

Norfolk Museums & Archaeology Service: Case Study

Museum: Ancient House Museum, Thetford, and Lynn Museum

Project: *Norfolk's American Connections: An exhibition produced by young people*

Why we did it: This project formed part of a joint Heritage Lottery Fund and Cultural Services project, *Norfolk's American Connections*, which linked with the Olympics and explored connections between Norfolk UK and North America through a range of events and activities. It aimed to engage local school children, at both UK and US base schools, with local history by guiding them through the process of creating an exhibition, from research to final display.

What we delivered: We worked with primary and KS3 pupils from eight schools (including two US air base schools). Pupils researched one of five historical subjects through repeat visits to either Ancient House or Lynn Museum, supplemented by additional research at the local library or Norfolk Record Office. The themes were: **Thomas Paine; Captain Vancouver; Abraham Lincoln and his Norfolk roots; 19th Century emigration from Norfolk to North America** and **The Friendly Invasion**. Once the research was completed, museum staff worked with pupils to write text and draw or select images for the panels. The end result was very professional: *"...[it] was visually striking and grabbed the attention making people want to stop, look and read"* (comment from a hosting venue).

Who benefited: 150 children took part. The exhibition was printed on pop ups and went on tour to 32 venues across Norfolk from July to December 2012. All the evaluation suggested the children had gained research skills. One school commented on how much their pupils' non-fiction writing had improved as a result of the project.

What happened next: The success of this ambitious project has given the learning officer confidence to plan similar projects in the future. It has also promoted history in local schools: one teacher, who disliked history before embarking on the project, has already booked Ancient House to run several events about English history at the base schools in 2013, while another has asked the learning officer to run history events for all US base high school students in the region.

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"I loved working with the American children. It was the best thing I have ever done at school."

The Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service (NMAS) is a multi-award winning service comprising **ten museums and a study centre**. The Service aims to inform and inspire people's interest in the cultural and natural heritage of Norfolk, and address relevant contemporary issues by:

- **Collecting, preserving and interpreting material evidence of the past**
- **Stimulating creativity, inspiration and enjoyment**
Providing an enjoyable way to learn throughout life
- **Engaging with the widest possible audience**
- **Enriching people's lives and creating a sense of place and identity**
- **Enabling people to understand and value other cultures**

It is a high performing service. In 2010/11 **380,000** visits were made to the museums, and **43,000** schoolchildren participated in formal learning events.

The Norfolk Museums Service was established in 1974 when the County and District Councils in Norfolk agreed to delegate their museum powers to a Joint Committee to manage museums through a county-wide Museums

Service. The museums in each district are managed by local Area Museum Managers who liaise closely with each District and ensure that the museums support local strategies and initiatives.

NMAS is one of only 16 Major Partner Museums receiving substantial revenue funding from Arts Council England in order to achieve ACE's vision for museums:

"A museums sector that is delivering inspiring public programmes using high quality collections to reach more and more people, especially children and young people. The sector is innovative; it shares best practice and is embedded in communities and responsive to audience needs. It is made up of strong, sustainable organisations with a highly skilled and diverse workforce; it is excellently led."

For more information contact:

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