

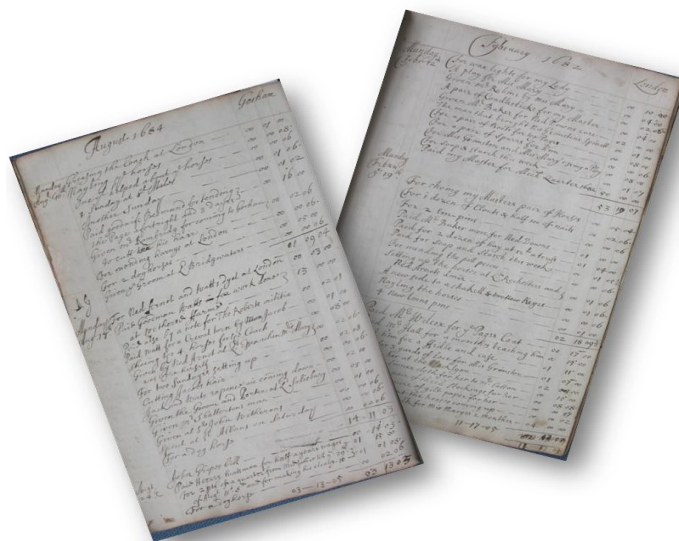
Partnership project between Family Learning and museums, libraries and archives

Hertfordshire County Council Family Learning already works with the county museums and libraries on a range of family learning programmes in schools but up until now has not focused a programme on archive collections.

Working with the county archive service, the local library and a primary school, they have designed a short family learning course called “Archive Adventure”.

The course includes a guided session at the school and in the county archives and an open access session at the library over a three week period. Families are issued a “passport” which is stamped as they attend each venue.

Activities start from the study of an eighteenth century portrait showing a little girl and her young black page. Mother, fathers, carers and their children are asked for their ideas of the story behind the portrait, the identity of the children, their relationship to each other and the historical context. To add evidence to their ideas, the families read entries relating to the page from the girl’s family archive . Adults and children then work together on a “story shield” to create and tell their version of the story from the point of view of the characters in the picture.



The follow-up session takes place at the county archive where families are able to look up more information about the family in the picture, have a tour of the archives and learn what information is kept there and how they can access it.

The library visit is open access so the families can make the visit when convenient to them. The library has a special display of books, including non-fiction relevant to the period of the picture, for example on slavery, local history. Families are encouraged to join the library if not already members and there is a quiz and tour of the library available.

Families are invited back to school to celebrate successful completion of their “archive adventure” and issued with certificates at school assembly.

Irene Austin Family Learning Senior Development Officer for Hertfordshire County Council explains:

“We are offering this course to all the families of year 4 children in the school. Archives are a huge learning resource but not as readily accessible as resources in museums and libraries. This is a way of offering a new learning experience in a very inclusive way. The first session at school gets the mothers, fathers and carers in to school and is local for them. We’re organising the session at the archives at different times after school and at weekends so families can decide when they want to attend. The course gives excellent opportunities for children and adults to engage with other aspects of their community and it broadens their experiences of reading in a relaxed informal way. I hope families will be inspired to re-visit the archives for further investigation of a topic which interests them”

Hertfordshire County Council