

Hidden Presence – a [ffotogallery](#) project

Learning resource – Central Kaff

The Participants

15 young people aged 11-17 over 8 sessions

The Project

Theme: The Mansion: Myth and Vision

Central Kaff is a youth club in Chepstow town centre, run by Monmouthshire Youth Service. We worked with a team of young people over several weeks, mainly after school sessions with a couple of full days during half term. The group made an animation to which all the young people contributed, exploring the place of Piercefield House (known locally as 'The Mansion') in local legend and Nathaniel's personal story.

Aims

- For the young people to gain a greater understanding of Nathaniel Wells and his place in their local history
- To explore myth and fact of past and future Piercefield through conversations and interviews with locals
- Draw awareness to the (hidden) presence and legacy of colonial capital in the development of the British landscape, country house, tourism, infrastructure
- To bring in an [intergenerational](#) element, mutually benefitting young and old

Planning

Six workshops were booked with the Youth Work Coordinator and each session was supported by a Youth Worker. As Central Kaff is a very informal, optional environment, it was very important to plan the activity with the full input from the young people, allowing them to decide what work to make and how. This encouraged them to attend regularly, engage and take ownership of their work.

Outcomes

- **Collecting stories**
 - About 'The Mansion' and Piercefield Walks from Chepstow residents (mix of fact and myth)
 - Opinions of local residents on what they think of the current state of Piercefield, its legacy and what its future could be
- **Animation**
 - Animation on the theme of past and future vision of Piercefield created on the basis of collected evidence/information.

We spent the first session meeting the groups, introducing ourselves and the aims and objectives of the project. The large group of about 12-15 young people all contributed to a large hand drawn map where they visually mapped their own memories and experience of walking to 'The Mansion' via the Walks. We recorded the young people's stories for use later, pulling out interesting bits that could be used for staging scenes in the animation.

Prompt questions

- Who did you go there with? What was the weather like? Did you see any animals?
- Did you encounter any other people? What were they doing?
- Who do you think built the house, what kind of person do you think they were?
- What do you think the caves/platforms were used for?

For the next session we arranged for a member of the local amateur history society, Chepstow Society, to talk with the young people about their knowledge of Piercefield and the story of Nathaniel Wells. This intergenerational sharing of information was a useful starting point for the collection of stories. Youth workers were quizzed and the young people were asked to collect memories from their family members at home.

The animation was planned over the course of a session. See [How to: Storyboarding](#). A decision was made in the group to make an animation about Nathaniel's early life in the Caribbean, to his inheritance and life as a country gentlemen, through to the abandonment and ruin of Piercefield House. Our team were on hand to fill in bits of historical information as the practical sessions went on.

The animation was completed over the last few sessions, with the revolving cast of young people working from the original storyboards – this was very important for consistency. Young people used a mixture of collage and drawing, using also architects plans donated kindly by an architect who had previously worked on the house; photographs of surviving Piercefield furniture and interior design magazines. The soundtrack was recorded lastly, with all sound effects and dialogue created and recorded by the young people. See [How to: Stop Frame Animation](#).

Impact on Learning

- The intergenerational aspect of this project brought the young and old people together in a purposeful, mutually beneficial activity, which promoted greater understanding and respect between generations. This activity built on the positive resources that the young and old have to offer each other.
- The young people acquired new ICT skills and learnt the principles of animation
- The group work allowed them to develop personal and professional skills in cooperation
- Storytelling and knowledge of how to use metaphors, symbols
- The youth workers learnt skills in animation as a method of learning