Oral testimony is an invaluable source of information for local historians. EMOHA publishes a series of information sheets which explain how to conduct your own oral history interviews, how to access the recordings in the East Midlands Oral Archive and how to publish your material. Yet while oral history can make a unique contribution to histories of Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland you should still use it in conjunction with other historical sources:

- to test its accuracy and reliability
- to understand the broader historical context
- to follow up the new avenues of enquiry that it might open

The following is a brief outline of some of the sources available for the study of local history. While these relate mainly to Leicestershire and Rutland, much of the basic information will also apply to other areas of the country.

**What sort of sources are available?**

These fall broadly into two categories. **Primary sources** are actual records which have survived, and provide first hand evidence of historical events. For example:

- Census returns and electoral registers
- Street directories
- Medical Officer of Health Reports
- Minutes of local authorities and their various committees
- Personal diaries
- Records of local businesses, societies & other organisations
- Newspapers and periodicals
- Maps & photographs
- Unedited video or audio recordings
- Artefacts

**Secondary sources** are those which bring together and interpret primary historical material. These include books, pamphlets, edited video or audio sources, museum displays and internet websites.

**Where can I get more information?**

- EMOHA Information Sheet #5: Who can help?
- BBC History website, local historical sources [www.bbc.co.uk/history/li/localli](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/li/localli)
- British Association for Local History, PO Box 1576, Salisbury SP2 8SY, [http://www.balh.co.uk/](http://www.balh.co.uk/)
- Historical Association, 59A Kennington Park Road, London SE11 4JH, which produces a series of short guides to records, and organises an annual Local History Week. Telephone (0207 735 3901) or see [http://www.history.org.uk](http://www.history.org.uk).
- Historical Manuscripts Commission, Information Sheet 15; Sources for Local History, available online at [http://www.hmc.gov.uk/nra/nra2.htm](http://www.hmc.gov.uk/nra/nra2.htm)
- Local History Magazine, 3 Devonshire Promenade, Lenton, Nottingham, (0115)
Many local records are available from the Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester & Rutland (ROLLR), which also has an extensive local studies library. The ROLLR is located at Long Street, Wigston, Leicester, LE18 2AH (0116 257 1080). Telephone for details of its collections and opening hours, or visit its website at http://www.leics.gov.uk/museums/records/.

Libraries are a useful source of local historical information. The Central Reference & Information Library in Bishop Street, Leicester, has a local studies section covering the County as well as the City of Leicester (0116 299 5410), and the Community History section of Leicester City Libraries is also based there. This has an extensive collection of reference material, including books, newspaper cuttings and photographs. Enquiries are welcome, but this material is not available on the open shelves, and it is essential to make an appointment to view it. Telephone 0116 299 5417/5410. Smaller local libraries in Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland often have material specific to their particular locality.

Depending on the subject of your research, you may also find useful information through museums, either in the displays themselves, or by contacting curators or other specialist staff.

Observations of the built environment, architectural styles and public art and monuments can be just as useful as historical sources as paper records.

These are the most obvious sources for local historical information, but here are some others which may be relevant to your research:

The members of local historical societies have often done extensive research into their own particular locality or subject area, and may publish newsletters or journals. For details of historical and heritage societies in Leicestershire & Rutland, contact your local library or visit Infolinx, the website of the Community Information Network for Leicestershire, Leicester & Rutland at http://www.infolinx.org/. You can also find links to village and community sites on the EMOHA website at http://www.le.ac.uk/emoha/community/leicesterrlinks.html.

There are a number of other websites carrying historical information about Leicestershire, Leicester & Rutland. They include Leicester & Leicestershire at http://www.leicesterandleicestershire.com, which has a useful ‘Who’s Who’ section; and Leicestershire Past & Present http://www.suite101.com/welcome.cfm/leicestershire. The EMOHA site at http://www.le.ac.uk/emoha/community/leicesterrlinks.html has links to more local websites.

The Leicester Mercury has a daily ‘Mr Leicester’ page, which publishes photographs, short historical articles, and appeals for help with research. Write to ‘Mr Leicester’ at the Mercury, St. George Street, Leicester.

BBC Radio Leicester may also broadcast appeals for help with research, and the ‘Talkback’ programme currently includes a ‘Memory Lane’ phone-in from 9–10 a.m. on a Friday morning. The BBC Leicester website also carries information about historical projects. See http://www.bbc.co.uk/leicester/aroundleicester/.

A guided walk can be an interesting way of exploring aspects of local history. For details of walks see the EMOHA diary at http://www.le.ac.uk/emoha/news/diary.html. Or contact Leicester Promotions on 0116 299 8888, or visit http://www.le.ac.uk/leicester/tourist/tb.html.

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