

# Putting visitors in the story: Escape from the Tower

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- Why put visitors in the story?
- Why a game?
- Case study
- Evaluation
- Conclusions

## Putting visitors in the story

- Our aim is to help everyone explore the story of how monarchs and people have shaped society, in some of the greatest palaces ever built.
- Many ways to help visitors explore stories:
  - Text & images
  - Audio guides
  - Room re-creation
  - Live interpretation
  - AV & sound
  - Interactives
- Let visitor make their own discoveries, choose own adventure, become immersed in story

## Why a game?

- Visitor becomes active participant in stories
- Family focused Prisoners of the Tower project open June 2007
- Real historical escape stories, create game with Tower as board
- HP Labs approach summer 2006
  - Testing new Mediascape software
  - Tower as a lab for HP technology
  - HP Labs joint project allowed HRP to pilot gaming



## Designing Escape from the Tower

Fast-track – co-design and implementation project

- HP Labs Mediascape implementation
- HRP content creation
- 2 day Workshop in July : agreed game idea, prototyped a complete game scenario
- Defined a script structure and overall design
- Follow up workshop in September
- Live trial in October: 200 participants

# Technology



- Sound, images, video placed virtually around site using Mediascape authoring toolkit
- Trial used iPAQ & headphones with GPS cards & radio receivers
- GPS triggers
- Radio pingers inside towers
- Yeoman Warder radio pingers





# Escape from the Tower

- 6 missions to help prisoners escape
- Mix real & virtual
  - “Meet” prisoners where they were held
  - Maps
  - Follow clues e.g. find ropes, barrels, avoid Yeoman Warders
  - Answer questions
- Win price on your head, avoid years in prison
- Content produced in house – total budget <£800!



## Audio content

- 80/20 audio/visual encourages visitors to look at the physical site not screen
- Prisoners speak to you in first person & involve you directly
- HRP staff used as actors
- Sound recorded with cheap mic & dictaphone!

# Visual content

- Simple, legible (sunlight & design cost)



PRICE ON HEAD:  
YEARS IN PRISON:

What gift will you choose?



**5  
YEARS!**

## Stories

- Six real stories chosen based on interest, location & appeal
  - Ranulf Flambard – Bishop of Durham, first prisoner of the tower, escaped by getting guards drunk, knotting sheets and climbing out of the original tower
  - Alice Tankerville – escaped by seducing a guard – later caught
  - Polar Bear – a present from the King of Norway – was taken to the Thames each day to fish for salmon
  - Lord Nithsdale – escapes dressed up in his wifes clothes
  - Henry Laurens – An American who is released in exchange for the Amercians freeing Lord Cornwallis of England
  - John Gerrard – a Jesuit priest who escapes by sliding down a rope from the Tower out to a boat on the Thames

# Polar Bear

- Meet polar bear & bear keeper at Bear House
- Agree to help the bear get out
- Go to South Lawn to meet Sheriffs and ask them for muzzle & chain
- Go to Wardrobe Tower to collect muzzle & chain
- Answer quiz
- Take muzzle & chain back to bear keeper
- Polar bear is very grateful!
- You win £5000 price on your head

What does the polar bear eat?



**SALMON**



**CARP**



**PRAWNS**

## What worked?

- Actively helping prisoners escape
  - *"Freeing the prisoners (polar bear)"*
- Mixing real & virtual e.g. Yeoman Warders
  - *"I liked it when the yodon yarders chased me"*
- Exploring the Tower
  - *"You learn more about the Tower. Makes it more interesting for children - my son loved it and wants to do it again."*
- Learning about the prisoners
  - *"in a fun way, not like a boring lecture"*
- Provoked group discussions about stories
- Interactive map

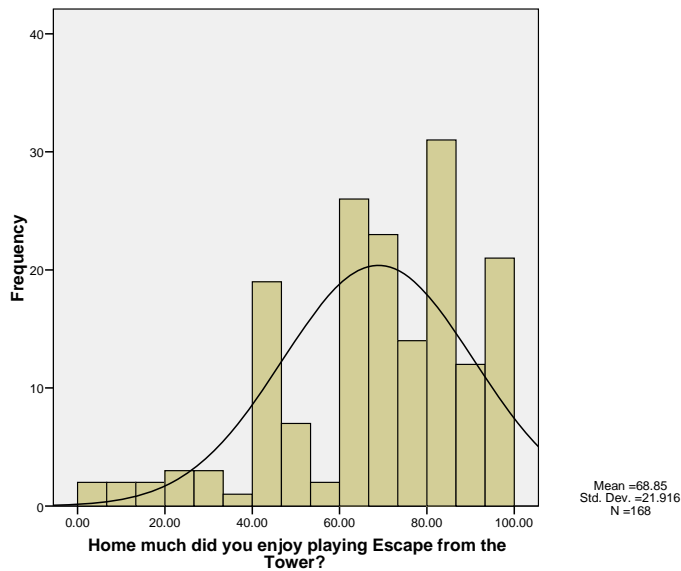


## What didn't work?

- Children complained 45mins too short
  - *"Do NOT have a time limite!"*
- GPS reliability e.g. slipping several metres
  - *"Satellites", "The sensors"*
- 26yrs+ age group didn't like *"walking back and forth"*
- Some groups wanted to compete, others wanted synchronised experience
  - *"Maybe one set with several pairs of headphones"*
- Requests to cover more of the site
  - *"Adventure could take you all around the tower - inside and out"*

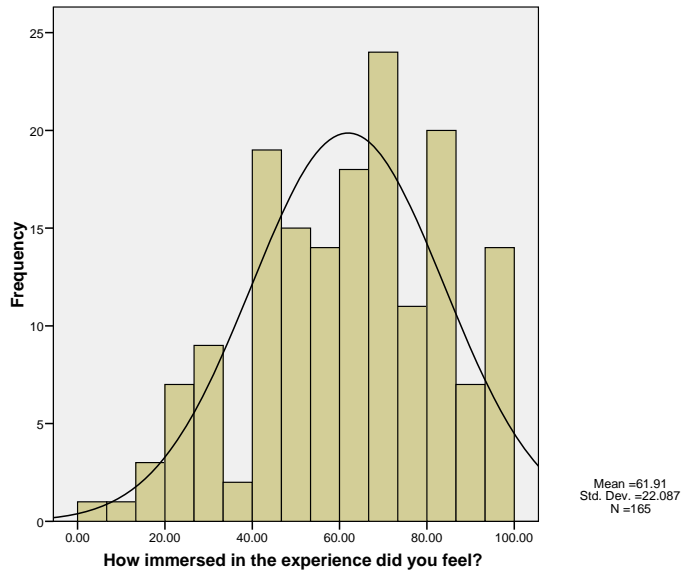


# Enjoyment



- Mean score 69
- No equipment problems 74
- Equipment problems 66
- No difference between age groups or gender
- *"It was great fun for the kids."*
- No correlation between enjoyment & getting caught
- *"Enjoyed watching the kids get excited and running away from warders"*
- *"The way you got kort by the gades [guards] and you had to make your own desichions!"*

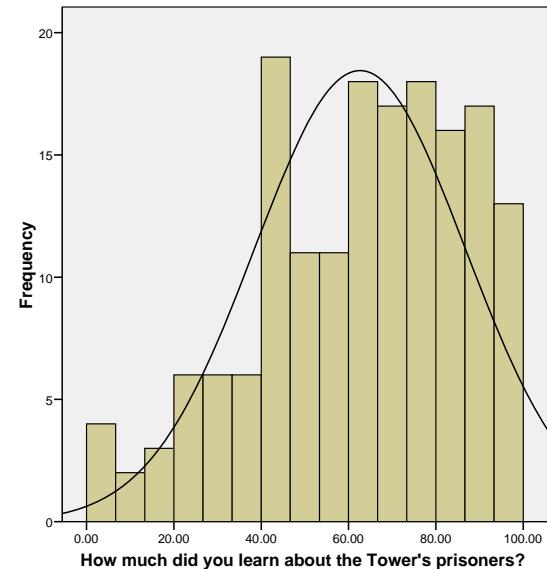
# Immersive experience



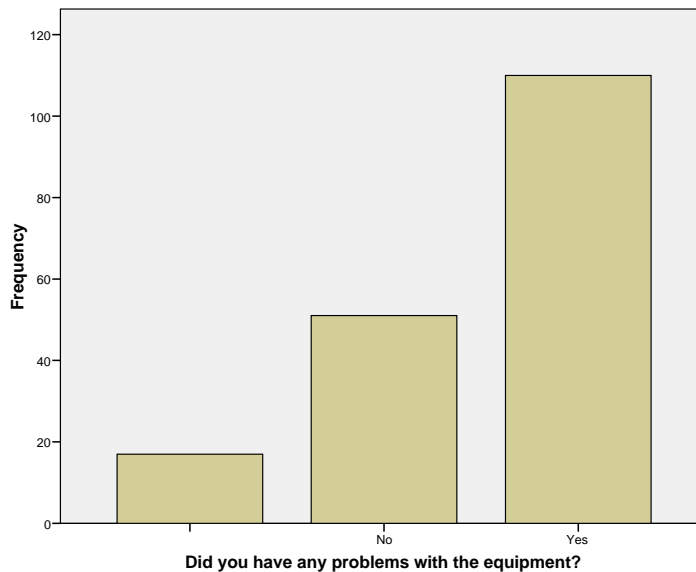
- Mean score 62
- Higher than expected given production quality, GPS
- *"Saving the polar bear"*
- *"When you got captured by the beefeaters"*
- *"V. realistic - felt a part of the adventure"*
- *"listening to them speak and finding things"*

# Learning

- Mean score 63
- *"it was different and you learn and have fun"*
- *"You learn more about the Tower. Makes it more interesting for children - my son loved it and wants to do it again. Would definitely recommend it to families."*
- *"It was a challenge"*

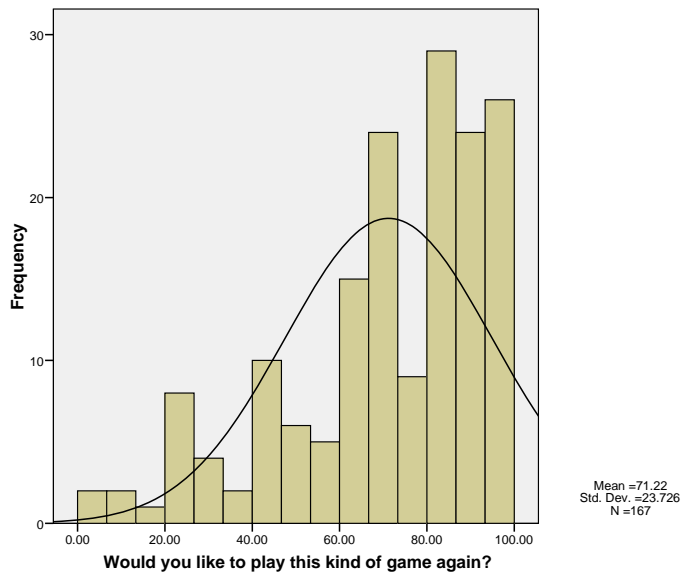


# Technology problems



- GPS reliability
- Pingers much more reliable but clunky receiver
- Button pushing – small boys & curators!
- *"Going back and forth, not being able to find the areas"*
- *"The signal"*

# Would you like to play it again?



- Mean score 71
- Many participants, particularly children, gave maximum score
- Surprisingly forgiving of sound quality & GPS issues
- *"No freezing machines pls! But basically fabulous experience - would def repeat!"*

## Lessons learned

- Power of participating in real stories in real locations
- Audience forgave sound quality, GPS problems and found it an immersive experience
- Fear of getting caught is as important as getting caught
- In house actors – free and great advocates
- Experience has been redesigned to cope with GPS variability
- Technology can empower us to create our own experiences
- Excitement of the interactive map!
- PR opportunity

## What next?

- Downloadable version of Escape from the Tower now available
  - Tweaks to reduce reliance on GPS accuracy
  - Using time based controls as well as GPS
  - No pingers
- Shorter term: HRP still have to look at hardware rental business model
- Longer term: visitors will not only bring own devices but also their own and others' content to our sites
- A question for the future: whose stories are they?

# Historic Royal PALACES

