

'People and Historic Places' in England - a visit to Tissington Hall

Recreational and educational opportunities in historic houses

The Historic Houses Association (HHA) and Black Environment Network (BEN) came together to formulate a project to increase ethnic community access to privately owned historic houses. The 'People and Historic Places Project' was a UK wide pilot to stimulate groups to discover the facilities, events and resources available and together to explore their significance.

Making it happen

Between April 2003 and October 2004, BEN worked in partnership with the *Bangladesh Multipurpose Centre* in North Lozells to target young men who were newly arrived in Britain to work in the catering trade. The group identified were ESOL students studying English as a second language at City College. They were keen to learn about this country and its language. An educational visit was planned to explore the house and gardens of Tissington Hall near Ashbourne in Derbyshire.

Cultural relevance

Baronet Sir Richard FitzHerbert, the owner of Tissington Hall was very enthusiastic to meet his guests and to discuss historical links between Tissington and Bangladesh.

The course tutor saw the trip as a good opportunity to practice conversation and to expand their vocabulary. A Bengali interpreter was on hand, to help the men get the most from their experience. A BEN Development Worker accompanied the group and helped to evaluate the pilot project.

Before this visit, the men had very little positive experience of the natural or historic environment, so the beauty of the place helped them form an emotional link to the English countryside. The personal involvement of Sir Richard enabled his guests to gain an insight into the influence of rural life on the development of British society. They were delighted to see cows in a neighbouring field, and they especially admired Tissington's rose garden, which reminded them of the set of a Bollywood movie.

The group brought Indian sweets as a traditional gift to their host.





The Future

The visitors enjoyed their trip and saw it as a revelation of a historic aspect of their new country. The partnership recognised opportunities for deeper engagement in recreational and educational activities in the historic environment. BEN and the HHA hope to build on this positive work by involving more minority ethnic community groups in accessing opportunities in historic houses.

The City College has since relayed their experience to other colleges offering ESOL classes and others are enthusiastic to develop initiatives to take advantage of positive opportunities to allow language learning to take place in context.



FACTFILE

- **Funders:**

BEN UK, Historic Houses Association

- **Partners:**

Tissington Hall, Bangladesh Multipurpose Centre, City College

- **Target group:**

The pilot project targeted a range of ethnic community groups across the UK. A group of Bangladeshi men from Birmingham was selected to visit Tissington Hall.

- **Numbers:** 14

- **Resources:**

'People and Historic Places' Report and summary report, available to download from the BEN website at www.ben-network.org.uk

- **Key points:**

- Visits to historic houses and gardens can make a significant contribution to social integration by enabling contact between ethnic community groups and the historic environment, enabling them to share knowledge, compare experience and make links with the history, people and landscapes of Britain.
- Historic places can offer opportunities for language learning in context. They can help newcomers to make connections with aspects of their new country of residence.



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