

I am Head of History at The John Fisher School, a state comprehensive Catholic boys' school in the London Borough of Sutton. In 2010 I enrolled, part-time, on the MA Public History course at Royal Holloway with the aim of developing new opportunities for my students to see the wider functions of history outside of the national curriculum and public exams, and to learn for myself how the subject could be relevant outside of academia. Promoting public history is an important part of my role at the school. We take part in national competitions and have won the Historical Association's Young Historian's Project and the Historical Fiction competition in past years. We run a weekly History Club which covers a wide range of activities from tracing family history to aircraft model making. Our lunchtime History Film Club helps to develop students' awareness of the advantages and pitfalls of this genre. We have staged a whole school Historical Food Fayre and a Spanish Armada Re-enactment Day. We consistently challenge and question national myths and perceived ideas about our heritage and identity; for example, we use assemblies to vote on the abolition of the monarchy and the purpose of Armistice Day. We visit local sites including the World War II fighter base at Kenley, Chaldon Church and Morden Mosque, in addition to other national and international sites - such as Canterbury Cathedral, Hampton Court, the First World War Battlefields, Auschwitz and Berlin.

The course inspired me to take public history a step further and In March 2011 I applied to The Heritage Lottery Fund and The Historical Association to fund an intergenerational oral history project run by students at the school, in partnership with the Croydon Airport Society and the Bourne Society, a local history group. This ambitious project was to produce a short film about the history of Croydon Airport, to be available on DVD for distribution to the Airport Visitor Centre, the Bourne Society, the Sutton Local Studies and Archives centre and local schools. My applications were successful and I was awarded £13,600 to make the film.

The film took a year to produce and involved 27 students and 25 interviews with local people who shared their memories about the airport with us. The students developed a range of new skills through their research at the local archives, oral history training, filming and editing. They worked as a team in the planning and scripting of the film and explained their role in presentations for local community groups. It allowed the students to take ownership of a project which connected with the wider community, felt relevant to their own locality and was produced for a public audience. It has helped to establish links with the Croydon Airport Society, the Airport Visitor Centre, Sutton Archives and the Bourne Society and it has raised public awareness of the local heritage sites and resources available. The local media (*Croydon Guardian*, *Croydon Today*, *The Croydon Advertiser*, *The Catholic Crier*, *Croydon Life* and *Radio Jackie*) ran articles about the project and the school included details of the project in the Headmasters newsletter, the school History magazine and the 6<sup>th</sup> form bulletin all of which were accessed through the school website. This gave widespread publicity to the school and to the partnerships; raising awareness of their role in the community. Dr Frank Anderson, Chair of the Croydon Airport Society noted: "Croydon Airport Visitor Centre appears to be becoming increasingly popular and we are now in constant demand with requests for special visits, filming requests and the like".

Tanya Smith  
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