

Foundations of  
museum learning  
**Dr John Stevenson**

Gaining real insight  
into audiences  
**Colin Mulberg**

A Midsummer Night's  
Dream at Blackwell  
**Esther Rutter, Lisa Keys  
and Rachael Lennon**

Digital sketchbooks  
**Helen Ward and  
Adrian Brooks**

Cardboard castles  
**James Brunt**

Volunteering alongside  
friends and families  
**Oomar Dhuru**

Managing a school trip  
across eight museums  
**Kate Noble**

An adventure in China  
**Lucy Wright**

Increasing access to  
law-related heritage sites  
**Rebecca Buck**

New audiences for  
Bath museums  
**Zoe Dennington**

A gravestone as a  
starting point  
**Michael Gorely**

**Gem**  
the voice for  
heritage learning

GEM champions  
excellence in  
heritage learning  
ISSN 1759-6378

# Case Studies

Vol.14 2015



# What is GEM?

## Editorial

GEM champions excellence in heritage learning to improve the education, health and well-being of the general public.

GEM believes that involvement with our rich and diverse heritage is an enriching and transformational experience that provides distinctive opportunities for learning. We aim to make that learning accessible, relevant and enjoyable for all. GEM works with its members and collaboratively with other learning organisations across the UK and internationally to:

- champion excellence in heritage learning and participation enabling people to be inspired by, value and enjoy their and other's heritage;
- advocate the power of heritage learning in transforming people's lives to sector organisations, national agencies, funders and government;
- influence sector organisations to deliver excellent learning and participation for their visitors;
- promote and explain the benefits of learning through heritage which is inclusive, sustainable and respectful of communities;
- develop creative partnerships with other organisations to share effective practice in heritage learning and participation;
- research and pioneer innovation in heritage learning and participation;
- inspire and support the work of heritage learning practitioners;
- provide opportunities for practitioners to develop their practice through networking, mentoring and learning together.

Case Studies 14 opens with details of GEM's successful piloting of a foundation course in museum learning as part of its vision for the continuing professional development of all those involved in heritage learning.

This edition showcases the exciting ways that our heritage learning colleagues are working to engage with and develop their audiences. *Gaining real insight into audiences* reveals how one museum learnt to use audience profiles and other useful techniques in planning its redevelopment.

When museum resilience is on everyone's lips, it's good to read of partnership working within the heritage sector to share expertise, make valuable economies of scale and improve capacity. *New audiences for Bath museums* describes how three organisations worked together with the aim of creating long-term community engagement partnerships. *Increasing access to law-related heritage sites* demonstrates how partnership working can help smaller sites develop new learning programmes.

Museums have often struggled to engage students aged 11 to 21. Three museums share their experiences, including using digital technology as a tool (*Digital sketchbooks*), working with teenage museum ambassadors to develop discovery packs (*Managing a school trip across eight museums*) and involving student interns in delivering sessions to schools (*Increasing access to law-related heritage sites*).

Arts Award continues to be a valuable method of engaging and rewarding children and young people. *A Midsummer Night's Dream at Blackwell* describes how three heritage organisations used Arts Award Explore as a framework for learning with pupils aged eight to eleven.

Two articles look at family learning in different contexts. *An adventure in China* gives helpful ideas when developing or refreshing a family backpack for use in galleries. *Volunteering alongside friends and families* describes activities that encourage both intergenerational learning among volunteers and new forms of engagement with the public.

Finally, *Cardboard castles and A gravestone as a starting point* remind us how visits to heritage sites can be the catalyst for exciting learning and skills development back at school whether through creative, imaginative building or detailed, historical research.

Enjoy reading your copy of Case Studies. If you would like to share a project or programme, please do submit a case study for the November 2015 edition. The deadline for submissions is 16 September 2015.

**Jo Roberts**

Group for Education in Museums  
54 Balmoral Road, Gillingham  
Kent ME7 4PG  
Tel/Fax: 01634 853424  
office@gem.org.uk  
www.gem.org.uk

Foundations of museum learning  
**Dr John Stevenson**  
GEM

# Foundations of museum learning

## Summary

*GEM's Foundation Course: Museum Learning, piloted last year, is part of GEM's new continuing professional development (CPD) framework consisting of a competency framework, CPD at all levels and professional membership.*

## Background

GEM has been supporting heritage educators for over 65 years through its publications, training and networking events, both nationally and locally.

Many staff, freelance workers, consultants and volunteers are involved in managing or delivering heritage learning activities. Some have a background in education, many do not. All are crucial in ensuring that museums are engaged with their communities and improving the education, health and well-being of the general public.

We need a highly skilled and respected workforce that is inspired, motivated and innovative; has the highest standard of best professional practice; and puts CPD at its heart.

GEM's plans include:

- Identifying the core competencies of the heritage learning workforce.

- Providing CPD at foundation, intermediate and advanced levels.
- Developing a peer-reviewed professional membership scheme that recognises the professional knowledge, skills and expertise of GEM members.

Our CPD framework is based on considerable feedback from GEM members and stakeholders, and from surveys and reviews. A clear CPD route is needed for those wishing to progress through a career in heritage education. It should embrace all those involved with museum learning including career-changers, volunteers and managers.

## Challenge

To create a high quality introductory course that would be a foundation for further professional development, and meet the expectations of employers. Harnessing the "GEM ethos" to the delivery of the course to reduce costs was also a challenge.

## Approach

A key element of the framework, our *Foundation Course: Museum Learning* is aimed at those at the beginning of their heritage education career whether paid or unpaid.

## Intended outcomes

Learning outcomes for the participants on the pilot course (October 2014 to February 2015) included understanding:

- the variety of heritage learning;
- audiences and their learning needs;
- how to engage audiences;
- learning theory and practice.

The outcomes for GEM included:

- a better understanding of the needs of participants;
- a way of providing mentoring to participants;
- a more effective course.

Professional  
Development

## Intended outputs

Participants were expected to:

- keep a reflective journal;
- develop a CPD action plan;
- complete a work-based assignment;
- receive mentoring.

## Obstacles and issues

To reduce costs we harnessed the willingness of GEM members to share their skills and experiences with others. We were very fortunate to acquire John Reeve as the course director to work on this basis, along with session leaders and mentors.

## Actual outcomes

Participant feedback and our own observations confirmed that the outcomes were achieved.

## Actual outputs

The reflective journal, CPD action plan and work-based assignment gave participants an opportunity to reflect on their practice. Mentoring in particular was much appreciated by the participants.

## Lessons learned

We received much helpful feedback such as:

- increase the amount of practical work;
- focus more on the WHY and HOW of what we do rather than the WHAT.

## Next steps

Based on the success of the pilot, we now plan to deliver the foundation course at least annually.

In 2015, we will pilot some of the modules which form the intermediate level of GEM's CPD programme. In addition, we will trial a peer-reviewed category of professional membership and develop our competency framework.

**Dr John Stevenson**  
Director, GEM

## Further information

john@gem.org  
office@gem.org.uk  
www.gem.org.uk

# Gaining real insight into audiences

## Summary

For the re-development of the Royal Marines Museum (RMM), we created a range of approaches to help us understand potential and existing audiences, including schools, families and Royal Marine veterans. We then used these to inform project decision making and to ensure that each audience was catered for in the new museum.

## Background

RMM is planning to relocate to new premises in the Portsmouth Historic Dockyard. This provides a great



opportunity to plan a new visitor experience for a wide range of audiences, including new galleries, displays, interpretation, facilities and educational services.

## Challenge

Developing a great visitor experience requires really deep insight into audiences: their interests, motivations, values, visiting patterns and what they want out of a visit. This goes far beyond standard visitor research and required new thinking and an innovative approach.

## Approach

We adapted techniques from human-centred design and those used in the commercial sector to understand customers. These included:

- Knowledge audit: to assess everything we already know about our visitors, identify deficiencies and then target further audience research to plug the gaps.
- Audience profiles: distil key information for each audience type into one chart with less than 500 words.
- Interest/motivation mapping: map key interests for each audience to help identify common learning opportunities.
- Visitor journeys: show learning and experience outcomes for different audiences as they journey through the museum.

## Intended outcomes

A thorough understanding of our audiences helps the project team, learning team and museum designers to plan something outstanding for a wide range of visitors.

## Intended outputs

Visitor insight is fed into all stages of the project, helping to develop the project rationale, early ideas, activity plan, and design proposals. Our deep understanding of visitors is also used to check ideas and proposals as they progress.

## Obstacles and issues

Visitor knowledge and information is spread right across the museum, so a wide range of staff contributed to the knowledge audit. As the audit developed, it went far beyond standard sources (for example, reports and evaluations) to include less traditional information sources (for example, shop sales during events, Twitter/Facebook analysis, and formal and informal enquiries). It took considerable time to gather all the information for the audit and feed it into the audience profiles.

## Actual outcomes

The audience profiles and visitor journeys are very visual ways of conveying information and are not only useful for planning, but also for reports and presentations. They have become powerful means of

communicating “soft” data on audiences, to stack against more quantitative information. The visitor journeys are useful for suggesting future possibilities without the time and expense of commissioning designs or pictorials.

## Actual outputs

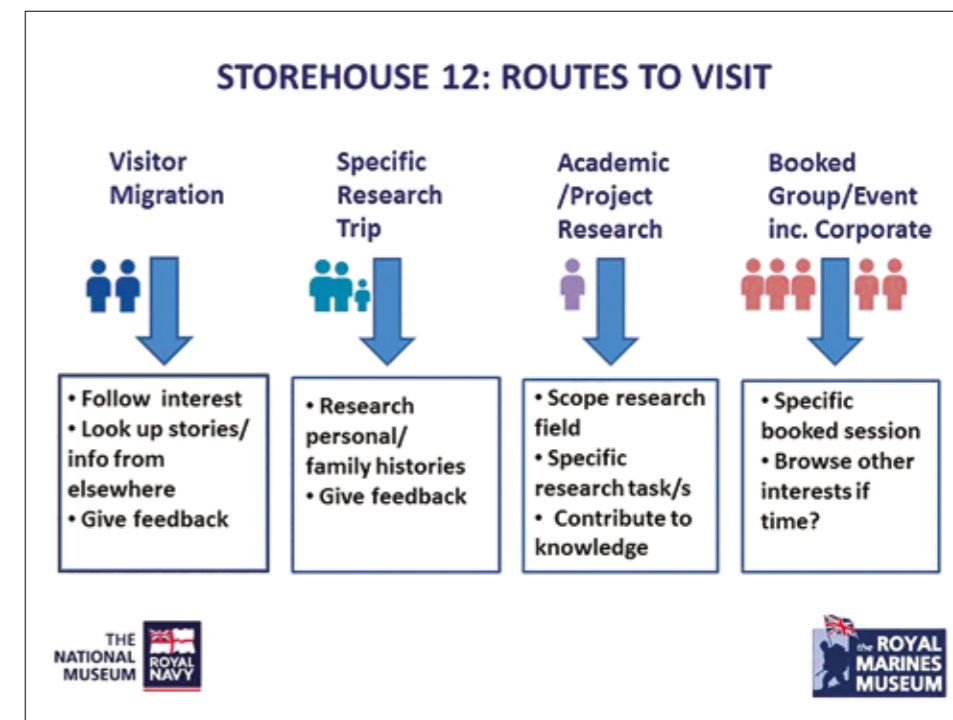
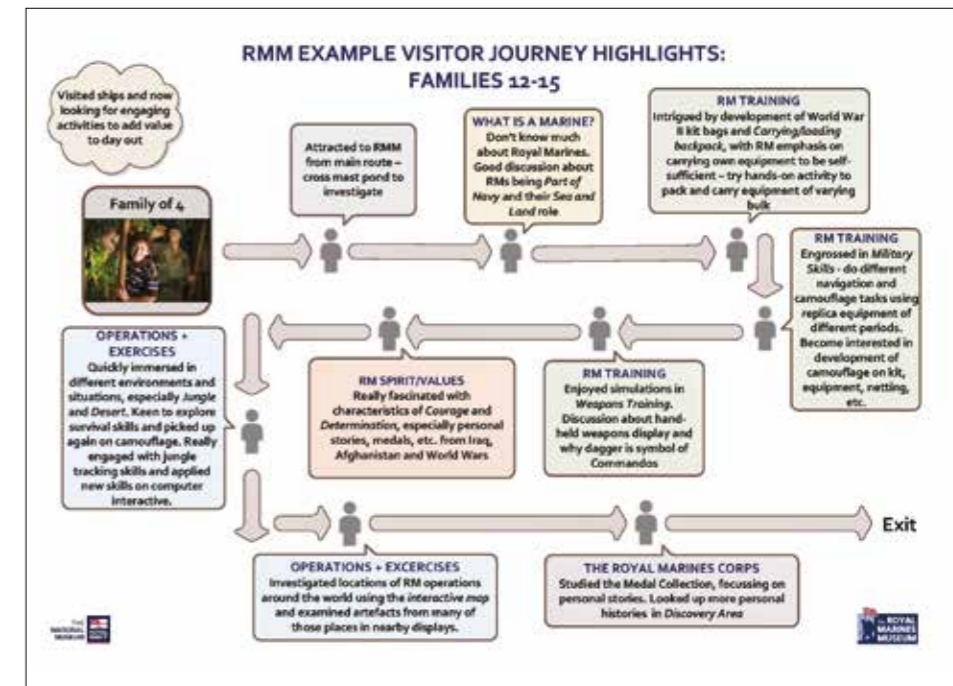
The focus on audiences has placed visitors at the centre of the new museum proposals. This focus has spread into other areas of activity in the museum (for example, planning public education programmes and marketing). The audience profiles have become the central point to record and store visitor information across the museum and now all visitor research is written up and relevant information added to the profiles. The profiles have also introduced a shared language across different museum functions, allowing staff in different areas of work to discuss and plan together.

## Lessons learned

Understanding audiences is a collaborative process; it is only worthwhile if the audience categories mean something to staff and they recognise the visitors they know and see around the museum. Otherwise, the information will not be used. The knowledge audit revealed that the museum knows a surprising amount about its visitors, but it is often buried in long-forgotten documents or needs teasing out of people’s memories. Not all information is of equal value, so it needs to be carefully analysed. It is important that staff understand the different end uses of the visitor information they are gathering, so that they know what to look for.

## Next steps

RMM is continuing to collect information on its audiences to feed into the audience profiles and these are now considered working documents. All interactions with visitors are an opportunity to learn and staff are using scheduled events to ask particular audiences simple questions



to plug the gaps in audience knowledge. The audience profiles now drive all future visitor research programmes and form a key part of background briefings for projects.

**Colin Mulberg**  
 Colin Mulberg Consulting

## Further information

[www.colinmulberg.com](http://www.colinmulberg.com)



# A Midsummer Night's Dream at Blackwell

## Summary

Three heritage arts organisations worked with a primary class from a culturally disengaged area of Cumbria to perform Shakespeare's play *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in the inspiring setting of Blackwell's Arts and Crafts house.

## Background

*Shakespeare Week* is a new national initiative for primary schools across the UK, run for the first time in 2014. Wordsworth Trust supported *Shakespeare Week* in the North West, and together with drama practitioner Lakeland Arts and Lakeland Museums' Education Network, they devised a week-long programme of activities culminating in a

performance of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at Blackwell.

## Challenge

Roose Primary is in one of the least culturally engaged areas of the country with just 39% of people regularly engaging in arts activities. Although only 20 miles from Blackwell, none of the participants had ever visited the venue. All three heritage organisations had done limited work with children from this area and were keen to engage better with schools from Barrow.

## Approach

The organisations wanted to inspire young people from Barrow to engage with not only their national literary heritage but also their local cultural heritage in a creative and interactive way, using the Arts Award Explore framework.

## Intended outcomes

To improve children's knowledge of Shakespeare's plays and language and to actively involve children and their families in the cultural life and heritage of Cumbria.

To provide an opportunity for the staff at the organisations to act as advisers on an Arts Award Explore project for the first time.

## Intended outputs

Performance of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at Blackwell and Arts Awards at Explore level for all participants.

## Obstacles and issues

Location: Cumbria is one of the UK's most rural counties, with expensive public transport and a population economically and culturally divided between those living in the affluent Lake District and those living outside the national park. Many people from cultural "cold spots" like Barrow never visit local places of cultural importance, perceiving them to be the preserve of tourists, and being unable to afford the cost of a visit.

Diverse educational needs: the class were of hugely mixed ability, and included children with autism and profound deafness. We initially advertised the project to pupils from ages nine to eleven, but as the staff at Roose were so keen for us to work with their eight to nine-year-old learners, we agreed to do so. Enthusiasm can



take you a lot further than "levels" and standard assessment test scores!

## Actual outcomes

All the children learned and performed lines from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, along with making props and devising costumes. None of the children had visited either Dove Cottage or Blackwell before, and all of them said that visiting these places was a highlight of the project. The

school arranged for a coach to take older siblings, parents and friends to see the performance, so the whole community was very engaged in the project and many adults got to visit Blackwell for the first time.

## Actual outputs

An enjoyable public performance of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was held at Blackwell on the Friday afternoon of *Shakespeare Week*. A video of the

performance was made and all children kept a learning log of their experience throughout the week. Every child in the class took part and all achieved an Arts Award at Explore level, supported by staff from the Wordsworth Trust, Lakeland Arts and Lakeland Museums' Education Network.

## Lessons learned

- Achieving Arts Awards gave the project greater validity for teachers, pupils and parents. It provided a framework for learning and a way of rewarding participation.
- The focus of the project was to perform the play in a week, rather than developing teachers' and parents' skills to continue to support the children's cultural involvement. This meant that the project was costly in terms of spend per child, and in the future we would aim to develop more adults to support their children within their local community, thereby allowing greater benefit.

## Next steps

This was the first time that any organisation had taken part in Arts Award Explore or *Shakespeare Week*. As it was such a positive experience, all involved would like to work in this kind of partnership and be involved in these initiatives again.

## Esther Rutter

Education development manager,  
Wordsworth Trust

## Lisa Keys

Co-ordinator, Lakeland Museums  
Education Network

## Rachael Lennon

Learning and interpretation officer,  
Lakeland Arts

## Further information

[www.shakespeareweek.org.uk](http://www.shakespeareweek.org.uk)  
[www.wordsworth.org.uk](http://www.wordsworth.org.uk)  
[www.blackwell.org.uk](http://www.blackwell.org.uk)  
[www.cumbriamuseums.org.uk/  
cumbrian-cultural-learning-networks](http://www.cumbriamuseums.org.uk/cumbrian-cultural-learning-networks)



# Digital sketchbooks

## Using tablets to support a museum art visit

### Summary

Over the last year, the Ashmolean Museum has been working with Marlborough Church of England School to explore how tablets can be used on a museum art trip. With support from Arts Council England through a major partner museum grant, the museum has created an online learning package that includes a series of short films.

### Background

Each year the Ashmolean welcomes 16,000 secondary students, many studying art and design. An art education officer who works with all the Oxford University Museums leads this programme.

### Challenge

The Ashmolean has a small set of teaching iPads but it is not viable for the museum to provide sets of tablets for large art and design groups. Our aim was to create materials to inspire and support teachers, and for students to bring their own tablets to the museum.

### Approach

We consulted with teachers through the Oxford Art Teach (OAT) network and recruited a local secondary school to work with on the design of two workshops. Material for the online package was collected by filming the workshops with students at the Ashmolean (with the help of the Oxford University media production unit), plus a follow up visit to the school.

### Intended outcomes

- Raise art teachers' awareness of how tablets might be used in a museum setting and to offer practical support about their use.
- Provide opportunities for students to research, record and be creative using tablets on a museum visit.

### Intended outputs

- Development of two iPad workshops focusing on the use of three apps: *PicCollage*, *Brushes3* and *123DCatch*.
- An online learning package including a series of short films, downloadable materials and a gallery of students' work.

### Obstacles and issues

- Teachers flagged up a need to know more about android tablets, however this went beyond the scope of this project.
- *123DCatch* relies on internet access and there were delays when pupils were attempting to upload images simultaneously.
- Maintaining the museum's set of iPads, including storing and sharing pupil work can be time consuming – we are still working out a system.
- We were essentially running two projects at the same time. Ideally, we would have trialled workshops before filming.

### Actual outcomes

- Working with iPads has really captured the imagination of students. Those with access to iPhones and iPads have learnt how they can support school art projects and have downloaded apps to use and share.
- Thirteen to fourteen-year-old students enjoyed the immediacy of

working with an iPad to create high quality designs. Sixteen to seventeen-year-old students were able to conduct more in-depth research, for example: analysing paintings.

- Using tablets seems to break down the barrier of visiting a traditional museum like the Ashmolean. There is an increased awareness of the Oxford University Museums as a valuable resource for art and design.
- Teachers report an improved understanding of working with digital technologies. Their experiences have been shared with the OAT network, contributing to ongoing wider discussion about emerging technologies in art and design.
- Museum staff have improved their knowledge and understanding of working with apps, as well as how we can best support teachers in this area.

### Actual outputs

An online resource that includes:

- Five short films: Introduction, Using *PicCollage*, Using *Brushes*, Using *123DCatch* and Conclusions.
- Downloadable PDFs for teachers and pupils: Five activities using tablets, Using *PicCollage*, Using *Brushes* and Using *123DCatch*.
- A gallery of student work.

### Lessons learned

- Apps that don't require internet access are more reliable to use in a workshop scenario.
- Simple apps worked better than sophisticated ones, ensuring the focus on museum collections was not lost.
- Teachers are overwhelmed by the number of apps available, and welcome recommendations and examples of how they might be used.
- Eleven to eighteen-year-old students often have access to smart phones and tablets, but don't necessarily see them as a learning tool.

### Next steps

- Promotion of an online learning package to schools and teaching



networks, including listing with Times Educational Supplement and iTunes U.

- Seek funding for new projects to develop our work with art teachers who want to use tablets on museum visits.

**Helen Ward**  
Deputy head of education,  
Ashmolean Museum

**Adrian Brooks**  
Art education officer,  
Oxford University Museums

### Further information

[helen.ward@ashmus.ox.ac.uk](mailto:helen.ward@ashmus.ox.ac.uk)  
[adrian.brooks@prm.ox.ac.uk](mailto:adrian.brooks@prm.ox.ac.uk)  
[www.ashmolean.org/education/dsketchbooks](http://www.ashmolean.org/education/dsketchbooks)  
[www.museums.ox.ac.uk/drupal7/content/art-education](http://www.museums.ox.ac.uk/drupal7/content/art-education)



# Cardboard castles

## Summary

Responsible Fishing UK's large-scale, cardboard box-building project (*Camp Cardboard*) was the perfect starting point for Aston All Saints Church of England primary school to develop learning from a recent visit to Conisbrough Castle in south Yorkshire and give children the opportunity to build their own interactive castle.

## Background

Responsible Fishing UK is a small arts organisation that develops big ideas with minimal environmental impact. *Camp Cardboard* was developed for the Sheffield Children's Festival in 2011 and has since toured the UK at festivals, schools and most recently around Haven holiday parks. Aston All Saints Church of England primary school booked *Camp Cardboard* specifically with the intention of supporting the children's learning following a school visit to nearby Conisbrough Castle. Following their

visit, children built 3D models of their favourite castle elements and *Camp Cardboard* was a special opportunity for children to build on their learning and create an interactive space to play in.

## Challenge

One of the key aspects the children had to overcome was how to recreate some of their model making on a life-size working scale. This involved creating spaces robust enough for play and interaction, working as a group to discuss and make compromises to the overall aesthetic in order to achieve key aims around logistics and practicality.

## Approach

Our starting point was a school hall full of flat-packed cardboard boxes and a class of children eager to build. The first task was to ask the children to tell us about their visit to Conisbrough and draw the key castle elements we would need to include in the finished piece. We then began building the boxes before working in small groups to bring the key elements to life.

## Intended outcomes

To reinforce learning within the children's castle topic and to deliver a day to remember that combined play, loads of fun and teamwork to create something on an epic scale.

## Intended outputs

A life-size working castle built using nothing but cardboard boxes, cardboard tubes and very little else.

## Obstacles and issues

One thing we learnt very quickly was that in order to achieve the children's aims of building working castle elements, such as the keep, the bailey and the portcullis we had to forget trying to recreate a scale model of Conisbrough Castle. Instead we created a working space that included all the elements, linked together through an outer wall, imagination and role play. As the build progressed we, as the artists, took on the role of potential attackers, looking for weak areas of the construction where we would plan an attack. As we pointed these areas out, the children had to quickly refocus their efforts to make that area better protected.

## Actual outcomes

What we really enjoyed was the ownership the children took over the space and their work. Having had to work together and make difficult decisions along the way, the children's pride in their castle was self-evident, even though in reality our portcullis was higher than our keep and scale was out of the window.

*Camp Cardboard* began life as a creative arts project to transform space. We now offer *Camp Cardboard*



as a themed activity to support key topics to enhance children's learning experience, developing a practical understanding of history, unleashing imaginations and bringing well-loved stories to life.

## Actual outputs

The project aims were met, but with a very different visual outcome than expected. However, the importance of making the space fully interactive meant we had to combine individual elements, rather than recreating the castle visually.

## Lessons learned

The key lesson learned for us is that the children's imaginations provided a much richer experience than painstaking attention to detail and trying to create authentic replications. The journey and the play are much more conducive to a fun experience and therefore a positive lasting memory of the project.

The opportunity for children to build and create on such a large scale unlocks imaginations and reinforces childhood. In times when children's freedom to explore and play is restricted, this project harks back to an earlier time and hopefully gives children the opportunity to explore, learn and develop a whole range of new skills through play.

## Next steps

*Camp Cardboard* continues to grow, both within schools and the festival scene. What this experience has given us is a new, more focused pathway that is relevant to schools' learning and key subject areas. Over the coming months, we will be developing new packages that showcase how *Camp Cardboard* can reinforce the curriculum and learning journey of children.

James Brunt  
Responsible Fishing UK

## Further information

james@responsiblefishinguk.co.uk  
www.responsiblefishinguk.co.uk





# Volunteering alongside friends and families

## Summary

Established learning volunteers deliver hands-on learning activities alongside their friends and family members to enthuse and inspire visitors about the natural world in various iconic Natural History Museum (NHM) galleries. Intergenerational learning and social outcomes are observed and practised.

## Background

NHM is a scientific centre of global significance and one of the world's leading visitor attractions for engagement with the natural world. The learning volunteer programme was set up in 2005 where our volunteers engage visitors, such as school groups, families, academics and many others, about the natural world using actual museum specimens and learning techniques.

## Challenge

- Introduce the first intergenerational learning delivery offer, adults alongside children, in the museum's 133-year existence.
- Address the demand from visitors, current staff and volunteers to have younger people delivering activities to their peers in galleries.
- Explore an academic question about the benefits and challenges of measuring social outcomes involving volunteers, children and partners.

## Approach

NHM investigated how plausible it was to create a programme addressing the needs of younger and older volunteer educators by extensively consulting learning volunteers and their friends and family members with regard to what they would find most engaging to deliver, and their specific needs. Bespoke activities, and management and training plans were constructed, trialled and delivered, accommodating volunteers from age seven up to 60.

## Intended outcomes

- Friends and family members learn from each other.
- Friends and family members actively engage and facilitate group and inter-group dialogue with a variety of audiences.
- Visitors develop their observational skills.

## Intended outputs

- An activity comparing and contrasting mammalian skulls.
- An activity observing, comparing and contrasting parts of animals consisting of two types of organic material.

## Obstacles and issues

Producing a training schedule that incorporated levels of learning for older and younger learners being trained during the same session became challenging. Training was revised during the programme on some days to accommodate younger learners by shortening the length of time for reflection and further discussion, and giving adult learners more time for observation and practice. Engaging with non-English speaking visitors became a challenge hence the production of multi-lingual resources.

## Actual outcomes

The social outcomes we wished to explore were met, based on observable evidence, feedback and visitor evaluation:

- Children and adults, learning from each other, learned new ways to interact with people and specimens. For example, a child volunteer said, "We get to spend far more time with



Nan and she taught us about most mammals having seven neck bones, which I showed people!"

- Familial visitor groups asked questions of our volunteers about how they participate at the museum. For example, a learning volunteer who brought her three grandchildren aged seven, ten and eleven years to volunteer alongside her said, "It's been absolutely marvellous being here. Lots of families keep asking how they can join in and do this as well and how clever the children are. Although, I don't think I could do this for more than the summer, it's fun but exhausting!"
- Couples volunteering together engaged some visitors on a different, social level, discussing their likes and dislikes about the natural world.
- An unforeseen outcome was how much visitors were clearly enjoying their interactions on a social level. When running this again I would include an outcome relating to confidence to engage with museum volunteers, specimens and scientific concepts.

## Actual outputs

Some children took to social media to

express what they were doing, even extending this to the museum's official learning Twitter feeds.

The actual activities succeeded for active engagement but I would possibly reduce the number of activities in future due to operational capacity.

## Lessons learned

- There was overwhelming positive feedback from participants about how much they learnt from and about each other.
- Visitors similarly gave consistently good feedback about this type of engagement, through official evaluation, observed comments and visitor dialogue with volunteers.
- Some young learning volunteers became self-conscious when dealing with peers approximately their same age.
- Managing children and adults in gallery spaces presents huge logistical challenges from an operational, health and safety and facilitative stance. Future iterations will still require a dedicated operational/ developmental manager to support each daily delivery.



- Other institutions were fascinated that we endeavoured this type of volunteer management, hence further collaboration with other organisations to share best practice and develop this type of engagement.
- This type of engagement was surprisingly well under budget due to use of specimens currently part of the museum's collections and well experienced methodologies. Uniforms and other resources were managed as part of the core learning volunteer programme budget meaning no extra expense was required.

## Next steps

We will now extend the *Learning Volunteer Friends and Families* offer to holiday periods and begin to open the offer to families who wish to volunteer but are not already part of the learning volunteer programme.

**Oomar Dhuru**  
Learning volunteer engagement manager, Natural History Museum

## Further information

o.dhuru@nhm.ac.uk



# Managing a school trip across eight museums

## Summary

*Activities Week ran in July 2014 when 270 students from a local secondary school visited eight University of Cambridge Museums (UCM) over three consecutive days.*

## Background

The week was planned at the end of the first year of a new strategic partnership between UCM and North Cambridge Academy. The partnership aimed to extend learning opportunities for students beyond the school walls in the hope of raising aspirations and being inspired by museums. The project was jointly funded by the University of Cambridge Widening Participation Fund and UCM, supported using public funding by Arts Council England.

## Intended outcomes

- Evidence of excitement, enjoyment and engagement with the collection.
- Examples of creative thinking, problem solving and working together as a team.

## Intended outputs

- UCM's education team worked with the museum ambassadors to create discovery packs which provided props and prompts to encourage exploration and interpretation.
- Each group produced a project recording their discoveries.

## Challenge

All pupils aged eleven to sixteen visited three or more UCM over the course of a day. The majority had no or very little prior experience of museums.

## Approach

Over the previous year teachers had taken part in training days and worked with the museums in curriculum-based sessions. A group of twelve to fourteen year old museum ambassadors from the school produced short films about three museums for other young people. The pupils visited museums which were linked according to their school house themes and subject specialisms of the form tutors.

- The project is being evaluated using the Arts Council's new quality principles as part of their phase three pilot.

## Obstacles and issues

The first challenge we encountered was the logistics involved in moving such a large number of pupils across so many sites. For various reasons the project lead changed three times over the course of the year. Also the event took place in the middle of a heat wave. By the end of the last day both staff and students were exhausted.

We put an iPad in each discovery pack to help pupils with their project. The devices were provided by the museums which meant they had to be specially prepared before and after each visit. This was extremely labour intensive and time consuming.

## Actual outcomes

Over the course of the week it was clear that pupils were both excited and engaged by their experiences in each of the museums. The group projects gave them a clear aim and the element of competition inspired them to try and produce the winning submission. As part of the evaluation, we also asked each group to make a mind map about museums pre and post-visit. These maps show a definite change in attitude of the young people towards museums from more negative to positive associations.

## Actual outputs

We produced ten discovery packs. We also collected a substantial bank of photos, films and projects which present a unique view into the experiences of the young people among our collections. These offer an insight into how teenagers view museums, and what they valued and enjoyed as part of their visit.

## Lessons learned

This partnership project demonstrated how important it is to state clear shared objectives from the beginning. In such

a big project it was easy to be overwhelmed by the details and lose sight of the overall aims.

The project was extremely resource-heavy in terms of staffing and equipment costs. This made it all the more important to plan for the legacy beyond *Activities Week*. The discovery packs will be available for other groups to use. As a group of educators we used the project as a valuable opportunity to discuss key themes across our collections and share good practice. We will now use the new quality principles to inform evaluation of projects.

It was essential to work closely with school staff to ensure the success of the visits. Three museum educators led teacher training at the school before the visits and it was clear that some staff had negative impressions of museums. This stimulated useful conversations at the time and informed our planning even further.



The use of the iPad created a whole new set of issues. In planning similar projects in future I would:

- factor into our planning the time taken on IT support,
- have a dedicated set of iPads pre-loaded and set up exclusively for the use of groups, and
- plan carefully for the different levels of consent required when creating projects with digital devices.

## Next steps

UCMs' education team will now regroup and reflect on the lessons learned and plan how to make the discovery packs available to other young people. We will continue to work closely with the school to plan further visits for their staff and pupils.

**Kate Noble**  
Education officer,  
Fitzwilliam Museum

## Further information

kjr21@cam.ac.uk



# An adventure in China

## V&A family backpacks

### Summary

In 2013 one of the Victoria & Albert Museum's (V&A) oldest and most popular backpacks *Chinese Treasures* was given a make-over. When updating an old family favourite how do you decide what to take out and what to keep?

### Background

The V&A's *Family Art Fun* programme attracts almost 65,000 families a year, with over 16,000 using backpacks. The backpack programme was the first of its kind in the UK introduced in 1998, and was awarded the Gulbenkian Prize for most imaginative education work by the Museums Association in 1999. Since then the programme has

developed to include new packs such as *Discovering Architecture* designed in partnership with architectural firm Rogers Stirk Harbour + Partners and *Agent Animal* a resource for early years.

### Challenge

*Chinese Treasures*, which explored the museum's China gallery, was originally introduced in 1999 yet remained popular for 12 years. In 2010 the gallery was redisplayed causing the removal of some of the objects used for activities and rendering the backpack unusable.

### Approach

We saw an opportunity to refresh the old favourite, updating the style and variety of activities to complement the more recent additions to the programme.

### Intended outcomes

To keep the essence of *Chinese Treasures* that made it so popular with families for so long, and produce a new and exciting backpack for families to enjoy, hopefully for another ten years.

### Intended outputs

To design and produce 20 new backpacks with a mixture of activities suitable for five to eight year olds, ready for 2013's October half-term activities inspired by the *Masterpieces of Chinese Paintings 700-1900* exhibition.

### Obstacles and issues

#### Where to start?

Evaluating the backpacks and asking families about their experiences proved incredibly helpful when starting this project. When asked what they

liked most about *Chinese Treasures* families highlighted doing jigsaws (always popular) and learning about the traditional pillow or headrest – families use a mini wooden replica pillow to try resting their head on. When asked what they would improve, one family suggested more challenges to find objects. Of the five original activities the pillow activity was kept for the new backpack.

### Quality on a budget

In designing a new resource the temptation for exciting and often expensive materials can make for difficult decisions. An early idea for the new backpack was to look at a traditional Chinese tea ceremony. We found a children's tea set available online in China, with an almost identical teapot to one on display in the gallery. Unable to source a similar version closer to home we decided the postage was worth it, and ordered 100 sets hoping we wouldn't need to re-order anytime soon. However, the remaining activities had to be even more cost effective.

### Choosing activities

Two current backpacks include audio activities using iPods, which although very popular can be tricky to maintain, including re-charging and ensuring tracks are left at the start for the next family. We decided to focus on design and sensory activities such as designing your own throne and choosing from three types of real tea leaves for your tea ceremony.

### Actual outcomes

Feedback from families since the backpack was introduced has been fantastic, with some amazing throne designs produced.

"Excellent backpack activity about China! All in the room so [we] could really settle and concentrate. Tea leaves and teapot were delightful."

### Actual outputs

Twenty *An Adventure in China* backpacks were delivered on time with enough spare resources ordered



to last, hopefully, for a good three to five years.

### Lessons learned

#### Listen to the experts

As a result of the families' feedback we chose to make finding objects for each activity more of a focus throughout the backpack, creating a treasure hunt between activities. We also asked our learning assistants who support the delivery of the family programme what they thought of *Chinese Treasures*. Their insights were very helpful; most suggested more explanation about Chinese culture and introducing a drawing activity, both of which we included in the new backpack.

#### Utilise the resources around you

Rather than using an external company to produce the replica wooden headrests, our in-house technical services team made them for us at a fraction of the cost, and even suggested adding some decoration to match the replica more closely to the original object.

#### Allow extra time

The backpack's accompanying booklet was designed in-house, but due to heavy workloads was completed very close to the print deadline. With more



time we would have created a more user-friendly map which families use to navigate the gallery.

### Next steps

*An Adventure in China* is available daily from the learning centre. The *Fancy Furnishings* backpack from 2002 will be re-launched as *Amazing Spaces* this year along with a new sensory resource *Curious Ceramics*.

### Lucy Wright

Assistant programme manager,  
families, Victoria & Albert Museum

### Further information

[l.wright@vam.ac.uk](mailto:l.wright@vam.ac.uk)

[www.vam.ac.uk/families](http://www.vam.ac.uk/families)  
[www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/b/backpacks](http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/b/backpacks)



# Increasing access to law-related heritage sites

## Summary

Funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), this innovative year-long project by the National Centre for Citizenship and the Law (NCCL) had the aim of increasing participation and learning at law-related heritage sites across the East Midlands.

## Background

NCCL is the learning arm of the Egalitarian Trust, based at Nottingham's Galleries of Justice Museum. Our courts of justice programme of citizenship and history themed, courtroom-based workshops are very successful in Nottingham and popular with our school audiences across all ages.

## Challenge

Based on NCCL's successful work in Nottingham, the challenge was to

increase access for education groups to legal heritage sites which were not currently being used to their full potential, with a focus on historic courtrooms at Leicester Castle, Northamptonshire Sessions House and Oakham Castle.

## Approach

HLF funding was used to make host sites part of a Public Legal Education Syndicate. This concept was created to allow close collaboration between a cluster of legal heritage host sites and NCCL as an established heritage education provider. This collaboration allowed NCCL to create new education sessions at each site and to run pilot sessions. We recruited student interns from Stratford-upon-Avon College and Nottingham Trent University to create and deliver the sessions, providing them with skills and experience.

selected from the HM Prison Service collection (one of the collections of the Galleries of Justice Museum) to be used for heritage learning by schools.

- Database of schools interested in accessing the host sites.
- Successful "pass" marks for the student interns in their respective courses.

## Obstacles and issues

- Logistics of working with three host sites and two groups of students, located in different places – need for good communication and organisation.

- Specific problem at Leicester Castle due to sudden closure as a result of instability of nearby church spire. Sessions were moved to Leicester town hall, not a heritage site but a public building, showing the need for contingency planning.
- Student interns from a diverse range of backgrounds had differing skill levels.
- Sessions had to be delivered when schools and students were available, reducing time for training and resource development.
- Limited availability of dates at host sites making recruiting schools more difficult logistically.

## Actual outcomes

- Thirteen student interns were engaged and all passed the module which the project formed part of. The project contributed to the students' higher national diploma in acting at Stratford-upon-Avon College and postgraduate certificate in heritage management at Nottingham Trent University.
- Sixty-two cohorts of school children participated in the sessions. Every participating teacher said they were "satisfied" or "very satisfied".
- New networks and relationships were made between project partners.

## Actual outputs

- A two-hour session inspired by the Galleries of Justice Museum's collections, delivered by the interns, with notes for teachers.
- Resources to facilitate activities, with the student interns creating and piloting prototypes, to be made professionally later.



- Long-term loans box of objects from the collections of the Galleries of Justice Museum for each host site.
- Database of local teachers who would like to take part in future sessions, and those willing to be consulted on further learning developments.

## Lessons learned

- Effective collaboration is possible between an independent museum, educational institutions and local authority managed heritage sites. This worked well because there was a dedicated project co-ordinator in post and lines of communication were kept open at all times.
- Greater understanding of what teachers want from their local heritage sites: not self-led sessions but engaging, facilitated sessions with some focus on local history.
- That one collaboration can lead to another as networks grow – future

partnership potential should be integrated in the project plan.

- Working with students as interns is effective; they bring creativity and new perspectives.

## Next steps

- Continuation of education syndicates, possibly branching away from legal heritage sites. Further funding is being sought.
- Resources and handling collections will form part of the learning offer at each host site, to be managed by them.
- Further partnership work for host sites. In Leicester, the session created for this project will be linked to an offer from the Richard III Visitor Centre; in Oakham there will be a link between its castle and the Rutland County Museum; and in Northampton the Sessions House session will link to activities provided by the museums service.

**Rebecca Buck**  
Project co-ordinator, National Centre for Citizenship and the Law

## Further information

Pollie Shorthouse  
NCCL executive director  
pollie.shorthouse@nccl.org.uk

www.nccl.org.uk  
www.ntu.ac.uk  
www.stratford.ac.uk  
www.leicester.gov.uk  
www.rutland.gov.uk  
www.northamptonshire.gov.uk

Tim Desmond, *Beyond the School: Museums and Young People*, 2009. (IPPR publication, *Learning to Live: Museums, Young People and Education*, eds. C. Oppenheim, Kate Bellamy, p. 67)

# New audiences for Bath museums

## Summary

The Holburne Museum, Bath Preservation Trust, and the American Museum in Britain worked in partnership to pilot four community engagement projects with Age UK, Bath Area Play Project, Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health National Health Service Trust, and St Mungo's Creativity Works, charities which work with people with mental health issues. Freelance artists facilitated a series of creative workshops for participants, inspired by the museum collections.

## Background

This was part of a larger Arts Council England project, *Developing Audiences for Bath Museums*, which aimed to develop a new, collaborative approach to marketing, interpretation and engagement. The project was delivered by existing museum staff, plus a community engagement co-ordinator.

## Challenge

Individual museums had enjoyed some success with community engagement projects, but it was felt that these did not do enough to tackle the persistent barriers to



engagement faced by some of Bath's communities. The museums also found it difficult to sustain community engagement work, which often relied on short-term project funding. It was felt that a joint approach would help the museums to create long-term community engagement partnerships rooted in the needs of participants.

## Approach

The community engagement co-ordinator spent six months approaching community groups with the offer of working with the museums on a cross-site pilot project designed to suit their needs. Community groups selected a freelance artist and an art-form to work in. Visits to all the sites, including creative workshops, talks, tours and play sessions, took place over a four-month period.

## Intended outcomes

The project aimed to:

- explore how the museums could work collaboratively with community groups to create projects tailored to their needs;
- establish long-term, embedded, and meaningful relationships with community groups and make this work core to the museums' purpose; and
- create a joint forward plan for community engagement.

## Intended outputs

Four evaluated pilot projects with community groups from Bath and



north east Somerset with no history of collaboration with the partner museums.

## Obstacles and issues

Cross-site timetabling and arranging transport was very time consuming. A participant-led approach demanded a great deal of flexibility from the museums and established ways of working were often challenged.

## Actual outcomes

- Strong partnerships and a desire from all the community partners to continue working with the museums.
- Closer relationships between staff in different organisations, an increased awareness of each other's work and areas of expertise, and a willingness to share resources.

## Participants commented:

"I'm 90 and this has been the most exciting experience of my retirement."

"I wasn't sure whether to do this but I'm really glad I did. It's been the best thing I've ever done."

"Can we go in the museum again?"  
(Bath Area Play Project participant)

## Actual outputs

- Thirty eight workshops, reaching 107 participants, across four pilot projects.
- An exhibition of work by participants was shown at the Building of Bath Collection, before being moved to permanent display at Hillview Lodge acute psychiatric unit.
- Free membership to all the museums for participants, and organisational membership to allow staff to bring clients to museums for one-to-one sessions.
- A joint forward plan for community engagement work.
- A symposium to share learning from the project.

## Lessons learned

- Partnership working increased capacity, allowing small museums access to larger museums' space and resources.
- Scheduling workshops at different



sites, organising transport and moving resources was very time consuming.

- Participants enjoyed having the chance to visit more than one museum, despite initial concerns that this might be unsettling. In future each organisation will co-ordinate work with one community group, but arrange visits to other sites.
- High quality art resources, transport, refreshments, and a warm and supportive environment at the museums were very highly valued by the participants.
- It was felt that additional training for freelance artists at the beginning of the project would have allowed them to facilitate a deeper engagement with museum collections.
- The partner museums also recognised the importance of embedding the values and understanding gained through the community engagement pilots in each institution's future planning to ensure long term sustainability.

## Next steps

A joint forward plan for community engagement has been put in place. Plans are being put in place to continue work with all community groups whilst a case for further funding is developed.

**Zoe Dennington**  
Head of learning,  
American Museum in Britain

## Further information

zoe.dennington@  
americanmuseum.org

Polly Andrews  
Community engagement  
co-ordinator  
pandrews@bptrust.org.uk

Christina Parker  
Head of education,  
Holburne Museum  
c.parker@holburne.org



# A gravestone as a starting point

## Summary

As part of a whole school local heritage week, three classes of seven to eight-year-old pupils from Victoria Park Primary in Bristol walked to a nearby Victorian burial ground (now a community orchard). They raised questions relating to a solitary gravestone from 1859 for a young couple who drowned in Watchet, Somerset and were buried together.

## Background

The project was part of the Heritage Schools Programme in Bristol. The aims of the programme include engaging children with the heritage of their local area, increasing

opportunities for learning outside the classroom and helping children relate local heritage to the national story.

## Challenge

To give the children an opportunity to find out about how ordinary people from their local area lived using a range of primary and secondary sources.

## Approach

In the classroom the children used the internet to search the 1851 census for the two victims. They also used Bristol's *Know Your Place* website to locate addresses of the victims' homes and workplaces on the 1840 tithe map. A group of children also visited the central library to read the original newspapers of the day that detailed the full story of the tragedy.

## Intended outcomes

- Create and follow own lines of enquiry.
- Use primary sources to research the past.
- Develop empathy with people in the past.
- Develop curiosity about their own local area.

## Intended outputs

- Exhibits for a school local history museum.
- A book telling the story of the Watchet tragedy.
- An assembly to re-tell the story and to explain the process of the research undertaken.

## Obstacles and issues

Giving 90 children access to the original newspapers: we used two ambassadors from each class who were taken to the library and allowed to look at the original papers.

## Actual outcomes

- An increased pride in the local area.
- Engagement with parents.

## Actual outputs

- The children discovered that the young couple were engaged to be married and were also the first people to be buried in the burial yard.

## Lessons learned

- There was great potential in this project for it to be a starting point for a much broader enquiry into the local area in Victorian times rather than as a one-off short project. One victim worked in a nearby paper factory, her father worked in a local coal mine.
- With older children a lot could have been made of the way the story was reported in the press at the time and comparisons made with reporting of tragedies in modern times.
- It was important to have done the preliminary research and created a simple "how to" guide for the teachers to ensure the children could successfully research using the census.

## Next steps

The Heritage Schools Programme will continue to provide support to schools in Bristol and share learning and resources with the wider heritage schools network.


**Michael Gorely**  
Local heritage education manager,  
English Heritage, Bristol

## Further information

Know Your Place  
[www.maps.bristol.gov.uk/knowyourplace](http://www.maps.bristol.gov.uk/knowyourplace)

University of Leicester School of Museum Studies

**MA / MSc / PGDip in Learning and Visitor Studies in Museums and Galleries by distance learning**



This innovative programme is aimed specifically at existing or aspiring museum learning professionals and aims to equip students with the skills and knowledge to work effectively in this field.

For more information, visit our website, call Dr Viv Golding on (0116) 252 3975 or email [artshums.dl@le.ac.uk](mailto:artshums.dl@le.ac.uk)

[www.le.ac.uk/museumstudies](http://www.le.ac.uk/museumstudies)

# GEM Foundation Course: Museum Learning

This ground-breaking course is aimed at developing the core skills and knowledge required of those at the beginning of their museum education career.

The course has an emphasis on reflective practice and continuing professional development.

"thoroughly stimulating and enlightening ... have come home with so many ideas and an enormous enthusiasm"

"gave me lots of ideas for new developments at work"

"much more confidence in working as a freelance museum educator"

"inspirational to think broadly how to interpret and engage with a collection"

To find out more please visit the GEM website or contact the GEM office.

[office@gem.org.uk](mailto:office@gem.org.uk)  
[www.gem.org.uk](http://www.gem.org.uk)



grow the artists and arts leaders of the future

Arts Award's unique qualifications develop creativity, communication and leadership skills. The flexible framework can work in any arts, cultural or heritage organisation, adding structure and accreditation to arts activities such as First World War centenary projects. [artsaward.org.uk/firstworldwar](http://artsaward.org.uk/firstworldwar)

Book training to get started at [www.artsaward.org.uk/training](http://www.artsaward.org.uk/training)  
020 7820 6178 [arts@trinitycollege.co.uk](mailto:arts@trinitycollege.co.uk)

TRINITY COLLEGE LONDON  
Lancashire Infantry Museum and Brookfield Community Primary photo Caroline Bray

Arts Council England  
Supported using public funding by ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND  
LOTTERY FUNDED

**Editor**  
Jo Roberts  
GEM  
54 Balmoral Road  
Gillingham, Kent  
ME7 4PG  
  
casestudies@  
gem.org.uk

**GEM**  
**Case Studies 15**  
Copy date:  
16 September 2015  
Publication:  
25 November 2015

Case Studies is  
published twice a  
year by GEM but all  
opinions expressed  
remain those of the  
named authors.  
  
© GEM 2015

Designed by  
SteersMcGillanEves  
01225 465546

**Cover:**  
Role-playing at  
Northamptonshire  
Sessions House

A large print version is available  
on request. Please contact the  
GEM office.

# Index

Vol.14 2015

- |    |   |    |   |
|----|---|----|---|
| 3  | Foundations of<br>museum learning<br><b>Dr John Stevenson</b>                                       | 14 | Managing a school trip<br>across eight museums<br><b>Kate Noble</b>       |
| 4  | Gaining real insight into<br>audiences<br><b>Colin Mulberg</b>                                      | 16 | An adventure in China<br><b>Lucy Wright</b>                               |
| 6  | A Midsummer Night's<br>Dream at Blackwell<br><b>Esther Rutter, Lisa Keys<br/>and Rachael Lennon</b> | 18 | Increasing access to<br>law-related heritage sites<br><b>Rebecca Buck</b> |
| 8  | Digital sketchbooks<br><b>Helen Ward and<br/>Adrian Brooks</b>                                      | 20 | New audiences for<br>Bath museums<br><b>Zoe Dennington</b>                |
| 10 | Cardboard castles<br><b>James Brunt</b>   | 22 | A gravestone as a<br>starting point<br><b>Michael Gorely</b>              |
| 12 | Volunteering alongside<br>friends and families<br><b>Oomar Dhuru</b>                                |    |   |