**Matthew Grenby, Heritage Stories Final Report**

**Research**

There were many aspects of the research carried out on the project. Some of the principal areas of enquiry, and our main findings, are set out here.

One aim of the project was to investigate how heritage has been presented to children and young people, and particularly how heritage organisations and writers have attempted to engage them using story and literature. To this end, we undertook archival research to explore how heritage and children’s literature have been yoked together from the mid-twentieth century to the present. The archives of Seven Stories, the National Centre for Children’s Books, were particularly useful. We were able to discover collaborations between children’s literature publishers and organisations (such as Puffin Books) and heritage agencies (such as the National Trust). This has led us to believe that there have been closer ties that has previously been realised between the children’s literature business, educational bodies, and the heritage ‘industry’. This is something we would like to explore further.

Other archival sources we consulted included the publications, in both print and video form, produced by the English Heritage education department. There is no single English Heritage archive and many of its publications and its records are difficult to access. As a service to the research community, and to English Heritage, as part of the project we digitised the full set of English Heritage’s educational videos. These are available under the ‘Digitised Materials’ tab.

Our research also looked at individual twentieth-century children’s books and their authors. Particular titles written for children often engaged with ‘heritage issues’: for example the destruction of ancient monuments or areas of natural beauty, or the influx of new people to historical environments (usually to the detriment of the ‘heritage’). Some children’s books were actively campaigning and polemical in this regard. Other books were more didactic in intent, attempting to teach young readers about the value of heritage of various sorts. We analysed some of these books, and we undertook archival research to find out more about the authors and the circumstances in which the books were written. Our research in this area has been presented in various formats (see below).

Thinking about the connections between children’s literature and heritage in the twentieth century led us to wonder how far back these connections went. Although it wasn’t part of the original project plan, we explored how very early children’s books – from the eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth – engaged with what we might (anachronistically) call ‘heritage issues’. What surprised us was that many of the earliest children’s books were concerned with teaching children about the historic built environment, and associated concepts such as national identity and the connections between the past and the present. Some preliminary findings have been presented at conferences and in print (see below), but this is another area we would like to explore much further. It seems likely, indeed, that the creation of the ‘heritage industry’ as a whole is bound up very closely with societal concerns about children, and the importance of teaching them about various kinds of ‘heritage’. The history of ‘antiquarianism for children’ has yet to be written. It is something that we would like to take further.

We were also interested in how heritage agencies can use story and creative writing content to engage children and young people today, in particular using digital platforms. To shed light on this we carried out a limited scoping exercise. Examples of the kind of work that has been undertaken – by Historic Royal Palaces, say, and English Heritage – was presented at our workshops. These workshops also explored attitudes to, and anxieties about, the use of digital technologies in heritage environments (both personal and professional). It is clear that heritage agencies have different views of the potential and challenges of employing digital technology in their engagement and education strategies, and collecting a range of attitudes towards the digital engagement of young people with heritage was among the most useful things that the project accomplished. Some agencies are very keen and optimistic while others are more wary. Both groups, however, are concerned about cost, rapid obsolescence, logistical difficulties, damage to historic fabric, the invasion of heritage spaces by new technology, and the ways in which digital technology can detract from user experiences. Most participants in our research were sure that older strategies for engaging young people – such as storytelling and creative writing – should not be abandoned in the new digital environment. What was evident was that no central body is currently collating best practice or offering advice on successful strategies for engaging young people with heritage. A means of coordinating the work in this area that is now being undertaken by different heritage agencies, and university and industry developers, is badly needed.

One additional output of the project was a piece of ‘action research’ to trial a new prototype project in a heritage environment. This project is now in development with our partners English Heritage and Culture Lab. The prototype will based at English Heritage’s [Belsay Hall, Castle and Gardens](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/daysout/properties/belsay-hall-castle-and-gardens/) in Northumberland, and will be organised around the motif of the ‘Wild Man’, a heraldic symbol of the Middleton Family, historical owners of Belsay, and an enduring presence in literature, folklore and children’s culture for many centuries. For more details see under the ‘Prototype’ tab.

Overall, what this project revealed is that almost no academic work has been undertaken to understand the connections between heritage and childhood culture. Indeed, there is little existing research into what young people understand by the term 'heritage' or their attitudes to it. The [Taking Part Survey by DCMS](https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-culture-media-sport/series/sat--2) found that ‘72 per cent of children aged 5-15 had visited a heritage site in the last 12 months' but there has no research into the frequency of these visits or how children feel about them. Young people from different socio-economic and cultural backgrounds may have different conceptions of what constitutes heritage. Research by one of our project partners, David Bradley of CURDS, has found that eight-year-olds from relatively deprived areas of Newcastle are much more likely to identify supermarkets, schools, hospitals and leisure facilities as the most important buildings and spaces in their lives than heritage sites. Their understandings of what heritage is, and what it is valuable for, should be important considerations for heritage organisations when planning provision for young people and for policy-makers.

The centrality of heritage to children's education is now a matter of urgent concern. A 2013 government report noted that: ‘We want children to grow up with a sense of real pride in their local area, founded on a deep understanding of its heritage and its place in the national story. All children and young people should know about our national icons and understand the key points in our history that have shaped our national character and culture.’ ([Cultural Education](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cultural-education), August 2013, p. 48). This attitude is reflected in recent changes to the National Curriculum. From September 2014, Key Stage 1 children must be taught ‘significant historical events, people and places in their own locality’, and at Key Stages 2 and 3 mandatory ‘local history studies’ are to be introduced. The new History GCSE syllabus proposes an optional ‘study of the historic environment (e.g. studies of local sites, museums or galleries)’.

**Dissemination of research**

**Project research papers**

**8 March 2014:** Prof. Matthew Grenby, 'Children and the invention of heritage: some thoughts', Rethinking the Grand Tour: Questioning Cultures of Eighteenth-Century Travel conference, University of York

**14 November 2013:** Prof. Matthew Grenby, **'***"*A place in the national story": Children, Children’s Literature, Heritage and National Identity**',** keynote address at *I linguaggi dell’identità: Lingue, arti, tecnologie e culture conference* (The Languages of Identity: Languages, Arts, Technologies and Cultures), Roma Tre University

**4 November 2013**: Dr. Helen Stark, ‘"I had come to think of the house as a kind of museum for children": Reading Children’s Literature and Heritage', Speakers Series Newcastle University.

**17 September 2013**: Prof. Matthew Grenby, 'The future of heritage protection' roundtable, at Heritage Past, Present and Future: Celebrating the Centenary of the 1913 Ancient Monuments Act, Society of Antiquaries of London.

**13 September 2013:** Prof. Matthew Grenby, 'The future of heritiage for children', lecture and Q&A, St. Paul's School for Girls, London

**11 September 2013**: Dr. Helen Stark, 'Lucy Boston and Berlie Doherty: Reading Children's Literature and Heritage', Care for the Future Project Workshop 2, Newcastle University.

**14 June 2013**: Dr. Helen Stark, 'Heritage Stories': Poster Presentation at the 8th Digital Storytelling Festival, University of South Wales.

**Publications**

M. O. Grenby, 'The Children's Tour Book 1740-1840: children's antiquarianism and the invention of heritage', an article submitted for publication.

Helen Stark, '"I had come to think of the house as a kind of museum for children": Reading Children’s Literature and Heritage', an article submitted for publication.

These scholarly articles are designed for a multidisciplinary audience: academics interested in children's literature, education and heritage studies. Professor Grenby’s article argues that what we might call 'heritage education' formed an important part of children's culture from as along ago as the mid-eighteenth century, the period when a recognisably modern 'children's literature' was first being developed. Little or no research has been undertaken on this children's antiquarianism. Dr Stark's article builds on this argument - that heritage and children's literature have a symbiotic relationship - by analysing the use of literature as a recurrent interpretation strategy used at heritage sites. Her article also analyses the circumstances which led to the production of a number of children's novels which very overtly engage with 'heritage questions' regarding particualrly historic properties or places.

**Resources/Guides**

 Dr Helen Stark is creating a resource which will summarise some of the project findings including:

* Children’s literature which engages with heritage
* Sites which use or have used children’s literature in their interpretation strategy
* Sites which engage visitors using literature more generally
* Sites with a digital interpretation strategy which draws on other media e.g. television programme

Similar projects include Zoe Toft's blogpost about books which feature [museum artefacts](http://www.playingbythebook.net/2012/11/14/childrens-books-featuring-museum-artefacts-on-public-display-around-the-world/) and Daisy Johnson's ['Read Around Britain'](http://didyoueverstoptothink.wordpress.com/) list which collates chidlren's fiction with a strong connection to place.

Literary Tourism

['Alice's Day'](http://www.storymuseum.org.uk/the-story-museum/alice) celebrates Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wondlerland* every year in Oxford. Some activities run all round the year, like the Snark Hunt Geocache. Get the clues and coordinates [here](http://www.storymuseum.org.uk/the-story-museum/alice/Alice-2011/snark-hunt-geocache).

 Zoe Toft has created a [map](https://maps.google.co.uk/maps/ms?msid=215720856552519526265.0004908800a98786c6527&msa=0) of places to visit in the UK for lovers of children's literature. You can read her blogposts explaining the map [here](http://www.playingbythebook.net/2010/09/22/a-childrens-literature-tour-of-the-uk-part-1/).

Take a tour of Belfast and find sites associated with C.S. Lewis. The PDF below details the trail and sites of interest.

Images from *The Travels of Tom Thumb Over England and Wales* (London: R. Amey, 1746) and *A Visit to Uncle William in Town; Or a Description of the Most Remarkable Buildings and Curiosities in the British Metropolis* (London: J Harris, 1818)