



Judge's Report for
The Tank Museum

The Sandford Awards for Heritage
Education

2009



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Judges' Report and Recommendations

The report should include an assessment of the service offered and the visit shadowed against the Sandford Award criteria, together with any recommendations for future development.

1. Assessment of how the services offered meet the criteria

Please provide an assessment of the services offered against each of the criteria below:

- ***The educational programmes at the site contribute to an understanding of the local and national heritage***

The Tank Museum has the finest collection of historic armoured fighting vehicles in the world. The tanks on display range from 'Little Willie', the world's first tank, to 'Challenger II', the British Army's current AFV. Many are housed in a new, HLF-funded extension. Bovington's long links with the Royal Armoured Corps make it a particularly appropriate location for the Museum, for the tank has had a major effect both on the local economy and the landscape. Visiting groups arriving in Bovington will drive past acres of churned up tank training grounds and may even find themselves following a 62-tonne Challenger down the road. While the Museum remains a Mecca for technical buffs, the past few years have seen a shift in interpretative emphasis, with tank development now explained in terms that are intelligible to the non-specialist. In addition, increased attention is being paid both to the military and social context in which the tank operated and to the experiences of the people who fought in them. The educational programmes reflect this and, as well as examining the tank's role in warfare, they use the collections as a starting point for a wider examination of aspects of 20th century history, including warfare in general, life on the home front, the role of the army in peace and war and the literature generated by conflict.

- ***An awareness of, and adherence to, the statutory requirements of the appropriate national curricula***

Six of the seven formal education sessions on offer have been designed to support the English National Curriculum. The contents of the sessions and their relevance to the National Curriculum are clearly laid out in the Education section of the Museum's website. The emphasis is on KS2/3/4 History but there are cross-curricular links, notably with Literacy and English in the Museum's interesting 'Letters Home' session. This session uses WW1 soldiers'

letters to introduce the subjects of morale, both at the front and at home, and censorship. Students write their own letters home which are then 'censored' by a student playing the part of an officer. The seventh session, 'survival skills' which involves KS2/3 students working in teams on a number of activities including shelter building, water collecting and fire lighting, is currently described by the Museum as 'non-curricular' but in my opinion has considerable relevance to PSHE/Citizenship

- ***Development of the programme through consultation with educational customers and advisers***

The Museum has worked closely with a number of local schools and colleges in the initial development of its education programme, notably the Thomas Hardy (sic) School in Dorchester with whom they are currently developing more history activities, as well as new design and technology and science-based workshops. Evaluation of existing programmes is carried out informally through conversations with visiting schools and formally through evaluation sheets which are given to schools, etc., at the end of their visits. The Education Officer also discusses a school's particular needs at the time of booking and is able to alter or combine workshops to suit its individual requirements.

- ***Provision on site of the desirable domestic facilities***

As you might expect from a museum which has recently undergone a £16m HLF-funded redevelopment, domestic facilities are excellent with ample parking, spacious areas in which groups can assemble and disperse, an outside play area where they can let off steam, good access for visitors with mobility difficulties, fragrant toilets, a well-stocked shop and a splendid restaurant. An AV-equipped education room is used for introductory presentations and artefact handling sessions and as a place where coats and bags may be left throughout a visit.

- ***Attention to good management and administration concerning all aspects of the visit***

Individual requirements are discussed at the time of booking and group leaders are able to take advantage of a free preview visit to the Museum. These preview visits are strongly encouraged, even for the large number of group leaders who have visited before, because the recent redevelopments have considerably changed many aspects of the Museum and its layout. For those unable to come in person, a standard risk assessment is available online. There is no booking form. Instead education bookings are made and

confirmed by email and recorded both in the education diary and in the central Museum diary, which is kept at front of house. Other members of staff are briefed on the day about visiting groups at the informal staff meeting held shortly before opening. My conversations with visiting teachers and a look at completed feedback forms suggest that they found the booking system user-friendly and all seemed to be happy with the information they were given about what would be happening during their visit and when. The group I was shadowing was met by the education officer at the entrance to the Museum where it was given a short briefing on fire and safety procedures before being taken to the education room. Their visit seemed to run to time and lunch was served efficiently and quickly.

- ***Provision of the relevant educational resources and facilities that enhance the quality of the students' visits***

The museum's collection of tanks, a major educational resource in itself, is supported by an extensive handling collection of original and replica uniforms and equipment, together with other wartime artefacts ranging from children's gas masks to a working air-raid siren. Reconstructions of a First World War trench, a 1940s 'Home Front' house, complete with household items, and an Anderson shelter are key elements in a number of the Museum's educational programmes. The willingness of the Museum restaurant to provide Second World War-style food for visiting groups meant that even the lunch break became a memorable learning experience.

2. Assessment of the visit shadowed

The visit I shadowed was by a group of 17 KS2 pupils from Breamore Primary School, Hampshire, who had booked the Museum's 'Home Front 1939-1945' workshop. The school had visited the Museum in the past but this was their first visit since its recent refurbishment and extension.

Proceedings began in the education room with a brief introduction to the outbreak of the war and its early events. Good use was made of audio-visual material, especially wartime photographs, about which the education officer asked the group questions. He made sure that the pupils understood the terms he used, explaining them where necessary, and also ensured that the majority of the group answered at least one question. Some of his questions, however, were slightly undermined by the fact that the answers to them were already displayed on the screen! The discussion then moved onto life on the Home Front, covering topics such as rationing, bombing and evacuation. A wide range of artefacts were available for the pupils to handle, including gas masks for young and old, items relating to the blackout, a stirrup pump for extinguishing incendiary bombs and a very loud hand-cranked air-raid siren. To show the contribution made to the War Effort by organisations like Air Raid Precautions, Women's Land Army, Women's Auxiliary Air Force and the Home Guard, a number of children were invited forward to try on relevant uniforms and equipment. A thoughtful touch was the provision of a large number of battledress blouses and steel helmets so that those pupils who were not called to the front to try on uniforms were given the chance to do so at the end of this part of the session. The education officer was excellent; he never once lost the attention of the group who remained enthralled throughout the session.

Although the focus of the visit was the Home Front, the group did spend a little time before lunch looking around part of the Museum's new 'Tank Story' exhibition in the company of the education officer. There was only time to look at a small section of the gallery and, given that the group had visited the Museum in order to study aspects of the Second World War, it might have been helpful to have taken the group directly to that part of the gallery instead of starting with the First World War and running out of time. Lunch itself was memorable because the Tank Museum offers visiting groups the opportunity to sample wartime fare. I'm uncertain what Jamie Oliver would have made of the spam fritters and jam roly-poly that were served up to the children but the majority seemed to enjoy the experience, and provision was made for the one or two who were unable (or unwilling) to eat the food on offer. The extraordinarily energetic education officer remained with the group throughout lunchtime, helping to serve the food and answering questions.

The afternoon saw the group split in two with one part visiting the 1940s house with the education officer while the second were given a trail to complete, supervised by teachers and parents. The two groups then swapped

over. The trail involved spotting animal badges on the vehicles in the museum and looking for tanks named after animals. The pupils clearly enjoyed competing to become the first to complete the trail, but I doubt if they learned much from doing it or even knew why the tanks had the badges on them – i.e. as signs of the formations to which the tanks belonged. In my opinion, the best that can be said about the trail was that it offered an enjoyable and not-too-demanding way of filling in some time while waiting to go into the 1940s house.

The 1940s house itself was an extremely accurate reconstruction of the ground floor of the wartime residence of an ARP Warden complete with blackout curtains, anti-blast tape on the windows, patriotic pictures, period crockery and a wireless set. The group enjoyed comparing it with their own houses and spotting the differences – no TV, a range instead of a cooker and microwave, no electric kettle, etc. A plate with what to the pupils seemed like tiny portions of food on it was then produced to demonstrate the effects of food rationing and show why it was necessary to 'dig for victory', grow your own vegetables, be creative with ingredients and avoid waste. The ensuing discussion was brought to an end by a familiar sound - the air-raid siren they'd heard earlier in the day - and the group made their way to a reconstructed Anderson air-raid shelter next to the house where they sat listening to the sounds of a bombing raid. There was just enough time before departing for the pupils and some of those accompanying them to squeeze in groups of four into a Chieftain tank, sit in the seats of the commander, driver, gunner and loader, and learn about their roles.

The pupils clearly enjoyed their visit and their interest was held throughout the day. I heard a couple saying that they wanted to come back with their families. The teachers I spoke to were all highly satisfied with both the running and content of the day and were planning to use what the pupils had seen, done and learned as the basis for a wide variety of follow-up work back at school.

3. Recommendations

1. I noted that the education room remained unlocked throughout the visit even though the group's bags and possessions had been left in there. Measures should be taken to ensure that the room is secure at times when it is unoccupied.

2. The uniforms tried on by the group proved a very effective way of illustrating aspects of life and work on the Home Front. However, it is worth remembering that many people on the Home Front made an important contribution to the war effort without ever donning a uniform. Large numbers of women, for example, spent the war working in factories producing the military hardware used by Britain's armed forces including, of course, many of the tanks on display in the Museum. Bearing this in mind, it might be worth considering adding some factory clothes - perhaps overalls and a headscarf - to the existing collection of Home Front uniforms.

3. Following on from this, the tanks themselves could be made more relevant to the Home Front workshop through a discussion of the manufacturing process. Where were they made? Who made them? Where did the components come from?

4. All the pupils clearly enjoyed the experience of climbing into the Chieftain tank; some said it was the highlight of their visit. Although it requires more supervision, it seems a more worthwhile activity than the current gallery trail. Although the Chieftain came into service twenty years after the end of the Second World War, the experience of being inside it would have been virtually identical to that of a WW2 tank. It was easy to see why in such cramped conditions members of tank crews formed such close bonds. The Museum might consider running this activity when the group is split into two for the 1940s house session.

5. The 1940s house is clearly an extremely valuable educational resource but it currently seems rather divorced from the main subject matter of the Museum - i.e. the story of tanks and the men who served in them. This could easily be remedied by giving the ARP warden who lives in the house a son and making him a member of the Royal Armoured Corps. This could be established by putting a framed photo of a young man in RAC uniform on the mantelpiece. Our fictional son could be home on leave with his black beret on the table and his kit bag on the floor, or he could be away training or on active service with a (censored) letter from him on the table. If it was desired to be a little more thought provoking, there could even be a letter on the table from the young man's CO saying how he had been killed in action.

SANDFORD AWARD FOR HERITAGE EDUCATION

Judges are required to make one of two recommendations for consideration by the Advisory Council, either a 'Sandford Award' or 'No Award'. Please delete below as appropriate

SANDFORD AWARD

Below is a citation that can be used for publicity, or in the event of 'No Award' – the reasons for failure and specific recommendations for the future:

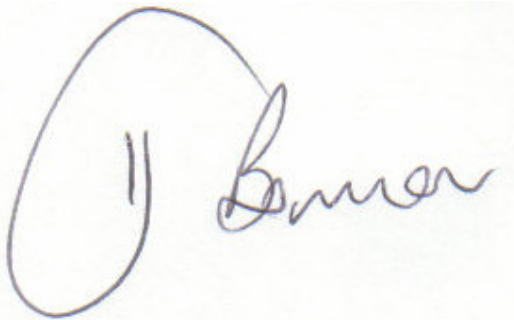
The Tank Museum's superb collections are supported by some well thought out and imaginative educational programmes which can be adjusted to the requirements of individual groups. The Museum has thought hard about the service it offers to visiting schools, developing an excellent object handling collection and recreating a section of trench, an air-raid shelter and even a WW2 house. Everyone at the Museum seems to take a pride in the educational service provided – even the catering staff play their part by supplying 'wartime lunches' for visiting groups.

Name of Lead Judge: Julian Humphrys
Signed :

ADVISORY GROUP'S RECOMMENDATION:

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Signed (Chairman of the Advisory Group):



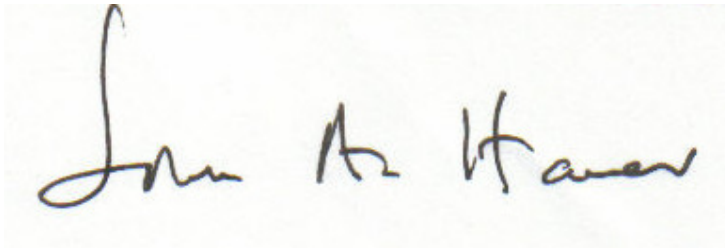
_____ Tracy Borman _____

Date _____ 9 July 2009 _____

DIRECTORS' DECISION:

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Signed (Chairman of the Board of Directors):

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light-colored background. The signature is written in a cursive style and reads "John A. Hamer".

_____ John Hamer _____

Date: ___9 July 2009_____