



What was life like for people in Gateshead during the wars?

Work in pairs to create an interview with a Belgian ammunition worker living in Elisabethville during World War I.

One of you will be the interviewer and one should be the worker living in the town. Use the template and information sheet to plan your questions and answers.



Teacher's Pet



Historic England



Today I am interviewing Adrien, a 30-year-old Belgian refugee who has come to work in the neighbouring Elisabethville work camp. Adrien was in the war, but an injury to their leg meant they were no longer able to fight. Keen to do their part to help, they heard about the work camp in Gateshead and came with their family to contribute to the war effort.

Hi Adrien, what can you tell me about Elisabethville?

Question two:

Answer:



Question three:

Answer:





Elisabethville

During World War I, many Belgian workers and their families came to live in a special place called Elisabethville. This village was named after the Queen of Belgium and was sometimes called 'the Colony.'

1. A Special Belgian Village:

Elisabethville was not like other villages in England. It was a Belgian village on British soil. This meant that it followed Belgian laws, used Belgian money (called the Belgian Franc), and people spoke both Flemish and French. In total, over 6,000 people lived in this village.

2. The Village Layout:

Elisabethville was planned very well, with wide roads and open spaces. Families lived in special wooden houses called 'huts.' These houses were quite modern, having running water and even indoor flushing toilets. Single men and wounded soldiers stayed in heated barrack blocks.

3. Village Facilities:

This village had everything a community needed. There were shops, a school for around 700 children, a Catholic church, a 100-bed hospital, butchers, and even a British Post Office. People could enjoy some relaxation time in a recreation hall, which also had a cinema. There were sports clubs, orchestras, and drama clubs, so there was always something to do.

4. Roles of Belgian Women:

Unlike in Britain, Belgian women did not work in the factories. Instead, they took on other important roles in the village, contributing to its growth and well-being.

5. A Village Apart:

Elisabethville was like its own world, separate from the nearby Birtley village. Belgians and the locals from Birtley rarely mixed, and getting permission to leave the village was not easy. If a man did leave, he had to wear a military uniform and wasn't allowed to visit British pubs.

6. Challenges and Achievements:

Life in the munitions factory was tough. The Belgians there had to make a lot of shells for the war, and they actually made more than they were asked to. But the work was hard, with long shifts, limited breaks, and frequent accidents.

Elisabethville was a unique and thriving village during World War I. It provided a sense of home for many Belgian workers and their families, even though they were far from their homeland. The residents of Elisabethville faced challenges, but their unity and determination helped them get through these tough times while supporting the war effort.



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Local History

Historic England and Teacher's Pet have come together to bring you a collection of free resources that you can use in your local history teaching.



Historic England



Teacher's Pet

Who are Teacher's Pet?

Teacher's Pet have been providing downloadable and playable educational content to early years and primary school teachers for over 14 years. We cover all areas of the curriculum and use a team of in-house teachers and designers to create engaging and memorable concepts, that the children will love.

Why local history?

At [Teacher's Pet](#) we want to empower primary school teachers by giving them the tools they need to deliver inspiring and thoughtful lessons about the local area and its history. We believe local history teaching has such an important part to play in a child's wellbeing – helping to give children a sense of pride in where they live.

Our Local History project is designed to provide teachers across the UK with everything they need to successfully carry out a full scheme of teaching about their local area, through key enquiry questions and source led activities.

Working with [Historic England](#) gives us access to archived maps and photos for resources and information from knowledgeable local historians, as well helping us to provide the content to you free of charge.

For more information about our Local History project or to find out more about Teacher's Pet Classroom Resources, please visit our website.