



# How to...



# Uncover your area's past

## Find out how life in your neighbourhood has changed over time.

Throughout May it is Local and Community History Month. The aim of this event is to increase people's awareness and interest in their local history and get communities taking part in research or events. There will be activities taking place across the UK, such as history-themed tours, exhibitions and talks.

Before you start delving into the history of where you live, it's good to have a goal in mind. You could find out the history of your house, street or school, or look up records of your relatives if your family has lived in the area for a long time. Even if you live in the countryside, or on a newly built housing estate, you might be able to look up who owned the land in the past, or what it was once used for.

Cities have lots of museums and famous landmarks, but history is everywhere and even tiny villages have historical buildings. Explore the local church or visit the high street. Big gravestones can reveal famous names from the past, and buildings can offer clues to what they housed hundreds of years ago. Here are four ways to research the history of where you live.

Explore local landmarks (this is All Souls College in Oxford, England).



### Go to the library

Local libraries often have sections dedicated to local history – ask staff to help you. As well as history books, some libraries have archives (collections of information) such as old newspapers, property records, maps and photographs. Local newspapers give a glimpse into important events and show snapshots of people and places from the past. Even old adverts can show you what people used to buy.

### Visit archives or museums

Archives can also be housed in council (local authority) buildings or museums, which might display objects from the past, with photographs and maps that show how an area has changed. Even road names can reveal the history of a place. They might be named after an important local person or landmark from the past, like a castle or farm, or reveal what was once there – “Gypsy Hill” or “Shoemaker Lane”, for example.



### Be inspired by landmarks

Ask an adult to help you locate local landmarks to delve into the past. For example, does your town have any statues, and what can you find out about the people they depict? What are the oldest or most important buildings? Public ones like clock towers or train stations often have clues to the past or plaques (wall signs) explaining their history. You could also find out if a local history society offers tours.

### Use internet resources

Ask an adult to help you research local history online. Start with the Wikipedia page for your town or area, which usually has historical details, from famous residents to notable events from the past. Search the internet using the name of your area and the word “history” and you might find websites for museums or history societies, which have photos, fascinating facts or even local legends, like ghost stories.



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