

**Choosing the sites**

The first step for the schools was to look at their local environment with new eyes - what could they choose? This proved extremely difficult. Once they started to walk the locality, the problem proved not to be what to choose but what to leave out - they were spoilt for choice.

I went with Forches Cross Primary School, Barnstaple, on their first foray into the town and we were amazed at the vast array of interesting buildings that we could choose to study, ranging from the clock tower to the bridge and from the new shopping precinct to a derelict church for sale for redevelopment. It turned out, as we walked around and in discussion when we arrived back at school, that the same thought had struck us all - what a fascinating variety of windows their were in the High Street above the modern shop fronts. The pupils began to wonder if people shopping ever bothered to look up and notice them - then it came to them - why not study the windows of Barnstaple High Street and help people notice them?

This is only one school's experience of choosing their site but in October of 1993 seventeen other schools all over Devon and Cornwall were having the same problem deciding which site or buildings to study. The two counties proved to be so rich in historical heritage, it was tough.

Should we not look to buildings of the future too, though? Two comprehensive schools decided to do just that.

The buildings and sites being researched now ranged from a Bronze Age site at Minions on Bodmin Moor to the ultra-modern New Tate Gallery, St Ives; and from a Victorian fishermen's shelter to a village flattened to make way for a Second World War airfield. By the beginning of November the studying and detective work had begun in earnest.

**Work in the classroom**

In order to help turn pupils into reporters (some as young as seven) I decided to take the newspaper to the classroom. Together, we deconstructed the newspaper - we used the school's local Northcliffe edition for this. We talked about some of the technical words used in a newspaper, such as the 'masthead' (the name of the newspaper); headlines; the 'gutter' (white margin at the edges of the page); and about the content of the newspaper - different sorts of advertisements, BDMs (Births, Deaths and Marriages) and so on. Most were surprised that without the adverts, a newspaper would cost in the

region of £5! After talking also about the editorial and pictures, the younger pupils went on to make a newspaper 'scrapbook'. They cut out a collection of specified types of items from the newspaper and were asked to glue them on to a double plain tabloid size sheet of newsprint, making sure that all the gaps were filled, leaving only enough white space to look attractive - not so much that they would lose their job for not using valuable advertising space!

Now that they had learnt a little about the format of newspaper content and layout, we moved on to learn how to write a newspaper article. The type of activity varied for this depending on the age of the pupils involved. In all cases pupils were introduced to the 5Ws - Who? Where? Why? When? What?

They were taught that these questions should be answered in all newspaper articles. We checked real newspaper articles to see whether this was true.

**Taking shape**

We followed this with finding out about the 'shape' of a newspaper article - the Introduction, the Body and the Tail - and explaining that it was like this so that any article could be edited by simply removing the end paragraphs one by one until it was the right length for the space available without it losing any of its interest or sense.

The older pupils cut up real articles and gave them to a friend to put back

together. This was followed by practising writing an article of their own using a photograph as a stimulus. These could be as humorous or bizarre as they wanted. They then read these to the class, who had to check that they had all the 5Ws and that it was the right 'shape'.

The younger pupils were told a fairy story in traditional style and then given a headline and introduction for the same story told in newspaper report style. They were then asked to write their own fairy tale in the style of a newspaper article, with an exciting headline. This proved good fun and very entertaining.

**Looking for clues**

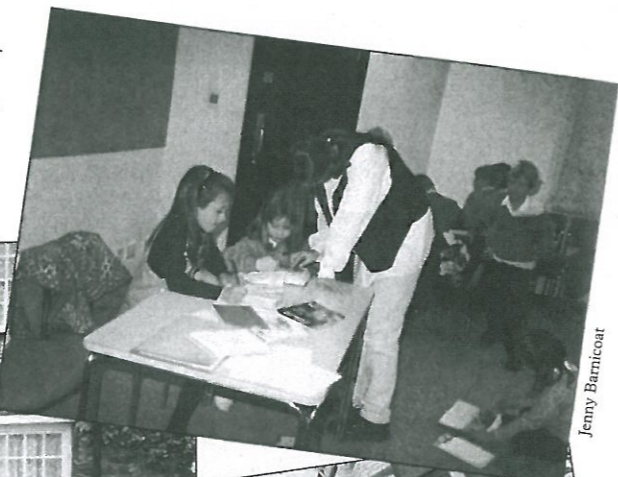
Having now learnt to be good reporters, the time had come to do a bit of investigative journalism. Well structured visits were planned to the site or building being studied. The pre-planning was important. The pupils now had to think of themselves as 'time detectives' looking for clues to the past as well as reporters - a lot to think about! We had sessions and

activities in the classroom introducing the work of English Heritage and talking about the kinds of reasons for preserving buildings and how to go about looking for clues to a building's past. The younger pupils especially enjoyed helping me smash up my old crockery - but got the message that once the past is destroyed it cannot be put back together again and that the fewer pieces we have left, the more difficult it is to find the clues to a place's history.

The field visits and follow-up visits proved to be the most exciting part of the investigative work for many. The pupils, who had taken part in discussion and activities in the classroom to enhance their observation skills, really enjoyed piecing together the evidence of former uses and the chosen place's history for themselves. They found that with practice they could readily spot blocked windows and doors and start to work out which walls had been built first. This led to all kinds of excited pointing of fingers, exclamations and hypotheses which were then to be investigated further back in the classroom or at the local library.



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LEFT: Bradninch County Primary (Yr 6) in the old cowshed during a visit to a local farm.

RIGHT: Pupils from Class B of Trevithick Primary, Camborne, in the process of making 3-D models of their building, Tyacks Hotel, Camborne.

BELOW: Class 2 of Abbotsham C of E Primary chose to study Dunster Castle, near Minehead, Somerset.



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ABOVE: Pupils studied a wide variety of 'special' sites. Here - Minions Moor, Bodmin.

TOP: Jenny Barnicoat, project co-ordinator, pointing out a blocked window at Raleigh House, to Class 1 of Summercourt County Primary.

TOP RIGHT: Some Class 3/4 pupils from Forches Cross continuing their research into windows in Barnstaple library.

RIGHT CENTRE: Forches Cross settled on the windows of Barnstaple High St.

RIGHT: Four boys from Padstow County Primary School studying their old school in Padstow.