

Tony Robinson's Local History Search is a unit of four 20-minute programmes that brings to life the study of different localities using evidence and historical research skills.

In the series Tony Robinson and a team of historians visit four widely contrasting places in the United Kingdom to find out why they are there and how they have changed. With the help of local experts and children from nearby primary schools, he explores maps, documents and other evidence that tells the story of each settlement. He then suggests ways in which viewers could undertake a similar quest.

The Tony Robinson's Local History Search package consists of a video and a Resource Book, which contains photographs and maps to support the themes covered by the programmes – agriculture, industry, transport and defence.

Curriculum Relevance

England: Study Unit 5 – An aspect of local history

Scotland: Studying people, events and societies in a local context

Wales: A historical topic in a local context

Northern Ireland: An aspect of history in the local area

QCA History Schemes of Work

Unit 12: A Victorian local study

How did life change in our locality in Victorian times?

Unit 18: Local history study

What was it like to live here in the past?

Key Questions

- How is our area different from those shown in the programmes?
- Why did people settle in our area?
- How did our area change in Victorian times?
- How has life in our area changed in recent memory?
- What evidence can we use to find out the story of our area?

Programme 1: Farming

Tony Robinson and his team visit Cookstown in Northern Ireland, where they trace the history of farming from its beginnings in Neolithic times through to the Irish potato famine. They visit Wellbrook Beetling Mill to find out how linen was processed.

Before viewing

- Locate Cookstown on a map of Northern Ireland.
- Introduce the word 'agriculture'.
- What do children know already about the history of farming? Refer to farming in periods previously studied, such as Ancient Egypt, Tudor or Victorian times.

While viewing

- Look out for different kinds of evidence that help us to piece together the story of Cookstown (eg standing stones, artefacts, buildings and documents).

After viewing

- What is special about Cookstown?
- How does its story differ from that of your local community?
- Why is this?

Programme 2: Industry

In the nineteenth century, Ebbw Vale in Wales became a centre for the coal and steel industries. Tony Robinson, with the help of local experts and children from a primary school, finds out why the two industries developed here. They explore the lives of the people who worked in the coal mines and steelworks and hear about their fight for improved working conditions.

Before viewing

- Locate Ebbw Vale on a map of Wales.
- Talk about the different ways in which people earn their living and introduce the concept of an industry – a particular kind of work undertaken by large groups of people.

While viewing

- Look out for the many ways in which the coal and steel industries affected the lives of people who lived in Ebbw Vale in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

After viewing

- Why did the coal and steel industries develop in Ebbw Vale and not in Cookstown?
- How did people earn their living in your area in the nineteenth century? To find out, look at census records, street directories and newspapers of that period.

Programme 3: Transport

The city of Perth in Scotland lies at the heart of a great communications network, which includes roads, railways and flight paths. Tony Robinson, together with children from local schools, investigates the ways in which road and river crossings have influenced the development of the city.

Before viewing

- Locate Perth on a map of Scotland.
- Introduce the word 'communications' and ask for examples of different kinds of communication, including those relating to travel.
- Look at a map or aerial photograph of your local area. Find the nearest river. Look for examples of roads and railway tracks that cross the river.

While viewing

- Why is Perth there? List the reasons, either mentally or in the form of rough notes.
- How many different types of transport are mentioned in the programme?

After viewing

- Compare the reasons for settlement in Perth and Ebbw Vale.
- Why did people settle in your local area? Use place name evidence, maps and local records to find out about the origin of a settlement in your local area.

Programme 4: Defence

Tony Robinson visits Portsmouth to discover why it has such strong defences. He learns from local experts about the life of the seamen on Henry VIII's ship, the *Mary Rose*, and Nelson's flagship, the *Victory*, and uses census material to discover more about the women of Victorian Portsmouth. Finally, he and his team of primary school investigators listen to the experiences of Portsmouth people who lived through the bombing during the Second World War.

Before viewing

- Locate Portsmouth on a map of England.
- Look at a map of Europe and find Portsmouth's location in relation to other continental countries.

While viewing

- Why is Portsmouth there? List the reasons, either mentally or in the form of rough notes.
- Introduce the word 'defence'. Ask for examples of defensive buildings, eg forts, walls and air-raid shelters.
- How was life in Victorian Portsmouth different from life in Victorian Cookstown or Ebbw Vale? Why?

After viewing

- Make a timeline beginning with the birth of Christ. Locate on the timeline periods your class has studied. Then add events referred to in the programmes (eg the building of the *Mary Rose*, the Napoleonic Wars and the Second World War) to give children an idea of how the history of Portsmouth fits into our national story.

Starting Points for a Local Investigation

The Domesday Book records English settlements that were in existence in 1086, although not all counties are included. There are surviving records for the three northernmost counties, London and Winchester. You can obtain a copy for your county from most large libraries.

Ordnance Survey maps from the 1830s onwards are available for most areas. The 1 inch, 2.5 inches and 6 inches to the mile maps

are the most useful. If you live in a town you may be able to get hold of the 25 inches to the mile version, published between 1855 and 1895. You will find that this map provides a wealth of detail right down to lampposts and trees. Copies are usually available from the county records office or main libraries.

Modern Ordnance Survey maps will give a clue to place names and physical features that affected the development of your local area. The Explorer series (1:25,000) is most useful.

The first census was in 1801 and a survey of households has been held every ten years since then. At the time of writing, census records are available up to 1901 (they have to be kept secret for 100 years). From 1851, census enumerators were required to enter every occupant of every household with details of their age, occupation and place of birth. Copies of census records can be obtained from large libraries or record offices and provide invaluable information about employment and migration in the past.

Local trade directories were the Victorian equivalent of the classified telephone directory. Tradespeople and local worthies could pay a small sum to be included in the street directory, which was regularly updated. Most contained a list of the important people in a town or village, a list of shopkeepers, advertisements, information about the postal service, and times of coaches and trains. Town directories often listed traders in a particular street. You can use these to track the way shopping has evolved in an area over time.

Local bookshops and libraries can often supply collections of old photographs relating to your area. Try taking your own up-to-date photograph of a site shown in one of these collections for the purpose of comparison.

Support material for Tony Robinson's Local History Search

Resource Book 206840 £6.95

206839 £4.95 each for ten or more copies

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4Learning, PO Box 400, Wetherby LS23 7LG

History for 7–11 year olds



How We Used to Live: Tony Robinson's Local History Search



Tony Robinson's Local History Search was produced for Channel 4 by Available Light Productions

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Series producer **David Parker**
Leaflet written by **Dinah Starkey**
Edited by **Christine Hall**
Designed by **John Burke**
Printed by **Graphic Litho**