

featuring a miscellany of recent or contemporary scenes, such as: Jesse Owens at the 1936 Berlin Olympics, a scene in Red Square, collegiate football, the bombing of Canton, a fashion show in Miami, and a preview of the World's Fair — the event at which the capsule was to be interred.

Combs Middle School, Stowmarket, Suffolk 1972.

On May 1, 1972, to commemorate the completion of building work, pupils buried a circular 'Tupperware' capsule near the base of a wall at the north-west corner of their school. Like the time capsules prepared in hundreds of other schools, this was an exercise in 'living history' for those concerned.

Copies of the Guardian, the Stowmarket Chronicle, and the East Anglian Daily Times — all of the date of the burial — were accompanied by a selection of coins. In addition, the capsule included a model mini car, other toys, photographs, and examples of the children's work. The teacher concerned also suspects that some of the pupils may have added other written material or objects when staff weren't looking. Except for this possible 'secret aspect', this project resembles many others compiled by schools and smaller commercial companies or organisations in that it was done for publicity and to enhance a sense of identity. Little attention was given to preservation or what the future might really want to find.

BELOW: The 'Tupperware' capsule, 1972 — pupils commit their capsule to posterity



Combs Middle School, Stowmarket

Mr and Mrs John Norton, Woolpit, Suffolk Early 1960s

Mr Norton (not his real name) and his wife put a time capsule into the concrete floor of their house which they were laying down. They cannot remember either the exact date or the precise contents, although they think it included coins, newspapers, the names of themselves and their children, and possibly other items. Mr Norton claims he put the coins and papers in to establish the date, and added his family's names because they did not plan to stay in the house for more than a decade. (They have subsequently moved.) It seems likely that the wet concrete itself provided the incentive for the capsule, which could explain the minimal contents, but the whole exercise may also reflect the close association which do-it-yourselfers can develop with the buildings they live and work on.

The Pharmacy, South Petherton, Somerset 1971

Like Pompeii, the pharmacy shop run by sisters Margaret and Evelyn White in the Somerset village of South Petherton was suddenly frozen in time, without anyone's intending it to become, in effect, a time capsule. The village's equivalent of Vesuvius was decimal currency. The two sisters locked up the shop when the new coinage was introduced in 1971, refusing to have anything to do with it.

Margaret White died in 1986 and shortly after her sister entered a nursing home. The shop with its contents were

auctioned a year later, the successful bidder being Flambard's Leisure Park of Helston in Cornwall. Besides old bottles and pipes, and some propriety medicines whose manufacturers have since been taken over or gone out of business, there were wooden cabinets with lettering in gold leaf, and a prescription book dating back to the sisters' father, William White, who died in 1909. One newspaper story could not resist mentioning that also discovered in the shop was a newspaper for April 16, featuring the sinking of the Titanic.

These examples demonstrate that although an 'accidental' time capsule contains a selection of objects and texts which are more functionally related to each other than in deliberate capsules meant for the future, this difference should not be exaggerated. On the one hand, ordinary life is cluttered with all manner of stray items whose chance preservation may imply they are more important than they really are. On the other hand, even the most eclectic selection of material to enlighten the future reveals the working of one or more human minds. Grandiose capsules get wide publicity and therefore influence what less ambitious encapsulators attempt.

The nineteenth century preoccupation with putting coins and newspapers into foundation-stone capsules is now practically universal. But it takes light-heartedness and perhaps the scepticism of school-children to include secret messages. Highly-organised capsules are too

ponderous, and casual ones usually too conventional, for that.

It is normally taken for granted that time capsules are actually meant to enlighten the future. However, this may not always be so, or be the main motive behind them. For the moment, though, let us consider them from this point of view. In order to reflect the reality of our lives, what must a piece of evidence do? An object must relate to other bits and pieces to give a comprehensive picture of how things are. One item on its own cannot hope to do that. The effect, in other words, should be to fill major gaps in whatever the existing records are, or whatever looks likely to survive into the future, whenever that will be. Libraries and museums already cover large areas of contemporary experience, but tend to select beautiful or durable or otherwise highly-regarded things. Ephemera may get short shrift, and so may many things that cannot be easily stored or labelled or handled. Most of the serious efforts in this area try to cope with the problem by selection, and a proper selection is supposed to be 'representative'.

But it is at least probably that future enquirers, who may not themselves be specialist historians, will appreciate not just wider coverage, but an indication of things that are omitted in this particular method of chopping up social experience.

What I have in mind as capsule material are our personal secrets, complaints, suspicions, inspirations, deceptions, doubts, or eccentricities; our private or sectional philosophies—even the fleeting or unworthy thoughts of mighty minds. These are what most capsules omit, or, if they contain them at all, do so by default. It is ironical, therefore, that what posterity may find most enthralling about a message left for it deliberately is something that got in by accident.

What are time capsules really intended for? And how thoroughly are they thought out? It appears that you would not deliberately wrap up for the future anything that is not going to survive the journey. Nor would you put in a container that is unlikely to last as long as some of its contents. This, however, is a defect in most capsule projects, and its frequency calls into question the very idea of these things being serious attempts to inform posterity. Perhaps they are (most of them, or all of them mostly) just ways of feeling or looking altruistic.

But there's clearly more to it than this. Among the motives which seem important (or which capsule compilers have admitted to) are the desire to make a mark on history, perhaps linked with an aversion to mortality. Another is sociability, which can take an intensive or extensive form. It may be just a simple friendly feeling towards another (unidentified) individual: 'hands across time', as when capsule connects compiler with finder through their joint association with the house in which it is deposited. Alternatively, there may be a more generalised sociability, perhaps not unconnected with a fear of real one-to-one relationships—when you greet the finder in a warm and even intimate way without knowing what sort of person they are, let alone their name.



Phreddy Dot
Dai Owen/English Heritage

Maybe encapsulators are egotists, terrified of anonymity, and trying to justify self-glorification in the respectable guise of social historian. (But they might as easily be slaves of fashion, unable to see the point of doing something different when friends or people they have read about in the papers have done something as mundane as burying a time capsule.) Others are cynics, out for cheap publicity. There are even one or two jokers, authors of 'artful' capsules who mischievously try to deceive the future, like the man who put stone tools from an archaeological site in East Africa into a cheap Chinese teapot and buried it in his garden in the Midlands. But was he serious? Did he really think anyone would be fooled? Or was he not rather saying 'Look how witty I am'?

What should the time capsule contain? I think all the coins and newspapers are largely a waste of time — but with one reservation. If people really are that unimaginative, then for a truthful picture of how things (unfortunately) are, posterity might as well know about it. Perhaps, though, people could be encouraged to be more imaginative about how they reveal their unimaginativeness, if only so we don't send future historians to sleep. I'd guess that what will really make our successors sit up and take notice is evidence they won't get anywhere else.

Take company records, as just one example. Published reports and internal memos are one thing. But confidential notes, dissenting observations, private diary entries about just what did go in the board meeting — those would be priceless for the study of many organisations in the past. And there's no reason to suppose they

wouldn't be equally revealing for future students of the present. Such matters are important because large corporations play a dominant role in contemporary life. But for this very reason, and the associated preponderance of official generalisations and statistics, the individual and the private are neglected categories.

So we should try to get more details of what makes people tick, and what goes on behind closed doors. Our culture thrives on voyeurism and exploitation of the sensational and exceptional. My candidate for what to include in time capsules is therefore ordinary life. That is the main experience of most of us, and the bedrock on which the frivolous and newsworthy rest.

What do you think?

Brian Durrans
Deputy Keeper,
Department of Ethnography,
British Museum.

Adapted from his article first published in The Ephemera, June 1990.

The Ephemera Society encourages interest in the conservation of ephemera and their collection by enthusiasts, produces a regular journal and holds collector's Fairs and Bazaars amongst other services to members. Further information is available from: The Ephemera Society, 12 Fitzroy Square, London W1P 5HQ Tel. 071-387 7723.

Doorstep heritage

What do you do with a graveyard where plants and weeds have taken over, which school children see as a short cut and which litterbugs find a convenient place to drop cans and crisp packets?

You might say 'I am far too busy for National Curriculum, assessment ...' or alternatively 'what a wonderful educational opportunity!'

Fortunately for many of us in Knowsley enough people chose the second response.

St Michael's Church is a magnificent building, it towers above the small village of Huyton in Knowsley. The church dates from around 700AD, it has a superb Anglo Saxon font, a beautiful alabaster effigy of Roger D Winwich (Adviser to Edward III and Treasurer of York Minster) and countless other exciting features.

The graveyard is fascinating in its own right. The last corpse was buried beneath its soil 150 years ago. Clues to the history of the area abound, with a little investigation children can find the graves of the servants of the Earl of Derby whose home, Knowsley Hall, is another local landmark.

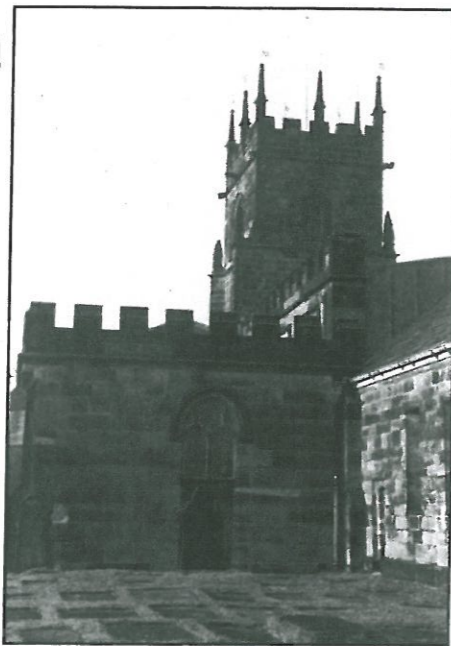
Two years ago the Curate of St Michael's Church, Steve Pierce, approached Mike Tilling, a teacher in St Michael's Junior School to discuss the potential for children's involvement.

The germ of an idea soon grew beyond that of simply 'cleaning up the graveyard'. Numerous individuals, schools and organisations declared an interest and became involved. These included the Church and Conservation Project, Operation Groundwork, UK 2000, RSPB and RSNC.

Establishing the right contacts and co-ordinating the various interested parties was essential to the success of the project. Knowsley LEA's science adviser, excited about the project, encouraged the involvement of the science teacher advisers. They contacted local schools and invited teachers to the Church to explore the potential for science work in and around the church.

Armed with digging implements provided by Groundwork, the first assault on the graveyard was made by Mike and his class of second year pupils. The children cleared some ground and planted bulbs. Operation Groundwork worked hard to make the site safe for children by cutting down dangerous branches. The following year the planting of bulbs and trees continued. The laying of the first path was a wonderful community effort. Groundwork obtained financial support from the Prince's Trust to assist these early developments in the graveyard.

The graveyard's great potential for educational fieldwork became increasingly apparent. The church hall was made available to schools for use as a class base. A full day's investigation could therefore take place on site.



St. Michael's Church, Knowsley.



Operation Groundwork — clearing the tombstones.



ABOVE: Collecting information from gravestones.

BELOW: Operation groundwork completed.



Children were involved in science investigation exploring life in the graveyard and history investigation exploring death in the graveyard. Information collected from gravestones was put onto a database for analysis (eg the high child mortality rate at certain times stimulated further investigation into illness and disease in the nineteenth century). Mathematics and language work involved interviewing parishioners, devising questionnaires, collecting and analysing data, carrying out surveys and much much more.

National Curriculum

Much of this, of course, took place prior to the arrival of the statutory orders. Would the National Curriculum be the 'kiss of death' to all the super work that had taken place?

The answer was a resounding no! but it was recognised that the work would have to focus on National Curriculum areas and programmes of study.

A local studies group was formed made up of teachers from numerous schools in Huyton. For a year they have been

researching, collecting and developing resources about the church and its surrounding area. All of these resources will form local studies packs for schools. The teachers have not set out to 're-invent the wheel', so where excellent resources exist commercially, they have been purchased (eg Living Churchyard Resources produced by the Church and Conservation Project, English Heritage videos about churches, particularly 'In Memoriam', RSPB booklets etc).

The teachers' resource pack takes a cross-curricular approach to teaching local studies. It is also based on the assumption that good primary practice is characterised by active pupil participation and an 'enquiring' approach to learning. The project was only made possible by the hard work and commitment of teachers in Knowsley, too numerous to mention and the teacher advisers whose motivation and organisational skills are considerable. The support of Operation Groundwork, interest and advice from Eve Dennis (Church and Conservation Project), Chris Baines, Phil Rothwell (RSPB) and English Heritage have all been greatly appreciated

and last but certainly not least the Huyton-with-Roby Historical Association who not only made available all their resources but gave a considerable amount of time in sharing their knowledge of the area with the teachers.

There is an enormous pool of goodwill and expertise on all our doorsteps. The Knowsley teachers discovered the key to open the door on the past — we are sure others can be equally successful.

Patricia Harrison
Senior Inspector (Humanities),
Knowsley LEA.

Mike Tilling
Teacher, St Michael's Junior School,
Huyton
(Now — Firtree Primary School, Stockport).

Frameworks of Worship

'In Memoriam — the archaeology of graveyards' is one of four videos in the English Heritage series 'Frameworks of Worship' which introduces different aspects of the historical development of churches, and considers some of the ways in which archaeologists gather and use information.

The other titles are 'Your Church — a threshold to history'; 'Chapels — the buildings of nonconformity'; and 'Buildings and Beliefs'.

All the videos are available on free loan to teachers or to buy, price £9.95 plus £1.00 post and packing from:
English Heritage
PO Box 229, Northampton NN6 9RY

Basic Curriculum	Cross Curricular Themes
History Geography English Mathematics Science RE Technology	Environmental Education Citizenship

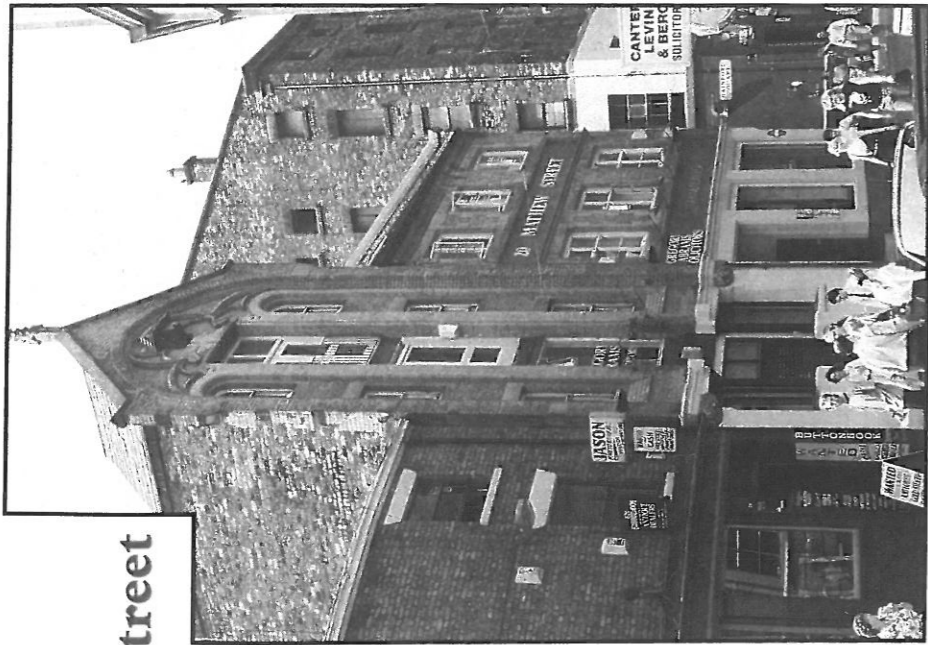
BELOW: Recording a spot height marked on the church.



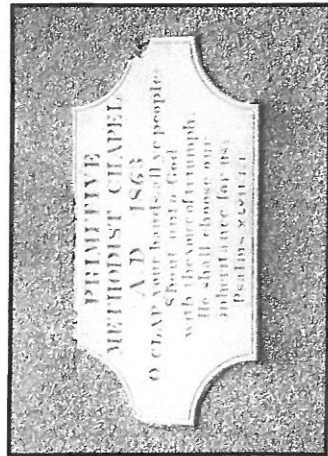
Nothing stays the same for long on the main streets of Britain's towns where buildings that are no longer useful are either pulled down and replaced or altered to serve a new purpose.

STREETWISE

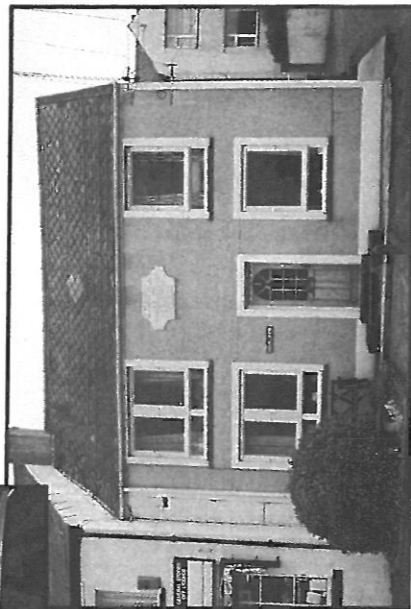
Unmasked! The disguise in the high street



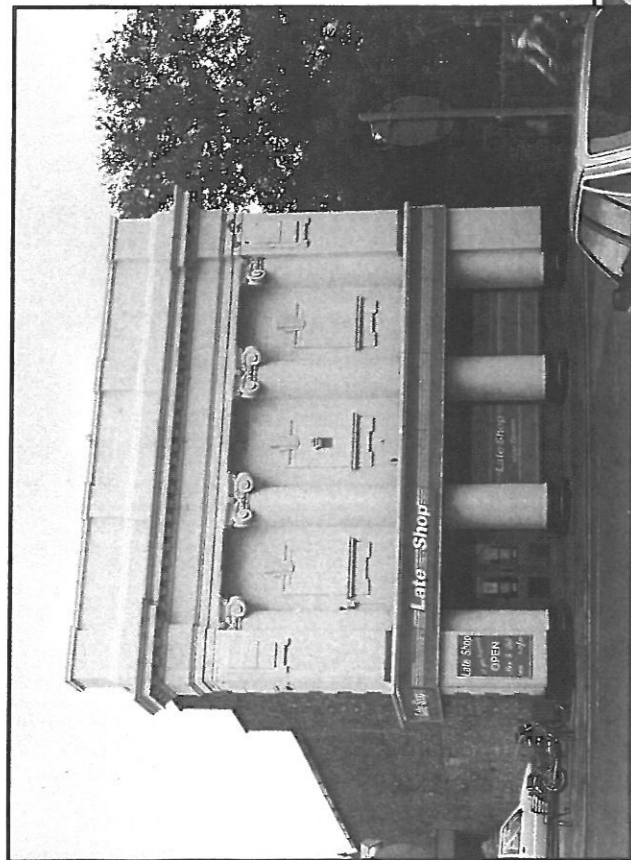
△ *Mathew Street, Liverpool, had a seedy, run-down appearance 30 years ago when the Beatles pop group performed here in a cellar night-club called 'The Cavern'. Look towards the top of the tall building where the cranes housing shows that these smart business chambers were once a warehouse for storing goods perhaps destined for shipping abroad from the nearby docks. Today's container transport has made transit warehousing redundant.*



An inscription on a plaque attached to the outside of a building can show its initial use long after it has changed. The plaque △ on what at first sight appears to be an ordinary house ▽ reveals that it once served as a chapel in this small north Cumbrian village.



Streetwise investigates clues to the past that can often be found in the streets near your school.



△ *The keen-witted sleuth will soon spot the clues to the alterations. Usually only the street level facade has been changed and tell-tale evidence betrays a building's original use. This supermarket in Carnforth, Lancashire was originally the local cinema but nowadays people stay at home and watch television instead of going to the pictures. A fresh coat of paint and some new sign-boards advertise this large, useful space as an all-purpose shop but the imposing frontage indicates its original purpose.*

Text and photographs by Ross Jellicoe
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RESOURCES

English Heritage Education Service EDUCATIONAL CATALOGUE UPDATE

VIDEOS

ARCHAEOLOGICAL DETECTIVES

This series aims to show children how enjoyable detective observation of historical evidence can be, and to help them record and reach conclusions about the buildings and objects of the past.



Bits and Bodies

In an exciting series of games, three teams of children compete for the title 'Champion Detectives', working together by handling real archaeological finds and everyday objects. Teachers can adapt all the games for classroom exercises to develop skills and hands-on approaches in the use of evidence.
Suitability: 9-13;
33 minutes; 1990.
Price: £9.95
Quote Code: XT 10565



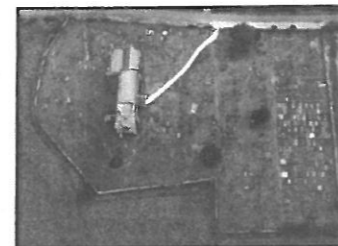
Clues Challenge

In this film two children visit modern locations familiar to them and apply detective skills which can be developed on later

visits to historic sites. Basic clues are sought about a furnished house, an empty bungalow and a building site, and the children reach accurate conclusions from the visible evidence which the buildings reveal.
Suitability: 9-13;
14 minutes; 1990.
Price: £9.95
Quote Code: XT 10265

FRAMEWORKS OF WORSHIP

Churches provide a locally accessible and rich resource for study. This series introduces different aspects of the historical development of churches, and considers some of the ways in which archaeologists gather and use information.



In memoriam

Graveyards and cemeteries provide an educational resource of unparalleled richness. Ecology, archaeology, demography, art and social history may all be approached through the evidence which graveyards contain. In memoriam introduces and explores these different aspects, and the links between them, and suggests how the local graveyard may be used as an outdoor classroom.
Suitability: 9-13;
21 minutes; 1990.
Quote Code: XT 10504

EVIDENCE ON SITE

This series introduces historic sites in the care of English Heritage and encourages investigative learning approaches by looking at physical evidence of the past.



Peveril Castle

Peveril Castle, with its twelfth century stone keep, is dramatically situated on a spur high above Castleton in Derbyshire. This video considers the castle in relation to the town and the surrounding landscape, and suggests investigative approaches for schools planning a visit to the popular site.
13 minutes; 1990.
Price: £9.95
Quote Code: XT 10569

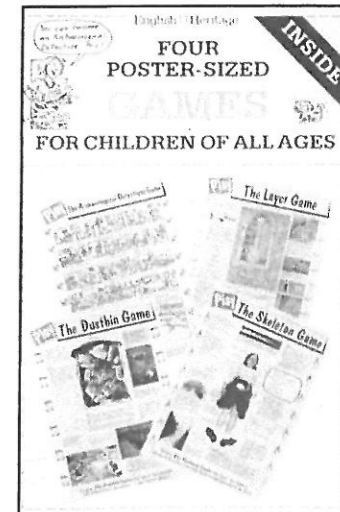
HANDBOOKS FOR TEACHERS



Old Sarum Philippe Planel

The massive banks and ditches of an Iron Age hillfort surround the remains of a Norman castle and cathedral which were abandoned in the thirteenth century. As an educational tool for exploring continuity and discontinuity of settlement over a long period the site has few rivals. The handbook contains background historical overviews; ideas for preparatory work, on-site activity sheets; and ideas for follow-up work. Most of the material is aimed at the 9-13 age range.
36 pages, card covers, A4 size, ISBN 1-85074-308-8
Price £2.95
Quote Code: XN 10560

POSTERS



Archaeological Detectives Poster Games

This set of four posters encourages children to learn through playing investigative archaeological games, including: The Dustbin Game; The Layer Game; The Skeleton Games; and The Archaeological Detectives Game.
A3 size.
Price: £2.50
Quote Code: XR 10503

Resources 1991

Look out for our 1991 catalogue announcing more new titles in May, along with the complete range of books, videos etc. An illustrated 40 page **Catalogue of Publications** is now available listing site handbooks, academic and specialist books and general books.

For free copies write to us at:
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