

Staffordshire History

The County of Staffordshire is rich in history and continues to attract the attention of historians.

One of the earliest published resources of information about Staffordshire is William Camden's *Britannia* – first published in Latin in 1588 but further revised editions followed up until 1607. Camden's *Britannia* was the first comprehensive topographical and geographical historical study to be published, and as such it is a useful starting point for early information relating to Staffordshire.

Other early county histories include the *Natural History of Staffordshire* (which includes a section on archaeological remains in the county), written by Robert Plott and published in 1686 and the *History and Antiquities of Staffordshire* by the Rev. Stebbing Shaw – of which he only completed his work up to the first part of the second volume and died in 1802.

In 1817 William Pitt published *A Topographical History of Staffordshire* which it is generally accepted relies heavily on the work of earlier researchers, particularly Robert Plott. The next significant work was published in 1880 by John Alfred Langford entitled *Staffordshire and Warwickshire Past and Present*, then in 1894 Rupert Lee published *Bibliotheca Staffordiensis*, a bibliographical account (with commentary) of printed matter relating to the County of Stafford containing some twenty thousand entries.

Probably the most significant volumes published during the twentieth century are the Staffordshire volumes of the Victoria County History series, designed to “record the history of every county of England in detail.” This series, known as the VCH, is produced to high scholarly standards and is generally acknowledged to be an authoritative work.

There are currently thirteen volumes in the Staffordshire VCH series available, as follows:

- Volume I – natural history, archaeology; political, social and economic history
- Volume II – industries; communications, forests; sport
- Volume III - ecclesiastical history, including Lichfield Cathedral and medieval religious houses
- Volume IV - the Staffordshire section of the Domesday Book; villages south-west of Stafford
- Volume V - towns and villages in the Cannock Chase area
- Volume VI - agriculture; schools; Keele University; Stafford borough
- Volume VII - Leek and the northern part of the Moorlands
- Volume VIII - Newcastle-under-Lyme; City of Stoke-on-Trent
- Volume IX - Burton-upon-Trent and its suburbs
- Volume X - Tutbury and Needwood Forest
- Volume XIV - City of Lichfield and the surrounding area
- Volume XVII - Boroughs of West Bromwich, Smethwick and Walsall

- Volume XX - south-west corner of Staffordshire, including Tettenhall and Kinver

Some other notable twentieth century titles include:

- Mee, Arthur. Arthur Mee's Staffordshire, part of the King's England series, compiled to represent a unique overview of the British countryside when originally published in the 1930s.
- Bird, Vivian. Staffordshire.
- Greenslade, M.W. & Stuart, D.G. A History of Staffordshire, first published 1965.
- Palliser, D. M. The Staffordshire Landscape published in 1976.
- Pevsner, Nikolaus. Staffordshire [The Buildings of England Series] published 1974.

Recent titles include A Guide to Staffordshire and the Black Country, the Potteries and the Peak by Michael Raven and The Staffordshire Encyclopedia by Tim Cockin.

All of the above titles are available in Staffordshire Libraries Local Studies Collection, though some libraries (particularly small libraries) will only have a limited stock.

Contact your nearest library to find out more.

The historical County of Staffordshire extends beyond the current county boundary and encompasses much of the West Midlands, including Wolverhampton, Walsall, Stoke on Trent, Dudley, Sandwell and parts of Birmingham. Therefore when undertaking research it is worth remembering that there could be appropriate resources at libraries and archives in these areas.