

Exploring local history with children

Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service



A Homework Guide

Introduction

At Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service we wish to give children the tools that historians use in their study of the past. This guide will give parents and children the tips they need to explore the hidden history of their area.

Over the years we have been asked, by parents, about what we hold that can be of assistance to children conducting local history research as part of a school project. This resource is created in response to these enquiries and is adapted from one of our publications, created for teachers, to help children answer the question 'What was it like to live here in the past?' This title came from the old National Curriculum unit, created by the Department of Education that dealt with the teaching of local history. We have used the ideas, sources and structure suggested in this unit.

The original aim of this unit was, not only to give the children an understanding of their local area and appreciation of its history and diversity, but also to develop the children's research skills.

What sources are available?

The reference library on level 2 of The Hive, as well as the local lending section of the library, has a large number of books to refer to. All of these are listed on the [library catalogue](#).

For many places on our county the story of its past is yet to be written. Where no written history exists the children will find themselves constructing a picture of the past by using an assortment of primary sources.

This leaflet suggests resources to be used and provides a series of structured questions that can help the children fully explore the available evidence.

Many of the primary resources mentioned in this pack are available at The Hive. Some are held upon microfilm in our Self Service area, on level 2 of The Hive. This area is open from 8:30 to 22:00 daily and you will not need any equipment, other than a Worcestershire library card should you wish to take copies.

Other items are only available to view in our Original Archive area. Please refer to our website for details of when this area is open and how you can access them.

At what age group is this pack targeted?

The questions posed in this pack could be used with 7 to 12 year olds. All age groups need to begin by evaluating the environment around them and then using the evidence to draw their own conclusions. According to the understanding of the child simpler or more complex questions can be asked. This resource is to be used by parents and children working together. Older children can use the information to begin to understand the development of their area and put it in context of national trends and events.

How to get started

A good place to start is to look at your area as it is now and think about what you can see.



- Ask your child about what they know of the local area and talk about its features.
- Go out into the locality and take photographs of a variety of familiar buildings.
- Use the photographs to lead a discussion about old and new. Can your child come up with a definition of the term "old"?

Let your child sort the photographs according to their definition and let them explain their reasons.

Place photographs on the map.

Use the evidence from the walk and the photographs to discuss:

- Are the buildings residential or commercial?
- Has there been a change of use?
- Why have you come to this conclusion?
- Who may have used these buildings?
- Who may have lived in these buildings? i.e. rich or poor?
- Why were these buildings placed where they are in the community?

Explore the Past

Begin to explore the development of the locality. Speculate about how they think it might have been different years ago. Why do they think this? Can they find any evidence to support this from looking around them? Do road names offer a clue?

- Are the buildings that surround this one similar? Do they think that they were built at a similar time?
- Relate the community surrounding your home /school to the nearest town.
- Ask your child where the people work / shop today.
- Ask your child where people may have worked / shopped in the past.
- Follow transport links to the centre using passenger time tables. It may be appropriate to look at the pattern of services to determine who the service caters for.
- What does this show about the development of the area? i.e. did it evolve at different periods or was there one large scale development?
- What reasons can they think of for this development?

How can WAAS help?

What sources are held at The Hive that can be of assistance?

Maps

Maps could be used from different periods with selected features, e.g. the school, church or a shop, being noted as reference points for comparison.



Find out what the area is like today by using a current map.

Begin to think about why the town, suburb, village began to grow in this particular location. Speculate about what this shows about the development of the wider area eg improved transport routes would allow suburbs to grow.

- Compare it with an earlier OS map of the area and locate recognisable features.
- Find what is different, what has changed, e.g. what buildings, roads were not on the earlier map.

Explore the Past

- Ask the child what buildings have appeared or disappeared.
- Older students might like to explore the Tithe maps. These maps were created in response to the 1838 Tithe Commutation Act, which calculated how much money every tenant owed to the church for the land that they occupied. From the maps the number of the relevant plot(s) of land that you are interested in can be identified. This number can then be found on the Apportionment CD in the self-service area. For each numbered plot the document will show
 - who owned
 - who tenanted
 - what was on that land
 - its rateable value.

This gives the student a good understanding of how the land was used and the dynamics of land ownership around 1840.

- View the Enclosure maps, created in the late eighteenth to the mid nineteenth century, which will give a picture of how the common land was divided up and all of the landowners are named.
- For more in depth research the student can search for any Estate map or plans that we may hold in the Original Archive area. Land ownership in the past was held in far fewer hands. Some landowners had very detailed maps of their estate drawn up as working documents or as a demonstration of their wealth. In addition we also hold some sales particulars for estates that outline the extent and nature of the property.

Where to find historic maps?

The Historic Environment Record (HER), in the corner of the Self Service area, has copies of pre-war maps and tithe maps on computer and can overlay the images on screen to help chart the changes in land use. The H.E.R. may also have details of any historic monuments or results of excavations carried out in your area. The team are available 13:00 to 16:00 Mon to Fri and you do not need to book an appointment.

Alternatively contact HER by making an [online enquiry](#).

In the Self Service area on level 2 of The Hive, there are 1st (approx. 1885), 2nd (1904) and 3rd edition Ordnance Survey maps for the county, held upon microfilm.

They have the scale 6" or 25" to the mile, with 25" giving most detail.

Please see a member of staff about accessing these.

CDs of Tithes and Enclosures are also available in the Self Service area. To access a computer, and to take copies, you will need a Worcestershire Library card.

There are many Estate papers available to view in the Original Archive area.



Pictures and photographs



Find two photographs of the area; one of the area today and one of the same area in the past. Direct the child's attention to look at different aspects e.g. buildings, transport, street furniture, people.

Ask your child open ended questions such as 'What has changed and what has stayed the same?' According to their findings ask your child to speculate

- 'Why might these changes have happened?'
- 'Why might these features have stayed the same?'

Where can we find old photographs?

In the Self Service area, on level 2 of The Hive, there are approximately 64,000 photographs on microfiche. These photographs form part of the Worcestershire Photographic Survey.

They are organised by parish or, in the case of Worcester City, by road name.

To see what photographs we hold please refer to our [website](#). This database allows you to search by parish/street or by keyword.

The results table will give you a photograph number and tell you when and by whom the photograph was taken.

The photograph number, in all cases apart from those microfiche relating to Worcester City, is written on the outside of the envelopes to help you locate which microfiche you need.



In most cases copies can be taken from the microfilm as long as the copy is for your own personal study. A few photographers do however ask for their permission to be sought before copies are taken. Before taking copies please consult a member of Archive staff who will be happy to advise further.

Census returns

From 1841 and every 10 years thereafter a survey of the population and households in all areas of the country were made. Forms were left with the head of the household with the legal responsibility of completing details for every member of that household. From 1851 the relationship of the individual to the head of the household had to be noted. Their ages and occupations and place of birth were also noted.

Censuses can be used to:

- find out about different families who have occupied one property over time
- compare the population of one area to another (to discover if one area was wealthier than another)
- discover which occupations were the most common in the local area giving clues as to local employers
- discover how an area changed/developed by comparing an earlier and later census



Look at one household and consider the following questions:

- What are the relationships of those in the family?
- Is the family larger than we would expect today?
- What job does the Head of the household do?
- Is this still a job that would be done today?
- Where were the individuals born?

Explore the Past

- Why might the Head of the household have moved to the locality?
- Were the children all born in the same place?
- Does this mean that the family were mobile?
- Does this mean that certain professions required mobility?
- Why were there so many old people living with their family?
- Were there other members of the household that didn't belong to the family?
- What does it mean if the family has domestic servants?
- What does the word 'apprentice' mean?
- What does this mean about the Head's business?
- What would it be like living with your employer?



Compare the one household with other entries:

- Are the other households employed in the same profession?
- What does this tell you about this area?
- Do the other households have servants?
- Are there both rich and poor in the same area?



Compare the census return for a given year to the Trade directory (see page14) for that period:

- Can any more information be found out about an individual family from the Trade directory?
- Were they wealthy enough to advertise their business?
- What sort of other businesses were operating in that area?
- Would it have been a self-contained community?



Compare an early census with a later one:

- Is the same family still there?
- Is there now more than 1 family living in the property?
- How many of the children are still living at home?
- Are there as many servants as there were?
- Are the family getting richer or poorer?
- Could this tell you anything about the area in general?
- Are there as many people in the area doing the same jobs as they were?
- How might local industries have changed?

Note of caution:

- Copies to download will be in the original script and may be difficult to read. Consider writing it out before presenting it to the children.

Where to find census returns:

Returns for the decades from 1841 to 1911 can be found online at <http://www.ancestry.co.uk> and [www.findmypast.](http://www.findmypast.com) Both sites are subscription sites but can be accessed free of charge in The Hive.

Trade Directories

Trade directories published more frequently than the census, and give information about the community not found elsewhere.



- Descriptions of cities, parishes, towns and villages. These may include geographical, historical and statistical details
- Information about local facilities, institutions and associations
- Listings for private residents, traders, trades and professions
- Details of important people
- Advertisements

Where to find Trade Directories

Directories covering Worcestershire and neighbouring counties for the period 1820 to 1970s can be found in the Self Service area.

Other sources

Sales particulars, diaries, letters may be available for your given area. A visit to Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service, at the Hive will show if any are available. Please visit when the Original archive area is [open](#).

What to do next?

Summarise what has been discovered so far.

Link facts to deductions made emphasising that events 'would seem to show'.



- Explore whether they think that changes have improved the area.
- Make clear the difference between fact and opinion.
- Put the information that they have deduced into a rough timeline.
- Explore specific changes that have occurred in the local environment that the children may have experienced in their own life time.
- Place selves, in the present, upon this timeline and ask how information can be gained about the period in between.

Oral histories



Talk to an elderly neighbour/ grandparent

- Brief the interviewee as to the purpose of the interview and what you are hoping to achieve.
- Prepare questions especially relating to the type of changes that the children have identified e.g.
 - What sorts of punishments were there when you were at school?
 - Can you describe your journey to school?
 - What was your home like?
 - What was a particular building used for when you were young?

Encourage open ended questions and make sure that the children stay focused as to the purpose of the interview.

When the visitor has left differentiate what can be considered fact as opposed to opinion.

Why might the person believe that education was better/harder in the past? If appropriate, explore how hindsight might alter perception.

Now your child has completed this exploration they will have increased their knowledge of the local area and will have learnt new skills; your child is now an historian.

Enjoyed your research?

If you would like to go onto explore the history of your house or your family look at our leaflets to see how we can [help](#).

If you, or the staff at your child's school, would like to find out what workshops we offer please see our [website](#).

Contact Us

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By telephone: 01905 822866

Website and Blog: www.explorethepast.co.uk

Click 'Contact Us' to ask us a question.



www.twitter.com/explorethepast



www.facebook.com/WorcsAAS or search for 'Explore The Past'

