

FOCUS ON

Trade directories



Gill Blanchard shows you how to get the most from trade directories and gazetteers

Trade directories offer unique glimpses into our ancestors' lives from the 18th to 20th centuries. As well as listing the gentry, clergy, professional people, merchants and people in trade they are time capsules of history, geography, work and culture.

They can provide addresses and locations of

people; help narrow down someone's date of death, move or retirement; describe how a place flourished or declined economically and provide snippets about local affairs hard to find elsewhere.

On a more personal level, directories convey the rhythm of day-to-day life through their lists of market days, fairs, postal services

and institutions. This enables us to visualise where, how and when our ancestors' might have socialised, attended religious services; communicated, travelled, transported goods and found work. We can find out about local charities; who was responsible

The first directory was Samuel Lee's 1677 list of London merchants

for law and order and where the old, poor or sick went for help.

Most directories reflect local characteristics; listing, for example, ship's captains and owners in coastal areas. The inclusion of stagecoach and railway connections made them popular with travellers. Many contain maps and some publishers drew attention to

changes or reforms they supported. For instance, Chase's 1783 directory of Norwich pleads that the ancient city walls be levelled to improve air quality and reduce disease.

The first directory was Samuel Lee's 1677 list of London merchants, now freely available on

Internet Archive at archive.org/details/littlelondondire

00lond. This was followed by Brown and Kent's 1734 London directory, which was republished until 1826. The first outside London was for Birmingham in 1763 by Sketchley. By the late 18th century directories such as *Bailey's Northern Directory, 1781* and *Wilkes Universal British Directory, 1790* were covering a ↔

Above: Painting by G Terry, *The modern tradesman, or the glories of British commerce, 1774*

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⇔ wider area. However, it was cheaper to produce detailed local directories and these flourished in the 19th century.

Post Office officials became involved in the publication and collecting of information from 1800 onwards and other publishers used post office workers and commercial travellers to collect information. The collection of reliable information was in turn influenced by the introduction of the penny post, the telegraph system and wider use of house numbering.

Peck's directory of Norwich, 1802, is typical of early directories. It points out "the most remarkable places in it worthy of the attention of strangers" and the range of tables from population figures, streets, markets, council officials and hospitals to bankers, coffee and lodging houses. On just one page of residents starting with William Holmes and ending with Thomas Ivory are manufacturers



Merchants trading at Covent Garden market, London, c1755

and traders of every kind, as well as innkeepers; hairdressers; a china and glass warehouse, as well as the circulating library; the mayor; two clergymen and three women who have no occupation given.

Printing was expensive and advertisements were taxed until 1853. Many publishers and printers, such as Mary's ancestor, Christopher Berry, went out of business. In his 1811 directory, published shortly before his bankruptcy, Berry complained about the difficulties in collecting information (see a copy at gutenberg.org/ebooks/32829?msg=welcome_stranger).

Gradually, new printing techniques and the abolition of the advertisements tax made directories more commercially viable.

The first national series was produced by James Pigot between 1814 and 1853, while William White and Frederick Kelly began in the 1830s. Pigot and White did not remain in business long but others continued into the 20th century. Kelly particularly benefitted from being able to produce a series of Post Office directories from 1836.

with gazetteers to provide short histories and descriptions of places. These include notes on 'principal inhabitants', land ownership, towns, parishes and manors. The bulk of each book is then taken up with individual place entries, each with its own short history accompanying the residents and trade lists. Some early directories such as White's arranged these parish entries by 'Hundreds' (an administrative unit).

Most directories for large towns and cities had separate trade and commercial sections listing people under their job or profession as well as alphabetically by surname.

Directory format

Directories were often combined

Top tip!

Directories can contain details about secondary occupations and voluntary positions that do not appear elsewhere. On the *Who Do You Think You Are?* episode featuring Mary Berry, she was intrigued to discover Robert Houghton of Ber Street listed as a builder as well as a baker in 1864.

Combining directories with other sources

Directories can tell us more about where people lived, especially when used with other sources. In her *Who Do You Think You Are?* episode Mary Berry's great great grandfather, Robert Houghton, was listed as a baker on Ber Street in Norwich. The exciting discovery that he was also a builder was made by going from the alphabetical listings in White's 1864 directory to the separate sections for trades and streets.

No exact address is given for Robert Houghton, but the 1886 Ordnance Survey shows a Houghton's Yard on Ber Street which no longer survives. Using old photographs, census returns, earlier

maps, sales particulars and building plans, it was possible to identify Houghton's Yard as where he lived. Of particular use was Mathieson's 1867 trade directory, which lists residents on the west and east side of the street in turn, and notes the location of yards and inns. The location of Houghton's Yard was then confirmed by measuring the distance on the ground against the Ordnance Survey and in relation to surviving buildings and yards.

The historical sections and parish histories in directories also bring the past to life. When researching my Lincolnshire ancestors, I looked at the 1842 directory

for Scotter where they lived. The village was described as lying on the banks of small river four miles from Kirton in Lindsay. It had three hamlets and 1,170 people living there when the 1841 census was taken.

I discovered the church had been repaired in 1820 and that a horse and cattle fair and a pleasure fair were both held in July each year. There were two Methodist chapels, plus a national school built in 1834 at a cost of £300 and attended by around 130 children. Archaeological discoveries included an ancient canoe measuring 50 feet in length and four-feet wide, human bones, spurs and other relics.

BER STREET TRADE DIRECTORY

Street listing for Ber Street in Norwich from Mathieson's 1867 directory

Location

Ber Street fell inside more than one parish. This section is for St John de Sepulchre and begins about a third of the way down the left hand column. Underneath the heading for Ber Street it is described as extending from Golden Ball-street to Richmond-hill. It then lists residents and businesses on the west side.

Traders

The first section up to Alden's-court lists 13 entries: a butcher; two grocers – one was also a provision merchant and the other a tea dealer; a linen draper; baker, three pubs, a cabinet maker, hair cutter and a fruiterer.

Robert Houghton

Robert appears on the 11th entry between Alden's-court and the bottom of the page. His immediate neighbours were Mrs Louisa Webb, a midwife, and William Rudling, a butcher. The entries for this section of Ber Street carry on to the right-hand column and end at Cogman's Yard (after the fourth entry).

Other traders

Entries in the right-hand column include other bakers, a musical instrument warehouse, the Co-operative Industrial Stores and a boy's school. About two thirds of the way down is a note saying "Here is Finkst-street", including St John de Sepulchre church. A few entries on is Richmond-hill, then it moves to the east side.

Bel—Ber		THE NORWICH	24
<i>Coldestrean-terrace—</i>			
1 Everett, J., drill master			
2 Merrill, Henry T.			
Lane, Mrs.			
Miller, Miss			
Robins, Geo.			
The Allies Tavern, Wynn, a, W.			
Here is Cross-street.			
Kitton, Fredk. K.			
<i>Belvoir-street, Earham-road.</i>			
2 Bellin, Victor, french master			
3 Goldswain, James			
Kidd, W., gardener			
Ward, Mrs. Ann, general shop			
Here is Stafford-st.			
Lamb, John, grocer			
Reeve, —			
Barker, T., gardener			
Fields, W., gardener			
Wilson, E.			
Clark, John			
Oury, Chas., relieving officer			
—			
Ber-street.			
<i>Golden Ball-street to Richmond-hill.</i>			
WEST SIDE.			
1 Powell, Robert, butcher			
Durrant, Henry, grocer & provision merchant			
2 Larn, John, linen draper			
Sullivan, Stephen, baker			
Baker's Arms, Ives, John			
Meadows, George, earthenware dealer			
Rudd, Thomas, cabinet maker			
Rooper, Robert, hair cutter			
3 Avey, Thomas, grocer and tea dealer			
10 Smith, George, linen draper			
Jobiler, Higgins, John			
Palter, William, fruiterer			
Thora Tavern, Larkman, Robert			
<i>Alden's-court—</i>			
Alden, James, yorkshire clog maker			
Alden, Charles Frederick, boot trees and last maker			
Crowfoot, William, furniture dealer.			
Deat, Thomas, butcher			
Berry, George John, baker			
Harris, James Thomas, boot and shoe manufacturer			
Morter, William, bootmaker			
Lockwood, William, shopkeeper			
Earl, Joseph, marine store dealer			
Folmister Tavern, Johnson, Henry			
Budding, William, butcher			
Houghton, Robert, baker			
Webb, Mrs. Louisa, midwife			
Newby, James, furniture broker			
Clark, Mrs. Ann, shopkeeper			
Fisher, Edward, butcher			
Farrow, Thomas, salomonger			
Clark, Mrs. Sarah, grocer			
Cusham, Mrs. Sarah, general dealer			
Howard, John, boot and shoe maker			
Cogman's Yard—			
Fenn, James, french polisher			
Lock and Key, Squires, James			
Newman, Mrs. Elizabeth, baker			
Smith, Samuel, shopkeeper			
Egan, Richard, hat maker			
Norwich Arms, Fogg, Samuel			
Hart, Andrew, shopkeeper			
Howard, Mrs. M., milliner & dressmaker			
Old Friends, Nichols, Robert			
Cross, Daniel, shopkeeper			
Jolly Butcher, Dambrook, John, and musical instrument warehouse			
Larsner, George, wardrobe dealer			
Williams, Mrs. Hannah, shopkeeper			
Smith, Robert, shopkeeper			
Bennett, William, baker			
Bell's Head, Hylth, William			
Co-operative Industrial Stores—Button, Samuel, manager			
Thorp, Alfred, boot and shoe maker			
Skipper, Thomas, general dealer			
Harris, James, greengrocer			
Forester's Arms, Brighton, Alfred			
Turrell, James, grocer			
<i>Pie and House, Bancalari, Dominico</i>			
<i>Fiz and House court—</i>			
Richardson, Samuel, boys' school			
Parsons, James, shopkeeper			
Faulger, Miss Catharine, grocer			
Webster, John, hairdresser			
Here is Finkst-street.			
<i>St. John's de Sepulchre Church—Moore,</i>			
Rev. Thomas, incumbent			
Grave, Richard, boot and shoe maker			
Hayward, Carl, tinsman			
Jenkins, Augustus, cooper			
Drake, William, greengrocer			
Here is Richmond-hill.			
EAST SIDE.			
Foulger, Horatio, shopkeeper			
King's Arms, Cooper, William			
Marrell, Robert, outfitter			
May, George, grocer			
Fox, William, butcher			
Robberds, John May			
Chambers, Charles, lodging house			
Paul, Charles Joseph, salomonger			
Lily Tavern, Young, Jacob			
Here is Russell-street.			
Newman, Robert, painter, plumber, and glazier			
Burrows, Bernard Lemon, chemist and druggist			
Lowe, Frederick, baker			
Richard, Solomon, furniture dealer			
Butler, Robert, rent collector and parish clerk of St. John's Sepulchre			

Many had separate categories for 'court' (wealthier residents, government and court officials), streets, trades and parishes. This format was gradually adopted by most other directories, making it easier to identify where people lived and trace properties.

By the late 19th century directories provide a good record of most households as more private residents were included. As a result, they are extremely useful in tracking people in the post-1911 period when census

returns stop being available, as well as where earlier ones do not survive. The last county directories were published in the late 1930s although simpler street-by-street listings of residents in cities and large towns continued into the 1970s.

Where to find directories

The biggest collection is at Guildhall Library, Aldermanbury, London EC2V 7HH: [www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/things-to-do/visiting-the-city/archives-and-](http://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/things-to-do/visiting-the-city/archives-and-returns)

city-history/guildhall-library/Pages/default.aspx.

Copies can be found at local archives, libraries and family history societies. The Society of Genealogists, 14 Charterhouse Buildings, Goswell Road, London, EX1M 7BA has a phenomenal collection (www.sog.org.uk).

Some local collections are free online. See for example, Buckinghamshire: www.buckscc.gov.uk/leisure-and-culture/centre-for-buckinghamshire-studies/online-resources/

trade-directories and Norfolk: www.norfolksources.norfolk.gov.uk/DserveNS. Leicester University hosts digitised copies dating from the 1760s: specialcollections.le.ac.uk/cdm/landingpage/collection/p16445coll4.

Thegenealogist.co.uk, ancestry.co.uk, findmypast.co.uk and origins.net also have various copies or indexes. CD copies are sold by companies such as www.ukgenealogyarchives.com/products/kelly.html and www.genealogysupplies.com. ■