

## Heritage Schools Case Study

### What makes our housing estate special?

*Students used a social-history photographic collection to learn more about their local heritage. They also undertook an oral history project.*

**Where:** Goddard Park School, Swindon

**Who:** Year 4

The project used images from the [John Laing Photographic Collection](#), held by the [Historic England Archive](#). The John Laing plc building company profoundly shaped post-war Britain. They built outstanding sites of worship like Coventry Cathedral and the London Central Mosque, some of the country's first motorways, including the M1, the Barbican & British Library, buildings which housed pioneering forms of technology such as Berkeley Nuclear Power Station and all across England, thousands of Easiform homes.



Education workshops were held to help pupils & teachers explore this social-history photography Collection, as well as share and record stories between former Laing employees and students living in areas built by John Laing plc. Using the [Heritage Schools aims](#), we wanted children to develop a sense of pride in where they live and to understand their local heritage and how it relates to a national story. Pupils examined the photographs as sources of primary evidence about their local area. They then used them to help devise historically valid questions to ask the people who helped to build them. Former John Laing employees were then invited into the schools to answer the children's questions. These visits and questions were filmed to provide a lasting legacy of the project

Easiform housing was built all across England so this Case Study could be applied in any [Easiform community](#), showing the importance of local housing as heritage.

#### Intended Outcomes:

- Children develop a sense of pride in where they live
- Children understand their local heritage and how it relates to a national story
- Children understand what a photographic archive is & how it could be used
- Children use primary sources of evidence
- Children devise historically valid questions (oral history)
- Children select and organise relevant historical information
- Children explore changes in post-war Britain
- Children look at their own identity within a local case study

#### What we did:

- Children investigated historical photographs and thought about “Why are photos a good historical source? What do you know/can you infer from a photograph?”
- Children looked at photographs of houses from their estate and found out more about the company, John Laing plc., that built them. Including watching a film about how they were built.
- Children were asked them to imagine you could interview someone that built these houses. What would you ask them? And how do we ask good questions?
- Children interviewed former Laing employees. Their questions included: “was it tiring?” “what did you do for shelter when it rained?” “what was your favourite thing you built?” “did you ever want to quit?”
- Children and the Laing employees went to see the Easiform houses from the archive photos, so they could compare the past with the present. Many were able to engage in a more informal way with the former Laing employees as we walked and talked. They also got to see the houses they may live in/walk past every day in a new way, through a historical lens.

#### Challenges:

- We found out after the date had been set for the interviews that we only had the morning with the students. It felt a bit rushed with the former Laing employees who I think would have relaxed with more time.
- Some children got a bit restless having to be very quiet during filming and the film was at risk of being lots of talking from the Former Laing Employees not the students.
- We were unable to complete the post-workshop assessment on the day, but the teacher was able to do this later. Luckily the students were able to remember the day and provide feedback with meaning.
- We didn't have time to talk about the whole collection, instead focusing on Easiform housing, perhaps students & the teacher missed an opportunity to see other images/understand the breadth of the collection.

#### Successes:

- The workshop with the images on the first day was great; the students engaged with the Archive and enjoyed seeing their own community in another way.
- The children wrote really thoughtful questions for the former Laing employees.
- With the support of the John Laing Charitable Trust we were able to find, vet and then support the Former Laing employees.
- The walk to the houses was really great and the students used the images to compare the past to the present. This was also a nice relaxed way for the former Laing employees to engage informally with the children.

#### Resources and web links:

- [Film – Swindon Easiform Housing](#)
- [Easiform Housing archive clip](#)
- [Easiform housing images](#)
- [John Laing Photographic Collection](#)
- [Teaching Activity: What makes a housing estate so special?](#)
- [Using the John Laing Photographic Collection for oral history projects](#)

#### Next steps/extension activities:

- Children use their oral history skills to interview other members of their local community.
- Find out more about oral history from the [Oral History Society](#)
- Find out more about [planning outstanding local history and heritage projects](#)
- Find out more about [exploring your home's history](#)