Family History
Gems of English Local History - The Victoria County History series

What are the Victoria County Histories?

Aim of the Victoria County Histories

The series of Victoria County Histories aims to provide an outline of local history for the whole of England, county by county, place by place. The name denotes a dedication to Queen Victoria not a focus on a particular time.

Local history is an important area of interest to the family historian. The town or village of one's ancestors as it was when they lived there, is an important setting in which a researcher often wishes to place the ancestor to help make sense of the family past. For many this will involve a concern with English local history. An essential set of local histories for this is the Victoria County Histories because of their scope and quality.

Phases of development

In the period 1899-1914, the Victoria History was described as "a history for gentlemen researched by ladies." It catered for the leisured upper middle and upper classes, focusing on these groups' interests: genealogy, heraldry, antiquities, archaeology, flora and fauna. Private sponsorship funded publication.

From 1914-1947 there was little funding and few volumes were published. Those that were, were largely written by successive editors. In 1933, Page, the editor at that time, gave the History to the University of London's Institute of Historical Research which still owns and manages it.

From 1947 the Histories have been written by historically trained professionals; the scale and productivity of the volumes for the counties have increased and the content of parish histories has been modernised.

Scope of the Histories

The Histories cover two types of articles: general and topographical. The general articles cover such areas as the Domesday Book, religious houses and the industries of every county. The topographical articles, the central part of the Victoria County Histories, deal with the natural and artificial features, place by place. This makes the Histories of prime interest to the family historian keen to get a clear sense of place. From the 10th to the 19th century parishes were grouped into 'hundreds' for administrative purposes: the hundred was the second tier of local government; in the Histories parishes are dealt with as part of their hundreds.

Changes since the 1950s

Before 1950, the Histories concentrated on ancient parishes, a detailed discussion of manor houses, churches and charities with less systematic information on landscape, communications and economic history.

Since the 1950s there have many more topics included. The emphasis has moved to civil parishes while townships and towns are dealt with as integral wholes. The introduction covers population, physical growth, landscape, social life and institutions. The other sections deal with the history rather than the architecture of manors and other estates; economic history and local government; the church, including where appropriate Catholicism and Protestant Nonconformity; education, charities for the poor and other topics.

Critical features of a history

The Histories are written cooperatively using a uniform approach. They systematically record the main features of an area's history including: population changes, the succession of principal landowners, how the inhabitants have earned a living and in doing so have altered the environment; how they worshipped and how their life as a community changed over the centuries. While there are no explicit genealogies, that material is part of these accounts.

The Histories draw attention to similarities and differences between a place and its neighbours, and wider regions and the country at large. They reflect accurate methodical research, using original sources, and provide full references.

Because of the coverage and standard of information the Victoria Histories should be the place of first resort for English local history.

How can I access the Histories?

State Library of Queensland's holdings

State Library acquires new volumes as these become available. The table shows the counties for which we hold volumes.

County	County	County
Bedford	Gloucester	Nottingham
Berkshire	Hampshire + Isle of Wight	Oxford
Buckingham	Hereford	Rutland
Cambridgeshire + Isle of Ely	Hertford	Shropshire
Chester (Cheshire)	Huntingdon	Somerset
Cornwall	Kent	Stafford
Cumberland	Lancaster	Suffolk
Derby	Leicester	Surrey
Devon	Lincoln	Sussex
Dorset	London	Warwick
Durham	Middlesex	Wiltshire
Essex	Norfolk	Worcester
	Northampton	York

These volumes (GSB 942-) are held in onsite storage and need to be retrieved. These can be located and requested through the One Search online catalogue http://onesearch.slq.qld.gov.au/

Online

A number of the volumes and/or part-volumes (religious houses and hospitals) are available through **British History Online** https://www.british-history.ac.uk/catalogue/secondary-texts

Where can I find out more about the Series?

The *Victoria County History* website https://www.history.ac.uk/research/victoria-county-history provides information on volumes already produced and those planned.

Need further information?

(07) 3840 7810 | https://www.slq.qld.gov.au/plan-my-visit/services/ask-us

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