



Historic England

Education

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Heritage School Case Study

Finding out about the soldiers of Cavendish Primary School.

KS2 students used a range of primary sources to investigate the lives of soldiers, who died in the First World War, and who are remembered on their school memorial.

Where: Cavendish Primary School, Didsbury, Manchester

Who: All KS2 classes

We wanted our students to understand the importance of remembering soldiers who died in the First World War. We decided that the best way to make this interesting and relevant for them, was by researching those soldiers who had been pupils at Cavendish, who sadly died in the war, and who are remembered on our school memorial.

Each class focused on a different soldier. We used log books, admissions registers, ancestry websites and other sources to build up a picture of his life before and during the war. A local heritage trail took children back to life pre-war, whilst map work, visits to the church, other local memorials and even the houses of some of the men, all made the topic more real. It brought home to the children the impact of the war on the soldiers and their families. We even traced a descendant of one of the soldiers who visited school and was touched we were remembering the sacrifice of her great uncle.

The topic inspired poems, diaries, letters and biographies, drama and art. We even carried out a Condition Survey of our memorial and registered it at War Memorials Online. The project culminated in a whole school assembly in which different classes showcased their learning. The assembly ended with the names of each of the soldiers read out by children from the school, as well as information that had been found out about them. This was followed by a one minute silence for the lost soldiers of Cavendish Primary School.



Intended Outcomes:

- Learn about the experience of soldiers and their families during World War One.
- Develop empathy and understanding by examining the impact on men and their families who had gone to Cavendish Primary School as children, and who are featured on the school memorial.
- Develop literacy skills through reading and writing activities linked to the scheme of work.
- Produce an assembly as a modern day memorial to the soldiers from the school.

What we did:

- Researched the lives of soldiers listed on our school war memorial.
- Carried out a condition survey of our memorial and submitted the details at www.warmemorialsonline.org.uk
- Took a tour of the local area to find out what it might have been like around 100 years ago.
- Wrote factfiles, letters and diary entries as our soldiers and produced a KS2 assembly to remember the soldiers on our war memorial.



Challenges:

- Initially teacher's lacked knowledge of this topic and some lacked confidence in their ability to teach it. Having been provided with basic resources, however, and on seeing how engaged the students were, they quickly overcame this!
- It was much easier to find information about some soldiers than others and researching the soldiers was time consuming (though interesting!).

Successes:

- Students developed a sense of empathy and understanding about the local impact of the First World War
- We developed lasting links with people in the community.
- We have developed a scheme of work which we can revisit and add to in future years.
- *“Once the project got going it was great – it really engaged the students and the staff and there was lots of learning done. One of the best things was engaging with the community, for example the local vicar and a local historian. We have created some lasting links as a result. We also contacted some living relatives of the soldiers listed on our memorial which was poignant.”* Helen Devine. Lead Teacher. Cavendish Primary

Resources and web links:

- [Commonwealth War Graves: Find War Dead](#)
- Genealogy websites such as: [Find My Past](#) and [Ancestry](#). These sites require a subscription, but can be accessed for free at local libraries. [Ancestry Classroom](#) can be accessed by UK schools for free if you email the Ancestry Library Team - alt@ancestry.com
- National Roll of the Great War: [Manchester Section](#)
- Manchester Library [Local Newspaper Search](#) (The Guardian (1821-2003) and The Observer (1791-2003). Need library card number.
- [British Newspaper Archive](#) (MEN and other local newspapers by region). Subscription site.
- [War Memorials Online](#)

Next steps/extension activities:

- We have already started to expand our scheme of work to look at the impact of the war on the home front. We have started to investigate a local military hospital and want to find out more about the role of women in our area.