

# HIDDEN HISTORIES

# HIDDEN HISTORIANS

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# Welcome!

This toolkit is number 1 in a series produced by Manchester Histories as part of our Heritage Lottery funded Hidden Histories Hidden Historians project. The other toolkits are:

- 2. Doing your oral history project**
- 3. Evaluating your project**
- 4. Creating your own archive**

**You can download all the toolkits at [www.manchesterhistories.co.uk](http://www.manchesterhistories.co.uk).**

These toolkits have been written by history and heritage professionals as beginners' guides, to give you the skills and confidence to carry out your historical projects from start to finish. You do not need any special knowledge or experience – just a general interest in history and the desire to research an area of history and heritage that is of interest to you.

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## What is this toolkit about?

This toolkit is a step-by-step guide to doing a successful historical research project. It covers all the key steps, from planning and design, to research skills, and how to organise and share your research. By the end of the toolkit, you should be equipped with the skills you need to get started with your historical research project.

The toolkit describes the practical actions you should take, provides checklists, top tips from the professionals, includes case studies as well as links to other resources should you need any further information.

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## Who is the author of this toolkit?

Dr. Ben Wilcock completed his PhD in 2016, and researches the history of Manchester and Liverpool in the early stages of the industrial revolution. He teaches at the University of Manchester, Lancaster University and Manchester Metropolitan University. He is interested in public engagement with history and works with several heritage projects in Greater Manchester, including the National Trust at Quarry Bank Mill and Stockport Museums at Bramall Hall.





# Introduction: What is historical research?

Historical research involves asking questions about the past, and then investigating to find the answers. Sources of information can be found in many different places, so starting a historical research project could seem daunting, but anybody can get involved in researching the past. Choosing a topic that interests you is the most important thing; whether that is the history of your family, a building you like, or a local social group or sports team, and Greater Manchester is an area with great resources to help you with your project.

## Getting started: Designing your research project

Doing a historical research project requires planning. Where should you begin? What should you be looking for? What documents are available and where can you find them? How can you make your research as good and as thorough as possible?

The following steps give an overview of the process you might take at each stage of your project. They are then covered in more detail.

### Step one: Your research questions

Come up with the questions you want your research to answer. Make sure your questions are focused and achievable. Learn about primary and secondary historical sources.

### Step two: General research

Your research question might have already been answered by someone else. Look in books and online to see if there is already any research that might help you in your project.

### Step three: Researching primary sources

What kind of primary sources might you want to look at, and where can you find them? Learn about researching online, in libraries, and in archives. Use sources critically – think about who created them and why. And always remember to keep a record of your findings.

### Step four: Sharing your project

Let other people know about the wonderful research you have done!



## Step one: Your research questions

Your first task is deciding exactly what you are interested in. People are inspired to undertake historical research by lots of different things, from a family story, a TV documentary, or a building close to where they live. Try to identify a topic or aspect of history you would like to learn more about, and then you can get started.

Once you have decided on a broad topic that you would like to know more about, you can start to think about how you can organise and focus your research. A good way to do this is by deciding on a central research question. The research question should sum up what it is you are trying to find out. For example, your research question might be:

- **‘For how long has my family lived in Oldham?’**
- **‘What kind of education would I have had one hundred years ago?’**
- **‘When was my house built and who lived there before me?’**

You want to focus your research and stay on topic, so aim to make your research question quite specific. For example, ‘What was life like in Greater Manchester in the past?’ is not a good research question, as it is far too broad and covers too wide a range of topics. Instead think about the time period and groups of people you are particularly interested in e.g. work and leisure activities, or life in the 1950s. A much more focused and good research question would be ‘What kind of work and leisure activities could I have done in Manchester in the 1950s?’.

Once you have decided on a central research question, you can ask follow-up questions that are related to your particular areas of interest. These might be: ‘How much did factory workers earn in the 1950s?’, or ‘Where did working people go away on holiday?’





## CASE STUDY

Anita has lived in Wigan all her life, and grew up in the 1970s. She has great memories of the Northern Soul scene, and she still listens to soul music all the time. She wants to learn more about the history of Northern Soul, and particularly about the Wigan Casino – the nightclub she can remember dancing at, that was just around the corner from her house.

Anita decides to start a project on Northern Soul music in Wigan, and comes up with the following research question: “Why was Northern Soul music so popular in Wigan and other places in the North of England in the 1960-70s?”

This is a good research question because it clearly identifies the topic she will be researching, as well as a specific location and time period. Anita also came up with some follow up questions to allow her research to develop and become more thorough:

- “What were some of the most popular songs and artists?”
- “What happened to the Wigan Casino?”
- “How many people were into Northern Soul in Greater Manchester?”

Always keeping these questions in mind will help Anita focus while she is researching her topic.



## Researcher's top tip

Make sure that you keep going back to your research question throughout your research. Try to constantly attempt to answer the question that you have set for yourself, rather than wander off onto other topics. Of course, if you have a lot of time to devote to your project, or you don't mind what research questions you answer, wandering off can be a lot of fun! However, your research might feel less satisfying if you never find any answers to the questions you had when you started.

Once you have decided on your research questions – you can start to answer them by looking at different sources.





## What are sources?

We find out information about the past by studying sources. Almost anything can be a useful source in historical research: a book, a letter, a diary, a coat, a newspaper, a toy, or even a building.

Historians classify sources into two types: secondary sources and primary sources. You should look at both types of source in your research project.

### Secondary sources

During the early research stage of your project, you will mainly use secondary sources. These are sources that are created some time after the events and times they describe. Often, a secondary source could be a text such as a book, blog, website or article that a researcher has written to look back at a period in history. Secondary sources might also be a piece of art or an object that shows a historical period or event. Your own research project could one day become a secondary source.

### Primary sources

Once you have done your general research and found out what other people have discovered about your topic, you will move on to looking at primary sources. Primary sources come from the time period you are researching. Useful sources for beginner researchers are:

- **Sources you read: letters, diaries, newspapers and magazines**
- **Sources you look at: photographs, films.**
- **Sources you listen to: music, oral history interviews (see the *Doing your oral history project toolkit* for more information about oral history).**

When you start your own research project, you will spend a lot of time looking at primary sources. The types of primary sources you use will depend on your research questions, and what is available and accessible. We'll come back to primary sources in Step three.

### Step one checklist

Before moving on to Step two, check you have done the following activities:

- ☐ Decided which topic or period of history interests you the most.
- ☐ Come up with a central research question that is not too broad or wide-ranging.
- ☐ Come up with a few follow-up questions to help you focus your research.
- ☐ Think about the kind of sources you might use to answer your questions



## Step two: General research

General research is the first stage of finding out more about your topic. In your general research you will look at secondary sources to help you to work out what other researchers have already discovered about the history you want to explore. This might show you some 'gaps' in the work that other researchers have done, that your research can help to fill.

Your general research won't fully answer your specific research question – that comes later. But it will help you find out more about the historical themes that are related to your question. For example, if you are researching the history of your family during the Second World War, your general research will probably not tell you exactly what your great-grandmother was doing, but it will help you to discover more about how the war affected the area that your family lived in, and will provide clues for your primary research. General research will help you to put your project in the historical context, and so is an important stage in the research process.

The two most common ways of doing general research are online and in books.

### Doing general research online

Many people starting their research project will make their first steps online. There are many benefits about carrying out general research on the Internet as there is a lot of material and it's easy to access.

However, it's a good idea to use the information you find on the Internet carefully as anybody can post information online, and this information is not always fact checked. You should consider the type of website publishing the information and pay attention to what sources the writer has used, and think about how they came to their conclusions. Try to use as many different online sources as you can, as well as looking at some history books.





Some good ways to do general research online include:

## **Search engines**

Search engines can help you quickly find out what's available on your topic. If you search for 'Manchester Local History' on Google, you will find links to the City Council's local history news page, the websites for several local history societies, and the homepage for Manchester Histories. Any of these links might lead you to information useful for your project. However, be aware that you might need to be very focused and specific with your search terms. For example, if your project is about a particular factory in Manchester during the Industrial Revolution, searching for 'Victorian Manchester' will get you a list of thousands of websites, with no way to immediately tell which ones are relevant to your project. A more focused search, such as for 'nineteenth-century cotton mills in Ancoats' is much more likely to find you something useful.

## **Social media and blogs**

Many organisations will have a Facebook page, or a Twitter account. Social media can be an excellent tool to getting in touch with other people who are interested in the same topic as you - especially if you are researching the history of a particular building, social group or sports team, for example.

Many areas have a local history society that has a website or blog. Lots of people who are passionate about the history of Greater Manchester also keep a blog to share their individual research and several large organisations like museums, libraries and universities also have blogs to inform people about their current work. There are some examples of good blogs in the Further Resources section.

## **Online encyclopaedias**

Even professional historians will start their research by looking at free online encyclopaedias like Wikipedia to get some very general information about a new topic.





## Researcher's top tips

- Stay focused. There is a massive amount of material available online, and only some of it will be relevant to your research question.
- Be flexible with your searches. Sometimes you will search for something online and won't find anything relevant. This doesn't necessarily mean that there is no relevant material available. Change your search terms and see if that makes a difference.
- Keep a record of useful websites you find – don't lose your research!

## Doing general research from books

It's a good idea to look through some history books by other researchers and historians on your topic. They will not only tell you what has already been discovered, but will often tell you what primary sources the author used and where to find them. This will not only give you lots of historical context for your topic, but will also save you time when it comes to looking for your own primary sources.

Start your search in your local library. The librarians and archivists working in the library will know what information is available. If you tell them you are working on a research project, they might also be able to recommend books that are relevant for your research questions.

If your research focuses on a particular town or region, contact the local library there to see if it has a local studies section. This will likely have a selection of books all about the location you are interested in, and might even have work by local historians that is not available elsewhere.





Many history books are very long, and you might have a lot to look through! Here are some tips to make your search more efficient and effective:

- **Use the contents and index pages.**

You may find that a 200-page book contains only a few pages that are directly relevant to your topic. Searching the index of a book will save you time and effort.

- **Take notes!**

Finding and then losing information in a book happens to everyone, and can be annoying. Make sure you make a note of exactly where you have discovered something (title, author, date of the publication or library in which you found a catalogue, for example) so you can go back to it if necessary.

- **Pay attention to the sources that authors use.**

Searching the references and bibliography of a book relevant to your interests is a good way to find other works and historical sources. Details of the archives the author used in their own research will also be listed



## Researcher's top tip

Don't be disappointed or lose heart if your general research shows that lots of research has already been done on your chosen topic. You will definitely be able to find something new and interesting to say. Focus on your research question and think about exactly what it is you want to discover, and look for 'gaps' in the existing research that you can fill.

## Step two checklist

Before moving on to Step three, check you have done the following activities:

- ☐ Searched online for blogs, websites, and articles relevant to your topic.
- ☐ Found out if there are other people currently researching your topic, and followed them on social media.
- ☐ Visited your local library to find books by other researchers, or found out whether there is a local studies section.





## Step three: Researching primary sources

Some common types of primary sources are:

### **Birth, marriage and death certificates**

Official documents that give dates and locations of important events. These documents are useful for people tracing the history of a family or individual.

### **Parish records**

Records of baptisms, marriages and burials performed by a church.

### **Census records**

These give details about where a person was living at a particular time, as well as information about the ages and occupations of members of the household.

### **Newspaper articles**

Just like today, newspapers of the past give a picture of what people were interested in. They can be useful in giving context to your research.

### **Letters and diaries**

Personal writing from an individual can give really valuable insight into a person's life and values.

### **Novels and Books**

Novels and books written at the time you are researching can give us useful information about different aspects of society and culture.

Researching primary sources will be the most exciting part of your project, where you will be able to build up your own picture of the past. Some sources you look at may never have been seen before by other researchers, so you will discover hidden histories and new information about the past.

Primary sources tend to be unpublished and/or quite rare, so you often won't find them in the same place as the information you looked at during your general research.



## Finding primary sources online

There are different types of website that may lead you to primary sources:

### Local history websites

Many local history organisations share information about their own projects on their websites, as well as details about any upcoming events, and useful links to other sources that could help you with your own research.

Check your local government website to see if there is a local history section. This should include links to museums, galleries, libraries and archives in the area. Local libraries and archives might also have their catalogues online, so you can have a look at what items they have before visiting in person.



### Researcher's top tip

The Manchester City Council website has a dedicated section with plenty of information about local and family history, including links to online historical newspapers, old photographs of Manchester, and details of local history events.

Have a look at [www.manchester.gov.uk/info/448/archives\\_and\\_local\\_history](http://www.manchester.gov.uk/info/448/archives_and_local_history).

A large collection of historical maps of Manchester has been put online.

Have a look at <http://manchester.publicprofiler.org/beta/>

### Archives websites

Some archives and heritage organisations have uploaded digital copies and images of their collection for you to view online. This means that you can have access to primary sources online.

If the collection is not available online, you should be able to search the archive's catalogue to see if it holds any useful material. You can then book an appointment to visit the archive in person.

See the Further Resources section for links to local and national archives, and some good examples of online collections.



## Family history websites

Commercial websites like Ancestry, FindMyPast and MyHeritage can be useful if you are researching family history. These websites often have tools to help you organise your research, and they often have online copies of documents like birth and death certificates available to view. But bear in mind that these websites often charge a subscription fee for you to view information that is otherwise available for free from local records offices.

## Finding primary sources in libraries

If you are having trouble finding useful information online, your next step will be your local library. This is especially true if you are researching the history of a particular location or area. Your local library might not only hold useful material for your project, but might also have displays and exhibitions that will signpost you to collections of primary sources that you can use.

Many libraries in Greater Manchester hold special collections related to the history of the local area. These might include letters, newspapers, magazines, artwork, or even objects. The library staff will show you how to access and use the material, but it's a good idea to contact them before you visit to make an appointment.

You will find a list of Greater Manchester library websites in the Further Resources section.

## Finding primary sources in archives

Archives will be extremely valuable to your research project. For an overview of what an archive is (and how to create your own) have a look at the Creating Your Own Archive toolkit.

There are two main types of archives that hold primary sources: private (or personal) archives and public archives.

### Private (or personal) archives

Private archives are collections belonging to individuals or private organisations. To access them, you need to get permission from the owner of the archive. Many private archives are not widely publicised, for example many charities, sports clubs, groups or individuals may have a private archive. If you are researching the history of a particular club, group, society or organisation it's a good idea to contact them directly to ask if they hold any archive material that you could look at.





## Public archives

Public archives are often in the same buildings as libraries, and are available for everyone to access and use. Archives usually hold printed and handwritten documents, images, films and objects that are stored away and are not on general display.

You usually need to make an appointment to see specific items or documents in a public archive. Archive catalogues are usually available online so you can search the collection and decide what you want to look at before you visit. Once you have chosen what you want to see, you can book an appointment.

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## CASE STUDY

Greater Manchester Lives ([www.gmlives.org.uk](http://www.gmlives.org.uk)) is a searchable website that allows you to look for primary sources held by archives and local history libraries in Greater Manchester.

Archives+ ([www.archivesplus.org](http://www.archivesplus.org)) is another great place to start looking for primary sources. Based in Manchester Central Library, you can view interactive exhibitions on a number of themes, like Communities, Pastimes, and Radical Thinking. It is also a hub for the Manchester and Lancashire Family History Society.

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## Researcher's top tips

To get the most out of your time in the archives, here are some basic tips:

- **Plan ahead**

Look at the online catalogue and make a note of the material you would like to look at. You could also telephone or email the archive to see if they can recommend other items in their collection that might be useful to your research. Book an appointment to visit the archive, giving plenty of notice so the archivists can have the material ready for you.

- **Talk to the archivists**

It's their job to help you access and understand the material, and they are trained to help you to understand how to make good use of the archives.

- **Have an open mind...**

Sometimes a document that you were sure would be useful to you turns out not to contain any relevant information at all. Similarly, something that you wouldn't expect to help you much by its description in the catalogue may prove to be a helpful source. Let yourself be guided by the material.

- **But keep your focus!**

Archives contain a wealth of information, and sometimes the volume of material can seem overwhelming. Stay on topic, be focused, and think about how the authors you encountered in your preliminary research used their sources. This will help you stay on topic.

- **Take notes**

Make sure you note down the reference number of each item so you can find it again if you need to. Most archives will let you photograph the material, and sometimes you can photocopy documents, but you should always ask the archivist before doing either of these things.





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## CASE STUDY

Mia was interested in researching the history of her family, who moved to Manchester from Trinidad in the 1970s. Her central research question was ‘what would life have been like for my family as Caribbean migrants moving to Manchester forty years ago?’

Mia’s general research showed her that other researchers had already done some work on the subject of Caribbean migration to Manchester, and this had led her to a range of sources and documents she can view in local archives, including some oral history recordings. She contacted Archives+, who directed her to a catalogue that many people have used when researching the histories of African-Caribbean communities in Manchester.

Mia found lots of sources to do with the foundation of The West Indian Community Centre on Carmoor Road, and discovered that some of her family were involved in the organisation of social events there. She looked at newspaper reports of the Centre to see what some of the contemporary attitudes were towards immigration to Manchester. She also contacted the Centre directly, and the organisers allowed her to come in and view the private archive of material they had saved. Mia was even able to find photographs that showed the streets, houses and communities that her family and other Caribbean migrants lived in.

By examining a range of sources in the archives and making careful notes about what she found, Mia was able to better answer her research questions and make her work more thorough.

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## Using sources critically

When you are looking at sources to answer your central research question, it's important to always think about how reliable and useful each source is. Historians understand that there is no such thing as a completely accurate and neutral source, and no source on its own can give us a complete picture of the past. Be critical of each source: consider its strengths and weaknesses, think about who might have created it and if their opinion will be biased in a particular way, and the reason for its creation. Using sources critically will make your research more balanced and measured.

To start you thinking critically, here are a few examples of some typical types of source you might find in an archive and their strengths and weaknesses.

### Newspaper article

- Strength:
- Represents some of the popular concerns of the time.
  - Gives details of specific events.
  - Easy to date.
- Weakness:
- The journalist and /or editor of the paper might have political views that affect how they have reported an event.
- 

### Photograph

- Strength:
- Useful to see what people or places looked like.
  - Shows clothing, fashion and other details that might be difficult to imagine written down.
- Weakness:
- Photo could have been staged or posed.
  - Not everybody in the past had access to cameras, might be difficult to find photos of non-privileged groups of people.
- 

### Diary entry

- Strength:
- Describes the thoughts and experiences of one individual in detail.
- Weakness:
- One person's story might not be representative of wider opinions and experiences.
  - Diary-writers might write in ways that put themselves in the best possible light.
- 



### Politician's speech

- Strength: • Demonstrates some political concerns of the time.
- Weakness: • The politician could have had an ulterior motive (to win public support, for instance) and might not present things in the same way that others would have at the time.
- 

### Letter to a friend or family member

- Strength: • Gives an insight into the way people communicated with each other in the past.  
• Presents details of everyday life.
- Weakness: • The writer might not have given a full account of the events or emotions described.  
• Letter writers tend to write only from their own point of view.
- 

When looking at sources in archives and libraries, make sure you are keeping an open mind as to the author's intentions, and that you are looking for a balanced picture. Questions that you could be asking about the sources you find might be:

- **Who has written/created the source? What do I know about them?**
- **Where has the information about this source come from?**
- **Do any other sources I have found agree with this source?**
- **Does it tell a different story to other information I've seen?**
- **How does this source answer my central research question?**
- **How does this source NOT answer my central research question?**

Remember, treating sources critically does not mean that they have no value. Rather, by trying to think about what sources don't tell us, as well as what they do tell us, you are making sure that your own research is balanced. Identifying and explaining differences between the sources you find is good practice in doing historical research.



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## CASE STUDY

Paul loves football, and has been researching the history of Bolton Wanderers, his local team. His central research question was ‘What did people say about Nat Lofthouse during his career as a player (1939-1960)?’

Paul did most of his general research online, and also spent some time in Bolton Central Library in the local history section. He was able to find newspaper reports of matches, as well as some photographs, match programmes, and accounts by supporters on fan websites that help him to answer his question. Most of the sources he found present a very positive image of Bolton Wanderers throughout this period.

However, when looking at local and national newspapers from the early 1940s, Paul noticed that some of the reports about Bolton Wanderers were quite critical of the team and players. This did not fit in with the personal accounts or programmes that he has looked at. From his general research, Paul knows that in the war years some people were critical of professional footballers and thought that they should have been fighting in Europe.

By using lots of different sources to see the bigger picture, Paul identified that while certain sources are more likely to praise the team, other sources are more likely to be critical of distraction from the war effort. Both of these types of source were useful to Paul’s research, and he used them in different ways. The personal accounts and match programmes showed him what supporters thought of their team, and could suggest that football matches might have been a welcome distraction from the difficulties of life in wartime Britain. The critical newspaper reports can be used to show that this attitude was not universal, and some commentators thought differently.

By identifying the differences between his sources and explaining these differences, Paul was able to present a balanced image of the way football was talked about in the early part of his period of interest. This balanced and critical approach to sources allowed Paul’s research to be well-rounded.

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## Researcher's top tips

Note down exactly where you've found something

If online, write down the exact website address. In libraries and archives, this will mean the reference or item number, alongside a description of the source itself (title, author, date). Be as clear and thorough as possible, as there is nothing worse than losing track of a source that would have been useful to look at again

- **Keep your notes organised**

Keep your notes safe, and arrange them in an order that makes sense to you. You could keep all your notes in a dedicated project notebook or save a record on your computer, but remember to back-up any files. There is more information about storing a project electronically in the Doing Your Oral History Project toolkit.

- **Revisiting your notes**

When you read through your notes again, make sure that you're considering the specific research question you have set yourself. Which of the sources you've used help to answer this question the most? These are your most important sources. Which of the sources don't help you to answer your question? These are sources to set aside. To keep your project focused, you need to be ruthless in editing the sources you use.

### Step three checklist

Before moving on to Step four, check you have done the following activities:

- ☐ Made use of all possible ways to find primary sources relevant to your topic: online, in libraries, and in archives.
- ☐ Browsed some online archive catalogues and made a note of material that looks interesting.
- ☐ Visited the archive to see your material in person.
- ☐ Thought critically about the sources you use and considered their strengths and weaknesses.
- ☐ Kept detailed notes about everything you look at so you can find it again if you need to.





## Step four: Sharing your project

Once you have done your research and come up with some answers to your original research questions, you should think about sharing your findings with other people. You have worked hard and found lots of interesting sources, and there are plenty of people who will be interested in your project.

If you do decide that you'd like to share your research project with other people, there are lots of ways to do so. These include:

### **Finding others with similar interests**

You might have found some local history groups when you were doing your general research. Get in touch with them online, or attend one of their meetings or events.

### **Local studies displays and exhibitions**

Many local libraries will be interested in hosting a small exhibition or display about local research. Speak to the library staff if this is something you're interested in.

### **Prepare a short talk**

You could organise your research project into a talk to deliver to others. The audience could be a local club or society, a school, or community group. You can present your talk with pictures of any interesting photographs or other sources you've found.

### **Share your work online**

Social media sites like Facebook are a great way of sharing the research you have done with a wider audience. You can start a page to show your progress and findings. You might also want to start a blog, or contact the editor of an existing blog to see if you can write a 'guest post' – for example Manchester Histories.

However, if you decide to publish images online, you must get the permission of whoever owns the image. You can find more information about copyright and data protection in the Creating Your Own Archive toolkit.







## CASE STUDY

The Bradford Pit Project commemorates the Bradford Colliery that used to stand on the site now occupied by SportCity and the Etihad Stadium, Manchester. It was set up to ensure that the people and places that contributed to development of Manchester will be marked and celebrated. The project was co-ordinated by Lauren Murphy.

Lauren has shared every stage of the project on her blog [www.bradfordpit.com](http://www.bradfordpit.com).



## Researcher's top tip

There is no right or wrong way of sharing your work, but if you think that you'd like other people to see it, be confident! You will find that people are interested, supportive and helpful when you share a research project that you have enjoyed.

### Step four checklist

- ☐ Think about sharing the research you have done with other people, whether online or in person.
- ☐ Get in touch with local history and community groups to talk about your research.
- ☐ Most of all, have fun! Historical research should be focused and thorough, but it should also be enjoyable.



# Further resources

## General information

Manchester Histories is a charity whose main purpose is to transform people's lives from across Greater Manchester through histories and heritage. We work in partnership with a range of organisations, community and voluntary groups to encourage people to recognise, celebrate and value their own histories.

Our Hidden Histories Hidden Historians project aims to uncover histories of people, families, communities and places that are less well known and well recorded, by encouraging everyone to get involved in exploring their histories and sharing their stories about the past.

Manchester Histories has four free toolkits on other topics you can use to make the most of your project, these are:

- **Doing your historical research project**
- **Doing your oral history project**
- **Evaluating your project**
- **Creating your own archive**

You can find all our toolkits at **[www.manchesterhistories.co.uk](http://www.manchesterhistories.co.uk)**

For beginners to historical research, the BBC has produced a 'Hands on History' guide available at:

**[http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/history/handsonhistory/a\\_guide\\_to\\_historical\\_research.pdf](http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/history/handsonhistory/a_guide_to_historical_research.pdf)**

The National Archives produces lots of easy-to-use guides on a range of research topics, such as family history, researching the First and Second World War, and political and social history: **[www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/)**





## Family history

If you are interested in researching the history of a family or individual, the following guides provide a good introduction to the topic with plenty of advice about how to get started:

- Society of Genealogists, 'Top Ten Tips for Starting Your Family History'  
[www.sog.org.uk/learn/education-sub-page-for-testing-navigation/guide-one/](http://www.sog.org.uk/learn/education-sub-page-for-testing-navigation/guide-one/)
- BBC History, Guide to Family History  
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/0/23493076>
- The Manchester and Lancashire Family History Society  
[www.mlfhs.org.uk/](http://www.mlfhs.org.uk/)

## Using archives

The following websites provide good introductions to doing research in archives:

- Archives Hub, 'Using Archives: A Guide for the Inexperienced'  
<http://archiveshub.ac.uk/guides/usingarchives/>
- People's History Museum, 'Introduction to Archives'  
[www.phm.org.uk/programme/introduction-to-archives/](http://www.phm.org.uk/programme/introduction-to-archives/)

## Blogs

Here are some good history blogs from local museums and historical organisations:

- Manchester Histories blog  
[www.manchesterhistoriesfestival.org.uk/blog/](http://www.manchesterhistoriesfestival.org.uk/blog/)
- People's History Museum blog  
<https://phmmcr.wordpress.com/>
- Chetham's Library blog  
<http://chethamslibrary.blogspot.co.uk/>
- Skyliner blog  
[www.theskyliner.org/](http://www.theskyliner.org/)



## Finding primary sources in libraries

Libraries in Greater Manchester are operated by metropolitan boroughs. You can find information about your local libraries on the following websites:

- City of Manchester  
[www.manchester.gov.uk/libraries](http://www.manchester.gov.uk/libraries)
- City of Salford  
[www.salfordcommunityleisure.co.uk/libraries/online](http://www.salfordcommunityleisure.co.uk/libraries/online)
- Bolton  
[www.bolton.gov.uk/website/pages/Libraryservices.aspx](http://www.bolton.gov.uk/website/pages/Libraryservices.aspx)
- Bury  
[www.bury.gov.uk/libraries](http://www.bury.gov.uk/libraries)
- Oldham  
[www.oldham.gov.uk/libraries](http://www.oldham.gov.uk/libraries)
- Rochdale  
[www.rochdale.gov.uk/libraries](http://www.rochdale.gov.uk/libraries)
- Stockport  
[www.stockport.gov.uk/services/leisureculture/libraries/](http://www.stockport.gov.uk/services/leisureculture/libraries/)
- Tameside  
[www.tameside.gov.uk/libraries](http://www.tameside.gov.uk/libraries)
- Trafford  
[www.trafford.gov.uk/residents/leisure-and-lifestyle/libraries/libraries.aspx](http://www.trafford.gov.uk/residents/leisure-and-lifestyle/libraries/libraries.aspx)
- Wigan  
[wigan.gov.uk/Resident/Libraries/index.aspx](http://wigan.gov.uk/Resident/Libraries/index.aspx)





## Finding primary sources in archives

If your research is based in Greater Manchester, your first step should be to search the Greater Manchester Lives archive database:

**[www.gmlives.org.uk](http://www.gmlives.org.uk)**

If your research is outside Greater Manchester, or you are interested to find out what else is out there, the National Archives website 'Discovery' is a searchable database of the collections of over 2500 archives across the UK:

**[discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/](http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/)**

Greater Manchester has several specialist archives and libraries that could help your research. Some of these are:

Ahmed Iqbal Ullah Race Relations Archive

**[www.racearchive.manchester.ac.uk/](http://www.racearchive.manchester.ac.uk/)**

The Centre is one of Europe's leading specialist libraries on migration, race and ethnicity. It is located in Manchester Central Library.

Chetham's Library

**[www.chethams.org.uk](http://www.chethams.org.uk)**

Chetham's is the oldest free public reference library in the United Kingdom. The library is open to readers and visitors free of charge, but you must make an appointment in advance. The library holds many thousands of old books, periodicals and journals, and local history sources.

John Ryland's Library and Special Collections

**[www.library.manchester.ac.uk/rylands/](http://www.library.manchester.ac.uk/rylands/)**

This beautiful library opened to the public in 1900 is now owned by the University of Manchester. It is open for library readers and visitors, and holds many old and rare books, in addition to an excellent archive of primary sources – such as letters, diaries and personal papers.



### The Peoples' History Museum

**[www.pmh.org.uk](http://www.pmh.org.uk)**

The museum is the national centre for the collections of material relating to the history of working class people in the UK. As well as permanent and temporary exhibitions, there is an archive of primary sources that will prove useful for those interested in Trade Unionism, the history of workers, or political history. You will need to make an appointment to view the archive.

### The Working Class Movement Library

**[www.wcml.org.uk/](http://www.wcml.org.uk/)**

Contains a collection of English-language books, periodicals, pamphlets, archives and artefacts relating to the working class since the Industrial Revolution. It is in Salford and is open to the public by appointment. It is a reference library, so you cannot take material away with you.





