

Parochial Sources

What are they?

Parochial sources are any materials produced by clergy or active laity relating to the life of church and parish. These include parish magazines, almanacs and calendars.

Where can I find them?

The survival of this material is, unfortunately, very much a matter of chance. The main depository of parochial material is [London Metropolitan Archives](#) (see the Building on History website for further details.) You can search their online catalogue [http://search.lma.gov.uk/opac_lma/index.htm]. Please note that when you search this website for the word 'Saint', it needs to be written out fully for your search to be successful. Additionally, some parochial publications were sent to the Bishop sporadically, so some material may be available in the [Fulham Papers](#) (see the Building on History website for further details) at [Lambeth Palace Library](#) (see the Building on History website for further details) though you will almost certainly not find an extended run of them.

If you find that the LMA does not have material from your local church, then that may mean that your church did not have a magazine or that it has not been deposited. You should therefore contact the current incumbent or churchwarden to find out if the church still holds copies. Many runs of parochial publications can still be found on dusty vestry shelves!

Descriptions of material

Towards the end of the nineteenth century enthusiastic incumbents often set up parish magazines, almanacs and calendars. Parochial sources were often an attempt to put the parish at the heart of their community and can be extremely informative, bringing many aspects of church and parish to life. Parish magazines, which began to grow in popularity from the 1860s, are the most commonly available type of source material and are perhaps the most widely useful. In terms of content they are as diverse as the incumbents who generally put them together. Parish magazines will often describe the life of the church itself: giving details about services, funds and appeals, and **rites of passage**, as well as activities with children such as [Sunday Schools](#) and [Church Schools](#) (see the Building on History website for further details).

The Revd J Erskine Clarke, Vicar of St Michael's, Derby, who is reputed to have been the pioneer of parish magazines, said that the publication should be 'aimed not at the committed in the parish but at the other half'. Thus parish magazines may often inform you as to how individual churches positioned themselves within the community. They frequently give the historian valuable insights into the [outreach activities](#) and [welfare work](#) undertaken by clergy and congregation in the local community. (See the Building on History website for further details.)

Parish magazines are a valuable source for local historians as they can provide a great deal of information about the local area: everything from cricket scores to details to railway timetables! Additionally they are a mine of information for [genealogists and family historians](#) (see the Building on History website for further details) giving details of baptisms, marriages and burials.

This document is online at:

<http://www.open.ac.uk/Arts/building-on-history-project/resource-guide/source-guides/parochial.htm>