

## CONFLICT AND COMMUNITY – “Their Past, Your Future”

The Cambridgeshire Young Persons History Award presented on Saturday, May 22<sup>nd</sup> at Toft was the culmination of a project covering the previous two school terms

For over six decades the village of Waterbeach has been “home” to a military establishment; firstly the Royal Air Force and latterly the Army. This has meant that the village school has had a considerable percentage of service children, some staying only a few months. Shops, churches, pubs and other organisations have also been affected by the transitory residents from the Barracks.

It was therefore decided to “bring together” the schools, the museums, and people involved at the various venues. Elly Wright, Education Officer at the Farmland Museum, Denny Abbey, together with Oliver Merrington from the Barracks Museum put together a plan for requesting Lottery Funding to cover the cost of the project. This involved filming and interviewing RAF service men from the Forties and Fifties; and modern-day soldiers there in the twenty-first century. A well-known local artist was employed to organise workshops for Years 5 and 6 to create posters and other artistic material using artefacts from the museums’ collections...showing what life was like in Waterbeach from the beginning of World War 2 to the present day.

The display of art work was put on at the school in December 2009 was followed by a reception for the junior children at the Barracks Museum; led by uniformed soldiers down the High Street, it was a real Red Letter Day for the youngsters especially as they were addressed by the Commanding Officer himself!

In the Spring Term a group of Year 10 students at Cottenham Village College led by their IT teacher, made a film of life in the area “then” and “now”, with the students asking many thought-provoking questions. This, together with the juniors work, was made into a DVD which was launched at the college in May this year with all contributing pupils attending.

Thanks to the Big Lottery Fund and Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, each pupil was given a copy of the DVD. They will enjoy showing relations and friends all that they have learned while studying the village-barracks link, showing what happened/is happening behind the strong fences at the Denny End of the village.

A true Community Project involving people from eight to eighty, which may well inspire budding historians; it is therefore encouraging both to them and the staff involved, that their efforts and work has been truly acknowledged by the Cambridgeshire Association of Local History with this award today

Lorna Delanoy May 2010