



## **Wells City Archives Database Property Index, 1860 (accompanies City of Wells Sewerage Plan, 1860)**

Wells City Archives has two unique maps which are a superb source for family historians, house historians and local historians. They show every single property in the City of Wells, as well as outbuildings (including stables, wash-houses and privies). They are the "City of Wells Sewerage Plan", which dates from 1860. Together with the accompanying "Book of Reference", you can work out exactly who lived in every house in Wells at that date and who owned each property.

This database makes available the data from this "Book of Reference". It is accompanied by images from the maps showing each street, so you can see the plan of each property.

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### **Introductory Notes**

1. The information in this database has been taken from the "Survey Book of Reference" (WCC/108/3) which accompanies the 1860 City of Wells Sewerage Plan held in Wells City Archives. The Book of Reference also dates from 1860.

The Book of Reference contains details of who owned and lived in each of the properties shown on the Plan. The information in this book is made available in this database. So you can find a numbered property on the Plan and look it up here to find out about the owner, the occupant and the nature of the premises. For example, 20 High Street was a house, shop and slaughterhouse, owned by Eliza Taylor and occupied by Charles James.

2. It's important to remember that the numbers given for each property are not house numbers, but reference numbers on the Sewerage Plan itself. (This is potentially very confusing!)
3. The 'owner' is the long leaseholder (i.e. the holder of the long lease), rather than the freeholder.

4. The “Book of Reference” was digitised by City Archives volunteers and the City Archivist.
5. Although the original documents are described as a “Plan”, they are here referred to as a map.
6. The images of the 1860 map included here do not necessarily include the full extent of each property. In some cases outbuildings and boundaries may not be shown on the images. If you want more detail, please contact the Wells City Archivist at [archives@wellsmuseum.org.uk](mailto:archives@wellsmuseum.org.uk).
7. The map was digitised by Know Your Place – West of England.

### **Historical Notes on the 1860 City of Wells Sewerage Plan**

In 1860, an extremely detailed two-part plan of the City of Wells was drawn up, based on a new survey of the City. In Tony Scrase’s words, it was “*the first comprehensive and accurate representation of the town*”. This large-scale plan was accompanied by a “Survey Book of Reference”, which contains details of who owned and lived in each of the properties shown on the plan. It thus provides a fascinating snapshot of the City of Wells in the year 1860.

The reason for the creation of the plan was Wells City Council’s Sewerage Scheme, initiated in 1858. This arose from a move to improve public health (especially to respond to cholera epidemics), and in particular from the Local Government (Public Health) Act of 1858. This Act had decentralised health administration and given the administrative powers to local authorities. Wells City Council had adopted the Act, and their Sewerage Scheme was part of their response to it. The Scheme provided new public sewers and drainage, and all people with property on the line of the new sewers could connect their private drains if they wished.

The plan is marked to show the course of the sewers. It also indicates all the features which might require drainage, so it shows privies, wash-houses, pigsties, stables, coach-houses and slaughterhouses. Wells and pumps are shown too, as well as dwelling houses (which are numbered) and features such as inns, hotels, schools, chapels, breweries, and the Union workhouse. So in combination with its accompanying “Book of Reference”, it has immense value as a social history document.

The data in the “Survey Book of Reference” (WCC/108/3) has been digitised and is made available in this database. The book describes the nature of each set of premises; for example, 30 Grove Lane is a “house, garden, [black]smith's shop, yard, etc.” (owned by W. C. Berryman and occupied by Robert B. Rawlings). The numbers given for each property are not house numbers, but reference numbers used for the purposes of this survey.

The survey and drawings were done by Arthur Whitehead (of Weston-super-Mare), County Surveyor, and the “Plan of the City of Wells” is dated 1st September 1860. It is in two parts; one shows the west of the City (WCC/108/1) and one the east (WCC/108/2), divided at

Sadler Street. The scale of the original plans is 1 inch to 160 feet (60 links), and it is drawn on linen-backed paper. Each part is 2.18 metres long.

### How to Use this Resource

1. Choose which of the three versions of the database will be most useful to you: the one sorted by the name of the street, the one sorted by the owner's surname, or the one sorted by the occupier's surname.
2. Click on the name of that database. It will open a searchable PDF. Use the + button at the top of the screen to enlarge the text to the size you want.
3. *This step is needed only if you're searching for a street by its modern name:* Click on the document called "New and Old Street Names". This will open as a PDF. Look in the first column for the modern name of the street you're interested in, then look in the second column for what it was called on the 1860 map and in the "Book of Reference". Now you can search the database sorted by street name, using the old street name.

Remember that the number given for each property in the database is not the house number, but the reference number for that property on the Sewerage Plan itself.

4. Search the database for the name of the street or person you want to find by doing this:
  - Select **Edit | Find** (OR click the icon of a magnifying glass at the top left of the screen OR type CTRL + F). A search dialogue will open.
  - Type your search term (e.g. your family's surname) into the search box. A message will appear in the search dialogue which tells you how many exact matches there are.
  - Click anywhere on the screen, then click **Next** in the search dialogue OR click the down arrow in the dialogue. The first occurrence of your search term will be highlighted.
  - Continue clicking **Next** or clicking the down arrow to find each further occurrence of the search term.
  - For each of your results, make a note of the number from the "No." column and of the name of the street. When you go on to look at images of the 1860 map, this will enable you to identify the property in which you're interested.
5. If you now want to look at images of the 1860 map showing the individual street and property where your family lived:
  - Click on the relevant "Street maps" document. The street maps are listed alphabetically by the 1860 street name (described as the 'old' street name in step 3 above). The document will open as a PDF.

- Click on the name of the street in which you are interested. (The 1860 street names are used.) You will be taken to the images of that street, of which there may be several. Look at each image in turn until you find the property reference number of which you made a note in step 4 above. Remember that you can use the + button at the top of the screen to enlarge the image to the size you want.
  - Streets are photographed from west to east or from north to south.
  - Click on “Key to the Maps” for an explanation of all the symbols, abbreviations and significance of the shading used on the maps.
6. If you want any further information or need any help, please contact [archives@wellsmuseum.org.uk](mailto:archives@wellsmuseum.org.uk). We'll be delighted to assist.
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