

Example of a Story Mat Design Plan

An example of an actual mid-stage story mat design plan...

This is a working document - I need your comments – so please add them to this, ideally in another colour, so I can spot them. Anything else that you want put in ? I will be at the training day on the 14th Dec and we can have further discussions then.

I spent a couple of hours in the museum before meeting with Dorothy and showing her my work so far. That was a good thing to do as it sparked off decisions about what she wanted on their mat. Ideas are not finalised and are still being developed. I keep my pieces of work as individual and small as possible, for as long as possible to maintain flexibility in the design of your mat for as long as possible. Some of this report may be stating the obvious to you, but I will be using it as the basis for my work, so I've mentioned things from your museum and sources of information that I will be using in the future. Please add anything that I have missed.

I was able to have a close look around the Museum and study the geology collection. I took lots of photos. Carl has recommended a book, The geology of Oxfordshire by Philip Powell 01/10/2005 , Dovecote Press, ISBN 9781904349198 He is currently borrowing this from Wantage library. It might be out of print as I've not found it available anywhere. I have Carl's contact details and he is happy to send me information from it if necessary. I am specifically looking for the details of the layers of rock /anticlines and synclines and faulting around Wantage. (I have contacted the Oxfordshire Geologist Trust to see if they can help me with this.)

The cross section running by the stairs as you enter the museum and up in the discovery section will be good for the rock layers. This is some inclined layers of rock and doesn't have any anticline/syncline or faulting in it. (I will base a flat panel on this and some 'liftable' layers of rock – likened to layers of bedclothes – good to show order of laying down of rocks, as per Sedgwick mat. (I am indicating the geological ages of the rocks on the Hampshire mat – Dorothy wasn't sure about this. Have a look at that mat on the training day, and you can decided later).

Seeing the Painshill mat in the auditorium led to a reduction of the mat's size – to a maximum of 2m long and ~1.3m tall. Mat to be only used indoors, so backing doesn't have to be waterproof. Backing to be 'theatrically neutral' – plain grey or green. Storage space will require mat to be folded, so it will be folded more than the Painshill mat. Where there are folds I can only put minimal texture, so things will be placed relatively to each other and not to scale. Carrying straps required. No buttons and beads, unless under fabric – to give texture (this might work well for corals).

Things to include on mat:

Concentration on local area, with a separate section to cover some general geology points eg igneous, metamorphic and sedimentary rocks. (volcanoes and panels along with handling samples). This will be demarcated in some way from the main area of the mat.

Ridgeway – this needs to much more utilitarian than the Downs on the Painshill mat. It was used to drove sheep/ for transport/armies. It is rutted - possibly couch down thick

wool threads to represent the ruts. Also the ridgeway can dry out in the summer and become very cracked. Need paths down into the valley – eg. one used to take sheep to market in Wantage. Others connect to Icknield Way, which connects the spring line villages in the valley.

Landmarks along Ridgeway:

Waylands Smithy – long barrow-sarsen stones – trees all around it

Uffington White Horse and manger

Dragon Hill – raise up this bit. area of white chalk on top and something to represent the dragon – eg scales, claws, tail – undecided yet

Uffington Castle – hillfort with ring of raised ramparts (also Rams Hill?)

Letcombe or Segsbury castle fort

Blowing Stone (now at Kingston Lyle) – connected with The Battle of Ashdown – where there was a single sarsen stone by a lone thorn tree.

Need to have a handling sample to represent the iron age.

Need to represent sheep by the Ridgeway - I have some sheepskin and Dorothy like the idea of having a pocket lined with sheepskin. Anything else you would like for the sheep?

Springs along valley at base of the chalk. Have these under flaps and developing into brooks along the valley and eventually meeting Letcombe Brook at Wantage. Unique flora and fauna of the chalk streams – done some watercress and possibly have a white clawed crayfish. Dorothy wanted one special spring connected with a story – when a cart and horse goes into a spring and ends up in the underworld – so will have a flap over the spring as usual, but the spring will lift up too and just be plain black below. Can you give me some idea where you would like this spring to be?

Types of landscapes:

Downland – chalk, which is steep-sided in to the valley. Specialised flora (scabious) and fauna (chalkhill blue butterfly) already selected by Dorothy.

Fertile area on the Greensand, which produces nutrients, so get orchards and cherries here – do a bunch of cherries, which will probably go under a flap (cherry baskets in the museum).

Want to have specialised flora and fauna of the valley to – contrasting with the Downland.

Water meadows on the Oxford Clay – snake's head fritillary(maybe)

Types of rock in local area.

This is an important element of the mat and I will be showing how the local materials have been used as building materials, by sewing panels representing walls:

Chalk – capping stones on the top of walls/ thatch overhanging walls of buildings and stone base to keep water out of the bottom of the chalk wall.

Clay turned into bricks - I have a good piece of fabric for this which Dorothy liked.

Sarsen Stones – and possibly a holey one too as per your auditorium.

Knapped and unknapped flint. Sometimes used in conjunction with other expensive materials eg brick/stone for cornerstones, framing and decoration.

(Diversity in Stone in the North Wessex Downs leaflet from the Oxfordshire Geology Trust) a good source for information on this).

Also, the use of none-local stone for expensive buildings eg oolitic limestone used for St

Peter and St Paul Church - piece of felt representing this with raised circular areas in it and some individual ooliths. There will be a handling sample as well.

Fossils of local area (I've taken lots of photos of these, and have your leaflet about fossils which have very clear illustrations):

In auditorium:

Jurassic ammonites and belemnites from Oxford Clay

Ammonites and Sea urchins from the Corallian limestone

Vertebra from ichthyosaur – Kimmeridge Clay near Abingdon

Lower Greensand – Faringdon bed sponge gravels. These are highly textured sponges and some wavy lines of manipulated fabrics would work well here.

Ammonite with mother of pearl and pyrites from Kimmeridge clay at Drayton

Cretaceous teeth:

lower chalk block with probably ichthyosaur tooth , from Childrey

Crocodile tooth from Faringdon sponge gravels

Mosasaur tooth (marine lizard) from Childrey

In discovery area:

ammonites and belemnites from Oxford clay

Chalk fossils – ammonites, echinoids, shell, teeth – Childrey pit

Faringdon sponge gravels – oyster shell from Wicklesham Quarry, Faringdon (think that this could make a beautiful embroidery)

Gault and Kimmeridge clays – Drayton pits

Lower Greensand- Fullers Earth – Baulking Pit

Corallian fossils – corals and sponges (Stanford in the Vale)

Dry Sanford Pit – Nature Reserve with lots of Corallian fossils

http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/conservation/geodiversity/englands/sites/local_ID71.aspx

<http://www.bbwt.org.uk/reserves/dry-sandford-pit>