



CASE STUDY

Sandford Award Criteria 3

The education programme has been developed through consultation with educational customers and advisers

At Cyfarthfa Castle Museum and Art Gallery pupils take on the role of detectives in their hunt for historical evidence.

Cyfarthfa Castle Museum and Art Gallery, Wales



The imposing castellated features of Cyfarthfa Castle, the best example of a 19th century Ironmaster's residence to have survived in South Wales, stands proud as Merthyr Tydfil's most iconic landmark. Cyfarthfa Castle was built in 1825 for 'Ironmaster' William Crawshay II, one of the most influential men in Wales at the time. The grand mansion overlooked his hugely successful Cyfarthfa Ironworks. By 1910, it had become Cyfarthfa Castle Museum & Art Gallery, its impressive treasure trove telling the story of Merthyr Tydfil from the Roman period to the late 20th century.

The Session:

Visiting the Victorians: Life in an Iron Town - Key Stage 2

What impressed the Sandford Award Judge?

History detectives and a search for clues...

'The Education and Interpretation Officer engaged the children from the outset and the quality of the sessions delivered during the day was excellent. He clearly had thorough knowledge of the subject matter and delivered the workshops in a friendly and yet authoritative way which held the children's attention throughout.'

'The children responded positively to the idea that they would be detectives for the day and rose to the challenge of finding evidence and looking for clues in the houses and buildings they passed on their walk. They were encouraged to think critically about a local legend concerning the Castle clock and delighted when they found historical evidence to disprove it!'

'The class teacher commented that these children were not always easy to engage but, on this occasion, they had listened attentively, taken up the challenge to be historical detectives looking for clues, and asked lots of interesting questions. She was very pleased that this had opened a historical dialogue which she would continue at school.'

'During the afternoon the whole class moved to the imposing room which had once been Mr Crawshay's Office and several children had the opportunity to wear good quality replica Victorian clothing, some of which was closely based on one of the Crawshay portraits. All the children were keen to participate and clearly enjoyed learning more about Victorian Merthyr in this session.'

Understanding Merthyr Tydfil's local and national heritage

Ironmasters and workers

'There was no question that by the end of the day the children had a really good understanding of how it might have felt to be an iron master, or an iron worker employed by the Crawshay family. The children 'walked to work', from the 'big house', via the workers' cottages to reach the actual site of the iron works. Much of the site has been demolished but by using copies of a contemporary painting to show the children how it used to look in the mid nineteenth century, and asking them to compare that with what was left today, the children were helped to visualise and understand how, with its seven blast furnaces, the Cyfarthfa ironworks made Merthyr Tydfil not only the largest town in Wales but also the largest iron works in the world.'

'Providing additional sensory experience in the form of smell boxes enhanced the children's experience even further - they could smell the sulphur, the ammonia, and

the acrid waste that was breathed in daily by their ancestors as the town grew from 40 families to a population of over 50,000 by the mid-nineteenth century.'

'The children who 'walked to work' for the first part of the day were then set a challenge to go back to the museum with their own teacher to find out more about the iron masters and what it was like to live in Cyfarthfa. These children had acquired a good initial grounding on which to build and a good understanding of what they were looking for.'

Consultation and evaluation with teachers and advisers

Consultation

'The Education and Interpretation Officer works in partnership with Cyfarthfa Park's Heritage Ranger and with other educational institutions. He meets with teachers from local schools, with lecturers from the University of Wales, and consults with other educational advisors to establish programmes related to the Welsh Baccalaureate.'

'The Education and Interpretation Officer also offers training to local school staff on the history of the locality and how to utilise the museum and its collection as an education resource. This allows him to engage in dialogue with the staff regarding the individual needs of their school or college, and facilitates work experience opportunities for older students. He is also a member of the South Wales Heritage Education Forum, where members utilise other Museum learning professionals in a peer review role.'

Evaluation

'Every visiting school is asked to fill out an evaluation form to assess the success of the day's workshops, relevance to the curriculum, how the session fitted into the school's aims and objectives, and what other opportunities the schools would like to be made available. The feedback forms, which are overwhelmingly positive, are regularly assessed and interpreted to inform the future development of the Museum's education programmes. The feedback provided is evaluated by the Museums Service senior staff, the Merthyr Tydfil Leisure Trust senior staff and the Local Authority's Liaison Officer with the Trust, the Culture and Sports Development Officer, and used to inform the future needs and funding requirements of the site.'