2B History of Box

Project Box Resources
- ✓ Laminated images relating to Great Kimble Box woodlands.
- ✓ Historic boxwood objects laminated images.
- ✓ Historic map and modern map of Halton area.
- ✓ Engraved block, ink, roller, burnisher, Japanese paper sheet.
- ✓ *How to print* guide.
- ✓ Ancient Tree Hunt leaflet.
- ✓ Powerpoint 'Growing with Box' Slides 5-10.

Additional resources
- ✓ Clipboards, pencils, paper
- ✓ Cameras (optional)
- ✓ Modern newspaper and modern children's illustrated book.
- ✓ Magnifying glasses for maps

Activities

Read all about it! Refer to Slides 5-8. Look at a modern day newspaper or children's illustrated book and then compare this to the 19th century equivalent – how do they look different; what words are used; do the pupils find the stories interesting? Compare how the images were made in the 19th century using engraved box woodblocks to how they are created today. Show the class how to make a print using the engraved woodblock. Create a newspaper front page for school.

Day in the life of a young lace maker: Research the tough lives of Victorian children at a lace making school. Pupils to imagine a typical day and create a diary entry describing what they did during the day and how they felt. Research lace making bobbins so that pupils can design a boxwood bobbin with an inscription to give as a gift to their family.

Then and Now.
- o Spot the differences between the historic map and the modern day map showing the area around Halton village. Talk about what people did to make those changes take place in the landscape and also what natural forces cause change, e.g. plant growth, storms, erosion. Also identify those features that have remained constant, including areas of woodland and hedgerows. How have place names changed or stayed the same?
- o Look at the images of boxwood objects. What were they used for and what are the modern equivalents? What materials are used today and where do these materials come from?

Living for centuries: Using the Ancient Tree Hunt leaflet as inspiration, look for old trees in your school grounds or on an off-site visit. Find the Box tree with the thickest trunk as this is probably the oldest Box tree. Back in the classroom, play the online Tree Memory game.

Going, going, gone! Change is part of life but people like to preserve special things so that they are not lost – talk about thinking of future generations. Refer to Slide 9. Discuss how we today benefit from the efforts of the Society for the Promotion of Nature Reserves in early 1900s. What special trees and woods would pupils campaign to keep in their local area today? Can pupils produce a letter, poster or webpage to gather support for their campaign?

History detectives. Look at the laminated images about the Great Kimble Box Woodlands in the Chilterns and Slide 10. Talk about how the past is recorded in different ways and by different people for different reasons. What record would pupils make about their off-site visit for future generations? How do their records compare with each other?

Extension/follow-up activities
- • Research historic figures linked to Box history, e.g. Thomas Bewick; Charles Rothschild.
- • Look at historic maps relating to your local area to see how the landscape has changed.
- • Discuss global trade in Victorian times and what woods are imported into the UK today.

2B Teachers' Notes

Learning Outcomes

- Understand some of the uses of Box timber in Victorian times and consequent changes.
- Investigate the local history of a place or craft or people linked to Box trees in the Chilterns.
- Understand how people have affected the appearance and use of the countryside over time.
- Understand how different historic records can provide an insight into the past.

Curriculum Connections

History: Crafts and industries; Local history study (yr 3); Sources of historic information; Influential people; change and continuity in the countryside.

Preparation / Key Notes

All but one activity is an indoor activity. The outdoor activity 'Living for centuries' can be combined with activities listed on cards 1A - C.

Background Knowledge

Human use of wood dates back to prehistory when man made fires. Cultural associations linked to Box in Britain date back to at least the Roman period during which Box associated with burials (perhaps symbolic of the afterlife: evergreen = everlasting life). Box can be found in Chiltern churchyards today. The Domesday book (1086) refers to place names incorporating 'box', suggesting that Box trees were significant enough to allow ready identification of a place; examples in the Chilterns are 'Boxmoor' and 'Bix'. There is a large ancient woodland of box trees dating back to at least the 1600s near Great Kimble. Box is also associated with plantings in historic designed landscapes, including Hughenden Manor, Chenies Manor, Tring Park and Cliveden. In the 19th century, newspapers such as the London Illustrated News were brought to life by illustrations printed using engraved boxwood blocks. This period in time saw growing demand for boxwood - England was importing Box timber from Asia into London by sea. Not so long ago, people would have regularly used boxwood objects, such as pastry cutters, lace bobbins, chess pieces and rulers. Today, boxwood is used only by a small number of artisans and other materials have replaced boxwood.

Charles Rothschild worked with the Society for the Promotion of Nature Reserves to conserve a large ancient Box woodland in the Chilterns. This woodland remains today thanks to its protection under law as a Site of Special Scientific Interest. It is amongst hundreds of sites across the UK that became protected in this way following the passing of an Act in 1949.

Web-site links and further resources

Life at lace making schools: www.afamilystory.co.uk/history/northamptonshire-lace.aspx#pillows-and-bobbins and https://ubp.buckscc.gov.uk/SingleResult.aspx?uid=TBC535

Society for Promotion of Nature Reserves: www.wildlifetrusts.org/rothschildreserves

Woodland Trust Tree Memory game: www.naturedetectives.org.uk/play/games/treesmemory.htm

Historic maps free to view and compare with modern OS maps online: www.nls.uk