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A few useful online resources for researching industrial objects and local companies and industries

Often you still can't beat a book, but here are some general websites that I have found useful for answering enquiries and researching objects. There are also numerous local and specialist websites; just remember to assess whether the information is reliable, particularly if the site is not 'official'.

FirstBASE

<http://www.shcg.org.uk/firstbase/index.html>

SHCG's own database for curators (under development) aims to provide an easy-to-use database of key reference information relating to the whole range of subjects dealt with regularly by history curators.

GB Esp@cenet

<http://gb.espacenet.com/>

Search UK patent applications from 1900 onwards – useful if you have a patent number on a mystery object. If you're not used to patents, look at the information at <http://www.patent.gov.uk/patent/whatis/index.htm> as there are various traps for the unwary.

Historical Directories

<http://www.historicaldirectories.org/>

If you want to trace a particular local company, this site is a starting point, with a selection of local and trade directories from 1750 to 1919. Use with care, though – you'll still need to visit a library for a really thorough search through a full set of directories.

British History Online

<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/>

Includes searchable text of the Victoria County History series for selected counties – quality varies but some of the brief histories of local trades and industries are extremely useful, with references for further research.

SHCG-LIST

As well as websites, don't forget **SHCG's email list** - SHCG members can send photos of mystery objects to curators across the UK. To join, send an email to shcg-list-request@mailtalk.ac.uk (this is also the address for any queries you may have) stating your name and whether you are a personal member or employed by an institutional member. If you work for an institutional member, please also state the name of the institution. You will receive an automated acknowledgement of your request.

Requests to join the list are processed manually, usually within 48 hours, but please be patient and allow up to 10 days. Once your membership is processed you will receive some automatically generated emails, including one containing a jargon-free guide to how the list works. After this, you will receive all emails sent by members to the list address, and will be able to post messages yourself by following the simple instructions in the guide.