

An Introduction

Telford and its surrounding area have a long and rich history. There is much to learn about the first settlers in the area and how its population changed over time. In this study, children will gain an understanding of how Telford became the place we know and love today.

What you need to know

One of the key sites around Telford is The Wrekin. This is the location of the first surviving evidence of human existence in the area. Evidence of flint tools dates back as far as 4,000 years. A Bronze Age barrow (burial site) was discovered on the summit of The Wrekin. This supports the theory that the area was highly important during these early centuries BC, as it was deemed a suitable place to come and honour the dead. Around the base of the hill, a large hoard containing 150 bronze artefacts was found. The natural resources that made The Wrekin a centre for early human activity also laid the groundwork for Telford's later prominence during the Industrial Revolution.

Through the ages the site remained popular, with an Iron Age fort dating back to around 400 BC. This fort was the capital of the Cornovii tribe – the main tribe in this area. When the Romans arrived in Britain it seems likely that the fort was abandoned or destroyed with evidence supporting both theories. The Romans built their own fortress/settlement in Wroxeter and it became one of the largest cities in the country.

After the departure of the Romans, Britain became a country influenced by belief and faith. In the Norman Domesday entry, several small villages were listed, some of which still exist today as suburbs of Telford, such as Madeley and Wellington. Several churches, abbeys and monasteries popped up across the area, which in turn led to an increase in settlement sizing. The dissolution of monasteries changed the landscape in and around the area, which set the foundation for a transition into the Industrial Revolution.

Telford's history is closely tied to its natural resources. Mining began in Roman times and expanded during the medieval period, led by the monks of Buildwas Abbey, who mined coal and ironstone. Early methods like bell pits, dug by local families, marked the beginnings of organised extraction. The Industrial Revolution transformed the region into a global hub, with the Ironbridge Gorge at its heart. Rich in coal, ironstone, limestone, and clay, it became the "Birthplace of Industry," where Abraham Darby I revolutionised iron smelting with coke. His grandson, Abraham Darby III, constructed the world's first cast-iron bridge in 1781, now a UNESCO World Heritage Site symbolising the era's ingenuity.

The region's industrial prowess extended beyond iron. The Coalport Pottery, founded in 1795, produced celebrated porcelain, while Craven Dunnill's decorative tiles gained international fame, adorning iconic locations such as the Houses of Parliament. Innovators like William Reynolds,



advanced the area's industrial success, developing canals and the pioneering Longdon-on-Tern Aqueduct.

Industrial work was gruelling and dangerous for men, women, and children. The Cinderloo Uprising of 1821, where miners protested wage cuts, tragically highlighted these struggles. Community tragedies, such as the 1864 Brick Kiln Leasow Pit accident, further underscored the risks and led to the building of memorials like the Nine Men of Madeley. Reforms, including the Coal Mines Act of 1842, reflect the sacrifices and gradual improvements in working conditions.

By the 20th century, Telford transitioned into a modern New Town. Designated on 16th January 1963 as Dawley New Town, the project aimed to resolve housing shortages and counteract industrial decline, encompassing Dawley, Wellington, and Oakengates. The inclusion of the historic Ironbridge Gorge in 1968 and its renaming after Thomas Telford cemented the town's legacy. With the completion of the M54 motorway in 1983, Telford became a thriving urban centre. This transformation brought modern housing developments, improved infrastructure, and new economic opportunities. By 2021, Telford had grown into Shropshire's largest town, with a population exceeding 185,000.

Resources

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



Teacher's Pet



Historic England



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.