

Project name	A View from the Hall
Location	East Riding, Humberside
Partner organisations	Burton Constable Foundation
Contact details	Gerardine Mulcahy, Burton Constable
Funded by	YMLAC

Introduction

Burton Constable Hall, its collections and parkland, passed to the Burton Constable Foundation in 1992. With an exemplary commitment to adult education, the Foundation has been inviting students to study at Burton Constable Hall for over ten years. The impetus behind *A View of the Hall* - the publication, touring exhibition and series of associated workshops and activities, was the desire to further our commitment to adult education, and encourage a greater appreciation and understanding of the historic houses of East Yorkshire.

With an aim to maximise inclusion and increase the educational provision for adults at Burton Constable, the project involved adult learners at all levels including: sixth-form students from South Holderness Technology College, adults with basic skills needs from Withernsea Open Learning Centre, students of photography studying at Cottingham Adult Education Centre and part-time undergraduate students studying Country House Studies and Arts & Humanities at Burton Constable and the University of Hull. Provision was also made for adult learners to attend a range of workshops – textile art, photography, creative writing and ‘family fun’ - free of charge.

Programme of Work

- Basic Skills Awareness – training day for museum staff in the region and participants in the project
- *A View of the Hall: Discovering the Country Houses of the East Riding* – a high quality, 72 page, publication, featuring twelve essays and a range of photographic illustrations of the country houses of the East Riding (see enclosed)
- *A View of the Hall...* - students produced a touring exhibition of photographic views complemented by a comprehensive database of all known East Riding Houses (including ‘lost’ houses). The exhibition opened at Burton Constable in May 2005 and will tour to Beverley, Goole and Sewerby throughout 2006
- *A View of the Hall...* - a comprehensive database, researched and compiled by Dr Susan Neave, of all known East Riding houses (available to view on the East Riding of Yorkshire Council website)
- A funded study day for adults with basic skills needs from Withernsea Open Learning Centre. (As a result of this study day, Burton Constable has established a good working relationship with Withernsea Open Learning Centre and Adult Literacy groups in the region. Withernsea have enjoyed a further visit this year and plan to return in the Autumn; and the Adult Literacy

group from Hedon will visit in the Autumn with plans ahead for future partnership programmes.)

- A series of funded workshops: Creative Writing: *A World in a Room*; Textile Workshops: *Stitching the Orangery*; Photography Workshops: *Every Picture Tells A Story!* and Family Fun Workshops (see enclosed leaflet)
- A funded 'Creative Writing Workshop' for sixth-form students from South Holderness Technology College

Outcomes

The **PARTICIPATING PROFESSIONALS** were: Dr Gerardine Mulcahy (Curator, Burton Constable Hall and Course Coordinator and Tutor for Country House Studies); John McKay (Tutor in Photography) and Dr Susan Neave (Freelance Researcher and Writer).

Dr Gerardine Mulcahy was responsible for:

- Initiating the project
- Initial grant application
- Project Management
- Working with Art & Design
- Writing the Introduction and Editing the Publication (*A View of the Hall...*)
- Hosting a study day for Basic Skills Awareness
- Commissioning the database
- Organising and advertising a range of educational workshops
- Layout and hanging of the exhibition and the organisation of the exhibition tour
- Production of two 'albums' of East Riding houses for public display
- Promoting the project at Princes Quay and the East Riding mobile library service (during Adult Learners' Week)
- Delivering Study Sessions (Adult Learners)
- Evaluation of Project (devising a range of questionnaires, holding focus groups and writing the report)

John McKay was responsible for:

- Working with the photography students to produce a series of photographs
- Selecting photographs for publication
- Selecting, mounting and framing photographs for the exhibition
- Teaching three workshops on various aspects of photography (architecture, still-life, portraiture)

Dr Susan Neave was responsible for:

- Researching and compiling a database of all known East Riding Houses
- Tracking down historic and contemporary images of East Riding Houses in order to illustrate the database

The **PARTICIPATING STUDENTS** included twelve students of Country House Studies/Arts and Humanities and six students of Photography.

- With guidance from the Curator, the academic students were responsible for researching and writing twelve essays on a variety of themes associated with the country houses of the East Riding
- Working alongside the Curator, they were responsible for designing an accompanying 'Country House' display
- Working alongside their tutor, the photography students were responsible for visiting a wide range of properties and photographing a series of views for publication and exhibition

Other contributors included the **WORKSHOP LEADERS**: Dr John Clark (Creative Writing), John McKay (Photography), Chris Lee (Textile Art) and Elise Randle (Family Fun) and the **WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS**.

In order to evaluate the outcomes and benefits of the project, the participants were asked to complete a questionnaire and a number of participants also attended a Focus Group (see notes enclosed).

Of the **PARTICIPATING PROFESSIONALS**:

All three felt their **understanding** of life in the Country House had improved and all three gained **knowledge** through the exercise (**100%**). John McKay commented that 'the quantity and quality of the houses surprised me' noting that 'the East Riding was certainly a prosperous area for some people'. Two of the three professionals felt that the project had allowed them to do new things. Although Dr Neave 'did **not** feel the project allowed her to do new things' – she did acknowledge that she had gained new **IT skills** with the introduction to the IT software package (Filemaker). All felt the project enhanced their intellectual and/or technical skills. John McKay found the project 'stimulating' and Dr Mulcahy was 'intellectually stretched by the rigours of editing [for publication]'. Two out of three, felt their **attitude** toward the East Riding had changed as a result of the project and Dr Mulcahy notes her changing attitude towards the country house and its role in education. All three were pleased with the final product and all three **enjoyed** the project and would like to be involved in something similar in the future. In terms of **progression**, Dr Mulcahy and John McKay will work together on next year's project (Sculpture) and Dr Neave has expressed a desire to work with Dr Mulcahy and the Foundation on the Yorkshire Country House Partnership's Estates project in 2007.

Of the **PARTICIPATING STUDENTS**:

76% felt their **understanding** of life in the Country House had improved as a result of participating in the project noting, for example, that they had gained 'further insight into 18th c[entury] science and scientific collections' and a 'more thorough understanding of the Grand Tour and its contribution to the country house'. Of those who did not feel it had improved their understanding, one commented that 'they were already taking the country house studies course' (a number found it difficult to disentangle what they had discovered as a result of participating in the project and what they had learnt as students of country house studies). Two photographers noted that they had only 'viewed the houses from outside'.

88% of participants furthered their **knowledge** (by discovering 'new' things about the country houses of the East Riding). (One student answered 'no' but failed to

elaborate; the other student answered ‘no’ but went on to comment that the project ‘did make me realise just how many country houses there were which I was not aware of previously’.) **70%** felt the project enabled them to do ‘**new things**’, with one student commenting: ‘I had never contributed to a publication before – never thought I would be capable of doing something like this, so it felt like an achievement’. One of the photographers noted that the project had ‘made me visit houses very close to home that I have not paid attention to or noticed previously’.

100% of the Country House/Arts & Humanities students felt they had enhanced their **intellectual/technical skills**. One student noted that it ‘increased [her/his] ability to condense relevant information...’ while another felt that the constraints imposed by writing for publication ‘although ... difficult ... were a good intellectual exercise’. By comparison, only **40%** of the students of photography felt they had enhanced their **intellectual and/or technical skills**; most failed to comment, but one student noted that ‘the project encouraged me to consider different compositions and views’.

All students of country house studies noted a difference between writing academic essays and writing for publication. Most comment on the need to be concise and some felt that writing for the public ‘needed to be simpler and not as intellectual’ or that the ‘language needed to reach the average reader rather than academics’, the articles had to be ‘interesting and entertaining’.

The photographers also noted differences in working for exhibition noting: ‘time constraints [which] meant that ideal conditions for external photography was not always available’. One student felt the project ‘directed ... [his/her] focus’ as he/she ‘was looking in a different way at the subject.’

29% noted a change of **attitude** towards the East Riding. Of those: one student felt he/she was ‘more aware of the contribution of country houses to the history of the area’ and another commented: ‘I will visit the houses in the publication and look at them with a different view now’. Of the 71% who did not feel their attitude had changed, those who commented, demonstrate an existing positive attitude towards the area. As one student says ‘It is an area of both beauty and hidden historical importance, hopefully the exhibition & publication will support the development of awareness of a wider audience.’

Again, regarding a change of **attitude**, certain students felt they themselves had changed as a result of the project. One student felt ‘proud’ to have been a participant, another felt it had ‘strengthened a sense of belonging to this area’ and a third felt ‘less nervous about being a prominent photographer’. Others noted an increase in confidence. (‘Do you feel **you** have changed’: Yes 29% No 29% Don’t Know 41%)

100% of those involved **enjoyed** participating in the project. This enthusiasm is reflected in the indication of future **progression** – **94%** would like to be involved in a similar project (one student expressed a hesitant ‘maybe’) and 59% of students would like to continue with their studies. Of the ‘don’t knows’, one student notes her intention ‘to follow up ... research’

In many ways the conclusions reached by the Focus groups (comprised of students from Country House Studies/Arts and Humanities) echoed those expressed in the questionnaires. However, there were some differences. For example, students who had failed to identify the development of new **skills** when responding to the questionnaire became conscious, during the course of conversation, of a number new skills acquired as a result of the project. For example: 'how to use an archive' and 'how to use newspaper reader machines'. Similarly, when assessing their **progression**, new issues were raised. One student exclaimed 'little did you know how much you spurred me into researching my own family history'. Certain students also felt they had a better **understanding** of the whole process of history writing. Having constructed their own histories, they recognised that 'history can be distorted'. A change in **attitude** was also evident as one student marvelled at the 'sheer amount of work' that historians undertake.

Evaluation – Public

For this project the 'Public' was comprised of **educational group visits***; those attending the **workshops** (free of charge) and the general visitors to the Hall and exhibition. (There were 12 workshops in all with an average of 12 people attending each workshop.) The experience of those attending study days and workshops were assessed by the use of questionnaires. For the general visitors, an additional section was added to the regular Visitor Survey forms. The response to the exhibition was also assessed by the use of a Visitor Comments Book (see enclosed).

(*In order to meet the prescribed deadline this project evaluation was completed before two of the educational visits had taken place. A visit from the Adult Literacy Group in Hedon and a Creative Writing Workshop for the sixth-form students of South Holderness Technology College are scheduled for the Autumn.)

EDUCATIONAL VISIT: Withernsea Open Learning Centre (18th April 2005).

Accompanied by their tutor and helpers, thirteen students with abilities ranging from Milestone 5 to Entry Level 2 of the National Curriculum visited Burton Constable Hall. I have evaluated their experience with the aid of comments made in correspondence (see enclosed):

- **Knowledge and Understanding:** Chris Thorogood (Tutor) felt the group had learnt a lot from their visit. For most, this was an entirely new experience. The students were intrigued by the wide range of objects and Michael's letter demonstrates how certain students 'made sense' of the objects on display (Michael 'would like a cup of coffee out of the coffee urn').
- **Skills:** By meeting new people in a new environment, the group, as a whole, furthered their social skills. Furthermore, they exercised their communication skills with a range of enthusiastic questions - listening attentively to answers. It was evident from Tony's letter that he was engaged both critically and analytically. Commenting on the decoration of the Staircase Hall, he writes: 'The Stairs were my favourite I liked the bright colu[o]rs It all matched up. Beryl, whose learning abilities appear particularly limited, also demonstrated an ability to make judgements – considering the 'Great Hall **best**'!

- **Attitudes and Values:** All the students (and the staff) demonstrated a really positive attitude towards the Hall. None of them had visited Burton Constable before and very few had ever visited a 'stately home'. They were impressed by the size of the house which, as Richard says, was 'very grand'.
- **Enjoyment, Inspiration, Creativity:** The entire group appear to have 'liked' the house, while Tony evidently found the visit stimulating and enjoyable, as he says 'it was lovely and interesting'.
- **Activity, Behaviour and Progression:** A number of the students expressed a desire to return to Burton Constable, and further visits have been arranged. Their follow up work included writing these thank-you letters to the Curator.

WORKSHOP: Creative Writing (Workshop Presenter: Dr John Clark)

From the available questionnaires (i.e. those submitted), it is evident that the WORKSHOP PRESENTER found this a positive experience with education rooms 'the best ... I've visited', although, he highlights a problem with disabled access. The presenter had clear aims and objectives for the workshop – 'all' of which were achieved. Assessing the students, Dr Clark considered they had all gained new **skills**, all demonstrated increased motivation (**attitudes and values**) and all had **fun** (**100%**). It is evident that the Dr Clark also gained a new **understanding**: 'It made me think hard about literary equivalents to the museum experience – of how a text might contain unrelated objects and try to tie them into a story with only partial success...'. In terms of **progression**, he notes 'I'll be writing something about it'.

Of the WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS, **100%** reported that the workshops allowed them to do '**new things**'. From their comments, it is evident that the experience had changed **attitudes** as they 'explored[ed] different aspects of life both in discussion and writing' and 'got a new insight into museums and collections'. Furthermore, there was opportunity to develop **creatively**, as one participant notes: it allowed him/her to 'use my imagination more'. **27%** felt the workshop had **changed their attitude towards Burton Constable** (it appears most had a positive attitude already - 'I have always loved B.C. Hall since childhood... it has always been a special place'). **45%** felt it had furthered their **understanding** of life in the country house (of the 6 participants who did not, one felt it 'confirmed his views' and one considered the question irrelevant). **100%** had **fun** and 10 out of the 11 (**91%**) felt **inspired** with one individual noting that he was **not** 'inspired' because he was an engineer!

WORKSHOPS: Photography (Workshop Presenters: John McKay & Brian Caley)

It appears from the questionnaires that the identified aims and objectives were achieved or partially achieved – insufficient time appears to have been a problem. The WORKSHOP PRESENTERS felt that the participants had gained new **skills**, demonstrated increased **motivation** and had **fun** but would have benefited from having more time to complete their tasks.

From the relatively large number of questionnaires submitted, it is evident that the workshop enabled **95% of participants to 'do new things'**. Their comments reveal developments in **knowledge**, changing **attitudes** (as the participant 'look at photographs in a new light') and **skills** ('use camera on manual not auto'). **37%** reported a change in **attitude** towards Burton Constable, one participant noted that he/she was 'last here approx 15 years ago. Improvements fantastic!' while another

'looked at it [Burton Constable] in more detail'. Of the 35% who did not note a change in attitude, it is evident from their comments that they already had a positive attitude towards the Hall. **21%** felt they had developed a greater **understanding** of life in the country house, although a number felt this question did not relate to their particular workshop. **100%** of participants had **fun** and felt **inspired**. Comments include: 'I want to photograph everything!', 'to look at buildings from different angles and close in on details' and 'John brought new ideas and techniques to the fore and helped me to see the ordinary in a new light'. In terms of **progression 95%** of participants reported that they would like to know about future workshops.

WORKSHOPS: Textile (Workshop Presenter: Chris Lee)

Chris Lee ran three workshops working with participants to create a textile picture for display. The presenter had clear aims and objectives (with a focus on acquiring new skills and having fun) and felt the objectives were achieved. Insufficient time was a problem. Chris felt that certain participants gained skills while others benefited from the social intercourse and that she gained from delivering a session to an audience of mixed ability.

The participant questionnaires revealed an initial problem with the seating arrangements. (The first session was marred by an oversight – the tables designed for schoolchildren were not exchanged for adult tables as planned. Rectified in the second session.) Nevertheless, they appear to have enjoyed a positive experience with **92%** reporting that the workshop had enabled them to do '**new things**'. From the comments certain individuals gained new **knowledge** whilst others felt they had used their **imagination**. **54%** noted a change of **attitude** towards Burton Constable. One participant comments that there are 'more things going on at the Hall than I thought', while another felt the workshops 'made it [Burton Constable] more part of the community (user friendly!)'. **96%** of participants had **enjoyed** and felt **inspired** by the workshop (with just one individual failing to answer the question).

WORKSHOP: Family Fun Days (Workshop Presenter: Elise Randle, Education Officer, Burton Constable Hall)

Two of the four family fun days have now taken place. The Education Officer reports that they have been very successful with high numbers attending (58 people have already attended these sessions). From the questionnaires, the workshops have appealed to a wide age range (children aged 2yrs to 10yrs with accompanying adults). **85%** of those questioned identified at least 'one new thing' they had learnt today (**knowledge**) which included the fact that 'they tried to make the castle semetricle'!

VISITORS TO THE HALL AND EXHIBITION

The Visitor Survey demonstrates that 87% of visitors felt the exhibition had enhanced their **understanding** of Burton Constable Hall; 90% felt it had furthered their understanding of other country houses in the East Riding (see enclosed).

Conclusion

The innovative nature of the Foundation's level of commitment to adult education at Burton Constable Hall has already been commended in a government report (G. Waterfield (ed), *Opening Doors: Learning in the Historic Environment: An*

Attingham Trust Report, June 2004). This unique project – A View of the Hall - has successfully achieved its aim to further that commitment. New links have been established with other educational providers and the project has enabled the provision of adult education at Burton Constable to be more inclusive (the project provided for a range of adult learners from those studying at Milestone level 5 to those studying at degree level.)

The key successes included the successful motivation and involvement of adult learners in the production of a high quality publication and touring exhibition, together with the introduction of adult learners with basic skills to an historic site. Both the participants and the general public gained from this project (evident when evaluating their Generic Learning Outcomes).

Nevertheless, there are lessons to be learnt. Disabled access poses a problem in any historic house (Burton Constable Hall is a Grade I listed Elizabethan Hall). Nevertheless, it may be possible to explore the use of alternative classrooms for the delivery of workshops, which would help increase access. Unfortunately, despite the provision of disabled parking, wheelchairs in the house, and an ambulant stair-lift, certain parts of the house remain inaccessible. With these limitations in mind, access could be increased if funding enabled us to provide a range of workshops offering more varied activities. Morning workshops presented their own difficulties with participants and workshop leaders complaining that there was insufficient time to complete given tasks. Workshop leaders may have had unrealistic expectations, however, with additional funding, the option of full-day workshops could be explored. The provision of light refreshments should also be investigated for future workshops.

The questionnaires proved the most effective means of project evaluation. The focus group had little more to offer and the visitor comments (see enclosed) contained such sweeping statements they proved to be of limited use.

Overall, the project has been very successful. All participants gained from their experience and new partnerships have been formed. As a direct result of this project, the museum is now working with the local Adult Education providers. Furthermore, a number of the participating students are now working as volunteers and researchers for the project on Country House Sculpture (the exhibition, sculpture trail, educational workshops and season of events begin in 2006).