



Promoting Heritage for
People and Places

The Cultural History Community Interest Company

Introducing Luton's Heritage to
a New Generation of Lutonians

The Luton Hat Industry

Evaluation Report

Introduction

The overriding objective of the Community Interest Company is to promote the heritage of Luton to new generations of Lutonians.

Luton is one of the most vibrant and diverse places in the country. No single ethnic group make up more than half the population, making Luton a 'super-diverse' town.

Luton has a large younger population, and a high proportion of the student population do not have a UK or Luton heritage and from our research and our previous heritage projects, there is a clear lack of appreciation of the heritage and history of the town, amongst young Lutonians.

Over 80% of school pupils are from Black or Minority Ethnic (BME) backgrounds. Approximately 56% of primary school pupils and 49% of secondary school pupils have English as an Additional Language (EAL). Nationally, only 21% of primary and 16% of secondary pupils have EAL. In several Luton schools, over 20 languages are spoken, and in total 165 languages are spoken in schools across the town.

This latest project centered on introducing the history of the Luton Hat Industry to students at both primary and high schools within the town. And in addition by introducing the heritage of the town, we sought to encourage the students to have a greater sense of place and connection with the town that is their home.

This project has been supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Methodology

We firstly undertook desk-top research into the history of the Hat Industry and produced historical summaries describing the growth of the industry from the early 1600, how it expanded and became the dominate industry and form of employment in the Town by the 1900s, peaking in the 1940-50s, with a world-wide reputation producing in the region of 50 million hats a year, through to its decline and almost disappearance today.

Supporting the historical summaries, we captured a series of video recordings of people with a personal connection to working in the industry, where they shared their personal and family stories of how the industry grew, expanded, and ultimately declined.

The 3 principal contributors, where able to share their inter-generational family stories extending back over 100 years.

The video recordings – were segmented into 10-15 minute sessions, charting the origins, the growth and finally the decline of the industry.

We sought and secured agreement initially from 3 schools to support the project and used the learning material that we supplied, 2 high schools, Challney Boys, Putteridge and Foxdell Primary School.

The historical summaries and the video recordings were provided to the schools, who used the material to deliver the local history element within the national curriculum requirements, but each with a different approach.

Challney Boys school used the material as a way of exploring the impact of intergenerational migration into the town. The family stories showed that migration to Luton driven by the search of work had occurred over several centuries.

Putting into a modern day and local context, Samir Richards Head of History and Associate Team Lead for Curriculum, commented that

‘.....the majority of the students at Challney Boys are British Pakistani and the learning material showed that migration to Luton over the generations had enriched the town, and enhanced the students sense of connection and belonging to the town.....’

Putteridge High School used the material to focus on the industrialization of the town. Fergus Jackman Head of History said that the learning material introduced the students to

‘... how the importance of the hat industry in playing a pivotal and critical role in the growth of the town; and came before and the subsequent expansion of alternative key employers such as the motor industry and more recently London Luton airport...’

In relation to the primary school clearly with very much younger students the approach was at a different level. Foxdell in addition to learning about the history of the hat industry, raised the children’s’ awareness and the role those young children in the past had in working in the hat industry rather than going to school.

Here we arranged for 1 of the few remaining hat manufacturers, Philip Wright, to visit the school, and had an interactive session with 40 children trying on hats that Philip had made himself. Philip encouraged the children to think about the joys of making things and the school subsequently facilitated sessions where the children took part in plaiting straw and making hats.

The material has now been used over 2 academic years. Erzsebet Zoughi-Lantal, Humanities Subject Lead at Foxdell Primary School, commented how

'.....the approach employed included critical thinking, research and creative and practical elements. The learning has stayed with the children, in that they still talk about the sessions with Philip and making hats themselves.....'

Challney Boys and Foxdell Junior Schools were also able to draw on and integrate some of the material from earlier projects that we have produced particularly around the history of iconic buildings, and how the change use of buildings, reflected the changing populations and communities of the town.

These differing approaches employed by the schools shows the flexibility of the material we created to cover a range of local historical issues and provides useful learning resources that out lasts the project and remains available for new students to learn about the heritage of the town.

The End of Project Event

The end of project event was site visits to the area of the town, where hat factories operated, known locally as the Hat District within the Cultural Quarter.

Putteridge, and Challney Boys and our 4th school, Denbigh High participated in the visit.



Here Philip Wright, shared with the students some of his family stories growing up in a family of hat makers dating back over 100 years, and where he gave an overview of the history of the hat trade in the town.

<https://hatsbyphilipwright.co.uk/video>

In addition, supported by the Culture Trust Luton, we arranged for visits and tour of 3 former hat factories, which are now all operated by the Trust and have been repurposed to provide creative, performance, exhibition, and workspaces.

The emphasis of the tour was to raise awareness of students that these buildings exist, their history and connection of the hat industry, but also that they offer local opportunities within their town, particularly if the students have interest in the creative industries, either in performance or as a career etc..

Ian Hayden, Assistant Head at Denbigh High School acknowledged

'...it was a really fascinating insight into the history of the town and the hat district area....'

Beyond the visit, the students were set a task to demonstrate the learning from the visit and were asked to prepare and deliver presentations, the theme of which was, whilst reflecting on the past but also looking to the future about what would make a good Luton citizen.

The resulting 5 presentations were made in the Council Chamber on the 3rd May, 2023.

Cllr Aslam Khan, Deputy Executive Leader & Portfolio Holder for Children's, Families and Education Services (Children's Services – Enhancing Skills and Education) hosted the event.

The students' presentations are accessible from the Learning Hub within our website:

<http://www.culturalhistories.org/home/3-iconic-buildings/learning-resources/>

The presentations were assessed by a panel consisting of a local historian, and representatives from the Chiltern Learning Trust, the Foxdell Schools Federation, and the Culture Trust, Luton, with the best presentation being awarded cash prizes to the schools of £250 and £125 to the runners up.

The funding for the prizes came from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Following, the presentations, Cllr Khan lead the students and teachers on a guided tour of the Council Committee rooms and the Mayor's parlour where the students signed the visitors book.

Cllr Khan also presented Certificates of Participation to all 4 schools that had supported the project.

The Certificates acknowledged the support of the Heritage Lottery Fund funding the project.

Follow the link to the End of Project page on our website:

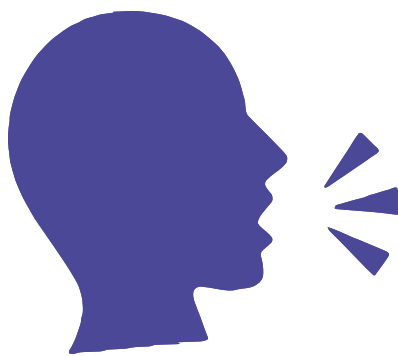
<http://www.culturalhistories.org/home/the-history-of-the-hat-industry-in-luton/luton-hat-industry/>

Facts and Figures



Over 80%

of school pupils are from Black or Minority Ethnic (BME) backgrounds.



Approximately **56% of primary school pupils** and **49% of secondary school pupils** have English as an Additional Language (EAL).



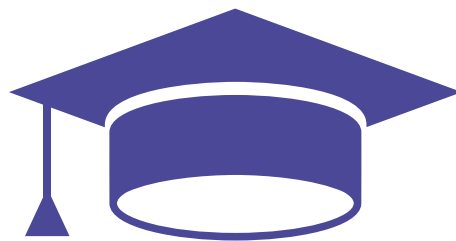
20
teaching staff

have been involved in the project.



Over 20
languages
spoken

In several Luton schools,



690 students have
participated in the project,
from **4 different schools.**

We have created...



*Historical
Summaries*



*Oral history
videos*

Podcasts



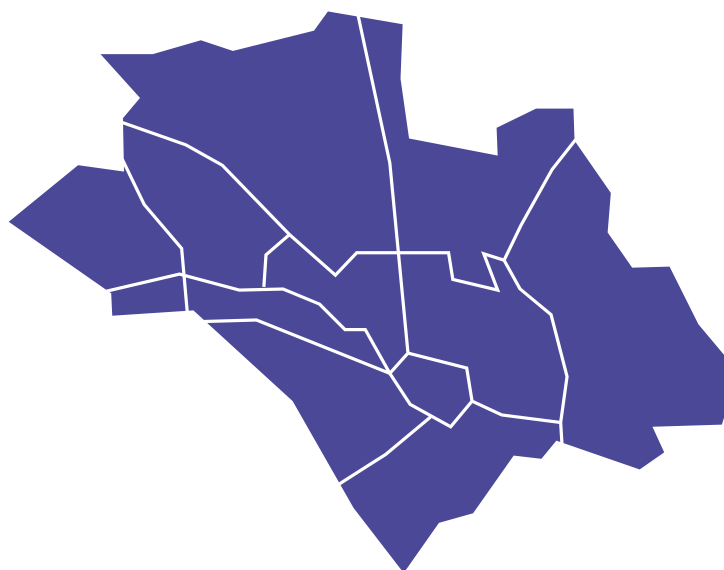
**available free
of charge**

to 54 primary schools and 20 secondary schools,
with a student population of circa 40,000.

Network consists of

**50 teachers
from 17 schools
across Luton,**

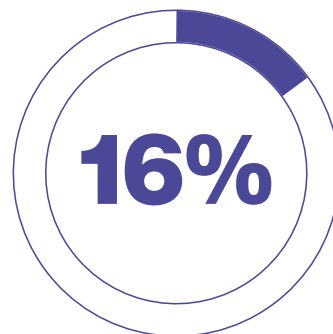
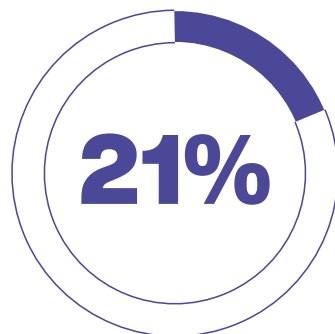
from primary, secondary, and further education
establishments.





nationwide audience of

**over 2100
subscribers**



Nationally, **only 21% of primary** and
16% of secondary pupils have EAL.

Partnerships

To enable this project, we have had the support of the Chiltern Learning Trust, Challney High Schools for Boys, Putteridge, Denbigh High Schools, the Foxdell Schools Federation, the Culture Trust Luton, the University of Bedfordshire, and Luton Borough Council.

The Chiltern Learning Trust undertook an assessment of the learning against the local history element of the national curriculum requirement.

The Culture Trust Luton facilitated the site visit and tour of the former hat factories. The Trust provided the meeting accommodation free of charge.

We brokered new contacts between the schools and the Cultural Learning and Skills Team within the Culture Trust Luton.

We connected with the Luton Creative Teachers Network promoting the project, but also the other heritage projects that we have developed.

This teachers network whose subjects are considered creative or cultural such as art, drama, film, media, design, heritage, performance, dance etc.. or for teachers of other subjects that may want to explore the creative potential of these and share ideas.

Schools and teachers involved, can share ideas and expertise, profile excellent practice explore co-creation in place making. Partnership working with schools to support better cultural education opportunities for young people.

A network co-led by teachers for teachers from a range of subject specialisms to promote networking opportunities between teachers and the local arts and heritage sector.

The network consists of 50 teachers from 17 schools across Luton, from primary, secondary, and further education establishments.

We agreed with the University of Bedfordshire that for the students that engaged in this project POLAR4 data would be collected.

The Borough Council provided the Council Chamber for the end of project event free of charge.

Legacy

690 students have engaged in the programme and had an introduction to the history and heritage of the town, supported by 20 teaching staff.

We have strengthened the partnerships with the schools involved, where we can continue to work with on future heritage projects.

We have created oral history videos and historical summaries, which combined with the classroom learning material produced by the schools, that meet the national curriculum requirements for teaching local history.

The materials are to be used for new year groups and from the varying applications used by the schools have a flexibility in terms of the subject area. We can expect at least similar numbers of students to engage with the resources in coming academic years.

We produced a podcast with the lead teachers involved in the delivery of the material demonstrating how it was used and its flexibility in meeting the local history element of the national curriculum requirements.

Sufian Sadiq, Director of Teaching at the Trust commented on the quality of the learning resources and the reach of the project:

'.....Chiltern Learning Trust has been proud to share the work of The Cultural History Community Interest Company. Working in partnership with several Luton-based schools to deliver a curriculum rooted in local history. As emphasised by the work taking place, Luton has a rich heritage that students in schools today can truly be proud of. As part of our commitment and pride in the school's local geography, we work with Chiltern Learning Trust through the Chiltern Teaching School Hub and have shared the summary interviews with its nationwide audience of over 2100 subscribers to help promote a love of community and to showcase the value schools and students have found in working with such projects.....'

Follow this You Tube link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vtA9oGWXI6o>

All material we produced, plus the class-based material and the teachers' podcast are available free of charge to 54 primary schools and 20 secondary schools, with a student population of circa 40,000.

All the learning resources for this and previous projects have been collated onto a newly created Learning Resources Hub on our website for ease of access for Luton schools. Follow the link, to register and have free access to download all of the learning materials:

<http://www.culturalhistories.org/home/3-iconic-buildings/learning-resources/>

Conclusion

The overarching objective of this latest project was to introduce and promote the heritage of Luton to new generations of Lutonians.

Many of the Luton's students have quite insular lives in terms of their connection with the Town, many being very community based within the areas in which that they live.

All 4 schools acknowledged that the research material and the video recordings introduced elements of the Luton's heritage, had contributed to giving the students a greater sense of place of their town.

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www.culturalhistories.org

