

Benin and British Heritage : A Learning and Engagement Project



Map of Africa



Map of Nigeria

Brief History of Benin

Many centuries ago, at the time when Benin was called Igodomigodo

Throughout that period, Igodomigodo made steady progress especially in the area of spiritual, philosophical and administrative development.

Its efforts were largely concentrated on the arrangement of human order so that by the time Europeans made contact with the people of Benin in the 15th century, they had already established an administrative system which till this day baffled the Europeans and earned for the capital of this African country, the name "City".

The nucleus of this great civilization was the monarchy which the Benins perfected around the 18th century after a series of experimentation with the Ogisos who introduced a monarchical system that is based on the principle of primogeniture.

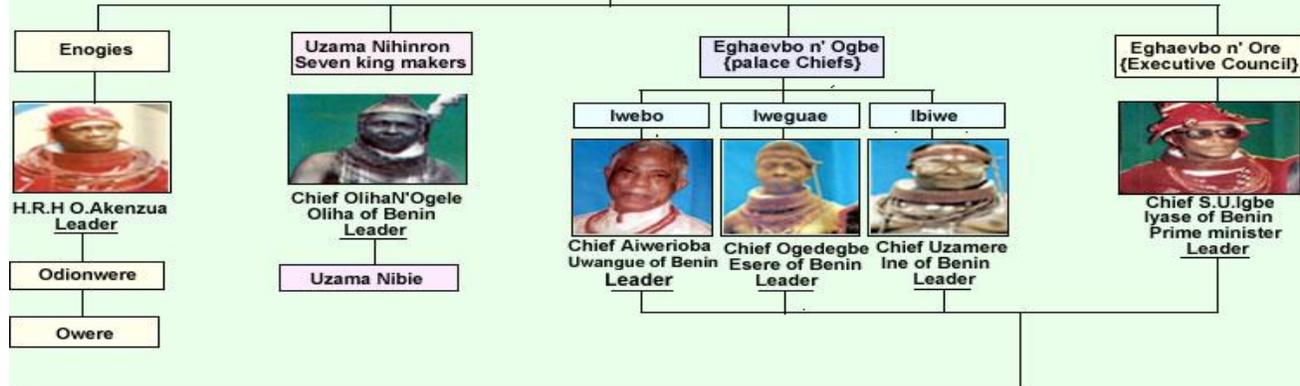
Benin Great Polity

The kingdom of Benin offers a snapshot of a relatively well-organized and sophisticated African polity in operation before the major European colonial interlude. Military operations relied on a well trained disciplined force. At the head of the host stood the Oba of Benin. The monarch of the realm served as supreme military commander. Beneath him were subordinate generalissimos, the Ezomo, the Iyase, and others who supervised a Metropolitan Regiment based in the capital, and a Royal Regiment made up of hand-picked warriors that also served as bodyguards. Benin's Queen Mother also retained her own regiment, the "Queen's Own." The Metropolitan and Royal regiments were relatively stable semi-permanent or permanent formations. The Village Regiments provided the bulk of the fighting force and were mobilized as needed, sending contingents of warriors upon the command of the king and his generals. Formations were broken down into sub-units under designated commanders. Foreign observers often commented favourably on Benin's discipline and organization as "better disciplined than any other Guinea nation", contrasting them with the slacker troops from the Gold Coast. Until the introduction of guns in the 15th century, traditional weapons like the spear and bow held sway. Efforts were made to reorganize a local guild of blacksmiths in the 18th century to manufacture light firearms, but dependence on imports was still heavy. Before the coming of the gun, guilds of blacksmiths were charged with war production—particularly swords and iron spearheads.

Benin kingdom monarchial system

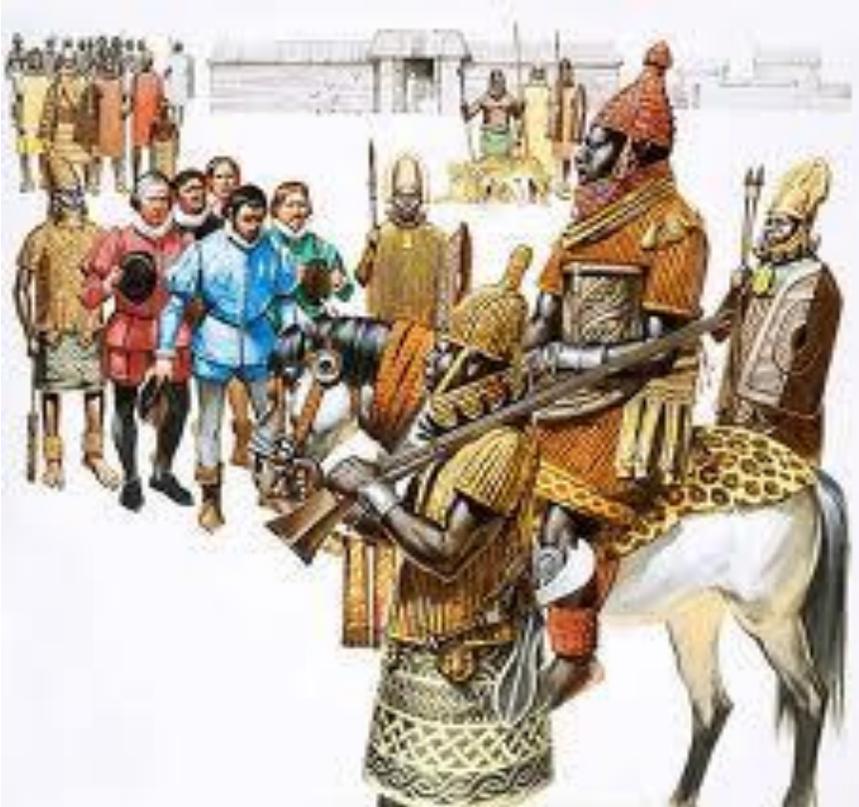


Oba Erediauwa
Benin kingdom Monarch



Leaders	State councils	Duties
Edogun	Ekaiwe	Royal defences forces {symbolic}
Ine	Ibiwe	In charge of the harem <small>The Queens' section is under the care of the Eruerie a sub-council header by Osodin</small>
Uwangue	Iwobo	Keepers of the regalia and royal wardrobe <small>Uzama Nihinron are members without duties</small>
Esere	Iweguae	In charge of Oba's household workers
Odionwere	Iwegie and Ebo	Royal diviners and senior doctors
Eguezigbon	Ewaise	Diviners and doctors
Ihama	Ihogbe {old}	Priest of the oba's ancestral Shrines & recorder of the departed Obas
Esekhurhe	Ihogbe {New}	Priest of the Oba's ancestral shrines <small>Chief Esekhurhe the leader of the council is also the chief priest of Benin kingdom</small>
Ogiefa-N'Ozeben	Ifa	Purifiers of the palace and the Priest of the gods of the earth
Okavbiogbe	Avbiogbe	Police, Lands and town Criers <small>It,s only ceremonial ! It is the local, state and federal government who now has the real power</small>
Odionwere	Ogbelaka	Royal Bards
Ine-Nigun	Igun-Eronmwon	Royal Brass-smiths
Eholo	Igbesanmwan	Royal carvers
Omuemu	Ikpema	Royal Drummers
Ehondo	Iwe-Aranmwon	Traditional butcher
Okaeben	Eben	Inter the remain of the Obas
Amaghizemwen	Isiemwero	The Oba personal body guilds and the royal policing

Pre & Colonial Era Relationship between The Benin and British



The ancient Kingdom of Benin was described in glowing terms by early European visitors

The Benin Massacre 1897

The Benin Empire fell to the British force during the Benin punitive expedition of 1897 during Oba Ovoranmwen's reign.

Captain Phillip and his party started a trade mission to Benin City in January 1897, when the Oba and his subjects were celebrating the annual Igue festival a period when outside visitors were not welcome. They were encouraged to postpone their visit for two months but they refused. The parties were massacred however, some of them managed to escape. This event is referred to generally as the Benin massacre.

February 1897 the British forces launched an attack on Benin City, it was finally captured after 8 days of fighting. The kingdom was destroyed and looted of its many valuable artifacts, Ologbohere the alleged mastermind of the massacre of Captain Phillip and his party was tried and hanged. Oba Ovoranmwen was dethroned, and deported to Calabar where he lived and died on the month of January 1914 after sixteen years of British captivity. Buried at Old Calabar by officials of colonial authority in the absence of his Benin royal family. The truth is that Oba Ovoranmwen has nothing to do with the massacre of Captain Phillip and his party. The fall of the Benin Empire was an event the British colonial power has always hoped for, it gave them the opportunity to stretch their Empire into West Africa's hinterland.

The Benin Massacre 1897



Vice-Consul H.L Gallwey's visit to Benin in 1892.
with Edo chiefs



Looted crafts after the Massacre

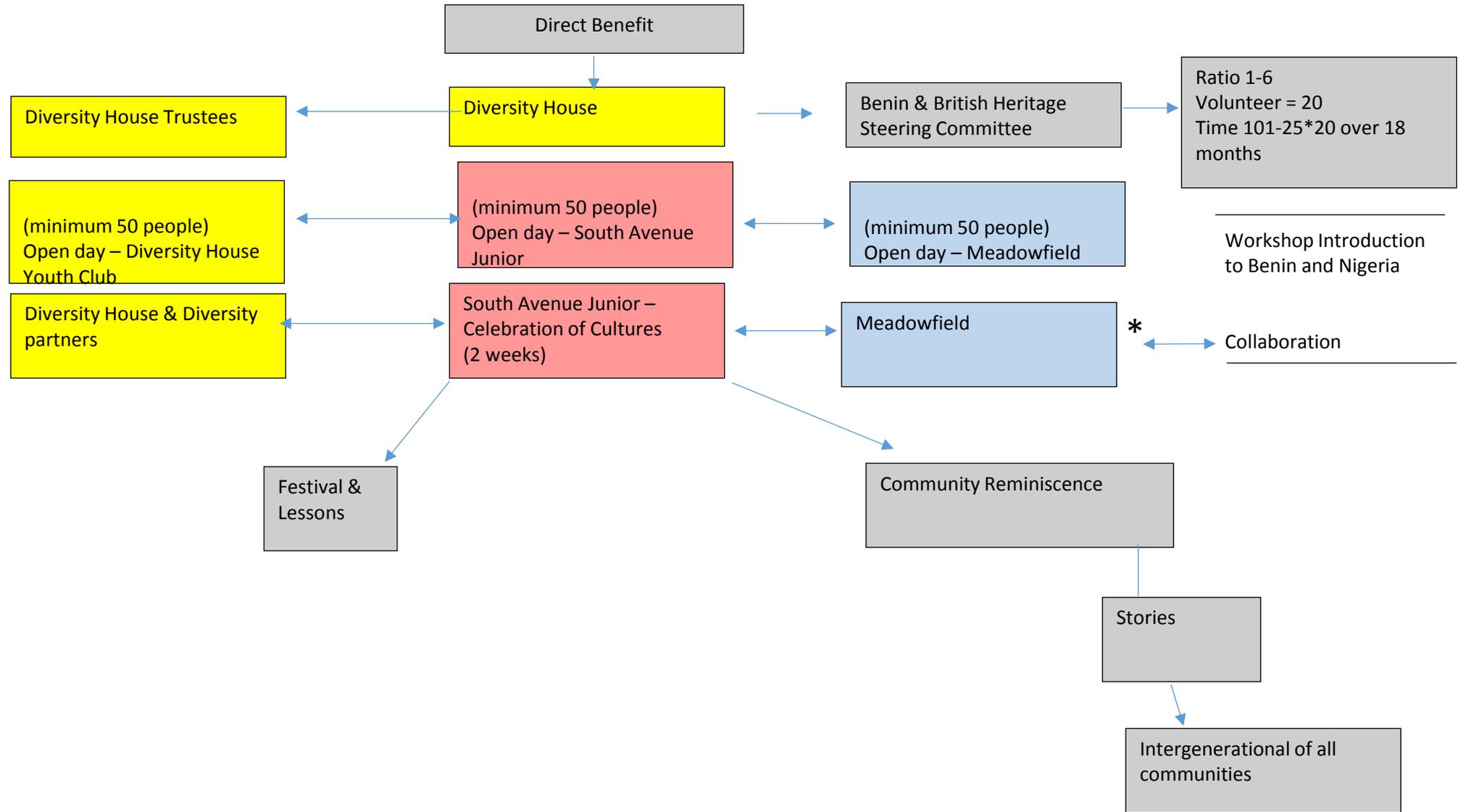
The Iconic Emblem of The Queen Mother Idia



Using this emblem, the Project will explore four key themes:

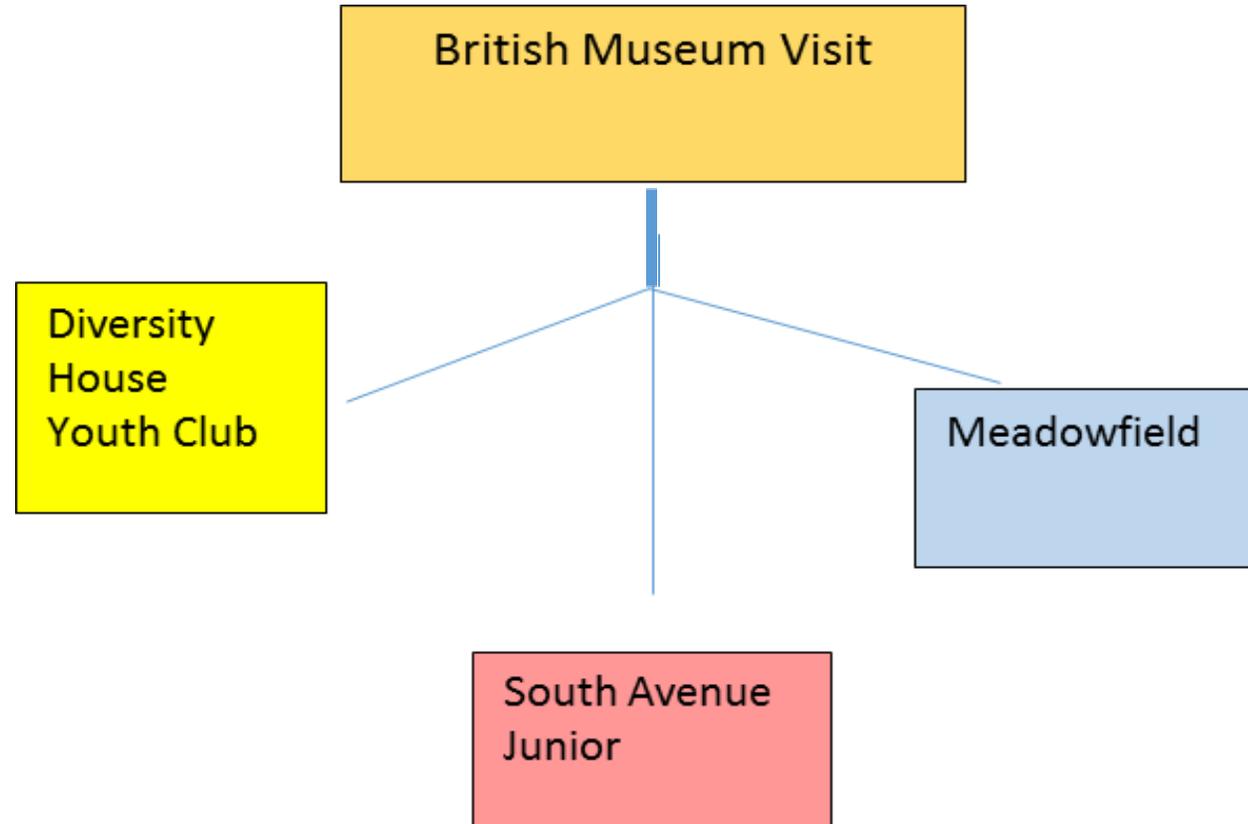
- **Monarchy and Governance**
- **Gender Roles and Empowerment**
- **Rituals and Traditions**
- **Trading and Professional Occupations**

Benin & British Heritage Learning and Engagement Project (18 Months)



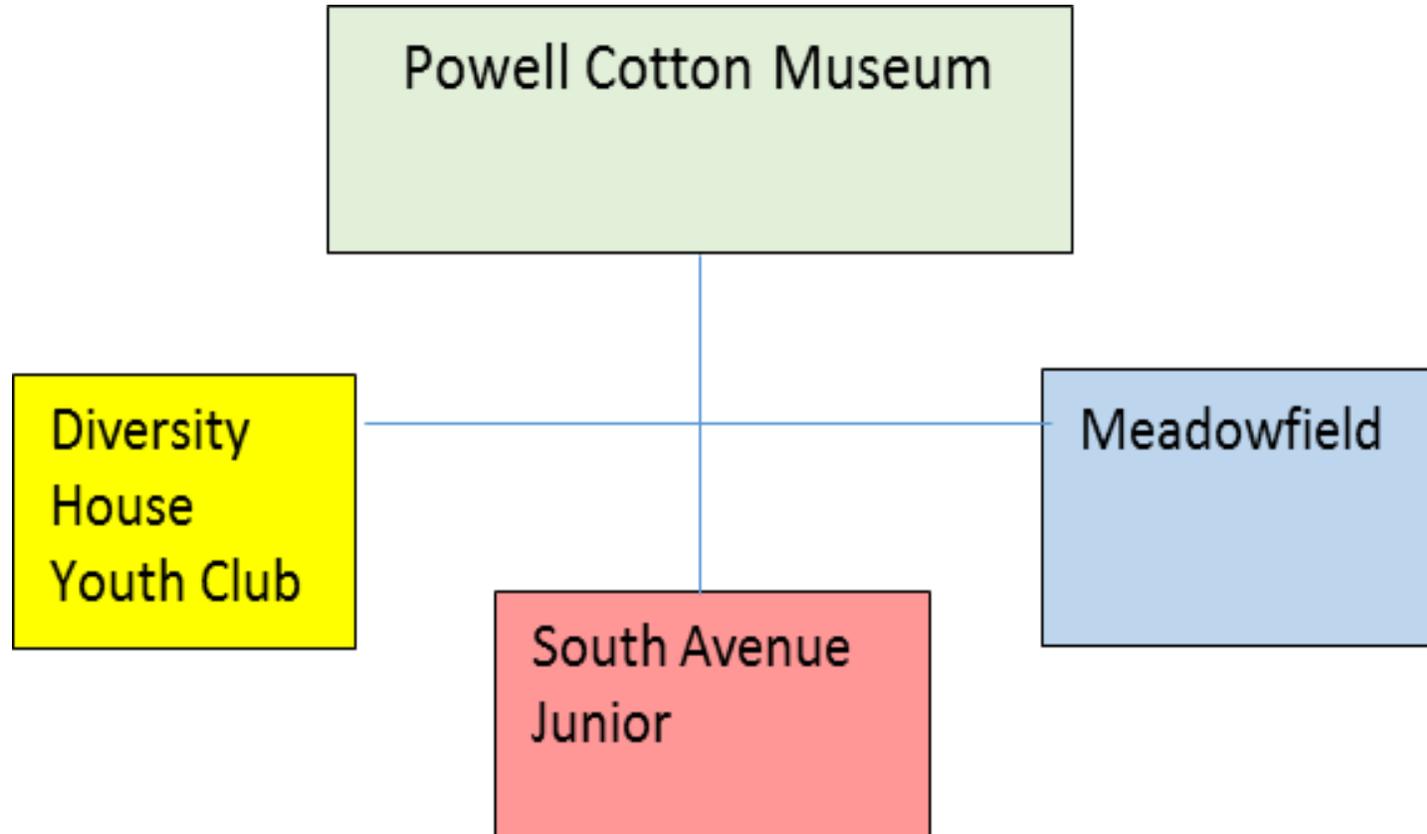
Benin & British Heritage Learning and Engagement Project (18 Months)

British Museum Visit



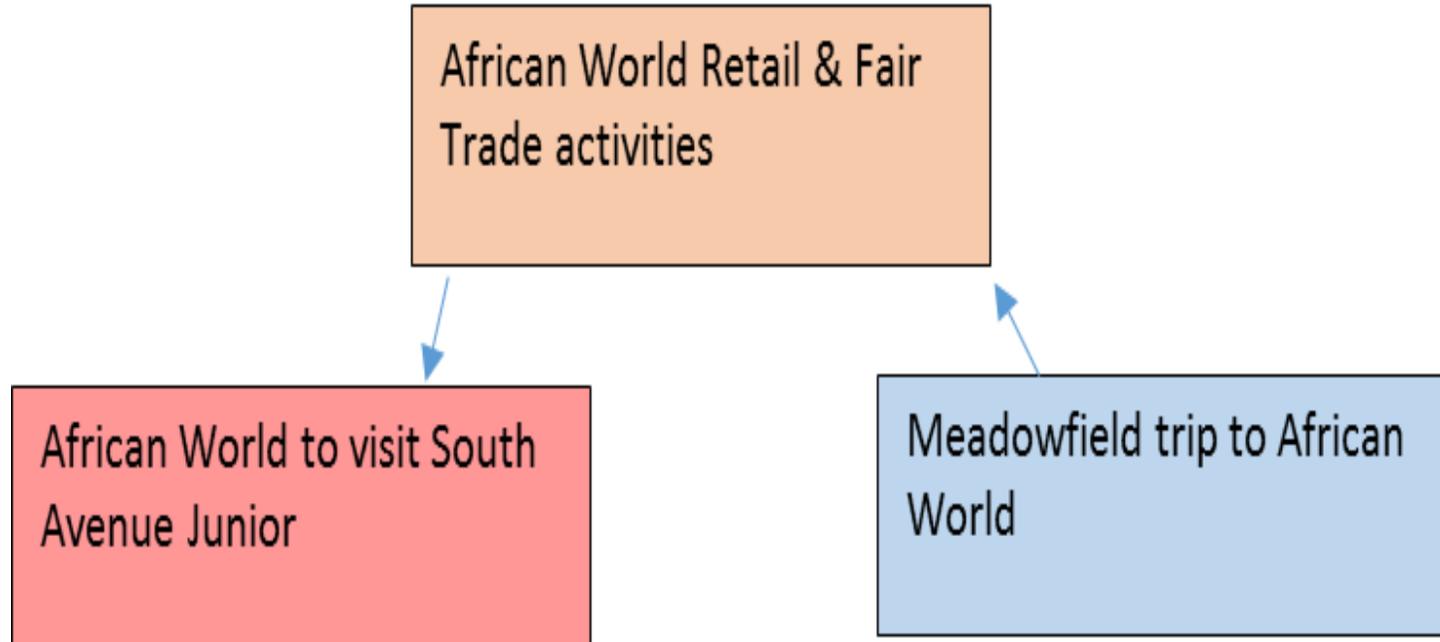
Benin & British Heritage Learning and Engagement Project (18 Months)

Powell Cotton Museum Visit



Benin & British Heritage Learning and Engagement Project (18 Months)

African World Visit

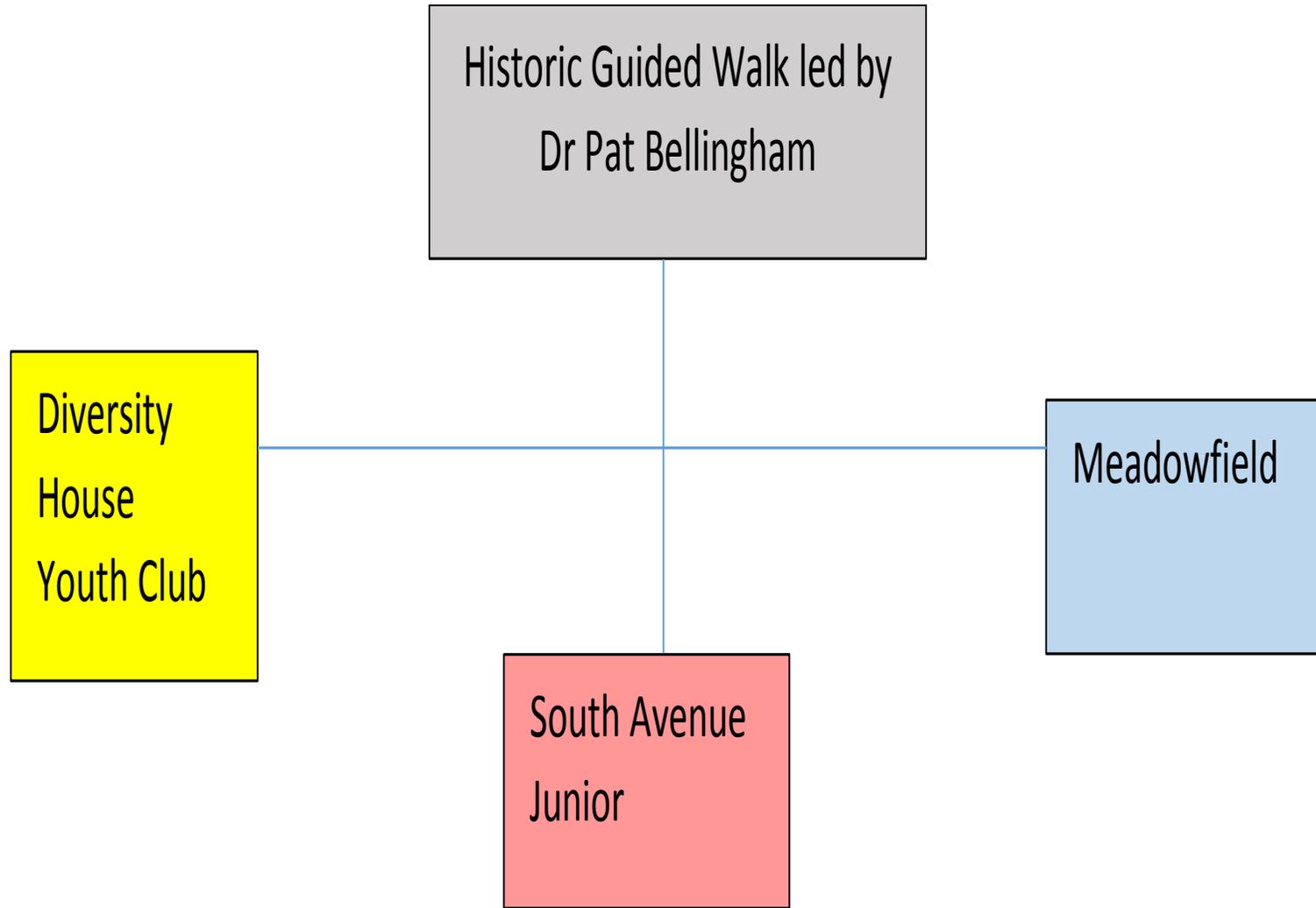


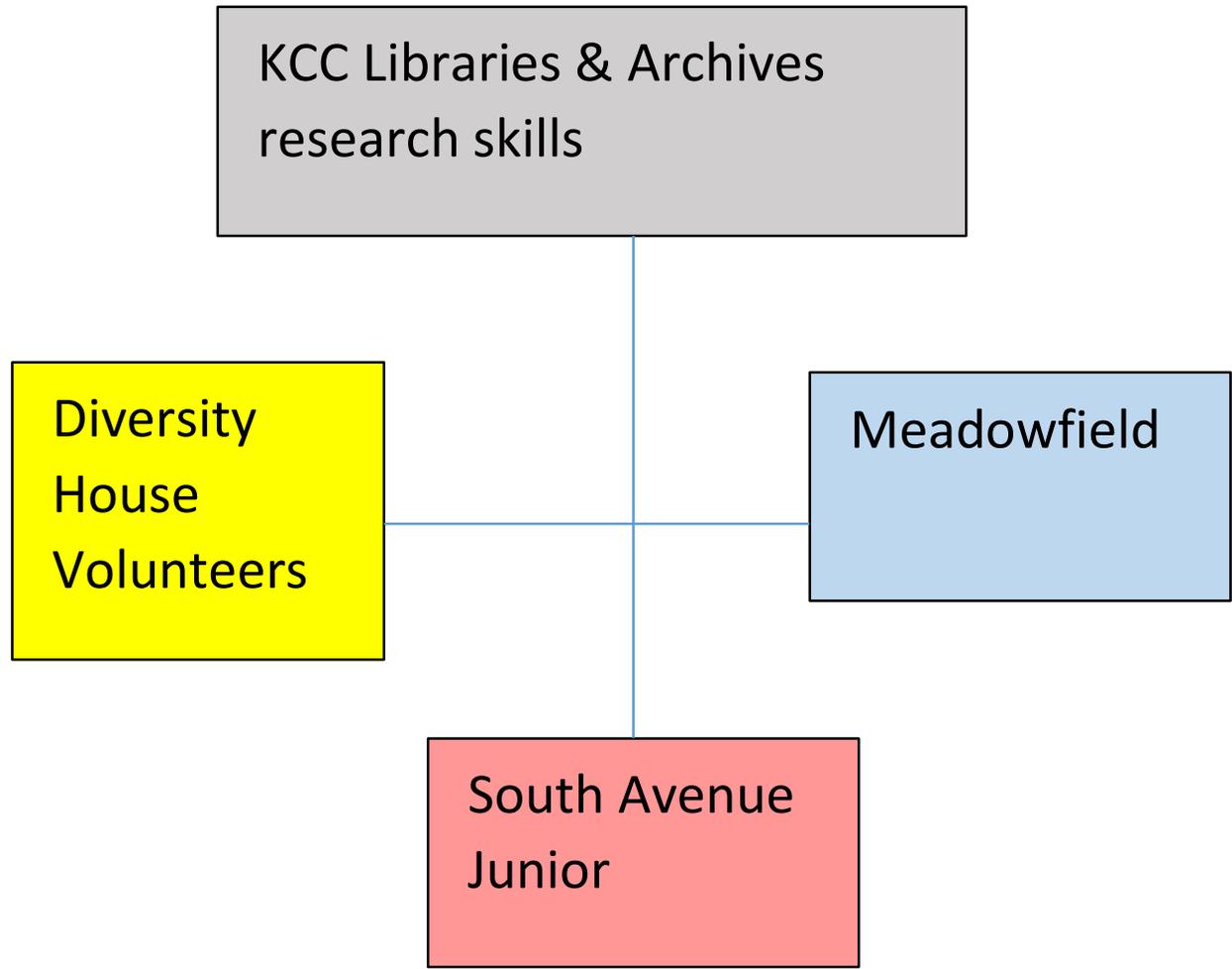
Historic Guided Walk led by
Dr Pat Bellingham

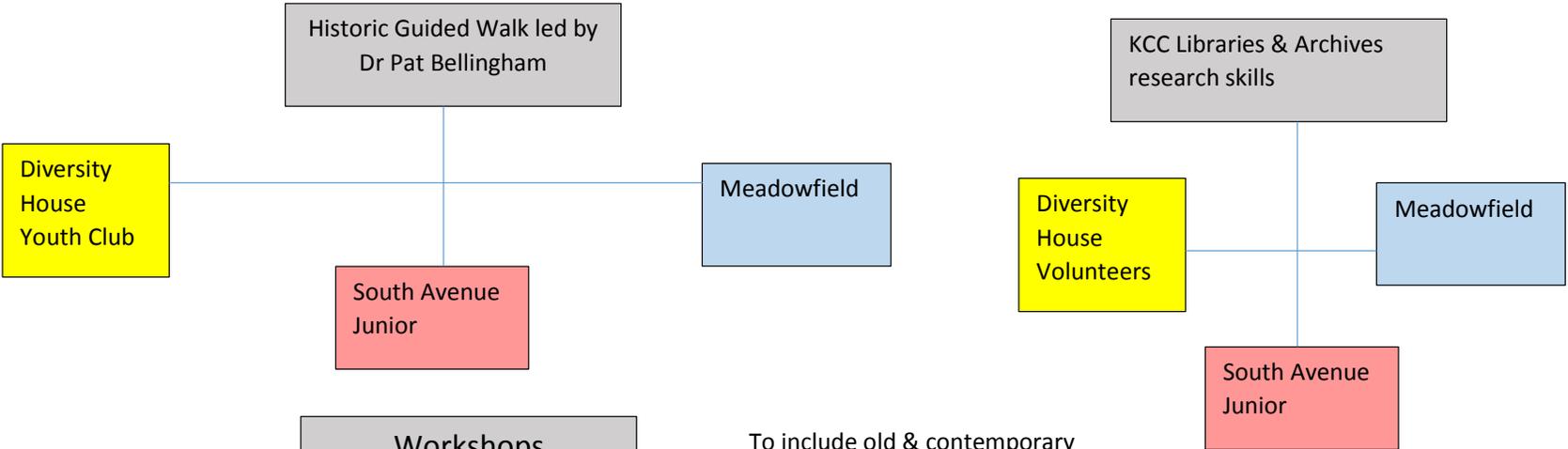
Diversity
House
Youth Club

Meadowfield

South Avenue
Junior







Workshops

= To include old & contemporary Benin & British themes

Rituals & Traditions

- 1) Myths, music, dance & songs
- 2) Festivals & masquerades
- 3) Culture & religion
- 4) Dresses/Accessories
- 5) Rituals at court
- 6) Symbolisms
- 7) Marriage
- 8) Oral traditions of Benin Kingship
- 9) Cuisine
- 10) Arts and Crafts
- 11) Ceremonies

Compare
Benin &
Britain

Monarch & Governance

- 1) Benin monarchy system
- 2) British monarchy system
- 3) Benin = the hierarchy at court
- 4) The Oba Palace Vs The Queens Palace

Competition & Awards

Interschool Essay & Crafts

Schools across Swale

Gender roles & Empowerment

- 1) Women's estate inheritance
- 2) Women and politics in Benin & Britain
- 3) Marriage
- 4) Women

Trading & Professional Occupation

- 1) Trade with Europeans – slave trade
- 2) Artists & craft workers
- 3) Agriculture
- 4) Economy

Project Conclusion

Celebration & Legacy

Diversity House

South Avenue Junior

Meadowfield