
Jigsaw Cambridgeshire Best Practice Users' Guide

Introductory Course to Historical Research Methods or Local History for Archaeologists

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1 ASK LOCAL PEOPLE FOR INFORMATION

When trying to find out about the local history of an area, ask somebody – everybody! Locals have a wealth of knowledge, especially those who have lived there a long time or all their lives or whose families originate from there. There's often a gender difference in the knowledge you obtain through speaking to people: women tend to talk about people, men tend to talk about *stuff* (machines etc.).

Local people you could ask:

- Parish Council
- Parochial Church Council (this body separated from the Parish Council in the late 19th century)
- Women's Institute. The central federation office may have records. The office for Cambridgeshire is in Girton village: WI Office, Oakington Road, Girton, Cambridge CB3 0QH. www.cfw.co.uk/
- Village Society
- History Society
- Civic Society
- Conduit – directory of Cambridgeshire's history and archaeology societies and organisations: <http://www.camantsoc.org/publ.html>
- And find the natives who know everything, and compare their stories

Express interest to local people as broadly as possible e.g. 'this bit of land' rather than 'this specific building' as then you're more likely to get a broad answer which can be narrowed down to the specifics.

Chinese Whispers often operates: if someone says there *may* be a site somewhere, news spreads and may be taken as certain fact. Don't fuel this by saying what you *hope* to find. Very soon someone else will be telling you that this thing is definitely there, they know because an expert said it was!

2 LOCAL HISTORY COMMUNITY

- Local History magazine: www.local-history.co.uk/links/historical.html
- Antiquarian Society (or archaeology, natural history etc. in some countries) founded in the 19th century. In Cambridge, it is the Cambridge Antiquarian Society (CAS): www.camantsoc.org
- County Local History Association (CALH) www.calh.org.uk since 1941
- Family History Society (CFHS) has all Cambridgeshire baptisms and marriages indexed www.cfhs.org.uk
- British Association for Local History (BALH) www.balh.co.uk
- Federation of Family History societies www.ffhs.org.uk

TV

- BBC: www.bbc.co.uk/legacies (past ventures) and www.bbc.co.uk/history/0/ (present offerings)
- Channel 4: www.channel4.com/programmes/tags/history

3 DOCUMENTS – AND WHERE TO FIND THEM

Documents came in bundles...but are now stored in nice acid-free boxes. However, documents are still catalogued according to the bundles they came in. The following may have useful records:

- National Archives (formerly PRO): www.nationalarchives.gov.uk
- County Archives at Shire Hall in Cambridge, and Huntingdon Library for Huntingdonshire District. They sometimes have copies of national documents. www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/leisure/archives
- Local Studies collections: the Cambridgeshire Collection at Central Library in Lion Yard http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/leisure/archives/local_history/cambs/
- National Newspaper Collection online <http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/help/about> has lots of newspapers including some local ones. It is incomplete but is still a useful and searchable resource.
- Cambridge University Archives: www.lib.cam.ac.uk/deptserv/manuscripts/universityarchives.html and <http://janus.lib.cam.ac.uk>
- Cambridge University's College Archives contain lots of information about the land they own in Cambridgeshire and beyond. They aren't always very well catalogued.
 - King's College website is good for their archives: <http://www.kings.cam.ac.uk/archive-centre/>
 - The Bowtell Collection at Downing College. John Bowtell (1753–1813) was a bookbinder who compiled a history of the town and county and collected documents. Most of these are catalogued. Information on how to access the archive can be found here: <http://www.dow.cam.ac.uk/index.php/about/archive>
 - The Wren Library, Trinity College has archives including early manuscripts: <http://www.trin.cam.ac.uk/index.php?pageid=350>

Be aware of which jurisdictions your site fell in:

- Local authorities
 - County (county boundaries existed since Saxon times and are in Domesday).
 - Hundred – smaller than a district.
 - Parish (ecclesiastical and civil). Parishes were important to people, hence 'beating the bounds' demarcation ceremonies. (E.g. there are markers around the door on the river side of Trinity College's Wren Library to mark the parish boundaries.) From 1555 to the nineteenth century, it was law that parishes were to maintain their own roads. Churchwardens didn't just deal with church business but also with parish business, and some churches owned small amounts of land.
- Public Utilities records, e.g. Board of Health maps.

- Court records, particularly those from Quarter Sessions. They affect roads, bridges, houses and land, and are useful for finding out about land ownership etc.
- Estates
 - Manors – useful for archaeology but the records are usually in Latin. Victoria County Histories covers manorial records.
- Church records. Church (consistory) courts: most diocesan records are in the County Archives, but you need to be aware that diocesan boundaries don't respect county boundaries.
- Diocesan records include records of courts, estates, visitations, livings.
- Private: family, individual e.g. George Nathan Maynard of Whittlesford gathered lots of archives which can be found in the Cambridgeshire Archives.:
<http://calm.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/ArchiveCatalogue/dserve.exe?dsqIni=Dserve.ini&dsqApp=Archive&dsqCmd=Overview.tcl&dsqDb=Catalog&dsqSearch=%28%28CreatorName==%27George%20Nathan%20Maynard%20of%20Whittlesford%27%29%29>
- Corporate: companies and professionals such as solicitors.
- Charities: some have been around for a long time and have good records. Hospitals, schools and almshouses have all been round a long time and have records.
- Land Registry lists all land owners, but this was only mandatory after 1985:
<http://www.landregistry.gov.uk/land-registry-services/?gclid=CJmXm46NqbQCFW3KtAod-TYAIQ>

You may experience problems if your parish is on a county or district boundary, as some boundaries have moved through time. Ask at your local records office to check where your parish documents are.

Questions to ask

What happened on this land?

What was the general economy in this community?

Where were the raw materials coming from?

What was produced in this economy (or next door or down the road)?

Maps

Go to your local County Archive office and ask for all the maps of the area you're interested in. Possibilities are:

- Ordnance Survey – from 1801, 1 inch to the mile scale, look for old editions with parish boundaries. Larger scale for towns since 1886.
- Tithe maps c.1841 – owners and occupiers.
- Enclosure maps from the eighteenth to nineteenth centuries. The final Awards mapped and listed the landowners, but there may be pre-enclosure maps, showing who farmed the original strips, if you're lucky.
- Estate maps from the late sixteenth century – a wide variety of forms.
- Board of Health maps Boards were created c.1843 to combat cholera and improve drainage. They may be found in county archives or in the University Library.
- Maps for a variety of purposes, but always note: the purpose dictates the content and the

form. Elements which are not relevant to the purpose may be omitted.

Directories

- Mostly from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.
- The earliest ones list towns only.
- Under villages, include potted history, notable features, population, transport services, and list notable residents.
- Content tends to be repeated in successive editions, and updating may be haphazard. They aren't always reliable since record-keepers could be lazy.
- <http://www.historicaldirectories.org/hd/>
- Place names: there is a book of Cambridgeshire place names but needs updating: *The Place-Names of Cambridgeshire and the Isle of Ely* by P. H. Reaney (1943).

Victoria County Histories

These were (and are being) written for each village/parish and contain general information, economic history, church history, non-conformity, education, charities for the poor, and information on manors and other estates (it is very good on this). Victoria County Histories and other documents can be found here: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/> Cambridgeshire has been completed, but many other counties are still in progress (and looking for volunteer researchers).

Wills and Inventories

Records survive from the sixteenth to early eighteenth century and contain useful details about material possessions, houses and family members. Inventories are particularly useful, as they list items by the room in which they are found. The house may thus be described as having a hall, parlour, chamber over the hall/parlour, kitchen, dairy etc. And there may be barns, yards and other outside space mentioned.

4 DATING SYSTEMS IN OLD DOCUMENTS

Regnal Years

Some documents, especially 17th century and earlier, date by the years the monarch reigned, so you need to know the day of the year on which the monarch succeeded to be able to interpret them. Regnal years are dated by succession dates rather than coronation dates.

Monarch	Regnal year began	Length of reign
William I	14 Oct 1066	21
William II	26 Sept 1087	13
Henry I	5 Aug 1100	36
Stephen	26 Dec 1135	19
Henry II	19 Dec 1154	35
Richard I	3 Sep 1189	10
John	27 May 1199	18
Henry III	28 Oct 1216	57
Edward I	20 Nov 1272	35
Edward II	8 Jul 1307	20

Edward III	25 Jan 1327	51 (England) 38 (France)
Richard II	22 Jun 1377	23
Henry IV	30 Sept 1399	14
Henry V	21 Mar 1413	10
Henry VI	1 Sep 1422	39 + 1 (1470-71)
Edward IV	4 Mar 1461	23
Edward V	9 Apr 1483	1
Richard III	26 Jun 1483	3
Henry VII	22 Aug 1485	24
Henry VIII	22 Apr 1509	38
Edward VI	28 Jan 1547	7
Lady Jane Grey	omitted	9 days
Mary I	6 July 1553	
Philip and Mary	25 July 1554	5&6
Elizabeth I	17 Nov 1558	45
James I	25 Mar 1603	23
Charles I	27 Mar 1625	24
Commonwealth	1649-49	
Charles II	30 Jan 1649 (but really 30/05/1660)	37
James II	6 Feb 1685	4
William and Mary	13 Feb 1688	6
William III (alone)	28 Dec 1694	8
Anne	8 Mar 1702	8
George I	1 Aug 1714	13
George II	11 Jun 1727	34
George III	25 Oct 1760	60
George IV	29 Jan 1820(regent from 05/02/1811)	11
William IV	26 Jun 1830	7
Victoria	20 Jun 1837	64
Edward VII	22 Jan 1901	10
George V	6 May 1910	26
Edward VIII	20 Jan 1936	1
George VI	11 Dec 1936	16
Elizabeth II	6 Feb 1952	ongoing

The calendar change in 1752

To correct the calendar against the sun, 11 days were taken out of September 1752. At the same time, the New Year was firmly placed on 1st January, and no longer on 25 March (Lady Day) – both 25 March and 1st January had been used previously, in different contexts. The first quarter of the year is often dated, e.g. 1725/6 to make clear which year it was! The removal of 11 days in 1752 had repercussions in finance: people didn't want to lose their 11 days so the new tax year was begun on 6th April 1753, so people would get their full 365 days. People sometimes referred to dates as being 'Old Style' or 'New Style', to make clear what they meant (but it is still confusing!).

Test

When are these, in modern dates?

14 Sept, 10th Richard II

7 Mar, 3rd Edward VI

4 Dec, 19th Elizabeth

19th Aug, 5th Henry VII

4 May, 22nd George III
Lady Day, 15th George II
Michaelmas, 10th Charles
23 Feb, 1725/6

5 WHERE TO GO FROM HERE

- National Archives have online courses: www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/records/reading-old-documents.htm in beginners and advanced Latin, palaeography, currency and numbers.
- Rosemary Horrox (Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge) teaches the study of Medieval documents and palaeography (see <http://www.hist.cam.ac.uk/directory/reh37@cam.ac.uk>) and may be prepared to do it again for local historians/archaeologists.