

How to trace the history of a Durham Bishopric property

How to follow the history of a piece of property, which was once part of the estates of the Bishopric of Durham using the Church Commission Durham Bishopric Estate (CCB) and the [Durham Halmote Court \(DHC\) Records](#), in the care of [Special Collections](#), Durham University Library.

Introduction

A. It is assumed, before anyone tries to trace the history of a place through manuscript sources, that he or she has already acquired a knowledge of the general and particular area, from the many printed sources available, such as the Victoria and other histories of the County, printed histories of parishes and villages, directories etc. and from printed primary material published by such local societies as the Surtees Society and the Newcastle upon Tyne Records Series and from the indices to local historical periodicals such as *Archaeologia Aeliana*, the *Durham Archaeological Journal* (formerly the *Transactions of the Architectural and Archaeological Society of Durham and Northumberland*) and the *Bulletin of the Durham County Local History Society*. If research from printed sources has not been done, the manuscript material from the administrative process can easily be misunderstood.

B. The steps to be taken follow, but at all stages in pursuing the history of a property, complications can arise, the procedures of administration can be hard to follow and the source material spread in several classes. There are useful papers which explain, in detail, many suggestions made briefly in this paper. These are in the volume marked "Collected memoranda on the Church Commission and Halmote Court Deposits" (ASCRref Z CCB) on a shelf in the Search Room. Other points may be explicable by an assistant keeper. The Bishops of Durham owned property held by their tenants by three main types of tenure - copyholds (property the title deeds of which were copies of entries about its transfer in the Bishops' Halmote Court books or rolls), leaseholds (held by lease from the Bishop) and freeholds (which paid a free fixed ancient rent to the Bishop, reminiscent of the feu duty found in Scotland). The records of the receipts of rent (or arrears) of these three sorts of property, throw light on their history.

C. There may be a short cut to trace the history of a property. The job may have been done already. Check in the card "Index to Halmote Court Lists, 1-11" in a drawer in the Search Room, for abstracts of copyhold title (or now [online](#)), or similar compilations concerning a particular property, or in the Church Commission card index (or [online](#)). There are not many of these shortcuts and usually searchers have to follow the following procedures:

1. The first step for both copyhold, leasehold and freehold property is to locate the place in question on the Key or "Index to the Ordnance Survey [O.S.] Maps of Durham 6" and [25" scales](#)" in the Search Room or [online](#). [This grid](#) gives the sheet numbers to both scales, and sixteen 25" sheets cover the area of one 6" sheet.

2. Consult first the 6" O.S. 1st edition plan from Halmote Court Records. This may be done [online](#). This will show, by its annotations, whether the Bishop of Durham had any interest in the land or not. If there is no annotation, the Bishopric Estate Records are unlikely to help further, although other collections in the Special Collections may do so. There were almost no maps or plans of the Bishopric copyhold properties in his records before the O.S. maps were published. Some copies of the tithe plans of the 1840's were made and used.

3. Assuming the premises in question are annotated in some way on the 6" plan, the next step is to consult all the 25" O.S. maps of the same area in the Halmote Court Records, which are held in our Strong Rooms (or [online](#)). All editions are necessary, as the property may well have changed status or boundaries in succeeding editions. Premises marked in pink and having a call number marked on, were copyhold. The call number is expressed on the maps as "call 27" or "C.27" or "Pt.C.27". "Pt." is Part call and indicates that an area had been divided: in this case each part has to be pursued separately, which can be complicated and time- consuming. If the property concerned is coloured with any other colour or annotation apart from a coloured call number, then the researcher should move on to point no.10 as points 4- 9 concern copyholds.

4. Having found the copyhold call number, the next stage is to consult the relevant [Call Book](#).

These books list the dates and parties of transactions concerning each individual call number. There are separate call books for the divisions of Auckland, Bedlington, Chester-le-Street, Darlington, Evenwood, Easington, Stockton, Gateshead, Houghton-le-Spring, Lanchester, Wolsingham, Middleham, Whickham and Bishopwearmouth Rectory. These Call Books are listed in Halmote Court List III on a shelf in the Search Room. To discover which division contains which townships, consult the lists at the end of these notes. You may need to look at several Call Books of the area concerned. High call numbers were used when earlier large areas, under a single call number, were subdivided for housing etc.

5. Having found the list of transactions for the call number of the plot desired, the next step is to find the complete transactions as recorded in the [Halmote Court books](#) on the dates given in the Call Books. The Halmote Court books, which were not divided into divisional areas until 1720, are listed in [Halmote Court List I](#), together with the dates they cover. These entries, which are mainly in chronological order, describe the property and often

mention earlier tenants and occupants of it. The call numbers were not used before about 1760.

Between 1720 and 1760 the Call Books are lists of names of tenants, altered as people died.

If you wish to pursue the history of a property to a date earlier than 1720, it is necessary to read carefully the first transaction after 1720, or after 1760 if more easily found and note the earlier occupants, see point 7. After 1720 the individual Court Books have two indices, of tenants admitted and surrendering, useful if Call numbers are hard to follow. Some searchers prefer to make their whole search by names of tenants, (not by call numbers) looking in each admittance in the court book to see what the name of the previous tenant was, then looking back through the indices for the admittance of that tenant.

6. Having consulted, in the Halmote Court Books, all the post-1720 transactions concerning the copyhold property noted in the Call Books, the researcher may be satisfied, or may wish to consult the card index to all eleven Halmote Court Lists, to see what other documents there are among the Halmote Court records, which might refer to the property in question.

The card index is in a drawer at the back of the Search Room marked "Index to Halmote Court Lists, 1-11". (These records are now catalogued [online](#).) Other documents include a significant series of rentals from c.1620 in Halmote Court list III [Rentals of Wards and Townships](#), also [enclosure awards](#), surveys [original surrenders](#) etc.

7. If the searcher wishes to pursue a copyhold property through the Halmote Court Books to a date earlier than 1720, the [Alphabet Books](#) (Halmote Court Records List III) should be consulted. These books are lists of most of the tenants who surrendered and were admitted to copyholdings between about 1594 and 1720. These lists are not straightforward to use, as the page numbers they give refer to paginations which have been altered as the Halmote Court Books were rebound, different parts together, over the centuries. A correlation table is available. It may be necessary for the research historian to read through all the entries in the Halmote Court Books for the township and the whole period in which he or she is interested in order to be sure of seeing all relevant entries. From 1522 to 1720 the Halmote Court Books in the Special Collections have an index of townships in each volume. (After 1720 the indices are by principal parties to transactions). There is another series of Durham Halmote Court Books and Rolls in The National Archives (TNA) at Kew with the Durham Palatinate material (DURH). This overlapping series runs from 1348-1619 (ref: TNA DURH 3/12-28 and 135-40). It has not yet been possible to ascertain the exact relationship of the two overlapping series. The Durham court books

from c.1517 are in the main un-paginated until very recently, showing they are not the subjects of the alphabets in Mickleton and Spearman MS 96 - however their authority is assured by the signatures of the Stewards of the Halmote Court written in the margins beside the entries. These alphabets apparently match the TNA series DURH 3/22-24 for the years 1523-1587. (Mickleton and Spearman MS 96 various alphabets by names of persons: ff.288r-310r is for TNA DURH 3/24 Halmote Court Book 1560-87 ff.310v-325v is for TNA DURH 3/23 Halmote Court Book 1530-59 ff.326r-329v is for TNA DURH 3/32 Halmote Court Book 1523-29)

However, the two series, TNA and Durham, will complement each other in places where folia have been lost or are illegible. Microfilm of the TNA series for 1348-1522 (DURH 3/12-21) has already been obtained for DULSC to cover the years before the Durham series starts and it is hoped to obtain microfilm of the rest of the TNA series so the Mickleton and Spearman alphabets to 1587 can be used and defective entries in the Durham series supplied. At present we have usable alphabets for the Durham series only from 1594 (in the Halmote Court Records Miscellaneous Books List III, pp. 15-16). The Mickleton and Spearman MS 96 alphabets appear to be duplicated at the TNA in Kew in TNA Index 10151 f.41. These early Halmote Court Books and Rolls on film have the townships arranged in very similar groupings to the 1517-1720 volumes. These arrangements can be seen in the typescript calendar of PRO DURH 3/18, Bishop John Sherwood's Halmote Court Book 1484- 1492 and a manuscript calendar of DURH 3/17, Bishop Lawrence Booth's Halmote Court Book 1457-76. There are no known indices to these TNA Court Books and Rolls 1348-1523.

8. Scholars wishing to continue to pursue a copyhold property to a date earlier than 1517 may next consult the [Collectors accounts](#). These run from the late 1390's to about 1540, depending on area. These are listed in Church Commission List I. These contain more names and rents than descriptions of property. They are parchment rolls, joined exchequer fashion.

There is a gap in the rentals in the later Tudor period.

9. Earlier than this period, Hatfield's Survey of c.1380 and the Boldon Book of c.1190 (Surtees Society vols 32 and 25, surveys of all tenures of bishopric property) will be useful, as will the various Durham Chancery Rolls in The National Archives (Calendared in the Appendices to the Deputy Keepers Reports, nos. 31-45), microfilm of many available in the Special Collections. There is a great deal of rich miscellaneous manuscript materials, individual items not parts of a series, deposited in many collections in the several manuscript depositories in the north-east of England. There is no quick and easy way to

pursue the history of any one place through these records, but with patience and persistence much may be found.

10. Other colours put on the Halmote Court O.S. maps are black, green, blue and yellow. These colours indicate leasehold land, or freehold land, or the boundary of land subject to an enclosure award. The colours are not used consistently throughout all the editions of the Halmote Court O.S. maps. Besides other colours there are other notations in addition to call numbers. If the word "notitia" or "leasehold" is written, move to point 11, "freehold" or "free rent" to point 12, "file no.---" to point 13, "allotment" to point 14, "enfranchised" to point 15, "surrender" to point 16, "glebe" to point 17, "mort" to point 18, "plan number" to point 19, and if just a long number to point 20. These are the most common annotations.

Ask an assistant keeper about any others.

11. "Notitia" written on the maps refers to various volumes and plans concerned with leasehold land on the Bishopric estates. If a number is given with the word "notitia" then 321764 is Halmote Court volume M.10 Darlington ward Notitia; similarly 321775 is M.9 (sometimes referred to as "Notitia D") Chester ward; 321781 is M.11 Easington ward, and 321799 is M.12 Stockton ward. When "FO21" appears, that is folio 21 in one of the Notitia Books appropriate to the Ward. These Halmote Court [Notitia Books](#) are listed in Halmote Court List II (Miscellaneous Books), pp.19-20. The page about each particular property in these Notitia books will refer back to a page of the "Old Notitia": these are the Church Commission Notitia Books listed in CC List IV. The reference is usually to the indexed CC Notitia Books: 54002 Chester and Bedlington, 54007 Darlington, 54011 Easington, 54016 Stockton and 54019a Yorkshire. But if the properties do not match up, then go on to the un-indexed series of CC Notitia Books: 54003 Chester and Bedlington, 54006 Darlington, 54012 Easington, 54017 Stockton, 54019 Yorkshire or 54024 minerals, or to 54001. After 54001 its predecessor CC (1981) 216814 can be consulted and CC (1981) 321795 for the Yorkshire properties.

These Notitia volumes perform a similar function for leasehold property as the Call Books do for copyhold. Usually there is a page for each property. At the top of the page is a brief description of the property. The bottom part of the page will list the dates when leases have been made or renewed and a list of fines paid at these times. The centre of the page records other information for use at times of renewal such as decay or increase in value as mines run out or trees come to maturity and also comments on the demeanour of lessees.

Halmote Court volumes M.9-M.12 contain plans of the leasehold properties and cross references to O.S. maps and older notitia. The texts of the leases may then be found in the CC Leases Registers which are the full texts of leases arranged chronologically by issue:

see CC List IV with the dates each register covers, so leases may be considered in relation to other leases made at the same time.

As an alternative to starting from the annotated HC O.S. maps for [leaseholds](#) the bundle of counterpart leases for the individual property may be located in the card (mainly place-name) indices to the CC schedules, kept in the search room (and now catalogued [online](#)). There are two card indices. One is to the main schedule of CC items deposited in 1956 and other small deposits before 1981.

The second card index, on blue cards, is to the schedule to the large CC deposit of 1981, concerning many properties already documented in previous CC deposits, but predominantly concerning coal mining, quarrying, land for railways and other industrial matters.

For the leasehold rentals when in single sheets by small area or by year and later when in rental registers covering whole wards and years on end, see the card index in the Search room marked "Index to Halmote Court Lists, 1-11". The earlier records of leasehold rents received are ragged as it was found that direct payment by lessees to the Bishop's exchequer did not work well and the leasehold rents were better collected. "Sundry Notitia" are small plans and valuations of leasehold properties listed in Halmote Court List V. "Notitia 1981" are also further older small plans of leasehold properties deposited by the Church Commissioners in 1981 and in that schedule. The Bishop possessed few plans of his leaseholds until the late eighteenth century. There is a card index by place name to the plans held by the late Dept. of Palaeography and Diplomatic before its collections were merged with those of Special Collections and this card index includes references to plans of the leaseholds.

Although not strictly leaseholdings, in the years before counterpart leases by indenture became a standard feature (which was during Elizabeth's reign on the Durham Bishopric estates) one may find premises, such as mills, recorded in the Halmote Court Books as being let as copyholds for terms of years, to individuals or groups, sometimes with licence to assign, which was tantamount to subletting.

12. "[Freehold](#)" on the Durham Bishopric estates does not mean precisely the same as elsewhere. Occupants of some of the Bishop's freeholds paid him a rent. The [Coroners Accounts](#), Church Commission List I, deal with rents from free tenants from c.1400-1500, later the free rents are among the [Rentals of Townships](#) Halmote Court List II, thereafter in the [Rental Registers](#), Halmote Court List III. These rents came to an end in the 1920's. See also the card Index to all eleven Halmote Court Lists. Some references to free tenements and free rents may be found in the early Halmote Court Books and Rolls when the court

was a convenient occasion to deal with and record various local matters not strictly manorial.

13. "File no.---" refers to a Church Commission file, which may be in Durham or in London at the [Lambeth Palace Library](#). There seem to be files for copyhold, leasehold and freehold land as required. There is a list of surviving miscellaneous files in Durham in Halmote Court List VII, pp.1-6. There is another list of file numbers used in the schedules which were supplied by the Church Commissioners with their deposits of 1956, 1971, 1977 and 1978. There is a series of keys to the subjects of Halmote Court Office files 5426-1022 and 15628-20631 in Halmote Court vols M.81-83. If not there, one may have to write to the Church Commissioners themselves, as they still hold many Durham Bishopric Estate Records.

Before enquiring with Lambeth, it may be useful to consult the card index in the Search Room, marked "Numerical Index to Church Commission Bishopric Schedules and Lists". These indices show whether any Church Commission accession number appears anywhere in the schedules of the documents received by this department from them, or in any of the Lists published by this department of Church Commission or Halmote Court documents. Check both file numbers and the Church Commission five or six digit document numbers.

14. "Allotment" refers to land allotted under an Inclosure Award. Enclosures in Co. Durham are usually one of three types, those made under Parliamentary Act, those made in Durham Chancery Court and those made by arrangement with the landlord or his agent such as on Durham Bishopric estate land with the Bishop's Steward and recorded in the Halmote Court Books. Material on all enclosure awards noticed to date is listed in a thin foolscap volume with a brown cover marked "Inclosure Awards"; see also [Church Commission List V](#) and [Halmote Court List IV](#), all three on shelves in the Search Room. Some of the boundaries of Chancery enclosures have been reconstructed upon the Halmote Court 6" O.S. 1st edition maps and in the Halmote Court Misc. Maps and Plans. The Parliamentary Awards had their own plans attached and the rough outlines of these have been marked, for ease of identification, on a reference set of 6" O.S. maps of various dates, in the Search Room.

Enclosures recorded in the Halmote Court Books did not have contemporary plans either, but for a few reconstructions see the general card index of plans in the Search Room.

Allotment land tended to be held by the same tenure as the property to which had pertained the common rights being redistributed by the enclosure.

15. "Enfranchised" means that the status of the land was changed from copyhold (or perhaps leasehold) to freehold, see point 12. This process had already begun long before

the Land Acts of the 1920's which speeded it up. If the date of enfranchisement is not marked on the 25" O.S. it may be in the Call Book. The date on which manorial incidents were extinguished, usually the same, is generally noted in the latest Call Book also. Some enfranchisements are contained in that series of Halmote Court Books containing transactions after 1925, see Halmote Court List II [Misc. Books](#), and others are traceable in the Enfranchisement Rolls Halmote Court vols M.77 and M.78 and in the Reporting Books of Compensation Agreements reported for sealing, M.38-41. Compensation was usually paid to the Church Commissioners (who by then administered the Bishopric estates) at the time of enfranchisement. See also note 21.

16. "Surrender" refers to the transaction whereby one copyhold tenant gave up his holding into the landlord's hand after which it was transferred to another tenant. These documents known as "original Surrenders" are misnamed. They are copies extracted from the Court Book, a few from as early as 1503, recording an admittance and its date and bearing the signature of the new tenant. These are arranged in the main by division and township and chronologically therein, see [Halmote Court Lists VIII-XI](#). Later surrenders c.1725-1925 are kept in year bundles and the names of tenants not listed separately.

17. "Glebe" was the land belonging to the incumbent for the time being of a parish. It was freehold and also usually tithe free unless leased out. The incumbent might work it himself or let it out. Ancient glebe was occasionally enlarged on the occasion of Parliamentary Inclosure Awards as compensation for the commutation of the tithes to which the incumbent has been entitled over a larger area.

18. "Mort" no-one consulted, even the Church Commissioners, knows what this means. A mort usually means a dead rent, one that never increases, but many of the Bishop's rents never increased, but he received increased revenue from increased fines. It does not seem to relate to a mortgage or to arrears. Work is needed to establish the common feature of rents grouped under 'morts'.

19. "Plan number": there are several batches of plans among the Church Commission and Halmote Court deposits. These have almost all been entered by name of place (not number) in the card index of plans in the Search Room. Those with references "Halmote Court Misc.Maps" or "Notitia" are the maps described as kept in rolls or folders in an obsolete card index from the Halmote Court office which contains old reference numbers, which may be those used on the Halmote Court 25" O.S. maps. Another batch of plans was received from the Commissioners in 1975, listed in a volume on a Search Room shelf, marked "Church Commission Maps and Plans". This contains both old and new reference numbers. Another batch of "Notitia", plans of leaseholds, was received in 1981.

20. If a plot is marked simply with a figure larger than the usual range of call numbers, this could be a file number, or a deed number, or the Church Commission reference number to a document in many possible classes, either in London or Durham. Follow the steps as described in point 13. Note that some O.S. maps were published with O.S. reference numbers and acreages printed within fields.

21. "Register" in a Call Book refers to registers listed in HC List VIII Transactions after 1925, when copyholds were being enfranchised: see note 15.

22. A name of a person written on the plot may well be a reference to the "owner" or "occupier" of the land either as given in an enclosure award or as given in the tithe apportionments accompanying the tithe plans in Durham Diocesan Records. These plans were made following the 1836 Act for tithe commutation and therefore before the 6" and 25" O.S. County Durham map series. Copies of tithe plans were often used for reference by landlords before the availability of the (usually better quality) O.S. maps.

23. After following the procedure above, it will be useful to check again in the Search Room card indices to the eleven Halmote Court Lists and the Church Commission Schedule, as references which looked uninteresting in the early stages of research, can assume new importance in the light of subsequent research.

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Halmote Court divisions / head courts, with their subordinate townships

AUCKLAND Division

Auckland Borough

Auckland (or Bondgate-in-Auckland)

Byers Green

Coundon

Escomb

Evenwood (when not separate – see also under MANORS below)

Heighington

Hunwick Edge

Middridge

Newton Capp

Redworth

CHESTER Division

Bedlington (when not separate – see also under MANORS below)

Boldon (East and West)

Chester-le-Street

Cleadon

Plawsworth

Ryton

Whitburn

DARLINGTON Division

Blackwell

Bondgate in Darlington

Coatham Mundeville (when not separate – see also under MANORS below)

Cockerton

Darlington

Haughton-le-Skerne

Sadberge (see also under MANORS and under STOCKTON)

Whessoe

EASINGTON Division

Cassop

Easington

Shadforth

Sherburn

Shotton

HOUGHTON Division

Bishopwearmouth (see also under MANORS below)

Burdon

Houghton-le-Spring

Middle Herrington

Newbottle

Ryhope

Tunstall

Warden Law

LANCHESTER Division

Benfieldside

Broom and Flass

Burnhope and Hamsteels

Butsfield, Coldpikehall and Broomshields

Cornsay

Kyo, Billingside and Peth

Lanchester

Roughside and Allanshields

Rowley (alias Cold Rowley and Holehouse)

Satley

Ushaw

STOCKTON Division

Carlton

Hardwickfield

Hartburn

Norton

Sadberge (see also under MANORS and under DARLINGTON)

Stockton

WOLSINGHAM Division

Bedburn

Bishopley

Greenwellside

Hamsterley

Lynesack and Softley

Newlandside

Stanhope

Wigside

Witton-le-Wear

Wolsingham

Halmote Court townships index, showing division / head court under which each was grouped

Township Division	Head Court
Allanshields	Lanchester
Auckland	Borough Auckland
Bedburn	Wolsingham
Bedlington	Bedlington Manor or Chester
Benfieldside	Lanchester
Billingside	Lanchester
Bishop Middleham	Middleham Manor
Bishopley	Wolsingham
Bishopwearmouth	Houghton
Bishopwearmouth Rectory	Bishopwearmouth Rectory
Blackwell	Darlington
Boldon (East and West)	Chester
Bondgate in Auckland	Auckland
Bondgate in Darlington	Darlington
Broom	Lanchester
Broomshields	Lanchester
Burdon	Houghton
Burnhope and Hamsteels	Lanchester
Butsfield	Lanchester
Byers Green	Auckland
Carlton	Stockton
Chester-le-Street	Chester
Cleadon	Chester
Coatham Mundeville	Darlington, or Coatham Mundeville Manor
Cockerton	Darlington
Coldpikehall	Lanchester
Cold Rowley	Lanchester
Cornforth	Middleham Manor or Easington
Cornsay	Lanchester
Coundon	Auckland
Darlington	Darlington
Easington	Easington
Escomb	Auckland
Evenwood	Evenwood Manor, or Auckland
Fawside	Lanchester
Flass	Lanchester
Gateshead	Gateshead Manor

Township Division	Head Court
Greenwellside	Wolsingham
Hamsteels	Lanchesrer
Hamsterley	Wolsingharn
Hardwickfield	Stockton
Hartburn	Stockton
Haughton-le-Skerne	Darlington
Heighington	Auckland
Holehouse	Lanchester
Houghton-le-Spring	Houghton
Hunwick Edge	Auckland
Killerby	Evenwood Manor
Kyo	Lanchester
Lanchester	Lanchester
Lynesack	Wolsingham
Middle Herrington	Houghton
Middleham	Middleham Manor
Middridge	Auckland
Newbottle	Houghton
Newlandside	Wolsingham
Newton Cap	Auckland
Norton	Stockton
Peth	Lanchester
Redworth	Auckland
Roughside	Lanchester
Rowley	Lanchester
Ryhope	Houghton
Ryton	Chester
Sadberge	Darlington or Stockton or Sadberge Manor
Satley	Lanchester
Sedgefield	Middleham Manor
Shadforth	Easington
Sherburn	Easington
Shotton	Easington
Softley	Lanchester
Stanhope	Wolsingham
Stockton	Stockton
Ushaw	Lanchester
Warden Law	Houghton
Warland	Lanchester
West Auckland	Evenwood Manor

Township Division	Head Court
West Thickey	Evenwood Manor
Whessoe	Darlington
Whickham	Whickham Manor
Whitburn	Chester
Wigside	Wolsingham
Witton-le-Wear	Wolsingham
Wolsingham	Wolsingham

Manors

BEDLINGTON manor (see also under CHESTER above)

Not divided into townships

BISHOPWEARMOUTH RECTORY manor (see also under HOUGHTON above)

Not divided into townships

COATHAM MUNDEVILLE manor (see also under DARLINGTON above)

EVENWOOD manor or barony (see also under AUCKLAND above)

Evenwood

Killerby

West Auckland

West Thickley

GATESHEAD manor

Not divided into townships

(BISHOP) MIDDLEHAM manor

Cornforth

Middleham

Sedgefield

SADBERGE manor or wapentake (see also under DARLINGTON or STOCKTON above)

WHICKHAM manor

Not divided into townships