

How to... investigate a building

Name of resource: The Granary Building, Welsh Back

Date of resource: Built 1869

Architects: Ponton and Gough

Resource located: Welsh Back, Bristol Harbourside

Curriculum links: Art, Maths, Citizenship

Learning Outcomes: To use a local building to find out about how people lived their lives in the past and to compare buildings in the past with contemporary ones.

Description of resource

This beautiful Victorian building was built in 1869 by Ponton and Gough. It has elements of Venetian, Moorish and Byzantine architecture and uses local bricks from the Cattybrook brickworks in Almondsbury. The bricks are of three coloured bricks; red, black and yellow, which are typical of the Bristol Byzantine style. It has seven grain floors, with many patterned ventilation openings to aid the drying of the grain. Originally hot air from furnaces in the brick insulated basements, were piped upwards to dry the grain and the ground floor has round exit holes for the chutes releasing grain. The basement and ground floor now form a restaurant and bar and the remainder of the building is divided into apartments, with an internal light column to provide additional natural lighting.

Why this resource is useful for a local history study?

The style and design of buildings can help us to understand how people lived their lives in the past through investigating a range of factors including style, materials available, technological processes, local vernacular and status. Investigating buildings from the local area enables us to understand more about the lives of people who lived in the past. They can help us build up a picture of all aspects of life including social, economic, industrial and agricultural.

Techniques for analysing the resource (questions to ask, things to look for, pitfalls etc.)

To engage the interest of the pupils, ask them several short questions about the photo of the Granary:

What materials do you think it is made from?

Is it damaged or well preserved?

What type of people do you think used to use the building?

Do you like the design of the building? Why?

Get the children to look at the design of the building. Do they think it was easy to build? Why?

What craftsmen do they think were involved in building? Do they think it was an expensive building to make? Why?

Get the children to imagine they were workers in the Granary building a hundred years ago. What do they think it would be like? Would they like to work there? Why?

There are lots of holes in the design of the building. Why do the children think they are there?

The design of the building is made up of lots of arches. What building might have been the inspiration for these?

In the 1960's the building used to be a dancehall, which had bands playing in the evenings. Can the children imagine what it would be like to spend an evening there?

When the building was a granary, what different types of people do the children think used to visit it? How is this different to the types of people that now visit and use the building?

Get the children to imagine they are an estate agent who is trying to sell an apartment in the Granary. How would they describe it?

The bricks used in the building were made just outside Bristol. Was this useful? Why?

The design of the building includes lots of arches and circles. Can the children use these shapes to make repeating patterns and tessellation patterns?

