

Schools Information

Warley Woods has been a well loved and used public-park for more than 90 years. Yet the history of this beautiful green space goes back much further, almost 500 years and possibly even further. We have prepared these notes for teachers to give an idea of the potential that the site holds as a local educational resource.

As pupils will usually be less used to working in an outdoor environment, we have provided guidance on preparing pupils for site visits. Also included are on-site strategies to make greater use of Warley Woods as a resource for teaching in all areas of the curriculum. Schools can book the traveling display about the park and the restoration project by contacting the Project Manager at projectmanager@warleywoods.org.uk.

Given notice we can also prepare displays on particular themes such as: people in the park, archaeology, woodland ecology, birds, butterflies and plants in the park.

THE PEOPLE'S PARK

In 1901 with the rapid expansion of Birmingham and improved public transport systems, part of the Warley Hall estate was put up for sale and was purchased for housing. Local residents were concerned about the loss of this green space, and raised money by public subscription to buy the site as a municipal park, managed by Birmingham council. It was opened as a public park, by the Lord Mayor of Birmingham, in 1906. A number of new features were added to the Park at this time, including a bandstand, drinking fountains, elaborate flower-beds, tennis courts and pavilions. Although most of these features have long since been demolished, evidence for them survives on the ground, in old maps and postcards.

PREPARING FOR A SITE VISIT

You need to be clear from the outset why your class is studying Warley Woods. Is the main focus of the project to be historical, with the site and its archives providing evidence about the way people lived in the past and the things they considered important? Or is the main focus to be on citizenship or science

RESOURCES

We are fortunate that Warley Woods has a wide range of source materials surviving in various different locations. The Trust is compiling a resource bank of copies of these materials, which could be made available on loan to schools, or in some instances in an electronic format. There is an extensive archive of original documents housed in Birmingham reference library, Sandwell local studies centre, Shropshire County record office and Worcestershire county record office. The Trust is compiling an index to these sources and obtaining copies for research and teaching purposes. In most cases the original documents are very fragile and would be permanently damaged by too much handling or over- exposure to light. The Trust also has a rapidly expanding collection of scanned historical photographs and stories loaned by local residents who have worked or played in the park and woods over the last 90 years.

PREPARATORY VISIT

We recommend that you undertake a preliminary visit around the site with the Restoration Project Manager to familiarise yourself with the potential and constraints of the park. For example there are toilets at the golf course pavilion, and a room, which can house one class, can be booked in advance. There is also a café in the Pavilion selling drinks and light refreshments.

EQUIPMENT

Some of the things you might want to bring with you, depending on the purpose of your visit might include: maps, tree, bird and butterfly handbooks, compasses, clipboards, paper for drawing and writing on, measuring equipment(including metre sticks, clinometers and trundle wheels),

binoculars magnifying glasses, cameras, video cameras, calculators and tape-recorders. Parents should be provided with a checklist of suitable clothing and equipment required, which should include sturdy walking shoes and waterproofs. When we start the archaeological dig in the spring we will try to arrange sessions for children from KS2 upwards, and will provide specific instruction and equipment.

PREPARING PUPILS

Pupils may not be used to working constructively in an outside environment; the following activities are general ones designed to help pupils understand and become more sensitive to an historic park like Warley Woods. Rather than tell pupils what not to do on site let the suggestions come from them. Ask them what dangers there might be, what would cause a nuisance and what would spoil the appearance of the site and the enjoyment of others? They could design a series of signs to encourage people to behave responsibly, perhaps using humour rather than censure to modify park users' behaviour in a constructive way (see dog-mess poster and bird-watching posters). Their 'do nots' might include climbing trees, wandering off and talking to strangers, damaging the trees and shrubs and dropping litter or not touching dog mess.

PUTTING THE REPTON GARDEN AND THE PEOPLE'S PARK INTO CONTEXT

What else was happening in the country at the time of Humphry Repton? Who was the King? What was happening in the development of farming and industry? Who were the Lunar society ? Who were the Quakers and the society for the abolition of slavery? What styles of housing and clothes were fashionable? Who was Jane Austin and what was she writing about ?

HOW WERE PARKS USED IN THE PAST AND HOW ARE THEY USED TODAY?

Investigate the purpose of parks by collecting pictures of parks and gardens, which show how people used them, or ask pupils to research their uses, then brainstorm and discuss. See how many different uses, and users, they can suggest. Then narrow this down to Warley Woods by carrying out observation exercises and photographic surveys of park users. Our collection of historical photos and documents includes evidence of sheep and pigs grazing the golf course area, around 1911-1920 and the Pierrots and Pierrets, who used to entertain visitors in the park.

PARKS AS STATUS SYMBOLS, PRIVATE OR PUBLIC OPEN SPACE

Explain that parks and gardens reflect their owners' position or ambition in society, political and cultural values (see the various owners, especially Samuel Galton Jnr. who was an Industrialist, Quaker, gun manufacturer and member of the Lunar Society). A good analogy, which pupils can relate to, is the symbolism of clothes, which make statements about their wearers. Fashions in clothes and in parks and gardens are both part of the history of social and political change.

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Before coming to the Woods pupils may need practice in the school grounds reading maps and plans, measuring using standard and non-standard measurements, following directions, taking photographs so that they may go about their tasks more confidently. They will also need to be introduced to some specialist and descriptive vocabulary, which we can supply you with. Words such as annual; formal; romantic; picturesque; scented ; doric; gothic; vista etc

CREATIVITY

Make a tape of the sounds that you hear in Warley Woods at different times of the day or week, and ask the pupils to write about what they can tell about the place from the sounds. Sounds might include birdsong, an owl hooting, dog's barking, children laughing, a golf ball being struck, the mower, people chatting. The children could use these sounds as a basis for a short story or play set in the woods, possibly about the 'grey lady' or the people who lived in or used 'the abbey' over the years. The colours and smells of the park can also be used to inspire creativity, and evoke memories, especially during the Spring and Autumn.

UNDERSTANDING CHANGE

Visit the park at regular intervals during the year so pupils may observe and record seasonal and other changes, possibly in the form of a calendar.

If you are interested in the history of Warley Woods it would be a good idea to create a giant time line of events. Pupils will have to decide an appropriate scale for the length of the park's history. Pupils can enter information on it using illustrations and text, as their research progresses. It might even be three- dimensional, incorporating models, or presented as a textile wall hanging.

ON-SITE ACTIVITIES

Warley Woods is a large park and there is a lot to take in, especially if you are only able to make one visit. It is best to focus your visit on a few well-chosen topics. Set up a wall display of six 'things to look for' before the visit, means that not everything will be new. You could be more challenging and display photographs of parts of things. These will encourage speculation and closer observation.

KEY QUESTIONS

Pupils should be encouraged to discuss what they would like to find out about the site and, with the teacher's direction, to form a series of key questions to consider. These might include:

- Where was the Repton landscaped park sited and why?
- How much of it survives today?
- How have the surroundings changed?
- What evidence is there for earlier use of the site?
- How do we find out?
- What was its original size and design?
- What structures were built in it and what were they used for?
- What happened to threaten the Park, and what did local residents do to save it?
- How did the Repton park differ in size from the People's Park?
- What structures were added to the People's Park, and why?
- Can you find traces of any of these structures?
- How many people might have used the Park when it was private and when it was a public park?
- How are local street names, and Smethwick Galton Bridge station linked to the park?
- Can you list any links?
- What has changed in the Park and what has stayed the same?
- What would you like to add to the Park for people to use it today?
- Where was the 'Abbey' built, what evidence can you find of the old nursery and winter gardens?

RECORDING EVIDENCE

A good way for pupils to record the park systematically, is to mark their observations on the current Ordnance Survey Map, scale 1:1250 or 1:2500. We can supply copies of recent site surveys and historical editions of the Ordnance survey and even earlier maps showing Repton's plans and the site before Repton created his landscaped park.

On-site observation skills can be practiced at school in the playground. Groups of students can be given photographs of particular elements of the school, such as the entrance gate, a grassed area, mobile classrooms, and asked to locate and record their positions onto a map. The same activity can be used to introduce the idea of scale.

Recording sheets and logbooks are useful for recording observations and impressions over time. Simple outline maps can be used to record observations of dog walkers, tree species, butterflies, birds and old park features. You can make overlays of different levels of information using OHP acetates. The observation log books could also contain hypotheses for answering by research in the local studies library or using aerial photographs, historical photos, maps and documents provided by the Trust.

USING AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHS

Aerial photographs show the landscape in a form that we can recognise. They show evidence of things not illustrated in maps, such as the seasons, and the time of day.

They are much easier to interpret than maps. Unlike maps they do not show names, nor do they have symbols, which show the function of buildings.

Aerial photos show the landscape as it really looks from the air, unlike a map, which is an interpretive drawing.

Aerial photographs can be copied onto an acetate sheet and the image projected onto a large sheet of paper on the wall. Pupils can then draw round the outlines of the Park and its blocks of woodland, and any other appropriate detail. This can then be annotated.

Aerial photos taken over a long period of time can be compared to show changes in the Park, such as the demolition of the Abbey and the nursery garden.

They can also be examined closely for evidence of demolished buildings and early field boundaries, which only survive as low banks in the grass. At different times of the day and the year different types of evidence will be visible.

SITUATION

Pupils should look at copies of maps showing the area of Warley Woods before and after the Repton park and the People' Park were created, as well as evidence on site, to consider the key question of why the Park was sited where it was. Look at the views from the highest point of the park, what can you see today and what would you have seen in Humphry Repton's time? Use aerial photos and historic maps as evidence for this study.

What already existed on the site before Humphry Repton came up with his plan? How did he make use of the existing features of the landscape, and what did he try to hide? What techniques did he use to change the view and mask ugly buildings? Would we consider these buildings to be ugly today? How do we disguise ugly features in the landscape today, and how successful are we (eg. the M5/M6, and multi storey blocks of flats/ large industrial estates, what would you disguise in your neighbourhood ?)

- Which buildings existed on or near the site before Repton designed his park?
- What sort of house did he want to build and where?
- Did he design the old Abbey and why was it called 'The Abbey'?
- What was on the site before Repton's park? Were there enclosed fields there before, or open common land?
- Can you see any evidence of the medieval field system in the park today?
- From the old maps can you see any evidence of a medieval deer park?
- Where and what was Warley Tor?
- Why was it called 'Tor'?
- Where did the water come from to fill the pond and intermittent stream?
- Why do you think the stream flows less often today than 200 years ago?
- Would you like to have a pond in the park once more, what would you have to think about from a safety point of view?
- What would the advantages and disadvantages of a pond be ?
- What do you think communications were like in Repton's day and in the time of the People's Park?
- Did Hagley road exist then? What was it called and what was it like to live there 90 years ago (we can supply oral history to answer these and many other questions.)
- How easy would it have been to get to the Park ?
- How far did people travel to come and visit the Park 80-90 years ago?
- Were soils, topography and views important to the location of the original Repton Park?

SURVEYING AND RECORDING WARLEY WOODS

Pupils will need to make a record or survey of the present day park, to find out what has survived from its past histories. This will involve recording all or some of the Park's archaeological, geographical, historical and botanical features. We can provide teachers with guidance in basic

surveying and field recording techniques.

INTERVIEWING PEOPLE IN THE PARK

Ask your pupils to devise a questionnaire. They can record who visits the park, eg. Whether they are male or female, children or adults, visiting singly or in groups. Are they local people, who visit regularly, or have they come from a distance to walk their dogs? Why have they visited the park? What are their opinions of the park's facilities, what do they like most or least about the site?

Role-play in the classroom, before the visit, will help pupils to carry out interviews in a courteous and confident manner.

Before undertaking any interview it is important to remind pupils of the need to keep in their groups and not to wander off alone: there should be at least three pupils in an interviewing group.

TREE SURVEYS

To undertake a tree survey, allocate small groups of pupils to well- defined areas, preferably in different parts of the site, to give them a manageable task. Pupils will need a large scale, clear map or plan of the area under consideration. Each group should have a magnifying glass to help count tree rings, which can be very close together. A camera is also useful for visual recording, and measuring tapes and clinometers will also be needed. Trees are remarkably long-lived and it can be informative to compare human and tree life-span.

LANDSCAPE DESIGN

Were views created to be seen from the house, and are parts of the park hidden from view ?

From whose rooms were the best views seen ?

Was the house aligned to take advantage of a particular aspect or prospect ?

How did Repton use water in the Park ?

How did such a large piece of land become available as a private park ?

Who could afford such a space ?

Who worked in the landscape and who enjoyed it ?

Look at aerial photos of the site to see how the trees were planted in specific areas.

Ask your pupils to photograph or sketch a view, or several different views across the park. Use a piece of card with a central square or rectangle cut out to frame the view and focus their ideas.

Views were often composed like paintings with, with interest in the foreground and attention paid to the middle ground as well as distant vistas. Discuss with them possible improvements to the view, asking them to jot down ideas and make rough sketches. If pupils take photographs scan them at A4. Using colour OHP transparencies overlaid onto the original view ask your pupils to design a new landscape for the same site. It is important that the overlay and print match exactly, so use standard A4 paper. Ask your pupils to write a short explanation giving their reasons for their suggestions and improvements. This is the same method used by Humphry Repton to show his proposed plans to his clients. The whole class' designs could be bound into a Red Book in the same way that Repton presented his own ideas. Pupils could also make presentations about their designs.

CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

Using a selection of historic maps, photographs, aerial photos, paintings and postcards of the Park, pupils will be able to assess the changes that have taken place over the years. It is best to simplify the task of comparison by giving small groups specific aspects to investigate.

How was the area altered in order to create the park?

How have the park's uses changed over time?

Has the planting changed over time?

Have boundaries and internal divisions changed over time?

Note changes in the different boundary materials, particularly fencing.

Do routes lead to the same places?

Have certain routes declined in importance? Have their surfaces and dimensions changed?

Where the roads surrounding the Park always this busy?

When did they start to become dangerous?
What can we do about this?
Have features inside the Park changed?
Have new features, such as car parks and a golf course been added?
When did they first appear?
How has the view out from the Park changed?
Why have these changes happened?

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE OF THE PARK

Community Building/ Meeting Room and cafe

The Community Trust will have to replace the old golf course pavilion, within five years, as it is in a very poor condition and is deteriorating rapidly. The Community Trust would like to create a building, which meets the needs of a wider range of the Park users and helps us to explain the significance of the site and why it is important. We also want to offer equal access to all visitors. The building should also house toilets, a café and a meeting room, which could be used by school groups and the golf club. Where should this building be located, on the existing site at Lightwoods Hill or more centrally within the Park? What are the constraints on the location of a new building within the park? How should it be designed? Could it be built by the Community itself? Pupils could research and discuss their ideas on the design and siting of the new building, and ways of presenting information on the significance of the Park. Pupils' proposals should include: Suggestions for the siting of the building, with reasons for their choice. Thought should be given to the building's environmental impact, and the pattern of existing park users circulation. Details of how the building will be made easily accessible to those with disabilities. How might it relate to plans for the restoration of the old kitchen garden area?

The approach- Planning for Real

It is best to divide pupils into small groups, each with a specific task to research and present. The groups will need to report back to each other on a regular basis, as the decisions of each group will, to some extent, depend on the others. Pupils should be aware of the significance and sensitivities of the site, including where rare species of bird, plant, butterfly, amphibian, or bat might be living. Pupils should also research into the needs and expectations of various categories of Park user; for example, children, family groups, people with disabilities, senior citizens, dog-walkers, golfers and educational groups.

To present their proposals pupils could produce models, videos, leaflet mockups and possibly a multimedia trail guide for those with limited mobility. The technique known as Planning-for-Real, pioneered by the neighbourhood initiatives foundation is an excellent methodology for discussion contentious issues such as the location of fencing or buildings within the Park. We can supply further details of this technique, for teachers who are interested.

CONSERVATION AND PROTECTION OF HISTORIC PARKS

We can provide extracts from English Heritage and HLF policy on Historic Parks and Gardens. Warley Woods is on the English Heritage Register of Historic Parks and Gardens. The scenario is that there has been an application to build a skateboard park within the old kitchen garden at the centre of the park, another group would like to restore the kitchen garden as a community garden for local schools and pensioners, with a pond to attract wildlife, others would like it to be managed as a wildflower meadow.

Divide the class into interest groups, representing local children, elderly residents, local schools, the Birmingham and Black Country Wildlife Trust, Smethwick Local History Society, Sandwell Council, national organisations such as English Heritage, The Garden History Society and the general public. The part of the Inspector, who must hear the evidence and remain impartial, is perhaps best taken by a teacher. Pupils' research should include surveys of the site's historic and natural interest, as well as the reasons for, and probable effects of, the proposals. Maps and overlays could be used to show the impact on the landscape. Local residents could be interviewed for their reactions. Once the groups have researched their evidence the Inspector can call upon them to give evidence. The Inspector will list the Pros and Cons in order to come to a decision. Out of role the pupils can vote on the applications.

HERITAGE LOTTERY FUNDED IMPROVEMENTS

A Trust has been set up by local residents to submit an application to the Urban Parks Program of the Heritage Lottery Fund. Pupils are asked to present an exhibition to inform local people about Warley Woods' value and their ideas for its improvement.

Pupils should first research the present and historical design features of the Park. Do any aspects of the original design remain and would it be desirable to restore those that do not?

What evidence do we have for the features of the Edwardian People's Park? How realistic is it to restore features like a wooden thatched bandstand? What problems might we encounter?

What current problems are there in the Park: Graffiti, vandalism, dog mess, personal safety, maintenance costs?

Where is the current café and toilet? Does it blend in well with its surroundings? Is it well used? Is there easy access for disabled users, or people with pushchairs and prams?

LITERACY

The study of Warley Woods helps pupils to formulate, clarify and express their ideas orally and in writing, for a variety of different purposes. Both specialist and descriptive vocabulary are developed, and the analysis of plant names can inspire an interest in words. The park can also be used to bring Literature to life, or as a stimulus for creative performance, costumed role play, poetry and drama. The legends about the Park provide an excellent basis for storytelling on site and at school.

NUMERACY

Surveying, estimating, scale, probability, statistics, volumes, area and data handling are all opportunities provided by projects based on Warley Woods. Numeracy linked with outdoor activities such as archaeological surveying, plotting finds, using maps and coordinates.

SCIENCE

Warley Woods is a natural laboratory for the study of life processes of living things, Habitats, Life cycles, seed dispersal, plants and insects and their relationship to their environment; Weathering, erosion, the uses and properties of materials. Scientific techniques in archaeology, geophysical surveying, problem solving, deduction.

HISTORY

Warley Woods is an important primary source of evidence for the lifestyles and beliefs of people in the past. Enquiry can involve a wide range of historical sources and heighten pupils' skills of observation, recording, questioning, deduction and research. Site study together with oral and pictorial sources can be used with KS1 pupils investigating events within and beyond living memory.

GEOGRAPHY

Warley Woods provides many opportunities for the study of physical and human geography, and issues of conservation, change and conflicts of interest in the environment. The Woods makes an ideal local study, investigating, recording making and using maps and plans, using compasses, following directions and devising questionnaires all exercise fieldwork skills and develop geographical language.

ART

The park and woods are a stunningly beautiful place, which provides countless opportunities for inspiring art-work. Butterflies, birds and trees, the changing colours of autumn, spring flowers can all be harnessed for creative inspiration, perhaps linked to dance and performance in the Park.

CITIZENSHIP

The work of the Community Trust is a great opportunity for schoolchildren play an active part their citizenship education through: weighing evidence; listening to opinions; making and justifying opinions; seeing the balance between different concerns within a community; working together to make decisions; understanding that compromise is needed to meet the needs of others within the community; identifying what improves and harms the environment, and researching, discussing and debating topical issues.

These are just preliminary suggestions and we welcome your feedback. You, after all, are the experts on the National Curriculum and the Trust welcomes your suggestions as to how we can enhance the educational potential of Warley Woods.

USEFUL SOURCES OF FURTHER INFORMATION

Community History Education Officer Sandwell Community Archives and Local History Service
Smethwick Library
High Street
Smethwick
B66 1AB TEL 0121 558 2561

Birmingham City Archives
Floor 7
Central Library
Chamberlain Square
Birmingham
B3 3HQ Tel 0121 303 4217
Email: archives@birmingham.gov.uk

English Heritage Education Service
Freepost 22 (wd 214)
London
W1E 7EZ
Tel 020 7973 3442
www.HeritageEducation.net

Using Historic Parks and Gardens £6.99 from English Heritage
Teachers handbook for local studies £6.99 from English Heritage
Aerial Photography book/CD-ROM £8.99 from English Heritage