French’s Road
The road contains a number of different types of memorials from the street name to inscriptions on a new re-used industrial complex. Pupils could be asked to:
- use buildings, date inscriptions and names along French’s Road and on the old mill site to work out what has changed over the last 100 years
- talk to people living in French’s Road about changes they remember
- use a local newspaper to find out about Barry Jacobs, who is commemorated on the inscription on Barry Annexe, 1986

Borough Council Housing
Cambridge Borough Council was proud of its public housing record and put up a memorial plaque which reads: “The 2,000th house built by the Borough of Cambridge 1919-1934.” Pupils might:
- make a transcript of the plaque
- use a street directory from 1934 to find out who lived in the house
- put out an appeal for anyone who lived in the street at that time, asking them what the houses were like inside
- discuss why it is important for councils to build houses to rent
- find out who is on the Housing Committee today, and ask them if any commemorative plaques have been put up recently

Industrial Cottage, 1887
Look in the census returns for 1881 and 1891 to find out who lived and worked there
- Find out which industry the cottage was used for by visiting the Local Studies Library

BARRY ANNEXE 1986

Cemetery
There is a small Victorian cemetery on Histon Road, similar in layout to the much grander ones in London and Bradford. Pupils could:
- record in drawing or photography symbols about life and death from the graves
- construct some family trees from information on family plots
- make a number of the most popular first names of people who died before 1940, between 1900 and 1930 and between 1930 and 1960.

Making history tactile
English Heritage has recently supported an extended project run by the University of Lancaster's Department of Teaching and Education Studies, to involve pupils in creating resources that will help children with visual impairments appreciate historic sites.

Ambleside Roman fort lies in a field on the edge of Lake Windermere. It is not very spectacular and there is no information for visitors. Two teacher-training students at the university, challenged to provide an interpretation of the site for the public, chose to consider the needs of the visually impaired and, among other things, created a tactile plan of the fort, labelled in braille. The materials they used were all inexpensive officuts – pieces of velcro, sandpaper, string and fabrics. The success of their design, when tested by a visually impaired adult, was the launching pad for a much more ambitious project involving Cumbria schools.

Special provision for the visually impaired at historic sites normally falls into three categories that can be tackled by children at school. The first resource, the creation of a large printed guide for the use of the partially-sighted, enhances language work and provides an opportunity to develop Information Technology skills. The second resource, an audio tape guiding the visually impaired visitor around the site, effectively promotes spoken English. The third resource involves the construction of tactile models, plaques and plans, and incorporates elements of art, technology and mathematics.

Underlying the work is the history of the sites, chosen because of their connection with the study units of the Key Stage 2 history curriculum. In order to create their support material, the children needed to know the history of the site and to observe and understand the important features associated with it. With English Heritage’s support it was possible to set up three projects using different historic sites. The first project was organised by Anne Mossop, history coordinator at Long Marton Primary School, Cumbria. Her class of seven to 11 year olds was studying The Tudors, a study unit, which provided the context for visiting Sizergh Castle, a National Trust property near Kendal. The second project involved primary education students from Lancaster University working with junior classes at Barrow Island Primary School (history coordinator, Audrey McKinnon) and North Walney Primary School (history coordinator, Adrienne Griffiths), both in Barrow-in-Furness, Cumbria. On this occasion English Heritage’s Furness Abbey – founded in the 12th century and dissolved on Henry VIII’s orders – was used. The ruins provided a very different challenge to that of Sizergh Castle.

The third project was based at Fitzerning Primary School, Cumbria (headteacher and history coordinator, Margaret Wilsie) and used the parish church. It is a small, pretentious Victorian building, and the study formed part of the work of Year 5 and Year 6 children. The sites were all very different and each project developed its own focus and momentum. With a clear brief, and known outcomes, the new fifth Key Element, ‘Organisation and Communications’ had a high profile.

Long Marton School and Sizergh Castle
This school was asked to participate in the project as part of a cross-curricular topic, currently under way with the juniors at the school. We studied and researched the Tudor background, investigating the furniture and decor as well as the political and royal aspects of the period. We also studied portraits, contrasting them with those from the Stuart period; this stretched the children’s vocabulary, stimulated their narrative and helped them use adjectives effectively in their detailed descriptions at the chosen site. In addition to the historical research we also learned a lot about visual impairment and the various aids available.

The Royal National Institute for the Blind resources pack was invaluable: we used the videos, Anna’s Story as...
Barrow Schools and Furness Abbey

The Dissolution of the Monasteries provided the context for our study of Furness Abbey. The Abbey is a superb ruin; part of it is almost as it was 300 years ago, but other sections are no more than outlines in the grass. Because of inevitable restrictions we had less time to spend on this study than on others which produced some less polished outcomes. The children provided their groups with an introduction to visual impairment, and the dissolution of the monasteries.

The visit to Furness Abbey encouraged the children to learn about the layout of the site, the routine of a ruin, and the different building periods and changes in design. Each group was assigned a part of the Abbey to study. The children had to consider the needs of the visually impaired and they were asked to choose a feature which could be reproduced in tactile form. This involved close observation which would allow an audio tape or a large print leaflet, describing the room, to be created at school.

The chosen features ranged from plans of parts of the abbey, to models of gables, plaques representing the shape of windows and relief models of the masons’ marks. The most ambitious model was a reconstruction, using art straws, of the rib structure of the infernary chapel vault. Large print guides were created on word processors back at school, but making the audio tapes in the classrooms was a minefield. Sound is vital to the visually impaired and the acoustics at Furness Abbey vary greatly from one room to the next. Recording in the roofed infernary chapel produced very different results to recording in the monks’ lavatories. These were all lost in the classroom and we learnt an important lesson: it’s vital to choose a site which can be resisted. The children could only go to Furness Abbey once and so did not have the opportunity to focus on the tasks one by one. In the other projects each visit had a single focus, for example, letting the children concentrate on making the audio tape or becoming familiar with the site.

St. Paul’s Church, Frizington, and Frizington Primary School

This school’s development plan for 1994/1995 included a focus on equality of opportunity for all. Consequently it volunteered to take part in the project. The work was carried out for the Spring Term with Year 5/6 children who would be working on a local history project studying the parish church during the first part of the term. Frizington is an ex-mining village which was mostly built in the 19th century. These children had worked on a Victorian Britain topic the previous year and this formed background knowledge to their local history work.

It was hoped that by the end of the term the children would become familiar with the parish church, and its history, and would have increased their awareness of the needs of the visually impaired. We were fortunate in having the help of Les Hartridge, who carried out extensive research on Frizington and its parish church. This provided us with archive material, such as photographs, burial and baptism registers and extracts from newspapers and trade directories containing information about the parish church. Children were able to use this material, guide books and photographs to research information about the church. They also interviewed the vicar and verger.

We spent four days working with Rob David and three students from Lancaster University, learning a great deal about visual impairment and how it affects people’s lives. The children watched the Anna’s Story video and put on spectacles which limited their vision in a variety of ways. Using this awareness we then visited the church to consider how we could make it accessible to visually impaired people.

On the following two visits the children were divided into six groups, each focusing on a different aspect of the church. The visits were spent creating and refining tactile material. A feature of the church is its variety of floor tiling. These tiles were reproduced in a variety of media – clay, art straws, fabric, etc. Another group focused on the outside of the building – recreating each wall in clay. The group that tackled the making of a tactile floor tile found they had taken on an enormous task which involved much group discussion and mathematical investigation.

We decided to create a large print book and an audio cassette guide. The children visited the church to plan their text and then spoke rather than read it onto the tape. Recording took place in the church which helped produce a thoroughly chokey sounds. Time was running out and the large print book was produced in an afternoon. We used computers to experiment with different sizes and density of print but the children found it difficult to synthesise their spoken commentary into concise sentences for the book.

While the project was underway we contacted the RNIB New College, Worcester. The children found this enormously exciting. We exchanged tapes and school prospectuses and labels in large print were sent to Frizington. The thought of having an audience gave a sense of purpose to the children, who came into school the day after a site visit with suggestions of how to extend our work further. They also began to evaluate their work critically.

I was touched by the case that was shown by our children to the visually impaired children. This was accompanied by a sensitivity and a respect for their achievements. The vicar, who met us at the church, was so moved that he made us the subject of his weekly sermon. We learned a great deal from the visually impaired children and saw where we’d made mistakes particularly on the audio tape, but we still achieved our objectives. The children worked with visually impaired children and appreciated their difficulties and achievements. They now have a knowledge of the parish church and its role in the community. We have all shared an exciting challenge and can take pride in what we have achieved. The exercise has been a community-wide morale booster – Frizington can be proud of its church, its children and their work.

Linking history with the needs of the visually impaired proved to be an extremely creative alliance. From the history point of view the approach generated a real need to know, and a desire to observe and record the details of features of the sites, knowing that the needs of the visually impaired demanded accuracy. At the same time the children became involved with understanding the needs of others, and were determined to learn and get things right. Although all the projects were clearly located within the context of the history National Curriculum, real learning was taking place in a range of other curriculum areas. After the children from RNIB New College, Worcester visited, the self-esteem of our own pupils increased.

As one wrote, ‘I thought the blind children liked their visit to our school and I am proud of what we have done.’

Rob David, Department of Teaching and Education Studies, Lancaster University; Anne Metoyer, Martin Primary School, Cumbaria; Margaret Whittle, Head Teacher, Frizington Primary School, Cumbaria.
Archaeology round-up

Lighting up the Dark Ages at West Heslerton, North Yorkshire

At West Heslerton, North Yorkshire, archaeologists are completing a major excavation project begun in 1988, examining an Early Anglo-Saxon village. The project is funded by English Heritage as part of the national Rescue Archaeology programme.

This year, the last season of excavation, is concerned with the examination of a series of Late Roman and Anglo-Saxon features spanning the period from AD350 to AD850. During the summer season a number of schools visited the site and after seeing archaeology in action took part in activities aimed at increasing the understanding of the Anglo-Saxon period as well as the collection and interpretation of archaeological material. Children were able to handle a wide range of materials – including pottery and animal bones – examine seeds through a microscope, see costume reconstructions and see how some of the fabrics were produced. As the excavation progresses a series of workshops was produced covering different aspects of the project. During the holiday period, families visited the site at weekends and on Wednesdays to see the work in progress. In-term-time schools could visit the site on any other day than Fridays by prior arrangement. Site visits for schools will continue until the end of October.

The Boxgrove excavation

In May 1988 English Heritage’s newspapers reported the finding of a shirt bone in a quarry at Boxgrove, near Chichester in Sussex. The bone, thought to be at least 500,000 years old, raised mammals belonging to only a man or woman? Where was the rest of the skeleton? How did the person die? What kind of life had he had? The excavation of the site and the work undertaken it seems a good idea to involve local schools. We had two main aims: to allow children to understand some of the processes of archaeology by watching archaeologists at work, and to inspire an interest in prehistory. This is not widely studied in schools, and we hoped to give teachers confidence in unfamiliar topics.

A second teacher, also an English Heritage, coordinated the project locally, in conjunction with the LEA advisory service. One of the archaeologists from the site team was able to devote some time to the education project, and she and the coordinator went into schools to talk to children. One of the first and most difficult concerns was to assess the time-scale involved: a period as long as 500,000 years is difficult to comprehend. Various time line methods were used. One primary school used cut-out squares of paper to represent 100 years; these were coloured and stuck together into a long roll which was laid out in the school playground. When the comparison was made between Queen Victoria living 100 years ago, and the Boxgrove hominin living 500,000 years ago, the children began to grasp the vast time. What life may have been like for these early people at Boxgrove was introduced by the children handling genuine flint tools, and considering how they were made and used. Comparisons were made between a modern axe, in its natural state, a roughened hand-axe, and a smaller, more finely chased hand-axe. The children appreciated the amount of work and skill that had gone into making them. Holding a tool that was first held half a million years ago is inspiring, even for a sophisticated child of the Nineties! Small groups of children were asked to discuss two main questions. Could the early inhabitants of Boxgrove talk, and if not, how did they communicate?

The new Investigating History for Primary Schools package – the result of a collaboration between the BBC and English Heritage – will enable you to develop your approach to history. English Heritage’s skill is to create an interest in the historic environment through imaginative, investigative educational activities outside the classroom. BBC Education’s strength is to bring this to life in the classroom in a stimulating way. Furthermore, it is unique to take a meeting of people who are striving to develop their skills as teachers for the benefit of their pupils. Drawing on the strength of both organisations, two programmes have been produced for broadcast in October, with repeats in February 1996.

INSET and television

Many school inspection reports refer to the lack of investigative approach to history. Television programmes are used passively, activities such as copying information from books and completing photocopied worksheets are still very common. The two ‘Teaching Today’ programmes and accompanying support materials enable you to design a staff development session to address this lack of an investigative approach. Furthermore, they will enable you to develop imaginative outdoor work in your own backyard and at historic sites. This package encourages both good practice in teaching history and good practice in the delivery of in-service training too. Television programmes on video in the context of in-service training are good at establishing the issues, raising questions, enabling teachers to see how other teachers were in the same situation and seeing things from the perspective of other teachers and pupils. However, they don’t allow you to discuss topics with the people featured. Television programmes need to be used in an active way by selecting certain sections as a stimulus, and preparing associated activities in between the chosen clips.

Watch and do!

Discussion agendas in response to a clip can take place in many ways:

● Agree-dissolve statements
● Linking questions or answers
● Categorising or sorting
● Ranking or prioritising

Having watched some of the video, design a task which enables the INSET participants to plan some teaching of their own, based on agreed principles. This might be brain-storming related to your own backyard and local sites, creating and listing tasks associated with a site visit, or creating activities for local history.

The ‘Teaching Today’ programmes can be used for self-managed INSET by an individual teacher; school-managed INSET ran by the history co-ordinator; LEA or other staff development body INSET; or INSET designed by historic site education officers. The pack includes a structure for INSET session activities and tasks to develop your own practice as well as further contacts to support development. Good luck! Please let us know how you used the programmes and related support materials. We welcome constructive criticism to enable future projects to meet your needs.

Chris Durbin, Education Officer, BBC Education

The transmission dates are:

3 Oct. 1995 Investigating History – a pile of old stones?
10 Oct 1995 Investigating History – your own backyard

The Investigating History pack, containing both 30-minute video programmes and an INSET teacher’s booklet, by Jenny Fordham and Liz Hollinshed, is available from English Heritage Education Office at £25.50 + VAT. Please quote product code KT10818. See page 15 for order form.

Our Education Service often supports archaeological projects to help set up educational resources or services for schools and colleges. This is a round-up of some of those going on around the country.