

CREATIVELY MINDED AND HERITAGE

Creativity & mental health activity in heritage settings

By The Restoration Trust



Creatively minded and heritage: Creativity & mental health activity in heritage settings

About The Restoration Trust

There is a chasm between what people living with serious mental health challenges need, and what is on offer. We use heritage and creativity to improve people's mental health without relying on services.

Exploring the compelling histories of patients in 19th century lunatic asylums, or sensory immersion in mysterious ancient landscapes reignites people's curiosity and love of life. Refocussing early intervention and prevention away from institutions and into communities overcomes systematic exclusion from amazing cultural assets that belong to us all.

Weaving partnerships and groups into new communities has long term impacts on people and places. Participants are partners, so together we highlight people's interest and skills through meaningful involvement.

We call this **Culture Therapy**, and we want it to be everyday good practice by 2027.

About the Baring Foundation

We are an independent foundation which protects and advances human rights and promotes inclusion. We believe in the role of a strong, independent civil society nationally and internationally. We use our resources to enable civil society to work with people facing discrimination and disadvantage and to act strategically to tackle the root causes of injustice and inequality. More can be found in *A History of the Baring Foundation in Fifty Grants*.

Since 2020, the Foundation has focused its arts programme on creative opportunities for people with mental health problems. The programme funds across the UK and it is intended to be long term. Although we have a very broad definition of creativity, most of our funding goes to arts organisations including museums. With this publication we wanted to look at opportunities for creativity for people with mental health problems that lay outside our

traditional areas of interest to include archives, historic sites and the benefits of enjoying the natural environment. This report forms part of an ongoing series of publications.

Acknowledgements

The Baring Foundation and The Restoration Trust would like to thank all those who kindly contributed case studies to this report. We owe especial thanks to those who joined us for an online conversation which helped shape this report: Paul Barclay, Project Officer, Green Health and Wellbeing, Cumbernauld Living Landscape; Kate Davey, Training Programme Manager, Outside In; Liz Ellis, Policy Project Manager, Business Innovation and Insight, National Lottery Heritage Fund; Iqbal Singh, Regional Community Partnerships Manager, The National Archives; Glenys Watt, Facilitator, retired chair of the Restoration Trust.

The Restoration Trust would like to thank our whole community of people involved in projects and governance for their ideas and commitment. In particular, we have been lucky to have Ellen Hardy, CHASE-funded editor and PhD candidate working with us on this report. This publication was designed by Alex Valy and edited by Ellen Hardy and Harriet Lowe, Communications and Research Officer at the Baring Foundation.

A note on language

We recognise that language is a very important issue but also that it is a contested one. Indeed, the very notion of mental health diagnoses, and the thinking that underpins them in making psychiatry a discipline, is itself challenged by some. The Baring Foundation uses the term 'mental health problem' as probably the most widely used term at the moment (for instance by Mind). However, it does not command universal support. The authors in this report were free to use the language that they were comfortable with and we have not edited their choice.

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Foreword

BY LIZ ELLIS, NATIONAL LOTTERY HERITAGE FUND

The National Lottery Heritage Fund is proud of our involvement in this publication and the insight it brings to how mental health, heritage and creativity connect us in new, and sometimes unexpected ways.

The National Lottery Heritage Fund is the largest dedicated grant funder of the UK's heritage. Thanks to National Lottery players, we invest in the full diversity of heritage and enable heritage to support communities right across the UK. We ask every project we support to involve a wider range of people in heritage.

The Covid-19 pandemic has drawn attention to the ways in which inequalities and isolation have contributed to rising levels of mental distress across the UK. The case studies in this report demonstrate the ambition and ingenuity that we can all use in our planning ahead to maximise the impact of our work within the communities we live in and contribute to. These case studies use the lens of mental health to open powerful new connections between the past and present.

Heritage can help us learn more about ourselves and each other. These quite different case studies invite us to listen to often unheard lived experiences within our national and international histories. These bold approaches to exploring our heritage enable us to engage with the past in ways that expand our sense of ourselves in how we connect with each other, locally and globally.

These case studies demonstrate the distinctive value of heritage in connecting us, challenging stigma, and enabling communities across the UK to tell the stories of the past that matter to all of us. Looking forwards, these trusted, creative connections across heritage and mental health help us make bolder choices as allies and partners in supporting full and flourishing lives.

Summary

Heritage brings such significant added value for creativity and mental health programmes that it should be a core resource for people looking for mental health treatments, and for heritage, creativity and mental health professionals developing cross-sectoral social prescribing programmes.

The wellbeing agenda is rapidly maturing as demand for mental health services overwhelms supply and all kinds of community assets, including heritage, are called into play. The interplay of heritage and creativity, where imagination is rooted in knowledge, has particular power for mental health and should be fore-fronted in co-produced project design. Virtual experiences can be as potent as face-to-face ones.

The case for museums and wellbeing is already made, so this report focusses on creative engagement with natural and historic environments, archaeology and archives, which are less represented in the literature.

The 18 case studies by no means tell the whole story of creatively minded heritage and mental health projects in the UK, but they are examples of excellent practice across multiple art forms, heritage assets, organisational structures and health settings. They show that all heritage can be used creatively to improve people's mental health and community connections nationwide.

People living with mental health challenges, funders, strategists, professionals, artists, service providers, social prescribers and academics can build on what has already been done to overcome barriers that restrict access to therapeutic engagement with heritage and creativity. Then everything will change for the better.

Introduction

BY LAURA DRYSDALE

“I’d recommend it wholeheartedly even if you’re only a little bit interested I mean in any sort of history then yes. All I can focus on is, it’s just giving me back my imagination.”

Dr Hill’s Casebook participant evaluation report

This quote from the evaluation of Dr Hills’ Casebook¹ contains key words that identify good practice in heritage, creativity and mental health, beyond the essentials of safe, attentive administration.

Wholeheartedly – you feel it with your whole self. Interested – you are curious, enlivened. Imagination – that alchemises interest into creativity. History – heritage is its manifestation, the ground on which the experience stands.

Sometimes it is best to begin with what something is not. This report is not about museums or nature – they are well addressed elsewhere, so we are focussing on archives, archaeology and historic landscapes. It’s not about wellbeing – mental health is wellbeing’s subset. It’s not about art – except where it is inspired by heritage. Things are messy in multi-layered cross-sectoral collaborations, so wellbeing is also about mental health, heritage is also about museums and nature, and creativity won’t be told what it is about.

The report has practical ambitions. We want excellent heritage and creativity projects to proliferate as a mental health prescription, available whoever or wherever you are. We

want heritage organisations to incorporate creative mental health programmes as core business, and mental health providers to integrate heritage and creativity in their range of treatments. We want universities to research and publish evidence of heritage’s value for mental health.

These case studies are inspiring examples of best practice, as people form new communities in real and virtual places, connected by meaningful shared experiences. The report is enriched by online conversations and written statements that took a more strategic approach. We all see creative engagement with heritage as a therapeutic opportunity.

Creativity and heritage projects

Countless creative options are available for heritage professionals developing mental health projects, and this report shares examples from visual and performing artforms, music, theatre, literature and craft. In Arts Council England’s phrase, ‘creativity needs constant nourishment’ (Great art and culture for everyone), and heritage can feed that hunger. Creative opportunities attract people who may feel that heritage is not for them, just as an interest in heritage can overcome a person’s distaste for self-expression. Heritage professionals can use research libraries like the online Repository for Arts and Health Resources² to make their case to managers and funders, and can advocate for the added value that their knowledge, places and collections bring to creative mental health experiences.

1 Dr Hill’s Casebook is a project about history, mental health, creative writing and theatre that is fascinating, challenging and fun. It is based at Norfolk Record Office and the Fisher Theatre in Bungay. It is a partnership between the Restoration Trust, Norfolk Record Office, South Norfolk Council and UpShoot Theatre Company. It is funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund with Norfolk Archives and Heritage Development Foundation. restorationtrust.org.uk/publications.

2 www.artshealthresources.org.uk.

The strategic context

There are opportunities at a political level in the radical way the Scottish government situates wellbeing and in the Welsh government's strategy around wellbeing for future generations. In England, the case has been well made by two leading sector bodies, Historic England and the National Archives. The annual survey *Heritage and Society* (2019)³, produced by Historic England (see page 69) as part of the *Heritage Counts* series, highlighted the therapeutic effects of historic landscapes, and the importance of shared identity and connection. The National Archives Strategic Priorities 2020 – 2022⁴ state that the archive sector will *Champion the role that archives and their collections can play in enhancing people's health and wellbeing*. Most potently, given that it made £350 million grant payments in 2019/20, the National Lottery Heritage Fund's mandatory inclusion outcome and additional wellbeing outcome are game-changers for the sector.

The NHS's Long-Term Plan places emphasis on prevention, which offers potential for heritage as treatment, and the National Academy for Social Prescribing is trying to deliver the promise of alternatives to medication. Link workers lack expertise in heritage and creativity; this needs to change through specialist appointments. Moreover, social prescribing will only have an effect on systems if prescriptions come with money attached; otherwise it compounds unfairness by pushing risk onto vulnerable groups without compensatory reward.

The Culture, Health and Wellbeing Alliance and the National Centre for Creative Health bolster cross-sectoral activity, and the MARCH

Network has provided research ballast, although there is still a paucity of published research on mental health outcomes through engagement with heritage⁵. Medical Humanities is an expanding academic discipline but, on the other hand, humanities departments are under threat.

Supply and demand

The pandemic has exposed the fragility of mental health systems, especially if you are poor. In my home county of Norfolk, the situation has gone from bad to worse. *The Eastern Daily Press* reports that, in 2018/2019, 75 per cent more people from poorer areas contacted mental health services compared to people from richer areas⁶. Now, mental health services are completely overrun. From March 2020, support networks vanished overnight, and demand spiralled. Beat, the local eating disorder service, reported a 202 per cent rise in calls to its telephone support service between November 2019 and 2020⁷, and local GPs talk of a huge surge in patients presenting with mental health problems.

The UK has a lot of heritage, with 20,000 scheduled monuments in England alone, and an archive service in most UK counties. It should be deployed for mental health *because it's there*, and people like it – Ancestry.com has 3 million paying subscribers and the National Trust has 5.6 million members. Findings from the Northern Ireland Continuous Household survey⁸ 2019/20 show higher life satisfaction scores for those who visited a heritage site compared to those who did not. According to the Taking Part survey⁹, three quarters of adults (73 per cent) in England visited a heritage site at least once in 2017/18. However, in the same year the Scottish Government reported that

3 *Heritage and Society*, 2019. Historic England. historicengland.org.uk/content/heritage-counts/pub/2019/heritage-and-society-2019.

4 www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/archives-sector/projects-and-programmes/strategic-vision-for-archives/strategic-priorities.

5 The Heritage Alliance's report on Heritage Health and Wellbeing includes useful evidence, case studies and recommendations aimed at heritage, health and social care, and the UK government: www.theheritagealliance.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Heritage-Alliance-AnnualReport_2020_Online.pdf.

6 'I reached breaking point': How Covid hit our mental health', *Eastern Daily Press*, 8 January 2021. www.edp24.co.uk/news/health/norfolk-coronavirus-mental-health-worse-in-deprived-areas-6861500.

7 Ibid.

8 *Experience of heritage by adults in Northern Ireland Findings from the Continuous Household Survey 2019/20*, Department for Communities Northern Ireland, 26 November 2020. www.communities-ni.gov.uk/system/files/publications/communities/experience-heritage-by-adults-northern-ireland-201920.pdf.

9 *Taking Part Survey: England Adult Report, 2017/18*, Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport. assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/740242/180911_Taking_Part_Adult_Annual_Report_-_Revised.pdf.

visits to historic or archaeological places were lower for adults living in the most deprived areas, at 20 per cent compared to 45 per cent¹⁰; the correlation between deprivation and mental illness means that many people living with mental health problems do not benefit from heritage.

It makes sense to marry a mental health system where demand is overwhelming supply, with heritage assets where there is plentiful supply but unrealised demand. There is no good reason for any heritage or mental health provider not to be doing their part.

Social justice and activism

The organisations and individuals in these case studies have fought to enlarge worlds compressed by more than a decade of austerity and the pandemic. This radical work highlights and challenges injustice, brings hope and joy through beauty and learning, and is brave enough to look at sorrow and loss without flinching. Inclusion and diversity are more than opportunity plus encouragement – they are about entitlement. Our heritage belongs to us all, we all have our own heritage, and it is our right to use it. It is our common duty to tackle the barriers that prevent people living with mental illnesses from accessing heritage.

Radical, activist organisations and initiatives are precarious by nature. Some won't survive as people move on or the context changes, but that doesn't compromise the value or the learning to be had from their work. Resilience may become complacency, and we need to embrace the square pegs that resist their edges being abraded to fit into the round holes, while still mainstreaming heritage and creativity in mental health provision.

The big issues

Mental health is our primary agenda, but heritage and creativity projects have other public goods. Being in historic landscapes encourages people to think about climate change and biodiversity. Delving into archives can inform us about diversity and inclusion. The urge to connect with projects may encourage people to get online, reducing digital exclusion. Accurate historical data and expertise can counter fake news and

disinformation. These are over and above the societal goods of people getting out and about, making friends, and connecting with their place.

Funding

Some funders are democratising decision-making by including beneficiaries on panels and creating easier application systems; it is deplorable to use exclusionary grant processes to reduce the funders' workload. Funded outputs are less predictable in a person-centred project, and that could inhibit applications to culture-based funds from mental health organisations. Without high-level advocacy from the heritage sector, mental health funders may not grasp that culture-based projects can deliver their objectives. Good funders understand that transformative mental health projects have a higher cost per head because involvement is deep rather than wide. Evaluation frameworks are beginning to be developed with beneficiaries, but although evaluation requirements are increasingly flexible, they can be difficult to fulfil where participants may be at risk or are unwilling to give consent for their work or image to be publicly shared.

Partnerships

Cross-sectoral partnerships are essential to link agile disruptors with heavier heritage, health and academic institutions. Can such partnerships be equitable given the disparity between their resources? Activist community and place-based organisations need the confidence to protect the value of their trusting relationships with participants; this is their power. They must assert ownership of their ideas and intellectual property and prize their local or specialist networks. Partnerships improve with time, so investment in long term collaborations affirmed in formal agreements ensure that the risks are managed, and that the reputational and communications benefits that accrue from excellent mental health projects are fairly shared.

¹⁰ *Scottish Household Survey 2018 – Key Findings*, 2019. www.befs.org.uk/latest/scottish-household-survey-2018-key-findings.

Research

A literature search of archives and mental health projects for Dr Hills' Casebook found no similar work, and yet these case studies show that examples exist; they just don't appear in academic journals. Change Minds (see page 23) won the 2020 Arts and Humanities Research Council/Wellcome Trust award for community engagement and this report is compiled by writer Ellen Hardy on a CHASE placement from the University of East Anglia, so we have had generous support from universities, but it is another world to adapt to, and another language to learn. Perhaps a dedicated peer reviewed journal would stimulate collaborative research and publication.

Trusted allies growing a body of practice

Our field is rich with potential as the wellbeing agenda matures, but it is also risky: mental illness is difficult, heritage is contentious, creativity is wayward. Opening ourselves up to genuine inclusion threatens the established order. Hustling for funds is competitive and undermines mutuality. Social media can be our friend, and a savage enemy. To build a robust community of practice we must identify our allies and take time to connect with each other in a climate of trust and support, because the forces of stigma, division and hate should not be underestimated.

Mental health for heritage and creative professionals

Commendably, The National Archives are producing a Wellbeing Impact Toolkit that includes mental health first aid guidance for archive leaders and support for volunteers, and many heritage and creative organisations provide mental health first aid training to staff. It is dangerous to expect heritage and creative professionals or volunteers to maintain their own health in the face of distressing feelings and material without expert support. Reflective practice groups, action learning sets and one-to-one supervision are tools that should be used wherever culture and mental health overlap.

Heritage constraints

Heritage assets are protected by legislation and standards, and these constraints must be respected and explained in mental health projects. The balance between access and preservation is an intriguing topic to discuss and rules should be clearly explained so that no one is shamed through ignorance. Back-room activities such as security, collections management and conservation illuminate what may appear to be forbidding institutions and connect to people's own experience of care and damage. One participant in our Conservation for Wellbeing project¹¹ at London Metropolitan Archives said: *"We had to be delicate with the stuff cause you have to wear the gloves and everything. ... it was just that really interesting how careful you have to be. You have to treat these things like you would treat a human being basically"*.

Empowering participants

Putting people first means changing the language of participation so that it reflects the truth of complex inter-organisational and inter-personal dynamics without slipping into falsities like 'hard-to-reach' or using catch-all acronyms. The benefits system makes it difficult to pay people for their labour, for example as members of steering groups or on recruitment panels, but it is immoral to expect people to give their time for free. Ideas, research and creative work must be correctly owned and credited within a detailed consent framework. Well-meaning efforts to hear directly from participants can be intrusive and inappropriate and more could be done to empower people to tell their story in their own way. Personal experiences of projects that reach into people's deepest selves can be drained of their healing power if we fall into the trap of misusing participants' stories to become what artist and activist Dolly Sen calls Inspiration Porn.

¹¹ conservationforwellbeing.org/home.

Culture therapy: heritage, creativity and companionship in the Restoration Trust

“ Stuck indoors during lockdown, there isn't much joy
So, yes, this was the light out of the darkness
Those packages were worth so much. Hugs in the post.
I felt like I was in the room with all of you.
That beautiful connection that we had every week.
I feel so small in the history of the world
I noticed how much other people were hurting
I won't ever forget this. ”

Excerpt from a Pantoum compiled by Jane Willis from words shared during the Human Henge Online Evaluation Focus Group

Human Henge Online¹² is one of a series of partnership projects that we run with English Heritage, Bournemouth University, the National Trust and Richmond Fellowship, using the ancient landscape of Stonehenge and Avebury for a sensory experience of history and nature. ‘Locating oneself in the past to influence the present: Impacts of Neolithic landscapes on mental health wellbeing’ (Heaslip et al¹³), found that the environments were central to expanding individuals’ horizons because of the need to imagine what life was like as there are no absolutes with this period of history.

The heritage is both known and unknown, thus imaginative speculation is based on accurate information and integrates heritage with a person’s creative self.

Groups maximise the value of an immersive experience of heritage and creativity because they enable individual experiences to resonate and offer people the best hope of maintaining connections once projects end. Living with serious mental health challenges assaults belonging, so when people can feel safe enough to be members of a group, with all the risks of love and loss that entails, they become a community. Then they are strengthened to connect with other benign communities that they can contribute to and draw on.

Laura Drysdale, The Restoration Trust

¹² humanhenge.org/about.

¹³ Heaslip, Vanessa & Vahdaninia, Mariam & Hind, Martin & Darvill, Timothy & Staelens, Yvette & O'Donoghue, Daniel & Drysdale, Laura & Lunt, Sara & Hogg, Chris & Allfrey, Martin & Clifton, Briony & Sutcliffe, Toby. (2019). ‘Locating oneself in the past to influence the present: Impacts of Neolithic landscapes on mental health well-being’. *Health & Place*. 62. 102273. 10.1016/j.healthplace.2019.102273.

CASE STUDIES

Archaeology & historic sites



Photo courtesy of Daniel Regan.

NORMAN GATE

Daniel Regan, Photographic Artist and Historic Royal Palaces

BY DANIEL REGAN

Amongst my multiple roles in the arts and health sector, I have worked as a freelance artist for the past 15 years, primarily focusing on mental health projects. I came into this field from discovering photography as a young person, coinciding with the onset of my own mental health difficulties. I now count my lived experience as an asset to working on participatory mental health projects. One of my own earliest personal projects was a five-year photographic exploration of abandoned mental asylums documented after my own psychiatric hospitalisation. It piqued my interest in heritage sites and their connections to our mental health through the ages.

In the Summer of 2019, I was commissioned to produce a participatory project by Historic Royal Palaces (HRP). The project ran in conjunction with HRP's upcoming exhibition at Kew Palace, *George III: The Man Behind the Myth*. The exhibition aims to look at King George III as a whole person, outside of the dominant narrative of being just the 'mad king', something that has been popularised through contemporary media. I was initially attracted to this project because of this approach, given my own long-term mental health difficulties. As someone who seldom visits traditional heritage sites myself, I entered into the project with curiosity given my own reservations around colonialism and the complex history of this country.

Alongside the exhibition, which will showcase historical objects from George III's life, the project involved working with around ten men who have lived experience of mental health difficulties, referred into the project via local partnership organisations in the Borough, such as Richmond Mind and the Dalgarno Trust.

One of the aims was to address the power imbalance in curating — allowing these men to offer contemporary interpretations of mental health and contributing to the text labels alongside objects on display in the exhibition. Their opinions and thoughts were elevated to go alongside the voice of the curators, drawing on six sessions and three site visits. The exhibition was due to open in April 2020 but was then postponed to June 2021 due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Not all heritage sites feel welcoming to people. For those that perhaps have little engagement in arts and culture, or have been marginalised by society, sites of prestige and history can feel exclusionary. Their airs and graces, status and reputations can feel intimidating and designed to represent the elite of society.

In this project we worked as a team to ensure that sessions were not only informative, creative and reflective, but most of all comfortable and enjoyable. At the beginning I felt that it was important to bring my own lived experience to the group. It felt important to share my personal experience of being a man with a mental health history, and my relationship to exploring that through the arts, to build a sense of understanding and trust with others.

As the output from this participatory project involved writing the curatorial labels, the sessions focused on a number of creative writing activities. The men did not necessarily have any experience in creative writing; in fact some had literacy difficulties and English was not their first language, but we framed the sessions around heritage and its inspiration that could fuel their creative outputs.

The participants were treated with the utmost respect, having private sessions with HRP's invaluable knowledgeable curators, trips to other heritage sites and access to hidden archives. The men were given a clear history of Kew Palace and George's life, with ample time to ask questions not just about George, but the architecture and site itself. In between these talks from experts the men engaged in an array of creative writing activities, including:

- their reflections on what important objects must have meant to George III. Then what important objects have meant to them and their mental health throughout their lives;
- letters to George III about their thoughts on mental health in the King's lifetime, and reflections on contemporary mental health today;
- poetry about the architectural site of Kew Palace, George III's home.

Many of these activities provoked in-depth and reflective conversation about changing attitudes towards mental health, often carrying on into more casual chats over the lunch that was provided. It was often noted that this was a space to feel heard, and the men knew that their contributions to the curatorial texts were a valuable part of the overall exhibition curation.

We were able to take the group on outings too, to Windsor Castle and The Royal College of Physicians to view objects from the collections such as George's doctor's letters. At Windsor Castle our participants were able to have private tours of HRP's archives, revealing clothing worn by King George III, and witness conservationists restoring items of clothing. Librarians brought out precious books, artwork and objects that belonged to George for them to view. It was a genuinely exciting visit that felt like stepping into a secret world hidden away.

Photo courtesy of Daniel Regan.



The project did not feel like it was 'mining' participants for their stories but valuing their lived experience as a key part of a reputable and established organisation's exhibition. The men's feedback about what they wanted more of and less of was a key part of the development of the project. They were valued with the effort put into the visits to sites and by curators and staff to help them get the most from the project.

At the end of the sessions I designed a book that combined their creative writing work (beyond the curatorial labels), alongside my own photographs made throughout the duration of the project. I had the pages printed and we purchased bookbinding kits. At Hampton Court Palace I held a bookbinding session where participants hand stitched their own books documenting their experience. For those that couldn't make it we bound theirs and sent them in the post, a memento of their participation and contribution to a mental health exhibition with a difference.

Museum of London Archaeology

BY MAGNUS COPPS

Museum of London Archaeology (MOLA) is an independent charitable company whose main purpose is to provide archaeological and built-heritage expertise to the construction and heritage sectors and public education in archaeology. Formerly part of the Museum of London, MOLA became an independent charity in 2011. It promotes active discovery through partnership and participation, widening access to and appreciation of heritage, and achieves lasting public benefit through research and education programmes with a wide range of audiences.

MOLA has found the most successful approach is to start with an open conversation with partner groups and organisations about what the major concerns or desires of participants are, using that as a base to build and propose activities – this empowers people from the outset, something that has a positive effect in itself.

Much of the value for participants in the work MOLA does stems from changing their relationship to their environment. This might be through discovering unique spaces like the massively underused Thames foreshore, where MOLA run volunteering activities through its Thames Discovery Programme (funded by Thames Water 2020-21). Available to anyone at low tide and rich with archaeological finds and features, visiting the foreshore has had measurably positive wellbeing effects on participants as well as inspiring curiosity and creative endeavours. The Programme has trained a total of 700 volunteers and in the year to February 2020 the mental health specific programme worked with 80 Londoners who identified as experiencing mental health difficulties, and 400 Londoners in total.

“Every time I leave the street level for the foreshore I am impressed and delighted by total change of the environment. How very different the foreshore feels from the street level. Even the wind is different, the Thames itself looks different, swirling and eddying – it suddenly feels as elemental as standing on a mountain.”

Thames Discovery Programme Volunteer, 2018

MOLA's Built Heritage Youth Engagement Project (2016-2019, funded by the Andrew Lloyd Webber Foundation) offered young people in the youth justice system new ways to understand a street they walk down every day by learning more about the age, construction, and uses of the buildings along it. When participants started looking in greater detail at the influences on design, evidence of change and the social and cultural significance of buildings, they often reported feeling that they were experiencing their surroundings from a new perspective. By extension, participants also find new ways of placing or seeing themselves in relation to these environments. Built Heritage Youth Engagement was delivered in small groups of between three and six participants per cohort, in three London boroughs.

Archaeological investigations also always have human lives at their centre, and as the projects glimpse these past lives with our participants, this offers opportunities for self-reflection. Participants consider how their experience of the world today affects how they interpret evidence of the past. Further, participants find it rewarding that they are producing useful, valuable knowledge that has application in wider research.



CITiZAN archaeologists recording 19th century Hooe Lake vessels, Plymouth. Photo © CITiZAN.

“The archaeology week with MOLA was, without a doubt, my favourite part of the Prince’s Trust programme. I am grateful to have been able to experience this with friends, in a safe place where everybody was welcoming and showed passion for their work.”

Audrie, Built Heritage Youth Engagement Programme participant, 2019

“It makes me feel useful, and I love the river and the history of London. I keep learning things, and it keeps me active. And I have made good friends.”

Thames Discovery Programme Volunteer, 2019

From a wellbeing perspective, MOLA has identified a range of benefits to participants. Fieldwork provides a focus of concentration

which can prevent rumination and intrusive, upsetting thoughts; it can provide gentle physical exercise; sites are often out of doors and therefore provide sunlight and fresh air; and activities are most often done in groups providing a team focus which provides positive social interactions.

Summarising and sharing knowledge are also an essential part of MOLA’s work, a necessarily imaginative and creative act as well as one that involves engaging critically with different sources of information from artefacts to oral history accounts. The charity co-produces and co-designs public outputs like pop-up exhibitions with participants, and offers opportunities like the Coastal and Intertidal Zone Archaeological Network (funded by NLHF, Lloyd’s Register Foundation, National Trust and Historic England) annual conference where volunteers can build confidence by sharing their own experiences and research.

“It’s fun mastering new skills and practicing them when you have a purpose. The skills themselves aren’t too taxing although the awkward positions you have to get into can be challenging.”

Thames Discovery Programme Volunteer, 2018

MOLA is committed to continuing this work and mobilising it in service of pandemic recovery in the coming years. The Covid-19 pandemic and successive lockdowns have had a significant impact on how communities perceive and relate to the places that they live in, the extent of which cannot yet be fully appreciated. MOLA has proved its participatory models and a focus on creative outputs can help to develop and shape aspirations for the future as well as understandings of the past and we are currently looking to develop a suite of new projects doing this around themes, including climate change and the transatlantic slave trade.

Waterloo Uncovered: Veteran Support Programmes

BY KATIE BUCKLEY AND ELLY STEINBERG

Waterloo Uncovered (WU) is a ground-breaking charity that supports Veterans and Serving Military Personnel (VSMP), many of whom have experienced mental or physical impacts from their service, with their recovery and wellbeing. It was established in 2015 to investigate and preserve the heritage of the 1815 battlefield of Waterloo in Belgium, in combination with providing support for veterans and serving military personnel. The charity has grown rapidly since, providing over 5,000 archaeology months and developing a 12-month programme delivered by professional welfare specialists.

WU was created with three essential aims:

1. To support VSMP, providing those who have served their country with the support they deserve when they need it most.
2. To investigate and preserve the archaeological heritage of the Waterloo battlefield before all traces are lost forever; and adding new understanding to the military history of this decisive conflict.
3. To provide formal education, informal learning and public engagement that broadens the understanding of war and its impact on people, both today and in the past.

At the point of the first lockdown in March 2020, WU's 2020 cohort of VSMP had already been interviewed and selected for a Support Programme. Usually this 12-month programme centres around a two-week excavation on the Waterloo battlefield in Belgium, but Covid-19 made this impossible to implement. Having committed to supporting these individuals, WU instead created a 12-week Virtual Programme, based on a combination of a successful 2019

pilot programme and the knowledge and expertise gained during the charity's five years of work.

The virtual support programme ran from May to July 2020. It was based on five pillars that WU has identified as key targets: Recovery (physical and mental); Health and wellbeing; Transition to civilian life; Education; Employment and vocation. The WU team turned round an online programme that supported more than 26 VSMP from the UK, two VSMP from The Netherlands and an additional two VSMP from the USA. The aims were to reduce social isolation, increase engagement, provide a distraction from the pandemic, and to educate participants about archaeological techniques, the Battle of Waterloo and what WU does as a charity.

To meet these aims, the Virtual Programme was constructed methodically in the following way. Educational archaeological content, set within a virtual team environment, was built towards a community test-pitting activity. Over 70 hours of tailored content was produced and managed by the WU Comms Team, in collaboration with WU's partner organisations **L-P: Archaeology** and the **University of Glasgow**. WU additionally partnered with the **British Museum**, the **National Army Museum** and **Wessex Archaeology** for bespoke content and virtual museum trips. In order to replicate the experience that VSMP have 'on site' in Belgium, archaeological supervisors headed up smaller 'virtual trench teams' to offer focused educational support during interactive group activities and to foster a sense of community. By working with the University of Utrecht, VSMP participating in the Virtual Programme were eligible for an ECT Credit¹⁴ on completion

¹⁴ European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) | Education and Training (europa.eu).

of the *Battlefields Uncovered* course, which ran in parallel to the Virtual Programme and has been completed by ten VSMP from the UK.

Wellbeing support was embedded throughout the programme. Emails were sent to participants at the end of every week, “Wellbeing Office Hours” were available to everyone every Monday, and WU’s Wellbeing and Support Team were available whenever required. In order to track the wellbeing of our participants and to reflect on the effectiveness of the Virtual Programme, WU used a two-pronged approach they have previously found effective; repeated wellbeing scores using the Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS), in combination with goal-setting for what beneficiaries hoped to achieve by attending the programme and a review of whether these goals had been met.

One participant felt that the Programme was a “whole rounded product” and for it to have been put together at such short notice was “phenomenal”.

“ Programme was well structured, easy to navigate and easily accessible. ”

“ [Programme has helped] keep me sane and balanced. ”

Waterloo Uncovered participants

Another participant commented that the programme “felt like a ‘virtual’ hug all of the time” and he felt comfortable knowing that he could ring the team if he needed to.

The Virtual Programme demonstrated the amazing ability of WU staff to work flexibly and collaboratively, producing something that positively impacted on people’s lives in a time of great uncertainty – and that should not be underestimated. WU’s ability to engage both participants and the wider public expanded rapidly during this period – with over 650,000 new views on the redesigned YouTube channel

Photo © Chris van Houts.



and website. Going forward, all WU's work should be as accessible as possible, both online and physically.

The Virtual Programme was created and run in response to Covid-19 and although it has exceeded expectations and offered support for VSMP in unprecedented times, it is not a replacement for the traditional Programme. Running things online did cause teething problems – onboarding participants remotely was tricky, but by the end of Week 3 of the Programme everyone had mastered the system and sticking to a clearly defined timetable avoided unnecessary stress and confusion. WU is proud of its ability to foster a sense of belonging through the online teams, but also aware that the lack of a physical excavation and spending two weeks away with the group was detrimental to relationship-building. Despite this, several VSMP from 2020 remain firm friends and will be joining new programmes in 2021. WU is hoping to support at least 28 UK VSMP in 2021, as well as three German participants and three Dutch participants. All 2021 programmes are tailored to specific themes – The Battle of Waterloo, Archaeology, Creative Activities (including drawing, multimedia arts and creative writing) – and include elements of mindfulness and a focus on wellbeing. Each is run in an intensive six-week online block, followed by regular contact throughout the rest of the year.

During the development of the Virtual Programme, WU benefitted, as ever, from collaborations with partners and organisations such as the British Museum and University of Utrecht. This has reinforced interest in collaborating as widely as possible to improve the programmes and provision. Meanwhile, while the programme was tailored to benefitting the VSMP that WU supports, the frameworks used this year to deliver public engagement, content, build relationships and support wellbeing remotely could be used for other groups of participants outside the sector.

CASE STUDIES

Archives



Archival photo of Emily Pope, a Victorian patient at Bethlem Hospital. Photo courtesy of Museum of the Mind.

Belfast Exposed: Open Eyes photography workshops

BY MERVYN SMYTH AND DEIRDRE ROBB

Belfast Exposed is Northern Ireland's (NI) leading photography organisation. Its vision is to enrich people's lives through photography. It was founded in 1983 by a group of local photographers in order to challenge media representation of the city's experience of conflict, and its work continues to reflect a socially engaged ethos while responding to contemporary currents in photography.

Belfast Exposed has four galleries exhibiting work by local and internationally renowned photographers, as well as an extensive archive of one million images. Belfast Exposed engages with local communities, schools and other organisations, delivering co-designed community programmes, therapeutic photography projects, career development training and educational programmes for young people. Working with both the statutory and voluntary sectors, Belfast Exposed delivers a bespoke therapeutic photography practice for individuals and groups who experience mental health issues. This is delivered in both primary (health and social care trusts) and secondary (voluntary and community sector) areas of engagement.

Open Eyes was a project funded by Comic Relief Global Health Matters and managed by Community Foundation for Northern Ireland (CFNI). It engaged with 40 participants over six months of weekly therapeutic photography workshops. The participants experienced a wide range of mental health issues relating to addictions, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), personality disorders, and lives affected by suicide.

One participant was suffering from PTSD stemming from his 25 years as a soldier during the Northern Irish Troubles. He was referred to Belfast Exposed by **WAVE Trauma Centre** and had previously undertaken basic photography workshop sessions with Belfast Exposed, gaining new skills and engaging with others. It was evident that he enjoyed photography and was progressing well. However, with the introduction of Covid-19 restrictions, he suffered a mental and physical breakdown, requiring medical intervention as he lost the power in his shoulders and hands due to mental health issues. During his recovery, Belfast Exposed continued working with him through tailored one-to-one engagement – initially via telephone, then moving to Zoom. This way of working allowed him to retake power and control of his journey through the use of an online platform and blended learning using imagery, short videos, sharing work and regular critiques.

Using images from Belfast Exposed Archive as a starting point, the participant was able to identify his former work as a soldier in the border area of Northern Ireland, revealing the dangers and stressful experiences that affected him profoundly. Through conversations around these images, he gained confidence in the tutor and proposed to focus on archive images as a Troubles legacy project. The use of archive images in Belfast Exposed was a safe place for the participant to visually revisit these places. Seeing the images for the first time was in itself a challenge, as these were locations that he patrolled when on duty. They held much anxiety and fear relating to the memories that contributed significantly to his mental health issues. Through the camera lens the participant was enabled to make decisions and control what he wanted to view and the



Photo of Forkhill, County Armagh taken by Jim. Photo courtesy of Jim/Belfast Exposed.

picture he decided to frame. The participant used this same process to take control of his thoughts and memories of the locations, with a realisation of how they have altered literally and metaphorically. There was a renewed acceptance of the past events in his life.

Throughout the project, the participant engaged in three levels of support – conversations around his stories and memories (helping to co-design the project); regular photography tasks (keeping active and learning new skills); and face-to-face location photography (coming to terms with the reality of the present and identifying changes in his life).

Overall, interviews with project participants identified a diverse range of impacts, including enjoyment of taking part in the project; reduced levels of stress and anxiety; building friendships and support from peers; positive impacts on self-confidence; better resilience; and greater awareness of the benefits of engaging in photography projects that support positive changes in mental health.

“The new images taken by the participant are both beautiful and revealing, he created a portrait of himself from within using the camera to capture the beauty in places where he had always held dark places for him.”

Belfast Exposed tutor

“ The Belfast Exposed photography course has let me see the how things can change, Belfast Exposed should undertake this course will all those ex-personnel who feel you could do it, this has really changed my mind and view, all those years of thinking about this place as a landscape I had to navigate my way through in fear, that was causing me harm, has now changed, I now see the beauty of the border landscapes, I am more at ease within myself, this is all thanks to Belfast Exposed. ”

Belfast Exposed participant

As an organisation, Belfast Exposed learned that regular and consistent contact with participants was vital to support their mental health. A combination of imagery and conversations opens up possibilities for exploring memory and anxieties, and group activity works well (although in some cases one-to-one support is needed – for example, when participants are suffering from PTSD). Overall, the process of taking a photograph allows participants to take control of decision-making, which can relate directly to other decision-making in their lives. The process naturally builds resilience, creating actively engaged participants. Peer-to-peer support occurred unexpectedly and created added value for the programme. There is, however, a need for programmes to be considered on a long-term basis rather than short funding cycles.

Looking forward, Belfast Exposed would like to build a strong communication plan to share their experiences more widely with the public and the sector. They will build strategic partnerships with both health and social care trusts and the voluntary sector. They will also focus on succession planning (sharing of skills/training), securing longer-term funding, and creating programmes that seek best practice in the engagement of photography and mental health.

Bethlem Museum of the Mind: Change Minds Online

BY AMY MOFFAT

Bethlem Museum of the Mind (MotM) records the lives and experiences, and celebrates the achievements of, of people with mental health problems. Over the period of May to August 2020, the Museum took part in the **Norfolk Record Office/Restoration Trust** 'Change Minds' project and worked with participants to research the lives of some of the Victorian patients of Bethlem Royal Hospital. This resulted in write-ups of these lives on the MotM blog, and an exhibition of creative responses.

Change Minds is an ongoing project that encourages the use of archives to help improve wellbeing. The Museum of the Mind had already been considering how to run a version of the project with South London and Maudsley NHS Trust (SLaM) service users for much of 2018-2019. This was always intended to take place at the museum as a face-to-face project. However, when Covid-19 hit it moved online. Working together, the Archivist, David Luck, and the Learning and Outreach Officer, Amy Moffat, planned a 10-week 'online outreach' project to work with voluntary participants to examine the lives of patients at Bethlem Royal Hospital in the Victorian era. The aim was to create a space where participants could learn about and try new things, share understanding and meet other people. This hits at least three of the components of the 'wheel of wellbeing'¹⁵ – in this case, to 'keep learning', 'give' and 'connect with others'.

Planning the project took approximately a month and a half; this included time to create consent forms, put safeguarding measures in place and create welcome packs. Part of this process was guided by information from the Change Minds Good Practice guide, which

had been put together by the Restoration Trust and Norfolk Record Office based on their previous experience.

Each participant was to choose and research one Victorian patient from Bethlem. MotM's patient records have already been digitised and are available for all (with a membership) on the genealogy website Find my Past. Ahead of the first meeting, MotM chose a sample of 20 Victorian patients with the criteria that they had to have a picture, and ideally were discharged from the hospital as 'well' or 'cured'. Having a photograph helped to create that instant human connection; at least one of the participants chose based on the image (e.g. "they look so young"). All the sessions were run via Zoom.

Participants included a mix of volunteers from the museum and Bethlem Gallery, SLaM staff and members of the public, and some of the group disclosed experience of using mental health services. Within the group there were varying levels of experience in relation to using archival material for research. The project started with the basics so that everyone coming on board would be at the same level. The first few sessions sought to guide participants through the research process, such as discussing the information that can be found in patient records, looking at other data such as census records and generally contending with the palaeography. This led into a session looking at how to write up research, and a plenary for everyone to discuss the lives they had found out about.

Participants were then encouraged to make a 'creative response' to their work. As with the research element, some participants had not previously had the opportunity to take part in creative activities, with some emphasising they were "not artists". To help encourage



“Façade” based on the life of Arundel Shoard, a Bethlem patient. Photo courtesy of Museum of the Mind.

their creativity, the group was led through a session discussing different art forms called Cake and Conversation, and a writing session, where they were invited to take part in creative writing challenges. The participants were then encouraged to have a go at making their own creative response in whatever form they chose, and the last session saw the group sharing their works with one another.

“The project was fascinating and stretched my abilities and confidence as never had any work exhibited in this kind of exhibition before ... I am glad I took part and think the exhibition is very powerful.”

Participant, Change Minds Online

All the work created by the participants culminated in an online exhibition, which was put together using Kunstmatrix. This enabled a virtual ‘room’ where the participants’ creative pieces were placed alongside the photo of their historic figure, with a label for their own interpretation and a link to their research write-up. The exhibition was online for approximately seven months, and was promoted through the Museum’s website and social media.

Undertaking a digital community outreach project was a first for MotM and it completely surpassed expectations, mostly because of the overwhelmingly positive response from the participants. From the beginning it was emphasised that the people being researched were not just “Bethlem patients”, but that this was a snapshot of possibly the

hardest year of that person's life. Participants bought in to that idea to the extent that they started repeating it back. Everyone involved built a real connection with the person they were researching, and this helped to make it a success.

“I was dubious initially about the creative aspect of the project. However, not only did I have the opportunity to try something totally outside of my comfort zone I realised that the “investigative” part of the process had left me with feelings and emotions that I was able to channel into the creative work. I feel this was an essential part of the project for me as I have been able to have closure on my patient. ”

Participant, Change Minds Online

During the project, consistency was key; everyone preferred to keep sessions to the same time and day each week. This was especially important to people during the first lockdown, as it helped to add some much-needed structure in an uncertain time. However, as with all good projects, flexibility was also important, and although there was a strict deadline for everyone's final creative work, the sessions and timings leading up to that were flexible.

Although the sessions were officially led by museum staff, as the volunteers' knowledge and confidence increased, the sessions naturally became more participant led. To help with the shared learning outside of the sessions, there was a shared folder that participants could contribute to, for example useful websites they found or to add definitions for terms in the casebooks. Unplanned but prompted by participants, MotM also created an e-mail chain for those who had given permission which they could use to get in touch outside the sessions, but which included museum staff for safeguarding issues. Something for further thought in the future.

The planning stages involved a lot of 'what if' scenarios – what if there aren't many participants? What if they drop out? What if they write a blog and don't want to make a creative piece? However, these worries were unfounded and the volunteers produced a fantastic bulk of work that resulted in an engaging exhibition. When Change Minds runs again, MotM would like to have a bigger celebration at the end of the project to congratulate everyone involved and to recognise their work. The publicity also wasn't planned, which resulted in staff rapidly working together in late August to create social media posts. In future iterations, this will be planned from the very beginning.

Owing to the success of the Change Minds Online project, the MotM is now planning to run the sessions again in Autumn 2021 and has secured funding to do so. Whereas the 2020 iteration worked with a mixed group, it will hopefully be mostly SLaM service users in the next stage which will mean tapping into the Museum's networks within SLaM. Working with a service user group will bring different challenges, for example access to the required technology, so MotM will be working with staff within the Trust to manage these obstacles. The Museum also hopes to, at least in part, run the next iteration in situ at the museum, as was envisioned in a pre-COVID world.

Chilli Studios & partners: Heads & Tales

BY JOANNE MICHELLE BURKE

“It’s all part of our long-term reclaiming the languages of lunacy – refusing to be silenced, re-writing narratives, laughing at top-down narratives – reclaiming human rights.”

Gobscure, Exhibiting Artist with Heads & Tales, 2019

Heads & Tales was a two-year community research and engagement project that culminated in a **new people’s digital mental health archive for the North East**. The archive explores, rebalances and celebrates the voices of people experiencing mental health conditions. This project actively valued the importance of peer support principles in mental health and the shared experience of mental illness, hence it was shaped and led by participants, volunteers and staff who are directly and indirectly affected by mental health conditions.

On average, 67 per cent of participants were living with mental ill health or a disability. There were 2,217 participants and 627 volunteers engaging a total audience of 9,756 people. The project was made possible through funding from The National Lottery Heritage Fund and National Lottery Players. Collaboration is deeply important to this project and the team worked with a range of exciting partners across sectors in the North East, including **Chilli Studios, ReCoCo collective** (including the **Recovery College** and **Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust**), **Disability North, Mind, Time to Change, Newcastle Libraries, Northumbria University MAD Studies, We are our Media** and the **North East Art Studios Partnership**.

Over the two years the project ran a diverse, engaging and busy programme. We organised residencies with **Tyne and Wear Museums**; hosted a cross-sector conference discussing creative legacies of heritage and mental health; ran a series of digital, archive and arts workshops; supported skills development in audio histories, podcasts, journalism, Wikipedia, mental health and speaking out about personal narratives and experience; and created supportive frameworks and learning resources, as well as holding numerous exhibitions and events across the North East. Each area was supported and evaluated by a peer-led steering group, with Disability North’s support. Sessions and their output were documented and gathered to create a living and growing archive.

“Through the Heads & Tales archive initiative, creative practice is shown and observed here to be both freeing and empowering, as well as life-affirming, moving and creatively disquieting, despite the complexity and challenge of people’s individual circumstances and conditions. And the archive material testifies to this aliveness with so many diverse and exciting images, objects, poems, songs and observations, all brought together to create a new and bold mental health narrative, one which never ceases to be challenging, expressive, informative, dynamic and alive.”

Steering group member and participant of Heads & Tales, 2020



Researching a patient's sketchbook at St Nicholas' Hospital. Photo courtesy of Heads & Tales/Chilli Studios.

Heads & Tales was led by the mental health and arts charity Chilli Studios – a creative community, space and service for those experiencing mental health conditions. The knowledge and history that Chilli Studios holds, especially around the ethical peer-led approach, really enabled this project expand and become flexible to honestly support people and collectively create the project and archive. Mental health by its very nature is a fluctuating thing and the team were able to build in extra space and supportive time to really involve the community at its heart – to be able to step back and take those important moments to breathe, concentrate on personal wellbeing then re-engage again when the time was right for the team and participants.

The archive serves as a snapshot of mental health in the present day (2016-2020) but also contains information and interesting items from the ancient to the Victorian to the contemporary in numerous forms including audio stories, interviews, poems, films, artworks, journals, photos, music, newspaper articles, timelines, museum and historical material.

“I felt that writing from a 21st century standpoint in response to three women living their committal and confinement a hundred years ago was, for me, a way of making a meaningful personal and subjective connection between then and now.”

Deborah B, Heads & Tales participant 2019

“ There has been a positive change in how archive/museums are perceived and our working partnerships through this project. Independent visits by individuals after the Heads & Tales sessions were great regarding interest in museums and personal self-confidence for those individuals. Also, our staff have had time to reflect and realise the value of their own transferable skills and experience of mental health and supporting others and have utilised them well in the project. ”

Zoe Brown, Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums, 2019

Tyne and Wear Museums and Archives (TWAM) worked closely, openly and sensitively with the Heads & Tales project and the people involved. Two three-month artist residencies were held at TWAM with Nelli Stavropoulou and Lalya Gaye (with a brilliant team of volunteers, peer group and staff). This resulted in a collection of valuable audio comments, narratives and creative responses from participants adding important perspectives to the voiceless patients of the past, as well as reflections of differences and similarities in personal stories and lives today. Combining the archive items with contemporary reflections of people experiencing mental health conditions gives a voice to past marginalised groups and promotes transparency of historic practices.

Future plans are afoot to gift the digital archive to local and national museum services; hold an exhibition with the Wakefield Mental Health Museum in 2022; and to carry on local collaborative projects involving the steering group and community.

The growing collection of 500+ archive items online can be freely explored at www.headntales.uk. A people's archive should rightfully be a living and growing one, so do remember to check back for more items to be uploaded soon!

Finding the Dollyness of Dolly

BY DOLLY SEN

Where am I? Where am I? Where am I in the world? As a mental health patient, I feel disjointed, displaced, pushed out, demonised, not part of the world. Very few people will listen to what I say because according to them my words, my opinions are part of my sickness. It is a degraded identity, nobody aspires to it, it is in no one's dreams for the future. The narrative of my life didn't belong to me. My story did not have my truth in it.

In 2002 I decided to write my memoir about my life and struggles with psychosis. To do this, I obtained my medical notes to help me write about my time in the mental health system. I was shocked when I read it: it was an awful, devastating experience. I could not recognise myself. Truth was not in my medical notes. Apart from factual inaccuracies such as being anything from 4ft 8 to 5ft 10, and interchangeable ethnicities, you don't know my story at all. You get observable data of an unobservable world. There was no room for beauty, no right to humanity, you could not see the Dollyness of Dolly.

My memoir, *The World is Full of Laughter*¹⁶, published by Chipmunka Publishing in 2002, was one way of setting the record straight. It showed me that creativity was one way I could gain control of my narrative. Psychiatry does not get to dictate my narrative. Each act of creativity was taking a tiny part of my soul back. I realised I had to tell my story in any way possible. Creativity is my way of doing just that. Creativity can help you reclaim dignity, love, and freedom. It can make your world beautiful enough to save your soul. But my art is not therapy. It also wants to be used to fight unfairness, injustice and unnecessary hurt, and I began using it as activism to call out bad practice and demeaning ideas in psychiatry.

Move forward ten years I am being trained to be an Occupational Therapist. One of my practice placements was on a mental health team. When it was time to write notes about the patients I worked with, I was not allowed to bring them to life or gift them with their own humanity. I was told to start again and be objective. How can you be objective in psychiatry when almost everything about it is linked to value judgements and reduced to symptoms of pathology. I left my OT degree soon after, feeling disillusioned.

In 2013, I helped Anna Sexton, an archivist doing her PhD work at the **Wellcome Collection**, explore their mental health archives. She found the survivor voice only made up less than ten per cent of the archives. That discovery brought archives into my creativity and activism. I took part in her study of the archives to undertake an experiment in truth and how it is arrived at. I did not like the silence of those being pathologised or the arrogance of those who claimed they knew what was going on in other people's heads without even the courtesy of even being kind to that person's head. The hidden song from the perspective of the individual was lost or never valued in the first place. This is particularly true for groups discriminated against in society who have also been known to the subject of institutionalised discrimination from psychiatry, such as gay people, women, people of colour, and so on.

Most professionals may know the climate of madness, and its mountains, but they have never climbed them. They might even know its language, but they will always speak with an accent, and so much is lost in translation. At the core of my practice is the belief that if you take the beauty out of a human being, you dehumanise them. That is one of the biggest failings of the work of psychiatry. Why should the people who've never visited a land be that

¹⁶ chipmunkapublishing.co.uk/shop/index.php?main_page=product_info&products_id=214.

country's prime historians? I think any mental health archive is incomplete until those who have been labelled 'mad' tell their side.

I moved to Great Yarmouth from London in 2016. It didn't take long for me to hear about Lorina Bulwer. Lorina was a British needleworker who created embroidered furies on discarded pieces of materials whilst in a workhouse lunatic ward. She created several of these samplers of needlework, which gained some infamy after she died. Some of these pieces can now be found in the Norwich Castle Museum. During the Covid-19 lockdown, researching her life and writing her story for a pamphlet become one of my pandemic projects. With a little bit of digging online, I found out where she was buried and was able to add missing info to her Wikipedia page. Lotte LS, who runs Red Herring Press¹⁷, based in Great Yarmouth, commissioned me to write a pamphlet about Lorina. I snapped up the chance. The pamphlet is a paean to the pained, a eulogy for the excluded, for the people who have been hurt by the world and then hated by the world. The term ugly is a weapon of humans. What does a flower, a rock or a bird care for the word 'ugly'? The human uses the term to its fullest potential. I insist on beauty and that why I am filling the holes in mental health archives as part of my activism.

Luckily, I have been given funding by Unlimited to do this at the Wellcome Archives for my project 'Birdsong from Inobservable Worlds'¹⁸. The project will offer three publications and three performances. The publications will be survivor accounts of the mental health system, exploring the impact of being pathologised.

It is time for those deemed ugly to allow beauty into their story, and those deemed broken to show how strong they really are. The right to tell our story belongs to all of us. Let's fill the silences that are screaming to be heard.

Dolly Sen is a London-born writer, filmmaker, artist, performer and activist. She is a disabled, working class queer, interested in disability and the madness given to us by the world. She currently resides in Norwich. She/They.

www.dollysen.com

¹⁷ redherringpress.bigcartel.com.

¹⁸ weareunlimited.org.uk/commission/dolly-sen-birdsong-from-inobservable-worlds.

The National Archives, the Black, African and Asian Therapy Network, and Stillpoint Spaces

BY IQBAL SINGH

The National Archives is a non-ministerial department, and the official archive and publisher for the UK Government, and for England and Wales. It is the guardian of over 1,000 years of iconic national documents. It is an expert advisor in information and records management and a cultural, academic and heritage institution. It fulfils a leadership role for the archive sector and works to secure the future of physical and digital records.

Two collaborative projects were conceived in 2019 in recognition that there was still much to do to address histories in relation to racism, colonialism and empire. This emotionally labour-intensive work needs to address both the facts that are uncovered and the feelings they provoke. Key to this is becoming aware of feelings we may have that, if not handled carefully, can distort our view of what happened and our ability to ultimately interpret the past in a way that does justice to the story. In light of the unprecedented changes and challenges over the course of 2020, this became altogether more urgent. The collaborations fostered over 2019-20 between researchers at The National Archives and psychotherapists at Stillpoint Spaces and the Black, African and Asian Therapy Network (BAATN) have aimed to kick-start important conversations as well as psychological processing of this important and challenging material.

Racism Past and Present

In collaboration with Stillpoint Spaces and counsellor and poetry therapist Charmaine Pollard, The National Archives developed a programme of workshops called 'Racism Past and Present'¹⁹. One of the aims of the workshop

series was to tell the long story of the black community in Britain from the end of the First World War though to the early 1970s.

The Stillpoint Spaces event was planned pre-Covid as a series of three workshops, aimed at a small number of participants, up to 20 per workshop. Two of the three workshops were delivered at Stillpoint Spaces offices and offered those attending a mixed evening of presentations, exercises and space to work together and individually. Underpinning the workshops has been a series of therapeutic interventions, led by Charmaine Pollard, which allowed those attending each workshop to have a space to process any emotional responses to the material from the archives. Following the standard invitation to ask the speaker questions about the history and archival materials, the workshop uniquely offered those attending a chance, with a therapist present, to start the necessary work of disentangling 'fact' from 'feeling'. Attendees were asked to say how they felt about what they had heard, and to also take part in a carefully crafted exercise to help channel these energies.

“Great evening, uncomfortable in the right way – thanks! ”

“Very thought provoking and moving information – thank you so much I'm very grateful! ”

“A rich event – only wish it was longer! ”

Feedback from attendees

¹⁹ blog.nationalarchives.gov.uk/racism-past-and-present-mixing-therapeutic-practice-with-archival-research.

Trauma, Resilience, Recovery²⁰

This collaboration between the Black, African and Asian Therapy Network (BAATN) and The National Archives led to an online workshop on the 83 years of Indian indentureship from 1834 to 1917. Using materials from The National Archives, the workshop explored the competing views of indentureship illustrated through visual material, diary entries, colonial reports and testimony, and also included time for personal reflection and discussion.

The BAATN event was mainly planned during the Covid-19 pandemic as a webinar with a Q&A. As soon as it was advertised there was overwhelming interest. The event was oversubscribed many times over, with 377 people booking a ticket.

The event was very successful with the vast majority scoring it 5 out of 5. Just over a quarter of the people taking part responded to a post event evaluation that provided valuable feedback:

“The workshop on Indian indentureship helped me understand the large-scale migration taking place from India in the late 19th-early 20th centuries. The presenters made the session informative and interactive. It was also great to hear from someone coming from a family with a history of indentured labour migration share her experiences and thoughts. Thanks for this great workshop!”

Participant

“A really urgent, moving area of research that I hope will develop and grow in awareness in history.”

“An illuminating and at times deeply mesmerising workshop professionally presented with careful consideration for all both past and present.”

Participants

Key to the feedback from participants in both projects was that going forward they wanted additional space and time to hear from one another: more personal stories and reflections, more dialogue between ‘records’, history and memory. And more experiential learning. The next stage in developing The National Archives’ practice, based on the trust developed with both BAATN and Stillpoint Spaces, and the experience of delivering an introductory programme, is to offer future participants longer workshops that are structured around spaces that allow more time for processing emotions. These same emotions can drive the search for answers, for example, through further historical/archival research and part of the next stages will be to enhance collaborations with cultural and archival institutions to support this follow-up.

Iqbal Singh, Regional Community Partnerships Manager, The National Archives.

Project Team: Iqbal Singh @beready4change; Eugene Ellis @baatnman; Aaron Balick @DrAaronB; Charmaine Pollard @calmurmind; Vidya Maharaj @roti.riot

²⁰ www.baatn.org.uk/national-archive-page.



1+1=2
PAIN TAKES HURT
1+1+1=4 TO CERVIX
1+1=2 TO MOUTH
NOTHING MOVES
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Heads & Tales exhibition. Photo courtesy of Heads & Tales.

Outside In: Exploring Collections

BY KATE DAVEY

Outside In is a catalyst for change. Founded in 2006, it is now an established national charity that aims to provide a platform for artists who face significant barriers to the art world due to health, disability, social circumstance or isolation. Outside In's work covers three main areas: artist development, exhibitions and training. These activities, supported by fundraising and communications, all aim to create a fairer art world by supporting artists, creating opportunities and influencing arts organisations.

Outside In's Exploring Collections course is part of the charity's training and professional development programme, Step Up, which is aimed at equipping artists facing barriers to the art world for reasons including health, disability, social circumstance or isolation with arts sector specific skills. Over the past three years, Outside In has been working with new partners to deliver its Exploring Collections courses, enabling artists to gain skills in research and interpretation in relation to specific collections and archives. Since 2017, Outside In has partnered with the **Wellcome Collection, Pallant House Gallery, West Dean College, Ditchling Museum, West Sussex Record Office, the Mental Health Museum, Glasgow Museums and Glenside Hospital Museum** to deliver ten-session courses that encourage artists to focus on a specific artist, object or theme from the collection or archive they are working with. They are then supported by an experienced course tutor to produce their own creative response; anything from a visual work to a piece of creative writing, a video, or a creative workshop pack. Several of the courses have resulted in exhibitions displaying the creative responses produced by course

participants, and participants are encouraged to talk about their research at informal sharing events.

The Museum Association's report, *Valuing Diversity: The Case for Inclusive Museums*²¹, notes that 'museum collections are often not interpreted from diverse viewpoints... Often the good work that comes out of projects is not used or displayed in the long term and therefore is inaccessible to people who would be interested in engaging with narratives that are relevant to their lived experience', and Arts Council England's 2019-2020 report, *Equality, Diversity and the Creative Case*²², found that just 7 per cent of people working for National Portfolio Organisations identified as disabled compared to 20 per cent of the working age population. The Exploring Collections course was created to challenge these statistics by providing opportunities for artists who face barriers to the art world to explore, engage with, and re-interpret museum and archive collections. The aim of the Step Up programme as a whole is to provide opportunities for artists who may be traditionally excluded from the art world to take up positions of authority, challenging the dominant narrative in the art world. The Exploring Collections course specifically enables artists from diverse backgrounds to provide new perspectives on existing objects and artworks.

“I have gained so much from taking risks and not knowing what I was doing. It's a nourishing and stimulating course that allows individuals to develop and blossom.”

²¹ *Valuing diversity: the case for inclusive museums*, The Museum Association, 2016. www.museumsassociation.org/campaigns/workforce/inclusion/valuing-diversity/#.

²² *Equality, Diversity and the Creative Case 2019-2020*, Arts Council England, 2021.

“My mind has been opened to new ideas and I feel I have grown in confidence and developed a new purpose and new directions in which to travel. I would wholeheartedly recommend it to anyone thinking about doing it.”

“I have gained an enormous amount of confidence and found a new purpose and joy in life. I was rather lost and felt I did not have anything to offer or look forward to in life. I feel full of possibilities and there is a future for me on this planet after all.”

Exploring Collections course participants

“Hosting a course with Step Up supported our drive to improve accessibility and inclusivity across the organisation. It was a pleasure to work with Outside In and the students’ response to the course and collection exceeded expectations.”

Host partner organisation

Eighty per cent of Exploring Collections course participants have said their confidence had increased as a result of taking part. 100 per cent agreed that their motivation had increased, and 80 per cent said that they felt more positive about themselves after taking part in an Exploring Collections course.

Research sharing event at the Wellcome Collection. Photo courtesy of Outside In.



Over the past few years, the Step Up programme has expanded to include more partner organisations from all over the UK. Partnership working is both incredibly beneficial and comes with challenges. Delivering a rigid course structure was no longer appropriate, and so each course is developed and delivered in close conversation with each partner organisation to create a bespoke iteration each time. Discussions around involvement from curators and collections managers is discussed in great detail prior to the start of the course, and there are regular check-ins throughout the course duration.

Outside In is flexible about how participants conduct and share their research, which can now be done via audio file or film if writing is a challenge. Support for artists is carefully considered, particularly when an Exploring Collections course is taking place with a collection that might include triggering or sensitive subject matter.

Outside In now invites previous Exploring Collections course participants to become Course Assistants on new courses to help the Course Tutor with participant support and to ensure we are able to consider and adapt our work to meet all participants' access needs. The move to digital during the Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted the need for this provision, particularly for artists who are unable to leave their homes or travel even under more normal global circumstances. Feedback has shown that online engagement is something the organisation needs to continue to provide even when restrictions have been lifted.

“ I personally thought that the online course was a huge success and it made it accessible for me. I am mainly housebound, getting on would be nigh on impossible for me. Plus knowing I was already home when the course was over each day was a relief for my energy. ”

Online participant

Outside In's ambitious National Lottery Heritage Funded project, 'Patient Artwork: New Dialogues', is now underway. This project brings together learning from previous work and collections of patient-created art, with the aim of providing opportunities for artists with their own lived experience of mental health issues to provide new perspectives on work created by people who historically may have spent time in a psychiatric hospital. The project aims to challenge who has the authority to talk about these types of collections – is it academics and medical professionals, or could it be those with their own lived experience? The project will see the development of a network of individuals and organisations looking to discover and share best practice in this area, concluding with three exhibitions in Spring 2022 in Bristol, Glasgow and Wakefield.

Outside In will continue to consider how it can provide a digital offer to artists moving forward. Exploration of hybrid events, sessions and courses is underway, enabling Outside In as a charity to engage with a larger number of artists based on their participation preferences.

West Sussex Record Office: Vawdrey Archive Project

BY JENNIFER MASON

The Vawdrey Archive Project was a Wellcome Trust-funded project that ran between September 2018 and March 2021. It was a partnership project between **West Sussex Record Office (WSRO)**, the County Record Office for West Sussex, and **Outside In**, a national charity that aims to provide a platform for artists who face significant barriers to the art world due to health, disability, social circumstance or isolation.

The Vawdrey Archive is a fascinating body of work comprising approximately 194 paintings produced by patients in art therapy sessions run by Dr Brian Vawdrey, and a copy of Vawdrey's illustrated thesis, *Art in Analysis*. The paintings span the years 1951 to 1971 and were produced by a number of different patients under Vawdrey's care, firstly at the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh and later at Graylingwell Hospital, Chichester, where Dr Vawdrey was a Senior Registrar, latterly consultant, from 1954 to 1985. The dissertation, submitted in 1953, makes specific reference to some of the artworks in the collection, including case histories and self-reflective commentary from the patients.

When Dr Vawdrey's archive was deposited with WSRO in 2014, it was recognised that this was an unusual record of early art therapy work with the potential to offer an important insight into the development of art therapy as a discipline and to encourage research and discussion around the definition of an artist and the ethical issues surrounding artworks produced by patients in a psychiatric setting.

In 2017, Outside In instigated a conversation with WSRO to discuss the potential for a funding application to the Wellcome Trust to make such a significant archive accessible. It was agreed that although staff at WSRO

had the skills to undertake the practical work on the archive, it was important for work to be informed by consultation with artists who had experience of mental health issues. This would help to reconnect the archive with people who are at some level representative of the artists who made the work and create a more nuanced catalogue.

“...a total privilege to work with those extraordinary paintings and with you all, thank you everyone for making it such a positive experience. I can honestly say that I've never been part of a group that has worked so well together over such a short space of time, and with so much mutual support and respect for everyone within it.”

Feedback from artist who worked on the project

The project aimed to open up access and inspire research into the Vawdrey Archive by cataloguing, preserving and digitising documents from the archive. A series of consultation sessions involving Outside In artists who had lived experience of mental health issues helped to enhance and enrich the catalogue – a new and innovative way of approaching medical and hospital archives. The discussions that took place at the consultation sessions, and with colleagues at the Wellcome, also fed into an exploration of the legal and ethical issues surrounding access to patient artworks. This informed decisions about whether or not to make the patient artworks available online. A subsite was created on the Outside In website to share the outputs from the project and learning from the project was shared through two events,



Photo courtesy of West Sussex Record Office.

blog posts, and a summary report. A further outcome, which had not been anticipated in the original project plan, was that the artists produced their own works in response to the art therapy paintings. These works were showcased at an end of project event and on the Vawdrey subsite.

“I feel so privileged to have been part of this project. A huge part of this has been meeting you all, creatively rich artists, supportive, fun, and hugely wonderful beings all round... The art, oh my goodness the art!!! Yum, yum, yum!!! The dissertation, the visitors, the discussions and everything else has been imprinted upon me. It will be forever present and that is such an incredible gift.”

“The really enjoyable part of the project is all the discussion. I like hearing the different parts...The artwork has really inspired me...I would recommend this project or something like it to other artists, it's nice I've had the chance to do it”

Feedback from artists who worked on the project

Learning points

This was a very new type of project for both WSRO and Outside In and it evolved as it progressed. As a result, there were a number of learning points which could be taken forward to future projects.

Before the project starts:

- Ensure that sufficient time and resources have been allocated to the work and to build this in at an early stage when planning the project budget.

- Think about what different parties are gaining from involvement in a project. Decide whether participation will be paid or voluntary ahead of planning your budget.
- Ensure that all practical costs of running workshops are considered and included in the project budget (e.g. travel, catering, fees for external speakers, room hire).
- Aim to discuss the legislative, ethical, regulatory and legal aspects of the archive you are working with at an early stage in a reasonable level of detail. This will help you to understand what you may or may not be able to do with a collection before committing to sharing work.
- Ensure that roles and responsibilities are clear from the outset. Consider a partnership agreement to help to achieve this.

Participants:

- The interview process for potential participants needs to be as accessible as possible to open it up to a diverse range of people.
- It is important to think about the powerful and potentially troubling as well as positive impacts of exposure to difficult and challenging archives and how the project will support those affected.
- The group Google Doc proved to be a great source of support for the artists and in future projects it would be worth seeing if it is possible set up an online forum or Moodle page specifically for project participants.

Practicalities:

- Think about locations and use of space. Where will you hold workshops? How will the workshops and events and an influx of new users/visitors impact staff and other activities taking place in the organisation? Does your chosen location have all of the facilities you need?
- Think about the support and assistance which may be needed when running activities. Do you have sufficient help and how will this potentially affect other staff or service commitments?
- Organise dates for big events and meetings thoughtfully and well in advance to ensure maximum attendance/benefit.
- Think carefully about the purpose and desired outcomes of different events and choose attendees, location, and content accordingly.
- Liaise and communicate with project partners over media, press, outreach and agree a strategy. Ensure all voices are heard.

CASE STUDIES

Local history



ArtatWork

BY MELANIE TILFORD AND HOLLY SANDIFORD

ArtatWork in Norfolk combines the arts with heritage and nature in both longer-term projects and one-off sessions. It delivers training in arts and wellbeing to artists and organisations. As a working-class and women-led organisation, we are well placed to understand the challenges faced by the local community. Project participants number around 10-12 (with 12 being the maximum at their indoor venue due to current restrictions) and they pay £3 each per session.

ArtatWork uses the arts to improve mental health and wellbeing, working with a wide range of people and communities. We founded ArtatWork because of a deep belief in the capacity of art, heritage, and community to improve mental health. After studying Art and Wellbeing degrees together, we knew that with our combined experience, skills, and passion we could create an organisation that truly reflected our values. We find that refocusing people's attention towards creativity is a powerful tool during challenging times. Being involved in creative projects can both help participants maintain an equilibrium and provides opportunities to move forward from difficult thoughts.

Combining the arts with local heritage is especially effective in terms of improving mental health and creating a sense of belonging. Using the visual as a heritage research tool acts as a bridge for those less confident with traditional text-based research. Encouraging mutual care and support between participants is also important to ArtatWork and projects are designed to build independence over co-dependence. The strength lies not in ArtatWork supporting participants, but in supporting relationships between participants which have the potential to last a lifetime.

“I value the group so much, it has helped to keep and extend friendships. I feel more comfortable in this group than I do with my friends, people who I've known for years.”

Participant

Co-production is central to ArtatWork's ethos. One example is a six-month project called Slippers to Stilettos that worked with women with mental health issues to creatively research Norwich's shoe industry. The women organised and invigilated an exhibition of the beautiful visual research they created during the project. The aim was to boost wellbeing and for the women to bring local heritage to life for others to enjoy and understand. It also challenged negative narratives surrounding mental health and enabled participants to contribute to and feel valued by their community.

Both quantitative and qualitative evaluation data show a significant improvement to wellbeing for participants, who were encouraged to take a leap and try experiences they might otherwise have considered too 'highbrow' or 'not for them'. Incorporating art into the project helped many make the transition, as did choosing a topic likely to spark interest – shoes being a perfect example! Both organisers and participants found that after working on the project they had gained research skills and looked at their familiar city in new ways, making them feel more integrated into their community.

“Slippers to Stilettos is an exemplary heritage and wellbeing pilot, participants have really enjoyed extending their knowledge and creativity in the context of a friendly, safe group, and the project is inclusive and people-led. Members of the group have contributed to the heritage of Norwich by making oral histories, through personal and group research, and by creating beautiful artwork that illuminates the story of the city’s shoe industry in new imaginative ways.”

Laura Drysdale of the Restoration Trust

Being practical and community-based, Covid-19 had a big impact on ArtatWork, though the organisation learned to adapt quickly. The limitations posed invited us to consider new ways of reaching people in their community. Sessions were delivered

online, and new arts and walking resources were created that needed limited materials. ArtatWork also co-produced a zine, ‘Art for Wellbeing’, with a core group of ten women. This was distributed physically to 50 women with mental health issues alongside an art pack and was downloaded over 2000 times.

Running ArtatWork has been a process of constant adaptation and learning. The most important thing we have learned is to nurture our own wellbeing; new ways of working such as having meetings whilst walking or in the gym have supported this. We also make time for developing our artistic practices, which improves wellbeing and provides ideas and energy to share with and inspire participants. Working with an inclusive, participant-led ethos can mean the line between the professional and the personal is more challenging to negotiate. However, regular reflective dialogue makes this negotiation possible and ultimately creates a practice that is both rich and innovative.

Photo © Maya Hunneyball.



As with many other organisations, irregular funding means ArtatWork is continually trying to create a sense of security and continuity for participants. Another challenge is the rates offered for delivering projects that do not take into account the hours spent preparing, the skills needed and background costs, creating tension around the practicalities of delivering essential work while maintaining a viable income for the organisation's staff. Delivering social prescribing projects is not just about having an artistic background; up-to-date training and awareness in safeguarding and related issues when working with participants are essential.

“ I don't feel judged, and I always feel judged... We're like a family. Everyone has the same issues, no one's better than anyone... we're all equal, and treated as such. ”

“ They let us have an impact. It's not tutor-student, there are no levels. Feeling valued is really important for your mental health. ”

“ It's a great mental health service, as all the others have totally failed me. ”

ArtAtWork participants

This said, reinventing projects also facilitates innovation and creativity and some of our most exciting projects have come from adapting projects for funding bids.

In 2021, ArtatWork is working digitally with **The Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts** on a project centred around objects in a Grayson Perry exhibition. The outcome of this will also be a zine sent out to people with mental health issues and their work displayed in a glass box alongside the fantastic Grayson Perry exhibition! Many of the participants are employing skills learned in previous projects; an invaluable resource – they are the best people to know what activities help in improving mental health. An additional innovation is setting up an Etsy shop for the women to sell their art, thereby validating their work, learning self-employment skills and providing additional income.

Theatre for Life: Emerge

BY MICHELLE SMITH

A collaborative film between Theatre for Life and **Southampton Children's Hospital**, Emerge is an insightful and informative look into modern day perspectives contrasted against stories of a community dealing with the aftermath of the sinking of the Titanic in 1912. The project has worked with the **SeaCity Museum** and **Historic Southampton** to collate research and oral histories, exploring how the Titanic widows and the Southampton community were affected following the tragedy. It has brought together real stories which reflect the inequalities and challenges faced in both 1912 and 2021, exploring how the human spirit triumphs in the face of adversity. The project is funded by a Mayflower 400 Community Heritage Grant as part of the city-wide Mayflower 400 programme. The anniversary year seeks to celebrate Southampton, a city and a community, built on journeys and migration, whilst increasing access to and engagement in culture.

The project worked with 12 young people who are at higher risk of illness from COVID-19, with long-term health conditions such as chronic heart failure, congenital heart disease, cystic fibrosis and autoimmune conditions. Sessions took place for three hours a week online from October 2020, and the film premiered on June 25, 2021. Emerge has enabled participants to learn new skills in writing, poetry, headphone verbatim theatre and performance work. It has revealed authentic voices and shared storytelling on the truths behind hidden disabilities and mental health.

“Such a moving experience. Clever parallels showing how much we still have to learn about helping each other and such inspirational stories of resilience.”

Audience feedback

Emerge evolved through a six-month emergency creativity and wellbeing online programme that Theatre for Life ran in response to the Covid-19 pandemic with the support of Arts Council England. The programme showed more than ever how important it is that society doesn't revert to forcing young people with hidden disabilities and mental health back into isolation while the rest of the world carries on. Many of the young people on the programme have experienced extensive hospital stays and ongoing medical intervention and are no strangers to time out from education and staying at home. However, many of them have felt that the pandemic has highlighted health inequalities even further and for the first time in their lives they have felt excluded from society and their peers.

As a company, Theatre for Life wanted to remove this feeling of exclusion by promoting self-efficacy, empowering young people to feel valued and heard. Emerge is about defying the stereotype of “vulnerability” and instead celebrating the members of a young company and their creative individuality. Theatre for Life encourages open dialogue and co-creation with theatre makers, working together to create powerful and meaningful theatre with the guidance of professional artists.

“Emerge has been a truly enlightening project. It really has been a break in the darkness that shines a light on the power of the arts and the young theatre makers determined to be seen and heard in a year that has forced many of our group (including myself) to shield themselves from society on the basis of survival.”

Participant feedback



Photo © Erin Knowles.

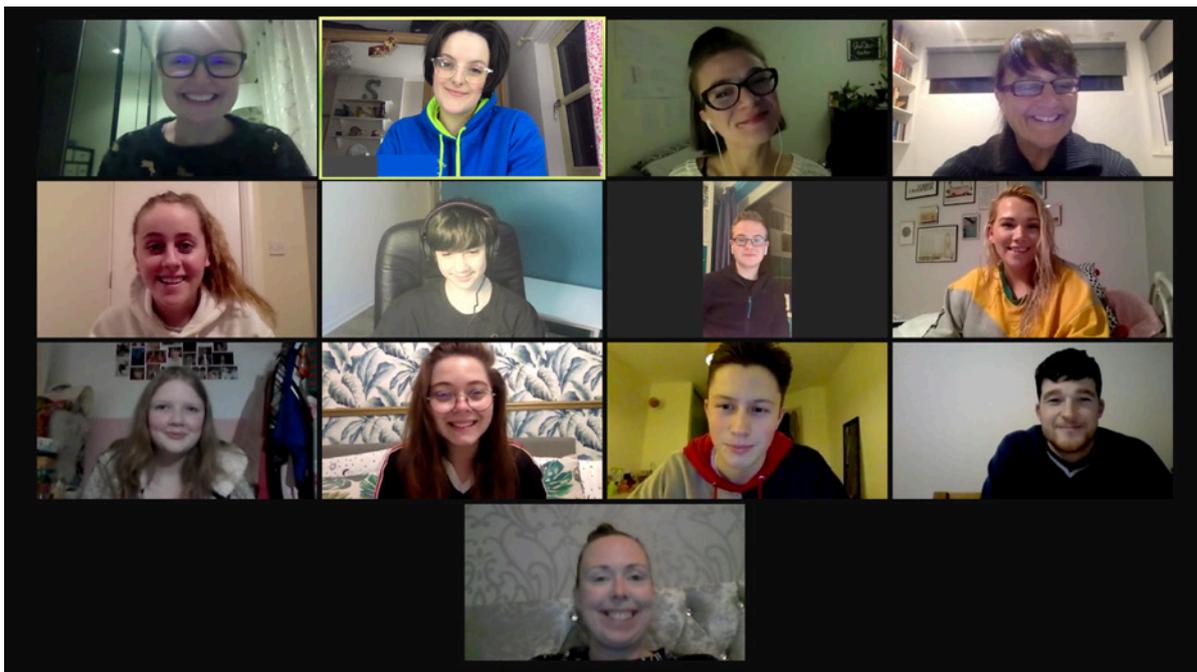


Photo courtesy of Theatre for Life.

Enabling young people to engage in a project which draws on a heritage story has also allowed them to creatively explore local stories in an empathetic way. The project was designed to enable them to use stories from the past – such as the impact of the Titanic tragedy on the local community – as a way of making sense of current events and how we can emerge more informed after the pandemic. It also aimed to empower the participants through different art forms, allowing them to develop lifelong skills, while learning more deeply about their local community and how others have also overcome adversity.

Using real stories from Emerge around resilience, health and wellbeing, the project has sought to enable young people to identify universal themes and human strength when faced with adversity. It has provided a safe and creative space with resilience tools and creative activities to help understand the narrative links and parallels within the film as we prepare for a time of recovery. Emerge hopes that young people will rediscover their voice and aspirations, redefining their own narrative and gaining a greater sense of control and self-belief.

“The process has been amazing, we have worked collaboratively as a team throughout and we have all helped each other in every aspect and that has been amazing. We are lucky to work so well as a team and despite the constant challenges thrown our way, we continue to adapt!”

“In the first lockdown it was amazing as it gave me something else to do, now it feels like something stable and tangible as a routine.”

Participants' feedback

Theatre for Life will be continuing to work in partnership with Southampton Children's Hospital in delivering a social prescribing programme across the NHS Wessex region.

Michelle Smith, Artistic Director, Theatre for Life
www.theatreforlife.co.uk/emerge @theatre_life2

Well-City Salisbury

BY LEIGH CHALMERS

Well-City Salisbury is a new project about wellbeing, creativity and connection starting in Autumn 2021. Funded by the National Lottery Community Fund, it connects people to the arts, heritage, locality, landscape and to each other. The project brings together the combined experience and unique skills from four partner organisations across Salisbury (**ArtCare, The Salisbury Museum, Wessex Archaeology and Wiltshire Creative**) to support people with a mental health need through creative courses, volunteering opportunities and training. Incorporating a social prescribing model, Well-City will support local organisations and health services working with people with mental health needs on their wellbeing journey.

Heritage informs us of our past and can open doors to the potential in our futures. Archaeology is about unearthing stories to understand the people who came before us, and it is these stories that speak to who we are and demonstrate that we are all interconnected. Heritage inclusion engages and involves individuals in a collective experience of common interests, traditions, cultures and stories that speak directly to their history, their present and their identity.

These concepts of story, connection and identity form the foundations of the work I deliver at Wessex Archaeology. Well-City is an innovative and ambitious partnership between a hospital, two heritage organisations and an arts organisation, and will deliver 24 creative courses and 12 volunteer mentor/peer-to-peer courses over a three-year period. We will work with local artists and creatives; we will provide mental health first aid training to staff, volunteers and artists; we will offer supported supervision to any of the delivery team who might need it. We will celebrate this work through exhibitions, resources and evaluation and we will be generous in sharing all that we learn.

The project has been three years in the making. It grew out of a series of pilots of between 8-12 participants that were delivered back in 2018, which saw me working closely with artist Sue Martin, who has lived experience of supporting people with mental health needs, and groups of people who attended mental health support services locally. Using heritage as a starting point for learning and creativity, it was not long before the impact and benefits of the pilots became apparent: the positive difference they made to wellbeing, and the potential to reach more people through this work.

The next move was informed by the essential processes of listening to the participants, evaluating the pilots and carrying out a mapping exercise of current mental health provision and bringing local creative/heritage organisations together in a partnership in order to offer people choice and to work with experts from different backgrounds across the organisations. This enabled us to widen our reach and therefore our benefit impact into the community.

“I wasn’t sure what to expect from participation in the Lost and Found project and was a bit nervous as I have been suffering from anxiety and depression. It turned out to be a really great experience, full of interest and insight into an area I know little about – archaeology. It was fascinating to learn not only about some archaeological objects themselves but also the amazing technology in creating and displaying 3D images of them. ”

Participant

Throughout this process, a steering group kept the Well-City Salisbury partners focused. Voices from people on the ground with lived experience of mental health needs has been an invaluable addition to the project. It was this group that I worked with at the start of the first lockdown to help me understand and workshop the potential benefits (and failings) a digital wellbeing project could deliver. This pilot was run in conjunction with The Salisbury Museum and Sue Martin. Across five online sessions, we explored archaeology and artefacts, went behind the scenes at the museum, and looked at objects on an interactive platform called Sketchfab. We set gentle creative challenges and invited people to keep on exploring and learning outside the boundaries of the project. It was a resounding success, with all of the participants recording an improvement to their wellbeing as a result of taking part.

“ Sharing time with staff from Wessex Archaeology and with other participants from Sheffield Mind was a real tonic for me and a highlight of my week. This was particularly so during the pandemic when times have felt more lonely and cut off. One of our tasks was to choose and talk about objects that are significant to us. Hearing something about other people’s passions and lives, and also sharing my own objects, has brought me out of myself and made me think about the place of objects in my own life. ”

Lost and Found participant

Photo courtesy of Wessex Archaeology/Tom Westhead.



By this point in 2020, the impact of the pandemic had forced the four organisations into exploring new ground with all of us considering what our digital offer might look like, experimenting with innovative ideas and methods of delivery and harvesting the learning from this to add to Well-City. Here at Wessex Archaeology, my experiences from the pilot led to the creation of a seven-month online heritage wellbeing course called Lost and Found, funded by Historic England's Covid-19 Recovery Fund. Working with eight community groups across the UK, members of the public curated an online digital museum using objects from the archives. 41 people engaged directly with the live sessions, and from digital engagement the Museum has reached 181,846 people with 10,433 engagements with content.

The learning from Lost and Found has been invaluable and of course has influenced the final concept for Well-City. Simply put, engagement projects must be a blended approach of digital and face-to-face delivery to ensure accessibility and inclusivity.

The impact Covid-19 has had on us as practitioners, facilitators and creatives has brought us closer to the heart of the project. We have all been sharing a collective experience (and in some cases trauma) for which the after-effects are yet to become clear. We are connected by this experience and Well-City is a project which aims to use a partnership approach to develop community resilience to be part of the recovery process. We expect the creative courses to reach between 200-240 people, and the volunteer courses between 40 and 90.

“... virtual platforms enable people to take part who may not be able to attend a physical meeting. I know it worked for G, as despite her being in pain she could still be part of the sessions. Had she been expected to travel to take part she may well have missed out on some of the project. We work with a lot of people who find travelling both practically and physically challenging, so for us virtual has to be something we continue to use and become more comfortable with to support inclusion even in a Covid-free world.”

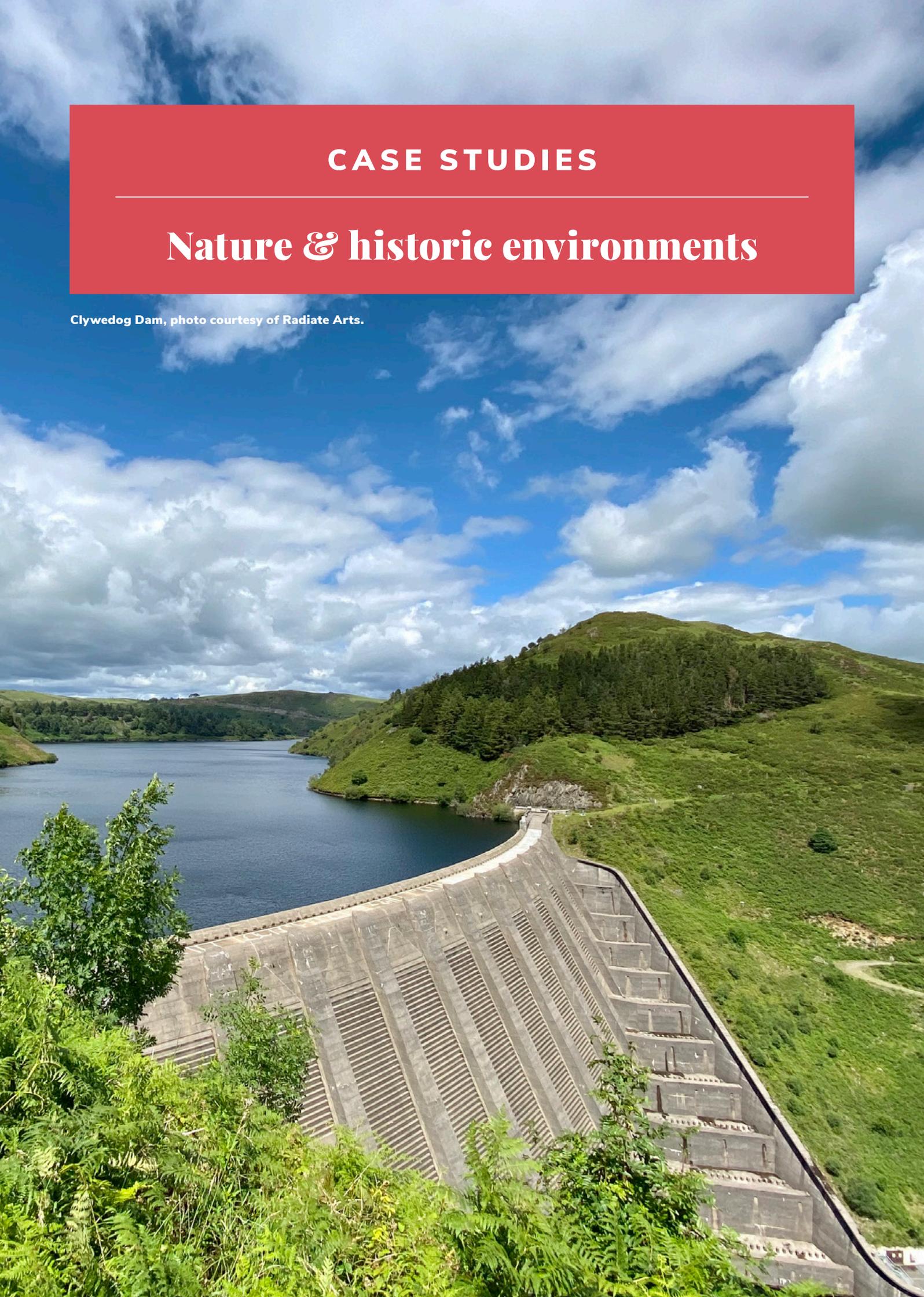
**Zoe Millington, Wiltshire Centre
for Independent Living**

With grateful thanks to the National Lottery Community Fund.

CASE STUDIES

Nature & historic environments

Clywedog Dam, photo courtesy of Radiate Arts.



Art Branches

BY STEPHANIE HARTICK

Art Branches was set up in 2015, to improve health and wellbeing through creative projects linked to the environment, and was a response by the Founding Directors to the ongoing rise in mental health issues coupled with their understanding of the therapeutic value of engaging with, and creatively reflecting on, the natural and built world.

Art Branches projects tend to focus more on settings in natural environments, but also work in some more urban settings where participants can walk to the projects, important for maintaining accessibility. A significant success factor in such projects is the ability to engage with an individual's point of view and cultural background. The processes leading to creative output can help to develop a sense of competency, relatedness (feeling connected to others) and autonomy (feeling in control). These are key factors in promoting motivation and wellbeing, and hence mental health recovery. We are very aware of the importance of local spaces to people, so it is important to us not to have a static headquarters but to be able to travel around and work with people in their local landscapes.

A successful Art Branches project that has gone on to be repeated is *Rooted in History*, a creative workshop on Hardwick Heath near Bury St Edmunds. A collaboration with **Suffolk Record Office**, it used rich archival material collected by community groups to inspire creative activities to support people's mental wellbeing. One of the participating groups from Gatehouse dementia hub, Bury St Edmunds, had a series of four sessions, incorporating exploration of material from the archive, including historic maps and photographs and beautiful botanical drawings. The second session involved a visit to Hardwick Heath, with copies of historic maps and photos to compare what is there now with what was there in the past. During the third and fourth

sessions participants had the opportunity to produce a creative response to the themes explored by the project. Thirty-six different service users and eight staff from Wedgwood House at West Suffolk Hospital took part in this project; their work has been turned into creative journals and a timeline mural in one of their in-patient common rooms. The timeline incorporates elements from the studied archives and artwork made by participants during the project and shows 1,100 years of history.

More recently, *Expressing Trees* is a year-long project enabling adults recovering from mental health issues to engage with local trees online. Developed in collaboration with an out-of-work university graduate with mental health issues, and supported by the Reviving Our Community Fund administered by Suffolk Community Foundation, the project aims to support the graduate to gain experience in community projects supporting vulnerable communities, and enable and encourage 80 participants to discover their local heritage. The project has three parts: first, putting together creative packs and resources to send out to project participants – around 80 in the first instance, who were referred by local services. The second part involved creating artworks inspired by trees and guided by the pack materials, supported through weekly online sessions. In the final part, 12 people were selected to do a four-week project on the historic landscape, expressing trees on canvas. The project altogether ran from May to October 2021 with a budget of around £5,000.

Important learnings from running Art Branches include how to partner with associate artists, and how to manage safeguarding of project participants. Art Branches has around 18 associate artists we work with on a regular basis; it is important that these artists have prior experience specific to the group involved



Photo courtesy of Art Branches.

in the project (e.g. young people with mental health issues, or people living with dementia). Art Branches generally works with artists through pre-existing networks within the sector and has a solid basis of experienced and highly valued associates. Art Branches will receive referral forms from mental health services, but if working within a unit or if participants are coming out of their unit for a day, they will have staff with them and those staff are ultimately responsible. Each site Art Branches works in has its own specific risk assessment relating to the type of activity, the type of clients and the number people involved.

Art Branches has seen steady organic growth over the past five years but remains a small, agile and focused organisation dedicated to improving health and learning about arts, local heritage and culture. Its local Directors and Associates have expertise in historic

landscapes, ecology, geo-conservation, arts, health and social care. They are a responsive team able to deliver highly regarded and relevant projects which can adapt to local circumstances and needs in society. Support from Baring Foundation in 2020 has ensured the continuation of these valuable projects in 2021, and so has enabled the participation of a wider range of adults facing mental health challenges. In general, Art Branches – like many such organisations – can find it challenging to secure enough funding, especially for longer-running projects. But it is a strength to be so small and so flexible. We're very effective for the small amount of money we get each year. And we help a lot of people in meaningful and lasting ways.

Stephanie Hartick, Founding Director
www.artbranches.org @artbranches

Cumbernauld Living Landscape: Wild Ways Well

BY PAUL BARCLAY

Wild Ways Well is part of the Green Health and Wellbeing workstream of the Creating Natural Connections project, which sits within Cumbernauld Living Landscape (CLL). CLL is a landscape-scale conservation partnership that includes the **Scottish Wildlife Trust, The Conservation Volunteers (TCV), Sanctuary Housing and North Lanarkshire Council**. It is funded primarily by the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

CLL worked with partners and consulted with the Cumbernauld community, and established that there was a need and desire for targeted support around mental health.

Cumbernauld is a very 'green' town with a large percentage of accessible high-quality greenspace. Many people however are unaware of the opportunities to engage with nature in the town or have an inherited poor perception of the various parks, reserves and woodland. Cumbernauld is also a town with a high level of social disadvantage and people who disproportionately experience poor mental health. The CLL partnership believes everyone should benefit from natural greenspaces and that they should be at the heart of the town's future. Facilitating access to these spaces for everyone should be a priority. Exposure to nature for the benefit of mental health is an emerging field of practice with potential to make a major difference in the lives of people and communities.

Wild Ways Well is intended to demonstrate the known benefits to health and wellbeing from spending time in nature – with a particular focus on positive mental health. Wild Ways Well combines this proven effect with the Five Ways to Wellbeing mental health framework, an acknowledged and proven framework that is also in use by the NHS and major mental health

charities. The project highlights the benefits of nature in supporting positive mental health and facilitates access to and use of outdoor spaces to the general public and other community organisations for this purpose.

Wild Ways Well organises a variety of public events and sessions to actively demonstrate this. Weekly sessions take place in outdoor spaces within Cumbernauld where participants are encouraged through a variety of activities to spend quality time in nature. In addition, one-off events, showcases and presentations attempt to bring the project to a wider audience and encourage participation. Training is also available for community groups who wish to run their own sessions.

The primary focus of the project is the 'Open' and 'Closed' Groups that run weekly – including sessions at weekends and in the evening ('Tea in the Dark') to facilitate access to as many people as possible. Open group sessions are available to any member of the public who feels they could benefit. There is no referral process and no limit to how often or the number of sessions people can attend. Closed group sessions are run in partnership with other organisations and groups. These are designed around a particular group of participants who are identified by the partner organisation and we work closely with them to ensure the locations and themes of the sessions are suited to their particular interests and abilities.

“I am grateful for feeling I belong and am never judged for having poor mental health. This has been a saviour and a haven for me this year.”

Wild Ways Well participant



Photo courtesy of Paul Barclay/Wild Ways Well.

A session will typically involve meeting in a central location; a walk to a natural green space (often a Scottish Wildlife Trust Wildlife Reserve); a 'social session' where participants share hot drinks and conversation around a fire; and a conservation-themed activity – examples can include natural art, folklore, storytelling, local heritage, plant identification, wildlife monitoring and tracking, citizen science, and habitat maintenance.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, the project adapted, but continued to support participants through online sessions, facilitating access to outdoor spaces on their doorsteps, activity packs and, once restrictions eased, running Covid-safe group sessions for groups who had been particularly badly affected.

CLL has developed a number of evaluation techniques in collaboration with partners at the James Hutton Institute. Feedback has repeatedly shown the partnership is achieving the desired outcomes of 'nature helping more people' and 'people helping

more people'. To date, CLL has engaged with 143 individuals via the Wild Ways Well project. Since attending the Wild Ways Well sessions, 73 per cent of participants strongly agree and 23 per cent agree that they feel more confident to spend time in nature. 77 per cent strongly agree and 18 per cent agree that they are more likely to spend time outdoors. 86 per cent strongly agree and 9 per cent agree that they feel better for taking part.

“It's different out here. I get really angry sometimes, but I don't feel angry here. I don't feel like that when we're out. I wish we'd started doing this years ago, we should always have been doing this.”

Wild Ways Well participant

Wild Ways Well has worked with every section of the community and all ages and ability levels and is yet to find an audience where sessions

could not be adapted in some way so that everyone can benefit. Throughout, the project has taken on board feedback from participants and groups and worked to reduce barriers, to make the sessions accessible to as wide a range of people as possible. This has included adapting sessions to work in a range of locations and environments and to be suitable for widely different ability levels. More recently the project has had to adapt to supporting people experiencing poor mental health via an online platform.

“I never feel weird, or an outsider in this group, I feel like you’re all the same as me, if I’m weird then so are you and that makes it OK.”

Wild Ways Well participant

One of the major lessons is that projects like this take time. It takes time and a lot of effort for your project to become known and accepted within the community and there is no easy shortcut to this process.

There is still a stigma surrounding mental health issues which is difficult to overcome – this was particularly highlighted when working with teenage groups. To help tackle this, Wild Ways Well developed ways to deliver sessions without ever directly mentioning mental health at all for some participant groups.

Unfortunately, many community groups and referral partners have been affected by the short-term nature of many projects – just as they begin to work with a group their funding runs out and the process ends. This makes them reluctant to invest time in new projects until they know it will be stable.

It is difficult to spread word of new projects and to build a referral/partner network partly due to this process of new projects appearing and disappearing regularly. Having the stability of relatively long-term funding has helped with this.

Post-pandemic, we envisage issues in the future around people being afraid/unwilling to go back outdoors and attend groups due to fears built up over a year of lockdown. This is likely to be especially evident in vulnerable groups who may experience high levels of anxiety and stress as things go back to ‘normal’. On the other hand, there has been a surge in appreciation for the benefits of green space which were felt by many during lockdown. It will be important to capitalise on this and ensure this feeling doesn’t slip away or the benefits are forgotten. We hope to run major events where we can showcase our practice and encourage others to participate.

Reducing the stigma around mental health is long overdue – everyone has mental health and looking after it should be part of everyone’s daily routine. Wild Ways Well shows how this is possible, it costs nothing, it is accessible to everyone and has no side effects. No special training, equipment or experience is needed to take part – just the opportunity and encouragement to step outdoors into a new, healthier life.

Green Light Trust: Nature Based Support Programmes

BY MANDY HORNE

Green Light Trust's vision is of a society where everyone has equitable access to the power of nature. It runs a continuous programme of wellbeing and educational support for over just under 2,000 marginalised and disadvantaged adults and children each year. By connecting participants with the natural environment in the Trust's woodlands across Suffolk and at partner sites in Norfolk, they are able to learn new practical and life skills, build confidence and self-esteem, improve their social and communication skills and overcome personal barriers to life progression. The programmes improve participants' mental and physical wellbeing, giving them a renewed sense of belonging and purpose.

Green Light Trust was established in 1989 as an environmental charity. In earlier years, the focus was on delivering projects to protect, conserve and enhance the natural environment. One of these inspired the formation of 62 community-owned woodlands across East Anglia, and in more recent years the charity purchased an ancient woodland in Lawshall, near Bury St Edmunds – a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) – bringing the woodland out of decline and into active management. This is one of the charity's main sites for its work with groups.

Green Light Trust recognised that the individuals engaged on these conservation projects were also benefitting personally from the activities outdoors and, over the past ten years, the focus has shifted completely to work with those who are least likely to access nature and face certain barriers to life progression, e.g. those who are long term unemployed, have mental health issues, in recovery from addiction, have learning disabilities or chronic illness, are victims of violence or abuse, have

a history of offending, etc; and children and young people who are struggling to engage and progress in mainstream education.

The Trust's standard model is to facilitate groups in its woodlands and other green spaces, typically one day a week over the course of 8-12 weeks. Groups carry out conservation and woodland management tasks, green woodworking activities, create natural habitats for wildlife, partake in wellbeing activities such as nature meditation and woodland walks, and interact socially – including a campfire lunch together. Some participants report that this campfire lunch is the only hot meal they have each week, so part of what the Trust does is help them learn to cook affordable and nutritious meals.

Life outcomes for participants are measured regularly through questionnaires, testimonials and case studies, including using the Rosenberg self-esteem scale and the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS), to measure improvements in confidence and wellbeing. 98 per cent of participants would recommend the Trust's services to others: a particularly significant achievement, bearing in mind that many of these individuals come from groups known for being the most difficult to engage.

“I have had terrible anxiety and I now feel I am able to go out of the house without having a panic attack. The course has massively increased my confidence.”

Participant who is a survivor of domestic abuse



Green woodcrafting at Frithy Wood. Photo courtesy of Green Light Trust.

During 2019/20, the Trust engaged with a peer-reviewed academic research study conducted by the University of Essex. The aim of this research was to demonstrate the benefits of nature-based interventions, both to health and wellbeing and also cost-savings to the public sector. This research showed that:

- the Trust works with people in the lowest 30 per cent of health and wellbeing scores, many in the lowest 5 per cent;
- it is able to move them significantly upwards along those scales – with an average improvement of 1.36 points, compared to the average improvement of 0.6 points from a significant positive life event (for example, the birth of a child);
- participants experience an 80 per cent recovery rate;
- the Trust's intervention saves statutory services, on average, £14,000 per year, per person.

The work also protects and improves the natural environments the Trust works in, improving biodiversity and natural habitat for wildlife.

“Green Light Trust keeps me grounded, gives me peace of mind and gets me out of the house. I don't know what I'd do without Green Light Trust, it's the highlight of my week.”

Participant with chronic mental and physical health problems

A real challenge for the Trust is keeping up with demand for services and having enough funding to deliver them. It is currently working to capacity on its sites but seeing a huge increase in adults, children and young people who need support for their wellbeing, particularly since the pandemic started. It is looking to grow the number of sites it works from in Suffolk and is expanding into Norfolk.

From the first lockdown in March 2020, it was feared that many of those engaged with the Trust at the time would quickly deteriorate faced with the increased anxiety and forced social isolation that came with the pandemic. Within two weeks the nature-inspired online wellbeing programme, AIR, was up and running, temporarily replacing the woodland face-to-face EARTH programme with Zoom sessions that involved making and sharing nature videos, encouraging participants to find interesting things in nature and take photographs on their daily walks to share with the group, having online lunch together and facilitating craft projects.

“ Discovering Green Light Trust was a lifesaver. Literally. Without the care and non-judgemental support I received, I dread to think what would have happened to me. ”

Participant who has now progressed to become a valued employee

One of the challenges for some of the participants was access to technology that enabled them to engage with the AIR sessions. One of the Trust's business partners were able to provide recycled smartphones that could then be loaned to participants. The online sessions proved very popular and were described as a lifeline through lockdown by many. The Trust was able to support over 300 people through the first lockdown period and continues to offer AIR courses to individuals who are not able to access the woodland sites.

The Trust is currently engaged in a project in partnership with Ipswich and Suffolk Council for Racial Equality (ISCRE) to increase engagement with ethnically diverse communities, as analysis of the participant demographic has highlighted this is not in line with the general population in the localities in which the Trust operates. It is also evident from national data that ethnically diverse individuals are less likely to live in areas that have access to nature. This will see the Trust building relationships with organisations working to supporting individuals from ethnically diverse backgrounds and breaking down the barriers these communities may have to accessing nature interventions.

Radiate Arts: Cysylltu Clywedog/ Connecting Clywedog

BY PAM GORDON

Radiate Arts CIC is a Community Arts company that specialises in delivering creative workshops and experiences to create positive change for people living with mental health problems. Established in Chester in April 2017, it has now expanded its services across North and Mid Wales. It primarily works via referrals, either from NHS social prescribing pathways or from charities and organisations who are working directly with participants as peer mentors or facilitators.

In July 2020, Radiate Arts established a Creative Hub at Llyn Clywedog²³, Mid Wales, inspired by the unique beauty of the area: the huge 1960s brutalist Clywedog Dam is juxtaposed with the ancient landscape of green valleys, Hafren forest²⁴ and the remote, rugged atmosphere of the Cambrian Mountains, with the source of the River Severn flowing through the Victorian ruins of Bryntail Lead Mines²⁵ below. This landscape immediately suggested itself as an amazing catalyst to ignite potentially limitless creativity, and an opportunity to engage with local architectural and landscape heritage.

The new project, 'Cysylltu Clywedog / Connecting Clywedog' is a community-developed sculpture space which aims to get people outdoors and being creative in the inspirational environment around Llyn Clywedog. It is natural progression from an initial programme of stone carving workshops, and a vision the organisation had right from the beginning. Radiate Arts is collaborating with organisations like **Hafren Dyfrdwy, Cadw, Montgomeryshire Wildlife Trust**, local charities and community groups, artists and creatives who share a similar vision and commitment to an equal partnership approach of improving

wellbeing for all. It connects closely with grassroots organisations and their members, collaborating with larger organisations in order to install and maintain an outdoor sculpture space with care and respect for the environment.

The sculptures will be a combination of commissioned pieces from local artists based on collaborative events and workshops involving members of local communities, and individual or collaborative sculptures made by local people at accessible workshops with the guidance of experienced artists. Encouraging people to go outdoors for the benefits to mental health and wellbeing, this landscape of ancient walks and woodland will be punctuated by sculptures that will stand in contrast with the established and imposing human imprint of the dam. It will be a celebration of connection and expression, an opportunity to adjust positively to the negative effects of social isolation brought on by the Covid-19 pandemic, and create a sense of place that is uniquely Clywedog by delivering projects that will promote biodiversity, natural habitats and sustainable living.

“A place that empowers people to value their world, their environment and themselves.”

Glenn Morris, Artist

The very first community project at Llyn Clywedog, 'Working with the Hard Stuff', is a programme of stone carving courses for Armed Forces veterans who have been referred by **Change Step**, a charity that offers effective support for veterans in Wales, enabling them

²³ www.visitmidwales.co.uk/Llanidloes-Llyn-Clywedog-Reservoir-Dam/details/?dms=3&venue=1014300.

²⁴ www.visitmidwales.co.uk/Llanidloes-Hafren-Forest/details/?dms=3&venue=1121670.

²⁵ cadw.gov.wales/visit/places-to-visit/bryntail-lead-mine-buildings.

to access vital support services and tackle serious stress and related issues. They are accompanied by a peer mentor who shares the same lived experience. Artist tutor Glenn Morris²⁶ was chosen specifically for this role because of his experience and knowledge of stone carving (an example of his work is displayed in Dyffryn National Trust Gardens in Cardiff, entitled 'Lost Comrades'²⁷) and also because of his previous experience of working with Armed Forces Veterans on vocational projects to help them get back into work.

“It’s been amazing, therapeutic, like 3D colouring in! I have been really surprised at what I’ve got out of this and (stone carving) is a new-found passion in me now.”

BP (veteran)

'Working with The Hard Stuff' has enabled people to discover or re-ignite a buried creativity, a way of expression that isn't reliant on verbal communication, that can be found by connecting with natural heritage and translating this into stone. It has strengthened their self-esteem and helped them on their path of recovery, gaining new tools to navigate their way through civilian life. As these sessions happened during the pandemic, numbers were reduced due to maintaining social distancing within the groups. As of April 2021, the project has delivered 23 workshops, with between three and six participants per workshop. A total of 12 people have come along to the workshops, with three of them attending every workshop, progressing their knowledge of stone carving over nine months, with a huge amount of skills and confidence development.

Working with the Hard Stuff, photo courtesy of Radiate Arts.



26 www.glenmorris.co.uk.

27 www.nationaltrust.org.uk/dyffryn-gardens/features/lost-comrades.

Two of these people will be progressing to volunteer workshop assistants in year two (subject to funding).

Cysylltu Clywedog /Connecting Clywedog is broken down into five stages, totalling 50 sculptures over five years:

Stage 1 (2021): Engaging people in the concept, development and planning of the outdoor sculpture space. Defining themes and collaborative workshops, measurable outputs and agreeing outcomes. Incorporating a 'Test and Learn' approach, Stage 1 will centre around Radiate Arts' base at Llyn Clywedog Creative Hub, adjacent to Llyn Clywedog Visitor Centre, Dam and Reservoir. Physical outputs will be a series of 40 community workshops culminating in three large-scale sculptures and eight smaller sculptures exhibited outdoors in the immediate vicinity of the Visitor Centre.

Stage 2 (2022/23): Expanding the range of activities and in turn expanding the outdoor sculpture space to key sites around the 14-kilometre reservoir perimeter, with 11 more sculptures created. This will be an opportunity to assess and re-imagine the project's initial vision together as a community, protecting and enhancing the green and blue freshwater spaces in the wider area, making it more accessible to visitors as well as building a diverse habitat for natural species. This will have a direct effect upon the introduction to new creative sessions and courses for sustainable living and waste reduction.

Stages 3/4 (2023/24): Continued expansion of the outdoor sculpture space, adding 20 more sculptures around Bryntail Lead Mines and The Dragon's Back Nature Trail, working closely with **Cadw, Montgomeryshire Wildlife Trust and Natural Resource Wales (NRW)** to develop in ways that enhance community engagement, and facilitate a thriving natural environment alongside increased levels of tourism.

Stage 5 (2024/25): Widen the reach of the outdoor sculpture space to a trail within Hafren Forest with eight more sculptures, maintaining distance from important sites (e.g. the osprey nests) as increased audiences follow the new trails and working closely with NRW and following their guidance on protected habitats and species.

Sheffield Environmental Movement

BY MAXWELL A. AYAMBA

Sheffield Environmental Movement (SEM) was set up as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) in 2016 to facilitate reconnecting people from Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic & Refugee (BAMER) communities to natural heritage. This is in line with the government's *25 Year Environment Plan (2018)*²⁸ and the *Julian Glover Review (2019)*²⁹, which aim to reconnect everyone to the natural environment and encourage diversity among people accessing or visiting natural environments. SEM uses indoor and outdoor educational activities to promote and facilitate access to and participation in natural heritage. It sets out to create connections and build awareness and understanding among BAMER communities about natural heritage and its related sites in the Peak District National Park and local green spaces.

SEM's role is further underpinned by findings from a community-wide consultation completed with BAMER communities as part of SEM's National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) Resilient Heritage programme in November 2019. The common thread from these consultations is that a natural heritage project should enable communities to learn about the natural heritage around them. How to access it, but above all, how to apply this learning by getting involved in practical work in natural places or site visits with families and friends, participating in environmental stewardship and active citizenship. This also enables participants to develop a sense of belonging, discover new spaces and understand the benefits for health and wellbeing. SEM's projects further focus on developing a legacy of action through experiential learning, embedding skills and knowledge through working alongside environmental heritage partners.

SEM also offers environmental photography and environmental pottery. SEM has found environmental photography to be a good vehicle used to engage urban young people in natural landscapes, helping to reconnect those who are marginalised and excluded to the natural environment as a form of leisure and recreation, and to become active citizens and stewards of these landscapes. It also helps to promote biophilia, that is, having affection for plants and other living beings, and enabling them to learn creatively about their natural heritage. Equally, we have found that our Environmental Pottery activities can help alleviate the symptoms of depression and anxiety, both helping participants to relax and also encouraging creative energy.

To gather feedback on its projects, SEM uses a baseline questionnaire and face-to-face interviews with participants, and sometimes case studies. These methods help to identify initial levels of knowledge and interest in natural heritage; then at the end of every project a similar evaluation is undertaken to understand any difference the project has made. Photos and videos of participants are then posted on the SEM website, with their consent.

In 2019, SEM was fortunate to receive a resilience grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) to conduct a consultation with 17 local BAMER community organisations and 10 environmental heritage organisations. With the BAMER groups, semi-structured interviews with group leaders explored their members' current awareness of natural heritage, barriers to engagement and types of activities that might engage interest.

28 *25 Year Environment Plan*, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, 2018. www.gov.uk/government/publications/25-year-environment-plan.

29 Julian Glover, *Landscapes Review - Final Report*, Department of Food Environment and Rural Affairs, 2019.



Photo courtesy of Sheffield Environmental Movement.

Among the environmental heritage organisations, all acknowledged that BAMER communities are under-represented in their activities and were very enthusiastic about SEM's role in brokering connections. It was also evident that environmental organisations do not know what BAMER groups exist or how to connect with them, but are unanimously keen to use SEM to disseminate information on what they offer – whether via training, taster sessions or posting publicity on SEM's website.

SEM's Walk4 Health Group, formerly known as the 100 Black Men Walk for Health Group – which inspired the national theatre co-production of the play, *Black Men Walking*, by the Eclipse Theatre Company and the Royal Exchange Theatre in 2018/19 – has gained a lot of publicity locally and nationally and has led to lots of people joining the Walk4 Health Group; they find it very important for not only their

mental and physical wellbeing but also as a form of self-therapy and solace from loneliness and isolation.

SEM is a small organisation that seeks to expand gradually in response to felt need. Data from the Natural England's MENE report in 2019³⁰ shows that ethnic minorities have on average 11 times less access to greenspace, with 15 per cent of time in greenspace by people from BAMER backgrounds spent in the countryside as compared to 38 per cent of white people. The importance of green spaces in enabling people from BAMER communities to be physically fit and mentally well has come to the fore during the Covid-19 pandemic. SEM was awarded a Covid-19 Heritage Emergency Fund grant, which enabled the organisation to continue engaging with groups online and growing its audience through improved digital outputs. These included reaching out beyond

30 *Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment – The national survey on people and the natural environment Headline Report 2019*, Natural England, 2020. www.gov.uk/government/statistics/monitor-of-engagement-with-the-natural-environment-headline-report-and-technical-reports-2018-to-2019.

the local community and running a Telephone Tree service to regularly connect with older people facing digital exclusion.

How often we can visit a park and who with has been a barometer of our confidence in unlocking society after the Covid-19 pandemic. What this narrative obscures, however, is that for some people this isn't the gradual return of cherished freedoms, but an ongoing reminder of what they lack. One in eight homes in England has no garden, with this figure much higher among black families. Data from Natural England's MENE report consistently shows that people living in more disadvantaged areas, people from BAMER communities and people with disabilities or long-term health conditions visit parks and green spaces less frequently than others. There is a strong correlation between these groups and people who are less physically active, and a clear 'read-across' to people experiencing health inequalities as highlighted in the 2010 Marmot Review on health inequalities³¹.

The pandemic has both highlighted and exacerbated this inequity – providing a stark reminder that for some people green spaces may be close by but remain off-putting or off-limits. For some the issues are systemic – not just where green spaces are located, but how they can be accessed and whether they have decent facilities. For others, the barriers are about relevance or confidence, with varying perceptions around who and what green spaces are for, how people behave in them and how to make the most of them. These issues are not new, but Covid-19 has intensified the challenge. How to address that challenge in the context of 'green recovery' is at the core of the debate being taken forward by organisations such as SEM.

**Maxwell A. Ayamba MSc, Founder/Projects Coordinator, Sheffield Environmental Movement (SEM). PhD Student in Black Studies, Department of American & Canadian Studies, University of Nottingham – AHRC/M4C
www.semcharity.org.uk @SheffieldEnvir1**

31 *Fairer Societies Healthy Lives: Strategic Review of Health Inequalities in England*, The Marmot Review, 2010. www.instituteofhealthequity.org/resources-reports/fair-society-healthy-lives-the-marmot-review.



Viewpoint

DR WILL RATHOUSE'S MANIFESTO

I came to the idea of using archaeology as a means to support mental health and wellbeing whilst completing my PhD in Archaeology at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David and working as a support officer for Mind Aberystwyth. I claim no credit for originating the idea. I was inspired by the Ministry of Defence project, Operation Nightingale, and the Past in Mind project undertaken by Mind Herefordshire and Herefordshire Archaeology Unit.

I have since volunteered on Operation Nightingale digs and conducted a programme of mental health archaeology projects with Mind Aberystwyth culminating in a survey of war memorials across Ceredigion. Following this I have been working for MOLA on the Thames Discovery Programme³² (see also the case study on page 13). I have expanded an outreach programme for older Londoners to include people living with poor mental health and service veterans.

The Thames Discovery Programme, funded by the City Bridge Trust, uses outreach techniques including talks and guided walks to encourage members of beneficiary groups to get involved in voluntary recording of the vanishing archaeological features on the foreshore. This includes drawing plans, identifying new and disappeared features, and collecting oral histories. Although the more broadly understood manifestation of creativity is represented in the project with three days of art activities (envisioned to include photography, sketching/painting features or reconstructions, and making mosaics from ceramic fragments from the foreshore), I would contend that creativity is also manifested in the plan drawing, oral history interviewing and other feature recording activities, albeit in a more structured form.

One aspect of the way archaeology may be used to support wellbeing that I would like to research in more detail is what I call 'the short-term full immersion model' versus 'the open-ended little and often model'. Archaeological projects like Operation Nightingale digs, Waterloo Uncovered and The Past in Mind, have tended to involve full-time working on digs, often a long way from home (with accommodation provided), usually lasting one to four weeks make up the full immersion type of project. The little-and-often model has been best exemplified by the Ceredigion War Memorials Project, Human Henge and Burgh Castle Almanac: participants in these projects continued to live in their regular homes and participated for between one and four hours once or twice a week over a period of two months or more. I am keen to see this kind of project linked to an ongoing sustainable volunteering project (such as the Thames Discovery Programme).

I argue that the two delivery models should not be competing with one another to be 'the right way to do wellbeing archaeology', but rather that they complement each other and cater to different participants with different needs. Full-immersion projects away from home may be too much for people living with anxiety who need an anchor to the familiar to feel safe or those who cannot be away for long due to caring responsibilities, etc. Some may need the introduction provided by a little-and-often project to develop the confidence to participate in a full-immersion project. On the other hand, little-and-often projects can be hard to run in areas with low population density and poor public transport. Full-immersion projects, with their full-time engagement and (usually) provision of accommodation make it more cost effective to transport participants in from further afield.

32 www.thamesdiscovery.org/contact/will-rathouse.

Two risks which have been identified with mental wellbeing projects (not just those rooted in archaeology and heritage) are: building of dependence, and post-project downturn. Dependence describes a situation where a participant comes to rely on the project to maintain his or her mental health compromising independence. Post project downturn refers to participants' feelings when, having finished an enjoyable, uplifting and positive experience, they find themselves back in the same situation they were before participation: looking at the same walls, being confronted with the same problems. Anecdotal information suggests that while many people have found the resilience, inspiration, self-confidence etc to address these problems, some do not and a few may feel even worse than they did before the project, having had a taste of a better life and then feeling it just as out of reach as ever.

In order to make profound and permanent changes to the lives of participants, some projects have incorporated psychological counselling while others have offered career focused support. As the work at MOLA develops, I intend to offer both of these along with the opportunity for those who have enjoyed foreshore archaeology to continue volunteering with the Foreshore Recording and Observation Group (It is the FROG members who carry out the work of the TDP supported and facilitated by the four professional archaeologists who staff it.)

It may be asked if encouraging volunteering might also be perceived as taking advantage of vulnerable people for free labour. Unpaid volunteers are not unique to the archaeological sector: without them the charity sector, many wellbeing support services, natural heritage, parent-teacher associations, youth groups and hobby societies to name but a few would barely exist. In most of these cases there is no viable income generation to be able to pay people currently volunteering and if one could be found, many people using such facilities would be priced out of it. The experience of volunteering is very different from that of paid employment: many volunteers would not want it changed in that way. For these reasons I don't believe that the kind of voluntary work undertaken in archaeology is exploitative.

While dependence can be a risk, especially where projects are not sustained in the longer term, encouraging hobbies or activities that promote good mental health (be they gardening, model making, trainspotting or archaeology) also promote independence. Indeed, the social connections forged by engagement in activities are frequently major assets in providing the personal resilience and support networks to deal with the inevitable misfortunes and difficulties that life presents.

For the purposes of this report, my most important point regarding the funding of projects like this is the short-term nature of grants. I've seen very few that last more than two or three years and it is a huge strain on the output of such projects and the people who run them to have to reapply for funding every two or three years. It needs to be made possible for a project to be funded for ten years subject to satisfactory reports every year or two.

Viewpoint

DESI GRADINAROVA, HISTORIC ENGLAND

There is a growing evidence for the wellbeing benefits of connecting with our historic environment – from increasing self-awareness and feelings of purpose and belonging, to improving brain health through learning and reminiscence and helping overcome social isolation, loneliness and depression.

The annual survey *Heritage and Society* (2019)³³, produced by Historic England as part of the *Heritage Counts* series, showed that engaging with or living near heritage is associated with higher life satisfaction and quality of life. The research highlighted the therapeutic effects of historic landscapes, and the importance of shared identity and connection. Visiting heritage sites is associated with increased rates in adults' subjective wellbeing, but also with positive effects on community wellbeing, including outcomes on social relationships, sense of belonging, pride of place, ownership and collective empowerment.

You don't have to visit a specific site to interact with heritage though – heritage is all around us, as it is the result of human activity in all places that were ever inhabited. Heritage is about people and their stories. Heritage activity could be a visit to a historic house and a trip to the museum, but also volunteering at an archaeological dig or going through your family archive – all this and more. Heritage includes historic buildings and sites, but also historic landscapes (including hidden ones under the ground), intangible heritage – consisting of people's memories, stories and significant histories, which may turn the most humble terrace house (or even a bench) in a heritage site. Heritage is all around us and it belongs to all of us.

Engaging with the historic environment can help each one of us maintain good mental health and social connectivity in more than one way.

In 2018, Historic England published our *Wellbeing and the Historic Environment Assessment*³⁴, which presented six routes to wellbeing through heritage – **Heritage as Process** (volunteering is a great example here), **Heritage as Participation** (visiting sites of cultural interest is the most popular form of engaging with the historic environment), **Heritage as Mechanism** (especially in using heritage assets to bring people together for therapeutic or social purpose), **Heritage as Healing** (Museums on prescriptions have experimented successfully in using handling museum objects to reveal benefits such as thinking and meaning-making, self-esteem and increased confidence), **Heritage as Place** (understanding the places we live in and connecting to our local heritage and history can increase our feelings of belonging and identity, and help us become more resilient and confident about our place in the world), **Heritage as Environment** (after all the environment is one whole thing – including both the natural and the historic elements of it, so appreciating all aspects of the environment will help us reap the associated benefits in a holistic way).

People are emotionally connected to place. Historic England and The National Trust carried out a research in 2019, which demonstrated that 75 per cent of members of the public want to pass on their love of a place to significant others. 92 per cent agree that they would be upset if their meaningful place was lost. The research used fMRI scanning and found that

³³ *Heritage and Society*, 2019. Historic England. historicengland.org.uk/content/heritage-counts/pub/2019/heritage-and-society-2019.

³⁴ *Wellbeing and the Historic Environment: Threats, Issues and Opportunities for the Historic Environment*, Sarah Reilly, Claire Nolan and Linda Monckton, 2018. historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/wellbeing-and-the-historic-environment/wellbeing-and-historic-environment.

key areas of emotional processing in the brain are activated by ‘a place deemed to be special’ by an individual, supporting the feelings of a deep connection.

The historic environment can also provide constancy. Community level wellbeing is higher in places that offer a ‘degree of constancy’ in the physical and social environment (those aspects that remain the same over time), which can be very reassuring in our fast-paced, constantly changing world.

Another way to deliver the wellbeing benefits of heritage is through social prescribing pathways. Historic England started a partnership with the National Academy of Social Prescribing (NASP) and is working alongside other sectors’ colleagues to create regional social prescribing infrastructure and to promote social prescribing projects. The wider heritage sector’s social prescribing offer is also growing, including museums on prescription, community archaeology projects, Sensory parks (Historic Royal Palaces), and heritage walks in Historic Houses properties.

We can all benefit from a healthy dose of heritage – and we can prescribe this to ourselves today.

It is the stories of our past that have the power to make us stronger and wiser. Life is not always easy, and as we all have witnessed in the last year, it can be full of hardship and challenges. We need that strength and hope not just to survive and carry on, but to keep our humanity alive. We all know that there is a part of us, deep inside, that needs more than fresh air and exercise, more than food and shelter. It needs purpose and inspiration; it needs to hear that story.

“ We all know that there is a part of us, deep inside, that needs more than fresh air and exercise, more than food and shelter. It needs purpose and inspiration; it needs to hear that story. ”

Call to action

EVERYONE CAN DO THINGS DIFFERENTLY

People living with mental health challenges

Assert your right to use heritage and creative assets as an integral part of your mental health care plan. Call out discrimination, and own your story.

Heritage organisations

If you have not already done so, review your assets of places, people, collections and information and ask yourself, how could you use them to deliver a brilliant mental health and creativity project? Upskill staff and volunteers with mental health training and supervision.

Mental health and social prescribers

Ask people if they are interested in heritage and creativity and follow their lead. Put heritage and creativity on your radar and employ Heritage and Creativity Link Workers. Pay providers.

Universities

Continue the progress in collaboration and research that meets cross-sectoral needs. Consider supporting a new open access Heritage and Health journal.

Funders and national organisations

Continue to reflect on options to fund flexibly, including long term and core support. Leverage best practice and stimulate it sector-wide. Urge government and your peers to see heritage as a mental health asset, and call out bad practice and exclusion.

Heritage, creativity and mental health providers

Keep on keeping on. Protect your value, publish research, share experiences, befriend your colleagues, and look after yourself.

Selected further reading

PUBLICATIONS

Historic Landscapes and Mental Well-being, 2019, Eds.: Timothy Darvill, Kerry Barrass, Laura Drysdale, Vanessa Heaslip and Yvette Staelens

Creative Health: The Arts for Health and Wellbeing, All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Wellbeing, 2017

ONLINE RESOURCES

Historic England

historicengland.org.uk/research/current/social-and-economic-research/wellbeing

See in particular: *Social Prescribing and the Potential of Historic England's Local Delivery: An SQW report to Historic England*, Lauren Roberts, Holly Waddell and Alice Birch, 2021

Wessex Archaeology

A Thousand Lost and Found Stories: How to run your own wellbeing project.

www.wessexarch.co.uk/our-work/thousand-lost-and-found-stories-how-run-your-own-wellbeing-project

(also available as a pdf)

What Works Wellbeing

whatworkswellbeing.org

In particular: *Heritage and Wellbeing: The impact of historic places and assets on community wellbeing. A scoping review.* Institute of Psychology, Health and Society, University of Liverpool/ Centre for Health Promotion Research, Leeds Beckett University, March 2019.

Repository of Arts and Health Resources

www.artshealthresources.org.uk

Arts and Health South West

www.ahsw.org.uk/resources

Culture, Health and Wellbeing Alliance

www.ahsw.org.uk/resources

Wales Arts, Health and Well-being Network (WAHWN)

wahwn.cymru/knowledge-bank

FILMS AND AUDIO

The Restoration Trust

The Return of Happy Times, Burgh Castle Almanac, Restoration Trust:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=ODVpf0bwVQI&t=27s

Dr Hills' Casebook: the story of a doctor and the people he cared for, Restoration Trust:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=gIL8cSK5IEM&t=2815s

BBC

BBC Open Country, Stonehenge and Mental Health:

www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b08md98n

SELECTED BARING FOUNDATION RESOURCES

Creatively minded
David Cutler, 2020

Creatively minded and young
Compiled by Harriet Lowe, 2020

Creatively minded and ethnically diverse
Compiled by The Baring Foundation, 2021

Creatively minded: the directory
The Baring Foundation, 2021

Creative minded and the NHS
David Cutler, 2021

The Baring Foundation

8-10 Moorgate

London EC2R 6DA

www.baringfoundation.org.uk

Twitter: @baring_found

November 2021

ISBN: 978-1-906172-58-9