



Discover the story of your house:

A Guide to How You Can Research the History of a Property



'1920s House Auction', George Street, Leichhardt, Image by J.G Park, Inner West Council Libraries Collection

Contents

Introduction	2
Before you start researching	3
Identify the historic Council and ward your house was located in	4
Search the relevant Council Valuation assessment or Rate books	5
Building Registers	9
Subdivision Plans	11
Photos of houses or streets	12
Sands Sydney Directory	13
Sydney Metropolitan Detail Series plans & Water Board plans	14
Trove	15
Spatial Digital Explorer Map	16
Council Archives	17
Paid house history research service	17
Development and Building applications	17
Other sources of information	17

Introduction

This guide will help you trace the history of your house in the Inner West Council area. Following the steps in this guide can help you find out:

- When your house was built
- Names of owners and occupiers
- Whether your house had a name
- Changes relating to your house
- Name of the subdivision

The research steps outlined in this guide can be carried out at the Inner West Council Libraries. The guide also lists additional resources that can be researched, depending on the type of information required. Researching your house history requires you to piece together a puzzle and be an investigator, it is not a quick process so be prepared to dig.

Specialist staff are available to assist with research enquiries at the following times:

Ashfield Library

Level 3, Ashfield Civic Centre, 260 Liverpool Road, Ashfield
Phone: 9392 5108

Balmain Library

370 Darling Street, Balmain
Phone: 9367 9211

Leichhardt Library

Piazza Level, Italian Forum, 23 Norton Street, Leichhardt
Phone: 9367 9266

Marrickville Library

Patyegarang Place, 313 Marrickville Road, Marrickville
Phone: 9392 5226

Contact our team for any enquiries: history@innerwest.nsw.gov.au

Before you start researching

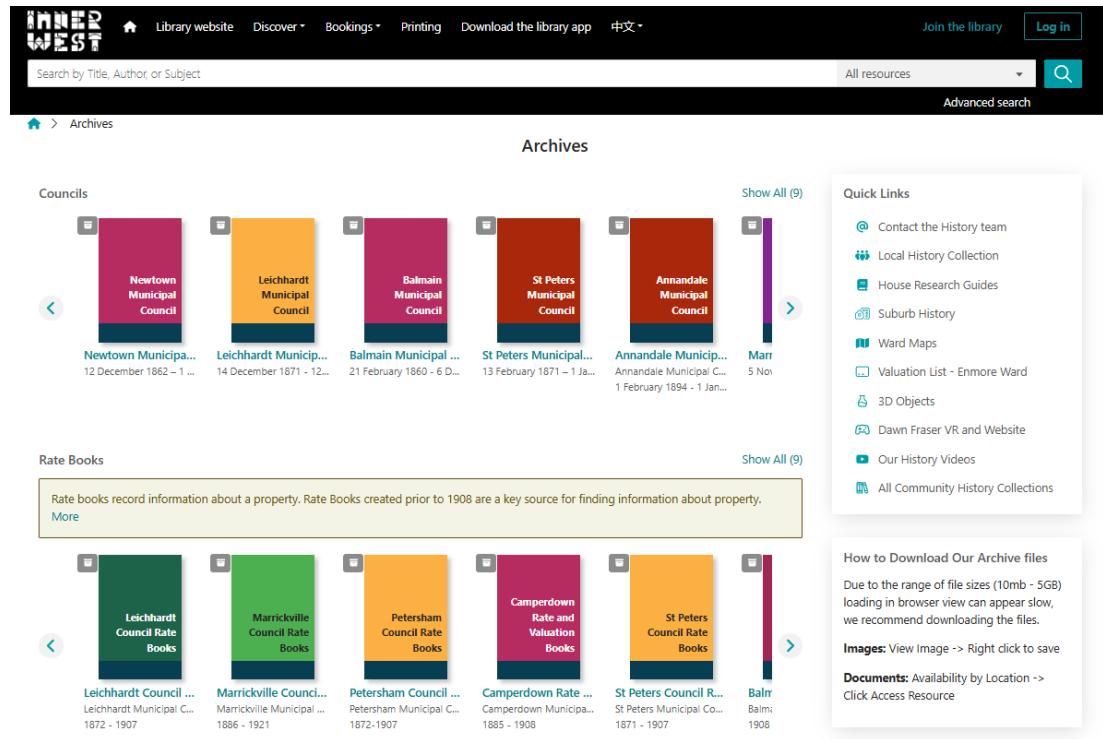
- Make a list of what you already know about your house including street address (current or previous), Council ward, nearest intersection, cross street or lane, or house name. Note any names of adjoining houses, prominent buildings nearby that may be older or similar in age to the house, or features such as parks.
- Take a closer look at your house. Features, details and building materials can help you identify the architectural style of the house. The house style can help you to broadly date it, if it has been built in a style popular at a particular time. Check Australian architectural styles or guides available online or books such as *A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture: styles and terms from 1788 to the present* by Richard Apperly, Robert Irving, Peter Reynolds; photographs by Solomon Mitchell.
- Talk to neighbours, former owners or long-term residents in the street. They may know about former owners or people who lived there. They may even have photos of your house or of the street.
- Gather any papers you have relating to your house such as certificate of land title, deposited plan (DP) and lot numbers or photos of the house.
- Use the Library's online catalogue to search for photos, surveys and reports about your house or street. Search for the street name or suburb to locate photos or information.
- Information about heritage properties is available on the NSW State Heritage Inventory. Heritage Studies conducted by the former Ashfield, Leichhardt and Marrickville Councils can also provide information about some houses. The library holds heritage reports about some of these properties.
- If the house is in Haberfield, look at *Tours of Haberfield Past and Present (Parts 1, 2 and 3)* by Vince Crow. These books include information about houses in Haberfield. They are available at Ashfield and Haberfield Libraries.

Before you start researching

We have two pages on the library catalogue for you to access historical information. Our [archives](#) page provides pages of property documents for all the Inner West Council Suburbs. Majority of material is freely downloadable. Our instructional videos can help assist you in navigating our pages - https://youtu.be/6FYnQo_8cj4

These records refer to areas:

Marrickville, Leichhardt, Balmain, Ashfield, Newtown, St Peters, Sydenham, Tempe, Annandale, Haberfield, Petersham, Camperdown, Stanmore, Enmore, Lewisham, Dulwich Hill, Lilyfield, Rozelle, Birchgrove, Ashbury, Croydon, Croydon Park, Dobroyd Point, Hurlstone Park and Summer Hill.



INNER WEST Library website Discover Bookings Printing Download the library app 中文 Join the library Log in

Search by Title, Author or Subject All resources Advanced search

Archives

Councils

Newtown Municipal Council Leichhardt Municipal Council Balmain Municipal Council St Peters Municipal Council Annandale Municipal Council

Rate Books

Leichhardt Council Rate Books Marrickville Council Rate Books Petersham Council Rate Books Camperdown Rate and Valuation Books St Peters Council Rate Books Balmain Council Rate Books

Quick Links

- Contact the History team
- Local History Collection
- House Research Guides
- Suburb History
- Ward Maps
- Valuation List - Enmore Ward
- 3D Objects
- Dawn Fraser VR and Website
- Our History Videos
- All Community History Collections

Show All (9)

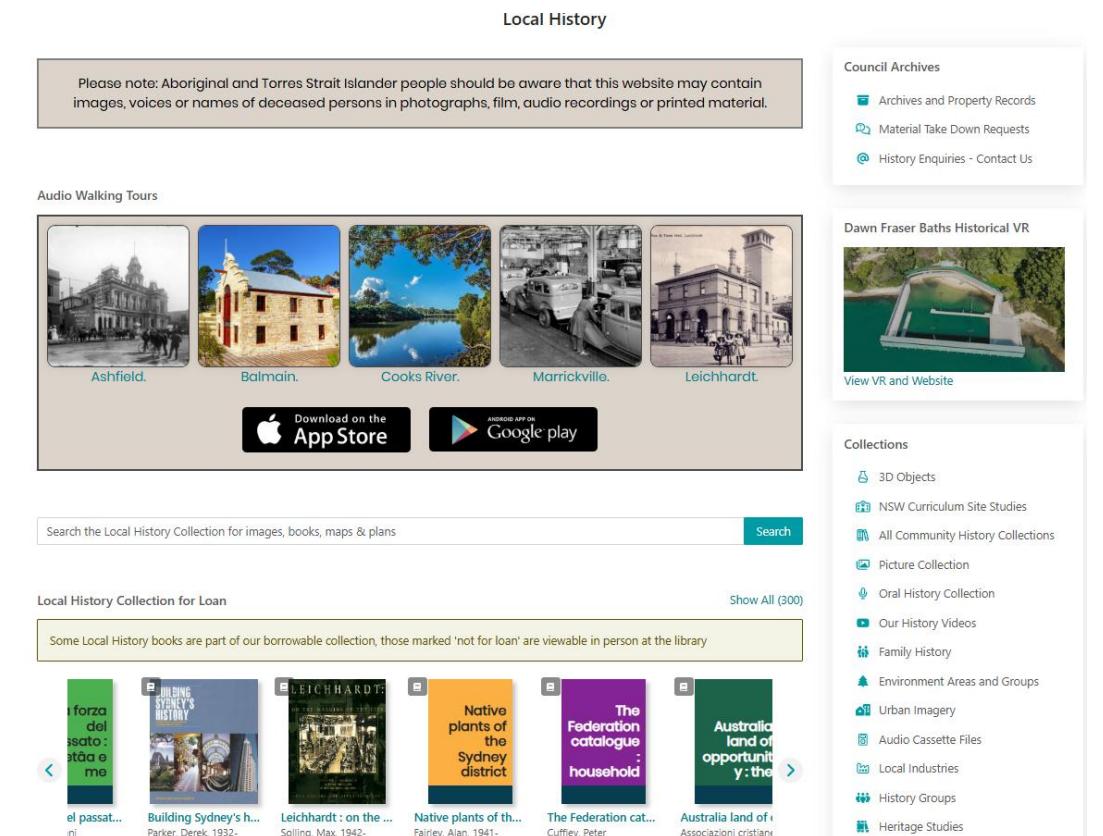
How to Download Our Archive files

Due to the range of file sizes (10mb - 5GB) loading in browser view can appear slow, we recommend downloading the files.

Images: View Image -> Right click to save

Documents: Availability by Location -> Click Access Resource

On our [Local History](#) page, you can find images, books, oral histories, local groups, objects from the archives and much more all about the Inner West Area.



INNER WEST Library website Discover Bookings Printing Download the library app 中文 Join the library Log in

Search by Title, Author or Subject All resources Advanced search

Local History

Please note: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should be aware that this website may contain images, voices or names of deceased persons in photographs, film, audio recordings or printed material.

Audio Walking Tours

Ashfield. Balmain. Cooks River. Marrickville. Leichhardt.

Download on the App Store ANDROID APP ON Google play

Search the Local History Collection for images, books, maps & plans

Local History Collection for Loan

Show All (300)

Some Local History books are part of our borrowable collection, those marked 'not for loan' are viewable in person at the library

Building Sydney's history Leichhardt on the ... Native plants of the Sydney district The Federation catalogue of household Australia land of opportunity

Council Archives

- Archives and Property Records
- Material Take Down Requests
- History Enquiries - Contact Us

Dawn Fraser Baths Historical VR

View VR and Website

Collections

- 3D Objects
- NSW Curriculum Site Studies
- All Community History Collections
- Picture Collection
- Oral History Collection
- Our History Videos
- Family History
- Environment Areas and Groups
- Urban Imagery
- Audio Cassette Files
- Local Industries
- History Groups
- Heritage Studies

Identify the historic Council and ward your house was located in



Houses in the former Marrickville Council area

Use the 1910 Council [Ward maps](#) located on the catalogue to work out which of the following your house was in prior to 1949: Petersham, Marrickville, St Peters, Camperdown or Newtown Councils.

Once you've worked out the historic Council, refer to the Map for the appropriate ward your house was in. You'll need this information to use the Council Valuation and Rate books.

Houses in the former Leichhardt Council area

Refer to the 1892 Parish of Petersham Maps for Leichhardt and Balmain to identify the ward your house was in.

Houses in the former Ashfield Council area

Refer to the Parish of Petersham Maps for Ashfield to identify the ward your house was in.

Note: Some street names may have changed since the Parish of Petersham maps were created. Some main streets or roads are Council or ward boundaries. Some streets are included in several Councils e.g. Stanmore Road is included in Newtown, Marrickville and Petersham Councils.

Search the relevant Council Valuation assessment or Rate books

Amount of the Annual Value of all Property liable to be rated in the SOUTH KINGSTON WARD, Borough of Petersham, by virtue of the Municipalities' Act of 1897, and Rates thereon after the rate of One Shilling in the Pound, and a Special Rate of Threepence in the Pound by virtue of the said Act for the Municipal Year commencing 1st February, 1898.															
Assessment No.	Room No.	Occupier	Leases.	Owner	Description of Property	Capital	Annual Value	The Value assessed by the Municipal Valuer	Amount of Unpaid Rates	Amount of Special Rate	REMARKS				Date of Assessment
											1	2	3	4	
187	87	Mr Allworth		E Galloway	2nd	12050	1049	10,162	5,591.2	3, 0.8	9.00				26/2/1898
188	85	Mr Wilson			House	170	42.05	22.9							
189	87	Occupied		J. H. Slade	Land free	98	85.0	45.6	1.15						
190	77			Mr J. B. Bagley	House	120	108	55.8	1.7						
191	75	Mr Banbury		Mr Banbury		80	72	31.2	1.8						
192	73			J. J. Bryan		52.0	47.5	27.3	11.10						
193	71	M. White				52.0	47.5	27.3	11.10						
194	69	Mr Crane		Mr Crane		105	90.0	44.6	1.8						
195	67	R. Merlock		6 P. Merlock		60	52	24	13.6						
196	65	W. Kemp		W. J. Kemp		78	67.0	37.6	16.11						
197	63	Mr H. Young		J. B. Young		85	49.0	29.6	12.5						
198	61	Mr H. Young		Mr H. Young		90	81	41	1.3						
199	57	Mr Reading		Mr Reading		55	49.0	29.6	12.5						
200	57	Mr Bruce		Mr Bruce		55	49.0	29.6	12.5						
201	55	Mr Boys		Est of Mr Boys	House	60	54	24	13.6						
202	53	Mr March				60	54	24	13.6						
203	51	Occupied		Mr J. S. Taylor	Land	800	25	15	6.3						
204	45	Miss Jones		Miss Jones	House	32.0	41.0	27.3	11.0						
205	43	R. H. Thompson		James Chin		45	40.0	2.6	10.2						
206	41	Reed & Brothers		J. & J. Chin		45	40.0	2.6	10.2						
207	39	Mr Scott		James Chin		45	40.0	2.6	10.2						
208	37	Mr D. G. Palmer				45	40.0	2.6	10.2						
209	35	Mr and Mrs Buckeridge		C. B. Stephen		55	49.0	29.6	12.5						
210	33	Mr & Mrs Cordean		Mr & Mrs Cordean		79.0	67.5	37.9	17.6						
						1150	1090	463	105.5						

1898 - 1899 Petersham Council Rate Book

[Valuation assessment](#), [Valuation lists](#) and [Rate books](#) record basic information about a property including: number, lot, section, land dimensions, description of the property, house name, assessed value and rates due. Property owner details are recorded including name and contact address. The property occupant's name and occupation are sometimes recorded.

Valuation assessment books record the valuation of properties. Rate books record the annual payment of rates to the Council. Rate books normally contain less information than the Valuation assessment books. Valuation assessment and Rate books were compiled either annually or triennially.

Valuation assessment and Rate books are organised chronologically, by ward. Streets are listed in alphabetical order (e.g. Ashfield and Marrickville Councils) or by geographical area (e.g. St Peters and Petersham Councils). Properties are listed by property number - odd numbered properties are listed together and even numbered properties together. Cross streets are also recorded.

Note: house numbers are not always recorded in the early Valuation assessment or Rate books.

You can find the Valuation assessment Books, Lists and Rate books on the catalogue

- Starting with the most recent books, work backwards until you find the dates you are looking for e.g. when the property description is recorded as Land, or when you reach the year your relative lived in the house.
- Record details about the property as you go including owner's name, occupant's name, house name or change in house number.

Note: Houses were renumbered at various times. There was significant renumbering of houses throughout Marrickville Council area during the years 1923 to 1925. The old numbers were crossed out and replaced by the new number. It is important to systematically work backwards from through the books to ensure you are researching the correct house.

If there is no house number, use the house name, the owner's name, names of neighbouring houses or owners, to locate your house.

Rates & Valuation books and Valuation lists we hold across these years:

- Annandale Council 1894 – 1920*
- Ashfield Council 1872 – 1949 Lists (hard copy rate books from 1928)
- Balmain 1908-1939*
- Camperdown Council 1885 - 1908
- Leichhardt 1872-1966*
- Marrickville Council 1886 – 1963 Lists (Books on hard copy to 1980s)
- Newtown Council 1866 – 1949*
- Petersham Council 1872 – 1963 Lists (Books on hard copy from 1926)
- St Peters Council 1871 – 1963 Lists (books hard copy from 1924)

*Note – only Rates books are held for some Councils. There are no Valuation assessment books held for the former Annandale, Balmain, Leichhardt or Newtown Councils.

We don't hold every Valuation assessment or Rate book for every Council and ward. Some books are missing.

Council Valuation assessment books from the mid-1920s to the mid-1980s for the former Ashfield and Marrickville Councils, are held at the Council Archives. These records are in hard copy. Access is by appointment only.

To make an appointment, contact the Council Archives history@innerwest.nsw.gov.au

Troubleshooting

I can't find the street in the Valuation assessment or Rate books

- Check the street existed and hadn't changed its name. Use the Historical Council ward maps to confirm.

A list of street name changes in the former Marrickville Council area can be found in the book *Marrickville: Rural Outpost to Inner City* by Richard Cashman and Chrys Meader, held in the library.

- If your house is located at an intersection, check if it is listed with the houses on the cross street
- If your house has or had two street frontages, check if it is listed under the other street name
- Check adjoining Wards as boundaries may have changed over time

I can't find my house (or house number)

- Check you are looking in the correct Ward. Long streets may appear in more than one ward
- House numbers may not be recorded in early Valuation assessment or Rate books. The property owner's name, house name, section and lot number or owners of neighbouring properties can be used to help identify your house
- You may have skipped a year when searching the books and overlooked a transfer of ownership or renumbering of houses. Retrace your steps. Locate the book recording the house and work backwards systematically from there.

1884 - 1885 St Peters Council Valuation book

- House numbers, the early books may not record street numbers. Street numbers are recorded for one side of the street at a time. All the odd numbers will be together, and the even numbers together.

Note – house numbers may change over time. Where house numbers are changed, the old number is crossed out and replaced by the new number.
 - Street names are written horizontally or vertically along the left-hand side of the page.

Note – some street names changed over time. A list of street name changes in the former Marrickville Council area can be found in Marrickville: Rural Outpost to Inner City by Richard Cashman and Chrys Meader, held in the library
 - Cross streets and lanes are often noted e.g. Here Unwins Bridge Road
 - House names were not always recorded. House names may also change over time
 - Surnames are sometimes spelt differently in different valuation assessment books
 - Changes of owner are indicated by the original entry being crossed out and the new details written in
 - Occupant details are sometimes recorded, mainly in the earlier books
 - Assessment numbers are given to each property. A property may not have the same assessment number in successive years
 - Description of property is usually limited to house, cottage, shop, factory or land. Other property uses are not usually recorded. Abbreviations are also often used e.g. Bk (brick), WB (weatherboard), Ctg (cottage). Sometimes the number of rooms is recorded.

Note: Descriptions can vary between assessors.

Building Registers

No.	Applicant	Nature	Situation	Date Cons'd.	Action	Result	Particulars										
							Sub-Div. Land	New Dwellings	Shops and Dwellings	Factories and Work-shops	Garage	Stables	Additions Dwellings	Additions Factories	Awnings & Miscellanea	Estimated Value	Fees
31	A. Bain	Garage	126 Denison R ^o 1/3/25	App'd	✓			1							30	5-	
32	W. J. Barnwell	1875 Building Station	"		✓										100	15-	
33	"	Lockup Sh. Kew	Carriageway			✓									2000	210-	
34	B. C. Green	Sleep. Dining	"			✓									1	90	10-
35	K. E. Smith	1875 Cottage	Upper St. Kew			✓									800	15-	
36	McAuley & Moffat	Subdivision	Const. Rd												—	—	
37	M. Soother	Imp. Dwelling	192 P. M. Rd		Rejected	192/28									1	220	10-
38	A. Croker	Add. Dwelling	1875 Boulardie		Rejected	192/28									800	15-	
39	E. Caughey Knight	Shop	413 Newland		Rejected	192/28									1	100	5-
40	J. Johnson	Subdivision	Fisher Rd 19/3/25	App'd	—			1							—	—	
41	James Nolton	Leaves	Railway	1/2/25		✓									—	5-	
42	J. Johnson	1875 Cottage	Fisher Rd 19/3/25		✓										900	15-	
43	W. H. Mitchell	Garage	1875 Boulardie			✓									30	5-	
44	Reed & Macrae	Subdivision	Boulardie			✓									—	5-	
45	H. J. Marlow	Add. Dwelling	29			✓									80	5-	
46	M. Chapman	McEhone Subdivision	Const. Rd			✓									—	5-	
47	G. Marshall	1875 Cottage	Denison Rd			✓									100	10-	
48	Karen White	Garage	27 Boulardie			✓									45	5-	
49	J. L. Johnson	1875 Cottage	Const. Rd			✓									150	15-	
50	M. Soother	Imp. Dwelling	192 P. M. Rd			✓									For fee estimated cost see App 27	—	
51	W. H. Evans	Subdivision	Boulardie			10/12/25									3		
52	Jas. Prior	"	1875 Sec. 12			✓									—	5-	
53	A. Paul	1875 Cottage	1875 7/28		✓										150	1	
54	H. Johnson	Add. Dwelling	1875 Boulardie		✓										200	5-	
55	Jas. Prior	1875 Cottage	Fraser Rd			✓									150	5-	
56	R. Owen	Helter Rd	69 Cavendish			✓									30	5-	
57	Mr. Kershaw	Other	8 P. M. Rd			✓									25	5-	
58	J. J. Dauay	Add. Dwelling	1875 Meadow Rd			Rejected									200	10-	
59	J. Dauay	Subdivision	Other 1875			Rejected									—	5-	
60	W. Herkert	Garage	186 Denison Rd	App'd	✓										75	5-	
							8	9	2	4	1	3	5	1000	15-31		

1925 Petersham Council Building Register

Building Registers were compiled by Council and record applications submitted to Council for approval of building works or subdivision of property. The Registers can be used to confirm construction dates or that works were approved by Council.

Building Registers record applications for:

- Construction of new buildings such as houses, garages or factories
- Alterations to existing buildings such as conversion of a house to flats
- Subdivision of land

The Building Registers usually contain the following information:

- application number
- applicant's name
- property address
- description of the building work
- date the application was submitted
- Council meeting date at which the application was considered
- whether the application was approved, referred to a Committee, subject to conditions or not granted
- whether the work was started or finished
- Council ward (former Ashfield Council and St Peters Building Registers)

You can find the Building Registers on the History computer desktop.

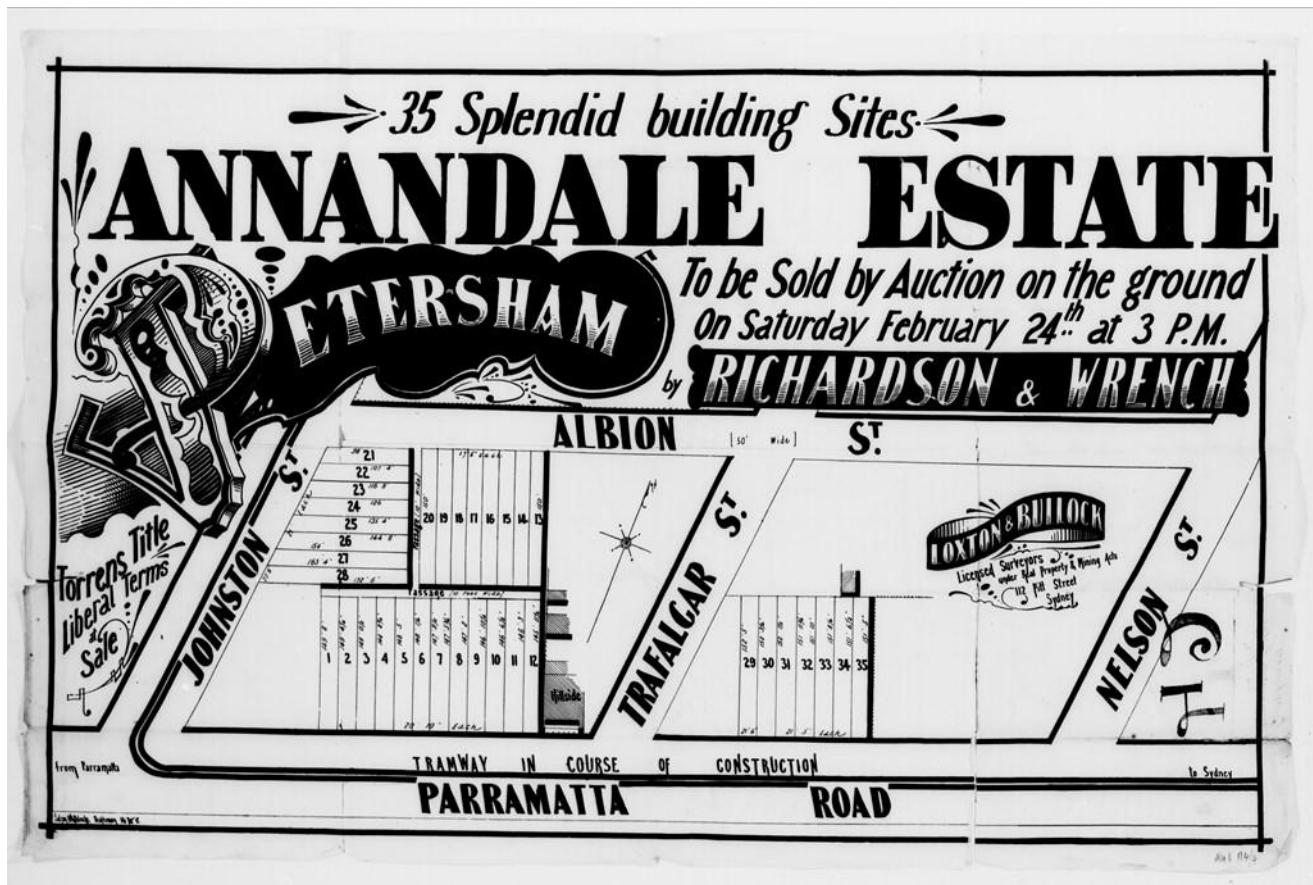
Building applications are arranged by year and application number. Building application numbers are recorded in the Valuation assessment Books.

Note: most building plans earlier than 1950 have not survived

Building and subdivision registers held

- Ashfield Council 1909 – 1997 (hard copy from 1981)
- Marrickville Council 1922 – 1997 (hard copy from 1957)
- Petersham Council 1911 – 1949
- St Peters Council 1919 – 1948
- Leichhardt Council Plans – 1909-1985

Subdivision Plans



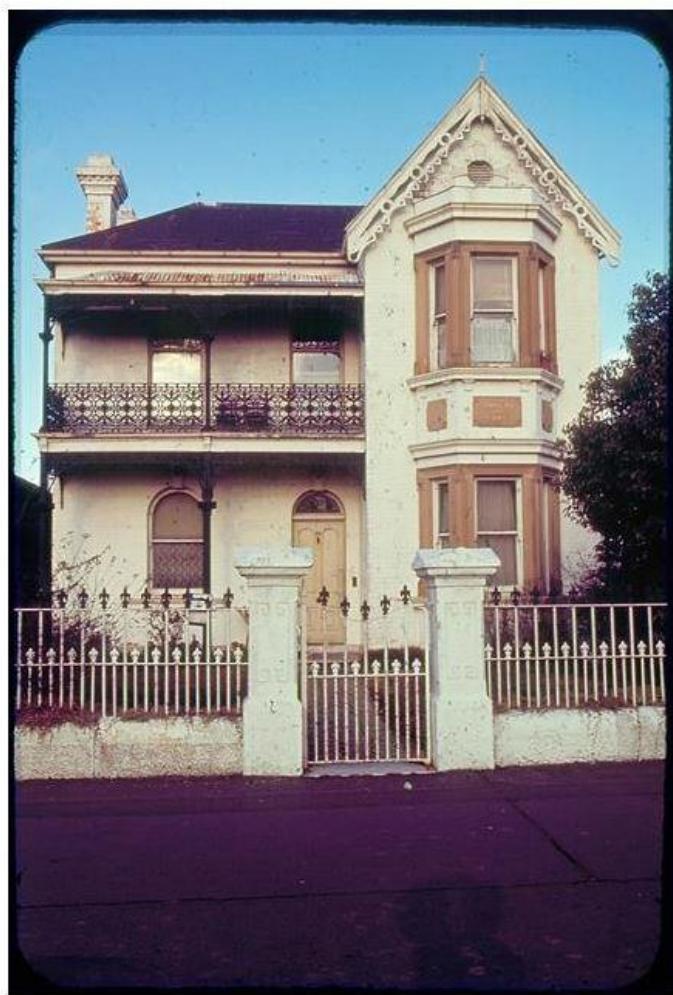
Subdivision plans were produced by property developers and real estate agents to promote land sales during the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Subdivision plans contain the name of the estate, size and number of lots, date and location of the auction. Subdivision plans often included local landmarks, houses or buildings that existed at the time of the subdivision. Subdivision plans can be used to help you identify when an area was settled and when houses were constructed.

You can find subdivision plans on our catalogue

Note: We do not hold every subdivision produced. There may not be a subdivision for your street, the section or side of your street.

Additional subdivision plans can be found on the [State Library of NSW website](#)

Photos of houses or streets



< 27/40 > Peter Reynolds Collection : Norton House, 33 Johnston Street, Annandale.

The Library's photo collection contains photos of houses, buildings and streets. You can use the Library online catalogue to search for photos. Search by street name or suburb.

Note: the photo collection doesn't contain photos of all houses or streets. If you have a photo you'd like to loan or donate to the Library, please talk to History staff at the Library or email history@innerwest.nsw.gov.au

Sands Sydney Directory

[Sands Sydney Directory](#) records occupants of residential and commercial properties. It was published annually between 1858 and 1932. The Directory covers every Sydney suburb and is arranged alphabetically by Council area.

You can use the Sands Directory to cross reference information found in the Valuation or Rate books or to fill in gaps if books are unavailable for particular years.

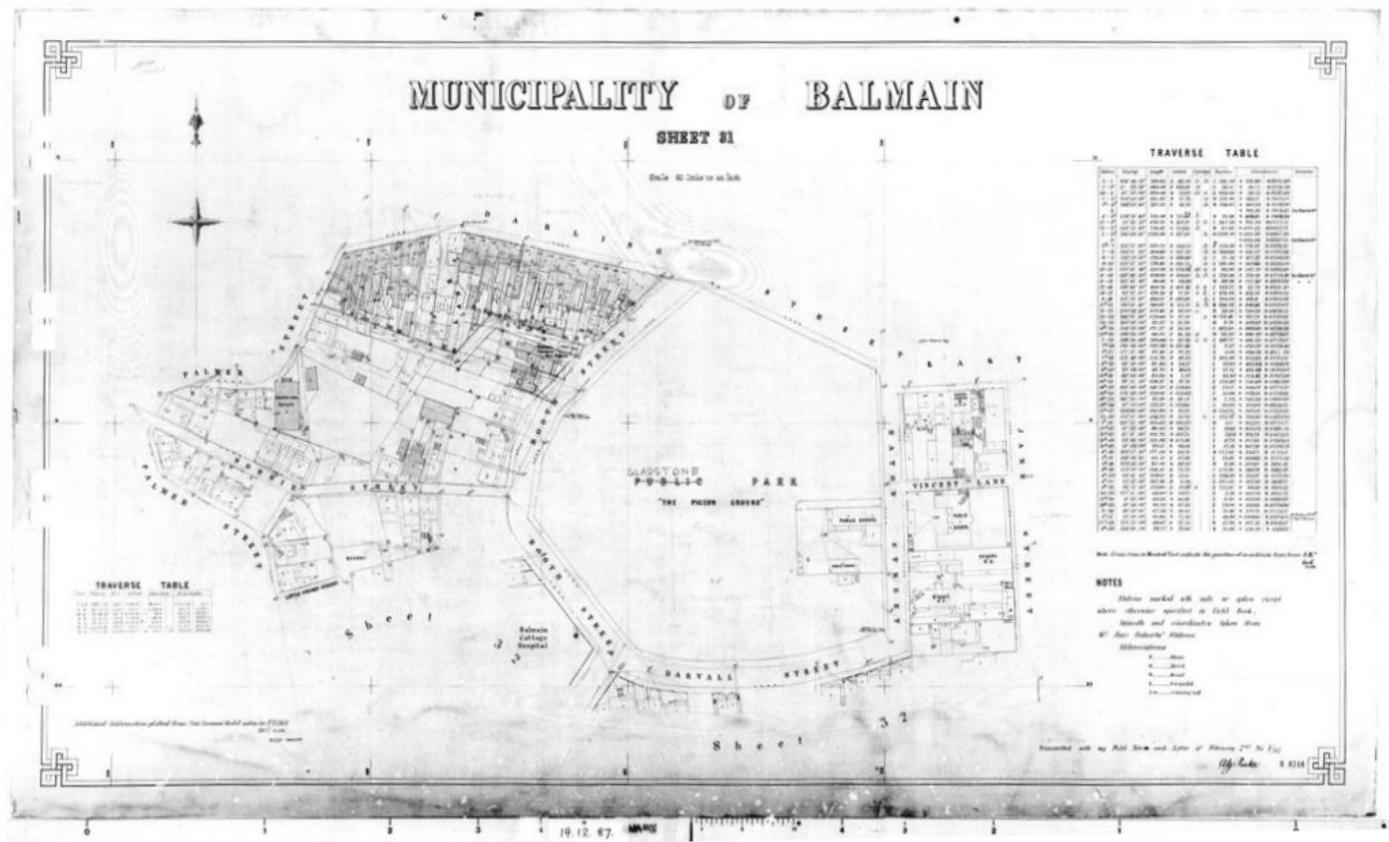
What information is in the Sands Directory:

- Names of people who lived in a building. Note the directory doesn't indicate whether the occupants are tenants or owners
 - Occupations of occupants (sometimes recorded)
 - Type of building e.g. shop or factory
 - House name (sometimes recorded)
 - A directory of trades, professions, commercial businesses and organisations

Sydney Metropolitan Detail Series plans & Water Board plans

If your house was built prior to 1899 you can use the Metropolitan Details Series plans or the [Water Board plans](#) to view the exact building footprints of houses and other buildings. The maps date from approximately 1880s – 1890s.

Metropolitan Plans are only available for some suburbs and streets.



Trove

[TROVE](#) is a very useful website where you can search for photos, maps, newspaper articles related to your house, the people who owned or lived in the house, the subdivision and more.

Spatial Explorer NSW

Explorer provides access to aerial maps of houses, streets and suburbs in NSW. You can use this to view 1940s to 1980s and 2000s aerial images of the property.

[SDT Explorer](#)



Council Archives

Access to the Council Archives is by appointment only. We make sure that most records are digitised and make them all available online where possible, with our object collection now accessible in [3D](#). You can search for particular archive items in the catalogue. Then can make an appointment by contacting us history@innerwest.nsw.gov.au

Former Ashfield Council Archives

Ashfield Library
Level 3, 260 Liverpool Road, Ashfield Phone:
9392 5108

Former Marrickville Council Archives

Petersham Town Hall
1st Floor, 105–107 Crystal Street, Petersham
Phone: 9335 2185

Paid house history research service

If you don't want to, or can't carry out research yourself, staff are able to assist you.

The fee for house history research is first half hour free then \$104 per hour, or first half hour free then \$52 per hour, for Pensioner Card/Health Card Holders.

Email history@innerwest.nsw.gov.au to make an enquiry.

Development and Building applications

To access Development and Building application records relating to your house, or information after the 1950s contact the Council on council@innerwest.nsw.gov.au or 9392 5000.

Or make a [GIPA Request](#)

Other sources of information

NSW Land Registry Services (formerly the Land Titles Office)

NSW Land Registry Services holds a wide range of property records and information relating to properties including land titles, associated plans and historical land grants.
<http://www.nswlrs.com.au/>

Newtown Project

This website features historical Council records, information, photos and subdivision maps of the former Newtown Council.
<http://www.newtownproject.com.au/>

Local Notes Page

<http://localnotes.net.au/>