The Siege of Rochester Castle MORPG

Leah Irving & Ken Eustace
• Two classes of year 8 and 9 students from Swan View High School
• Developed a virtual replica of medieval Rochester Castle
• Role-played the siege of Rochester Castle by King John in 1215
• Average student participation time 5.6 hours – 20.5 highest participation, 0.1 lowest participation
• Average time teachers spent supporting the game – 9 hours
• Leah Irving – project coordinator, researcher – located Perth, W.A. studying through Deakin University, Melbourne Vic.
• Dianne Hobbs and Mark Weber – Teachers at Swan View High School, Perth, W.A.
• Ken Eustace, Geoff Fellows, Allan Blytheway and Mark Lee – Charles Sturt University, Wagga Wagga – technical support, hosted the MOO, game design advice and practical support such as programming etc.
Considerations when using a MORPG in the classroom

- IT infrastructure of the school – bandwidth, processor power, video cards, sound cards etc.
- Cost – subscribe to an online multi-user game or purchase video game for LAN (only available during school time)
- Finding a suitable game that can be incorporated into the curriculum
- Teacher preparedness
• enCore MOO with Xpress client – developed by Jan Rune Holmevik and Cynthia Haynes
• Developed for educational purposes but has multiple applications
• Open source software
• Its free!
• More user input – can be customised, students can develop/build the environment
• Low bandwidth requirements
• Secure – username and password login
• Monitored – wizards rule – also rooms can be “recorded”
• Curriculum requirements – goals and outcomes mapped
• Research requirements
• Team responsibilities
• Support
• Training – teachers and Leah to use MOO
• Finding an event in medieval times that was suitable for a game narrative – the siege of Rochester castle by King John fitted this requirement
• Student input into game design was important
• Rules developed
• King John wanted control of the castle from Bishop Langton
• Laid siege to the castle for several months
• Curtain wall was breached and castle people retreated to the keep
• King John’s assault had little effect until a tower was undermined by tunneling the tower, using wooden props for initial support and then burning the supports with the “fat of forty pigs”
• A basic castle structure of drawbridge, curtain wall and grassy area set in the countryside was developed prior to students starting
• Students were given a name and character from the medieval period
• Castle team had to request permission from Bishop Langton to build – the castle was built by programmers creating and connecting rooms to the Rochester castle layout
• King John’s team researched the engines of war from the medieval period, formed teams to assault and lay siege.
• CSU team created a “guard” robot for the drawbridge – only the castle team “knew the password”. King John’s men were automatically sent to the countryside.
• Players used synchronous and asynchronous methods of communication – e.g. castle team left instructions on notes for each other.
• The keep wall was breached – a tunnel (room) was created with a “crumble” verb which allowed the aggressors into the keep – the fight was short and bloody – some canny castle people created secret rooms to flee to and were never captured.
You're already here!
You want to Curtain Wall

You want to Curtain Wall...
Common exits:
[To Curtain Wall] to Curtain Wall,
[To East Tower] to East Tower,
[To West Tower] to West Tower,

You want to Big Sceary Area

You want to Big Sceary Area...

You want to Big Sceary Area...

You see before you the big grassy area surrounding the castle. The Keep Bishop Langton presides over the layout of Rochester Castle. Layout is updated as it expands. It's a little out of date at the moment. Contact Gresham via MCO Mail with your room details including where he is to be connected.
Student Character

Charles is different from the others. He is more secretive and mysterious than others. And he likes black clothes to help him hide among the crowd. Being a squire, he assist Sirius with his duties, as well as doing secretive jobs. He usually hangs out at the castle tavern and enlists with others there. To see the tavern, type @g1 #1917 in normal mode.

Real Name:

He is a programmer in Rocheste Castle
Tavern accommodation

Upstairs To The Tavern's Units And Closets

You see:
   1. Thomas (asleep)

Links:
   → Castle Tavern
   → Bedrooms
   → Lavatory
   → Charles' Private Area

Obvious exit: [To, Upstairs] to Upstairs, [down] to Curtain Hall
You move to Upstairs
Obvious exits: [To, Castle_Tavern] to Castle Tavern, [To, Staying_Room] to Bedrooms, [To, Bathrooms] to Lavatory, [To, Charles's Private_Room] to Charles' Private Area
• Students really engaged in learning – they had fun and enjoyed learning about medieval times in this context
• Students learnt to use a new technology – programming skills
• Brought together two classes – friendly rivalry. Communication inside the game flowed over to the school yard.
Outcomes for teachers

- Integrated ICTs with the curriculum – important part of the school’s strategic plan
- Learnt to use a new technology which gave them an innovative way to teach their subject
- Generated interest among the school community
- They had fun!
Further developments

- A project funded by Learnscope for two TAFE classes – Multimedia and Business Management – using a MOO for a virtual business.
- Large scale research project “Sense of Place” in 2007
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