

An Introduction

Huddersfield and its surrounding area has a long and rich history. There is much to learn about how the settlement started and how its population grew due to an increase in various industries, in particular textiles. In this study, children will gain an understanding of how Huddersfield became the place we know and love today.

What you need to know

The earliest settlers in the area date back to the late Neolithic period, with evidence of various tools being found locally. These groups would have moved a lot, choosing to utilise the rivers for fishing and trade. This continued throughout the Stone Age.

During the Bronze Age, we know the first stable settlement began on what is now Castle Hill. This site was likely chosen due to the high ground – perfect for defence and to also protect homesteads from flooding. For a long time, it was believed that this settlement remained occupied and eventually the Brigante tribe called it their home until the Roman invasion, however, new scientific archaeology methods meant that this theory was proven wrong. In a process known as carbon dating, they discovered that the settlement burned down due to a fire in 430 BC, long before the Brigante's occupied the area and the Roman invasion of Britain.

The site remained unoccupied for over a thousand years after this event, but life continued in other locations. Just outside of Huddersfield, Slack Roman Fort was built in 80 AD. This was used by a garrison and would have had a surrounding community. After the Romans withdrew from England, the site was abandoned but a few settlers would have stayed as it was their home.

Little evidence shows the impact of what happened after this, but with the arrival of the Anglo-Saxons and the Vikings, the north of England was left to defend itself. Many towns and villages would have been attacked by barbarians and life was very difficult. Huddersfield was most likely barren and depopulated during this time period.

When the Normans arrived, they returned and built a motte and bailey castle on the site where the first settlement once stood. This castle stayed occupied for over 100 years. Unfortunately, the surrounding area's settlements would have not been so lucky. In an event known as the harrying, large portions of the north were punished by the King. Towns and farms were laid to waste – something we know happened in Huddersfield due to the domesday book entry.

In the 1500s, William Ramsden married Joanna Wood and was gifted land and property in the area. This began a long association between the Ramsdens and Huddersfield. The family bought up more land and eventually, in 1599, they purchased the Manor of Huddersfield from



Queen Elizabeth I. The Ramsden family were responsible for Huddersfield gaining a market charter and encouraged trade and industry with the building of the Cloth Hall. They also improved transport links to the town with the railway and canal. Although the Huddersfield Corporation eventually purchased the estate in 1920, many buildings with links to the Ramsden family still stand in Huddersfield today.

Huddersfield has long been a town of textile workers with weaver's cottages once being a common sight. During the Industrial Revolution, work moved from cottage industries to large factories as machinery took over. The Luddites were a group of people who were opposed to the use of machinery fearing it would take away their livelihoods. One Huddersfield factory owner, William Horsfall, was murdered by Luddites after leaving the Cloth Hall one day. Huddersfield became a wealthy town due to the textile industry but conditions were very tough for the people who worked in the factories.

In 1895, the George Hotel in Huddersfield was the venue for an important meeting that led to Rugby League being founded. The sport is still very popular today with the Huddersfield Giants representing the town.

In the early 1900s, the fight for women's suffrage (the right to vote) was fought all over the country. With Huddersfield's strong tradition of protest, dating back to the Luddites, it is not surprising that the town became a hive of suffragette activity.

During the 20th century, war gripped Europe and Huddersfield felt the impact. Belgian refugees came to the town looking for work and to help boost the war effort in Britain by supporting the factories. Not everybody agreed with war though and Huddersfield had a number of protestors known as conscientious objectors. In World War 2, a prisoner of war camp was situated just outside of the city. Evidence of this can still be seen today from above.

After the war, Huddersfield received people from all over the world who came to work largely in the textile industry. Eventually, many of the mills closed, some were destroyed, and others have been repurposed into housing or places of work. Despite the industry not being as popular as it once was, its influence on the town's growth and development is still evident today.

Resources

Our key enquiry questions, sources, PowerPoints, activities, and other resources will help to build children's understanding of their local area of Huddersfield and answer the question 'How has Huddersfield changed over time?'

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.



Local History

Teacher's Pet is proud to be working alongside Historic England, to allow teachers in and around Huddersfield, to enjoy our range of Local History resources.



Teacher's Pet



Historic England

Who are Historic England?

Historic England protect, champion and save the places that define who we are and where we've come from as a nation. We care passionately about the stories they tell, the ideas they represent and the people who live, work and play among them.

At [Historic England Education](#) we want every child to be inspired by their local heritage and every teacher to have brilliant resources to use inside and outside the classroom.

Our Heritage Schools programme aims to help school children develop an understanding of their local heritage and its significance to make sure that:

-  Children develop a sense of pride in where they live
-  Children understand their local heritage and how it relates to the national story
- Teachers are more confident in making effective use of local heritage resources in delivering the curriculum
-  Local historic context is embedded in the school's curriculum
-  Heritage providers are more connected to the needs of local schools
-  Parents are engaged in their children's learning
-  Communities are more deeply involved in the life of the school