



The Thames Heritage Tapestry

A schools arts project celebrating the River Thames



*Managed by The Millennium Tapestry Company
in partnership with the Thames Heritage Trust*

The project

The Thames Heritage Tapestry involves schools along the River Thames. Each school designs and makes a one metre square of textural embroidery to create a tapestry to reflect how the Thames has shaped and influenced the local communities it runs through. The project is designed to support and enrich the national curriculum; it will broaden knowledge of the river and develop a deeper understanding of its significance. The end result will be a multifaceted portrait of the Thames from its source to the estuary through the eyes of the children who live along its banks. *Frankly, totally stunning.*



Some canvases created by schools that have already completed their work

How it works

After consultation with the local education authorities, primary, secondary and special needs schools have and are being selected within each of five Thameside areas defined below.

We send an overall briefing document and individual briefs to each of the schools, asking them to portray one of four broad subjects as they relate to their own section of the river:

- River-linked work activities
- Nature and caring for the environment
- Sport, recreation and leisure activities
- Local history, architecture and heritage

We provide each school with a resource pack comprising carpet canvas and all the yarns, materials and implements needed to complete their metre square. We have held teacher seminars for the schools taking part and we visit schools to help them as necessary.

We mount the finished canvases on wooden frames, so that they can be hung on our dedicated display system (which is modular and highly flexible; it can be either two or three metres high) or using venues' own systems.

We held local exhibitions in Lambeth and Southwark in July and August 2011 and have now embarked on a programme of major exhibitions which will include at least eight free public venues along the Thames. The first show was in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford in January 2012. It is hoped that finally a permanent venue will be found. Otherwise each square can be returned to the school that made it.

Each school is encouraged to take a particular interest in the Thames and in the issues important to the river, its environment, conservation, its historical importance and heritage, and the sports and recreational opportunities it offers. This will serve to raise the River's profile in the schools and their local communities. It will create a heightened interest in the Thames, as a tangible link between all the diverse communities along its banks and an enduring legacy of their lives.

Local education authorities along the Thames

There are thirty-two riparian local education authorities and further authorities almost on the River. We are aiming for 240 schools in these authorities to take part in the project, and already more than 200 are signed up. The project is as inclusive as possible, and it is important that we have encouraged schools from urban, suburban, country town and rural areas to take part.

The authorities are, by area:

Upper Thames: Gloucestershire, Wiltshire, Swindon, Oxfordshire (except SE), West Berkshire;

Middle Thames: Reading, Wokingham, SE Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Windsor and Maidenhead, Slough, Surrey, Kingston upon Thames;

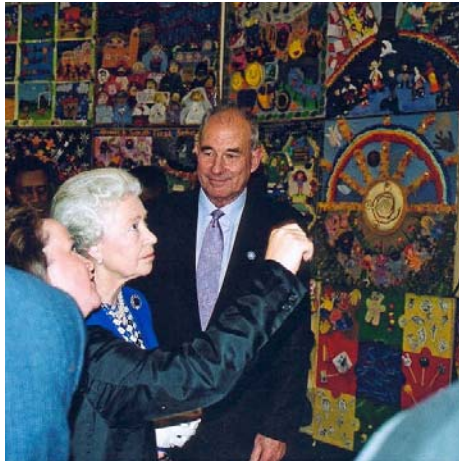
Upper Tideway: Richmond upon Thames, Hounslow, Hammersmith and Fulham, Kensington and Chelsea, Wandsworth;

Central Tideway: Westminster, Lambeth, Southwark, City of London, Tower Hamlets, Lewisham, Newham, Greenwich;

Estuary: Barking and Dagenham, Havering, Bexley, Thurrock, Kent, Essex, Southend-on-Sea, Medway.

Who we are and what we do

The Millennium Tapestry Company is a not-for-profit organization running collaborative arts projects for schools that support and enrich the national curriculum. The projects' primary outcomes are artworks which often constitute



The Queen at displays of the Millennium...



...and Golden Tapestries

enduring legacies of events or anniversaries; but they are also designed to help children learn about issues like caring for the environment, recycling and reducing energy consumption, accepting cultural differences as a means of promoting social cohesion and global citizenship and understanding disability.

Children are encouraged to take pride in their local area and its history. Schools form or reinforce links with their wider communities which endure beyond the projects. Schools from very different communities take part and special schools are able to contribute on a level playing field with other schools.



The Thames Heritage Trust was formed in 1979 and now provides grants for improving leisure, education and cultural facilities to stimulate use and interest in the non-tidal River Thames. Its Annual Award recognises volunteer organisations involving young people in *River-linked Activities, Wildlife and Pollution, Recreation and Leisure and Local History*. The Thames Heritage Tapestry is a collaborative initiative that meets the objectives of the Thames Heritage Trust.



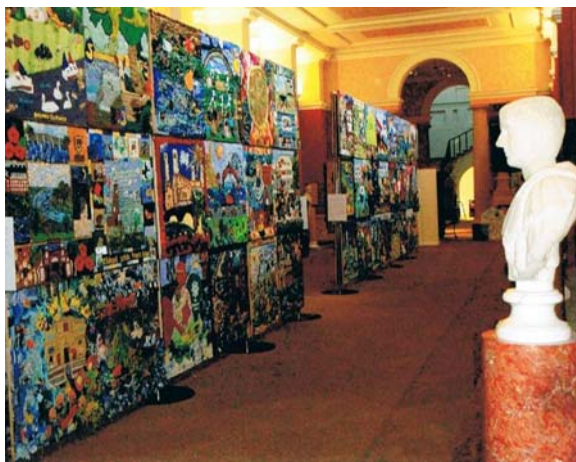
The London 2012 Cultural Olympiad

We are proud and delighted that the Thames Heritage Tapestry has been awarded the Inspire Mark by the London Organising Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games, which confers on the project official recognition as a part of the London 2012 Cultural Olympiad celebrations and allows us to take advantage of the communications support offered.

Timing

Resource packs being sent to schools
Major exhibitions

ongoing
from January 2012



The exhibition in the Randolph Sculpture Gallery in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford

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The project is backed by the Prince Philip Trust, River Thames Society, BBOWT (Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust) and the Environment Trust for Richmond upon Thames.

