

Winter
2023



Leicestershire
County Council

Culture
Leicestershire
Heritage, Libraries, Collections and Learning

Volunteering

News

Take a look back at some of the wonderful achievements and projects that over 250 volunteers within our Culture Services have been involved in!

We hope you enjoy reading and thank you to everyone who has gifted their time, skills, creativity and experience!

Volunteering at the 1620s House and Garden

The fantastic volunteers at the 1620s House and Garden have been integral in helping this beautiful heritage site spring back to life after temporary site closures due to the pandemic.

Our House Interpreter volunteers continue to provide insightful and unique guided tours of the 17th century house to visitors, as well as undertaking research. Through their research, we have found and recorded many witch marks, which are symbols or holes marked into the building to ward off evil.

Garden volunteers are integral to interpreting, developing and maintaining the beautiful early 17th Century styled gardens. Pandemic related



lockdowns meant volunteers faced their biggest challenge yet; reclaiming the gardens back from nature! They worked tirelessly on this mammoth task, ensuring the gardens were brought back to their pristine standards for the site's season opening; with a nod to the situation by preserving the wildflower garden that had self-seeded. Other recent additions they've added include; a bug hotel, a children's trail and clearing the woodland area for families to explore.

With the support of our Event volunteers the site has put on a variety of fantastic events and activities for all ages. The afterschool Thursday crafts club has been a huge success and alongside the Friends of the 1620s House and Garden, our volunteers helped welcome nearly 2,000 people at two recent Plant Fairs.

An amazing achievement!

www.1620shouse.org.uk



90 Years of Theatre in Market Harborough

Late last year Harborough Museum's Local Studies Volunteers visited Harborough Theatre to meet with members of the trustee committee and learn more about the impressive history of amateur dramatics in the town. After a behind the scenes tour, ideas for collaboration were shared while looking through the theatre's vast paper archive of photographs, programmes, posters and reviews.

In celebration of the theatre's 90th anniversary in 2023, the groups decided to work together to curate a series of exhibits in the two Community Showcase display cases in the Local Studies section of Harborough Museum. To ensure the rich history of the theatre was captured, the team opted to display a decade per case, starting with the 1930s and 1940s, and changing displays throughout the year.

With support from Harborough Museum, volunteers chose key areas of research and wrote text for display panels. They worked closely with the theatre trustees to pick out costumes and stage props from the theatre's tremendous collection to showcase in the exhibit.

Following the holiday season, the team came together for an enjoyable afternoon to install the first display. Everyone got stuck in, sharing ideas, problem solving and learning together.

90 Years of Theatre in Harborough 1930s - 1940s is on display at Harborough Museum until Saturday 11th March 2023.



"It has been fascinating to work with the Theatre and our volunteers to celebrate the history of one of our closest cultural neighbours in the town. Building on the existing permanent display 'A Place to Meet', which showcases a small part of the Theatre's history, it's an excellent opportunity to work with the community. We're excited for everyone to see how our volunteers and members of the Theatre have brought plays to life in the museum."

*Tim Savage
Museums Officer*

Stay up to date with the changing displays and find extra stories, audio and video clips as they are posted on the exhibition's digital timeline at www.harboroughmuseum.org.uk

What Home Library Service Means to our Clients

Another year has passed, and our fabulous Home Library Service (HLS) volunteers continue to make their regular visits to housebound clients. In the last twelve months, they have offered over 300 hours of their time, ensuring this invaluable lifeline continues to reach some of our most vulnerable library users.

A huge thank you to all our HLS volunteers. The testimonies below from two of our HLS clients illustrate just how much it means to them:



"The service has been a great help to me, with nothing else to look forward to apart from my books. People like [my volunteer] make a big difference to people like me. I can depend on him because he will always look after me."

81-year-old disabled client receiving the service in the Desford area

"[When my volunteer has been] I feel a lot brighter, and I feel I can cope... I think that's because I have been having to use the old brain again... We chat away like old friends even though she is much younger than me. I enjoy her company very much. I can't fault the service for all these years... [The service is] very, very, very important. It's an absolute boon to me."

92-year-old client receiving large print books in the Narborough area

Melton Carnegie Museum's Young Person's Heritage Project

The Participation Team is working in partnership with Long Field Spencer Academy, Melton Carnegie Museum and local creative practitioners, Long Brow Arts, to create opportunities for young people to share how we can develop heritage and cultural activities that are relevant and interesting to them.

In October 2022, students volunteered their time at the museum's community engagement event which welcomed over 150 visitors. They spent time meeting and greeting visitors, taking feedback questionnaires, leafleting, serving refreshments and helping people learn about local history alongside the Senior Curator.

This was only the start of their volunteering journey with the museum, and in November they embarked on a project exploring the history and heritage of their hometown. Activities have included a photo walk, printing, poetry and mindfulness. We can't wait to see how they combine all of this to create their very own exhibition at the museum! The exhibition will be on display from 16th February, with the student volunteers supporting family activities inspired by their creations during the February half term holiday.

To discover more visit www.cultureleicestershire.co.uk/volunteering/stories/melton-secondary-school-students-volunteer-at-museum-open-day



"The students were a breath of fresh air. They were amazing and our visitors loved them. Many visitors came up to me during the event and commented on how lovely and enthusiastic they were."

*Fiona Crew
Museum Assistant*



'We Are Harborough!' is a project exploring the diversity of communities which are part of the district. Together we are creating a wonderful community exhibition which will be showcased in Market Harborough Museum & Library from March to August 2023.



We are asking people 3 questions: What makes Harborough special to you? If you could share one memory about Harborough, what would it be? What is your favourite place in Harborough?

Community Curators for this project include members of the Ukrainian community and their Host Families, Gypsy & Traveller Community, Young People and Adult Learners.



A range of activities are taking place, such as reminiscence sessions, museum tours, classical musical workshops and vox popping. Members of the local community with a keen interest in history are volunteering their time and are enjoying supporting the wide range of activities on offer.

To find out more visit www.cultureleicestershire.co.uk/projects/we-are-harborough

Garden Volunteers Win Local Award!

At Melton Carnegie Museum, Garden Volunteers are busy year-round growing and maintaining the beautiful gardens which surround the museum for visitors to enjoy. At the 2022 annual Melton in Bloom 'It's Your Neighborhood Awards', the volunteers came away celebrating a Thriving Award for their hard work on the museum's community garden project, 'Growing the Museum'.



"The Museum shows lots of change and development and new ideas being put into practice. Lovely to see so many plants being grown in a garden which people are encouraged to pick and take home. It's a lovely project to involve the community"

It's Your Neighbourhood Assessor

'Growing the Museum' is part of a larger local community initiative with the neighbouring church and Morrisons Supermarket, to enhance the residential area by planting environmentally friendly, crop producing plants and flowers. Recently volunteers have added a produce basket onto the museum fence for passers-by to easily take free produce; this year they hope to be able to increase the amount and variety of produce grown at the museum.

www.meltonmuseum.org

Introducing Charnwood Community Panel

Charnwood Museum in partnership with the Cultural Participation Team were keen to find ways of ensuring local community groups were given the opportunity for their stories and culture to be shared and represented within the museum.

Towards the end of 2022, we successfully recruited a small diverse group of volunteers to form a 'Community Exhibitions Panel'. The aim of the panel is to help support local people to have better access to the Spotlight exhibition space within Charnwood Museum. Their role is to break down the barriers which might stand in the way of this. The panel will shape this new approach by developing a totally new process for expressing interest, offering grant support, initiating support workshops and making a film to inspire ideas- especially for people who would not usually think of making use of the space. Our volunteers are transforming how we reach our communities, share stories, make connections and promote local talent.



"So far, it's been an interesting experience, and I've been able to use some of the skills learned through a career in librarianship, particularly in relation to refining processes, and researching and contributing information about local organisations. Along the way, I've met some fascinating people, and hope to meet many more, as this project is still in its early stages."

*Lynne
Community Exhibitions Panel volunteer*

Q&A with Leicestershire Shared Reading



Who are Leicestershire Shared Reading (LSR)?

LSR is a voluntary organisation set up in 2016 in partnership with Leicestershire County Council's library service to support a thriving network of 'Make Friends, with a Book' shared reading groups. The groups, led by volunteer Reader Leaders, meet weekly either via Zoom or in person at public libraries around the county and are open to anyone to drop in and sit for a while, listen to stories or poems being read aloud and talk about them as a group.

What does a Shared Reader Leader do?

Shared Reader Leaders bring great literature to life using 'The Reader' model. After completing a training course Reader Leaders have access to a range of great literature to encourage the sharing of thoughts and experiences, allowing personal and social connections to be made. It's not about teaching literature but sharing it together.

What can I expect at a meeting?

Groups are very relaxed and have a friendly, welcoming feel. Each week, the Reader Leader will bring a story and poem to share with everyone. Everyone has a copy of the text so that they can follow it as it is read aloud. Throughout the session, the group will pause to reflect on the story or poem, working out what's going on together, sharing their thoughts about it, perhaps making personal connections to the literature. The Reader Leader encourages discussion, creating a safe space where members feel valued, encouraged and listened to.

Who can be a Shared Reader Leader?

We encourage anybody to apply if you enjoy reading for pleasure, are confident reading aloud, like working with people and have good time keeping skills. Training is provided to ensure you feel confident in your new role.

If you want to apply to be a Shared Reader, join a group or just find out more, please contact leicssharedreading@gmail.com or visit www.leicestershiresharedreading.org

Navrang Arts launch the Re-building Lives exhibition 50 years of Ugandan Asians in Loughborough



"What we have been able to do here is something quite special. It immerses you because we have been able to use the whole height of the gallery and you feel enclosed within it. We try and draw you in in different ways; I don't tell you things, I use the words of the Ugandan Asians themselves, so the exhibition is full of quotes."

*Professor Graham Black
Lead Curator Volunteer*

"What I really like is that I get to do different things. It's not just one thing. I've been able to interview people, I've been able to put objects in the cases, I have been able to use different kinds of software to compile the oral histories and I think this is such a cool experience. I get to do different things and it's fun as well."

*Jyoti Ramjee
Rebuilding Lives Volunteer*

This is an immersive and emotive exhibition that tells the story of Ugandan Asians' journey - from their homeland India to Uganda, where they successfully established and put down roots, only to be expelled by the dictator Idi Amin in 1972. It was created almost entirely by volunteers.

Roles ranged from applying and managing the funding from The National Lottery Heritage Fund, curating the content and researching the availability of objects, photographs and film through community 'Memory Days' where people shared their objects - brought from Uganda and held for 50 years.

We are honoured to have hosted this exhibition at Charnwood Museum and to have met and connected with so many inspirational people.

To find out more please enjoy our film about the project: www.cultureleicestershire.co.uk/projects/uganda-50

To find out more about Navrang Arts please visit www.navrangarts.com

Exploring local heritage

The Loughborough Library Local Studies Volunteer Group (LLLSVG) have had another busy year! You'll find the group at The Local and Family History (LFH) Centre located in Loughborough's Library, where they are on hand to support both the serious researcher and casual caller to explore and access the extensive collection of local and family history.

Alongside this the volunteers regularly research and curate exhibitions and produce publications with the aim of bringing interesting local history topics and themes to public notice. From *Taylor's Bells Around the World* to *Loughborough's Art Deco Heritage*; and *Paget Lace - Loughborough's Lace Industry* to *The Golden Years of the Great Central Railway's London Extension 1899-1957*. This gives just a flavor of some of the subjects the group have researched and shone a spotlight on. Their current display *The Day Loughborough was Sold - The Moira Sales of 1809 and 1810*, looks at the 252 lots of Loughborough town centre properties which were sold off by the Earl of Moira (of which 30 were public houses aka pubs!) It includes expansive research carried out about a selection of the properties auctioned, the people who occupied them, the selling price, the purchasers and associated aspects of town life in the early 19th century.



"The exhibitions and projects undertaken by myself and other Volunteers entail working together as a team. For me, attending the LHF Centre at Loughborough library and working on these kinds of projects and exhibitions, keeps my interest in local history alive. There is always more to learn from each project undertaken. The social side of working with other Volunteers and dealing with library customers, is really enjoyable. I would recommend volunteering in some manner to everyone."

Sharon Gray
LLLSV Group

Why not pop into the LFH Centre and have a look for yourself!

The exhibition runs until 27th February 2023!

Thank you to all our fantastic volunteers who gifted an amazing 13,000 hours from January-December 2022.

We're excited to share that the Communities and Wellbeing team have successfully been awarded National Portfolio Organisation status from the Arts Council. This means there will be a new programme of exciting cultural activity happening across our sites, including new volunteering opportunities. Further information will follow, but in the meantime to find out more about NPO visit www.artscouncil.org.uk/investment23

Your community

Your opportunity

If you have any questions, please feel free to email nicola.levin@leics.gov.uk or claire.bradshaw@leics.gov.uk

www.cultureleicestershire.co.uk/volunteering

