

What is 'community heritage' and how is it practised in Britain today? Discuss in relation to one project known to you.

Introduction

To answer the question what community heritage is, we must firstly, understand the definition and discover how it is celebrated and conserved in Britain in the present day. Secondly, this essay will explore a particular project. The project that will be examined is managed by Cadw, a department within the Welsh Government. Cadw provide protection to significant landmarks in Wales with five major projects displayed on their website. From these projects, it can be understood what community heritage truly is, with examples of groups and organisations actively practicing it today. Lastly, a conclusion will be made in order to answer the issue in question.

What is 'community heritage'?

The word 'community' is described in the Cambridge English Dictionary as "people living in one particular area or people who are considered as a unit because of their common interests, social group, or nationality".¹ 'Heritage' is described as "features belonging to the culture of a particular society, such as traditions, languages, or buildings, that were created in the past and still have historical importance".² The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), describe heritage as "a source of identity, heritage is a valuable factor for empowering local communities and enabling vulnerable groups to participate fully in social and cultural life. It can also provide time-tested solutions for conflict prevention and reconciliation".³

The definition of 'community heritage' is therefore clear: a group of individuals that have a past in common. This, in Britain, can be seen through small towns or villages where communities of people are closely knitted. It can also be seen in religious groups, charitable organisations, and areas of the country people may live in. Community heritage may be able to be connected to other things like, football clubs as their fans all come together to support one thing they have in common. Thus, showing that community heritage is anywhere and everywhere people go.

How is community heritage practised in Britain today?

UNESCO offers a platform in which they hold conventions concerning heritage and for international corporations to appreciate, understand, and discuss heritage.⁴ They also discuss legal developments and support for national policies for heritage protection, with

¹ Cambridge Dictionary, 'Community' (2021)

<<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/community>> [7 October 2021].

² Cambridge Dictionary, 'Heritage', (2021) <<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/heritage>> [7 October 2021].

³ UNESCO, 'Preserving Our Heritage', (2009) <<https://en.unesco.org/content/preserving-our-heritage>> [8 October 2021].

⁴ UNESCO, 'Preserving Our Heritage', (2009) <<https://en.unesco.org/content/preserving-our-heritage>> [8 October 2021].

the link to training, preservation, and management.⁵ UNESCO also claims that natural and cultural heritage sites such as museums, libraries and archived collections around the world are becoming less popular as well as falling victim to natural disasters and conflicts.⁶ In the past few decades UNESCO have demonstrated and endurance and relevance to leading international efforts in preventing the theft and unlawful trafficking of cultural property and community heritage.⁷

Community heritage can be celebrated and practised through many ways including, participation in the arts, visiting museums, galleries, and the use of libraries. According to the Government, a survey was conducted that showed how many people attended these sites by ethnic group.

From 2018 to 2019, 77.4% of people over the age of sixteen participated in the arts at least once a year, with this number staying stable since 2012.⁸ From that figure, 88.7% of these participants were of Mixed ethnicity and is the most likely to attend out of all the ethnic groups in Britain.⁹ These numbers demonstrate those who participate in the heritage of their community art programmes, allowing it to thrive.

Museums and galleries visited by those sixteen and over from 2018-2019, were only 50.2%, with 51.1% of those of the White ethnicity choosing to go, 33.5% of the Black community participating, and 43.7% being of Asian background.¹⁰ Museums and galleries promote a large amount of British heritage and historic collections. From this, we can determine how popular certain heritage sites are in England, and in particular which communities and groups are most likely to attend.

It can be argued that libraries are a large part of British heritage and were very popular until the past few decades, with the birth of the digital age. In 2018 to 2019 only 32.9% of people in England used their local library, this has fallen by 4.1% since 2012.¹¹ 42.5% of people going to libraries were of Asian ethnicity and 31.8% were White.¹² The figures of people attending their local library has fallen due to other sources such as the internet and other

⁵ UNESCO, 'Preserving Our Heritage', (2009) <<https://en.unesco.org/content/preserving-our-heritage>> [8 October 2021].

⁶ UNESCO, 'Preserving Our Heritage', (2009) <<https://en.unesco.org/content/preserving-our-heritage>> [8 October 2021].

⁷ UNESCO, 'Preserving Our Heritage', (2009) <<https://en.unesco.org/content/preserving-our-heritage>> [8 October 2021].

⁸ Ethnicity Facts and Figures, *Participation in the Arts*, (2019), <<https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/culture-and-community/culture-and-heritage/adults-taking-part-in-the-arts/latest>> [9 October 2021].

⁹ Ethnicity Facts and Figures, *Participation in the Arts*, (2019), <<https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/culture-and-community/culture-and-heritage/adults-taking-part-in-the-arts/latest>> [9 October 2021].

¹⁰ Ethnicity Facts and Figures, *Visits to Museums and Galleries*, (2019), <<https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/culture-and-community/culture-and-heritage/adults-visiting-museums-and-galleries/latest>> [9 October 2021].

¹¹ Ethnicity Facts and Figures. *Use of Libraries*, (2019), <<https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/culture-and-community/culture-and-heritage/adults-using-public-libraries/latest>> [9 October 2021].

¹² Ethnicity Facts and Figures. *Use of Libraries*, (2019), <<https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/culture-and-community/culture-and-heritage/adults-using-public-libraries/latest>> [9 October 2021].

technology which is must faster and easier to access. This has clearly hindered libraries, their financial aid, resources, and their presence among their community.

In this report, there is also a section on heritage sites, and this includes: cities and towns with significant historic character, historic and secular buildings that are open to the public, historic parks, gardens or landscapes, monuments like castles, forts, or ruins and sites with archaeological interest.¹³ From 2018-2019, 72.4% of people sixteen and over visited these sites, with 42.3% of the Black community visiting, and 56.3% being of Asian descent and 75.4% of White people attending.¹⁴ This is one of the highest, most visited, and used heritage locations in England, with large amounts of people from all ethnic communities participating in the success of these monuments.

A huge contributor to heritage projects that help communities in Britain is the National Lottery, who help promote and raise money for projects and groups through their National Lottery Heritage Fund. Since 1994, they have awarded £500 million to over 26,700 communities and their cultural heritage projects across the UK.¹⁵ The goal of the Heritage Fund is to help provide financing for research and sharing history of a community or a place.¹⁶ The funding can be used for many different types of heritage groups.

The National Lottery provide support project ideas like researching the impact of a historical events of a town and sharing the findings through displays, talks, and an online presence. Other project ideas that are accepted for financial help are, investigating a name from a war memorial, researching into documents and photographs that are linked to the LGBT+ community, setting up an audio trail or tour for buildings, parks and monuments in a town or village, and enabling a youth group to research local history.¹⁷

They are currently supporting many groups like, Zebedee Troupers, a group of young people with disabilities, who are researching into the role disabled people played during both the Great War and the Second World War.¹⁸ The fund is also sponsoring Queer research groups in Salisbury, Cheshire, and Suffolk.¹⁹ The National Lottery also support community sports in Northern Ireland, the UK's first National Marine Park in Plymouth, a group providing

¹³ Ethnicity Facts and Figures, *Visits to Heritage Sites*, (2019), < <https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/culture-and-community/culture-and-heritage/adults-visiting-heritage-sites/latest> > [9 October 2021].

¹⁴ Ethnicity Facts and Figures, *Visits to Heritage Sites*, (2019), < <https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/culture-and-community/culture-and-heritage/adults-visiting-heritage-sites/latest> > [9 October 2021].

¹⁵ National Lottery Heritage Fund, *Community Heritage*, (2021), < <https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/our-work/community-heritage> > [8 October 2021].

¹⁶ National Lottery Heritage Fund, *Community Heritage*, (2021), < <https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/our-work/community-heritage> > [8 October 2021].

¹⁷ National Lottery Heritage Fund, *Community Heritage*, (2021), < <https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/our-work/community-heritage> > [8 October 2021].

¹⁸ National Lottery Heritage Fund, *Zebedee Troupers – Abled not Disabled*, (2018), < <https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/projects/zebedee-troupers-abled-not-disabled> > [8 October 2021].

¹⁹ National Lottery Heritage Fund, *Projects*, (2021), < <https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/hub/107823/project> > [8 October 2021].

learning through accessibility to multi-sensory stories and a group looking at Somali nomadic culture.²⁰

From this alone, it can be said there are plenty of projects being ran around Britain. Many of these heritage projects seem to be based around small towns' histories and stories or larger areas, where they are focused on more religious aspects or LGBTQ+ rights and support.

Project

Cadw is a part of the Welsh Government's Art and Sport Department that also provides a service that deals with the historic environment of Wales.²¹ They aim to care for historic spaces and help inspire current and future generations to get involved with their own community heritage conservation. Cadw also work on protecting certain historical sites and "look back in order that we can see ahead".²² Wales is full of history that needs to be cared for, understood, and shared with the public.²³

Virtual tours are provided by Cadw, bringing Welsh history into the modern age. Cadw also provides links to diverse histories and use the past to help make sense of the constant changing world.²⁴ They are currently working on accessibility and protection of historical environments. This is done through promoting and developing skills of teams of people, and individuals alike that will be taking care of historic properties.²⁵ Cadw also advocate the improvements of communities to treasure and appreciate their heritage as well as, making sure the historic sites work with the economic well-being of Wales.²⁶ They also collaborate with their partners, Fusion, working to achieve their common goals of conservation.²⁷

Cadw has over 250 people working for them with a range of disciplines.²⁸ Around 100 of the people are custodians, working to take care of monuments or are a part of in-house teams that undertake conservation and maintenance of many historic sites.²⁹ They also have specialist staff that work all over Wales as field monument wardens, inspectors of historic building, ancient monuments, parks, and gardens.³⁰ These staff members always do hands-on work and are constantly out visiting sites, greeting the public and local authority ambassadors.³¹

A six operational branch system is how Cadw works, with the Historic Environment Team being the main one. This branch focuses on listing buildings, scheduling monuments, and registering historic parks and gardens that are of national importance.³² They also provide a

²⁰ National Lottery Heritage Fund, *Projects*, (2021), <<https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/hub/107823/project>> [8 October 2021].

²¹ Cadw, *What We Do*, (2021), <<https://cadw.gov.wales/about-us/what-we-do>> [10 October 2021].

²² Cadw, *What We Do*, (2021), <<https://cadw.gov.wales/about-us/what-we-do>> [10 October 2021].

²³ Cadw, *What We Do*, (2021), <<https://cadw.gov.wales/about-us/what-we-do>> [10 October 2021].

²⁴ Cadw, *What We Do*, (2021), <<https://cadw.gov.wales/about-us/what-we-do>> [10 October 2021].

²⁵ Cadw, *What We Do*, (2021), <<https://cadw.gov.wales/about-us/what-we-do>> [10 October 2021].

²⁶ Cadw, *What We Do*, (2021), <<https://cadw.gov.wales/about-us/what-we-do>> [10 October 2021].

²⁷ Cadw, *Fusion*, (2021), <<https://cadw.gov.wales/about-us/partnerships/fusion>> [11 October 2021].

²⁸ Cadw, *What We Do*, (2021), <<https://cadw.gov.wales/about-us/what-we-do>> [10 October 2021].

²⁹ Cadw, *What We Do*, (2021), <<https://cadw.gov.wales/about-us/what-we-do>> [10 October 2021].

³⁰ Cadw, *What We Do*, (2021), <<https://cadw.gov.wales/about-us/what-we-do>> [10 October 2021].

³¹ Cadw, *What We Do*, (2021), <<https://cadw.gov.wales/about-us/what-we-do>> [10 October 2021].

³² Cadw, *Who We Are*, (2021), <<https://cadw.gov.wales/about-us/what-we-do/who-we-are>> [11 October 2021].

statutory advisory service for planning applications, ecclesiastical exemptions, and listed building consents as well as, advise owners of scheduled monuments on how to protect it and guide them through consent processes.³³ This team also keeps surveys of listed building that are at risk of damage and offer advice and help to those who wish to contribute to improving their condition.³⁴ The Historic Environment Team offer grants to those who wish to conserve monuments and historic settings.³⁵ These grants come from the Welsh Archaeological Trust and other conservation bodies such as Friends of Friendless Churches and Addoldai Cymru, which is designed for sites that are of national importance on Cof Cymru — the National Historic Assets of Wales.³⁶ The team aim to identify the impacts of climate change on certain historic sites and what is the best way to adapt to them while promoting and supporting those training in conservation skills.³⁷ Cadw also work with their partnership to help community programmes of actively involved in heritage preservation.³⁸

Wales's cultural heritage can be physically manifested through historic sites such as castles and forts.³⁹ As a nation, the centre of Wales's cultural identity is historic environments and rich heritage.⁴⁰ From the past, it can show us what stories and events that have created the culture and identity in Wales.

Cadw support five smaller projects across Wales including:

1. *The Four Little Pigs of Blaenavon*, which is based on a story written by Year One pupils from Blaenavon Heritage VC Primary School.⁴¹ Cadw's Lifelong Learning Team, Literature Wales, Groundwork Wales, and Torfaen County Borough Council with funding from Communities First, have helped promoted this book and story.⁴² This book by the young children is based off their local area's history. This promotes the education of young people and getting them involved with their own heritage.
2. *Cipio'r Castell: Brwydr Slam* is a project at Caerphilly Castle that is actively supported by the community and school engagement it receives.⁴³ A large amount of support comes from Theatr Genedlaethol Cymru and its production of Shakespeare's

³³ Cadw, *Who We Are*, (2021), <<https://cadw.gov.wales/about-us/what-we-do/who-we-are>> [11 October 2021].

³⁴ Cadw, *Who We Are*, (2021), <<https://cadw.gov.wales/about-us/what-we-do/who-we-are>> [11 October 2021].

³⁵ Cadw, *Who We Are*, (2021), <<https://cadw.gov.wales/about-us/what-we-do/who-we-are>> [11 October 2021].

³⁶ Cadw, *Who We Are*, (2021), <<https://cadw.gov.wales/about-us/what-we-do/who-we-are>> [11 October 2021].

³⁷ Cadw, *Who We Are*, (2021), <<https://cadw.gov.wales/about-us/what-we-do/who-we-are>> [11 October 2021].

³⁸ Cadw, *Who We Are*, (2021), <<https://cadw.gov.wales/about-us/what-we-do/who-we-are>> [11 October 2021].

³⁹ Cadw, *Our Priorities*, (2021), <<https://cadw.gov.wales/about-us/what-we-do/our-priorities>> [12 October 2021].

⁴⁰ Cadw, *Our Priorities*, (2021), <<https://cadw.gov.wales/about-us/what-we-do/our-priorities>> [12 October 2021].

⁴¹ Cadw, *Four Little Pigs of Blaenavon*, (2021), <<https://cadw.gov.wales/about/projects-research/projects/four-little-pigs-blaenavon>> [12 October 2021].

⁴² Cadw, *Four Little Pigs of Blaenavon*, (2021), <<https://cadw.gov.wales/about/projects-research/projects/four-little-pigs-blaenavon>> [12 October 2021].

⁴³ Cadw, *Cipior Castell Brwydr Slam*, (2017), <<https://cadw.gov.wales/about/projects-research/projects/cipior-castell-brwydr-slam-project-caerphilly-castle>> [12 October 2021].

Macbeth.⁴⁴ This is a project of three Welsh-medium secondary schools coming together to participate in slam poetry with the theme of Macbeth.⁴⁵ The project helps educate children and brings them into the community setting, while contributing to the development of their communication and literary skills.

3. *It all 'stacks up' at the Castell Coch* is a project in Cardiff, where a decision was made to perform work on the castle to conserve.⁴⁶ Although this decision included putting scaffolding up on the castle it was necessary to protect the castle, as water was seeping through the floors and walls.⁴⁷ The process to fix the establishment used a less invasive method to conserve the building.⁴⁸ Castell Coch is a huge part of Welsh history and culture, meaning that this project is a very important one in order to protect and keep Welsh heritage.
4. *Llanmelin Wood Hillfort Excavations* is an archaeological community project that began as a way to learn and understand how people in the past lived in Llanmelin.⁴⁹ It was found that there were five trenches, one on the inner bank of the main enclosure, one by the entrance and three focused on areas inside the main enclosure.⁵⁰ Within these, there was pottery from both the Iron Age and Roman, as well as animal remains and bones.⁵¹ This is huge for a community, as it provides them with answers about their heritage and gets people interested in history that they all share and may get involved with.
5. *Perceiving the Past: Basingwerk Abby*, which is aimed to empower Cadw volunteers to develop and improve both new and previous skills they hold.⁵² This project focuses on the health and well-being for all. The project is also partnered with the National Library of Wales, the National Museums Wales, and Flintshire Archives to develop the educational resources for teachers and school children in the community.⁵³ The Cadw Lifelong Learning team also did this with Holywell and its community, resulting in the winning of the British Museum Volunteer March Award for the Welsh region.⁵⁴ This demonstrates the success of community heritage

⁴⁴ Cadw, *Cipior Castell Brwydr Slam*, (2017), <<https://cadw.gov.wales/about/projects-research/projects/cipior-castell-brwydr-slam-project-caerphilly-castle>> [12 October 2021].

⁴⁵ Cadw, *Cipior Castell Brwydr Slam*, (2017), <<https://cadw.gov.wales/about/projects-research/projects/cipior-castell-brwydr-slam-project-caerphilly-castle>> [12 October 2021].

⁴⁶ Cadw, *It All Stacks Castell Coch*, (2021), <<https://cadw.gov.wales/about/projects-research/projects/it-all-stacks-castell-coch>> [12 October 2021].

⁴⁷ Cadw, *It All Stacks Castell Coch*, (2021), <<https://cadw.gov.wales/about/projects-research/projects/it-all-stacks-castell-coch>> [12 October 2021].

⁴⁸ Cadw, *It All Stacks Castell Coch*, (2021), <<https://cadw.gov.wales/about/projects-research/projects/it-all-stacks-castell-coch>> [12 October 2021].

⁴⁹ Cadw, *Llanmelin Wood Hillfort Excavation*, (2012), <<https://cadw.gov.wales/about/projects-research/projects/llanmelin-wood-hillfort-excavations>> [13 October 2021].

⁵⁰ Cadw, *Llanmelin Wood Hillfort Excavation*, (2012), <<https://cadw.gov.wales/about/projects-research/projects/llanmelin-wood-hillfort-excavations>> [13 October 2021].

⁵¹ Cadw, *Llanmelin Wood Hillfort Excavation*, (2012), <<https://cadw.gov.wales/about/projects-research/projects/llanmelin-wood-hillfort-excavations>> [13 October 2021].

⁵² Cadw, *Perceiving the Past: Basingwerk Abbey*, (2018), <<https://cadw.gov.wales/about/projects-research/projects/perceiving-past-basingwerk-abbey>> [13 October 2021].

⁵³ Cadw, *Perceiving the Past: Basingwerk Abbey*, (2018), <<https://cadw.gov.wales/about/projects-research/projects/perceiving-past-basingwerk-abbey>> [13 October 2021].

⁵⁴ Cadw, *Perceiving the Past: Basingwerk Abbey*, (2018), <<https://cadw.gov.wales/about/projects-research/projects/perceiving-past-basingwerk-abbey>> [13 October 2021].

projects and that projects such as this can make a large difference, especially in small areas. The element of health in this project also brings people together.

Conclusion

In conclusion, community heritage is about a group of people with something in common and that share a past. This is usually practised in Britain through conservation of historical buildings, sites, and monuments, as well as through organisations, charities, and projects. Community heritage is all around us and can be found in everyday life from football club fans, libraries to schools and museums or churches. Historic sites can expand further than their value to our society. They also contribute to the success of communities, the economy because of tourism, and knowledge by being educated. Community heritage is a very personal and important in everyday life, providing a sense of belonging to many.

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