

Understanding our Local History

People often think of Milton Keynes as being too new to have any 'real history'. As Milton Keynes was built in the 1970's it's easy to think that it wouldn't be rich in historical features like older cities such as London or Liverpool. So what was here before the City that we know today? The

ground beneath our feet can tell a very interesting story about the life in this area before Milton Keynes was built.

Scientists, geologists, archaeologists and historians believe that millions of years ago you might have seen a woolly mammoth roaming around this area!

What evidence is there to back up this claim?

Woolly mammoth tusks have been found here as well as flint hand axes and other tools that would have been used by early human settlers. Bronze Age swords and Iron Age pottery and jewellery have been found in locations across Milton Keynes.

The remains of the largest roundhouse in Britain was found at Bluebridge. This shows that that some sort of civilised society existed in Milton Keynes 4,500 years ago. The Roman Villa at Bancroft is a great place to visit to learn more about early life here.



Take a look at this map of Milton Keynes showing some of the sites of historical interest. Can you use a city atlas to find out which estates these findings are on?



What techniques can historians use to find out about the area?

Read the description of each technique and see if you can match it to the correct name.

Translations of medieval documents such as The Domesday Survey of 1086 can tell us about land owners and property transactions. The field names can give us clues about how the land was used.

Field Walking



A team of people carefully remove layers of soil to expose remains of old buildings, tracks, pots, bones and coins that can provide clues about who lived here in the past.

Aerial Photographs



Systematic searching over ploughed fields for shards of pottery, tiles or debris. Dry patches on the ground could indicate former roads or stone buildings whereas lush patches could indicate wells, or graves.

Archaeological investigations



Photographs taken from above can reveal crop marks or earth works that might not be visible at ground level.

Documentary Evidence



What would survive?

Think about the things that would be left behind at a historical site.

Organic materials (anything that was once living like human, animal, and plant remains) break down and decay when they are exposed to moisture and air. Most archaeological sites have little to no organic remains.

Inorganic materials (things that were never living) tend to survive better, although some things can rust or break down.

Look at the items below and circle the ones that you think would most likely to survive underground for 200 years.



Discussion points:

How old is your school?

How do you know this?
What evidence do you have?

How was the area used before your school was built?

How could you find this out?

How do you think this area will be used in the future?

Will there always be a school here? How do you think this area will change?

What questions would you like to ask a local historian?

Can you find out how to contact your local historical society?

Imagine a historian discovered the remains of your classroom in 200 years time.

What questions do you think they would want to ask you?

Now swap questions with a partner and have a go at answering theirs. You could interview each other or write your answers down.

Draw a picture of an artefact the future historian might find and write a description of what they might think it is.

Remember in the future, thier life might be very different to your life now!

