

Rate Books

A rate is a levy for local purposes based on the yearly value of a property. Rates have been collected spasmodically from the 14th century. They become more prevalent in the 18th Century after the Poor Relief Act of 1601 which aimed to provide for the poor of a parish. However, rate books were also compiled for purposes such as the maintenance of the Church and the Highways or for the Sewers and Lighting. These rates often continued to be collected by the parish after the Poor Law Amendment act of 1834, which replaced the parish as the administrative unit with a union of parishes. As a result, most rate books have come to the record office as part of the records of the parish, though some can be found in the records of the Poor law unions and even local district councils. The councils had developed as rating authorities from the Local Government Boards and the urban and rural sanitary authorities created in 1871 and 1872 respectively and began collecting the General rate - which combined and superseded the previous rates - around 1925. At times these general rates have been combined with the water rate.

Parish Rates

The early rate books were written by the parish officials responsible on parchment or in books, and generally only record a name, the rent they paid and the rate assessed on them. However, after the Poor Law Amendment act of 1834, printed rate books began to be used which recorded additional information. The table below lists:

- The parish the rate book relates to
- The rate for which it was created
- A description of the headings used in the book
- The dates it covers
- It's document reference number

However, this is a guide to what could be in the rate books, since not all of the fields listed under the description were completed in each case. The document reference numbers and dates given are for a range of rate books which share a common format and often represent multiple volumes. Therefore, it is necessary to check our printed or online catalogues to find the document reference number for the individual rate book you are interested in.

General Rates & Valuations

Just like the rate book compiled by the parish officers and their successors, the general rate books created by the Local Government boards and their successors have been produced in a variety of formats. As well as continuing to produce rate books, these authorities also produced valuation lists. The rate books and valuation lists can be found listed separately in the tables below. The tables below list:

- The parish the rate book or valuation relates to
- The district which produced it
- A description of the headings used in the book
- The dates it covers
- It's document reference number

As with the parish rate books, the description is a guide only since not all fields will necessarily have been completed. A number of volumes have at times been grouped together in the table, so it is advised that you check our paper catalogues to find the document reference number you require.

If an extended run of rate books has survived, then they can potentially provide useful genealogical information where a number of generations have been recorded. The rateable value of the property can be used to gauge the status of the occupant. Later books can also be of use in house or property history, often indicating both the owner and the occupant of a particular property and giving an estimate of it's size and value.