

About the Market Place Historic Directory List

Before the age of computers or telephones and tablets all information was found in books. To find out where a business was located and to contact the owner it was necessary to create printed 'Directories'.

These were books that listed every type of profession found in Gainsborough. Under the 'profession' heading were the names of every person who did that job and the address where you could find them. This was what you had to do if you were looking for a dentist, a doctor, a dressmaker, grocer, shoemaker etc.

These directories were re-printed every few years to keep them up to date, so as a researcher today, if you wanted to find a list of all the people who had lived at 7 Market Place you would need to read every Directory spanning over 100 years!

In Gainsborough we are lucky, as we have fantastic researchers at the Gainsborough Heritage Centre who have already done this job for us.

They have created a list of all the known businesses that ran from each address from the earliest Directories in the 1820s to the 1990s when the lists were first made.

They have very kindly provided us with a copy of the list for Market Place. To understand how to use the list, you need to remember that many buildings have come and gone. In particular, the Old Moot Hall was the first version of the Townhall, and it housed many different businesses. In the 1890s the new, bigger Town Hall was built, and it replaced some shop buildings as well as the Old Moot Hall. This Town Hall was damaged by German air raids in WW2. In the 1950s it was partially rebuilt and the layout inside was changed again. This meant that the shop numbers changed several times. This is why the list has a separate section for the Old Moot Hall and then the Town Hall.

Once you have carefully found the building number for the shop that you are researching you will see that the different businesses that were there are listed in date order.

Another point to remember is that in earlier times there were side doors, often down alleyways to reach shops and business that were located upstairs above the ground-floor shops. This explains why there are more than one business occupying the buildings at the same time.