

# **DISCOVERING OUR LOCAL AREA: INTRODUCING A LOCAL HISTORY WEEK**

---

Deborah Currans

Tweedmouth Prior Park First School

2022 - 2023

# Background – inspiration for the project

The children in our school live in a beautiful part of North Northumberland, an area rich in its cultural heritage. On our doorstep we have the coast, castles in abundance, Holy Island, the Farne Isles and the National Park. It is an area steeped in history. I wanted this to be reflected in our school aims and curriculum intent.



# Getting started

## Challenges and misconceptions:

Our children live in the small town of Berwick upon Tweed. It is a long distance from, and expensive to travel to, larger cultural centres and venues.

The sea is in clear view from our upstairs classrooms but most children lack awareness that they live in a coastal town.

As young children they naturally take their local environment for granted.

## What does the National Curriculum History Programme of Study say about local history?

- To know and understand the history of these islands...how people's lives have shaped this nation
- To gain historical perspective by placing their growing knowledge into different contexts, **understanding the connections between local, regional, national and international history; between cultural, economic, military, political, religious and social history;** and between short- and long-term timescales.
- understand historical concepts such as continuity and change, cause and consequence, similarity, difference and significance, and use them to make connections...and draw contrasts.

# Aims:

**Some reflections from the first session of the Cultural Leadership course (Source, handout 1) that I think are relevant for our school**

Culture is strongly rooted at a local level; it draws on and reflects the rich diversity of our communities.

Culture should be an essential part of every child's education, both in and out of school.

Everyone should have the chance to experience culture, participate in it, create it, and see their lives transformed by it.

"Culture is the way we come to know the world, individually and collectively. It is as rich and diverse as the traditions that stand behind its making. It is the active engagement with the creation of our arts and heritage, and the expression of what and who we are as individuals, as communities, and as a nation. The quality of that culture is a measure of the way we live." Imagine Nation – Cultural Alliance

## **Our hopes (our School Aims and Curriculum Intent)**

During their time in our school, our intention is to widen the children's experience to ensure that they have a good understanding of their surroundings.

We ensure all children have access to a broad, balanced and engaging national and locally relevant curriculum that fosters high expectations for all pupils.

We live in a community with a rich cultural heritage and this is used to develop, extend and enhance children's learning. We introduce our children to a range of visitors and experiences in school, and take them on visits, in the local area and further afield, that enrich their subject knowledge and curiosity about the world around them.

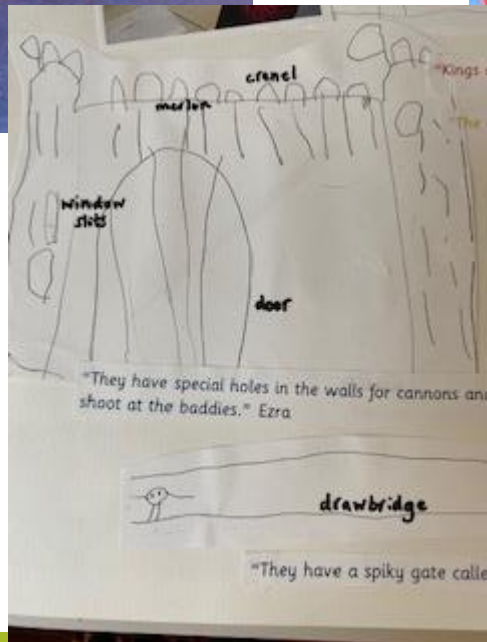
# Intent: Developing our local history week

- I have always been interested in history and living in Northumberland has seen that interest grow – the area is steeped in history. A walk on Bamburgh beach, with its imposing castle towering over the landscape, set me thinking about how we could ensure the children in our school learn about their local history - aspects not necessarily covered in the National Curriculum units of study, but places, stories and characters they will hear about as they grow up and take their own place in the local community.
- My idea was to introduce a local history week with each year group focusing on one aspect. A week would be long enough to explore a topic but not deflect from other essential elements of teaching.
- I didn't want teachers to feel overwhelmed, with this becoming yet another thing to do. I thought about what could be taught to each year group and then presented my ideas.
- Early Years – local castles (close by we have Bamburgh, Norham, Ford and Etal, Holy Island, Alnwick, Berwick also had its own castle in years gone by).
- Year 1 – local saints (St Cuthbert and St Abb)
- Year 2 – Grace Darling (already part of the Year 2 history programme)
- Year 3 – The Berwick Barracks and the old defensive walls.
- Year 4 – Berwick Town Hall and an extra short focus on the Battle of Flodden.
- We then agreed to have a local history week during the Autumn Term.

# In Nursery and Reception we were learning about local castles.

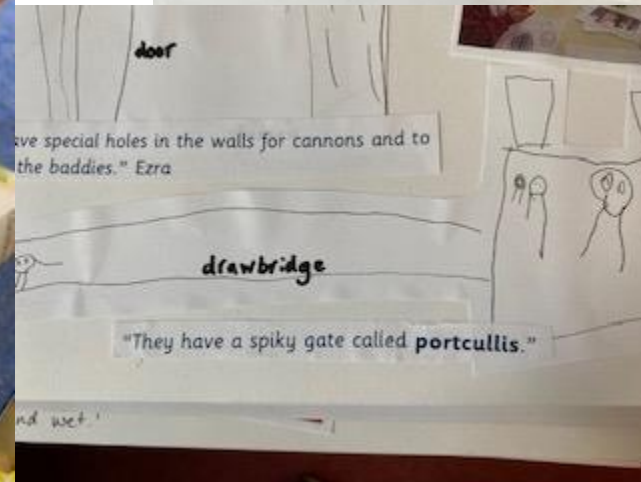


History week - Castles 26/09/23  
We have lots of castles locally; Banbargh, Holy Island and Norham.  
The children learnt the names of our local castles and tried building castles of their own.



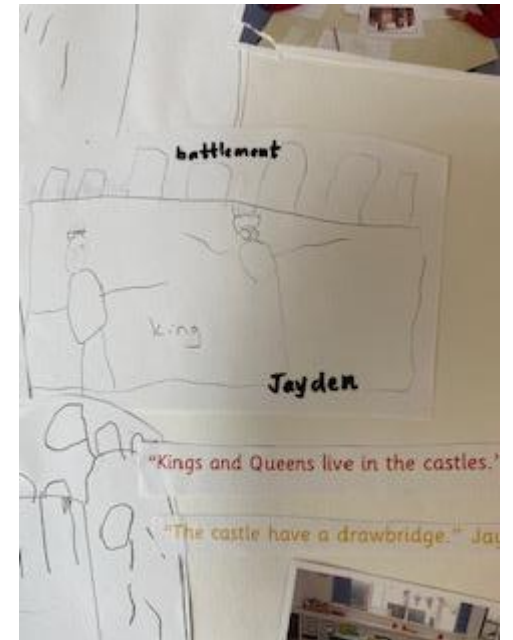
"They have special holes in the walls for cannons and to shoot at the baddies." Ezra

"They have a spiky gate called portcullis."



"They have special holes in the walls for cannons and to shoot at the baddies." Ezra

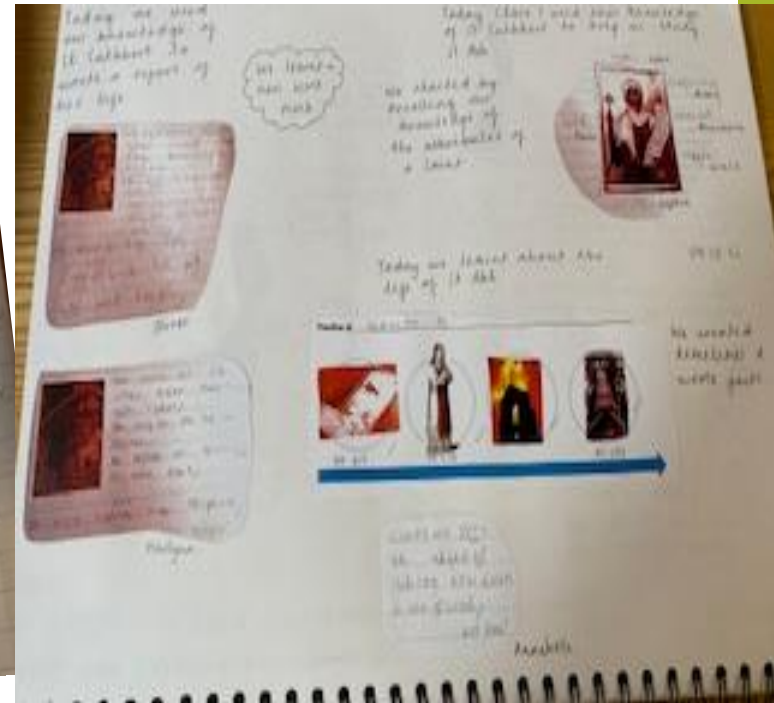
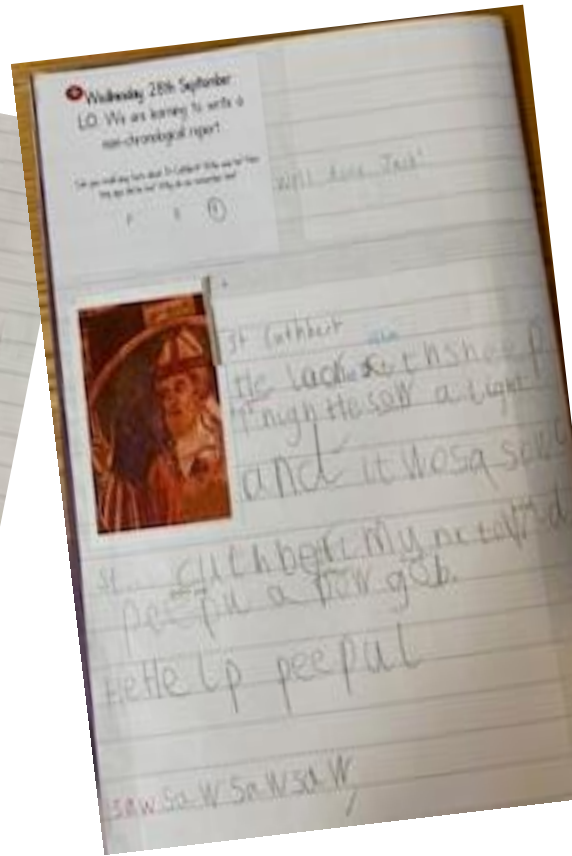
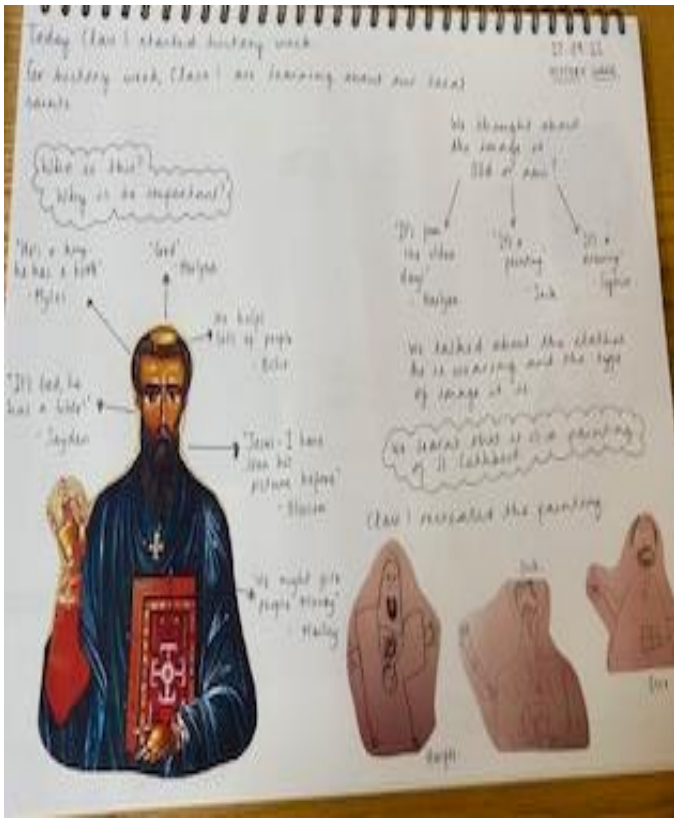
"They have a spiky gate called portcullis."



"Kings and Queens live in the castles."

"The castle have a drawbridge." Jayden


# In Year 1 we were learning about early Christianity through stories about local Saints.



# In Year 2 we were learning about local heroine Grace Darling



**Local History**

Who was Grace Darling?



Born 1815

Where in the world is Longstone Lighthouse?

**Moral dilemma**

Would you endanger your life to save someone else?

You might hurt them while trying to help them

They might be important to someone

Sometimes you need to be brave they could be a good person.

I might die trying to help them and wouldn't have a life anymore

Yes	No
HHH	HHH
HHH	HHH
HHH	HHH

What can we learn from Grace Darling's example?

Be brave  
I can be brave and help others

Active  
She was brave and helped others

Helpful  
She is a girl who wanted to help others



Her name is the name of the lifeboat



Many people in the water the boat did

What did she do, that makes us still talk about her today?



She - saved the Longstone Lighthouse - when there had been a storm



Her name is the name of the lifeboat



There is today a lifeboat


Was her life as a child the same as yours?



Her life was very different from mine

Making props and filming her life story (page available on class page)

Dressing as Victorian children to get into role as family members of the Darling family



Videos and photographs of our amazing actors are on our class page

What was her everyday life like?

Dear Diary

After school I had to go to the school to get my books

At the end of the day I had to go to bed

Her life was very hard

Her life was very hard

Her life was very hard

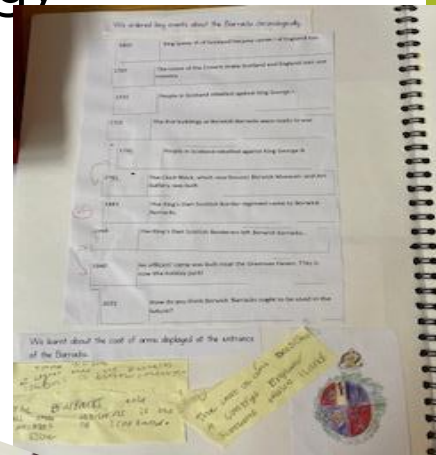


In Year 3 we studied the Berwick Barracks and worked with the Union Chain Bridge Project Team to gain a Heritage Heroes Award from Archaeology Scotland.

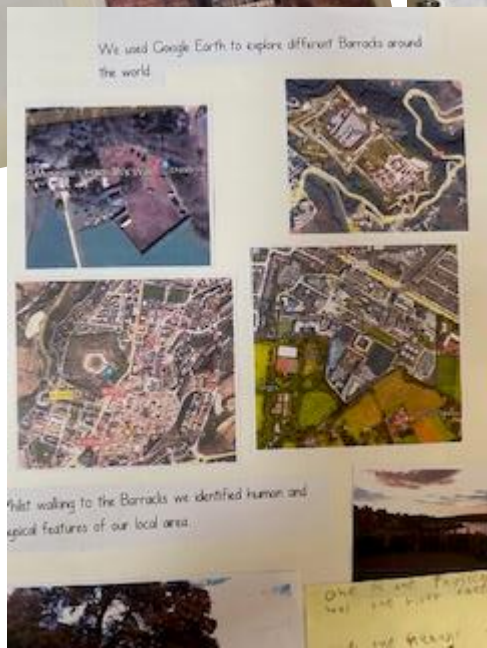


On our visit to the Barracks we visited various rooms

- A window on Berwick
- The Burrell Collection
- Cyril's room
- Lowry Image

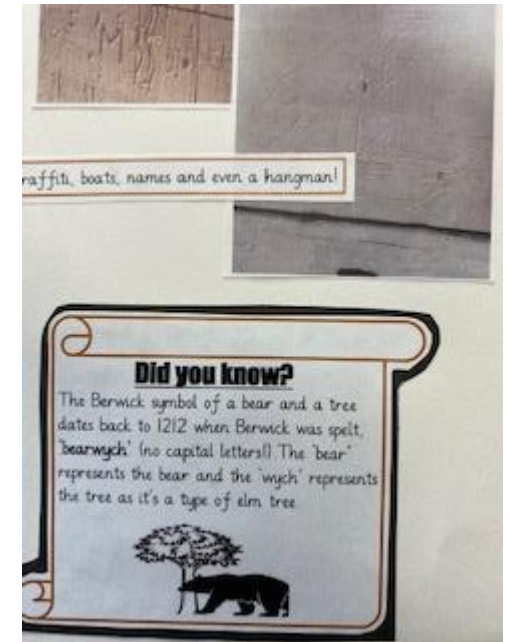
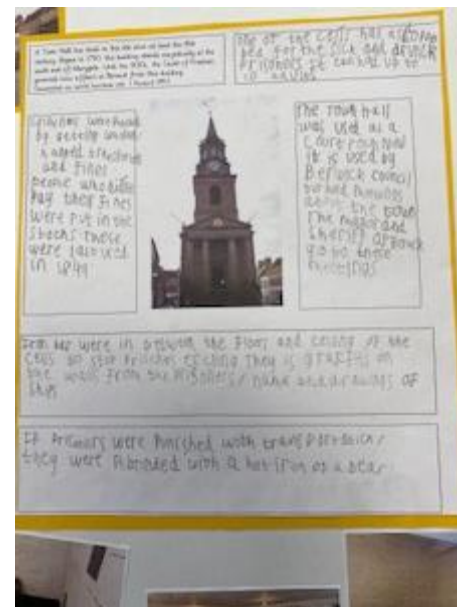


One of the physical features was the river Tweed and the bridges. The human physical features were the bridges and houses. Human physical features on the river Tweed are the flowers and glass.

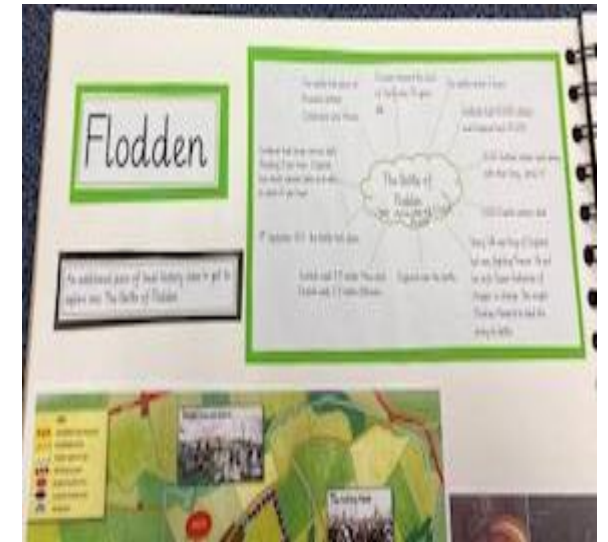
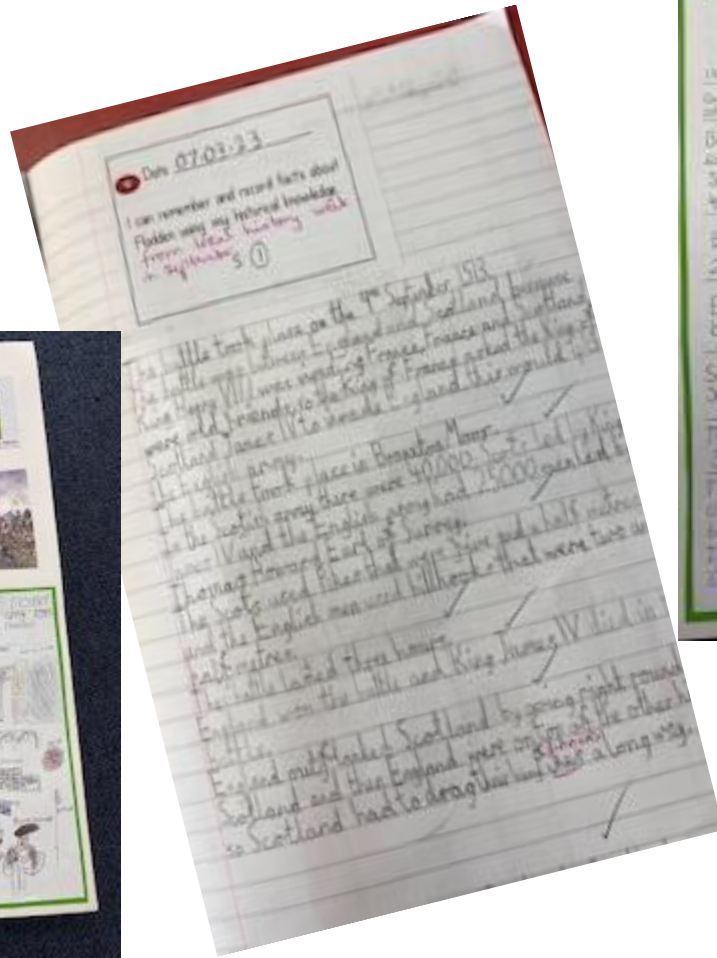


We became heritage heroes and our certificates were presented to us.

# In Year 4 we were learning about Berwick's Town Hall.



# And the Battle of Flodden



# Reflections: What did the children think about our local history week?

"I really like the feeling of absorbing the knowledge about what's happened around here and you might also find out what's happened to your relatives in the past." (Y3)

*"I like learning about local history because then you can think that actually happened around here. It's really cool to think that happened here and you can think about it."* (Y4)

"It's nice to know what's happened around here in the past." (Y4)

*"You can learn more about round here and it will help you when you go to high school."* (Y3)

"I'd like to learn more about history now." (Y3)

*"Now I'd like to know more about other parts of history, like the Egyptians."* (Y4)

"It's near you so you can go and explore it and take your family." (Y3)

*"If you think it's interesting you can go and explore it and I took my family."* (Y3)

"I got my mum and dad to take me to the Flodden battle site." (Y4)

*"I went to see where Grace Darling lived in Bamburgh."* (Y2)

"I took my dad and my sister to the Grace Darling museum so that I could learn even more about her." (Y2)

*"Grace Darling saved 9 people. Lifeboats save people now and we have one in Spittal."* (Y2)

"I like learning things about Berwick – lots of interesting things you can go and look at, like the army place. It's called The Barracks." (Y1)

*"I like learning about Berwick because it's an interesting place."* (Y1)

"I liked the story of St Cuthbert." (Y1) "I saw a picture of St Cuthbert on the Town Hall when we were shopping." (Y1) "St Cuthbert was kind and helpful so we should be kind and helpful and if our friends are unkind we should forgive them." (Y1)

*"I liked building a castle with bricks." (Nursery). "My castle has a drawbridge." "I like seeing castles." (Reception)*

# Reflections: What did the staff think about our local history week?

*"It's really interesting from a professional point of view that our children weren't aware of their local area." "Lots of our families do not use their local area. So many of the children hadn't been to the beach, or the river or around the walls."*

*"It's re-engaging their enthusiasm for their local area."*

*"It's clearly developing their cultural capital."*

*"Now they're aware of what's around and they want to go and see it."*

*"They are becoming proud of their local area and sharing their knowledge with their parents."*

*"They are re-engaging their families with their local history."*

*"The children are now beginning to make links with the wider history of the area and beyond – the Romans, the Anglo Saxons, the Vikings."*

*"You can see their understanding of the chronology of time improving."*

*"Their understanding of their local area is developing and they are extending their vocabulary, especially their historical vocabulary."*

*"They are beginning to make family connections – understanding the roots of their community."*

*"It's giving them an idea of what has modelled and shaped their local area."*

*"They're starting to learn about the wider influences on Berwick, between England and Scotland."*

*"When these children grow up, we will be their history so it's making them aware they are part of the timeline of history and part of the tapestry of history of Berwick and the surrounding area."*

*"It's important that our children know about their local environment. They need to know what's right here now and what's happened right here in the past. It helps to get them engaged. It's providing enrichment opportunities for our children."*

*"If they understand their local history, it will help them make links with the bigger picture – the wider historical context."*

# Next steps

- Local history week – the children and staff enjoyed having the time to explore our local area. Visits and visitors helped to bring the topics to life.
- We need to review Year 4 topics - continue with Flodden or instead look at the Lindisfarne Gospels, which could link with their unit on the Anglo Saxons.
- Year 4 during their unit on Anglo Saxons this summer, will work with the Union Chain Bridge Project Team on a Heritage Heroes project (Archaeology Scotland) and this will feed into a wider Heritage Schools Award (Historic England).
- Next time – each class to include a workshop for parents.
- What about our children's knowledge of local geography?

We decided to introduce a local geography week in the Summer.

- Early Years – the seaside
- Year 1 – the River Tweed
- Year 2 – Northumberland National Park
- Year 3 – Berwick's local landscape through The Lowry Trail (linking to their Art Unit on Lowry)
- Year 4 – the Berwick bridges