

## **Sources for Victorian and Edwardian housing development**

Talk to Dartmouth Park Conservation Area Advisory Committee

*Colin Thom, Survey of London, 8 Nov 2012*

*{title slide}*

My talk tonight is mostly about documentary sources for the study of London's Victorian and Edwardian houses, with particular reference to suburban growth in outer areas of the capital, especially after the coming of the railways in the mid nineteenth century.

The title picture shows the Clapham Junction area of Battersea around 1900, Battersea being our current area of study at the *Survey of London*, though very soon to be put to bed to allow research to begin on the richer architectural pickings of St Marylebone. The residential part of Battersea to the south of this main shopping crossroads was built up mostly in the late 19th and early 20th centuries by many individual builders and speculators, and its rather messy development and varied mix of houses of different periods and styles is similar to what you find here in Dartmouth Park.

### **Maps**

*{tithe}*

For a quick and easy introduction to this pattern of development, maps are always the best place to start, whether you are studying a large suburban area like south Battersea, or just a single street, or house. A series of maps of different dates will give an immediate picture of change over time.

This is a tithe map of 1838, one of the great building blocks of topographical research for the early 19th century, as theoretically they cover the entire country — but its something you might not recognize here, as I understand that no tithe maps exist for St Pancras, which must have undergone some sort of enclosure before then. As you can see, South Battersea was at this time largely a district of big mansions in generous grounds. This fragmentation of landownership had an effect on the character of later development; and some of the old boundaries are still traceable in the modern street-pattern.

*{slide: 1890s OS}*

It took till as late as the 1890s for the western half of the district to fall to the Victorian speculators, who began to eat away at the old mansions and their grounds, advancing gradually from west to east, laying out new streets of terraces and semi-detached houses as they went.

*{slide: 1900s OS}*

And by the early 1900s, the area was almost solidly built up with new housing, as well as churches and schools — in fact, a fully fledged lower-middle and working-class suburb in its own right.

So much for the general. For more particular information, such as accurate building dates and the names of the people involved, I recommend looking at the wide range of local government records for the period.

### **District Surveyors' Returns**

### *{boroughs map}*

The Victorian era in London was marked by great improvements in the system of building control and regulation. Each metropolitan borough or vestry had its own district surveyor, to check the safety of construction of any new buildings, which were classified according to their type, and within in that by height, floor area, wall thickness, and so on. The surveyors compiled monthly returns, listing all new buildings and alterations taking place in their area, and these are now kept at London Metropolitan Archives. Generally they cover the period from the mid 1840s to around 1939 – though I'll return to this question of coverage in more detail shortly.

### *{DSR1}*

Here's a typical volume of returns for 1884, open at a page for the Streatham district of Lambeth for the month of April. The individual districts policed by the surveyors do not always correspond with old parish or recent borough boundaries, so it's always advisable to check neighbouring districts if the property in question was close to a boundary. Given the large number of entries for each year it is very difficult to find a reference to a particular property without a rough idea of when and where the house was built. However, the information given is very precise, and for those investigating a street or a larger area, is invaluable, providing exact dates of construction, and the names and addresses of the individuals involved.

### *{Gleneldon}*

This is Gleneldon Road in Streatham, an area where a lot of house-building was taking place in the 1880s and 90s, and the terraces here are fairly typical of the lower-middle-class houses then being built in vast numbers all over London's suburban fringes.

### *{DSR2}*

The returns comprise three parts. In Part 1 each entry for that month is given its own identifying number, and includes: the date when notice was received that work was to commence (or the 'discovery' date, i.e. when the surveyor discovered that un-notified building work had already begun); who sent the notice (usually the builder or owner); the names and addresses of the builder – in this case a William Pierce of Battersea;

*{DSR3}* some idea of the building work, here its 6 dwelling houses in Gleneldon Road; and a brief indication of their size, in this case of 3 storeys.

### *{DSR4}*

It's also worth checking the Part 2s of the directories, where the serial numbers from previous months are given with the date of 'covering in', when a house's roof was put on and the fees became due, just to make sure that the work was done. Sometimes notes are made, such as 'suspended' or 'abandoned', which you need to watch out for, as you might otherwise be looking at a record for a row of houses that was never built.

### *{Port book}*

Now, you are very lucky here, in Dartmouth Park, that your advisory committee includes among its members some very fine historians, and none is finer than Professor Michael Port, who has compiled this excellent little booklet listing the District Surveyors Returns for the area, complete with useful colour-coded maps showing which builders were responsible for which houses, and when they were constructed.

### *{Port book extract}*

For instance, here's a page from Michael's book listing the surveyors' returns for Dartmouth Park Road, and you can see how much these are dominated by the work of the Smerdon Brothers builders in the 1880s.

### *{Smerdon houses}*

From these lists it becomes clear that this run of three-storey semis on the south side of the road, with a few nice Gothic decorative touches, were run up by the Smerdons. In fact I think I'm right in saying that the Smerdon family home was at No. 55 in this row.

But as Michael's book makes clear, the district surveyors' returns have not survived for most of the 1850s and for all of the 1860s, a time when house-building in Dartmouth Park was in full swing. So, for the remainder of this talk, what I'd like to do, rather than give a wide-ranging guide to the many diverse documents that relate to London's built history, is to focus in some detail on two or three particular types of London-wide sources that can fill that gap, and might provide detailed information about the development of Dartmouth Park in the 1850s and 60s, and later.

## **Deeds and leases and estate records**

### *{GL deed}*

Deeds, and leases, and estate records of all kinds, are the bread and butter of the urban or house historian. Here's a typical example of an early 19th century building lease – this is what it looks like folded up, for those of you who haven't seen one before.

### *{Deed2}*

This one is actually a 70-year building lease from the Trinity House Corporation of land in the St Mary Newington area of South London, near present-day Elephant & Castle, to a local timber merchant named Thomas Balchin. You won't be able to read it but the lease includes 5 houses recently built by Balchin in a new street there called Coles Street; *{deed3}* and there is a handy little outline plan which shows their location in the street and also their room layouts, with a typical Georgian side-passage plan of two main rooms separated by a central staircase.

Deeds like these form part of every local archive or local history library collection. Now, I don't actually know what, if any, estate records survive for the Earl of Dartmouth's holdings in and around Kentish Town – perhaps you may be able to enlighten me later. But what I do know is that, even if deeds or estate records like this do not survive, or can't be found, all is not lost if the area in question lies north of the Thames.

### *{MDR slide}*

For between 1709 and 1938 every single sale, mortgage or lease of more than 21 years duration, relating to property in Middlesex, had to be registered in the volumes of the Middlesex Deeds Registry, now kept at the London Metropolitan Archives, in order for any future transaction to be considered legal. Basically a shorter version of the original deed or lease was copied into these volumes. So their coverage is enormous, but they are a tremendously underused and poorly understood resource. *{MDR detail}* Most researchers are ignorant of their content; the indexes are poor; and the sheer bulk of the records – some 13,000 volumes covering 230 years – makes them rather daunting. But their potential usefulness is tremendous and they are well worth persevering with.

### *{MDR index}*

The indexes are not particularly easy to use, but they are, by and large, alphabetical, and arranged by the first party's surname. So, to find a property, you'll have to have a rough idea of the date of a transaction, and the name of the owner or lessor at the time. There are no place indexes, nor any for second parties or buyers; but from 1717 onwards an end column of the index gives the relevant parish. The other columns give you the number of the volume for that year for each entry, and also the number of the entry itself within that volume.

### *{Bedford Park villas}*

Lets take a quick look at Bedford Park, an area where the identity of the landowner who developed the estate, Jonathan Carr, is well known, and so the wonders of the deeds registry are wide open. These are designs by the architect E. W. Godwin for small villas at Bedford Park, with bay windows placed in two of the flank walls, to make the most of the views afforded by corner sites. *{MDR}* And here is a lease of 1879 for one such corner house, with the distinctive bay windows, in Woodstock Road. The lease is from Carr to an Edgware builder, John Finnimore, who presumably erected the house. *{Carr indexes}* And as you can see, there are lots and lots of entries in the registry under Carr's name for 1879, and also for the next few years; and as each of these entries listed for Acton or Chiswick will relate to a lease or mortgage for new houses at Bedford Park, anyone interested in the area could quite quickly gain an insight into how Carr and his brother were operating there.

### *{MDR D Park}*

You are also very fortunate in Dartmouth Park that you know the identity of the major landowner here at the time of building development, the Earl of Dartmouth. I had a quick look at the Deeds Registry for the mid-to-late 1850s under the name Dartmouth, and here are just a couple of typical entries. (I'm very sorry about the terrible quality of these slides, but for this period the LMA insists that you use microfilm versions of the deeds registry, rather than the lovely volumes I showed earlier.) This is a 99-year building lease of September 1857, issued to the builder William Hall, who, as some of you will know, was very active in the area at this time. The lease is not from the Earl alone, but in party with the builders John Kelly of Euston Square and John Eeles Lawford of Tottenham Court Road, whom the little plan shows the Earl has also agreed with for the land adjoining. The plan also shows Hall has agreed to take a plot on the other side, so this house is presumably one of a pair – in fact, I think it must be No. 5, though in the lease it is referred to by the name 'Ashridge Villa'. *{5 D Pk Rd}* Hall's term begins in September 1853, which gives a reliable date for the start of building work in the street, so we can say with some confidence that this pair were built by Hall, under Kelly and Lawford's guidance as developers, in 1853–7.

### *{MDR}*

Here's another entry from the same period, of May 1857, relating to another house in Dartmouth Road, as Dartmouth Park Road was first called, this time on the north side. Its being leased by Lord Dartmouth and his developers Kelly & Lawford to Thomas Statford, a Kentish Town carpenter, who presumably built the house. *{MDR p2}* It is followed in the registry by another deed for the same house, dated the next day, from Statford to a Great Titchfield Street upholsterer named Thomas Webb. This is Statford mortgaging his interest in the lease, now that the house is finished enough to stand as security for a loan, and is standard behaviour for builders in speculative developments of this type. Also, though this time there is no name for the house, it is pretty clear from the larger than usual width of the plot and its shape, as well as the description of it as abutting northwards onto a narrow 'private road', *{4 D Pk Rd}* that this is probably No. 4 Dartmouth Park Road. And if you were to proceed

through the Deeds Registry for the 1840s and 50s in this manner, you'd soon build up a detailed picture of early Victorian development in the area and of the various individuals involved.

## Ratebooks

What the deeds registry, with its emphasis on long-term leases, and therefore owners, head lessees and mortgagees, has not told us, *{Directory}* is much about the first occupants of these new houses in the area, most of whom would have had short-term tenancies. The decennial Census returns and street directories are the two most commonly used sources for identifying residents; *{directory 2}* here is a typical London street directory entry of 1889 for Egerton Gardens in the Brompton area of Kensington. But for the period I've been looking at in the 1850s, street directories in this alphabetical form were still in their infancy, and were neither comprehensive nor terribly frequent for areas outside central London, where detailed information about residents and especially those involved in commerce was deemed less essential.

So I'd like to illustrate to you one very effective way of finding out the names of early residents, and at the same time getting a feel for the chronology of building development: by consulting parish ratebooks for the period, usually kept at the local history library.

### *{N Sq 1}*

This is Northampton Square, in Clerkenwell, laid out in the early 1800s. Though redeveloped since then, the square still retains substantial numbers of houses of the period, particularly in and around the east and south sides of the square. It was originally part of an estate known as Wood's Close, owned by the earls of Northampton.

### *{N Sq 2}*

The houses were built by several builders in the usual manner of speculative estate development, under the watchful eye of the Northampton estate surveyor, the eminent architect Samuel Pepys Cockerell.

### *{1825 ratebook Northampton square}*

Ratebooks are probably the best and most widely available source for early house occupation. (This is a late-Georgian example I'm using here, but the technique and data holds true for the Victorian period too, as we'll see in a minute.) Many of you will be old enough to remember the days before the Council Tax, when most people paid rates — a charge or a tax levied by the local authorities to help recover the costs of various public services, such as paving, cleaning or lighting the streets; or, going back earlier, for the upkeep of the parish poor. The amount paid depended upon the size of your house, which was given a value based on how much it could earn each year in rent — this was known as the rateable value — you can see in this example from Northampton Square in 1825 that Charles Windeller's house at No. 8 is rated at a value of £70, more than twice that of Richard Kaye's house at No. 18. Also keep an eye on Stephen Warwick at the top of the list, at No. 1. He turns out to be a long-term resident in the square, and long-term residents are a real boon with records like these, as we'll see. Rates could be charged to either the owner or the occupier, but generally they were paid by occupants. Whereas street directories do not list every house in every street, ratebooks do. And census returns exist for only one night — one night — in a ten-year period, ratebooks often for every 3 or 4 months, and at least for every year, and often going back into the 18th or even 17th century.

### *{1821 ratebook}*

What can we infer from a comparison of the 1825 ratebook for Northampton Square with those for 1821 and 1814? There are a few more gaps in 1821, but most of the houses are still in occupation, so there wasn't a lot of change in the way of development. But few names persist; I made it about 10 houses in 1821 with the same occupants as in 1825.

### *{1814 ratebook}*

This goes down to only 3 names by 1814. This tells us much about the rate of house occupancy and change in the early 19th century. House ownership was very rare among all classes in 19th-century London. Everyone rented, usually on quite short-term leases, say for 1, 2 or 3 years, or perhaps quarterly or, at the very lowest social levels, weekly. This kind of flexibility was vital, giving residents the chance to move quickly if required in a volatile, ever-changing job market.

### *{slide: 1809 ratebook}*

By 1809 we're down to one page, and some of the houses you can see are listed as 'Building', so unfinished.

### *{1807 ratebook}*

And going back to 1807, the list now takes up about half a page, and it quickly becomes apparent that only a handful of houses by then were under construction, and only one or two were finished enough to be occupied. Also see how the order has changed, the houses on the east side of the square now being listed before Stephen Warwick at No.1. It was quite common for rate-collectors to change their route and the order of the names in the books: that's why even if you're looking for only one name or one house, it's best to note several names either side as well, to make sure that you know where you are if the order does change.

### *{1805 ratebook}*

By 1805, only two houses are listed as 'Building'. There are no ratebook entries for Northampton Square before this. So you can see that as well as identifying the first occupants of the square, the ratebooks also give us a very clear picture of the chronology and date of building construction, on a house by house basis.

### *{SoL ratebook notes}*

At the Survey of London we use lined sheets of A3 paper like this and make the notes from right to left as we work backwards through the ratebooks, noting changes to the occupants' names — a dash or a tick can be used if there is no change, as you can see with Stephen Warwick; and we also note any changes to the rateable value of the houses — as this can sometimes point to an enlargement or rebuilding. In this way, if you go back far enough, it should, hopefully, become apparent when, and in what order, the houses were built.

But as you've seen, the ratebooks list only names, with no suggestion of what kind of people these may be. And this is where the recent flood of historical data on to the internet, in easily searchable forms, comes in to its own. Ancestry, the family history site, is the obvious example; but there are a few others I find more useful to start with.

### *{Newspapers site}*

One is the historic newspapers sites, such as the Times Digital Archive, or the British Library's historic newspapers, where you can free-text search for names of people or streets or areas. I didn't find Stephen Warwick, but I did find a couple of the other early residents that were listed in the ratebooks.

### *{William Gamble or Peter Bodkin}*

William Gamble turns up in 1828, listed in the *London Gazette* as a bankrupt — he was a watchmaker — a trade very common to the Clerkenwell area and prevalent in and around Northampton Square; and Peter Bodkin is given as an Esquire on his death in 1829, *and* was thought important enough to have this announced in the *Morning Post* — though it doesn't tell us what he was.

### *{A2A}*

The other site I like to check is the Access to Archives, or A2A site, now included on the National Archives website, which covers many archives nationwide; and Peter Bodkin turns up there in an insurance policy as a broker in Pentonville in the early 1800s, where he presumably moved from to Northampton Square when it was laid out a few years later. So though the ratebooks may be limited in what they can tell you about the individual occupants, some more detail can be fleshed out from these sorts of sites — though as you'll see I've picked a couple of the more unusual surnames — I wouldn't recommend doing this for a John Smith.

### *{109–119 Chetwynd Road East}*

I was quite interested in these houses on the north side of Chetwynd Road, at its far east end, given as of the 1860s in the Conservation Area Assessment. Since the District Surveyors returns for that period don't survive, they don't feature in Michael's excellent booklet. Perhaps a study of the St Pancras ratebooks might provide a more accurate date. These ratebooks are now kept on microfilm at Camden Local Studies Library in Theobalds Road, and so the quality of these next illustrations is also poor, as I was reduced to photographing the microfilm reader screen, so I hope you can see them OK.

### *{1878}*

Here is the 1878 ratebook for Chetwynd Road East, with most of the houses built and occupied. Handily, the four houses immediately west of the ones I'm interested in weren't built till the late 1880s, and so they aren't listed here. *{1878 detail}* You'll see that a gap has been left in the numbering, between 31 and 45 — but this is for six houses, not four; and that's because the two westernmost house of the run I'm after, Nos 109 & 111, hadn't been built yet either; only 5 houses are listed at this date at this end of Chetwynd Road, then numbered 45–53 (in modern terms that's Nos 113–121). *{1874 ratebook}* The 1874 ratebook shows things pretty much the same, though the four houses even further west, the present Nos 93–99, are only just up and still marked as 'E' for empty.

### *{1870 rb}*

Back in 1870 only two houses are listed here — at the top, numbered 1 & 2 — that's the present No. 119 and its original partner at 121, since demolished — then in the occupation of John Maryon and the wonderfully named Borroughs Dickie Kershawe — names like that are a great help when it comes to identifying the individuals in question — DB Kershawe is in the 1871 census at the house as a civil engineer in the employ of the New River Company. The houses that are listed after Nos 119 & 121, from John Potter on, are on the other, south side of the street. *{1868 rb}* And the same is true in 1868, just two houses, and you can see from the hastily scribbled additions that the south side houses were only then just going up.

### *{1862 rb}*

The same pair is still listed in 1862, when the previous occupant of No. 121, Edwin Mountford, had only just left, as his name has been scored out, and both houses were listed again in 1860.

*{1858 rb}*

But by 1858 there are no houses, and the name Chetwynd Road has only just been scribbled in as a late addition, presumably marking the street's beginnings.

*{109–119 Chetwynd Road East}*

And so the ratebooks show that the building chronology of this short row is far from just simply '1860s'. Nos 109 & 111, with the bow windows, in the foreground to the left, were the last of the group to be built, some time after 1878; the white house at the far end, now No. 119 — Burroughs Dickie Kershawe's house — was one of a pair, built around 1859, and for several years these were the only two houses on this north side of the road. The detached house alongside at No. 117, and the other flat-fronted pair at Nos 113 & 115, seem to date from the early 1870s — so, in fact, none of these houses appears to have originated in the 1860s at all

## Street naming and numbering plans

That Chetwynd Road example also shows how house-numbers can change over time. And this may sound obvious, but I can't emphasise too strongly how important it is to ensure that you are looking at the right property. *{Fournier Street}* One common mistake made by researchers is to find themselves wading through quite difficult sources such as early ratebooks, looking for the wrong house. You must take note of any changes to street-names and house-numbers over time, a very common thing in London.

These problems can be overcome if you refer with care to maps, street directories, and ratebooks, and look at the various London County Council *Names of Streets* volumes. These books give the dates of changes, list the street-names that were abolished, and give the references for the official street renaming or renumbering plans, held at the LMA, which are the basic authoritative source. This plan of 1893 is for Fournier Street — the new name for what till then had been called Church Street, in Spitalfields — chosen to commemorate a wealthy local Huguenot benefactor, George Fournier. Note how the old, eccentric house-numbering — 26, 26a, 26b etc — has been replaced by a regular 'odds and evens' sequence.

*{Chetwynd 1874}*

And here's a similar map of 1874 for Chetwynd Road — again on microfilm, so apologies for the poor quality. Five of the houses we were looking at, at the east end of the road, are shown — *{map detail}* you can see the end houses, which at one stage we saw as numbered 1 & 2 in the ratebooks, were in fact originally known as 1 & 2 Chetwynd Villas, before being renumbered as 51 & 53 — and of course they were later to be renumbered again as 119 & 121. *{Chetwynd 1886}* And here's the later LCC street-naming and numbering plan of 1886, showing just that.

## Drainage Plans

*{D plan}*

Another type of local authority records that are widely available in most London areas are drainage applications. Builders of new houses had to submit plans to the

local board or vestry showing the house drainage and how it would connect with the existing system. Many of these plans and applications, sometimes dating back to the 1850s, survive in local history archives or, if not, in council departments, such as Building Control or Works. Sometimes they are very poor and sketchy; but sometimes, as here, they are of good quality, and show room divisions and other details, giving an idea of the original layout and room use. The accompanying form, which I haven't shown, gives the date and the applicant's name and address — usually, but not always, the builder. This rather nice example from Hornsey is a plan accompanying a drainage application of 1897, for the conversion of a house at No. 55 Queen's Drive into flats.

### *{Broomwood Rd}*

As I said, often the plans are much more rudimentary or sketchy than this. Here is a row of standard late-Victorian or Edwardian terraced houses in Broomwood Road, in south Battersea, where this type of building is predominant, if not ubiquitous, and often very hard to date accurately. *{D Plan2}* A drainage application for them in the collection at Wandsworth Town Hall, in the planning department there, gives their date as 1905 — slightly later than I might have expected — and gives us the builder, the very handily named John Smith, quite a prominent builder in the area.

### *{Chetwynd villas}*

This a row of between-the-wars semis at the west end of Chetwynd Road, in Dartmouth Park, known as Chetwynd Villas, which I'm sure most of you know. They are typical of their period, with bowed windows and timbered gables. Camden Local studies library has a very good set of drainage plans for Dartmouth Park, kept on microfiche — so once again, apologies for the quality of these images — and they include the plans and elevations for these houses. The drawings are a bit crude, but they mention the original materials, such as the roughcast render and tiled roofs; and the little plans give you the original room layouts for each floor — this one shows the first floor, with its 4 bedrooms and little bathroom, sink and separate WC. The application to build came from a local firm, the builders Goddard & Phillips of Highgate Road, and is dated November 1933.

### *{Tudor mansions}*

Here's another interesting piece of later infill, at the opposite end of Chetwynd Road, the red-brick castellated flats of 1899, today known as Tudor Mansions. *{D Plan2}* There is also a drainage application for this building in the collection at Camden, and again we get a chance to see the original plan, with two flats to each floor, usually with 3 bedrooms and 2 sitting rooms, a bathroom and kitchen. The name on the plans and application is that of the owner, and presumably developer, Arthur George Shearing, a builder of Fortress Road, Kentish Town, and the building's name is given on the application as Tudor House, not Mansions.

Finally, there is one last class of official record that I'd like to show you which I think is particularly good, especially for houses of the period we've been looking at, built between about 1840 and 1910.

### *{slide: IR121 map}*

These are not local authority records, but national ones, kept at the National Archives in Kew, relating to the short-lived Finance Act of 1909–10, for which every single property in England & Wales — every property — was visited and inspected, and its value and other details noted. I won't bore you with the background to the tax, which was an invention of Lloyd George's; suffice to say that the records were noted in small bound volumes, or fieldbooks, each property within an income-tax parish having a unique identification number; and these numbers were also recorded on

large-scale Ordnance Survey maps like this one, for London in class IR 121. This is the map for the area around Broomwood Road. *{houses}* You'll remember these houses from the drainage plan I showed a minute ago. *{map again}* The maps don't survive for every area, but where they do they are the best and sometimes the only route to finding the relevant field-book entries.

*{slide: IR 58 book}*

And here's what a typical fieldbook, in class IR 58, looks like.

*{slide: IR58 detail}*

I think these IR58 fieldbooks are incredibly useful for Victorian housing because they give the names of freeholders and lessees, and usually the dates and terms of leases; now, if these are the original building leases, which they are likely to be for buildings erected as recently as the later 19th century, then you have a good approximate date for the construction of the house — and bear in mind south of the river here in Battersea there is no equivalent to the Middlesex Deeds Registry. In this case the houses are said to have been built under Mr Ingram's freehold, on a lease commencing in 1904.

*{slide: IR58 again}*

The fieldbooks usually also give a short description of the buildings at the time the visit was made, around 1911 or 1912, and other details which would be very hard to find elsewhere, and which can point you in the direction of other sources. You can see as well as listing the rooms in the house, it says it was 'well built by Smith' — our man John Smith again. And remember, every street in the country was covered like this.

*{IR 121 map}*

Here's one of the IR 121 maps for the Dartmouth Park Road / Chetwynd Road area that we've been looking at — let's have a look at what the fieldbooks say for Tudor Mansions, which on the map are marked as entry number 592.

*{IR58 fieldbook}*

Now, if I hadn't found that drainage plan, or it hadn't survived, all that information is also given here, and a little more, in fact. The name Shearing is given as owner; and also of interest is the information given further down that he bought the site freehold in 1899 for £200, and had subsequently spent £2,500 on it, presumably the cost of building the flats. *{Fieldbook 2}* The description tells us how many flats there were, and the number of rooms.

*{Boscastle House}*

What about this detached house, No. 1 at the corner of Boscastle Road, formerly Grove Road? Can the fieldbooks perhaps tell us when that was built?

*{fieldbook 1}*

Well here we are — it's another Earl of Dartmouth freehold — and once again the building lease commences in September 1853 — so it must have been built around the same time as the adjoining houses on Dartmouth Park Road that we saw earlier in the Middlesex Deeds Registry. *{fieldbook 2}* and the description tells us a little bit about the house's layout, with 2 rooms to a floor, and a half-landing in-between with a WC and bathroom, and another WC in the garden. And the surveyor has included a little sketch site plan showing the outlines of the house at that date and its position in the grounds.

*{last slide}*

Well, that's been a bit of a breathless run through these principal sources. But I hope I've been able to convince you over the last 50 minutes or so that there are easily accessible documents out there, that can help fill some of the gaps in our knowledge, and could be used to help you understand more about the history of your house, and perhaps add to the wonderful work that's already been achieved here in Dartmouth Park by your Advisory Committee. I'm not usually one for the hard sell, but all of these sources, and more, are described in more detail in my book on the subject, published by John Richardson's Historical Publications Ltd in 2005, which is still available in some record offices and libraries, as well as online, but very rarely in any respectable bookshops.