

An Introduction

Derby and its surrounding area has a long and rich history. There is much to learn about how the settlement started and how its population grew due to an increase in various industries. In this study, children will gain an understanding of how Derby became the place we know and love today.

What you need to know

The first evidence of human activity within Derby comes from the Roman period. Several items have been found within the area, with the most notable being the settlement known as the Derventio Fort. This fort was occupied by the Romans and even had a hypocaust to keep their public bath warm. Two Roman wells still exist in the area, and surrounding streets refer to the Roman heritage through their names.

After the departure of the Romans, we know that a fierce battle took place near Derby for control of the settlement. The Anglo-Saxons lead an army to fight against the Vikings who were occupying the site. This time period is where Derby is believed to have got its name – translating to the Viking words meaning Deer Farm.

Following the Anglo-Saxon take over, the settlement was then changed again due to the arrival of the Normans. During this time, the settlement grew and according to the Domesday Book, was one of the largest settlements in the country.

During the Medieval period, Derby capitalised on this growth and became a busy market town. A royal charter was granted in 1157, providing the town with rights and a merchant guild. The medieval market town is where the marketplace sits today, with many of the streets which span from the site, still existing!

Unfortunately, in the 1300's Derby faced its biggest challenge – the Black Death. This plague effected the entire country, and the residents of Derby would have had a difficult time coping with understanding the disease and how to stop it. Trade posts were set up, such as the headless cross on Ashbourne Road, where merchants could continue to make a living with controlled risks surrounding the plague. Despite this, the town continued to thrive, and was perfectly placed and ready for the Industrial Revolution.

50 years before the Industrial Revolution began, George Sorocold built a silk mill on an island in the middle of the River Derwent. The silk mill in Derby is thought of as the first proper factory in England. The machinery and processes used in the silk mill came to be due to John Lombe who went on a spying mission to Italy where he uncovered their trade secrets.



During the Industrial Revolution, more textile mills sprang up in Derby and all along the River Derwent. The town also had a thriving pottery industry with Crown Derby, later The Royal Crown Derby Porcelain Company, leading the way.

The arrival of the railway in Derby, helped transform it from a market town to an industrial centre. Derby began a long history of building trains which continues today.

In 1908, a newly formed business called Rolls-Royce moved its headquarters from Manchester to Derby. The luxury car manufacturer, who during World War 1 also expanded into making aircraft engines, became a major employer in Derby.

In 1914, World War 1 broke out and Derby played its part. Men from Derby served around the world in the Sherwood Foresters and the Derbyshire Yeomanry. At home, the Rolls-Royce factory produced more than 60% of all the British-built aircraft engines used in the war. Other local factories also produced equipment to support the war effort.

In 1939, war broke out again and Derby once again played its part. People went to war and factories upped production to support the war effort. On the 27th of August 1942, a German plane. dropped bombs on the Rolls-Royce factory in Derby. It was Derby's most lethal air raid with 23 people killed, 12 were in the factory and the rest in surrounding streets.

In the 20th and 21st Century, Derby was the home of many influential individuals and groups which have made an impact in the town and even around the world! From an inspiring suffragette named Alice Wheeldon, to the video game character, Lara Croft – the city is remembered and celebrated for its contributions to society. This has been made more prominent in recent years with the 'Made in Derby' scheme – similar to the Walk of Fame stars of Hollywood, this scheme creates permanent reminders around the city of these individuals who have made a difference.

Resources

Our key enquiry questions, sources, PowerPoints, activities, and other resources will help to build children's understanding of their local area of Derby and answer the question 'How has Derby changed over time?'

Get in touch

Is there an area of local history you'd love to see on our Local History Hub?
Get in touch to learn how we can work together! Email

LocalHistory@tpet.co.uk
to find out more.



Teacher's Pet



Historic England



Local History

Historic England and Teacher's Pet have come together to bring you a collection of free resources that you can use in your local history teaching.



Historic England



Teacher's Pet

Who are Teacher's Pet?

Teacher's Pet have been providing downloadable and playable educational content to early years and primary school teachers for over 14 years. We cover all areas of the curriculum and use a team of in-house teachers and designers to create engaging and memorable concepts, that the children will love.

Why local history?

At [Teacher's Pet](#) we want to empower primary school teachers by giving them the tools they need to deliver inspiring and thoughtful lessons about the local area and its history. We believe local history teaching has such an important part to play in a child's wellbeing – helping to give children a sense of pride in where they live.

Our Local History project is designed to provide teachers across the UK with everything they need to successfully carry out a full scheme of teaching about their local area, through key enquiry questions and source led activities.

Working with [Historic England](#) gives us access to archived maps and photos for resources and information from knowledgeable local historians, as well helping us to provide the content to you free of charge.

For more information about our Local History project or to find out more about Teacher's Pet Classroom Resources, please visit our website.