



Whether you're a newcomer to family history or an experienced researcher, we all need to understand the range and types of records available to us. Every county is different, so it helps to have a well written guidebook to call on that describes the resources available. Explore the Past, Worcestershire's award-winning Archive and Archaeology Service, has produced such a guide, which provides a go-to reference for those tracing their ancestors in Worcestershire.

The downloadable 70-page research guide is the ideal starting point to discovering your family's history, wherever you are in the world. It explains how to get hold of the information you need, whether it's held in the Worcestershire collections or from other sources.

It focuses on the most commonly used resources, and provides information on where to go for further guidance and services. Although the examples used are from Worcestershire's collections, it serves as a general guide to information you might find within English archive and archaeology services more generally. The live links within the download are particularly useful, meaning you only have to click within the text to go straight to the relevant web page.

Nine Hundred Years of History

Located at The Hive in the centre of Worcester, the Worcestershire Archive & Archaeology Service (WAAS) is the main archive for the historic county of Worcestershire. The Service's

resources are mind-blowing. It holds over 12 miles of documents dating from the 12th to the 21st centuries, relating to the people, buildings and landscapes of historic Worcestershire. It also has over 60,000 records of the archaeology of the county from the Ice Ages to the present.

Many, though not all, of these holdings are available on the Service's [online catalogue](#). The guide, in conjunction with additional catalogues available on [The National Archives website](#), will help you make a more comprehensive search to find what you're looking for.

Whether researching a family, a building or a place, published material is a good place to start. The Local Studies and Archaeology Reference Library at The Hive contains over 20,000 books about Worcestershire's history, people and places. These cover biographies of local people and families; as well as topics such as military history, crime, transport, local industries, and sport and leisure activities.

A Wealth of Family History Resources

The census is a key resource for family historians. The Worcestershire census, 1841–1911, is available on microfilm at The Hive, and free of charge via [Ancestry.co.uk](#) onsite. The Hive computers also offer access to [FindMyPast.co.uk](#) and other useful resources free of charge.

Church records are another staple. This is a complicated area that is dealt with very comprehensively within the Guide. The Church of England had a wide-ranging role as a result of which a vast amount of documentation was created relating to the parish and its parishioners. WAAS holds records for most parishes within the county as well as for the Diocese of Worcester. The most commonly used sources within these collections are parish registers, bishops' transcripts and probate records. We may also find our ancestors in the Poor Law papers or in Vestry records, which deal with parish administration. In addition, the WAAS holds Non-conformist and Catholic records.

Newspapers are a marvellous source of information about events, social activity, crime, politics and opinion. WAAS holds copies of the Berrows Worcester Journal for the period 1712 to 2012,

including its pictorial supplements, together with other titles from across the county.

Trade directories offer a fantastic snapshot of a city, parish or town at a given time. The volumes are considered the precursors to modern day telephone directories, but they contain much more information. WAAS holds a comprehensive collection for the City of Worcester and the county.

Going Further

Maps and plans are an important resource for family and local historians. The WAAS records cover the City of Worcester as well as parishes, towns and villages across the county. The collections include Ordnance Survey maps, tithe maps, enclosure maps, and estate maps.

Photographs and prints provide a visual record of how an area has changed over time and what people, their homes and their communities looked like. The Worcestershire Photographic Survey (WPS) comprises over 85,000 photographs, photographs of engravings, and prints of the county. It is supplemented by thousands more photographs elsewhere in the collections. Again, the online catalogues list what is available.

Other services on offer at The Hive – all of which incur fees – include research, digitisation, translation and transcription.

The Guide concludes with useful sections on copyright and 'Frequently Asked Questions' about accessing and using the service.

Overall, this is an invaluable guide for the Worcestershire family historian or local history researcher and is well worth the £6 cover price.

Available at: <https://www.explorethepast.co.uk/discover-your-past/>