

HALSWAY MANOR

National Centre for Folk Arts

Future Halsway Project Evaluation

Executive summary

Halsway Manor – National Centre for Folk Arts provides a permanent home for the enjoyment, study and development of folk music, dance and culture in England and draws on traditions from across Europe and beyond. Unique in the UK it hosts over 340 days of residential and outreach activity every year covering all facets of the folk arts from instrumental music, song and dance to traditional storytelling, crafts and instrument making. Listed by English Heritage as Grade II*; the house is late 15th century with considerable 19th century additions. Set in 6 acres of woodland and gardens, the manor's seclusion and the warm and friendly atmosphere is much appreciated by its many supporters as being highly conducive for educational/learning activities. It also houses a large folk arts library which suffered from sporadic management and no strategy.



The property was purchased by Halsway Manor Society in 1965 and set up as a charity and since then it has operated as a home for folk education. Over the years there have been additions to the property but without the kind of money to fully care for it the buildings have suffered from heavy use and non-strategic repairs.

In 2017 the 'Future Halsway' project received first stage Heritage Lottery Funding to develop a project to restore the property and manage a far reaching creative education programme to engage communities in the area. The

restoration was essential to deal with expensive problems such as the roof, chimneys and ancient plumbing and wiring. Following a second stage pass in March 2018 the project started a month later.

The restoration programme was developed following a comprehensive survey by conservation architects Chedburn Dudley. Following a formal tender process Jonathan Rhind architects were appointed as project architects and Ellis and Co were appointed as main contractor for the building work. Mechanical and electrical services were sub contracted through a subsequent tender process.

Over the course of the development phase librarian Matt Rose was appointed to develop the main library project and Alice Maddicott was appointed to write the activity plan. Both of these were appointed to deliver their element of the project in stage two.

This report highlights the success of the project and how it has significantly impacted on the future prospects of the unique organisation and opened up folk arts to many new people.



As a result of this Project

We have a fully functioning organisation which has been protected by a programme of significant improvements to the fabric of the building, its systems and management and maintainance.

There has been a far reaching creative learning programme which has engaged local communities and young people in a wide variety of heritage learning opportunities. This has significantly increased our level of engagement and provided us with a new audience which has not been worked with before. The project has also made great strides to increase understanding of the heritage of the site through new interpretation and research and making this information available to many more people.

"It is wonderful to know so much more about Halsway and it's fascinating history" Visitor

The library is an important part of the charity and this project has enabled the organisation of this valuable resource to focus the collection, engage more people and ensure that it is correctly managed, preserved and available for use.

Approved Purposes

- Undertake a programme of repairs in line with 2016 condition survey recommendations. To include repairs to the leadwork, chimneys, windows, glazing and masonry.
- Upgrade and repair the water system which is currently damaging the interior fabric of the building.
- Manage a programme of heritage skills volunteering and training with South West Heritage Repair out of date electrical systems.
- Work with local craftspeople to restore the garden's stone walls, steps and balustrades.
- Appoint f/t librarian to create a national searchable folk arts library database with the English Folk Dance and Song Society (Vaughan Williams Memorial Library) and support the delivery of interpretation and activities.
- Appoint a freelance learning consultant to support the delivery of interpretation and activities.
- Work with local schools, and community groups to interpret Halsway by using library and archives throughout the property.
- Deliver heritage learning strategy including exhibitions, education and public events.

Project management

After a formal tendering process in Phase 1 heritage architects Jonathan Rhind were selected by the Project Management Group to led on project design. Using the original full survey as a reference a programme of work was specified. There was then a formal tender process to appoint a Quantity Surveyor, Mildred, Howells & Co and Mechanical Engineer BJP and the main project contractors Ellis and Co. The whole project was well specified in Phase 1 which enabled it to start as soon as the funding was in place. A significant problem would have been caused had Ellis and Co and the other companies not agreed to allocate time without knowing the funding outcome. Somerset Mechanical and T&C Electrical were appointed through tender as the electrical and mechanical contractors.

As the project started there were monthly full project team meetings, weekly architect and client meetings and Crispian Cook met daily with the site manager from Ellis. The whole process went very well throughout the project and any issues were quickly sorted out. Jonathan Rhind were efficient and all of the other contractors communicated well. Any issues or amendments were addressed by the project team and a way forward was decided.

Project outcomes - Capital Programme

What difference will your project make for heritage?

Heritage will be better managed

Following the detailed survey by Chedburn and Dudley the capitol restoration works were specified. This work was then the focus of the round 2 project.

Key result: A maintenance and management plan has been produced to ensure that facilities are correctly monitored and checked on a regular basis. This plan includes all areas and items which could cause problems if left unmonitored for example blocked drains and gutters. This document also links in with the new conservation plan which outlines the architectural and cultural heritage of the site and the importance of the items it contains. These two documents are kept on file and remain the key references for any future work and whenever there are maintenance issues into the future. Staff training has also happen so people are aware of the importance of the management plan.

The project addresses a number of areas where maintenance was difficult to monitor.

Key result: There are now man safe systems all around the buildings so that all external areas can be accessed safely and quickly. There are also ladder fixing points over roof ridges to prevent damage due to access.

Key result: The failing roof lights have been replaced all across the manor. These were leaking and degraded. They have been replaced with opening velux windows so not only are they much better thermally but also mean that the roof can be accessed safely internally. This will ensure that there is no build up of debris and the state of the roof can be monitored in line with management plan.

The grounds of Halsway Manor have been looked after by volunteers for a number of years and this project sought to find ways to better maintain the grounds and provide opportunities to better understand how the grounds work and can be sustainably cared for in the future. There is now a garden and grounds plan which has been developed with the volunteer team.



Heritage will be in better condition

The buildings and grounds have been brought up to a good standard of repair and many of the heritage features restored to their former condition. Over the years there have been a number of unsightly additions which have been removed or replaced. Ellis and Co historic buildings conversation and restoration company were appointed through a tender process managed by project architects Jonathan Rhind. Ellis were chosen because of their competitive tender and there experience of working on similar projects. The project manager, Crispian Cook visited Nettlecombe Court to talk to the director there who was very happy with their recent restoration which had been managed by Ellis.

The restoration plan was designed using the original quinquennial survey carried out by Chedburn Dudley in 2016. The main contractors tendered on this basis and when Ellis won the contract they prepared more detailed mechanical and engineering plans. These were used to subcontract through tender, Somerset Mechanical and T&C Electrical.

Through a series of meetings with the Project Management Group (PMG) the project was fine tuned although there was an issue with the mechanical and electrical (M&E) elements coming in significantly high. This was due to the complexity of the building and the fact that there had been different phases of works and quality of implementation over the years.



Mechanical and engineering

Although the original plan was to install provision for solar thermal water heating this proved to be too expensive due to the space available being not great so the potential benefits being too small to justify. Although alternative heat sources were discussed at length the M&E consultant, BJP, stated that actually a well running modern LPG system was the most efficient source for Halsway. This was because of the nature of the business i.e lots of people using hot water at the same time. The heat source was three LPG boilers which were in worse condition

that expected due to the high heat in the poorly ventilated boiler room. Also because of their poor performance secondary electrical heating was being used.

Another issue was that one third of the manor was heated electrically using inefficient storage heaters and immersion heaters. There was no thermostatic control in the building which resulted in inefficient heating which was either on or off.

Key result: Due to the amount of new mechanical infrastructure being installed BJP recommended replacing all three boilers with modern, efficient condenser units. New mechanical and natural ventilation was also installed in the boiler room to reduce plant heat and increase lifespan.

Key result: A new heating circuit was installed to utilise existing heating from main boilers. This means that there is only one heat source in the manor. New radiators were installed in specific areas. A new computerised heating management system was installed with multiple thermostats so that the heating is smart and controllable requiring little day to day management and much more efficient. BJP estimated these measures could save 20% on our fuel bills which equates to about £2500 per year.

Cold water storage was in 12 loft header tanks which posed a significant risk of failure and potential flooding. A number were inaccessible and posed a high risk from water borne diseases such as legionnaire's disease. There was also a significant amount of pipe work because of these outdated and dangerous tanks. This also meant that water in the bedrooms was not potable and plastic bottled water had to be provided for guests in their bedrooms. Water pressure was also a problem and many showers and taps often failed.

Key result: A new pressurised cold water system was installed with a fixed, sealed tank in the cellar. This means a constant pressure across the whole manor so all outlets work properly negating the use of secondary pumps which use more electricity. There is now no stored water in the loft spaces so less risk of water damage and contamination. This results in us not having to provide bottled water to guests. There is also an annual saving on extra water testing because of the new system of approx £500 per year.



Electrical services in the manor were erratic and how many additions over the years. It was acknowledged early on in the project that a full re-wire was too expensive and disruptive. The brief was to rationalise existing wiring, take out redundant installations and make the system safe and efficient. When the electricians were on site they inspected the fire alarm in the main building and found that it was sub standard and needed replacing. This was a

significant addition to the project not in the original budget.

Key result: Movement sensing LED lighting was installed into all public spaces. Due to the nature of use most lighting used to be on for about 14 hours per day. Now it only operates when movement is detected and is low watt LED. All other bulbs in the whole building were replaced with LED ones. Across the entire property there are approximately 300 bulbs.

Key result: All circuit boards have been changed and wiring checked and certified safe. Changing to LED, many with microwave sensors results in significant maintenance and energy savings.

Roof

The roof was a major concern early on and a lot of work was specified. There was some opening up as part of the tender process and early signs were good regarding the state of underlying timber. This was the largest piece of work and scaffold had to be installed surrounding the manor. The survey had specified two chimneys for repair/re-build. On closer inspection there were a number of additions to the main roof programme including replacing all the roof lights, more lead work and work on another chimney. Also the one chimney needing rebuild required more work as previous repairs have been carried out with cement.

Key result: All new lead valleys on the roof with space to properly drain rainwater. Originally the large central lead valley was down for patching but it was decided early on that it should be totally replaced. All gable ends and flashings were repaired where necessary. All new roof lights which are insulated, water tight and provide easy, safe access to the roof. All chimneys repaired or rebuilt and are now safe. All finials and stonework checked and solid. Broken or missing slates repaired. This work not only makes the roof water tight it makes the structure safer for customers and staff.

Rainwater goods and foul drainage

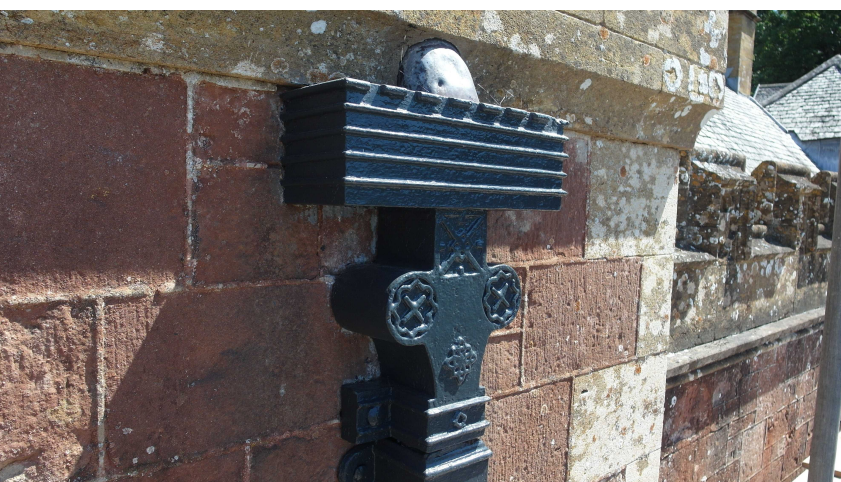
The rainwater goods on both the manor and the mews have not been maintained over the years and many of them are ornate. Over the years there have been cheap repairs done and listed iron pipe work has been replaced with plastic. There were also multiple places where there were holes and other damage.

CCTV surveys picked up that a number of drains leading from the manor were collapsed and damaged.

Key result: All drainpipes, gutters, soffits and fascias have been renewed and redecorated. Plastic has been replaced with cast iron where appropriate. All drainage was also rodded and cleared. Checking of all pipe work is in the maintenance plan. Drains have been relined where damaged.

External walls and landscape

All around the property there was stonework needing re-pointing. This included the walls of the manor and mews and stonework in the garden. There were also broken stone steps around the grounds which were dangerous and in risk of damaging surrounding stonework.



Key result: There was significant re-pointing around the buildings and grounds. Two balustrades were also rebuilt. The stone steps were replaced with new like for like stone. The work was carried out by local craftspeople.

Key result: We ran a lime re-pointing training day for local volunteers to learn this heritage skill. The workshop was fully booked with a waiting list.

Key result: The windows in the property were all surveyed, repaired and redecorated. A number of unsightly additions were taken away also to bring the manor back to its former glory. Windows are not more draft free and further damage has been prevented.

Heritage will be better interpreted and explained
Heritage will be identified/recorded



Throughout the project there has been a focus on the importance of caring for the assets of the charity. In the past the property has come second to the activities happening in it. However with a new conservation plan and training of staff and trustees and the improved interpretation the importance of the building's heritage is much better understood. This will lead to better overall management of the site and the probability of problems occurring being reduced. These elements are further addressed in the creative learning and library sections of the evaluation.

What difference will your project make for people?

People will have developed skills
People will have learnt about heritage

Throughout the project a volunteer gardening team has been working to improve the quality and biodiversity of the gardens. A garden plan has been produced by our volunteers to enable the sustainable management of the grounds. It aims to manage the grounds in a way which is easy to maintain and provides enough interest and biodiversity whilst not being too difficult for volunteers to work in. There has been a whole day training session for local volunteers in lime re-pointing; which there is a constant need for at Halsway because of the weather. The workshop, designed for volunteers was fully subscribed with 15 participants, there was also a large waiting list. A good outcome was that many of the participants felt they had learnt a new skill and understanding that they could apply to their own heritage projects.

We had an excellent day at Halsway Manor, learning enough about pointing with lime mortars to oversee the forthcoming work on our local church and maybe take on some of the more straightforward pointing ourselves. Participant

Many other elements are included in the creative learning and library elements of the evaluation.

People will have changed their attitudes and/or behaviour
People will have had an enjoyable experience
People will have volunteered time

Halsway Manor historically has been a place which was enjoyed only by people residents on courses, indeed it has been for one reason or another kept a secret for the few to enjoy. One of the key aims of this project was to open up the facilities to the general public and create projects which draw local communities and visitors to the area to events and activities. Feedback from all different activities has been unanimous in saying that Halsway Manor is now a welcoming place which people feel they can visit at anytime.

Key result: West Somerset District Council have approached Halsway after hearing about the work and asked if a series of skills workshops can happen for local unemployed and/or harder to reach individuals. These workshops will be happening throughout 2019.

What difference will your project make for communities?

Negative environmental impacts will be reduced

Upgraded water supply means over 10,000 plastic bottles are not used annually. Estimates show that one half litre plastic bottle of water has a total carbon footprint equal to 82.8 grams. This means that annual carbon saving is 828kg CO₂e and a cost saving of approximately £2000

Assuming the average bulb was Halsway is 60w of power and they are on 6 hours per day with a KW cost of 0.13p this represents a cost of £5000 per year. With all new LED bulbs approx 5w each this represents an annual saving of £4500. This represents an annual saving of 10000kg CO₂e.

The new central system is more efficient and negates the need for secondary electrical heating and inefficient storage heaters. The estimated efficiency of the new system is up to 15% equalling a saving of 13500kg CO₂e per year and £1350 in cost saving. In addition all electricity is now sourced from 100% renewable supplies.

Your local area/community will be a better place to live, work or visit

Your local economy will be boosted

Your organisation will be more resilient

Due to the large number of activities in different parts of the community there has been a significant rise in the profile of Halsway. There have been a number of articles in national publications about the project, concentrating on the benefits of having a sustainable cultural facility in such a beautiful albeit remote area.

Now that Halsway is renovated the chances are significantly improved for it to continue to grow, employing local people and spending more on services and products in the community. Halsway source all food and supplies local to support the rural economy and with higher turnover comes even more expenditure.

The work that has happened at Halsway has boosted enthusiasm among member, supporters and customers. They have seen that Halsway are serious about maintaining the business and buildings after years of partial neglect and non strategic development plans. Phase 2 of 'Future Halsway' is underway to renovate the rear of the manor and provide a permanent dining room. There are also plans to build a new kitchen to the rear of the manor in order that the original rooms can be restored to their former glory.

There has been significant staff training and the implementation of new management processes to ensure the ongoing maintenance and care of the buildings and grounds. There is much better understanding about the heritage of the site which has led to staff and customers treating it with more care. The interpretation has brought the manor alive and resulted in many more people taking an interest in both the physical and intangible heritage of the site and local area. This is evidenced by the fact that now all course participants read the interpretation and one off visitors to the site have some context to their visit.

Feedback from users of Halsway has been overwhelmingly positive. With all the new systems working properly and the manor being more comfortable than ever we are noticing an increase in bookings and interest up approximately 8% over the last year.

The improvements to the manor have been very well received and course feedback highlights people's delight that the property has been given a new lease of life. The interpretation elements now explain the heritage of the manor and the new artworks help bring this to life. The restoration of the Gair-Wilkinson painting collection, the reproduction of Cecil Sharp's photos of Somerset folk singers and the publication of the Ruth Tongue book have created a valuable legacy for future visitors to explore and enjoy.

Project outcomes - Creative Learning Programme

Introduction

This report aims to evaluate all the activities that happened as part of Halsway Manor's Future Halsway project. Over a period of one year from April 2018 to end of March 2019, a large number of new and interesting activities took place, with a key focus on engaging local people as well as supporting the interests of existing audiences and celebrating the wider heritage of Halsway.

The activities ranged from a wide-reaching schools programme in heritage-inspired creative writing, folk music and dance, to innovative events for the public. From heritage open days to a travelling miniature library, from exhibitions to a community dance, creative residencies, folklore walks and a seasonal supper, a wide variety of local audiences were engaged and key links made to support local organisations, such as local library services. As well as this new interpretation was created for both adults and children, bringing to life the history of the manor in exciting ways. Through this programme we have reached a new audience of hundreds as well as continuing to engage our existing users.



The approach to evaluation for the activities has used a logical methodology, including both quantitative and qualitative analysis of information gathered. The following report will discuss all activities, divided for clear analysis under HLF's headings for evaluation best practice in terms of outcomes for people and communities, as well as including the heading for the evaluation of heritage and interpretation. Each heading will have a summary of how the project met these goals, followed by statistics and quotes from participants.

Overview – what we wanted to happen:

At the start of the project our key target audiences were:

- People living locally of all ages and backgrounds
- People who do not normally engage with folk arts
- People living locally – potential library users
- Local schools and young people – including increasing local attendance of Young Halsway courses
- A wider age demographic
- Heritage, local and natural history audiences
- Local creative arts audience
- People who struggle to access culture locally.

With these people in mind we proceeded with our varied activity programme, whose aims were to:

- Continue to provide inspirational activities and show best practice in the field of folk arts.
- Develop our offer to include the wider heritage of the manor and its history.
- Develop our offer to include the intangible history of the local landscape and area.
- Develop our education offer to engage more and a wider demographic of young people, to ensure our heritage for the next generation.
- Provide activities for families, encouraging the “parent age” generation, currently our least engaged age bracket.
- Develop activities that genuinely appeal to people living locally and provide an invitation for them to get to know Halsway, learn about our heritage and feel welcome.
- Take Halsway out to the wider community as well as bring people in.

- Develop an innovative creative interpretation strategy to enrich the experience of both heritage activities and course attendees, using Halsway's USP as a "hands on" heritage property.
- Develop ways of engaging the wider creative community and using our heritage to inspire exciting new work.
- Develop Halsway's potential as an exhibition venue utilising our heritage.
- Develop the library, its outreach, its sustainability and focus on the South West of England.
- Make Halsway a place of living history with a coherent narrative for visitors.
- Become a cultural hub of exciting activities embedded within the West Somerset community, with a wider heritage offer that supports and invites in people living locally, especially those who may not have experience what Halsway has to offer before.
- Design a sustainable heritage offer that is valued within the local community.
- Design a sustainable schools offer that feeds into our existing Young Halsway programme, exploring our wider heritage for this project.
- Become a place that is seen as not as one that is not closed and for insiders only, but welcoming, so that those who previously felt on the outside of our creative community are comfortable coming in.
- Visitors are welcome at Halsway at any time – a part of Halsway will always be open to the public for the first time in Halsway Manor's history.

What actually happened

People will have learnt about heritage:

Schools and young people

At the start of this project we had thought to focus on three strands of heritage learning connected to Halsway – folk music, dance and creative writing – which we have done throughout the year. Our baseline was virtually no engagement with local schools, but a good track record of working with young people, though rarely local, through our residential Young Halsway courses. We wanted to change this, feeling that becoming part of the local educational community was key to Halsway being a sustainable and positive part of the local community and passing on our heritage knowledge.

Music

The first strand to start was the music workshops with our local colleges, working with our musicians in residence Sam Kelly and The Lost Boys who were tutoring on our Young Halsway Intermediate course.

For the initial workshops we worked with GCSE students from two local schools: West Somerset College in Minehead and Haygrove School in Bridgwater. Tutors Archie Churchill Moss and Sam Kelly, visited each school for two days working towards slightly different outcomes in each. The first school visited was Haygrove. Here two groups of students worked towards learning a local Somerset folk song and then arranging it themselves for a recorded performance and then later a concert performance at the school's summer festival: Glastongrove. At West Somerset College two groups also learned and arranged local Somerset folksongs. Whilst at Haygrove there was a celebratory performance as an outcome, at West Somerset College the outcome was that a number of students were identified and given bursaries to attend our Young Halsway Intermediate course. Whilst this was seen as a great success, we also identified that maybe our Introductory course would have been more suited to their level. However this was useful in that it enabled us to adapt our learning plan for the year to save some budget to support other

young people accessing our Introductory course, through further workshops at Danesfield with another young folk musician tutor Ford Collier.

Through these workshops 57 young people learned more about heritage. Specifically the folk song heritage of the area, by learning local tunes. A further 4 students went on to access heritage further, by attending our Young Halsway Intermediate course with a bursary. Another interesting development is that the Advanced level Young Halsway students, a separate course, were so interested in the history in the new interpretation on display, that their course ended up being themed on the HLF project and Halsway's history in a way we hadn't envisaged, adding another fruitful strand to the project's work with young people. This led to another 5 young people having an in depth heritage learning experience.

The whole music schools programme was a particularly valuable heritage experience as it took into account the intangible, often forgotten, heritage of the area and also enabled young people, with the exception of 3 students with previous folk knowledge, to experience folk music for the first time.

Conversations were had with teachers, students and tutors and written surveys were handed out. We received back 38 student surveys.



Survey feedback from students included:

"I didn't know what folk music was before and I would like to listen to more. I didn't know that folk music was around this area."

"I felt it expanded my knowledge of local heritage and I will continue to learn songs like this in the future."

"It made me aware that all folk music is not the same."

The tutors of the project also got to expand their heritage knowledge, through researching songs specific to the local area and learning them to teach to young people.

They also learned more about the history of the manor and brought this into songwriting sessions, when moving from schools workshops to our Young Halsway residentials.

Tutors Archie Churchill Moss and Sam Kelly said:

"Workshops always highlight the importance of material choice for myself. I had to find certain tunes that the participants could engage with in terms of their enjoyment and its accessibility."

Creative writing

Our baseline here was very little engagement with primary schools except for our most local Crowcombe. We worked again with Crowcombe to deepen that relationship, whilst expanding further to work with new local schools. Creative writing and drawing on folk and local heritage was also a new direction for us – we were keen to expand the heritage remit, which we could offer and see how this was received by schools.

Three local primary and first schools (years 3-6) took part in creative writing workshops inspired by the wider heritage of Halsway with writer Alice Maddicott. The offer was for three workshops per school or age group, starting with an inspirational kick off day at Halsway, followed by a day in school and a day up on the Quantock Hills. The idea was to expand the creative inspiration from Halsway through to the children's familiar environment, then on to the wider landscape of the area, ensuring learning about heritage in a variety of ways as per the HLF remit.



During the first day at Halsway the children each created their own imaginary version of the manor, inspired by the building and its stories. Starting outside, in order to gauge the children's initial reaction to the manor, the children explored and discussed what the manor would be like if it was alive – what clues do we see on the outside of the building, from the hunky punks to parts of the building being wings, the windows eyes? Children drew and labeled their manor characters, so before they even entered they had a personal connection with the manor as part of

their imagination. They then discovered the interior of the manor; its rooms and how the manor has changed over time, different incarnations during its history, plus they met the other mythical creatures hiding in its carvings and ceilings, as well as discovering exciting things such as the witch marks above the fireplace. Time was spent discussing these things and using them to collect story ideas and begin to build a story world together and individually. They also explored the library and created their own imaginary versions of it. These things ensured an extremely creative experience directly inspired by heritage.

This kick off day was followed by a day back at each school where the children expanded their imaginary worlds, using their local environment, combined with favourite ideas and imaginings to create wider story worlds, with creative maps of the area. The final day was up on the Quantock Hills, expanding the pool of imaginative inspiration in the local area further and embracing another side of Halsway's wider heritage. The children worked on their descriptive writing to really bring the place to life. Working outdoors they collected ideas and descriptions, giving them a chance to feel that their creative writing was really embedded in the landscape that they were exploring, that was also local to them and could be part of their world. There was also a wellbeing goal here – to see if there was a positive impact, especially with children who struggle in a classroom environment, in working outside.

Feedback from the workshops was overwhelmingly positive. Teachers reported how inspired children were and how they kept talking about Halsway. Parents reported to teachers that the children had come home "buzzing" with excitement from the first day. It was also noted that children with writing challenges felt able to contribute – putting up their hands with ideas when normally they would have been silent. They felt freed to try when normally they were nervous or reluctant to do so.

One teacher from Crowcombe school said: "the children loved it so thank you for making the return to school so magical for them and setting them up with a renewed love of writing! As promised our English groups are named: Dragons, Poppinjays and Hunky Punks - the children are thrilled."

Crowcombe children said:

"I liked it when we told story about Pegasus and Witchy" Darcey Year 4

"I enjoyed going up onto the Quantocks, bouncing on the heather and exploring nature." Beatrix Year 4

"I enjoyed making our own imaginary libraries with the popinjays." Abi Year 4

"I really enjoyed the imaginary maps - it was really good fun to use your imagination because nothing was wrong or right." Riley Year 4





My Halsway Manor experience By Riley Sedgbeer

In September it was awesome! We got to go to Halsway Manor and it was really, really, fun. There were a lot of things that were extremely inspirational and things that made me think. When we were outside we imagined what it would be like if it was alive, I thought it was a bat. There was a bar room and the seats were really comfy. How comfy? They were so comfy that Mrs. Tyrrell nearly fell asleep. We made stories that were an imagination world. We heard a story of Pegasus and Witchy the story was cool because Alice is a writer. There was a mysterious library to get in there was a secret door inside there was a secret cupboard.

The challenges were different in each school, with literacy levels and previous experience of heritage and the surrounding area varying hugely between each class. For example many of the Crowcombe children were aware of Halsway and spent time with their families up on the Quantocks, whereas most children from St Peter's had not heard of Halsway and, despite Williton being nearby, some had never been up on the Quantock hills. It was generally held that therefore this was a hugely beneficial

experience for local children who for whatever reasons have access issues with experiencing and discovering the landscape and heritage of the area. Even though the Quantock Hills are nearby, this visit expanded the experiences of local children, supporting their creative development and sense of pride and belonging in their local area. The children at Old Cleeve and St Peter's were also less aware of local folklore, such as the story of our local dragon, the Gurt Worm of Shervage Wood, and the beneficent Black Dog that protects lost children on the hills. It was fascinating to see how these mythical animals became characters for the children, helping to bring there local landscape to life imaginatively.

We were particularly pleased with the wider outcomes of the project, as well as Crowcombe renaming their English groups, St Peter's in Williton decided to change their next English topic to be the wider heritage of Halsway, as the teacher felt that the children were so inspired by their experience. On meeting the head of the West Somerset Academies Trust, it was discovered that the biggest challenge in local primary schools is getting boys writing. We were thrilled that this project did just that – many boys who will never write completed long pieces of work and sat quietly writing for the first time. This evidence of engaging reluctant boy writers was also seen at Crowcombe school, where the teacher informed us that one boy who never writes had independently written three pages, as he was so inspired.



Working with four classes across three schools enabled us to tweak the workshops with each group, so that the project evolved. This inevitably meant that the first group were a slight test group, but it was not felt that this impacted on the quality of their learning, it just made us realise that certain things would work in a better order or in different rooms – for example the Long Room was too echoing for an ideal learning environment, whereas for dancing on courses it is the perfect space.

"Abbey Class would like to thank you for the amazing experience they had with you for all three sessions. The children all loved the experiences you provided and they really build a strong connection with you which allowed them to fully explore their creativity without fearing they would make mistakes. The children enjoyed writing in new settings and it has inspired me to take them out of the classroom more to do more creative writing.

The children enjoyed exploring the history of their local area using both the library and through the stories that you told especially the 'gurt worm'!

Boys' writing is one of our main focuses for our class this year. The boys were all captivated in the stories you told and they really started to use their imagination. Having completed this project at the beginning of the year, really helped to spark off their enthusiasm for the year. Boys are now more motivated to work and are not afraid of using any ideas they may have. This newfound confidence has allowed them to also help their other SPAG skills and handwriting as they want to take more pride in what they have written.

Thank you so much for this experience!" – Miss Martin, Old Cleeve year 4 class teacher.

Dance

For the dance strand of the schools workshops innovative folk dance practitioner Laurel Swift worked with a mixed age group from Danesfield, our most local middle school on a mixture of country and Morris dancing styles. In this way the children learned about folk dance heritage, where they wouldn't have had the chance before unless their families were involved in folk dance. Country dancing is very much of the local heritage that is dying out in some rural communities and rarely touched on beyond primary school. Morris dancing is hard to access for young people, especially a contemporary creative take on it.



Over three days 25 children worked with Laurel and her musician partner Ben, to both learn and create folk dances, as well as learning the traditional skill of "calling" a dance. This led to the Danesfield children hosting a school dance for the whole of year 4 from two feeder schools, St Peter's in Williton and Knights Templar in Watchet. This was a brilliant event as it enabled the Danesfield to pass on their heritage learning to a younger group and acted as a lovely transition event as these year 4 pupils will be moving up to Danesfield in September, as well as expanding our primary school numbers to include Knights

Templar. This led to a further 58 children and 8 adults, as well as a further 30 Danesfield children, being involved. The students were also all invited to bring their families to the end of project community ceilidh, the hope being here that as well as having a lovely time this would enable the children to pass up their learning to their parents, also engaging the parent age bracket, the age group we had identified in our consultation as being the hardest to engage.

Of particular note in terms of heritage learning was a moment when Laurel and Ben asked the children where they felt the Morris dancing they were doing came from. Poland, France, Ireland, Scotland, Spain... A huge number of countries were listed before someone suggested England. The children were fascinated to discover that England had its own dance tradition, and discovering this made them keen to learn more about wider folk heritage. This also showed the real need for folk arts education in English schools – it is a knowledge of heritage that is in danger of being lost and highlighted to us the future challenges Halsway faces in ensuring the preservation of folk knowledge.

Other Activities

The Travelling Library

Whilst the library element of this project as a whole will be evaluated elsewhere in this report, it was the focus on one of our key community outreach activities: The Halsway Manor Travelling Library.

When developing the activity plan it was decided that key to the dissemination of knowledge of the heritage of Halsway and specifically the rich contents of its library that people did not realise was open to the public, was the

idea of taking the library out to the community. Therefore an activity was designed, working in conjunction with and supporting the local West Somerset library service.

The Travelling Library was a beautiful purpose-built structure, a display background in the form of a reproduction of the manor created by a local craftsman, which toured local libraries with a selection of books and artefacts from our collection, along with a member of staff to engage the public in discussions. It toured a number of local libraries, including all those in the West Somerset service area. These were Williton, Nether Stowey, Watchet, Minehead, Porlock, Dulverton and Taunton.

During the Travelling Library's tour, 236 local people learned about heritage directly in terms of being able to easily access and read books, as well as from discussions about Halsway and local history with the staff member. The contents of the library were tailored for each location, expanding local knowledge as well as spreading the word about folk arts and what Halsway has to offer the community. Our librarian noted specific interests in each area:



"At Watchet library there was much interest in Halsway Manor library's unique collection of books of sea songs and sea shanties. including biographies of Watchet singer John Short aka Yankee Jack.

At Williton Library residents of Croft House nursing home visited the Travelling Library. Some were wheelchair-bound, others suffering from dementia. All seemed to really enjoy perusing both books on local history and the collection of local historic photographs. This led to the outcome of a display panel with the involvement of Graham and friends of Williton library. The project also featured in their newsletter.

At Porlock Library the photograph collection triggered memories for two sisters of being evacuated from London to Porlock during the Second World War.

At Dulverton there was particular interest in the recordings of folk songs originally sung around Dulverton at the turn of the 20th century. After seeing the travelling library, several people decided to visit Halsway Manor to undertake further research in the library and to attend a concert by folk singer Kitty Macfarlane."

Head Librarian Sara Long said: *"West Somerset Libraries were thrilled to be able to collaborate with Halsway Manor. Their travelling library was a delight and of great interest with artefacts, fascinating photos and books. All beautifully displayed together with a delightful replica of the manor".*

Our challenges were that we could not guarantee how many visitors would come to the library and for some visits numbers were lower than we would have liked. There were also space limitations in terms of what we could take; only so many books would fit and people were unable to take things away. However using this as an opportunity to invite people to the library for further engagement did allow us to offer a way of mitigating this. Whilst only a small number, approximately five, have so far come to the library as a result of this, the project has enabled us to build a strong link with the local library service and we hope that numbers of new visitors as a direct result of the Travelling Library are something that will continue to grow as a project legacy.

Community events – family folklore walk and seasonal supper:

For the family folklore walk our aim was to create a family day out, working in partnership with the Quantock Hills AONB that combined both the folklore heritage of the local area and the natural history, enabling people to learn about two kinds of local heritage. Halsway provided the organisation of the event and a storyteller, Clare Viner,

with a special interest in the Quantock Hills, and the AONB provided a ranger and volunteers with expertise in the landscape. The event took the form of a walk across the hills and through the woods, stopping to hear local folktales and also at points of historic or natural history interest. Parents and children heard tales that are part of local folk heritage and information about the area from scheduled monuments to how to recognise delicious whortleberries.



We capped the numbers at 20-25 to provide a safe and more intimate event and we were pleased how it was fully booked with 22 signed up to attend and six more enquiring last minute if they could attend. Unfortunately we had a last minute cancellation of six people, meaning it was too late to fill the places with others who were interested, meaning that was had 16 in attendance plus six Halsway and AONB workers and volunteers.

Feedback from participants was extremely positive and we were happy to have a real mixture of young people of different ages, including some children with their foster families, diversifying our outreach. Their comments show how people learned about heritage, but also through coming together as a community and having a lovely day, this event met a number of HLF evaluation criteria. We had some lovely letters afterwards including this one:

"It was a wonderful day and fabulous to meet you. I have spoken to the children who have talked of nothing else since we arrived home. To follow are their best bits and a few things they thought of for future events:-

Daphne - I loved the stories.

Edith - Picking whortle berries and eating them.

Edmund - hearing stories about the Dragon and trying to hear the songs coming from underground.

Suggestions:-

More story walks!

Halloween walks with scary stories.

Riddles to solve.

Making up songs and stories about the hills.

Making stories, songs and myths about our own lives.

Like the children i thoroughly enjoyed today. The stories were brilliant and having the Quantock Ranger and volunteers there added to it, with them sharing knowledge and enthusiasm.

It is wonderful to see Halsway reach out to the community like this, and I would definitely love to bring the kids to other events. It was a real gift.

Thank you all.

Ruth, Edith, Edmund and Daphne"

Another family commented:

"Millie and I enjoyed the folklore walk on the Quantocks so much and wanted to send our thanks to all involved with the event.

Millie`s thoughts follow: `` I liked listening to the folklore stories and the way Clare told them. I also found that where we stopped corresponded with the story that was being told``"

Another sent this email:

"Thank you again for an incredible Family Folklore Walk.

Beautifully organised by your self and great to meet you and hear more about what you do. The stories were brilliant and caught the attention of all the children and adults present. Claire was lovely having a mystic charm, which made the stories even better. The Rangers were friendly and informative and added yet another dimension to the day. It was wonderful how everyone walked and talked to different people in such a natural relaxed way. In

this day and age of people taking less time for each other and viewing what is gifted around us it made the day so special. Our friend Sue from Australia was very impressed and she took lots of photographs which were shared with her family and friends in Australia that evening. Everyone agreed just how lucky we are to live somewhere so captivating.

The day was so inspiring that a few days later the children had a painting day chatting about nature and using fallen leaves and twigs to print pictures with, all great fun.

Thank you again Alice for the warmth you brought to the day and we would love to go on more walks like this as a family."

Our seasonal supper took place in January. Local people were invited to attend a community supper, hosted by Tim Hill a musician and traditional customs expert, and learn about heritage through a celebration of the season. Due to its mid January date it was decided to focus on Wassailing traditions and attendees got a chance to directly take part by Wassailing an apple tree as well as share their own family and local customs and traditions, all in the context of a delicious meal using seasonal ingredients. 33 people attended. Families were welcome and whilst the uptake was mainly among adults, we did have 5 children and teenagers, creating a lovely atmosphere of sharing heritage knowledge across generations. This event was also notable for how some more local Halsway regulars attended as well as a few new visitors, providing a good mix of new and existing audiences.

Feedback included:

"Thank you very much for last Sunday. Obviously a lot of effort had been put into organising the event. We did not know what to expect and came with an open mind. However we did not realise the emphasis was to be on Wassailing, which was great, or that you were looking for contributions from ourselves. If you hold a similar event next year we will certainly come along. Thank you again for all the effort that went into the evening."

"A wonderful evening, thank you to all involved."

Heritage Open Days and Exhibition Week



Part of our commitment at the start of this project was to be open to the public where possible, starting with being involved in the nationwide Heritage Open Days programme. Heritage Open Days runs over two weeks in September, with properties not normally open to the public, opening their doors for Friday, Saturday and Sunday each week. Whilst we were only able to open on the Fridays due to courses taking place at the weekend, we committed fully to the experience and felt that it was a great success.

On the first Friday our expectations were exceeded when we had 111 visitors over four hours. Most of these visitors were local, from within about a 15 mile radius, and most were new to Halsway, having discovered us specifically through Heritage Open Days. The second Friday was slightly quieter with 69 visitors, meaning that over the two days we received 180 new local visitors to the manor. Whilst our overall quantitative target for heritage connected new visitors was 1000 over the year, it was felt that this number for these two weekday events was where we wanted it to be and higher than the lower end of our expectations.

Due to it being a weekday most of our visitors were of retirement age, so whilst this is our most common existing age demographic, it still expanded our audience, as they were new to Halsway and folk arts. It was really lovely to see the building be truly appreciated. People when they visited spend a considerable amount of time talking to us

about the manor and looking around.

It was also a great test for our newly installed interpretation. Virtually all visitors read it and the feedback was extremely positive. They also had the chance to listen to music and oral history from our archive on our folk listening post, part of our more creative interpretation plan. Due to us not receiving young visitors on these days the children's interpretation wasn't handed out as we had hoped, though we were pleased that some adults wanted to read the children's history and take interpretation packs home for the children in their families, hopefully broadening the reach of Halsway still further.

What particularly struck us was how many visitors hadn't realised we were here before, as we had identified as one of our key obstacles to engagement during the consultation period. Therefore linking up with a national scheme such as Heritage Open Days was a great way to overcome this and spread the word that we are here. Most visitors were local, some in nearby towns and villages for many years, and this was the first time they had either heard of or felt invited to engage with Halsway. They were all keen to find out more and many said now they knew we were here and had visited they would come again. This was an overwhelmingly positive outcome for us in terms of our wider community engagement goals. However it also raised the idea that without this maybe we wouldn't have reached as many local people, and therefore what is it they were doing that we weren't to gain the attention of local people? This led to some interesting discussions with visitors and reflections – it became clear that making sure that Halsway is known and seen as a welcoming place you can visit was key to this project being sustainable rather than a one off.

In terms of how we gathered data, we counted visitor numbers and meeting them and talking to them gave us their age and general demographics. We left the visitor book for them to sign and give feedback if they wished, but we felt like a survey in this instance would be too formal and might distract people from looking and having a pleasurable non-pressured time. Therefore we made sure that staff were greeting people and talking to them throughout the day, finding out if they were new to Halsway, what inspired them to come and what would interest them in terms of what we could offer in the future. Whilst some were interested in our folk arts courses, it became clear that the interest in history was more prevalent. However many would have been curious to try folk arts, specifically more in terms of crafts than we currently offer, but that to be really appealing to locals we would have to provide more day courses, an inherent challenge with our business model of residential courses, needed to fund the day-to-day running costs of the manor.

It was a real pleasure to see how interested people were in the history of the manor and this had a wider impact in that it made us realise that we had a responsibility to this side of Halsway's heritage beyond this project – we are the guardians of more than folk arts and the library and this is something that ought to be celebrated and available for people to learn about.

A different side to Halsway's heritage was our exhibition week, where we fulfilled our commitment of days to be open to the public by opening for the entire week for an exhibition about past Halsway owner, the painter Frances Gair Wilkinson and her family, and local folklorist Ruth Tongue. 141 local people visited to view work and learn about the lives of these fascinating women, expanding our commitment to heritage learning beyond folk arts and the manor's history to an even wider definition, ensuring a learning about heritage offer to appeal to as many interests as possible. Many general visitors were in the older over 50 category, but we also invited local school groups and art groups in, expanding our age range. Evaluation included both conversations with visitors and visitor feedback surveys, although only 11 surveys were returned, showing that in this instance conversations were perhaps a more useful method of evaluation.



"Very enjoyable! Informative and educational! Nicely presented. Lovely!"

"Fascinating. Good to learn about some of the historical characters associated with Halsway... Altogether a great exhibition linking many elements."

"Wonderful warm welcome."

"Good to see care taken to present your material."

People will have developed skills:

The activities of this project allowed people to develop a variety of new skills, both practical skills and an expansion of knowledge and confidence. Our baseline for skills was that whilst our whole remit with courses is that skills are learned, and so therefore our current skills learning baseline is high, this is not within the local community, so we were going to expand this to a new audience and a wider remit of what skills might be, for example through volunteering and our education programme.

Schools and young people

As outlined in previous sections our schools programme for this project led to a variety of skills being developed, with a broad ranging offer for local young people.

The music workshops enabled the development of new skills in musicianship as nearly all young people were new to folk music and also the unique way it is often taught by ear. Without exception in our feedback students said that they felt their music skills had improved as well as their knowledge, and learning by ear was a noted interesting and valuable experience. For those that came to our Young Halsway Intermediate Course with bursary places, these skills developed even further, as they had access for the first time to an intensive musical course. Whilst some said they found it quite challenging they all agreed their skills had improved and were keen as a result to keep developing as general and folk musicians. They also had the additional skill gaining experience of working on a large ensemble piece for performance at Sidmouth Folk Festival. This communal collaborative experience was of great value in terms of developing and cementing their new folk skills.

The music programme also enabled the development of the skills of Young Halsway tutors, who learned many local songs specifically for the project, researched in the library and developed their teaching practice from school workshop through to Halsway residential.

Tutors said:

"The participants also were given time to work independently without a tutor. These independent sessions allowed us as tutors to witness each of the participants musical personalities which further allowed us to understand where each participant would fit when we split them down into smaller groups."

"Whilst tutoring on the young folk course it was great to see how seamlessly the bursary students integrated with the participants who had been coming on the course for a number of seasons."

With the dance workshops the young people learned new skills, both in terms of folk dances, but also in the tradition of calling and leading dances, as well as the opportunity to take the lead creatively in interpreting their own dances, inspired by traditional formats, and to take ownership of their learning by passing their new skills down to year 4s from other schools at the school dance. Dance provision within the school was low, despite the school possessing a dance studio, and folk dance had not been introduced before, so this was a great opportunity for new skills learning.

The creative writing workshops focused on a high level of literacy skills development via inspiration and the

encouragement of imagination, as well as a pastoral approach to literacy learning, taking the premise that often low literacy levels are due to a fear of getting things wrong – if this fear is taken away do more technical writing skills flourish naturally because children are engaged and having fun?

Coming into the workshops the three schools had children with a wide variety of literacy levels. All the schools felt that the children had learned new skills, especially in terms of unlocking their imaginations, being inspired by the area and in descriptive writing. For this section the following case study shows a particular focus on the wide-ranging skills developed – both technical and personal in terms of confidence and behaviour.

Deeper Case Study – St Peter’s, Williton

St Peter’s Williton was one of our key target schools for creative activities. As a local primary school it lies in an area of social deprivation with over 50% of students being pupil premium – an extraordinarily high percentage. During this project it was identified that our work had made a particular impact. Therefore as well as chatting to children and staff and requesting written feedback, we decided to conduct more in depth interviews and meetings with the class teacher, to work towards a deeper case study for our evaluation.

At the start of the project it was identified that there was a particular challenge in engaging reluctant writers, especially boys, an issue also identified by the head of the West Somerset Academies Trust as an area-wide problem. The year four group that we worked with had a particularly bad reputation in the school as a difficult class, that their current teacher was trying to dispel, working on encouragement and belief in their work. It was also identified that out of all the schools we were working with, the children in this class had the least previous access to the wider local area, local heritage and cultural experiences. Despite being local, both Halsway and the landscape of the Quantocks were new to the majority of children. There was also a specific challenge in that there were 11 SEN children in the class, who struggled both with learning difficulties that impacted their writing and physical needs.

There were two key conclusions that came up initially. First that one of the main outcomes was that the children had a new set of tools to aid their ability to be creative. The teacher felt that their thinking had been liberated and their confidence had grown. Where before they struggled even with the concept of imaginary, now the children had the skillset to create their own worlds and stories and could take inspiration from their everyday environment. Secondly it was clear that Halsway had become a place that was creatively alive for them, where they felt welcome. Therefore the teacher made the decision to change the class’s English topic to Halsway and to do follow up work. At the evaluation meeting they brought new artwork inspired by Halsway as well as stories, linked in with their curriculum literacy objectives.

When discussing the project the teacher divided the class into three groups: SEN, middle ability and high ability and provided a case study child for each group.

SEN: There were a variety of complex needs within the SEN group. As the case study child the teacher chose B – a boy with behavioural issues who refuses to write. He was chosen as out of all the children he was the one who surprised and exceeded expectations the most. As a child it was felt that his refusal to write was part fuelled by a lack of confidence and a fear of writing.

On day one of the project, the inspiration kick off day at Halsway, B surprised the teacher by putting his hand up a number of times and being keen to take part. It was felt that the inspirational location of Halsway and being out of the normal school environment contributed to this. In terms of behaviour B is known to kick out, to have tantrums, walk off or refuse to participate. He often seems stressed and miserable, yet particularly on the day up on the Quantocks he seemed happy and engaged, seeking out positive interactions with adults and his peers and coming up with interesting creative ideas. He didn’t “kick out” as the teacher put it – a surprising and impressive change for him.

In terms of not so much SEN but low ability, another child O, showed a huge improvement in his writing. Normally when asked to write a story it would simply be a dry list rather than a structured piece of creative writing. The teacher reports that now he is writing much more detailed work with more creative language and ideas. It seemed that with him, as well as others, the key was to engage their imaginations so that they wanted to get their ideas

into their work. If a child feels confident and proud in their ideas then they will be more likely to share them through their writing.

Middle range:

Our case study middle ability level was a girl named L. The project really enabled her to grasp high level creative thinking orally, with hugely expressive language. This led to the teacher seeing something in her that she hadn't seen before, and the potential for what she could achieve. She was particularly enthusiastic and dominated a lot of the conversations. She was very keen to share her work and seemed confident in her ideas. However her written work was of a lower level than her verbal work, highlighting how on a longer project this challenge of how to translate your best ideas to the page should be a focus. But the teacher still felt this was a huge positive saying "once they have the imaginative foundation, you as a teacher can get them there." We had achieved the major hurdle of engagement, creative thinking and confidence in L's ideas.

High level:

For the higher level case study a girl N was chosen as she was of high ability but lacked confidence. The teacher brought in some of her work done in class as well as that done during the project. It was interesting to note how much more imaginative and expressive her language was in her project work when compared to her quite dry class work. This suggested to the teacher that the project somehow enabled her to go off script and be more free in her writing. The challenge now was how to get that sophisticated descriptive language into her class literacy exercises.

In general there were a few key conclusions that the teacher had:

- Being out and about sparked ideas in the children's imaginations where they struggled for ideas in the classroom
- The children really enjoyed the project – there was not one complaint to the teacher and they were happy to talk and share their thoughts about the project. They were all smiling which was lovely to see.
- They learned more about their local heritage. Most of the children didn't know Halsway or the Quantocks – this really broadened their experience.
- There was great parent feedback – many parents reported that their children came home talking enthusiastically about Halsway and their experience.
- One of the strongest outcomes was the creative thinking of the children. As the teacher put it "the project has given them permission to be free".

Other Activities



Throughout this project a number of other activities enabled people to learn new skills, or develop existing ones.

Of particular note were some of the creative skills that were on offer. For example as part of our poetry residency, award winning poets Amy Key and Rebecca Perry offered a free poetry-writing workshop at Minehead Library. This gave local writers access to a caliber of writing workshop that is rarer in rural as opposed to big urban communities. We were thrilled with how there was a waiting list with the 16 places filled, after the workshop had only been advertised in the library for three days and a lovely variety of people from new immigrants to well established local writing groups attended. Later that evening Amy and Rebecca performed at a packed

local art venue and some of the workshop attendees were inspired to attend, also gaining new insight into potential performance skills for their work.

"Thank you so much for excellent workshop yesterday! Well attended and thought out and gave much food for thought! So much that it inspired a poem in the night."

With the interest in heritage and writing skills we planned a creative nature writing walk with the Quantock Hills AONB, but unfortunately we had to cancel it due to adverse weather conditions. Thirteen people had signed up – a good indication of local interest, and all said they would sign up again if the event was rescheduled.

Our Summer Fete changed this year to take the form of a Family Folk Arts Taster Day. As well as viewing dance displays, visitors were given the opportunity to try out a variety of new skills including: drumming, playing in a folk ensemble, blacksmithing, Morris dancing, Maypole dancing and green woodworking. Around 400 people attended the day with most trying out at least one new skill. Music and blacksmithing were the most popular workshops, showing how people will try something new if just given access to someone willing to share their knowledge.



Taking blacksmithing as an activity that was particularly popular, we were pleased with the age range that took part. Whilst many adults tried out this new skill, there was a lovely example of two young girls who returned with their parents again and again, showing how a change encounter with a potential new skill can inspire what could become a new hobby or interest. In the case of something such as blacksmithing, this is a hard to access skill, arguably especially for young women.

People will have changed their attitudes and/or behaviour:

One of our greatest challenges during this project was to overcome the preconception found to be held locally during our consultation period, that Halsway wasn't somewhere you could come and visit and was somehow for "insiders" only. This was our baseline. We set out to create a number of activities designed to both welcome people as a point of entry to Halsway and also to broaden Halsway's reputation doing work for and within the community – both through schools workshops and activities within the community such as the end of project dance, writing residency events and the travelling library.

The first hurdle that we overcame was getting people involved. In many cases we reached more than our target numbers, therefore in quantitative evaluation terms one could presume we succeeded in changing attitudinal and behavioural patterns. We doubled our heritage target number and tripled our schools target number. However this is a more complicated issue than simple numbers, so through extensive conversations with participants and visitors we paid particular attention to qualitative evaluation here.

Whilst the uptake on returning surveys was not high, events provided a great opportunity for in depth conversations with visitors. The key questions we asked visitors were if they were new to Halsway, if they had heard of Halsway before and if they were local. In the majority of cases for our Heritage Open days and Exhibition Week, around 90%, visitors had come from a radius of a 30 minute drive. The other two questions were really interesting in that if people were new to Halsway about half had never heard of it and half had, but had felt that they couldn't come. With those who weren't new to Halsway, they still would not necessarily have other occasions to come, as as locals they felt that the residential course model wasn't for them. In this way these activities enabled new and past visitors to feel welcome to come and see what was going on.

With activities that took place out in the community we asked people if they had heard of Halsway and if they had ever visited. The majority of people, even if they had heard of Halsway had not visited and had not realized it was

something they could do, or had been put off by hearing that it was for “insiders only”. Therefore we were pleased with our decision to take some events out to the community, as it had real outreach value and like we hoped, acted as an invitation for people to follow up the experience with a later visit. One lady spoken to at a travelling library stop had heard 20 years ago that Halsway was not friendly to locals and so had never thought to visit since. It was great to have a chance to dispel an outdated belief and invite her to visit and use the library.

Another example is how after the poetry events many were intrigued by the contents of the folklore library and a local writing group decided to use the library as a potential research venue. The Travelling Library enabled our Creative Lead and our Librarian to come into direct contact with the public and chat in depth about what we could offer at Halsway and invite people to visit, breaking down that initial barrier of people feeling unsure of visiting without a specific invitation.

Our impact in terms of changing attitudes and behaviour also varied by event. For example our participation in Heritage Open Days, whilst changing the demographic of visitors, didn't really change attitudes as such as the vast majority of visitors had not realized we existed. However our exhibition week helped change perceptions as a lot of people came who knew we existed and hadn't felt they could come before. We hoped the same would be the case with our community celebration ceilidh, however unfortunately the numbers were not what we had hope despite sending out a large number of invitations to make the marketing personal, suggesting that for large scale events off site, there is perhaps a different approach that would have worked, or that this is something that will work better in the future as we continue to strive to support our local community.

Another challenge was working with existing staff to show the value of what Halsway could offer beyond fee-paying courses. Whilst all staff were enthusiastic about our having achieved funding there were some key adjustments in terms of the activities that took place at the manor. For example there was some reluctance at the practicalities of being open to the public. However once visitors came and positive feedback was received most were pleased with how things had gone. There were also practical challenges in having school visits, but as word spread throughout the community of everything we had been doing there was great support for the positive impact we were having and the enthusiasm of local children. One member of staff was pleased as her young cousin had been involved in the schools workshop and really enjoyed it. Changes in this area are slow, but definitely moving in the right direction as the impact of this project continues to trickle down throughout the local community.

People will have had an enjoyable experience:

All the activities led to feedback examples of people having had enjoyable experiences and we are thrilled that whilst there were occasional suggestions for future improvements, there have been no complaints or evidence of negative experiences damaging to the project's aims.

"It was a really inspirational writing experience." Emily

"I think the thing I enjoyed most was doing the maps. It helped me with my story afterwards." Tirion

"It was terrific because we got to explore around and get ideas outside." Tarot
(quotes from Kingfisher class, Crowcombe)

Level of enjoyment was measured across activities by a combination of feedback surveys and conversations with participants. Again the data from surveys was a small sample in terms of numbers filled out, but robust in depth discussions and feedback emails from all activities led to an informed analysis being possible. We also ensured a wide variety of activities enabling people to find something to suit them and what they might enjoy as well as the opportunity to gain enjoyment from trying something new. We also took into account reflective enjoyable experiences, such as viewing or reading something interesting, as well as more participatory experiences such as trying a new skill or attending a workshop.

The folklore walk and the poetry residency connected activities were of particular note in terms of enjoyment. As previous quotes in this report show, the level of enjoyment was high. But there were other notable moments, such as the poets receiving a standing ovation at their reading, and emails, which the previous quotes were taken from,

being sent spontaneously. Enjoyment was also clear from how parents and teachers have reported on how their children have continued to talk about Halsway and the experience and produce creative work inspired by it.

"They've just had a brilliant time – they absolutely loved it – especially the country dancing." Miss Attwood, Danesfield Middle School

People will have volunteered time:

A large percentage of our regular volunteer engagement was carried out through the library and will be discussed in that section of the report. However we sought to engage volunteers wherever possible throughout the project.

Our heritage open days saw us work with two key volunteers. They already had a relationship with Halsway, having worked as garden volunteers and attended a number of courses. Heritage Open Days enabled us to give them the opportunity to pursue their wider interests in history and heritage to act as guides for the day, showing over 200 new visitors to Halsway around the manor, explaining its history and also showing them the gardens and wider grounds.

"We really enjoyed showing people around the house and gardens, and being able to share the place we love so much." Maureen and Graham

Our walk up on the Quantock Hills enabled us to engaging volunteers in that we worked with volunteer rangers for the Quantock Hills AONB to help guide the walk and expand their skill set in that they learnt about folklore, the wider heritage of the hills, as well as contributing their expertise on the landscape. They made an invaluable contribution to the day, being an integral part of the experience with their knowledge complementing Halsway's folklore expertise. Had we not had to unfortunately cancel further walks due to adverse weather conditions, we would have again engaged volunteer rangers.

"I wanted to say how much I enjoyed this Folklore Walk. It was really magical - I would love to see Clare do an annual Folklore Walk as a regular event."

"One grandmother said to me that normally her little grandson becomes tired after about 40 minutes when out walking but on Tuesday he just kept going and going ! It was lovely to see the looks on the children's faces during the stories and their interest when Andy pointed out various things."

The lead AONB ranger commented:

"It was a lovely walk with some great families. The walk seemed to be the correct length and pitched at the right audience. Our volunteers really enjoyed it."

Heritage will be better interpreted and explained:

For this project both a traditional and creative approach was taken to create and install interpretation in the manor for the first time. This was our baseline. In our consultation it became clear that many people were potentially interested in the history of the manor and were unsure how to find out more. There was a history on our website, but we wanted something immediate to welcome visitors to the building, both normal course attendees enriching our existing visitor experience, and visitors to our HLF activities.

Our Creative Lead worked hard to research the history of the manor from the Domesday book to the present day, writing a series of panels that were then designed and printed by local businesses and displayed in the great hall in time for our Family Folk Arts day and Heritage Open Days. We were thrilled with how it became clear straight away that the majority of people entering the Great Hall read the panels, each time opening up the history of the manor to a wider variety of people.

Alongside these more traditional interpretation panels we launched an innovative selection of interpretation specifically for children, as we wanted to ensure that all ages were engaged with the heritage of Halsway. We were

aware in our consultation how many heritage properties provide children's activities, but interpretation aimed at enriching young people's learning was rare. Our creative lead wrote a history booklet telling Halsway's story from the point of view of a sentient manor, a series of "adoption packs" for architectural features, such as the carved dragons and hunky punks on the building, with facts and creative activities for children, and a leaflet all about the ghosts of the manor. All these items provided knowledge of Halsway's history, whilst encouraging children to feel invested in the manor creatively and that it was a place full of welcoming characters and ways in for them. All these items proved incredibly popular with children begging for extra adoption packs as they couldn't decide between characters, with feedback from adults that the history booklet was an engaging way into the history for them too as it was so readable and an interesting angle. Around 150 children received the interpretation packs and whilst we were disappointed not to have feedback emailed in terms of completed activities from the adoption packs, which we were hoping to add to our website as a creative legacy, we have been told on a number of occasions that the items have been well used and enjoyed.

"I have written stories using my characters and now the different creatures are making friends!"

"I never knew what hunky punks were before."

"I really enjoyed learning about the evacuee babies."

"My husband sat and read the children's history booklet cover to cover – he loved it and he never reads anything."

As well as these two bodies of interpretation we created new information for specific events, for example our exhibition week, which was part of our commitment to being open to the general public more, had specially written handouts about the Gair Wilkinson Family and Ruth Tongue, that visitors were free to take home with them to read at their leisure and hopefully inspire them to research more into these fascinating local people. Most people took the handouts home.



Another key element during the design of the project was further hidden and innovative creative interpretation for adults.

This proved the most challenging element of the strategy as many of the lovely things we had designed, when tested out, proved to be too fragile or moveable to survive long term in a working building, and that therefore a new approach needed to be taken for this element. Some elements like our folk listening post worked, but the more fragile written items needed to be created in a more robust manner. Therefore we thought of interesting places more creative interpretation could be safely written, such as hand painted on tabletops in the bar to give people unexpected thought prompts as they sat and looked out of the window.

Other elements it was decided on reflection would work better in a different way. For example our proposal to have a memory exhibition using archive photographs in the summer house proved impractical and that also it would be nice with such a celebratory idea to have something more permanent and in the manor. Therefore a work was commissioned by artist Sophie Erin Cooper, who created a permanent piece on the painted up window in the corridor. This was inspired by and celebrated the personal memories of Halsway, whilst acting as a really



interesting piece of creative interpretation of this everyday history in an unexpected place, also drawing on our initial desire to create hidden interpretation pieces.

We have been really pleased with how our interpretation has been widely read by new users and visitors to HLF activities, it has also proved really popular with existing users and regular course attendees who have enjoyed finding out about the history of the manor and its past residents. It can be confidently assumed that most visitors to the manor, including existing users, have read some or all of the interpretation since its installation.

More people and a wider range of people will have engaged with heritage:

Through all our activities we engaged with around 2000 people, not including existing users and library visitors, almost half again of our normal engagement with courses, just in new and local users. Our baseline was that beyond our course engagement we have very little local engagement except at the summer fete and Christmas fayre.

Our aim was to work with around 200 local school children, we exceeded this with 256 with our planned schools programme, plus a further 264 from connected schools activities through a project with Historic England inspired by wanting to do more with local history and folk heritage, 81 through a project with Somerset Art Works and 50 through students benefitting from tutors on our Young Halsway programme expanding their knowledge of local folk heritage, and a further 30 from an additional local school hearing about what we were doing and wondering if they could be involved. Therefore our schools programme managed to reach not just the initial schools we planned to work with, but almost every primary school in the West Somerset area and secondary schools from Minehead to Bridgwater, with us more than tripling the number of young people engaged with Halsway's wider heritage from our initial target number. As before the project Halsway barely engaged with local schools at all, this was a great achievement and shows our commitment to a new education programme at Halsway.

Our walks with the AONB enabled us to reach a wider range of people than our normal remit by sharing promotion and our trying something a little different with the type of events we promote. In terms of quantitative goals we reached our target number (22 including volunteers), and whilst this was quite small, it was felt for this event the qualitative goals were more important, to make a meaningful connection with some local families that will have a sustainable impact. After this event it has become clear that we have made connections with families that will last and that could lead to the word being spread about how we are open and welcoming to people living locally for the future. Also this event being for families meant that we could engage with an audience normally only catered for by Halsway for one week in the summer, when there is a family folk residential. However this attracts people nationwide and we wanted to focus on local families. Our Family Folk Arts Taster day, in the form of a summer fete, also enabled us to tap into this audience.

The Travelling Library enabled engagement with casual visitors, and widened who we were able to engage with – all visitors to the library on the days we visited had access to the library and a member of Halsway staff to chat to.

Our Poetry Residency also enabled us to engage with a wider variety of people, who accessed our heritage in a fascinating way as it was through the poet's interpretation of Halsway and the contents of its library. Both the workshop at Minehead Library and the reading at Contains Art, led to us engaging with and supporting a new audience in terms of the wider local creative community of writers and artists. It also enabled us to link up with and show support for a key creative community hub in the form of Contains Art. All of this work contributing to the profile of Halsway and the dissemination of heritage in the area. The resulting poetry pamphlet will continue this legacy, being distributed through libraries and local arts organisations, as well as further afield, giving a further creative gift to the community involved in the project.

Our interpretation also led to a huge increase in the number of people engaging with heritage. The accessibility of the history panels on the wall meant that any visitor had the chance to learn about the manor. The children's history being distributed through schools meant that we engaged a large number of children with the history for the first time (school workshops also aided this) and that they also took this home to their parents and wider families, again broadening the reach of heritage engagement for this project. The interpretation was also hugely popular during our Heritage Open Days where it was read by nearly 200 visitors. Heritage Open Days in general was a great success for wider visitor engagement as nearly all visitors were new to Halsway and local. Tapping into

the Heritage Open Days programme enabled us to promote that we were open to members of the public to a heritage network not normally within our reach and to also feel like we were further linking up with heritage activities locally.

As aforementioned when talking about schools numbers, as well as the activities we had planned to do for this project, a number of other link ups and opportunities emerged through the outreach our Creative Lead was doing. Discussing our schools work led to a link up with Historic England leading to an extra 264 schoolchildren being worked with across 10 local schools. They worked with local folk musician Ford Collier to learn locally collected songs and then write their own versions of them using local stories and their own memories. It also enabled us to run a CPD day for local teachers at Halsway on heritage and creative learning, with ten teachers attending from the schools that Ford later ran workshops in.

Another key link up was with Somerset Art Works who chose us as the venue for an arts council funded artist residency. This led to local contemporary artist Andrea Oke researching local history and folk lore, including the work of Ruth Tongue, in the Halsway library and creating a new body of work 'Shadowlands' to be exhibited at Halsway during Somerset Open Studios 2018. Andrea also ran connected schools workshops engaging a further 81 children and a family drop-in workshop, further supporting our goal to engage local families with our wider heritage, and provided illustration for our poets in residence.

In general we hoped to engage with 1000 new visitors through heritage activities, not including the 200 goal of our schools programme, and we succeeded in engaging with closer to 1500 with this rising to over 2000 with schools engagement, doubling our general quantitative engagement targets. The majority of these were local new visitors, yet we are also pleased that our existing users have loved things this HLF project has enabled us to add, such as the interpretation and our schools programme.

Local area/community will be a better place to live, work or visit:

West Somerset is a government Opportunity Area with less cultural provision than many other areas in the West Country and nationwide. Halsway felt a responsibility with this project to address this by providing interesting opportunities and activities, in terms of visitor experiences and events, working closely with local schools and organisations, supporting local creatives and promoting pride in local heritage.

One KPI in terms of the success of this aim is the anecdotal evidence suggesting that word has spread throughout the area that Halsway is doing more for people living locally and that positive change for the community is underway. For example one lady popped in when driving past, having always been too shy to do so before, as she had heard talk of what we had been doing and how welcoming it was. She felt confident now to drive up and come inside to ask someone, rather than presuming it was closed to non-course participants. Also a number of people contacted our creative lead, such as local history groups, wondering if they could visit or if Halsway could help facilitate their events, as they had heard there was someone now focusing on education and community.

Other elements of the project created events to welcome, nurture wellbeing and ensure Halsway was part of an effort to promote the community coming together. For example our folklore walk worked with the AONB to create a new kind of event for both of us and a completely new clientele, promoted through flyers in schools and villages, where the offer was both a healthy fun family walk and an opportunity to learn more about the wealth of folk and natural heritage of the local area. Whilst we had to cancel it due to adverse weather, our creative nature writing walk was well subscribed entirely by locals, so would have continued our ethos of deeper understanding of landscape and new creative skills. Our seasonal supper offered a wonderful chance for the community to come together with us facilitating a celebratory feast to bring people together and share customs.

Our creative writing residency brought interesting opportunities to the community with both a writing workshop in Minehead library, further building on and supporting our relationship with the local library service after the travelling library project, and a poetry reading at Contains Art, a local contemporary community art space in Watchet, again showing our support for making the community a better place by teaming up with a key local organization.

One local writer who attended both the workshop and reading said:

“Thank you so much for organising this extraordinary event. I feel truly blessed to have met and worked with these incredible poets Rebecca Perry & Amy Key ... I felt the workshop was rich with content and challenged me to write, with tarot cards & fortune cookies prompts! I was inspired and deeply moved by the poetry reading in the evening and still have lines swimming around in my head. This brilliant day has made me start playing with words again which makes me very happy!”

We also saw a really positive impact from the travelling library. Head librarian Sara Long said:

“Somerset Libraries are looking forward to our next venture with Alice from Halsway Manor and are very appreciative of their support. Halsway is a wonderful resource that can go unnoticed, so we are delighted to be able to promote the Folk Art Centre.”

Breakdown of participation on specific parts of the creative learning project

| Activity | Number of attendees |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Schools music | 57 |
| Schools dance | 121 |
| Schools creative writing | 111 |
| Other connected school activities | 294 |
| Further teacher engagement | 10 |
| Young Halsway Tutor Outreach | 50 |
| Family Folklore Walk | 22 |
| Heritage Open Days and exhibitions | 321 |
| Seasonal Supper | 33 |
| Nature Writing Walk | 13 but cancelled due to weather |
| Travelling Library | 236 |
| Poetry residency events | 51 |
| Community celebration dance | 8 |
| Folk Arts taster day | 403 |
| Creative projects and commissions | 5 |
| Somerset Art Works visitors | 145 |
| Somerset Art Works schools | 81 |
| TOTAL | 1,948 |

Project outcomes - Library Development element

Introduction

This report aims to evaluate all the activities that happened as part of Halsway Manor's Future Halsway project relating to Halsway Manor Library and Archives (The Kennedy Grant Library). Over the course of the Future Halsway project the library and archives project manager worked to bring the library to life. He developed better ways of using resources to feed into courses, engage local people with heritage and make the collection available to all.



The library was developed into a collection that is able to support all the courses held at Halsway Manor by providing an information service, a research service and publications on a wide range of subjects including the folk songs of the South West of England, folklore of Britain, traditional song lyrics and tunes, historical dances, early music, fiddle tunes plus information on all other folk arts and course subjects such as accordions, Klezmer, hurdy gurdy, bagpipes, Northumbrian pipes, Baroque, melodeon, guitar and so on.

The library contains a unique collection of material on music and dance in general and folk music and folklore in particular. It forms a valuable resource for anyone interested in the folk arts of the United Kingdom, especially folk arts from the South West of England. The library holds over 8,000 items including the music and book collection of folk song collectors Peter Kennedy and Margaret Grant, the archives of Somerset folklorist Ruth Tongue, the mid-19th century William Winter manuscript of songs and tunes from the Quantocks and paintings by the Gair Wilkinson family.

The collections are of international significance to the understanding of the folk arts; of folklore, folk customs, traditional music, dance and song. They are a free resource for all visitors, course participants and anyone conducting research into the folk arts. They significantly enhance the overall learning experience of people attending courses at Halsway Manor.

Library Development Strategy

Before the project began the heritage contained within the library and archives of Halsway Manor was hidden and at risk, primarily through the lack of a coherent library acquisitions policy, development strategy or library catalogue. The library and archives were a disorganised mass of around 10,000 items. These included manuscripts, books, pamphlets, journals, CDs, LPs, photographs, costumes, artefacts, paintings and musical instruments. Items were stored in unlabelled boxes throughout the Manor, hidden under tables, on shelves and in cupboards. The librarian began by reviewing the complete collection and then creating a library development strategy.

Goals

- Establish Halsway Manor Library as the major resource on the folk arts in the South West of England.
- Take Halsway Manor Library to a wider audience and increase public knowledge of Halsway Manor and the folk arts.

- Provide a library service to course leaders, researchers, performers and the 6000 annual course participants at Halsway Manor.
- Increase library users and library enquiries.
- Help Halsway Manor deliver better value to its course participants.

Develop the Collection

- Review the library's policy for purchasing and receiving donations.
- Revise the library's collection management policy.
- Implement a digitization strategy.
- Implement an archiving policy.

Manage the Collection

- Upgrade the library management system to KOHA to link with EFDSS.
- Review and improve cataloguing standards.
- Cataloguing project of 1000 donated items.
- Recataloguing project of items to be moved or removed.
- Build a team of volunteers to assist in cataloguing.



Improve Access to Collection

- Library catalogue to be made accessible online.
- Library enquiry service to be made available online.
- Librarian in attendance 30 hours a week to assist library visitors.
- Key folk texts to be identified and displayed in the library.
- Reading lists for popular folk topics to be developed.
- Publish a book based on archive material called Ruth Tongue: Somerset Folklorist.

The librarian assessed the market for related collections of heritage material and built a network with other libraries, archives and collectors with whom he consulted including: British Library, Public Library Service, South West Heritage Trust (Somerset Archives and Local Studies), English Folk Dance and Song Society and the Vaughan Williams Library, The Folklore Society, Quantock Hills AONB and Picture Archive, Exmoor Society Archives, Dartington Hall, Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society, Watchet Museum, Museum of British Folklore, Rebecca Dellow, Geoff Woolfe, Ian Enters, Rob Hitchens, Ian Anderson, Maurice and Joyce Chidgey, Bob and Jacqueline Patten, Sarah and Iain Mackie. Various folk collectors contacted the Librarian and expressed a wish to eventually donate their collections to Halsway Manor. The Librarian endeavoured to create space to accommodate all these future donations, for example, the Yetties Folk Archive.

The librarian went on to audit, re-catalogue and reorganise the complete collection (c.10000 items). Unwanted, irrelevant, obsolete or duplicate items were removed. Wanted items were re-catalogued and relocated. Valuable and vulnerable items were preserved, archived and digitised. The huge backlog of donated and uncatalogued items was processed. Key 'classic' folk arts material was retained, as were items relating to the South West of England.

A library webpage was created on the Halsway Manor website. A new library catalogue was created with Koha



library management system and made searchable online. This links to the English Folk Dance and Song Society library site. Also a new Reading Room for guests and artists in residence was set up containing a collection of books on a range of interesting folk arts subjects. This allows material to be accessible in another area of the house.

Throughout the project the library provided heritage material to course participants and artists, including artists in residence

Faustus, Lady Maisery, and Sam Kelly and the Lost Boys. With the newly organised collection and presence of a librarian the library has been utilised significantly more by course participants an average of 152 per month.

Archive

Halsway Manor archive was reorganised and rehoused. Rare books and manuscripts were restored and added to the collection. These include original manuscripts of Maud Karpeles and Peter Kennedy, William Winter's Quantocks Tune Book (c.1854), Sanderson's Duettings (c.1820), J Thompson's Guide to the Ballroom, Thomas Wilson's Complete Guide to English Country Dancing (c.1815) and Thomas Wilson's Companion to the Ballroom (c.1815).

The archive also contains valuable heritage material in the form of the EDFSS (English Folk Dance and Song) South West papers 1930-1965, Bristol EFDSS Folk News, South West Folk Clubs, South West Folk Festivals, Sidmouth Festival Programme Archive, South West Folk Magazines, Somerset Folk Magazines.

Digital Archive

A digital archive of images and recordings was created. It includes:

- A photograph collection of the folk arts in Britain.
- A photograph collection of the history of Halsway Manor.
- Peter Kennedy's vinyl 78rpm collection of tunes from the South West of England.
- Telling Tales oral history project.
- Super 8 films of historic folk events in the South West of England, including early footage of Sidmouth Folk Festival.
- The Folktrax audiovisual collection of renowned song collector Peter Kennedy. Folktrax is a large collection of over one thousand CDs; valuable recordings documenting the heritage of the British Isles such as customs, songs, tunes and folklore.
- Ruth Tongue Women's Institute cassette recordings.

The librarian also created archive collections of:

- History of Halsway Manor.
- Gair Wilkinson family.
- Idyllist School of Painting.

These physical and digital archives are now safely stored in acid-free stationery in wooden filing cabinets in the library. They are a valuable heritage resource for Halsway Manor.

Ruth Tongue: Somerset Folklorist

The Ruth Tongue Archive was rehoused and archived to a professional standard.

It contains the remaining papers of Ruth L Tongue including:

- Poetry
- Correspondences
- Folklore notes
- Chime Child book notes
- Forgotten Folk Tales notes
- Ghost Lore notes
- Cromwelliana
- Somerset folklore notes
- Theatre and Drama notes
- Drama scripts
- Costume and Production notes
- Theatrical programmes
- The Greenwood Tree Alphabet manuscripts
- Witchbones and Aunt Tryphena manuscript
- Local Somerset dances notes
- Early stories manuscripts
- Cassette and CD recordings of Ruth L Tongue singing and storytelling.
- Songs of Somerset notes.



The Songs and Stories of Ruth Tongue by M B Rhodes was edited and republished as Ruth Tongue: Somerset Folklorist. This updated book has been redesigned and is now available to more people to use at Halsway Manor.

Enquiry and Research Service

The librarian ran an enquiry service for researchers and guests, answering hundreds of enquiries. Here are some examples of typical questions asked in person, by email or by post:

Can you help me with my research into vernacular music from the mid-Victorian period 1840-1880 associated with common events in Somerset; country dances, weddings and other local celebrations?

Do you have any information on Vaughan Williams and folk customs in South Somerset/North Dorset/Wiltshire (Blackmore Vale: Wincanton, Bruton, Mere, Gillingham, Sturminster Newton, Dorchester).

Do you have any books on Yankee Jack the shanty singer from Watchet? I am writing an article for Watchet Conservation Society.

With updated records and online catalogue we are now much better able to find information and help out with enquiries.

Volunteers

Throughout the project the librarian managed a programme of volunteer training. Five volunteers assisted in reorganising the library collection and will continue to help out in the future. Simonne Bailey, Kate Best, Jane Hill, Tom Brown and Barbara Brown. Student librarian Jennie Higgins also assisted in the archiving of the Ruth Tongue collection. Two new volunteers have just been trained; William Mearns and Sandra Sideaway.

The librarian ran training sessions for volunteers and all Halsway Manor staff. Training included:

- History of the collection.
- Tour of the library and archives.
- How to find a book.
- Using the catalogue.
- How to borrow a book.
- How to return a book.
- How to shelve a book
- Basic research skills.

Heritage and Community

The folk arts and folk song are by definition 'living traditions' so it is especially important that communities are able to access their own folk heritage. Library developments during this project have made it easier for both the local community and the general public to consult and engage with their cultural heritage. Anyone with an interest in the folk arts of their community can now visit Halsway Manor and find useful material for further study. The library and archives are now easily accessible from the library itself. The contents of the library are now easily accessible through the online catalogue.

Further examples of library and archive enquiries:

Please can I visit the library and archives and learn more about Lily Gair Wilkinson for my research on anarchist women?

I am a member of Friends of the Quantocks and saw your post regarding archives at Halsway. I am fascinated by old pictures and paintings of the Quantocks. How can I see the archive?

I'm a singer in the US looking for early (as old as possible, pre-1800 if possible) lullabies or secular "mother" themed music for a potential performance at a local early music festival.

Please could you select local tunes for a remembrance show, Axe Valley Remembers.

Heritage Outcomes

- The reorganisation and development of the library and archives has succeeded in opening up the manor to new audiences and made a worthwhile difference to heritage, people and communities.
- The project consolidated the various collections into just one that is now focused more on the folk arts of the South West of England, one that complements rather than competes with the comprehensive folk collection held at EFDSS Vaughan Williams Library.
- The heritage held within the library and archives is now better managed. Systems of management and maintenance have been established to be followed by library volunteers. There is now a sustainable system in place so that users can make better and more frequent use of the library. The volunteers are still engaged and come in to work when required.
- There is a significant improvement to the physical state of the library heritage material itself. All valuable material that was previously stored incorrectly throughout the Manor has been relocated to within the library itself and correctly housed on shelves and in cabinets.
- Valuable heritage material has been digitised and backed up enabling greater access to and improved security of irreplaceable heritage material.
- Library heritage material is better interpreted and explained. The librarian has gone through every single item (8000+) and arranged them according to subject. The librarian has created guides that explain where to find material on specific subjects. The collection is now in one place and is easily navigable by anyone.
- Valuable library heritage material has been identified, recorded and safely stored. It has become apparent that the library collection particularly strong on the early song collectors, the history of dance and British folklore traditions.

Changed Attitudes

Since the project began there has been a noticeable shift in visitors' attitude towards the heritage material held at Halsway Manor. Guests report that they find the library a delight to visit, that interesting material is now so much easier to locate and that the collection is no longer intimidating or impenetrable.

"The library is neater, cleaner and easier to use. Thank you." – F Hart

"I am greatly impressed by the extent of the collection and would love to return to browse for an extended period."
- Andy Redfern

"The library was extremely useful during the course and I would very much like to visit again...Thank you for all your help and for making the library so welcoming and such a great resource." - V Astley

"The library was used to source material by most groups on the Faustus course, either using books or the online index. The library has changed considerably. It is more ordered, a lot less cluttered and in clearly defined categories." – M Rose

Summary

The key differences that the library project has made to heritage, people and communities are:

- Improved access to heritage material. Material has been re-catalogued, relocated, archived and digitised. Information on heritage material is now accessible by anyone via the library website and online catalogue.
- Safeguarding of heritage material. Vulnerable heritage material is now safely stored in the library to a professional standard.
- Better management of heritage material. Heritage material is now easier to manage with Koha library management software, library website, online catalogue and a team of trained volunteers.
- A wider range of people have learnt about heritage, developed skills and changed their attitude towards the library and its heritage material.
- The skills developed include learning how to engage with heritage material, collection management and conservation.
- People volunteered time, undertook research and had an enjoyable experience.
- The heritage of Halsway is now better interpreted and explained throughout the Manor.
- The reorganised library and archives now provide improved access to heritage material.

Future Goals

- Develop the library collection in tandem with course developments.
- Continue to acquire and catalogue relevant new books and donations.
- Maintain a team of trained staff and volunteers to maintain library and archive.
- Maintain library website and online catalogue.
- Maintain an enquiry and research service.

Conclusion

The project overall has been a fantastic success for the organisation. It makes a true change for its forward direction and has provided a platform to build future plans on. The capital element was essential to preserve and care for a large heritage asset. From the initial survey and the development phase it was clear that there was a lot of work to be done to ensure the fabric of the buildings would not be damaged by the weather and extended use. The buildings had been well loved but suffered from insufficient maintenance and investment. When the initial project plan was developed it seemed that the scope would enable the majority of problems to be resolved.

A skilled and experienced project team was essential to realise the project within a tight time frame. Losing more than a month would have had a serious impact on the business. The work started well and the more invasive work was completed on schedule. Good communication throughout the project meant that the changes to the project were well managed and opportunities to realise efficiencies were implemented.

The creative learning and library elements of the project went very well and all the proposed programme elements happened successfully. Many projects have created legacies, whether it be the uncovering of lost songs, finding of old pictures or the restoration of important artworks. Halsway Manor is now a much more robust and well managed organisation that will be easier and cheaper to run in the future. Participant numbers are growing and word is getting around that Halsway is no longer a slightly shabby folk centre but a thriving centre for folk arts at the centre of the community.

Changes, contingency and developments

There were no major changes to the programmed project but some small ones. The largest changes to the capital element were:

Change to replace whole lead valley when repair was budgeted. This was done on recommendation by the contractor.

Replace boilers. This was because on closer inspection the existing units had come to the end of their lives.

Add LED emergency lighting.

Replace out of date fire alarm system in the manor.

Replace roof lights rather than repair old ones.

All of these changes were based on getting the best value out of the project and ensuring the changes would last.

The other element that cost more than budgeted was the making good. This was due to an increase in the amount of remedial work needed as some of the work was more invasive than planned. For example the new alarm meant that many floors had to come up and carpets had to be replaced and a lot of paintwork was damaged.

The project has finished slightly below the original budget. This is primarily due to a number of savings on the activity programme. There was a saving on the project officer role as there was not someone in role for a period of time. There were also a number of savings on displays as we finalised different ways to present information and concluded that elements like permanent projection were not suitable for the space. The other saving was VAT as most of the costs were VAT free.

Lessons learnt and challenges

The capital part of the project went very smoothly due to good communication and a clear idea of the project scope. It would have been easy to spend a lot more money on the property and choices had to be made at times to come up with best value solutions. It was the right decision however to go ahead with items which in the long term will provide better value and protect the organisation for longer.

The activity plan was overall very successful but the major barrier was that because of the severe lack of non curricular learning opportunities it was a difficult process to engage schools. Once contact was made and the projects started to happen communication became easier and it was apparent how needed this kind of project is in West Somerset.

Unexpected outcomes

There have been a number of positive, unexpected outcome from the project these are mainly due to the increased profile of the organisation and its willingness to support community development and education in the area. A number of different groups have made contact to ask to work with us on future projects, these include:

Running a program of schools workshops for English Heritage

Running a series of heritage and folk workshops for people seeking to get back into employment.

Schools asking if we can expand on the work and asking if we can support visits to the library.

AgeUK asking to work with us on new projects.

A number of new volunteers contacting us.

Better profile and a relationship with the Hinkley Point funders which has led to the submission of an application to build on the HLF project education work.

What next?

The project has been an incredible success for the organisation and has not doubt ensured its survival for the future. We have had designs completed and received planning permission to build a new building to house all the ancillary functions such as kitchen and wash up to the rear of the manor. This will enable us to restore a large part of the manor back to its former glory and make better use of the original layout of the house. The project has helped to show that Halsway Manor is a forward looking organisation that understands its role in protecting an important heritage facility for future generations.

