

Geordie at War

Interim Report July 2012



The Project started at the beginning of October 2011 with staff carrying out research into the various Museums, History Societies, Re-enactment groups and support groups who might assist the project. The first groups of young people were recruited and started work at the beginning of November. Youth Forums were held at our Project Office in West 15 to draw out ideas from the groups involved. These were useful sessions and produced a wide variety of ideas for activities for the project.

The original plan was to try to run the project in chronological order starting with the Roman Army and progressing through the various eras to the present time. This proved difficult as most Museums, particularly those related to the Roman period, close down over the winter. A great deal of effort was made to utilise resources which were available during the winter period and the original plan was modified considerably. Sessions were organised looking at the Border Reivers, The Vikings, the Anglo Saxons and the Normans as well as a small amount of work on the Romans from resources that were available (Segedunum Roman Fort). All the organisations involved proved very flexible in accommodating our needs and were most helpful in developing practical, hands on, activities. The groups have also participated in other community projects which are relevant to the aims of Geordie at War.

All Saints Church of England College

This group of Year 10 students (6 male, 7 female) have worked on the project from the start. They are a very enthusiastic group and have been fully involved in all the activities. They have provided the foundation of work to populate the public display and produced a huge amount of video footage towards the final DVD. Historically they have looked at the Roman Army, Border Reivers, Anglo Saxons, Vikings, Normans and Napoleonic Redcoats. All sessions were of a practical nature – looking at weapons equipment, dress, food, language and lifestyle. The sessions have been a mixture of outdoor, practical sessions with re-enactment groups, museum visits and personal research. They have received practical instruction in still and video camera techniques, sound recording, utilising computer software to produce high standard display material and research skills. Their historical



knowledge has improved but more importantly they have become more aware of the impact these groups have had on the development of local culture and language.

The group participated in a two day residential field trip which included a Battlefield Tour - Homildon Hill 1402 and an in-depth tour of Bamburgh Castle (both with a guide from the Battlefield Trust)

The group have also made a small contribution to the Benwell at War Project by researching servicemen and women buried in the local churchyard.

In addition the group are using the Project to facilitate a qualification through the Open College Network – Developing Skills for Employment. LookwideUK, in partnership with the school, are providing evidence from the various activities towards four of the six units required for the qualification. We are confident they will all achieve a Level 2 Award (equivalent to GCSE's)

Walker Technology College



This group were a mix of Year 10 and Year 11 Students (8 male 1 female). They only participated in six sessions at the start of the Project before moving on to a different programme. They also received practical instruction in still and video camera techniques and sound recording. Their involvement looked at the impact of the Vikings and Border Reivers on the local population. In particular they enjoyed the cooking sessions which were organised with two re-enactment groups.

This group are also using the Project to facilitate the same qualification through the Open College Network – Developing Skills for Employment. LookwideUK in partnership with the school are providing evidence from the various activities towards four of the six units required for the qualification.

Northumberland Adult Learning Service - Blyth

This is a smaller group of post-16 learners (5male 1 female). The boys are trainee car mechanics and the girl is training for social care. They have been involved since the beginning of the project and have developed three main areas. In the initial stages they were given training in photography skills to enable them to participate in the War Graves Photographic Project. This entailed photographing war grave headstones in a local cemetery to facilitate the wider project.



War Grave Photography



They then became involved in the restoration of a World War Two searchlight at Blyth Battery. The searchlight had been acquired by the Battery but needed to be dismantled, cleaned, painted and then re-assembled for display as part of the Battery Museum. Given the technical nature of their training this project has suited this group well and they have made tremendous progress with the restoration. It is particularly satisfying as it is part of their local community. We hope the restoration will be completed before the end of our project.

In addition the group had the opportunity to talk to a World War Two veteran about his life and experiences in the Army. Visits to local Military museums were organised around this talk to give the group some background knowledge. Video footage of the talk was taken as part of the DVD production.

Haltwhistle Community Campus

Haltwhistle Community Campus provided a group of Year 8 students to participate in the Project (9 male 3 female). Their involvement was from January to May as part of a wider programme with the school. They focussed on three main areas linked to their local communities – the Roman Army (the Roman Wall is on their doorstep), the Border Reivers and Prisoners of War. They also received practical instruction

**Interviewing an Archaeologist –
Vindolanda Roman Fort**



in still and video camera techniques and sound recording. They particularly enjoyed the Border Reiver sessions which included looking at the food they ate and an element of cooking.

Despite living close to Hadrian's Wall their knowledge of the Roman Army was limited. They video interviewed an archaeologist at Vindolanda Roman Fort as part of their contribution to the DVD. He was very impressed with the questions they asked at the end. They also enjoyed walks along the Wall and the photography tasks set as part of these sessions.

Interviewing a German POW – Featherstone Castle POW Camp



Their research on Prisoners of War during the Second World War produced some very thoughtful moments. They looked at the Geneva Convention and then how prisoners were treated by the various warring factions. This was followed by a two day residential Field Trip - a Bastle Trail to record evidence as part of their work on the Reivers followed by a visit to Featherstone Castle Prisoner of War camp (3 miles outside Haltwhistle). Although the Camp is no longer there some buildings still remain and with assistance from Volunteers from the Haltwhistle Project the group were able to visit the site and record an

interview with a German Prisoner (re-enactor). Overall the group were a challenge but responded well to the project. (The group will move to high school in September and one pupil put on his form that involvement with Lookwide was the highlight of his year)

Conclusion

To date 40 young people have participated in the Project together with some 45 Volunteers, Re-enactors and Museum Staff.

The project is moving along at a steady pace. A large amount of video footage has been produced together with hundreds of photographs. This will provide future participants with opportunities to edit the material for public dissemination in due course. The Education Pack and Heritage Trail are also work in progress and again these will provide opportunities for participants to develop new skills and learn about the development of their local communities.