

Section 2: Practical work

Safety first!

Before any kind of class or fieldwork, please make sure you have thought through the appropriate safety precautions, especially safety in heavy traffic situations.

(a) Classwork

If you have gathered picture information of your local area, you may well be able to do much of your work in the classroom without going into the field with a large class. Alternatively, you can get students to visit the local area at the weekend and make their own observations (see the 'Photography for use in class' section on the opposite page).

Much settlement work can usefully begin with a local map. There are two kinds of map that can be valuable: a large map that can be pinned to a wall and used in whole-class teaching, and small maps which show the main streets or other features and which you have compiled by simplifying the published maps.

The first step is to make sure students can identify the location of the place. Start with an atlas. It is very useful to go right back to a world map for this and to find the location of the UK, then to turn to maps which show progressively more detail. The value of this is in comparing the local settlement to the distant settlement as required by the curriculum. If you do it this way, you are starting with common ground and making sure that both the developing world settlement and your local settlement are seen in the same way.

A number of points can be raised as you 'home in' on the chosen place:

(1) Where is it in terms of latitude? (This will affect climate and therefore the nature of the housing and many of the activities).

(2) Where is it in terms of continental location? This will be important in considerations of whether the place has overseas trade links, and also in whether it is likely to experience a maritime or continental climate (again important from the point of view of the construction of housing, lifestyles and so on). (For more weather information please see *The Weather Pack*.)

(3) Where is it in terms of the nation? Is it central or peripheral, will it look towards its neighbouring countries or will it be isolated from them? For example, people in some parts of the Borders of Scotland may look towards the bigger towns in Northern England for their shopping rather than look inward to the Scottish Lowlands cities.

(4) Where is it in terms of relief? Is it on a plain, on a coastal plain, in hills, mountains or in a narrow river valley. Is it on the windward or lee side of a mountain or range of hills? Do the hills make people look in one direction for trade rather than in another?

(5) What are the neighbouring places? What are their names? How far away are they? Can students read a map scale and find out for themselves?

Note that these starting classroom questions do not require much discussion but it is very important that students have looked from the wider perspective to the local perspective, and have not started with just a narrow view. They must be invited to develop a sense of place about whatever settlement they choose. Comparisons are much better made in this way.

Notice that the student book is, to some extent, organised this way, so that the location is discussed before the pattern of activity inside the town,

although it does not cover map work as such because it does not provide case studies – these are dealt with on the web site and in the *Comparing Places* book.

(b) Project work

Project work is essentially a matter of going out and investigating what people are doing. Surveys play a crucial role in this because the pattern of activities is not necessarily obvious. Here are some suggestions:

- (1) historic core
- (2) traffic survey
- (3) pedestrian survey
- (4) land use survey.

In many cases, you will need to make up your own local studies file.

How do I start?

Settlement studies are best done by walking around. There is no substitute for getting to know your local area on foot.

Start with your local tourist information office, or if you do not have one, the town or city hall. Then visit the local museum. Finally, see how many local brochures or magazines you can find. A parish magazine, for example, may have many advertisements that will help students get a flavour of the kind of services that exist in the area. Sometimes there are also articles on the local history, too. Lots of this type of information is held in public libraries.

Help students to understand that the library and the museum are key places from which to do research. Get them to use their local resources.

Photography for use in class

Choose good weather and take a camera. If you have a projector then slide film allows you to show pictures in class and prints can be made from slide film. Or, do the walk around twice and use slide film one day and print film the next.

Once you have a collection of photographs, you have much of the resource that you need for your local study and you can teach the local area without having to take large classes out into busy locations.

There is every reason why parents should be enlisted to go around local areas with their children during weekends and holidays. In this way everyone gets to know their local area. In many towns there are locally organised historical tours.

What photos shall I take?

The syllabus requires that the area you use must include the majority of the homes where your pupils live. It might therefore be useful to get this information before you start.

As you begin to walk around, you will soon notice the locations of the shops of various kinds. You should aim to record the locations of each photograph on a town plan, Ordnance Survey map or sketch.

(i) Shops

The various types of shops you might note down are:

- corner shop
- supermarket and department store
- shops on main trunk roads
- city centre shopping area (pedestrianised)
- suburban shopping centre (plaza, pedestrianised with parking)
- out-of-town centre (plaza)
- shopping mall (weather-protected covered centre)

Then try writing down the functions of each of these shops. You can probably do this most easily by noting the names of chain stores, for example. You will need to explain about the way that chain stores work (sharing the costs of bulk buying and distribution etc). Most children know what



▲ Many of the pictures you take may be of local streets. At first it may not seem that much information can be obtained from a simple street picture. However, this proves to be far from the case.

Take this picture, for example.

Here are some simple observations and deductions that can be turned into a question and answer session:

This is a narrow road. In fact, it is so narrow that it suggests that, at the time it was built, it was not expected that vehicles would use it regularly because it is only wide enough for a single vehicle (in this case originally a cart or carriage).

The road surface is still part cobbled, suggesting an early road, but also one in a historic district, or it would almost probably have been resurfaced.

The houses are terraced houses, suggesting that they were built for people of modest means.

They are made of stone, suggesting that building stone was readily available (otherwise they would be of brick).

This road (which is in Robin Hood's Bay, in North Yorkshire) is built on a steep slope. Why should that be and where would we expect to find steep roads? In this case it leads to the shore where fishing boats once landed. Now it is a popular tourist street and the shops have been converted to sell tourist items. See also the bed and breakfast sign.

So, from what might at first have been thought of as a rather ordinary scene, we have been able to build quite a considerable bank of information.

Boots, Currys, Sainsbury's etc stand for and you can then discuss what the shops offer while looking at the photographs.

You may need to tell children what goes on in speciality stores with which they will not be familiar (e.g. jewellers) and why many of these are not chain stores.

(ii) Housing

The housing stock is characterised by both its size and its age. This is a complicated subject, because we recognise the status of an area from all kinds of images. However, we don't want to stereotype areas in discussions with students, so it is best to categorise them in terms of their shape:

- Terraced houses
- Semi-detached
- Detached
- Blocks of flats

It will be difficult for children to recognise new and old with much accuracy. You will need to supply this information from your own observations.

Many towns and cities have conservation areas (historic districts). Clearly, most of the houses in such areas will have been chosen for their good preservation, so it will be easier to point out old housing stock by visiting this kind of site.

(iv) Communications

Begin with the pattern of roads. Use a map and find contrasting patterns, such as a gridiron pattern and winding roads as well as those which have planned curves. One objective will be to try to sort out areas that were planned from those that were not.

Look for road names. These may tell you which are the oldest roads (because they are named after a nearby town etc) or they tell of the location (High Street, Bridge St etc) or function (Market Place). Encourage students to be sensitive to the

meaning of names. Some roads are named after people. What connection did these people have to the town? Students can also investigate the origin of the name of their district or town using books such as the *Oxford Dictionary of Place Names*.

(v) Local history

There is a wealth of opportunities for combining local history with geography in this study and making people aware of, and proud of their community. The local museum will obviously be a good starting point. There are many old maps available. Take a photocopy of one and compare old and modern maps. This will allow students to spot all kinds of things, including what their street once looked like – if it existed at all.

Also, try to find the original church and other ancient features of the cultural landscape and plot these to help define the historic core.

(vi) Landscape

It is often difficult to spot the lie of the land in a town or city because steep slopes have often been modified. You have to walk around consciously trying to spot the landscape.

Start at the river, if there is one, and identify the floodplain to either side of it. Where is the settlement with respect to the river? Did the historic core avoid the floodplain, has newer settlement spread on to it, or is this vulnerable areas used for recreation or is it used for industry?

Look for slopes. Many old settlements are built on river terraces (for definition see *The River Book* in the *Curriculum Visions* series) and others on river cliff sites. Some examples are given on the web site.

Has the town grown up the slope or down the slope? What shape is the flat land, and is this shape related to the pattern and shape of the oldest streets?

As you can see, there are many opportunities available.

(vii) Comparing your locality to a distant place

This task is made more difficult, because you cannot study a distant place as well as your own locality. You could take pictures of another locality during your holidays and then use the pictures and local brochures and postcards to bring the place to life. There are some well-known field trip locations, and information is often available from the local field studies centre. If you can't visit, or obtain information by post, use the photocopiable book *Comparing Places* (see page 83). This book has links to the web site.

Some books have case studies, but these are often too brief to be able to capture the spirit of a place. The flexibility of our web site is invaluable here.

Students could also e-mail schools in other parts of the world. It's easy and fun.