

Case Study: Heacham Junior School, Norfolk

Background

Heacham is a village on the North Norfolk coast. The Junior and Infant schools share their head teacher with nearby Snettisham Primary School. Heacham Juniors is a smaller than average school which covers Years 3 to 6. Most pupils are White British and few speak English as an additional language.

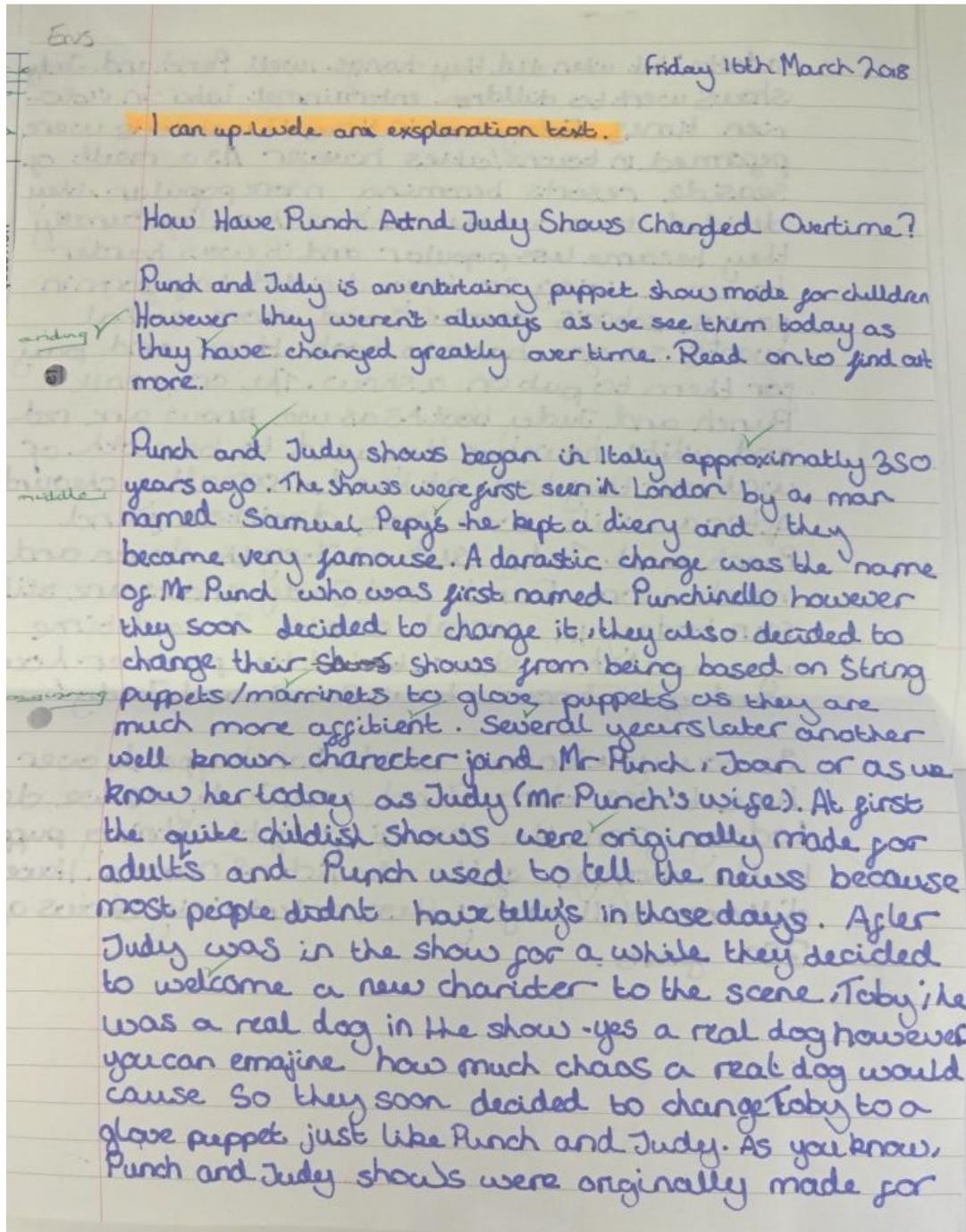
The school joined Heritage Schools in 2015/16, when the Local Heritage Education Manager (LHEM) came into school to provide CPD for all the teachers. Since then, the teachers have used the maps, photographs and other resources provided to study Heacham. This year, the History Co-ordinator planned a whole-school heritage project about Hunstanton and seaside resorts, so she asked the LHEM for further help because the training and resources she had provided previously had been so useful. The LHEM created Powerpoint presentations of maps, photographs, etc for the pupils to use in class before visiting Hunstanton. The LHEM and the History Co-ordinator worked with volunteers at Hunstanton Heritage Centre to devise a programme of activities for the Year 5 and 6 classes when they visited Hunstanton.

Year 5 and 6's heritage project



The three Year 5 and 6 classes, nearly 90 children, studied the development of Hunstanton as a Victorian seaside resort and how it has changed to the present day. In the mid-19th century local landowner Henry Le Strange decided to build a new sea-bathing resort to the south of the original Hunstanton village, and subsequently the railway came to the town and a pier was built. A few of the pupils live in Hunstanton, and all the pupils know the town because it is only three miles from Heacham, but they were more aware of its current features, such as the arcades and the Princess Theatre, than of its past.

The pupils used the maps, photographs, documents and resources about Punch and Judy, which the LHEM had prepared, for cross-curricular learning in class. This developed their understanding of Geography, using maps to study places in increasing detail, from continents to countries and then to towns and villages. They used historic maps and photographs to study how Hunstanton has developed and changed, and used Punch and Judy as a resource for Literacy, describing how Punch and Judy shows have changed over time. Towards the end of the project, they spent a day in Hunstanton doing a carousel of activities at the Heritage Centre, the Princess Theatre, and a heritage trail around the town.



Extended writing about how Punch and Judy shows have changed over time

Heritage Centre activity

Hunstanton Heritage Centre is run by volunteers and has an extensive collection and display of photographs and information about the history of Hunstanton and surrounding villages. The lower ability pupils had I Spy sheets of things to look for in the Heritage Centre, some of which they were familiar with from their classroom studies, and some new information which they had to find. The higher ability pupils devised questions which they wanted to ask the Heritage Centre staff; each class covered one topic: Henry Le Strange, the railway and the pier. They became journalists and interviewed the Heritage Centre historians using Dictaphones, so that they could listen to the responses again in class. This was a new skill which they hadn't used before. An article about their visit was in the local paper.

Children hear about the past and present hopes for our pier

Our heritage can point the way to a brighter future for our town

Last week Hunstanton Heritage Centre opened its doors to pupils from Heacham Junior School.

The children had prepared a list of questions on a range of topics including the railway and the pier.

They wanted to know how they came to be constructed in the 1850's and why the town lost its railway in 1969 and the pier in 1978.

The volunteers who were on duty pulled no punches when it came to blaming lack of foresight and poor decision making by those in authority at the time.

When it came to the failure to restore Hunstanton's lost assets, the pupils were told the recent good news about the King's Lynn Hunstanton Railway Project and the Hunstanton Heritage Pier Community Trust.

It was encouraging to those involved when a show of hands revealed unanimous support from the youngsters for reinstatement of both the pier and a railway.

Perhaps such enthusiastic support, from those with a lifetime ahead of them, will persuade West Norfolk Council to go 'back to the future' by resurrecting its 2007 policy to reinstate the pier and reconnect Hunstanton to the national rail network.

For my part, I am delaying publication of a book about Hunstanton Pier in the hope of a happy ending, which could see the Heritage Centre move across The Green to a permanent home within a single storey entrance to a new pier.

To those who think this idea takes me into the realms of fantasy, I would argue that compared with the notion of a Pier Company being relieved of its duty to provide a Pier - as happened on October 14, 2009, - transforming the 'hangar' into a heritage centre makes perfect sense.

For anyone thinking that the Heritage Centre is only there so that older people can remind themselves of Hunstanton in its heyday, the visitors' book tells a different story.

Yes, there are plenty of comments bemoaning the loss of key facilities and some of the town's finest buildings, but there is plenty of evidence to suggest that learning about the past inspires people of all ages to work towards a future for the town that could be even better than its past.

For this reason we must all be prepared to hold our local and national politicians to account.

It is pointless simply accepting bland excuses for inaction, such as: "There is nothing we can do to rectify mistakes made in the past by this council, or by a previous government."

In the case of the pier and the railway there are already grassroots community action groups leading the way, while government sponsored organisations, such as the 'Town Team' and the Coastal Community Team, have not done enough to engage with the very people they are supposed to represent.

Heacham Junior School at the Heritage Centre. Photo by Brian Holmes

Princess Theatre

The theatre was previously a cinema, and before that, a hotel. The mother of one of the pupils is the sound engineer at the theatre, and she gave the pupils a behind-the-scenes tour of the theatre and showed them photographs of the building in the past and of people who have performed there.

Town heritage trail

The current heritage trail, available from the Tourist Information Centre and the Heritage Centre, is very long (with many stopping points) and not very child-friendly. The LHEM and the History Co-ordinator chose some of the locations, which would be most relevant to the pupils, such as the house which used to be the jail, and the old school, and the LHEM created a new trail using Google Maps. The trail can be used on tablets, with links to historic photographs of each location. At each location, the pupils stood on the spot from which the historic photograph was taken, to see what was the same and what had changed.

In addition to these activities, the pupils used OS maps on their walk around the town, and learned to orientate the map and understand the map key, so they could read the map correctly. This is an important skill to learn, when now people use map apps on their smartphones more than they use paper maps. They visited the cliffs and the beach and looked for fossils, and studied rocks and fossils in greater detail back at school as part of their Science project.

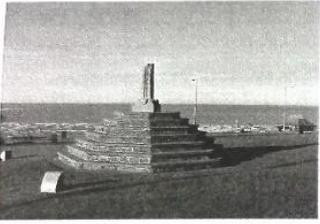
This approach, of learning about Hunstanton in class before visiting the town, was very effective because the pupils were already familiar with the history of the town before they made their fieldwork visit. The History Co-ordinator had thought that the pupils would find the Heritage Centre displays rather information-heavy, but in fact they were fascinated by the displays; they recognised photographs which they had already seen in class, and spotted differences amongst photographs which they had not seen before. They were intrigued to find people who knew so much about Hunstanton's past:

"We met some – are they Historians? We met some Historians and they know everything about Hunstanton"

SPY

Who is this man?
 Henry style man Le strange ✓
 Where and why is there a statue of him in Hunstanton?
 The founder of Hunstanton and his statue is outside the golden lion. ✓

Name the feature and building below


 village cross ✓


 golden lion hotel ✓

What can you find out about the picture above?
 The railway came to ~~town~~ hunstanton in 1862 it (took) 10 months to build. The railway opened a line from Kings Lynn to hunstanton was 16 miles of track. new a car park they opened it for the first time since it closed in may 2008. war officer in the second world war. was perched by Hunstanton Urban District Council. In 1950 for use as officers it was demolished in April 1967 ✓

I Spy sheet used by some of the pupils at the Heritage Centre

Impacts of the heritage project

Impacts on the pupils

The pupils were very enthusiastic about learning more about Hunstanton. Most of them did not know that there used to be a railway and a pier. During the course of the project, one pupil found that his great grandfather's house deeds were signed by Henry Le Strange, and another pupil found that her aunt's house is featured in the heritage trail as it was the first detached house to be built in Hunstanton.

During the evaluation visit, the pupils were asked whether they had enjoyed learning about local history. All said they had, apart from two who were not sure. Some of those who had enjoyed it said:

"I loved it because it was just down the road and it was cool to see what it was like before we see it today"

"Yes. Because I like learning history around our area. Also cause I like understanding to tell my family"

The pupils were asked whether they found it more interesting to learn about the history of their local area, or to learn about things which had happened in other places further away. There was an almost even spread of opinions, with eight saying they found local history more interesting, 10 preferring history of other places, and nine having no preference.

"More interesting near here because I can go and see it in person"

"I like further away places because there would be more things to learn about and I like imagining more than actually seeing it"

"I like learning about things nearby and far away because they are both important"

These responses show that the Heritage Schools approach has been very engaging for pupils. It has enabled them to find out about their local area in much more depth, thanks to the resources provided by the LHEM and the connection made with the Heritage Centre, also arranged by the LHEM.

As part of the evaluation discussion, the pupils completed "A heritage guide to Hunstanton", loosely based on a Trip Advisor review. They gave Hunstanton an average rating of 4.5 out of 5 stars. They gave their reasons why their opinion of Hunstanton has, or hasn't, changed as a result of doing the local heritage project. One person's opinion had not changed at all:

"It has not changed because I still see it in the same way however I may know a bit more but I still think it is the same Hunstanton"

Some pupils' opinions had changed a little:

"I never liked Hunstanton because I never knew the background of it but now I do"

"Now I know it has a lot of history, I would like to go there more"

Some pupils' opinions had changed a lot:

"I enjoyed the topic and took my family on the heritage trail"

“There once was nothing there at one point and imagining that is crazy”

The heritage project has clearly given the pupils a greater understanding of, and interest in, Hunstanton and they have learned new skills such as map reading. The project has also enhanced their learning in Science and Literacy through the study of fossils at Hunstanton cliffs, and writing about the development of Punch and Judy shows, for example. The strength of the Heritage Schools approach is that it enables subjects in addition to History to be studied through the lens of local heritage.

Impacts on teachers

Since the LHEM delivered the CPD session for the teachers two years ago, four of the six teachers are new to the school so did not receive the training. This year’s heritage project has shown to the teachers how the Heritage Schools resources can be used, and the advice and support available from the LHEM to develop projects. Some of the teachers have lived in the area for a long time, and the Hunstanton project gave them new knowledge about the town through the information provided by the LHEM.

The History Co-ordinator was very appreciative of the amount of help given by the LHEM to plan the Hunstanton visit and prepare the resources for the town trail and the other activities. Maps and photographs had been given to the teachers as part of their Heritage Schools CPD session. Because the LHEM is familiar with the maps and photographs available, it was quite straightforward for her to do the preparation, whereas the History Co-ordinator felt that she would not have had enough time herself to prepare in such detail and so the project would not have been nearly so effective. This demonstrates the great benefit to teachers of LHEMs being able to help develop heritage projects.

Impacts on the school as a whole

The school is currently in the third year of its four-year curriculum planning cycle. The History Co-ordinator wishes to include local history, as a basis for cross-curricular learning, in all future planning across the year groups. She also wishes to work more closely with Heacham Infants School regarding local history now that they have the same Head Teacher. The Infants School does a study of the village and as almost all the Infants pupils move up to the Junior School, it would be sensible to ensure that the Junior School local heritage projects build on what is studied at the Infants School.

Impacts on Hunstanton Heritage Centre

The volunteers at the Heritage Centre were very pleased to be involved with the project. In the past they have had some school visits, but usually by schools from further away rather than local ones. The lead volunteer thought that perhaps local schools felt that they knew about Hunstanton’s history already so they did not visit, or that local history was not sufficiently important. He found the planning session with the LHEM and the History Co-ordinator very valuable, and agreed that it had been very effective for the pupils to learn about Hunstanton in class first, before visiting the Heritage Centre and the town, because it gave them context for what they saw and heard during their visit. Some other schools which visit the Heritage Centre do self-guided visits with a question sheet, but if they come without preparation, the pupils do not benefit so much from the visit.

The Heritage Centre volunteers consider that the carousel of three activities in different locations was very effective too. Working with the Princess Theatre provided an additional indoor venue in case of poor weather, and the theatre has toilets whereas the Heritage Centre does not. The partnership also allows joint promotion of the theatre's annual pantomime and visits to the Heritage Centre. As a result of the Heritage Schools project, the three activities carousel model is being developed with Hunstanton's Heritage Gardens. An alternative indoor venue is the Town Hall, so that visits could take place during the autumn and spring terms when the weather may be poor. This carousel of activities with different partners, piloted successfully as the Heritage Schools project, will be promoted to all schools in the local area to enable pupils in other schools to increase their knowledge of Hunstanton.

The lead volunteer considers that the Heritage Schools project, and the subsequent development of school visits in partnership with other venues in the town, will help strengthen the Heritage Centre's role in Hunstanton, which will in turn benefit the town. Around 20% of properties are second homes, and the Heritage Centre wishes to help maintain a vibrant community.

Impacts on the community

In addition to the benefits for the Heritage Centre, the project has strengthened links between the school and families. Some of the pupils have found out more about their homes, or those of their wider families, and have brought objects and documents into school, such as house deeds signed by Henry Le Strange. Although no parents accompanied the visit to Hunstanton (for safeguarding reasons), some of the pupils have taken their families on the heritage trail and told them what they have found out about Hunstanton.

"I can now tell my family about Hunstanton and it's really interesting now."

Sharing this new-found knowledge about the town will help strengthen family bonds and adults will have a better understanding of their locality. Heritage Schools has a wider impact beyond the school itself.

This Case Study was produced by Qa Research, an independent full-service social and market research agency commissioned by Historic England to evaluate their Heritage Schools Programme.