

An Introduction

Middlesbrough is a relatively new town, but the surrounding area has a long and rich history. There is much to learn about how the town started and how its population exploded in a relatively short period of time. In this study, children will gain an understanding of how Middlesbrough became the place we know and love today.

What you need to know

The Tees Valley has been home to people for thousands of years. There have been many discoveries that highlight its rich and diverse history. A Mesolithic hunters' camp, dating back to around 6,000 BC, was uncovered at Highcliffe Nab. Other discoveries include a Neolithic tomb, a Bronze Age cemetery, Iron Age settlements, a Roman Villa and an Anglo-Saxon burial site. There are also plenty of references to Viking influence with place names ending in -by having been farms during the time of the Vikings and Roseberry Topping coming from the word toppen, an old Danish word for hill. The first evidence of people living on the site, where Middlesbrough now stands, is much more recent. Robert de Brus, a lord, gave the land to Whitby Abbey in AD 1119 and a priory was built. The priory at Middlesbrough was a middle stopping point between the important Christian locations of Whitby and Durham which gave it the name Mydilsburgh meaning 'middle fortress'.

In the 1500s when King Henry VIII ordered all priories to be closed, the land was leased out and eventually became a farm. By 1801, the priory had gone and Middlesbrough was a farm with around twenty-five people living there. In 1808, the government wanted to make the River Tees more accessible for ships. A large channel was dug, called the Mandale Cut, which made it easier for ships to navigate up the river from the sea all the way to Stockton. This would change everything for Middlesbrough.

In 1829, a man named Joseph Pease famously sailed the river to find a location for a new port which would allow even larger ships to stop in the area and import/export goods. The location he settled on was the site of the farm. With his partners, he purchased the land and began to build the new town and port.

The world's first public railway soon opened, to join the town of Stockton with the newly formed Middlesbrough and by 1830, it was connected to surrounding towns - allowing the population to boom.

In 1839, master ironworker John Vaughan and his business partner Henry Bolckow decided on Middlesbrough as a location for their first ironworks. On the 8th of June 1850, Vaughan and John Marley, a mining engineer from Darlington, discovered a high-quality seam of ironstone near Eston. This prompted the rapid growth of their business - Bolckow Vaughan & Co. Ltd - and it became a world leader in steel making.

The steel industry led to the rapid growth of the population of Middlesbrough. In 1851, the population was 3,397, but by 1891 the population was more than 80,000. Before long, Middlesbrough was the iron smelting centre of the world.

With population and import/export levels being so high, a new station was built. This station was designed by William Peachey and it was a grand example of early Victorian architecture. Sadly the most beautiful part of the station - the large glass dome, was bombed and destroyed during World War 2. The rest of the building still stands today, and it operates as a busy hub and station for thousands of people.

The new station helped accelerated the growth of Middlesbrough, and the steel industry boomed in the town. Before long Middlesbrough was known as Ironopolis, and structures built in Middlesbrough were prominent all over the world.

Resources

Our key enquiry questions, sources, PowerPoints, activities, and other resources will help to build children's understanding of their local area of Middlesbrough and answer the question 'How did Middlesbrough come to be known as Ironopolis?'

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

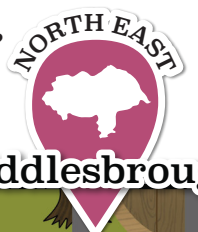
LocalHistory@tpet.co.uk
to find out more.



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.