

Uncovering Research Online – Explore More

There are many sources that you can use to explore more about your local history, ranging from historic photos and maps to archive documents and books. Many of these sources can be found online. Use this guide to help you uncover the most useful resources for your research.

Starting points

Online catalogue searches can help you locate what information is available and where to find it. These can be a great place to start your research. Click on the [Links](#) in the headings below.



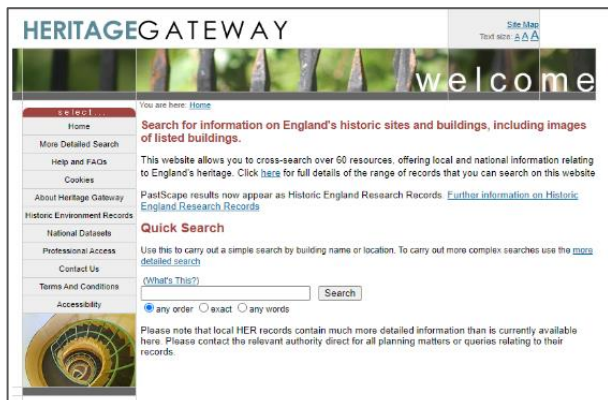
[Discovery](#)

Access records held by The National Archives and more than 2,500 other archives held by local record offices, universities, libraries, universities, museums, national institutions and other institutions.

[National Archives](#)

The UK Government's official archive, known as the National Archives, holds over 1,000 years of public records. Its website includes a searchable online catalogue and online guides to various topics such as wills and probate records, and census returns. It also has a helpful [research guide](#) for houses.

[The British Library](#) is the national library of the United Kingdom and give access to the world's most comprehensive research collection of over 170 million items. This includes rare books and manuscripts, maps, Parliamentary papers, topographical prints and drawings and architectural drawings.



[Heritage Gateway](#) is managed by Historic England in partnership with [ALGAO](#) and [IHBC](#). The website provides access to local and national records on the historic environment including the following resources:

- Local authority records from over 70% of England's Historic Environment Records (HERs)
- National records from the [National Heritage List for England](#) including listed buildings and scheduled monuments
- Historic England Research Records
- Records from the National Trust Historic Buildings Sites and Monuments Record
- The Excavation Index
- Information of historic parks, gardens and historic landscapes (Parks & Gardens UK)
- Designation Decision Records

Explore More

Local collections



Your local archive and museums service will have a host of useful information relating to your local area.

You could also try your local library as they may also have records, collections and other resources that can help you.

You can also check the following local archives and heritage collections:

[Wigan Archives and Local Studies](#)

[Lancashire Archives](#)

[University of Manchester Special Collections](#)

[The Greater Manchester County Record Office](#)

[Wigan World](#)

[Wigan Buildings](#)

Exploring locations

Maps



Historic maps can give a useful 'snapshot' of change over time. This can be helpful in tracing changes in an area or the use or name of a building or place through the years by looking at successively older maps.

King Steet, Wigan Ordnance Survey 1900, extract reproduced with permission from NLS

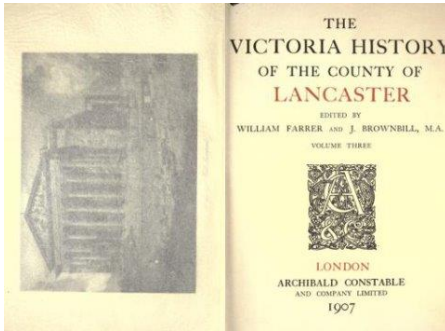
Historic Ordnance Survey Maps, or OS maps, can also be very useful. They are usually available to view at your local records office, with many available on the [National Library of Scotland website](#)

Find Tithe maps and Award (c.1838) by subscription at [The Genealogist](#) or look at the original copies for free at your local record office or archive. There are also some private websites sharing historic maps which might be useful, though you may be expected to pay for a subscription to view some of them, or reproduce their images.

Explore More

Local studies

From the late 16th century, historical and topographical works concerned with the individual ancient counties of England were produced by antiquarians. [Wikipedia](#) includes a useful summary of antiquarian writers associated with each county, and is a good starting point in identifying what sources are available



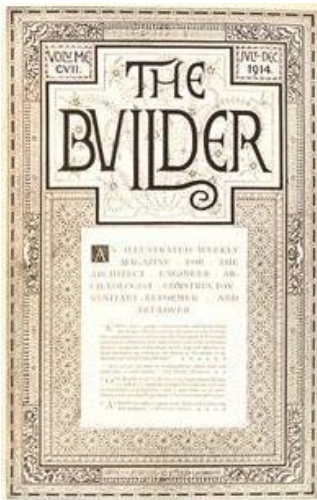
The [Victoria County History](#) (VCH) is a series of publications, founded in 1899 and originally dedicated to Queen Victoria, that cover the history of England County by county. They contain, among other subjects, information on the history and development of the towns and villages of a particular county, and details of buildings of architectural and historic interest.

You can explore digitised volumes of the VCH on [British History Online](#)

The Victoria History of the County of Lancaster 1907

Exploring construction and design

The Pevsner Architectural Guides are a series of guide books to the architecture of Great Britain and Ireland. Begun in the 1940s by the art historian Sir Nikolaus Pevsner, the 46 volumes of the original Buildings of England series were published between 1951 and 1974. This is the Buildings of England database created from Pevsner's *Buildings of England* series. [Pevsner Index](#)



[The Royal Institute of British Architects](#) holds architectural books and journals, biographical files and nomination papers and an architectural photographic archive

[Researching Historic Buildings in the British Isles](#) is a website that provides a comprehensive guide to investigating the history of all types of buildings.

Volumes of the magazine the Builder for the period 1843-1852 are available online via the [Internet Archive](#)

Exploring local connections

Many amateur historians and local history societies undertake research as a group activity, often to coincide with a memorable event, such as the centenary or a public event, like a royal jubilee. In some cases, these histories may date back to the early 19th century and have been undertaken by an enthusiastic local historian or cleric, although many will be very recent. Where these histories are published, they will be available at a local Archive/Local Studies – or even a library.

Explore More

The [British Newspaper Archive](#) online is a searchable database of national papers from the 1800s & now processing papers up to the 1950s. Another online newspaper tool is [The Gazette](#).

Exploring businesses & family history

[The National Archives](#) provides a useful guide to researching companies.

A number of companies keep their archives and make these publicly accessible via the [Business Archives Council](#).

Trade directories are an essential tool for local, urban and family history. The online collection [here](#) contains 689 directories, with at least one directory for every English and Welsh county for the 1850s, 1890s and 1910s. You can find Kelly's and Pigot's directories here, as well as those by regional publishers. But you will often find trade directions in reference library – on the shelves - to browse too.

Family history sites such as the [Ancestry](#) and [FindMyPast](#) websites are useful for searching for people or business records.

Census returns from 1841-1911 are searchable. Local libraries and archives often subscribe to editions of these sites which you can access for free.

Picturing the past

Regional heritage film footage can be searched here [NWFA](#) the specialist public film archive for the North West.

Photographs

Collections of photographs by enthusiastic local photographers are sometimes deposited at an archive and can be as early as the late 19th or early 20th century in date.

Newspapers have substantial photograph archives. [Mirrorpix](#) is a national collection including the archives of many regional newspapers as The Mirror Group took over ownership. There are often license and copyright restrictions / fees with these, but fine if you are only sourcing for personal research.

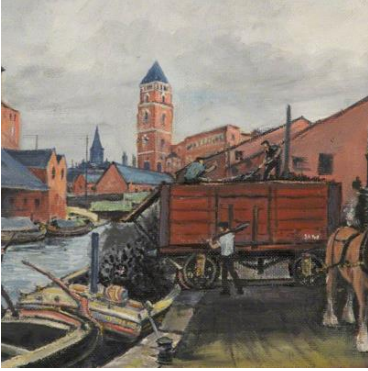
An online catalogue of archive material is held at the [Historic England Archive](#) in Swindon. The archive is a large collection of historic photographs of buildings, including [Britain from Above](#). Some museums also hold large online available archive collections.

Postcards

The [Frith](#) archive is an extensive database of heritage postcards available online.

Explore More

Art



Wigan Pier by [Harry Walder \(1909–1992\)](#)
[Wigan Arts and Heritage Service](#)

Art collections can give us a window into the world and daily life before the camera. The [Art UK](#) platform provides a single digital infrastructure for all the UK's art, searchable by artist, artwork or theme.

Exploring wider

Journals can also be a useful source of information. You can access academic journals, primary sources and books online at [JSTOR](#)

The [Parliamentary Archives](#) are a rich and exciting resource for exploring local, national and international history from the fifteenth century to the present day.

The [British History Online](#) site has useful primary and secondary sources for the history of Britain.

The [Oxford Dictionary of National Biography](#) includes 'over 60,000 biographies, 72 million words, 11,000 portraits of significant, influential or notorious figures who shaped British history.

Museum Collections

Museum collections hold archives too, sometimes these can be specific company or personal archives. Museums also care for photographic collections as well. You might also find objects associated with your topic.

A few sample sites:

[V&A](#)

[Wellcome Collection](#)

[The British Museum](#)

[National Trust Collections](#)

[IWM \(Imperial War Museums\)](#)

Explore More

National Societies

If you are researching a particular heritage site, you may be able to find a specialist group or society that has more information, either locally or nationally. Here are some examples of national special interest groups

[Airfield Research Group](#)

[C20 -The Twentieth Century Society](#)

[The Georgian Group](#)

The [Mills Archive](#) website

[The Victorian Society](#)

[Society for Theatre Research](#)

[Subject specialist networks](#)

[Vernacular Architecture Group](#)

[Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings \("SPAB"\)](#)

[Garden History Society](#)

[Milestone Society](#)

[Historic Buildings and Places \(formerly the Ancient Monuments Society\).](#)

Local Societies

This website contains useful information as well as many links and contact details for many local history societies in your area. [Local history societies](#)

Copyright

As a starting point see this introductory [factsheet](#)