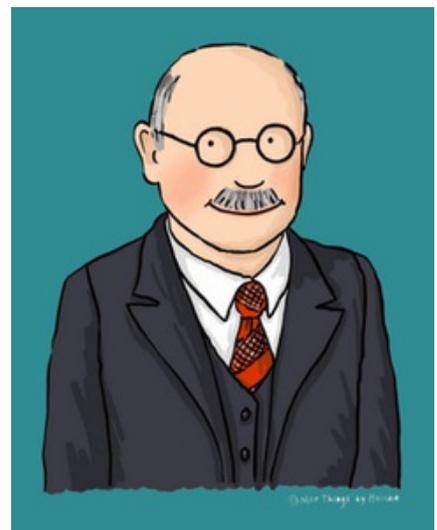
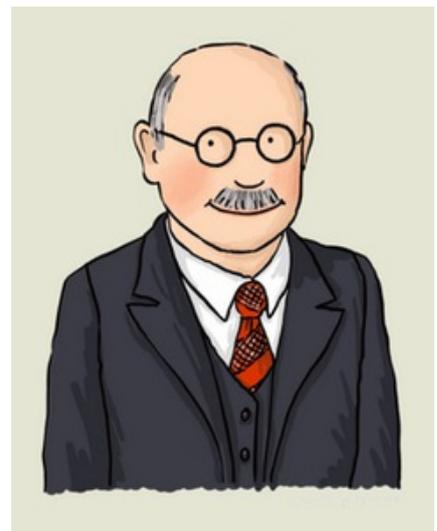


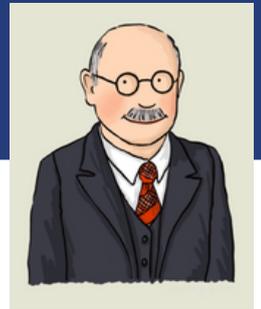
# Brick & Concrete

## Sir John Laing – his life & leadership

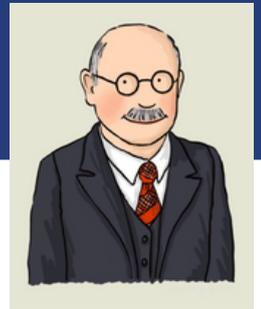
### A resource for schools

### Key Stage 1, 2 & 3+

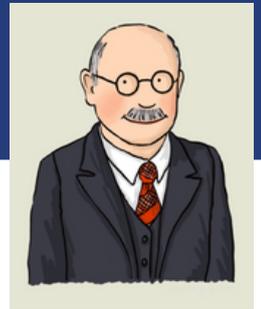




- An introduction – Sir John Laing – a much-needed role model?
- Project. Pack. Purpose.
- John Laing resource disclaimer
- Sir John Laing – An overview
- Learning objectives
- Using this resource – Colour key for Key Stages
- Teaser poster for classroom or corridor
- John Laing facts – Any Key Stage
- John Laing timeline – Key Stage 2
- Stories – What happened next? – Key Stage 1
- Stories – What happened next? – Key Stage 2
- Dramas – What happened next? – Key Stage 2
- Cathedral design competition poster – Any Key Stage
- Prayer space – Coventry cathedral – A prayer/reflection space – Key Stage 1
- Prayer space – Coventry cathedral – A prayer/reflection space – Upper Key Stage 2 & Key Stage 3+
- Life journey activity day – Key Stage 1
- Life journey activity day – Key Stage 2
- Discussion questions – Key Stage 1
- Discussion questions – Key Stage 2
- Quotations – Key Stage 1 and Lower Key Stage 2
- Quotations – Upper Key Stage 2 & Key Stage 3+
- Collective worship – The two builders – Key Stage 1
- Collective worship – The building of Solomon’s temple – Key Stage 2
- Collective worship – Nehemiah – Key Stage 3+
- Acts of kindness – Key Stage 1
- Acts of kindness – Key Stage 2
- A good leader – Upper Key Stage 2 & Key Stage 3+



- What is success in life? – Upper Key Stage 2 & Key Stage 3+
- Values – Upper Key Stage 2 & Key Stage 3+
- Blue sky thinking – Any Key Stage
- Brick & concrete letter – Key Stage 2
- Wallet & writing (Programme for Life) – Any Key Stage
- A blue plaque – Upper Key Stage 2 & Key Stage 3+
- John Laing – A statue – Key Stage 2
- Engaging plenary ideas – Key Stage 2
- Engaging plenary ideas – Key Stage 3+
- Review sheet – Upper Key Stage 2 & Key Stage 3+
- Exit tickets – Upper Key Stage 2 & Key Stage 3+
- Pictures for display – *this document has several pictures and photographs used throughout the resource that you may find useful to use for displays: Drawing of John Laing on various coloured backgrounds, John Laing blue plaque, Blank blue plaque, Photos of John Laing statue and Photo of John Laing letter*
- Acknowledgements
- Additional Resources



## Sir John Laing – a much-needed role model?

### Monkey See Monkey Do

*“Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith” Hebrews 13.7 (NIV)*

Bonnie Tyler is still holding out for one, while Bowie claims we can be heroes - just for one day. We all love a hero. Even as adults, we are often mesmerised by celluloid or sporting heroes.

In recent years we have endured scandals about famous entertainers, store owners, newsreaders, sportsmen, clergy, authors, monks, dancers, police, princes, presidents and more.

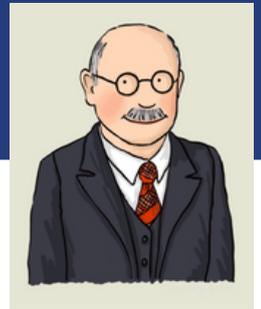
Social media, and the media in general, relishes the making and then breaking of a hero – both stories sell. The rise and fall of heroes is easy to engineer in these days of phone tapping, trolling, investigative journalism and the public interest argument. And while people guard their own mental health they often display a disregard for the mental health of others, as they post vicious criticism and abuse to their fallen heroes.

This leaves us, our children and our young people with several questions to grapple with:

- Does fame/constant adoration corrupt, and absolute adoration corrupts absolutely?
- Does ‘Joe Public’ bear any responsibility in creating this celebrity culture?
- What are young peoples’ criteria for picking a role model or hero?
- Do we equip them to recognise good characteristics?
- What values do our young people aspire to or articulate?
- Are heroes and role models different?
- Are we introducing our young people to stories about good role models in an accessible and exciting way?
- Are we exploring with young people the role of common humanity, kindness, forgiveness, justice, second chances, responsibility and empathy?

This matters because negative influencers, heroes or role models have a staggering impact on the lives of young people, shaping the way they behave, what they believe and how they interact - with studies showing that young people with positive role models have better self-esteem, better academic performance, and are less likely to engage in unsafe behaviours.

*‘Since it is so likely that children will meet cruel enemies, let them at least have heard of brave knights and heroic courage.’ C S Lewis*



The tone of voice our children and young people hear, the behaviours they observe, the values they absorb have a significant effect. Role models need to demonstrate what it looks like to live with honour, purpose, morality, civility, authenticity, wisdom, kindness and respect for others.

For children and young people are watching, listening and copying -- it is 'monkey see monkey do'. And in an era when boys, for example, are more likely to own a smartphone than live with their father it can be argued there is often a role model gap. We, as educators, need to mind that gap.

It was with such thoughts and questions in my mind that I took up a grant from The Laing Family Trust to produce some educational materials on the life of Christian builder, Sir John Laing. At first glance he may seem an unlikely hero, but he is a wonderful role model.

While our young people need to hear inspiring tales of courage and adventure, the majority of us will be called to live our day to day lives in relative obscurity. We sometimes need to be reminded how to do that. John Laing's path was an 'everyday' one in many ways, but his servant-style leadership offers a different kind of role model to the ones often presented. His humanity means that he couldn't live a perfect life, but he did live an extraordinary one. His was an ordinary life lived responsibly, with intent, resolve, humility, strength, thanksgiving, contentment, enthusiasm, empathy, compassion, kindness, challenge, resilience, great generosity and hard work.

Perhaps there is little capacity in the school curriculum for stories that illustrate and promote timeless values, but I believe space should be made. Many children and young people are searching for purpose, direction and stability. They need us to advocate for them.

I offer you the life story of Sir John Laing.

# Project. Pack. Purpose.



The pack is designed largely for use in RE lessons and offers an example of a leader of industry who put his Christian faith into action. Aspects of the pack could be of use in PSHE lessons and perhaps encourage links between RE and Design Technology. In addition there are suggestions for collective worship and ideas for activity days based around Laing's life.

We have attempted to offer some ideas at Key Stages 1, 2 and 3+. Obviously teachers can judge which ideas are most suitable for their age groups and particularly at lower and upper Key Stages, where overlap might occur.

Young people today value authenticity; the life of Sir John Laing offers a real-life example of a man whose faith or beliefs were implemented. He put his words and faith into action to make a difference to the life of others. Laing had a role model and became one.

Many areas in Sir John Laing's life lend themselves to an examination of how his faith affected how he lived and conducted himself.

For example:

- How did John Laing handle disappointment?
- What was John Laing's 'Programme for Life'?
- How did the Christian owner of a multi-million-pound company let his faith affect how he treated his employees?
- What was John Laing the first person to be asked to do in 300 years?
- How would you design or build a cathedral?
- How did John, a rich man, end up with only £316 in his bank account?

Instances from John Laing's life are used as starting points/connections for examining similar experiences in the life of the pupils.

For example:

- To encourage pupils to fulfil their own potential
- To challenge them to care for others
- To examine what generosity means
- To offer an opportunity to examine their own values
- To provide a space to understand the difference faith can make
- To be the impetus to think about their own future
- To examine his leadership style

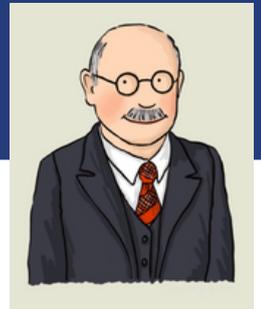
# Disclaimer

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# Sir John Laing - An Overview



**Sir John Laing (1879 - 1978) - Christian, entrepreneur, and philanthropist.**

***“In a materialistic society, he was a man who gained glittering prizes and refused the glitter.”***

***- Roy Coad, author of Laing***

John Laing joined his father’s building company aged 14. He inherited the business in the early 1900s. The firm saw incredible growth under John Laing - he expanded the business from a local building firm into a multi-million-pound international enterprise. He proved to be an effective and compassionate leader, who lived his life with integrity.

Sir John was a Christian who believed in living life abundantly (John 10.10) and in the service of others. He was extremely generous with his money and time, and offers a tremendous model of leadership. Success in business is often measured by profit, but we can measure Laing’s success in service as well.

He made a fortune but lived a simple lifestyle. He was a philanthropist who gave away his fortune but never sought to control the causes he donated to. It will never be known how much he gave away, as he gave anonymously. He gave almost 40% of his shareholding in the business to a charitable foundation and left less than £400 when he died. “He was a man who gained glittering prizes and refused the glitter.” Through his charitable trusts, he gave away around £500 million in today’s money.

His faith was also demonstrated by the way he treated and nurtured his staff. He was ahead of his time in offering paid holidays, a company pension, employing welfare officers, giving bonus payments, having site nurses on large projects and pioneering changes in health and safety, arranging away days to the seaside for the families of the company’s workers and encouraging shareholding by employees.

The Laing Company worked on a variety of national infrastructure projects such as houses to help with the housing crisis after WWII, Mulberry harbours used on D-Day, sewers, the M1, the British Library, the Barbican, Coventry Cathedral, Central London Mosque, bridges, Sizewell B power station, hospitals, schools and the British Library.

Laing remained a family business until 2001 when the construction side was sold after 156 years.

# Resource Learning Objectives



## Brick & Concrete – The Life of Sir John Laing

### Learning Objectives:

- To provide an example of a life well lived.
- To learn about Sir John Laing - to investigate his life story and the impact he made.
- To learn from the life story of Sir John Laing – to explore and identify his leadership skills, the importance of his faith and Christian values, his hard work and commitment, to examine how to overcome challenges, examine success and to reflect on the significance of serving others.
- To provide the opportunity to reflect upon and to understand the skills required to lead others well.
- To explore what to look for in a good role model.
- To examine how pupils can be positive role models in their schools, sports teams or communities.
- To encourage questions about, and to reflect on, life.



# Using this Resource



The worksheets and teachers' documents in this resource are colour coded according to Key Stage. Just check the John Laing image in the top right hand corner! A coloured strip below the image indicates that the document spans across Key Stages.

Teachers' documents are differentiated from pupil worksheets by the word 'Teacher' written in the footer at the bottom left of the document (see below for example).



**Key Stage 1**



**Key Stage 1 & Lower  
Key Stage 2**



**Key Stage 2**



**Key Stage 3+**



**Upper Key Stage 2 &  
Key Stage 3+**



**Document suitable  
for all Key Stages**



**General information  
document**

**Coming soon to  
a classroom  
near you!**



# John Laing Facts



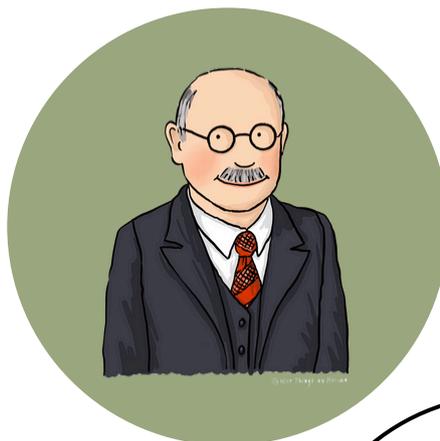
Here are some quick, key facts about Sit John Laing.

He was born in 1879 in Carlisle, UK.

He was a hardworking, intelligent pupil at school. He left school at 14 years old and became a builder's apprentice at his father's firm.

He built up a multi – million-pound construction firm.

He had a strong Christian faith. The values of his life came from the Bible. He treated his workers well.



His firm built a wide range of buildings such as power stations, a cathedral, churches and houses.

He was ahead of his time with many innovations and was among the first to give holidays with pay and a company pension.

He was knighted by Queen Elizabeth II in 1959.

He was extremely generous. He anonymously gave most of his money away to charities.

He died in 1978, aged 98.

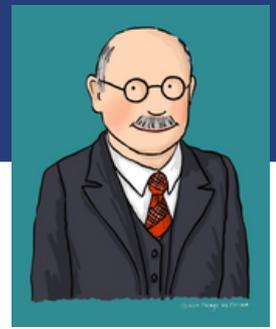


Christians and Sheffield Schools  
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Laing Family Trusts

# Sir John Laing Timeline



You will need a piece of paper and some scissors. Cut out the arrows and place them in the correct order to make a timeline of John Laing's life.

He married Beatrice in 1910

During World War 1 (1914 – 1918)  
The Laing Company built huts for the army, hangars for planes and runways etc

John Laing was born on 24 September in 1879 in Carlisle, UK

In 1978 John Laing died aged 98

In 1959 John Laing became Sir John Laing and he also opened the first section of the M1

During World War II (1939-1945)  
The Laing Company built secret RAF bomber command, aircraft factories, 60 airfields etc

In 1904 his father let him run the building business

He left school at age 15 in 1894

By 1968 The Laing Company had built 100,000 Easiform houses

In 1955 The Laing Company laid the foundations of the new Coventry Cathedral (the cathedral opened in 1962)





## John Laing - The Story of His Life. What do you think happened next?

Here are six short stories from John Laing's life. They can be used as a way of telling his life story to a class. Each story is on its own page.

The stories can be used in different ways:

1. As readings
2. Older pupils in groups can write short dramas using these episodes from John Laing's life.

Remind pupils that they can use direct speech, characters, mime, simple props, a narrator etc.

Act the story out for the class. Ask your audience halfway through: 'what do you think happened next?' then listen to the audience's ideas.

At the end of each act ask the audience a second question: "what have you learnt about John Laing as a person?" and listen to their suggestions.

## WHAT DO YOU THINK HAPPENED NEXT?



## WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNT ABOUT JOHN LAING AS A PERSON?





## Chapter 1

John Laing was born a long time ago in 1879. He was a clever boy and worked hard at school. One day the headmaster came into the room and found him reading, not doing his classwork. He was cross.

**WHAT DO YOU THINK HAPPENED NEXT?**



John was made to stand in front of the whole school, but the headmaster found out he had already finished all his classwork.

John left school when he was 14 years old, although his granny tried to persuade him to stay at school longer. But John wanted to be a builder – the best builder in the country.

**WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNT ABOUT  
JOHN LAING AS A PERSON?**





## Chapter 2

He became a builder at his father's small building company. He had to get up very early to go to work. He had to work long hours and spent many hours in rain, mud, frost and snow. He was often drenched to the skin. One day he was told he wasn't working hard enough.

### WHAT DO YOU THINK HAPPENED NEXT?



John worked harder. One day he had a brick laying competition with another young builder. They had 4 other workers bring them bricks and they worked for 9 hours, using 4000 bricks!

During his years as trainee builder John saw that builders worked long hours, cold, up to their ears in mud and soaked to the skin.

### WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNT ABOUT JOHN LAING AS A PERSON?





## Chapter 3

After a few years his father retired, and John became the boss. He was kind to his workers – he understood how hard they worked. He took them on trips to the seaside and gave them paid holidays. However, he worked hard and expected them to too.

He took over the firm from his father and started to take on bigger projects.

One of his first big jobs did not go well. The weather was terrible, the site flooded. There was quicksand and sometimes workers had to be pulled from it leaving their boots behind. John was very worried and often could not sleep.

## WHAT DO YOU THINK HAPPENED NEXT?



John went for a walk and prayed to God, “I am sorry that I have worried my parents. Please help me and from now on I will run the company differently. Amen.”

His troubles were sorted out. John wrote down how he would live from then on.

1. Being a Christian would be the most important thing in his life.
2. He would enjoy life and help others to enjoy their lives.
3. He would live on a small amount of money and give the rest away to his church, people in need or charities.

He called this plan his Programme for Life. He followed it for the rest of his life.

## WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNT ABOUT JOHN LAING AS A PERSON?





## Chapter 4

One lunchtime John Laing was due to visit a building site. The staff in the office made sure there was a tablecloth and some tasty food for him to eat.

Meanwhile the builders were eating in a cold, building with the rain leaking through the roof and the food certainly could not be described as tasty. In fact the men eating it complained, "I bet the boss isn't eating this rubbish."

They didn't know there was a man in the corner eating and listening to them.

## WHAT DO YOU THINK HAPPENED NEXT?



The man in the corner was John Laing, the boss! He left and went to his meeting in the office. He did not eat the tasty lunch, saying he had already eaten with the men in the canteen. Soon the leak in the roof was fixed and food for the men in the canteen improved.

## WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNT ABOUT JOHN LAING AS A PERSON?





## Chapter 5

When John Laing started work in the building industry all the heavy lifting was done by horses and carts. As time went on the Laing Company started to use heavy machinery.

One day John was looking out of the window of an office. He started watching a man working with his lorry. John left his office and went towards the man driving the lorry.

**WHAT DO YOU THINK HAPPENED NEXT?**



Laing said, 'I like the careful way you look after that lorry of yours – would you like a job with me?'

The man accepted John's job offer. He worked for The Laing Company for the rest of his life. John would often find him and have a quick chat with him.

**WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNT ABOUT JOHN LAING AS A PERSON?**





## Chapter 6

During World War II, Coventry cathedral was largely destroyed. A new cathedral was needed.

Basil Spence was the architect who won a competition to design the new cathedral. Laing's was the building company who were chosen to build it.

Coventry Cathedral was the first cathedral to be built for 300 years. Laing said it was a building that needed to last for 1000 years. He wrote to each employee to ask them to do their very best work.

It turned out to be a difficult job. They found a pit with lots of skeletons and bones. The weather was awful and the men working for Laing had to use fires to try to keep warm.

## WHAT DO YOU THINK HAPPENED NEXT?



The Laing Company built the new cathedral on time. The company were praised – they were pleasant to work with, great craftsmen and they completed the work on time, in spite of all the problems and the very bad weather.

Laing's decided they would cover their costs but wouldn't make any money from building the cathedral. This was kept a secret at the time.

## WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNT ABOUT JOHN LAING AS A PERSON?





## What Happened Next?

Here are six short stories from John Laing's life. They can be used as a way of telling his life story to a class. Each story is on its own page.

The stories can be used in different ways:

1. As readings
2. Older pupils in groups can write short dramas using these episodes from John Laing's life.

Remind pupils that they can use direct speech, characters, mime, simple props, a narrator etc.

Act the story out for the class. Ask your audience halfway through: 'what do you think happened next?' then listen to the audience's ideas.

At the end of each act ask the audience a second question: "what have you learnt about John Laing's character?" and listen to their suggestions.

**Please note:** These six stories are also supplied as dramas with scripts.

## WHAT DO YOU THINK HAPPENED NEXT?



## WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNT ABOUT JOHN LAING'S CHARACTER?





## 1. School

The young John Laing was an intelligent pupil, who worked hard. He often finished his classwork first.

One day the headmaster visited John Laing's classroom. He caught John reading a book under his desk. Two days later the headmaster visited the classroom again and found John reading in class again! He wasn't pleased!

### WHAT DO YOU THINK HAPPENED NEXT?



John Laing was made to appear in front of the whole school for a hearing. John Laing told the Headteacher that he had completed his work and asked, "Sir, why don't you give me some more work to do?"

When the Headmaster found out that John Laing had finished all his work and that was why he was reading during the lesson, he moved John Laing up two classes!

John Laing left school as soon as he could at 14. His grandmother tried to persuade him to stay on at school, but he wanted to work in the building business with his father. John Laing wanted to be the top contractor (builder) in the country!

### WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNT ABOUT JOHN LAING'S CHARACTER?





## 2. Apprenticeship

John Laing's father believed that his son should have three years of practical building training before he eventually took over the business. He thought this would give John Laing a knowledge of what the job of a builder involved (including coping with the British weather!), that it would help him understand people and that it would give him experience of overcoming the difficulties of doing the work.

John Laing worked as an apprentice aged 15 – 18. He had to get up early and work long hours in all weathers. At the start when he wasn't working hard enough, he was told, 'I wouldn't like you to catch cold. Work harder!'

### WHAT DO YOU THINK HAPPENED NEXT?

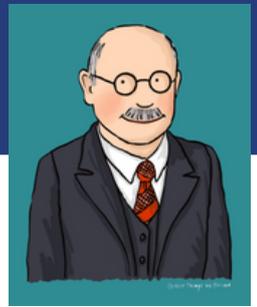


So John doubled his output. He then had a brick laying competition with another apprentice. They had 4 labourers bring them bricks and they worked for 9 hours, using 4000 bricks!

He also learnt from a stone mason called Bob Franklin that it was the quality of work that counted, not just the speed. Bob put a lot of effort into a stone carving, even though it was going to 100 feet off the ground. "Do everything right, otherwise you might become slovenly" said Bob to the young John. It was a lesson he did not forget.

### WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNT ABOUT JOHN LAING'S CHARACTER?





## 3. Sewer

John Laing was a young builder who wanted to be the top building contractor in the country. He took over the firm from his father and started to take on bigger projects. In 1906 he was given the contract to build a sewer. It was not the sort of job the company had tackled before.

The job did not go smoothly. The weather was terrible, the site flooded. There was quicksand and sometimes workers had to be pulled from it leaving their boots behind. Then the owners of the land objected to the work and took Laing from court to court trying to get payment from them. John Laing worked very long hours, was very worried and often could not sleep. He thought the company might go bankrupt.

## WHAT DO YOU THINK HAPPENED NEXT?



John went for a walk and prayed, “I am sorry that I have worried my parents. Please help me and from now on I will run the company differently. Amen.”

The company won the court case and didn’t have to pay compensation. John did not celebrate; he went to his hotel and wrote down how he would live from then on.

1. Being a Christian would be the most important thing in his life.
2. He would enjoy life and help others find enjoyment too.
3. He would live on a small amount of money and give the rest away to his church, people in need or charities.

He called this plan his Programme for Life. He followed it for the rest of his life.

## WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNT ABOUT JOHN LAING'S CHARACTER?





## 4. Canteen

John Laing often visited building sites to check up on the progress of a building project and the standard of the work.

One lunchtime John Laing was due to visit a site. The staff in the office made sure there was a tablecloth and some tasty food for him to eat.

Meanwhile the builders were eating in a cold, building with the rain leaking through the roof and the food certainly could not be described as tasty. In fact the men eating it complained, "I bet the boss isn't eating this rubbish."

They were unaware that there was a quiet man in the corner eating listening to their conversation.

## WHAT DO YOU THINK HAPPENED NEXT?



The quiet man in the corner was John Laing, the boss! He left the canteen and went to his meeting in the office. He refused the tasty lunch, saying he had already eaten with the men in the canteen.

The only sign that the man in the canteen was John Laing was that the leak in the roof was fixed and food for the men in the canteen improved.

## WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNT ABOUT JOHN LAING'S CHARACTER?





## 5. Lorry

When John Laing started work in the building industry all the heavy lifting was done by horses and carts. As time went on the Laing Company started to use heavy machinery.

One day John Laing was looking out of the window of a company office. He started watching a man working with his lorry on a job nearby. John Laing left his office and approached the man driving the lorry. The man's name was Neville Reece.

## WHAT DO YOU THINK HAPPENED NEXT?



Laing said to Reece, "I like the careful way you look after that lorry of yours – would you like a job with me?"

Neville Reece accepted John Laing's job offer. He worked for The Laing Company for the rest of his life and became one of the firm's most trusted employees. Laing would seek Reece out to have a quick chat with him whenever he visited a site where he was working.

Neville Reece's wife commented, "The Laing Company were everything to him."

## WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNT ABOUT JOHN LAING'S CHARACTER?





## 6. Cathedral

On 14-15 November 1940, during World War II, Coventry was bombed by the Germans. The bombing lasted 10 hours and 554 people were killed. 865 were seriously injured. A third of the city's houses were made uninhabitable. The cathedral was hit and largely destroyed.

Basil Spence was the architect who won a competition to design the new cathedral. Laing's was the building company who were chosen to build it.

Coventry Cathedral was the first cathedral to be built for 300 years. Laing said it was a building that needed to last for 1000 years. He wrote to each employee to ask them to do their very best work.

It turned out to be a difficult job. They found a plague pit with lots of skeletons and bones. The weather was really awful and the men working for Laing had to use braziers (fires) and every heating device possible in order to keep the men warm.

## WHAT DO YOU THINK HAPPENED NEXT?

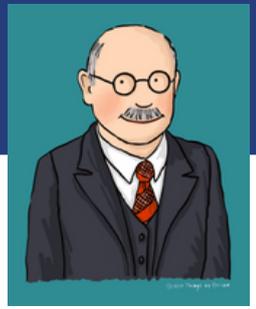


The Laing Company built the new cathedral on time. The company were praised – they were pleasant to work with, they were business like, superb craftsmen and they completed the work on time, in spite of all the problems and the bad weather.

Laing's decided they would cover their costs but wouldn't make a profit from building the cathedral. This was kept a secret at the time.

## WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNT ABOUT JOHN LAING'S CHARACTER?





## What Happened Next?

Here are six short dramas. They can be used as a way of telling John Laing's life story to a class.

Each drama can be acted out by a group of five pupils. Each script is on its own page. Pupils can mime parts of the stories and use simple props.

The narrator needs to ask the audience halfway through, 'what do you think happened next?' before the drama continues.

At the end of the performance ask the audience a second question, "what have you learnt about John Laing's character or his values?" Let the audience offer suggestions.

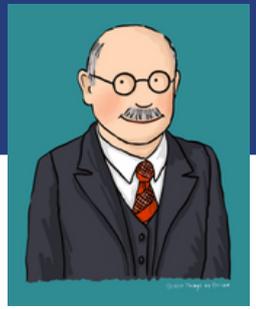
**Please note:** These six episodes are also supplied as readings that older pupils can convert into dramas for themselves.

## WHAT DO YOU THINK HAPPENED NEXT?



## WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNT ABOUT JOHN LAING'S CHARACTER?





## 1. School

**Narrator:** The young John Laing was an intelligent pupil, who worked hard. He often finished his classwork first. One day the headmaster visited John Laing's classroom.

*John Laing is sitting reading a book. Other pupils are working.*

**Headmaster:** What are you doing boy? Why aren't you working?

**Narrator:** Two days later the headmaster visited the classroom again...

*John Laing is sitting reading a book.*

**Headmaster:** You are doing it again boy!

**Narrator:** asks the audience (could use a sign):

## WHAT DO YOU THINK HAPPENED NEXT?



**Narrator:** John Laing had to appear in front of the whole school for a hearing.

**Headmaster:** Laing - why did I twice find you reading in class and not doing your work?

**John Laing:** Sir, I had completed my work. Why don't you give me some more work to do?

**Headmaster:** Oh. (*thinks*) Laing, I am going to move you up two classes!

**Narrator:** Some time later, John had a conversation with his grandmother.

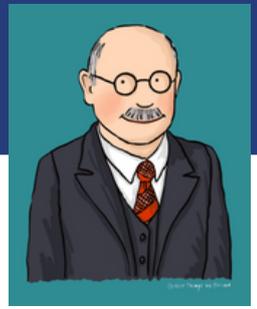
**John Laing:** I am going to leave school.

**Granny:** John please stay at school. You are doing so well.

**John Laing:** Sorry Granny, I have decided. I am going to be a builder. One day I will be the top contractor in the whole country!

## WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNT ABOUT JOHN LAING'S CHARACTER?





## 2. Apprenticeship

**Narrator:** John Laing's father believed that his son should have three years of practical building training before he eventually took over the business. John Laing worked as an apprentice aged 15 – 18.

**John Laing's father:** Son, working as a builder will give you a knowledge of what the job of a builder involves. You'll learn to cope with the British weather! It will help you understand people and give you experience of overcoming the difficulties of doing the work.

**John Laing:** It isn't even light yet and it is throwing it down with rain. Off to work I go.

**Narrator:** Once, when he wasn't working hard enough...

**Site Manager:** Laing, 'I wouldn't like you to catch cold.' Work harder!

### WHAT DO YOU THINK HAPPENED NEXT?



**Narrator:** Laing doubled his output. He even had a brick laying competition with another apprentice. They had 4 labourers bring them bricks and they worked for 9 hours, using 4000 bricks!

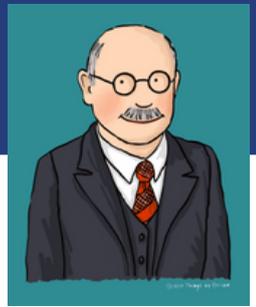
**John Laing:** Why are you carving that so carefully – it is going 100 feet up. No one will see it.

**Bob Franklin:** Do everything right. If I start being slovenly it might infect all my work.

**Narrator:** These were lessons John did not forget. John Laing developed a deep respect for the builders working on the sites. He often reminded the people working for him in warm offices that the builders were often working long hours and were cold, up to their ears in mud and soaked to the skin. He knew they were the company's greatest asset.

### WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNT ABOUT JOHN LAING'S CHARACTER?





## 3. Sewer

**John Laing's father:** Son it is time for you to take over the building firm I have started. I am going to retire.

**John Laing:** I won't let you down, father.

**John Laing:** *(To his workers)* We are going to take on the contract to build a sewer. It is not the sort of job we have tackled before.

**Narrator:** Things did not go smoothly.

**Worker 1:** This weather is terrible! The site is flooded!

**Worker 2:** Help! The quicksand is swallowing me up! Save my boots!

**Narrator:** Then, the owners of the land objected to the work and took Laing from court to court trying to get payment from him. John Laing worked very long hours, was very worried and often could not sleep. He thought the company might go bankrupt.

## WHAT DO YOU THINK HAPPENED NEXT?



**John Laing:** *(Praying)* I am sorry that I have worried my parents. Please help me and from now on I will run the company differently. Amen.

**Narrator:** The company won the court case.

**John Laing:** I'm not going to celebrate yet...I need to think...

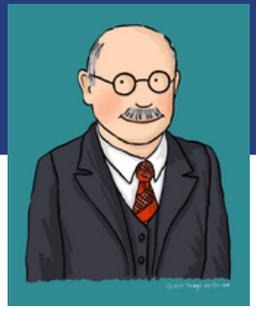
**Narrator:** John went to his hotel room and wrote down how he would live.

**John Laing:** *(Writing)* 1. Being a Christian will be the most important thing in my life. 2. I will enjoy life and help others find enjoyment. 3. I will live on a small amount of money and give the rest away to my church or people in need or charities.

**Narrator:** John Laing called this plan his 'Programme for Life'. He followed it for the rest of his life.

## WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNT ABOUT JOHN LAING'S CHARACTER?





## 4. Canteen

**Narrator:** John Laing often visited building sites to check up on the progress of a building project and the standard of the work. One lunchtime John Laing was due to visit a building site.

**Office Staff 1:** The boss is visiting at lunchtime tomorrow. I will order some tasty food for him to eat.

**Office Staff 2:** I will bring in a nice tablecloth and some flowers.

**Narrator:** Meanwhile the builders were eating in a cold, building with the rain leaking through a hole in the roof and the food certainly could not be described as tasty. It was not at all tasty.

**Builder:** “I bet the boss isn’t eating this rubbish.”

**Narrator:** They were unaware that there was a man in a raincoat in the corner eating quietly and listening to their conversation.

### WHAT DO YOU THINK HAPPENED NEXT?



**Narrator:** The man in the raincoat was John Laing, the boss! He left the canteen and went to his meeting in the office.

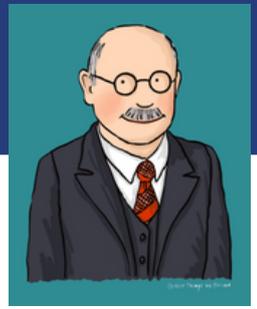
**Office Staff 1:** We have a lovely lunch for you.

**John Laing:** No thank you. I have already eaten in the canteen with the men.

**Narrator:** The only sign that the man in the raincoat in the canteen was John Laing was that the leak was fixed and food for the men in the canteen improved.

### WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNT ABOUT JOHN LAING'S CHARACTER?





## 5. Lorry

**Narrator:** When John Laing started work in the building industry all the heavy lifting was done by horses and carts. As time went on the Laing Company started to use heavy machinery. One day John Laing was looking out of the window of a company office.

**John Laing:** Can you see that man and his lorry?

**Employee:** Yes, I see him. He is taking great care, isn't he?

**Narrator:** John Laing left his office and approached the man driving the lorry.

**John Laing:** My name is John Laing. What is your name?

**Neville Reece:** (*nervously*) My name is Neville Reece.

### WHAT DO YOU THINK HAPPENED NEXT?



**John Laing:** I like the careful way you look after that lorry of yours – would you like a job with me?

**Neville Reece:** With the Laing Company? Yes please!

**Narrator:** He became one of the firm's most trusted employees. Laing would seek Reece out to have a quick chat with him whenever he visited a site where he was working.

**Neville Reece's wife:** My husband, Neville Reece worked for The Laing Company for the rest of his life. The Laing Company was everything to him.

### WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNT ABOUT JOHN LAING'S CHARACTER?





## 6. Cathedral

**Narrator:** On 14th - 15th November 1940, during World War II, Coventry was bombed by the Germans. The bombing lasted 10 hours and 554 people were killed. 865 were seriously injured. A third of the city's houses were made uninhabitable. The cathedral was hit and largely destroyed.

**Basil Spence:** I am Basil Spence - the architect who won a competition to design a new cathedral. Coventry Cathedral is the first cathedral to be built for 300 years! It is a dream come true for me!

**John Laing:** I am John Laing. The Laing Company was the building company who were chosen to build the new cathedral! It is a building that needs to last for at least a thousand years. I am delighted to do this work for God. I have written to each employee to ask them to do their very best.

**Narrator:** It turned out to be a difficult job.

**Builder 1:** I've found a plague pit with lots of skeletons and bones.

**Builder 2:** This weather is really awful!

**Narrator:** The men building the cathedral had to use braziers (fires) and every heating device possible in order to keep the men warm.

**WHAT DO YOU THINK HAPPENED NEXT?**



**Narrator:** The Laing Company were seen as a great success – they were pleasant to work with, they were businesslike, superb craftsmen and they completed the work on time, in spite of all the problems and the bad weather.

**John Laing:** We decided we would cover our costs but wouldn't make a profit from building the cathedral. Don't tell anyone though.

**WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNT ABOUT JOHN LAING'S CHARACTER?**



# CATHEDRAL COMPETITION

Coventry Cathedral was bombed during World War II and a competition was held to design a new cathedral. A chance like that does not come along very often!

**THIS IS YOUR CHANCE  
TO DESIGN OR BUILD A CATHEDRAL!**



You can submit hand drawn plans,  
a painting, a collage,  
a model made of any materials,  
a computer aided design...

Add a short description/explanation alongside your design.

**Closing date:**

**PRIZE:**



## Coventry Cathedral

### A Prayer Space / Reflection Area for Schools

**Aim:** The aim of this space is to enable children of all faiths and none, to explore life's questions, experiences, spirituality, and faith in a safe, creative, reflective and interactive way.

The area is a safe space for all, where responses are anonymous and correct spelling does not matter, and nothing is marked.

**Set up:** A room full of stations or activities to help pupils to reflect on life. Pupil responses are often displayed on ribbons, pegged on strings, on fake trees or bunting. Fairy lights, tents, cushions, fake candles etc can be used as decoration and to make it an inviting and inspirational experience.

Each activity station needs an explanatory card and some resources. You can choose to do all, some or just a few of the activities listed below in any order. You could have one activity in a corner of the classroom, corridor or do the activities together as a class.

At Key Stage 1 you may need volunteers to help the pupils at each station. Get a group of church or community volunteers, parents/grandparents to help set up the room and monitor the space. Find out more about prayer spaces in schools and look at photographs to inspire you at [www.prayerspacesinschools.com/about-us/](http://www.prayerspacesinschools.com/about-us/).

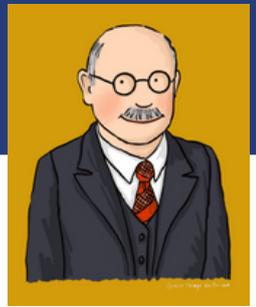
Pupils will need some simple background facts about Coventry Cathedral (see below) before visiting the activities and be given a few instructions e.g. responses are anonymous.

**Coventry Cathedral Background:** During World War II, Coventry Cathedral was largely destroyed.

It was decided a new cathedral should be built. A competition was held to design it. A man called Basil Spence won the competition and his design was chosen.

John Laing's building company built the new cathedral.

It was the first cathedral to be built for 300 years!



## 1. A Kinder World

### Introduction

In 1940, the day after the old Coventry cathedral was so badly damaged a man called Rev. Richard Howard stood in the rubble. He said, “We are going to try to make a kinder world.”



### Activity

How could we ‘try to make a kinder world’ today?

Write or draw your idea on the torn-up cardboard and add it to the pile of rubble.

### Equipment

Some rubble or bricks (doesn't have to be a lot), battery fairy lights in between the rubble, pieces of torn up cardboard that can be written on, pens, photos of the destroyed cathedral, carpet squares or cushions in circle around the rubble.

## 2. Forgiving

### Introduction

The day after the old cathedral was so badly damaged a man called Rev. Richard Howard stood in the rubble. He said, “We are trying to banish all thoughts of revenge.” He meant we are going to forgive the people who did this.



He had 'Father Forgive' written on the burnt wall behind the altar of the old cathedral. A prayer for forgiveness is still said every Friday in the cathedral.

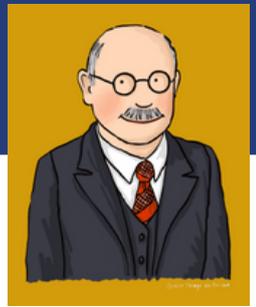
Coventry Cathedral has since become a centre for peace and forgiveness in our world.

### Activity

Is there anyone you need to forgive? Ask pupils to spend a few, quiet moments thinking of them and to place a glass pebble gently into the bowl of water when they are ready. They might like to say quietly, “May I be kind and forgiving to others” as you place your pebble.

### Equipment

A bowl of water, some glass pebbles, a basket of “May I be kind and forgiving to others” on strips of card to take away if pupils wish to.



### 3. An impossible dream?

#### Introduction

In 1944 Basil Spence was a soldier on a beach in France. Just before he fell asleep an army friend asked him what he would like to do with his life. Basil Spence said, "I want to build a cathedral." No cathedral had been built for 300 years. It seemed an impossible dream.



#### Activity

What is your dream for your life? What do you hope to do?

Make a flag.

Write or draw your dream on your flag and stick it in the sand.

#### Equipment

A builder's tray of play sand, flags (lollipop sticks, precut paper, Sellotape in dispenser) pens.

### 4. Inspiration

#### Introduction

A competition was held to design a new cathedral for Coventry.



The rules of the competition to design the new cathedral stated that "The cathedral is to speak to us and to generations to come of the majesty, the Eternity and the Glory of God."

Basil Spence entered the competition. He felt his design for a new cathedral was inspired by his faith in God and in the ceiling in the Nave was inspired by the magnified eye of a fly!

#### Activity

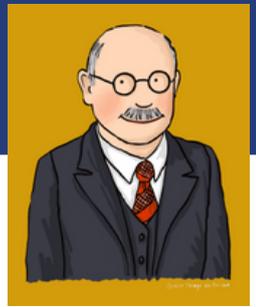
Look at some photos of the magnified eye of a fly. Look at (or photos of) ceiling of the nave.

What or who inspires you? It maybe someone you want to be like. Perhaps they are very good at something. It might be someone famous you admire or someone who is kind to you. It might be a family member or a teacher.

Write or draw your answer on a star. Hang it on the tree.

#### Equipment

Pens, a twig tree, fairy lights, star shapes, ribbons, hole puncher. pictures of the eye of a fly, Coventry cathedral's stained glass photos, light up stars as decorations.



## 5. Good News!

### Introduction

Basil Spence gave his design in for the cathedral on the last day of the competition, he even thought about not handing it in. He did not expect to win. He said, "I can say with truth I did not have the faintest hope of success." He got a phone call telling him he had won when he was in a meeting. He was so shocked the other people in the meeting thought he had received bad news!

He stammered, "It is the best news I have ever had. I have won the competition for the new Coventry Cathedral." He later reflected, "My life's wish has been granted."

### Activity

What is the best news you have ever received? Write or draw it on a blank mobile phone shape. Peg it on a ribbon.

### Equipment

Photocopied mobile phone shapes, a clothes rail with ribbons hanging off it, pegs, pens.



## 6. Glory

### Introduction

The rules of the competition to design the new cathedral stated that "the cathedral is to speak to us and to future generations of the kingship, the everlasting nature of God and of His glory".

### Activity

Look around the cathedral or at photos of it.

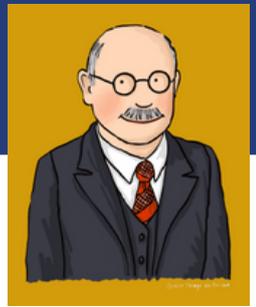
Do you think Basil Spence the architect who designed the building managed to convey the hugeness, the kingship, the wonder and glory of God? Why? How? Where?

Decorate a crown shape. Then write YES on your crown if you think Basil Spence managed to demonstrate the bigness and wonder of God and NO if you think he did not. Put your answer in the YES or NO box/basket.

### Equipment

A 'YES' sparkly bowl/box and a 'NO' plainer box/basket for voting, small crown shapes, pens, crown decorations, gold/silver cloth for the table, battery operated candles etc.





## 7. Safe and Happy



### Activity

The new cathedral was finished in 1962.

Look around the cathedral or look at photographs of it. Can you describe it? How does it make you feel? What do you like best about it?

Sit and think about your life. What makes you feel safe and happy? A person? A place? An activity? A pet? A friend? Something else?

Draw or write what makes you feel safe and happy on a thank you card. Hang your card on the tree.

### Equipment

Create a pleasant small space – perhaps battery-operated fairy lights/candles, cushions, soft music, a plant/flowers etc, thank you cards, pens, a twig tree.

## 8. Giving



### Introduction

The Laing building company felt honoured to be chosen to build the new Coventry cathedral. It was the first Cathedral to be built for 300 years. John Laing said it was a building that needed to last for 1000 years. He wrote to each builder to ask them to do their very best work, for they were building a place of worship. Laing decided to make no money (profit) from building Coventry cathedral, but this was kept secret at the time.

John Laing was a very generous man – he gave most of his money away to help others.

### Activity

How can you be generous? Write down your ideas or what you could give to someone else. It does not have to be money – it could be time, friendship, help, a smile, a kind word, an invitation etc.

Either ask pupils to draw round their hands or have some pre-cut.

Write or draw your ideas on a handshape and place your hand in the offering bowl.

### Equipment

Coloured thin card, scissors, a beautiful bowl/basket, pens/pencils.



## Coventry Cathedral

### A Prayer Space / Reflection Area for Schools

**Aim:** The aim of this space is to enable children/young people, of all faiths and none, to explore life's questions, experiences, spirituality, and faith in a safe, creative, reflective and interactive way.

The area is a safe space for all, where responses are anonymous and correct spelling does not matter and nothing is marked.

**Set up:** A room full of stations or activities to help pupils, in small groups, to reflect on life. Pupil responses are often displayed on ribbons, pegged on strings, on fake trees or bunting. Fairy lights, tents, cushions, fake candles etc. can be used as decoration and to make it an inviting and inspirational experience.

Each activity station needs an explanatory card and some resources. You can choose to do all, some or just a few of the activities listed below, in any order.

Ask a group of church or community volunteers, parents/grandparents or retired teachers to help set up the room and help monitor the space.

Find out more about prayer spaces in schools and look at photographs to inspire you at [www.prayerspacesinschools.com/about-us/](http://www.prayerspacesinschools.com/about-us/).

Pupils will need some simple background facts about Coventry Cathedral (see below) before visiting the activities and need to be given a few instructions e.g. responses are anonymous.

**Coventry Cathedral Background:** On 14th-15th November 1940, during World War II, Coventry was bombed by the Germans. Rev. Richard Howard went on the roof of the cathedral to try to save it but when many bombs fell he had no choice but to retreat to his air raid shelter.

The bombing lasted 10 hours and 554 people were killed. 865 were seriously injured. The old Coventry Cathedral was largely destroyed and a third of the city's houses were made uninhabitable.

Basil Spence was the architect who was chosen to design a new cathedral, after winning a competition. John Laing's building company built the new cathedral.



## 1. A Safe Place

### Introduction

During the bombing of Coventry Cathedral during WWII Rev. Richard Howard bravely went up on the roof of the cathedral to try to save it, but when too many bombs fell, he had no choice but to go to safety in an air raid shelter.

### Activity

Sit quietly and think for a few minutes about what makes you feel safe? A person? A place? An activity? A pet? A friend? Something else?

Write down what makes you feel safe on a thank you card. Peg your card on a ribbon.

### Equipment

Create a pleasant small space – perhaps battery-operated fairy lights/candles, cushions, soft music, a plant/flowers etc, thank you cards, pens, pegs, a clothes rail with ribbons hanging from it.



## 2. A Kinder World

### Introduction

During World War II, Coventry was bombed by the Germans. The cathedral was hit and largely destroyed.

Standing in the rubble the next day Rev. Richard Howard said, “We are going to try to make a kinder world.”

### Activity

How could we try to make a kinder world? Write your response on the torn-up cardboard and add it to the pile of rubble.

### Equipment

Some rubble or bricks with battery operated fairy lights, pieces of torn up cardboard, pens, photos of the bombed cathedral.





## 3. War and Peace



### Introduction

The old Coventry cathedral was bombed and largely destroyed in November 1940, during World War II.

There has never been a year in recorded world history with no wars or conflicts. There are still many wars in today's world.

### Activity

Take a moment to reflect. Then write down your thoughts, prayers, wishes or hopes for world peace on the doves. Attach your doves to the camouflage netting.

### Equipment

Dove shapes, hole puncher, thin ribbon, camouflage netting, pens, flags of the world bunting globe/a map of the world.

## 4. Homelessness



### Introduction

A third of the Coventry's houses were made uninhabitable during the WWII bombing of Coventry.

John Laing's building company built thousands of houses after the war all over the UK, to help rehouse people.

Sadly, many people across the world are homeless today.

### Activity

How would you help people who are homeless or try to solve the crisis?

What message of hope would you send to homeless people?

Write your ideas on the cardboard shelter.

### Equipment

A large cardboard box shelter, felt pens, a blanket or sleeping bag, shopping bag of clothes, takeaway coffee cup.



## 5. Forgiveness

### Introduction

During World War II, Coventry cathedral was bombed. The cathedral was hit and largely destroyed. Standing in the rubble the next day Rev. Richard Howard said, “We are trying to banish all thoughts of revenge.”

He is remembered for encouraging forgiveness and reconciliation. He had 'Father Forgive' written on the burnt wall behind the altar of the old cathedral. A prayer for forgiveness is said every Friday in the cathedral.

Coventry Cathedral has since become a centre for peace, forgiveness and reconciliation in our world.

### Activity

Is there anyone you need to forgive? Spend a few moments thinking of them and place a glass pebble gently into the bowl of water. You might like to say quietly, “May I be kind to others, tender-hearted and forgiving” as you place the pebbles.

### Equipment

A bowl of water, some glass pebbles, “May I be kind to others, tender-hearted and forgiving” on coloured card strips in a basket - to take away, if pupils wish.



## 6. An Impossible Dream?

### Introduction

In 1944 during World War II Basil Spence was dug in near the beaches of Normandy in France. Just before he fell asleep an army friend asked him what his ambition in life was. Basil Spence said, “I want to build a cathedral.”

### Activity

No cathedral had been built for 300 years. It seemed an impossible dream.

Make a flag.

What is your dream? Write it on your flag and stick it in the sand.

### Equipment

A builder's tray of sand, flags (lollipop sticks, Sellotape, paper, scissors) pens.





## 7. Inspiration

### Introduction

The rules of the competition to design the new cathedral stated that “The cathedral is to speak to us and to generations to come of the majesty, the Eternity and the Glory of God.”

Basil Spence felt his design was inspired by his faith in God and a picture of the magnified eye of a fly inspired the ceiling design for the nave. He also passed out in a dentist’s chair and had a dream of his design for the cathedral!

### Activity

What or who inspires you? Write the name of the person/thing on a star. Hang it on the tree.

### Equipment

Pens, a twig tree, fairy lights, star shapes, ribbons, pictures of the eye of a fly, stained glass and other aspects of the cathedral, light up stars.



## 8. Good News!

### Introduction

Basil Spence gave his design in for the cathedral on the last day of the competition, he even thought about not handing it in. He did not expect to win. He said, “I can say with truth I did not have the faintest hope of success.”

He got a phone call telling him he had won when he was in a meeting. He was so shocked the other people in the meeting thought he had received bad news!

He stammered, “It is the best news I have ever had. I have won the competition for the new Coventry Cathedral.” He later reflected, “My life’s wish has been granted.”

### Activity

What is the best news you have ever received? Write it on a piece of newspaper.

### Equipment

Pieces of newspaper, thick felt pens that don’t mark the table, a place to display the responses, Blu Tack.





## 9. Plans

### Introduction

Basil Spence was an architect. He designed Coventry Cathedral and drew detailed plans of the building. The cathedral was to represent trust, faith and hope in the future.



### Activity

What are your plans/hopes for your life? Write them on a piece of paper, roll it up and place it in a hole in the 'wall'.

### Equipment

Pens, paper, life size wooden bricks with holes in e.g. <https://www.play-learn.co.uk/product/50-piece-giant-life-size-bricks/>. Optional: some architect's plans, brick wallpaper for decoration.

## 10. Cruel Comments

### Introduction

Basil Spence's design for Coventry Cathedral was unusual. Some people did not like it. They wrote several letters a day complaining to the newspapers. They sent him abusive, insulting and critical letters. His wife was very cross about them, and she tried to read and destroy the letters before they got to him.



### Activity

What is your advice to people coping with cruel comments in person or on social media? Write it on a phone shape and peg it on the line.

### Equipment

Blank mobile phone card shapes, pens, pegs, a clothesline strung across the room.





## 11. Self Talk

### Introduction

Basil Spence kept saying to himself, “It is going to be built. It is going to be built. It is going to be built” to get himself used to the idea.

In 1955 the foundations were laid by the Laing Company, five years after Basil Spence had won the competition.

The cathedral opened by Queen Elizabeth II in 1962.

### Activity

What phrase could you say to yourself to encourage and reassure yourself in unsure times? Write your phrase on a heart-shaped sticky note and stick it on a mirror.

### Equipment

Pens, a number of mirrors, heart shaped sticky notes.



## 12. Your Best

### Introduction

Coventry Cathedral was the first Cathedral to be built for 300 years.

John Laing was honoured to be the chosen builder. He said it was a building that needed to last for 1000 years.

He wrote to each employee to ask them to do their best work for they were building a place of worship.

### Activity

Think about whether you do your best?

Quietly reflect about situations where you feel you have not done your best?

When you are ready, add a pebble to the cairn (pile of stones). Let go of any regrets you may have.

### Equipment

A few larger stones to start the cairn, some smaller pebbles (they can be oval shaped precut cardboard pebbles) battery lit candles, cushions/beanbags/carpet squares, optional - small pop-up gazebo or garden umbrella.





## 13. Foundations



### Introduction

John Laing knew digging deep foundations for any building is very important. Good foundations give a building its strength.

John Laing also believed that having good beliefs and values were important as the foundations for building a strong and good life. He found his values in his Christian faith.

### Activity

Think about what values and beliefs are important to you. Write them on a lolly stick and plant it in the soil.

### Equipment

Pens, lolly sticks, large pot of soil.

NB. See idea for making values Jenga set elsewhere in this project. These could be used here.

## 14. Difficulties



### Introduction

The Laing Company built the new cathedral. It wasn't always easy. They found a plague pit with lots of skeletons and bones. The weather was awful and Laing had to use every heating device possible in order to keep the men warm and to try to complete the job on time. But The Laing company were seen were pleasant to work with, they were business like, superb craftsmen and they completed the work on time.

### Activity

What might help you to cope well in difficult times? Write your ideas on the flames and add them to the fire.

### Equipment

A circle of stones or a firepit, red card flames, battery run fairy lights or candles, pens.





## 15. Teamwork

### Introduction

Basil Spence and John Laing's building company worked together to design and build Coventry cathedral.

### Activity

What do you think are the values of working with others in teams?  
Write your ideas on a shape. Display the shapes holding hands.

### Equipment

Different coloured people shapes, pens, Blu Tack, wooden art models/figures for decoration.



## 16. Skip

### Introduction

Builders always make a lot of mess and rubble. This was the case when Coventry Cathedral was built by The Laing Company.

Today builders put any rubbish that they want to get rid of into a skip.

### Activity

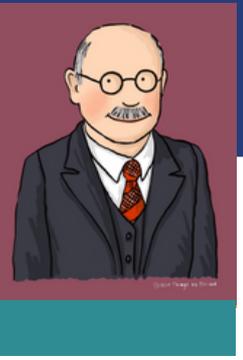
Put on a builder's hat.

What feelings or actions you like to get rid of in your life? (e.g. anger, arguments, anxiety, fear, bullying etc.) Write it on a piece of paper, tear/screw it up and throw it in the 'skip'.

### Equipment

'A skip' (a yellow plastic (toy) box?) or you could use a wheelbarrow, pieces of paper /thin cardboard, pens, hard builder's hats, high viz jackets.





## 17. Generosity

### Introduction

The Laing Company decided to make no profit from building the cathedral, but this was kept secret at the time.

### Activity

How can you be generous? Write down your ideas or what you could give to someone else (it does not have to be money).

Draw round your hand and cut it out.

Write your ideas on a handshape and place your hand in the offering bowl.

### Equipment

A large bowl or basket, pens, thin coloured card, scissors.



## 18. Glory

### Introduction

The rules of the competition to design the new cathedral stated that “The cathedral is to speak to us and to generations to come of the majesty, the Eternity and the Glory of God.”

### Activity

Look around the cathedral or at photos of it. Do you think Basil Spence the architect who designed the building managed to convey the majesty, wonder, vastness, eternity and glory of God? Why? How? Where?

Write your answer – Yes/NO on a crown shape. Decorate the crown. Place your crown in the YES basket if you feel Basil Spence did create a cathedral that speaks of the glory of God or put your crown in the NO box/basket.

### Equipment

A sparkly YES basket/box, a plainer NO box for voting, small crown shapes, pens, materials for decoration, glue sticks.





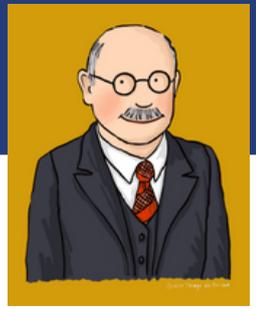
## A discussion & activity day based on the life of John Laing

### Aims

- To give pupils an opportunity to explore the life journey and values of Sir John Laing through discussions and various activities.
- To encourage pupils to reflect on and talk about their own life journey.

### Suggestions

- Choose how many activities you want to do.
- You will need an adult to help at each activity station – you could ask a church for volunteers, a community group, retired teachers parents/grandparents.
- Make each activity table look attractive and interesting if possible.
- Staff, helpers and pupils could dress as builders for the day.
- Have construction opportunities available e.g. Lego, Knex, cardboard.
- In addition, ask a builder into the classroom to answer pupil questions.
- Add an art lesson – pupils produce a portrait of John Laing – use paint, pencil, collage or computer.
- If an activity day/half day is not possible these suggestions could be done as a class.



## Activity 1



**Introduction:** John Laing always knew he wanted to be a builder like his father. John Laing said that if he sold 1000 homes, he hoped to gain 1000 friends, because they would love living in those houses. He made sure they were built well.

**Activity:** Build something out of Lego, Mega Blocks, cardboard etc.

**Discussion:** What job do you want to do when you grow up? Think and talk about why would you like to do that job?

**Activity:** Design a 'business' card for your chosen career.

**You will need:** Construction toys, pens, card.

## Activity 2



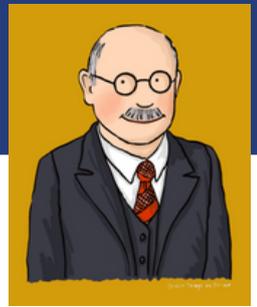
**Introduction:** John Laing lived from 1879 – 1978. He had a plan for his life. He followed his plan and had a long, interesting life full of hard work and fun. He died when he was 98 years old!

**Activity:** Look in the old wallet(s) to find a piece of paper with John's plan on it. (John Laing's Plan for his life: 1. Love God. 2. Enjoy life and help other people enjoy life. 3. Be generous with my money.)

**Discussion:** What do you enjoy about life? How could you help others enjoy life?

**Activity:** Write down your plan for your life and put it in an envelope with your name on. Stamp the date on the envelope. Take it home.

**You will need:** Old wallet(s) copies of John Laing's Programme for Life, pencils, paper, envelopes, date stamp.



## Activity 3

**Introduction:** John Laing built several big community buildings, such as The British Library and Coventry Cathedral.



**Activity:** Look at some photographs of community buildings (where you live and beyond).

**Discussion:** Talk about community buildings and favourites. Why are they important? Should we take care of them? How do you think architects and builders feel when buildings are spoiled?

**Activity:** If you could build or design a community building, what would it be for? (It could be a library, a theatre, a football stadium, a church, a mosque, a hospital, a school, a railway station for something else.)

Pretend you are an architect and draw your design for a community building.

**You will need:** Photographs (or PowerPoint) of local community buildings and some from further away, large sheets of paper (A3?), pens/pencils.

## Activity 4

**Introduction:** One businessman commented on John Laing: “Here comes Laing, happy as usual!” Many people say he was always happy and smiling.



**Activity:** Read Spike Milligan’s short poem ‘A Smile’s Worth’. He believed a smile was a small act of kindness and that everyone smiled more it could change the world!

**Discussion:** What do you think of Spike Milligan’s idea? Who can you smile at today? Talk about what makes you happy?

**Activity:** Look at your face in a mirror. While smiling draw a portrait of your face with a smile on it! Give out smiley face stickers.

**You will need:** A copy of ‘A Smile’s Worth’ by Spike Milligan, some smiley face stickers, paper, pencils, crayons, small mirrors.



## Activity 5



**Introduction:** Everything lovely and beautiful thrilled John Laing. He was especially delighted by nature or creation. He loved the view from his home, watching the birds in the garden, and he always admired a beautiful oak tree.

**Activity:** Have some pictures of common garden birds. Which do you think may have been John Laing's favourites? Learn the names of a few common birds.

**Discussion:** Talk about what you enjoy or find beautiful in nature.

**Activity:** Decorate an oak leaf or a bird shape on both sides and hang it on the tree.

**You will need:** Pictures of common garden birds, photo of an oak tree, pre-cut oak leaves and bird shapes on string loops, felt pens or crayons, a twig tree.

## Activity 6



**Introduction:** John Laing gave hundreds, then thousands of people jobs. He was a good boss; he knew his workers and was kind to them. He paid them when they were on holiday, he took them on trips to the seaside.

John's Christian faith was important to him and in the Bible it says, 'Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other' (Ephesians 4.32).

**Discussion:** Talk about how you could be a kind boss. You don't have to wait to be a boss before being kind to people. How can you be kind to people in school?

**Activity:** Colour in the letters on a poster that says: IN A WORLD WHERE YOU CAN BE ANYTHING BE KIND or TREAT PEOPLE WITH KINDNESS or BE KIND TO ONE ANOTHER FORGIVING EACH OTHER. Decorate your poster.

**You will need:** A Bible, crayons, printed posters.



## Activity 7



**Introduction:** John Laing had a plan for his life – one of the things he decided was to be wise and generous with his money. He had a lot of it! He gave most of his money away to different charities and tried to help people.

**Discussion:** When did you last help someone? When did someone last help you?

**Activity:** The Bible has a story about a Good Samaritan who helped someone, he gave his time and his money. Read (Luke 10.25-37) or listen to a child friendly version of it - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/teach/school-radio/articles/zf8w92p> (5 minutes 59 seconds). There is a transcript of the story there for you to read.  
Act out the parable, if you have time, with simple costumes and props.  
Look at leaflets from various charities.

**Discussion:** Who would you/school help if you were going to start or help a charity? (It could be people in wheelchairs, old people, animals, trees, poorly people, hungry people etc.)

**You will need:** A child friendly copy of the story of the Good Samaritan, a Bible, leaflets from various charities. Optional: Simple costumes and props, access to a computer.

## Activity 8



**Introduction:** John Laing married a lady called Beatrice Harland in 1910. They decided that if they argued they would always be friends again before the end of the day when the sun went down. They got this idea from the Bible: “Don’t let the sun go down on your anger” (Ephesians 4.26).  
You could look the verse up in a Bible e.g. The Good News Bible.  
John and Beatrice were happily married for 62 years.

**Discussion:** Talk about what you think you have to do to be happily married?

**Activity:** Design a wedding anniversary card for John and Beatrice using the Bible verse.

**You will need:** A Bible, crayons, felt pens, art materials, plain cards, copies of the Bible verse.



## Aims:

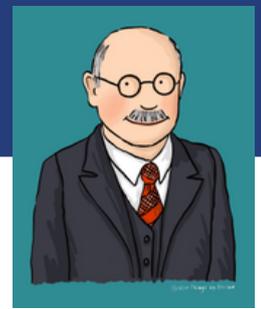
- To give pupils an opportunity to explore the life journey and values of Sir John Laing through discussions and various activities.
- To encourage pupils to reflect on and talk about their own life journey.

## Suggestions:

- Choose how many activities you want to do.
- You may need some extra adults to help – you could ask a church for volunteers, a community group, retired teachers, parents / grandparents.
- Make each activity table look attractive and interesting if possible.

## Additional Suggestions:

- If an activity day/half day is not possible these suggestions could be done as an entire class.
- Staff, helpers and pupils could dress as builders for the day.
- In addition, ask a builder into the classroom to answer questions.
- Add an art activity – pupils produce a portrait of John Laing – use paint, pencil, collage.
- The Laing Company produced a metal money box to advertise their houses. Design and make a cardboard money box house.



## Job

### Introduction

John Laing always knew he wanted to be a builder like his father. He wanted to be the best contractor in the country. John Laing grew his building business from a small family business in Carlisle into a multi-million-pound global business. Laing said that if he sold 1000 homes, he hoped to gain 1000 friends, because they would love living in those houses. He made sure they were built well.



### Activity

Build something out of Lego, KNEX, cardboard or spaghetti and marshmallows!  
Think - what is your dream job, hope or ambition? what are your reasons?  
Design a 'business' card for your chosen career. Explain what you will do on the card.

### Equipment

Construction kits, cardboard, scissors, glue, pens, card.

## Smile

### Introduction

One businessman commented on John Laing: "Here comes Laing, happy as usual!"  
Many people say he was always happy and smiling.



### Activity

Read Spike Milligan's short poem 'A Smile's Worth'. He believed a smile was a small act of kindness and that if everyone smiled more it could change the world!  
What do you think of Spike Milligan's idea? Who can you smile at today? Think about what makes you happy?  
Look at your face in a mirror. While smiling draw a portrait of your face with a smile on it!  
Take a smiley face stickers.

### Equipment

A copy of 'A Smile's Worth' by Spike Milligan, some smiley face stickers, paper, pencils, crayons, small mirrors.



## Plan

### Introduction

John Laing was ambitious. He wanted to take on bigger projects than his father had done. He was very disappointed when one of his first big jobs which was to build a sewer did not work out as planned – due to quicksand and poor weather – the job took a long time. John Laing was even taken to court by the landowner the sewer was to be built on. His father was very worried - the company could go bankrupt if the case was lost. Laing prayed to God about his difficulties. He won the case! After winning the case John went for a walk and decided on a plan for his life – he was going to live purposefully. He followed his plan until he died and had a long, interesting life full of hard work and fun. He died when he was 98 years old!



### Activity

Look in the old wallet(s) to find a piece of paper with John's plan on it. (John Laing's Plan for his life: 1. Love God. 2. Enjoy life and help other people enjoy life. 3. Be generous with money.)

Reflect on how do you cope with disappointment and difficulty? Do you learn from it?

What do you enjoy about life? How could you help others enjoy life?

Write down a plan for your life and put it in an envelope with your name on. Stamp the date on the envelope. Take it home.

### Equipment

Old wallet(s), copies of John Laing's Programme for Life, pencils, paper, envelopes, date stamp.



## Community

### Introduction

A community building is a structure available for use by the public. John Laing built several big community buildings, such as The British Library and Coventry Cathedral.



### Activity

Look at some photographs of community buildings (where you live and beyond) Think about which community buildings are your favourites. Why are community buildings important? Should we take care of them? How do you think architects and builders feel when buildings are spoiled?

If you could build or design a community building, what would it be for? (It could be a library, a theatre, a football stadium, a church, a mosque, a hospital, a school, a railway station or something else.)

Pretend you are an architect and draw your design for a community building.

### Equipment

Photographs (or PowerPoint) of local community buildings and some from further away, large sheets of paper (A3?), pens/pencils.

## Homelessness

### Introduction

After World War II there was a housing shortage, as homes were destroyed by the bombing. John Laing's company built Easiform houses – these houses were quicker and easier to construct than regular homes.

Sadly, many people in our country are homeless today.

### Activity

How would you help people who are homeless or try to solve this crisis?

What message of hope would you send to homeless people?

Write your ideas on the cardboard shelter.

### Equipment

A large cardboard shelter with a blanket or sleeping bag in it and a shopping bag of clothes, felt pens.





## Nature

### Introduction

Everything lovely and beautiful thrilled John Laing. He was especially delighted by nature or creation. He loved the view from his home, watching the birds in his garden, and he always admired a beautiful oak tree.



### Activity

Have some pictures of common garden birds. Which do you think may have been John Laing's favourites? Learn the names of a few common birds.

Think about what you enjoy or find beautiful in nature.

Decorate an oak leaf or a bird shape on both sides and hang it on the tree.

### Equipment

Pictures of common garden birds, photo of an oak tree, pre-cut oak leaves and bird shapes on string loops, felt pens or crayons, a twig tree, stunning photos or a PowerPoint of nature.

## Help!

### Introduction

John Laing often helped people. One day he saw a hand crane operator on one of his building sites. The man looked tired. John Laing went to speak to him. He explained that his wife was ill and he was struggling to cope with looking after the children, the house his wife and coming to work. Laing went to visit the man's wife and found out that his story was true. He gave the man 2 weeks off work and still paid him – something that did not happen in those days.



### Activity

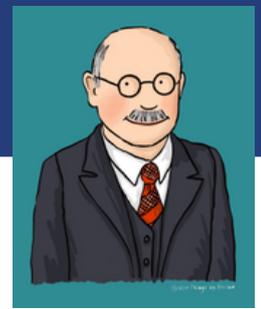
When did you last help someone? When did someone last help you?

The Bible has a story about a Good Samaritan who helped someone, he gave his time and his money. Read Luke 10.25-37. Act out the parable, if you have time, with costumes and props.

Look at leaflets from various charities. Who would you help if you were going to start or help a charity? (It could be people in wheelchairs, old people, animals, trees, poorly people, hungry people etc.)

### Equipment

A Bible, leaflets from various charities, simple costumes and props.



## Leadership

### Introduction

John Laing had worked as an apprentice builder – he knew what it was like to work hard for long hours in the mud, rain and snow.

When he became the boss he gave hundreds, then thousands of people jobs. He was a good leader; he knew his workers and was kind to them. For example: He paid them when they were on holiday and he took them on trips to the seaside.

John's Christian faith was important to him and in the Bible it says, 'Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other.' (Ephesians 4.32) He tried to follow this advice.



### Activity

What do you think are the values or attributes of a good leader? Think about how you could be a kind boss or leader.

But you don't have to wait to be a boss before being kind to people. How can you be kind to people in school?

Colour in the letters on a poster that says: IN A WORLD WHERE YOU CAN BE ANYTHING BE KIND or TREAT PEOPLE WITH KINDNESS or BE KIND TO ONE ANOTHER FORGIVING EACH OTHER. Decorate your poster.

### Equipment

A Bible, crayons, printed posters.



## Marriage

### Introduction

John Laing married Beatrice Harland in 1910. They decided that if they argued they would always be friends again before the end of the day when the sun went down. They got this idea from the Bible: “Don’t let the sun go down on your anger” (Ephesians 4.26) John and Beatrice were happily married for 62 years.



### Activity

You could look the verse up in a Bible e.g. The Good News Bible

Think about what you need to do to be happily married.

Design a wedding anniversary card for John and Beatrice using the Bible verse.

### Equipment

A Bible, crayons, felt pens, art materials, plain cards, copies of the Bible verse.

## Skip

### Introduction

Builders always make a lot of mess and rubble.

Today builders put any rubbish that they want to get rid of into a skip.

### Activity

What would you like to get rid of in your life – anger, laziness, quarrels, bullying, fear, anxiety?

Write it on a piece of card, tear it up and throw it in the ‘skip’.

### Equipment

‘A skip’ (a yellow plastic box?) or wheelbarrow, pieces of cardboard, pens. Tip: you might be able to find a toybox skip.





## Foundations

### Introduction

John Laing knew digging deep foundations for any building is very important. Good foundations give a building its strength.

John Laing also believed that having good beliefs and values were important as the foundations for building a strong and good life. He found his values in his Christian faith.



### Activity

Read The Parable of the Two Builders in Luke 6.46-49 (Watch it at [https://youtu.be/VIPMld7ScU0?si=kd\\_jdULo\\_wdqaROR](https://youtu.be/VIPMld7ScU0?si=kd_jdULo_wdqaROR))

Think what influences your behaviour? What are your values? Where do you get them from? Think about what values and beliefs are important to you.

Write a good value (e.g. kindness, honesty, patience) on a sticky note and stick it on the rock. Write a poor behaviour (e.g. anger, quarrelling, violence) on a lollipop stick and plant it in the sand.

### Equipment

A Bible, pens, lolly sticks, sticky notes, a large stone, a large pot of sand. Access to a computer if you want to watch the parable.

NB. See idea for making values Jenga set elsewhere in this project. These could be used here or use the photocopiable values sheet and cut it up and put the values in a basket as inspiration.



## Cathedral

### Introduction

Coventry Cathedral was the first Cathedral to be built for 300 years.

John Laing was honoured to be the chosen builder. He said it was a building that needed to last for 1000 years.

He wrote to each employee to ask them to do their best work for they were building a place of worship.

### Activity

Imagine you are John Laing writing to one of the workers chosen to work on the building of the new Coventry cathedral. You are asking that they do their best work on this place of worship that needs to last for 1000 years.

Start your letter 'Dear Fellow Worker' and copy John Laing's signature

### Equipment

Writing paper, pens, copies of another of John Laing's letters from the photograph resources of this project.





## M1

### Introduction

Laing saw a lot of changes in his long life – he was born in 1879 when Queen Victoria was on the throne and died aged 98 in 1978 when Queen Elizabeth II reigned.

As a boy in Carlisle Laing had dreamed of seeing a motor car or a flying machine. When he started work the heavy lifting was done by horses and carts. During World War II his company built aircraft runways and in 1959 the company built the first section of the M1 motorway.



### Activity

Motorways tend to be smooth and fairly straight. They are well sign posted and you know where you are going. Life is not like that – there are twists, turns, disappointments and surprises.

Think about your life so far – what has your biggest surprise been? Write it down on the 'motorway'.

### Equipment

Toy cars on a long strip of lining paper taped to the floor with road markings on it, pens.

## Life

### Introduction

John Laing died when he was 98 years old. He had a long, happy and very interesting life.



### Activity

If you could meet him, what interesting questions would you like to ask him about his life? Write your question on a question mark.

Peg your question mark on the washing line.

### Equipment

Large precut card question marks, pens, washing line, pegs.



## Name

### Introduction

At John Laing's funeral in 1978 the person who talked about him used the letters of his surname to describe him.

L – loyalty

A – authority

I – industry (hard work)

N – naivety (simple view of life)

G – generosity

### Activity

Use the letters of your name or the name of a friend in this way.

### Equipment

Pen, paper.



## Generosity

### Introduction

John Laing was a very generous man. He save most of his money away to charities and to help others. It is estimated he gave away £500 million! But the true amount may never be known.

When Sir John Laing died he had only £371 in his bank account.

The Laing Company also decided to make no profit from building Coventry cathedral, but this was kept secret at the time.

### Activity

How can you be generous? Write down your ideas or what you could give to someone else (It does not have to be money – for example time, a smile, help, friendship, food to a food bank etc.)

Draw round your hand and cut it out.

Write your ideas for giving on a handshape and place your hand in the offering bowl.

### Equipment

A large bowl or basket, pens, thin coloured card, scissors.





## Heroes

### Introduction

John Laing lived a long life – he died aged 98. He lived a good life. He displayed many values – kindness, empathy, purpose, responsibility, honour, morality, civility, honesty, authenticity, wisdom, and respect for others.

His remarkable life of generosity has been recognised with a statue (Furness Abbey, Cumbria) and a Blue Plaque (Newcastle Street, Carlisle) both put up in 2025.

We have been learning about John Laing as he is a good role model or hero. Our role models can influence our behaviour – we need to choose them carefully.

### Activity

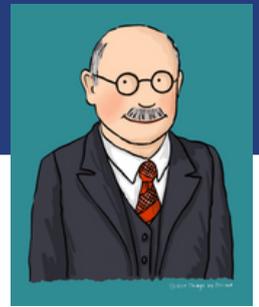
Think what sort of behaviours you admire in a role model.

Who are your role models or heroes? Who do you admire? Why did you choose them as a role model? Write your thoughts, nominations or ideas on an imaginary superhero shape.

### Equipment

Pictures of possible role models or heroes for display (e.g. Martin Luther King, Jesus, Mother Teresa, Eric Liddell, Mohammed, Buddha, Taylor Swift, Marcus Rashford, Jessica Ennis) pens, imaginary superhero shape e.g. Superman, Wonder Woman.





## Plaque

### Introduction

Blue plaques are put on buildings in remembrance of someone linked to the building. Blue plaques began in 1867.

There are a few rules for nominating someone to get a blue plaque. Here is one of the rules: To be chosen for a plaque, a person must be understood by the National Blue Plaques Panel: To have made an important contribution to human welfare or happiness, and/or To have made an exceptional impact in their field, community or on society at large In June 2025 a blue plaque was put up in memory of Sir John Laing – it was put on a Carlisle house on Newcastle Street that he lived in.



### Activity

Examine some examples of blue plaques.

Think who would you give a blue plaque to? (For example - a historical figure, someone famous, a member of your family, a friend, a teacher, a fundraiser etc.)

Fill in the blank blue plaque with the name and some information about your chosen person.

### Equipment

Examples of Blue Plaques, blank plaque & John Laing's blue plaque (available in 'Pictures for Display' file of this project), pens, Blue Tack for display.

# Discussion Questions



Quick suggestions for use as discussion questions or as purposeful plenaries at the end of a lesson to review learning and reflection.

Would you enjoy being a builder? Why or why not?

Do you like John Laing?  
Why or why not?

John Laing liked smiling.  
Who can you smile at today?

If you could tell someone one thing about John Laing, what would it be?

John Laing liked nature.  
What do you like about nature?

What is your favourite story about John Laing?

If you could spend a day with John Laing, what would you talk about?

Is there anything you wish you knew about John Laing?

John Laing was often kind.  
Can you think of a time when someone showed you kindness, perhaps in an unexpected way?





1. John Laing grew his building business from a small family business in Carlisle into a multi-million pound global business. If you were going to start a business, what kind of business would it be?



2. John Laing was very disappointed when a big building contract to build a sewer did not work out as he planned. His father was very worried. John Laing was even taken to court. He prayed to God about his difficulties. He won the case. How do you cope with disappointment and difficulty?



3. John Laing employed hundreds, then thousands of people. He worked hard at getting to know his employees and he treated them well. What do you think are the values or attributes of a good leader?



4. John Laing wanted to be the top contractor (builder) in the country. What is your dream or ambition?



5. We have been learning about John Laing as a good role model. Who are your role models or heroes? Who do you admire?



6. John Laing said that if he sold 1000 houses he hoped to gain 1000 friends, because they would love living in those houses. What is your favourite part of where you live?



7. Everything lovely and beautiful thrilled John Laing. He was especially delighted by nature or creation. What do you find beautiful?



8. John Laing believed The Bible could guide him through his life. What influences your behaviour? What are your values? Where do you get them from?



9. One businessman commented on John Laing: "Here comes Laing, happy as usual!" What makes you happy? How would you like to be described by others?





10.

John Laing was very generous with his money and his time. He gave to many different charities. He had a strict rule that his name must not appear as a donor. He used several false names when he donated. Although he owned a multi-million pound company when he died he only had £371 in his bank account. He had given his money to others!

a) If you were going to give, start or volunteer at a charity, who or what would the charity help?

b) What false name would you use if you wanted to remain anonymous as a giver?



11.

After World War II there was a housing shortage. Many homes had been bombed. John Laing's company built Easiform houses – these houses were quicker and easier to construct than regular homes. Today many people are homeless in our country.

What are your suggestions for helping the homeless today?



12.

John Laing was a Christian. His faith was very important to him. He built a church, then he attended it. He had to extend it twice. There were 1500 children in the Sunday School! Why do you think many churches (not all) are not full of children and young people today?



13.

John Laing built several big community buildings, such as Coventry Cathedral. If you were going to build or design a community building, what would it be for?



14.

John Laing died when he was 98 years old. He had a long and interesting life. If you could meet him, what questions would you like to ask him?



15.

You have learnt a lot about John Laing's life. What will you remember about him?





## Ideas for using John Laing quotations with Key Stage 1 & Lower Key Stage 2

### Quotations have several educational uses:

- Encourage critical thinking and analytical skills
- Aid communication skills
- Can be inspiring or motivational
- Foster a deeper understanding of life
- Connect to pupil's own life experience
- Create empathy by seeing life from Laing's point of view
- Help them to hear 'Laing's voice'
- Can enhance vocabulary

### Quotations - ideas for use:

- Choose a quotation to talk about as a class - what does the quotation tell the pupils about John Laing? There are discussion suggestions alongside each quotation.
- Do some artwork that is inspired by a quotation and display it.
- Ask pupils whether their family has a phrase they often say
- Create a class quotation - offering advice or inspiration.
- Draw John Laing and cut out words about him from the quotations to stick around him to create a collage.
- Do a class picture of John Laing's oak tree with birds in its branches and stick the quotation on it.
- Reflect on how John Laing sets us a good example using these quotations.

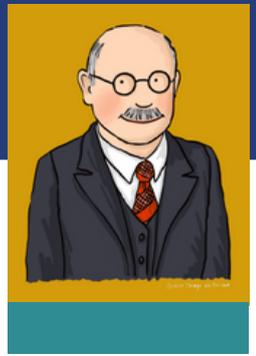
Here are 7 quotations said by, or about, John Laing – one for each day of a week. They could be used as a quick thought or reflection for the day. Each one has some questions to help you discuss it or to connect it to pupils' own experiences.

### 1. "Here comes Laing, happy as usual!" (As John Laing arrived at a government committee during WWII)

- What sort of things do you think made John Laing happy?
- What makes you happy?
- Who can you smile at today?

### 2. "Remember the men who are up to the ears in mud and drenched to the skin." (Laing to his inside office staff about his outside builders)

- Do you think it is hard work being a builder?
- Do you think John Laing was a kind boss?
- Why do you think he told his inside workers in the office to remember the outside builders?
- How can you work at understanding other people's lives and experiences?



**3. “He knew everyone by name...their families and everything.” (A worker)**

- Do you think John Laing’s workers liked the fact Laing remembered their names?
- Do you like it when people remember your names? Why?
- How do you think people feel when you get their name wrong?

**4. “Sir John himself was a proper gentleman...he would drive to go and drink tea with an old worker.” (A worker)**

- What does this tell you about John Laing?
- How do you think the old worker felt when John Laing visited him?
- Who would you like to drink tea with?
- How can you show kindness?

**5. “John Laing expected you to work hard, because he himself worked hard.” (A worker)**

- Do you think it is important for people to work hard?
- How does work make people feel?
- Why might people not work hard?

**6. “Everything lovely and beautiful thrilled John Laing.” (A close friend of John Laing)**

- What sort of things do you think John Laing found lovely and beautiful?
- What sort of things do you find lovely and beautiful?

**7. “John Laing loves the view from his home, watching the birds in the garden, and constantly admires the beautiful oak tree.” (A worker)**

- Is spending time in nature good for people?
- What do you like to look at in nature?
- Do you have a favourite tree or bird?

# Quotations



Here are 7 quotations said by, or about, John Laing – one for each day of a week. They could be used as a quick thought or reflection for the day.

Each one has some questions to help you discuss it or to connect it to your own experiences.

1  
“Here comes Laing,  
happy as usual!”

(As John Laing arrived at a government committee during WWII)

2  
“Remember the men who are up to the ears in mud and drenched to the skin.”

(Laing to his inside office staff about his outside builders)

3  
“He knew everyone by name...their families and everything.”

(A worker)

4  
“Sir John himself was a proper gentleman...he would drive to go and drink tea with an old worker.”

(A worker)

5  
“John Laing expected you to work hard, because he himself worked hard.”

(A worker)

6  
“Everything lovely and beautiful thrilled John Laing.”

(A close friend of John Laing)

7  
“John Laing loves the view from his home, watching the birds in the garden, and constantly admires the beautiful oak tree.”

(A worker)





Below are 34 quotations said by, or about, John Laing. They could be used as a quick thought or reflection for the day. Each one has some questions to help you discuss it or to connect it to pupils' own experiences.

## Quotations have several educational uses:

- Encourage critical thinking and analytical skills
- Aid communication skills
- Can be inspiring or motivational
- Foster a deeper understanding of life
- Connect to pupil's own life experience
- Create empathy by seeing life from Laing's point of view
- Help them to hear 'Laing's voice'
- Can enhance vocabulary

## Questions to ask of a quotation:

- Does the quotation offer good advice?
- Is the quotation inspiring or motivational?
- How does the quotation connect with the pupil's life?
- What does the quotation tell pupils about John Laing?

## Classroom ideas:

- Choose a quotation each lesson for class discussion
- Have pupils choose a quotation and write/discuss how it has impacted or inspired them
- Reflect quietly on how a chosen quotation has impacted them
- Create a poster using one quotation they have chosen
- Produce a piece of motivational advice of your own to display
- Look at the range of quotations and summarise what you have learnt about Laing's character
- Make a small notebook using paper/staples/ribbon - start a quotation collection with one from Laing. Collect other quotations or phrases during the coming week as you hear memorable sayings from friends, parents, teachers, film, TV etc.
- Think about whether your family has a phrase they often say
- Do pupils have a favourite quotation or song lyric?



**“Always setting the example, he expects the impossible and usually gets it!”**  
(Emily Ridout Byrnell, John Laing’s secretary)

**“If a man does not save, he just gets into an extravagant way of living and when the slump comes he will find things very difficult.”** (John Laing)

**“Here comes Laing, happy as usual!”** (An industry rival as John Laing arrived at a government committee during WWII)

**“Enthusiasm is a form of faith.”** (John Laing)

**“Remember the men who are up to the ears in mud and drenched to the skin.”** (John Laing to his office staff)

**“A man who bestrode two worlds.”** (A friend)

**“He was a man of great heart, who inspired and stimulated his workers, and won an unquestioned loyalty from them.”** (Roy Coad, author of ‘Laing’)

**“John Laing was a man big enough to see beyond himself, and to encourage others who could go where he could not.”** (Roy Coad, author of ‘Laing’)

**“I never knew a less conceited man.”** (An elder at John Laing’s church)

**“You worked hard because you knew you were appreciated.”** (An employee)

**“He knew everyone by name...their families and everything. When the firm grew bigger he had a list made out for him.”** (An employee)

**“He knew everything about you.”** (An employee)

**“He was a very hard man and up to a point he was tough, but it was coupled with a fairness equally as strong.”** (Wallace Haughan)

**“He expected commitment.”** (An employee)

**“I wanted to be the top contractor in the country.”** (John Laing)

**“The centre of my life was to be God.”** (John Laing)



**“He made God a participating partner in his business.”**

(Brian Griffiths in his foreword to ‘Laing’ by Roy Coad)

**“The influence for good of this exceptional man will be felt by many – and especially those in business – for many years to come.”** (Maurice Laing – son)

**“He seemed to work like a machine during the war. He gave everything he had...what a man and what a leader!”** (Another leader in WWII team)

**“Laings was probably the best and most conscientious company in the industry.”** (Supervisor of airfield surfaces WWII)

**“I can just say that life is fully as happy as it has been in any previous period of life and I think our Heavenly Father just grades our pleasures to fit our ages.”** (John Laing as an old man)

**“He lived a life of delightful simplicity and beaming warm – heartedness.”** (A friend)

**“Sir John himself was a proper gentleman...he would drive to go and drink tea with an old labourer.”** (An employee)

**“My father believed in his son having three years practical training, so as to get a knowledge of humanity, of the British weather, and of the difficulties of actually doing work and overcoming these difficulties.”** (John Laing)

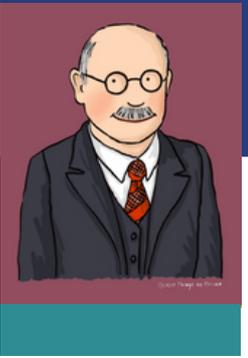
**“I am not sure that people will realise the immense impression of peace, happiness, simplicity and contentment that John Laing radiated.”** (Roy Coad, author of ‘Laing’)

**“His method of doing business was infused with a generosity of spirit.”** (Brian Griffiths in his foreword to ‘Laing’ by Roy Coad)

**“Of all the building contractors in Great Britain, one of them without a doubt with the warmest place in my heart is John Laing & Son Ltd.”** (Aneurin Bevan)

**“I am not going to retire. I have always got pleasure from my work, although at times it has been hard, but hard times bring their reward.”** (John Laing)

**“John Laing had a winning, happy temperament and a disarming smile that was throughout his life to disarm tough opposition.”** (Roy Coad, author of ‘Laing’)



**“John Laing expected you to work hard, because he himself worked hard.”**  
(Clarence Payne, an employee)

**“He was the most delightful of travelling companions. His capacity for enjoyment was unbounded. Everything lovely and beautiful thrilled him.”** (A close friend of John Laing)

**“There are very few of us who have not spent many hours in rain, mud, frost and snow, often drenched to the skin, but I do not know any life that could be more satisfying.”** (John Laing)

**“Sir John is interested in the simple things of life. He loves the view from his home, watching the birds in the garden, and constantly admires the beautiful oak tree. He loves nature and his enquiring mind and zest for life has made him such an interesting person.”** (An employee)

**“John Laing gets from this life as much satisfaction and fun as any man could wish for.”**  
(Godfrey Harrison, author of ‘Life and Belief in the Experience of John Laing’)



Below are 34 quotations said by, or about, John Laing. Each one has some questions to help you discuss it or to connect it to your own experiences.

## 1

“

### Quotation

Always setting the example, he expects the impossible and usually gets it!

- Emily Ridout Byrnell, John Laing's secretary

”

### Questions

- Does the quotation offer good advice?
- Is the quotation inspiring or motivational?
- How does the quotation connect with your life?
- What does the quotation tell you about John Laing?

## 2

“

### Quotation

If a man does not save, he just gets into an extravagant way of living and when the slump comes he will find things very difficult.

- John Laing

”

### Questions

- Does the quotation offer good advice?
- Is the quotation inspiring or motivational?
- How does the quotation connect with your life?
- What does the quotation tell you about John Laing?





Below are 34 quotations said by, or about, John Laing. Each one has some questions to help you discuss it or to connect it to your own experiences.

### 3

“

#### Quotation

Here comes Laing, happy as usual!

*- An industry rival as John Laing arrived at a government committee during WWII*

”

#### Questions

- Does the quotation offer good advice?
- Is the quotation inspiring or motivational?
- How does the quotation connect with your life?
- What does the quotation tell you about John Laing?

### 4

“

#### Quotation

Enthusiasm is a form of faith

*- John Laing*

”

#### Questions

- Does the quotation offer good advice?
- Is the quotation inspiring or motivational?
- How does the quotation connect with your life?
- What does the quotation tell you about John Laing?





Below are 34 quotations said by, or about, John Laing. Each one has some questions to help you discuss it or to connect it to your own experiences.

5

“

## Quotation

Remember the men who are up to the ears in mud and drenched to the skin.

- *John Laing to his office staff*

”

## Questions

- Does the quotation offer good advice?
- Is the quotation inspiring or motivational?
- How does the quotation connect with your life?
- What does the quotation tell you about John Laing?

6

“

## Quotation

A man who bestrode two worlds.

- *A friend*

”

## Questions

- Does the quotation offer good advice?
- Is the quotation inspiring or motivational?
- How does the quotation connect with your life?
- What does the quotation tell you about John Laing?





Below are 34 quotations said by, or about, John Laing. Each one has some questions to help you discuss it or to connect it to your own experiences.

7

“

## Quotation

He was a man of great heart, who inspired and stimulated his workers, and won an unquestioned loyalty from them.

- Roy Coad, author of 'Laing'

”

## Questions

- Does the quotation offer good advice?
- Is the quotation inspiring or motivational?
- How does the quotation connect with your life?
- What does the quotation tell you about John Laing?

8

“

## Quotation

John Laing was a man big enough to see beyond himself, and to encourage others who could go where he could not.

- Roy Coad, author of 'Laing'

”

## Questions

- Does the quotation offer good advice?
- Is the quotation inspiring or motivational?
- How does the quotation connect with your life?
- What does the quotation tell you about John Laing?





Below are 34 quotations said by, or about, John Laing. Each one has some questions to help you discuss it or to connect it to your own experiences.

9

“

Quotation

I never knew a less conceited man.

- *An elder at John Laing's church*

”

Questions

- Does the quotation offer good advice?
- Is the quotation inspiring or motivational?
- How does the quotation connect with your life?
- What does the quotation tell you about John Laing?

10

“

Quotation

You worked hard because you knew you were appreciated.

- *An employee*

”

Questions

- Does the quotation offer good advice?
- Is the quotation inspiring or motivational?
- How does the quotation connect with your life?
- What does the quotation tell you about John Laing?





Below are 34 quotations said by, or about, John Laing. Each one has some questions to help you discuss it or to connect it to your own experiences.

## 11

“

Quotation

He knew everyone by name...their families and everything. When the firm grew bigger he had a list made out for him.

- *An employee*

”

Questions

- Does the quotation offer good advice?
- Is the quotation inspiring or motivational?
- How does the quotation connect with your life?
- What does the quotation tell you about John Laing?

## 12

“

Quotation

He knew everything about you.

- *An employee*

”

Questions

- Does the quotation offer good advice?
- Is the quotation inspiring or motivational?
- How does the quotation connect with your life?
- What does the quotation tell you about John Laing?





Below are 34 quotations said by, or about, John Laing. Each one has some questions to help you discuss it or to connect it to your own experiences.

## 13

“

### Quotation

He was a very hard man and up to a point he was tough, but it was coupled with a fairness equally as strong.

- Wallace Haughan

”

### Questions

- Does the quotation offer good advice?
- Is the quotation inspiring or motivational?
- How does the quotation connect with your life?
- What does the quotation tell you about John Laing?

## 14

“

### Quotation

He expected commitment.

- An employee

”

### Questions

- Does the quotation offer good advice?
- Is the quotation inspiring or motivational?
- How does the quotation connect with your life?
- What does the quotation tell you about John Laing?





Below are 34 quotations said by, or about, John Laing. Each one has some questions to help you discuss it or to connect it to your own experiences.

## 15

“

Quotation

I wanted to be the top contractor in the country.

- John Laing

”

Questions

- Does the quotation offer good advice?
- Is the quotation inspiring or motivational?
- How does the quotation connect with your life?
- What does the quotation tell you about John Laing?

## 16

“

Quotation

The centre of my life was to be God.

- John Laing

”

Questions

- Does the quotation offer good advice?
- Is the quotation inspiring or motivational?
- How does the quotation connect with your life?
- What does the quotation tell you about John Laing?





Below are 34 quotations said by, or about, John Laing. Each one has some questions to help you discuss it or to connect it to your own experiences.

17

“

## Quotation

**He made God a participating partner in his business.**

*- Brian Griffiths in his foreword to 'Laing' by Roy Coad*

”

## Questions

- Does the quotation offer good advice?
- Is the quotation inspiring or motivational?
- How does the quotation connect with your life?
- What does the quotation tell you about John Laing?

18

“

## Quotation

**The influence for good of this exceptional man will be felt by many – and especially those in business – for many years to come.**

*- Maurice Laing (son)*

”

## Questions

- Does the quotation offer good advice?
- Is the quotation inspiring or motivational?
- How does the quotation connect with your life?
- What does the quotation tell you about John Laing?





Below are 34 quotations said by, or about, John Laing. Each one has some questions to help you discuss it or to connect it to your own experiences.

19

“

## Quotation

He seemed to work like a machine during the war. He gave everything he had....what a man and what a leader!

- *Another leader in WWII team*

”

## Questions

- Does the quotation offer good advice?
- Is the quotation inspiring or motivational?
- How does the quotation connect with your life?
- What does the quotation tell you about John Laing?

20

“

## Quotation

Laings was probably the best and most conscientious company in the industry.

- *Supervisor of airfield surfaces WWII*

”

## Questions

- Does the quotation offer good advice?
- Is the quotation inspiring or motivational?
- How does the quotation connect with your life?
- What does the quotation tell you about John Laing?





Below are 34 quotations said by, or about, John Laing. Each one has some questions to help you discuss it or to connect it to your own experiences.

21

“

## Quotation

I can just say that life is fully as happy as it has been in any previous period of life and I think our Heavenly Father just grades our pleasures to fit our ages.

- John Laing as an old man

”

## Questions

- Does the quotation offer good advice?
- Is the quotation inspiring or motivational?
- How does the quotation connect with your life?
- What does the quotation tell you about John Laing?

22

“

## Quotation

He lived a life of delightful simplicity and beaming warm – heartedness.

- A friend

”

## Questions

- Does the quotation offer good advice?
- Is the quotation inspiring or motivational?
- How does the quotation connect with your life?
- What does the quotation tell you about John Laing?





Below are 34 quotations said by, or about, John Laing. Each one has some questions to help you discuss it or to connect it to your own experiences.

23

“

### Quotation

Sir John himself was a proper gentleman...he would drive to go and drink tea with an old labourer.

- *An employee*

”

### Questions

- Does the quotation offer good advice?
- Is the quotation inspiring or motivational?
- How does the quotation connect with your life?
- What does the quotation tell you about John Laing?

24

“

### Quotation

My father believed in his son having three years practical training, so as to get a knowledge of humanity, of the British weather, and of the difficulties of actually doing work and overcoming these difficulties.

- *John Laing*

”

### Questions

- Does the quotation offer good advice?
- Is the quotation inspiring or motivational?
- How does the quotation connect with your life?
- What does the quotation tell you about John Laing?





Below are 34 quotations said by, or about, John Laing. Each one has some questions to help you discuss it or to connect it to your own experiences.

25

“

## Quotation

I am not sure that people will realise the immense impression of peace, happiness, simplicity and contentment that John Laing radiated.

- Roy Coad, author of 'Laing'”

## Questions

- Does the quotation offer good advice?
- Is the quotation inspiring or motivational?
- How does the quotation connect with your life?
- What does the quotation tell you about John Laing?

26

“

## Quotation

His method of doing business was infused with a generosity of spirit.

- Brian Griffiths in his foreword to 'Laing' by Roy Coad

”

## Questions

- Does the quotation offer good advice?
- Is the quotation inspiring or motivational?
- How does the quotation connect with your life?
- What does the quotation tell you about John Laing?





Below are 34 quotations said by, or about, John Laing. Each one has some questions to help you discuss it or to connect it to your own experiences.

27

“

## Quotation

Of all the building contractors in Great Britain, one of them without a doubt with the warmest place in my heart is John Laing & Son Ltd.

- Aneurin Bevan

”

## Questions

- Does the quotation offer good advice?
- Is the quotation inspiring or motivational?
- How does the quotation connect with your life?
- What does the quotation tell you about John Laing?

28

“

## Quotation

I am not going to retire. I have always got pleasure from my work, although at times it has been hard, but hard times bring their reward.

- John Laing

”

## Questions

- Does the quotation offer good advice?
- Is the quotation inspiring or motivational?
- How does the quotation connect with your life?
- What does the quotation tell you about John Laing?





Below are 34 quotations said by, or about, John Laing. Each one has some questions to help you discuss it or to connect it to your own experiences.

29

“

## Quotation

John Laing had a winning, happy temperament and a disarming smile that was throughout his life to disarm tough opposition.

- Roy Coad, author of 'Laing'

”

## Questions

- Does the quotation offer good advice?
- Is the quotation inspiring or motivational?
- How does the quotation connect with your life?
- What does the quotation tell you about John Laing?

30

“

## Quotation

John Laing expected you to work hard, because he himself worked hard.

- Clarence Payne, an employee

”

## Questions

- Does the quotation offer good advice?
- Is the quotation inspiring or motivational?
- How does the quotation connect with your life?
- What does the quotation tell you about John Laing?





Below are 34 quotations said by, or about, John Laing. Each one has some questions to help you discuss it or to connect it to your own experiences.

## 31

“

Quotation

He was the most delightful of travelling companions. His capacity for enjoyment was unbounded. Everything lovely and beautiful thrilled him.

- A close friend of John Laing ”

Questions

- Does the quotation offer good advice?
- Is the quotation inspiring or motivational?
- How does the quotation connect with your life?
- What does the quotation tell you about John Laing?

## 32

“

Quotation

There are very few of us who have not spent many hours in rain, mud, frost and snow, often drenched to the skin, but I do not know any life that could be more satisfying.

- John Laing ”

Questions

- Does the quotation offer good advice?
- Is the quotation inspiring or motivational?
- How does the quotation connect with your life?
- What does the quotation tell you about John Laing?





Below are 34 quotations said by, or about, John Laing. Each one has some questions to help you discuss it or to connect it to your own experiences.

## 33

“

### Quotation

Sir John is interested in the simple things of life. He loves the view from his home, watching the birds in the garden and constantly admires the beautiful oak tree. He loves nature and his enquiring mind and zest for life has made him such an interesting person.

- *An employee*

”

### Questions

- Does the quotation offer good advice?
- Is the quotation inspiring or motivational?
- How does the quotation connect with your life?
- What does the quotation tell you about John Laing?

## 34

“

### Quotation

John Laing gets from this life as much satisfaction and fun as any man could wish for.

- *Godfrey Harrison, author of 'Life and Belief in the Experience of John Laing.'*

”

### Questions

- Does the quotation offer good advice?
- Is the quotation inspiring or motivational?
- How does the quotation connect with your life?
- What does the quotation tell you about John Laing?





## The Two Builders

*You will need some Lego/Mega blocks and photos of interesting buildings.*

### Opening questions

Ask two of the children to quietly build something using Mega blocks – limit the time to around 2 minutes while you ask the next questions.

- Have you ever built anything?
- What did you build?
- What materials did you use to build with?
- What is your favourite building? (You might show slides of some beautiful buildings). Maybe it is your home?

Some classes may have something they have built to share.

### Bible Story

Jesus told a story about two builders – one was wise, and one was foolish or silly. Jesus' story can be found in Matthew 7.24-27 and Luke 6.46-49. (There are several story versions/videos of this parable available, or you might like to use the version attached.)

The wise builder made sure he spent time and effort building his house so that it was strong and safe.

The foolish builder rushed and did not use the best materials; his house was weak and unsafe when a stormy day came along.

The story has a meaning. It is designed to teach people to build themselves a good life so when difficult days come, they can cope.

### John Laing – a good builder

John Laing became a builder at 14 years old. He was a Christian and had read the story of the two builders in the Bible.

John had to get up very early and work hard in all sorts of weather – snow, rain, hot sunshine – and in all sorts of conditions – mud, cold, boiling heat. He loved his job and always worked hard to make sure that whatever he built was good quality. He was a wise builder.

Eventually he became the boss of his father's building company. He was involved in all sorts of building projects – churches, Coventry cathedral, power stations, the M1 motorway, aeroplane runways, houses and more. Many people said very good things about his company and their excellent work.

One of his building projects did not go very well because the land he was building on was flooded. John was worried and prayed to God to help him.

As a boss he treated all his workers well and was kind and considerate towards them. For example, he gave them paid holidays before it was the law to do so. He knew their names and about their families. Many of his workers said very good things about John Laing.

John Laing was a careful builder, and he also built a fine life.



## Quiet moment to reflect

- We are all building our lives. None of us are finished yet. We can choose to be wise or we can be foolish.
- We can build our lives on unkind things like lies, stealing, shouting and being mean or we can build our lives on good strong values like being kind, telling the truth, love, prayer and thankfulness.
- Sit quietly for a moment and think about what you want to be like.

## Prayer

Now I am going to say a prayer. If you want to make it your prayer, say 'Amen' (which means I agree) at the end after me. Otherwise just sit quietly and think about what you have heard today.

Dear God, help me to be a good builder as I build my life. Help me to be kind, patient, loving, thankful and truthful.

Amen

## The Parable of the Two Builders

Jesus' parable of the two builders can be found in Matthew 7.24-27 and Luke 6.46-49. Here is a simple version of it – to be read with expression and actions.

Handy Andy was wise and clever  
He took his time, so that his house would last forever

Silly Billy was foolish and daft  
He built fast... but he's going to need a raft!

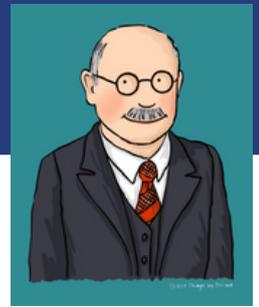
Wise to build your house upon a hard rock where it won't ever roll  
Foolish to build your house upon soft sand where it will fall into a hole

A storm came, heavy rain fell from the sky  
But on Andy's strong house he could rely

A storm came, heavy rain fell from the sky  
Billy's weak house fell, and he started to cry.

Wise to build your house upon a rock where it won't ever roll  
Foolish to build your house upon soft sand where it will fall into a hole

Be wise - build your life upon something strong!  
Turn away from all that is weak and wrong!



## The Building of Solomon's Temple

### Time to Listen

'Solomon began to build the house of the Lord.' 1 Kings 6.1

### *To be read by a pupil:*

In the Bible a King called Solomon decided to build a magnificent temple as a worship offering to God. Everything was to be done to the very highest standard. For example: it was to be built of the best carved cedar wood and very fine stone. The inside was panelled in wood covered in gold and there were two 15 feet golden angels. No noise was to be made by any chisel or hammer during the building.

### Time to Participate

You will need: some uncooked spaghetti and some large marshmallows, a table. (Alternative: Lego).

Pick 3 pupils. Give them around 10 pieces of spaghetti and marshmallows. Ask them to build something in 2 minutes.

While they are building show the rest of the pupils some photographs of amazing public buildings.

After 2 minutes look at what they have built. It isn't always easy being a builder!

### Time to Learn

"There are very few of us who have not spent many hours in rain, mud, frost and snow, often drenched to the skin, but I do not know any life that could be more satisfying" (John Laing).

What job do you think the man who said that did?

A builder called John Laing (1879 - 1978) was responsible for the construction of many public buildings in the UK. His company built, for example The British Library, The Barbican, schools, churches, Sizewell B and Coventry Cathedral. He always made sure that his workforce produced their very best job. If it wasn't good enough a building would be torn down and rebuilt. John Laing was very pleased his company had been chosen to build a cathedral! The workforce chosen to build Coventry Cathedral received letters from The Laing Company asking them to do their finest work on the building it was hoped would stand for 1000 years. The company decided to make no profit from the build, but this was kept a secret at the time.



Aren't we blessed to have public buildings in this country? Do you have a favourite public building? (It could be a football stadium, a cathedral, a library, a town hall, a church, a mosque, a library, a hospital, a theatre etc.).

Maybe you like it because it is beautiful or tall, because of what you do inside it, or perhaps you have special memories of going there.

If you were going to design a public building what would draw up plans for?

Have you ever thought that someone spent years of their life designing it and a team of people put all their strength into building it?

### **Time to Reflect**

I am going to give you a few quiet moments to think about 2 questions.

1. How do you think people who built or designed our public buildings feel when they have done their best work and then others damage, vandalise or don't care properly for them?
2. Do you always do your best?

### **Time to Pray**

I am going to say a prayer. If you want to make it your prayer, say, 'Amen' (which means 'I agree') at the end after me. Otherwise sit quietly and think about what you have heard today.

Help me to be the best I can be in my classroom, in my sport, at playtime, in my friendships and in my family.

Amen.



## Nehemiah

### Thought for the Day

***'Come let us rebuild' (Nehemiah 2.17).***

You might like to use a photo of the Blitz Beach, Coventry Cathedral and the present-day walls of Jerusalem.

### Time to Listen

There is a beach near Liverpool known as the Blitz Beach. Liverpool was bombed by the German Luftwaffe in World War II. After the war the rubble left from the bombing was dumped on a beach and it is still there. You can walk over the debris of people's lives – their doorsteps, mantelpieces, burnt bricks and the remains of their fireplaces. The human stories behind the remains must be filled with both courage, love and loss.

Coventry was another city bombed during World War II. Its cathedral was engulfed in flames and largely destroyed. The rubble and remains were cleared and what remains of the old cathedral still stands – broken, but beautiful as a testimony. A cathedral stonemason saw that two of the cathedral's burnt roof timbers had fallen to the ground in the shape of a cross. He tied them together and placed the cross on an altar made of rubble in the ruined cathedral. The burnt cross is a symbol of forgiveness - hope emerging from the ashes. 'Father Forgive' was inscribed on the wall behind the cross.

John Laing was the Christian building contractor commissioned to build a new cathedral in Coventry – a symbol of new life that was to stand beside the burnt shell of the old cathedral. He wrote to all the builders involved in the rebuilding asking them to do their very best work – for this place of worship would stand for 1000 years. It was a difficult build: for example the weather was terrible and they dug up some skeletons.

In the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC Nehemiah learnt that the walls of Jerusalem had been reduced to rubble. Indeed, they had been burnt and broken 140 years previously. No one had thought these piles of burnt stones could amount to anything again. But Nehemiah determined to do something about it. He had a vision for those damaged stones. He gathered a team together to rebuild. Nehemiah's team were ridiculed by some but they stuck at their task. Nehemiah said, the joy of the Lord was his strength. (Nehemiah 8.10) The burnt stones were repurposed, and the walls were rebuilt!



## Time to Connect

There is a lot of distress in our world.

Perhaps you feel as if you are a burnt or damaged stone and that people walk over your hurt like those at the Blitz beach in Liverpool.

Perhaps you think you can never amount to anything again like the burnt rubble in Jerusalem. But those burnt stones were repurposed by Nehemiah and you too can be redeemed, restored and rebuilt. You too can have a new story.

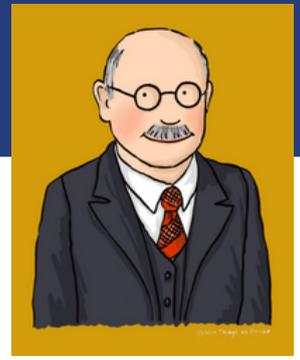
Perhaps you recognise that you have caused others to feel like burnt stones. Perhaps you need forgiveness like that offered at Coventry Cathedral.

Perhaps you recognise that some people you know feel they are like the burnt stones in today's stories... You can do your very best work like Laing's builders at Coventry Cathedral and help to comfort, bring hope, offer encouragement and restore your friends.

## Time to Reflect

Let's have a moment of silence and reflect on what we have heard today.

# Acts of Kindness



Sir John Laing was kind and generous to his employees, to many charities, to his friends and family. He cared for the world.

How can you be kind? Use these ideas to help you. Think of something you can do for each idea.

**WHO CAN  
YOU LISTEN  
TO?**

Who can you  
ENCOURAGE?

**How can you  
HELP  
someone?**

**HOW CAN YOU  
SHOW SOMEONE  
YOU CARE?**

Who can you  
say THANK  
YOU to?

**How can you  
DONATE to  
charity?**

Who can you  
give a  
**COMPLIMENT**  
to?

What can  
you SHARE?

How can you  
LOOK AFTER  
the world?

**How can you  
be  
GENEROUS?**

How can you  
SHOW RESPECT  
to others?

**How can you  
VOLUNTEER?**

**Who can you  
SMILE at?**

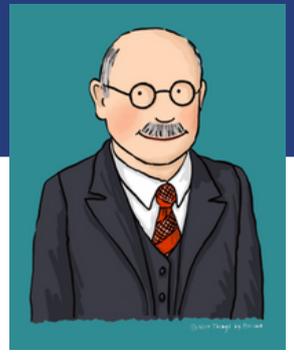
Who needs your  
SUPPORT?

**WHEN DO YOU  
NEED TO KEEP  
QUIET?**

**Can you resolve  
to post only  
KIND comments  
on social media?**



# Acts of Kindness

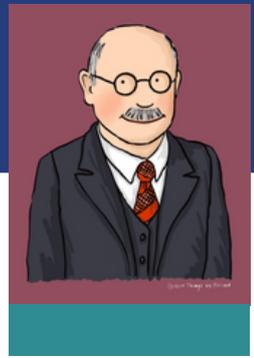


Sir John Laing was kind and generous to his employees, to many charities and his friends and family. He cared for the world.

How can you be kind? Put your ideas in the circles.

A grid of nine large, empty circles arranged in three rows and three columns, intended for students to write their ideas for acts of kindness.

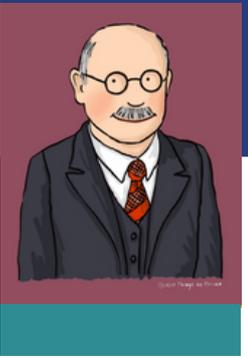
# A Good Leader...



Colour in the boxes that you think describe a good leader.

is bossy	has integrity, is honest and trustworthy	is a good communicator	is a poor judge of character
only cares about himself	is arrogant – enjoys being the most important person	is argumentative	is organised, reliable and dependable
works hard	is disorganised and unreliable	does not listen to the opinions of others	inspires others to do well
is a poor communicator	is indecisive (can't make decisions)	is approachable and friendly	is able to motivate others
is confident enough to encourage or promote others	is able to delegate wisely	is able to make decisions	is lazy
has a positive attitude	does not inspire loyalty	does not accept responsibility for failure	listens to the opinions of others

# What is Success in Life?



Use these questions to discuss the idea of success – either as a whole class or in smaller groups.

## Discussion Questions:

Who do you think is successful?

How would you define success?

Can success mean different things to different people?

How would you measure success?

Success is often thought to be based on power, status, money, career or fame. Can success be based on anything else? What?

Can success be based on generosity, family, integrity, serving others, kindness, loyalty, being a good role model, making a positive difference to others, fulfilling personal goals, service or values etc?

Do you think success brings happiness or fulfilment?

How does someone's idea of success effect the decisions they make about their life?

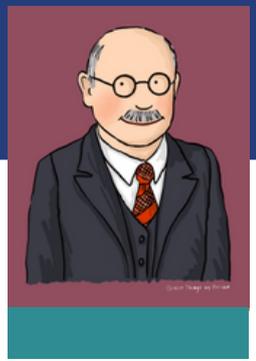
Do you think John Laing had a successful life? Why? How? Can you give examples?

Would you say Jesus Christ had a successful life? Why?

What would you like to be successful at?

Has this discussion made you think differently about success? How?





Sir John Laing became the leader of a multi-million pound company, that employed a huge number of employees.

Laing had strong values, that he could articulate. Many of them were derived from his Christian faith

This activity provides an opportunity to explore values with children and young people.

## Activity

This activity can be done in pairs or small groups.

Either buy some Jenga sets or cut out some 2D 'bricks' from cardboard.

Cut out the values on the following sheets and stick them on the bricks. (You can omit words that are not suitable for your key stage.)

Play a game of Jenga and when you take a piece, answer the following questions.

## Questions

Is this a value you think John Laing thought was important? Can you give an example?

Is this one of your key values in life? How might you demonstrate or show this value in your life?

## Plenary

Look at all the values.

Which 5 are the most important to you?

Quietly reflect on why these values are significant to you?

Write them down on a piece of paper.





Cut out the values below and stick them onto Jenga bricks or cardboard 'bricks'.

<b>CHARITY / GIVING</b>	<b>FRIENDSHIP</b>	<b>COMMUNICATION</b>
<b>HELPFULNESS</b>	<b>MORALITY</b>	<b>PEACEFULNESS</b>
<b>TRUSTWORTHINESS</b>	<b>COMMON SENSE</b>	<b>LISTENING</b>
<b>JOYFULNESS</b>	<b>LEARNING</b>	<b>CARING</b>
<b>POSITIVITY</b>	<b>DIVERSITY</b>	<b>ENCOURAGEMENT</b>
<b>CREATIVITY</b>	<b>GENTLENESS</b>	<b>UNSELFISHNESS</b>
<b>HOPEFULNESS</b>	<b>SYMPATHY</b>	<b>FORGIVENESS</b>
<b>LOVE</b>	<b>PRAYERFULNESS</b>	<b>HAPPINESS</b>
<b>HUMILITY</b>	<b>FAMILY</b>	<b>THINKING OF OTHERS</b>
<b>SHARING</b>	<b>COURAGE</b>	<b>COMMUNITY</b>



Cut out the values below and stick them onto Jenga bricks or cardboard 'bricks'.

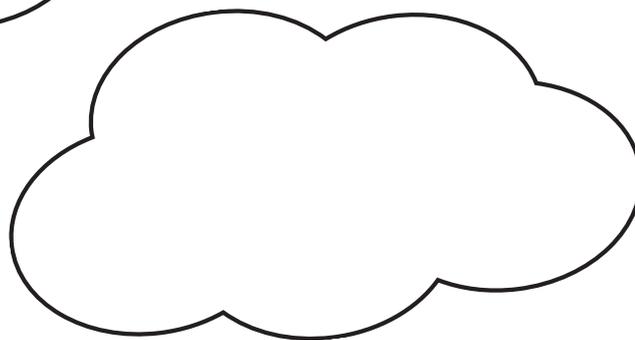
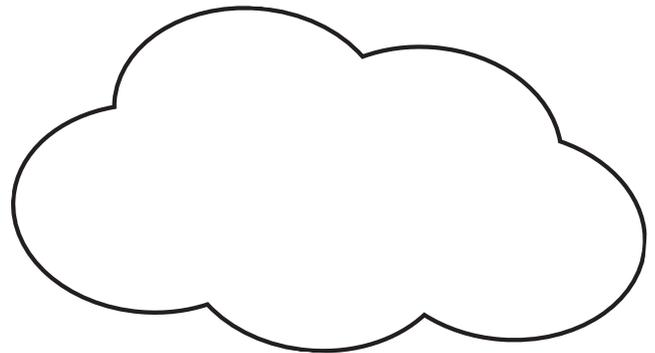
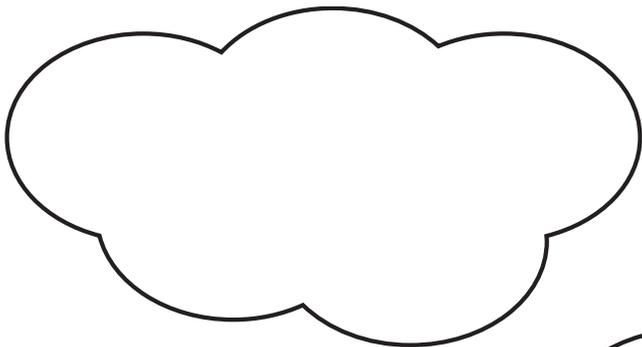
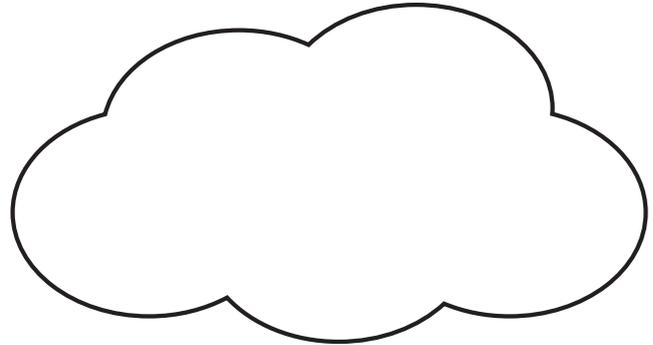
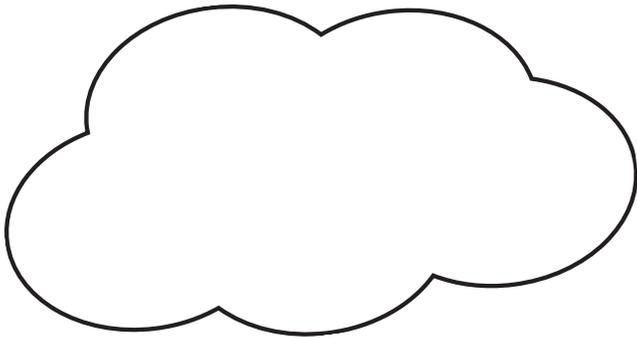
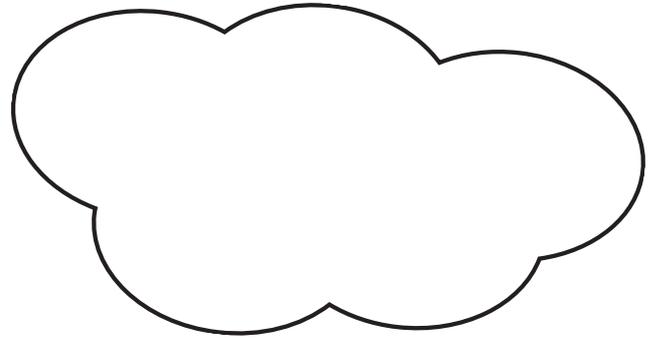
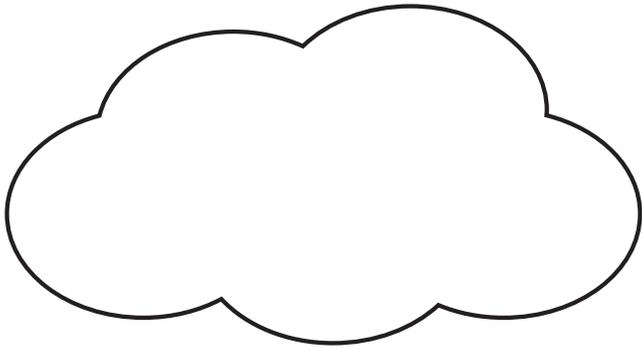
<b>GENEROSITY</b>	<b>LOYALTY</b>	<b>KINDNESS</b>
<b>INTEGRITY</b>	<b>UNDERSTANDING</b>	<b>FAITH</b>
<b>PATIENCE</b>	<b>TRYING HARD</b>	<b>GOODNESS</b>
<b>SELF-CONTROL</b>	<b>GRATITUDE</b>	<b>TOLERANCE</b>
<b>RESPECT</b>	<b>ACCEPTANCE</b>	<b>SELFLESSNESS</b>
<b>TRUTHFULNESS</b>	<b>CURIOSITY</b>	<b>EQUALITY</b>
<b>HUMOUR</b>	<b>TEAMWORK</b>	<b>FAIRNESS</b>
<b>REFLECTION</b>	<b>JUSTICE</b>	<b>RESILIENCE</b>
<b>EMPATHY</b>	<b>DEPENDABILITY</b>	<b>DETERMINATION</b>

# Blue Sky Thinking



John Laing dreamt of being the top building contractor in the country. His dream came true after a lot of hard work!

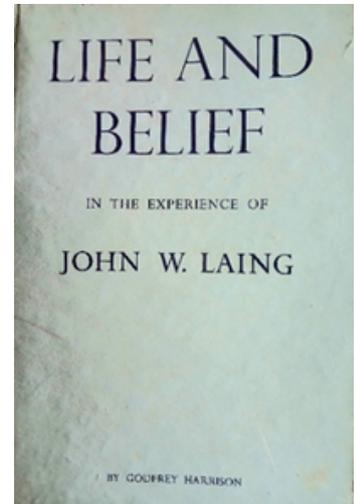
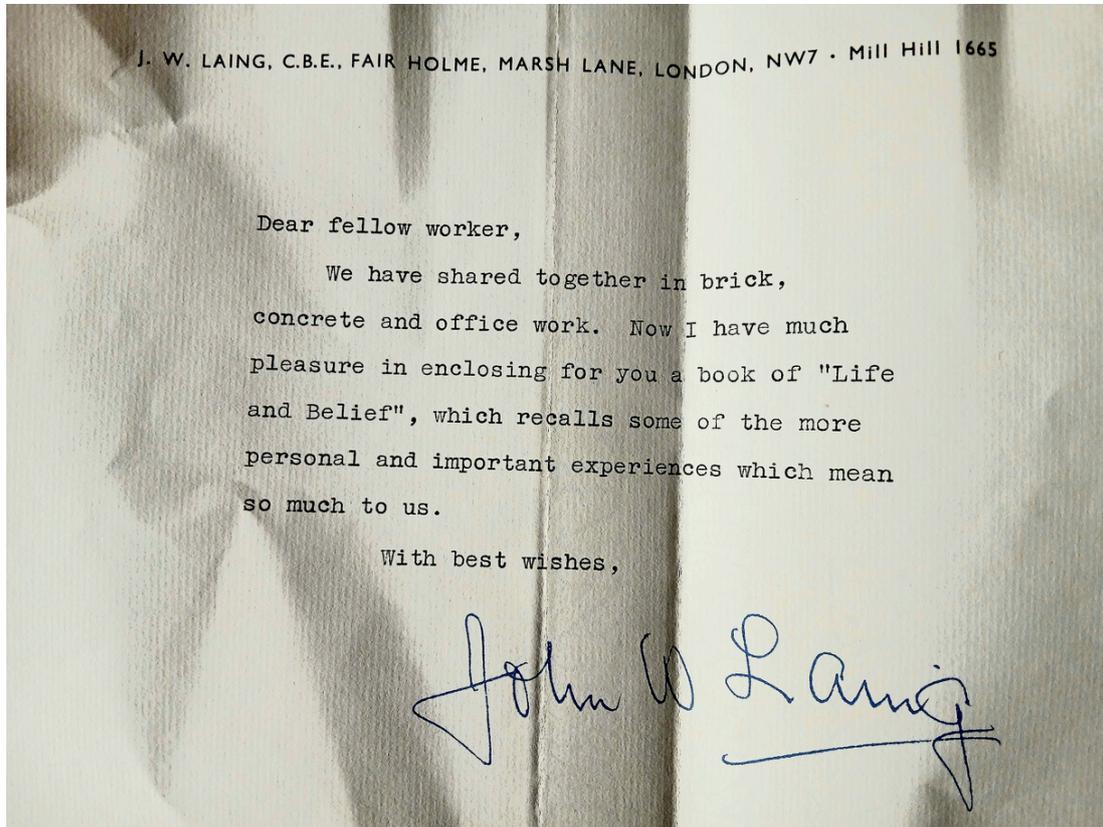
What are your dreams? Put your ideas in the clouds.



# Brick and Concrete Letter



This is a photograph of a letter John Laing sent to one of his employees. It was found tucked inside a book about John Laing's Christian faith.



## Ideas for use

Photocopy the letter (a larger copy can be found in the 'Pictures for Display' document). Put a copy in an envelope and hand out to each pupil.

Use the questions on the pupil document for discussion. Put a pupil in charge of leading a class discussion or put the class into discussion groups and appoint a pupil as a leader of each group.

Ask pupils to imagine they are a boss. What would they write about to their workers?

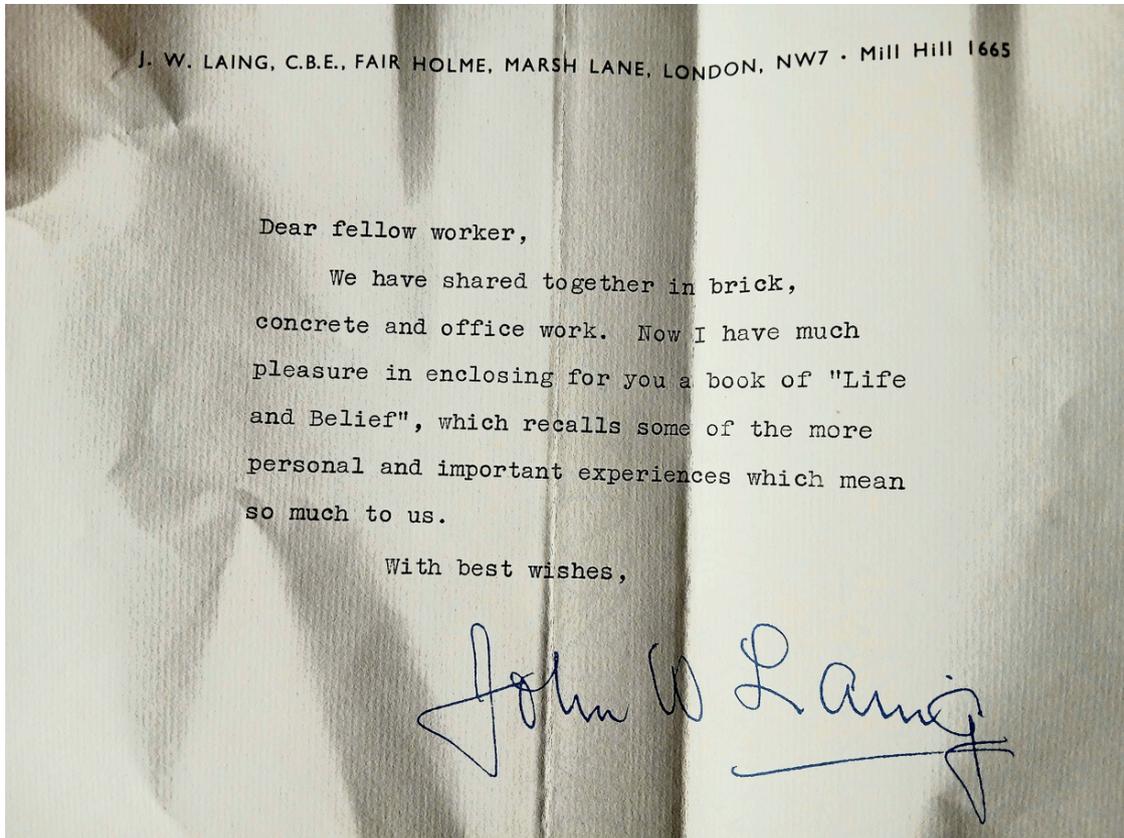
Copy John Laing's signature.

Imagine you are a boss. Why would you write to one of your workers? What would you write? How would you start your letter? Write a letter on some notepaper to 'an employee' (as a class, in groups, pairs or individuals).

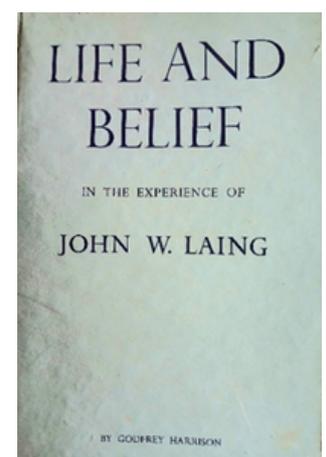
# Brick and Concrete Letter

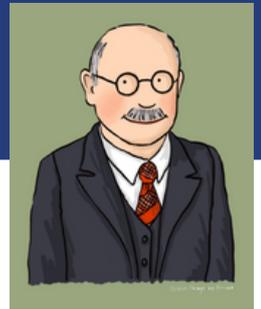


This is a photograph of a letter John Laing sent to one of his employees. It was found tucked inside a book about John Laing's Christian faith.



1. What do you notice about this letter?
2. Why do you think this letter survived?
3. Why do you think Laing starts his letter, 'Dear fellow worker'?
4. Why might John Laing have sent his worker a copy of the book?
5. Imagine you are an employee – how would you feel about receiving this letter?
6. How do you think John Laing and his workers shared together in 'brick, concrete and office work'?
7. What do you think Laing refers to when he writes 'the more personal and important experiences that mean so much to us'?





*You will need a wallet for illustrative purposes.*

John Laing was a young builder who wanted to be the top building contractor in the country. He took over the firm from his father and started to take on bigger projects. In 1906 he was given the contract to build a sewer. It was not the sort of job the company had tackled before.

The job did not go smoothly. The weather was terrible, the site flooded, there was quicksand and sometimes workers had to be pulled from it leaving their boots behind. Then the owners of the land objected to the work and took The Laing Company from court to court trying to get payment from them. John Laing worked very long hours, was very worried and often could not sleep. He thought the company might go bankrupt.

John prayed, "I am sorry that I have worried my parents. Please help me and from now on I will run the company differently. Amen."

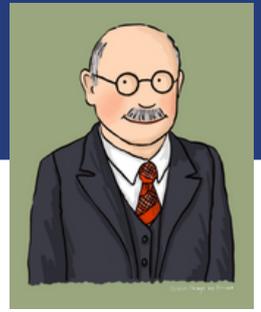
The company eventually won the court case, and they didn't have to pay compensation. But John did not celebrate with his family; he went to his hotel room and wrote down how he would live from then on.

*Hand a pupil a wallet and ask them to read what is in it:*

My Programme for Life by John Laing.

1. Being a Christian will be the most important thing in my life.
2. I will enjoy life and help others find enjoyment too.
3. I will live on a small amount of money, even if I become rich, and give the rest away to my church, people in need or charities.

Laing called this his Programme for Life. He read it to his wife, Beatrice, before they got married – she agreed to it. He kept the piece of paper, perhaps in his wallet, and followed his plan for the rest of his long life.



### Pupil Activities

Ask pupils to reflect:

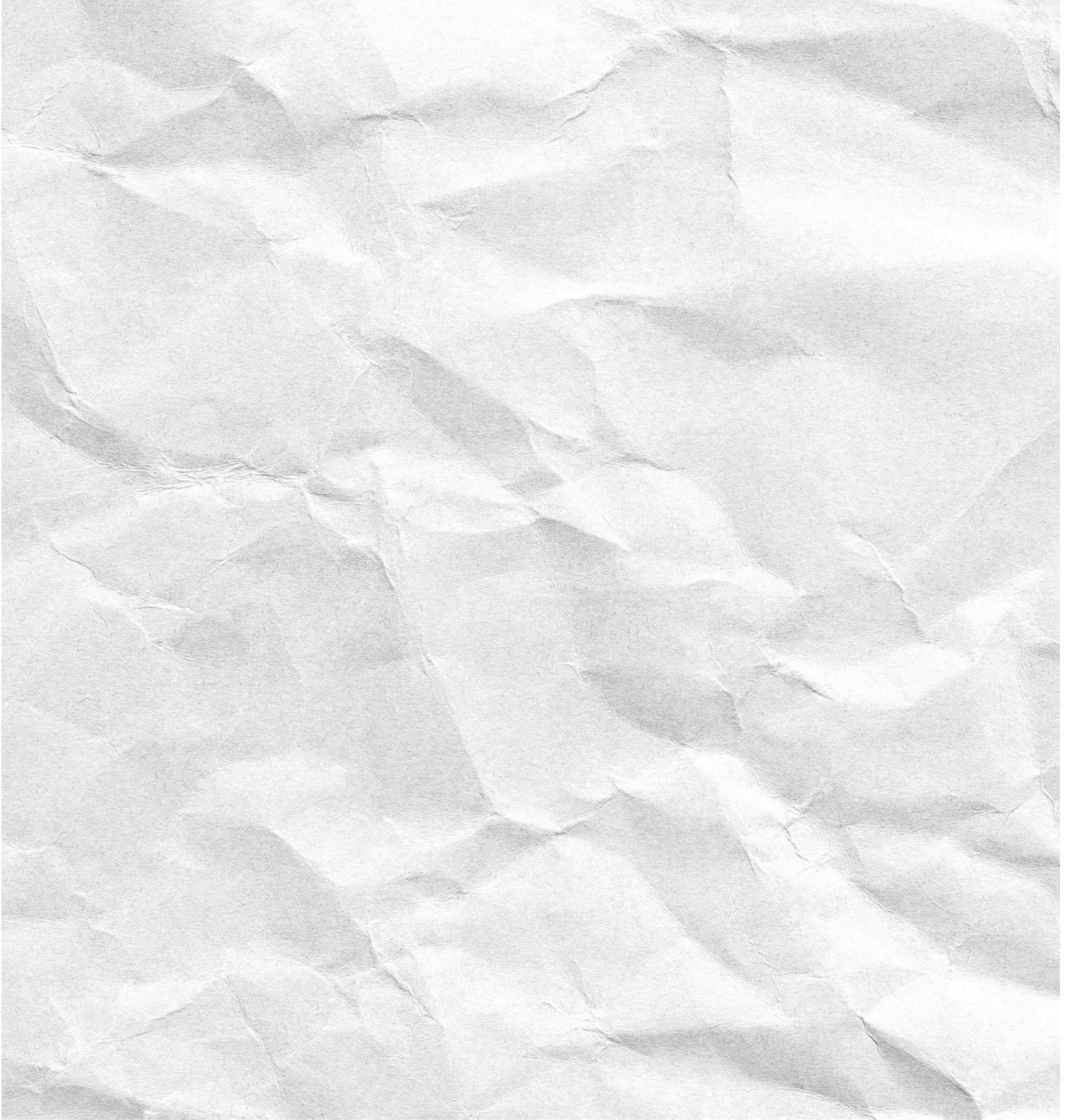
- Who do you hope to be?
- What will your values be?

Ask pupils to write down their own Programme for Life on a separate sheet (provided). This can be shared or kept private.

# Wallet & Writing



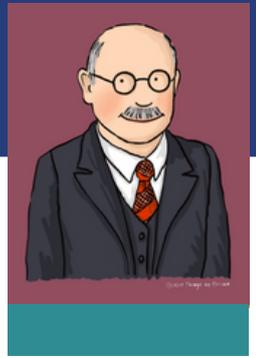
Write down your own Programme for Life on the paper below.



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Laing Family Trusts



Blue plaques are put on buildings in remembrance of someone linked to the building. Blue plaques began in 1867.

There are a few rules for nominating someone to get a blue plaque. Here is one of the rules:

To be chosen for a plaque, a person must be understood by the National Blue Plaques Panel:

- To have made an important contribution to human welfare or happiness, and/or
- To have made an exceptional impact in their field, community or on society at large.

In June 2025 a blue plaque was put up in memory of Sir John Laing – it was put on a Carlisle house he lived in.

A spokesman at the unveiling said: 'Sir John Laing founded an international construction business and oversaw the building of the most iconic buildings in the country – Coventry Cathedral, The Barbican, The British Library and the M1. He was a committed Christian and philanthropist. He was a real people person. He believed in caring for people and looked after his workforce.'

## Tasks

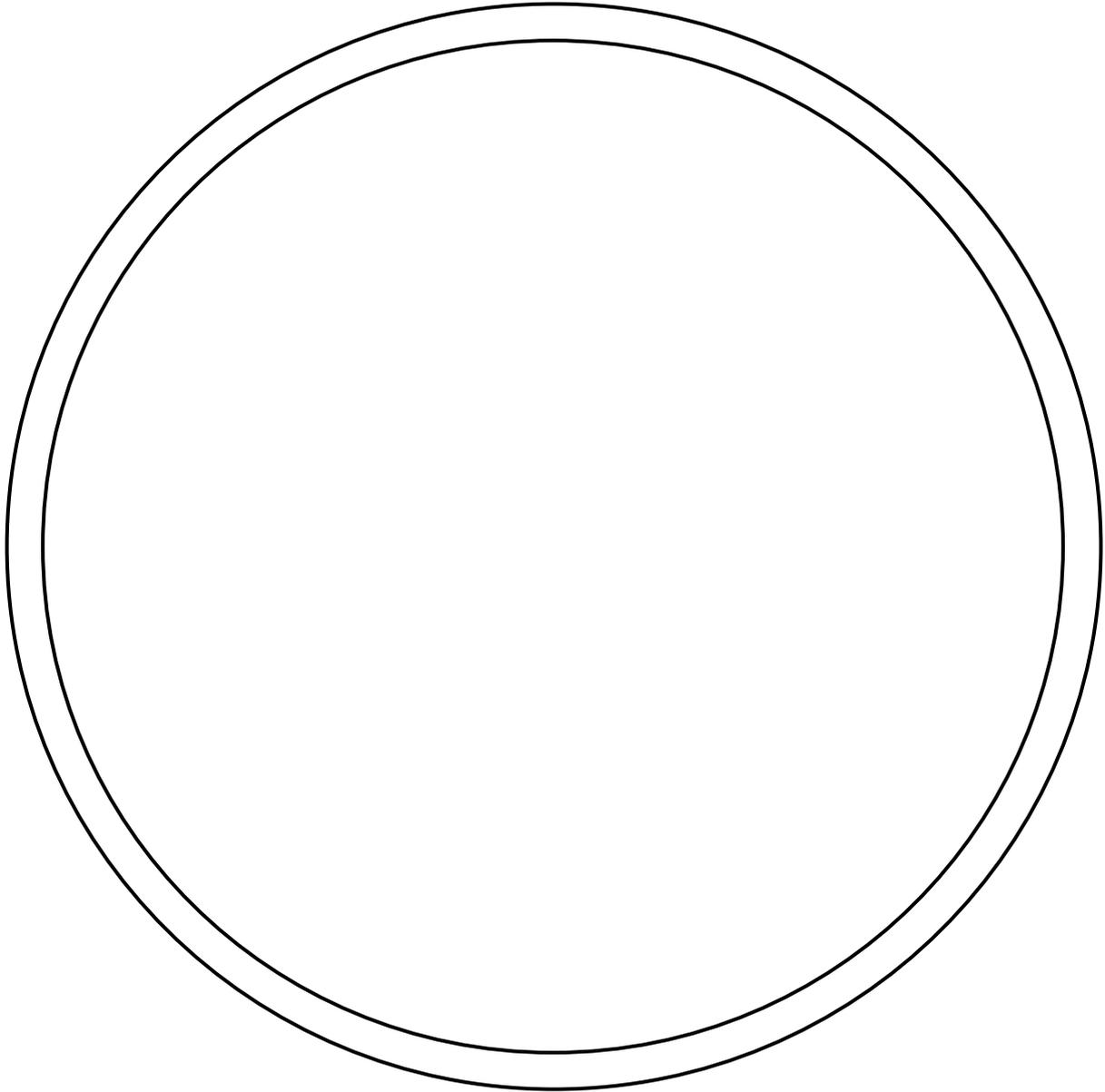
1. Why do you think the panel decided John Laing deserved a blue plaque?
2. Who would you give a blue plaque to? (For example - a historical figure, someone famous, a member of your family, a friend, a teacher, a fundraiser etc.)
3. Examine some examples of blue plaques.
4. Fill in the blank blue plaque with the name and some information about your chosen person.
5. Chose a class panel to decide who will get a blue plaque or have a class vote.





## A Blue Plaque

Fill in this blank plaque with the name and some information about your chosen person.





Sir John Laing 1879 - 1978



A statue of Sir John Laing was placed at Furness Abbey in 2025. He is holding a Bible in his hand. Furness Abbey was chosen, as it is where he sat to pray after a very worrying and difficult time for his business. He believed his prayers were answered and as a result he decided on his 'Programme for Life,' - he determined that his life would be one of faith in God, generosity towards others and enjoyment.

**1. Watch this video about the making of the Centenary Sculpture:**

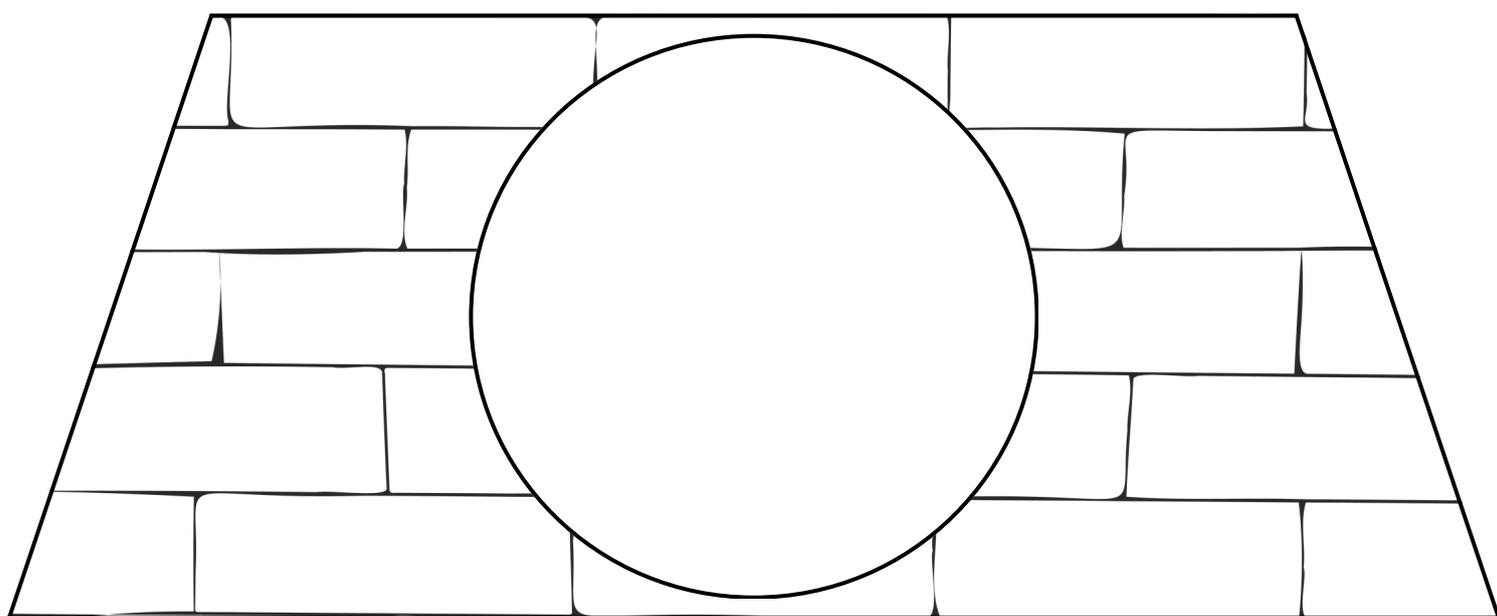
<https://www.alexjwright.co.uk/sir-john-laing-making-of-the-centenary-sculpture> (7 mins 46 secs).

**2. Imagine you could commission a new statue.**

- Who will your statue be of?
- Why do they deserve to have a statue of them put up?
- Draw a design for the statue on the empty plinth.
- Write their name and a sentence about them on the statue's round plaque.



## Design a Statue



# Engaging Plenary Ideas



Quick suggestions for use as discussion questions or as purposeful plenaries at the end of a lesson to review learning and reflection.

Describe John Laing in 5 words.

What have you learnt about John Laing? You can only use 3 words.

What part of John Laing's life would you like to see as a painting? Why?

What life lesson have you learnt from the story of John Laing?

What is the first word that comes to mind when you think of John Laing?

Do you think you would get along with John Laing? Give a reason for your answer.

Write a job description for John Laing in two sentences.

What would the newspaper headline be for John Laing's life?

What advice do you think John Laing would give you about your life?

You are going to do an interview with Sir John Laing. Prepare some questions to ask him.

John Laing was often kind. Think of a time when someone showed you kindness.

What part of John Laing's life would you make into a short film?



# Engaging Plenary Ideas



Quick suggestions for use as discussion questions or as purposeful plenaries at the end of a lesson to review learning and reflection.

Create a tagline for the life of John Laing.

If you could be 'a fly on the wall' in one part of John Laing's life – what part of his life would it be?

If John Laing (1879 - 1978) was alive today, what do you think would surprise him?

Come up with a name for a board game based on John Laing's life.

If you could spend a day with John Laing (Laing's built Coventry cathedral) or Basil Spence (Spence was the architect of Coventry cathedral), which would you choose and why?

You have visited Coventry cathedral. Write a short postcard to a friend about your visit.

If John Laing had a social media account, what do you think he would post about?

What advice do you think John Laing would give you about your life?

What life lesson have you learnt from the story of John Laing?

Sizewell B Power Station and Coventry Cathedral were both built by Laings. They are sometimes known as 'the power and the glory'. If you could visit only one of these Laing buildings, which would you choose? Give a reason for your choice.

You are going to write a book about John Laing's life. Think of an imaginative title for your book.

You are going to do an interview with Sir John Laing. Prepare some questions to ask him.



# Review Sheet



## The Life of Sir John Laing

What did you find most interesting or surprising about Sir John Laing?

What question would you like to ask Sir John Laing?

What inspired or challenged you most about Sir John Laing's life?



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Ask pupils to fill in an exit ticket to hand in before they leave the classroom. Pick the question most suitable for your class or differentiate by pupil.

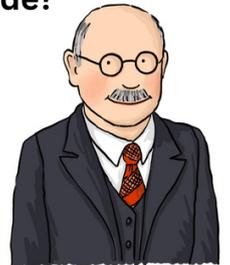
**Write down a question you would like to ask John Laing about his life.**



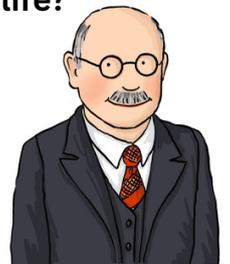
**What part of John Laing's life was the most interesting to you?**

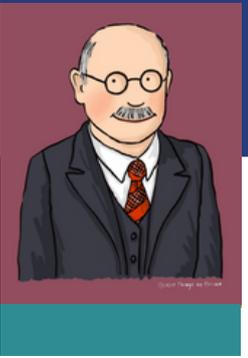


**If you had to create a quiz for this lesson, what 2 questions would you include?**



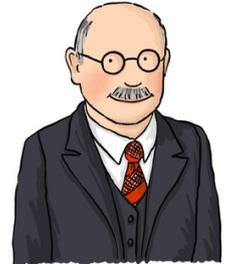
**Is there a lesson from John Laing's life that you can apply to your personal life?**



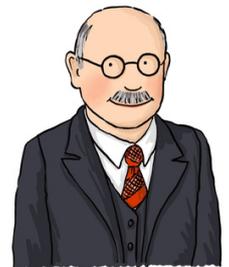


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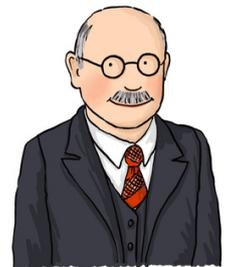
**What part of John Laing's behaviour would you like to copy?**



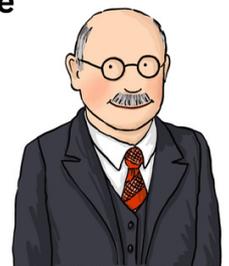
**How could what you have learnt about how John Laing's lived his life help you change the world for the better?**



**Is John Laing's life still significant today?**



**Write down five words to describe John Laing. Then narrow it down to three words.**





Ask pupils to fill in an exit ticket to hand in before they leave the classroom. Pick the question most suitable for your class or differentiate by pupil.

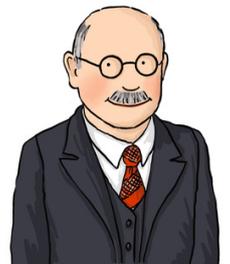
**Is there anything that you found surprising about John Laing's life?**



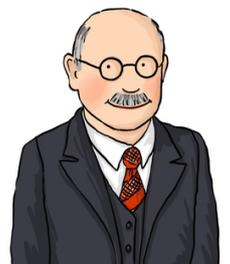
**In a year's time what would be the most useful thing to remember about John Laing's life?**



**How did his life story make you feel and why?**



**Smile as you summarize this lesson in two sentences.**

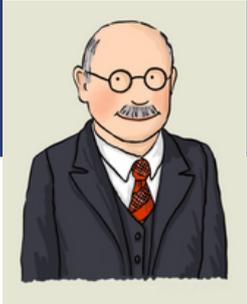




## John Laing – Classroom Display Resources

These photos and pictures can also be found as separate files in the electronic pack for you to print out or show on screen.

- Drawing of John Laing on various coloured backgrounds
- John Laing blue plaque
- Blank blue plaque
- Photos of John Laing statue
- Photo of John Laing letter



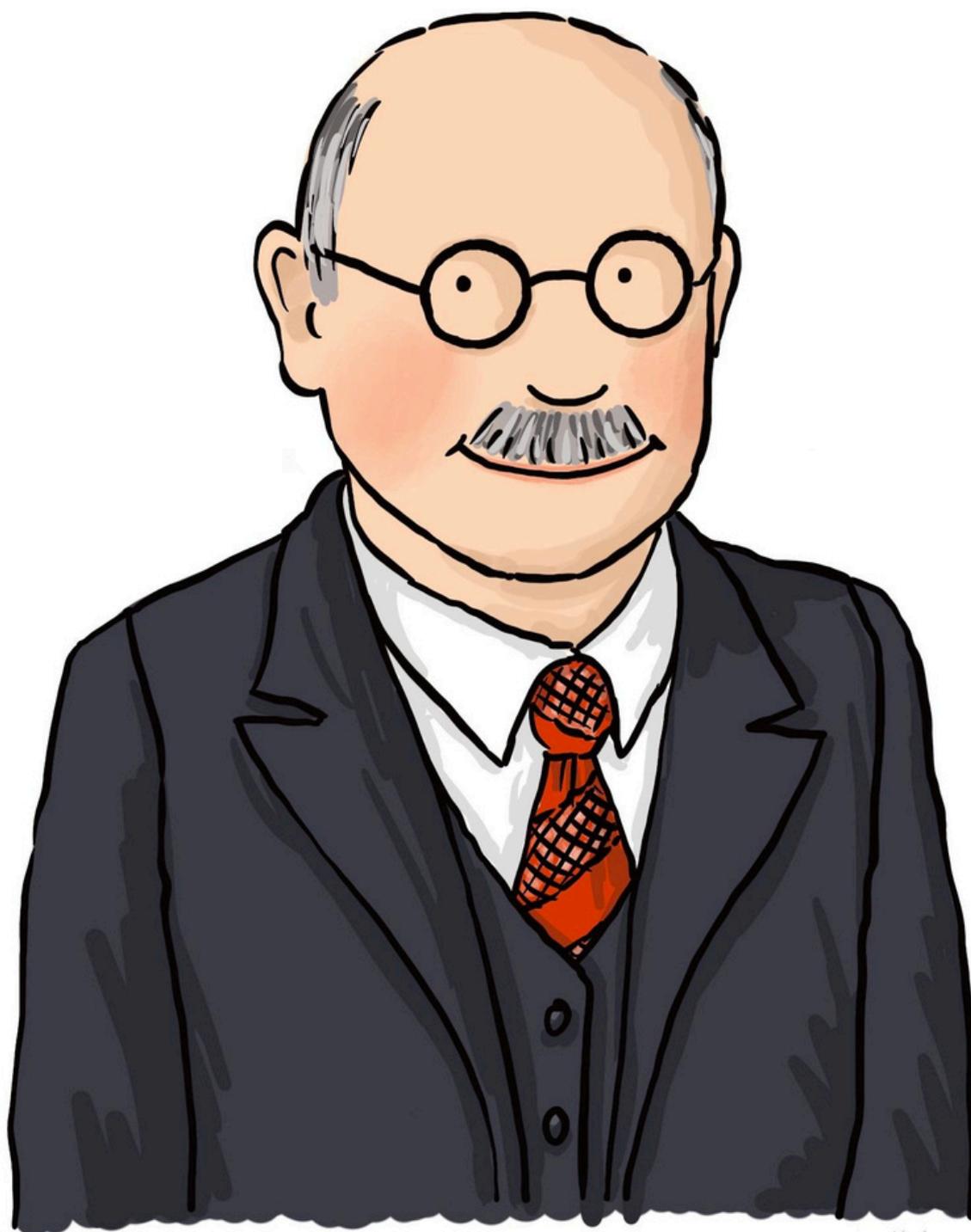












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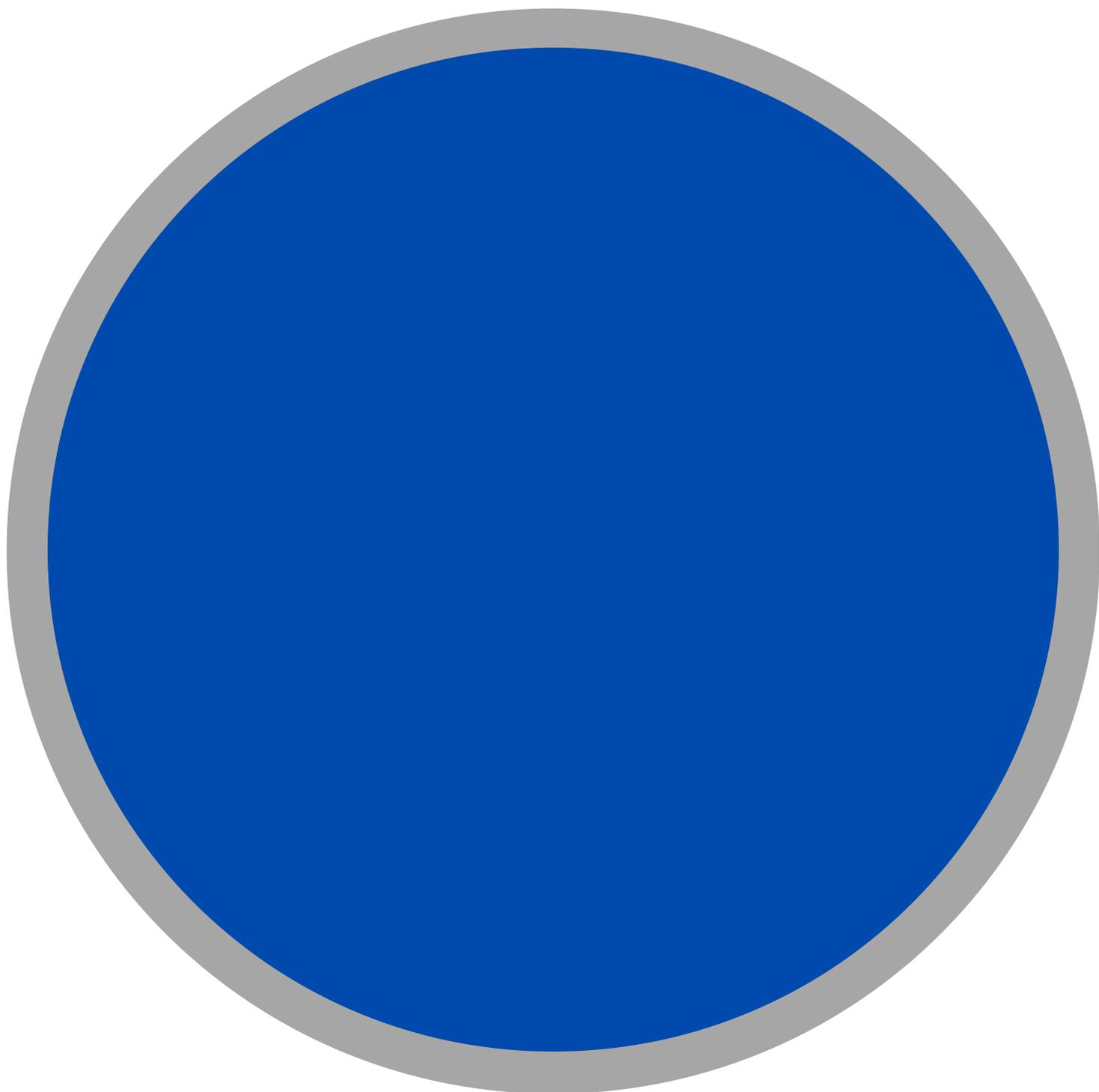


**1879 - 1978**

**Sir John William Laing CBE**

Founder of John Laing  
Construction, Philanthropist and  
Christian

Born here 1879









J. W. LAING, C.B.E., FAIR HOLME, MARSH LANE, LONDON, NW7 • Mill Hill 1665

Dear fellow worker,

We have shared together in brick,  
concrete and office work. Now I have much  
pleasure in enclosing for you a book of "Life  
and Belief", which recalls some of the more  
personal and important experiences which mean  
so much to us.

With best wishes,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "John W Laing". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line extending from the end.

# Acknowledgements

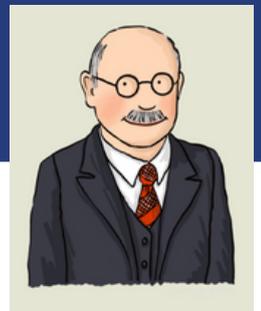


We are very grateful to The Laing Family Trust for funding this project.

<https://www.laingfamilytrusts.org.uk/>

We want to thank 'Nice Things by Helena' for the wonderful illustration of Sir John Laing.

<https://nicethingsbyhelena.com/>



There is an archive of photos, documents and videos which can be accessed by contacting the John Laing Charitable Trust via their website:

<https://johnlaingcharitabletrust.com/legacy-archive/>

You can also view some of the photos directly on the website and watch a video.

The Trust also has a webpage with information about John Laing:

<https://johnlaingcharitabletrust.com/about-us/about-sir-john-laing/>

There is some interesting information about the history and legacy of John Laing on the John Laing Building Company's website: <https://www.laing.com/about/history/>

You can view a range of photos of John Laing and his building projects in the John Laing Photographic Collection on the Historic England website: <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/photos/results/?searchType=HE+Archive&search=jlp01&filteroption=images>

## Collective Worship

Assemblies.org has a great assembly idea called Moneymakers – the Parable of the Pounds and the life of Sir John Laing on their website. It considers the question: What is the Christian attitude to wealth?:

<https://www.assemblies.org.uk/sec/2392/moneymakers--the-parable-of-the-pounds-and-the-life-of-sir-john-laing>

## Coventry Cathedral

Coventry Cathedral – [www.coventrycathedral.org.uk](http://www.coventrycathedral.org.uk)

John Laing standing on the steps of Coventry Cathedral: <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/photos/item/JLP01/08/062531>

Historic England has an RE lesson idea (a PowerPoint based teacher led presentation) called

What makes a place of Worship worth Exploring?: <https://historicengland.org.uk/services-skills/education/teaching-activities/what-makes-a-place-of-worship-worth-exploring/>

Video of how a Year 5 Class learned about the Story of Coventry Cathedral, including meeting former employees of the building company (6 mins): <https://vimeo.com/454343906> or

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sGu2NKlpqQo>

## Books

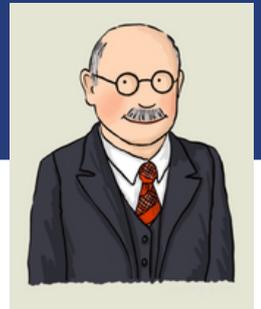
'Phoenix at Coventry' by Basil Spence (1962)

'Laing' by Roy Coad (1979)

'Life and Belief in the experience of John Laing' by Godfrey Harrison (1954)

'The Good Builder – The John Laing Story' by Berry Ritchie (1997)

Building to Share: The Story of John Laing (Faith in Action 1998) - Pupil book



## Positive Role Models

There has been much recent public discussion around the need for positive role models, particularly for boys, with the publication of The Lost Boys Report: [www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk/library/lost-boys](http://www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk/library/lost-boys)

Gareth Southgate's Dimbleby lecture: [www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/m00293l5/the-richard-dimbleby-lecture-sir-gareth-southgate](http://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/m00293l5/the-richard-dimbleby-lecture-sir-gareth-southgate)

Netflix series, 'Adolescence': <https://www.netflix.com/gb/title/81756069>

## Various

Making of Sir John Laing Centenary Sculpture (statue): <https://www.alexjwright.co.uk/sir-john-laing-making-of-the-centenary-sculpture>

Obituary:- Sir John Laing: [https://www.dumville.org/laing/photo\\_pages/johnlaing.html](https://www.dumville.org/laing/photo_pages/johnlaing.html)

John Laing's Blue plaque – Newspaper article: <https://www.newsandstar.co.uk/news/25214579.blue-plaque-unveiled-carlisle-sir-john-laing>

RE Quest Resources – Sir John Laing, A Real Hero: <https://request.org.uk/resource/people/significant-people/a-real-hero-sir-john-laing/>

Facts and timeline: <https://www.geni.com/people/Sir-John-William-Laing/6000000001477072526>

## Places to Visit

Coventry Cathedral, 1 Hill Top, Coventry, West Midlands, CV1 5AB

Laing's Blue Plaque, 21 Newcastle Street, Carlisle

Statue of Sir John Laing at Furness Abbey, Barrow-In-Furness, Cumbria, LA13 0PJ