

Nowt About Us Without Us

*A picture of creative lives in South East
Northumberland*

Woodhorn Museum Saturday 26 October –
Sunday 3 November 2019



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Inspired by the Pitmen Painters (Ashington Group) people of all ages have taken a lead in arts and creativity over the last three years, through the Museums Northumberland bait programme. This journey has included exploring different artforms, selecting artists to work with, sharing stories and presenting finished art works. People taking part have described the positive impact on personal wellbeing, community spirit and the new skills and friendships made along the way.

Nowt About Us Without Us celebrates these journeys, sharing a contemporary picture of creative lives in South East Northumberland, exploring themes including magical and mythical stories, lives unseen and unheard, experiences from around the world, arts activism, memories, and exploring our sense of well-being and mental health.

Meet the community of artists and explore your own creativity through a series of free family drop in workshops.

Projects

Journeyman – Lives unseen and unheard

Five groups of men and boys have come together to share their own unique journeys in South East Northumberland. Exploring travel across continents, over time and space, through recovery and into adulthood. Discover lives unseen and unheard, explored through; animation, photography, graffiti, poetry and sound recordings.

'I guess a lot of the time my head feels clogged up with a lot of emotions and a lot of ideas and when I can make some of my ideas real, it makes me feel like my life's worth it.' Paul, participant.

Colour to the Grey

Through the *Colour to the Grey* project young people decided to raise awareness of the factors that contribute to mental health and wellbeing, as well as provide a space in which young people and adults can increase their own sense of wellbeing, through creative activity.

A group of 8 young leaders collaborated with artist Amy Lord and producers, The Empty Space to lead the project and realise the resulting 5 days of art, activism and wellbeing in Blyth during August 2018.

'A lot of it has been working with people and understanding how to work in a big group – everyone has differing opinions and just making that mesh work has been a big skill I've learnt.' Mitchell, Young Leader, *Colour to the Grey*

Open Door

Since February 2018, Museums Northumberland have been working with the resettlement team at Northumberland County Council to develop *Open Door*, an arts project for refugees who have recently resettled in South East Northumberland.

The project has welcomed more than 60 people aged between 1-65 years to fortnightly sessions in Cramlington and Blyth, working with six artists across a wide range of art forms, including painting, sculpture, print making, drawing and textiles.

Although the creative activities are what brings the group together, having an open and supportive environment for fun, socialising and eating are extremely important elements too.

'We've been coming together as a family, me and my daughters. The activities are very good and encourage people to join in. I've met people I might not have otherwise met and we hope more local people will join the group. Lots of people have different skills here, so we can all learn something new.' Jaziya, participant.

Community Programming

For the last three years, a growing team of Community Programmers, local residents from across South East Northumberland, have visited the Edinburgh Fringe Festival and selected a series of shows to bring back to venues in South East Northumberland to share with a wider audience.

Working with The Empty Space, the international shows they have brought back to South East Northumberland include *Near Gone*, *Becoming Scheherazade*, *Old Boy*, *100 Homes* and *The Man Who Planted Trees*.

'I love feeling part of the community who does this, who brings it together.' Sheila, Community Programmer

From the Ashes

Residents from South East Northumberland aged 9 – 70, worked with Curious Monkey Theatre Company and writer Gez Casey over 12 months, to write,

perform and record an audio drama called *From the Ashes*, which aired on Koast Radio in May 2019.

From the Ashes is a satirical drama, set in the fictitious town of Stonebridge which has been labelled the worst town in Britain and tells of what happens when its residents and politicians are plunged into crisis.

'The whole process has been collaborative. We spent quite a lot of time as a group exploring different ideas through drama and writing. Museums Northumberland bait and Curious Monkey Theatre have encouraged us to be involved in the whole process: making the sound effects, jingle writing, filming, recording, creating artwork, social media, marketing, doing interviews and so on.' Chris, participant.

Bridge Project

In 2018, Museums Northumberland bait and the Bridge Project teamed up to offer arts workshops as part of a programme to remove barriers to work for people living in South East Northumberland. Bridge is an employability project that supports people who are furthest from the labour market to gain confidence, improve their skills or make changes in their life.

The group formed and expanded to form the 'Bridge Mental Crew' who were inspired to interview and select the artists they wanted to work with and co-curate and present an exhibition of their work in summer 2019 at Hirst Park Pavilion.

'I didn't go out of the house before, but I like art so I came along to see what it was all about. Best thing I've ever done. It feels like a family, even though none of us knew each other before.' Sam, participant.

Rainbow's End

Groups of older people from Ashington, Bedlington and Blyth took part in *Rainbow's End* - a creative project to help people discover treasures within their everyday lives. Led by Seaton Delaval based artist Jane Sutcliffe, groups at

Station Court Care Home in Ashington for people living with dementia, Ridley Court Care Home in Blyth, the Get Together group at North Seaton Colliery for people living with disabilities, and Bedlington Creatives worked with five professional artists to explore past influences that have had an impact on the present.

'Taking part has made people feel like they're a part of something; giving people company, sharing skills and trying new activities together.' Jane Sutcliffe, artist

Wonderfolk

In 2016 a commissioning panel of local people selected a proposal from The One and The Many to create an interactive family quest at Woodhorn Museum in summer 2017.

Visitors were invited to meet Professor Parkyr, a world expert in unexplained underground life forms, and with the help of a magical miner's lamp go on a special mission to track down and uncover the stories and secrets of the Wonderfolk - magical, mythical creatures hidden underground among the coal seams.

The immersive and interactive family quest, combined drama, music, exhibition, animation and technology.

'My children still put on the hats they made and look for Wonderfolk in our garden.' Wonderfolk visitor

Heart of Hirst

In 2015, Museums Northumberland bait commissioned curator Andrea Hawkins to work with partners to develop a series of projects with people living in the Hirst area of Ashington.

There were three stages to the project, an artist in residence project with renowned social documentary photographer Mik Critchlow, community connections with the *Heart of Hirst* residents group who developed their annual community led Party in the Park event and artists Zoe Walker and Neil Bromwich working with

200 people in 2017 to make a film *A Plea for Common Ownership* inspired by the mining heritage of the area.

'We just wanted to bring the community spirit back into Ashington, and that works well when you've got an artist working with the whole of the community.' Carol, *Heart of Hirst*

URNS

Older people from the Elderflowers group worked with dancer and choreographer Paula Turner, filmmaker Lucy Cash and artistic director Emilyn Claid to produce a film, *A Long Side*.

A Long Side was part of the *URNS* exhibition at Woodhorn Museum. The exhibition took place between October 2016 to March 2017 and it also included photographs showing the making of the film. Since then, the film has been shown in care homes, hospitals and village halls across South East Northumberland, and has been seen by over 600 people on YouTube. The Elderflowers have also taken a leading role at the Northumberland Ageing Well Conference in 2017.

'You never know what you can achieve until you try. We're very open to trying new things - the more new things we try the more willing we are to try more things. It's so worthwhile.' Ella, participant.

Frost of Forgetfulness

In 2016 a commissioning panel of local people selected Unfolding Theatre to create a magical quest for families at Woodhorn Museum. Over 3,000 people set out on a frosty mission to help save the museum's memories.

The mission was created in partnership with community groups across South East Northumberland. Leading Link, Northumberland Recovery Partnership, Seaton Sluice Brownies, 5th Ashington Brownies, 1st Seaton Hirst Brownies, Woodhorn's Customer Hosts and over 600 local people helped bring the *Frost of Forgetfulness* to life.

'I think the trail made the museum more exciting. I enjoyed following the map, so we could find parts of the museum we hadn't seen before.' Alison Walters, Brown Owl

Elvis at 65

60 people from 7 groups engaged with music, visual art, ceramics, creative movement and photography to create new artworks, try new techniques and experiment with new materials. Sessions were led by Yuvel Soria, Clare Armstrong, Sharon Bailey, Gary Bowden, Hannah Shaw and Megan Randall at day centres, care homes, residents' and voluntary groups to enable self-expression and wellbeing through art.

Friendships are incredibly important to people taking part. Park View residents made ceramic flowers to display in communal spaces, members of Seaton Delaval's Royal Voluntary Service photographed friends, and people living at Ridley Park Care Home made treasures to frame that reflected life-long relationships.

'My worries fell out of my head.'
Participant in *Elvis at 65*

Thanks

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Museums Northumberland is the lead body for a consortium of organisations delivering the ambitious bait programme in South East Northumberland.

Museums Northumberland bait works in partnership to support more people in South East Northumberland to create and take part in inspiring and high-quality arts experiences. All projects aim to build a stronger future with the people who live here.

Museums Northumberland bait is part of the Creative People and Places programme, initiated and funded by Arts Council England through the National Lottery. Creative People and Places is about more people taking the lead in choosing, creating and taking part in art experiences in the places where they live.

www.baittime.to

Our Funders



Our Consortium

