



Intergenerational Case Study

Project name

Stories of paper-making in Linlithgow: intergenerational project

Lead organisation

West Lothian Local History Library

Partner organisation

Linlithgow Bridge Primary School

Contact details

Name: Helena Gillis

Role in organisation: Volunteer project manager

Telephone number(s): 07963994489

Email address: helenagillis@hotmail.com

Web address: <http://visitwestlothian.co.uk/see-do/history-heritage/west-lothian-local-history-library/>

Start & end dates: August 2013 to April 2014

Project Overview

This project aimed to explore the working and social life in Linlithgow connected with the local paper mills. The project was funded by a Heritage Lottery Fund grant, with considerable time contributed by project volunteers. Sybil Cavanagh, West Lothian Council's Local History Librarian, was keen to connect people living in Linlithgow with local history resources, and she championed and supported the project.

Avon Mill had been open from 1870 to 1972 and Lochmill had been open from 1808 to 1984. Both of the paper mills were demolished almost immediately after their closure, leaving behind a limited amount of built heritage. Photographs, newspapers and other artefacts at Annet House Museum and at West Lothian Council's Local History Library indicated a rich social life associated with the mills, with the two mills enthusiastically competing against each other to create the best brake (decorated float) at the annual Marches.

Volunteer Project Manager, Helena Gillis, met with ex-mill employees, and used their stories as inspiration to develop a programme of events to bring together local school pupils and ex-mill workers to explore mill heritage over the autumn term of 2013. Linlithgow Bridge Primary School Head Teacher Susy Webster and P6 Teacher Ruth Bruce met with Helena to schedule the activities to fit in with the school timetable, and to bring teaching expertise to the project.

At a separate but connected event, ex-mill workers were invited to a coffee morning to share their mill stories and to bring along their photographs for the library to scan for use by the mill project – attendees of this event found out about the forthcoming intergenerational aspects of the project, and some chose to become part of the key cohort of ex-mill workers who joined the P6 class for regular sessions through the autumn 2013 term.



Linlithgow Bridge Primary School is situated within a short walk of the site of the paper mills and many of the pupils and ex-Mill employees live on the same streets, and so their families have a shared mill history. This project sparked a shared interest in local heritage and in the local community, as the ex-mill workers brought their expertise and knowledge to the project, together with inspiration drawn from mill heritage resources, and the group of ex-mill workers pupils responded enthusiastically and quickly bonded.

Project activities included visits to West Lothian Local History Library and to Annet House Museum to see photographs of the mill and associated social life, to see newspaper archives with stories of mill life, and to trace mill family histories with volunteers from the West Lothian Family History Society; and a day trip to the Tullis Russell paper mill to experience being in a modern paper mill. Old maps with the mills marked on were compared to new maps, and the ex-paper mill workers led a class trip to explore local streets to see and photograph what remains of the mill buildings. The ex-mill workers showed the pupils how to make paper flower decorated panels, a skill which they had learned in making the paper flower decorated brakes (floats) for the Marches (Linlithgow's annual summer fair, which includes a procession through the town of decorated floats). Artist Michele Mathieson led a session when we hand-made paper. Archaeologist John Wells brought kites from which we launched cameras, allowing the group to take aerial photographs and film of mill remains. Interviews by the pupils with the ex-mill workers have been captured on CD collecting the stories, which most enthused the pupils. A drama session led by Katherine Morley, creative writing and art sessions followed in class to allow the pupils to explore mill themes still further. All of the project activities allowed time for participants to share stories about life in Linlithgow.

Project progress was captured in a number of articles by the 'Black Bitch' (the Black Bitch is the name given to people born and brought up in Linlithgow, and the name of a local magazine freely-distributed throughout Linlithgow). This local publication and an end-of project celebration on 12th December (to which the whole school, all project volunteers and other participants and families of the P6 class were invited) allowed the project participants to tell the story of the project to interested families and friends. Tea and cake afterwards provided the culmination of the project celebration. The project display was moved to the local library for a month, so it could be viewed by the whole community.

The recordings made by the pupils of their interviews with the ex-mill workers, together with additional interviews of mill workers by adults interviewers, are now available on a CD at West Lothian local history library, and copies of the CD were made available to all those involved in the project, and to their families and friends. Excerpts of the interviews will shortly be available on SCRAN.

Evidence of need (*Why was it important to run this project and why intergenerational?*)

This project was an opportunity for West Lothian Local History Library and Annet House Museum to provide access to their mill heritage resources, which were the inspiration for the project. The project also collected oral history records and photographs of mill life, which are now available to the wider community through West Lothian Local History Library.

The Curriculum for Excellence encourages learning using local primary resources, and this project provided the opportunity for the P6 class of Linlithgow bridge Primary School to use local maps, photographs, family history records, newspaper archives, and to interview local

Template - intergenerational case studies



ex-mill workers to create an oral history record of local mill history, and to bring local history and the local environment alive.

Linlithgow's mills have been closed for three decades, and so the memory of the life of the mills is held by an older generation. The Local History Library and Annet House Museum objects and archives were important in providing a visual and written record of the mills for the project, but the ex-mill workers lived and breathed the history, geography, social life and politics of mill, history and of the wider history of Linlithgow, and by working with the pupils the older people were able to bring the project alive.

A one-off visit of the ex-mill workers to tell their stories of mill life to the pupils would not have allowed the group to get to know each other, to build the rapport and understanding which allowed the project to be such a pleasurable shared experience. The ex-mill workers brought skills and experience and enthusiasm to the class which was welcomed throughout the term, and the P6 class looked forward to the older people coming to the class every week to bring new insights and fun to the class.

The skills and insights that the young people brought to the project were much appreciated by the ex-mill workers. It takes time for people to get to know each other, and coming together on a weekly basis for the mill project, allowed an understanding and friendship to build between the older and younger project participants. The project was very positive in that it allowed both old and young to utilise their talents and to feel useful and needed, and it encouraged shared learning about a shared mill heritage.

Purpose/Objectives (*What did you hope to achieve or change? Were you trying to meet specific community needs? What were the intended aims and objectives for the younger & older generations and the community involved?*)

Through this project, West Lothian Local History Library aimed to share information and to encourage an enthusiasm in the local community about Linlithgow mill heritage. The Local History Library was also keen to record the stories of ex-mill workers, and to collect photographs illustrating the social history of the mills. Photographic and oral history records of the mills have been collected by the Local History Library, and it has been noticed by library staff that pupils and older project participants have since visited the library.

The ex-mill workers were keen to share their stories of the mill, both their work and social lives. The mills was demolished very soon after it was closed, and the workers had largely very good memories of their time at the mill, mixed with sadness at the abruptness with which the buildings and this life had been taken away. They knew the importance of the mill in the past to the local community, and how it provided a shared memory for people of their generation. The ex-mill workers all live very close to the school, and felt a strong connection to the school, and were keen to share their memories of the mill, experience and skills with the pupils at the school, and felt that they could have an enjoyable time working with the pupils. The warm messages made by ex-mill workers throughout and at the end of project celebration, the comments made to school and to the volunteer project manager (including in a number of letters), and the laughter and furious discussion in class, together with the fact that the ex-mill workers attended more than ten mill project sessions is evidence that the project achieved some of the objectives of the ex-mill worker project participants.



Susy Webster, the Head Teacher of Linlithgow Bridge Primary School, is keen to incorporate local themes within the school curriculum, and she was delighted to take on the mill project, which allowed the P6 class to explore a number of social studies themes. The project also provided an opportunity for the school to develop its links with the local community. Aims for the P6 class included learning interviewing and listening skills, and to experience using primary sources – including reminiscence through working with the ex-mill workers, and the use of heritage resources available in the West Lothian Local History Library and at Annet House Museum. The P6 teacher, Ruth Bruce was also keen to develop further creative responses to the mill theme, and she worked separately with the pupils to produce poetry, stories, drama and painting inspired by the mill stories.

Participants (*Who were they? How many took part? What were the age ranges? How were they recruited/involved?*)

26 P6 students from Linlithgow Primary School and six ex-mill workers, in their 60s 70s and 80s were the key project participants in the intergenerational aspects of the project. They met together weekly (activities took place on 10 days) throughout the autumn term of 2013, for a couple of hours, or for an entire day on other occasions, depending on the time requirements of the activity.

The P6 class was recruited through contact made by Helena, the volunteer project manager with Susy Webster, Linlithgow Bridge Primary School Head Teacher and the P6 teacher, Ruth Bruce. Linlithgow Bridge Primary School is within a few minutes' walk of the site of the paper mills of Linlithgow, and many ex-mill workers live around the school, making the mill project an ideal focus for the school. The school teacher, Ruth Bruce, introduced the pupils to the idea of working in the class with older people, and to the potential benefits that this would bring.

The West Lothian Local History Librarian already had contact with a number of ex-mill workers, and the volunteer project manager met these people to discuss the project and to invite them to share their time and knowledge about the local mills, and to participate in the project. A project launch for ex-mill workers was held in early August 2013, which was attended by approximately 20 ex-mill workers. At this event photographs and mill stories were shared and an invitation was made to attendees to participate further in the project by coming along regularly to school sessions, or by providing copies of photographs or relevant stories.

A couple of weeks after the project launch event, and after the beginning of the autumn 2013 school term the ex-mill workers and the P6 class met at the school for just over an hour, with the older people distributed throughout the class. At this session there was a slide show about the history and life of the mill at Linlithgow to which young and old contributed enthusiastically. Project participants then worked together to look at large scale maps from 1960 when the mills still existed, and to compare them with current maps of the same scale and covering the same area, which now included the school and modern houses in place of many of the mill buildings, or with changed use of mill buildings. The older and younger people bonded in this session, and there was a lot of laughter and stories told as people compared their shared mill and other local histories.



Activities/ events (*What activities/events were organised? How often did participants meet? What did they do together? Who supported/ facilitated sessions?*)

Participants (the P6 class of Linlithgow Bridge Primary School and up to six ex-mill employees) met weekly throughout the autumn term of 2013. Sessions in the classroom began after class registration and ran for an hour and a half until break time. The trip to Annet House and to the Local History Museum took a whole morning, as did the reminiscence and interview training by the Living Memory Association, the drama session with Katherine Morley and the paper-making session with Michele Mathieson. The trip to the Tullis Russell paper mill took an entire school day.

The volunteer project manager organised and participated in all of the sessions. The P6 teacher, Ruth Bruce, took an active role in all sessions, and she often did preparatory and follow-on work with the class.

The mill project activities were as follows:

1. Introductory meeting for the P6 class of Linlithgow Bridge Primary School and for the ex-mill workers. The ex-mill workers sat at desks around the class room with the pupils, and both led discussion and listened with interest to the pupils in response to a mill slide show and work with local maps.

Introduction to paper-making and to the mill history and heritage of Linlithgow. Screening of photographs illustrating the history and processes of papermaking, and of the Linlithgow mills and of mill social life.

Participants were shown a slide show of photographs and were asked to compare a map from 1960 which includes the mills, and a contemporary map of the same area in which many of mill buildings have disappeared or have been converted to alternative use. Discussion flowed around the subject of paper making in Linlithgow, and about how the geography of the local area has changed. The pupils and older people discussed what was it like to be involved in the mill industry from a work and social perspective.

2. Visit to Annet House Museum to see the mill clocking in machine, photographs and examples of paper made at the local mills, facilitated by the volunteer museum manager Mr William Morrison. Visit to West Lothian Local History Library to view and use relevant resources to help exploration of local mill life: photographs; newspaper archive; valuation and census records.

In advance of this session, for homework, the pupils prepared family trees, and a wealth of information about the pupils' families' connection to paper-making industry mills was unearthed through this family activity. At the Local History Library the pupils worked with volunteers from the West Lothian Family History Society, with West Lothian Local History Library staff and the ex-mill workers to further explore family records, and to find links with the local mills.

3. Session at the class room to look more closely at further photographs from the mill, and discussion between the P6 class and ex-mill workers to learn about life at the time of the mills.



Many photographs of mill life depict brakes (floats) decorated in panels of paper flowers created by the mill workers for the annual Marches. The ex-mill workers shared stories with the P6 class about the fun they had designing, decorating and parading the brakes (there was great competition between the two mills every year to produce the best brake). The ex-mill workers and the P6 class worked together to make paper flowers, which were later incorporated into a rainbow panel, designed by P6.

4. Training session with the Living Memory Association on reminiscence, its purpose, and how to make oral history recordings. The pupils considered what they had learned about mill life, and designed questions to allow them to collect further information of special interest to them.
5. Recordings made by the pupils, of mill stories told by the ex-mill workers.
6. Day trip to the Tullis Russell paper mill in Markinch. The group are given a tour of a working paper mill, and the group also learned about current environmental concerns about the paper industry, and how these problems are addressed.
7. The P6 class and ex-mill workers look again at historical and current maps of the area of Linlithgow covered by the mill, mark on the map remaining buildings and information about their past and current use, and think about a route to take in the future session to explore the area on foot.
8. The group, led by the ex-mill workers, explore the area on foot to observe and photograph what remains of the mill buildings.
9. Paper making session with local artist, Michele Mathieson.
10. Drama session with Katherine Morley. Lots of drama skills learned. The pupils and Ruth Bruce, create a drama to illustrate a number of key stories they have enjoyed about the mill, for presentation at the project celebration.
11. Aerial photography session with archaeologist John Wells. The group fly kites with cameras attached and take aerial photographs and films of the mill sites. Afterwards John showed us how to download and use the film and photographs to location the site of the mills.
12. Celebratory event and exhibition of artistic responses made to the mill stories. The P6 class and two of the ex-mill workers tell the story of the mill and the mill project, incorporating the drama and film and photographs made through the project. The celebration takes place at the school and is attended by project volunteers, the whole school, the parents of P6 and other project participants.
10. The mill project display moves to the West Lothian Local History Library for one month, over the Christmas holiday 2013-14.



Evaluation

What were the outcomes/benefits for the older people?

The life experience of the older people was given validation by being the essential component and the starting point of the project. They had the satisfaction of sharing and passing on their knowledge to the younger generation, as well as reviving memories in discussion with the other former papermakers involved in the project. They also enjoyed the social aspects of the project: getting to know the pupils, working with their contemporaries to explain their knowledge; as well as the educational benefits: learning something of education today, and having the opportunity to compare a modern paper mill with what the mills they had known thirty or forty years ago.

What were the outcomes/benefits for the younger people?

Getting to know older people, many young people have little contact with the elderly except perhaps with grandparents other family members; learning that old people have had interesting lives, have particular knowledge, and interesting experiences to share; being able to better understand their own community and its past; being able to understand their locality in the context of the past; having a better understanding of the paper industry; understanding that the past leaves traces of all kinds, formal, written records, oral history, and archaeological traces on the ground, if you know how to look for them; and understanding that industries can come and go;

What were the outcomes/benefits for the community?

Although papermaking was an important industry in Linlithgow for over 150 years, it held a more insignificant place in local folk memory than the other important industry, shoemaking. There was a lack of written records and photographs of the paper mills, and it was felt that an oral history project would be an important and useful way of recording some of its history before the surviving employees died out. Through the interviews carried out by the pupils (as well as more in-depth interviews by adult interviewers), the photographs unearthed during the project, the aerial photographs and the guided walks round the mill remains, the Local History Library now has a substantial amount of material on the Linlithgow papermills. Some of these photographs and interviews have already been made available to the community in the form of a display in the library, and in a free CD, and will continue to be used as the basis for future project and displays.

How did you evaluate this project/activity?

The P6 class kept individual diaries about the project. This included the thoughts of the pupils, before the project, about what they thought would be the benefits in working with ex-mill workers. This allowed the schools and pupils to monitor their response to the project throughout the project.

What did and did not work, and what was the evidence? Were there any barriers?

For the Local History Library; it was pleasing to see our resources being used by the school, and to be able to accommodate a school class visit. A small number of pupils subsequently visited the library with their parents. As Linlithgow Library is a busy one, a large number of the public were able to learn about the project through the final display in the library. It's not possible to count how many people viewed the display as it was in two locations within the public library, but informal comments to staff were all positive. The display was an opportunity to show that the library is able to contribute to the work of the schools, and is proactive in gathering and recording local heritage



There is the potential for collaboration with Linlithgow Bridge and other local schools, and with Annet House Museum on future projects.

Class visits cannot at present be accommodated as the library is decanted into small premises; but once the library is into its permanent home it would be good to pursue this option with schools. The visit of the Linlithgow Bridge School highlighted the need for a class visit to be fairly tightly structured, and the need to be realistic about the time allocated for each activity. A subsequent class visit by a primary school from another village researching their own paper mill was revised in the light of this and as a result it worked better.

What changed as a result of the project?

Relationship of the school or P6 class with the local community.

Greater public awareness of the significance of the paper mills in Linlithgow's history.

Some increased awareness in schools of how the Local History Library can contribute to project work.

What would be done differently in the future?

This was a project on a grand scale, and the number of meetings added both to the depth of relationship developed between the older and younger people and to the activities which could be used to explore local heritage. However, this project relied on the input of a volunteer project manager, and it would be difficult in future to reproduce a project with such a large number of activities.

A more limited project in the future might well be arranged, using this one as a template – integrating the living experiences of older folk with the written records of a location or industry – maps, newspapers, photographs, and histories.

Outputs *(Please detail any materials & resources created for or by this project such as: leaflets, photographs, DVDs, toolkits, training resources, policies.) Would you be happy to share these on our website and social networking sites?*

The 'Linlithgow Mill Stories' project CD contains interviews and transcriptions made by the P6 class with ex-mill workers, together with additional interviews and transcriptions made with ex-mill workers by a number of adult project volunteers. The CD contains a number of project photographs, but additional photographs can be provided, if useful.

Funding – Who funded this project?

Heritage Lottery Fund

Next steps - *As a result of this project, are any other intergenerational activities being delivered or planned by the lead organisation or partner organisations?*

For the Local History Library: Not at the moment. We have three WW1 projects on the go at the moment, all with adults. Perhaps next year, being the 70th Anniversary of the end of the Second World War; we may try to work up a small intergenerational project with older people who were pupils during the war, comparing their experiences with pupils today.



Susy, the Head Teacher contacted the ex-mill workers, and was delighted when volunteers came to the school to help the Primary 6 class make paper flowers for the school's Gala Day float. They worked alongside the young people in class; and it was lovely to hear them interacting again. The float was based on a garden theme – it was fabulous and won 3rd prize.

Additional Awards

Please detail any awards your project has been involved with for example Duke of Edinburgh, ASDAN volunteering, Discovery etc.

Not applicable

Your Priorities (please describe how this project fits into your local authorities priorities)

Lifelong learning

Stronger communities – through pride in their heritage

Safeguarding the built heritage – through greater awareness of relics of papermaking industries

Partnership working

National Objectives - Does this project help contribute to any of the Scottish Governments National Strategic Objectives (please tick more than one if suitable).

- Greener Scotland
- Healthier Scotland
- Safer and Stronger Scotland
- Smarter Scotland
- Wealthier and Fairer

For more details please check out the following link:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/About/Performance/Strategic-Objectives>

Date of case study: May 2014