

How did parishes engage with social issues?

Many of the churches of London applied themselves to combating the 'unnatural condition of society' by playing a key social role in providing relief and welfare.

Look. As social problems often corresponded with the existence of a large working class or poor populations it will be worth looking for indicators of the social makeup of the community in the past. Can you find industrial buildings or houses which suggest the existence of a large working class population in the past? Which churches existed in these areas? Is there living accommodation for larger number of curates and/workers? You may also find ancillary buildings connected to churches – what social function did these serve?

Listen. By talking to longer-standing members of churches and older members of the community you may be able to tap into the collective memory of the local area. It may be that conversations will shed light on past parish social initiatives. Does it seem that the community or districts within it have a long-standing 'working-class' or 'poor' identity? For more information on oral history see the Building on History website for further details.

Read. The following may be useful:

Jeffrey Cox, *The English Churches in a Secular Society: Lambeth 1870-1930*, Oxford: OUP, 1982.

Gareth Stedman-Jones, *Outcast London: A Study of the Relationship between Classes in Victorian London*, Oxford: OUP, 1971.

Stephen Yeo, *Religion and Voluntary Organisations in Crisis*, London: Croon Helm, 1976.

Donald Lewis, *Lighten their Darkness: The Evangelical Mission to Working-Class London*, Carlisle: Paternoster, 2001.

Research. A variety of sources can shed light on the social activities of an individual parish. **Charles Booth's** survey of working class life, published as *Life and Labour of the People* (1889), contains details on the social engagement of churches. Other potentially useful sources include parish magazines, which may be found at either **London Metropolitan Archives** or **Lambeth Palace Library**, often contain adverts and descriptions of church activities, and local newspapers (which can be found in **local archives**). In addition, many churches published yearbooks and annual reports, some of which can be found in the British Library or the **London Metropolitan Archives**. You might also find that the **autobiographies and biographies** of individual clergy are of use. For insights into broader or diocesan attitudes towards social issues, the pamphlets collections of **Lambeth Palace Library** and Sion College may be helpful.

See the Building on History website for further details.

This document is online at:

<http://www.open.ac.uk/Arts/building-on-history-project/resource-guide/themes/social-issues.htm>