

## Handout

*Hear your house talk through the records*



State Library of NSW, Nos 133-139 Macquarie Street; (Terrace Houses)  
<https://collection.sl.nsw.gov.au/record/nvgM2a81/r5dp3IVxX4BNX>

## First step – Confirm the street address of the house

If you don't know the address your starting point should be family information, papers or BDM certificates. If you have no success with that approach you may find the street address of the property you are researching in the following:

- 1891 and 1901 Census Collectors' Books (Tip: State Archives and on Ancestry)
- Electoral rolls and Telephone books – place of residence
- Directories such as *Sands Directory*
- Newspapers (articles and family notices)
- Official NSW Government correspondence
- Council records (Rate Books and Minutes)
- School admission records
- Insolvency and bankruptcy files
- Deceased Estate files<sup>1</sup> usually contain lists of the deceased person's assets. The address and Certificate of Title (CT) details of any real property should be recorded. Probate Packets and Intestate Estate records may also include lists of assets, including any real property.
- Inquest records (State Archives ), and
- NSW Government Gazettes and Police Gazettes (Tip: on Trove).

Tip 2: Don't forget that street numbering can change over time and sometimes houses had names. You may need to check more than one source to confirm the current address.

## What did the house look like?

There might be an image or description of the house or property in:

- family photographs and papers
- the collections of the local/family history society and local history publications
- Deceased Estate files (there may be a description of the property)
- Trove (newspapers, pictures and other publications), and
- Spatial Information eXchange (SIX).

If you don't have a picture/image of THE house, another one from the same era in the same area could provide a guide. Publications with photographs of housing styles and Local Environmental Plans (LEP) for the municipality may be of assistance. Don't forget to try Google (particularly for real estate advertising) and Google Earth.

## Looking at the area around the house/property

Early maps of the area and subdivision plans are an important source. Many of these are digitised and are now available on Trove. The current aerial view of the property is on SIX Maps. Go to <http://maps.six.nsw.gov.au/?search> and type in the address.

When you get to the current view of the property you can search for the Lot (the piece of land) and Deposited Plan<sup>2</sup> (DP) number. Using these numbers you can do a Prior Title Search on the NSW Land Registry Services Search Portal and get the Certificate of Title (CT) reference at: <https://online.nswlrs.com.au/wps/portal/six/find-records/>.

In addition, you can view the 1943 image of the same area on. This will show you how the area – and the property – may have changed in the last 70 plus years. Click on the icon in the top right hand corner of the current view to get to the 1943 view.

Description of the 1943 view: "The coverage extends to the limits of the Sydney urban area as it was in 1943 and includes a corridor along the great Western Highway through to Mount Victoria. This includes the following suburbs: Ashfield, Bankstown, Blacktown, Blue Mountains, Botany Bay, Burwood, Canada Bay, Canterbury, City Of Auburn, City Of Kogarah, Fairfield, Holroyd, Hornsby, Hunters Hill, Hurstville, Ku-Ring-Gai, Lane Cove, Leichhardt, Lithgow, Liverpool, Manly, Marrickville, Mosman, North Sydney, Parramatta, Penrith, Pittwater, Randwick, Rockdale, Ryde, Strathfield, Sutherland Shire, Sydney, The Hills Shire, Warringah, Waverley, Willoughby, Woollahra."

## Finding who has owned the property under the Real Property Act 1863

The Torrens title system was introduced to NSW with the commencement of the *Real Property Act* on 1 January 1863. Since then all land granted by the Crown is subject to the provisions of that Act.

### 1. Search for a previous Certificate of Title (CT) reference under Torrens title:

To search for the Certificate of Title (CT) reference go to the NSW Land Registry Services (NSW LRS) Portal: <https://online.nswlrs.com.au/wps/portal/six/home>

- Select the 'Find Records' option (<https://online.nswlrs.com.au/wps/portal/six/find-records>)
- Use the Street Address enquiry.
- This may give you a Lot and DP number rather than a CT reference.
- Go to the Prior Title Search if your address search gave a Lot and DP number and enter these numbers.
- This will give the CT reference formatted as 'Vol-Fol', for example 807-117.
- Note 1: Torrens Title folios in Volumes 1 to 8497 (up to c.1962) have been digitised and are available online. You can still access the originals at the Land Registry Services office in Queens Square (as at 8 September 2017).

Note 2: For CTs from volumes from 8498+ you will need to go to the NSW LRS information brokers - [http://www.nswlrs.com.au/land\\_titles/information\\_brokers](http://www.nswlrs.com.au/land_titles/information_brokers)

### 2. Search for images of the Certificate of Title (Torrens title)

The screenshot displays the 'Historical Land Records Viewer' interface. At the top left is the NSW Land Registry Services logo. The main search area includes a 'Keyword' field with a 'Search By' dropdown and a 'Lot (Ref Maps)' field. Below this is a 'Refine Search' section with two main categories: 'Collection' and 'District Office'. Under 'Collection', there are four options: 'ALL', 'MAPS & PLANS', 'OLD SYSTEM RECORDS', and 'TORRENS RECORDS'. A purple arrow points to the 'TORRENS RECORDS' option. The 'District Office' section has a search field and two radio button options: 'All' and 'N/A'. The main content area on the right contains text describing the HLRV and a list of record types: 'Maps', 'Plans', 'Old System Records', and 'Old Form Torrens Register and The Purchasers Index'. Each item has a brief description. At the bottom, there are links to 'www.nswlrs.com.au/information-brokers' and 'NSW LRS Historical Records Online page'.

Link to the Historical Land Records Viewer: <https://hlrv.nswlrs.com.au/>

To search for the images of the Certificate of Title documents for volumes 1 to 8497 go to the Historical Land Records Viewer (HLRV): <https://hlrv.nswlrs.com.au/>

Click on the arrow beside 'Torrens Records' on the search options on the left hand side of the screen under 'Collection'. When it opens select 'Old Form Torrens Register'.

Make sure that you have selected the Volume and Folio number option from the list of Attributes. Enter the volume and folio number ('vol-fol') and hit 'enter'. The result will be displayed. Click on the number and the CT will be displayed.

The CT will show the previous CT reference. To follow the CT back further you simply repeat your HLRV search of the Old Form Torrens Registers using the previous CT reference(s).

As you continue your search beyond the twentieth century and into the previous century you may find a Primary Application Number on the CT. This will appear as "Appn No" followed by a number. You will find it in the right hand corner.

### Primary Applications

To convert land held under Old System Title the current owner needed to lodge the completed Primary Application (PA) form together with a survey of the land and documents proving title, which included a set of deeds, with the then Department of Lands. This supporting documentation – including any correspondence between Lands and the owner(s) about the land – was placed in a 'packet' known as the PA packet. For more information on searching for PA packets and related records go to *Primary Applications* in State Archives online A-Z Research Guides at: <http://tinyurl.com/y86lql6n>.



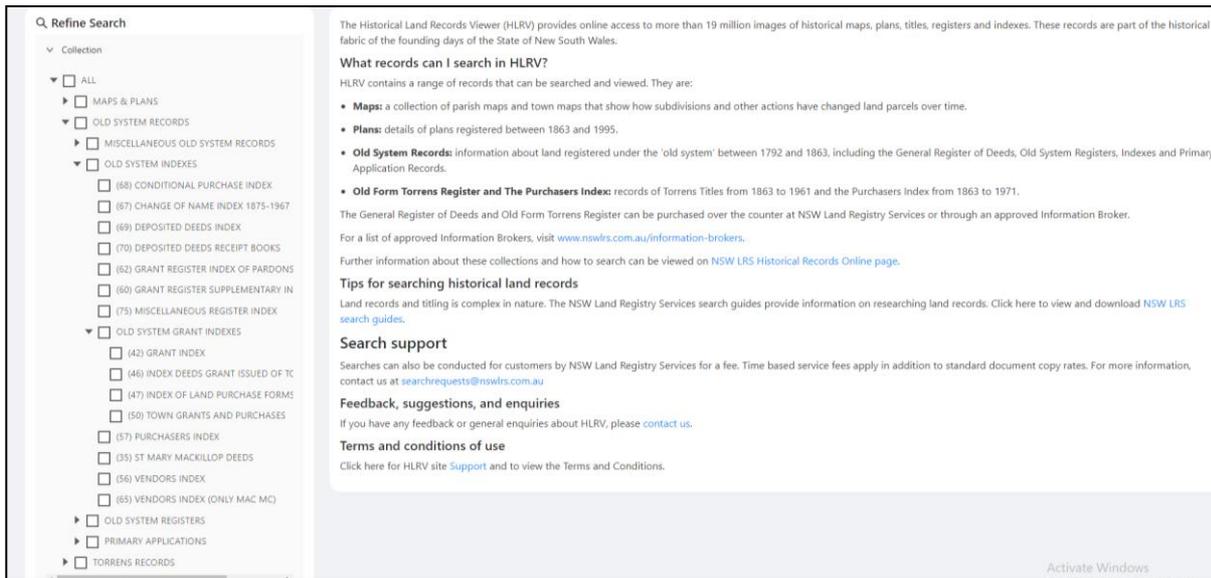
Tip 1: The Certificate of Title always gives the name of the original grantee.

Tip 2: There are often further pages showing various transactions.

### Locating land grants on HLRV

As the Certificate of Title always gives the name of the person receiving the original land grant you may wish to access this document. To do this you need to go to the HLRV page

at: <https://hlrv.nswlrs.com.au/>. Click on the arrow beside 'Old System Records from the search options on the left hand side of the screen. Click on the arrow beside 'Old System Indexes'. When it opens select 'Old System Grant Indexes' and then select 'Grant Index'.



## When was the house built?

If you are not sure about who built the house or when it was constructed, council rate books and street directories may help. Tip: Contact the local studies section of your library. Newspapers should also be checked. For example, there could be a newspaper advertisement for the house when it was first built and offered for sale or the owner of the land may have advertised for an architect and/or builder. State Archives' *House and Property Guide* online at: <http://tinyurl.com/y9uxj9a2> has further information.

## What was inside the house?

Family records such as photographs, drawings, diaries and correspondence are a key source. In addition, the Deceased Estate Files covering 1880 to 1958 should always be consulted. There will be details about real estate holdings as well as schedules of the deceased person's furniture and possessions, including household items. The value of these assets was recorded and used in determining the Death Duties payable on the estate. It is also worth checking the Probate Packets and Intestate Estate files as they may also include schedules or lists of assets. Further information:

- Probate Packets: <http://tinyurl.com/yb5kp5wd>
- Intestate Estate files: <http://tinyurl.com/y9cmq4y5>

Other sources:

- Insolvency (1842-1887) and Bankruptcy files (1888-1928) could have information about house contents. (For more information: <http://tinyurl.com/ya873xor>)
- Inquest or crime scene records from 1940-Dec 1963 sometimes include interior photographs. (For more information: <http://tinyurl.com/j63qnnf>)
- Newspapers may list the contents of houses being offered for sale.
- Trade catalogues are a helpful way of finding out what was available in fashion. The Caroline Simpson Research Library (<http://tinyurl.com/yas7ezek>) has significant holdings of these catalogues. Some are online.

<sup>1</sup> The Stamp Duties Office created a deceased estate file for every individual who died leaving property or other assets ('estates'), which were subject to death duties. The files contain the papers, correspondence and other documentation relating to the assessment of death duty by the Stamp Duties Office, including a list of assets. Go to <http://tinyurl.com/y8pljaza> for further information about the Deceased Estate files.

<sup>2</sup> Deposited Plans define legal boundaries of land and often record subdivisions, easements and resumptions.

<sup>3</sup> 'Tiny URLs' (<http://tinyurl.com/>) have been created for most of the links to State Archives and Caroline Simpson Research Library web pages listed in this handout.