

## Local history

**Key historical question: How would you find out what your area was like in Victorian times?**

### Introduction

The purpose of these film clips is to show teachers and pupils how to go about a local study for their own area for the Victorian period.

Our presenter, Rebecca suggests various starting points and locations for researching your locality starting with your own school, local streets, local archives and libraries, local and regional museums. She also highlights ways of recording your findings.

Rebecca demonstrates the type of sources which might be available in your local area. You may be lucky enough to have some archival material from your school such as log books or registers or have access to a Victorian school building. Pupils could certainly look at Victorian buildings in their area or in the area selected for the study. At local archives you can find 19<sup>th</sup>-century street maps, photographs, trade directories, census data, school records, and objects in a local museum. Of course it is also possible to find many good quality historical sources online to help with a local study.

We hope you are now confident in using primary sources in the classroom having worked through our online Start here unit and explored some of the other topics using the four step approach: L-A-C-E and the sources contained in them.

Finally, we include in these notes some details on the type of sources that you could find at your local archive or local history studies centre/library. Of course these may vary across the country.

### Creating your local study

**Start** by viewing each film clip:

Clip 1: **The school** - Rebecca visits a Victorian school

Clip 2: **The local area** - Rebecca looks at buildings in the local area

Clip 3: **The local archive or record office** - Rebecca finds sources in the local archive

Clip 4: **Visiting museums** - Rebecca finds objects in two local museums

Clip 5: **Completing a local study** - Rebecca starts her local study

There are some **film clip prompt questions** available to download from the Local history webpage to support discussion after each clip. Having viewed the films, teachers can carry out the whiteboard activity (download this from the teachers' resources section of the website). Finally, **worksheets** are also available to support the development of a local study from the Local History webpage. These are recording sheets which list the questions to think about when visiting **local buildings, local archives** and **local museums**. Teachers can use **the whiteboard activity** to start their study.

### Learning objectives

## **Pupils will:**

- interrogate different sources of evidence
- learn to assess usefulness of sources to carry out specific investigations
- understand how different source materials can be compared and used in conjunction with others to develop understanding of a topic or theme
- recognise what evidence of Victorian times remains in their area

## **Outline of the type of sources that you could find at your local archive or local history studies centre/library**

### **1. Trade directories**

#### **Where to find them**

The University of Leicester has set up a website with online access to large collection of digitally imaged 18th, 19th and early 20<sup>th</sup>-century trade directories at: [www.historicaldirectories.org/hd/index.asp](http://www.historicaldirectories.org/hd/index.asp)

#### **History**

Several firms have published local trade and commercial directories since the late 17th century.

#### **What they contain**

They list all the traders and professionals in their locality and by the late 19th century these directories became very comprehensive and many contained alphabetical lists of private householders as well information on local traders. You'll find:

- 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
- advertisements

#### **Value**

They are easily an accessible primary source for those seeking to develop a local study. They provide first hand data about local communities, their infrastructure and the individuals living in those communities.

Most record offices contain at least a few 19<sup>th</sup>-century editions of trade directories for their area and trade directories are often readily available through local studies and archives collections, for example, in local libraries or family history centres.

### **2. Ordnance Survey maps**

#### **Where to find them**

Historical maps (available online at [www.old-maps.co.uk](http://www.old-maps.co.uk)) are in partnership with Ordnance Survey/Landmark Information Group and they sell Victorian OS maps centred on a specific postcode for your area. Alternatively you should be able to obtain copies for use in the classroom from local studies collections/borough councils, county councils' Sites and Monuments Records, and county record offices.

## Value

They can show changes to an area over time in terms of housing, farming and transport links. They also provide a geographical context to the locality which can make sense of its history of the locality to the pupils.

## 3. Census

### Where to find it

Census records for England and Wales from 1841 to 1911 are available online; partners of the National Archives carried out this work. It is free to search their websites, but there is a charge to download documents:

[nationalarchives.gov.uk/records/census-records.htm](http://nationalarchives.gov.uk/records/census-records.htm)

Also most local and county record offices provide free access to the 1841 to 1901 census returns for their own areas.

### What they contain

Between 1801 and 1831 the census contained only general information about numbers of people. The 1841 census was the first to list the names of every individual in a household. After 1851 it recorded the age of each person, their relationship within the family (such as wife, son or daughter), occupation (job) and place of birth.

### History

The census is a count of all the people in the United Kingdom on one particular day and is taken every ten years. The first government census in Britain was in 1801. It may have been prompted by a book called *An essay on the principle of population*, written by Thomas Malthus in 1798. Malthus wrote that the population was growing so quickly that the country would soon not be able to feed itself. There has been a census every ten years since, apart from in 1941 due to our involvement in the Second World War.

## Value

It is clear that the census can be a really valuable source for helping pupils to find out about the Victorian past. As everybody in the country answered the same questions we can also use it to compare areas at the same time or over a period of time.

Children can investigate any page of the census for their area to discover what information it contains. They will be able to find out where people were born, what their **job** was and their age.

The '**Where born**' column allows pupils to trace the movement of a family because just one census return shows where the parents came from and where they were living when each of their children was born. If they are all from the same place it shows the family hasn't moved, but some may have several children all born in different places.

The **age column** gives an indication of how old children were when they started working and how long people worked before they retired. It also gives an idea of how long people lived. It is unusual to see anyone listed older than today's retirement age.

Pupils can look at the census returns for the two areas in the same year and work out which is the rich area and which the poor. To do this they would need to look at the jobs, the size of the household and the presence of servants.

Finally, pupils could also look a particular family over a period of 30 years, that is, three versions of the census in the period (1861, 1871 and 1881 for example) and see how the family has grown or changed in that time.

## **Photographs**

### **English Heritage**

[www.heritage-explorer.co.uk/web/he/search.aspx](http://www.heritage-explorer.co.uk/web/he/search.aspx)

This website is a good starting point in the classroom for a local study. You can search English Heritage's extensive photographic collection by date, theme or location. For example, a general search for schools brings back 247 schools:

[www.heritage-explorer.co.uk/web/he/search.aspx?crit=school%2C%20education&pn=3&pid=50&rt=0](http://www.heritage-explorer.co.uk/web/he/search.aspx?crit=school%2C%20education&pn=3&pid=50&rt=0)

However, teachers can refine their search by 'Where - select a county'

It's also possible to search for Victorian buildings:

[www.heritage-explorer.co.uk/web/he/imagebytheme.aspx?ctid=28-](http://www.heritage-explorer.co.uk/web/he/imagebytheme.aspx?ctid=28-)

Finally, Victorian people produces 62 results using the following criteria:

What: man, woman, clothing, Where: N/A, When: Victorian (1837 - 1901)

[www.heritage-explorer.co.uk/web/he/search.aspx?crit=man%2C%20woman%2C%20clothing&pid=50&rt=0](http://www.heritage-explorer.co.uk/web/he/search.aspx?crit=man%2C%20woman%2C%20clothing&pid=50&rt=0)

The National Monuments Record, the public archive of English Heritage, holds all the photographs on ViewFinder. They date from the 1850s and are a resource for people interested in England's social, industrial, architectural and archaeological history. Additionally, you can search under collections and themes.

You will also find photo essays on different subjects that provide a commentary alongside selected images from ViewFinder's photographic database.

### **The Frith Collection**

This is another important photographic collection. It was founded by Francis Frith, the pioneer Victorian photographer, in 1860. Today it contains over 365,000 photographs depicting some 7,000 towns and villages throughout Britain – all taken between 1860 and 1970.

You can search the collection for photographs of your local area via their website:

[www.francisfrith.com/](http://www.francisfrith.com/)

### **Newspapers**

Many local libraries hold collections of newspapers. The Newsplan website allows you to search for local newspapers and gives details of where they are held.

[newsplan.liem.org.uk/default.asp](http://newsplan.liem.org.uk/default.asp)

The Times Archive is a fully searchable database of The Times newspaper. View the original newspaper images of great historical events since 1786.

[archive.timesonline.co.uk/tol/archive/](http://archive.timesonline.co.uk/tol/archive/)

## **School records**

These can also be a rich source of historical documents. Many local archives may contain

- records from School Boards and the Guardians of the Poor
- school log books and possibly teachers' accounts of particular events, for example Salford Local Archive holds teacher's accounts of the cotton famine
- your own school may hold archival material, from old photographs or building plans to log books and registers if you are lucky!

## **Using your local museum**

Pupils and teachers can use their local or county museum to support their local study. It is important to get pupils to study the objects themselves, using the L-A-C-E process, rather than relying on an object caption for information. This ought to steer them away from a fixed interpretation and help them engage with the source more closely and attempt to draw their own conclusions.

Teachers may also make use of items available within school or provided by pupils or staff or contained in museum handling boxes or even replica artefacts.

## **Other sources**

- local government records on the boroughs can show changes such as the growth of your local area or transport links
- poor relief records for the Victorian period
- street directories for your town or city
- an increasing number and range of source material is now readily accessible on the internet via such sites as Ancestry.com and Trade Directory
- your local historical society if one exists!

## **Useful websites**

[www.culture24.org.uk](http://www.culture24.org.uk)

This has latest news, exhibition reviews, links, listings and education resources from thousands of UK museums, galleries, archives and libraries, all in one place.

[www.history.org.uk](http://www.history.org.uk)

The leading national charity supporting the study and enjoyment of history: an organisation active in all spheres of formal and informal history education encompassing the national and local dimensions.

The National Archives Education website has many free resources on the Victorian period, including these two collections of documents and images on Victorian lives and advertising which can be used in the classroom:

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/topics/selling-the-victorians.htm>

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/topics/victorian-lives.htm>

## Local Archives

The [ARCHON](http://nationalarchives.gov.uk/archon) Directory includes contact details for local archives and local museums (collectively called record repositories) in the United Kingdom and also for institutions elsewhere in the world which have substantial collections of manuscripts.

[nationalarchives.gov.uk/archon/searches/search.asp](http://nationalarchives.gov.uk/archon/searches/search.asp)

### Interactive whiteboard pack

We have put together a collection of images and Flash objects for use with this unit.

(Size: 30mb)