



Contacting Us

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This guide will help to explain some of the more commonly used records for local history research, including some useful records which are not held by West Yorkshire Archive Service [WYAS].

Please contact us using the 'contact us' details if you would like to visit WYAS to look at any of the records we do hold that are mentioned in this guide.

There is no charge for personal visits to our searchrooms except for copies of documents and photography fees. We can also arrange for groups visits and offer a 30 minute research service.

If you are researching a particular person or family you might like to look at User Guide 11 'Sources for Family Historians' or if you are researching the history of a building you may wish to look at User Guide 10 'Tracing the History of your House' and User Guide 7 'West Riding Registry of Deeds Service for Family and Local Historians'

In this guide you will find information on:

- Parish and Township Records
- Manorial Records
- Family and Estate Records
- Maps and Plans
- Transport Records
- Taxation
- Census

PARISH AND TOWNSHIP RECORDS

Many West Yorkshire parishes were not created until after the sixteenth century and were both ecclesiastical and civil authorities and their records reflect this. A variety of these records can provide information for those studying local history.

Parish registers of baptisms, marriages and burials can include additional information about a parish. For instance, the Kirkburton burial register 1777-1778 shows that there was a smallpox epidemic in the area at this time. Some early registers also include other information, such as pew rents, or lists of people excommunicated from the church. They reflect the personality of the vicar or clerk who maintained them and vary from the well-kept to the indifferent and scrappy. For details of parish registers held by WYAS see Collections Guide 1.

Township records can often be the most informative local history source. They may include **vestry minutes** – the equivalent of local council minutes. One of the main responsibilities of the vestry was poor relief – the care for poor and needy residents. Vestry minutes also refer to repair of the roads, the militia, and other local matters.

The chief local officers were the *churchwardens* and the *overseers* of the poor. **Overseers' records** include accounts showing the money spent on the poor, and other documents concerning the poor - including apprenticeship papers, removal orders and settlement certificates. **Churchwardens' accounts** show how much was spent on the repair and maintenance of the local church. Sometimes the records of officials such as the Highways Surveyors and the Local

Constable also survive. After 1834, the poor became the responsibility of new Poor Law Unions, and township records become less informative. For further information on the Poor Law, visit: <http://www.workhouses.org.uk>

MANORIAL RECORDS

Until at least the sixteenth century, the main unit of local administration was the manor. Manor court rolls record leases and surrenders of land, agricultural regulations, and sometimes minor criminal offences. Until 1733 Manorial records are generally written in Latin.

Many parts of West Yorkshire were once within the boundaries of the Manor of Wakefield. This was one of the largest manors in the country and continued to deal with land transfers until 1925. The records of the Manor of Wakefield are held at the Yorkshire Archaeological Society in Leeds. You can check the location of other manorial records on the Discovery website hosted by The National Archives <http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/>

FAMILY AND ESTATE RECORDS

Many villages were part of the lands of an estate owned by a wealthy family. Estate collections include title deeds, accounts, leases, maps, rentals (listing tenants' names) and surveys (giving tenants' names, and the names and acreages of

fields). Estate maps often show field boundaries, lanes, paths and buildings. But they usually only cover the land owned by a particular landlord, and do not show all the details of a village. If you know the name of the family who owned the estate, you can check the location of family and estate records on the [National Register of Archives](#).

Family and estate collections held by the West Yorkshire Archive Service include:

Bradford	Spencer-Stanhope family of Horsforth, Calverley and Eccleshill; Wilson of Eshton Hall; Tempest of Tong; Ferrand of Bingley; Francis Sharp Powell of Horton Hall
Calderdale [Halifax]	Lister family of Shibden Hall, including the journals of Anne Lister; Stansfeld of Sowerby; Armytage of Kirklees Hall, Brighouse; Sunderland of Hipperholme
Kirklees [Huddersfield]	Ramsden family of Byram and Longley; Beaumont of Whitley; Thornhill of Fixby
Leeds	Records of Fountains Abbey, Studley Royal, Ripley Castle, Temple Newsam, Gascoigne of Parlington and Newby Hall
Wakefield	Smyth family of Heath, Bretton Hall, Pilkington of Chevet, records of Nostell Priory

MAPS AND PLANS

Enclosure Awards and Maps

Enclosure awards and maps relate to the enclosing of common land. Acts of Parliament were passed for each township which wished to enclose its common land. They date mainly to the later 18th and early 19th century. Officials then drew up an *enclosure award* listing the enclosed lands and which local people received them. Most awards have maps to accompany them.

Tithe Awards and Maps

Tithe maps show the land in each parish or township divided into numbered plots. The accompanying awards give details of the owner, occupier, field name, state of cultivation, acreage and tithe value of each plot. Tithes were payments made to the local clergyman. Originally these payments were 'in kind' but from the 17th century onwards they were converted into money payments.

See our Tracks in Time website www.trackinsintime.wyjs.org.uk for digital copies of Leeds maps and award data.

Ordnance Survey Maps

Established in the 1790s the Ordnance Survey's large and small-scale maps are particularly useful for local historians as they allow the comparison of a site or area over a period of time and give details about buildings, roads, developments, public institutions and even trees and land use. Maps of West Yorkshire tend to start in the nineteenth century and we hold editions up to the 1930s in our

offices. Later editions are generally available in the Local Studies Libraries. Further information can be found on the Ordnance Survey website <http://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/>

TRANSPORT RECORDS

During the 18th and 19th centuries *turnpike trusts* were set up to build and maintain main roads. Tolls were charged for the use of the roads. Turnpike trust records include minute books, route maps, details of toll charges, and sometimes tollhouse keepers' daybooks. Most turnpike records for West Yorkshire are held at our Wakefield office.

Our Wakefield office also holds a set of plans showing the properties acquired for the building of roads, canals and railways within the West Riding of Yorkshire, as well as the archives of the British Waterways regional office which are currently being catalogued as part of the [British Waterways Virtual Archive Project](#). Further canal and railway archives for West Yorkshire are held at the [National Archives](#) in London.

TAXATION

Poll Tax Returns

The Poll Tax was first levied in 1377. It was paid by all the population, except beggars and children under 14, at a rate of fourpence a head. It was levied again in 1379 and 1381, but proved very unpopular

and was not re-imposed after the Peasants' Revolt of 1381. The next general poll tax was levied in 1513, and it was imposed again six times between 1641 and 1698. The medieval returns in particular are a useful source of information about village populations at an early date. The records of the tax are held at the National Archives in London <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/>

Hearth Tax Returns

Hearth tax was levied from 1662 until 1689. The parish constable compiled lists of householders and the number of hearths in each house. The tax was levied on all houses worth £1 a year or more, and was paid by the occupier not the landlord. There were many exceptions, including people receiving poor relief (the equivalent of being on benefits), those not paying parish rates, charities, and industrial premises (except smiths' forges and bakers' ovens).

The original returns are at the National Archives. More information on the hearth tax at the National Archives can be found in the series of information leaflets <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/records/catalogues-and-online-records.htm>

However, many of the returns have been printed and are available in local libraries and West Yorkshire Archive Service offices. There are two versions of the 1672 West Riding return – the version at the National Archives appears to have been copied from a volume held at our Wakefield office and available on microfiche in Bradford, Calderdale (Halifax), Kirklees (Huddersfield) and Leeds

Window Tax

Window tax replaced heath tax in 1696. Each household paid a basic two shillings, and houses with between ten and twenty windows paid a further eight shillings. These figures were revised in 1747, and in 1825 houses with fewer than eight windows were exempted. However, householders cut their payments by blocking up non-essential windows. The tax was finally abolished in 1851. The records of this tax are held at the National Archives.

Land Tax

An Act of 1780 meant that records of the land tax had to be kept in each county, so that they could be used to check whether people were entitled to vote in general elections or not. The records list the owner and occupier of the property, and its taxation value. The records stopped being used for electoral purposes in 1832, when electoral registers were introduced. The land tax returns for the West Riding are held at our Wakefield office.

Further information on the land tax is available in the published Search Guide to the English Land Tax, which is based on the West Riding returns

CENSUS

The census lists the names of those living at a particular address. There has been a census in England and Wales every 10 years since 1801, but the first census to list everyone living at a particular address was in 1841. Census records are closed for 100

years so the most recent census currently available is the one from 1911.

In 1841 the census entries showed whether someone had been born in the County they were living in, gave ages rounded down to the nearest 5 years (apart from children) and did not show who was the head of the household or relationships between residents. Later censuses give ages, occupations, place of birth and relationships. Ages and places of birth are of help in tracing families back through the different census records.

The WYAS does not hold copies of census returns; however census records are available in the National Archives; and copies are available in local libraries on microfilm, microfiche or you can get access online.

Free access to the 1881 census is available at:

http://www.familysearch.org/Eng/Search/frameset_search.asp

Or you can pay for access at one of these sites:

[http://www.ancestry.co.uk/1841-](http://www.ancestry.co.uk/1841-1901censuses)

[1901censuses](http://www.ancestry.co.uk/1841-1901censuses)

<http://www.findmypast.co.uk/> for all census returns from 1841-1911.

You cannot look at the census returns until they are 100 years old