

WREN | 300



THE  
SQUARE MILE  
CHURCHES

TOOLKIT

# Toolkit for researching the history of a London church



Photographer: Nicolas Randall / Alamy Stock Photo

CELEBRATING WREN IN THE CITY OF LONDON'S CHURCHES

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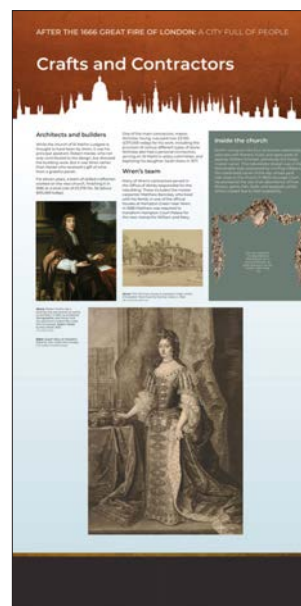
This guide is inspired by the Wren300 project, a year-long celebration in 2023 honouring Sir Christopher Wren and the post-Great Fire of London church rebuilding program. Funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund and the Diocese of London, one of the project's highlights was the volunteer-led initiative, *A City Full of People*. Research carried out by a team of volunteers delved into the stories of individuals who lived and worked in four City parishes during the crucial post-1666 period in London's history.



We have crafted this guide with the aim of assisting individuals and church communities undertaking research projects associated with historic places of worship. Our intent is to provide clarity on how various historic documents are organised and described, empowering you to locate and utilise these remarkable resources. The guide is structured to support you in:

- Initiating your project
- Exploring further details
- Employing effective note-taking techniques
- Involving others in your research
- Identifying additional resources

While the guide primarily focuses on Church of England churches in the Diocese of London, the insights offered here are largely applicable to other historic places of worship. Towards the end, we've included some resources with a broader focus. Our hope is that this document not only imparts practical advice but also sparks ideas for uncovering the rich heritage of our churches.



# How to get started



## Why research a church's history?

Looking at the *history* of a building and the stories of people related to it helps us to connect to the past, celebrate shared experiences, and learn from differences.

From history we can learn more about the *heritage* we have around us today. In turn by researching our heritage we can learn more about the past. Heritage includes historic buildings, traditions and stories, as well as objects, stained glass, memorials and monuments, wall paintings, statues, historic fixtures and graffiti, and the biodiversity of external spaces, such as graveyards and cemeteries. In fact, it can be anything from the past that you would like to pass on to future generations.

Historic places of worship offer us a variety of opportunities to explore the past, whether from the buildings themselves, the people that worked and worshipped in them, or from what grows, lives or is celebrated in the land surrounding the building.

## Your idea

Whether you are working independently or thinking of involving other people, it is worth writing down the answers to a few questions to help give your project some shape.

- What or who would you like to learn more about?
- What do you think should be remembered and shared with future generations?
- What kind of historical research or activity can help you do this? (For example, do you need to look at records, meet with someone who knows something about your idea, collect stories from people living nearby?)
- How soon do you need to get started? (For example, is there an anniversary coming up, a renovation project, ageing community whose memories you might need to capture?)

You can return to these questions later, to see if your early research has helped you to focus even more or encouraged you to explore something else.

The more specific you can be about your idea, the easier it will be to get started.

Overleaf are two examples that we've sketched out; one focuses on part of a church building and the other on an object associated with a church.

**EXAMPLE 1:** Stained-glass windows in St Margaret's church

**WHAT INTERESTS ME AND WHY?**

- Stained-glass windows in St Margaret's because no one knows much about the artist that designed them.
- Interesting subject matter and unusual imagery.
- They need repair and we might need to know about its historic value to fund that work.
- There might have been an unsympathetic repair carried out in the 1970s as the glass looks wrong.

**WHAT SHOULD BE UNDERSTOOD BETTER?**

- The importance of the windows to the church's architecture and the story they tell as a set.
- The artist who designed the windows and their connection with the church.
- The artist's other work, elements of the design, the position of the windows in St Margaret's and the connections with our area.
- The craft of stained glassmaking locally.

**WHERE TO SEARCH?**

- Historical records including local newspaper archives.
- Church records to establish who commissioned the original work and track maintenance or alterations and damage.
- Find members of the artist's family to see if they have any memorabilia we could look at.
- Interview stained glass experts to find out about its historic value and to see if it needs expert repair.

**HOW SOON?**

- Within next 12–18 months – we are a little concerned about one pane of glass.
- A local school is interested to talk to us about the design
- We will revisit this question after our consultation with the stained glass expert.

**EXAMPLE 2:** Finding out about two people whose initials were memorialised on a piece of church furniture in 1690

### WHAT INTERESTS ME AND WHY?

- Who are the people whose initials are carved onto the double church warden chair in St Martin Ludgate?
- Their initials appear next to a date, 1690 – why is this significant?
- What role did they play in the post-1666 history of the church?

### WHAT SHOULD BE RESEARCHED?

- The names of the two people and their connection with the church as churchwardens.
- Their professional lives, connections with the parish and beyond.
- Who made the chair? Was he one of the craftsmen who were employed in the refurbishment of the new church?
- Did the maker do work in other churches?

### WHERE TO EXPLORE?

- Historical records starting with parish records and biographical records.
- Follow family business in guild and trade records.
- Investigate whether the double churchwarden chair is unusual and look at the style of the joinery.
- Look at furniture collections to understand the style of the chair.

### IS THERE AN URGENCY TO THE RESEARCH?

- Does the chair need conservation or cleaning?
- Is there a need to engage visitors and users of the building with new stories about its history?
- Understanding who it was made for and by whom makes connections with the past which leads to the heritage being more accessible and more valued.



St Martin Ludgate's 17th-century carved oak, double-seated churchwarden's chair, the only one of its kind known to exist, carved with the initials JS and TP.

# Find out more

Historical records are referred to as **primary sources (original historical documents) and secondary sources (published material, transcripts and copies of original documents).**



## Primary sources

Numerous original historical records lie awaiting discovery in collections housed in various repositories such as archives, museums, libraries, private residences, and even within the churches themselves. While an increasing number of these primary sources are becoming accessible online, it's important to note that the majority of church records remain undigitised, necessitating in-person visits for thorough examination.

## Secondary Sources

Secondary sources include published histories of your church, parish, and its surrounding areas, readily available in your local history library and archives centre. Many churches also provide printed guides and additional information for visitors, accessible on their websites or through interpretation panels within the premises. Your local library is likely to house secondary source materials related to your church. Familiarising yourself with existing literature on your church's history will not only inform your exploration but also aid in selecting specific themes or time periods for further investigation, ensuring your efforts contribute new insights without duplicating prior work.

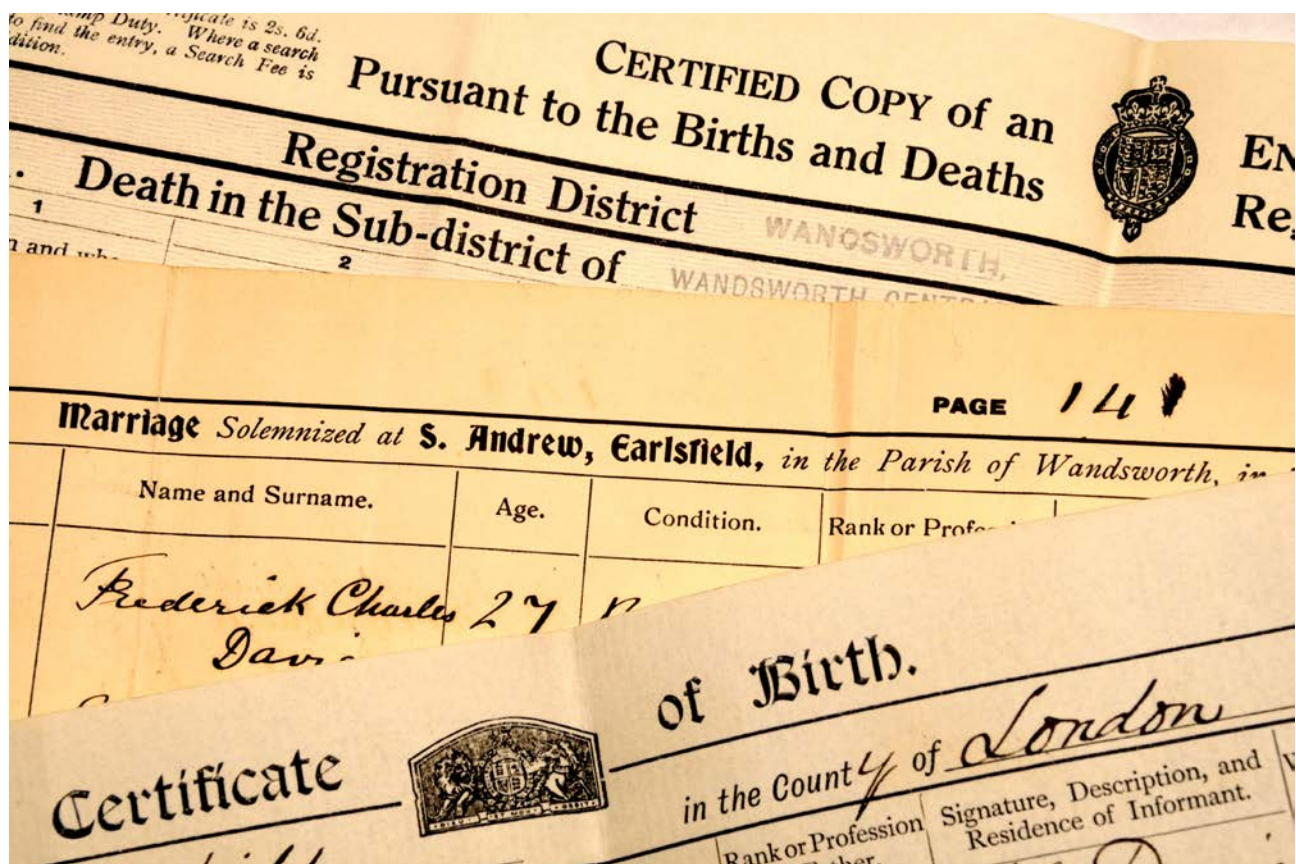
## Where to find sources

The main historical sources used in researching the history of a church or parish are described below and will give you an idea of the kind of information they offer. We have included ideas for researching the wider social context of a parish and individual lives, as well as the history of your historic place of worship.

## Parish records

**London Metropolitan Archives (LMA)** is the official repository for Diocese of London church records and a summary of its holdings for each church can be found by searching the catalogue under the reference P69. Here you will find **vestry minutes, churchwarden account books, maps, plans, deeds of property owned by the parish, parish rate books, poor law registers**, as well as **registers of baptisms, marriages and burials**.

Although the survival of records differs between parishes, there is a wealth of information to be discovered about how the parish was run and about the lives of its inhabitants. The vestry minutes and churchwarden account books offer insights into changes made to the fabric of the church, as well as details of the church's fittings and furnishings, sometimes also listed in inventories. Examples of these records can be found for the three parishes included in the **London Lives** project.



Certified copies of Birth, Marriage and Death registers (Photographer: PjStudio / Alamy Stock Photo, July 2004)

## Birth (and baptism), marriage and death (and burial) records

Parishes were responsible for meticulously recording local inhabitants' vital life events, such as births and baptisms, deaths and burials, and marriages. While the level of preservation may vary from parish to parish, some records date back even before 1600. These archives constitute a treasure trove of insights into the social composition of the parish, capturing not only details about the resident population but also visitors. Invaluable addresses often accompany the recorded names. Additionally, these records provide information about the clergy involved in the services, including rectors, vicars, and sometimes the parish clerk responsible for the documentation.

Delving into parish records can extend beyond demographic details. For instance, burial records may unveil clues about the church's architectural layout and fabric, specifying the locations and dates of burials within the church or its grounds,

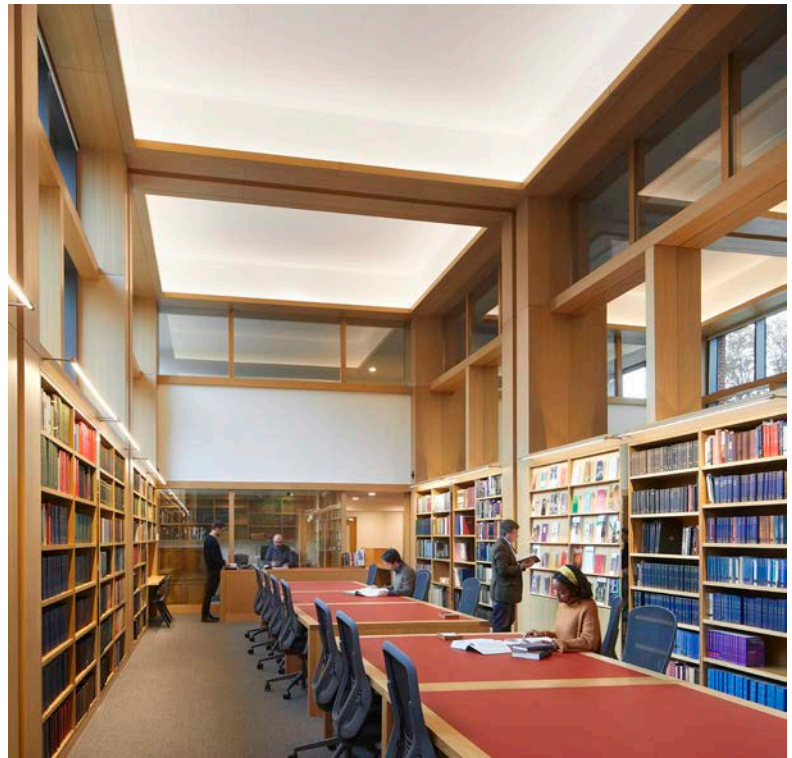
as well as indicating when burials ceased. Accessing parish registers for churches affiliated with the Diocese of London can often be facilitated through platforms like **Ancestry**, though digitisation efforts might not encompass all records. Alternatively, these registers may reside in the archives of local authorities, either within the original record books or on microfilm for preservation purposes due to manuscript fragility. It's noteworthy that recent registers might still be housed in the church, actively employed for documenting contemporary baptisms, marriages, and burials.

## Church of England permissions process

**LMA** holds *faculties* for churches within the Diocese of London where proposed works or changes are to be carried out on consecrated ground, both within the church building and in any churchyard or associated burial ground. A faculty is a form of ecclesiastical planning permission,



granted by the bishop's official at the Consistory Court of the Diocese. Faculty papers may also be found in **local archives**, where these have been deposited with the parish records. In addition to the signed documents, the files contain the petitions for and correspondence on the alterations to be made and sometimes drawings and plans. These do not necessarily indicate the works as executed, only that permission was sought or obtained. Faculties can help you find out about changes to your church and churchyard. Within the Diocese of London, these generally date to the nineteenth century onwards; earlier faculties, though granted, may not survive.



The Reading Room at Lambeth Palace Library ©Hufton+Crow



London Metropolitan Archives (Photographer: Robert Evans, June 2023)

## Corporation of London records

**LMA** is home to the Corporation of London records which contains planning records for development within the Square Mile. It also holds a wealth of material documenting the rebuilding of the City after the Great Fire of 1666, including accounts of the contractors who worked on the new churches designed and built under the supervision of Sir Christopher Wren. The Corporation's archive also contains taxation records, such as the land tax and hearth tax, and lists of freemen or citizens who had the right to elect their representatives on the Common Council. Manuscripts relating to the city livery companies which representing the interests of different trades can be found in **LMA** and the **Guildhall Library**.

## Planning documents

Records connected to planning and building control can be found at **local authority archives** or at **The LMA**, which holds the archives of the different London-wide administrative bodies, namely the Metropolitan Board of Works (1856–1889), London County Council (1889–1965) and the Greater London Council (1965–1986). The drainage records, which often include plans, tend to be with the local authority archives in London.

## Maps and plans

Plans and maps are invaluable sources for identifying change to your church buildings over time, any associated parish property, and to the immediate and wider urban or landscape setting. Maps which may help you include the Ordnance Survey, Goad insurance plans, tithe maps, estate maps, building control plans, London County Council bomb damage maps – many of which can be found on the **Layers of London** or **Find My Past** websites. The relevant local authority archive or museum is very likely to keep physical copies of the main maps

for an area and perhaps also less well-known parish maps. As noted above, plans were often included with faculties and in drainage records as part of sanitary regulation. Maps of all sorts can be usefully compared with aerial views from the Historic England Archive: <https://www.britainfromabove.org.uk/>

## Property records

Plans often also form part of title deeds, leases and other property records made for legal purposes and should be studied along with the accompanying text. If your church lies on land presently or formerly owned by an estate, lease plans and other documentation may survive with the estate archive or the local authority archive. Archives with detailed catalogues, such as **The LMA** and **The National Archives**, will itemise any plans that survive for your church building or associated property. If the boundary of your church site is of interest, it may be worth identifying neighbouring property holders to see if records survive for these.

## Insurance and wills

A growing number of insurance records, such as the Sun Fire Office policy registers held at **The LMA**, have been catalogued and can be found by searching by the name of the policy holder or by the street or property name.

A considerable amount of detail about a person's property can be discovered by looking at **wills**, many of which are available to download from **The National Archives**. For individuals dying after 1854, the value of their estate at death can be found by consulting the probate registers, which are available on **Ancestry**.

## Records about people's homes and workplaces

There are a number of records which can help trace individuals or groups of individuals in your parish and further afield.



## Street and trade directories

These were published from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries and survive for many areas, both local and city-wide. Depending on the type of directory, these record residential addresses (generally for the middle and upper classes) and also the addresses and proprietors of traders and other businesses across a wider social spectrum. Street and trade directories are a little like **telephone directories**, which gradually replaced them in the course of the twentieth century.

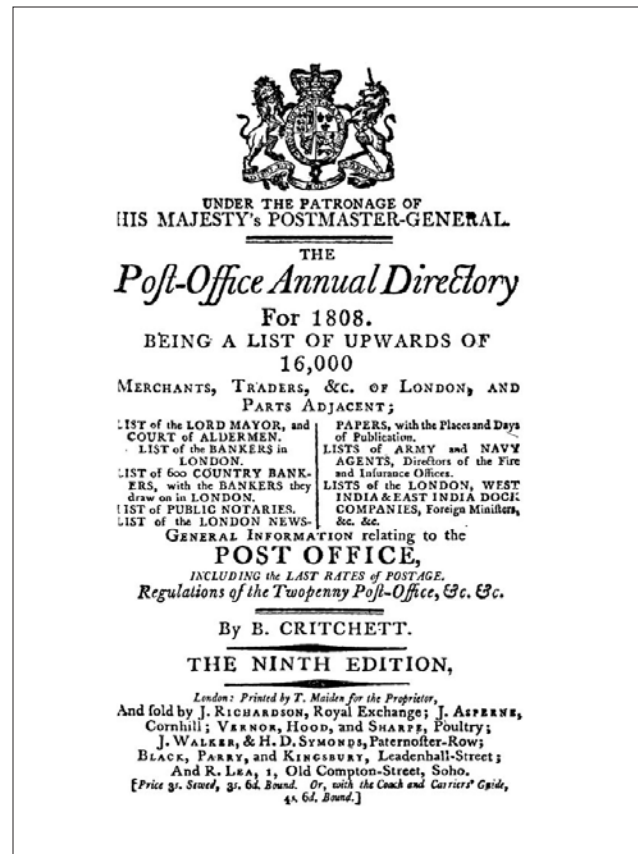
## Census returns

These exist for the period 1841–1911 and 1921 (the latter exclusive to *Find My Past*) and are another well-known source for tracing people and the places where they lived and worked. Likewise **Electoral registers and poll books** record the names of those who were entitled to vote in both local and general elections (in general, this did not include women until the early twentieth century).

Censuses were also carried out in 1801, 1811, 1821 and 1831 to determine population numbers and trends. However, personal details were not officially recorded unless the ‘enumerators’ (census data collectors), chose to collect this extra information voluntarily. This was done only rarely but where such records do exist, they are of great historical value.

## Photographs, postcards, drawings and paintings

Visual material can help you understand how your church building and the environment in which it sits have changed over time. Some images may also record monuments and other particular aspects of a church which also reveal the people associated with it. As with all records, it is helpful to think about why an image was made and for which audience it was intended. Is it a documentary photograph,



an architectural drawing or an artist's impression? All are potentially useful but served different purposes. Original paintings and drawings and photographs can be found in local archive and museum collections and also as reproduced images in newspapers and journals of the time. Drawings and plans are often found in the building records and faculty petitions noted above.

Online sources of images of churches in London and neighbouring counties (and further afield) include the London Picture Archive and the searchable pages of the collections of the **British Museum**, the **V&A**, the Conway and Witt collections at the **Courtauld Institute**, **Lambeth Palace Archives Luna**, **RIBApix** and the huge digitised image collection of the **Historic England Archive (HEA)**. Some local authority archives have online digital image databases or include some digitised images on their catalogues. See also <https://www.watercolourworld.org/search-landing/>

# Making notes

We started this document recommending that you begin with an idea. This will have helped you to think about what you are going to use the research for – whether it's for private or public use, for fundraising or a project in the community.



## What do I need?

We're now going to recommend that you make notes not only on what you find, but also on where you found it. You'll need to have a paper notebook and pencils for when you are working in an archive. Depending on how you like to work, you may also want to work on a computer or use a phone to make notes and take photos. Ask fellow researchers for tips about the latest Apps or things they wished they'd done when they first started out.

How you structure your notes is up to you. You will need to connect different source materials together so that you can check a fact or opinion. Give some thought now about how you will organise your notes – by date, source, topic, person or place. Your files will be an assortment of different types of documents, photographs, recordings, leaflets and things to follow up.

It can be helpful to keep a separate list of sources you plan to research, ticking them off as you go and noting down which were useful, which held particularly significant documents for your research.

## Citing source material

For your own reference it, it is important to make a note of the catalogue reference, including manuscript number and description, date and author. For more formal use (in publications for example) there are different styles of referencing.

*Cite them right* gives very helpful guidance on citing primary and secondary source material consistently and accurately.

<https://www.citethemrightonline.com/>

## Taking photographs

Using a camera is a useful way to save time in an archive, so you can work with the documents in your own time. You can also enlarge your digital images to view difficult to read text and handwriting more clearly. However, don't assume that photography will be free or permitted.



Drawing of St. Paul's Cathedral by Sir Christopher Wren, The Chapter of St. Paul's Cathedral and London Metropolitan Archives, (Photography by Quite Frankly Productions, 2023)

Some tips<sup>1</sup> to help you:

- Plan how you will reference the documents later. Tip: Photograph the cover folder or box which shows the reference before you photograph the contents. Or write the folder information on a slip of paper and include it with every document you photograph.
- Take an acid-free blank sheet of paper with you. If you are trying to read thin, translucent paper documents, putting a sheet of blank paper behind, will help you read it better. Do check with the archive before using this technique.
- Make a note of any copyright information. Creating digital copies of documents in academic or public archives is generally allowed for private study or for a non-commercial purpose. If you plan to share or publish your images of the documents (even for charity) you will need to secure permission from a copyright holder.

## Oral history

If your research will involve recording first-hand evidence of the past, the **National Lottery Heritage Fund** has helpful advice on how to structure and plan the project, what equipment to use, ethics including safeguarding, recording agreements and archive and deposit arrangements.

**The Oral History Society** is another fantastic organisation to connect with and they publish a lot of free advice on their website, run courses and connect you with local groups.

<https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/funding/good-practice-guidance/oral-history-guidance>

<https://www.ohs.org.uk/>

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<sup>1</sup> Thanks to Dr Carrie Smith, who posted these on Twitter, reproduced from Columbia University: <https://blogs.cul.columbia.edu/rbml/2023/06/14/tips-for-researchers-first-time-in-the-archives-photos-and-scanning/>

## Reading early documents

If you are looking at records before the nineteenth century, chances are you will encounter material that is handwritten using strange spellings, Latin words or terms that are no longer much used in modern speech. Dates and measurements can also be different. Fortunately, archivists and teachers have created some handy guides and Hull University has a particularly helpful series that includes:

- Transcription – introduction to conventions
- Palaeography – reading old writing
- Archaic terms and spellings – Early Modern words
- Historical dates – Early Modern date systems
- Weights & measures – Early Modern measures
- Language – Archives in Latin

As well as helpful advice, the website also includes publications that you can go to for further information.

<https://libguides.hull.ac.uk/archival-skills>

## Interpreting what you discover

One of the challenges of researching the past is that you can't go back in time and observe or talk to the people involved. Instead, we have to pick up clues and hints about what life was like then, why decisions were made or not made, and why some people's stories are hidden from us. Just like us, people from the past are not impartial. They have opinions and beliefs linked to their upbringing and what was socially acceptable at the time. To help build your interpretation of the

past, it's important to weigh up each piece of information that you encounter:

- Who was that letter written to? Why?
- Could they be hoping to impress someone or keep something a secret?
- Why did they choose to write down that point?
- Who decided where something was placed?
- What motivated a commission?
- Who or what is missing?

You may well be confronted with terms that we just don't use today or encounter biases that are not acceptable today. There is a lot of helpful advice developing in the heritage sector to help custodians of historic buildings and collections to navigate derogatory language.

## Inclusive heritage

Historic England have brought together resources to enable researchers to explore aspects of our past, such as the transatlantic trade in enslaved people, attitudes towards disability and the changing role of women, and how they have been reflected in the buildings of our towns and cities.

<https://historicengland.org.uk/research/inclusive-heritage/>

***Finding the Words*** offers case studies from a project that examined colonialism in Bath during the Georgian period. The document offers advice on how to present a transcription which uses derogatory language and options for interpretation.

<https://bathandcolonialism.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Finding-the-Words-booklet.pdf>

# Getting other people involved

As you progress in your research, you may find other people become interested in what you are discovering or you might want to recruit co-researchers or participants to get involved.

We have included some questions here to help you shape your idea further so that you can explain it to other people. This will also help you to communicate your research project to funding bodies as well as to your church community.



## Useful questions

### Purpose

- What are you wanting to understand, conserve, repair, learn or change?
- Is your research leading to a planning document (Maintenance Plan, Conservation Management Plan, Funding Application)?
- Are you hoping to involve people from your congregation and local community so that they too can appreciate the history and heritage of your church?

### Scope

- Have you a specific time period or topic in mind which you would like to investigate?
- If the focus is on an individual, which period of their life, who else should be included – relatives, colleagues?
- Can you approach your project in phases to keep it manageable?

## Who and what is it for?

- Is it to support a project that your church is involved in? Are you preparing background documents to support a capital grant application?
- Is it part of a community-wide event or celebration?
- Is it to help connect community groups to your building?
- Is it for a group of churches with similar historical interests?

## Who could be involved?

- Co-researchers – volunteers (new and existing), academics
- Audiences – digital and in person (whether accessing a collection, an article, new information panels, a new leaflet, hearing oral histories)
- Participants – people who take part in activities linked your research
- If you plan a capital project in the future, what could their involvement be then?



City Full of People volunteers at the London Metropolitan Archives  
 Photographer: Laurie Dighton, Feb 2023

### How could people be involved?

- What activities could you develop to involve more people in your heritage beyond the written word?
- Could artists, musicians, writers or craftspeople that could run workshops to explore the past?
- Does your community have groups that would value heritage activities to bring them together with others in the community?

### Do you need any expert support?

- Could you benefit from training in oral history, developing information panels, social media?
- Are there experts and speakers that could help your church community understand your church's history better?
- Do you need help with reinterpreting an element of your heritage that is contested?
- Who do you know in your church or wider community that might have these expert skills?

### Sharing your research

- Thinking about who your research is for, and what is the best way to share what you learn?
- Does your research need to be presented in a formal, traditional way or in a style for academics?
- What other formats could you use to engage lots of different people?
- What other formats could you use (e.g. trails, quizzes)
- What access or cultural requirements have you considered?
- How will you share on your social media platforms?

### Learning from others

- Who could you visit to learn how they involved other people in research?
- Which historic places of worship share their stories well on websites, social media, talks, Heritage Open Days?
- Who could you ask about great ideas for involving other people?



## Finding funding

Research is often prompted by a special future project – perhaps even a major capital development project. It can provide essential background information, as well as give support to a grant application for funding.

Making grant applications can be time consuming and funders have different priorities and conditions. Expect to be asked to show how else you have (or will) raise funds – think about fundraising from your community, private giving, in-kind giving, as well as cash donations.

Here are some general points to get you started:

- Read the funders' priorities carefully to make sure your project is a good fit.
- Check the eligibility criteria before you start work on an application and speak to funders if you aren't sure your organisation or project fits.
- Who is going to be the lead contact and are they the best person to answer questions from the funder if requested?
- Give yourself plenty of time to develop and write an application. Gather supporting documents well in advance.
- Check the decision-making timeline – some funders meet monthly, others once a year – and make sure this fits with your project timeline. Funders do not make grants for things that have already happened.
- Where possible, involve other people in your project's development to show you are responding to a need or interest and that you have support.
- You will be one of many organisations making application, so don't be put off if you aren't successful. Ask for feedback and ask when you could make another application **in the future**.
- Be clear about your heritage value and the need for a project to happen now – this is your case for support.



- Think about how you will appear to a funder. Does your organisation come across as professional, knowledgeable, able to deliver your project? Can you show you're competent in terms of safeguarding, HR and financial matters?
- Keep notes on your fundraising activity and keep a calendar of forthcoming deadlines so you can plan your fundraising.

Numerous freely accessible and searchable databases are available online. Frequently, local authorities offer services that charitable organisations can subscribe to, encompassing trusts within a specific local authority area.

### Heritage Funding Directory

<https://www.heritagefundingdirectoryuk.org/>

Managed by the Heritage Alliance and the Architectural Heritage Fund, the Heritage Funding Directory is a free guide to funding support for anyone undertaking UK related heritage projects. This is a useful starting point for navigating funding sources in the sector and it is recommended that you visit the funder's website directly to explore the latest information.



Salisbury Cathedral Library (Photographer: Ben Birchall, PA Images / Alamy Stock Photo, 2019)

### Funding Finder Database

<https://www.charityexcellence.co.uk/Home/FundingFindersResources>

This site has links to online databases of grants and lists of funders that you can search for free. It gives you more click-throughs to funding opportunities than any other directory.

It gives a weekly update with reminders of deadlines. While not history focused, you can find funding opportunities to help people access your heritage and take part in projects.

Other sources of funding and support can be found at:

### National Churches Trust

<https://www.nationalchurchestrust.org/get-support/buildings-maintenance/support-organisations> for links to County Church Trusts and heritage support organisations.

### Council for the Care of Churches

<https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/churchcare/church-buildings-council> to assist parishes in their tasks of maintaining church buildings, contents and churchyards.

### War Memorials Trust

<https://www.warmemorials.org/>

The Trust provides advice, information and grants to protect and conserve war memorials in the UK.

# Discover more



## Making sense of your building

Explore useful glossaries to better comprehend the terminology associated with buildings, including places of worship. These resources aid in unravelling the language used by architects and historians to describe architectural styles, construction methods, and various components of buildings.

### Looking at Buildings

[www.lookingatbuildings.org.uk](http://www.lookingatbuildings.org.uk)

This was created as an educational resource to accompany the *Pevsner Architecture Guides* (Sir Nikolaus Pevsner is a famous architectural historian who is best known for writing 46 volumes of *Buildings of England* which he wrote in the 1940s and 1950s.)

### Abelard

[https://www.abelard.org/france/cathedral\\_glossary.php](https://www.abelard.org/france/cathedral_glossary.php)

This is an ongoing initiative aimed at constructing a comprehensive glossary encompassing terms relevant to churches, cathedrals, and French architecture. If you're in need of swift definitions for terms like 'corbel' or 'volute', this resource provides valuable insights.

## Is your building 'listed' or your monument 'scheduled'?

### Church guidebooks and leaflets

Have a look at existing guidebooks and leaflets about your building's history. There may well be clues to where to begin your research or where research is needed for the future. You may also be able to meet the author so that you can compare notes.

### The National Heritage List for England (NHLE)

<https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/archive/history/images-of-england/>

This is the only official, up to date, register of all nationally protected historic buildings and sites in England – listed buildings, scheduled monuments, protected wrecks, registered parks and gardens, and battlefields. This will give you some basic details about the style, form and age of your building, materials used in its construction and sometimes the architect or builder.

## Pevsner's Buildings of England

<https://www.british-history.ac.uk/>

*Pevsner Architectural Guides: Buildings of England* series (each volume covers a different county or area - see also Buildings of Wales series), are an ideal starting point for researching any historical building. If your church is mentioned in it, it can offer a very helpful foundation of information.

See also the *Survey of London* and *Victoria County History* (which can be searched on line), check to see if your parish is listed.

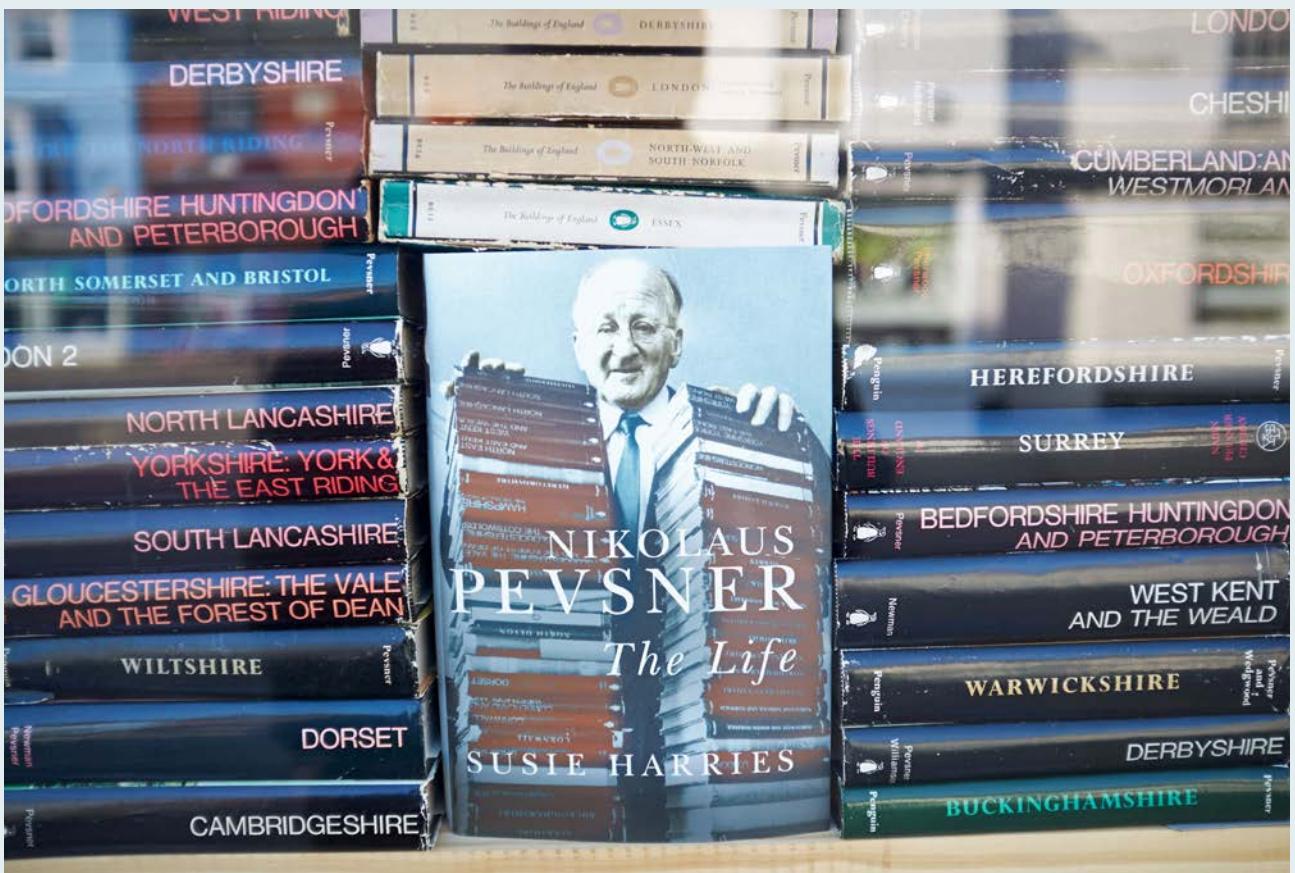
<https://www.british-history.ac.uk/series/survey-london>

<https://www.history.ac.uk/research/victoria-county-history>

## Historic Environment Record (HER) Database

<https://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/Gateway/>

Further information about buildings and archaeology can be found by searching the Greater London Historic Environment Record database which allows you to cross-search over 60 resources, offering local and national information relating to England's heritage.



Nikolaus Pevsner Architectural Guides (Photographer: Susie Harries, 2014)

# Digging deeper



## Physical archives

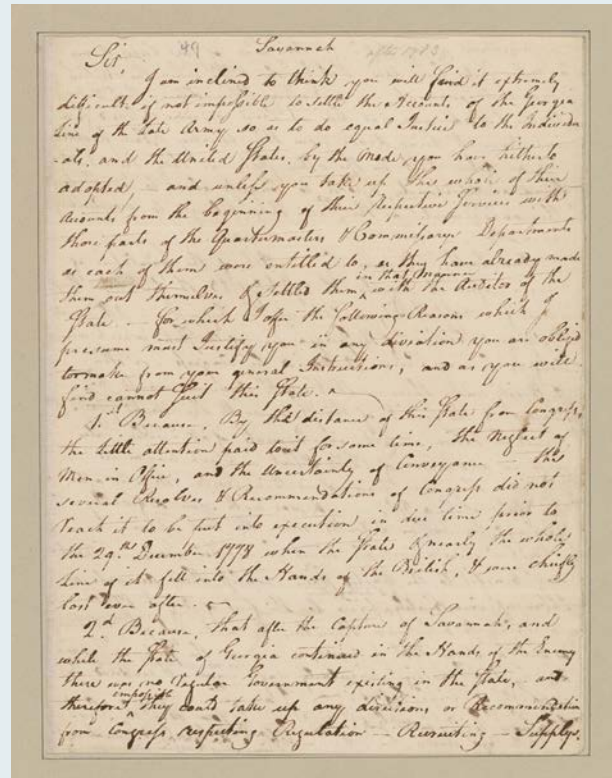
Don't forget to check whether there are records still stored in **your own church** or with the parish officers and incumbent. Most records before 1950 are likely to have been deposited at the local archives, but more recent documents, files, folders and correspondence may be kept on site. Often you will find that churches have received gifts and donations of papers and images, drawings or paintings that relate to their history that have been kept on site.

We recommend that you look first at what each archive has available online, so that you can plan your visit. Each archive has different opening hours and requirements for using their services and their websites will give you a clear idea of what you need to do ahead of a visit.

### London Metropolitan Archives (LMA)

<https://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/things-to-do/history-and-heritage/london-metropolitan-archives>

Located in Clerkenwell, The LMA has the largest collection of London-related archives, including records belonging to the Corporation of London, the London County Council and the Greater London Council. It is home to the archives of the Diocese of London, which include all of the parishes that fall within the diocese. These parish records generally pre-date 1950 and are a wonderful resource to explore. In addition, The LMA holds many of the records used by family historians and is also home to an extensive library of London-related books and publications, which makes it an essential destination for



From The New York Public Library

researchers. You will need to register for a free History Card in order to access the manuscript collections.

### Local authority archives

These exist in every London borough and are run by the local authority. They usually co-exist with the local history centre and contain the records created by the local authority, such as electoral registers, as well as other useful historical sources, including local newspapers, street directories and maps. They often hold records relating to parishes within the borough, such as parish magazines and local rate books, which can be invaluable for researching a church's history. Opening times vary and it is always best to contact the archive in advance of any visit.

## Lambeth Palace Library

<https://www.lambethpalacelibrary.info>

This is the official library and archive of the Church of England and holds a range of important records including the papers of the Bishops of London and the Ecclesiastical Commissioners for England. The records of the Church Commissioners, the Incorporated Church Building Society, ChurchCare, and other Anglican organisations that tell us about church property, finance, organisation and personnel, may well also be of help in your research. While the majority of the records will need to be consulted in person (as manuscripts or on microfilm readers) some of the collection has been digitised.

<https://www.lambethpalacelibrary.info/digital-collections/>

## Guildhall Library

<https://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/services/libraries/guildhall-library>

The Guildhall Library in the City of London has one of the finest collections of material relating to London's history. It also houses the archives of the 80 City livery companies as well as the records of the London Stock Exchange.

## The British Library

<https://www.bl.uk/>

This is the best place to find historical publications relating to a church, such as the published sermons of a former incumbent or memoirs of a celebrated parishioner. Membership is free and open to anyone with a research reason to consult the collections. The British Library is home to a vast collection of manuscripts and maps, so it is always worth searching not only the main catalogue of published material but also the specialist catalogues.

## The National Archives

<https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/>

The National Archives in Kew is England's largest archive and contains the official records generated by government departments, law courts, the military and monarchy. Start by browsing the Discovery catalogue – which also searches 2,500 other archives – and if you wish to visit in person, register for a reader's ticket and order in advance. Some records, such as wills, have been digitised and can be ordered online.

## The Historic England Archive

<https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/archive/collections/>

Based in Swindon, this archive has an extraordinary collection of records, photographs and images relating to the historic environment. Visits to the searchroom are by appointment only, but a million items can be searched online.

## The Royal Institute of British Architects Collections (RIBA)

<https://www.architecture.com/about/riba-library-and-collections>

These are an invaluable set of primary and secondary sources relating to architecture and the built environment. They can be consulted either at the RIBA headquarters in Westminster or in the RIBA Architecture Study Rooms at the Victoria & Albert Museum, South Kensington. An appointment is needed to access archive material.

## Digital resources

Online resources have revolutionised the way in which we carry out historical research. An increasing number of original documents are being digitised and shared on online platforms, which are continually expanding their coverage and content. These online resources make it possible to consult documents from the comfort of your own home, but some of the major platforms are subscription-only. This means you may have to factor in the cost of taking out a subscription, although some resources offer a trial period and may be available at your local authority archive.

### Ancestry

<https://www.ancestry.co.uk/>

The largest collection of online family history sources, which has worldwide as well as UK-based collections. Invaluable for researching both people and buildings in London. Subscription needed – but do check whether your nearest library or archive provides free access.

### British Newspaper Archive

<https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk>

The digitised collection of local and national newspapers held in the British Library, which can be searched by key word search or by browsing individual titles. Subscription needed.

### Find My Past

<https://www.findmypast.co.uk/>

Important collection of online family history sources combined with the British Newspaper Archive database. It has exclusive rights to the 1921 census. Subscription needed – but do check whether your nearest library or archive provides free access.



The National Archives (United Kingdom)

### Layers of London

<https://www.layersoflondon.org>

A growing collection of historical maps which can be searched by location, theme or search term. Individual stories relating to people, buildings or events can be added or pinned to the maps by any researcher keen to share their findings.

### National Library of Scotland Maps

<https://maps.nls.uk/>

An authoritative collection of historical maps from across the UK, including Ordnance Survey maps.

### London Picture Library

<https://www.londonpicturearchive.org.uk>

The online gallery of images of London drawn from The LMA and Guildhall Art Gallery collections.

### Imperial War Museum

<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections>

IWM's collection covers all aspects of conflict involving Britain, its former Empire and the Commonwealth, from the First World War to the present day. As well as objects, it includes a range of media, from art, film and photographs to printed materials, documents and sound.



### Lives of Londoners, 1690-1800: Crime, Poverty and Social Policy in the Metropolis

<https://www.londonlives.org/index.jsp>

This project has amalgamated, digitised and catalogued archives to enable searches of over 3 million names of people who lived in London during this period. Its research guides offer an excellent introduction to understanding parish life.

### Switching the Lens – Rediscovering Londoners of African, Caribbean, Asian and Indigenous Heritage 1561 to 1840

[https://search.lma.gov.uk/scripts/mwimain.dll?GET&FILE=%5bWWW\\_LMA%5dthrough-the-lens.html](https://search.lma.gov.uk/scripts/mwimain.dll?GET&FILE=%5bWWW_LMA%5dthrough-the-lens.html)

This database contains references to over 2600 Londoners of African, Caribbean, Asian and Indigenous heritage whose names appear in documents held at The LMA.

### The Proceedings of the Old Bailey, 1674-1913 (Old Bailey Online)

<https://www.oldbaileyonline.org/>

This project has digitised the court records of nearly 200,000 criminal cases heard at London's central criminal court, the Old Bailey. It offers extraordinary evidence of ordinary people's lives and is accompanied by invaluable research guides.

### The Clergy of the Church of England Database, 1540-1835

<https://theclergydatabase.org.uk/>

This database has amassed the details of the careers of Church of England clergy from over 50 archives in England and Wales and can be searched by clergyman or by church/parish.

## Other archives and collections

There are many specialist online resources which may be relevant to your research project. Professional archivists will be able to advise you where to look for collections that may be of use for your research.

### The Archives Hub

<https://archiveshub.jisc.ac.uk/>

Use the Archives Hub to find unique sources for your research, both physical and digital. Search across descriptions of archives, held at over 390 institutions across the UK.

Below are examples of some of the resources that were of particular value to the *City Full of People* researchers, showing the different archives and online resources you too could find useful.





The National Archives, Kew, London.  
(Photographer: Sharad Raval / Alamy Stock Photo)

## Permissions and reproduction of sources

All archives and libraries have policies about the use and re-use of digital copies of items in their collections. When accessing their collections, you agree to follow the policies. Always ask if you are unsure about any of the terms.

For example, here is the policy of The National Archives:

### ***Digital copies of documents***

*The use of copies of records downloaded from our website using Discovery is subject to the following conditions. Digital copies of documents may only be used for:*

- *private study or research for a non-commercial purpose*
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[www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/legal/copyright/digital-copies-of-documents/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/legal/copyright/digital-copies-of-documents/)

## Further resources

Additional advice and information can be found on the following websites:

<http://www.open.ac.uk/Arts/building-on-history-project/resource-guide/research/architecture.htm>

<https://www.buildinghistory.org/buildings/churches.shtml>

<https://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/things-to-do/history-and-heritage/london-metropolitan-archives/about-lma/switching-the-lens-project>

<https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research>

### **Building on History: The Church in London**

<https://www.open.ac.uk/Arts/building-on-history-project/>

This portal shares information on how to conduct a **History Audit** of a congregation, ideas on **how to use history to inform contemporary mission and ministry**, a guide on **how to write a church and parish history** and material on developing a **Statement of Significance** for a church. It also provides **educational material for primary school teachers**, exploring the historical links between school and church plus historical **case studies** for church leaders.



Photographer: Luis Louro / Alamy Stock Photo, January 2011

## Thanks and acknowledgements

### Toolkit Authors

Dr Melita Armitage

Dr Rebecca Preston

Dr Susan Skedd

With additional thanks to Wren300 team for their production of the toolkit, as well as the London Metropolitan Archive, Lambeth Palace Archive and the many organisations cited throughout this resource for their support, information and images.

The development of this toolkit would also not have been possible without the many people involved in the *Wren300: A City Full of People* project and exhibition, including the team of dedicated volunteer researchers, Dr Celia Mill and Tim Wales.



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