

Trade and Street Directories

Background

Trade directories began in the late 1600s, but became more widely available in the early 1800s. They were produced by private companies, including Kelly, Slater, Pigot and Smart. Some were produced by the Post Office. They continued in some places until the 1980s, when they were replaced by telephone directories and the yellow pages, and which have themselves (as of 2025) since been replaced by digital directories accessible online.

What records are there and what information will they contain?

Trade Directories

- List tradesmen and businesses by trade, e.g. butcher, baker, etc.
- Give details of the business name and the location of the business premises. For individual tradesmen, this was often where they lived too.
- Usually include a section where tradesmen are listed by parish.
- May include a section of "Private Residents". As people had to pay to appear in early directories, not everyone is listed.
- Often include official information about the local area (such as the county council, MP, churches, hospitals, schools) at the front of the directory. When there is a section sorted by place, this information may be given about the parish.

Street Directories

- Usually only cover the larger towns and cities, i.e. Gloucester, Cheltenham and Stroud.
- List the head of the household of each house or business on each street. The streets are sorted alphabetically.
- May include a section at the end where individuals are listed alphabetically.
- Lists houses in the same order as they are on the street so you may find that odd numbers are listed first, followed by even numbers.

How to Find the Records

We hold a range of trade and street directories, some as hard copy and some on microfiche. A select range are kept on the Searchroom shelves; other directories need to be ordered from the strongrooms. Please note that we don't hold directories for every year; there are large gaps in our holdings and the early directories do not contain a lot of information.

As there is no standard collection of directories, they are held under a variety of different references. Most are held in the local studies collection, with some at the relevant local studies library.

Enter the search term "directory" into the search box of our online catalogue to find a list of holdings. You can then sort this by date. Please see the Help page and FAQs for more guidance on how to use the online catalogue. You can also watch our YouTube tutorial. For further advice, please contact us at archives@gloucestershire.gov.uk.

It is also possible to view some directories for free at:
<https://leicester.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p16445coll4>