

Plymouth 1620 in the Community: places, people and evidence

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In 2019 Plymouth Archaeology Society was awarded funding for a community project *Plymouth 1620: the place, the people, the evidence* by The National Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), supported by Mayflower 400. The aim of this project was to build heritage enthusiasm and expertise in local communities. Due to Covid19, work focused on providing support and activities for people in lockdown and promoting findings and expertise of individuals and local groups.

An online hub was set up to share information and resources whilst community activities were designed around households. Alongside the project, an evaluation strategy (HLF, 2021a) obtained online analytics and collated feedback via social media, email communication and a Google form administered to participants.

The online hub was a Plymouth 1620 Facebook page, hosting a mixture of guides, interviews with researchers, information and updates. For example, to support communities searching for information using online archives, a four-part video podcast series entitled *1620 Delvings* was provided by local archivist and researcher Deborah Watson. This included searching for maps, plans, paintings and people.

Three community activities represented different models of partnership working. The Ham Woods History Pack was designed by Tina Tuohy (an archaeologist) and Friends of Ham Woods Secretary Kate Wing (a former teacher). The pack was developed for families during lock down as a guide around the woods with 1620 history relating to the local history study section of KS1 and KS2 history curriculum. The Turnchapel Banners coordinated by creatives Zara Lester and Toni Northmore involved residents creating eighteen 1620-2020 themed banners. These are now regularly used for events and celebrations. Finally, a 1620-themed shanty writing competition attracted thirty-one entries from musicians and writers from Plymouth and further afield, such as Suffolk and Kansas, USA. A judging panel selected three winners and all recordings (with consent) were shared online via the Facebook page. A Shanty Live event was held at a local community pub, where most of the shanties were performed or played.

Had face-to-face gatherings and events been possible throughout, more community activities would have taken place. However, feedback showed that the project involved a wide range of people, contributed to greater wellbeing, supported people to develop new skills and helped to improve the local area (HLF, 2021b). The evaluation also concurred with that of Billet (2007) who stressed the importance of a shared goal, mutual respect with partners, a capacity for partnership working such as learning together, and developing trust and trustworthiness. A key lesson learnt was to remain flexible in terms of outcomes to ensure a mutual sense of ownership.

Its legacy is evident from the new collaborations between groups and networks across Plymouth, heritage activities that have followed on from this project, skill development of participants and strengthened community engagement. The online hub is now embedded and managed by Plymouth Archaeology Society and future events can build on the community links.

References

Billet (2007) Collaborative working and contested practices: forming, developing and sustaining social partnerships in education, *J. of Education Policy* 22 (6), 637-656.

HLF (2021a) Evaluation Guidance. [online]

<https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/funding/good-practice-guidance/evaluation-guidance>

HLF (2021b) Outcomes for Heritage Projects. [online]

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