



Battlefields Trust members visit battle site.

PART FIVE

Spreading the word



The Magna Carta Armoury





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Sharing your findings on Magna Carta and the local story is part of the Magna Carta 800th legacy. Creating events or activities that educate and inform your local community are all things that will help to raise awareness of that period of history and how the ideals of Magna Carta connect to today.

If you are organising anything do think about Health and Safety – The Battlefields Trust can help with further advice but always consider:

- Doing a Rick Assessment
- Briefing people before an event – especially before embarking on a trail.

Event ideas and activities that highlight the themes of Magna Carta

Local talks

Lots of organisations like to have speakers – Historical societies, The Women's Institute, U3A, amenity societies and local schools etc. One of the most successful ways therefore of informing others about the local history of their area is to create a talk or presentation about Magna Carta in your area.

Creating a talk:

- These days most groups like to have a visual images to accompany a talk, therefore a good starting point for putting something together is to collect images of local sites and historic images that will illustrate the places and people that you plan to talk about.
- Next use the information time line or mind map to explore the factual evidence that you have for your talk.
- A suitable length for a talk is around 40 – 45 minutes and then be prepared to answer questions.
- The next step is to work out what your story is – is your presentation just about the local historic connections to Magna Carta; the story of how you researched and discovered the local connections; or is it about how your local area's history fits into the wider narrative of the history of the Magna Carta?
- You may want to create a variety of elements or themes for your talk – if so ensure that the connections or sections are clear, don't just jump around.
- Try and strike a balance between some historical information, but not so much that it doesn't allow for the local dimension to be explored and explained.
- On a sheet of paper create a plan for your presentation with clear single headings – use that as a plan for putting your talk together.

- Select images that support each of your headings or factual points.
- If you are creating a power point presentation then between 12 and 20 images/slides will be about right.
- Practice your presentation to ensure that you have got the length right.

Creating an education trail for the whole community

Once you have established the local history of the Magna Carta in your area it might be possible to create an education trail. An educational trail is an opportunity for people to learn about the history of something by following a route around an area, ideally one they can do on foot. The benefits of an education trail include: people are automatically introduced to the history in their area as they visit it and see it; it can attract a different audience to those that attend static talks; it can work for a variety of age groups, including family groups; it can allow partnerships to be created by connecting different buildings and areas into a single story.

There are two ways that an educational trail can be easily devised and both can be used in

any local area, they are: a walk led by a guide (volunteer) and, or one that is self-guided - can be followed using printed (online) material.

Putting a trail together

- Be realistic and clear about distances – a couple of miles is usually enough for most people. On the other hand some people are looking for longer walks, that are more detailed, just be clear.
- Be realistic about times – give approximates so that people know how much time it will take up.
- Use a map when plotting the trail and provide a map for any printed material.
- Try and ensure that any speaking is done away from busy roads.
- Are there toilets on the route?
- For self-guided trails ensure that explanations for each site on the trail are clear about what the connection to the past is.
- Use crossings for getting across roads.
- Check if any of the trail cuts across private land – will permission be needed?
- It is better to have a trail that makes sense for walking rather than simply for chronology.
- Include a timeline for people to look at.
- If it is a guided tour keep the numbers manageable, so that everyone can hear.



Launching the Magna Carta Trails (second from left, Sir Robert Worcester, MC 800th Committee Chairman; second from right, Edward Dawson, MC 800th Project Director). Photo courtesy of the Magna Carta 800th Committee.

- Don't put a trail together and create an audience for it. Think about the audience BEFORE creating the trail. You might, for example want to create something for people with mobility issues and that would be a very different trail to one for, say sixth-formers.
- The Battlefields trust has a policy that to always expressly ask for a donation from walk participants - a minimum of £5 - this raises funds and also offers an incentive to join as members normally go on the walks for nothing (though many make a contribution anyway).
- Do a risk assessment. Sounds difficult but it isn't. All it really involves is writing down the things you ought to have thought about anyway. The Battlefields Trust can provide examples.

Once you have created your trail then you need to consider advertising it or creating audiences for it.

The Battlefields trust has a number of people who are very experienced in putting trails together and people shouldn't hesitate to contact regional coordinators to ask for more advice.

Creating an event

Consider the following:

- What type of event do you want to put on?
- Can it combine a number of elements e.g. talks, films, quiz?
- How many people are there to help you?
- Do you need to rent a venue or can someone donate a space?
- Do you need to fund your event – publicity, room hire etc. (there is advice on costing and writing a budget in Section 8)
- The time and day of your event will affect the audience – e.g. evenings are not good for families. Time of year may also be important due to weather influences.
- Give yourself plenty of time to plan and organise – a couple of months at least.
- Is there another organisation locally that you could share an event with?
- What outcomes do you want from the event?
- Is there anyone in your group who has specialist skills that they can use e.g. PR, IT
- Will you need volunteers to help at the event and does everyone know what will be expected of them?

Chainsaw sculptures of knights in Northampton.
Photo courtesy of Michael Ingram.



Contacting the local media

It is helpful to contact the local media to promote your activities or simply to let them know about your local research.

Before you contact the media consider the following

- What is it you want them to know?
- Who do you want the media to inform about something – e.g. an audience for a talk?
- Be clear what you are telling them – prepare your information document?
- Can you prove and provide evidence for your story?
- Be absolutely clear why it is a local story
- Why are you telling them this information now?

Tips

- Try and tie your events into a specific anniversary
- Work with others to tie your events into a wider series of events e.g. local history month (held in May), a local series organised by your local council
- Many groups do not pay for speakers, but they will provide expense – make sure any costs are agreed in advance.
- If you are looking for more volunteers or members of your group then always bring recruiting material to an event or walk. People who have just had a good time are particularly likely to sign up.

