# Around the Hippodrome – a local study from 1907

This section offer teachers an ideal topic for a local study in history and geography. With research help from our theatre volunteers, staff and librarians from the Local Studies section of Darlington Library we have produced this teaching sequence using some excellent sources to help children investigate the area around the theatre shortly after its opening and how it has changed over time.

Activities in this section can be enhanced by further research at the Local Studies section of Darlington Library, where there are skilled staff to help with research.

You need to be aware that we have cleared all copyright of images for your use only in school. Should you wish to use the images for any other purpose you MUST contact the Local Studies section of the library for clearance otherwise you will be liable for breach of copyright.

Children's learning in this section will undoubtedly be reinforced by walking around the area looking for clues about the area's past and a guided tour of the theatre. Contact us for details.
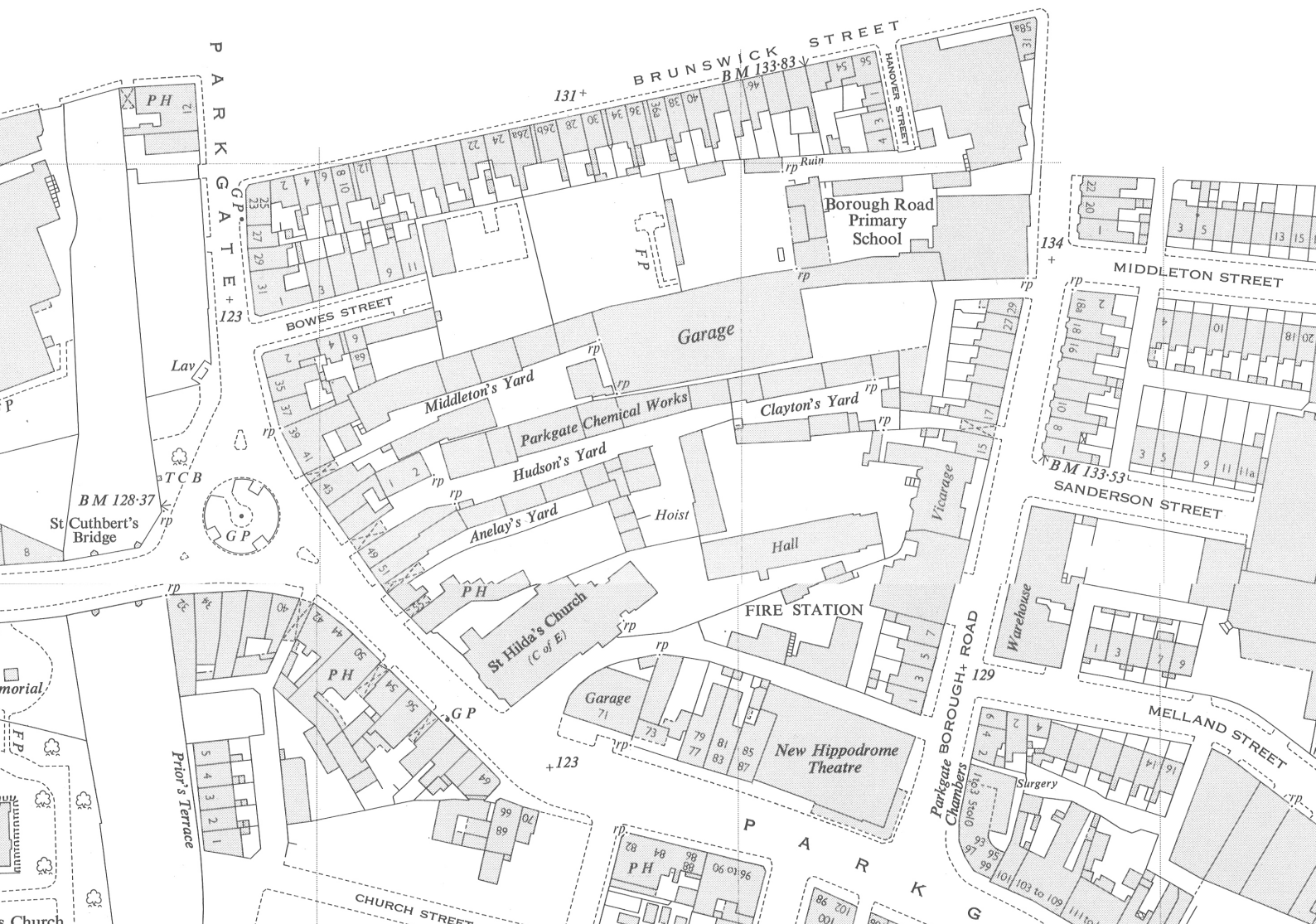
28a | What's this building?

# 28b | What's changed on and around this building?

ACTIVITIES

- Introduce this historical enquiry topic by asking children what they think this building is. What clues helped them work this out?

- How do they know that this photograph was taken a long time ago? (We don't yet know the date, unfortunately.)

- What do children notice about the street compared to streets in towns today?

- Compare with the later photograph to identify what has changed. Circle the changes on your whiteboard.

- Begin discussion about what has caused these changes. The elaborate wrought iron canopy was demolished by a large lorry; a projection box was built above the stone Hippodrome lettering when the theatre began showing early films which needed a separate self-contained space in case of fire; and the words 'Palace Theatre' on the corner were obliterated when the theatre was renamed the 'Civic'. In the street you will see changes in transport and street lighting.

29 | What was around the theatre?

Aerial view taken c1936 from St Cuthbert's Church tower
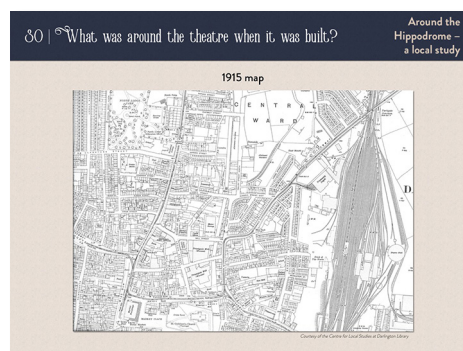
ACTIVITIES

- Find the Hippodrome. What is immediately around it?

- What impression do children get of Darlington from this photograph? (Although it was taken about 30 years after the theatre opened, it gives a vivid impression of the industrial landscape around the theatre, whose patrons would have worked in the foundries, mills, railway works and other industries and businesses.)

- What dominates the scene?

- How close are homes, shops, businesses and heavy industry to the theatre?

- What do they notice about the streets?
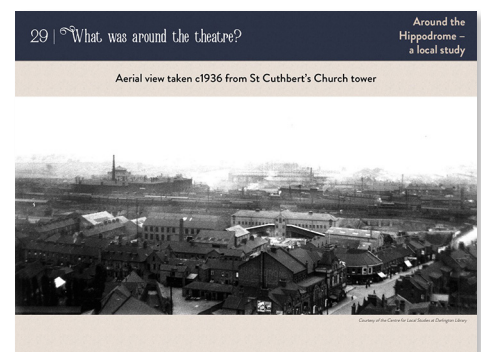
- Draw attention to the rounded façade on the opposite corner. Before it was built, the gable end of the terrace fronting Parkgate was covered in advertising - featured in **Whiteboard Activity 35** Shopping around.

Make links with the 1915 map in the following activity to identify what some of the industrial works produced. The map also shows many nearby public houses (PH), inns or hotels that would refresh thirsty men after they'd finished work before returning home, perhaps stopping off to use the many public urinals indicated on the map. It would be into the same public houses that some of the theatre's patrons might have popped into before or after a show.

30 | What was around the theatre when it was built?

ACTIVITIES

- Children look at the map and talk about what they see.

- Help them identify key features to get a bearing, especially those still existing.

- Find the Hippodrome. Discuss why the site was a good place to build a theatre. (Close to a main railway station, on a tram route, next to a fire station – useful because theatres had often caught fire in the past.)

- Look at what else is nearby - industrial works, hotels, public houses and business premises. Can children make any connections between places?

- What other places of entertainment can they find?

- Identify the long streets of homes of the people who worked in these industries and businesses (usually close by). Many would have come to the shows at the Hippodrome, probably sitting in the gallery or pit.

- You'll find a copy of this map in the Resources Folder [Historical sources].

- There is also a copy of an 1898 map of the area in the same Resources Folder for teachers wishing to explore local history and geography aspects further.

31 | Who lived around the theatre?
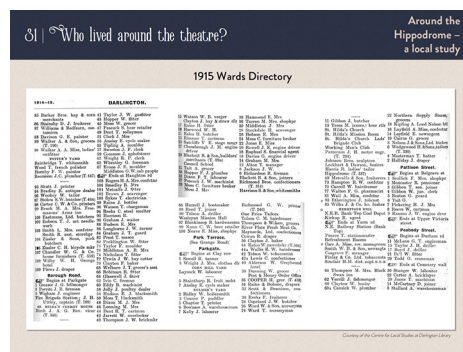
ACTIVITIES

- Explain that these are extracts from Ward's Directory of 1915 showing Parkgate (a commercial street) and Borough Road (a residential street that details the occupations of the main householder). The Hippodrome is on the corner of both streets.

- Directories like these covered the whole country and listed all the trades in towns, either alphabetically or street by street.

- Talk about the different occupations of people living in Borough Road (below are explanations of some of the more obscure trades).

- Compile a list of common trades. You could do this by cutting up these extracts into sections and distributing them for children to collate in groups. How many people worked in food, clothing or furniture shops; how many worked as tradesmen – plumbers, fitters or electricians; how many people sold tobacco or sweets (confectioner); or how many people worked for the railway or the fire service.

- Present this information as a list or graph.

- Make connections between trades such as cartman, hay and straw deliverer and blacksmith.

- You'll find copies of these extracts in the Resources Folder [Historical sources].

EXTENSION ACTIVITY

- Ask children where some of the people in Borough Road might have worked. Refer to the map or the aerial photograph.

- Look for links to the theatre such as who lived in number 25 Borough Road, or who were the printers in Parkgate who produced the theatre's programmes. Which hotels in Parkgate might some of the main performers have stayed?

- Mention that many visiting performers would want to stay as close - and often as cheaply as possible - to the theatre to minimise travel time and costs. Some local women would take in boarders to supplement their income. Ask children to suggest which households along Borough Road might have been used to provide accommodation.

TRADE DESCRIPTIONS

Bottler – leather bottle maker
Chargeman – a foreman or someone who uses explosives
Draper – someone who sells cloth to make clothes
Fellmonger – leather merchant or dealer in cattle hides
Greaser – worker in a woollen mill
Hosier – seller of stockings and socks
Labourer – worker on a farm, a builder or employee of Darlington Corporation
Millwright – worker in a saw mill
Moulder – makes moulds for bricks or metal tools
Nurseryman – grows plants, shrubs and trees
Overlooker – supervisor (in a textile mill)
Puddler – worker who manufactures iron
Rolleyman – driver of a flat wagon carrying heavy objects (barrels and blocks of stone)
Scavenger – street cleaner
Tanner – worker who tans hides to make leather
Waggoner – delivery man (using horse and cart)
Whitesmith – metalworker dealing in tin or light metals and white enamelled goods

32 | How did people in Darlington get to the theatre?

ACTIVITIES

**READ and EXPLAIN – Travelling to the theatre**

- Find the theatre in each image.

- Ask children to sequence photos chronologically.

- What has changed in the street over time? What is constant?

- Identify different types of transport within each image - some contain more then one type.

- Talk about public transport in each and how they are different.

- Compare means of propulsion – human, horse, electricity, petrol/diesel.

- There are two other photos in the Resources Folder [Transport] from 1907 and the late 1980s, but not from same angle that you may want to use.

- Also in the same Resources Folder you'll find a 1974 bus timetable* with ticket prices and a diagrammatic route map. Services 2A/2B and 6/6A travel along Parkgate. (You should note that the ticket prices are in today's currency and not the pre-decimal coinage featured in other activities within this resource.)

- Compare with bus routes that pass the theatre today.

*Courtesy Aycliffe and District Bus Preservation Society

EXTENSION ACTIVITY

Look for evidence to show how goods and people were transported around Darlington when the theatre was built? Use the:

- 1915 Map, which shows tram lines, depot and motor engineer premises.

- Ward's Directory, which details the homes and premises of hay deliverer (fodder for horses) and a smithy (shoeing horses).

- Theatre programmes, with adverts offering free storage of cycling and good stabling in local inns/public houses.
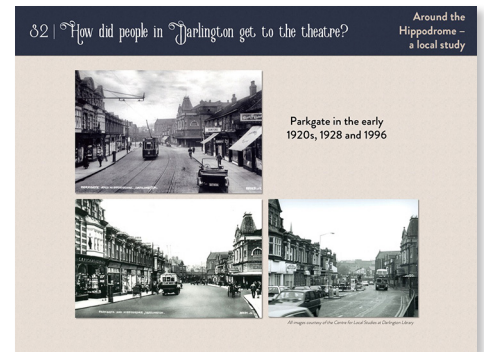
# 33 | How did people further away travel to the theatre?
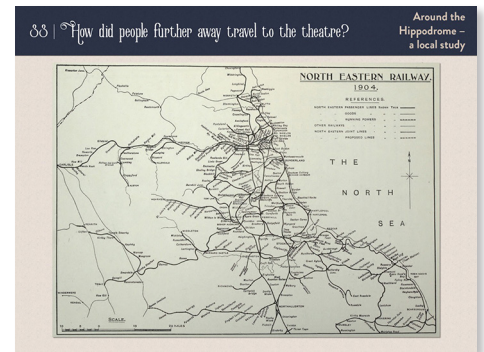
ACTIVITIES

- Explain that this was the local railway network when the Hippodrome was opened. At that time travel by steam train was the main form of transport for most people other than horse and cart. All the performers coming to Darlington each week would have arrived by train, on a Sunday.

- Find Darlington and talk about places that children might easily have travelled to by train.

- From which local stations might theatre goers have come to see a show at the Hippodrome?

- You'll find a copy of this map in the Resources Folder [Transport].

EXTENSION ACTIVITY

- Explain that many of these routes no longer exist, closed down in the 1960s after a Government review of the railways. (Many routes were unprofitable owing to widespread bus travel and increasingly affordable use of cars.) If you want to compare the rail network to today, download local maps from the web.

- Talk about how rail travelled has changed since steam - diesel and electric power.

34 | How did the area around the theatre change after WWII?
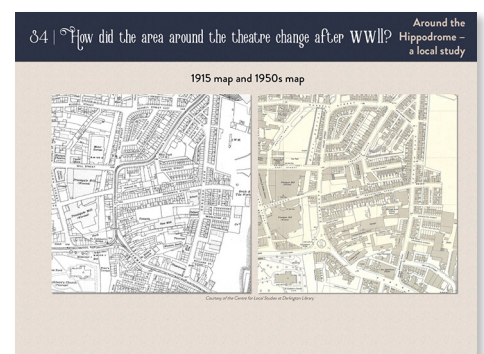
ACTIVITIES

- Compare this map to the 1915 map.

- Identify what has disappeared and what has been built.

- What other changes can children detect in the area around the theatre between WWI and WWII?

- What might have caused these changes?

- You'll find a copy of this map in the Resources Folder [Historical sources].

EXTENSION ACTIVITY

- Compare with a modern map or a Google street or satellite map. What has changed since the 1950s and why?

35 | Shopping around - advertising local businesses

ACTIVITIES

**READ and EXPLAIN – Advertising in and around the theatre**

- Explain that the Hippodrome was a financial business and needed to raise revenue to pay its bills, its performers, staff and owner managers. In addition to ticket sales and revenue from refreshments and cigarettes, advertising was a money earner.

- Explain that the image on the screen is a theatre programme. How much space is devoted to adverts compared to space used to detail the show?

- Talk about individual designs of adverts. Look at use of language and different fonts, lack of images and linear adverts between columns and around the edges.

- Which adverts have connections to the theatre?

- There are many other examples in the Resources Folder [Adverts].

- Working in groups, give each a programme and ask children to cut them into separate adverts and then group them according to what they sell. How many businesses sell food, flowers and fruit; fashionable clothes and jewellery; furniture, wallpaper or carpet cleaning services; or walking sticks and gramophones? What does this information tell them about people's lives at the time?

- Extend by asking children to find businesses on the 1915 map. Can they find the streets of other businesses advertised in the programme/s in the map?

36 | Design a safety curtain

ACTIVITIES

- Explain the function of a safety curtain. It's sometimes called the 'iron' and was introduced to seal the stage area from the auditorium to prevent fire spreading. The high open space above the stage would also act like a chimney drawing air forwards and upwards,
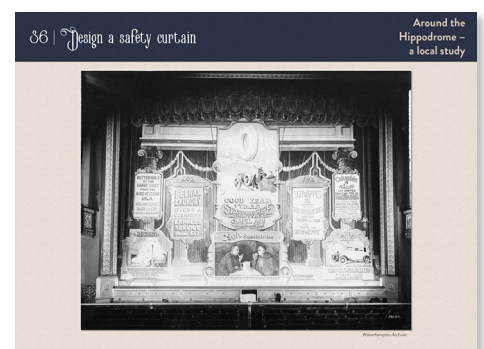
fuelling any fire in the auditorium. Owing to the high amount of timber and other combustible material, there had been many fires in the past, destroying theatres, often with loss of life.

- Why has this theatre put adverts on its curtain instead of pictures?

- What are they advertising?

- Look at their different graphic styles and typography. How do they compare to similar adverts today?

- Create a similar safety curtain by asking children to use cut-outs from old Hippodrome programmes in the Resources Folder [Programmes]. Embellish the content of each with elaborate borders.

PRACTICAL ACTIVITY

Children work individually, in pairs or groups to design a safety curtain. Themes could be:

- 'Around Darlington', using old and recent photographs to showcase the town today to visitors

- 'Past pantomimes', using collages and cut-outs from past posters

- 'Pepi and past performers', to portray the diversity of 'variety' talent that came to the Hippodrome.

37 | Postcard from the past

ACTIVITIES

- Explain that this is an early postcard of the Hippodrome. Postcards like this were produced as souvenirs of places, long before cameras were affordable. People would buy them to share with friends and families, writing messages on the reverse. Compare with how we share images and experiences through social media today.

- Ask children to imagine that they are a performer engaged for a week at the Hippodrome who is sending a message to his/her family.

- Talk about what they might say about their arrival at Darlington; their first impressions of the town; what the theatre is like and the streets round about; where they might have stayed; and how they might have occupied their time when not in the theatre. Use this discussion to summarise what children have learned about the area around the theatre from all activities in this section.

- Provide a frame for children to write their postcard. Rehearse what children might want to say before constructing a written draft.

- You'll find a copy of the postcard's reverse in Resources Folder [Cartoons and templates].