

## **School class visits at Camden Local Studies and Archives Centre**



**One of our visiting schools, but during a previous era Kingsgate Primary School 1938  
(© Camden Local Studies and Archives Centre)**

Camden Local Studies and Archives Centre holds an extensive collection of information about the history of the London Borough of Camden and its predecessor authorities of Hampstead Holborn and St Pancras. This comprises primary and secondary sources such as maps, pictures, books, newspapers, correspondence.

We have hosted numerous class visits at the centre, with schools from various parts of the borough. These sessions have been well received by children and staff. We have also supported the City Read project.

A trip to the Camden Local Studies & Archives Centre actively supports the teaching of history and geography to primary school pupils. The children and staff benefit from the opportunity to view and examine unique historical documents. This experience is entirely unique in an age of universal information technology. The children and staff are fascinated by the format in which information was published and disseminated in the past, and at the centre we are privileged to have access to a wealth of material which is simply not available on the internet. Teachers are particularly keen to stress the difference between primary and secondary sources, and they want their pupils to experience historic items.

We usually run the school visit sessions on Friday mornings with a duration of roughly 90 minutes. On Fridays we operate an appointments system for other centre users so this provides us with the opportunity to devote staff time and reading room space to the needs of the visiting class. We set out the study material on four tables, each corresponding to one of four sub topics which relate to the main project. On every table there is an explanatory

heading, and we also provide a few questions for the children to consider on an informal basis. We encourage the children to discuss, draw and write about their discoveries. Paper and pencils are provided so that the children can note and express anything that particularly fascinates them. We certainly see some inspiring pieces of art work and also some very interesting written notes. We also learn from the children too, as so often they uncover interesting facts. We approach this from the point of view that hopefully every child who attends can gain something valuable from this experience. We strive to provide these activities on an informal basis, and they have proved to be informative and fun.

At the end of each session the school staff usually stage a brief class discussion so that the children can share their findings. Sometimes the class even has their lunch at the centre before returning to school! The work they do is usually followed up at school and in order to facilitate this we provide staff with a pack of useful items to take back to school, including for example a copy of our publication Wartime Camden. Teachers are encouraged to complete a brief feedback form, and we find that their comments are invariably positive as the material that we offer is completely unique and is presented in a user friendly manner. Of course we always take on board any constructive suggestions in order to further develop the program.

We pitch the sessions to the specific needs of the school and have prepared entire topics from scratch. Over the years we have created a vast collection of material from previous visits. We are able to use these items time and again, also mix and match. For example where teachers require information about several periods of history at the same time. The topics studied so far are as follows, with a brief outline of some of the sources used:

#### **School history & local area studies,**

Historic maps and pictures of the local area. Census records and London directories for snapshots of local residents and businesses.

#### **Camden in wartime: World War One & World War Two**

Pictures of bomb damage, and the London County Council Bomb Damage Maps. The St Pancras Air Raid Precautions pictures of the Second World War. Ration books and recipes. Images of post war redevelopment.

#### **The Victorians, Charles Dickens and the Workhouse**

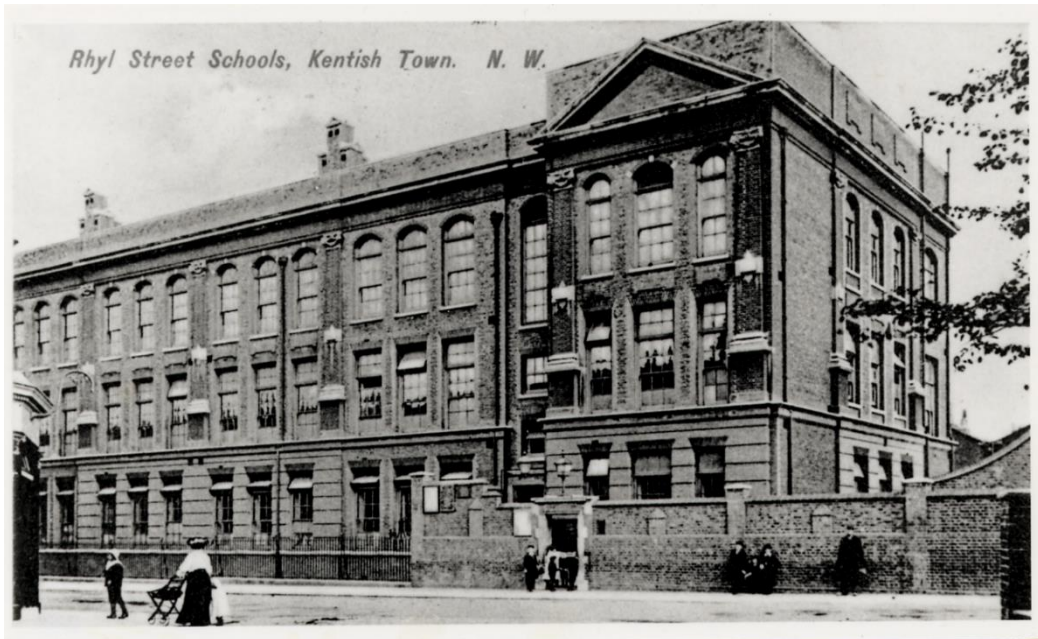
Pictures of Victorian high streets. The early series of Ordnance Survey maps to chart the development of Victorian Camden. Accounts of life in the workhouse.

#### **The River Fleet, and Hampstead Heath,**

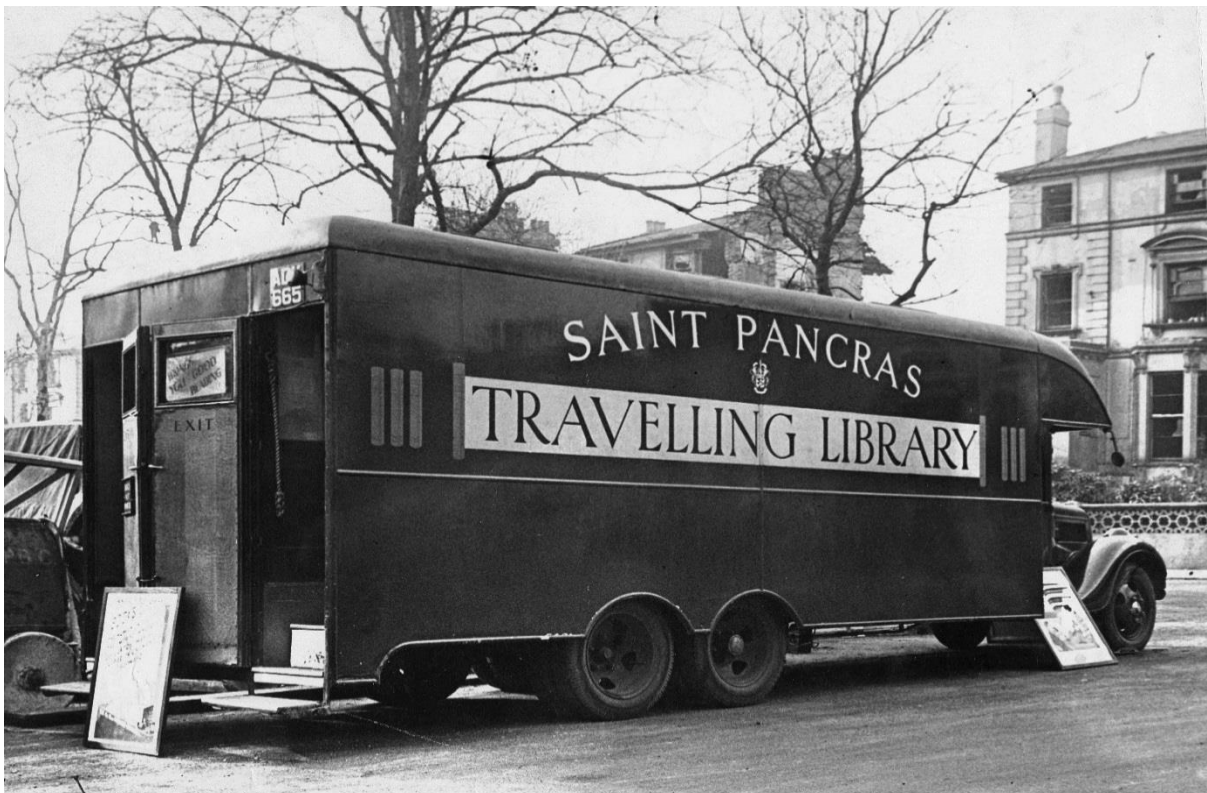
Historic images of the Fleet and the Heath, and maps of the water courses. The history of how the Heath was saved for the benefit of the community. The gradual disappearance of the River Fleet underground.

#### **London in Tudor, Stuart, Georgian, & Victorian Times.**

Extracts of historic maps of London over the ages which have been scanned, printed, and laminated so that they can be safely examined by classes.



School history studies The Rhyl Street Schools 1913.  
(© Camden Local Studies and Archives Centre)



A favourite Camden in Wartime image from the St Pancras Metropolitan Borough Air Raid Precautions collection (© Camden Local Studies and Archives Centre)

**A message to Camden primary schools from the staff of  
Camden Local Studies and Archives Centre**

We wish to send our best wishes to your staff and pupils at this difficult time.  
We hope in future to be able to offer class visits as have we have done in the past,  
and we will contact schools as soon as this is possible.

In the meantime you are most welcome to email your enquiries and questions to:  
Ingrid Smits and Kate Brolly on [localstudies@camden.gov.uk](mailto:localstudies@camden.gov.uk)