, in Kingswear, Crowther’s Hill, near the Board School Steps, and alterations to a house in Newcomen Road
- plans for three new cottages in South Ford Road, next to South Ford School Rooms, to be built by Mr T O Veale
- construction of three more houses further along South Ford Road, by Mr C W Veale, in what had previously been a garden
- rebuilding of “Glenorleigh”, in Kingswear, destroyed by fire, by Mr J E Short
- construction of two semi-detached villas in Ridge Hill for Mr J C Dawe, by Messrs Wills and Anderson

¹⁵ Through its lifetime this newspaper has had several different names, though retaining “Dartmouth Chronicle” as part of the title. It is referred to here as “The Dartmouth Chronicle” for simplicity.

The “Dartmouth Chronicle Monthly Recorder and General Advertiser”, founded by Robert Cranford, and printed in Dartmouth, began publication in January 1854. As its title indicated, it appeared monthly, and was priced at one penny, or 9d by post. At that time, newspapers published more regularly than monthly were still taxed - in the first edition Robert Cranford wrote that “we may print News in our “Chronicle” without its being stamped [ie taxed], provided we do not publish it oftener than once a month”.¹⁶

At the beginning of 1871 the Dartmouth Chronicle became a weekly newspaper, appearing every Friday. The Editorial in the first edition of that year, 6 January, noted that this was due to “the reduction in Newspaper postage [and] the greatly increased facilities afforded the Press by the Postal Telegraph” but also predominantly to the need to provide timely news and comment if the newspaper was to be “useful as a medium for the expression of public opinion”. As this implies, the newspaper industry was becoming increasingly competitive.

No copies of the first year’s papers appear to have survived locally (though a copy of at least the first edition is in the British Library) but on the “Dartmouth Archives” section of the DHRG website we currently have images of most editions for the years 1855-1884. Like many local newspapers of this period, the Chronicle was a mine of detailed information, and it is well worth browsing editions around dates in which you are interested. The images on our website are not searchable by keyword.

Dartmouth Museum also holds some copies of the Dartmouth Chronicle – please ask them for what is available if there is a particular year or ranges of years in which you are interested. Dartmouth Library’s Local History Section holds a collection of press cuttings relating to buildings from the Dartmouth Chronicle and other local newspapers of more recent date. The Dartmouth Chronicle of today is understood to hold nothing earlier than 2002.

The British Newspaper Archive (BNA), part of Find My Past, has been working in partnership with the British Library to digitise their large collection of historical newspapers. The partnership was renewed in 2021. Since 2016 some editions of the Dartmouth Chronicle have been viewable and are fully searchable via BNA (subscription required). The transcripts are provided by “Optical Character Recognition” (OCR) software which creates searchable electronic text; however, it is not always fully accurate to every character. It thus helps to search on different forms of a street, house or personal name. The years covered at time of writing are: 1869, 1871-1874, 1894-1896, 1898-1913.

Copies of the newspaper held at the British Library were at some point committed to microfilm and copies of the microfilms are held by the Local Heritage Resource Centre at the Cookworthy Museum in Kingsbridge. These extend beyond 1913 though the termination date remains to be established.

Several other regional and local newspapers carried news and advertisements relating to Dartmouth and the surrounding area. Those that tend to occur most frequently are listed overleaf, though there were several other titles of interest. The years shown are those available on the BNA website at time of writing, listed by earliest date.

As this illustrates, more and more newspapers survive from the mid-18thC onwards, though the high point of local newspapers was the 19thC and first part of the early 20thC. From time to time, affairs in Dartmouth and the surrounding area hit the national newspapers too (particularly when royal and naval news was concerned) so, unless you wish to browse a particular newspaper, it is sensible to define your search widely at first and then narrow down as necessary. A regional search will capture all newspapers printed in the South-West; a county search, all newspapers printed in Devon.

¹⁶The Chronicles of Dartmouth A Historical Yearly Log 1854-1954, p28, by Don Collinson (see Further Reading).

Sherborne Mercury	1744-1867
Exeter Flying Post	1800-1866, 1869-1885, 1889-1900
Exeter and Plymouth Gazette	1827-1853, 1855-1857, 1859-1861, 1863-1874, 1876-1878, 1880-1887, 1889-1895, 1897-1900, 1902-1950, 1952
Western Times	1827-1896, 1898-1910, 1912-1950
Totnes Weekly Times	1869-1871, 1884-1895, 1898-1909
Western Morning News	1860-1861, 1863, 1865, 1867, 1869-1871, 1873-1950, 1952, 1961, 1980, 1982
Torquay Times and South Devon Advertiser	1869-1895, 1897-1911, 1921-1962
Brixham Western Guardian	1902-1910, 1912-1914, 1916, 1918-1922, 1925, 1944, 1946

Trade Directories

Trade Directories can be a useful source for house history, especially when used in conjunction with census records and newspapers. Directories were produced by several different publishers and so took different forms and provided different levels of detail. Usually, however, a general description of the town or parish was followed by a list of private residents, followed by a list of merchants and tradespeople. Earlier directories may also group individuals and businesses under occupational headings. In towns, addresses take the form of house name or number (where there is one) and street name.

Later directories expanded the scope of entries to provide information about local government and other institutions, such as churches and schools, and services such as transport and postal (and later telephone) communications. The University of Leicester has an extensive collection of online directories. According to their website:

- 1760-1850 saw sustained if erratic growth in numbers of directories published, due to increased trade, urbanisation and better transport
- After a period of consolidation in the industry, there was rapid growth after 1880
- The heyday of the trade directory was the early 20th century, peaking in 1936, reflecting continuing urbanisation, and the increasing importance of retail and services in the British economy
- Production of directories declined rapidly in the 1950s due to competition from telephone directories and other sources of information

The information in a directory may not be comprehensive or entirely accurate, since publishers collected data in different ways. For more information about directory publishers and how they worked, see the Further Reading section. But taken as a whole, a directory provides a valuable snapshot of economic and social life in a community.

The Publications category of the “Dartmouth Archives” section of our website includes the relevant extracts from 24 Devon Directories for Dartmouth and the surrounding area, from 1823 to 1939 inclusive. Earlier directories predate census records, while those published after 1841 help to fill the gaps between census years. However, none of the Dartmouth directory entries provide information grouped by street, apart from that produced by Cranfords in 1939. Residents and tradespeople are listed alphabetically.

From time to time the Dartmouth Chronicle included information for the town of Dartmouth, similar to that available in trade or town directories. For example:

- In 1855 (see the March edition, for example), a list of “Residents and Visitors”, organised by street. This lists a large number of names though is not comprehensive (document 102060)
- 6 January 1871, a “Local Directory” appeared on the back page, giving a lot of information about the town, including details of many local organisations and the people responsible, though not including a list of residents (document 102183)
- From 22 May 1908 to the outbreak of war in 1914, the newspaper expanded to eight pages, with a new feature on the back page, in the form of “A Directory of Dartmouth Residents”. This *was* organised by street. As the newspaper put it: “Every effort is made to ensure accuracy in this list, but Residents can greatly assist us in this matter by sending direct to our Office as early as possible, any Arrivals, Removals, Departures, or Alterations Desired, for which no charge is made”. Though it is not comprehensive, the number of names included in these lists increased in later years and it is a useful supplement to the 1911 Census.

Photographs and Topographical Prints

Old photographs of houses and streets can provide helpful supplementary information for house history, though it is often difficult to date photographs exactly. They may turn up in all sorts of places – for example, the Rijksmuseum in the Netherlands holds a family photograph album containing some pictures of Dartmouth taken in or before 1897, presumably taken on holiday.¹⁷

Dartmouth Museum’s collection includes many old photographs of the town and surrounding area (only a small number of those available are shown on the Museum website so you will need to ask about houses or streets in which you are interested). The collection also includes copies of some topographical prints - these began to appear in Devon in the early 19thC. For the list of known prints of Dartmouth, see the project “Etched on Devon’s Memory” (link in Further Reading below). Many are held at the Devon Heritage Centre.

Historic England has some interesting photographs of older houses in Dartmouth in the “England’s Places” collection. Many were taken in 1943 and 1946 for the National Buildings Record, set up in 1941 to collect photographs and other records of buildings and sites at risk during and after the Second World War. See the Further Reading section.

Tax Records

Over the centuries governments have often found it convenient to raise revenue assessed on the value of land and property. The Valuation Survey is one example, and as discussed above, provides much useful information for house history. Two other significant examples of national tax records based on property are the Land Tax and the Hearth Tax.

Land Tax

The Land Tax was first levied in 1693 on personal and real property. In 1698, for ease of collection, it took a different form - the amount levied from a county was determined centrally and local assessors created a fixed quota per parish to be paid by landowners based on land alone. It was up to each Land Tax parish to decide how to allocate the quota and, according to those who have studied it, how this was done is not clear. There were apparently no valuations or surveys.

In 1798 changes were introduced which implemented a fixed annual charge, and returns were compiled for all landholders across the country liable for the tax. The original records are held at the

¹⁷ Reisaalbum van de familie Fryer (RP-F-2007-154), www.rijksmuseum.nl

National Archives in series IR23 but have been digitised and are available to view and search on the Ancestry family history website, where they have the title “UK, Land Tax Redemption, 1798”. Devon covers five volumes (National Archives reference IR 23/16 to IR 23/20 inclusive). To find a parish on Ancestry, enter the name in the “Lived in” field, or browse the volumes. The town of Dartmouth is listed as Clifton Dartmouth Hardnesse [*sic*]; Townstall [*sic*] is a separate Land Tax parish.

The page numbers of the digitised return on Ancestry match the folio numbers given in the National Archives catalogue entry for the relevant volume of the return. Dartmouth and the surrounding area largely fall within volume 1 of the Devon returns (reference IR 23/16):

Land Tax parish	Folio numbers in volume 1
Borough of Clifton Dartmouth Hardness	332-337
Townstal	361-362
Dittisham	338-339
Stoke Fleming	351-353

Kingswear is not listed as a Land Tax parish in the National Archives catalogue.

The return shows proprietors’ and occupiers’ names, listed alphabetically, with the sum assessed. There is no address, or any description of the property. An individual return may therefore be of little value unless you already have some idea of a house’s owner or occupier, but they do show where the owner was also the occupier.

However, one further type of Land Tax record might provide a lot more information about an individual property, though investigation requires a visit to the National Archives. In 1798 the government offered landowners the chance to buy out their tax, either by paying a lump sum equalling 15 years tax, or by purchasing government stocks yielding an annuity worth 20% more than the tax. Where Land Tax was redeemed, a certificate was issued, giving a description of the property based on the contract. Certificates were given a number, which appears on the 1798 assessment in the left-hand column, headed “No. of register”.

The certificates are found in Registers of Redemption Certificates, held in series IR 24. These are not grouped by parish but in order of receipt. Certificates normally give place of residence of the owner and describe the property, many including plans. Another series, Parish Books of Redemption, itemises redemptions by Land Tax parish, listing names of redeemers, the sum redeemed and the certificate number. These are held in series IR 22.

Land Tax assessments, certificates or other associated documents may also survive in the Devon Heritage Centre or other archives, especially where these were retained amongst estate papers of individual landowners. For information see the link in the Further Reading section.

Hearth Tax

The hearth tax was introduced in 1662. It was “a property tax on dwellings graded according to the number of their fireplaces”¹⁸ (or stoves) and was sometimes called “chimney money”. The tax was paid in two equal instalments by the occupier, or if the house was empty, by the owner, at the flat rate of one shilling per hearth for each instalment. During the 27 years the tax was collected there were frequent changes in administrative arrangements. This has impacted on survival of the tax records. For the majority of Devon, including Dartmouth and the surrounding area, only one return survives, that of March 1674 (returns survive for 1669-1674 for Exeter and Tiverton).

¹⁸ Hearth Tax Digital, A Brief Introduction to the Hearth Tax, www.gams.uni-graz.at (see Further Reading)

It takes the form of a list of names of heads of households, with the number of hearths in the dwelling they occupied. The non-chargeable are also listed – the 1662 Act exempted those not contributing to the poor rate (assessed locally) and those having goods worth less than £10 and living in dwellings with rentable value of 20s a year or less. From 1663, parish constables were required to enter houses to inspect whether the number of hearths declared by occupiers was true. Landlords were responsible for paying the tax if houses were sub-divided and let to poor tenants who were exempt, and from 1664 no-one with more than two hearths could be exempted under any pretext. In 1663 many people blocked up one or more hearths to escape the tax, but in 1664 blocked hearths were made chargeable.

Although the return is based upon individual dwellings, usually there is nothing to identify the property to which the return relates – no house, street or even inn names are given in any of the returns for Dartmouth and surrounding parishes. Also, it is impossible to tell whether there is more than one household in a house. Sometimes, however, there are exceptions – for example, “Thos Boone Esquire” is listed with fourteen hearths in the parish of Townstal. This is the largest house of the sixteen listed in the parish, and larger than any other house in the town of Dartmouth (indeed, he was one of only 187 people in Devon who had a house of 10-14 hearths). It is therefore almost certainly Mount Boone house.

The Devon 1674 return was transcribed and published privately by T L Stoate in 1982 (for details, see the Further Reading section). He observed that the condition of the original document (held in the National Archives) was “far from satisfactory as regards completeness and legibility”, with many missing names at top and bottom of the rolls of paper on which the return was written. A microfilm of hearth tax returns at the National Archives is held at the Devon Heritage Centre.

In other parts of the country the hearth tax can be combined and compared with probate inventories to calculate how many rooms houses contained, but in Devon almost no probate inventories have survived (they were destroyed in bombing in 1942 – see discussion of Devon wills below). Nonetheless the hearth tax is the closest available to a householder census for the latter part of the 17thC and has been widely used to estimate population levels.

Civil Registration and Parish Register records

Civil registration records and, before them, parish register records¹⁹ will enable you to trace the history of a family, and the house they occupied, in a local community. Depending upon the dates in which you are interested, either or both will be an essential source if you know the occupants or owners of a house and you want to research their personal stories.

Civil registration of births, marriages and deaths began on 1 July 1837. The country was divided into Registration districts and sub-districts, each with a Registrar responsible for seeing that births and deaths were registered. In 1874, legislation made registration compulsory. Responsibility for registering a birth was the parents', or the principal occupier of the house where a birth took place. Responsibility for registering a death was placed on a relation of the deceased, and also required a doctor's certificate.

From July 1837, marriages were allowed to take place in a local register office as well in recognised religious buildings (different denominations were subject to varying rules). A new type of marriage register was introduced requiring more details to be recorded.

¹⁹ Strictly speaking this term covers Church of England parish registers but is used here for convenience to cover registers kept by other religious denominations too.

There is a public right of access to the General Register Office (GRO) indexes to the registers (see the GRO publications listed in Further Reading). Indexes list names alphabetically and give the certificate reference number. To obtain the full information in the registers, including any house address or other location details, you will need to buy the certificate. This can take time and is also costly. However, the GRO has recently introduced a quicker and less expensive Online View digital image service for historical birth and death records for England and Wales (see the links to their publications in the Further Reading section).

Civil registration records of births, marriages and deaths are also held locally and are indexed separately. In Devon, historic registers are held:

- for the part of Devon administered by Devon County Council, by the Devon Registration Service (includes Dartmouth, Dittisham, Stoke Fleming and Kingswear)
- for Plymouth, at Plymouth Registration Office
- for Torbay, at Torbay Registration Office

It is sometimes not realised that parish registers continued to be used after 1837. Find My Past has digitised and indexed many of the surviving Devon baptism, marriage and burial registers extending to 1915, including those for all the Anglican churches in Dartmouth and the surrounding area. During the 19thC it became the practice to record more information about place of residence, especially at marriage. There is no address search function (within parish) but it is possible to browse through the register images. Another alternative is to look for newspaper announcements of births, marriages and deaths for the period in which you are interested.

For dates much before the introduction of civil registration, Church of England parish registers (and those of other religious denominations where available) are usually the only record you will find for births, marriages and deaths for the vast majority of people. However, addresses or place of residence details are unlikely to be recorded in earlier registers except in general terms (John Smith “of Dartmouth” or, if within Dartmouth, “of St Petrox” (for example)). A separate guidance note on the availability and coverage of parish registers for Dartmouth and the surrounding area is in course of preparation.

Using Wills and Probate Records for house history

Wills and probate records are important sources for family history, often providing key details of family relationships. If you know who owned a house, and if the descent of property to heirs is mentioned, they can be used for house history too. They may also contain much fascinating detail about a testator’s life, so it is always worth exploring if someone you are researching has left a will. However, locating Devon wills is not straightforward.

As today, the person making the will (the testator) named a person responsible for carrying out its provisions, the executor. For the will to be valid the executor had to prove it before a court ie obtain probate. If a person died without making a will, the next-of-kin could apply to the court for letters of administration to access any property. When granting probate, the court took a copy of the will. Until 1782, executors were obliged also to submit an inventory of the testator’s goods to the court.

Prior to 1858, wills were proved in ecclesiastical courts, specifically in the court of the Archdeaconry in which the testator held property. In Devon, there were two, the Archdeaconries of Totnes and Barnstaple, so for people owning property in Dartmouth and the surrounding area, this was likely to be Totnes. If property was held in more than one archdeaconry, the will would be proved in the Bishop’s Court in Exeter; if held in more than one diocese, then at the Archbishop’s “Prerogative”

Court of Canterbury (PCC) in London. The PCC also had jurisdiction over estates of people who died at sea or abroad, leaving personal property in England. From 1652-1660, church courts were abolished, and all wills had to be proved in London; these are also included in the PCC collection.

PCC wills are held at the National Archives in series PROB II. They cover the period from 1387-1858. They have been digitised and can be downloaded from the National Archives for a small fee, see the links in Further reading. The digitised images are also available on Ancestry (subscription required).

On 12 January 1858, a civil probate system was set up in England and Wales with a Principal Probate Registry in London and district Probate Registries covering the country. From that time all Devon wills were proved in Exeter, with copies sent to London. The National Probate Calendar lists all proved wills and letters of administration received by the Principal Probate Registry and the Calendar entries for 1858-1995 are available free on Ancestry. Copies of wills and administrations can be ordered from the Probate Service, see the links in Further Reading.

Wills proved before 1858 in the two Devon archdeaconry courts were moved to the Exeter Probate Office. In 1942 the Probate Registry was destroyed by bombing in the Exeter Blitz and almost all original Devon wills, administrations and inventories held there (of whatever date) were lost. However, the following survive:

- copies of wills sent to London from 1858 onwards
- all pre-1858 Devon wills proved at the Prerogative Court of Canterbury in London
- some original wills proved in Devon before 1858 and kept elsewhere, which since 1942 have been deposited at the Devon Heritage Centre or its predecessors (for example, as part of family, estate or solicitors' collections).

Furthermore, Devon wills, administrations and inventories proved in Exeter and Barnstaple had been calendared before 1942. Beyond the calendars, some wills had been abstracted or transcribed by various researchers, or published in whole or in part, for one reason or other, before 1942. Thus, even though the original will was lost, the existence of the will had been recorded and in some cases, all or part of the contents. Unfortunately, no calendar of testamentary documents proved in Totnes was ever compiled, so we will never know the full number of testators from Dartmouth and the surrounding area.

The Devon Wills Project, "undertaken by volunteers from 2009-2022, was set up to provide a finding aid in the form of a consolidated index of all Devon wills, administrations and inventories. The index shows where copies, transcripts, abstracts or extracts of such original testamentary documents can be found, and in many cases the whereabouts of the original documents". This extraordinary effort covers over 300,000 wills from almost 550 different sources. In general, it covers the period up to the end of 1857 but goes beyond this in some cases. The index lists wills in alphabetical order under testators' names. It includes all PCC wills relating to Devon.

The Devon Wills Index is web-based and held on the GENUKI website; there is a free search facility on FindMyPast (requires registration). For more information, see the links in the Further Reading section.

Further reading

The final section of the paper provides suggestions for further reading and links to sources of further information mentioned in preceding sections.

Development of Dartmouth and the surrounding area

Dartmouth, a History of the Port and Town, by Percy Russell. First published in 1950, and reprinted in 1959 with some corrections and additions. Reissued 1982 by the Friends of The Dartmouth Museum Association.

Dartmouth and its Neighbours, a History of the Port and its People, by Ray Freeman. First published in 1990, reissued in 1996, republished with additional material in 2007, Richard Webb, Dartmouth

The Chronicles of Dartmouth, a historical yearly log 1854-1954, by Don Collinson, 2009, Richard Webb, Dartmouth

The Chronicles of Dartmouth, a historical yearly log 1955-2010, by Phil Scoble, 2012, Richard Webb, Dartmouth

(both volumes based on the content of the Dartmouth Chronicle but also including other material).

DHRG publications on the development of areas within Dartmouth

The Story of Warfleet, by Ray Freeman, DHRG Paper 8, 1993, out of print and available to download on <https://dartmouth-history.org.uk/dhr-g-books/the-story-of-warfleet/>

The Development of Dartmouth Millpond to 1846, by Ivor H Smart, DHRG paper 13, out of print and available to download on

<https://dartmouth-history.org.uk/dhr-g-books/the-development-of-dartmouth-millpond-to-1846/>

The Newcomen Road, by Ivor H Smart, DHRG paper 15, out of print and available to download on

<https://dartmouth-history.org.uk/dhr-g-books/the-newcomen-road/>

Dartmouth Industry and Banking, 1795-1925, DHRG paper 18, (covers several properties in the centre of Dartmouth) out of print and available to download on

<https://dartmouth-history.org.uk/dhr-g-books/dartmouth-industry-and-banking-1795-1925/>

Up the Hill to Townstal, by Eric Preston, DHRG paper 32 **still in print**, available to purchase on

<https://dartmouth-history.org.uk/group-books/>

Kingswear Historians

Kingswear and Neighbourhood, by Percy Russell and Gladys Yorke, 1953, reprint with additions, 2008

<https://kingswearehistorians.com/books-and-publications/>

Sources for House History: Studies of Local Houses

The following DHRG books are examples of studies of the history of individual houses or other properties in Dartmouth and the surrounding area.

The Wadstrays (a history of the Wadstray Farms) by Irene O'Shea, DHRG paper 35, out of print and available to download on <https://dartmouth-history.org.uk/dhr-g-books/the-wadstrays/>

Wadstray House, A History by Irene O'Shea, DHRG paper 21, still in print, available to purchase on

<https://dartmouth-history.org.uk/group-books/>

The History of the Castle Hotel, DHRG paper 25, currently out of print, not yet available to download at time of writing (please contact us if you are interested in this book).

Oldstone, the Story of a Ruined Mansion, by Ursula Dimes, DHRG paper 9, available to purchase on

<https://dartmouth-history.org.uk/group-books/>

Brownstone: A Devon Farm through Seven Centuries, by Ray Freeman, DHRG paper 4, out of print and available to download on

<https://dartmouth-history.org.uk/dhrg-books/brownstone-a-devon-farm-through-seven-centuries/>
The Dartmouth Residences of Thomas Newcomen and his Family, by Ivor Smart, DHRG paper 3, out of print and available to download on

<https://dartmouth-history.org.uk/dhrg-books/the-residences-of-thomas-newcomen/>

Kingswear

Kingston Farm and its Cottages: the story of a Devon farm through the ages, by David Williams, 2008

<https://kingswearhistorians.com/books-and-publications/>

The Local History section in Dartmouth Library contains reference copies of all DHRG publications and many other useful books.

Vernacular and Town Houses in Devon

The Buildings of England: Devon, by Bridget Cherry and Nikolaus Pevsner, Yale University Press, 2004

See the introductory essays, especially:

Rural Building 1400-1800, Peter Beacham

Town Houses: Medieval to Mid-seventeenth Century, Michael Laithwaite

Entries for Dartmouth (p320) Dittisham (p335) Kingswear (p325) Stoke Fleming (p764).

West Country Households 1500-1700 ed John Allan, Nat Alcock and David Dawson, Boydell Press, 2015, especially the chapters on:

The Development of the Vernacular House in South West England 1500-1700, Nat Alcock

The Transformation of the Building Stock of Exeter, 1450-1700, Richard Parker and John Allan

Historic England guidance on domestic buildings, in four parts, provides a good introduction:

Vernacular Houses: <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/dlsg-vernacular-houses/heag102-domestic1-vernacular-houses-lsg/>

Town Houses: <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/dlsg-town-houses/heag102-domestic2-town-houses-lsg/>

Suburban and Country Houses: <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/dlsg-suburban-country-houses/heag104-domestic3-suburban-and-country-houses-lsg/>

Modern Houses and Housing: <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/dlsg-modern-housing/heag105-domestic4-modern-houses-and-housing-lsg/>

See also the website "Researching Historic Building in the British Isles". The author, Jean Manco, has now sadly passed away so it has not been updated since 2018. However, it still provides extensive resources and guidance. <https://www.buildinghistory.org>

Sources: Dartmouth Borough Archives, Devon Heritage Centre

Dartmouth Vol 1, Pre-Reformation, by Hugh R Watkin, Parochial Histories of Devonshire no 5, 1935.
Note:

There is (as yet) no general guide to the Dartmouth Borough Archive collection. Extracts from some documents first appeared in the Fifth Report of the Historical Manuscripts Commission in 1876 (p597-606) which commented that the borough's "ancient records" could be divided into "charters, volumes, deeds, and miscellaneous documents." In 1879-80 Stuart A Moore (who had catalogued the archives of the City of Exeter in 1868) examined and numbered the documents and placed them in order. The Introduction and Table of Contents to his catalogue provided rather more detail on the

contents of the collection than the HMC had done three years earlier (see the “Dartmouth Archives” section of the DHRG website, document number 103050.)

In 1925 the collection was once again examined and arranged, this time by Hugh R Watkin. The Devonshire Association published the results for the pre-Reformation records in 1935; Hugh Watkin observed he had undertaken “a ... careful examination of the collection, as [a] result of which each item has been dated and placed chronologically in the decade to which it belongs. It is satisfactory to record that very few documents which find mention in the Calendar of Mr Moore are today missing; whereas, on the other hand, some few items have been recovered. Where possible, every parchment and paper has been transcribed and the contents embodied in a précis.” In his publication he arranged the records into three groups: Manor and Borough records (which included the property records); Ecclesiastical Records; and Naval and Commercial Records. He also incorporated some entries from calendars of government records, relating to Dartmouth. Documents (from the borough’s collection) were referenced with the numbers allocated by Stuart Moore.

At the time of Hugh Watkin’s death in November 1937 he had reportedly “made great progress with the second volume” of Dartmouth records, which was intended to follow the volume on the Pre-Reformation records (Western Morning News 18 November 1937) but a second volume never appeared. By 1927 the records themselves had been removed to Exeter City Library, where they acquired the “DD” numbers still in use today, from 60501-68522. The documents referenced in Hugh Watkin’s first volume equate very broadly to DD numbers 60501 – 61553 ie the first four volumes of the calendar (though this is only a rough guide, as some documents were calendared with numbers a little out of strict chronological sequence).

After Hugh Watkin’s death it seems that some (if not all) of his work towards the second volume was incorporated into the typed and bound Calendar of the collection, prepared in the Exeter City Library some time before 1950. From there the records and the Calendar eventually found their way to the Devon Heritage Centre, where they are today.

Other Dartmouth Borough Council records (and associated bodies) dating from 1581 to 1972 can be found listed in the DHC online catalogue under reference R9/1; and from 1943-2002 under reference 5748A. See also the “Dartmouth Archives” section of the DHRG website, document numbers 103051, 102988, and 102970, listing a further collection of Borough Council records recently sent to the DHC.

Sources: Deeds

Guide to searching the online catalogue at the Devon Heritage Centre:

<https://devon-cat.swheritage.org.uk/help/search>

Guide to using the National Archives online catalogue, Discovery:

<https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/discovery-help/>

Tracing History through Title Deeds: A Guide for Family and Local Historians by Nat Alcock, 2017, Pen & Sword

Tracing the history of your house: the building, the people, the past, by Nick Barratt, 2006, The National Archives

University of Nottingham, Manuscripts and Special Collections, Research Guidance:

Introduction to Deeds:

<https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/manuscriptsandspecialcollections/researchguidance/deeds/introduction.aspx>

Deeds in Depth:

<https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/manuscriptsandspecialcollections/researchguidance/deedsindepth/introduction.aspx>

The above website has much other useful guidance on the content of old documents, such as approaches to dating.

Learning how to read old handwriting

Devon deciphered: Interpreting Manuscript Sources c1300-1740, John Booker, 2017, Friends of Devon's Archives

Examples of online guides:

National Archives, Reading old documents:

<https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/reading-old-documents/>

University of Cambridge, English Handwriting online 1500-1700

<https://www.english.cam.ac.uk/eres/ehoc/index.html>

English Paleography: Learn how to read Secretary Hand, by Kathryn James, Beinecke Library, Yale University

<https://sway.office.com/2il2mOAQ3Dr1sZeP?ref=Link&loc=play>

Sources: Maps

Early Maps

Benjamin Donn, A Map of the County of Devon, Reprinted in Facsimile with an Introduction by W L D Ravenhill, 1965, Devon and Cornwall Record Society and the University of Exeter.

The Old Series Ordnance Survey Maps of England and Wales: A Reproduction of the 110 sheets of the Survey in early state in 10 volumes; Volume II, Devon, Cornwall and West Somerset, Introduction by J B Harley and Yolande O'Donoghue, pub. Harry Margary, Kent.

Sheet 23 covering Dartmouth and the surrounding area is viewable on the Vision of Britain website https://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/maps/sheet/first_edition/sheet23_sweng

Tithe Maps

Devon County Council, Historic Environment: Tithe Maps and Apportionments

<https://www.devon.gov.uk/historicenvironment/tithe-map/>

Tithe Surveys for Historians, by Roger J P Kain and Hugh C Prince, 2000, Phillimore

Ordnance Survey Maps 1880-1936

National Library of Scotland, Ordnance Survey Town Plan of Dartmouth

<https://maps.nls.uk/os/townplans-england/dartmouth.html>

The sheets can be viewed together as "a seamless zoomable overlay layer" ie enabling the viewer to move readily across sheet edges.

National Library of Scotland: Ordnance Survey Town Plans of England and Wales, 1840s-1890s: additional information

<https://maps.nls.uk/os/townplans-england/info.html>

National Library of Scotland OS 25 inch Maps England and Wales 1841-1952

<https://maps.nls.uk/os/25inch-england-and-wales/>

National Library of Scotland OS 25 inch Maps England and Wales 1841-1952: additional information

<https://maps.nls.uk/os/25inch-england-and-wales/info1.html>

Sources: Census Records and the 1939 Register

Census records are a widely used resource in family history and feature prominently in many books and magazines on the topic. For availability of the records on websites, both free to view and requiring a subscription, see Census records, National Archives guidance:

<https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/census-records/>
1939 Register, National Archives guidance:
<https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/1939-register/>

Sources: Electoral Registers

The National Archives does not hold electoral registers but provides some helpful links:
<https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/electoral-registration/>

Sources: Local Newspapers

The British Newspaper Archives is working with the British Library which holds a huge collection of newspapers. See the British Newspaper Archive website (subscription required):
<https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk>
Kingsbridge Cookworthy Museum, Local Heritage Resource Centre, appointment needed, see email contact details:
<http://kingsbridgemuseum.org.uk/local-heritage-resource-centre/>
Dartmouth Museum
<https://www.dartmouthmuseum.org>

Sources: Trade Directories

The University of Leicester Special Collections Online includes a collection of “Historical Directories of England and Wales” including much helpful information about them as source material:
<https://specialcollections.le.ac.uk/digital/collection/p16445coll4>
For more on Directory publishers, see this page:
<https://specialcollections.le.ac.uk/digital/collection/p16445coll4/custom/publishers>

Sources: Photographs and Prints

Dartmouth Museum holds a large collection of local photographs and some prints though very few are shown on their website. Please contact them directly to ask them for details of any house or street in which you are interested. There may be a fee payable.
<https://www.dartmouthmuseum.org>

The Totnes Image Bank also holds many local photographs. The full collection is viewable on their website but there is a charge to download any you wish to order.
<https://www.totnesimagebank.info>

Many books have been published containing local photographs, so it is worth looking through the publications held in the Local History Section of Dartmouth Library. For example, many are included in The Chronicles of Dartmouth 1854-1954, see above. Also of interest are:

Dartmouth Through Time, by Ginny Campbell, 2014, Amberley Publishing, comparing old photographs with the same view today.

Dartmouth Then Dartmouth Now, DHRG paper 39, by Hilary Sunman and Peter Pryn, focusing on changes in Dartmouth’s shopping streets since the 1960s, again using photographs of the period compared to today:

<https://dartmouth-history.org.uk/dhrg-books/dartmouth-then-dartmouth-now/>

The project “Etched on Devon’s memory” ran from 2002-3 and digitised over 3,400 prints of Devon, from 1680-1870. Images are available via the Devon Heritage Centre online library catalogue. For further information see here:

<https://www.archives.swheritage.org.uk/da-ls-rg-etched>

There is also information on this website:

<https://etched-on-devons-memory.blogspot.com>

Known prints of Dartmouth and the surrounding area are listed here:

<https://etched-on-devons-memory.blogspot.com/2017/03/places-d.html>

“England’s Places” collection of photographs, compiled for the National Buildings Record:

<https://historicalengland.org.uk/images-books/photos/englands-places/>

Sources: Tax Records

Land Tax

For information on land tax holdings at the Devon Heritage Centre, see their guidance:

https://www.archives.swheritage.org.uk/files/ugd/f60e4e_02670409120049bd87409182aa925085.pdf

A useful short article on the Land tax holdings at the National Archives is here:

<https://cdn.nationalarchives.gov.uk/documents/the-land-tax-1692-1963.pdf>

Hearth Tax

For general information on the Hearth Tax, see the website Hearth Tax Digital, “a platform for the publication and dissemination of research and analysis on hearth tax records.” The site includes records for some places in England but (so far) not Devon.

<https://gams.uni-graz.at/context:htx>

Devon Heritage Centre guidance on the Hearth Tax returns held there:

https://www.archives.swheritage.org.uk/files/ugd/f60e4e_a18a2a1448804fe490bd5f9c19885a4c.pdf

The only surviving return for most of Devon, including Dartmouth and the surrounding area, is from 1674. It was privately published in 1982:

Devon Hearth Tax 1674, ed T L Stoate, 1982, published on CD by Bernard Welchman, 2003, now available to download (fee chargeable) at Westcountry Books on Genfair:

https://genfair.co.uk/search/?q=&s_id=201&cat_id=8849

For other published early tax lists see the website GENUKI for Devon, Taxation:

<https://www.genuki.org.uk/big/eng/DEV/Taxation>

This does not include the latest volume of Devon Parish Taxpayers 1500-1650, published in 2023, namely volume 3 Churchstow to Dunkeswell (which includes Dartmouth), Devon and Cornwall Record Society New Series vol 65, ed. Todd Gray. This includes transcripts of taxpayers (poor rate) in Dartmouth’s three parishes between 1601 and 1649, though not all years have survived for all three parishes. Taxpayers are listed in each parish alphabetically. Other than the parish in which they are recorded, there is no information about the house in which individuals lived.

Sources: Civil Registration and Parish Register records

For more information about obtaining birth, marriage, civil partnership and death certificates, see the official guidance provided by the General Register Office:

Discover Your Family History

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1167709/OV_06.1_DYFH.pdf

How to order and pay for Civil Registration Records

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1166872/OV_04.1_how-to-order-pay-civil-registration-records.pdf

This includes details of the Online View Digital Image Service.

Devon Registration Service copy certificates:

<https://www.devon.gov.uk/registration-service/certificates/apply-for-a-copy-certificate/>

Sources: Wills and probate records

Further guidance on PCC wills held at the National Archives plus a dedicated search form is here:

<https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/wills-1384-1858/>

To obtain copies of wills proved after 1858, see this helpful guidance page on the National Archives:

<https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/wills-or-administrations-after-1858/>

To search for and order a probate record, see this page on the official GOV.UK website:

<https://probatesearch.service.gov.uk/#wills>

For the Devon Wills Project, see this section of the GENUKI site:

<https://www.genuki.org.uk/big/eng/DEV/DevonWillsProject>

Family history websites mentioned in this note:

Find My Past: <https://www.findmypast.co.uk/>

Ancestry: <https://www.ancestry.co.uk/>

The Genealogist: <https://www.thegenealogist.co.uk/>

Subscriptions required for general use.

Websites accessed on 14 November 2023.

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The Dartmouth History Research Group is a not-for-profit community and voluntary group. We undertake research into the history of Dartmouth and the surrounding area and make it available to the general public, to promote and increase public understanding of local history and heritage. Membership is free and open to all. New members are always welcome. For further information about the group, please see our website www.dartmouth-history.org.uk or contact us on enquiries@dartmouth-history.org.uk

