

Session Plan 3

What was our area like 100 years ago, at the time of the First World War? How is it different today?

This session introduces young people to finding out about their local area from historic sources, using maps and photographs.

The activities are designed to support the National Curriculum in England, Wales and Northern Ireland at Key Stage 2, and are suitable for pupils in Scotland following the broad general education phase of the Curriculum of Excellence. They are relevant for the KS2 'Local History Study' in England and Wales, 'The World Around Us' at KS2 in Northern Ireland, and support experiences and outcomes in Social Studies at Levels 2-4 in the broad general education of the Curriculum for Excellence. The activities are also tailored for youth groups such as Young Archaeologists' Clubs, Scouts and Guides.

Session aims

- For your group to use historic maps and aerial and historic photos to discover and record a local area.
- For your group to compare and contrast the similarities and differences between the First World War and today.

Session outcomes

Your class or group will have discovered and mapped their local area, including key buildings that would have been put to use to help the War Effort.

They may identify factories, warehouses, farms, houses (such as vicarages or larger properties), and timber yards and sawmills, which were used during the First World War. They should note public buildings, such as town halls, churches, schools, hospitals, museums and libraries that could have been reused to help the War Effort. They may also identify factories, such as munitions works, that were built during the War years.

Your class or group will have recorded the significant green spaces, for example, allotments, parks, village greens and heathland that could have been used for food production or for camps and training troops. They will map transport links such as roads, railways and canals, and evidence of bus, railway and tram depots and stations.

Using the maps that they have created, your class or group will be able to compare and contrast their area between the time of the First World War and today.

Resources required

Templates:

Before undertaking this session, you will need to prepare some blank template maps for your local area. These should provide a framework for your chosen area of study. We recommend that you select an area of no more than 5 kilometres square for your local study. This could be a village or town, a rural area, or an area within a large city.

The template that you create does not need to be to scale but it should show in sketch format the key features of your chosen area, for example, one or two roads and notable landmarks such as rivers, the coastline or woodlands. It is important to ensure that any features you include were both visible during the First World War and still in existence now.

Historic maps:

Historic England has published advice on using historic maps in a useful [‘How to...’ guide](#). It outlines the types of historic maps available, and provides information about sourcing historic maps.

We recommend that you use the free online maps provided by the National Library of Scotland. In order to identify potential First World War sites, we suggest using the Ordnance Survey’s ‘6 inch 1888-1913 series’ of the UK. It is possible to [access this edition alongside a modern Bing map](#) on the National Library of Scotland website, making comparisons easier.

To find physical copies of maps for your local area, try your local archive service. You can [search for your local archive service](#) using your postcode on the Government’s website. (Please note: this is only possible for England and Wales. In other parts of the UK, try contacting your local council for details of your archive service.)

If possible, it is useful find an Ordnance Survey map from the interwar years, so you spot can any changes potentially made during the First World War and before the Second World War.

Historic photographs:

There are a number of different approaches to sourcing historic photographs of your chosen study area. Local libraries, museums and archives may hold physical prints of images that you can search. A trip to a local archive or library with your class or group would make a fantastic addition to your research!

In England

Historic England maintains a number of different collections of historic photographs:

- [Pastscape](#) is a database of information on England's archaeology and architecture.
- [Heritage Explorer – Images for Learning](#) includes over 10,000 historic images.
- [Images by theme](#) and [Educational images](#) are available from the education pages of the Historic England website.

In Scotland

Historic Environment Scotland provides access to historic photographs via:

- [Canmore](#) which is a free online catalogue of Scotland's archaeology, buildings, industrial and maritime heritage
- [Scran learning images](#) which is an online learning resource base with over 490,000 images media from museums, galleries, and archives across Scotland. You can search the whole resource base for free, but a paid-for account is required to download images.

In Wales

[Cymru 1914 – The Welsh Experience of the First World War](#) is a mass digitisation project of the often hidden history of the First World War across Wales. It includes historic photographs and other resources.

In Northern Ireland

You could contact the [Monuments and Buildings Record](#) of the Department for Communities in Northern Ireland. It holds information on all elements of Northern Ireland's historic environment. It includes written records, maps and photographs. The [Northern Ireland Sites and Monuments Record](#) can also help to identify First World War sites in Northern Ireland.

BBC Primary History animations

The [series of animations](#) produced for the BBC Primary History website are a useful resource for helping your pupils or group to think about life on the Home Front during the First World War. The animations in the 'My Town' and 'My Family' sections are particularly relevant to this Session.

Session plan

The First World War was the first “total” war, meaning that civilians, men, women and children across the country were involved in the War Effort in some way.

Some people were directly affected by the bombing of their local area, by Zeppelin airships or Gotha bombers and by coastal bombardment from battleships and submarines. Many women were involved in working in factories and on the land for the first time; and children played their part too. Whether you are studying an industrial, urban or rural landscape you will find a First World War story from the Home Front.

Begin the session by recapping about what you discovered during **Session 1: How were people at home involved in the First World War?**

This session will focus much more tightly on your own local area. Discuss with your group the area that you have chosen to focus on. Talk about what the area is like now. You might like to ask these questions:

- What buildings are there? When were they built?
- What transport infrastructure is there? How long has it been in operation?
- What does the landscape look like? Are there open fields or green spaces?

Provide each pupil or group member with two copies of the template sketch map that you have prepared. Using the historic maps (either online or paper copies) can they draw onto the template the buildings and features that would have been in the area during the First World War? Using their knowledge of the area along with modern maps, can they complete the second template map to the area as it is now?

Writing challenge... can your pupils or group members describe the differences between their two maps?

Inspirational idea... Using historic photographs alongside modern images or their own photographs and observations, can your pupils of group describe how the same building looked during the First World War and now?

Redmires Case Study

The area of Redmires, near Sheffield, was used extensively during the First World War. During the War, the Redmires Training Camp was established to train the men of the Sheffield Pals Battalion and other regiments; the men used the surrounding landscape to dig practice trenches and train for deployment on the Western Front. An airfield was established in the area and the Training Camp was eventually transformed into a Prisoner of War camp towards the end of the war.

A number of maps and photographic sources were used to investigate the area to find remaining First World War remains and investigate the landscape further:

- A simple Google search brought up a record for the site of the Redmires Training Camp on the [Historic England website](#). This provided some background information for the site as well as a general location.
- The National Library of Scotland's map website provided a 6-inch Ordnance Survey map from 1924. This was discovered using the 'Find by place' function, with the 'Great Britain, Ordnance Survey' category and 'OS Six-inch, 1842-1952' map selected. [This map revealed the location of the Redmires Training Camp at Lodge Moor, Sheffield](#); it was the Sheffield Pals training camp and was later used as a Prisoner of War camp.
- Modern aerial photographs, such as Google Maps and Bing Maps, can be very useful for finding, or confirming the presence of, First World War remains and earthworks. While investigating the [Redmires area with the Google Maps](#) mapping layer two potential practice trenches were discovered in an area used by the Sheffield Pals. You can also use Google Maps and Bing Maps via the Home Front Legacy recording app (see **Session 4: Accessing and using the Home Front Legacy recording app**)
- The local archive service hosts an on-line '[Picture Sheffield](#)' photographic catalogue. Searching this website provided a number of historic photographs showing the Redmires Training Camp showing what life was like in the camp during the War.

Final question

At the end of this session, your pupils or group members should be able to answer these questions: ***What was our area like 100 years ago, at the time of the First World War? How is it different today?***