



# Library and Archives

## House History

### TRACING THE HISTORY OF LAND AND PROPERTY ON THE ISLE OF MAN

The majority of the Island's 'older' housing stock dates from the 1840s period to the early part of the 20th century, when land was developed and many terraces were built in Douglas and to a lesser extent, Ramsey and elsewhere in the Island. There are many older houses such as farm houses and cottages and even converted buildings but the format for research is just the same. The key is to find the owner of the property/land and then trace backwards. This guide offers basic advice about which record types to consult to explore the history of your house, but please note it is aimed at people who are researching as a hobby. If you are undertaking research for any legal purpose you are advised to seek legal advice.

### LEGAL RECORDS

#### Deeds:

Property owners in the Isle of Man hold an 'Abstract of Title' which comprises of copies of relevant deeds to their properties. Records are stored by the date they were legally registered and not by address or location. Therefore, research can be time consuming and complicated, especially if the property was part of an estate sold off for piecemeal development or another type of subdivision.

Deeds after 1911 can be accessed through the Deeds Registry online service accessed via [gov.im/deedsindices](http://gov.im/deedsindices). The Grantor and grantee indices for these period are all scanned and viewable online for free. Documents can be ordered via the online service sometimes there will be a short delay before older deeds are made available. Deeds pre-dating 1911 are held at The Manx Museum. The Land Registry has an excellent website which explains modern Land Registration and contains links to online tools

<https://www.gov.im/landregistry>

The area of the site which deals with the 1847-1910 deeds is here

[Isle of Man Government - Pre-1911 Deeds](#)



The older deeds were indexed by parish and the name of the Grantor- that is the **person selling** or transferring the property. No property names were listed in the old indexes so searching was difficult. Because the new online information is on an Excel spreadsheet listed under the heading Requisition Books, it is possible to do a broader search. The Museum retains copies of the original indexes for researchers who prefer a manual method. The physical copies of the post 1911 deed indices are now held in the Public Record Office.

In order to locate a deed, the year, month and deed number is required and usually the name of one party to the deed.

Deeds before 1847 comprise of some alternative sequences depending on which court they were proved in. For example, one can view indexes to so called 'Castletown Deeds', 'Old Deeds' and 'Enrolled Deeds', 'North Side Sales' (NSS), 'South Side Sales(SSS) and NS Mortgages and SS Mortgages. Indexes can be consulted at The Museum but a CD Rom with an index may be purchased from Frances Coakley, the Editor of the Manxnotebook website.

<http://www.isle-of-man.com/manxnotebook/>

There is a growing number of images of these deeds available to view on the free Familysearch website.

<https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog>

Search the Catalogue for "Isle of Man" to see what is available

### **Manorial Rolls:**

These are held by the Library and date from 1511. They were kept for the purpose of recording rents and land transfer fees paid to the Lord of Man and they ended in 1911 on the redemption of the 'Lord's Rent'. As a rule, provided the property was recorded in 'Wood's Atlas' of 1867 (see more later), it is possible to commence a 'manorial' search for any land on the Island.

The most useful are 'Liber Assedationis'- the books of assessments. 'Lib Assed' are books in which, at around 20 year intervals, the names of all the owners of land in every parish were recorded. There is an index at the front of most of the 'Lib Assed' arranged by parish. Changes in ownership through sale, inheritance, bankruptcy etc., are recorded in 'Libri Vastarum' or 'Lib Vast'.

There are also separate records for land leased from the Lord Bishop and certain ecclesiastical baronies. These records are available at in the Reading Room at The Manx Museum, on Microfilm and on the Familysearch website. Researcher Chris Keig has indexed the microfilms and provided links on his website to assist viewing these historic records

<https://www.manxfamilyhistory.com/>

For background reading on the Manorial Rolls, indexes and transcriptions, Robert Cannell's website is a useful resource

<http://manxmanorialroll.com/>



## Wills

Wills can be a good source of information not only about real estate proper, but about possessions, sometimes shown in an inventory of goods which accompanies a will.

The Library holds wills c.1600 to 1916 but only produces them for legal purposes because they are available to view on the Familysearch website and on Microfilm. Later wills may be ordered at the General Registry.

<https://www.gov.im/deedsonline#accordion>

<https://services.gov.im/deeds-probate-land-registry-document-search/deeds-and-probate/search>

The Isle of Man Family History Society have a useful index of wills

[http://www.iomfhs.im/resources/wills/Index\\_A-Z.html](http://www.iomfhs.im/resources/wills/Index_A-Z.html)

Transcriptions of many wills are available on Ian Radcliffe's website

[https://www.mannincloud.info/indexes/\\_will\\_index.html](https://www.mannincloud.info/indexes/_will_index.html)

And similarly, Jim Smith's resource

<http://www.mathjim.ca/IOM1/Wills.html>

Wills sometimes describe a property in useful terms; e.g. 'all my large house, formerly occupied by William Cubbon as a farm'. Please note: if a transaction recorded in the Manorial Rolls arose from death of an owner, information will be recorded whether the property passed by will, by barganeirey (an heir's settlement), or to the heir on an intestacy.

## Estate Papers

A number of properties were formerly part of a larger estate so estate papers, i.e. leases, rentals, surveys, notices of sale, etc., may help. Bear in mind that the family concerned might still hold their papers privately. Ask at the Reading Room Counter or email staff to ask them to search the database giving as much detail as possible.



# Maps and Plans

## Wood's Atlas

This 'atlas' was published in 1867 and shows most of the ownership of land at that date (some town areas are excluded). On the atlas land areas are colour coded; quarterland, for example, is red. The atlas records a number for individual parcels of land and the accompanying parish index gives the name of the proprietor of the land or property, relating to individual number(s).

Thus from Wood's Atlas, one has the parish, the Treen, the Quarterland (or Intack), the owner and the area, as at 1867, from which a search of the manorial records may be commenced.

In 1860 Tynwald established a Committee to levy a rate on land owners to fund healthcare provision. In 1861 valuers were appointed by Lieutenant Governor Pigott with instructions to use the 1841 Tithe plans as a base to determining the ownership and extent of land holdings. James Woods was appointed as a surveyor to the valuers

Where the tithe plans were unsuitable or out of date new plans were drawn up as basic sketches and the survey was completed in April 1864. These documents form official taxative surveys and serve to provide official authenticated evidence of land ownership in 1864 to which the Land Registry and the conveyancing community often refer. The shorthand terminology for the series of plans prepared or approved is the 'Tithe plans' and the 'Asylum plans'. Copies of these documents are held at the Public Record Office, in the Deed Registry and at the Manx Museum. For comparison purposes these documents are similar to the 'England and Wales (Exclusive of the Metropolis): Returns of Owners of Land 1873' which provides a taxative record of land ownership in England and Wales at that date.

The Atlas consists of a single bound volume consisting of 17 maps with scales shown in chains. Land parcels are numbered. Numbers showing a 't' suffix indicate a reliance on the taxative Tithe plans; those without a 't' suffix refer to the taxative Asylum plans of the same number. The schedules provide the name, location number, proprietor and size of numbered parcels in acres rods and perches.

The Land Registry has made the Woods Atlas accessible at [www.gov.im/woodsatlas](http://www.gov.im/woodsatlas). There is also a way of searching the Woods Atlas by postcode via the Land registry's title locator. This is indicative only as clearly the Woods Atlas and the postcode gazetteers utilise different base mapping.

## Ordnance Survey

A survey of the Isle of Man was done between 1866-1871, for military purposes, by the British Government. These maps, to scale 25" to 1 mile, show individual properties and the gazetteer which accompanies the maps states the type of use the land was under.

These maps can be accessed in various places online. One is the Land Registry via the 'Title Locator' search function. The other is the National Library of Scotland.

<https://maps.nls.uk/os/25inch-england-and-wales/isle-of-man.html>

## Tithe Plans

These excellent reference aids are based on individual parishes and were produced as a result of the Tithe Commutation Act, 1839 which converted church tithes of kind, hay, pigs, cattle, etc., into money payments. These plans have been microfilmed and are available on microfiche in the library and on the Registry website alongside Wood's Atlas. They give full details of each property as it existed during the period around 1840.



## Asylum Plans

These are similar to Tithe Plans. They were prepared in order to assess a rateable value on properties to finance the building of the 'Lunatic Asylum' in Braddan, during the early 1860s. All these are available to view by parish on the Registry website.

<https://www.gov.im/woods atlas#accordion>

## Surveys

Private land and property surveys usually pre-date the Ordnance Survey, and the majority were produced between c.1760 and c.1850. Copies of some of these surveys may be held at the Library. Email the staff with details to ask.

Another source of information may be holdings at The Public Record Office. They preserve and allow access to Government and Local Authority records. Examples may be Development Control Plans, Building Control Plans and Rates Records.

<https://www.gov.im/about-the-government/departments/enterprise/central-registry/public-record-office/records/>

Often, when searching for a historical information on a property, the focus may fall on the people who lived there rather than the bricks and mortar. Please see our Family History Sources factsheet for hints and tips on searching for people

<https://manxnationalheritage.im/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Family-History-Sheet-Library-and-Archive-Service-Digital.pdf>

**Before your visit:** Check our Library and Archives opening times. Write down any facts you know for sure. Be prepared to stow your bags in a locker and use only pencil. Bring a USB key if you want to save digital data and also a camera. Allow sufficient time for research and possible visits to sites of interest. You will need to register with us so bring some photographic ID.

You can find a downloadable version of this, Contacts and other available guides on our website.

<https://manxnationalheritage.im/collections/library-and-archives/>

To email the staff [Library@MNH.im](mailto:Library@MNH.im)

