



King John's tomb at Worcester Cathedral
with shaft of autumn sunlight
Photo courtesy of Janice Bridgen.

PART FOUR

What is local history and what can I do with it



LOTTERY FUNDED

The Magna Carta Armoury

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CARTA

What is local history and what can I do with it?

Local history is a great way of bringing people together from different walks of life, backgrounds and ethnicities to engage with finding out about the area in which they live. Communities are able to explore their own histories and how that relates to the places in which they live now, irrespective of their social history or ethnicity.

Local history includes examining the physical geography or development of an area, key buildings that were, or are there; exploring the people who lived in that area in the past; exploring institutions or organisations that were in the area; exploring employment and traditional crafts; examining key events and time periods as they played out in an area.

Exploring the Magna Carta 800th story through your local history is a great way to engage with the impact and reality of history.

In Part one of the toolkit there is advice on carrying out local research for local history; however it might be that there is already lots of information about your area at the time of Magna Carta. If there is lots of information about your area and Magna Carta then what your role might be is to ensure that the local aspect come out from the 'grand narrative' of the period.

How to ensure that the new research (or bringing together of information and data) has attractive local angles

The following are a few of techniques for creating a picture of the local story for Magna Carta.

1 – Using the information timeline from Part two

Start with your information timeline. Identify which information is local and what is general – arrange it into two columns. Next to each of the pieces of information write a sentence about what it is, now does that sentence tell you what it is that is local about the information? Ensure that each piece of information relates to a local element, even the information that was general. e.g.

Local - the Castle Keep was the site of preparation for a key battle that occurred 5 miles from the centre of the town. The preparations were organised by Baron Red and employed 200 local men.

General – The sieges of 1216 occurred across the England. In the local areas just outside of London this included Odiham, Windsor and Berkhamsted. News of those sieges reached a location and spread fear in the local area, making preparations against the King more determined.



Image of St Albans Abbey



Next to each to of the pieces of significant information explain what evidence you have for that piece of information – e.g. the book, document or chronicle where you found the information relating to the local history.

2 – Using a basic big events timeline

(e.g. <http://magnacarta800th.com/history-of-the-magna-carta/the-magna-carta-timeline/>)

<http://magnacarta800th.com/history-of-the-magna-carta/battles/>

www.bl.uk/magna-carta/articles/timeline-of-magna-carta

www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/middle_ages/magna_01.shtml

Use the timeline as a guide to pin information about what happened locally by writing a paragraph on a local element for each big event e.g.

the Magna Carta document was issued by King John more than once. In our region there is one

copy of the first document and a copy of the third. In my town there are no copies but it was the site of a siege in 2016, after the first copy was issued nationally.

Next to each to of the pieces of significant information explain what evidence you have for that piece of information – e.g. the book, document, chronicle where you found the information relating to the local history.

3 – Creating a mind map

Using a large sheet of paper place a picture of a significant place in your local town e.g. the Guildhall, in the middle. Now place other pictures from the area or representing ideas around that central picture and write the connection down on the map or on a side piece of paper.

By the end you should have a visual display of how the Magna Carta story has connections to your local area.

Next to each to of the pieces of significant information explain what evidence you have

for that piece of information – e.g. the book, document, chronicle where you found the information relating to the local history.

Different people can carry out different parts of research to create any of the timelines or maps above.

For organising your information

Explain - what makes each of the local information 'local'?

- Are the events unique to your area?
- How do the events of your area fit into the bigger regional and or, national picture?
- What are the pieces of evidence that you have built up and what are the sources for that information?
- Is there a physical building or place that can represent the local story?
- If significant buildings that were there at the time of Magna Carta are not mentioned in any sources – why might that be the case? E.g. the local Abbey was obeying the Pope's edict and could not be involved with local activities.

- Are their local people who can be named that had a role?
- Is it possible to link an action or response from people in your area to an event?

Finish by creating a one page description that summates the local story of Magna Carta. This can be used to send to other people to promote your local activities and as a way of focusing people on the local dimension.

Tips

Once you start your local research get a large map so that you can mark any key locations.

Check local museums for or libraries for old history projects (the Victorians were very keen on this) and there may have been some local research on the Magna Carta that has been done before.



Visitors crowd around the Salisbury copy of Magna Carta in the exhibition at the Cathedral.