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for Heritage
Interpretation

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AHI 2021 Engaging People Awards Special



Association
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Interpretation

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Editors:
Nicky Temple and Nicolette Evans
journal@ahi.org.uk

Copy Editor:
Kathrin Luddecke

Editorial Board:
AHI Marketing and Communications Group

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AHI contact details:
01795 436560
admin@ahi.org.uk

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Foreword

Welcome to the Winter issue of *Interpretation Journal*, featuring projects shortlisted for the AHI 2021 Engaging People Awards, sponsored by The Creative Core.

There have been many changes made to the AHI awards since the last ceremony in 2019, as Awards Chair Bill Bevan explains on page 5, including a new name and new categories, and a different approach to the judging process.

As Journal Editors, we have also taken a different approach in the way we are presenting the shortlisted projects and those who have been chosen as winners. This year, the words you will read are directly from the project teams themselves. We asked them to talk about their vision and aims, their experiences in running the project and what they learnt along the way. Our intention is that by presenting the projects in this way, you may find inspiration and transferable ideas for your own work.

One of the things that we enjoy most about editing *Interpretation Journal* is the amount we learn from the incredible range of interesting interpretation projects we are lucky to feature, countrywide and beyond. This special awards issue is no exception. We hope you enjoy reading about the shortlisted projects as much as we did.

You'll notice that we have not featured the winners of the Young Interpreter and Lifetime Achievement awards in this issue. Fear not, for they will appear in the next *Journal* as part of our In Conversation With... series of interviews. We are delighted to say that the winner of the Young Interpreter award is Lihem Tesfaye and the winner of the Lifetime Achievement award is Bob Jones MBE.

AHI would like to thank The Creative Core for sponsoring the awards overall, and the sponsors of the six categories – Novadura, HDC International, Artemis Scotland Ltd, Bright White Ltd, Anglezarke Dixon Associates, Red Kite Environment, AT Creative and Info-Point. Without crucial support from our sponsors, we would not be able to run the awards at all.

As always, we welcome your comments and feedback. Please get in touch with us: journal@ahi.org.uk. ■

Nicky Temple and Nicolette Evans

Next issue will focus on: East of England

For more information about the Association for Heritage Interpretation [AHI] email: admin@ahi.org.uk or write to: The Administrator, AHI 25 Recreation Way, Kemsley, Sittingbourne, Kent ME10 2RD. Tel: +44 (0)1795 436560.



Individuals can join AHI as Associate or Student Members or can apply to be elected, subject to qualifications and experience, as Full Members or Fellows. Businesses can join as Corporate Members with the same rights as individual members. All members receive *Interpretation Journal*, and other mailings. They can participate in AHI events and (if paid-up) can vote at the Annual General Meeting. Printed in UK © AHI 2021.

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Cover: Visitors enjoying the displays at Dub London: Bassline of a City.

© Museum of London, photographer Chris Bethell

View from the Chair

Jim Mitchell

Chair, AHI

Welcome to the Winter 2021 issue of the *Interpretation Journal*.

Engage!

A big thank you to everyone who has 'engaged' at the AHI conference and awards this year. It was a great success and again has given me great heart thinking about the variety and scope of interpretation happening right now across the UK and Ireland. Our challenging themes of how interpretation can help make a better world, how heritage sites can be agents of change, and how are we reaching for the horizon, are very ambitious – but recognise where we are as a profession and how we fit with the big issues of the day.

I would like to add my congratulations to all of the awards winners and entries this year. The new Engaging People focus has given a bumper crop of entries and interest, helping AHI celebrate excellence and reach new audiences. Watch this space for events coming in 2022, including virtual global gatherings and returning to an in-person conference in Wales – something to be very excited about! Soon it will have been two years since the pandemic started and many interpreters have found it pretty tough at times, I am sure. At AHI we have responded to the changes and taken advantage of some of the opportunities such as with our virtual conferences and awards, the webinar series and online training programme. We have also seen memberships broadly hold up in numbers and had many new people join, which is good news for AHI. However, we are still adapting and are always keen to hear ideas from the membership on how to better deliver for members and the profession.

Best practice guidelines

If you haven't already, then I recommend you log into your account on the website and access our newly updated and designed best practice guidelines. The professional development team has been hard at work giving these a new lease of life and they are now there for you to use, both to learn and to share this best practice more widely. They have been given a lovely design by the Way Design. More will be added over the coming months. Remember that the back issues of this journal are also to be found in this section, as are recordings of our webinars.

Changing chairs

By the time you have read this I will have stepped down as a trustee for AHI, after eight years on the committee and three as Chair. It's been a tremendous experience and I have felt privileged to work with my fellow trustees to help steer AHI through challenging times. AHI has been such an inspiration to me throughout my career, and it's been great to give back to the organisation. I am looking forward to continuing to help AHI as a member and also dedicate some more time for advocacy for the profession whenever and wherever I can. I would like to especially thank Lyn, who has been so helpful and professional throughout my time as Chair – I will miss our regular catch ups. I would like to congratulate Beth Môrafon, who will make an excellent new Chair, and wish the team my very best. ■

The Creative CORE. Official
sponsors of the 2021 awards



FROM DISCOVER HERITAGE TO ENGAGING PEOPLE – REDEFINING THE AHI AWARDS

Bill Bevan, Judging Panel Chair

The AHI Awards have been radically redesigned between 2019 and 2021, taking forward the strengths of the previous years while making some changes to help make the awards more relevant to recent sector innovations and a changing society. This resulted in the new name along with new and changed categories and a different judging emphasis.

All finalists are assessed by a pair of site judges, making the AHI Awards very different from many other awards. They complete in-depth reports that blend their experience as visitors with an assessment of the planning, implementation and evaluation of the projects they are judging.

In 2020, the AHI Awards Group wanted to:

- Use the awards to help redefine interpretation as a discipline about engaging people across a broader range of areas – heritage, culture, wildlife, science – therefore shifting the focus more to people, whether visitors or communities
- Make the awards more inclusive and diverse to increase their relevance to, and attract entries from, a broader range of organisations, groups and people
- Help sites and organisations who don't necessarily regard themselves as 'interpreters' value the awards as recognising their work in visitor experience and engagement



A volunteer-led Walk and Talk tour in progress at the British Museum



Visitors test out the audio-visual display at Eskdale Mill

- Respond to society-defining events – Covid, Black Lives Matter and the climate emergency
- Treat the internet as a place where interpretation is delivered on a par with physical indoor and outdoor venues
- Simplify the application process.

You can see and assess the results of this in the finalists and winners presented in these pages. Reflecting on the entries we received in 2021, we had more than ever before, representing a much wider range of projects and organisations. →

© Trustees of the British Museum

© Minerva Heritage Limited

Left: Light installations,
Glow Wild at Wakehurst

Right: Carl Barma, a member of
Action for Autism & Asperger's
Barnsley in a felt-making
workshop. Allegories of the
Senses, Cooper Gallery



© RBG Kew



Rhiannon Rees

The judging process

The awards have a three-stage judging process which we feel provides a robust and fair process for choosing the winners of the AHI Awards.

Stage 1. Shortlisting All entries are read and assessed by the judging panel to shortlist the finalists for each category. In 2015 we created a five-member panel and wanted to ensure that the members represented all the nations of Britain and Ireland to avoid any suggestions of regional bias. For 2021 Catherine Ross and Lynda Burrell of the National Caribbean Museum joined the panel to provide guidance, mentoring and awareness in ensuring there was less in-built bias during shortlisting.

Stage 2. Site-judging All finalists are assessed by a pair of site judges, making the AHI Awards very different from many other awards. They complete in-depth reports that blend their experience as visitors with an assessment of the planning, implementation and evaluation of the projects they are judging. Pairs of site judges are allocated to visit specific sites, balancing travel distances, conflicts of interest, experience and availability. A site judge will visit two sites, so that they can compare and review their experiences.

We run a mentoring scheme within the judging process, where we pair experienced interpreters with those early in their career or looking to develop their interpretation skills. This has proved successful, with both mentors and mentees benefitting from working together to assess and report on the shortlisted sites. And there's nothing more rewarding for the awards group to see our mentees grow into mentors.

Stage 3. The Big Decisions The members of the judging panel read the site judges' reports to choose the category winners and the recipient of the overall AHI Award for Excellence.

Judge training

Panel and site judges commit to two rounds of judging over a four-year period, which is a big ask, and we are lucky enough to have judges who willingly return for further rounds as well! We have 20–30 site judges for this period.

All judges receive a full day of targeted training – usually held at a heritage venue so that they can network with the team and other judges, as well as test their newly honed assessment skills on a live project. They are also provided with a wealth of written guidance and access to the awards group.

Thank you

Our judges are a marvellous bunch, sharing their time and expertise freely and hugely enthusiastically – we couldn't run the scheme without them. They are all volunteers who work directly or indirectly in interpretation and are drawn from our membership (or are encouraged to join if not already a member).

A huge thank you to everyone who has judged this year – and to all our site judges, judging panel and awards group now and in previous years – for all your commitment, rigour and insights. The merit and integrity of the AHI Awards is down to you. ■

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AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE

This award, chosen by the judging panel, is given to the most inspiring, innovative and inclusive project from among the category winners. The overall winner will be the very best of the best new projects successfully and effectively engaging people with our heritage, nature, culture or science, and will also be taking positive action towards diversity and climate sustainability.

Winner

DUB LONDON: BASSLINE OF A CITY AT THE MUSEUM OF LONDON

Find out more about this project on page 33.



© Museum of London, photographer Chris Bethell

Sponsored by Novadura



INDOORS CATEGORY

For permanent or semi-permanent projects that engage people inside and provide interpretive visitor experiences in heritage, nature, culture or science. Projects can be physical and/or digital indoor experiences, from tiny churches to palaces, village halls and schools, museums and visitor centres, in one place or several.



WINNER

ESKDALE MILL

Minerva Heritage Ltd worked with Eskdale Mill & Heritage Trust to support the conservation, preservation and interpretation of the Lake District's last working water-powered corn mill. The project was awarded funding from National Lottery Heritage Fund, Copeland Community Fund and other funders in 2018.

Casting my mind back to 1997, as a grumpy, grungy teenager visiting Eskdale Mill on a family holiday to the Lake District, I could never have imagined that one day I would be part of a team to undertake its major redevelopment.

First of all, conservation required the mill's contents to be packed up and stored off-site. Volunteers worked, from scratch, to catalogue each artefact, noting items that could be used in the mill's redisplay. The volunteers became part of the interpretive planning team, contributing

to theme development and identifying stories to be told through the mill's architecture and artefacts.

Following this, detailed designs were developed for graphic and other media that would support delivery of the plan. We had to think carefully about how to accommodate the needs and motivations of the target audiences – mostly walkers and family day visitors using the Ravenglass and Eskdale Railway. The resulting suite of media includes graphic panels and hands-on interactives interpreting the people of the mill, the mill's architecture and the complexities of mill operation, an audio-visual presentation bringing to life the mill's drying floor, a new guide book and a children's 'Flour Power' trail, developed together with a crack team of contractors (The Way Design, Elmwood, Fuzzy Duck, illustrator Steve Hall, Activation – to name but a few!). The display content was supported by volunteers who were trained to research the mill's history and conserve artefacts for redisplay.

The mill re-opened, with a new manager, in 2019. While the displays were intended to support self-guided visits to the mill, volunteers enhance the visitor experience through knowledgeable, enthusiastic guiding. The mill grounds have been impeccably managed and recently enhanced by an external trail that engages visitors with the natural resources that support the mill's operation.

Balancing the books



© Minerva Heritage Ltd



© Minerva Heritage Ltd

Low-key interpretation panels
with mounted artefacts

It is hoped, following a challenging 18 months, that we will begin to find out more about how visitors engage with the mill's redisplay, so that we can enhance and develop interpretation further according to their feedback. We certainly hope to see more of this:

"The mill itself was totally fascinating – lovingly restored and presented by enthusiastic volunteers – a real trip back in history."

Tripadvisor Review 2019

And to inspire more grumpy, grungy teenagers to take up careers in heritage interpretation. ■

What the judges said:

Eskdale Mill's team have produced an excellent example of the transformation of an industrial heritage site into a lovely visitor attraction. Visitors are presented with engaging and well-considered displays. The narratives are thoroughly researched, and clearly and carefully selected to connect the mill to its surrounding agricultural community. A sensory experience. To be invited to pass through the mill's long history is a real delight.



© Minerva Heritage Ltd

A water-powered interactive in the mill's grounds



FINALIST WITH JUDGING PANEL COMMENDATION

THE WALK AND TALK PROGRAMME

AT THE BRITISH MUSEUM

The British Museum's Walk and Talk tours were designed to support small numbers of people who might lack confidence in – or experience barriers to – visiting the museum. The programme aims to reach people in the locality who are living with mental distress.

The programme was created in partnership with a local mental health organisation, Mind in Camden, and the museum's community partnerships, interpretation and volunteer teams. With staff guidance, volunteers work in pairs to develop and deliver short informal tours or talks for participants from Mind in Camden. The tours are followed by a staff-led activity session (object-handling) to facilitate further conversation.

This Anglo-Saxon brooch featured in a Walk and Talk tour about the five senses. Sight is shown in the centre, surrounded by figures representing hearing, touch, taste and smell



© Trustees of the British Museum

The programme has evolved in other ways. Conversations with Mind in Camden led to an increased focus on objects relating to wellbeing and daily life. The success of the programme in encouraging repeat visitors means that we now ensure that every tour is unique, although each aims to open up conversations prompted by objects, and to build participants' confidence in visiting a local museum.

Since October 2020, more than 75 people have attended one of the Walk and Talk sessions, with several making repeat visits. Evaluation has highlighted the positive effect the tours had on attendees' wellbeing:

*"It's been absolutely fabulous...
What else is there on I could go to?"
"I enjoyed it. I feel more hopeful now."*

The next series of tours is currently in development. ■

Staff from Mind support participants with their journey to the museum. Recognising that the museum can often be a busy, intimidating place, the tours provide a relaxed, conversational introduction. Volunteers meet attendees at the information desk and provide a friendly welcome, before walking to a quieter gallery where the tour takes place.

The tour explores a small number of objects with relatable themes such as the five senses, music and masks (relating to people's experience of wearing face masks during the pandemic). It ends with suggestions of an object to look out for next time to encourage attendees to return independently. Over the pandemic, when many people experienced greater loneliness and isolation, we felt it was important to continue the programme so it was adapted and delivered online.

What the judges said:

The project provided meaningful and satisfying experiences not only for the participants but also for the volunteers involved in planning and delivering the sessions. The museum should be commended for its genuinely collaborative approach to this project, responding to feedback at every stage and viewing planning and delivery as an iterative process. They considered the tours in the context of the whole visit experience, researching and implementing measures to ensure that the target audience is more likely to get to the point of being able to engage with the tour; this is an often-neglected part of the planning process.

Learning about ghastly ailments and the apothecary's stomach-churning remedies



© Imagemakers/Buxton Crescent Visitor Experience



FINALIST

BUXTON CRESCENT VISITOR EXPERIENCE

This project set out to tell the story of Buxton's hugely important Georgian Crescent, the town's history as a spa, its nationally famous mineral water and the past uses of the 'water cure'. Buxton Crescent Heritage Trust and its partners set out to create a viable new heritage visitor experience that would be sustainable in the long term, creating jobs and opportunities for volunteering. It aimed to provide a focal point for the town's heritage tourism offer, supporting a vital element of the local economy.

A Grade I listed building, the Crescent is synonymous with Buxton's history and identity and is hugely important to local people.

Above all, the largest ambition was to interpret and celebrate the restoration of what was both a major asset and a big challenge for the town – the abandoned Georgian Crescent. A Grade I listed building, the Crescent is synonymous with Buxton's history and identity and is hugely important to local people. But for 30 years it had been empty and was slowly deteriorating in the heart of the town. This project has brought it back to life and welcomed the public back in to discover its special story.

The experience includes a range of media providing different insights and means of accessing information including talking portraits, touch screens and virtual reality. There is also a sponsored film highlighting the key theme of 'how and why thermal mineral water rises in Buxton'.

The attraction has been open daily since May 2021, with a guided tour allowing the experience to function while restrictions were in place. We've received a good response so far on social

media and are using this, alongside feedback forms, to inform plans for increasing visitor numbers in the future.

The experience is now looking to launch a full education programme including talks, music, cultural, artistic, family and educational events alongside group and private packages to help increase its appeal and ensure sustainability. As restrictions ease, we also plan to host larger events in the nearby Assembly Rooms. ■

What the judges said:

It provides an enjoyable and informative visit, with well-produced interpretive media. We particularly enjoyed the interpretation about a lady's day in Buxton, the apothecary's illness bowl and the film. We hope that the Crescent Experience will attract visitors to Buxton and serve to highlight its rich history as a health spa.

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FINALIST

CASTELL COCH INTERPRETATION

Often mistaken for a Victorian folly, Castell Coch in Wales was the Marquess of Bute's and architect William Burgess's ultimate boy's toy. Extensively researched and using the finest craftsmen in the country, they undertook painstaking reconstruction in the 1870s, solidly based on the 12th century remains of a land-grabbing Anglo-Norman marcher lord's castle.

Inside, the ornate decorative scheme takes its references from the medieval, but actually every mural, each flower and every carving serves just one purpose – a love letter to Bute's beloved wife Gwendoline. And it's wildly gothic!

We wanted to provide activity for younger visitors, somewhere welcoming and worthwhile for less able visitors and ultimately tell Bute's love story in a different but fitting way.

Working with Cadw, Ruth Taylor Davies developed the interpretation plan and Cod Steaks Ltd delivered it. We kept to the theme but also wanted creativity. We aimed to reflect Bute's use of high-quality craftsmanship and introduce colour and vibrancy. We wanted people to be in awe when they saw the dressed rooms. And we had an empty tower to do it in.

We chose wallpaper as the main agent for delivery. Cadw's conservation principles dictate that everything we do should be reversible and non-invasive. After much experimentation with suitable, sympathetic wallpaper pastes, we decided on a floor-to-ceiling interpretation that captured the artistic spirit of Bute's and Burgess's ideals. This was complemented with interactive games including a crystal-visioning machine (it's true, the marquess had one of these); wine bottles with interpretive labels referring to the marquess's innovative vineyard, the first planted in the UK since Roman times; and an audio interactive that made the plates on the dresser 'sing and dance' as a meal is prepared in the kitchen. We even created a central-heating game, complete with hot air – if you plumb it right! We also rehoused the twelve original stained glass chapel windows creating a modern and restful chamber at the top of the tower. ■

Floor-to-ceiling interpretation wallpaper with the model of Castell Coch



© Crown copyright (2021), Cymru Wales

What the judges said:

Well planned and thought through to deliver the stories of most interest to Castell Coch's visitors while also picking up on themes from the pan-Wales interpretation plans. Suggestions to link to Lord Bute's port and the growth of multiculturalism in the area, and the link between decorative schemes and places of worship, would be worth exploring in the future. We applaud its innovative aspects and would recommend a visit once Covid restrictions are relaxed so that you can enjoy the full experience of this stunning castle including the interactives.

Sponsored by HDC International

HDC International
 The heritage interpretation experts!

OUTDOORS CATEGORY

This category is for permanent or semi-permanent projects that engage people outside, and provide interpretive visitor experiences in heritage, nature, culture or science. Projects can be physical and/or digital outdoor experiences and outdoors really does mean anywhere outside! This might be a small garden or a landscape, a street to a city centre, a forest to a carpark, and at one location or many.



WINNER

ARNIEBOG DISTANCE STONE AND SILVANUS SCULPTURE AT NETHERCROY

The overall aim of the Rediscovering the Antonine Wall project is to raise awareness and understanding of this World Heritage Site among a diverse audience, specifically through engaging with disadvantaged and deprived communities and those less likely to engage with heritage.

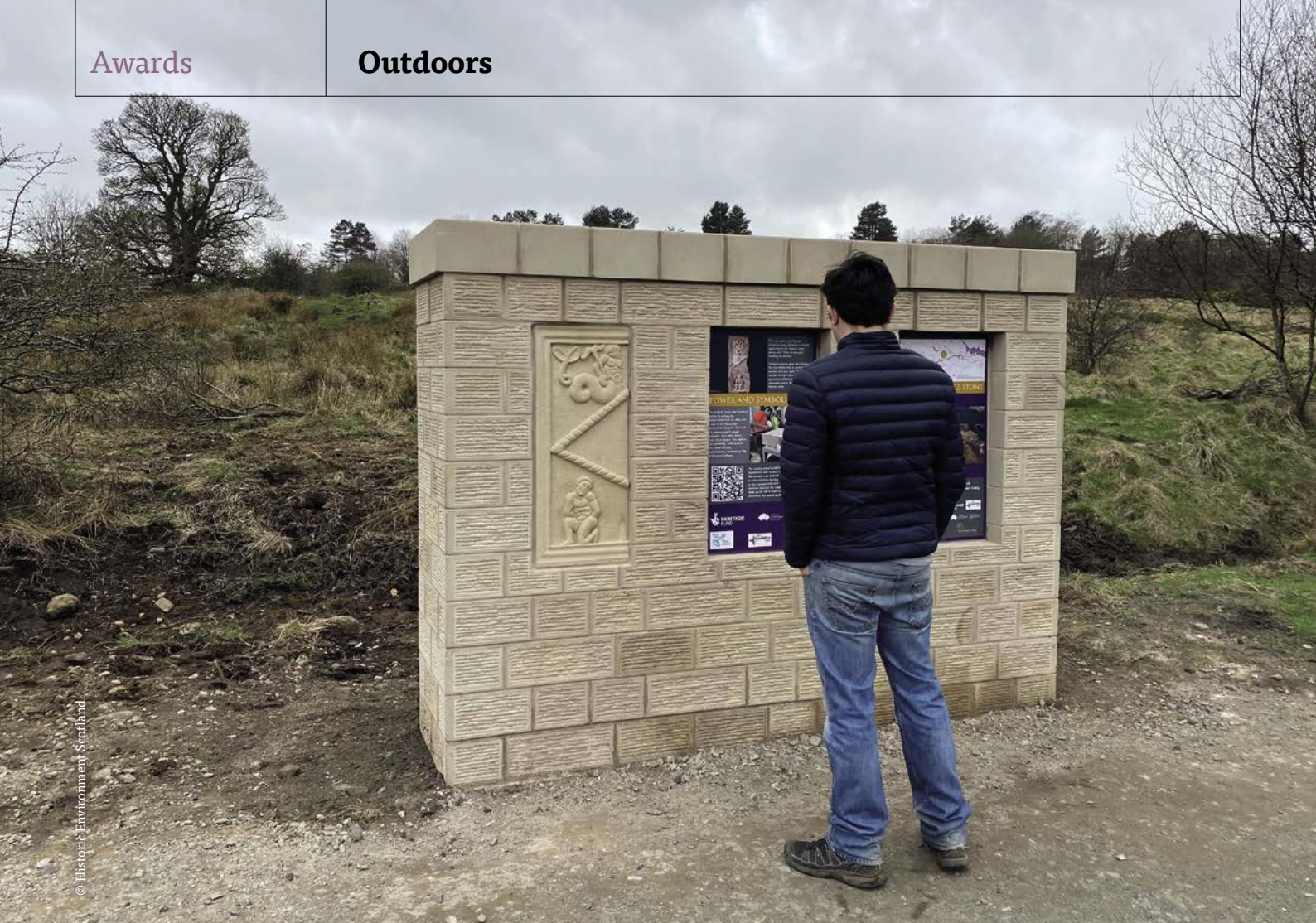


The Arniebog distance stone and Silvanus sculpture at Nethercroy are part of a programme of regeneration-led capital projects alongside co-designed and co-curated community projects and outreach activities.

Distance stones are highly decorated stone sculptures offering a dedication to a Roman emperor and mark the distance of the completed wall. The Arniebog stone replica, rather than being tendered commercially, was developed collaboratively with the City of Glasgow College digital and stone masonry departments, to offer skills development opportunities and real-life case studies for students. Working with the college was a unique way to deliver the distance stone and a film was created by the lecturers and students to document their experience and its impact on the future careers of the students. →

© Historic Environment Scotland

Silvanus, the sculpture of a Roman soldier's head from the 'Rediscovering the Antonine Wall' project



© Historic Environment Scotland

The Arniebog distance stone replica

In addition, the project has helped us to achieve our key aim of raising awareness of the Antonine Wall World Heritage Site; it has made heritage accessible to all.

The second commission of a massive corten steel sculpture, representing a soldier looking across supposedly 'barbarian lands', was intended as a modern response to the Roman remains on Croy Hill and something that would create a strong sense of place on the route up to them.

Together the stone and sculpture have created a destination of Nethercroy, which sits adjacent to the ex-mining community of Croy. This is driving visitors to the site and the impact has been felt in the local community. In addition, the project has helped us to achieve our key aim of raising awareness of the Antonine Wall World Heritage Site; it has made heritage accessible to all.

One of the most challenging aspects of the project was the remote site which caused issues for construction over the winter months. Also, working with the college on the stone masonry took considerably longer than a traditional tender approach; however, the resulting benefits were more than worthwhile. Over the next five to ten years, we are planning further regeneration and community development projects which will continue to raise awareness of the Antonine Wall. ■

What the judges said:

The level of community involvement must be commended, the project is much better for it and the impacts (including skills training and local pride) are notably enhanced. The judges loved the way the installation encouraged visitors on the day to engage and discuss the area's Roman heritage with each other. The metal head (Silvanus) provides the drama while the distance stone brings the community involvement, relevance to people today and demonstrates the reason for the location. It has gone beyond raising the profile of the wall locally to encouraging local people to consider it as part of their local heritage and to share this with others. That must be regarded as a significant success.

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FINALIST

FINALIST

LAND OF IRON

For a hundred years, ironstone mining and railway construction in the North York Moors helped fuel the Victorian industrial revolution, transforming the area's farming valleys into dirty, noisy centres of industry.



Rosedale Railway tramper landscape

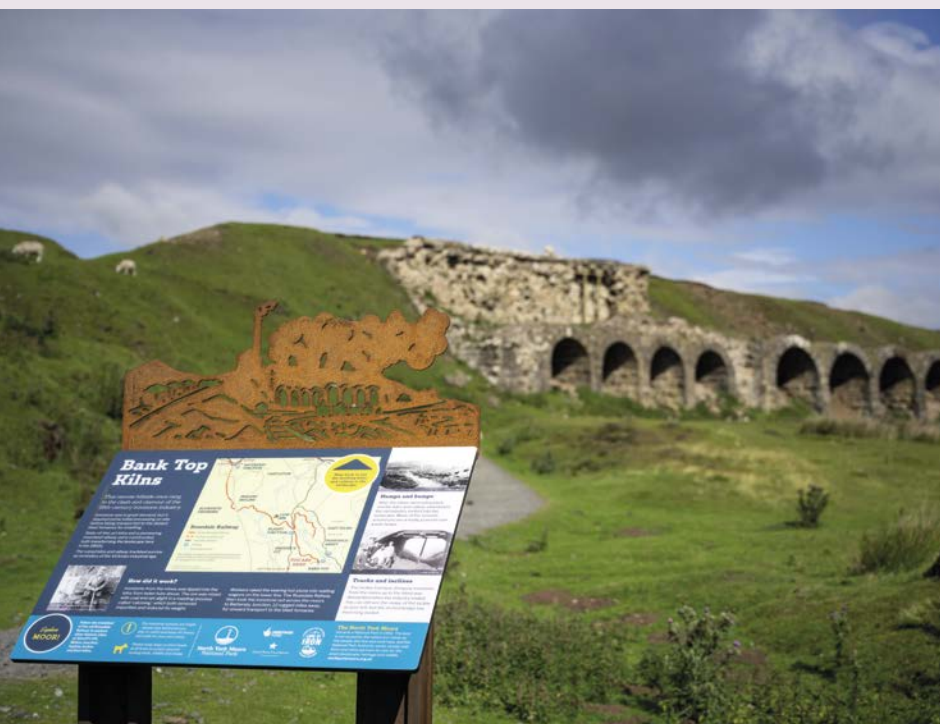
North York Moors National Park Authority

The Land of Iron project tells that story – and that of the local communities and landscapes affected – across a similarly vast scale. There are interventions at 3 project hubs and 22 different interpretive features spread across a project area of 77 square miles, or about 14% of North York Moors.

We worked hard on the content to make the stories personal and thought-provoking. We brought the harsh lives of nameless navvies to life, explored the role of women in the 'Iron Rush', celebrated the pioneering achievements of engineers and mine-owners and gave a face and a story to miners, railway and kiln workers, and engine drivers and their families.

We used hard-wearing materials that reflected the heritage and blended with the landscape – reclaimed railway sleepers for panel legs, benches and frames; corten steel for silhouettes and cut-outs. We built to last – we expect the beautifully weathered cast-iron models to be part of the landscape for as long as the industrial relics themselves have lasted.

Bank Top silhouette board



North York Moors National Park Authority

We learnt quickly that, as a project team, we didn't really know anything. The real knowledge and expertise lay within the local communities, who drove the work forward with a passion.

That's where the future lies too for the project. The National Park Authority has a maintenance brief to look after and promote the interpretation – but it's in the communities, from where the stories originated, that the heart of the project still beats. Enthusiastic volunteers continue to engage with research, walks, digs, wildlife counts and events. Meanwhile, a publicly accessible archive of all the information has been established at the Cleveland Ironstone Mining Museum, taking on the name 'Land of Iron' for the regional ironstone story – a perfect legacy, as the project becomes a place. ■

What the judges said:

Incorporating tactile 3D models and engaging 'viewfinders' helped the visitor visualise historic buildings and landscapes, and to place themselves into the past. Also noteworthy are the calls to action that invite visitors to break from the trail on additional mini-journeys of discovery. The project went the extra mile to be sustainable – working with partners to increase bus services and planning walks that started close to rail stations, reusing local, sustainable and durable materials and raising awareness of the unique wildlife habitats that developed from the ironstone heritage. They also worked hard to remove barriers to access through creating new wheelchair and Tramper-accessible paths and flattening existing paths.



FINALIST

PLYMOUTH TRAILS

The Plymouth Trails project launched in June 2020 with the aim to create a series of self-led walking trails around Plymouth, available to users through a free smartphone app, way-markers and booklets. They were created for local people and tourists, with a strong focus on accessibility which saw the addition of dropped kerbs, additional seating and level access to toilets. The trails also signpost users to other trails, landmarks and attractions around the city.

The offer centres around a free smartphone app with three core trails: Mayflower, City Centre and Hoe trails. The project centralised all self-led trails in Plymouth and made them accessible via a layered approach. It now includes an expanding range of trails including Rainbow Connections (an LGBTQ+ trail), Powerful Plymouth Women and the Blue Mile (a mindful coastal trail). The next trail to launch will be about Plymouth artist Beryl Cook. The app is

being updated to represent the city's heritage through 'locators'. These will allow users to find all heritage plaques, statues and features around Plymouth, starting with a Blue Plaque locator.

Originally there was a strong focus on volunteer guides, which wasn't achieved due to Covid. However, this did allow a greater focus on accessibility and diversifying the number of trails and themes. The delivery of tours by

Bronze totems highlight sites of interest

Left: Users of the Plymouth Trails app can experience 'then and now' images on the routes

Right: One of the ten bronze totems guiding users around Plymouth's Barbican city



volunteers was always a difficult part of the project due to overlap with paid tour guides and local interest groups leading their own walks. It would have been advantageous to involve volunteers and specific interest groups more prominently in the development of the trail content and to widen the offer earlier in the process.

The offer centres around a free smartphone app with three core trails: Mayflower, City Centre and Hoe trails.

The project was overseen by Destination Plymouth, who employed a dedicated Trails Officer, who went on to be employed by The Box, the city's museum and archive, to continue developing trails, both digital and physical, and interpret the city's heritage 'outside' of The Box.

The project had several funders, including the National Lottery Heritage Fund, Plymouth City Council, Mayflower 400, Plymouth Waterfront Partnership and more. Where possible, the money available was spent on local suppliers. ■



Bronze floor markers around the Mayflower Trail

What the judges said:

The visual look of the app before commencing the trails was vibrant and inviting. We were impressed by the subject matter and choice of trails; these were clear and helped to highlight the layout and distinctiveness of different areas within the centre of Plymouth and further afield and the historical significance and stories for each. The navigation tool was a bonus and the pop-up text as you approach a point of interest.

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TEMPORARY EVENT OR ACTIVITY

A time-limited activity such as a performance, exhibition or heritage activity, including events that have already taken place indoors, outdoors or online. Entries can include temporary activities lasting from a couple of hours to a whole season. They can be part of a wider existing project or a stand-alone.



WINNER

BLINK – THE END IS IN SIGHT

BLINK – The End is in Sight was a temporary exhibition staged by charity Sightsavers and held at the Oxo Tower, London. It featured an interactive interface and innovative blink-tracking technology that mimicked the effects of trachoma, a devastating eye infection, by eroding five artworks from award-winning photographers, blink by blink, pixel by pixel.

The exhibition space for
BLINK – The End is in Sight

Together, a team of curators (Barker Langham), designers (MET Studio), interactive producers (Jason Bruges Studio) and photographers created an exhibition that brought a new level of awareness to this debilitating disease.

Our vision was to create a ‘real-life’ experience of the fading of sight to make the audience, in some way, understand the reality of trachoma. Most of us blink without thinking about it – we do it over 20 times every minute. But for people suffering with trachoma, each blink brings them closer to blindness.

So we asked well-known photographers to donate a work capturing the last image they would want to see before going blind, knowing that this work would be destroyed forever by the audiences’ blinks.

Each photograph exhibited was fitted with tracking technology, meaning every time a viewer blinked a mechanical actuator moved across the artwork permanently destroying a small part of it, pixel by pixel. During the run of the exhibition these artworks eradicated gradually but permanently much like the loss of sight caused by trachoma. The overall experience leveraged on people’s ability to empathise, in a very small way, with trachoma sufferers.

Putting on such an exhibition was unprecedented for Sightsavers and allowed them to reach new audiences outside of the charity’s traditional channels and fundraising activities. Ultimately, the exhibition’s success



MET Studio



MET Studio

The exhibition space for
BLINK – The End is in Sight

makes us believe it could represent a new and innovative approach for charity exhibitions. BLINK broke the barriers commonly present between the audience and the message, creating a silent, powerful and direct dialogue between the two. The exhibition was replete with moments to inspire change – from the photographers stories to understanding the devastating effect of trachoma.

An unexpected result was this incredible multi-agency partnership between a charity and the arts and cultural sector alongside the opportunity for a new audience to understand how they could be part of the possibility to eliminate trachoma by 2025. ■

Most of us blink without thinking about it – we do it over 20 times every minute. But for people suffering with trachoma, each blink brings them closer to blindness.

What the judges said:

BLINK – The End is in Sight represents a well-thought-out, well-planned and well-delivered project with a very clear aim that drove the development of a tightly focused narrative and excellent interpretation. Posing the key question 'If you were going blind, what is the last thing you would want to see?' created a central point around which the interpretation could be framed. Being able to watch the Blinkometer increase as the digital image degraded gave an immediacy to the experience that was really thought-provoking and effective in inspiring repeat visits.



FINALIST WITH JUDGING PANEL COMMENDATION

TRAVELLING TREASURE

The Travelling Treasure touring exhibition was a key output of the Church of England Diocese of Newcastle's Inspired Futures project (2016–2019), helping the region's churches to find more sustainable futures. The aim was to 'work together to create a shared travelling interpretive resource benefitting our churches, heritage, people and communities'. It was developed and delivered by Jo Scott Heritage Planning & Interpretation and the Inspired Futures project team, led by Inspired North East project officer Ian Bapty. Interpretive design was by Marcus Byron.

Travelling Treasure (May 2019 – March 2020) was designed with North East of England churches to celebrate the people who created their buildings and keep them active today. The objectives included: challenging perceptions of what churches are and what they do; increasing visitor numbers and dwell time; connecting with new and different audiences; helping local people see the potential of their heritage; and growing confidence, skills and capacity.

The core message of Travelling Treasure is that 'people are our greatest treasure', and it draws attention to the many people who have been involved in designing, caring for, using and sharing our historic churches. Simple devices like these shoes at the altar invited visitors to think about all those who had stood here and why over the centuries



© Jo Scott

very well received. Marks of success were the churches who relished telling their own stories and engaging their volunteers; the pride of team members seeing their suggestions come to life ('the shoes at the altar were my idea!'); the satisfaction of attracting more families and schools; hearing a regular visitor say: 'I've been coming here for years and never noticed that until today!' The process also succeeded in building confidence and skills, encouraging churches to try something new and to recognise the potential of working with their communities to tell more and different stories.

The team is extremely proud of the confidence-building co-curation process that created Travelling Treasure, the positive response and the sustainable principles underpinning it (display flexibility, recyclable materials, minimised travel). The ultimate sustainable solution was to hand over the exhibitions to the Rural Churches for Everyone project in spring 2020. The pandemic put that project on hold, but we remain optimistic the team will repurpose and continue to tour the displays around the region's churches and engage more congregations, communities and visitors in due course. ■

Church teams were closely involved in planning, resulting in effective and engaging resources suitable for any church, regardless of size or location. For just £15,000, we created two easily transportable sets of colourful graphic displays, handling objects and simple interactives that appealed to visitors of all ages and interests. The displays used clear themes relevant to any church, to which each venue could add their own stories and opportunities to ask questions, invite opinions and gather memories.

Eleven churches hosted Travelling Treasure and the colourful displays were generally

What the judges said:

Travelling Treasure is provocative, reflective, engaging, fun and delightful in its approach. It touches on the emotions surrounding big life events, wellbeing, peace and community – not easy topics yet of profound universal interest. Its approach is deliberately quirky – a brave decision made collaboratively and endorsed by parish volunteers. It should be held up as an exemplar small-budget co-creation project.

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GLOW WILD

Glow Wild is a lantern trail held at Wakehurst, Kew's botanical garden in Sussex. Our largest annual event saw its seventh year, during the winter nights of 2020/21. As darkness fell, the gardens were brought to life with glowing lanterns, mesmerising projections, immersive soundscapes and torches of fire. Visitors formed part of the installations, as they do each year, carrying their own individual lanterns.



Jeff Eden

Visitors choose a lantern

Glow Wild is intrinsically inspired by nature and science. This is central to Kew's mission – connecting people to our landscape, opening their eyes to the joys in nature, to its wonder and to its beauty. The trail has its roots in community creation, and our aim was for it to be uplifting and awe-inspiring, with moments of wow, but also with moments of calm.

Pertinent to these tough times, last year's trail set out to celebrate the hidden heroes of the natural world, inspired by aspects of nature that often go unseen – a grain of pollen, a seed on the wind, fungi that enrich soil allowing plants to flourish. We played with scale and challenged perception, inviting people to explore the complex web of nature and spotlighting what we might otherwise miss or take for granted. We asked: 'Can you see it?' By drawing attention to and celebrating the big in the small, we hope our message resonated with the heroes out there helping us to get through these tough times.

Putting on a temporary event last year was not without its challenges. Wakehurst staff, volunteers, local community groups and artists came together in less traditional ways – sometimes virtually and in physical isolation. Everyone pulled together and worked hard to deliver the project, whilst meeting ever-changing government guidance. Glow Wild also became a vehicle for building morale and team spirit within our organisation. Every person involved in the creation demonstrated real passion and resilience, despite and in spite of the challenges.

On reflection, we are delighted that we were able to provide families and friends with a safe and enjoyable destination during the dark, cold months of a world isolating from a pandemic. This rang especially true with the loss of so many cultural institutions and events, and in knowing that getting outdoors and connecting with nature is enormously beneficial to our wellbeing. ■

What the judges said:

The quality and artistry of the event stands out, as does the commitment to sustainability. We felt good efforts had been made towards removing physical barriers to the event. It would be fantastic to see where they take this in future events, developing inclusivity further.

Pertinent to these tough times, last year's trail set out to celebrate the hidden heroes of the natural world, inspired by aspects of nature that often go unseen...

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LOCKDOWN RESPONSE CATEGORY

This category is for online or physical interpretation developed in response to Covid when the site or venue was closed, or event cancelled, due to lockdown. Any type of media is welcome as long as the aim was to engage locked-out visitors in an innovative and engaging way with the heritage, nature, culture or science that is usually offered face-to-face.



WINNER

KNITTING THE HERRING

Knitting the Herring, Scotland's National Gansey Project, was born out of an appreciation of the value of the Museum's Recognised Collection of fishermen's knitwear as a record of the often-unsung creativity and quality of female, domestic craft and design.

Right: Gansey herring submitted to SHOAL and knitted by enthusiastic supporter, Carolyn O'Hare

We sought to raise awareness of gansey heritage and its power to inspire a broader understanding of the story of Scottish fishing. We also knew that people, especially in lockdown, were looking for ways to connect and wanted to use our collection to bring people together in the present, inspired by the heritage of the past.

This Golden Fleece online talk by knitting historian Esther Rutter

The project was funded by Fife LEADER, Outer Hebrides LEADER, NLHF and Fife Council Settlement Fund. Its core output is the Knitting the Herring website (www.scottishgansey.org.uk) which includes



Scottish Fishing Museum – Knitting the Herring Project

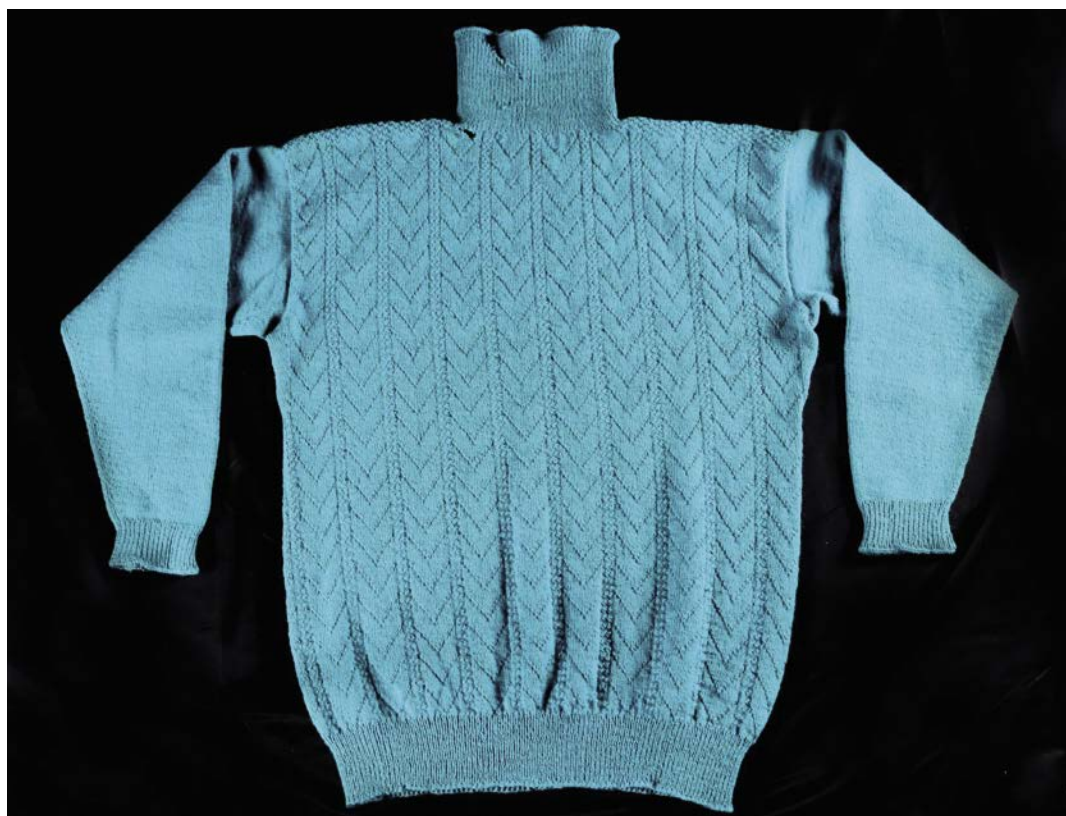
sections on the history of ganseys, their patterns and traditions, a database of museum ganseys, a blog, events programme and activities section. This remains as a lasting legacy and hub for anyone wanting to learn about and be inspired by these unique garments.

The second strand was a meaningful audience engagement programme with a large, broad and international reach. We set out to collaborate with contemporary artists, organisations and knitters to provide new gansey-inspired designs, entertaining talks and discussions, practical activities for all levels of knitting ability and stories to reflect the intangible cultural heritage of knitting.



Scottish Fishing Museum – Knitting the Herring Project

Light blue gansey from the Scottish Fisheries Museum collection



© Scottish Fisheries Museum Collection

"Thank you for creating this lovely project and letting lots of people take part, even though many of us haven't been able to visit you recently."

Carolyn O'Hare

In response to lockdown, we adapted our plans for physical activities and events to bring more of the project online. However, mindful that not everyone can access online content, and wishing to retain the tactile and tangible potency of knitting, we partnered with community organisations to send out knitting kits to schools and vulnerable people.

Although the funded project ended in February 2021, its legacy continues through ongoing *Knit and Natter* online sessions which draw contributors from across the globe, plus the rescheduled SHOAL exhibition which will open on site at the Scottish Fisheries Museum in December with plans to tour to South Uist in 2022. This will, at last, enable us to fulfil one of our main original aims of enabling people to see these beautiful and intricate garments first-hand. ■

What the judges said:

Knitting the Herring was a well-planned project in response to an area of the Scotland Fisheries Museum's collection, the need to record local craft and associated stories, and a general love of craft in the public. It was nice to see a project like this originating from the collection. The website created as a result of the project is clear, well laid out, easy to navigate and with plenty of images of ganseys and videos of experts talking about them. The 3D model of a gansey is a great addition, allowing you to get a real feel for the garment. Really well evaluated – it's clear that a lot of effort has gone into this.

Although the funded project ended in February 2021, its legacy continues through ongoing Knit and Natter online sessions which draw contributors from across the globe...


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BRISTORY: THE HISTORY OF BRISTOL IN 1766 SECONDS

Bristory is a fast-paced irreverent look at the history of Bristol through the eyes of young Bristolian theatre-makers. Originally due to be toured to local schools, it was reconfigured into a film due to the second national lockdown.

Our young theatre-makers wanted to create a piece of work that fostered belonging but did not present a polished history of our city.

A key theme is the centrality of protest and activism to Bristol's history. As one of the group put it, 'more and more people are educating themselves on racism, homophobia and modern misogyny. I think it's inspiring to hear about people like Annie Kenney and Paul Stephenson. Hopefully young people watching the show will be inspired to create social change in the future.' Everyone who responded to our evaluation survey agreed their pupils knew more and felt differently about Bristol's history because of it.

The group was made up of deaf and hearing actors, so we made a version of the show with fully integrated BSL and captioning.

While we were disappointed to cancel our tour, filming had many advantages. As of August 2021, we have sent *Bristory* to 58 primary schools across Bristol, South Gloucestershire and North Somerset and it has been watched by 60 to 100

pupils per school. This equates to around 3,000 key stage 2 learners, compared to our original plan to perform *Bristory* in person which would have seen us reach around 1,000 pupils with social distancing restrictions in place.

Prior to the pandemic, transport costs increasingly prevented schools from visiting the theatre in person. Filming *Bristory* meant many were able to engage with Bristol Old Vic for the first time. As one headteacher said, 'our children would never have been exposed to something like this before the pandemic' and having a recording, as opposed to a live performance or livestream, gave teachers greater autonomy as to how they use it in their classrooms.

Our main lesson from creating *Bristory* was just how different the demands of film and live theatre-making are. If we were to make it again, we would experiment with multiple locations, sound and animation, instead of simply performing the piece to camera. When restrictions allow, we hope to tour it to schools within walking distance of the theatre. ■

A still from the Bristory show



© Bristol Old Vic

What the judges said:

Bristory responded to local and worldwide events in an inspired way and produced an alternative version of the story of Bristol with a wide appeal. The inclusive way the show had been developed and had used specialists to inform and advise was excellent. It was very much a collaboration with the young people. Deciding to extend the show to include the history of the whole of Bristol and not just the Bristol Old Vic was inspired. Sustainability played a central part; the show contained strong messages around Bristol's involvement in mitigating climate change.

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ADAPTING ARCHAEOLOGY:
THE SCOTLAND DIGS DIGITAL CAMPAIGN

How do you promote a summer of archaeological digs without actual digs? This was the conundrum facing the Dig It! team when the pandemic hit in March 2020 – just as we were gearing up for our Scotland Digs 2020 campaign.



© Miranda Stuart 2020

Illustrator and designer Miranda Stuart reimagined a scene from 1911 at Cammo Estate's servants' accommodation based on finds made by the Edinburgh Archaeological Field Society

The plan was to create a sense of cohesion around the summer dig season, by developing a digital hub bringing together breaking news and live fieldwork updates from sites across the country. The public could then follow along through a dedicated hashtag and webpages, or find events if they wanted to get involved, which aligned with Dig It!'s overarching vision: to help create a Scotland where everyone enjoys archaeology.

Although development-led work continued, most community-led events were put on hold, including volunteering opportunities and tours which would have been core campaign elements. But many of these groups rallied and organised online talks, Q&As and more – and so Scotland Digs 2020 became Scotland Digs Digital.

The campaign switched gears to focus on advertising these events and encouraging archaeologists to share their lockdown work from home using #ScotlandDigsDigital on social media. We also modified our plans for the campaign webpages, which included an events section listing more than 70 online free or low-cost public events. All these elements were designed to be flexible so that we could adapt them when community-led fieldwork was given the green light later in the summer.

Towards the end of the campaign, the team used the bulk of the advertising budget to support Scotland-based creatives. Three digital artists were commissioned to reimagine scenes from the past inspired by summer discoveries made by volunteers, including a medieval gravestone, Victorian servants' cottages and a magnificent moat. The artwork received regional and national press coverage and is still being used by the archaeology groups to promote their work.

Earlier this year, we launched Scotland Digs 2021 based on lessons learnt from last summer. We picked a hashtag, updated the webpages and commissioned creatives, but we wanted to do a better job of engaging with commercial archaeological units who can't run events or are restricted by confidentiality agreements. We reached out to them individually, provided examples of content that they could share safely and organised free monthly webinars to encourage participation. The plan is to continue running these campaigns each summer, building on lessons learnt as we go.

The Dig It! project is coordinated by the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland and primarily funded by Historic Environment Scotland. ■

What the judges said:

The Dig It! project gave a voice and platform to many small community organisations who were also grappling with the impact of lockdown, and provided help and support for these groups to be more digital. The team worked hard to be inclusive, from commissioning creative resources to appeal to different audiences and bring new perspectives on the past to focusing on digital and intellectual accessibility, including a Gaelic policy, commissioning plain English articles and paying for articles to increase the range of authors who would write for them.




Eighty-three per cent strongly agreed that CB helped them feel connected with others during lockdown, with the most popular reason to engage being 'to be entertained' and 'to lift my mood'.

FINALIST

#CURATORBATTLE

#CuratorBattle (CB) grew from the simple idea of using Twitter to share York Museums Trust (YMT) objects under a given theme and then challenge other museums to do the same, creating playful, interactive threads of objects for audiences to engage with and enjoy.

It was part of a larger digital strategy to share our collections and stories with audiences in engaging and captivating ways while the Yorkshire Museum, York Castle Museum and York Art Gallery were closed because of the pandemic. With most staff furloughed, a small cross-departmental team was created, combining different expertise to generate fresh content around a series of objects that had rarely been in the public eye.

With its playful tone, the aim for CB was to be informative, accessible and entertaining and to stand out from other museum content. We also wanted the battles to lift the mood and enhance the feelings of wellbeing for those who engaged in it during a challenging time for many.

The first battle was on 19 March and we continued to run them weekly for 19 weeks up to the end of July 2020. Overall, more than 1.6 million people engaged with CB and YMT's objects which were seen by more than 6.2 million people on Twitter alone. The battles

were covered by international media, including CNN, Guardian UK, China Global Television Network and BBC One's *Have I Got News for You*.

Survey results showed 50% of the CB audiences were engaging with YMT collections for the first time. Eighty-three per cent strongly agreed that CB helped them feel connected with others during lockdown, with the most popular reason to engage being 'to be entertained' and 'to lift my mood'.

In a time when audiences could not visit cultural venues physically, 86% of people surveyed stated that CB met their need for cultural activity during lockdown. The battles also raised the profile of other museums. For example, Scarborough Museums Collection Team saw their impressions rise from 15,000 in March, prior to the battles, to 931,000 after taking part in the #CreepiestObject battle.

The battles also helped raise awareness of the YMT's financial position following the effects of the pandemic, generating more than £20,000 in online donations (from March to July 2020).

The real shift internally has been the continuation of a cross-departmental approach to creating online content and, organisationally, a wider acknowledgment that creative and engaging social media content can play a significant part in developing and diversifying museum audiences. ■



Fabulous Footwear – #CuratorBattle Tweet featuring a Viking shoe from Yorkshire Museum's collection

What the judges said:

#CuratorBattle was very fun, quirky and enjoyable. YMT created the conditions for the project to grow organically and for it not to be constrained. It raised awareness of different museums and their collections and extended the reach globally. More than anything it attracted a far greater number of people to YMT and supported museum professionals.

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BRINGING THE ZOO TO YOU!

When schools moved to online learning in March 2020, the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland (RZSS) rapidly re-adapted its online resources and created new programmes to support families learning together at home by bringing the Zoo to You. They also wanted to help keep communities connected to both the zoos and their local nature throughout the pandemic.



© RZSS

Tiger live stream

Our goal was to provide learning resources to support families and teachers adapting to home-learning in a very short space of time. We pitched Zoo to You to be fun, educational activities which could be used without preparation or prior knowledge across a range of devices.

At a time when the nation was being asked to stay inside, we wanted to encourage families to spend positive, fun time together. In addition, with many people missing the natural world around them, we made it our mission to help to reconnect young people and their families with nature. We felt it was important to maintain this connection with the environment for people's wellbeing, as well as to continue to foster the empathy for the natural world which is so vital to gain support for conservation.

Over the course of the following year and throughout the various stages of lockdowns in 2020, we used trends and analytics captured by our digital learning environment about which

topics, formats and release times were the most popular with our learners, and adapted our workflow to suit their needs. Over a year, we created 175 free new activities on 30 different topics and widened our reach to engage with more than 43,700 families worldwide.

Moving into the future, the standalone resources created as part of the Zoo to You project will remain available online for free for families. They continue to see much higher levels of engagement than any of our previous online resources with an average of 6,700 families still using the site every month. The project has also informed the way we approach producing online and community engagement in all areas of our work, including structuring our mix-and-match online packages for school groups and home educators.

To view the free family resources visit the RZSS 'Learning and Discovery' website <https://learning.rzss.org.uk/> ■

What the judges said:

An excellent educational project. The project aims to 'reconnect young people and their families with nature' through a combination of attractively presented web pages, activities, quizzes, information and videos. The resources are all free and designed to be accessible across all devices meaning that people who might find physically visiting the zoo too expensive can access all this material, from anywhere in the world. The 'Which wild work would suit you?' quiz and 'Work on the wild side' section offer a great insight into the work of a zookeeper.

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Red Kite

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT CATEGORY

For projects where the community takes the lead or where organisations work in equal partnership with their communities, to tell local heritage, nature, culture or science stories. These can be temporary events or permanent displays or activities, and can take place indoors, outdoors or online. The important thing is that community groups or organisations are directly involved in planning and delivering experiences for local people and/or visitors.



WINNER

THE COLINTON TUNNEL MURAL PROJECT

The Colinton Tunnel Mural is Scotland's longest and most significant heritage mural, covering the entire surface of a 140-metre Victorian railway tunnel. The design, created by lead artist Chris Rutterford, uses a poem by Robert Louis Stevenson as the narrative 'hook' for artistic representations of local heritage, creating an immersive literary and artistic experience.

Part of the mural being created by some of the pupils at Colinton Primary School, one of four contributing schools. More than 600 children contributed to the mural

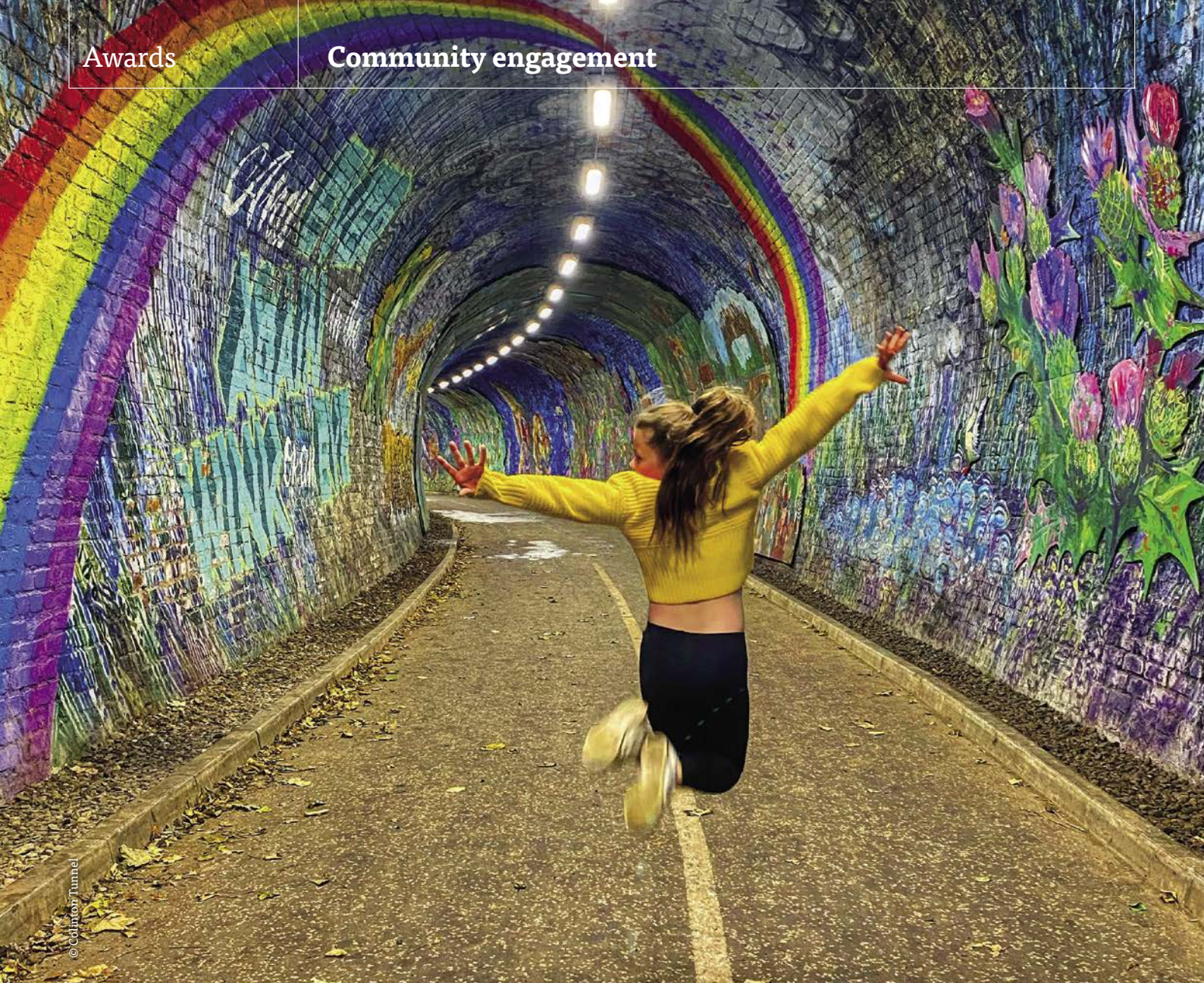
The mural was conceived to address local economic challenges, including the loss of half of our local retail businesses. We wanted to attract more visitors – increased footfall helping remaining businesses to survive and new ones

to thrive. We also hoped that, by creating a bright and engaging environment, the mural would enhance community safety and make people smile. Research showed that good-quality public artwork greatly reduces the risk of new graffiti.



We have been far more successful than we could have hoped. Visitor numbers have trebled in two years with more than 2,200 recorded on a single wet Saturday in October. Benefits have reached the local economy, despite so many businesses being closed during the pandemic. Comments across social media confirm the positive impact of the project and the sense of safety visitors feel, replacing previous unease.

We set out to maximise community involvement. More than one-third of our funding came from local residents. More than 600 young people from four schools have painted parts of the mural, as have young families from the local army barracks and the Pentlands Art Club. This is a mural for the community, with significant parts funded and created by the community.



© Colinton Tunnel

The winning entry in our recent photographic competition, perfectly expressing the joy that people experience when visiting the mural for the first time

Project planning and management have generally been straightforward, though the pandemic and a major civil engineering project both impacted our scheduling. The biggest single challenge has been weather, affecting those mural elements outside the tunnel and creating the micro-climate that we now know to exist within it. Weather affected paint adhesion and resulted in some areas needing to be repainted, using different materials and techniques.

Ongoing fundraising will support planned maintenance so that the mural stays bright and any damage is quickly repaired. We plan for ongoing community engagement, small-scale additional painting, school events, talks to various groups, activities around the tunnel and sales of merchandise featuring mural images. We have also been asked to advise other groups across Scotland, who have watched our journey with fascination, on how they might create similar murals. ■

What the judges said:

The Colinton Tunnel mural is an excellent example of a public art project that transforms a historic site into a vibrant place that makes people want to visit it. The obvious looking-ahead and thinking about how to maintain and continue the work is exemplary. It would have been easy to sit back and delight in what had been achieved, but they have recognised the need to keep the community engaged and use the momentum.



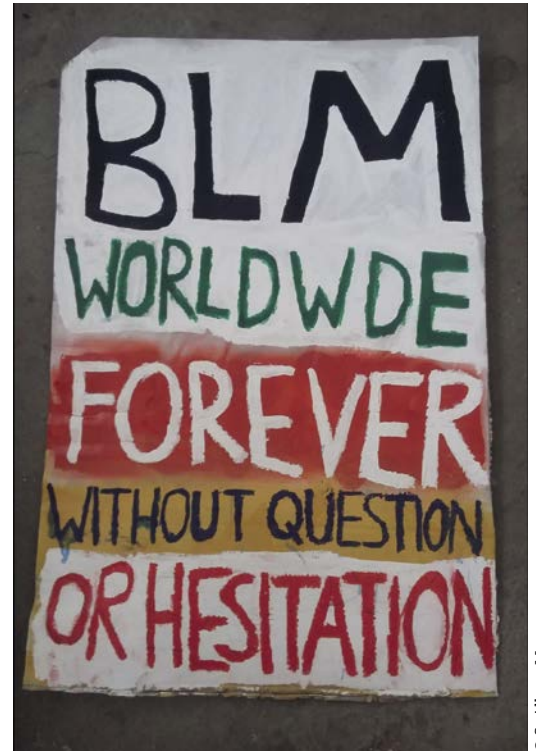
FINALIST WITH JUDGING PANEL COMMENDATION BLACK LIVES MATTER EXHIBITION

Following two Black Lives Matter protests in St Albans on 12 June 2020, St Albans Museums worked with the community to collect placards from the protests and display them in the window of the museum closed due to Covid, highlighting the historic nature of a large protest – especially during a pandemic.

Black Lives Matter placards collected on 12 June 2020.
Images from St Albans Museum website



© St Albans Museums



© St Albans Museums

We didn't want to lose the momentum by waiting until we could reopen and so we identified that displaying placards externally would not only allow people to see them immediately, but also sent a strong message about our commitment to raising these stories up and highlighting previously hidden histories.

Our aims were to carry out contemporary collecting to represent our local community, provide a rapid response to a current issue, bring objects representing the black community into the museum, start a conversation about the issues raised during the protest and the historical links to St Albans, and to help the black community feel that the museum is a place where they can see themselves represented.

This all took place at a time when the museum was closed to the public due to lockdown and so we had to think creatively about display. We didn't want to lose the momentum by waiting until we could reopen and so we identified that displaying placards externally would not only allow people to see them immediately, but also sent a strong message about our commitment to raising these stories up and highlighting previously hidden histories. Images, placards and information were also shared on the

museum website and this page is now a long-term online record of the protests, and a place to start conversations about the black community in St Albans and how we record their history. ■

What the judges said:

At its heart was the museum's desire, in the wake of Black Lives Matter, to engage with those who have often been neglected by museums and heritage sites. The project was modest, and was produced very quickly, yet was still able to engage intimately with the Black community and allow them to take ownership of the story. The project reached its target audience and some! Its contribution to museum audience diversification will go far beyond what may be expected from a £200 budget!

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ALLEGORIES OF THE SENSES

An exhibition at the Cooper Gallery, Barnsley, from August to November 2020.

'Allegories...' was our first fully community-curated fine art exhibition, and our first to open after lockdown. It has changed the way we work. Having put accessibility first throughout planning and delivery of the exhibition, we then continued this whilst adjusting to meet Covid restrictions by working with consultancy Access for All to produce two welcoming videos and an immersive online tour for those that were unable to come to the gallery.

The exhibition represented the five senses through artworks from the Barnsley Museums and Arts Council Collection and was curated by members of Action for Autism & Asperger's Barnsley (AfaAB). Our vision was to create the most accessible exhibition possible, to inform our access policy and provide a blueprint for future co-curation practice.

The guest curators brought their experiences of life on the autistic spectrum to every stage of the curation process. As they chose artworks representing each of the senses, they considered how providing sensory experiences, such as tactile objects, or perfumes, might help visitors to better understand particular artworks and how visitors with different sensory processing might relate to each section of the exhibition.

The final interpretation included: LEGO® Braille Bricks and Makaton signage; descriptive audio labels available online and activated in

the gallery using PENfriends (a small, hand-held scanner); an activity booklet with practical ideas to try at home including recipes inspired by artworks (devised by the guest curators and also available online); a newly commissioned tactile woven textile artwork (which was on display to demonstrate the potential for tactile experiences post-Covid); and access (on request) to smell the perfume 'Iron' designed by artist Antony Gormley.

This was our first exhibition with a full audio tour describing every exhibit, but it won't be our last. Staff and student volunteers have trained with access organisation, VocalEyes (featured in the Summer 2020 issue of the Journal), and we are committed to describing key objects across all Barnsley Museums' collections and in future Cooper Gallery exhibitions.

AfaAB have developed a strong sense of ownership and belonging at the gallery. They are more confident in expressing opinions about art and were invited to write interpretation for Arts Council Collection touring exhibition 'Breaking the Mould'. They also worked with us and the National Gallery to write interpretation for the visit of Jan van Huysum's flower painting to Barnsley in June. We are currently working with the group to develop a proposal for a future Cooper Gallery exhibition. ■

Action for Autism & Asperger's Barnsley on a visit to Barnsley Market to see the poem they wrote inspired by Jan van Huysum's painting 'Flowers in a Terracotta Vase' (background)



Photograph by Louise Edwards

What the judges said:

This project has been well-used by the team at Cooper Gallery to develop new and inclusive ways of working that will have an important impact on Barnsley Museums' activities in future. A great deal of thought clearly went into both the interpretive theme of the senses and the programme of inclusive engagement with a range of audiences, in particular those with a sensory disability. Connecting paintings to recipes was inspired – kudos to guest curator Carl, and an idea that museums should steal with pride!



FINALIST

LOST AND FOUND

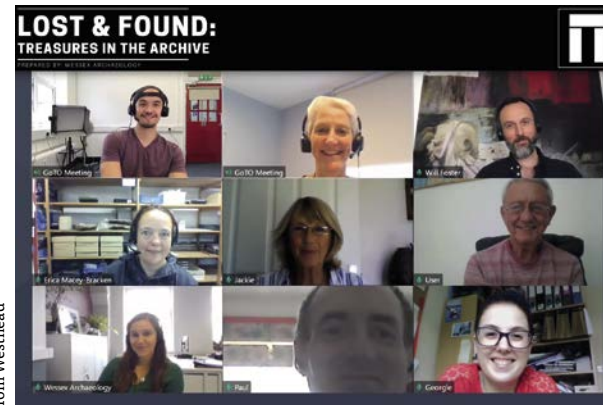
A museum created by the public for the public, Lost and Found gives participants a unique insight into the work of Wessex Archaeology (WA) and presents them with an opportunity to meet some of the experts who work there. Over a series of five live sessions per group, we invited participants to curate an interactive digital museum using objects from the vast archive collection at WA. Participants choose two objects that were 3D scanned and uploaded onto a digital platform called Sketchfab. This sits within a new digital museum, The Museum of the Lost and Found.

Over the duration of Lost and Found we worked with such a diverse group of people that, every time we ran a session, we learnt something new. Although the bare bones of the project were the same, how these bones were fleshed out very much depended on the groups we worked with. Where possible we went out of our way to meet the needs of every person who took part, for some this meant conversations in between sessions to explore ideas for home-tasks or to offer technical support. For others it was simply the flexibility to take part in the sessions but without the pressure to have a camera on, and for others it was enough for them just to be there, to feel safe in the sessions without the expectation to take part. We learnt to be flexible and open, and we learnt to trust people to make the best decisions for them.

The feedback we received was always overwhelmingly positive, but one thing we heard often was, 'I wish it could have been longer'. Five sessions which equated to eight hours of live engagement time in total might be considered a bit lean, but within this time we felt we gave people the space to contribute and participate in conversation. This feedback however has informed the structure for a community café that WA have set up: Dig In invites people to come together in a gentle and accessible way to meet with staff and volunteers and to continue having those conversations and making connections.

The Museum of the Lost and Found is now a resource on which other projects can be based. It is also a little diamond in the crown of the community work WA delivered during lockdown, something of which we are incredibly proud. The learning from this experience will continue to inform how we seek to engage with our communities and to spot opportunities for worthwhile and heartfelt connection to those who might benefit from it.

Dig In invites people to come together in a gentle and accessible way to meet with staff and volunteers and to continue having those conversations and making connections.



Participants take part in a live session

The access to an experienced, knowledgeable and enthusiastic team alongside the wealth of artefacts and stories in the hidden archive is testament to the power of history and a natural curiosity about our past. WA has demonstrated that there is a need for people to be involved in finding out about how their ancestors lived and worked and, by doing so, they are brought together in new and sustainable ways by using 21st-century technology. ■

What the judges said:

The co-curation in this project is brilliant, and, from the report evaluation, this has been very well received by the groups involved in the project. The creative responses were excellent and highlighted the fact that any object can be inspirational if it is framed correctly to begin with. The fact that the responses were so varied highlighted the level of engagement with the participants. The project is thought-provoking, with objects inspiring curiosity and a desire to find out more – even the humble Golden Syrup tin.

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UNTOLD STORIES CATEGORY

Projects in this category tell the story of groups, communities or events that have been overlooked or excluded in the past. Projects showcase courageous creativity, and celebrate all aspects of our shared history and achievements, shining a light on untold, unheard or under-represented voices.



CATEGORY WINNER

AND WINNER OF THE AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE

DUB LONDON: BASSLINE OF A CITY AT THE MUSEUM OF LONDON

Dub London: Bassline of a City was conceived to open up a conversation with Black and Caribbean Londoners. In this project we made space for Londoners to share their heritage, adding to the museum's permanent collection and shaping our headline temporary display. We invited communities to tell us what they felt was representative of dub reggae community and culture, and planned a high-impact exhibition in our free temporary display space. We wanted this to be accessible to dub devotees and curious newcomers within the museum, in community spaces and on digital platforms.

Collaboration with Dub Vendor enabled the creation of a display embodying the essence of the record shop

Through co-production, we pursued a joyful celebration of London life, and how dub sits within Windrush and immigration narratives, speaking to a generation between two cultures/two lands. We collaborated with communities to seek out authentic, authoritative voices. Dub

London highlighted the reggae record shop as a centre of dub culture and community from the 1970s to the present: a place to soak up the sounds, words and visions of 'back home'. The record shop was a community space that championed music coming out of Jamaica's ghettos which enabled London's Black youth to embrace their roots. We spoke in depth with shop owners, members of the Rastafari community, musicians, writers, photographers, DJs, academics, radio producers and fans. As part of the Culture Mile partnership, we hosted an event in tribute to pirate radio with the Dread Broadcasting Corporation.

Collaboration with record shop Dub Vendor Reggae Specialists enabled us to create a display embodying the essence of the record shop. Papa Face – DJ and owner of Dub Vendor – contributed to the design and sold records and answered questions over the counter three days a week. Visitors became part of the display experience. Papa Face trained a group of visitor service 'dub hosts' who gained skills in DJ-ing. The collection of 150 vinyls chosen by 15 independent record shops were →



© Museum of London, photographer Chris Bethell



Dub London highlighted the reggae record shop as a centre of dub culture and community from the 1970s to the present: a place to soak up the sounds, words and visions of 'back home'.

displayed and played to the public. Building personal relationships over two years with our committed community partners has resulted in a truly co-produced display, as well as important acquisitions for the museum's permanent collection. Many of these relationships have resulted in further partnership working, including shaping content for our new museum at West Smithfield.

This project's originality lies in the museum's mandate: We Are London. Dub London comprised public events, online content and outreach and a collecting output that broadened the museum's collection, ensuring these stories are available to Londoners in perpetuity. The museum's role was that of a facilitator in making space for the untold stories of dub, enabling communities to tell their story in the way they wanted to tell it. ■



What the judges said:

Dub London is an exemplar of interpretive engagement by combining thorough planning and audience consultation with creative delivery to create a temporary exhibition and four-year collection programme. The exhibition blends traditional and innovative on-site and online approaches in its delivery, combining graphic panels and object displays with audio-visual and personal interpretation. It is brilliantly co-curated with the community it is about, based on extensive community and audience consultation allied to good interpretive planning and followed up with robust evaluation. Community involvement in the heart of the project is evident by the Museum of London accepting the community's advice to re-create a dub record shop in the gallery,

bringing Papa Face of Dub Vendor on site to engage with visitors and playing shop owner-curated playlists of dub and reggae from which visitors can select tracks to listen to.

Dub London provokes thought, reveals meanings, engages emotions and tells little-known stories that may surprise some visitors – such as the need for Black families to create supplementary schools to overcome classroom racism. The exhibition has successfully attracted new audiences to the museum, including younger and more ethnically diverse visitors. Dub London has been a great success, filling the museum with the music of Black Britain and creating new realisations that resonate beyond the visit.



FINALIST WITH JUDGING PANEL COMMENDATION

DESIRE, LOVE, IDENTITY: VOLUNTEER-LED LGBTQ TOURS OF THE BRITISH MUSEUM

The 'Desire, love, identity' volunteer-led LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer) tours were developed – along with a self-guided audio tour – to create a lasting legacy for Desire, love, identity: exploring LGBTQ histories (May–October 2017), the first exhibition at the British Museum to focus on these issues. The exhibition incorporated an LGBTQ trail through the permanent collection highlighting fifteen particularly significant objects.



© Stuart Frost

A Roman statue depicting the beautiful youth Ganymede with Jupiter in the form of an eagle. One of the objects frequently featured in the LGBTQ tours

Right: A volunteer-led LGBTQ tour in progress at the British Museum. The group are discussing Ishtar, a Mesopotamian deity who had the power to assign gender. Some of her cult followers seem to have been regarded as woman-like men

The project was inspired by Professor Richard Parkinson's award-winning book, *A Little Gay History – Desire and Diversity Across the World*. Richard's book highlights 40 objects in the Museum's collection from around the globe, from 11,000 years ago to the present day. All of the 'Desire, love, identity' LGBTQ programming demonstrates that same-sex love and desire – and gender diversity – have always been an integral part of human experience, whilst acknowledging that the way they have been expressed culturally has varied widely over time.

The exhibition was shaped by a cross-departmental staff network, a range of longstanding community partners, external advisors and curators from almost every department. The involvement of a wider group of motivated people with varied lived experiences and expertise was key to the project, bringing different perspectives to the table, providing reassurance and building confidence. The volunteer-led LGBTQ tours have been similarly shaped by a collaborative, community-driven approach.

We ran numerous training sessions for the volunteers, inviting external experts to come and talk to the team, and to share their own thoughts and experiences. The team have also been on inspirational volunteer-led LGBTQ tours at other institutions including the V&A and the Museum of Classical Archaeology, Cambridge. The volunteers are encouraged to identify and research other LGBTQ objects currently on display, adding them to the tour. Some of the team have recently been involved with a collaborative project with community partners to identify and research Asian objects in the museum with LGBTQ connections. It has taken time to build the volunteers' confidence and to evolve the usual way we work – changing

institutional work culture at the museum has required patience and perseverance.

The first volunteer-led LGBTQ tours took place during June and July 2019 to coincide with the 50th anniversary of the Stonewall Riots, events in Greenwich Village, New York, which inspired ongoing global campaigns for LGBTQ rights. They ran on a monthly basis subsequently, quickly booking out and receiving positive feedback. The closure of the museum on 18 March 2020 led to a lengthy hiatus, but the tours resumed on site on 10 September 2021 and are a permanent part of the public offer. ■



© Trustees of the British Museum

What the judges said:

The tone of voice in the tours was uniquely informal, humorous and engaging and was thoroughly unexpected from such a large traditional museum. The approach of the volunteers is open and disarming while covering a huge amount of information, and the tour addresses the biases that affect which objects and stories survive for us to hear about. This honesty continues in acknowledging the part of the British Museum itself in how its own attitudes to collecting LGBTQ objects have changed over the years.



© Panopticon and Ignite Yorkshire



FINALIST REPRESENT

Led by progressive training company IVE, Represent is the first collaborative project between Ignite Yorkshire, Geraldine Connor Foundation and Heritage Corner, hosted by Leeds Industrial Museum. This project is supported by funding from Department for Media, Culture and Sport's Youth Accelerator Fund via the National Lottery Heritage Fund's Kick The Dust programme.

In October 2020, fifteen young people aged 16–24 were commissioned to spend four days developing interpretations of the industrial heritage of Leeds and its links to Britain's colonial connections and Black history. Prior to the project IVE commissioned Leeds-based Black history experts Heritage Corner to research the connection between Yorkshire's industrial history and transatlantic trade and what interpretation existed for this hidden area of history.

Represent was developed as a direct result of this research to create space for young people to explore this untold heritage. Placements for young people were offered as short paid traineeships. The programme included sessions on unconscious bias, the role of the curator, how to use archives for research and curator-led tours of the museum. Young people were joined throughout the week by expert speakers including curators and artists Khadijah Ibrahiim and Pauline Mayers.

Participants developed proposals for creative interpretations that would engage diverse audiences in the history they had learnt. The ideas were presented to industry professionals, including curators from across Leeds museums and galleries. Proposals included spoken word performances, community engagement and

outreach in schools, and projections onto objects on permanent exhibition.

A key lesson from Represent is the need to create a balance for young people, who are keen to engage with difficult subject matter, but who will also need space to digest and reflect on what they have learnt. The need for self-care in the process of researching traumatic subjects was part of the training by Pauline Mayers in using archives for research. The emotional impact of working with contested history was frequently identified by participants as a rewarding but challenging aspect of the project.

The partnership of organisations has continued to work together to make the interpretation proposals a reality by seeking additional funding and opportunities. Two such projects are now in progress working with Represent alumni in producer and other creative roles and with a new cohort of young people. ■

"It's not very often that I get a chance to attend programmes that educate me on the forgotten and hidden history of people of colour whilst simultaneously giving me the space to explore my creativity."

Iliham, participant

What the judges said:

Represent is a brilliant model of how to reach out to under-represented communities, and especially their young people, making heritage stories relevant to them. It shows the benefits of looking at objects and the stories they hold in different ways. It challenges us to look beyond traditional museum practice. Represent is a success story in how creative and appropriate community engagement can instil a sense of ownership in the objects, deeper connections to a place and support community identity.

Above: Due to Covid restrictions, Represent piloted blended online and in-person working



FINALIST

HOUSE OF LIFE HERITAGE EXPERIENCE AT WILLESDEN JEWISH CEMETERY

Supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, our project aimed to open up a remarkable site to greater numbers and a more diverse range of visitors, built around the little-known stories of a significant minority community. A new visitor experience in an unassuming multi-cultural corner of northwest London is ripe for discovery.

Over five years, through the development and delivery stages of a process backed by NLHF Heritage grants, the United Synagogue has set up new displays and delivered an ever-increasing programme of events, volunteering, learning, community engagement, outreach and marketing, opening up fascinating stories and developing a strong fan base for our unique approach to engaging with all the meanings of a cemetery.

We have called the transformation of this near 150-year old private cemetery – where people are still being buried in 2021 – a ‘House of Life’, reviving an old name for a Jewish burial ground and using it to shorthand what we are now providing for visitors.

Walled off since 1873, disconnected from its neighbourhood and in a state of some disrepair, Willesden Jewish Cemetery is now becoming a place for the wider public to learn about living Jewish traditions, the history of a community and the site itself, with hundreds of inspiring ‘people stories’ that prompt reflection on the

value of life. Visitors can see the conservation of buildings, memorials and environment whilst meeting people from different backgrounds and taking a break from the city bustle in tranquillity and fresh air.

We were surprised by how important a coherent design style turned out to be, developed by Philip Simpson Design, particularly in the cemetery’s outdoor space which is dominated by memorial masonry. It expresses so much of the welcome we wanted to convey, provides literal markers for routes around the site and adds a 21st-century layer to the history. Our next steps are to build our fundraising for the continued sustainability of our public engagement programmes, particularly to develop more visits from schools and to encourage more drop-in visitors from the communities on our doorstep.

What the judges said:

One of the most impressive aspects of the project is the wide variety of activities used to engage with local communities and a willingness to work in partnership with others. Activities range from a four-month long exhibition in the local public library to webinars, ‘Death cafes’, special interest/theme talks via Zoom, tours, literary events, soundscape art, concerts, using digital options during the Covid pandemic. These demonstrate creativity and determination to engage with a wide range of audiences despite challenging circumstances. The team involved should be commended on their efforts to engage and work with the local community, despite the cemetery being closed during the pandemic.



© United Synagogue

New panels in central avenue

We have called the transformation of this near 150-year old private cemetery – where people are still being buried in 2021 – a ‘House of Life’...

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Association for Heritage Interpretation would like to thank all members of the judging panel, site judges and Awards Group who have volunteered their time and skills. It is thanks to their commitment and professionalism that the 2021 Awards have been such a success. A key part of the awards is the pairing of experienced mentors with early career interpreters to judge sites. We are grateful for the knowledge our mentors are willing to pass on.

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Pioneers in Co-production of interpretation design

Co-production empowers audiences and communities to get involved in creating the cultural assets they will use and enjoy

This approach is epitomised by the new **Museum of Making** which Core helped to co-produce with the people of Derby

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