

HERITAGE AND HISTORY IN PRACTICE

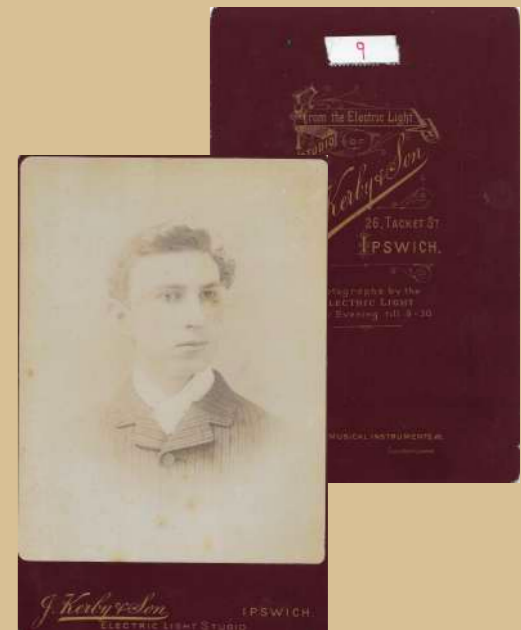
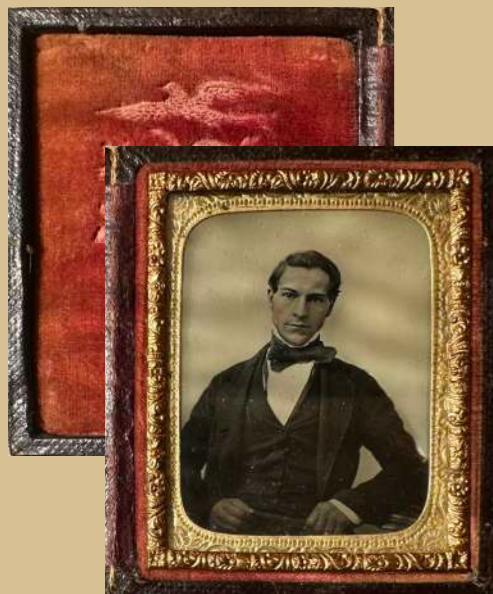
Workshop 4: Storytelling and Audience Engagement

29th April 2026

Dr Brandon Reece Taylorian

Research Fellow at the University of Lancashire

brtaylorian@lancashire.ac.uk



Institute of
Creativity,
Communities
& Culture



UK Research
and Innovation

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Today we will explore:
 - What makes a good public history story
 - How to write short captions
 - How to balance historical accuracy and accessibility
 - How to think about the audience for your output
- By the end of today's workshop, you will have sat down with me one-to-one to review how your output is shaping up.

WHAT I HAVE BEEN UP TO

- Promotion of the Exhibition Launch has begun! I have printed posters and flyers for the Exhibition Launch. Please hand these out to your friends and family and local histories societies.
- I have been handing these out to The Harris, around the university, Lancashire Archives and have also been inviting university staff and senior management to the event on 24th June.



Exhibitions Scheduled for 24th June and throughout July 2026:

- Wartime stories
- Victorian schools and culture
- Local histories of Preston
- Stories of religious conversion
- Windrush generation and descendants
- Histories of industry
- Migration stories
- British imperial histories
- Antique photographs
- Family history research methods
- Historical crimes
- Social histories across Lancashire
- Family life during the Interwar period

WHAT I HAVE BEEN UP TO

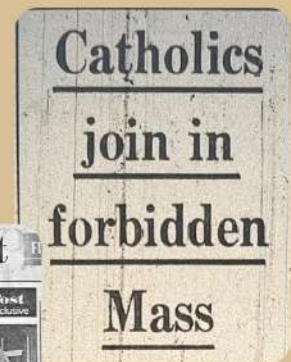
- I am developing sneak peeks to help promote the exhibition. These will be published in Facebook Preston history groups.
- If you would like a sneak peek for your output, please send me 5 relevant photographs or newspaper articles and the final title of your output.

HERITAGE AND HISTORY IN PRACTICE



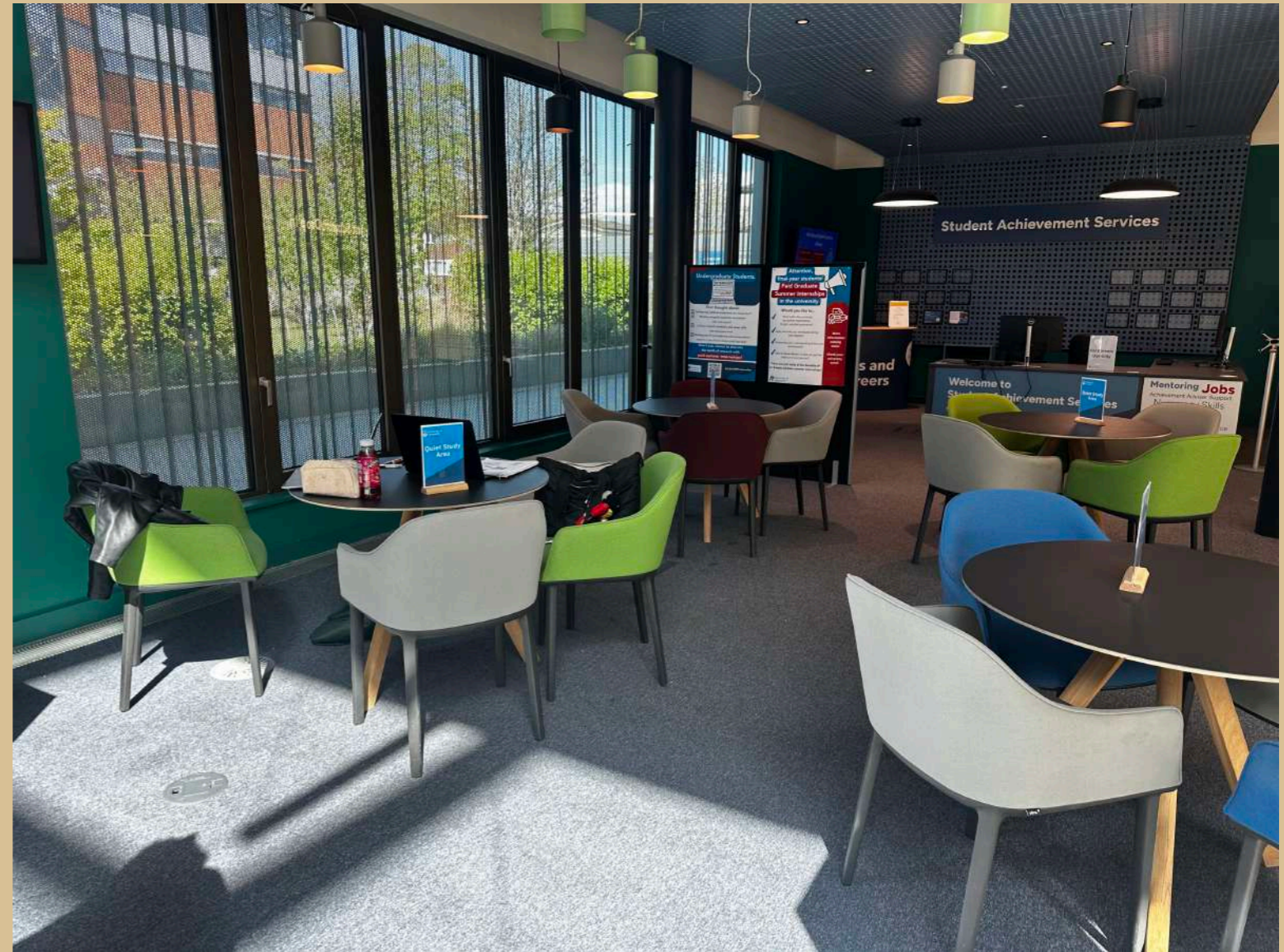
EXHIBITION SNEAK PEEK – 24th JUNE AT STUDENT CENTRE, PR1 7DP

REBEL CATHOLICS OPEN THE LEYLAND LATIN MASS CENTRE, 1974–1977



DISCOVER WHY AN ISOLATED HOUSE ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF LEYLAND TURNED INTO A CENTRE OF CATHOLIC DISSENT DURING THE 1970s AT THE UNIVERSITY OF LANCASHIRE STUDENT CENTRE, PRESTON

OUR EXHIBITION SPACE



FURTHER TO-DO LIST

- **Podcast Participation Sheet:** We still have some spaces left to participate in a podcast episode. Please fill in the sheet if you are happy to participate. We have Monday 13th July and Thursday 23rd July available (11am to 3pm) in the Media Factory Podcast Studio. I will meet you outside the Media Factory.
- Complete the **Title Production Sheet** and hand in to me.
- Complete the **Caption Production Sheet** and hand in to me.
- Please give me any notes you have made that you no longer need so I can place them into the co-researcher folder.

TURNING YOUR HERITAGE INTO PUBLIC STORIES

**WHAT DO YOU THINK
MAKES A GOOD ‘PUBLIC
HISTORY’ STORY?**

WHAT MAKES A GOOD 'PUBLIC HISTORY' STORY?

- A strong public history story should:
 - Be clear and easy to understand
 - Focus on people and experiences
 - Explain why the material matters historically
 - Connect a personal story to a wider historical context
- Remember: the goal is to help audiences **learn something about the past.**

FROM HERITAGE MATERIAL TO STORY

- Your material might start as a personal object or photograph. Your task is to explain:
 - What the material is
 - Where it comes from
 - What it tells us about the past
 - Why it matters historically
- This process turns family heritage into public history.

CAPTION-WRITING

- Captions help audiences understand what they are looking at. A good caption should include:
 - What the item is
 - Who appears in it (if known)
 - When it was created (or approximate date)
 - Where it comes from
- Example of a short caption: "Portrait of John Smith and Mary Smith, likely taken in Lancashire around 1860. The ambrotype photograph reflects the growing popularity of studio portraiture in the mid-nineteenth century."

WRITING INTERPRETIVE TEXT

- Interpretive text explains why the material is historically important. Instead of only describing the object, explain:
 - What it reveals about society
 - What historians can learn from it
 - How it connects to wider history
- Example: "This photograph reflects the importance of family portraiture in Victorian society. Studio photographs allowed families to preserve their identity and social status at a time when photography was becoming more accessible."

BALANCING ACCURACY AND ACCESSIBILITY

- Public history writing should be:
 - Historically accurate
 - Clear and concise
 - Accessible to non-specialists
- Avoid: academic jargon, overly complex sentences, assuming specialist knowledge.
- Your audience may include visitors with no historical background.

THINKING ABOUT YOUR AUDIENCE

- When writing your text, ask yourself:
 - Who will read this?
 - What do they need to understand the material?
 - What might they find interesting or surprising?
- Your audience will include members of the public, local history enthusiasts, students and families.

**ANY QUESTIONS OR
COMMENTS SO FAR?**

WRITING YOUR EXHIBITION CAPTION





TASK: WRITE YOUR CAPTION

- Using the **Caption Production Sheet** in front of you, please draft a caption to go beside your exhibited material. Please return the sheet to me once you have completed the caption.
- Please follow the template for captions:
 - Title (including place and date), explain what the item shows, explain what it tells us about the past and indicate where the material comes from. Aim for between 50 to 100 words.

TASK: PLANNING YOUR CAPTION

- Please now begin filling in the **Caption Production Sheet** in front of you.
- Take a few minutes to consider the questions.
- Have a go at drafting a caption for your output and then hand in this worksheet to me.

HERITAGE AND HISTORY IN PRACTICE




  **CAPTION PRODUCTION SHEET**  

What is the material/story? Who is featured? Where and when was it created/take place?

Historical context (what other relevant events occurred during the period?)

What does this item help us understand about the past? Main insights?

Now draft your caption (50–100 words):

 UK Research and Innovation  University of Lancashire 

ACTIVITY: PEER DISCUSSION

- Share your draft caption with another co-researcher. Discuss:
 - Is the caption clear?
 - Is the historical context understandable?
 - What could be improved?
- This feedback will help strengthen your narrative.

IMPROVING YOUR STORY

- As you revise your text, consider:
 - Can any sentences be simplified? Think about your word choice.
 - Have you clearly explained the historical significance?
 - Does the story connect personal heritage with wider history?
- Good interpretation helps audiences **see the past in a new way.**

**10 MINUTES BREAK
FOR REFRESHMENTS**

THINKING ABOUT YOUR AUDIENCE

**WHO WILL OUR
AUDIENCE BE AT THE
EXHIBITION?**

**WHAT MAIN MESSAGE
MIGHT WE WANT TO SHARE
WITH OUR AUDIENCE?**

ONE-TO-ONE SUPPORT WITH OUTPUT

TASK: ENGAGING YOUR AUDIENCE

- Using the **Audience Engagement Sheet** in front of you, think about what central message you want someone to take away after viewing your output.
- Also consider:
 - What might surprise them?
 - What might they learn?
 - What questions might your output prompt for them?

HERITAGE AND HISTORY IN PRACTICE




AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT SHEET

Who is your audience?

What do you want visitors to the exhibition to learn from your output?

What might surprise them about your output?

What questions might visitors ask after seeing your output?

NEXT STEPS

- In the next workshop we will learn:
 - Exhibition design
 - Visual layout
 - Selecting images and text
 - Developing display materials (please let me know what materials you feel you will need for your displays)
- Your caption text will become part of your **exhibition output**.



Thank you for listening

Next workshop: 13th May

Any questions in the meantime? Email me:

brtaylorian@lancashire.ac.uk

