'Our Buildings Project' - Guidance document for volunteers/residents

There are many avenues to pursue when considering researching a building. This guidance includes our suggestions on how to start and some websites and resources worth exploring. It can be a very interesting but frustrating and lengthy process. The more unique or important the property the easier it may be to find out more about its history but details of past residents are generally quite easy to find. If you have a specific enquiry and would like some help please email bamptonheritage@btinternet.com

How do I start?

Stage 1 – We suggest you set up a research document in Word, and then use Google

1. In Word, open a new file called BHVC Our Buildings Project (or similar)
2. Within that folder, open a new Word document called eg. Old Malt House Research 1. You can use this document to record (suggest cut and paste or use Snipping tool) all info you find on –line, along with the website address where you found it.
3. Use Google
4. Google the property name, the property address separately and together, consider refining the search by also adding Devon. (This will help to exclude references to Bampton in Oxfordshire).
5. Google the property name (s)/address, along with the name of anyone significant or a business name that you know has a connection with the property.
6. Read the entry/document that google leads you to. Use function button F3 to bring up a search box which will help to take you straight to the relevant section of the website or document.
7. Print out relevant pages or ideally cut and paste or use Snipping Tool to paste the info and source into your Word document.
8. Remember to regularly save your Word document so the information is safely stored.
9. You could keep information found and a note of the source, in several rough documents. Later, use these documents to put together a smarter chronological report. Email bamptonheritage@btinternet.com if you would like to see an example final report.

Stage 2 - Using Tithe Maps

Tithe maps [1837-1847] of most Devon parishes, together with their apportionments give names of owners and occupiers, property and field names, acreage, and state of cultivation.
Tithe maps for Bampton can be found at https://new.devon.gov.uk/historicenvironment/tithe-map/

Zoom in on the top left hand corner of the Tithe map and find the plot number given to your property and boundaries.

Use the 'Apportionment' document associated with the Tithe map to search the plot number for your property. These are not listed numerically, so use the F3 button to enter your plot number to help you find the relevant entry. Find the name of the land owner, the name of the occupier/tenant, and the description/name of the land at that time. Record all this on your Word document, along with the date of the Tithe map.

Stage 3 – Use ancestry/Find my Past websites to find census information.

Census records record properties (listed by street name) and *sometimes* show property name and/or number. Census records were compiled every ten years from 1751 to the current day although the most recent census you will be able to access is 1911.

Read horizontally along the record (using the column headings) and you will be able to discover the names of anyone who lived there, their age/year of birth, their sex, and their occupation.

These records give a good sense of the social history of your property. For example, was it a house where a large or small family lived. How many children were there? What sort of jobs did the parents have? Were there servants living there? As families often stayed in the same house for many years, sometimes generations, the list of names can show new additions to the family or staff numbers. It can also help to identify when someone might have moved away (perhaps got married), or died (they appear on one census but not the next, their spouse might be shown as widow/widower on the later census). Use snipping tool or add the information you learn onto your Word document.

You can then use the ancestry websites to find out more about the family members but WARNING... . Do not get side tracked. Only do this if you want to know more about the family member for a specific reason. This may be because they are of particular note or importance locally/nationally. Going down this route will be time consuming and will distract you from your reason for research – being the property itself.

Stage 4 – Research Newspapers. Any important incidents relating to the property or use of the property may be recoded in local or national newspapers. These reports can also give more insight into the people who lived there. You can do this on Find my Past, or www.britishnewspaperarchives.co.uk Available for use for free at the Devon Heritage Centre, Exeter (see below).

Stage 5 – Visit the Devon Heritage Centre (and use their on-line search facility before you go).

Devon Heritage Centre
Great Moor House
Bittern Road
Exeter
EX2 7NL

01392 888700
devonarchives@swheritage.org.uk
Website: www.swheritage.org.uk/devon-archives

They may have documents you can study/photocopy/photograph . Below are some useful resources available there. It is more likely that you'll find documents relating to larger or more important buildings only. For small properties it is rare to find documents of their construction or age. Their age can usually be assessed only by reference to architectural features by an architectural or buildings historian. We have local volunteers who may be able to help you with this – please ask. Ownership however can sometimes be traced back to 1780, and sometimes further.

The following records are available at the Devon Heritage Centre. They also have experienced researchers on hand who can help you.

General Books
Tracing the History of Your House, Nick Barratt, The National Archives (2001) [ISBN: 1903365228]
Discovering your old house, David Iredale and John Barrett, 3rd edition (1991, reprinted 1997),
Tracing the History of Houses , Bill Breckon & Jeffrey Parker,Countryside, (1st edition 1991, reprinted 1996)

Directories (Devon)
White 1850, 1878; Billing 1857; Morris 1870; Kelly 1866, 1883, 1889, 1893, 1897, 1902, 1906, 1910, 1919, 1923, 1926, 1930, 1935, 1939.

Periodicals
Transactions of the Devonshire Association
Devon and Cornwall Notes and Queries
Devon Historian

Maps (Devon)
These include Ordnance Survey maps [6" and 25" to 1 mile], first edition [1886-9] and second edition [1904-6], and some later editions. Devon Heritage Centre holds incomplete series of these maps in paper format.

Microfiche of the complete set of First and Second Edition 25" maps are available in the Westcountry Studies Library. They also hold a large number of later OS maps. For a list of their major map series see the Local Studies web-page. The library also runs MapView, computer software which enables the viewing of recent large-scale digital mapping of Devon.

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There is a maps and plans card index (part of the subject card index) in the Devon Heritage Centre search-room, which indexes other historic maps deposited in private collections.

Electoral Registers
Electoral registers have been compiled since the 1832 Reform Act and are available on fiche in the Devon Heritage Centre.

Tax Assessments
Land Tax, 1780-1832: annual returns for each parish give names of owners and occupiers with the properties concerned.

Enrolled Deeds
Deeds of bargain and sale were enrolled with the Clerk of the Peace, 1536-1763. There is a typescript calendar and index in the search-room.

Rate Books
Church and poor rates (from parish record deposits) and poor, district and water rate books (from local authorities) from the mid- 19th century onwards are available at the centre.