

## **Case Study: Wilburton CE Primary School, Cambridgeshire**

### **Background to Wilburton CE Primary School**

Wilburton is a village in the Fens near Ely, and the school has 116 pupils from Reception to Year 6. 14% of the pupils are from Showmen families, who travel all over the country to fairgrounds during the spring and summer. A further 8% of pupils are from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families. Two pupils have a Polish background, and one is from Ukraine. 18% of pupils are eligible for Pupil Premium.

### **Wilburton Primary's involvement with Heritage Schools**



*Wilburton pupils taking part in an archaeological dig, which was part of the inspiration for "I am Wilburh, the woman of Wilburton"*

The whole school took part in "When Wilburton Sings" in 2022, which is part of "When Cambridgeshire Sings". "When Cambridgeshire Sings" began in 2019 and was the subject of one of the 2021 Heritage Schools case studies. Participating schools work with award-winning folk musicians The Young'uns to create a song based on their local heritage, and the teachers receive a CPD session beforehand about their local heritage from the Heritage Schools Local Heritage Education Manager (LHEM).

Wilburton Primary has also taken part in the "Whistle-stop Tour of the Music and History of the British Isles" (2023) and the Year 5 and 6 class took part in the creative writing project "Just Beneath the Surface" (2022). The LHEM provided a CPD session and extensive resources for the teachers about the musical heritage of the area, and a further toolkit of local heritage resources for the pupils to use as inspiration for their creative writing.

*"The LHEM is so enthusiastic and has so many rich stories. It has inspired the staff. The resources are so easy to use" - Head Teacher*

"When Cambridgeshire Sings", "Just Beneath the Surface" and "The Whistle-stop Tour" are all managed by consultant Karin Horowitz, which frees up more of the LHEM's time to provide training for teachers. Karin Horowitz also provides well-respected wellbeing support and training for head teachers and their staff, and it was through this that Wilburton's Head Teacher found out about the Heritage Schools projects. This shows the value of Heritage Schools working with other partners to extend Heritage Schools' reach.

All three projects are currently delivered online because it does not require travel time and cost for the practitioners who deliver the sessions, and so the available funding can allow more schools to participate.

## **Wilburton Primary's Heritage Schools projects**

### **When Wilburton Sings**

The school had not studied traditional music before, and the Head Teacher was keen for the whole school to take part as an opportunity for the pupils to celebrate their different cultures and learning about the history of the village, which is a cultural heritage which all the pupils share, whatever their own family background is. The LHEM provided local history resources which the pupils used, working with The Young'uns, to write a song about Wilburton. The chorus explains the origin of Wilburton, and the verses describe some key moments in the village's history:

I am Wilburh the woman of Wilburton  
To these fenlands I came  
I am an Anglo-Saxon settler  
Who gave this village its name.

If you dig down underground  
There's fossils and bones that will be found  
There's belemnites and ammonites, straight and round  
To Wilburton, forever, bound.

Henry VII, King Henry  
Passed through Wilburton and planted a tree  
Chopped down in 1983  
But another grew anew when an acorn shook free.

To this village came disease  
The plague arrived on revolting fleas  
Smallpox brought folk to their knees  
Now there's covid - 'wash hands please!'

My name it is your history  
But my story is a mystery  
I'm the heart of your community  
So come all sing in tune with me.

The Head Teacher commented that when the pupils sing the Wilburton song, they are so enthusiastic that it must have increased their pride in Wilburton.

### **Just Beneath the Surface**

The Year 5 & 6 class worked with writer Tom Kitching to write creatively about the history of Wilburton, based on heritage resources provided by the LHEM. The Head Teacher decided that the class would benefit from taking part in this project so that they could improve their writing skills, and they would gain a good understanding of the local history context.

The pupils took part in inspiring activities to explore their reactions to local heritage objects, buildings and places; they created sensory language word banks and developed more complex and evocative phrases and descriptions. Each pupil decided what they would like to write about, which enabled them to broaden their vocabulary, think about nuance and connotation in words, and improve their composition skills and use of grammar. Then the pupils read their work to the rest of the class, increasing their confidence and competence in reading aloud.

*"The workshop was really good and it was delivered really well. It was a great activity and the children did some fantastic writing with it" - Head Teacher*

### **A Whistle-stop Tour of the Music and History of the British Isles**

The whole school took part in this project, with renowned musicians John Dipper and Joseph Hardy. Again, the LHEM provided resources about Wilburton and its musical heritage, including that Ralph Vaughan-Williams had visited the village in 1906 when he was collecting folk songs.



*Zoom session with John Dipper and Joseph Hardy on the Whistle-stop tour day*

The pupils and staff were intrigued to find that the local man whom Vaughan-Williams had talked to was a Mr Gothard, and another Mr Gothard (the same family) had been a previous headmaster of Wilburton School. They sang some of the songs which Vaughan-Williams had collected, including one about the village blacksmith, and the LHEM's resources showed where the blacksmith's forge used to be in the village.



*Wilburton, High Street with the blacksmith's shop and three of the workers in the foreground also the old grocery shop. 1905*

[https://wilburton.ccan.co.uk/content/catalogue\\_item/wilburton-high-street-with-the-blacksmiths-shop-and-3-of-the-workers-in-the-fore-ground-also-the-old-grocery-shop](https://wilburton.ccan.co.uk/content/catalogue_item/wilburton-high-street-with-the-blacksmiths-shop-and-3-of-the-workers-in-the-fore-ground-also-the-old-grocery-shop)

The pupils learned about Fenland protest songs of the local people in the 1600s: they relied on the wild fen for hunting and fishing, and they protested about the proposed new drainage of the Fens which would have destroyed their way of life. The pupils wrote their own present-day protest songs with an environmental message. They also learned maypole dancing.



*Maypole dancing*

### **Impacts on pupils**

Having taken part in these three projects, the pupils now have a much greater understanding of Wilburton's history and how the past and present are connected, and they have a greater sense of ownership of and pride in their locality. They have found out, for example, why the railway came to Wilburton (to transport fruit and agricultural produce more effectively than by road) and then why it closed in the 1960s as road transport had become cheaper than rail. The pupils learned how precarious life was as an agricultural labourer and the importance of Harvest; several of the pupils come from farming families, and all the pupils can relate this to the produce they grow on the school allotment.

The pupils sang traditional songs and learned dances which are local to Wilburton. As a whole school they created their own song, "I am Wilburh the woman of Wilburton," and some of the pupils wrote individual protest songs about environmental issues.

The pupils' attainment and depth of understanding in History has increased because the local heritage is referred to frequently – not just in History, but in other subjects as well. There is so much detail in the resources provided by the LHEM, and the teachers find them easy to use, so it is easy to integrate local heritage throughout the curriculum.

*“They have really excellent outcomes in History. History is now the strongest of the foundation subjects. The [LHEM’s] training has narrowed our focus which has led to a greater depth of understanding and more focused teaching. Now we look at fewer things in more detail, for example looking at just one photograph in a lesson” - Head Teacher*

The Year 5 & 6 class which did the *Just Beneath the Surface* workshop have improved their writing skills.

## Impacts on teachers and the school as a whole

*“The training which [the LHEM] provided was incredible. It really gave the local context. It has been transformational for the school curriculum. It has really helped us with chronological sequencing and now almost all of our History units of work have a local context to them. Then we started to think about how we could make these links in other subjects as well. Staff knowledge has increased too, so we can refer to local heritage more. The training is on the staff portal so we can keep coming back to it” - Head Teacher*

Teachers are using the training from the CPD sessions and the resources the LHEM provided for each of the three projects to focus particularly on the intent statements for History: chronology and critically analysing sources of evidence. In addition, the whole curriculum is being re-written to use local content wherever possible. For example, the topic of Fen drainage covers History (when the Fens were drained, why and by whom), Geography (change in land use due to drainage) and Music (traditional songs protesting about the impacts of drainage on the lives of local people).

Timeline	Event	Taught in (unit)	Resource
Neolithic (4000-2201BC)	Flint knife and scraper (found in Wilburton) A knife and scraper of black flint, respectively of length 9,3cm and 7,5cm Bronze Age blog.	Changes in Britain from the Stone Age to the Bronze Age (KS2 Year C)	Slide 99 Historic England CPD <a href="https://www.elymuseum.org.uk/museumfromhome-bronze-age/">https://www.elymuseum.org.uk/museumfromhome-bronze-age/</a>
1365-967 BC	Flag Fen causeway constructed.	As above	Trip to Flag Fen
673	St Etheldreda founded a double monastery on the site of Ely Cathedral in 673AD	Ely Cathedral (KS1 Year B)	Ely Cathedral workshop
800-900	Etheldreda’s monastery destroyed by Vikings	Ely Cathedral (KS1 Year B)	
970	Wilburton listed as Wilburhtun - Farmstead or Village of a woman named Wilburh.	Equality (KS2 Year B)	Wilburton Song by the Young ‘Uns
1071	Hereward’s defence of Ely - the last English resistance of against the Norman Conquest was quashed	Invasion! Romans, Anglo Saxons and Vikings (KS2 Year D)	<a href="https://www.herewardthewake.co.uk/">https://www.herewardthewake.co.uk/</a>
1322	Central tower in Ely Cathedral collapsed	Ely Cathedral (KS1 Year B)	
C. 1250-1450	St Peter’s Church, Wilburton, built	Wilburton Buildings (Geography KS1 Year B)	<a href="https://historicensland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1302304">https://historicensland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1302304</a>
1485	1,School Lane	Wilburton Buildings (History) Year A	<a href="https://historicensland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1302302">https://historicensland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1302302</a>
C. 1500	Oak tree planted by Henry VII		
1539	Henry VIII destroyed Ely Monastery	Ely Cathedral (KS1 Year B)	
1608	Sir Miles Sandys of Wilburton acquired Wilburton Rectory and set about draining and		

Wilburton Primary's new localised curriculum is based on a timeline of local events, the relevant subject and unit within it, with links to resources. The table above shows part of the localised History curriculum.

### **Impacts on families and the local community**

Families have come into school to hear the songs, which the pupils sing in family assemblies. During the creative process of creative writing and composing songs, the pupils have been able to share aspects of their families' cultures and heritage. The pupils share their knowledge of Wilburton's history with their families:

*"It's really an eye-opener, and it's interesting for the parents too. Children have first-hand experience of the history, and they can see it in the village when they are walking there with their parents" - Head Teacher*

Pupils have planted apple trees on Parish Council land and discovered, through using historic maps provided by Heritage Schools, that the land used to be an orchard. Thus, they have reverted the land to its previous use, and the trees will provide a lasting benefit for the village.



*Planting apple trees for a new orchard*

Another link has been made with the Cricket Club, where several of the pupils play; they compete for the Gothard Cup, which is named after another relation of the Mr Gothard who told Ralph Vaughan-Williams about Wilburton's folk songs, which the pupils discovered as a result of the LHEM's research.

## Summary

*"Everyone has been great, not just with their own knowledge but the way in which they have imparted what they know, their enthusiasm and their passion, that was got over to the children when they were doing the workshops. They have all been really good at engaging all the children, right across from Reception to Year 6, which can be a challenge sometimes, especially when the workshops are all online" - Head Teacher*

The Head Teacher was emphatic about the value which the LHEM's training and resources had brought to the school, and the benefits and enjoyment which the pupils had gained from the three Heritage Schools projects they had taken part in. The local heritage they have discovered has given them a much greater understanding of, and pride in, the place where they live. As they had not learned about traditional music before, this opened up new areas for them as they learned how to write songs and found out about the many varied aspects of local heritage on which their songs were based.

The training and the creativity resulting from the three projects has been transformational for the staff's teaching and development of the curriculum. The whole curriculum, across all subject areas, is being re-written to include links to local heritage wherever possible, and the teachers will continue to use the LHEM's resources.

Having an external consultant, Karin Horowitz, to develop and manage the three workshop programmes is a highly effective partnership for Heritage Schools as it enables Heritage Schools to reach more schools, which they might not make contact with otherwise, and it frees up the LHEM's time to work with more schools within and beyond these three programmes.