

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.



Key Stage or Level

Key Stage 2



Subject

Using Archives to Explore Local History



Title

On Your Doorstep—Newspapers
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 - Newspapers

This resource explores how you can investigate the history of your locality using newspapers 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 - Newspapers / Learning Objectives

Learners will understand:

- The role of the archives in providing important historical sources.
- The role of using newspapers 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 and identify differences between ways of life at different times.
- Plan the investigative approach to be used, suggesting how to find relevant information.
- Identify the ways in which the past is represented and interpreted.
- Distinguish between 'fact' and 'opinion' giving some evidence/knowledge-based reasons for these.
- Communicate ideas, opinions and conclusions with increasing independence in a variety of ways.
- Understand why people did things, what caused specific events and the consequences of these events.

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 language and structure that is appropriate to the purpose and focus of the writing.
- Assess the quality and reliability of texts and distinguish between fact, theories and opinions.
- Carry out research to develop a full understanding.
- Evaluate the content, presentation and reliability of texts.

Subject Curriculum—Geography

- Identify similarities and differences to describe, compare and contrast places and how they have changed.

On Your Doorstep - Newspapers / Skills focus

Thinking

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

Communication

- Developing, organising and presenting information and ideas.
- Locating, selecting and using information using reading strategies.
- Writing accurately.
- 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.

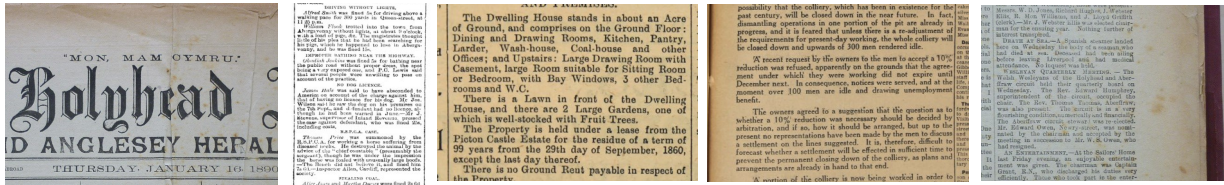
[View the film - The Archive and the Archivist](#)

On Your Doorstep - Introductory Film - Newspapers

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

[Newspapers | Peoples Collection Wales](#)

Looking at Archives — Newspapers



Using Newspapers

Newspapers are very useful for exploring local history because they were published much more often than many of the other historical sources used in the series of learning activities. They often reported on local events, places and people which would not otherwise be recorded. Their advertisements and notices tell us a lot about local businesses and events, crimes and concerns.

The first printing press in Wales was established in 1718, much later than in the rest of the UK. The first newspaper to be published in Wales was *The Cambrian*, in Swansea in 1804. *The Western Mail* started in 1869. The first Welsh language weekly was *Seren Gomer*, founded by Joseph Harris in 1814. The numbers of newspapers increased as more and more people learnt to read. Newspapers were the main way that people learnt about what was happening in the country and the world and how that might affect them.

Newspapers are printed on cheap paper that isn't meant to last. Paper copies become very fragile and brittle with age and so most have been photographed and are preserved on microfilm (a way of storing archive material). You can look at newspapers on microfilm readers in local archives.

There are examples from six newspapers to be used with the online pupil tasks. In some cases we have the whole front page, in others just clippings from the newspapers:

- Holyhead Mail and Anglesey Herald* 30 January 1890
- Monmouthshire Free Press* 11 October 1895
- Pembroke County Guardian* 8 August 1929
- Pembrokeshire Telegraph* 25 July, 8 and 15 August 1929
- Tenby Observer* 24 March and 10 July 1913
- The Wrexham Advertiser and North Wales News* 7 February 1891

Use the links to the collections on the People's Collection Wales website to look at all the newspapers online. Comparing the newspapers gives useful information about similarities and differences in various parts of Wales in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century.

On Your Doorstep - Newspapers / Task 1

What can we learn about life in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century from the newspapers?

Study the newspapers from the collection below to help you answer this question.

Here are some questions to help you with your task.

Read through the Blaenavon Police Court Notices clipping from the *Monmouthshire Free Press* 11 October 1895. What do these tell us about life in Blaenavon at this time?

Can you work out the rules for traffic in Blaenavon in 1895?

What sort of vehicles would these apply to?

What other sort of information about life at this time do the newspapers tell us about?

Collection for Task 1

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

On Your Doorstep - Newspapers / Task 2

How do newspapers in the different localities differ in the way they report events in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century?

Study the newspapers from the collection below.

Here are some questions to help you with your task.

Saundersfoot is described in the *Tenby Observer* notice for the sale of St Bride's House in 1913 as a "seaside resort" and is also described in the Saundersfoot Notes. The newspaper clippings from the *Pembrokeshire Telegraph* in 1929 describe a very different Saundersfoot. Print out and put the articles from the *Pembrokeshire Telegraph* in date order and mark information that you think is important for understanding what Saundersfoot was like in 1929. How does this contrast to the information given in the *Tenby Observer*?

Considering all of the newspaper clippings or sources from the different localities, which ones do you think are the most valuable sources for finding out about local history and which ones are less useful?

Collection for Task 2

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

On Your Doorstep - Newspapers / Task 3

How do newspapers connect with other sources from the archives?

Exploring local history is about making connections between the different kinds of sources. Like a jigsaw puzzle, it is about detective work and looking for links.

Here are some questions to help you with your task.

Look at the Saundersfoot photographs from the **Saundersfoot Newspaper Collection** and see what links there are with the newspaper articles. What about the Saundersfoot trade directory (within the collection)? Does this give more information about the colliery in Saundersfoot? Can you find places mentioned in the Saundersfoot newspaper articles (for example Bonville's Court Colliery, Hean Castle, Coppit Hall) on the maps included in Collection 3? Do they still exist today? Use modern day maps to help you with this.

Collection for Task 3

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

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

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

You can visit or ask your local record office or archive for examples of newspapers for your own area. Many newspapers have been scanned and are now available online. You can also ask your family if they have any old newspapers of your local area in times past. What do they tell you about the past?

What new questions would you like answers to?

You can carry out further 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 - Daily Life

Using newspapers from your local archives compare how daily 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 newspapers from your local area during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. What do they tell us about daily life in your local area? How does this differ from the other localities?

Look at the Wrexham Advertiser and North Wales News for 7 Feb 1891 (the [Newspapers Collection](#)) and other front pages of newspapers from your local area. What do these front pages tell us about the local area? How has the layout and content of these front pages changed over time?

Looking at daily lives in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century - front page news

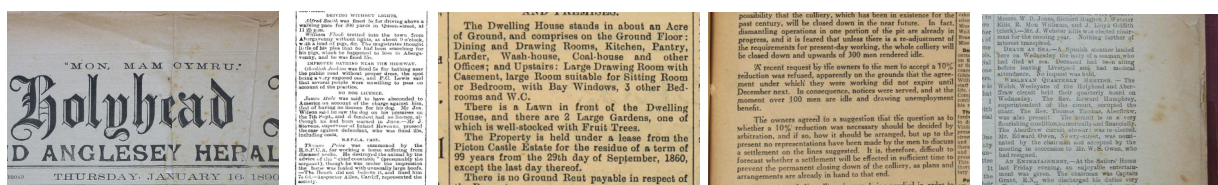
In groups or individually, for on information in newspapers from the archives, the pupils design a front page for their new local newspaper, from the early twentieth century. They will decide which events they feel are important and should feature on the front page, choose a name for the paper and design the layout of the front page. They can then share and discuss these in a whole class discussion.

Information the pupils may want to include on their front page:

- Date of the newspaper - is the paper a daily newspaper or weekly newspaper?
- Any events which they feel are important and justifiable for front page news.
- The layout of the front page - does this vary between different newspapers?
- The price of the newspaper.

Ideas for further follow on activities:

- There is a clipping in two parts of the District News for Holyhead, from the *Holyhead Mail and Anglesey Herald* 30 January 1890 in the [Newspapers Collection](#). What happened to the "Tenby Castle" and why was this news covered in Holyhead? What other information in this clipping is useful for finding out about life in Holyhead in 1890?



Additional Activities - Reporting of Events

Using newspapers from your local archives compare how different events were reported in your local area during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century by the various newspapers.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Discussion

Look at newspapers from your local area during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. How do they vary in how they tell the stories of daily life? How does this differ from the other localities? How reliable do you think they are?

Looking at newspapers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century - reporting on your local area

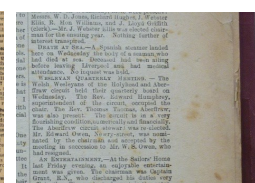
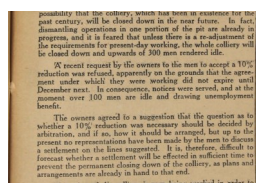
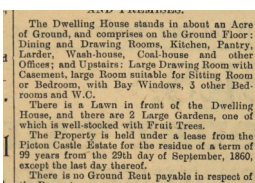
After studying the newspapers from the local archive, each pupil or group of pupils writes a short article or column on their local area. They may write it for a specified audience or for one they choose, for example, local people or for tourists. The articles and columns are then presented to the class and the ways and reasons as to how and why they differ discussed.

Information pupils may include in their presentation:

- Their chosen audience.
- Reference to the articles they are using for their information.
- Highlights of their area or events which they will include in the article/column.
- The date the article or column was written.

Ideas for further follow on activities:

- Look at the newspapers in the [Newspapers Collection](#). The articles about Saundersfoot from the *Pembroke County Guardian*, *Pembrokeshire Telegraph* and the *Tenby Observer* show the range of local information that newspapers contain about local affairs. In the *Tenby Observer* of 24 March 1913 there is a "Saundersfoot Notes" column. There are two other clippings from 1913. Can you see how the different information is presented? Do the styles for reporting the different sorts of information vary widely between subject/newspaper?



Additional Activities - Using Different Sources

Using newspapers from your local archives combined with other sources from your local archives investigate events reported in your local area during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Discussion

Look at newspapers and other sources, including census returns, photographs, school log books, maps and trade directories from your local area during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. What do they tell us about how the events and daily lives of local people have changed over time?

Looking at newspapers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century - combining resources to find out more

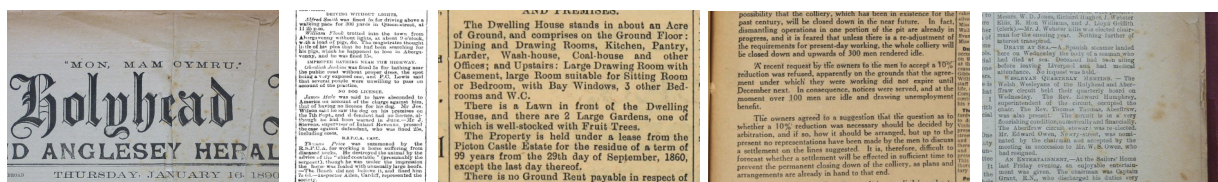
After studying the newspapers from the archive, each pupil or group of pupils chooses one article on a significant event and then using other resources investigates the article further, for example is the event mentioned in a school log book, are there any photographs? What caused the event to happen? What were the consequences?

Discussion topics might include:

- The article or event they are choosing to investigate and why.
- Can they find anything further on the online archives?
- Do trade directories, parish records, school log books, the census returns or maps help the investigation? If so, which of these has been the most useful?

Ideas for further follow on activities:

- Check the Blaenavon photographs in the [Blaenavon Newspaper Collection](#) and see what they show about the traffic in Blaenavon streets. Do these findings support the Blaenavon newspaper articles?
- What do the Wrexham photographs and the *Wrexham Advertiser* in the [Wrexham Newspapers Collection](#) tell us about cultural life in Wrexham at the time? Do the advertisements link with the trade directories?



Newspapers can give us useful information about the history of our local area and can often be accessed quite easily in many local authority archive services.

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

So, what are newspapers?

Newspapers are printed documents that contain stories about people, places and events. They can be printed on a weekly or a daily basis. National newspapers, that is ones that cover a big area such as England and Wales, usually tell the stories of people and events that are considered important to the nation as a whole. These newspapers, therefore, do not very often tell us about local events or people. Local newspapers on the other hand, more often concentrate on stories that are important to smaller areas, for example the closure of a local factory, the opening of a new shopping centre or a school's sports day. Sometimes events are so important that the stories are told in national and local newspapers. A good example of this would be the First World War. Even here though the stories in a local newspaper would often reflect local interest, that is they would talk about people who would be known to the people living in the area. For example, if a soldier who was serving in the war died in action, the local newspaper might write an article about this. It would not be likely to be written about in the national newspaper.

Newspapers are quite special sources of historical information because they are written at the time the events are taking place. They therefore reflect what is important to the people living in the locality at a particular time and often we can find out what they thought about events by reading the newspaper reports.

As newspapers are printed documents this makes them much easier to read than some historical sources which are hand-written. However, just because a newspaper article is written at the time the event is happening it does not mean that what it says is always accurate. In the past it was much more difficult to make sure of accuracy, not least because some contributors to the stories being told were illiterate, and it was not as easy for newspaper publishers to verify facts as it is today. The internet did not exist and communicating over distances was more difficult.

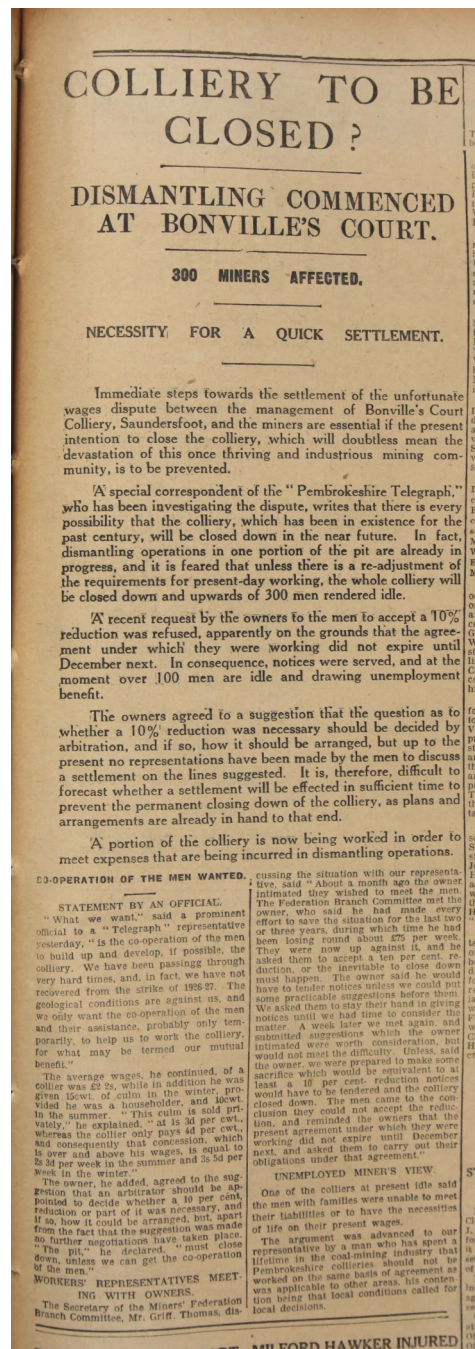
One of the problems with using newspapers is that they can often be in poor condition. Daily or even weekly newspapers were not made to last a long time: they were designed to be thrown away soon after being read. Due to this fact the paper on which they are printed is usually of poor quality and often the newspapers are falling apart and need to be handled very carefully if they are not to get any worse.

Another problem when using newspapers is that they are not indexed in any way. Unless you know approximately when an event happened it can be a long process in trying to find what you are looking for. However, once you find it, a newspaper story can reveal information that it might be very difficult to find anywhere else.

So, what information can we find in local newspapers?

The breadth of information in a newspaper is staggering. It can range from announcements of births, marriages and deaths to tragedies on land and sea and on to local interest stories such as reports on the summer carnival or St David's day celebrations. You can find announcements for property sales and shop advertisements for goods on sale, such as the latest clothes fashions in the local store or endorsements for different types of medicines.

However, what local newspapers do best is tell the stories that matter most to their readers. A good example of this is the newspaper article here taken from the "Pembrokeshire Telegraph" of 1929.



Pembrokeshire Telegraph 1929

[Link to image](#)

On Your Doorstep - Newspapers / Teachers' Notes

This article tells the story of the possible closure of Bonville's Court Colliery. Given that the colliery would have employed quite a few people living in Saundersfoot, this would have been big news. The prospect of its closure would have spread fear among the people at a time when there was no modern welfare system to help them. How would they afford to live if the men had no wages to bring home? We can speculate how many people would be made unemployed and think that it would be a high number, but in fact we don't need to wonder because the article tells us that "upwards of 300 men" would be "rendered idle". The article speaks about the uncertainty that exists and even the main headline asks a question about the future: "Colliery to be closed?"

This article is one of several that the newspaper wrote on the subject of the closure of the colliery. The articles explain the situation and give the different sides of the conflict between the employer, Bonville's Court, and the employees, those working the mine. Such articles are useful because the person writing the report often spends time seeking out the information to help them write the article. Our example here speaks of people talking to the "Telegraph's representative".

Unfortunately for all concerned this story did not have a happy ending: Bonville's Court Colliery did not recover and closed only a short while after these articles were written. The value of the newspapers for local history research is that in just a few articles we can learn a considerable amount of information about an event that would be unlikely to be recorded anywhere else in such depth. In historical newspapers the writer of the article did the research for us. Where the newspapers survive we are often left with details of events that would otherwise have been forgotten.

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

Further Information - Local Archives

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

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/>