



# Teacher Fellowship Programme

## Local history: untold stories of the people of Britain

How much do our primary school log books tell us about childhood in Wrecclesham 150 years ago?

Susannah Russell

## **How much do our primary school log books tell us about childhood in Wrecclesham 150 years ago?**

This enquiry is aimed at upper Key Stage 2 children and covers the local history study in the Key Stage 2 programme of study. My school's log books form the basis of this enquiry and, due to the amount of reading that is required, as well as some of the source material that looked at illness and death, I felt that it was more suitable for Years 5 or 6. The log books begin when the school was opened in 1863 and continue until the present day. The various headteachers write about a range of topics, from types of lessons and visitors to staffing issues and absences. The headteacher Mr Waterson, who wrote in the books 150 years ago, created very detailed logs, expressing his feelings about the state of the children and his role in their education – often not very complimentary! However, rather than investigate what a typical Victorian school day entailed, I chose to focus on the reasons why the children were away from school, because some of these were very specific for our local area. I felt that this would enable my pupils to develop a deeper understanding of what life was like for a Victorian child living in Wrecclesham.

### **Rationale**

Wrecclesham is a village on the outskirts of a market town called Farnham in Surrey. It was once a small rural community, but housing developments in the 1930s mean that it is now being swallowed up into the suburbs of Farnham. The present site of the school and most of the catchment area is in this more modern part of the village. The oldest area of Wrecclesham, which contains the high street and all the listed buildings, has a busy A road cutting through it and is not often visited by the pupils. The children did not see Wrecclesham as a rural setting, and there are no links to the interesting farming history surrounding the area. I felt that the log books were key to my local history project, as they provided an introduction to what life was like in Wrecclesham and would enable the pupils to have an understanding of how the agricultural calendar, especially the growing of hops, impacted the lives of the local Victorian children.

At St Peter's, we have two units dedicated to local history. The Year 4 Civil War topic looks at the war from a national perspective and then makes links with Farnham. The Year 2 topic focuses on a significant person from Aldershot, rather than the immediate locality of Wrecclesham. I will be using this project as a starting point to adapt these topics so that they link directly to Wrecclesham. I would like to create a spiral curriculum in terms of local history, starting in Reception, that can be built on as the children move through the school.

Prior to writing my learning resource, I carried out some pupil voice investigation to see what the children understood about the term 'local history' and what our local history was. Every child could explain that local history was about the history of their local area; however, it became very clear that they did not know anything about Wrecclesham. They could not name any older buildings apart from the Church, the school and Farnham Castle. They did not view where they lived as old and they did not connect it with 'history' because no big event happened here. I wanted this enquiry to give the children a sense of identity and belonging. I wanted them to feel that where they live is significant, and

also to see how their local history fits into the wider Victorian period. By using the log books as a starting point, it gave the children an immediate link to their childhood and school life. It helped to develop a sense of both continuity and change. I also wanted the children to develop their understanding of how to use sources to investigate and explore what a Victorian childhood was like in Wrecclisham, and to be able to increase their knowledge of local places, events and people.

The log books were the key to the whole enquiry, so I wanted them from the very beginning to create a sense of awe and wonder in the classroom – a feeling that the children were touching something old and important. I wanted them to see what information they held but also to see their limitations –that we don't always understand what has been written and that we need to investigate further to develop a more rounded picture of childhood in Wrecclisham. This is why the enquiry is titled 'How much....' rather than 'What do we know about ...'. As the log books were central to the enquiries, I wanted each session to start with different extracts that linked to the specific enquiry for the lesson. It meant that in every lesson we listed what we could learn from the log books and what we wanted to find out, and we then used a variety of sources to fill in the gaps or answer our questions. The enquiry starts with a wider context by looking at what Wrecclisham was like 150 years ago, and then focuses on three specific reasons for the children's absences from school, which related to the Victorian rural life of Wrecclisham.

Our school has seven log books, beginning in 1863 and continuing to the present day. These hidden gems have been kept in a carrier bag in the cupboard of my headteacher's office and had never been seen by the pupils. Therefore, for one aspect of the enquiry, I wanted the children to understand how important these log books are and to articulate why it is necessary to conserve them and to treat them as archives – to keep them in a better place than an old carrier bag! The final outcome focuses on this idea. We wanted to show the school and wider community what the children had learnt about a Victorian rural childhood in Wrecclisham, and thereby persuade the headteacher and governors that the books need to be looked after.

### **Summary of lessons**

<b>Lesson focus and learning objectives</b>	<b>Learning activities</b>	<b>Resources for the lesson</b>
<p><i>Lesson 1: Why and how should the log books be preserved?</i></p> <p>Children should learn:</p>	<p>An investigation of the log books as a hook for the topic. Put the books on the table, explain where they are kept, but don't say what they are. Reinforce how to look through them.</p> <p>Slides 4–6:</p>	<p>PowerPoint slides 1–8</p> <p>Log books</p> <p>School photograph</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Key vocabulary associated with the log books and schools</li> <li>• To sequence using timelines</li> <li>• To use and evaluate a range of sources</li> </ul>	<p>Allow time for the children to carefully look through them. What do they notice? What are they? How do they know?</p> <p>Make a list as a class of dates and things they can read/work out. Explain that they are the school log books. The headteacher had to keep a record of what happened in school each day. Discuss the dates of the log books – why does it start in 1863? When does it end?</p> <p>Create a class timeline. Place when the logbooks were started and the last entry by the present headteacher (2020). Add on the dates for Queen Victoria’s reign.</p> <p>Introduce the topic enquiry question. What can we find from the log books and what else may we need to find out from other sources?</p> <p>Slide 7: Explain that Mr Waterson was the headteacher 150 years ago. Look at a photograph of some of the school pupils and the headteacher. What do they notice?</p> <p>Collect comments/questions. Dispel misconceptions, e.g. just because the photograph is in black and white does not necessarily make it old. Add the dates of Mr Waterson’s headship to the timeline. Focus on when this period of history occurred in relation to other history topics.</p> <p>Slide 8: Provide children with a selection of photocopied log book pages, with a transcription of the entries. Examine some of the log book extracts. Begin to make a list of the absences and talk about what children would like to find out.</p>	<p>Photocopied extracts of the school log books with a transcription of the entries</p>
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	<p>Discuss the negativity of the headteacher at times . What are his views on the pupils and the area? Do you think that his opinion of this area will be accurate? Why is he so negative?</p> <p>Slide 8: <i>Activity</i> Create a list of things that children notice and questions that they would like to answer.</p> <p><i>Plenary</i> Why are the books so important to us today? Should they be kept in a bag? What should we do with them? (Capture initial ideas to revisit at the end of the topic.) Throughout the weeks, we will begin to think about what to do with the information that we find out and what to do with the books.</p>	
<p><i>Lesson 2: What was Wrecclesham like 150 years ago?</i> (Note: This lesson takes an afternoon session)</p> <p>Children should learn:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To identify the key features of the locality at different times</li> <li>• To compare the locality over time, focusing on what has changed and what has stayed the same</li> </ul>	<p>We need to look more closely at Wrecclesham to find out what it was like at the time of the log books.</p> <p>Slide 10: Look at the extracts from the log book, mentioning a scattered parish, a list of children and where they live. What do we think Wrecclesham was like at the time?</p> <p>Slide 11: Look at the modern map of Wrecclesham. Can you find the school, Weydon, church and railway line? Can you name the road that the</p>	<p>PowerPoint slides 9–21</p> <p>A3 photocopies of the two maps</p> <p>Copies of the maps and photographs for the walk</p> <p>Copies of Lesson 2 worksheet: Places in Wrecclesham</p> <p>Risk assessment of the route</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To identify reasons and factors affecting the changes</li></ul>	<p>church is on? What are the yellow, orange and pink roads? What road is our school on now? Notice the triangle of roads and how built up it is.</p> <p>Slide 12: Look at the map from 1894. Similarities/differences? Can children find the church, school and railway? Why does some of the map look as though some of the areas have nothing on? What would the land use be? What buildings are listed? Almshouses, pubs, church, school, institute, Farnham Pottery, etc. Why is the school in a different place to the modern map? Where is Little Green Lane? Green Lane? Notice Broadwell Copse.</p> <p>This is Wrecclesham when the log books were written. Refer to the class timeline. Why would Mr Waterson have written that it was such a scattered parish? Use the absence list in the log books to find where children lived.</p> <p>Look at the photographs of some of the streets in Wrecclesham from the Victorian period and discuss what children notice.</p> <p>Take a walk around the old parts of Wrecclesham, using the Lesson 2 worksheet (Places in Wrecclesham) to fill in what they notice. Make notes about the similarities and differences.</p> <p>Slide 13: Walk to the Church and compare the drawings.</p> <p>Slide 14:</p>	
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	<p>Point out the building that was Wrecclesham Institute. What similarities and differences can they see? What is the building used for now? Find it on the map so that they know where we are.</p> <p>Slides 15–19: Continue to walk past the Church to the High Street and up to Quennells Hill. Using the copies of the photos, try to stand in the same position as the original image was taken. What buildings are still the same? Point out the almshouses and the pubs.</p> <p>Slide 20: Walk to Farnham Pottery and notice the date and name on the wall.</p> <p>Using the maps, try to locate the original site of the school. Why are the roads around the original site called Copse Way and Broadwell Road? Walk back along Shortheath Road to the school. Use photos and maps to notice continuity and change.</p> <p><i>Plenary</i> What have you learnt about Wrecclesham from the maps and images? What buildings are still in Wrecclesham today? How are they used now? What differences did you see?</p>	
<p><i>Lesson 3: How did the hops calendar/rural life affect the whole family?</i> (Note: This lesson is around an hour and a half in length)</p>	<p>Slide 23: Look at the map of Wrecclesham again. What do we now know about Wrecclesham? Make a list: school, church, pubs, smithy, pottery.</p> <p>What can you tell me about the houses? What does that tell us about the children and where they live?</p>	<p>PowerPoint slides 22–33</p> <p>Photocopied extracts from the log books</p>

<p>Children should learn:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To reconstruct what rural life was like from a range of source material</li> <li>• To compare accounts of the hop harvests from different sources</li> <li>• To evaluate the memoirs and their reliability</li> </ul>	<p>What was Wrecclesham surrounded by? What do you think the fields might have been used for? What jobs do you think the families of Wrecclesham did?</p> <p>Slide 24: Look at the log book entry about boys leaving for work. What would their jobs be? Would it have been factories and mines? Where could they work?</p> <p>Provide children with photocopied extracts from the log books related to farming and harvests, plus transcriptions of the entries.</p> <p>Look at other log book entries for other clues and make a list of different occupations. What does this tell us about the children and families of Wrecclesham? How much does it tell us/not tell us? What more do we need to find out?</p> <p>Slide 25: Look at the tithe map. What do you notice? Can you find the triangle of Wrecclesham? The church? Explain that it shows what was grown in the fields: hops. Hops are a crop that is used in the production of beer. They are grown in a particular way and are very labour-intensive.</p> <p>Look at the list of the jobs in the log books – find the references to hops and how many different jobs there are. Why does the headteacher complain about them?</p> <p>Slides 26–27: Look at the photos of the harvesting of the hops. What can they notice? How are the plants grown? (Link to references to poles.) What are they</p>	<p>1841 tithe map of Wrecclesham (Museum of Farnham)</p> <p>Photocopies of the hop harvest photographs</p> <p>Photocopies of the memoirs</p>
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	<p>doing? Who can they see? Put finger on significant parts: man with a book, baskets, horse and cart, bines, babies/children, cloth box.</p> <p>Slides 28–30: Give out parts of George Sturt’s memoirs. Can children compare this to the photo? Can they find the tally man? The cart? The bags/baskets? The children?</p> <p>Why were the children involved in the hop harvest? What does this tell us about the families of Wrecclesham?</p> <p>Slide 31: How does George describe the hop harvest? Do you agree that it would be fun?</p> <p>The memoirs were published after George died in 1927. Place this date on the timeline.</p> <p>How reliable do you think the memoirs are? Would George Sturt’s views have changed over time? Why would individual memories of an event vary?</p> <p>Slide 32: Why were triangles used on the tithe maps?</p> <p>Slide 33: <i>Activity</i> Using the hop harvest photo, write a caption/passage about this picture. What would we need to include to make sure that it contains all the information? What is the most important information?</p>	
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	<p><i>Plenary</i></p> <p>How did the hop calendar affect the families in Wreccllesham? How do these log book entries tell us about childhood in Wreccllesham?</p>	
<p><i>Lesson 4: Why were so many children ill 150 years ago?</i></p> <p>Children should learn:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To use a variety of sources to understand why so many children were ill during this time</li> <li>• To identify and explain the causes of the different illnesses</li> <li>• To describe and explain what happened as a consequence of these illnesses</li> </ul>	<p>Provide children with photocopied extracts from the log books related to illness, as well as a transcription of the entries. Using the log book extracts, look for entries when children were unwell. Make a list on the board of reasons/illnesses.</p> <p>Use dictionaries to find out what diphtheria, whooping cough, measles and influenza were. Reinforce the fact that they are all infectious diseases (link to Covid). Why might the children catch these? Why don't we have these diseases nowadays?</p> <p>Reasons in log books: poor, pinched (look up in dictionary), thin, pale (because they are ill or old). What do we know from last week about the harvesting? Poor, little money.</p> <p>Slide 36: Look at the census returns (place the date 1881 on the timeline). What do these tell us about the families? Why would that help to spread disease?</p> <p>Slides 37–38: Look at the burial records. What do children notice about the ages of the people? What do the ages tell us about the children's lives? Can they find Mr Waterson's child?</p> <p>Slides 39–41:</p>	<p>PowerPoint slides 34–44</p> <p>Photocopied log book extracts</p> <p>Census pages</p> <p>Burial records</p> <p>'To the vicarage born, the memoirs of Mrs James Stevens' by Florence Stevens (the vicar's daughter), <i>Farnham and District Museum Society Newsletter</i>, 8, no. 5, Surrey History Centre, SHC ref: J/48/83</p> <p>Diphtheria report 1885, Surrey History Centre, SHC ref: 1972/Box15</p>

	<p>Look at the log book extracts, Florence Stevens' memoirs and the map in relation to the scarcity of water and building a well. What does this mean? How did they get their water? What does this tell us about their houses? How does this add to the spread of disease?</p> <p>Slides 42–43: Look at the diphtheria report: sanitary circumstances. What does this tell us about Wrecclisham? If waste is thrown in holes in the ground, where will it eventually go? Rivers.</p> <p>Slide 44: <i>Activity</i> In the style of a <i>Horrible Histories</i> book, write up six filthy facts about why children were always ill in Wrecclisham.</p> <p><i>Plenary</i> What was life like for a child in Wrecclisham? How do the log books show this?</p>	
<p><i>Lesson 5: How did the local clubs and fairs impact on school life?</i></p> <p>Children should learn:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To use a range of sources to describe the different fairs and clubs in the local area</li> <li>• To compare accounts of Farnham Fair from different sources</li> </ul>	<p>Provide photocopied extracts from the log books related to the fairs and clubs, with a transcription of the entries. Look at the log book extracts. What other reasons were there for absences and school closures? Make a list on the board. Discuss what children notice.</p> <p>Slide 46: Read the extracts about the importance of pigs in country life. What would happen if the pig died? What could the owners do to ease this worry?</p> <p>Slides 47–48:</p>	<p>PowerPoint slides 45–54</p> <p>Photocopies of the log book extracts</p> <p>Newspaper article from the <i>Surrey and Hants News</i>, 1880, Surrey History Centre</p> <p>Copies of the Farnham Fair photograph</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To evaluate the memoirs and their reliability</li> </ul>	<p>Focus on the 'club days'. What could this mean? What do you think they did? Look at the Pig Club in particular. Read the newspaper report about the Pig Club anniversary. Why did they have a pig club? What did they do each year? Focus on the band, going to the houses, the meal and then the fun!</p> <p>Slide 49: Look at other recollections. Notice similarities and differences.</p> <p>Slides 50–54: Read the passages and look at the photographs on the next four slides. They are recollections about Farnham's fairs by Florence Stevens, George Sturt and John Henry Knight. Highlight animals, stalls and entertainment.</p> <p>What do these tell us about the Farnham Fair? What would the sights/sounds be at the clubs and fairs? What would it be like to go on the swings or roundabouts?</p> <p>Slide 55: Explain why so many families took their children out of school to visit the Farnham Fair or take part in the club anniversaries. What reasons would they have given to Mr Waterson so that they could attend? Why do you think the families felt that the children should miss school to attend the fairs or clubs?</p> <p><i>Plenary</i> What were the families like in Wrecclesham? What do we know about their everyday lives? What did they do? What did they worry about? What would a fair mean to them? How exciting would it be? Why did they miss school for them?</p>	<p>'To the vicarage born, the memoirs of Mrs James Stevens' by Florence Stevens (the vicar's daughter), <i>Farnham and District Museum Society Newsletter</i>, 8, no. 5, Surrey History Centre, SHC ref: J/48/83</p> <p><i>A Small Boy in the Sixties</i> by George Sturt (1980), Caliban Books</p> <p><i>Reminiscences of a Country Town (Farnham)</i> by John Henry Knight (1909), Martin and Sturt</p>
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<p><i>Lesson 6: Outcome task: How much do our primary school log books tell us about childhood in Wrecclesham 150 years ago?</i></p> <p>Children should learn:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To make judgements and reach conclusions about the main enquiry, bringing together what they have learnt in a display or exhibition for the school community</li> </ul>	<p>How much do our log books tell us about childhood in Wrecclesham, and how much more have we learnt about childhood 150 years ago?</p> <p>Create a spider diagram of what children now know about childhood in Wrecclesham 150 years ago.</p> <p>How much has been learnt from the log books and other sources? Why is it important to use a range of sources to find out about an event? Why should we try to use a range of different interpretations for an event? Which sources have been the most useful? Why?</p> <p>What do you think our community should know? How can we tell the story of our log books and Wrecclesham?</p> <p>Discuss how information and artefacts are presented in an exhibition (<a href="https://teesvalleymuseums.org/schools/museum-in-your-classroom-toolkit">https://teesvalleymuseums.org/schools/museum-in-your-classroom-toolkit</a>).</p> <p>Create a display/exhibition for the school community. Make a list of what we would want to use/print. Discuss how to present it and what we would need to add.</p> <p>Group the children for different sections: maps and photos of Wrecclesham, hops, illness, fairs, log books.</p>	<p>PowerPoint slides 56–58</p> <p>Copies of maps, photographs, memoirs, census, burial records and reports to be used in the exhibition</p> <p>Log books</p>
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	<p>Children decide what information they would like to present and how to organise it on the boards. Place the log books on display, with captions and explanations.</p> <p><i>Plenary</i> Why should we conserve these books? How can we preserve these stories? Where should we keep the books? Decide as a class how to preserve these books as archives.</p> <p><i>Suggested further activities</i> Visit from education officer in relation to how to conserve the books, or a visit to Surrey History Centre.</p> <p>Cross-curricular links to an English lesson to add to the display – write a letter to headteacher/governors, persuading them to preserve the books in a better way than just in a carrier bag.</p>	
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### **Reflections**

The enquiry was so powerful because it linked directly to the children's lives and their school. From the very first lesson the children were captivated by the log books, and even before they opened them they knew that they were old and needed to be respected. They really enjoyed investigating the entries and trying to decipher the writing. They loved finding references to places that they knew, and were often shocked by some of the comments. Using the log book extracts at the beginning of each lesson also helped to keep the enquiry focused. It helped to show the class what evidence we already had and also what we needed to find out about. The use of the local maps was also very powerful. By using a modern map of Wrecclesham, they were able to find key places and I was able to reinforce the three main roads that form a triangle in Wrecclesham. This then became a focus when we looked at the older maps. The children had a point of reference and could then spot any similarities and differences. Taking them for a walk around these roads helped to make the maps more three-dimensional and informed their views of life 150 years ago. They were very surprised to find that many of the buildings still existed and enjoyed comparing the

photographs with the real thing. My class loved the topic; the familiarity of the local area and using the actual log books helped them to retain the new knowledge each week. They were also very keen to tell others what they had learnt, and are adamant that the log books are very important and need to be conserved.

My aim was to broaden the children's knowledge and understanding of their local history. I wanted them to know what life in Wrecclesham was like for a Victorian child and to begin to instill a sense of place and belonging. I wanted them to compare the evidence contained in the log books with evidence from other sources, and to discuss these different interpretations of history. I feel that all local history topics should start with maps and a walk around the local area. It places the topic in a geographical context and enables the children to make links and notice the history around them. This definitely gave my class a sense of place and belonging. Many had visited the pubs and local Victorian pottery, but had not realised their importance as part of the history of Wrecclesham. A topic like this actually starts from what they know and allows the children to make connections and develop their knowledge. Using a variety of sources helped to keep the enquiry interesting. The photographs and the walk around the local environment allowed all children to access the learning and produced some pertinent questions and thoughts. I think that the memoirs also reinforced the learning and, as they often matched what children saw in the photographs, they helped to build a more detailed picture of rural life in Wrecclesham.

Mr Waterson, the headteacher in 1863, wrote such detailed entries in the log books that the planning of the enquiry was quite straightforward. It was clear that the log book entries needed to be used as a hook at the beginning of the topic and that they would anchor each individual lesson. As the children had very little knowledge of the history of Wrecclesham, it was obvious that they needed to be given some background information about life in Wrecclesham and how it used to look before we attempted to investigate the log books. The log book entries were clear that there were three main reasons for absences from school and that they all affected the children's life in Wrecclesham.

To help to uncover the resources, I contacted two local museums, Museum of Farnham and the Rural Life Living Museum. Both curators were happy to meet me and discuss the enquiry. They then found a variety of resources for me and allowed me to have copies to use in school. They also lent me copies of books and a DVD by local historians that deepened my own knowledge of the area, and I was able to find other sources to use in the museums. I also contacted the education officer at Surrey History Centre (SHC), the county archives. She spent an afternoon explaining the artefacts and showing me the maps and then, for a fee, created a local history pack specifically for this enquiry. At SHC, I also spent time locating the newspaper and diphtheria reports used in my resource. In addition, I used the internet and social media sites relating to the local area to obtain other information. Surrey Libraries allow members free access to Ancestry.co.uk, which meant that I could search

the 1881 census and burial records for names in the log books. Until I began this project, I did not realise how much material there was and how many experienced people there are in the local area who are willing and able to help.

### **Resources that inspired me**

Skinner, G. and Peel, J. (2021) 'Belmont's evacuee children: a local history project' in *Primary History*, 87, pp. 39–45.  
(*This school had also used their log books as a basis for their enquiry about World War II.*)

Harte, J. (2016) "'On the far side of the hedge?' Gypsies in local history' in *The Local Historian*, 46, no. 1, pp. 27–46.  
(*This article started with a photo of gypsies in Farnham, so it caught my attention straight away! It allowed me to think about the untold stories of local people.*)

Timmins, G. (2018) *Exploring Local History: a practical guide for teachers in primary and secondary schools*, British Association for Local History, pp. 61–69.  
(*This book has a whole chapter on how to use school log books in the classroom. It provides classroom activities for using the log books, focusing on different aspects of the books, e.g. school timetables, absences, lessons, etc.*)

Leach, S. (2016) 'Teaching about my school in the past using original sources or why would I want those old books in my classroom?' in *Primary History*, 73, pp. 22–25.  
(*This article gives lots of practical advice about how to use log books in the classroom.*)

Wilkinson, A. (2010) 'A local history toolkit' in *Primary History*, 55, pp. 16–17.  
(*A comprehensive list of resources that can be used in a local history unit.*)

Dixon, L. and Hales, A. (2014) *Bringing History Alive Through Local People and Places*, London: Routledge, pp. 80–102.  
(*The whole of this book was very inspiring. The authors describe in detail how important it is to use maps and take the children on a walk around the local area. Chapter 5 focuses on resources and local history resource centres, and how they can be accessed by teachers and then used in the classroom.*)

Dixon, L. and Hales, A. 'What makes good local history?' in *Primary History*, 71, pp. 19–25.  
(*A detailed article discussing the benefits of a local history topic, looking at specific case studies and starting points.*)