



TEACHER NOTES

The Investigation



The Case

Thomas Young VC and Frederick Dobson VC were born over one hundred years ago.



Frederick William Dobson (1886 – 1935) was born in High Spen where he became a miner, but left to join the army. He would have grown up in the village as a child and young man.



Thomas Young (1895 – 1966) His real name was Morrell (Young was his step mother's name) and he was born in Boldon in South Tyneside in 1895 but had come to work in High Spen as a hewer (working at the coal face with a pick and shovel). He would have only been 14 years old when he started this work and may have been even younger.

We have some details of their lives on file but they did not leave very much personal information about what their lives were like living and working the village of High Spen.

How can we find out?

In our investigation we will have to look for all sorts of sources of evidence. We will need to piece these together like a jig-saw puzzle to give us a clear picture of life in the village just before 1914.

What sort of evidence can we use?

(arranged in the form of pieces like a jig saw puzzle)

Maps

Photographs

Diaries

Census forms

Place Names

Monuments

Buildings

Trade Directories

Letters



Memories ?Unknown Source

School registers and Log Books

Churches and graveyards

Newspapers

Parish Registers

1 Village Detectives – The Village Trail.

Focus: To investigate existing buildings in High Spen to provide evidence for age and use

For Teachers: It might be useful to provide an information sheet showing building styles popular around 1900. There were often neo-Gothic. However, this style was rapidly giving way to Art Nouveau, characterised by sinewy lettering, often interlinked, and more simple decoration, and latitudinal lines rather than longitudinal ones.

(See Information Sheets on the two styles)

Main Activities

Using an outline map, walk down the main street of the village. Draw a plan of the houses and buildings that they see along the main street and what they can find out about them.

Key Questions:

What buildings might have existed in 1914?

Have they changed their use?

Are there any clues as to what they were used for in 1914?

It might be useful to deal with this in two parts:

Before the school

After the school

b) Compare their findings with the village trail information on the CD. Children to make notes and add to the field work findings.



2 Mapping the Village

Focus: Have people lived in and around High Spen for a long time?

For Teachers:

The Ordnance Survey, often shortened to OS, has made detailed maps of Britain since 1800. OS maps the British Isles at a variety of scales including 1:2500, 1:1250 and 1:10560 (25", 102 and 6" to the mile). In 1945 a National grid was set up with a continuous system of revisions. The 1:10560 maps are useful for an overview, for example showing a village with its surrounding countryside. A standard working scale for planners today is 1:1250.

Main Activity

Compare the 1858, 1896 and more recent maps.

What were the houses like?

What was the inside of the houses like?

Key Questions

What was the village like around the late 1890s?

Has it changed very much since 1856?

Has the village changed very much compared to today?

Outcomes - The village has/has not changed very much since 1901. My reasons for saying this are...

(Illustrations: Back to Back houses and Terraced houses with gardens)

3 Counting the People

Focus: What is a census and what use are they?

For Teachers



The census has been taken every ten years since 1801, with the exception of 1941. Thousands of enumerators were appointed to issue, collect and check household forms. The information was then copied into master volumes. The raw data is not released to the public for 100 years to protect people's confidentiality.

Main Activities

Activity: discuss what a census is and the reasons why this information is collected, for example, number of school places.

Counting the people 1

Counting the people 2

Comparing Households

Compiling the Census

Filling in the Census

High Spen Census: Focus on particular streets 1901

Outcomes - The households have/have not changed very much since 1901? I know this because.....

4 Street Directories

Focus: How can street directories help us to find out about local businesses and facilities?

For Teachers

Street Directories were published in county or town volumes for most of the nineteenth century and lingered on until the 1960s. They were made redundant by the growth in telephone use, the internet and business Directories such as Yellow Pages. A good street directory has several features which are invaluable for the local historian.

Individual entries might be listed by trade or by street. Often the community has a brief history and a summary of economic activity and facilities. They do not, of course, list every property.

Main Activities



Use a dictionary to make a glossary of the more difficult terms.

Design and draw shop signs for the various trades and shops.

High Spen entries in the Whellan Directory

Outcomes: What sort of shops, businesses and facilities existed in High Spen in 1914?

5 School Registers and Log books

Focus: To discover life at school over one hundred years ago through school registers and log books

For Teachers

From 1862 schools requiring a government grant had to keep a log book and were paid according to results. Registers tell us about the number of pupils at the school and at what ages they both started and left. The school log books tell us about day to day events – sometimes fascinating details emerge about the hardships of daily life.

Main activities

What sort of events happened at school in the early 1900s?

What does it tell us about living conditions of the pupils?

Dressing for School

Educating Girls

Handwriting practice

Pounds Shillings and pence

Prepare a lesson

Punish the child

Recitation

School buildings

Inspector Visits

6 Smile Please!

Focus: The usefulness of photographs in interpreting the past



For Teachers

When first invented, photography was expensive and the tripod and glass plates cumbersome. Toward the end of the nineteenth century a number of important innovations occurred. Hand-held cameras were invented and rolls of film replaced glass plates. This made photography relatively inexpensive and accessible to more people. However, photographs were usually taken as a souvenir or remembrance of times past and poses tended to be staged. However, they do give us glimpses into the lives of ordinary people, revealing the clothes they wore and the leisure pursuits they enjoyed.

Main Activities

Why were photographs taken?

Composing your own photograph

Chronology of photographs

How useful and limiting are photographs

Outcomes

How useful have photographs been in helping us to understand life in the village at this time?

7 Memories

Focus: Interviewing older people in the village about life in the past

For Teachers

People who have lived in the village for a long time are invaluable repositories of knowledge that can be so easily lost if not recorded. They are also an invaluable way for the younger to get to know the older as well as learning the techniques of interviewing.

Main Activities

Composing the questions to ask

Checking the information

Outomes: How reliable are people's memories about the past?



8 Church Search

Focus: How can the local church provide us with information about the history of the village and local inhabitants?

For Teachers

For many hundreds of years the church was the most important building in the community. They were the first places to keep records of births, deaths and marriages. Often churches will contain memorials to important people in the community and the graveyard can reveal names, ages and sometimes the cause of death of the dead.

People in the past often set up elaborate gravestones to the departed and sometimes in different forms and shapes. St Patrick's graveyard is no exception and there are many different types of graveyard furniture.

Main Activities

A Church Search

Graveyard Studies

Memorial Stones

Outcomes: How useful has the graveyard and church in telling us about life in High Spen around 1900?

9 Parish People

Focus: How can Parish register tell us about the people of the village?

For Teachers

In 1538 English and Welsh parishes were first instructed to keep a register of baptisms, marriages and burials. Since 1813, specially printed registers have been used, with separate books for each type of service.

Main activities

What's included in a parish register?

Can you find Frederick Dobson's birth?



10 Read All about It!

Focus: The value of newspapers to tell us about past local people and events

For teachers

Newspapers are usually kept in the local library. Most libraries have lists of the titles and dates of their collections. The growth of newspapers really began after 1856 when the stamp duty tax was removed and by 1900 most areas of the country had their own local 'rag'. They offer one of the richest sources of evidence for local people and events. Adverts can be equally fascinating and revealing about life in the past.

Main Activities

Main events in the village around 1900

How the exploits of Thomas Young and Frederick Dobson were reported

11 Any Other evidence Used?

12 What was High Spen like in the early 1900s?

What would the village have been like at the time Thomas Young and Frederick Dobson lived there?

The village of High Spen is located in

It first began as a

By 1900 the village had increased in size.....

Life in the village was.....

It was very different from today