

**A Common Treasury**  
**An Evaluation of a secondary schools programme**  
**at Bruce Castle Museum**

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## **CONTENTS**

Executive Summary

Recommendations

1.0 Introduction

2.0 Aims of Evaluation

3.0 Methodology

4.0 Findings

- Was the pack helpful?
- Would teachers have liked more support, and if so what?
- Were instructions for preparation clear?
- Was the museum welcoming?
- What were teachers' and pupils favourite aspects?
- What were teachers' and pupils least favourite aspects?
- Were post-project ideas suitable?
- Did the sessions support the National Curriculum?
- Session delivery

5.0 Comments on Evaluation

Appendix 1 – Data collection techniques

## **Executive Summary**

This evaluation report provides a summary of the evidence gained from a variety of data collected from teachers, students, museum staff and others. The data clearly shows the success of the project, but also highlights areas for development and change

A “Common Treasury” programme of workshops for secondary pupils at Bruce Castle Museum has been innovative and stimulating. The pupils have enjoyed the interactive theatre work and developed a greater understanding of the period and the people living then. With appropriate follow-up work the issues raised during the session can be developed and clearly linked to citizenship.

With secondary pupils being much less frequent visitors to museums it is a considerable success that Bruce Castle has managed to attract so many groups from a range of different schools. **This highlights the need to write appropriate material for this age range.**

The interactive theatre work was of a high standard, with the actors being not only good at acting, but also good at involving and engaging the young people. They deserve to be congratulated for their work and I hope they wish to continue with such a profitable partnership.

The trail, although less successful, offered an opportunity for students to make links between history and other aspects of the curriculum. It might be useful to develop further the relationship with Personal and Social Education teachers.

Teachers as well as pupils were enthusiastic. It is hoped that continuing work can be done with these schools, with discussions to find other areas that the museum and the theatre group can support schools with.

## **Recommendations**

It is recommended that Bruce Castle Museum:

- Continue to use drama
- Continue to develop relationships with secondary schools in area
- Develop the teachers' pack to recommend more detailed ideas for follow up work (eg relating to modern democracy and the civil war period of history)
- Provide teachers with an opportunity to understand the session before pupils come and stress to teachers how useful this type of session is. Thus they may see reasons for preparation and follow-up work more clearly. Teachers should as part of this make more clear links with the museum. Teachers need clear and brief notes of what pupils should know for the workshop.
- Work at a slightly drier time of year!
- Develop trail to have more interactive approach and perhaps include some role-play work in the classroom as part of the session
- Discuss with Personal and Social Education teachers their requirements of the trail and subsequently adapt the trail's content and ability to interact with pupils.

## **1.0 Introduction**

Bruce Castle Museum is a Grade 1 listed 16<sup>th</sup> century manor house whose owners played an active part in the English Civil War. In 1649 the Hare family owned Bruce Castle. They were Royalists like many in the area, but their immediate neighbours were Parliamentarians

Clio's Company are a site-specific theatre company, run by Lissa Chapman and Jay Venn and specialising in new work with a historical base. A majority of their work is highly interactive with its audiences, treating them as if they are in the same time as the characters in the action; except in the unlikely event of immediate danger, the actors never come out of character.

The partnership with Bruce Castle Museum has created a powerful programme for secondary pupils.

The interactive theatre work takes place in and around Bruce Castle Museum. The known history of the house, its inhabitants, and the area has been used as the basis for the drama in which the pupils take part. None of the specific events are known to have happened; they all could have done – all are likely, and grow out of the known circumstances of the time.

The trail takes you on a circular tour and lasts about 1.5 hours. Beginning at the 17<sup>th</sup> century former manor house of Bruce Castle, it moves up White Hart Lane and down the High Road, returning via Bruce Grove. The trail looks at a variety of points over the last 500 years by using a route, which passes buildings past and present, place-names, and shop signs, all providing evidence of the different communities settling here. Different people have lived or worked in this area, making Tottenham their home.

## 2.0 Evaluation Aims

The evaluation brief has a number of specific questions to be answered about the running of the workshops. These questions are listed below:

- Was the pack helpful?
- Would teachers have liked more support (and if so, what type)?
- Were instructions for preparation clear?
- Was the museum welcoming?
- What were teachers' and pupils' favourite aspects?
- What were teachers' and pupils' least favourite aspects?
- Were post-project ideas suitable?
- Did the sessions support the National Curriculum?

There was also the need to evaluate the success of the programme itself.

- Did the different sessions relate well to each other?
- Was interactive theatre work a good way of dealing with Personal and Social Education?
- Which session (theatre or trail) was most effective?
- Were pupils interested in returning to see the museum?

### 3.0 Methodology

Data was collected from a number of different sources so that a fully complementary picture could be made. Analysis of the data will provide not only information on the success of the programme but also information for future developments.

Data included:

- Observations from attending both the trail and theatre workshop sessions
- Informal conversations with teachers, pupils, staff and actors involved
- Survey to teachers after their visit
- Comments card for pupils after their visit
- Phone calls to teachers after the sessions to find out about follow-up work

Despite a lot of work, numbers of replies from teachers and pupils was initially low. Phone calls to each teacher have been undertaken to gather extra feedback. Even then some teachers were unavailable on several occasions and did not return the call. Through the combined methods responses were received from most teachers, five phone responses (out of a total of 7 schools) and four evaluation replies. Details provided by those who did respond through surveys or conversation was useful. Two schools also sent responses from the pupils.

The evaluator did not view post-visit work, partly because those schools that responded had not done any follow-up work, and partly because the limited time was used to gather feedback from all teachers through the extra data collection by telephone. This took some considerable amount of time.

## 4.0 Findings

### 4.1 Was the pack useful?

Replies to the survey showed that teachers found the pack useful, largely for preparation work. Although teachers said the post-visit ideas were appropriate few teachers appear to have done much follow-up work, for one reason or another (see below 4.7). Thus the pack was not used as much as it should have been. From phone conversations **it is recommended that the follow-up ideas also include some specific question sheets** on the moral issues of each person in the theatrical workshop. This would highlight some of the issues concerned.

### 4.2 Would teachers have liked more support?

Generally teachers said they found the support adequate. Some suggested the administration had been very thorough. One teacher missed the teachers' familiarisation session and felt that this would have been very useful in helping understand why and how to prepare the pupils for their session. **It is recommended that a teachers' introductory session continue to be included in future.** When asked about further support several teachers asked for sessions in school. It is possible that they felt the play could be put on in the school without the museum as the environmental setting. **It is recommended that the basis of the session (i.e. the factual evidence of what actually happened at Bruce Castle) is made clearer.**

### 4.3 Were instructions for preparation adequate?

Teachers agreed that the instruction were adequate. One teacher felt that more detail in the pack on this aspect would be useful. Those that did not attend the workshop preview found the instructions not detailed enough. It helps to indicate to teachers what is expected of the pupils and thus how important their preparation is. One teacher requested a summary sheet of what the children must know before they attend the workshop. **It is recommended that some consideration of how to provide clearer preparation guidelines be made.**



#### 4.4 Was the museum welcoming?

No specific question was used to answer this but informal discussions and observations were used to ascertain how welcoming the museum was. Students appeared comfortable and all staff were welcoming, providing clear instructions and places to sit/leave bags etc.

#### 4.5 What were teachers' and pupils' favourite aspects?

The most popular session (by both teachers and pupils) was the interactive theatre. This was seen as enjoyable and interesting. It attracted the attention of the pupils and helped them to think about the period in relation to "real" people who lived then. Pupils liked the interaction with the actors, and in particular "Edward", a digger. The New-Model Army officer was a useful inclusion adding a natural way of disciplining the pupils when necessary. A teacher commented that the session gave the students a "*greater sense of historical identity*"

#### 4.6 What were teachers' and pupils' least favourite aspects?

The students rarely mentioned the trail in comments cards filled in. This suggests that this was a less successful aspect of the day. One teacher commented that the success of the trail "*was dependent on the students (behaviour)*". The trail had a number of aspects which teachers felt needed improving. There needs to be:

- More interaction is needed for pupils
- More focus on Civil War aspects, as students have not covered more recent material and thus find it difficult to relate to. One teacher suggested there was plenty at the church to study including gravestones and the church itself. Maps of the area showing the neighbours

#### COMMENTS BY STUDENTS

"I enjoyed the bit where we were doing a play"

"I enjoyed the interactive drama session because it showed what life was a bit like in old times"

"I enjoyed going in Edwards tent when he was asking us questions"

#### COMMENTS BY TEACHERS

Used the session "to summarise what we have already done"

"Definitely interested in coming again"

and use of land were good. The context of the play could be drawn out more.

Also:

- Pupils do not like walking very much, especially since many had already walked to the museum in poor weather) and discipline can be difficult with less enthusiastic members of the group.
- The citizenship aspects seem not to be a priority for the teachers leading the trip.
- The role-play work done when the rain came down was popular but if a Civil War focus were intended for future activity this role-play would have to relate to these aspects and not to citizenship.

#### **4.7 Were post-project ideas appropriate?**

The teacher survey suggests that teachers found these ideas appropriate. However in conversation teachers admitted to doing little follow-up work and therefore it would be difficult to actually find out how effective the ideas really were. Reasons for not doing follow-up work were several. Most teachers said that the sessions did not coincide with their study of the Civil War (which was covered in the Autumn Term by a number of the schools). Consequently the session was used to summarise work done previously. Citizenship studies within Personal and Social Education were not mentioned as an important aspect of the day, largely because it was the history teachers and not PSE teachers who had booked the sessions. **Consultation with PSE (citizenship) teachers would be useful here to gain their opinions.**

#### **4.8 Was support for the National Curriculum appropriate?**

Most teachers found the session provided useful support for the history curriculum. This was the aspect that most teachers had booked the session for. The links to the citizenship aspects of Personal Development were not generally relevant to these aims.

## **4.9 Evaluation of Session Delivery**

### **4.91 Did the different sessions relate well to each other?**

The teacher survey showed that the sessions (trail and interactive theatre) did relate to each other. One teacher in a phone discussion suggested that the trail needed to focus on the Civil War aspects and not bring in the more modern aspects (intended to relate to the PSE). In the future a decision needs to be made as to how relevant the PSE aspect is to this secondary school programme. The contrast between the Civil War period and now highlight some interesting issues, which it would be a shame to lose. **It is recommended that some discussion with PSE teachers would be useful to ascertain the relevance of various aspects of the trail before altering it.**

### **4.92 Was drama work an effective way of teaching PSE?**

Again it is clear that teachers booking the sessions had an historical focus in mind and the use of interactive theatre was seen as a useful way of involving students. However it is likely that aspects of PSE will become more important as this part of the Curriculum develops

### **4.93 Which session was most effective?**

It was clear from all concerned that the interactive theatre work was the most successful aspect of the day. Details of the improvements needed to improve the trail have been included elsewhere in this report.

The drama work was a good way of involving the pupils mentally and physically. It also helped them understand the complex issues of the time and to empathise more with people of the time. One pupil wrote

*“It helped me to understand what different people thought of the parliament, regardless to their position and a lot of the time people faked what they thought of the parliament about liking them”*

Others did not express themselves so well but showed that they understood the historical context the drama was based in. They liked the role-play and the

“realistic characters”. Two out of the thirty-three responses from pupils had not enjoyed themselves.

They would have liked to be more involved and perhaps dressed up to “*match our characters*”.

Teachers agreed that the drama was a particularly engaging way of developing pupils’ understanding, encouraging empathy and thinking. They would also have liked more interaction and one mentioned the lack of opportunity to see more of the museum.

Generally though there was little complaint about the session and the way it was structured. In summary potential improvements might include:

- More interaction, for example in the summary session when the moral aspects were discussed. However from my observations there were many opportunities for pupils to be involved but most were unhappy about answering questions and giving comment.
- Simple costumes for the students
- 

#### **4.94 Did pupils wish to return to see the museum?**

A small proportion of students (approx 1/3 of replies from a total of 15 responses to this question), when asked, expressed an interest in visiting the museum again. Some were sure while others said “maybe”. Finding out what young people actually want from Bruce Castle Museum would be a useful piece of follow-up work. Recent evaluation work of older teenagers has shown the need for museums to offer space to sit, drink, music and displays on topics, which interest them (eg fashion, jewellery, war)<sup>1</sup>.

## **5.0 Comment on Evaluation**

This report attempts to portray the feelings of all those who participated, students, teachers, museum staff and actors. However limited responses were received from pupils and their formal responses have been supplemented by feedback from informal conversations with students and through observations of their behaviour. Responses from teachers were much higher as a result of the combined use of evaluation forms and phone calls. Seventy percent of teachers involved provided feedback.

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<sup>1</sup> Represent, an Evaluation, unpublished report for West Midlands Regional Museums Service evaluating a project for young excluded people at Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery. Accessible on the Regional Museum Council's website.

# APPENDIX 1

## A Common Wealth?

### Teachers' Evaluation Form

Please help us to improve our services to schools by answering the following questions.

#### Practicalities

- 1 Was the pre-booking marketing information sufficient? Yes/No  
*(Please delete as appropriate)*

If you answered **No**, why not \_\_\_\_\_

- 2 Was the booking administration efficient? Yes/No

If you answered **No**, why not \_\_\_\_\_

- 3 Were the instructions of how to prepare for the day helpful? Yes/No

If you answered **No**, why not \_\_\_\_\_

#### Resources

- 4 Did you use the pack, "A Common Wealth? "?

Before

After

Not at all

- 5 Did you prepare your pupils before the visit? Yes/No

- 6 **Would you have liked more support?** Yes /No

If so what would you have liked?

INSET

Classroom session

Homework sheets

Other *(please specify)*

- 7 Were the ideas for post-project class-work useful? Yes/No

If you answered No, please state why \_\_\_\_\_

## The Workshop

8 Which was the best aspect of the workshop?

\_\_\_\_\_

9 Which was the least useful aspect of the workshop?

\_\_\_\_\_

10 What did you feel the children enjoyed the most?

\_\_\_\_\_

11 Did it support any of the following Curriculum areas?

History

Literacy

Personal Develop/citizenship

12 Would this type of approach be useful for aspects of personal development other than citizenship?

Yes/No

If Yes, which areas? \_\_\_\_\_

13 Was the performance and museum trail an effective way of supporting personal development work?

Yes/No

Any comments \_\_\_\_\_

14 Did the performance and museum trail link well together

Yes/No?

Any comments \_\_\_\_\_

15 Which aspect did you feel was the most effective?

Trail

Theatre work

16 Would you consider returning to the museum with your pupils? Yes/No

Please add any other comments here

Thank you

Please return this form in the **internal mail** to Sian Harrington at Bruce Castle Museum, Lordship Lane

**A COMMON WEALTH?  
STUDENTS RESPONSE**

Using words or pictures can you tell me about what you most enjoyed at the museum today.

Would you like to visit the museum again?