



Teacher Fellowship Programme

Local history: untold stories of the people of Britain

How much has the Leeman Road area of York changed over time?

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The enquiry is focused on the area surrounding our school, an area of mainly Victorian terraced houses. It provides opportunities for children to use a variety of primary sources to make comparisons, to identify what has changed and what has stayed the same, and to consider causes and consequences of change in an area familiar to them.

The key elements of the enquiry are:

- using maps to gain an understanding of the chronology of the area
- a local walk to gain a sense of the area as it is now and to provide a context to the study
- a comparison of photographs from the past and present to identify what has changed and what has stayed the same
- a study of local shops, how they have changed over time and the reasons why
- gaining an understanding of how the area has changed during living memory, through interviews with local people

The enquiry was planned to be used with a Year 2 class. In Key Stage 1, the National Curriculum states that children should be taught about significant historical events, people and places in their own locality. This enquiry doesn't look at a significant event but focuses on the lives of local people and how they changed. It could be adapted for use in Key Stage 2, where children are expected to undertake a local history unit, which could include a study of an aspect of history or a site dating from a period beyond 1066 that is significant in the locality.

Rationale

York is an important historical city and there is evidence of the Roman, Viking and medieval past, as well as the more modern railway and chocolate industries. These aspects, which have national and global significance, would make interesting local history studies. However, I wanted to focus on the area around the school, closer to where the majority of the children live. We already ensure that the local aspects of Roman, Anglo-Saxon and Viking York are included within those broader topics. In Key Stage 2, we look at the impact of the First World War on the Leeman Road area. This enquiry provides a context for that study and introduces children to a range of primary sources.

The Leeman Road area of the city is a traditional working-class area of terraced housing, within walking distance of the city centre. It grew up from the 1880s to provide housing for workers at the nearby railway and carriage works. Prior to this, it was farmland. The area is a distinct geographical area, surrounded by railway lines and the river Ouse. This makes it suitable for a local study that would also meet the requirements of the geography curriculum, which requires children in Key Stage 1 to use simple fieldwork and observational skills to study the geography of their school and its grounds, as well as the key human and physical features of its surrounding environment.

St Barnabas CE Primary School is situated at the edge of the area, overlooking the river and with views across to York Minster. We have recently been re-evaluating our curriculum and

trying to establish what skills and knowledge we want our children to have and how we can enable them to gain an understanding of key concepts. Many of our children come from low-income families who work long hours. The children don't have the opportunity to visit local places, so have a poor knowledge and understanding of the world around them; they lack curiosity and don't ask questions about their surroundings. The aim of the local history unit is to present a topic to which the children can relate, that sparks their interest and natural curiosity, and that invites them to ask questions and find out answers about the area around them. They will understand that their local area has a past and is continuing to change and develop, and that they play a part in that.

I have been able to draw on a wide range of sources to develop this enquiry, but it could be equally successful if it was simplified and focused on a particular aspect. For example, it could look at how shopping has changed in the local area or high street. You could look at the shops then and now, what they sell and why people have changed their shopping habits. Another alternative would be to use the maps as the starting point and look more closely at the stages of development and match these to different types of buildings in the area. One feature that I would like to look at more closely is the ferry that existed before a bridge over the River Ouse was built.

Learning aims

When teaching the Year 2 class about the Great Fire of London, I was asked whether it had really happened. The children struggled to recognise the difference between fiction and events that occurred in the past. I therefore wanted this topic to be one to which the children could really relate. It is based in the community with which they are familiar. Using photographs and memories of people known to the children helps to ground the topic in the children's knowledge and experience, allowing them to make observations and ask questions about places that they recognise. This will help them to gain an understanding that the area has changed over time and will continue to change in the future.

Using a range of sources of evidence enables the children to ask questions, carry out observations, formulate interpretations of what happened in the past and learn the skills of an historian. I wanted the children to notice what has changed and think about why those changes have occurred. For example, there used to be over 30 local shops; now there are five. Why were there more shops here in the past? Where do people shop now? I wanted the children to make observations and recognise how things change and develop over time, and to identify what stays the same, enabling them to place events and images in chronological order. This allows them to see cause and effect and have an idea of the 'big picture'.

Before starting the enquiry, I also wanted the children to learn why the area is called Leeman Road. Few of the children had ever wondered who George Leeman was and why a street had been named after him. This also gave us opportunities to add cultural capital by including a visit from our local MP and a visit to the Mansion House.

Structure of the enquiry

When formulating the enquiry question, I wanted to incorporate as many different sources of evidence as I could – maps, photographs, trade directories and oral history – to help the children to understand different aspects of the area's past and make connections with the present. These enable children to ask questions, identify continuity and change, and notice similarities and differences. I also wanted the children to begin to understand about the diversity of evidence available and the importance of utilising a range of material.

The enquiry begins by looking at the maps of the local area; as we have previously used them in geography, the children can identify the local area and it builds on previous knowledge. This is a good opportunity to introduce the concept of chronology and change over time. We use Digimaps and can slide between the current map of the area and maps from the 1950s and 1890s. This gives the children the opportunity to identify how the area has developed and to place the maps in chronological order.

After looking at the maps, I want the children to see how the features identified on the maps relate to the area as it is now. Therefore, the next lesson discusses what features there are now and identifies them on a walk around the local area. It also gives the children the opportunity to share their experiences of living and growing up in the area, which will help them to gain a sense of ownership of the enquiry.

Having built up a picture of the area as it is now, the next lesson uses old photographs. The children should be able to recognise many of the buildings and compare them to modern photographs. This allows discussion about what has changed and what has stayed the same, and thinking about why the changes have occurred. For example, many of the photographs of the past include horses and carts, so we can discuss how methods of transport have changed.

A significant feature of the area in the past was the number of shops. This part of the enquiry allows the children to investigate how many shops there were, where they were and what they sold, using entries from trade directories, data from a 1920s survey and adverts from the parish magazines.

The last source of evidence is oral history. I want to focus the enquiry back to the children's experiences of living in the area and to compare them to those of older residents.

The final outcome involves the children returning to the enquiry question 'How much has the Leeman Road area of York changed over time?' and considering how, after examining the different sources of evidence, the area has changed. This could be a great opportunity to involve the local community by inviting parents, grandparents and other people into school, displaying our findings by creating a Leeman Road museum. At this event, we would display photos of the local area showing the changes over time, the photos from the parish magazines and quotes from the people who have been interviewed. Some of these would be on display boards, but I would also have some on tables where people are sitting having refreshments. These would be a prompt and provide an opportunity for conversations with local people, which could reveal more memories of the area and how it has changed. I

would encourage the children to ask questions about their visitors' memories of the area and think about what the area will be like in the future, as there will be redevelopment locally.

Lesson focus and learning objectives	Learning activities	Resources for the lesson
<p><i>Lesson 1: How can maps help us to define the Leeman Road area and identify changes?</i></p> <p>Children should learn:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To identify the features of the Leeman Road area To sequence maps in chronological order 	<p>Why is it called 'Leeman Road'? How do we remember important people? One way is to name streets after them. Who was George Leeman? Why do we remember him?</p> <p>Discuss with children: What are the features of the Leeman Road area now? How would they define the area? Compile a list.</p> <p>Can we identify the area on an Ordnance Survey map? Use Digimaps to find the school. What features can we see?</p> <p>What happens if we look at the map from the 1890s? What do we notice?</p> <p>Give the children copies of five maps of the local area. Can they put them in chronological order? What did they use to help them put them in chronological order? For example, the number of streets and houses.</p>	<p>Lesson 1 PowerPoint</p> <p>Digimaps or Google Maps of the local area: https://digimapforschools.edina.ac.uk</p> <p>Historic maps of the local area from the 1870s, 1890s, 1910s and 1950s (worksheet or available from: https://maps.nls.uk/os)</p> <p>George Leeman worksheet (from PowerPoint)</p>
<p><i>Lesson 2: What features of the Leeman Road area can we identify on a local walk?</i></p> <p>Children should learn:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To identify features of the local area through a local walk 	<p>Recap the features of the local area now. What shops are there? What other buildings are there? What types of houses are there?</p> <p>Go out for a walk around the local area. Can children see the church, vets, war memorial, shops and playgrounds? What differences can they identify in the houses? Are they terraced? Semi-detached? Do they have driveways? How can we tell which ones are oldest? Can children see any signs that buildings have changed use, such as larger windows on buildings that used to be shops?</p>	<p>Lesson 2 PowerPoint</p> <p>Eye Spy worksheet</p>
<p><i>Lesson 3: What can photographs tell us about continuity and</i></p>	<p>Examine the photographs of the local area. Can children recognise where they</p>	<p>Lesson 3 PowerPoint</p>

<p><i>change in the Leeman Road area?</i></p> <p>Children should learn:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To use photographs of the local area to identify what has changed and what has stayed the same 	<p>are? What is the same? What is different?</p> <p>In pairs, annotate pairs of photographs or complete a similarities and differences grid.</p> <p>Come back as a class and share findings. What have we discovered about how much the area has changed? Record similarities and differences on a class flipchart.</p>	<p>Photographs of the local area (from worksheet)</p> <p>Sticky notes or similarities and differences worksheet</p>
<p><i>Lesson 4: How have shops in the area changed? What does that tell us about changing shopping habits?</i></p> <p>Children should learn:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To look at evidence of shops in the past To identify what has changed and consider why changes in shopping have occurred 	<p>Recap what shops we have in the local area now. What do we buy from them? How do we do most of our shopping?</p> <p>Look at adverts from parish magazines. Where is the shop? What does it sell? Discuss with children what is sold in a grocer, draper, dairy and butcher.</p> <p>Look at the list of shops in the local area from the survey on the worksheet. What do you notice about the number of shops? Do you know what they all sell?</p> <p>Give children an outline of a shop. Write the address, what type of shop it is and draw what it sells. Stick it on an outline map of the local area so that we can see how many shops were in the area and what they sold.</p> <p>Why have those changes happened? We can buy food in supermarkets or online, which is cheaper and provides more choice. More women work outside the home, so have less time to go to different shops. We can use cars, so can carry more, and we have fridges and freezers, so food keeps for longer.</p>	<p>Lesson 4 PowerPoint</p> <p>List of information about shops from trade directories or survey (on worksheet): https://le.ac.uk/library/special-collections/explore/historical-directories</p> <p>Adverts from parish magazines (on worksheet)</p> <p>Outline of shop to write on (PowerPoint file) and a map</p>
<p><i>Lesson 5: How has the Leeman Road area changed within living memory?</i></p> <p>Children should learn:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To use interviews to find out how the 	<p>What do we mean by living memory?</p> <p>What questions would children like to ask people who have lived in the area for some years? For example: How have houses changed? How has the school changed? What shops can you remember?</p>	<p>Lesson 5 PowerPoint</p> <p>Memories from local people (on worksheets)</p> <p>Sticky notes</p>

<p>local area has changed during living memory</p>	<p>Hotseat using the collected memories (or invite one of the people in). Children ask questions about what the Leeman Road area was like in the past.</p> <p>Look at the memories. What can we learn about the area in the past? Record answers in a speech bubble.</p> <p>Reflect on the answers that children have been given – are there any that they found surprising?</p> <p>Why do you think people have different memories of the area? Think about when they first lived here – were they adults or children? Was it before or after houses had bathrooms? What decade are they remembering? Does it matter that people have different views?</p>	<p>Speech bubbles worksheet</p>
<p><i>Lesson 6: How much has the Leeman Road area changed over time and are there aspects that have remained the same?</i></p> <p>Children should learn:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To review how much the Leeman Road area has changed over time • To identify features that have stayed the same • To identify reasons for changes 	<p>Recap the changes that we have found out about over previous lessons.</p> <p>What was different in the past? What has changed now? Is there anything that is still the same? Why do you think that some things have changed while others have stayed the same?</p> <p>Record answers in a class Venn diagram or double bubble diagram.</p>	<p>Lesson 6 PowerPoint</p> <p>Venn diagram (PowerPoint file)</p> <p>Double bubble worksheet</p>

Reflections

The enquiry is powerful because it is rooted in the community around the school, where the children live and with which they are familiar. Much of the content of the history National Curriculum is outside the children's experiences, whereas this uses sources that are recognisable to the children and roots it in fact. We were able to use a range of sources of evidence to build up a detailed picture of the area, and to include memories from people that the children know. They were able to take ownership of the enquiry; they were historians constructing the history of our community.

The questions that it asks are simple – what has changed and what is the same? – which enables discussions to move on to asking why the children think that those changes have occurred.

It helped that we were using a discrete geographical area, defined by the surrounding railway lines and river, and a set time period from when the area became a community to the present day. This kept it manageable and allowed us to go for a walk around the area so that we could see the features as they are now. Many of the features will be familiar to the children, but they may never have asked questions about them before.

As part of our discussions about why the area was named after George Leeman, we talked about his role as Lord Mayor and Member of Parliament. To make this more relevant, we contacted the current MP and invited her to school to talk about her role.

The underlying principle of this enquiry is that the changes that have occurred in the local area have an historical importance. It is easy for children to think that history only involves significant people, battles or inventions. But history also involves looking at the lives of ordinary people and how they change over time. By studying the local area, children feel that their lives and the lives of their families and past generations are significant.

In addition, children can gain an understanding of how we build up a picture of the past through a variety of sources. This could become an ongoing project, adding other people's memories or focusing on different aspects, such as the history of the school or the links to the railway industry.

I was fortunate to have a range of sources upon which to build, but it would have been possible to look at a narrower enquiry depending upon the resources available, such as how the school has changed over time or how shopping has changed during living memory.

When formulating the enquiry, it is important to have an open mind and think about what you want the children to learn. I started by searching the internet for references to the local area, and found some very interesting information about an Honesty Girls Club and an Adult Education School. But it was difficult to see how I could build an enquiry around these without providing pupils with a great deal of contextual information. I revisited my aims – I wanted the children to feel a connection to the topic and to be able to have ownership of it.

It is also important to look at the school's overall history curriculum. Where will your enquiry fit? We already had a Key Stage 2 topic looking at the impact of the First World War on the local area. By looking at how much the area has changed over time in Key Stage 1, we are establishing a solid basis that can be built on later.

The planning and resourcing process was successful because I gave myself time to do it thoroughly before teaching the topic. There are often setbacks along the way when carrying out research and visiting archives. Local history groups may be run by volunteers who take a while to reply to queries; archives may have restricted opening hours; and the collection may not contain the information that you are hoping for. Starting early means that you have time to rethink and plan if your initial idea doesn't go as expected.

I began by looking at easily accessible information – photographs from the online archive held by the local library and historic maps. The maps showed a clear sequence of the area’s development, and the photographs are a good hook for children. Once I had these, I had enough information to know that I could construct an enquiry question. I could then dig deeper to find more specific information about how the area has changed and find out what was held in the archives. I suggest looking at local publications and newspapers online or in the local library, talking to people who have lived in the area for a while, and making connections. Speak to local history groups and see what is held in the local library. You may find that unexpected people hold key details or have time and are willing to undertake some of the research for you. Often, archivists are keen to help and know of other sources that can be useful. I found a book written by a member of the community, which referenced people with whom they had spoken and mentioned that the adverts were from the parish magazines, a source that I wouldn’t have thought of.

Useful websites and articles

Dixon, L. and Hales, A. (2015) ‘What makes good local history?’ in *Primary History*, 71, pp. 19–25.

(This article is very useful as it discusses the definition of local history and what good local history looks like and gives case studies. It stresses the importance of linking local history to the national and global story, showing how an area that doesn’t appear to have any significant history can be used for a local history study as long as links are made to more global changes or events. It gives examples of sources of evidence that can be used, such as maps, walks and oral histories, which helped me to see how I could incorporate these approaches. It also suggests ways for the subject leader to incorporate local history across the curriculum.)

Hughes, A. and De Silva, H. (2013) ‘One street, twenty children and the experience of a changing town: Year 7 explore the story of a London street’ in *Teaching History*, 151, Continuity Edition, pp. 55–63.

(This article looks at a Year 7 project but could be adapted for use in primary school. I used the suggestion that each lesson could focus on a different type of evidence, though I didn’t use census material in Key Stage 1. I felt that the way in which they presented their findings was very effective and could be adapted for pupils who find writing difficult. It showed how different sources could be linked to build up a bigger picture, and how a local area can give a ‘small view of a big picture’.)

Wilkinson, A. (2021) ‘Using trade directories – reconstructing life 100 years ago: a case study from Heckington, Lincolnshire’ in *Primary History*, 88, pp. 32–34.

(This article was a great starting point in how to use trade directories and where to find them. It shows how they can be used to provide a picture of the businesses in the area, while also pointing out their limitations. It reminded me of the necessity to unpick vocabulary, as children will be unfamiliar with terms such as ‘chimney sweep’ and ‘tailor’. I was fortunate enough to find a survey that had been carried out into the local area, which gave more information, but the trade directories were a good starting point. This article gives a list of suggestions that show how trade directories can be used as part of an enquiry.)

Hales, A. (2018) 'The local in history: personal and community history and its impact on identity' in *Education 3–13*, 46, no. 6, pp. 671–684.

(This article is useful for helping to focus on the purpose of local history and how it can put the child at the centre, helping them to be engaged, inspired and empowered by history teaching. It also looks at the difference between the physical locality and the community, and how we can make our study relevant to the children that we teach.)