

How lessons learnt from Public Engagement may ensure that First World War community research projects are not "all over by Christmas"...

Professor Maggie Andrews – University of Worcester and AHRC funded Voice of War Peace Community engagement Hub maggie.andrews@worc.ac.uk

Jenni Waugh - Director of Jenni Waugh Consulting Ltd, independent consultant to the heritage sector specialising in community engagement and digital learning
jenni.waugh@talktalk.net and jenniwaughconsulting.com

This paper explores how techniques and methodologies developed on three previous projects, that the authors have been involved in, are being implemented to drive a new programme of collaborative research - World War One in the Vale.

World of Kays was a JISC-funded, University of Worcester, digitisation and reminiscence project. Delivered in 9 months (2011-2012), high levels of engagement were generated prior to the launch of the central website and image database through a combination of social media platforms and participative art and heritage activities. These united diverse communities: online, offline and onsite in the locality and at the university.

Abberley Lives was an HLF-funded community research project, led by Abberley WI Branch and supported by University of Worcester (2012-2013). A combination of regular blogging concurrent with onsite activities ensured its impact went beyond the village. This project blog, which prompted responses from the UK, Australia and Canada, now encompasses other village activities and provides a vibrant broadcasting service for the community.

Finally Children on the Move was an HLF-funded project supported by public engagement from University of Staffordshire and led by Staffordshire Museums and Archives Services (2010-2012). It involved archival research undertaken by volunteers and 90 oral-history interviews with former evacuees and their hosts. Outputs so far include a book, touring exhibition, two journal articles; and an interactive website with learning resources for schools, with a facility for evacuees to continue to upload their stories – which remains in use.

It will be suggested that the success of each project relied on the lexicon of communication possibilities offered to potential participants. A complex inter-play of virtual and real life encounters enabled connections to be developed between participants. Building on their legacy, World War One in the Vale aims to develop a multiplicity of communication channels between university, community groups, local heritage societies, archives and museums.