

Local history: useful books and sources for the teacher

This section is intended to provide some useful suggestions for teachers who wish to find out about the history of their local area. The listing is merely a selection of some of the more useful and accessible types of publications and sources. Many of the books listed are in print or will be available in most county libraries, and several of them contain bibliographies which will introduce the reader to further sources.

Details of some of the important organisations, libraries and institutions which can be of assistance in the teaching of primary history may be found on pp. 37-39 of these guidelines.

Getting started

The books below, some of which are written in gazetteer style or arranged by county, will provide comprehensive listings and some information about historic sites and buildings in all areas of the country.

Automobile Association	<i>Illustrated Guide to Ireland</i> [An earlier edition of this work, entitled 'Illustrated Road Book of Ireland' and published in 1963, remains invaluable. While out of print, it may be purchased readily in second-hand bookshops.]	London, Reader's Digest and AA, 1976
Barrow, Lennox	<i>The Round Towers of Ireland: Study and Gazetteer</i>	Dublin, Academy Press, 1979
de Breffny, Brian	<i>The Castles of Ireland</i>	London, Thames & Hudson, 1986
de Breffny, Brian and Mott, George	<i>The Churches and Abbeys of Ireland</i>	London, Thames & Hudson, 1980
de Breffny, Brian and Ffolliott, Rosemary	<i>The Houses of Ireland: Domestic Architecture from the Medieval Castle to the Edwardian Villa</i>	London, Thames & Hudson, 1984
Dudley Edwards, Ruth	<i>An Atlas of Irish History</i>	London, Methuen, 1981
Fry, Plantagenet S.	<i>Castles of Britain and Ireland</i>	Newton Abbot, David & Charles, 1996
Harbison, Peter	<i>Guide to the National and Historic Monuments of Ireland</i>	Dublin, Gill & Macmillan, 1992
Harbison, Peter (ed.)	<i>The Shell Guide to Ireland</i> [An updated edition of the work originally written by Lord Killanin and Michael Duignan. The second revised edition of their work, published in 1966, remains a very useful and comprehensive guide.]	Dublin, Gill & Macmillan, 1989

Leask, Harold	<i>Irish Castles and Castellated Houses</i>	Dundalk, Dundalغان Press, 1973
Leask, Harold	<i>Irish Churches and Monastic Buildings (3 vols.)</i>	Dundalk, Dundalغان Press, 1966 and several reprints
Lewis, Samuel	<i>A Topographical Dictionary of Ireland (3 vols.)</i> [A gazetteer-style book produced in the early nineteenth century and accompanied by a county atlas. It provides excellent descriptions of every parish, village and town in the country as they were in the 1830s. The work was reprinted in 1970 and will be available in many libraries.]	London, Kennikat Press, reprint 1970, original editions 1837 and 1850
Mitchell, Frank and Ryan, Michael	<i>Reading the Irish Landscape</i>	Dublin, Town House, 1997
Office of Public Works	<i>Archaeological Surveys of Irish Counties</i> [An on-going series, available for several counties]	Dublin, Stationery Office
O'Brien, Jacqueline and Harbison, Peter	<i>Ancient Ireland: from Prehistory to Middle Ages</i>	London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1996
Ó Ríordáin, Seán P.	<i>Antiquities of the Irish Countryside</i>	London, Routledge, 1991
Rowan, Alistair and Casey, Christine	<i>The Buildings of Ireland</i> [A projected nine-volume series intended to provide a comprehensive architectural guide to all significant buildings. To date the following are published: North-west Ulster (1979) North Leinster (1993)]	London, Penguin
Ryan, Michael	<i>Irish Archaeology Illustrated</i>	Dublin, Country House, 1994
Shaffrey, Patrick and Maura	<i>Buildings of Irish Towns</i>	Dublin, O'Brien Press, 1983
Shaffrey, Patrick and Maura	<i>Irish Countryside Buildings</i>	Dublin, O'Brien Press, 1985
Simms, Anngret and Andrews, J.H.	<i>Irish Country Towns</i>	Cork, Mercier Press, 1994
Simms, Anngret and Andrews, J.H.	<i>More Irish Country Towns</i>	Cork, Mercier Press, 1995
Weir, Anthony	<i>Early Ireland: A Field Guide</i>	Belfast, Blackstaff Press, 1980

More information about the locality

While the books listed above will highlight many items of interest, most local history studies will require more detailed information about people, places and events in the locality. Some useful sources include:

Published local histories

Many volumes of local history are published throughout Ireland each year. The historical accuracy of some of these publications needs to be scrutinised carefully, but they can provide excellent extracts from a wide range of historical sources and may contain reprints of photographs and documents. The index of the local county library will indicate what is available.

Articles in periodicals

The most up-to-date and detailed information is published in historical journals and periodicals. These range from popular publications such as *History Ireland* and *Archaeology Ireland* to regional journals such as *Journal of the County Louth Archaeological Society* and *Breifne Antiquarian and Historical Society Journal* and publications such as *Irish Historical Studies*. Local libraries will have copies of journals produced by local societies and in many cases copies of other journals in which items of local interest have been published. These may be indexed by place-names.

An indispensable index to articles relating to Irish history may be found in:

Hayes, Richard J., *Sources for the History of Irish Civilisation: Articles in Irish Periodicals* (9 vols., Boston, 1970). This work provides an index, under 'persons' and 'places', to all articles in a very wide range of journals published up to 1969. The index is available in many larger libraries and in the National Library, Kildare Street, Dublin. Since 1970 a continuation index has been maintained by the National Library.

Provincial newspapers

Provincial newspapers are a most valuable source of information. There is a large collection of provincial and national newspapers in the National Library of Ireland, and many county libraries have collections of the papers published in their areas (often on microfilm). It is worth while considering enquiring at the offices of existing newspapers, which may have files of back issues.

Maps

The 25-inch and 6-inch scale Ordnance Survey maps are excellent sources of information. Copies of the original editions of these series, published from the late 1830s onwards, are available in many libraries. Full sets may be consulted in the National Library of Ireland and the Library of the Royal Irish Academy, Dawson Street, Dublin. A very useful aid with these maps is Andrews, J. H., *History in the Ordnance Map: An Introduction for Irish Readers* (Dublin, Stationery Office, 1974).

The Royal Irish Academy and the Royal Dublin Society Joint Committee on Historic Instruments has been responsible for the publication of the *Irish Historic Towns Maps (and Atlas)*. These volumes reprint maps of historic areas with a commentary. To date maps covering Kildare, Carrickfergus, Bandon, Kells, Mullingar, Athlone and Maynooth have appeared. Maps for Downpatrick, Belfast (part I, to 1840), Dublin (part I, to 1610), Bray, Derry, Kilkenny and Limerick are in preparation. Copies of these publications are available in county libraries.

Parliamentary papers

During the nineteenth century a great number of parliamentary enquiries were held into conditions in Ireland. These give a wealth of information about local population, housing, industry and education. Among the most useful are:

Census returns

These returns, especially from 1851 onwards, are packed with information and are readily available in printed form in the National Library of Ireland. In order to consult the returns you need to know the reference numbers of the census years in question. These may be found in

Vaughan, E. and Fitzpatrick, A. J., *Irish Historical Statistics: Population 1821-1971* (Dublin, Royal Irish Academy, 1978).

Reports on education and schools

Very detailed surveys of Irish schools and teachers were published in 1825, 1835 and 1870. The relevant reports are:

Second Report of the Commissioners of Irish Education Enquiry, 1826-27 (12.) xii

Second Report of the Commissioners on Public Instruction (Ireland), 1835 (47.) xxxiv

Report of the Commissioners Appointed to Inquire into the Nature and Extent of the Instruction Afforded by the Several Institutions in Ireland for the Purpose of Elementary or Primary Education: Educational Census, etc. [Powis Report], 1870 (c.6v.) xxviii, part v.

Report on Irish towns

Details about Irish towns in the 1830s and earlier are contained in:

Reports of the Commissioners Appointed to Inquire into the Municipal Corporations of Ireland, 1835, vols. xxvi and xxvii, 1836, vol xxiv.

Pictures and drawings

The section of the guidelines which discusses the use of pictorial evidence also includes some advice on obtaining images. The indexes to the Lawrence and other photographic collections of the National Library will be an important starting point when trying to trace views of a local area in the past. Exhibition and other catalogues from the National Gallery contain many copies of landscape and other views. See, for example:

Hutchinson, John. *James Arthur O'Connor* (Dublin, NGI, 1985)

de Courcy, Catherine and Maher, Ann. *Fifty Views of Ireland* (Dublin, NGI, 1985)

NGI, *National Gallery of Ireland: Illustrated Summary Catalogue of Paintings* (Dublin, NGI, 1981)

Le Harivel, Adrian. *National Gallery of Ireland: Illustrated Summary Catalogue of Drawings* (Dublin, NGI 1983).

Manuscript sources

The most accessible manuscript sources which may be of use to schools are the records generated by schools themselves. School roll books and registers are invaluable, and the information contained in them may be transferred and used in computer database form. All manuscripts need to be handled with great care: holding and turning pages leaves a deposit of acid on the leaves which destroys paper. Documents should not be exposed to daylight for long periods and copies should be used for class work. Excessive photocopying of original documents should be avoided as it is damaging to paper.

The central administrative record of a school may be traced in the papers of the Commissioners of National Education (the forerunner of the Department of Education and Science – Primary), which are deposited in the National Archives (formerly the Public Record Office and the State Paper Office), Bishop Street, Dublin 8.

A very useful publication which traces the history of the national school system and includes examples of many of the types of records available for the history of a school is Hannigan, K. (ed.), *The National School System, 1831–1924: Facsimile Documents* (Dublin, Stationery Office, 1984).

The other large source of documentary material is likely to be church records. Church of Ireland parishes were the civil and ecclesiastical authority until the nineteenth century, so their records can be very valuable for many aspects of social history. These records, which include vestry minute-books, registers of baptisms, marriages and burials, may be held locally or centrally in the Library of the Representative Church Body, Braemor Park, Churchtown, Dublin 14.

The National Library will advise on the location of the records of Roman Catholic parishes and dioceses. Few of these records date from before the late eighteenth century. They may include baptismal, marriage and burial records and other parish records. Many of these are retained in local archives, with microfilm copies available in the National Library.

Bibliographies

Some excellent bibliographies and guides include:

Fitzpatrick, Georgina	<i>Handbook of Teaching Resources: Junior Certificate History, Part I</i>	Dublin, School and College Publishing, 1989
	<i>[This work includes lists of sources for each county and suggested teaching resources].</i>	
Heferty, Seamus and Refaussé, Raymond	<i>Directory of Irish Archives</i>	Irish Academic Press, 1993
Nolan, William	<i>Tracing the Past: Sources for Local Studies in the Republic of Ireland</i>	Templeogue, Geography Publications, 1982