

Estate Records

Background

Landed estates, large and small, kept records of their administration. Private landowners began to become more common after the Reformation, and they began to keep records of what they were doing with their land, who they were leasing it to, and how they were making money from it. The bulk of estate records tend to date from the 18th and 19th centuries, as the manorial system began to decline and private landowners became more prominent. There are however in some cases estates where earlier records have been kept and survive.

What records might have survived?

- Maps and plans
- Rent records
- Deeds and leases
- Wage records
- Estate accounts
- Records of businesses on the estate

Estate records are often part of the archive of the owners of the estate. The archive might also include:

- Family and personal records of the owners and their family, such as diaries, letters, pedigrees and photographs.
- Political or other official records, if a member of the family has been an MP or held an official post or position in government.
- Records relating to military service of members of the family.
- Records relating to the family's involvement in the local area, perhaps with the church, charities, schools, associations or societies.

Each collection is different, but the types of records that appear tend to be similar in form and purpose.

How to Find the Records

You can also make a search of records held at Gloucestershire Archives through our online catalogue (Available at <https://catalogue.gloucestershire.gov.uk/>). Enter the word(s) that you wish to search for into the search box. For estate records try searching for:

- The name of the estate
- The place
- The name of the family who owned the estate

You can click on reference numbers of blue main titles of the results to call up a description of each of these items. The "Title", which is really a description, could be sufficient for you to

assess whether the documents are of use to you but if not, click on the blue main title or reference number to the right of each entry and this will bring up a more detailed description of the item.

Key points

- Bear in mind that, although classification schemes and cataloguing styles will be different in other archives and record offices, the types of records that they cover will be similar all over the country. The references may be different, but you will be finding the same sorts of records.
- Remember that every collection is different. No two estates were run in the same way, and some types of document may not even have been kept for some estates, although there are full series of them in other collections for other estates. Also, not all the records that existed will have survived, so there may be gaps in the records.
- The handwriting may be difficult! 19th century handwriting can be very hard to read and may take some time to get used to. If in any doubt, speak to a member of staff.

Classification scheme for estate and family collections

D***/M	Manorial records: the records of any manors included in the archive
D***/T	Title deeds: documents recording the transfer of title of property (sales, purchases, mortgages and so on) but not leases as they do not involve a transfer of title – these are catalogued under E
D***/P	Maps and plans
D***/E	Estate records: the records of any estates included in the archive, including leases and tenancy agreements for estate properties
D***/F	Family and personal records: the records of the family whose archive it is
D***/A	Accounts
D***/L	Legal: records relating to legal cases involving family members or properties
D***/B	Business, commercial and professional: records relating to the businesses the family may have been involved in, and businesses run on their estates
D***/R	Ecclesiastical and charity: records relating to the family's involvement with local organisations including churches and charities
D***/X	Official: records relating to the governmental or other official careers of family members
D***/C	Correspondence
D***/Z	Miscellaneous: anything that doesn't fit anywhere else!
D***/Q	Printed material