

# *So what's all this about Culture?*

## *Trowbridge, My Roots, My Family and Me*



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## *My Roots My Family and Me*

Funded by: Young Roots Heritage Lottery, SPLASH Wiltshire

### **Partners:**

SPLASH Wiltshire

Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre

The Trowbridge Museum

No Added Sugar – lead artist Toni Dickinson

Arts Award Adviser – Toni Dickinson

Young people from North Wiltshire and Swindon

Wiltshire Police

Wiltshire Council Youth Development Service

An arts and cultural collaboration giving young people the opportunity to use their creative skills to research and record the things that are important to them regarding their culture and heritage. The young people were engaged through taster days at different venues. Participants were then given an extensive tour of the archives at the award winning Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre and encouraged to research further in archives of their choice. The Trowbridge Museum also gave the young people an extensive tour with expert staff encouraging the young people to develop ideas and create works of art that reflected aspects of the museum. The project culminated in an exhibition of their written and creative work that was curated and organised by the young people, held firstly at The Trowbridge Museum followed by a 2<sup>nd</sup> exhibition at The Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre.

**The Heritage Lottery Fund – Young Roots** is a grant programme designed to engage young people aged 13-25 with their heritage. Young Roots projects stem directly from the interest and ideas of young people, who are supported by youth and heritage organisations to develop skills, build confidence, and connect with their local communities.

**The Young People** came from a range of cultures, in and around Trowbridge. Through the project they found that their own heritage and culture and that of their neighbours was more diverse than they had previously realised. The young people looked at the variety of cultures within their towns and the sub cultures within cultures, and learnt how this makes us both different and similar.

The young people who attended were from a wide range of cultures and social economic backgrounds including: mainstream, a children's home for challenging behaviour, young people with ADHD, Asbergers, Autism, from women's refuges, looked after young people, a boy whose estranged mother had recently died, a young man who had emotionally shut down from a recent trauma in his life, a girl who's family had suffered from knife crime and two girls with numerous problems who had been referred by social services. Most of the participants had not visited a museum before.

**SPLASH** "Splash promotes inclusion and development through a programme of activities for young people in the school holidays, for the well being of the whole community"

- **We are** a registered charity, supporting young people between the ages of 10-16 years.
- **We organise** holiday activities, which aim to attract young people into positive and inspiring leisure activities and divert from negative and anti-social behaviour.
- **We prioritise** those who are experiencing challenges in life. We aim to raise self-esteem and confidence and empower young people to make independent, positive and safe choices about their leisure time.
- **We believe** in a partnership approach to working, looking to add value and work with other organisations to improve the quality of life and outcomes for young people.

**No Added Sugar** is a specialist participatory arts organisation with 10 years of extensive experience and expertise in helping participants to realise untapped creative potential in a number of ways, including participatory workshop programmes, artist in residency, commissions, cross-curricular work in schools and partnership work with museums. No Added Sugar have a strong record of working to wider community cohesion projects with families, young people and their communities. No Added Sugar has a ten-year partnership with Splash and has previously delivered Heritage projects.

Our mission is to celebrate diversity through providing creative opportunities for people of all ages and abilities.

**Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre** has been a valuable active partner in this project. Every member of staff was made aware of our visits and did their best to make us all feel welcome and relaxed about using the facilities.

Education manager Laurel Miller arranged for extensive tours of the centre to excite the young people and provided lesson plans to:

- Introduce the young people to the local history, heritage museums and offer opportunities for them to volunteer and become users of these centres.
- Enable young people to have a greater understanding of what makes them the person they are through their culture, heritage, community and family.
- Increase awareness of the value and need to protect our heritage
- Explain what an archive does and the reason for strong rooms and cold storage

The young people really enjoyed the tour of the facilities and archives and were particularly impressed with the restoration work being carried out on archives.



The young people used the expansive archives to research their own heritage and culture.



The Manager, Terry Bracher, made himself available for the duration of our visits. He took the young people in small groups on detailed tours of the facility and gave informative insights into some of the stories and history behind important artifacts. Terry also found time to teach the participants various methods available for them to research their own families. The young people were really impressed when they found certificates and newspaper cuttings about their own families.



Looking at historical maps of Trowbridge



A Bible from the archive's cold store



The laboratory

**Trowbridge Museum** was also extremely welcoming during our visits and played a large part in the project. David Birks, Education Manager, related really well with the young people and provided active fun sessions to:

- Bring young people from different communities and cultures to explore diversity in order to gain a better understanding and respect of different culture
- Explore why families migrate, where their family came from and why they settled in Trowbridge and the contribution they make to the community
- Increase awareness of the diverse heritage of Trowbridge through time lines to improve relationships within communities through a better understanding of those different communities
- Gain a greater understanding of what makes them the person they are through, group work and print making
- Increase awareness of the need to protect our heritage and support our museums
- Interpret exhibits and understand exhibits in the museum

David provided opportunities for group work to encourage the young people to discuss their learning and present their work.



The young people looked at the history of people moving to this area and the historical facts that led to their migration. They looked into their own heritage by speaking to parents and grandparents to find out why they lived in Trowbridge and into the history of the area and the work available. We took photographs of the young people and David taught them to make prints of themselves which they framed for the exhibition.

The young people spent time drawing chosen exhibits to inspire them further to make their own art work about their culture and heritage.



Rajeev Ladva visited the project to talk about his life as a second generation Hindu brought up as part of the only Asian family in a Wiltshire village, and the negative and positive experiences he faced because of this.

Rajeev enjoyed his time on the session and revisited the project to help some of the young people to understand how the exhibits related to their own lives. On the left he is seen discussing the football exhibition with Kieron. Keiron then looked at the different countries and cultures that take part in the World Cup and the relevance of using art and sport to bond countries. Keiron made 2D and 3D work in response to this.



Sketching



The looms are a big part of the heritage of Trowbridge



Mounting prints for the exhibition

**Wiltshire Youth Services** provided excellent venues for us to work in throughout the project. The young people worked on their artwork and arts awards and the facilities at the youth centres allowed for break out sessions for outside activities for further team games. We started each day with team building exercises and evaluated where each participant was and where they were going next with their work. The young people were given one-to-one sessions throughout the project and we had a range of visitors including trainer Luke Chambers from 'Get Intune' who has a great deal of experience delivering sessions about celebrating diversity.

The young people looked at what culture and heritage meant to them individually and through group work.





The peer mentors were a real help and enjoyed the responsibility given to them.

*"Working on the Heritage project has been a great experience for me personally. The time spent working with young people is incredibly rewarding and the achievements of the project itself are extremely notable. The general positives not only apply to the desired outcomes of the project, but have been a significant contribution to the building of my own character. Through the confidence and experience I've earned through being involved, I have found the ability to make improvements in my own life; I have found the desire to further myself through degree level education as well as the freedom to work on my own creative ventures. Where I was previously apprehensive towards these goals I am now free to take the skills I've gained and run with them. I would definitely like to be involved in a project like this again."* Matthew Whittaker AGE 21

Participants could not wait to start work each day, giving the centre a real buzz. The young people's feedback was really positive, the main evaluation said that they really appreciated the opportunity to:

- Use a variety of quality materials of their choice.
- Have experienced support to teach them new skills, introduce new materials and how to use them
- Quality support to help them realise their new ideas.
- Spend as much time as they needed to complete their work, with many working through breaks and lunch.

The image on the right shows participants talking to Simone (Splash) about their work and discussing their plans for the next stages and the exhibition. Reflection and evaluation was completed at the start and end of every session individually and in groups. This was not their favourite part of the project as it interfered with their work. However as their ideas came to fruition and they were proud of their results they became more enthusiastic about reporting back and talking to the rest of the group. The young people took a while to become a real team. They started by pairing up and then made small groups through their interests. Eventually they saw themselves as one group with one focus.



## The Artwork

The young people took part in workshops to learn different techniques to use in their final pieces. They used their research to design art works reflecting their culture and heritage.



*“My family is British and as I do not have any other cultures in my family I chose to show I embrace all other countries and cultures through this art piece.” Katie*



*‘This piece looks at English fashion through the ages. I was very proud to see it displayed at the museum in the textile area along with other archives.’ Amy*



*“I chose to look at war through the ages and how we have not learnt from the wars we have fought.” Ryan*



Gabbie related this to the loss of fields near her grandfather's farm and depicted this through the above painting showing new houses encroaching upon a favourite childhood spot, the old water pump.

She then researched the work of contemporary artists and found out that Jake and Dino Chapman had drawn onto expensive Goya prints and that they had become more valuable. She also looked at today's artists and studied Banksy for her arts award. Abi took her idea forward by drawing and painting on an old Constable print bought from a charity shop. She had 2 prospective buyers at the exhibition however refused to sell as she had become attached to the work, more so from the praise she had received from visitors. Abi was one of the more confident participants and took part in leading the group, the projects, direction and the exhibition.

Gabbie looked at old maps at The Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre and became conscious of the changing landscape of her local area.





Police Inspector Dave Bonner-Smith joined us for a day and can be seen here helping Keiron with his work.

We used cascading techniques for learning. A small group of young people were taught mono printing and then they went of to a quiet corner to explore their new techniques and came up with ideas and designs to teach to other young people. They will use the evidence of this for their Arts Award.



The young people chose different artists to teach different art techniques. Although they were all keen to learn stone carving, most gave up after realising how time consuming it was. Steph, however, loved the challenge of finding her fossil in the lovely rose stone. The young people each found an art form that suited them and become so engrossed in their work that they were happy to sit alone and focus. The stone on the right is Steph's work in progress. The Trowbridge museum asked to keep her piece as a permanent exhibit, however Stephanie refused the honor as she came to love the piece and was very proud of the attention it generated whilst hidden in the exhibition with real fossils.



## The Exhibitions

The exhibition was well attended by both young people and visitors. The experience for the participants to make their own work, organise their own exhibition and have their work publicly displayed was really valuable and encouraged them to speak well to their audience about their artwork and how it related to their heritage and culture. Facilitators were happy that the young people chose the two museums to display their work and believe this was undoubtedly due to the positive relationships made with museum staff during their visits.

The art worked well in the Trowbridge Museum and we tucked some of the young peoples art work into relevant spaces within the permanent exhibitions. We also displayed a body of work and video footage of the young people working in the education room along with their written work and preparation sketches.

The Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre, due to a shortage of exhibition space, chose six pieces to display in their public foyer area, where the work has attracted much interest and many comments. The work will stay on display until the History Centre's open day in October 2011. This is the first time that the History Centre has exhibited original arts work and the Centre estimates that over 2,000 people will have seen these works.

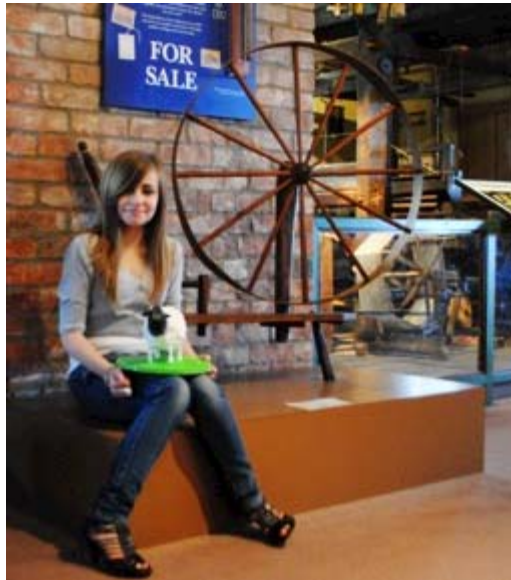
The mix of working with mainstream and challenging young people was really difficult at the start, however the young people became a real team, supporting each other by learning about the problems of Autism and Asperger's and making relationships through cascading teaching techniques. We taught different techniques in small groups and these young people then taught others in small groups. They recorded this on video and the evidence will be used for their art awards. Toni Dickinson – Artist / Facilitator

*"The project allowed us to work in partnership with artists, a charity and another heritage venue to deliver a key target for WSHC, reaching new audiences - in this case young people in informal learning environments. As part of our outreach programme , this project contributed to our goal of attaining the top four star rating when the archives were assessed by The National Archives in 2010. The model of partnership working on grant funded projects will be used in the future as we seek to engage more young people with the archive in innovative ways."* Laurel Miller – Education Officer The Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre

*"Working in partnership with SPLASH and No Added Sugar gave the museum the opportunity to work with an age group that we usually have difficulty in attracting into the museum, as well as enabling us to create more challenging workshops that that made full use of the museum and its collections. It was great to see so many participants and parents attending the exhibition, some of whom had never visited the museum before, but have now revisited on subsequent occasions."* David Birks – Education Officer



The young people tucked their work in with relevant exhibits in the Museum and challenged visitors to find the work.



## The final word

*“This project was inspired by young people in Bristol who were keen to give others the opportunity to discover more about who they are and what has made them the person they have become. The project opened their eyes to the people and communities around them, encouraging them to ask questions about heritage, culture, migration and community.*

*When Splash began working with the young people on the project we had specific outcomes agreed that we wanted to achieve. However, each holiday period saw us meeting new and unexpected outcomes as a more diverse group of young people began to engage in the project. This required a flexible and imaginative approach to the project to ensure our outcomes would continue to be met.*

*For many of the young people engaging in the project this was a first. Some had never worked with Splash before whilst others found it difficult to stay engaged in anything including school so to embark on a project requiring imagination, commitment, teamwork, and personal research and growth was a real challenge. Initially the young people found it difficult to stay engaged and focused. Having never been to a museum before some were surprised when they found enjoyment in visiting the Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre and Trowbridge Museum and were proud when they discovered how much they had learnt.*

*At the start of this project many of the young people thought that culture and heritage was something that belonged to other people from other countries. Now they are a group of young people who are proud of their culture and heritage. They understand how it fits into everyday life and shapes the community around them.*

*Throughout their time with us the young people continued to learn, build their confidence and self-esteem and make friendships. It was truly rewarding to see the pride they took in their art work and research and how this was demonstrated at their exhibition.*

*Although this project may have been challenging for all at times we are incredibly proud of the work and knowledge the young people achieved during this project.” Simone Matthews – Splash Operations Coordinator*

