

Learning Activity

This resource provides learning activities for your students using People's Collection Wales. It can also be used as a template for creating your own activities using the People's Collection Wales website.



Progression Step

3



Subject

Using Archives to Explore Local History



Title

On Your Doorstep—Photographs
Using archives to explore local history



Author

Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historic Monuments of Wales and the following local archives: Gwent Archives; Pembrokeshire Archives; Anglesey Archives; Wrexham Archives and Local Studies Services; Blaenavon Community Heritage and Cordell Museum.

Using Archives to Explore Local History - Photographs

This resource explores how you can investigate the history of your locality using photographs as a type of source found in local and national archives or record offices in Wales. It forms part of a series forming the basic building blocks for finding out about local history.

The resource is intended as a guide for teachers, helping them to use primary sources in the classroom. The resource can also help teachers work with their local archive to locate similar sources for their own locality. It aims to introduce teachers and students to the types of archival sources used for local history and to familiarise them with the form, appearance and content of the sources.

On Your Doorstep - Photographs - Learning Objectives

Learners will understand:

- The role of the archives in providing important historical sources.
- The role of using photographs as a type of historical source.
- What life was like in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century for their own locality compared to other localities across Wales.

Learners will be able to:

Subject Curriculum—History

- Use a range of sources, including ICT, to search for information.
- Ask and answer relevant questions about the past.
- Identify differences between ways of life at different times.
- Identify the ways in which the past is represented and interpreted.
- Select, record and organise historical information.
- Communicate ideas, opinions and conclusions with increasing independence in a variety of ways.

Literacy Framework

- Listen and respond to viewpoints and ideas of others.
- Contribute to discussions and presentations.
- Identify main ideas, events and supporting details.
- Plan and adapt writing style to suit the audience and purpose.
- Use a structure that is appropriate to the purpose and focus of the writing.
- Use language that is appropriate to the writing.

Subject Curriculum—Geography

- Identify similarities and differences to describe, compare and contrast places and environments.
- Describe the causes and consequences of how places and environments change, from past to present.
- Observe and ask questions about a place.

On Your Doorstep - Photographs - Skills Framework

Thinking

- Asking questions.
- Activating prior knowledge, skills and understanding.
- Considering evidence, information and ideas.
- Evaluate own learning and thinking

Communication

- Developing and presenting information and ideas.
- Organising ideas and information.
- Communicating information.

ICT

- Finding and developing information and ideas.
- Creating and presenting information and ideas.

On Your Doorstep — Introductory Text

Introduction

This resource forms part of a series of eight. Each resource in the series introduces a different type of historical source. The types of historical sources introduced in this resource are typically what you might look at during a local history project and they are all available from local archives.

The different types of sources introduced are:

The Census

Tithe and Ordnance Survey Maps

School Log Books

Photographs

Parish Registers – baptisms and deaths

Trade Directories

Sales Catalogues

Newspapers

The exemplar historical sources in each resource come from four localities across Wales: Holyhead, Blaenavon, Saundersfoot and Wrexham. They cover the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Using these as examples, it is possible to explore, make connections and comparisons, ask and answer questions, discover landscapes and people, and the links between them.

There is a short film introducing archives and then for each type of source there is an additional short film explaining the type of source and how we can use it to find out more about local history. A transcript of the films and thumbnail images are included in the **teachers' notes**. The full size images are available by following the links to the People's Collection Wales website.

Each resource in the series has several **online tasks** for pupils which use the sources from the four localities. These sources can be viewed online at the People's Collection Wales website by following the links on the pupil task sheets. There are also **additional activities** that suggest ways in which pupils could use sources from local archives to investigate local history on their doorstep. These additional activities enable pupils to compare and contrast their own locality with those across Wales. There is a contact list for local and national archives throughout Wales at the end of the teachers' notes.

[View the film - The Archive and the Archivist](#)

On Your Doorstep - Introductory Film - Photographs

This is a short filmed introduction with an archivist explaining photographs as a type of source and how we can use them to find out more about local history.

[Photographs | Peoples Collection Wales](#)

Looking at Archives — Photographs



Using photographs

WHEN was the photograph taken?

Photographs capture or document a **moment in time**. *“We are now making history, and the sun picture supplies the means of passing down a record of what we are, and what we have achieved in this nineteenth century of our progress”*, declared John Thomson to the Royal Geographical Society in 1891.

One of the challenges with photographs is to know when that **moment in time** was! That is, when they were taken. Unless the date is recorded on the photograph, or it was taken at a recognisable and recorded event, we can often only guess when it was taken by looking at clothing, hairstyles, signs, transport, etc. Comparing two different photographs of the same place and looking for differences can sometimes help us guess when the photographs were taken. Clothing, trees and seasonal weather can be clues as to the time of year.

WHO took the photograph and who is being photographed?

Another challenge is that we often don't know the identities of the people in the photographs unless their names are written on the back. It is useful to think about the relationship between the person taking the photograph and the people in the photograph. For example, do the people in the photograph know the photograph was being taken? Were the people in the photograph deliberately posed or not?

Looking carefully at what the people in photographs are doing tells us about work and family life. Clothing and surroundings give us clues about the status of the people and their occupations.

WHERE was the photograph taken?

Sometimes we cannot even identify where the photograph was taken, although with careful detective work and comparison with other known photographs and even maps, we can sometimes work out the location.

WHY was the photograph taken?

Historic photographs contain all sorts of clues about life and places in the past. Remember that historic photographs were often taken for particular reasons, the subjects and places carefully chosen to communicate a particular message.

During the tasks, use the links to the collections on the People's Collection Wales website to look at all the photographs online. Comparing the photographs gives a lot of useful information about similarities and differences in various parts of Wales in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century.

On Your Doorstep - Photographs / Task 1

What were people's working lives like in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century?

Study the photographs from the collection below.

Here are some questions to help you with your tasks.

What do these photographs tell us about people's occupations in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century? What sort of jobs are the people doing?

What can you see, hear or smell?

How do you think the people in the photographs are feeling? What are the people in the photographs doing? Are they all working? What are the conditions like?

What questions do you want to ask about what is in the photographs?

Collection for Task 1

[Link to collection on People's Collection Wales website](#)

On Your Doorstep - Photographs / Task 2

What was transport and travel like in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century?

Study the photographs from the collection below.

Here are some questions to help you with your tasks.

List all the forms of transport you can see in the photographs. What do you notice about the traffic and road surfaces?

How would people have travelled to Holyhead, Saundersfoot, Blaenavon and Wrexham based on the evidence in the photographs?

How do you think this is different from today?

Collection for Task 2

[Link to collection on People's Collection Wales website](#)

On Your Doorstep - Photographs / Task 3

What was clothing like in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century?

Study the photographs from the collection below.

Here are some questions to help you with your task.

What do these photographs tell us about people's clothes in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century?

What do you notice about people's clothing and footwear in the photographs?

Do people have special clothing for work?

How are their clothes different to today's clothes?

Look at the photographs where there are groups of people. What are they all doing? Can you explain why they might all be there at that time? Do you think the photograph is posed?

Collection for Task 3

[Link to collection on People's Collection Wales website](#)

On Your Doorstep - Photographs / Task 4

What were buildings and streets like in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century?

Study the photographs from the collection below.

Here are some questions to help you with your task.

Choose one of the streets. Describe the buildings? How do they differ in each location?

What are the clues to help you identify the location of the place?

What questions would you like to ask about the place?

Can you guess in which year was it taken? Can you also identify the season? What are the clues to help you answer these questions?

Look at the photographs of streets in Saundersfoot and Blaenavon. Which town do you think had the busier commercial or shopping centre? Look at what the shops' signs say? What is displayed outside the shops?

Collection for Task 4

[Link to collection on People's Collection Wales website](#)

On Your Doorstep - Photographs / Task 5

What was technology like in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century?

Study the photographs from the collection below.

Here are some questions to help you with your task.

Which types of technology can you see in the photographs?

How does this differ from today's technologies?

Look at the lighting in the streets and the buildings. Do the streets have street lights? What sort of power is used to power any lights or lamps you can see in the photographs?

Find examples of the types of technology used for lowering and raising, lifting and winding, loading and unloading. How does this differ from today?

Collection for Task 5

[Link to collection on People's Collection Wales website](#)

Well done you have finished your tasks and you have collected lots of information using photographs.

Now it's over to you to find out more.

You can visit or ask your local record office or archive for examples of photographs for your own area. Many photographs have been scanned and are now available online. You can also ask your family if they have any photographs of your local area in times past.

Walk through your local area, village, high street etc. and see if you can identify any remaining buildings from the photographs. Take a photograph of the same location. You could develop a classroom exhibition of local historic photographs, including labels, and take photographs of the same places in the present, to compare with photographs of the past.

What new questions would you like answers to?

You can do more research online, at archives, local record offices, museums and at your local library.

Find your local archive or record office @ <http://www.archiveswales.org.uk/>

Find your local museum @ <http://www.culture24.org.uk/places+to+go/wales>

The National Library of Wales @ <http://www.llgc.org.uk>

People's Collection Wales @ www.peoplescollectionwales.co.uk

Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historic Monuments of Wales @ <http://www.rcahmw.gov.uk>

Coflein @ <http://www.coflein.gov.uk/>

Additional Activities - Working Life

Using photographs from your local archives compare how working life in your local area differs from that of the other localities during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Discussion

Look at photographs of working lives from your local area during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. What are the main industries or opportunities for employment? How does this differ from the other localities?

What age are the employees? Can you find any examples of children working in the photographs? What do you notice about safety in places where people lived, travelled and worked? How has this changed today? What would be acceptable today?

Can you find any examples of how people might have prepared for accidents in the workplace?

Looking at working lives in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century - industry safety guidelines

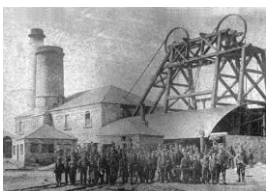
After studying the photographs, each pupil or group of pupils writes a set of safety guidelines for their chosen industry.

Pupils may want to include the following information:

- The type of industry.
- The age of workers within the industry.
- Typical accidents which may happen within the industry.
- Safety advice and guidelines to help prevent accidents.

Ideas for further follow on activities:

- Design a safety poster to help prevent accidents.
- Imagine you were a child working in one of the factories. Write a diary entry describing your working day.



Additional Activities - Transport and Travel

Using photographs from your local archives compare how transport and travel in your local area differs from that of the other localities during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Discussion

Look at photographs of transport and travel from your local area during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

What are the main types of transport?

How does this differ from the other localities? How does it compare to today?

Looking at transport and travel in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century - writing a travel diary

After studying the photographs from the archive, each pupil or group of pupils chooses a mode of transport and writes a travel diary to a location of their choice.

Their travel diary may include the following information:

- The mode of transport and why they chose it.
- The destination of their journey and purpose of the journey.
- How long the journey took. The condition of the roads.
- Any mishaps or problems along the way.

Ideas for further follow on activities:

- Look at the photographs from Saundersfoot in [Collection 2](#). What do you think the larger ships in the quay might be used for? Note the moveable crane on the quay wall. You will see another crane in the photograph of Holyhead. Are there any harbours or quays in your area? Using photographs from a local archive how do these compare to how they look now?
- Look at the photograph of South Stack lighthouse in [Collection 2](#). What is the importance of the lighthouse on South Stack near Holyhead? How did people get to the lighthouse? Is the lighthouse still there today?



Additional Activities - Clothing

Using photographs from your local archives compare how clothing in your local area differs from that of the other localities during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Discussion

Look at photographs of people and clothing from your local area during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. How do their clothes differ from the other localities and from today's fashions?

Photographers documented and recorded events in the local area. Are the photographs posed? Did the people want to be photographed?

Looking at clothing in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century - documented events

After studying the photographs, each pupil or group of pupils chooses a photograph of an event. They then describe the clothing the people are wearing to such an event from the point of view of a journalist.

Their report might include the following information:

- The event and the date of the event.
- A description of the location of the event.
- Who attended the event? Describe the people and the clothing.
- How many people were at the event? Was it an important event?

Ideas for further follow on activities:

- Look at the photographs from [Collection 3](#). The photographs of children in Holyhead and Saundersfoot show how children might dress for school and chapel outings. Do you think the girls at the British School in Holyhead usually dress for school like this? Why do you think this?
- Can you find any other photographs which document or record events in your local area on People's Collection Wales and say whether they have a local or national significance or importance?



Additional Activities - Buildings and Streets

Using photographs from your local archives compare how buildings, streets and shops in your local area differ from that of the other localities during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Discussion

Look at photographs of buildings, streets and shops from your local area during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. How do these differ from the other localities and from today's streets?

Looking at buildings, streets and shops in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century - investigating your street

After studying the photographs of buildings and streets from the local archives each pupil or group of pupils chooses a street and investigates its history using trade directories, sales catalogues, census returns and OS maps of the area to help them identify the buildings. Comparisons can then be made to how the street looks today.

The pupils might include the following information:

- The street name and a brief description of the street as shown in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century photograph.
- The names and numbers of any shops that are on the street and how these shops have changed over time.
- How the appearance of any of the buildings have changed.

Ideas for further follow on activities:

- Look at the photographs from [Collection 4](#). In the Blaenavon photographs, look at the two photographs of the Workmen's Hall. Which do you think is the earlier photograph and why do you think this is? Can you suggest possible time frames for the two photographs.
- Use the OS maps and the trade directory from [Collection 4](#) and any clues from the Saundersfoot photographs of Railway Street to work out what is the building on the far right hand corner of Railway Street. The signs and the poles are also clues. Find Railway Street, Saundersfoot on the OS Map. Can you also identify the house from the 1891 census return for Saundersfoot?
- Look at the photographs from Saundersfoot and Blaenavon. Compare the signs outside the shops to the trade directories from Saundersfoot and Blaenavon in [Collection 4](#). See if you can work out what the shops sell. Notice the castle like building in three of the Saundersfoot photographs—use the trade directories from Saundersfoot to find out what this building is.



Additional Activities - Technology and Power

Using photographs from your local archives compare how technology and power in your local area differs from that of the other localities during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century?

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Discussion

Look at photographs of examples of technology and power from your local area during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. How do these differ from the other localities and from the technology and power you see today in your local area?

Looking at technology and power in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century - power and industrial technology

After studying the photographs, each pupil or group of pupils chooses one form of power or industrial technology which they will promote, in the form of a short brochure or presentation, highlighting the uses, benefits, costs and main advantages of the power or technology.

Presentations may include the following information:

- The name and type of the power or technology.
- The advantages of the power or technology compared to the older methods which the power or technology will replace.
- How the power or technology will change working practices.
- Cost and availability of the power or technology.

Ideas for further follow on activities:

- Look at the photographs from [Collection 5](#). What different kinds of energy is used to power the transport you see in the photographs?
- Can you find any more examples of power and technology on the People's Collection Wales website?



Photographs can give us useful information about our local area and help us to create a picture of the past.

The following is the film transcript detailing the use of photographs, using one locality as an example.

So what is a photograph?

We are all used to having our photograph taken and using digital cameras and mobile phones to take photographs and then sharing them either on the internet or by printing copies. Most record offices hold copies of photographs in their collections. During the nineteenth century having your photograph taken was quite a rare thing. Mostly it was specialist photographers who took photographs and even then they were usually formal portraits. These portraits are normally of quite wealthy people as you would have to pay the photographer to take your photograph and so poorer people couldn't afford to have their photograph taken. In these early portraits, because of the way the camera worked, the people had to stay very still for quite a long time, if they moved their picture would be blurred.

A valuable way of getting the most out of any photograph that you are looking at is to ask it questions. Begin with asking the questions you can answer immediately from your photograph, such as: Do you know where it is? Who is in it? What items are in it? Then move on to ask questions that you may not be able to answer and would need further research such as: Why was the photograph taken? If there are people, why are they there? If there are objects, what are they? This helps to develop questioning skills but also allows us to see the potential of photographs when combined with other archival documents such as census returns, maps and newspapers.

So what information can we get from photographs?

Photographs can show us what places and people looked like during a certain time in history. They can show us what has changed or stayed the same. If we look at this photograph of Holyhead Port we can see the changes that have taken place over time.



[Link to image](#)

Holyhead was an important port because it had links with Ireland and was on the post route. What can you see when you look at this photograph? Do the boats look like the boats that would sail out of a busy port today? What kind of smells and sounds can you imagine just by looking at this photograph? What do those things tell you about Holyhead Port during the nineteenth century? Asking those kinds of questions when looking at a photograph can help us to recreate the feel and look of the place in the past.

On Your Doorstep - Photographs / Teachers' Notes

Photographs of people can also show us how things have changed. Look at the photograph of schoolchildren from the British School at Holyhead.



[Link to image](#)

What can you see? Have you had your photograph taken in school? Would you say that your photographs are similar to this one? How about the clothes? Do they have different or similar clothes to yours? Where are the boys? During the nineteenth century, for the most part, boys and girls were taught apart, and sometimes went to separate schools. Look at the girls' faces. They are not smiling. It is likely that these girls wouldn't have had their photograph taken very often so they might not be very sure what they had to do, and remember they would have had to stand very still for quite some time. Lastly look at the teacher who is standing in the middle. Does she look like your teacher? What is different or similar about her?

Although photographs by themselves can give us a lot of information when we use other sources alongside photographs we are able to gain even more facts. By carrying out some further research in the archive using this photograph, of a watchmaker on Holyhead High Street, as a starting point, we can get a bit more information. When we looked at the census for 1901 we found a man called B Jukes who is a watchmaker from Scotland living with his family above his shop in Holyhead. Take a closer look at the man with the moustache. Look at his feet. He is wearing slippers. Do you think this means he has just come downstairs from his home to the shop and, as he hasn't got to go outside, hasn't had to put on any shoes? Could this be the same person then as the man in the census?



[Link to image](#)

On Your Doorstep - Photographs / Teachers' Notes

The rows of watches in the window make you think that there must have been quite a few people who wanted watches in Holyhead during this time. These aren't watches like the ones you wear on your wrist, they are called pocket watches and hang from a pocket or button hole on a chain like the one the man in the photograph is wearing. Not everyone could afford to have a watch like this and they were during this time worn to show that you were a wealthy person.

In a record office most of the photographs we store have no information with them. This can make it very difficult to make use of them. That is why it is very important that we all record information with our photographs, like where it was taken, who is in it, and even who took the photograph. This will make it much easier for people in the future to get the most out of our photographs.

Most record offices house hundreds of photographs accessible to the public which could help to bring the history of your area to life.

Some local museums will have 'handling boxes' of artefacts, which they will loan out to schools. These are an excellent way to bring history in the classroom to support learning.

Further Information - Local Archives

Find your local archive below:

[Aberystwyth University Archives](#) archives@aber.ac.uk Tel: 01970 628593

[Anglesey Archives](#) archives@anglesey.gov.uk Tel: 01248 751930

[Bangor University Archives](#) archives@bangor.ac.uk Tel: 01248 382966

[Cardiff University, Special Collections and Archives](#) keelanp@cardiff.ac.uk Tel: 029 2087 5678

[Carmarthenshire Archive Service](#) archives@carmarthenshire.gov.uk Tel: 01267 228232

[Ceredigion Archives](#) archives@ceredigion.gov.uk Tel: 01970 633697/633698

[Conwy Archives Service](#) archifau.archives@conwy.gov.uk Tel: 01492 577550

[Denbighshire Record Office](#) archives@denbighshire.gov.uk Tel: 01824 708250

[Flintshire Record Office](#) archives@flintshire.gov.uk Tel: 01244 532364

[Glamorgan Archives](#) glamro@cardiff.gov.uk Tel: 029 2087 2200

[Gwent Archives](#) enquiries@gwentarchives.gov.uk Tel: 01495 353363

[Gwynedd Archives, Caernarfon](#) archives.caernarfon@gwynedd.gov.uk Tel: 01286 679095

[Gwynedd Archives, Meirionnydd](#) archives.dolgellau@gwynedd.gov.uk Tel: 01341 424 682

[Neath Antiquarian Society Archives](#) westglam.archives@swansea.gov.uk Tel: 01639 620139

Further Information - Local Archives

Pembrokeshire Record Office record.office@pembrokeshire.gov.uk Tel: 01437 775456

Powys Archives archives@powys.gov.uk Tel: 01597 826088

Swansea University Archives archives@swansea.ac.uk Tel: 01792 295021

University of Wales, Trinity St David Archives rodericbownlibrary@tsd.ac.uk Tel: 01248 38296

West Glamorgan Archive Service, Swansea westglam.archives@swansea.gov.uk Tel: 01792 636589

Wrexham Archives and Local Studies Service archives@wrexham.gov.uk Tel: 01978 297480

You can find more resources online, at archives, local record offices and museums.

Find your local archive or record office @ <http://www.archiveswales.org.uk/>

Find your local museum @ <http://www.culture24.org.uk/places+to+go/wales>

The National Library of Wales @ <http://www.llgc.org.uk>

People's Collection Wales @ www.peoplescollectionwales.co.uk

RCAHMW @ <http://www.rcahmw.gov.uk>

Coflein @ <http://www.coflein.gov.uk/>