

MLA EAST OF ENGLAND LEARNING NETWORK PROJECT

Background Information

Service name	Hertfordshire Museums
Description of activity / project	In 2007 the monument to Thomas Clarkson in Wadesmill was restored. The local primary school were asked if they would be involved in the project to restore the monument and to produce an exhibition that could be displayed in the local museum. This project was part of the Hidden Histories project led by Hertfordshire Archives and Library Service (HALS) which investigated the links between people in Hertfordshire, the slave trade and abolition. The project was funded by Heritage Lottery Fund.
Timescale (or ongoing)	July 2007 – December 2007
Main audience / user focus	Key Stage 2 pupils at Thundridge Primary School
Partners	Ware Museum Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies Historic Environment Department, Hertfordshire County Council Theatre Is ...
Project / programme objectives	To increase awareness of the significance of the role of Thomas Clarkson in the abolition of slavery. To restore the monument that was erected to mark his resting place between Cambridge and London where he made his life changing decision to spend the rest of his life working for the abolition of the slave trade.
GLO and GSO piloting objectives	To use the Generic Social Outcomes and Generic Learning Outcomes to provide a broader picture of the outcomes of the project.
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1. **What** were the key outcome(s) measured

GLOs:

- Knowledge and understanding
- Skills
- Attitudes and values

- Enjoyment, inspiration, creativity
- Activity, behaviour and progression

GSOs:

- **Health and well being** – helping children and young people to enjoy life and make a positive contribution
- **Strengthening Public Life**

2. **How** you measured the extent to which the outcome / outcomes were met (Include any of the following developed for your project: questionnaires; interview or focus group guides; observation schedules)

- Photographs
- Minutes of meetings
- Emails and letters
- Letters of thanks from children after visiting Hertfordshire Archives
- Focus group with staff from the school to talk about their reactions and the reactions of the children to the project
- Observing and talking with children at school, in the museum and in the archives
- Press cuttings

3. **Who** you collected evidence from

- Head teacher and teachers from Thundridge School
- Museum staff
- HALS staff
- Freelance museum educator

4. **Who** collected the evidence:

- Museums Learning Officer
- Hidden Histories Project Officer

5. **How** you analysed the evidence

I went through all my evidence and looked for key examples that matched the GLOs and GSOs and then presented this in a written report. I haven't included photos in the report as I thought it might make the document size too large but in several cases they were key pieces of evidence. If I was presenting this report formally I would want to use the photos - much more interesting than lots of words!!

6. **How** you presented the findings

(Include a summary of the findings)

- A written report

7. **How** you used, or plan to use, the findings

(For example to inform service development or for advocacy)

- To feed into the evaluation for the HLF as the Hidden Histories project is completed.
- For presentation at the E2BN conference in June.

- To feed back to the Herts, Beds and Luton Education Forum whose members include Museum staff, Extended Schools Coordinators and the Hertfordshire Adult Learning Partnership. Hazel Courtley, MLA East of England, will be addressing the meeting in June and those of us who attended the Learning network will contribute to the session as well

8. Comments on the piloting process
(Including what you learned, what went well and any challenges or problems)

I was pleased and surprised to discover how much evidence we all collect as a matter of course eg photographs, notes of meetings, anecdotes and comments made by those taking part in a project. The Learning Network was a good means of showing how evidence can be 'firmed up' so that it can be presented in a meaningful way to a wider audience, particularly partners and funders.

It was good to address the issue of overusing the evidence. Indeed the group as a whole seemed very conscious of this. I think it is always a risk when talking to those who identify more readily with figures that anything 'soft' can easily be dismissed or discounted.

It was particularly valuable to work with colleagues on real 'warts and all' situations, this made the exercises we did much more useful and transferable.

9. Finally, give details of anything that surprised you about the piloting process.

Not a surprise perhaps but it was good to see that the GLOs and GSOs could be applied realistically to a very wide range of projects and some meaningful evaluation drawn from them.

Jane Munns
MLA Learning Network
Evaluation report – April 2008

Project: Thundridge Primary School 'Making a Difference'

Intended Audience for the evaluation –

To be submitted as part of the HLF Evaluation report for the Hidden Histories project
Colleagues within the museum service

Outline of the project

In July 2007 Thundridge Primary School were approached and asked if they would like to participate in a project focusing on the restoration of the monument to Thomas Clarkson that had been erected in 1879 to mark his involvement with the campaign to abolish slavery. The monument was erected to mark the spot where Thomas Clarkson stopped to rest on his way from Cambridge to London and where he made his historic decision to spend the rest of his life actively campaigning against slavery. Over the years the monument had fallen into a state of disrepair. With the Bicentenary of the Abolition of the Slave Trade in 2007 the decision was taken to restore the monument and to hold a ceremony to re-dedicate.

The monument to Thomas Clarkson is on the old A10, and the school is approximately 300 metres away, in the village of Thundridge.

The project was a partnership project between the Museum Service, Hertfordshire Archives Local Studies and the Historic Environment Department of Hertfordshire County Council and was funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Quantative Evaluation

Forty six Key Stage 2 children from Thundridge School took part in the project along with their class teachers, the head teacher, teaching assistants and several parents who accompanied them and provided transport on the visits they made.

Throughout the project a range of other people and organisations were involved. These included:

- Museums Learning Officer
- Freelance Museum Educator
- The Head of the Historic Environment Unit
- Staff from Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies
- Ware Museum
- The Rhodes Partnership (consultants responsible for the actual restoration of the monument)
- Theatre Is ...

Qualitative Evaluation

I knew from conversations and observations throughout the project with many of those involved that the project had been a success on many levels. The school led by an enthusiastic and committed head teacher with class teachers who took the project on wholeheartedly, commented positively and were delighted with the responses of the children. While it was pleasing to hear from staff that the project

enabled the school to work in a topic based rather than a subject based way with excellent academic outcomes for the children I was keen to use GLOs and GSOs to feed into the evaluation as I felt the outcomes identified by the participants covered a far broader range than those relating to the children's performance in school.

Looking through the evidence that I gathered I identified examples of all the GLOs. As far as the GSOs were concerned there was less evidence for them and I felt that the one best represented by the evidence was Health and Well being - helping children and young people to enjoy life and make a positive contribution.

GLOs

Knowledge and Understanding

This is an obvious outcome for a school based learning topic but when I spoke to the school staff they commented that the children were still referring back to the topic. Staff felt that the project would be something that many of them would remember throughout their lives.

The teachers felt that the children were the beginning to understand human rights and what it meant to have these taken away. Staff felt confident that the children would be able to build on this understanding in the future.

Referring to the work the children undertook on the abolition of slavery the head teacher commented that the children '*have understood how important changes can come about through determined effort*'*they have written meaningful biographies, reports and poems which show the depth of their understanding*

The school played a major role in the re- dedication event along with many other people who had been involved in the project. The school felt that this was a significant event for everyone involved and underlined the fact that one individual can make a difference. They were thrilled to meet Tom Clarkson who is a direct descendant of Thomas Clarkson.

In Ware Museum the children found out what a museum display might consist of and decided what they would like their display to include. The exhibition which was one of the stated outcomes of the project, incorporated the children's ideas.

Skills

Photographs showed the children engrossed in field work in the village identifying buildings that Thomas Clarkson would have seen. This was a follow on activity from their visit to the Hertfordshire Archives where they looked at primary sources including maps dating from the 1800s.

They visited the local museum and were shown how to 'read' and handle artefacts. They continued this work at school – photographic evidence shows the children engrossed and involved in this.

The teachers commented that the children's historical enquiry skills greatly improved. The children loved the idea of being history detectives and quickly learnt the difference between what they could actually find out from documents and what

they could deduce. They also realised that there were some things that they couldn't find out from these primary sources.

In literacy they have been given '*a real reason to write*' – poetry, factual accounts, biographies etc.

They came up with questions and interviewed the County Archaeologist and the consultants from the stone masons. They were also given the opportunity to try on protective clothing and use some of the tools on pieces of stone.

Attitudes and values

The theme of the topic was 'Making a Difference'. The school used the decision that Thomas Clarkson made at Wadesmill as the starting point to the project and considered its' impact. The children were challenged to think about the impact they could have and the issues that they were concerned about in their daily lives. As part of the re- dedication celebrations each child signed a pledge stating how they hoped to make a difference in the future. The photos that were taken as they wrote these showed the seriousness with which they undertook the task.

Enjoyment, inspiration, creativity

Photographs provided ample evidence of these outcomes. The work with Theatre Is .. resulted in a performance at the re- dedication day. This was identified as one of the highlights of the project. This has had a longer term impact as the school since participated in the Local Schools Sports Partnership by developing a costumed dance. They have been commended on the originality of their performance. This was something they would not have done before their involvement in the project.

The children also expressed themselves through poetry, art and performance.

One very experienced teacher said that she had enjoyed teaching the topic more than she had enjoyed teaching anything for years.

Activity, behaviour and progression

One teacher commented that '*... some children have been given a voice*' through the project.. She commented on one child, bright but often not really involved, who had responded positively to the project in a way that hadn't been seen in school before.

The school have chosen the Caribbean as a Geography topic for the Spring term. This was entirely a result of the children's continued interest in the project. The head commented that when the children cooked in school using ingredients from the Caribbean such as sugar, they referred back to things they remembered from the previous topic. One teacher commented that '*.. this doesn't usually happen.... They usually move on very quickly ...*'

GSOs

Health and Well being - *helping children and young people to enjoy life and make a positive contribution.* – not too sure about this, perhaps I am pushing my evidence?

Evidence in the form of photographs, email and letters and comments from guests as well as children and staff showed that taking part in the re-dedication event was a

positive experience for the children. Their teachers felt that it was important for them to have been involved so they could see how their work and what they had learnt fitted into the bigger picture. Their drama / dance was performed for an audience including their families, local people, members of the Stevenage African Caribbean Society, local families whose descendants were involved with the abolition campaign, local councillors and officials as well as staff from the archives, museums etc. During the day they also read their poetry, decorated monument biscuits and served these to guests as well as signing their pledges to make a difference.

*I have copied the last 2 paragraphs from GLO Knowledge and Understanding as they illustrate GSO **Strengthening Public Life** as well.*

The school played a major role in the re- dedication event along with many other people who had been involved in the project. The school felt that this was a significant event for everyone involved and underlined the fact that one individual can make a difference. They were thrilled to meet Tom Clarkson who is a direct descendant of Thomas Clarkson.

In Ware Museum the children found out what a museum display might consist of and decided what they would like their display to include. The exhibition which was one of the stated outcomes of the project, incorporated the children's ideas.

Conclusion

Overall the project was a great success for the school. The comments from the staff and the reactions of the children were all positive. I did ask if there was anything that they would have changed and to identify any part that was less successful. However, they didn't think there was anything that they would have changed.

Other participants, including museum and archive staff, were also pleased with the way the project ran and with the final display in the museum. The display has been used at the final event for the Hidden Histories project and the school have asked to borrow it for their open day in the summer term. I have been asked to present the project at a conference for teachers in the summer term.

The GSO that I had expected to be met by the project was strengthening communities as this was a project that took place within a small local community and involved several organisations within the community. I think it probably was as the school came into contact with several groups that they wouldn't have met without their involvement with this project. I think that my lack of evidence for this was probably as a result of my collection of data by not contacting a wide enough range of people. I probably should have also arranged time to speak to the children and their families to find this out. This shows the importance of a good question as my questions seemed to lead the staff to talk mainly about school based learning.

I also wish that I had taken time to collate this evidence as the project had progressed as I think I would have finished with a more satisfactory written report. The Learning Network has taught me this!, especially on a project that lasted for several months and involved a wide range of people, some of whom only had a brief involvement with the school. It was difficult to find a time to go back to the school to

talk to the staff once the project was completed as other factors such as Christmas, Ofsted and bad weather all intervened!

Finally I really appreciated having a 'critical friend' to read the report through and I think that working with the network has given me many 'critical friends' that I hope I could call on in the future.