

Children help to restore Horsham St Faith War Memorial

Early this July, a year six class from Firside Junior School and some of the Eighth in the East team spent a fun sunny two days at Norwich International Airport restoring the previously vandalised Horsham St Faith war memorial that sits adjacent to the entrance of the airport.

The two days were part of a learning week held by Eighth in the East at Firside Junior School.

Learning about the past

The children spent the first half of the week in the classroom learning all about the local impact and significance of the United States Army Air Force in their area, building on their previous knowledge about World War II from their history lessons.

They learnt all about the geographical impact that the airfields had on the area and the difference in culture between the English and the Americans, as well as taking a look at life on the airbase and the artwork that the Americans brought over to England. You can see some of our budding young historians displaying their American-styled paintings of a Flying Eight Ball below.

Later in the week, the students moved on to looking at the importance of War Memorials and they then used what they had learnt during the discussion to create some leaflets for the younger year three students at their school in order to share their newly-acquired knowledge.

This meant that when we informed them of some recent vandalism to the memorial at the airport, they found themselves not only shocked but really passionate to help us with the restoration work.

Restoring the Memorial

They began on Thursday by dividing into teams -as you can see in the gallery above- each carefully choosing an area to restore, and got started by giving their area an energetic and much needed thorough clean-up. Despite it being one of the hottest days of the year, all of the students pitched in with truly impressive enthusiasm!

On Friday morning, Mike Bailey, one of the original designers of the memorial, kindly popped along to talk to the children and regaled them with stories about his own childhood encounters with the Americans during the war. All the children thoroughly enjoyed grilling him about what he used to get up to!

In the afternoon, the clean-up part of the operation gave way to varnishing the memorial bench, painting the RAF and USAAF ensigns, and planting the lavender and American grasses leading up to and surrounding the memorial headstone.

After putting all of the tools away and taking a step back, it became clear the children had given this memorial a whole new lease of life and they deservedly received a lot of praise from those passing by into the terminal!

It was brilliant to see one little boy bring his father back to the memorial after school to look at all the hard work he'd put in.

Overall, the week was a great success for all those involved, and every one ended up learning a lot about both War Memorials, and the impact of the Americans in their area. We simply couldn't have done it without the hard work and determination of the great students at Firside Junior School!

What People Had to Say

Andrew Bell, CEO of Norwich International Airport said about the project;

As part of our commitment to engage with the local community we are pleased to be working with The Eighth in the East on this heritage lottery funded project to restore the war memorial... It is tremendous that local school children of Firside Junior School will be involved with the restoration and will be able to learn about the airport's role in the war.

Stephen Keer, Year Six Teacher, at Firside Junior School expressed before the restoration;

We're really excited about finding out about the American airmen who were stationed in our local area, as well as working on restoring an important local memorial site as part of our World War 2 topic.

Why not flick through the gallery at the top of the page for some pictures of what we all got up to and to see how the memorial looked before and after all the hard work?

Or have a look at some of the great things the EDP had to say about the restoration [here](#)