

Leaving Certificate History Research Study Report

A Guide on how to Research
Wicklow County Archives



The following support documents are available to download free of charge from our website at <https://www.wicklow.ie/Living/Services/Arts-Heritage-Archives/Archives/Collections/Digitised-Collections>

	Format	Content
Teacher's and Student's Guide to the Archives	PDF & Print	A guide to the County Archives and the resources available to help you complete your project
Teacher's Guide to the RSR	PDF	A guide of the processes and requirements for completing the RSR project.
Student's Guide to the RSR	PDF	Step by step guide to how to complete the RSR, with guidance and checklists
How to do Historical Research	Powerpoint	A presentation on how to approach historical research
How to do Historical Research - Student Guide	PDF	Where to find information sources. How to carry out research, record your findings and correctly cite information sources
RSR Worksheets	PDF	A series of worksheets to help students record their findings

Note

Website links can change over time.

If you find that some of the links in this guide no longer work go to:

www.wicklow.ie
and search for
County Archives



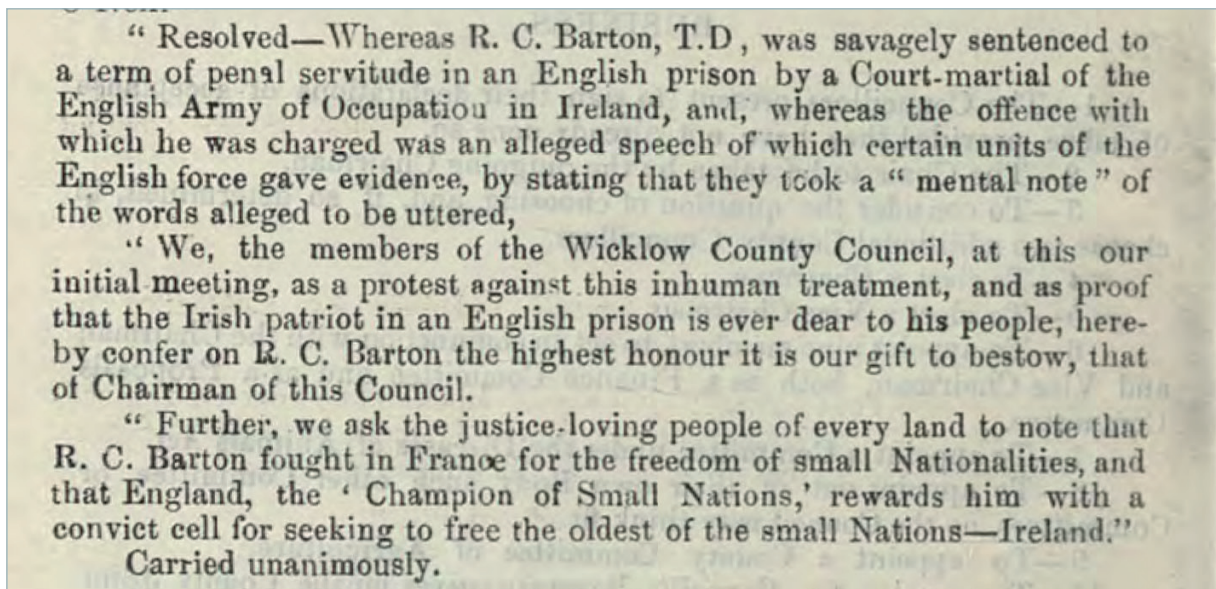
WHAT IS RESEARCH?

Research is used worldwide. It is when an individual or group looks into a topic by taking what we already know and trying to build on this information. Doing research helps us gain a new understanding of a topic. When doing historical research, it is to find more information, and to make sure what we know is **accurate** and **factual**.

How do we conduct research in History?

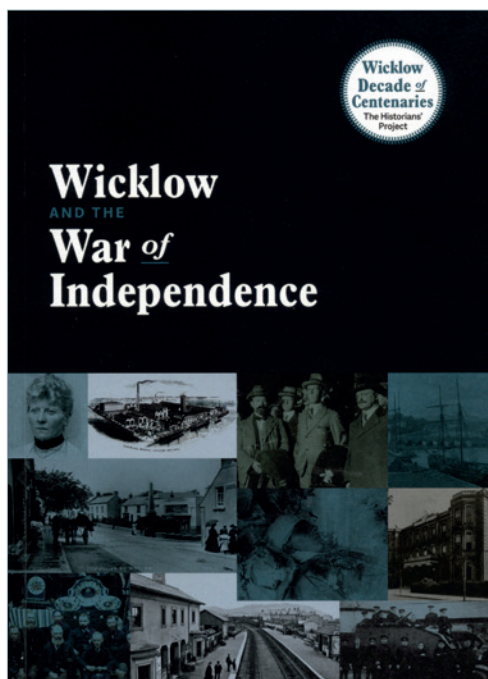
Researching a topic means looking at different types of sources related to the topic. Sources can be divided into primary sources and secondary sources.

Primary sources are records that were created at the time of the event or direct records of people who had experienced the event. They are first-hand accounts of what happened. The main types of sources are newspapers, official documents, government reports, speeches, interviews, autobiographies, diaries, letters, etc.



Primary Source: Wicklow County Council Minutes - 18th June 1920: The Council protests against the imprisonment of RC Barton T.D. and make him Chairman of the Council. Barton would later be a leading participant in the Treaty Negotiations.

Secondary sources are from a later date. They are created after the event has happened, but still provide us with information of the event/person being studied. They are typically books written on the history of your chosen topic (**you cannot** use your history textbook as it is too general), biographies, articles, most websites, etc.



Secondary Source: Wicklow and the War of Independence. History of Wicklow during the War of Independence.

Examples of Primary Sources	Examples of Secondary Sources
Photographs, Cartoons, Drawings, Census, Government Documents, Newspapers, Diaries, Letters, Interviews, Posters, Maps, Speeches, Autobiographies, Magazines, Artefacts	History Books, Biographies, Websites TV/Film/Radio Documentaries, Podcasts

While you may be able to visit the Library and the County Archives to carry out your research, remember that there is a huge amount of information and material can be found online. Wicklow County Archives <https://www.wicklow.ie/Living/Services/Arts-Heritage-Archives/Archives/Collections/Digitised-Collections> and the Wicklow Heritage Project <https://heritage.wicklowheritage.org> are a great starting point.

We also have different types of sources: **written**, **visual**, **aural**, **oral** and **tactile** sources.

Written	Government records, Autobiographies, Biographies, Letters, Diaries, Emails
Visual	Documentaries, Films, Maps, Drawings, Cartoons, Posters, Photographs, Artwork
Aural	Speeches, Podcasts, Recorded Interviews
Oral	Interviews
Tactile	Artefacts – Coins, Jewellery, Weapons, Clothing,

(See: RSR Worksheets: Key Word Definitions)



Steps to take in Conducting Research in History:

Historical Significance:

Before coming to a decision on a topic for research, we must ensure that it is historically significant. In selecting the topic, the following four things must be considered:

Note: Your selected topic must fit into at least one of these categories to be considered historically significant.

1	Remarkable	Was the event or person being researched remarked upon at the time or since the time?
		Were people talking about it at the time? Are people still talking about it in modern times?
		Is it an important event/person that is known nationally and/or internationally?
		Did this event/person impact their world? In what way were their words/thoughts/actions/beliefs impacting the world at their time in history?
2	Remembered	Is the person/event collectively remembered? How is it remembered?
		Has the commemoration/remembrance of this event/person changed over the course of history? How?
		Are there commemorations to celebrate this person/event?
		Is it remembered locally/nationally/internationally?
		Do we still speak about this event/person regularly?
3	Resulting in Change	Did the person/event have consequences for the future?
		Did the event/persons actions change the course of history? How?
		Did the course of the event change an aspect of culture/society/politics? How?
		Did the actions of the person influence modern life? How?
4	Revealing	Does the event/person reveal something about another time in the past?
		Does the event/person reveal more information about a specific period in the past?
		Are we able to draw comparisons and connections between the past and now because of this event/person?
		What can we learn from the event/person that may influence our actions and beliefs now?

We need to understand the historical significance of an event, person or issue before we research it. Really, we need to know why it is an important part of history. If it is only important to an individual family, then it would not be historically significant for everyone. But, if it is a person from a family who was involved in a national or international movement, that would be historically significant for more people.

For example: **'Researching an uncle who fought in WWI'** will be significant for your family, but not everyone and would not meet the criteria of being "Historically Significant". **'Understanding the role of Irish soldiers from Wicklow in WWI'** will be historically significant to a lot of people. **'Exploring the childhood of Robert Barton'** may not be as historically significant as **'Analysing the role of Robert Barton in the Treaty Negotiations'**.

It is also important that the topic being researched is something you are interested in. The aim is to further one's understanding and knowledge of a topic. The more interest you have in the topic being researched, the easier it should be to engage with the topic, it will be easier and more enjoyable.

A focused topic

In order to limit the amount of work you have to do and to give your RSR response some depth you need to make your topic focused on a specific issue – e.g., apply dates, a specific event in a person's life, a specific building during a period of in history. The following table will give you some indication as to the difference between a general and focused topic:

General	Focused
The 1798 Rebellion	South or West Wicklow and the 1798 Rebellion
The Great Famine	The Coolattin Estate during the Famine
	The Poor Law and the Shillelagh Workhouse
	Death and Emigration from Wicklow during the Famine
Ireland and World War I	Wicklow women in WWI
	WWI impact on Wicklow
	Wicklow men in the great War
Wicklow Women	Kynoch Munitions, Arklow and WWI
	Jennie Wyse Power - Women's right activist 1858 - 1941
	Anna Parnell - Ladies Land League
	Teresa Dargan - Poor Law Union and Rathdrum Rural District Council

(See: RSR Worksheets: Why is my topic historically significant?)

Complete

I have selected a topic for research and understand how it is historically significant.



Formulating questions

Now that a topic has been decided, the next step is to come up with some questions that will be answered about the event/person/issue.

You should aim to have 3-5 questions as part of the research. These questions should focus on something in particular i.e. they should be focused and not too broad. There are two types of questions, and there should be at least one question from each. Think about creating questions that will show off your skills acquired in History.

Factual Questions:	Analytical Questions:
They ask you to research specific information	To answer analytical questions that you have posed, you must go through the sources.
Type of Questions:	Type of Questions:
Who? What? When? Where? Why? How?	Why is something historically significant? Comparing events/people/issues. Finding the cause of events/issues. Assessing the impact or consequences of a person's actions/event.
Generally, this type of question will have one definite answer.	Answers are not given in all the research, instead you must come to your own conclusion.

When creating your questions, keep it specific to the topic. Also make sure that it is something you are interested in finding more information about.

Complete	I have created a few questions on my topic. I aim to answer these questions as part of my research process.	
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Finding Sources

The topic is selected, and the questions are formed. The next step is to answer the questions. When looking for the answer to questions, there can be many different sources on the topic.

Where do we find sources? One of the main locations is historical repositories – these are libraries, archives, and museums. Repositories should be the first stop when looking for sources, you may go in looking for one source, but the librarians, archivists and historians may be able to point you in the direction of more sources and information. Remember - a lot of repositories can now be accessed online.

If you choose a topic which is based in Wicklow, you may be able to visit the Library and the County Archives to carry out your research. There is a huge amount of information and material can be found online. Wicklow County Archives <https://www.wicklow.ie/Living/Services/Arts-Heritage-Archives/Archives/Collections/Digitised-Collections> and the Wicklow Heritage Project <https://heritage.wicklowheritage.org> are a great starting point. See the **Guide to the Archives** for information on these sources and possible topic selection.

The most common sources used are books, websites, artefacts, documentaries, interviews, diaries, letters, maps and photographs. Remember to focus on a specific aspect or question when looking for sources, don't try to answer all of the questions from one source.

However, if using the internet as part of your search, you must be specific in the search terms – e.g., don't search for the War of Independence, instead be more specific in what you want to find out, 'Wicklow and the War of Independence'. Don't over rely on the internet. Check out primary and published sources in your local library or at Wicklow County Archives. Try to use only one website as part of the research. This doesn't mean you cannot use a book that was accessed through the internet, but you should use different types of sources to consult. Again, try to focus on one specific aspect of your research at a time - read about it, write down the information gathered and see if it answers the questions and gives you the information you intended on finding out.

Analysing Sources

Reading the sources is a big part of the process, so you must know what information you are looking for! Remember the questions that were compiled at the start of the process? They should be written down beside you as you read the sources.

A good way to examine your sources is to write the title, the author and the type of source at the top of the page. After each section/chapter, stop and write down some of the notable points you came across in that section/chapter. Or if there is a quote from a significant person that you want to include in your final piece, jot it down on the notes page and add the page number to the citation of the source. Once you have finished using that source it is a good idea to jot down what you found good (strengths) about the source, and what you found bad (weaknesses).

(See: RSR Worksheets: Source Analysis)



When examining a source, consider the following questions:

It is important to identify the reliability of sources. When conducting research, historical records and written histories should be questioned around issues of accuracy, exaggeration, prejudice, propaganda and bias when dealing with sources. Looking at a number of sources, and comparing their content, will show if there are issues with the information presented.

- ▲ What type of source is this?
- ▲ Where did this source come from?
- ▲ Is this a primary or secondary source?
- ▲ What facts can you learn from this source?

Strengths and Weaknesses of the Source

To ensure a source is reliable, you should cross-check the information. That means what is said in Source A, should be checked against your other sources to ensure it is reliable and factual.

- ▲ Are there any opinions presented in the source?
- ▲ Is the viewpoint presented in the source objective, or does it show signs of bias?
- ▲ Is this source an example of a reliable source?
- ▲ Is this a useful source? What new information did you gain from it?

Remember – if you are reading a book or looking at a website, see if there are any other recommended books, websites, articles, etc., to read on the topic.

Complete

I have found a number of sources based on my topic.
I have examined my sources, taking notes of new information gathered.

Citing Sources

Upon completion of the research, you must cite (reference) what sources you have used. With each type of source, there may be a different way to cite your research. Incomplete or incorrect citations will cost you marks.

Use the table below when citing all your sources:

Type of Source	How to reference this source:
Book	Title, Author, Publisher, Place and Year of Publication
Local History Journal	Title of Article, Author, Title of Local History Journal, Volume Number, Year
Visit	Name of Location Visited, Date Visited
Website	Web page Title, URL, Author (if stated on website), Date Accessed
Interview	Name of Interviewee, Subject of the Interview, Interviewed By, Recorded Using, Location, Date of Interview
Newspaper Article	Title of Article, Author, Name of Newspaper, Date Published, Page Number
TV or Radio Documentary	Title, Year, Channel, Writer/Director, Presenter/Narrator, URL, Date Accessed

It is very important to state where you have gotten all your information. If you read sources and then re-write it or write it in your own words and don't give credit to the author, you are stealing another person's work – it is called plagiarism.

Complete

I have correctly cited all of the sources that I used during my research.



Linking research/evidence in your work

Now that we have gathered all of our evidence, completed the research and answered the questions posed at the start of the process, it is important to link all of this into your final written piece. Consider some of the following link words and phrases that you can include in your write up:

- ▲ It is explained in Source A ... that ...
- ▲ When I looked at Source B, I discovered that ...
- ▲ Having read two different sources, one a primary source and the other a secondary source, it is now my understanding that ...
- ▲ Despite new research and evidence, many people still believe that ...
- ▲ Historians agree/disagree that ...
- ▲ A similar aspect in the sources was that ...
- ▲ A common element in all of the sources was ...
- ▲ Source A explains how ... however, the opposite can be seen in Source B, which states ...
- ▲ The account that is given in Source A is very different to the other sources, nothing like this occurs in ...

Complete

I have linked the sources used, and the new information gathered into my final piece of work.

Final Tips and Checklist

	To do:	Complete:
1	The topic I have selected is historically significant and I am interested in finding out more about it.	
2	I understand and can explain how my topic is historically significant by referring to the 5R's.	
3	I have narrowed the focus on my research – e.g., adding dates, selecting a specific event in a person's life, the importance of a building in a key event, etc.	
4	I have come up with a few questions that I want to find the answers to as part of my research.	
5	I have found a few sources to use as part of my research.	
6	I have used the questions listed to ensure my sources are objective and factual.	
7	I can categorise my sources into primary and secondary; and written, visual, oral, aural and tactile.	
8	I have read through all my sources and gathered information to help answer the questions previously formulated.	
9	I have taken note of the correct information from my sources and can cite them properly in my final piece.	
10	I have linked the information gathered from the sources in my written work.	
11	I have proof-read all my work, checking the spelling and grammar, and that all the sources are cited correctly.	



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Wicklow County Archives

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