

# Heritage Sector Initiatives

**In the spirit of *Power of Place* heritage organisations of all types are already engaging with a wider range of people.**

In this section we review what the historic environment sector is doing to open its doors and become more inclusive, responding to the challenges we all set ourselves in *Power of Place*:

- find out what people value about their historic environment and why, and take this into account in assessing significance
- work with museums, libraries and archives to widen access
- work with excluded groups to develop access policy and practice.

Here we see some of the innovative ways in which organisations are broadening access, not only the larger operators in the sector, but also those with smaller staff and budget resources. Partnerships to ensure useful futures for historic buildings (see Truman pp 21–2; Lee pp 23–4), opening up under-represented histories (see Guillery and O'Reilly pp 17–19; Hasted *et al* pp 24–5) and interpreting historic places for new audiences (see Wong pp 22–3; Garnham p. 26) are all included here. For the first time, too, we have, in the results of the 'Taking Part' survey (Dawe pp 16–17) robust information about people's attitudes and behaviours in relation to engaging with the historic environment. We can find out about what people like and how they spend their time, before planning services that will meet their needs. **n**

## Taking Part

Geoff Dawe

*Economist, English Heritage*

Taking Part is a major national survey of attendance, participation and attitudes in the culture, leisure and sports sectors. The main purpose of the survey is to monitor the progress of the sectors in achieving the Public Service Agreement (PSA) targets agreed with the Treasury. For the first time it is possible to produce robust estimates of attendance, participation by different groups and areas, volunteering, attitudes, attendance as a child and to build up a picture of reasons why people do or do not undertake cultural activities.

For the purposes of this article we concentrate on the historic environment and the groups identified in the PSA target – black and minority

ethnic groups, the disabled, and those from lower socio-economic groups. Taken together these three groups (and allowing for overlap) account for more than half the adult population. Taking Part and the historic environment PSA target are based on attendance at eight site types:

- a city or town with historic character
- a historic building open to the public (non religious)
- a historic park, garden or landscape open to the public
- a place connected with industrial history (eg an old factory, dockyard or mine) or historic transport system (eg old ship or railway)
- a historic place of worship attended as a visitor (not to worship)
- a monument such as a castle, fort or ruin
- a site of archaeological interest (eg roman villa, ancient burial site)
- a site connected with sports heritage (eg Wimbledon) (not visited for the purpose of watching sport).

The survey intentionally allows an element of self-definition about the scope of what constitutes a visit to a heritage site, for example as part of trip with a different purpose.

The accompanying tables show some selected results from surveys conducted in the period July 2005 to July 2006. Some of the differences in the rate of attendance or reasons for attendance or

Visit by the Brushstrokes group to Spetchley Park, Worcestershire, organised by the Gateway Gardens Trust. Brushstrokes is a church-based group working with deprived families. The Gateway Gardens Trust assists diverse audiences who find it difficult to access heritage. Spetchley Park is a member of the Historic Houses Association.

© Gateway Gardens Trust



non-attendance between the priority groups may be due to other factors such as age or income or area of residence of the respondents rather than membership of a particular group.

Information from the Taking Part survey can be used as an input to decisions and policies designed to raise participation to meet the PSA targets for each of the priority groups by 2008. However we recognise that more analysis is required to tease out the real reasons behind responses such as 'not interested' or 'difficult to find the time' and by implication the measures

Table 1: Attendance to at least one historic environment site by priority group during the past 12 months (percentage of each group)

Priority group	Percentage	Range <sup>1</sup>
Black & ethnic minority	50.7	48.1 to 53.1
Limiting disability	59.5	58.0 to 61.0
Lower socio-economic	57.1	55.9 to 58.3
All adults	69.9	69.1 to 70.6

<sup>1</sup> Range is the 95 per cent confidence interval within which the population level of attendance for each group is expected to be found.

Table 2: Main reason for attending a historic environment site during the past 12 months (percentage of each group attending)

	Priority group			
	Black & ethnic minority	Limiting disability	Lower socio-economic	All adults
Personal enjoyment/relaxation	48.7	53.2	51.8	53.2
Accompany children	7.9	6.8	9.5	8.4
Part of holiday/day out	4.9	5.0	5.4	5.3
Part of a group or tour	6.1	6.8	5.7	5.2
To attend special event	3.2	3.7	4.0	3.9
To learn something new	6.7	3.0	3.2	3.6
To use facilities	1.0	3.1	3.9	2.9

Table 3: Main reason for not attending a historic environment site during the past 12 months (percentage of each group not attending)

	Priority group			
	Black & ethnic minority	Limiting disability	Lower socio-economic	All adults
Not really interested	25.8	22.4	31.7	29.3
Difficult to find time	41.0	12.1	24.8	28.7
Health isn't good enough	6.5	40.5	15.3	13.4
Never occurred to me	7.4	4.1	6.8	6.6
Lack of transport/accessibility	2.4	7.0	6.3	5.1
It costs too much	4.9	3.9	4.1	3.9
I would not enjoy it	1.8	1.7	2.4	2.1
Not enough information	3.5	<1	1.3	1.3

that might be used to overcome the identified barriers.

Future releases of data will include responses to questions directed at young people (aged 11 to 15) about their attendance at heritage sites, and responses to questions about whether people live in what they regard as historic areas or houses. General information about the Taking Part survey and latest results are available at [http://www.culture.gov.uk/Reference\\_library/Research/taking\\_part\\_survey/](http://www.culture.gov.uk/Reference_library/Research/taking_part_survey/) n

## Religion and Place in Tower Hamlets

Peter Guillery

*Survey of London, English Heritage*

Lucy O'Reilly

*The Building Exploratory*

Religion and Place is an English Heritage research project that is exploring the history of architectural provision for religious worship in selected urban locations. The survey takes in post-Reformation buildings of all faiths and denominations, sizes and architectural qualities, relating them to local patterns of settlement up to the present, to include mosques, gurdwaras and mandirs alongside churches, chapels and synagogues. Places of worship are often the most prominent and architecturally distinctive buildings in any neighbourhood, to which local residents have strong attachments, whether they visit them regularly or not. Tower Hamlets in east London, with its especially rich history of religious mix, has been included to represent the capital. Other places being surveyed are Liverpool, Coventry and Leeds. As well as generating contact with new audiences, the investigation of 167 sites in Tower Hamlets has supported conservation initiatives and created records for posterity.

The case-study approach is crucial for the 'place' element of the project, understanding buildings not primarily as artefacts, but more as reflections of distinctive local histories. The long view is also important, to emphasise the fact that across centuries of immigration, persecution and assimilation there have always been established and economically dominant groups alongside emerging and insecure groups. Raphael Samuel observed that 'the built environment is apt to give a privileged place to the powerful, and indeed very often to leave them as the only presence in the field.' This is true, but only up to a point, and it is important to challenge that 'apt'.

The experiences of those who do not now see

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themselves reflected in the monumental have precedents. For some, personal or family histories of migration have tended to mean that heritage is sought and defined not in buildings, but in portable objects or intangible cultural forms such as language and music. Some groups at different times have concealed their presence in the face of hostility from the majority, some have been written out of the record; over time some have gradually become more assertive. In Tower Hamlets, the dynamics of resistance/assimilation and discretion/assertion are readily tracked, from 17th-century Nonconformity, to re-emergent Roman Catholicism, on to Anglo- and immigrant Judaism, and to present-day Islam and Pentecostalism. There are differences in experience between groups that need to be recognised, but the connections that can promote community cohesion depend on cross-cultural comparisons. An open understanding of 'English heritage' reveals disparate parts of the puzzle as being interdependent, not as being either 'ours' or 'theirs'.

In response to English Heritage's study of these 167 remarkable places of worship in Tower Hamlets, the Building Exploratory ([www.buildingexploratory.org.uk](http://www.buildingexploratory.org.uk)) was commissioned to carry out a pilot project designed to engage a diverse audience in the rich heritage revealed by the research. Religion and Place in Tower Hamlets is a unique and timely project, offering an opportunity for young people to learn about religious beliefs and practice, and aiming to foster a sense of tolerance and compassion in one of the country's poorest boroughs.

The Building Exploratory has developed successful approaches to engaging audiences with their built heritage that are now widely recognised. Building on these methods of engagement, the pilot project used a combination of building visits, meetings with representatives of faith groups and a creative programme run by artists to allow a class of secondary-school students to explore their own thoughts and feelings about faith buildings and their users.

Two artists, working in their chosen medium of paper collage, explored a Sikh gurdwara and a Church of England parish church with students from Mulberry School for Girls. The girls, all from Bengali Muslim families, had their understandings of the places and practices of these two faiths critically challenged. They learned new creative skills and used these to develop their own responses to the buildings and how the respective faith groups use them. The artists interpreted the girls'



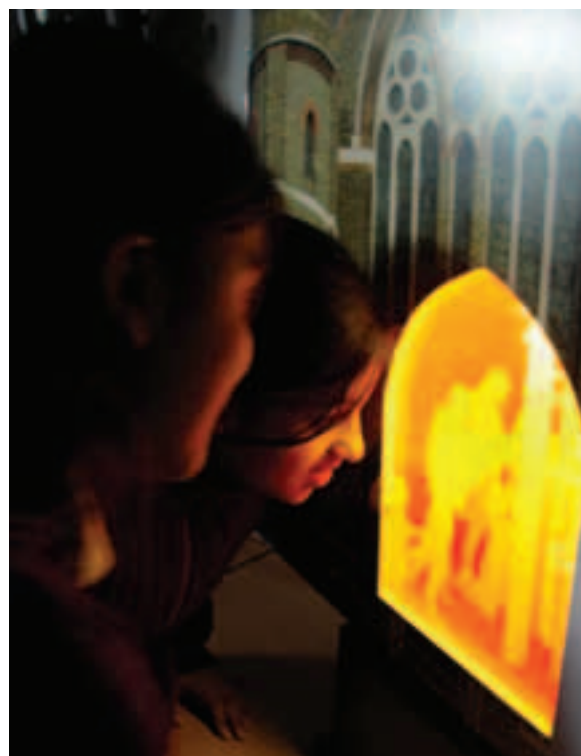
The Celestial Church of Christ, Poplar; a conversion of 1984 in the former Anglican Church of St Saviour.

Derek Kendall  
© English Heritage

responses through three-dimensional art-works called faith chests, which are currently on display at the Building Exploratory's exhibition.

The methodology developed during the pilot was widely applauded for its success at encouraging the young people to engage with the issues and deepen their understanding of other faith groups. The teachers involved were particularly struck by the value of cross-curricular working across the Religious Studies and Art and Design departments and the richness this brought to the project.

Building on this success, the full project is now underway. For this, the Building Exploratory, will co-ordinate an additional four schools working with four artists to explore eight more of the faith buildings researched by English Heritage and will create eight more faith chests. Funding has been received from English Heritage and Arts Council



Students from Mulberry School for Girls explore the faith chest for the first time. The faith chests were created in response to a series of building visits and artist-led workshops.

© The Building Exploratory

England to support the project, which will also produce a vibrant and informative publication. The publication will allow a wider local audience to benefit from the outcomes of the work carried out in the schools: 20,000 copies will be distributed to school children across Tower Hamlets.

The faith chests will form the core of an exhibition to take place at a community venue in Tower Hamlets in the spring of 2008 and a web-based resource will allow the methodologies and outcomes to reach a nationwide audience. [n](#)

### The Untold Story

Laura Hetherington

*Head of Learning, National Trust*

Stefan Wathan

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Alex Murphy

*Project Officer, National Trust*

Like most charities the National Trust has had to re-think how it engages with people to ensure that with evolving lifestyle choices and a changing population demographic, we can respond to their needs to maintain levels of support from existing visitors, members and volunteers as well as attracting new supporters. With a membership of around 3.5 million, paying visitor numbers reaching 16 million, and more than 47,000 volunteers, some might argue that the National Trust has no need to reach out beyond its traditional supporters.

But the National Trust has been doing exactly this since its foundation in 1895. At the heart of the National Trust is a mission: 'for ever, for everyone' and while striving to deepen its engagement with traditional supporters, the Trust also recognises the need to reflect the histories and cultures of the people associated with its properties and the aspirations of those living and working in the local community.

Opening the shiny covers of National Trust



Participants at a London Voices workshop – part of the National Trust's new programme to break down barriers to access at its London properties.

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marketing materials and member magazines or stepping over the threshold of one of our properties will open your eyes to a wealth of creativity, innovation and a passion for working with people to uncover new stories – or perhaps more accurately, untold stories. For example, we are currently collaborating with community organisations to interpret the hidden history of properties and collections that have connections with the slave trade.

The Untold Story was a three-year pilot project that engaged with local communities through the performing arts to develop new interpretation at some of our properties. The pilot helped us to assess how we relate to diverse communities and consider how relevant our interpretation is to a wide variety of people. The project taught us how to listen and respond by telling stories from a variety of viewpoints. In-depth evaluation was essential as was sharing our successes and the lessons learned. Across the organisation, The Untold Story highlighted the importance of building in new ways of working, training and support to ensure that the legacies of such projects can continue into the future.

'I'd never thought about how Derby had a history with India.'

Audience member

At Kedleston Hall, near Derby, the Trust wanted to interpret a collection of Indian artefacts assembled by Lord Curzon, Viceroy of India in the late 19th century. Two miles away an Indian community was searching for ways to keep their own culture and traditions alive in the minds of future generations. As this collection has strong – if not always comfortable – connections to their own cultural heritage, and Kedleston's history has pertinent and sometimes controversial links to the colonisation of India by the British, the Untold Story participants were keen to see this story told.

At the Workhouse in Southwell a wide-range of participants, from young people with experience of homelessness to Gypsy Roma women, participated in a performance project that addressed issues of independence, prejudice and the human right to personal choice. The final performance – *Always Among Us* – painted a vibrant picture of life in a Victorian workhouse, raising contemporary questions about Britain's welfare state, as well as fuelling valuable dialogue about contemporary issues.

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'It brought the property alive and let people see it in the light of modern-day poverty – bringing alive the very real thought that poverty is always with us, it is just different these days.'

Volunteer

Participants with their work at Kedleston Hall in Derbyshire – one of the many local contributions to the National Trust's The Untold Story project. © National Trust

Always Amongst Us: performers in costume bring Victorian poverty to life at the National Trust's Southwell workhouse in Nottinghamshire. © National Trust

Two projects have recently started building on the experiences of The Untold Story, both with the aim of encouraging local people to discover what properties have to offer and to share in the development of projects and activities. Whose Story will work from West Midland properties to look at ways of increasing the number of visitors, staff and volunteers from black and minority ethnic groups. London Voices is working in four London boroughs to attract new families to National Trust properties, specifically those families who face cultural, economic or intellectual barriers to access. A programme of research, learning and creative projects will take place at Ham House, Morden Hall Park, Osterley House and Park and Sutton House over the next three years.

The Untold Story demonstrated that people want to hear the stories of those who lived and worked at our properties and that in turn they want to share their own stories and their own experiences. Engaging on a more emotional level with our traditional supporters and bringing to light a property's significance to modern Britain allows people to reflect on their own lives and histories to make sense of their place in society today. [n](#)



## The Churches Conservation Trust's work with communities

Crispin Truman

*Chief Executive, The Churches Conservation Trust*

The Churches Conservation Trust (CCT) cares for 340 of the most historically, archaeologically and architecturally important churches no longer used for regular worship ([www.visitchurches.org.uk](http://www.visitchurches.org.uk)). All across England, they range from the most isolated rural gems much-loved by visitors to large urban buildings suffering vandalism and an uncertain future.

For almost forty years we have been taking on ever more churches but, since 2001, have seen no increase in DCMS and Church funding. We cannot keep going without the support of local communities and volunteers.

That would be reason enough for inclusion to be important to CCT. But it's more than that. Churches are community buildings. Even if they are not needed for worship anymore, parish churches were built by the community and have been used for secular as well as sacred purposes for a thousand years. John Betjeman described the daily use of village churches in the 15th century – the porch as a schoolroom, the nave for social gatherings, the churchyard for brewing ale. Now in the 21st century when so many historic churches are tragically underused, it is right and proper that we should revitalise their societal function and encourage activities of interest to all.



Right and above:  
At All Saints in Vange, Essex, the Churches Conservation Trust's efforts paid off when local children helped design replacements to vandalised stained glass. Now beautifully conserved, this once-wrecked church is jealously guarded by the community.

© The Churches Conservation Trust



So CCT is working with partner organisations to engage excluded groups, young people, older people and black and ethnic minorities. It may take time before the benefits are clear. People need persuading that a cold empty church, however beautiful, has a role to play in their future.

Community work is always time – and people – intensive and depends upon members of that community being prepared to contribute and champion the cause. Sustainable funding to pay for adaptation, activities and staff is hard to come by.

In Bristol, the Grade I St Paul's church was saved with Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and CCT money and the energy and vision of circus school Circomedia who now occupy it. In an urban area with high levels of disadvantage, the church is a centre of training and performance for the whole community. BTEC courses bring in young offenders and children who have dropped out of education. Users and audience alike are as diverse as the people who live in the surrounding streets.

At St John at the Gate down the road, the arts college came up with the solution to persistent tagging on the cement-covered alleyway under this mediaeval church. A graffiti art project brought young and disadvantaged people and church heritage together to everyone's benefit.

Bolton All Souls is a huge Victorian church in a predominantly Asian community. It has a lovely interior designed by Paley and Austin, but the redundant building attracts vandalism and arson and has become a blight on the area. The answer has to – and will – come from the community. A group of Asian people have formed themselves into a trust and are working with CCT towards an HLF bid to adapt the building for use by young people.

CCT is not alone: working through a new sector-wide 'places of worship' group we aim, with

the Church of England and others, to ensure that historic churches will in future benefit from and give benefit to all sections of the community. [n](#)



The redundant Georgian St Paul's Church at the heart of the disadvantaged St Paul's district of Bristol has become the new home of Circomedia who use circus-based activities to help disadvantaged young people achieve their full potential and progress into training and jobs.

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### **Black Environment Network (BEN) and ethnic minority access to the historic environment**

Judy Ling Wong OBE

*Director, UK BEN*

We love what we enjoy, and we take care of what we love. The beginning of this process is what enabling access to the historic environment is about – putting into place that very first privileged step of the enjoyment of our historic environment. BEN's mission is to enable full ethnic minority participation, to open its benefits to the quality of life of 8 per cent of the British population, as well as to make the prize of their vast missing contribution to the care and protection of the historic environment a reality ([www.ben-network.org.uk](http://www.ben-network.org.uk)).

The challenge is for historic environment organisations to put into place an organisational culture of commitment to this work. It means

allocating resources and the time of skilled staff who can work effectively with ethnic community groups to open out all that they have to offer. BEN acts as a catalyst and enabler to spearhead and underpin this work. We uniquely position ourselves as a bridging organisation, ultimately doing ourselves out of a job, leaving behind working relationships between historic environment organisations and ethnic groups.

BEN works at different levels to achieve its aims. We sit on key committees such as the Historic Environment Review Executive Committee (HEREC) to represent issues and influence policy. For example, we fuelled the development of the concept of community value within the planning system, moving thinking towards recognising community meaning of buildings and places alongside criteria such as architectural quality. BEN speaks at many conferences and seminars to highlight and promote understanding of what is needed to promote ethnic engagement with the historic environment. At the present time, English Heritage funds us to provide initial strategic advice to historic environment organisations. For substantial detailed pieces of work, BEN acts as paid consultant – an example is the consultation exercise with ethnic groups to inform a strategic approach to providing effective and relevant museums, library and archive services in Milton Keynes. We provide tailored training at cost, and provide a range of downloadable free resources on good practice on our website.

We work in partnership with historic environment organisations to seek resources to jointly carry out focused developmental projects on the ground. For example, the Mosaic project (2001–4) with the Council for National Parks pioneered an access methodology to connect ethnic groups with historic landscapes, while the People and



Chinese elders from the Wai Yin Chinese Society touring the stunning gardens at Arley Hall in Cheshire with Viscount Ashbrook.

Photo: Black Environment Network

Historic Places project with the Historic Houses Association enabled ethnic groups to experience private historic houses. A broad-based vision enables more to happen through linking life interests (a fun day out with friends, new knowledge and skills, food, health, identity, arts and crafts) with the historic environment. Our work on the ground has informed good practice through the development of culturally relevant approaches and key working concepts. An example is multi-cultural interpretation, in which we propose that all historic properties should make visible their holistic histories without editing out their multi-cultural aspects.

With limited resources, one of our most important functions is to be a network. Through mutual support and fuelling enthusiasm, a continuing momentum leads us into the future. **n**

### The Bruce Grove Townscape Heritage project

Graham Lee

*Senior Regeneration Conservation Officer, Haringey Council*

The aim of this project is to refurbish fine Edwardian and Victorian properties (which to qualify must be in a Conservation Area) close to the Bruce Grove junction with Tottenham High Road in north London. Once a thriving town centre with all major multiple stores represented, the location has deteriorated economically and physically over the last 30–40 years as a result of poor maintenance, inappropriate alterations, much under-used accommodation above ground floors or poor quality housing in multiple occupation (HMO). The area encompasses some of the most deprived wards in the UK with a multi-ethnic and transient population. The Townscape Heritage

Initiative (THI) scheme, supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), offered the potential to utilise lottery funding for historic building improvement in the central core area.

The Neighbourhood Management Department of Haringey Council commissioned a retail consultant's study of the High Road seven years ago. This identified the primary building use as retail with some residential but acknowledged that the viability for shopping along this full length is unsustainable. The area is still an important focus for local shopping, however, and many of the businesses have confirmed their long term intention to remain in the area.

People come first in any work of this type and extensive consultation with residents and businesses has been essential, organised through both one-to-one discussions and group presentations by the Council and its consultants. Experience shows that a minimum of four visits was required to confirm scheme details with individual shopkeepers and it has been essential to engage support from both leaseholders and freehold owners.

By working with housing associations it has been possible through the THI to replace HMOs with purpose-converted flats and to provide new flats in unused upper floors, together with improvements to external elevations and shop fronts.

Previous grant funding had been in reaction to individual grant applications and properties, with the result that improvements were pepper-potted across the area. A requirement of the THI scheme is that the project concentrates on a very tightly defined location. This has the advantage of encouraging groups of adjoining owners to engage with the scheme, thereby improving total blocks with the accompanying visual and

The Bruce Grove junction with Tottenham High Road in north London as it is now (left)  
© Haringey Council and how it will look after Townscape Heritage Initiative refurbishment (right)  
© Frederick Stafford Planning



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economic benefits. We believe that the consequent achievement of 'critical mass' will act as the catalyst for further improvement of the area in future. But this is not a quick fix! It takes a long time and careful planning: our Stage 1 application to the HLF was delivered in May 2003 and we expect completion in June 2010.

A requirement of major HLF funding is that the project should include a training plan. For Bruce Grove this contains several elements that will help to encourage diversity in the sector:

- training of local residents, owners and occupiers in conservation planning, repair and maintenance
- training opportunities in construction and conservation work in conjunction with local colleges and project contractors
- links with local schools through the Education Business Partnership to raise awareness of opportunities for careers in building conservation.

A funding mix has been assembled towards an overall project value approaching £5 million, including £1 million from HLF as well as contributions from the European Regional Development Fund, the Housing Corporation through Housing Associations, Haringey Council and the property owners.

Tottenham High Road overall has benefited from more than £2 million of other grant investment during the past 10 years which has been available only to Conservation Areas. All these funds have an economic and community regeneration focus, aiming to preserve and repair the best of the historic built fabric for modern use. Much has been achieved but much remains to be done. n

### **Sites of Memory: 2007 bicentenary of the parliamentary abolition of the British slave trade**

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Emily Gee

*Heritage Protection Team Leader, English Heritage*

Catherine Bloodworth

*Outreach Officer London, English Heritage*

March 2007 saw the 200th anniversary of the passing of the Abolition Act that made slave trading in British ships illegal. The transatlantic slave trade was one of the largest forced migrations of human beings and had a major effect on the history of Africa, the Americas and Europe. The year 2007 offers an opportunity to share our understandings of this legacy.

Staff from across several departments came



Manilla, a bronze bracelet-shaped trading token, from the wreck of the *Douro*, 1843. Although sunk off the Isles of Scilly 36 years after slave trading was banned for British ships and ostensibly bound for Portugal, divers have found that the *Douro* carried a cargo of goods suitable for slave trading on the West African coast.

© Mark Dunkley, English Heritage

together to plan the English Heritage programme to commemorate the bicentenary. One clear objective was to ensure that the activities were not tokenistic but had the potential for changing our core working practices to be more representative of the diversity of heritage. A balance of activities during the year and longer-term research was agreed. A second aim was to interpret the bicentenary as a part of British history for a broad audience, rather than seeing it as specifically relevant to black history.

Consultation has been a vital part of planning the bicentenary programme. Expertise was needed from a wide range of sources both within and beyond the organisation. At a regional level, different communities have chosen to mark the year in different ways. Some have chosen to focus not on slavery, but the contributions to our shared heritage by groups whose voices are not often heard. In either case, the question of how to open up sites and artefacts to interpretation from multiple perspectives has to be addressed.

The Revealing Significance outreach project, at Rangers House in London, is exploring hidden cultural references in response to objects in the Wernher collection, which include ivories, paintings, sculpture, textiles and ceramics collected around 1900, mainly from across Europe. During 2007 one local school and two community groups are working with a creative facilitator to explore the collection through discussion, writing and the creation of artwork back in community settings. Some of the key themes that are being used to start dialogue around the collection are strong women, African and Asian origins, life and death and mythical creatures. Outcomes of this pilot project may include an exhibition of the groups' work and a new on-site interpretative leaflet documenting the groups' responses to the collection.

Pupils from John Roan School in Greenwich handle objects from Rangers House as part of the Revealing Significance project.  
© English Heritage



At Kenwood a display of Lord Mansfield's rulings relating to the transatlantic slave trade, alongside information about his personal life, is on view from the end of May until September. This will provide an opportunity for interaction around the themes of slavery and abolition that previously have had limited visibility. Over the summer half term a group of experienced artists and educators led a series of activities designed to encourage new visitors to engage with key themes and to record their reactions to the display.

Access to information is fundamental to the ability of heritage bodies and communities to interpret our shared heritage. While much research has been undertaken at a regional level, there was no national overview of the connections to the slave trade and abolition in the built environment. English Heritage therefore commissioned Angelina Osborne and S I Martin to research and write a *Sites of Memory* leaflet identifying sites throughout the country associated with this history. The information covers the slave trade and the wealth it brought to Britain, the lives of black people in England as a result of the trade and the monuments of the struggle for abolition. The information is also available at [www.english-heritage.org.uk/abolition](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/abolition) and we will be adding to it as a lasting resource.

The research for *Sites of Memory* will also feed into a further project, *Designating History*, which aims to ensure that information about these links to the historic environment will be available to all who need them in future.

Buildings are listed for their 'special architectural or historic interest', but the latter consideration is often less easy to capture in the statutory record. Many listed buildings are designated for architectural reasons and with little mention of their often extraordinary histories, such as the long association of the Grade II\* Holy Trinity Church in Clapham with the Clapham Sect of abolitionists. The list description of a building is valuable on two counts: as the guide for managing change to its fabric, and often as the only piece of documentation conveying to its owner why it is so special. In England and Wales, the proposed reform of the heritage protection system will put improved information for owners at the forefront. *Designating History* will help English Heritage to identify ways of improving the information offered on the historical associations of sites for the future.

The *Designating History* project will therefore be looking at a selection of major sites with strong historical links, such as the Grade I Church of St Andrew, Chesterton, Cambridge, which has connections with the abolitionist Olaudah Equiano and his family. Building on existing research, the project will result in a small batch of revised list entries that better flag the historic links to abolition within a site. There is also some scope for new designations, such as that of the recently listed tomb of abolitionist Granville Sharp (died 1813) in Fulham churchyard. Explaining, commemorating and celebrating is as important a part of our work as describing, and doing so aligns us with the Heritage Protection White Paper's emphasis on public engagement and community values.

The bicentenary programme will also include public events at English Heritage sites and a number of partnership projects in different regions. Teachers' resources will be published on our website during the autumn. Initial research on possible links between families associated with English Heritage sites and the slave trade or a abolition movement has been carried out and the potential for taking forward more detailed investigations is being evaluated.

There has been considerable value in the focus that the bicentenary has given to work across several departments of English Heritage, bringing national media attention and helping to spread the message that heritage is as diverse as the population. The challenge now is to ensure that the long-term legacy of 2007 is embedded in the way we plan for the future. [n](#)

### Historic Houses Association: enjoyment, learning and discovery

Frances Garnham

Assistant Director, Policy and Campaigns, Historic Houses Association

The Historic Houses Association (HHA) represents an astonishing variety of Britain's built and cultural heritage. HHA properties are highly individualistic and diverse, ranging from imposing palaces and castles to small houses and gardens, the vast majority of which continue to be lived in as family homes. They offer a rich variety of opportunities for enjoyment, learning and discovery. Our philosophy is to widen and deepen these opportunities. At its heart, this is simply about linking people and places. Whilst some of the buildings are regarded as iconic symbols of Britain's unique heritage, they are also local resources for spiritual refreshment, learning and recreation, meeting friends, bringing communities together and places to have fun.

At Doddington Hall just to the west of Lincoln, a Heritage Lottery Fund grant has helped to fund interpretative tools for visitors with visual impairment. In partnership with visually impaired people, reinterpretation of the hall has been developed specifically by and for visitors with sight loss to make it more accessible for all.

Last year, Eastnor Castle in Herefordshire joined the Anglo Sikh Heritage Trail, which draws together UK locations and artefacts relating to the Sikh community into one inspirational project. Eastnor holds the first private collection of Sikh artefacts to be included on the trail and provides a tangible reminder of the intimate connections between the British and Sikh nations.

'People care passionately about our heritage but we need to invest in it'.  
Historic Houses Association

One of the HHA's most successful partnerships is with the Gateway Gardens Trust, which connects a diverse range of community groups with the social and environmental heritage of historic parks and gardens. Working with, amongst others, minority ethnic groups, people with disabilities, older people, women's groups, inner-city children and those affected by rural poverty, partnerships have been carefully created to ensure that visits develop into meaningful and sustainable relationships. This has been done by matching groups and gardens with great care and, together with the participants, by designing the shape and substance



of the visits and activities on an individual and personal basis. The Gateway Gardens Trust is a dating agency *par excellence*, helping to grow and nurture these relationships.

The gains from these kinds of targeted community work are significant: they challenge perceptions on both sides, help to identify and remove barriers and open up understanding of what historic houses, gardens, collections and estates have to offer and to gain. They provide connections between places and communities, support our understanding of our individual and shared identity and help people to discover and explore what is on their doorstep. At Doddington, owner Claire Birch was unsure about the value of the new tour until she went round the house with a visually impaired visitor. 'Every room felt and smelt completely different to him, and some of the things he mentioned were incorporated in the audio guide such as the smell of wood smoke from the fireplace and beeswax.'

However, there is still a significant gap between the proportion of the overall population engaging with heritage and those from priority groups. To close this gap there is a need for investment to increase capacity, develop and share skills and extend outreach programmes to support both the communities and the heritage providers themselves.

But the biggest threat of all is to the places on which all of this depends. There is a compelling case for investment in the fabric of our heritage, public financial support for which has fallen dramatically over recent years. With careful investment, we can secure a unique bequest to future generations of architecture and history that touches each and every one of us.

The HHA has just launched its new website. Visit [www.hha.org.uk](http://www.hha.org.uk) and click on Learning and Outreach. [n](#)

Gatka martial arts at Eastnor Castle to mark Anglo Sikh Heritage Week in September 2006.

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## Rethinking Disability Representation in museums and galleries

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Rethinking Disability Representation is a new project, initiated by the Research Centre for Museums and Galleries (RCMG) at the University of Leicester that is exploring innovative ways of interpreting disability and representing the lives of disabled people – ways which are purposefully designed to frame the way audiences engage with the issues they encounter. It builds on RCMG's earlier findings from research entitled *Buried in the Footnotes* ([www.le.ac.uk/museum-studies/research/Reports/BITF2.pdf](http://www.le.ac.uk/museum-studies/research/Reports/BITF2.pdf)). This identified that the potential for disability representation and understandings of disability heritage remained largely under-explored in the museum sector. Indeed, at a time when many were increasingly concerned with issues of diversity and equality, few had thoughtfully engaged with the representation of disabled people's heritage due, at least in part, to a lack of confidence in dealing with perceived sensitive, often contested materials and interpretations.

Rethinking Disability Representation is developing new approaches to the display and interpretation of objects and collections linked to disability using a 'social model' perspective. By equipping the nine partner museums involved with an understanding of disability issues and politics and enabling them to share ideas and

existing good practice within the project, a new confidence in the ways disability can be addressed within interpretation is emerging. This is enabled by close working partnerships with key experts in the disability field – a Think Tank of disabled activists, artists and cultural practitioners – and work with local disabled communities.

Working with RCMG and the Think Tank, each of the nine partner museums is developing interpretive projects – exhibitions, displays, educational resources – which contribute to the project's overall aims, to:

- uncover material evidence held within museums collections that can contribute to a broader understanding of disability experience
- explore the potential meanings of the material evidence to 'tell stories' linked to historical and contemporary disability experiences
- develop innovative approaches to displaying and interpreting the material
- evaluate the impact of these interpretive projects on both disabled and non-disabled audiences
- disseminate the findings widely to inform mainstream practice in museums, heritage organizations, and more broadly within the arena of disability rights.

For example, *A Whitby Fisherman's Life – 'Stumper' Dryden through the Lens of Frank Meadow Sutcliffe* focuses on the work of disabled fisherman Robert 'Stumper' Dryden through Sutcliffe's exceptional photographic images to illuminate the life of the local 19th-century fisherman, with additional historical material telling 'Stumper's' story.



19th-century fisherman Robert 'Stumper' Dryden and Tom Langland, photographed by Frank Meadow Sutcliffe.

© The Sutcliffe Gallery 2004 by agreement with Whitby Literary and Philosophical Society

'This project represents a great opportunity to unearth and celebrate the contribution that disabled people have made to British history. I hope it will also inspire confidence in the contribution that disabled people are making today, and in Britain's future.'

Bert Massie, Chairman of the Disability Rights Commission.

The RCMG project is supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund, the National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts, the University of Leicester and contributions from participating museums. [n](#)