

WHAT IS THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT?

A major part of studying place is the influence of human behaviour on the natural characteristics of a locality, and how it contributes to the personality of a place, as well as how the natural environment influences human behaviour in that locality. In studying places, and the interaction between place and human activity, pupils should be encouraged to ask questions. By using a set of carefully structured key questions as a starting point pupils will be able to pose their own questions at a particular site.



Geography site work at the Rollright Stones, Oxfordshire.

Change in the historic environment

The survival of each succeeding landscape depends on a number of factors, including the type of material being used to build the structures and the rate of agricultural, industrial and urban change. At any particular place, some structures from the past are likely still to be in use, though not necessarily for their original purpose. More recent structures might encapsulate some of the fabric of an older building. Many buildings and structures will have disappeared from above the surface of the land altogether and the only traces we will find will be below the ground or by studying old maps, aerial photographs or other documentary evidence. Many of those sites which now leave few traces on the surface will have been destroyed only in the very recent past as more intensive agriculture and urban expansion have made an impact on the landscape.

The historic landscape has two dimensions. This diagram shows the relationship between the vertical element of the landscape as it changed over time, and the horizontal aspect which shows the shape of the whole landscape at one particular time, either in the past or present.

ACTIVITY

Pupils could be asked to survey a small section of one of the streets of Rochester, or any other historic town, to identify evidence of the past that remains today.

■ Ask pupils to look for changes in the use of buildings: old shop signs painted high on walls often give a clue here. Additions and alterations to buildings resulting from change of use can be noted.

■ Open spaces in a built up area may reflect a past event or past use; for example an old market area no longer used and turned into a car park, or a small garden

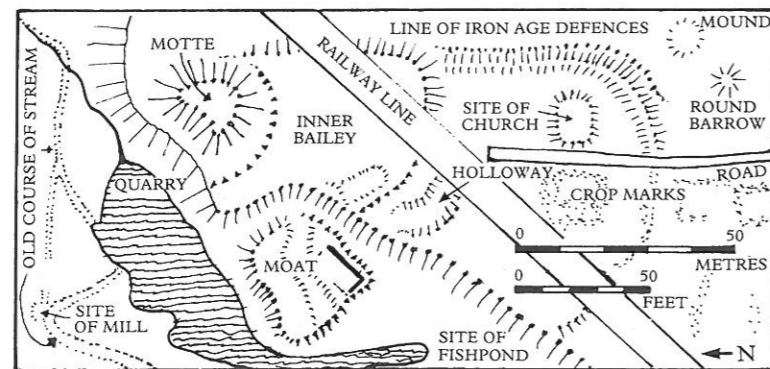
on the site of a building destroyed during the Second World War.

■ Street names are also a fertile source of information. These details may be recorded in a set of annotated photographs or a slide sequence with accompanying commentary.

■ The position of the noted buildings or areas may be marked on a street plan of the area, in varying degrees of detail. For instance buildings or remains from different periods or buildings of differing use - domestic, industrial, commercial - may be noted in different colours.

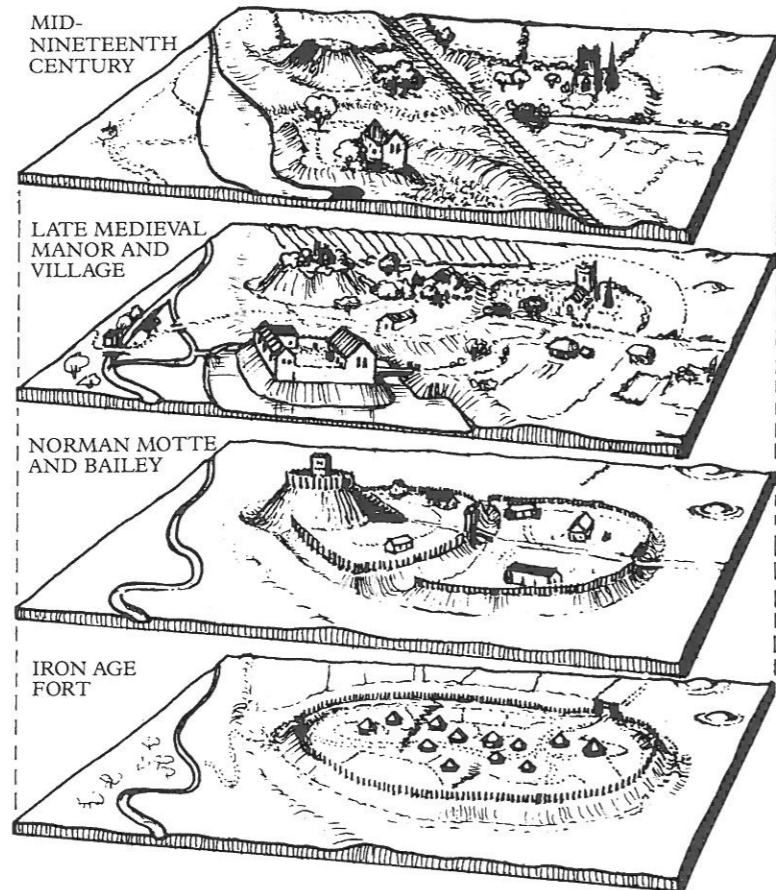


From *A Teacher's Guide to Geography and the Historic Environment*, English Heritage.



The two-dimensional landscape.

- The horizontal dimension.



- The vertical dimension.

THE CONSERVATION OF THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT



Wroxeter Roman City, Shropshire. Many of the now upstanding remains have been excavated and conserved.

What is conservation?

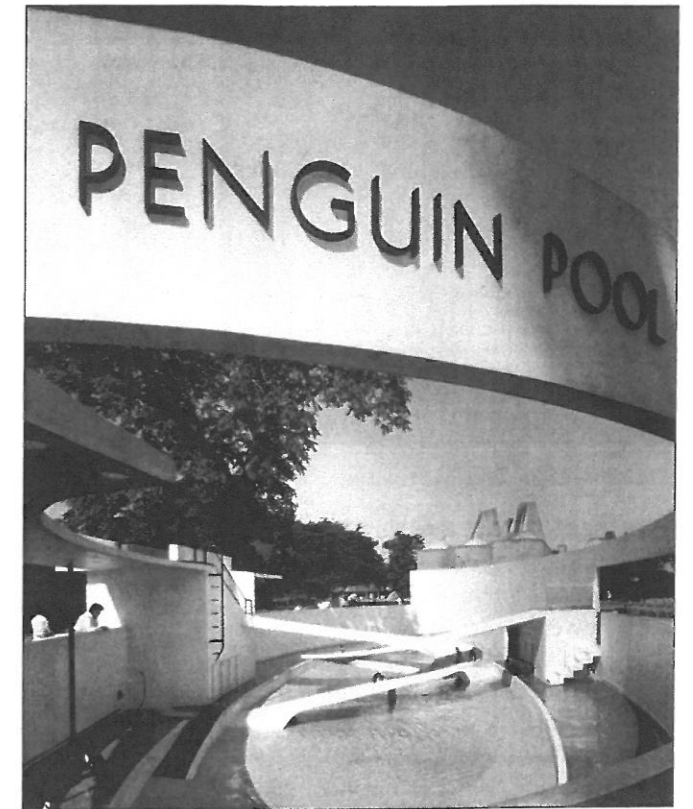
The conservation of the historic environment raises complex issues. In the case of historic buildings the options may include preserving a building in the state in which it was found, recycling or adapting a building for new uses, restoring a building to its original state using traditional or modern techniques, or substantial rebuilding.

Conservation can even encompass the detailed recording of a building before it is demolished, or the placing of a plaque on the site of the demolished building. All of these processes can be appropriate in certain circumstances, but argument arises over specific cases and over where the emphasis of long-term policies should lie.

What are scheduled ancient monuments?

Ancient monuments which are considered to be of national importance may be 'scheduled' and given legal protection. Once a monument is scheduled no works which are likely to affect or damage it may be carried out without government consent. For example farmers have responsibility for any scheduled monument on their land and will have to apply for consent to change its cultivation from pasture to arable use. Among our scheduled monuments are stone circles, Roman forts and towns, earthworks as well as substantial ruined buildings like castles and abbeys. They range from the oldest, palaeolithic cave sites in Derbyshire, to the most recent, pill boxes from the Second World War. In all there are currently about 15,600 scheduled monuments in England and Wales.

Avebury stone Circles, Wiltshire. An example of the conflict between transport needs and conservation.



The Penguin Pool at London Zoo, designed by Lubetkin in 1933-4 uses reinforced concrete and is a Grade 1 listed building.

What are listed buildings?

Historic buildings thought worthy of protection on the grounds of special architectural or historic interest are catalogued on a list and known as listed buildings. There are about 440,000 listed buildings in England and Wales. They may not be demolished, altered or extended in a way which affects their character without the consent of the local planning authority.

Listed buildings are usually in current use and the majority are private houses. The term actually applies to anything that has been constructed, so lampposts (including those outside No. 10 Downing Street), garden walls, sundials, bridges, bandstands, canal locks and even some tombstones are included.





Michelin House, Fulham, London.

Conservation areas

Where an area is of special historic or architectural interest local authorities have powers to designate conservation areas. There are about 7,500 conservation areas in the UK today ranging from the historic centres of towns and cities to Victorian suburbs and 1920s model housing estates. They contain a large percentage of listed buildings but need not be centred on them. A conservation area might be designated to protect a village green, an historic street pattern or features of archaeological interest. Consent is required before any building in a conservation area is demolished and there are restrictions on the kinds of development which may take place within them.

Using Historic Buildings

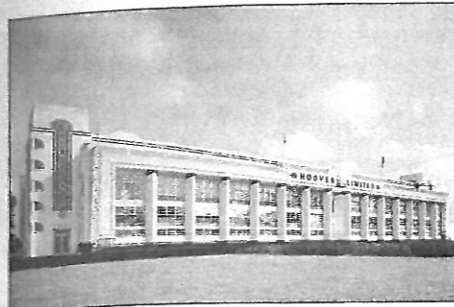
Local historic buildings make an excellent study for schools. They link the present, past and future, and fall within the first-hand experience of pupils. As every locality has buildings, this study can be rooted in the pupils' own environment, involving them in the history of their own areas and decisions which affect their own futures. The subject is flexible enough to interest an eight-year-old or stretch an eighteen-year-old. It is genuinely cross-curricular, involving pupils in both practical and theoretical work, getting them out of the classroom and into the community. It is a topic with which pupils may become heavily involved and it can stimulate vehement discussion. It is a direct and tangible route to preparing pupils for citizenship. And, most importantly, it is a fieldwork topic that is cheap and accessible: almost every school will have listed buildings within walking distance.

How to involve pupils in the issues

- Ask pupils to note which buildings they find interesting and to say why. This can be compared with the buildings they remembered for their mental maps.
- Ask pupils to note which buildings are the oldest. What are the common features that identify old buildings (styles, materials, size, etc.)?
- Ask pupils to identify new buildings which are decorated to look old. Look for fake leaded windows, new coach lamps, half timbered integral garages, neo-Georgian bow windows, Tudor lettering and spelling etc.

- Ask pupils to look for changes to buildings. Identify replacement windows, extensions, blocked doors and windows, new roofing etc. This approach can be followed by discussion as to why people want these changes.
- Ask pupils to look for clues that tell them something about the owners or occupiers of the building. Are they rich/poor, young/old? What interests do they have? What do names tell us? Is the business prosperous or not? What image is being projected?
- Ask pupils to note building materials. This can be followed up with questions about which materials are local, are natural or artificial, are used for old or new buildings.

BELOW: Doughty Street, London. Listed buildings in use as professional offices.



The Hoover Building, Perivale (1931).



Canning Street conservation area, Liverpool.



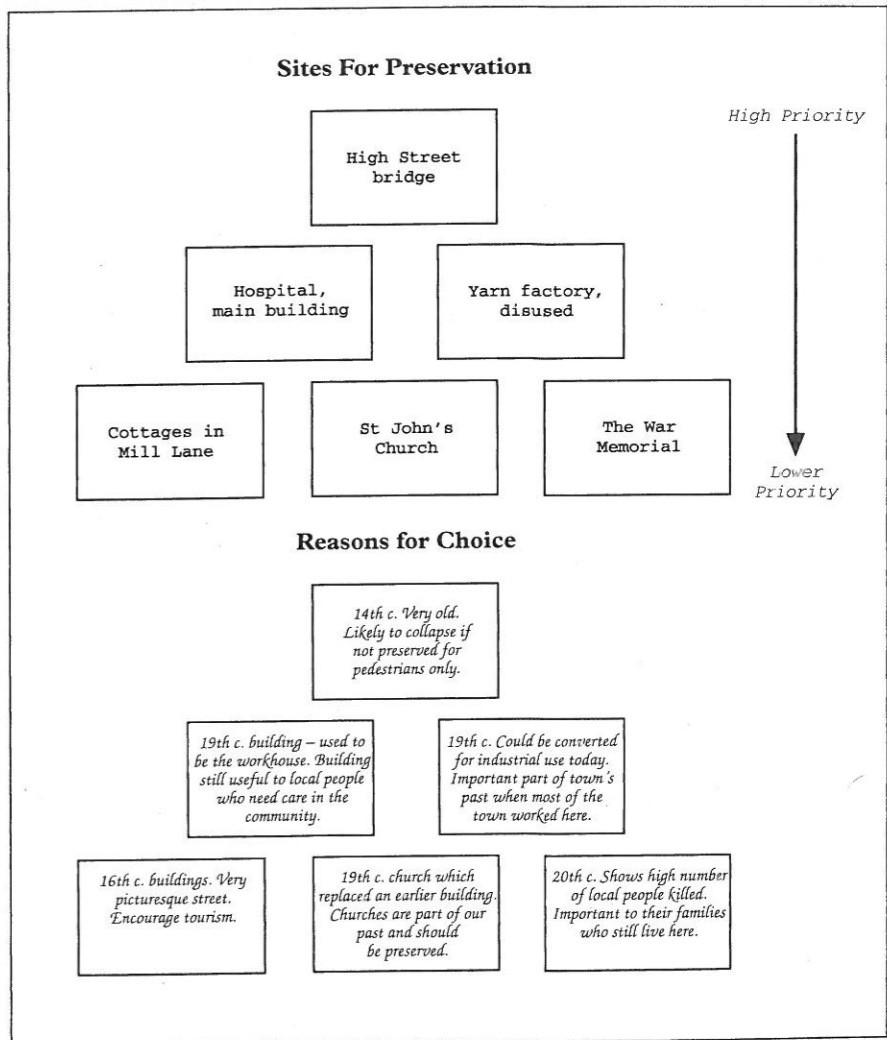
Audley End House, Essex.

ACTIVITY

Ask pupils, working in pairs, to choose six buildings, structures or landscapes in the local area that they consider should be preserved for future generations. This may be done by visiting possible sites and drawing/photographing them, or it may be done by using visual and documentary sources in the classroom. Write the name of each building or structure on a separate postcard. (Each group will need six postcards).

For each building or site pupils should explain the reasons on which they based their decisions. They should then be asked to prioritise their choices one to six. For instance, pupils may consider

- whether age in itself makes something worth preserving. If so, how old would the structure need to be?
 - should places be preserved because they look picturesque, or are industrial sites equally worth preserving?
 - whether the whole range of society and its activities is represented in the places chosen for preservation.
 - whether the needs of preservation should outweigh the needs of society for transport, industrial and leisure development for the future.
- Each pair should then compare lists with another pair of pupils.
- Were the same buildings chosen?



- Were the reasons for choices similar?
- Was the order of priority the same? If not, why did it differ? Were different reasons given more importance?

Ask each group of four to negotiate a list of only three buildings to be preserved with reasons. If this list is reported back to the whole class a picture should emerge of the similarities and differences of opinion over

what is worth preserving and why. If only one of the buildings could be preserved, on what basis would the groups/class make this decision? At the end of this activity your pupils should be more aware of the different criteria for preservation of the historic environment, the differences in opinion that can affect decisions on preservation, and the possibilities of conflict between different criteria.

The National Curriculum recommends visits to historic sites, whether they are local buildings near your school or national monuments such as those managed by English Heritage.

If you make an educational group visit to any English Heritage Historic Property our free educational visits scheme offers an ideal opportunity to include visits in your programmes of work. Almost every aspect of the curriculum can be explored through the resource of the historic environment - not only for the study of history but for any other subject. There are lots of stimulating ideas on the following pages to help you, including activities taken from some of our National Curriculum Teacher's Guides. To find out more about them send for a free copy of our **Resources** catalogue.

History

Activities in which pupils identify changes and place them in sequences can help them develop an understanding of the concepts of change and continuity. They may, for example, examine repairs and alterations to buildings or the changing use of the site at the different times. This can lead on to a consideration of the reasons for such changes, perhaps using additional information, or the causes and consequences of events in the site's history.

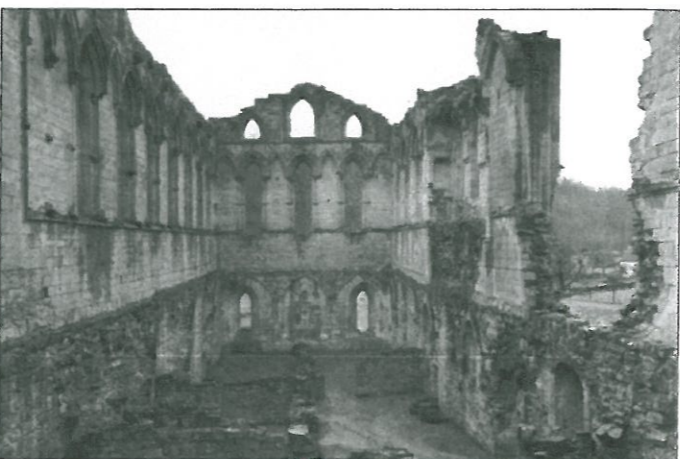
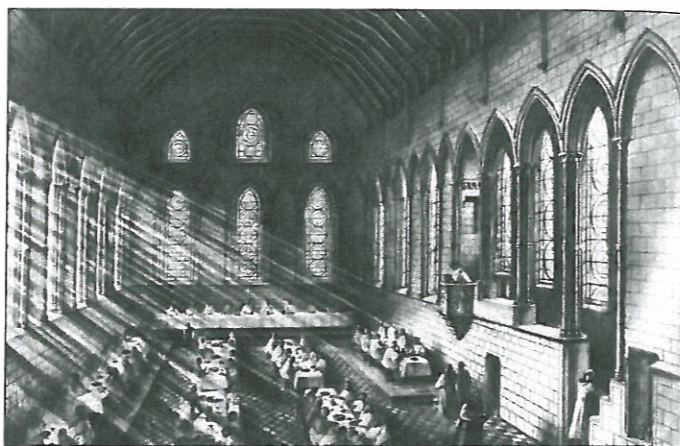
Work at a site will involve the use of evidence about the past. Pupils can draw their own conclusions from the clues they find and, perhaps, consider the advantages and limitations of physical remains as sources of historical evidence. Other types of historical sources such as maps, pictures, written accounts from the time and extracts from guidebooks can be used to help build up a fuller picture. Pupils can compare these additional sources with what they have seen during their visit to test the reliability of the sources or the accuracy of their own conclusions.

Encourage your class to see if modern presentation or conservation techniques interfere with their own interpretation of the site. Does modern lighting or heating give a misleading message, or do safety barriers or furniture which is arranged to facilitate a visitor

Individual features, like window shapes, can help to date buildings or identify alterations.

route give a wrong image? Many larger sites have artist's impressions of how they looked in their heyday: ask pupils to look closely to see how much has been based on what remains of the site, and how much is artistic licence and therefore an interpretation which is open to question.

The refectory at Rievaulx Abbey, North Yorkshire with an impression of how it looked by the artist, Alan Sorrell. How much is based on the evidence left by the site and how much on the artist's informed imagination?



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English

Historic sites are a new and unfamiliar environment to most pupils where the need to listen to and follow instructions is important, and where there are opportunities for extending vocabulary. They are also good places for group work which promotes a high degree of verbal interaction and synthesis of ideas.

Sites are useful stimuli for both formal and creative writing, but it is best to confine pupils to collecting notes or even just words on site, and leaving the polishing until later. A well-defined framework produces the best results. For example, if you want your class to produce an illustrated guide or a commentary to accompany a slide or video presentation, make clear who the audience is, how this will dictate vocabulary and complexity of concepts, and exactly how long the finished product must be. Similarly, for creative writing, a constraint on number of lines or even words can result in more precise and imaginative work. Your pupils can express their individual impression of the site, or they can devise a story based upon a real or fictional account which took place in a particular spot or time in the site's history.

Role play and simple dramatic improvisations during the visit can result in the planning, writing and performance of a short play. Topics, such as the facilities available for the general public at the site or the effects of tourism on the monument, could provide opportunities for discussion or debate and is a useful topic for oral assessment.

Geography

Skills developed during fieldwork on site might include using photographs, plans, sections and maps to aid understanding. Pupils in KS3 and KS4 can be given tasks which involve surveying and the construction of plans, cross-sections or composite maps. At all Key Stages pupils should be given experience in the use of compasses and compass directions both on site and before the visit. On site groups may use questionnaires, make field sketches, measure or gather information to use later in graphs and charts.

Your class might conduct research into the importance of a site to the local economy after having made a survey of

the impact of tourism on the buildings and their immediate environment.

Mathematics

A variety of mathematical techniques can be practised on site, such as measuring the height of walls, the volume of towers, the ground area of rooms or the percentage of wall area taken up by windows. Precise measurements need to be taken if you want to construct three-dimensional models.

Studying floor tiles can lead to work on tessellation, examining the lines of sight from arrow slits in castles involves a study of angles and trajectories, and observation of facades focuses upon symmetry.

Any data collected will need recording, processing and presenting.

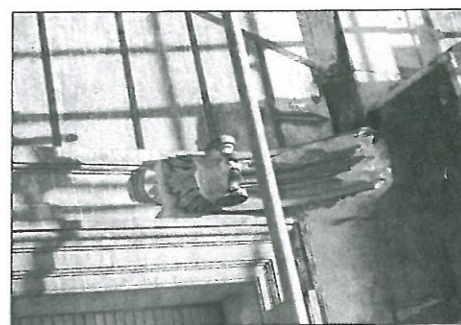


The symmetrical facade of Marble Hill House in London. Some of the individual features have more than one axis of symmetry.

Science

Opportunities for work in science include a wide range of investigations into building materials, the effects of weathering and pollution, the forces involved in supporting a massive wall, or into human influences on the natural environment. Sites often have several undisturbed areas rich in flora and the walls of many old buildings have become host to a variety of life forms.

Pupils can test what happens to sound in different spaces possibly with a view



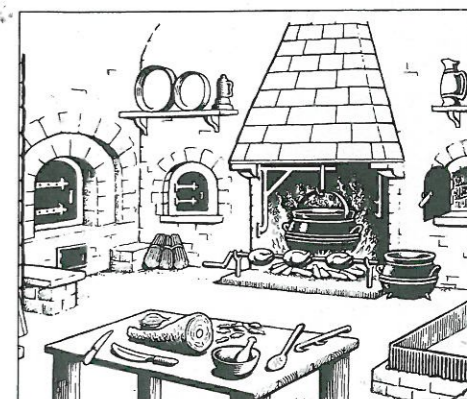
Decay at Brodsworth Hall, South Yorkshire.

to discovering a likely spot for musicians to perform. Groups involved in a photographic exercise might need to measure light levels, calculate correct exposures and consider the use of filters for making photographs of different parts of the site.

Technology

The technology curriculum requires an exploration of a variety of materials, artefacts and systems. An historic site provides an ideal opportunity for pupils to experience the technology of other times, and they will be exposed to aesthetic and cultural considerations which affect design. They can think about the construction of tall walls and arches and return to school to test the forces involved and the solutions employed by builders now and then. Pupils will need to be aware that in the past and in other cultures problems such as light, sanitation and water supply were addressed in different ways. On site they may look for evidence of the design of heating and water systems.

Opportunities for design might include guidebooks, information leaflets and posters advertising the site or an event in the grounds. Pupils can be involved in designing costumes, scenery and programmes for a play, or designing fabrics inspired by features observed at the site. A project involving the design of a new visitor centre, information signs or a play area can involve pupils in work covering all Attainment Targets. Similarly follow-up activities might centre upon period food, the planning, preparation and evaluation of which would provide ample opportunity for developing and using artefacts and systems as well as working with materials.



Methods of cooking food were different in other times. From Goodrich Castle, A Teacher's Handbook, English Heritage.