

## Fieldwork in History Teaching and Learning

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In a recent discussion of fieldwork in history teaching at British universities, Christine Hallas concluded that ‘generally the use of fieldwork in higher education history courses has been sporadic ... occasions when some light relief is required from sitting in the lecture hall.’ (1) This view was largely impressionistic, as little formal research has been undertaken to determine how widely fieldwork is used in history departments, what kinds of activity are undertaken and how highly students value fieldwork as a form of learning. Whereas geographers, archaeologists and others seeking to improve their students’ learning through fieldwork can draw on a substantial body of case studies and analyses, historians have had to depend primarily on their own individual experiences. (2)

This chapter endeavours to begin to fill this gap by reporting the results of surveys of university departments and of recent history graduates, undertaken to establish the quantity, variety and purposes of fieldwork and its value in students’ eyes, and by identifying a range of issues affecting the effective use of fieldwork. For the purposes of this research, fieldwork was defined as the study of physical, non-written evidence such as castles and other buildings or artefacts in galleries and museums. (3)

Questionnaires were sent to all history departments in Britain. Forty-seven responses were received, of which the great majority came from the ‘new’ universities and university colleges. The questionnaire focused on five issues:

1. who initiated fieldwork
2. the purposes of field-work
3. the types of place visited
4. the contribution of fieldwork to student assessment
5. future uses of fieldwork.

The extent of students' experience of fieldwork and their perceptions of its value were investigated through a questionnaire sent to former history students studying for the Postgraduate Certificate in Education (a teaching qualification) at four universities and colleges. Eighty-three former history students who had undertaken their first degrees at forty-three different institutions completed the questionnaire. In addition to the questions asked in the departmental survey, the students were asked about the kinds of activity they had undertaken and about their perception of the value of the study of sites as historical evidence in relation to other kinds of source.

## **Policies and practices**

In the survey of departments, nineteen of the forty-seven replies cited departmental policy as the major reason for their use of fieldwork. This was sometimes linked to the development of courses on such topics as heritage, landscape history, the built environment and research methodology. One respondent described his department's 'over-riding objective in fieldwork' as being 'to bring students into contact with how history is used in the "real world" and the political, social and economic debates which inherently have an historical component'. He continued, 'at Level One [first year], for example, we take students to Wigan Pier and to the Merseyside Maritime Museum in order to expose them to how historical issues are portrayed to a mass audience.' In the remaining twenty-six universities the use of fieldwork depended on lecturers' own initiatives. Replies indicated that in these cases the lack of a coherent and supportive policy increased existing difficulties in arranging and carrying out activities beyond the university. Much therefore depended on the confidence of staff in the effectiveness and value of the learning strategies being employed outside the normal classroom. The existence of staff with backgrounds as teacher-trainers, or the appointment of new staff with an interest in the historical importance of sites, were often key factors in building this confidence.

One result of this generally unsystematic approach to the initiation of field-work is that many students taking history degrees never visit a historical site as part of their course. Over half of the eighty-three students surveyed had not undertaken fieldwork during their degrees. These forty-five students were drawn from thirty universities. Many felt that there had been little opportunity because of, for example, the impracticality of fieldwork for courses on the history of other countries. However,

there was the indignant lament, 'I did a course on medieval monasticism which really should have included St Mary's Abbey in York and what about Fountains etc?' More problematically, the student who commented, 'I didn't do any but still got a 2i', made this statement in support of his contention that fieldwork was of no importance in the study of history. This may be one flippant response, but the overall pattern of replies showed that students had significantly different understandings of the value of fieldwork and of sites as a source of historical evidence, depending on whether or not they had any experience of fieldwork.

The thirty-eight students who had experience of fieldwork recorded a total of eighty-seven visits during their three years of study: thirty-two in year one, twenty-four in year two, and thirty-one in year three. This pattern may reflect a desire on the part of tutors and departments to involve and enthuse new students through fieldwork in the first year of their course, and through using sites to add depth to the range of sources studied in the final year. Moreover, the range of places visited was extremely varied. It included the expected sites such as castles, stately homes, industrial sites, deserted villages, museums and art galleries, but also a sewage works, a funeral director and local cemetery, and more distant exotica such as Versailles, Amsterdam, Venice, a one-week visit to St Petersburg, and the sombre scenes of Western Front battlefields and Holocaust sites. Those students whose highlights involved exploring Victorian graveyards may not have sympathised with the complaint that it was too cold to take notes in St Petersburg. (4)

This range suggests no lack of imagination or enterprise on the part of tutors, although the ability to continue the more distant or longer visits was felt to be seriously at risk because of financial constraints. The use of properties owned by English Heritage and the National Trust was extensive, and it is possible that closer, structured links between these organisations and universities would be advantageous both in developing resources and in planning modules so that the use of a site is integral (and perhaps the starting point of enquiry) rather than being an entertaining flourish at the end of a lecture-based course. Overall, such a range of activities underlined the absence of a journal which could bring together case studies and thus promote ideas about the effective use of historical sites for fieldwork.

From a departmental perspective, the most highly rated purpose of fieldwork was its development of students' skills in critically analysing evidence, followed by the acquisition of contextual knowledge, with the improvement of staff-student relations in third place. Other objectives cited were extending knowledge of the local community and the development of transferable skills, although few replies referred to the enhancement of teamwork and independent learning, both particularly achievable through fieldwork. However, the student respondents had a different perspective on the objectives of the fieldwork they had undertaken. Only 25 per cent saw the development of evidence-handling skills as the key objective, while 38 per cent thought that the acquisition of contextual knowledge had been the most important objective. Nearly 20 per cent believed that 'general interest' had been the prime purpose of their fieldwork. Some students clearly felt that there was an appropriate emphasis on deepening knowledge and analysing a site as evidence. Other comments that fieldwork was a 'bringing together [of] work done on a Georgian town', and that 'it helped to clarify and make real what we had already learned', suggest the development of contextual knowledge and the value of field visits for pulling together the threads of a course. Fewer comments suggested the use of evidence-based activities, though one student identified the purpose of a visit to Hadrian's Wall as 'to prove or disprove theories', an intriguing and potentially exciting approach. Less positively, the number of times 'general interest' appeared as an objective was high, and it was reflected in comments such as, 'it didn't seem to provide much relevance to the course other than as general interest'. Although these differences about objectives may not be significant, it is possible, particularly in the light of the numbers citing 'general interest', that objectives relating to analysis of evidence are not apparent in the activities or assessments undertaken by many students. Comments suggest that field visits which are simply 'a pleasant diversion from seminars' are not popular with students. However laid back they try to be, students appear to prefer the rigour and value of fieldwork to the relaxation and questionable relevance of field trips.

This perception that field visits were not sufficiently challenging was deepened by students' descriptions of the kinds of activity they undertook. Guided tours (either by the students' own lecturer or by someone connected with the site) predominated, providing the main component of thirty-four out of fifty-eight visits. Group or individual work made up the remainder. Students' own active involvement in learning

during visits was dominated by discussion and written descriptions. Little use was made of investigative activities involving measurement and the collection of data. Fewer than 15 per cent of activities involved learning through independent or small-group completion of structured tasks. Just over half of respondents felt that the structure of the visit and the activities undertaken could have been improved. Since the lack of structure of visits was the most common complaint, it is reasonable to hypothesise that poorly structured visits fail to challenge students, thereby reducing motivation and making it more difficult for students to relate a field visit to the overall course.

It is instructive to compare these findings with the models of fieldwork developed by geographers. While 'Cook's tours' or guided 'sight seeing' visits were the major focus for fieldwork in the 1950s and 1960s, the 1970s saw the addition of 'problem-oriented, project-based fieldwork' involving 'inductive and deductive approaches, hypothesis generation and testing, data collection and statistical analysis, interpretation and report writing'. Passive student participation was being replaced by 'active student participation although often staff-led'. In the later 1980s these approaches were overlain by the introduction of objectives related to transferable skills. (5) The surveys undertaken in this research provide little evidence of history fieldwork having moved beyond the 'Cook's tour' stage. This is not to say that this approach is not valuable but, even allowing for the differences between the two subjects, there may well be room for the development of a wider range of approaches to fieldwork in history.

Replies from history departments indicated that few used fieldwork in formal assessment. Only sixteen departments had assessment strategies clearly related to activities undertaken on a fieldwork visit. Assessed tasks included specific examination questions based on a visit, oral presentations, reports, group-work tasks and the compilation of a fieldwork file in preparation for a dissertation. Among departments not using fieldwork in formal assessment, there was an acknowledgement of its value in informing personal studies such as dissertations. Moreover, tutorial and informal discussion of sites visited was common. Yet the absence of a relationship between fieldwork and formal assessment clearly downgraded the importance of fieldwork in students' eyes. Fewer than a quarter

reported that fieldwork contributed to assessment, enhancing the view summarised by one student that fieldwork was ‘more recreational than practical’.

Unsurprisingly, there was a marked contrast between students’ views on the value of fieldwork depending upon whether they had direct experience of it. Those who had undertaken fieldwork believed that their understanding of past societies and situations had been enhanced by the experience, as illustrated in Table 13.1.

**Table 13.1 Student ratings of the value of fieldwork**

	Students with fieldwork experience		Students without fieldwork experience	
	No.	%	No.	%
<b>Vital importance</b>	15	42	2	3.0
<b>Important</b>	9	25	17	42.5
<b>Useful</b>	12	33	18	45.0
<b>Little importance</b>	-	-	1	2.5
<b>No importance</b>	-	-	2	3.0

Why did these students see fieldwork as important? The majority of answers were at a basic level such as, ‘it illustrated the points made during the course’, another example of the ‘let’s go on a guided tour to round off the course’ approach to fieldwork. More relevant to the purposes of fieldwork were the claims that, ‘it brings home that evidence is not only about printed sources and artefacts. History is all around us’; ‘History is a subject which works most effectively when it has penetrated a student’s imagination. Visual aids (including visits) help this process enormously’; and ‘Fieldwork gave me a real sense of being in touch with the history of an area, in a way that books alone could not have provided. My visit to Aldgate as part of a week long trip in London . . . was a real highlight.’ What set these comments apart from nearly all others was their awareness of the contribution that the evidence of historical sites can make to a historical enquiry. However, few responses suggested that students had under-taken their fieldwork in a spirit of enquiry, seeking out answers to questions or testing hypotheses, and therefore it is not surprising that such responses were in the

minority. The nature of the perceived objectives, the structures of visits and the nature of the activities undertaken all indicate a predominantly passive role for students. If students were required more frequently to think about the value of physical evidence, then their justifications for fieldwork might move more frequently beyond the banal 'it brings the past alive'.

## **Improving fieldwork**

In their responses to a question about future patterns of fieldwork, even the most committed departments indicated that they faced increasing difficulties, particularly in financing visits and finding time for them. The constraints of departmental budgets (when available), increased travel costs linked to larger groups of students, and awareness of greater strains on students' finances and their ability to contribute to costs were frequently mentioned. Changes in the organisation of the academic year due to modularisation and a two-semester pattern further complicated fieldwork arrangements, especially if they were to be for more than a half-day and therefore intruded on others' teaching time. The development of information technology strategies for learning was also cited as another example of a new initiative that was pushing fieldwork down the list of departmental priorities.

Fieldwork was also seen as demanding in terms of preparation at a time when staff workloads appear to have increased, and because the 'academic return seemed small compared with archival and library study'. One department expressed the concern that fieldwork seemed irrelevant against the demands of the Research Assessment Exercise on staff time. Another occasional contributor to problems was a departmental ethos that did not see the study of historical sites as central to a history degree; one tutor commented dryly that some of his colleagues saw going to the library as fieldwork. It was apparent that staff confidence, both in their own expertise at using sites and in the value of fieldwork for learning, was increasingly important in maintaining the provision. In this respect, the attitude of most of those who made regular use of fieldwork was summed up by the comment that, 'constraints make it difficult for us to expand fieldwork but we remain committed to its use'.

Even in those institutions where fieldwork is pursued with conviction and confidence, it is felt to be threatened by, among other factors, financial constraints and competing

priorities such as research. Therefore it is vital to be able to answer effectively the simple question: ‘Why do we take students to historical sites?’ Hallas’s discussion of objectives for fieldwork deals effectively with transferable skills. (6) Outcomes more purely historical include the development of skills in asking questions and in observation and analysis by using the site to answer questions or test hypotheses; an understanding of the strengths and limitations of artefacts, buildings and other sites as historical evidence; deepening knowledge of events, people, attitudes and culture; and a sense of period, including the ability to identify similarities and differences between periods. Hallas’s suggestion of ‘empathy’ as an objective in its own right is problematical in the light of the literature on empathy in teaching history in schools. Empathy is perhaps best seen as a means to enhanced understanding of motivation and causation rather than as a separate objective in itself.

Anyone who has led a field visit will recognise the truth in the assertion that ‘effective learning cannot be expected just because we take students into the field’. (7) Objectives have to be clearly related to potential improvements in students’ performance. Can the ‘Cook’s tour’ deliver enhanced performance? The answer is that it may do, depending upon its purposes. If the prime objective is enhanced knowledge and the tour is simply a vehicle for conveying information to students then it is no more likely to be effective than a normal lecture, allowing for the distractions of a scenic backdrop or the boom of aircraft passing over-head. Using a historical site as the setting for a lecture imparting information would be a poor use of such a valuable resource. The nearest students may come in such circumstances to participative learning will be to nudge a neighbour and whisper, ‘what did she say?’ However, the guided tour may be much more useful if it is seen as a way of introducing students to a different objective – the analysis of the site as evidence. For this objective the tutor can pass on techniques in the tour, the first stage in preparing students for studying sites more independently. This approach would focus on passing on the tutor’s skills and observational techniques rather than a quantity of information. Therefore what geographers term ‘observational fieldwork’ can be structured as a stepping-stone to ‘participatory fieldwork’. (8) However, it is important that the literature on structured lectures be applied to this kind of introductory fieldwork; for example, the provision of brief tasks leading to feedback and the use of guide-lines for note taking, including key quotations, skeleton notes

and questions to be augmented by students' own answers or selection of detail as evidence. (9)

Perhaps the most valuable use of fieldwork lies in developing students' historical skills in asking questions of a site, suggesting hypotheses about its use or the society that created it, and using the detail of the site to test those hypotheses. If this approach is taken there are implications for the timing of fieldwork visits. Visits conducted at the end of a module may be useful for pulling threads together and consolidating understanding, but that too can take place effectively on campus. The best time to use a site may well be at or near the beginning of a sequence of work, so that the site can be approached with an open mind, questioned and combed for evidence, and then used as a case study against which to test further ideas and reading. This approach may also be the one best supported by developments in information technology, through the growing number of 'virtual reality' sites which can be explored by students and used to develop their skills of evidence analysis before going out to a site. (10)

Effective use of information technology is one aspect of a third area for objectives – employability. Developments in geography fieldwork have been significantly affected by Enterprise in Higher Education initiatives since the mid 1980s, developing transferable skills in leadership and group work, independent thinking and self organisation, communication and presentation. These skills do not develop through passive, lecture-oriented visits, but active, problem-solving fieldwork offers a particularly fruitful context for developing these skills, and may in turn have a constructive impact on students' ability to work together in the more familiar environment of the university. (11)

Another increasing problem for those wanting to use fieldwork comes from the rapid increase in the numbers of students in classes. There are few occasions when learning cannot be enhanced by fewer students having greater access to their tutors. However, if the need to provide fieldwork for large groups leads to a re-thinking of approaches to fieldwork, then some good may emerge. Historians can draw on the work of geographers and others on methods of dealing with large groups, particularly the use of worksheet-guided trails and group projects. (12) Such methods are valuable, not

simply because they reduce the problems posed by large groups but because they make better use of the site as a historical source and require students to be active learners. They also encourage the development of skills as students may work in small teams, contributing and assessing ideas, and preparing and presenting conclusions.

Clearly, students will take fieldwork more seriously, will work harder and hopefully will learn more if it contributes to their formal assessment. The opportunities for using more varied forms of assessment are considerable, particularly in relation to the development of transferable skills. Oral presentation skills and organisational and group-work skills can be assessed alongside the traditional qualities of the historian. Oral presentations can prove to be a valuable stage in moving towards written assessment, as they provide an occasion for trying out ideas and structuring arguments and evidence. (13) Formative assessment of these skills may be more appropriate in year one, before moving to summative assessments in years two and three. However, traditional forms of assessment can be used successfully, both as assessment mechanisms and to help students focus effectively on fieldwork activities. An essay question such as 'To what extent can a visit to the site help to reconstruct the battle of Hastings?' will require students to discuss written sources and the site, and weigh up the value of the site as evidence in relation to the evidence from other sources.

Clearly related to assessment issues is the problem of ensuring students' progression in learning throughout their fieldwork activities. In terms of the progression of general skills, we have suggested that it may help to think in terms of a progression from guided observation to group and individual investigation. A more difficult aspect of progression is whether fieldwork undertaken in year three is more demanding in terms of the use of source analysis techniques than in earlier years. Given the limited quantity of fieldwork undertaken in history departments, there is no evidence of planned progression in the difficulty of tasks. This is clearly an area that would merit further investigation. In addition to helping students to see the value of their fieldwork, it would help tutors to identify standards and policies for this work. The existence of coherent, structured departmental policies should also assist in the process of gaining funding, both for field visits and for staff development. Departmental visits to sites need funding, but would also contribute considerably to the sharing of expertise and to the development of new ideas and teaching materials.

With a departmental policy it is possible to move, albeit slowly over several years, towards creating progression in students' experience and learning through a coordinated approach to course construction and teaching.

### **Fieldwork in practice**

A second strand of research was the analysis and evaluation of our own use of fieldwork. The following example is taken from a third-year Special Subject course, 'The Fall of the House of Lancaster, 1447-64'. The starting point for the planning of fieldwork was the assessment to be undertaken at the end of the year, which included one examination paper on the sources of the period. Students had to answer two out of four questions, three of which were based on the evaluation of documentary sources. The fourth question was designed to offer students the chance to consider the value of non-documentary evidence in relation to other forms of evidence as follows:

Either

How effectively can the battles of this period be reconstructed using written sources, artefacts and battle sites as evidence?

Or

To what extent do the buildings of the period and their contents support the view that mid-fifteenth century Englishmen were 'preoccupied with thoughts of civil war'?

Once the assessment needs were decided before teaching began, then field visits could be planned, designed to build students' knowledge of the range of non-documentary sources and their ability to evaluate and use them as evidence. Further objectives were the increasing of students' knowledge and understanding of events and of mid-fifteenth-century society. The first of the three visits was undertaken early in the course, in the expectation that informal discussions would encourage students to contribute more freely in weekly classes. The first site visited was All Saints Church, Harewood (West Yorkshire) to see six pairs of effigies from the period 1400–1510. This entailed a twenty-minute journey each way and, at most, ninety minutes on site. Preparation for the visit was deliberately brief, consisting of an overview of the objectives, and the request for students to consider how sophisticated they thought

fifteenth-century society was and the reasons for their views. This was intended to identify their preconceptions at the outset of the course, so that they could then more effectively observe any changes in their views. The visit was structured around an activity booklet which included three tasks.

- First, students were asked to complete a grid identifying the effigies and placing them in chronological order. This was not overly demanding as there were unavoidable information boards, so students were also asked to list the physical features that helped to decide the chronological sequence and in what ways they developed over the period.
- The second task focused on the livery collars, asking students to identify differences and to suggest why they differed and whether they could learn anything from them about the loyalties of the individuals.
- The third task ranged more widely, asking students to make deductions about a series of aspects of society from the effigies – the roles of religion, chivalry and warfare, the importance of ideals such as loyalty, and the prosperity of society.

Each stage was undertaken by students working in pairs, with a specified time limit at the end of which they reported back to the tutor. Discussion then took place, with students comparing answers and key points being identified and developed by the tutor. Students had space in their activity booklets to add relevant notes. This helped to ensure that their notes had structure and were useable for further work and, ultimately, for revision. After each feedback session students moved on to the next task. Finally students were asked, on the basis of the evidence of the effigies and the discussions, whether fifteenth-century society was more or less cultured than they had previously thought and whether the effigies were more or less valuable as sources than they had expected, and to explain the reasons for their views.

The other two field visits were timetabled just a week apart, so that a visit to the Royal Armouries in Leeds to examine weaponry, armour and tactics paved the way for visiting the site of the battle of Towton, near Tadcaster in West Yorkshire. The preparation for the Armouries visit took five hours, working in conjunction with the Armouries education officer. The visit itself lasted five hours, and therefore had to be

constructed to allow for the natural ebbs and flows in students' concentration over that time and, if possible, to enhance their concentration. The first hour was spent working in small groups on specified items of armour, investigating how the authenticity of the armour might be established and the suitability of armour and weapons for fighting. Tasks were again provided in an activity booklet, which also gave precise instructions as to where each item could be found because time wasted looking for items in a large museum rapidly de-motivates students. During the hour, the tutor worked with groups answering questions or prompting other lines of thought. At the end of that hour students spent half an hour with a museum curator, who talked to them about how the authenticity of armour can be established and the other issues they had been investigating. A half-hour break followed to allow students to relax before they spent another hour on a structured group activity, completing a table to identify a full range of weapons, which kinds of soldier would have used them, and their strengths and weaknesses as weapons. They were also asked to consider what evidence the armour and weapons provided about the nature of society, a deliberate return to the issues discussed during the first field visit. A second half-hour break followed, and the day was completed with a talk and handling session on tactics and weaponry led by another curator. This was intended to pull together the strands of the day's work, as well as providing a lighter touch – with a purpose – at the end of the day when students could try on armour to test weight and mobility.

The following week students visited the site of the battle of Towton, having prepared by reading primary accounts of the battle and historians' reconstructions. The site happily contains no signs marking hypothetical positions, but it is crossed by a road which means that tutor and students need to be aware of traffic. The major purpose of the visit was to evaluate the accuracy of historians' reconstructions, and to consider some of the military problems such as the difficulty of commanders in communicating with their armies. This was much clearer because the students could see the size of the battlefield and the lines of sight from strategic points, and stand on the spots suggested by historians for the armies and assess the logic of those positions.

At the end of the course, after examinations had been taken, students completed a questionnaire on the field visits, both for the course described above and for a parallel course. Students were asked to grade the value of the fieldwork for developing understanding and knowledge.

**Table 13.2 Student ratings of fieldwork in two courses**

	<b>4 (high)</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1 (low)</b>
<b>House of Lancaster</b>	4	5	1	-
<b>Parallel course</b>	0	7	1	-

As Table 13.2 shows, the number of students rating fieldwork as highly valuable differed substantially between courses. The reasons for this difference can be inferred from students' comments on other parts of the questionnaire. Several students following the House of Lancaster course echoed one comment that 'the visits were good, if not excellent, for the final examination'. None made comments such as those from the parallel course, that 'what we looked at was not really relevant' and 'as one nears the exam the importance [of the visits] dwindles'. This difference can therefore be ascribed to the degree to which visits have an explicit relationship to assessment. In addition, students on the parallel course regarded it as most successful for 'getting to know students/tutor', whereas students on the House of Lancaster course regarded 'adding to subject knowledge' as the objective most successfully achieved. A second reason for the difference may lie in the degree of structure to the visits. The House of Lancaster visits were closely structured, whereas the parallel course did not use structured activity sheets but relied on the tutor and students to observe and record in their own way. At this level it might be suggested that students would not appreciate closely structured work that has the tang of school worksheets, but the response from House of Lancaster students was positive because the tasks and the recording sheets gave students confidence and clarity of purpose, and also ensured that they had material at the end of the visit that they could use for future work. No activity sheet was used at Towton, eliciting the comment that 'Towton needed a sheet . . . as it was too much to take in and remember'.

Several possible improvements were suggested by students in addition to Towton needing an activity booklet. Two shorter visits to the Armouries could be used, as students felt that a visit early in the year would help them to understand more of the society and events, while a second visit would be retained as specific preparation for the visit to Towton. One change to a task could be that instead of asking a series of open questions such as ‘What do the effigies tell you about the importance of loyalty?’, alternative hypotheses are provided as answers to some of those questions for students to choose between, thus providing a variety of open questions and hypotheses from which to choose. The key elements to preserve will be a clear relationship between visits and assessment, clarity of objectives and preparation, variety and structure of tasks, and a variety of pace within a visit.

## **Conclusion**

It seems that the historical community divides into those who regard work at historical sites as a natural and important part of a historical education, and those for whom site-work is either irrelevant, insignificant or a time-consuming intrusion on other priorities. Clearly, not every course can or should involve fieldwork. However, we would like to conclude by drawing attention to the wider value of fieldwork as part of a history degree.

One concern is about the impact on students’ own teaching, should they go into teaching either in colleges or in secondary schools. Most history teachers in schools use fieldwork, and over 30 per cent of GCSE candidates follow the History Around Us unit of the Schools History Project GCSE course, which requires site visits and the interrogation of physical evidence. Are these teachers receiving models of good practice in their own experience as students? The experience of one of the authors of this article in helping to set up a new museum, and in particular in providing resources and activities for secondary schools, suggests that the ‘Cook’s tour’ approach is being carried forward, sometimes with disastrous and nearly always with disappointing results in terms of the quality of work undertaken during the visit. Teachers who have used investigatory approaches have been much more successful in maintaining students’ concentration and enthusiasm, and have elicited a greater volume of work from students.

In the longer term, history graduates will hopefully maintain their interest in history and visit sites, along with so many of the rest of the population. Will history graduates do so with a more informed eye than the general public for interpreting what they see, and be better able to learn from the site about the society that created it? Will they be more willing to question the heritage interpretations that they witness? If they do not, then has something important been missing from their historical education at university?

## Notes

We would like to take this opportunity to thank those colleagues who took the time to complete questionnaires, many providing considerable detail.

1 C. Hallas, 'Learning from experience: field trips and work placements', in A. Booth and P. Hyland (eds), *History in Higher Education* (Oxford, Blackwell, 1996), p. 225.

2 M. Kent, D. Gilbertson and C. Hunt, 'Fieldwork in geography teaching: a critical review of the literature and approaches', *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, 21:3 (1997), 313–32 provides a discussion of past and current practice and identifies key issues and problems for future development. This survey draws on over seventy articles and books in geography and closely related disciplines. Although it deals with geography it contains a great deal that will be of value to historians exploring the uses and value of fieldwork.

3 The research thus excludes oral history work and visits to record offices and other archives.

4 Examples of the range of sites visited by individual departments are: Lindisfarne, York, Fountains Abbey, Escomb, Jarrow and Antwerp by a northern university; and Dublin, Hadrian's Wall, York, Saltaire, Chipping, Wigan, Grange-over-Sands and Lancaster by a northern university college. Another university college makes use of the following: Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool; Quarry Bank Mill, Styal; Port Sunlight, Wirral; Ludlow Castle, local field systems and turnpike roads, the Grosvenor Museum in Chester and the city of Chester.

5 See Kent *et al.*, 'Fieldwork in geography teaching', p. 316.

6 Hallas, 'Learning from experience', pp. 225–6.

7 N. Lonergan and L. W. Andresen, 'Field-based education: some theoretical considerations', *Higher Education Research and Development*, 7 (1988), 70.

8 See Kent *et al.*, 'Fieldwork in geography teaching', pp. 315–17.

9 See, for example, A. Jenkins, 'Active learning in structured lectures', in G. Gibbs and A. Jenkins (eds), *Teaching Large Classes in Higher Education* (London, Kogan Page, 1992).

10 A. Jenkins, *Fieldwork with More Students* (Oxford, Oxford Centre for Staff Development, 1997), pp. 38-42, provides a list of sites and contacts. Useful starting points are the Computing in Teaching Initiative for History, Archaeology and Art history

<http://www.arts.gla.ac.uk/>

Try also Durham cathedral's virtual field trip, based on photographs rather than computer graphics.

<http://www.dur.ac.uk/>

11 See J. R. Gold and M. J. Haigh, 'Over the hills and far away: retaining field study experiences in large classes', in Gibbs and Jenkins (eds), *Teaching Large Classes*, for accounts of the development of group skills which, though based on residential courses, offer ideas which could be amended for day or half-day activities.

See also G. Gibbs *et al.*, *Developing Students' Transferable Skills* (Oxford, Oxford Centre for Staff Development, 1994).

12 See, for example, A. Jenkins, 'Thirteen ways of doing fieldwork with large classes/more students', *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, 18, (1994), 143-54; Jenkins, *Fieldwork with More Students*.

13 For ideas on alternative forms of assessment see S. Brown, C. Rust and G. Gibbs, *Strategies for Diversifying Assessment in Higher Education* (Oxford, Oxford Centre for Staff Development, 1994);

And A. Booth's 'Changing assessment to improve learning' and 'Assessing group work', in Booth and Hyland (eds), *History in Higher Education*.