

An Intergenerational Update

From connecting schools and residents of local nursing homes, to creating new twists on Sompting myths and legends, inspired artwork to investigations of the area's history, our project partners at Agecraft have undertaken a whole lot of fantastic work over the first half of the project.

This is a report by Katie Gander of Agecraft on their work connecting generations and investigating our local heritage.

Creating A Legend



Local community organisation Agecraft was invited to be part of the EPIC project, to work intergenerationally with local schools and residents to enable more engagement with the heritage of Sompting and the ongoing development of the new river. Through making connections between different parts of the community the aim was to collectively create a pop-up museum which could then be toured around schools and community centres, thereby sharing the valuable heritage of Sompting and the new river trail that is being made.

The launch of the EPIC project in April 2019 saw Agecraft begin its journey into the heritage of Sompting and its people. We met residents and heard stories about the area and, aided by a basic map, markers were placed to show where children played in the Brooks catching sticklebacks and shooting homemade bows and arrows. A picture began to emerge of the current agricultural land having been an oasis for children to play and for wildlife to flourish.

There is a local myth that a water dragon (knucker) lives in a deep watery hole (a knucker hole) on the Brooks, which should be avoided at all costs. In

May 2019 we ran a creative workshop for children and families and with some of our older volunteers. The children made a new legend about the Sompting knucker and created clay and stone models of them and their homes. One of our volunteers Barry, also brought some vintage toys for the children to try out including tin can stilts and a game of pickup fives/jacks with stones. We wanted the children to discover connections to the older generations as well as feeling they are part of creating a new living history as the river is established.



Connecting Generations

Agecraft also facilitated reminiscence sessions at Rectory House Residential Nursing Home in Sompting as part of an after-school club for children at Sompting Primary School. The idea was to begin creating exhibits for the pop-up museum and the after-school club invited local children to think about where they were located in the community and in relation to the river site. Assisted by the residents of Rectory House, they made models of their houses, wrote and drew pictures in notebooks and mapped their journeys to and from school.



Following this we took the children to the site of the new river with the intention they would return to Rectory House and tell the residents about it, engaging a part of the community who couldn't physically get there themselves. This river trip was the highlight of the after-school club and we were joined by Linda from the EPIC team. Children were given bags and collected lots of items they found on site including ceramics, stones, dried plants and leaves. On returning to Rectory House the children described their trip and shared their excitement with the residents with their found objects being the focus for conversations, these have now been made into a display for the museum by local artist Jo Coles.



These workshops culminated in a sharing session in which the model houses were placed on a 3D table-top map of the area which also showed the location of the school, nursing home and river site. Families of the residents and children were invited to come and see this and hear about the project from all those who had participated over a cup of tea and some cake.



Expanding the Project

Alongside the after-school club with Sompting Primary School, Agecraft was also working with children at Downsbrook Primary School in East Worthing. We worked in a very similar way with these children, they made model houses and visited the river site to learn about the project. This school is located to the east of the EPIC site and the 3D



tabletop map was expanded to cover this area. A sharing event was held in the school so that the houses could be placed on the map and the work shared with their families during parents evening.

A very talented older volunteer artist, Joan Mensor, came along to both the schools and the nursing home to talk about her artwork and collages, she works a lot with found objects so this fitted in well with what we were doing. The children really enjoyed meeting Joan and seeing her collages. Unfortunately, due to ill health and the subsequent Coronavirus situation or group of older volunteers were unable to participate in the work with Downsbrook School but a great time was had by all those involved.



In February 2020 we held two exhibitions sharing the work created so far by the children and the volunteers. They were at the Harriet Johnson Centre and East Worthing Community Centre, the full 3D map with the model houses and new river site was on display. The volunteers helped with this; Joan brought her collage work to talk about and Val had a vintage Aunt Sally and old maps of the area to share. Children who had been to the workshops in the schools came along and the local community was able to find out what Agecraft had been doing over the previous 6 months.

Sompting During WW2

A group of older volunteers met regularly at Chesham House to share the information about the heritage of Sompting and find ways they could become more involved and work with the younger generations. One of the volunteers Jenni was keen to write a fictional account of the actual evacuation of a school from south London to Sompting at the beginning of the WW2.

Based on a booklet we had access to, produced by one of the teachers evacuated with the school, Jenni wrote an account from the perspective of a brother and sister. This story was then taken into Sompting Primary School where the children were invited to create illustrations for the book. Barry, another volunteer, also came along and told the children about his experience of having been an evacuee. This combination of real and fictional stories evoked a full picture of what it was like to have lived in Sompting during the outbreak of the war and fitted in well with the school curriculum for year 6 who were covering this topic at the time.



Creativity in the Classroom

Joan, our fabulous volunteer artist was keen on facilitating some workshops for children to make collages based around the theme of river wildlife. Assisted by husband Ron, they made some wildlife templates and prepare materials and with the help of Val (another brilliant volunteer) we took these to Downsbrook School and created some masterpieces.



A Deeper Look at the Areas History

In February and March 2020 we held a series of Sharing History events at the Harriet Johnson Centre, each covering a different time period in Sompting's history, starting around 1800, with a variety of information and topics discussed and explored. This has enabled interesting facts and stories to be collated for inclusion in the pop-up museum. We invited anyone interested to come along and most participants were also part of the Lancing and Sompting local history group and were a very good source of additional material, special thanks goes to Eileen Cowell who, as a local history expert, provided extensive research material. This is now being collated ready to be shared either in the pop-up museum or, if necessary, virtually online.



