



Tree rings

A tree stump provides a visual record of its life. You can reveal this by polishing the cut surface using rough paper initially, then moving onto finer sandpaper. If it is a large stump, you may want to polish a sector of about 45°.

Your pupils will see rings become visible, one for each year the tree has lived. They can work out how old the tree is by counting rings from the outside to the middle, youngest to oldest. Your pupils can relate historical dates from your school or local area that have occurred during the life of the tree. Why not mark these interesting points with labels?

Not every school will be lucky enough to have a tree stump but there are other ways to enjoy looking at tree rings.

Trees are regularly cut down in most parts of the country for one reason or another. Look around your local area to see if there are areas of woodland or forest. You may be in the middle of a town or city but it would be rare if there were no parks near you.

You could find out who manages these woods, forests or parks and ask them for help.

Get the children to write letters to ask if they will provide you with a section of the trunk of an old tree, letting them know why they want it. Ask them to polish the surface for you, as they will have access to power sanders to speed up the process. The children can then use this to study the ring structure and make historical connections.

You can add a layer of clear varnish over the labelled surface if you wish to keep this historical record for longer.

