

Local History Series: 10



Sources for studying local history

PRONI holds a unique combination of private and public records that are essential for anyone wanting to know the history of their local community, town or village. Because there is such a wealth of material in PRONI, this handout is designed to give you an overview of just some of the sources you can consult.

Maps

These are an essential starting point for almost every local history study. PRONI holds maps that date from the 17th century right up to the present day, allowing you to document the changes in the landscape over the years. We also hold localised maps for almost all of the major estates in Northern Ireland. (See *Guide to Landed Estates* for details of the maps available.) The **Ordnance Survey** started publishing maps in the 1830s. PRONI holds the various editions of these maps. As they mapped the entire country they are therefore an essential tool for studying the growth of towns and the changing face of the countryside no matter where you live. These will shortly be available on-line. (See catalogues under PRONI Reference '**OS**')

Ordnance Survey Memoirs

These are a unique source of information for the pre- Famine period. They were compiled to accompany the 1st edition of the 6 inch Ordnance Survey maps. They provide information for each parish on a wide range of subjects from roads, schools, and public buildings, to mills, canals, antiquities, employment, farming and churches. The Memoirs have now been published and are available in the PRONI Library.

Transport Records

It is impossible not to include transportation in a local history study. Whether you are interested in roads, railways, canals or shipping, you will find a wealth of information in the Grand Jury Records (**ANT, ARM, DOW, FER, LOND and TYR**), in the Ulster Transport Authority archive (**UTA**), and in the records of the various canal companies. Other useful sources include: the Ministry of Home Affairs (**HA**) and the Ministry of Development (**DEV**), and the Church of Ireland vestry minute books.

Education Records

Educational institutions form an important part of any community. PRONI holds the records of over 1,500 schools, national, public elementary and primary, ranging from the mid-19th century to c. 1940.

Information on national schools can be found in the grant-aid applications to the Commissioners of National Education which will give you details of the numbers of pupils attending a school, the size and condition of the schoolhouse and the classrooms, the names of the teachers, the date of foundation, etc (**ED/1**). Many private archives, including estate and family archives, will often include records of private, endowed and charitable schools. (See **Subject Index** and *Guide to Educational Records*)

Photographs

These are a wonderful resource for the local historian, giving an immediate impression of life and work in the past. Of particular interest are: the photographic collections of H.E. Cooper, who worked in Strabane, Co. Tyrone (**D1422**); the Allison family in Armagh (**D2886**); W.R. Henderson, who worked in the north-west (**D2618**); and the Annesley family of Castlewella, Co. Down (**D1854**).

Landed Estate Records

These are an invaluable source for any study of 18th and 19th century Ireland as the landlords were then the major employers. Our *Guide to Landed Estates* lists the estates alphabetically by landowner, and describes the range of records held, such as rent books, leases, wages books, correspondence, maps and plans and their covering dates.

Poor Law Records

Many market towns in Northern Ireland, as elsewhere in the island of Ireland, had a workhouse for the relief of the poor and destitute. The minute books, indoor relief registers, etc, document how the poor law was administered and give details on those who received relief and the impact of the Famine on the local population (**BG**).

