

Thetford Warren Lodge – The Warreners’ Tales



Lesson Plan – History (Local history – Thetford Warren Lodge)

Length of lesson: 45mins – 1 hour

Suitable for Key Stage 2

Focus: To gain knowledge and understanding of some of Norfolk’s past through the exploration of a local heritage site. They will identify the relationships between the landscape and how it has changed over time in context with its use and the roles of those who lived and worked there.

<p>Learning Objectives</p>	<p>To understand what Thetford Warren Lodge and the surrounding landscape was like and how it has changed over time. To recognise how people’s lives and trades changed over time and to understand the chronology of events. To make connections between local, regional and national history.</p>
<p>Success Criteria</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I can make suggestions about events and locations drawing on my own knowledge and historical sources. • I can select and organise relevant historical information. • I can construct informed responses to questions that involve thoughtful selection of information.
<p>Activity Summary</p>	<p><u>Introduction</u> – Ask the children to work in mixed ability small groups (5-6 pupils) Provide each group with a photograph of Thetford Warren Lodge (Figure 1/Slide 1) a large A3 sheet of paper and 2 coloured pens. Ask the children to stick the photo in the center of the page. Display the following questions for the class to consider in their groups (Slide 2):</p> <p>What could this building be? Who might have lived or worked there? What might the building have been used for? How old is the building?</p> <p>Children to discuss their ideas in groups and to scribe them around the photograph using 1 of the coloured pens. Groups share and feedback initial ideas.</p> <p><u>Main Activity</u> - Show the class the Norfolk/Brecks map (Figure 2_1/Slide 3) and identify where the building is located and where it is in relation to the school. Ask (Slide 4):</p> <p>Do we know anything about the area? Do we know anything about the landscape? Was it always like this?</p> <p>Now that the children know that the building is in ‘The Brecks’, find out if they have changed their minds about any of their ideas? Allow the children time to discuss further and to explain what might have influenced their decisions.</p> <p>Now name the building as ‘Thetford Warren Lodge’ (Figure 2_2/Slide 5), ask</p>

(Slide 6):

What clues can we draw from the name?

What do we now know? (It's in Thetford, it's called a 'Warren Lodge')

What is a Warren?

How might this help us determine what the building was used for?

Share ideas as a class and collate ideas that help to form a more accurate picture of the lodge and its use.

Ensure that the children make the link with rabbits!

Explain that the people who lived and worked in the Lodge were called 'Warreners'

Show the children a timeline (Figure 3/Slide 7) that displays when the Lodge was first in use and other key events in British history along the timeline up to present day.

Why would people have wanted to catch rabbits back in the 1400s?

Again collate responses and explain that the lodge still exists and that it only ceased to serve as a Warrener's Lodge in the 1930s, so it has a 500-year long history.

Watch 'The Warreners' Tales' -

Tell the children that they are going to take a walk through history to find out what 'Thetford Warren Lodge' was like back in the 1400s and how it changed over the course of history. Ask them to pay particular attention to the lodge and what it was like both inside and out but also the role of the Warrener and any other key historical figures.

After watching the film, ask the children to return to their small groups and to use the 2nd coloured pen to note down 10 new facts that they have learnt from the film and that relate to 'Thetford Warren Lodge' in some way, this can be facts about what it was made of, what the rooms were used for, what the Warreners did, what they used, the fur trade, etc.

Encourage children who have not yet contributed to share their group's facts with the class. Ensure that the class identify the link to Royalty (Catherine of Aragon) and position this event on the timeline. As a class identify other key events from the film and place them on the timeline. You can then list other key moments from the lodge's history that wasn't mentioned in the film (Figure 4/Slide 9).

Summary Activity Hot Seating – Whole Class Activity

Ask the class to sit in a circle and put one hot seating chair at the front of the class. Ask whether anyone would be willing to become a 1930's Warrener, 1930's Warrener's wife or Catherine of Aragon. Have a flat cap, headscarf and paper crown available to give the willing pupils. One at a time these pupils will take their place on the 'Hot Seating' chair. They must keep in character and answer questions as accurately as possible using the information they have learnt from the film. The class will devise questions that encourage the hot seating characters to explain more about what the lodge was like, what they did etc. The teacher should ask the first few questions as a model to support the children in generating their own.

Additional Notes	<p><u>Resources</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• PP slides – Thetford Warren Lodge Image (Figure 1)- Map of the Brecks (with Lodge location identified – Figure 2_1)- Map of the Brecks (with the Lodge location identified and named – Figure 2_2)- Timeline of key events in British History over the last 500 years (showing the beginning of the lodge to its demise – Figures 3 & 4 [depending on level of understanding]). <p>Coloured pens Large A3 paper</p> <p>Flat cap Headscarf Crown</p>
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An introduction to Warrening in the Brecks & Thetford Warren Lodge

While back in the 1400s, most rural landscapes were used for arable farming, The Brecks had dry, sandy soil with a dry climate that didn't support this source of income for the local people. Instead, they turned to warrening. The soft soil in conjunction with the climate being similar to the rabbits' native Mediterranean was perfect for breeding rabbits and so, under the initial gaze of the church, warrens were built to capitalize on the value of rabbit meat and fur. These warrens occupied the higher, permanently dry pastureland of parishes whose settlements clustered on the fen-edge or along the rivers and they were concentrated where the greatest depth of blown sand overlaid the chalk. What is now Thetford Forest Park was once completely open heathland with scarcely a tree in sight.

Warreners were appointed by the warren landowners and charged with the duty of overseeing the breeding and culling of rabbits for profit. They lived in the warrens, which became both a family home on the first floor and a workshop for storage and prepping the rabbit meat and fur for sale on the ground floor. The lodges looked like miniature castle keeps and had defensive features due to the large threat from poaching.

Warrening was such a lucrative business that by the eighteenth century, there were over twenty warrens in the Brecks as well as two fur processing factories in Brandon and short-lived premises in Thetford and Swaffham. The annual cull on many of the warrens ran to over 20,000 animals, with the meat being sent to London and Cambridge, as well as to markets locally. The fur was despatched to Luton, for use in the hat industry, but also to Europe and as far afield as South America.

Each warren's boundary in the Brecks was marked with manmade banks to act as a perimeter, keep rabbits from escaping and stop poachers from entering. These banks were up to two metres high, up to ten metres wide and were made of turves (grass).

Thetford Warren Lodge is a rectangular building of two storeys, 8.5 x 5.8 metres, with walls to their original height and almost one metre thick at ground floor level, constructed of mortared flint rubble with brick and tile and limestone dressings. One pointed arched doorway gives entrance to the ground floor and there are five narrow window slot openings. A staircase to the upper floor had an octagonal turret, there are four rectangular window openings (one on each elevation) and a fine fireplace. There was a lean-to structure against the north wall and two single-storey thatched wings were added in the 19th century, but these were destroyed by fire in 1935.

The demise of warrening in the Brecks began in 1880 when the Ground Game Act was passed. This stipulated that at the consent of the landowner, rabbits were allowed to be hunted for sport. The early 1900s also saw 'fur fashion' die out as more exotic textiles became available from abroad. In the 1920s, the Forestry Commission bought a large proportion of the Breckland warren land which they covered with trees. As rabbits damage small trees, an eradication process was begun and this, in conjunction with an outbreak of myxomatosis in the 1950s, led to the demise of warrening in the Brecks. The fur factories were also shut down and the profits once brought to the Brecks from warrening were lost.

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A Timeline of Thetford Warren Lodge

