

# Lives on Loan Reel Histories

Evaluation Report  
Written by Infinite Arts  
for The Grange Throckley  
September 2009



# Reel Lives on Loan Evaluation Report

written and compiled by Infinite Arts 2007 - 2009

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## 1 Introduction - purpose and methodology

This Evaluation Report has been produced in order to;

- influence future projects and practice
- inform project development and review both during and after the project
- value the thoughts and feelings of the participants
- provide information to funders,

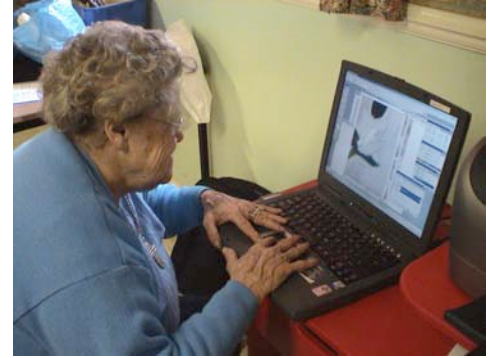
The purpose of this report is to make recommendations, which can be carried forward into future project development by The Grange, the artists and the other partners. This information may also be useful to managers of other centres who wish to learn from the experience of the project at the discretion of The Grange.

Infinite Arts have been involved in the evaluation of the Lives on Loan and Reel Histories project (known collectively as Reel Lives on Loan) since the outset beginning with a meeting between the Grange Day Centre manager and the evaluator. The initial meeting was followed by visits to a number of the sessions to meet the artists and participants to explain the process of evaluation and to assess the style and process of the sessions. Evaluation questionnaires were produced in order to gather feedback, using different questions for the artists, staff and centre manager.

Feedback from the participants was gathered during visits from conversations with participants and staff. These visits also provided an opportunity to talk through the evaluation with the artist, to see at first hand how the project was progressing and talk to the artist and participants about the development of the project. The evaluator also attended a number of planning meetings involving centre staff, artists and partners. The project manager and the evaluator met and spoke on the phone regularly during the project so that the evaluator's findings could form a useful part of the ongoing process of development and review of the project.

### Background to The Grange

The Grange Day Centre currently has over 100 service users all of whom are elders or third age. The centre is very much part of the local community and the management committee reflects this, having two retired local business men, a Local Authority councillor and an Alderman (over retirement age), the local vicar and a further 2 people who have retired from their careers and wish to continue to give to their community. The centre is a registered charity (No; 1058445) and provides individual day care to the residents of the outer west of Newcastle upon Tyne, through a contract with Newcastle Social Services Department. All people referred to the service have undergone an individual assessment of need and have been identified as needing day care support to prevent; social isolation, family breakdown, relapse of functional illness, or to offer support and respite for families/carers, to enable people to retain their independence and remain in their own homes for as long as possible.



### Arts Development at The Grange

With the support of Kellett Fund, Northern Rock Foundation, Northern Arts and Newcastle City Council, The National Lottery through Awards for All the Grange has for more than ten years successfully undertaken a programme of arts development, which will continue into 2010, and has involved the direct participation of all service users. Staff at The Grange have recognised that the arts successfully bring people together and provide an opportunity for individuals to work together towards shared goals and an end product. They have found that arts projects act as a catalyst for confidence building through the realisation of new skills; ultimately creating an improved and more active quality of life. Over the last few years participants have had a chance to try a variety of artforms and activities including stained glass, ceramics, storytelling, self portraits, woodcarving, silk painting, and digital art.

Lives on loan Reel History Project is financially supported by Heritage Lottery Fund, Newcastle City Council, and Tyne & Wear Business Partners. Artist Chris Robinson, Animators Alina Trehwitt and Dominic Smith, Actor Joy Sanders. All participants are elders who use services at The Grange Day Centre, Newburn Road, Throckley, Newcastle upon Tyne. Other images of this and other projects can be viewed on their Web site [www.grangearts.org.uk](http://www.grangearts.org.uk)

## 2 The Project- a brief description

The aims of the project were:

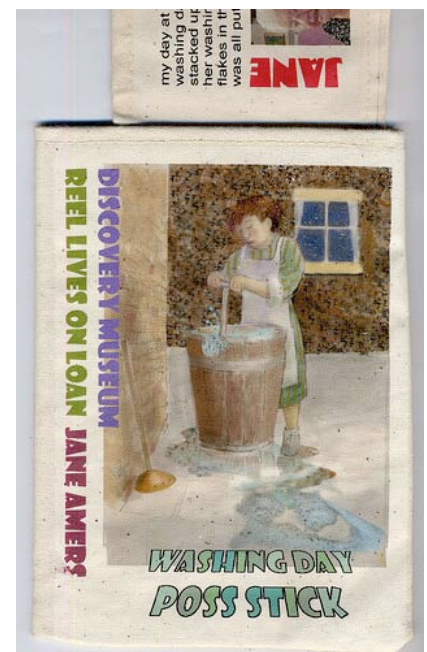
- to record older peoples life experiences stories and histories
- to engage older people with the arts, culture and heritage
- to develop museum audiences understanding of local heritage
- to create opportunities for younger generations to value older people

The project has involved two main phases, Lives on Loan and Reel Histories.

### Phase 1 Lives on Loan

The first phase involved the collation of stories of peoples' life experiences and memories to be included in Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums loans boxes. The resident artist, Chris Robinson, engaged directly with elders from the centre, involving them in art activities, reminiscence sessions, visits to the Discovery Museum and tours of Newcastle. Alina Trewitt, animator ran sessions with elders who have enjoyed taking part in new art activity.

Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums outreach team were able to offer training on Oral History to Chris Robinson and recordings were made of several of the elders at The Grange. Art works and resources have been created for loans boxes and will be shown at a final project exhibition. In particular, Chris developed storybags and plaques which featured several of the elders and aspects of their life histories. During the process, photographs were taken of members of the group in costume and these photos were traced to make line drawings which were then digitally scanned. Members then chose images they liked, to colour in and mount to create greeting cards. Most of the group used their cards to give to family and friends. The computer was a key element of the project both in the form of information retrieval, an image bank during discussion, a means to generate artwork, a tool for photo repair, and a photocopy and print facility. Many of the group carry photographs with them which facilitate conversation and memory and validate identity.



### **Phase 2 Reel Histories**

The second part of the project grew out of an earlier visit to the Museum archive to look at Loans Boxes where the group discovered a box of film posters which each told the story of a film through a collage of imagery. So phase 2 involved the artist Chris Robinson working with elders to create colourful posters which tell real life stories using film-related imagery. Each of the clients involved created a film poster and a storyboard based on significant, life-changing moments in their own history. Posters were made in specific film genres along with postcard images of the story boards; these will form the content of a new Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums Loans Box featuring the Cinema in the forties. The resulting posters, storyboards, postcards and pictures have been displayed in The Grange and at the Discovery Museum.

As the project draws to a close, animations have been created of several of the digital stories which were recorded in Phase 1. Artist and animator Dominic Smith was engaged through Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums to create the animations using the paintings from phase 1 and the digital voiceovers to create animated stories which will soon be available on DVD.

### 3 Summary of Feedback – Phase 1 - Lives on Loan

#### 3.1 Artist's Feedback, Chris Robinson - Phase 1

Artefacts were borrowed from the museum, i.e. Poss. stick and washtub, plus some items of period clothing. The artefacts were used to stimulate discussion regarding washday, chosen for the potential for shared memory. Most of the group had similar memories of washday even though some used different vocabulary and each member's household had a different routine. The group were invited to dress up and act out their washday memories. Photographs were taken of members of the group in costume and these photos were traced to make line drawings of the activity, these were scanned into the computer and added to the pool of images generated by the group. Members then chose images they liked, to colour in and mount into greeting cards. Most of the group were going to give their card/artwork to family and friends.

The computer was a key element of the project both in the form of information retrieval, and an image bank during discussion, a means to generate artwork, a tool for photo repair, photocopy and print facility.

Many of the group carry photographs, which facilitate conversation and memory and validate identity. Hubert, previously an English teacher had begun talking through his memories of washday in his family home, this conversation led him to talk about his memories of the war-association links to bring on memory.

Pictures of food stimulated many memories within the group, memories connected with other parts of the world could be supported or stimulated with world maps sourced through the computer and often requested by the group members. Memories/stories were stored in the computer along with photographs creating a digital world of memory.

Joe's memory of washday, is typical of the discussions which took place whilst the group colour in their cards or etch images from pictures they have made:

'You hung around to get a turn of the poss stick (posser), it was not a case of being asked to help; you wanted to, it was a treat! If the weather was bad you strung the washing line across the living room. The Monday meal would be left over from the Sunday, all fried up and lovely. There had to be mint sauce though, you would run down to your grandad's allotment to get it' Joe

'The best thing about the working at the Grange is working with people; I feel that they trust me enough to share their lives. I can contribute to their lives by sharing memories; we can celebrate life, without avoiding the bad (no topics are avoided and sad memories may come up) but looking at the good, the positives. I find people really have this amazing reservoir of experience and memory; it is a chance for members to share their lives, their experiences and their stories' Chris Robinson

## The Grange Day Centre – Lives on Loan and Reel Histories

Chris highlights the process; “Through discussion, something may arise that an individual or the group want more information about, to confirm a memory or to share with each others. There are different levels in which members can be involved in the activity.”

“The theme set by the Discovery Museum was Work and Chores. I would have liked it more open, but I realise the Museum needs reminiscence about certain things and that is always a good starting point. There has been a very lively discussion and some quality time spent discussing whether life was better then. We have recorded video of 10 older people and illustrated them on cloth as story bags with text. More illustrations are to be included in the animation, which is yet to be done (by Dominic.)”

“The life stories are a contribution to arts culture and heritage in that these individuals have told their stories and helped produce a record of “working class” life in the North East from the 30’s to the present day in an informal and accessible format. The story bags and animation will be of use to museums in that they are a resource for display and educational projects for people interested in the lives of local people. Both the elder participant and myself as the artist have endeavoured to make the presentation of the stories as entertaining as possible for younger children and youths. It is our intention to build that intergenerational link by showing the elderly to be amusing, human, and friendly and their lives interesting.”

Chris felt that this phase of the project turned out as he had expected. “It is much as I expected though the time needed to complete over two hundred illustrations for 10 people and produce 24 cloth bags and sculpted plaques has been underestimated.”

“What we’re doing hasn’t been done before and I want to supply the Discovery Museum with a teaching aid (the cloth bags) and animation video that will assist their outreach team to communicate better the life and experience of the elders to



enhance the exploration of the museums and illustrate the objects on loan through connecting them with real people. I hope that this will encourage young people to understand older people. To laugh with them and respect their experience.”

“What is important to me is to give the elders participating a feeling of pleasure and achievement and consolidating this as a concrete expression of their making. That each one has their own story bags and animation videos that they can share with their families.” Chris describes his role as “A facilitator who can encourage people to express themselves. A sympathetic ear and an eye as an artist to help illustrate their lives.”

Chris felt that there were no problems with phase 1 although he was concerned about the time it has taken to complete and fabricate the artworks which has prevented him from doing more art workshops. This was resolved as Michele Wright the Grange Day Centre manager was aware of the time needed, understood why Chris was overstretched and allowed him to spend time on production as required.

Chris suggested that the benefits for the participants are obvious to see “Everyone has looked pleased to see their stories illustrated and have helped me correct the text stating that they are pleased.”

The benefits for Chris are that the project has made him stretch his skills to illustration, some animation and conducting interviews for story telling. “It reminded me that when I first got into painting and art as a young man in Newcastle I wanted to make a proletarian or working people’s art. That has happened here in a small way I just wish I could do more, more and larger.”

“I hope family and friends will value their stories and words. I know that some will treasure these cloth bags and their loved ones on video. Children will connect with Sissy, Lily, Joe, Lawrence, Nick and all the others.”

Chris is happy with phase 1 of the project and says” I just wish I had practical ways to engage the elders in that. That will be the next problem to try and solve.” He would like to have more time to spend on the project.

### **3.2 Artist’s Feedback - Alina Trewitt - Phase 1**

Artist Alina Trewitt was engaged to run a number of sessions with elderly day visitors. Most sessions had an equal mix of male and female participants. She felt that her role was clearly defined but would have liked the chance to re-record the sound. She also would have welcomed the chance to edit the final piece together but this task was allocated elsewhere.

“I was really pleased with what was achieved. Most residents had a go at a little bit of animation and all made some of the set or characters. The results were very striking, complemented the storytelling well and had a real impact when the participants were able to watch them back. Animation is quite fiddly so hard with arthritis, loss of control

## The Grange Day Centre – Lives on Loan and Reel Histories

over limbs etc but they were brilliant. I really enjoyed working with older people, something I had never really done before.”

“I did feel part of a team. Anita was great and really supportive and Michele was really positive about what we were doing and willing to help in every way.”

In Alina’s view the participants benefited from IT skills and using modern technology. “One woman commented that her grandkids would not believe what she was doing. Most didn’t grasp how animation worked but they loved seeing what they had done. Teamwork and communication skills. It was lovely to hear their stories about washing days, war times, rationing etc and I think they really enjoyed recounting them and having someone listen and value them.” Alina felt that better equipment would have improved the project. Although she had no written contract, she felt the support level was just right and the brief was clear. She felt that there was good organization from Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums although she had to reschedule once at short notice. Alina would have liked to see the finished piece and she would have like to have been more involved in the sound and edit.

### 3.3 Participants' feedback – phase 1

Feedback from the participants was gathered throughout the project during visits to the sessions. The participants have been encouraged to join in and work with others who they have not worked with before, and have gained confidence along the way.



### **3.4 Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums' Feedback phase 1; Anita Wan, Outreach Worker**

Anita described her role as “organising artists, workshops and all activities in connection to the Reel Lives on Loan project. I am working with Michele to ensure that all targets are being met and the project is running to schedule. I liaise with and feed back to TWM staff on developments. I work with Newcastle communities, engaging them with the museums and their collections. My main duties are project managing community projects – employing artists, arranging workshops, visits etc.”

“I hope that the Grange elders get as much out of the project as they can. That they feel their lives and experiences are important and valued. I hope that the resources we’re currently producing will greatly enhance the loans boxes and give some meaning and context to the objects within them. And that the schools and communities who use them will learn and gain understanding of the lives of our elders.”

Anita felt that the project has gone well despite being a bit behind due to Chris being away but all the digital stories should be finished soon.” She described the benefits of the project “The participants are getting involved in different activities, trying new things, interacting and getting to know other service users at the Grange. The impact of this project has been really positive – people come away happier because of the social interaction and because their experiences and knowledge are being valued. The Centre staff are learning about and taking part in reminiscence sessions using objects, learning about new creative activities to engage the elders. The artists are gaining experience in working with elders and so informing and improving on their knowledge and educational practice. TWM are maintaining our good relationship with the Grange and the elders there. The resources that will be produced will greatly enhance our loans box service and enhance the experiences of people who use them.”

She reported problems encountered while recording the audio, as there was a lack of quiet space within the centre. This had been resolved and Chris ended up with enough good recordings for TWM to use. Anita felt the project could have been improved by having more artists involved while Chris is there as well. “It means that whilst Chris is doing the audio or reminiscence activities, there could be someone else doing related arts/crafts activities as well.”

She feels she has learned much more about people’s lives and what the North East used to be like and now has an improved knowledge about the practicalities of creating digital stories, working with artists and the skills needed.

Her future aims for Phase 2 of the project are to continue working successfully with the Grange elders and to work with those elders who seldom engage in activities there. She intends to meet those aims by artists and herself varying the days that they visit the Grange. “By developing relationships with the elders there through reminiscence activities and conversation and hopefully elders will start to feel they have ownership of the project and join in with other activities.”

### **3.5 Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums' Feedback Phase 1; Kath Boodhai**

Kate commented that the story bags have not yet been used in schools but thinks they will be very popular. She suggested we follow the use of the packs for comments from the teachers and young people, T&W A&M seek feedback from the users when they return loan boxes after use. She confirmed a real need for the loan boxes as they were always at a shortage and had many requests for the ones they currently own. The fact that they have produced 105 bags with a variety of stories, will allow schools to loan more than one story bag at each time, allowing smaller group work within bigger classes.

### **3.6 Centre Manager's Feedback Phase 1; Michele Wright**

"This project grew out of an exhibition we had at the Discovery Museum as the centre has a very good relationship with Tyne and Wear Museums, We borrowed their loans boxes and that lead on to this joint project –Lives on Loan. We discovered that the loans boxes have a theme and stories came out about the items. We thought it would be fabulous to record the people talking about the objects, and perhaps to animate it. The first year of that project came to an end with a celebration in September at the Discovery Museum. There are ten boxes we are adding to. The monologues have been included. Chris is now finishing off five more of the bags. To take it a step further he is doing cameos, from the dry point etching he is moulding cameos, so there is actually texture, for example cheekbones, so that people who are visually impaired will have a 3D impression of the people involved. He is looking for a material that is sturdy enough to be handled and has been experimenting with different things. That is an example of how things progress. Alina has done the animation – she has finished that now and Dominic from the Discovery Museum is doing the editing.

"There was a delay caused by our main artist being unable to start the project until May 2007 and then he had to take a further two months out for personal reasons. There were sound practical reasons to accept this delay and not look for another artist to fulfil the brief. So although the timetable is a little behind schedule, the process is the same and will involve our elders at each stage. The delay has not affected the aims or project team. We are very happy with the project so far."

### **3.7 Evaluator's feedback phase 1; Infinite Arts**

In August 2008, the evaluator reported that the TWM Partners are very enthusiastic about the project and the way that it is developing in The Grange. They have requested more of each of the finished bags to furnish other venues, and are also keen to develop bags on new subject areas. Staff suggestions included developing a sheet to go in the teachers pack and incorporating objects into the bags too; "suddenly it makes sense of why we are keeping the objects!" The two-way communication has been very impressive with ideas being developed by the artists and participants consulting with museum staff to ensure they will enhance public perceptions. The participants' thoughts and memories are valued and the museum ends up with product which contains real stories and memories to share with a wider public.

## 4 Feedback from Phase 2 - Reel Histories

The second phase of the project was planned from the outset to follow on from the Lives on Loan work. Michele Wright, the Centre Manager described the process of development;

“When we went into the Museum Archive to see which loans boxes we wanted to use, we came across a box that was full of film posters. We thought it would be fabulous to do posters of people’s lives. So in year two of the project we are going to do some film screenings and we are going to record people’s stories about going to the Cinema. They will be able to make their own film posters and create storyboards using props from the museum. This way we will be able to put something back into the loans boxes to go out to different communities. I think that is a fabulous project and we have two years funding from The Heritage Lottery to support it.”

The project has gone on to involve a focus on Cinema and Film with the artist, Chris Robinson gleaning stories from elders and representing them in the style of film posters and storyboards. A DVD of film clips was produced and two Cinema based events were organised in The Grange during August. Each day was built around the memory of life during the forties and included an exhibition of items from the Museum Loans Boxes, a chance to see and try on some period clothing and accessories, and an opportunity to be made up – like a film star.



#### 4.1 Feedback from Artist Chris Robinson - Phase 2

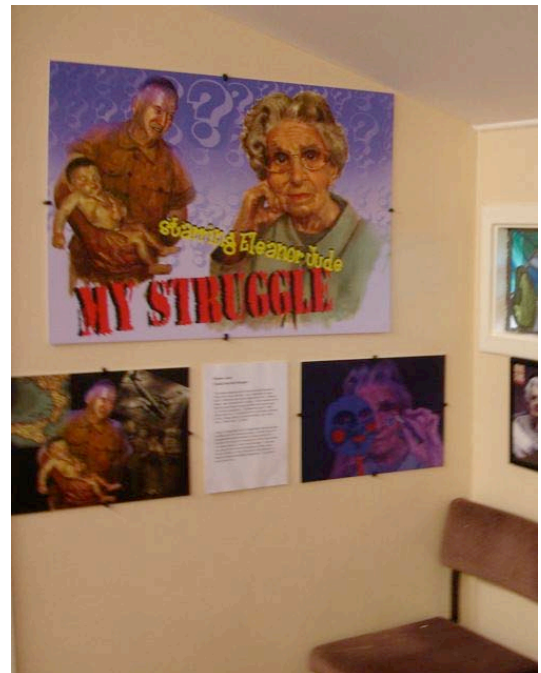
Chris Robinson described his role in this phase of the project as - to facilitate artistic and creative participation by elders and also to produce his own work. He felt that he had achieved what he set out to do and that the Cinema Matinee Day proved to be a very valuable addition to the project providing opportunity for participation in greater numbers. Some memorable moments for him included sharing peoples' recollections and engaging them in illustrating their story, thereby proving to them how valuable their lives and experience are.

"I have gained from other peoples input into the project such as the Matinee Day which broadened the participation and reinforced the idea of fun as the best way to open up new experiences and involve the elders. I have also learnt some of the art of illustration and the use of popular art i.e. cinema posters/celebrity culture rather than arts or crafts forms when making art in or for the community."

In terms of benefits to participants, Chris felt that "The elders now see their lives as valuable to other generations and why it is needed for the work of the Discovery Museum and its potential in the local schools. There was some original artwork created in the posters. Also the dressing up and posing as movie stars I think boosted elder's perception of themselves and re-engaged the elders with their "real selves". For the elders to feel fun loving, beautiful, and amusing must have helped them and it helped break stereotypical perceptions of elders.

Chris felt that the project was well organised and was clear about the aims of the project. He was well supported, allowed flexibility and was not inundated with demands from the managers. He felt that communication was quite good and he kept Kath Boodhai and Michele Wright updated in person and by e mails and phone calls.

With hindsight, Chris wished that they could have had more days like the Cinema Day and would have liked to have done more individual Movie Posters, but that was not possible due in the time available. He felt that the working with elder's life stories



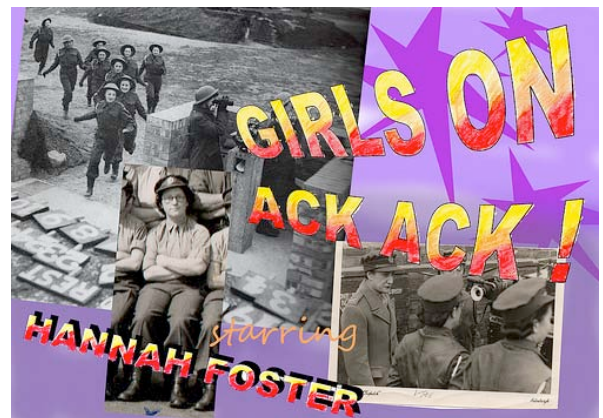
creates an ideal arts project in that it connects to individual people with practical outcomes. The idea of art as a mere decoration or pastime becomes more meaningful if it has a basis in life and therefore I can see this type of project has limitless possibilities.

Chris suggested that the project could continue by producing more life stories as "storybags" on cloth and as collections of printed material i.e. photographs / illustration and text in the form of cards or handmade books as these had proved to be successful methods. He also felt that participants could create their own TV soap...or Radio programmes... maybe a Desert Island Discs.

Chris also made suggestions for new ways to gather and make the life stories such as Digital Life Storybooks which would be web-based that have the look of books with turning pages. This would have

the advantage that they are seen worldwide and form a historical archive. Chris felt that this would also provide ways of involving input from family.

Chris felt overall that the project had been very worthwhile. It has allowed the elders to value their own lives as they can often think their time has gone. He thought that young people respond well to learning about history from 'the horses mouth' which they can find more interesting than reading a history book.





### **Nichol Elliott**

Nichol felt that the project had been very good and enjoyed remembering what life was like many years before. Talking to Chris he had remembered working in shops and food stores and could recall the end of rationing. The sweets that were brought in for the cinema days in the Grange reminded him of the sugar cigarettes that you could get as a child.



### **Vi Bruce**

Vi Bruce commented on the development of arts activities in the Grange. She had not been involved in doing the posters and photos but saw it all happening. She has taken part in many arts activities over the years. Since the onset of her arthritis she has tried to take part in every activity that makes her use her hands.



### **Avril and Joanne**

Avril and Joanne did take part in the project. They thought it was brilliant and different from some of the other things they've done in the centre. "We've done a lot of work here you know!" They remembered a lot about the wartime spirit and said "you had to be a lot stronger then."

### **Betty Watson**

Betty said that it was a blessing to have somewhere like this to go to. She has taken part in many of the projects including the painting at Christmas, and the ceramics which she has not quite finished yet. Betty commented that her friend who is nearly 90 was thrilled about the place and her sister who is now in a home had been one of those who dressed up.

### **Anne Eschle and Cathy Marshall from Newcastle City Elders Council**

Anne Eschle and Cathy Marshall from the Newcastle City Elders Council felt that the project was really interesting and that the artist and the participants had done wonderfully with the artwork.

### 4.3 Feedback from Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums - Kath Boodhai

Kathleen Boodhai, Assistant Outreach Officer, Tyne & Wear Archives and Museums felt that the project incorporated a multi-art approach to reminiscence – oral histories through object handling/exploration as memory triggers; producing story bags which are tactile, user friendly; re-enactment of the classic cinema experience for the elders; launch event to celebrate project; animations to bring stories to life.

She valued the opportunity to provide a voice for Elders at the Grange and share their histories with community and schools through these different mediums was a valuable experience.

“The sessions explored real-life experiences of the Elders through reminiscence which validated or added value to their life stories especially through sharing these experiences to other generations and the wider community. The oral history sessions as well as exhibition and classic cinema took place at the Grange and was facilitated by artist Chris Robinson who has become a household name amongst the residents as he has remained a constant (worker) during the course of the project.”

She described the gains to the participants as:

- The opportunity to share memories from yesteryear
- A comfort to know that their stories will be shared with other generations
- Good to know that they have created resources to compliment the existing resources in the museum.
- A sense of fun

She felt that other gains, current and future included;

- Schools and teachers – that the stories of Elders can come to life in an interesting and fun way
- Children and young people – to listen and respect to Elders in our society
- Communities – that these stories are as relevant today as they were in the past

Regarding problems with the project, Kath agreed that the Cinema Posters exhibition at Discovery worked better displayed at the Grange as the space was more accessible and it was easier for all the Elders to view the posters throughout the week.

Kath reported that schools are currently able to access the storybags and they appear to be well received and that Age Concern Newcastle's Write Stuff group, Newcastle looked at a loans box earlier this year and commented:

"The storybags makes the use of and stories behind the objects more real as it places a real individual and their personal life at the heart of the experience of using the loans boxes." participant, the Write Stuff community group.

Kath has been able to gather feedback from other members of the learning team and from a teacher who used and valued the loans boxes.

### **Lawrence Brown ‘Doon the Pits’ schools teaching session**

‘Lawrence’s story about being a miner was used in a schools object handling session about ‘Working Lives’ and ‘Work and Leisure’. It made the miner’s lamp come to life. We also used a miner’s helmet. Lawrence’s real life story as shown in his story bag was very relevant in complementing the objects and the museum’s loans box resources’.

Assistant Learning Officer, Tyne & Wear Museums & Archives

### **Amy Wild Evacuee Storybag in WW2 Child Evacuee Loans Box**

‘The Amy Wild Evacuee storybag and story *adds value* to the museums’ World War 2 Childhood loans box. The images of Amy as a child is important for the study of History to Key Stage 2 (ages 7-11) as it shows the past experience of a person from everyday life and **social** history, as a different way to learn about children who were evacuated during the war. The story bags helped to stimulate learning about the past. The children really liked the story bags. They recognised places such as Walker and they were surprised that it was still there after all those years. They thought that it must have been exciting but very hard for Amy to have to leave home’.

Teacher, Key Stage 2, Years 3-6, Ages 7-11.

## **4.4 Feedback from Michele Wright - Phase 2**

As Manager of The Grange Day Centre, Michele Wright was integral to the development and success of the project. She commented on some of the highlights: “The story bags from Phase 1 are fabulous and have proved to be so valuable to individuals that we used them as evidence to acquire funding from Northern Rock Foundation to continue and develop this with more of our elders. The film posters and story-boards too are impressive and I particularly enjoyed the sessions with Joy Sanders on the cinema days when our elders turned into movie stars through a makeover activity. It was wonderful to see people come out of their shells and take the limelight, some for the first time in their lives.”

“My recollections of the two Cinema Days are very positive. We had not anticipated how popular the makeovers would be so this became a much bigger part of the day. My favourite parts of these days were of seeing our service users in a completely different light. Michele commented that when the elders were dressing up everyone enjoyed the experience. Everyone had commented on how much one lady in particular looked just like a film star, and the particular lady said that when she was 21 she had been told she looked like Judy Garland. To touch her like this and make her feel like her young 21 year old self again was priceless.”

Michele felt that the posters were so popular with participants that many copies had to be made so they could be shown off to their families as well as being reproduced for the Grange calendars in 2008. “Working with artists who had already established relationships with our elders ensured that the sessions were appropriate to groups. People thoroughly enjoyed the workshops. The Movie days were especially enjoyed as good fun days that widened the participation in the project.”

## The Grange Day Centre – Lives on Loan and Reel Histories

Michele felt that the element of partnership with Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums on this project had been very successful in some respects and more difficult in others. In respect of the Lives on Loan project, a two-way relationship with TWM benefitted both partners.

Plans made for the interim exhibition at the Discovery Museum had to be amended and the work transferred to the Grange because the space made available at the museum was not accessible for the service users. As a result of this the final celebration of the project was held in the centre where the participants were able to celebrate with family friends and invited guests. There were some complications with the printing and sending of invitations and gathering numbers for attendance for the event as this had to be done through TWAM even though the event was held in The Grange.

Michele was delighted with the animation and how closely it links with the story bags. “Although this was due to be part of phase 1 it has now taken place during phase 2 and has been worth the wait.”

### **Benefits arising from the project**

Michele felt that participants benefitted from raised self-esteem from the positive regard from others and sense of achievement that having the posters made brought. Family and friends of participants have already benefited in a knock on effect from the raised self-esteem of participants and the realisation that the elders still have much to offer. The wider population of Throckley can now view the completed works and benefit through seeing the positive aspects of the work.

Michele felt that the groups who use the loans boxes and the learning teams at Tyne & Wear Museum will gain from the extra resources and will be able to offer an improved experience to their audiences and visitors.

Michele listed the following unexpected outcomes in addition to the work leading on to further funding opportunities:

The learning team at The Discovery Museum were so impressed with the fantastic work that had been produced that they commissioned extra copies of the story bags to go into the main collection.

As a direct result of seeing this project, the Director of Adult services for Newcastle City Council also commissioned further work with Chris Robinson and our elders to produce artwork go in a main corridor of the Civic Centre.

A consultant psycho-geriatrician who is devising an electronic system to assist elders with memory difficulties in their homes commissioned Chris to make illustrations for programmes around life books for individuals as he was so impressed with the story bags.

#### **4.5 Feedback from Alison Flanagan Wood - Phase 2**

Alison Flanagan Wood, Arts Development Officer, Adult and Culture Services at Newcastle City Council has been involved since the early days of the project and has been interested to see the work develop. “I have valued all the hard work the elders at the Grange have contributed to this project. Certain elements have worked better than others but the main artist has managed to engage and capture the true feeling of the project and make it an enjoyable experience for all participants. The work created will leave a truly lasting legacy for all generations.”

She felt that the partnership with Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums Outreach Team was not helped by the change of staff at various times throughout the project which may to have led to a lack of understanding of some aspects of the project.

##### **Benefits to participants and others**

Alison felt that the sessions all worked well. “One of the highlights was the dressing up day and film screening at the Grange. Brilliant day! Fully engaged all participants and has been a talking point for all. Many people were able to relive certain times in their past lives. This for some was amazing and has been recorded and evidenced for them and their families to keep for ever!”

Alison felt that all children and community groups who access these new resources will learn more about the past and gain a better understanding of life from that period. She hopes it will inspire others to develop creative approaches to intergenerational work. She felt that the artists benefited greatly from working so closely with the participants and that as an officer working with The Grange she benefited from the energy the centre holds as it continues to grow and expand its arts programme.

#### **4.6 Feedback from Dominic Smith - Phase 2**

Dominic Smith is the animation artist who was engaged to develop animated stories using the audio recordings and Chris Robinson’s painted images. He writes: “The animation aspect of the Reel Lives project is late in reaching final production. This is partly due to personal illness. Another aspect in its delay has been a certain amount of confusion about what was actually required of me. This is often the inherent nature of any creative project that involves a number of organisations working in collaboration. The confusion is also not a direct criticism of anyone involved in this project as I am generally capable of taking control of a wide brief and developing a clear working process, but as mentioned earlier due to ill health this was not the case. Recently I have been in much better health and have been able to engage with this project again, finding a clear development process. I have subcontracted aspects of the process to other very experienced media professionals and have been liaising with all parties in order to maintain a clear consistent style to the animations being produced whilst massively speeding up the development time. The actual scale of work required to produce this number of high quality animations with un-layered images is not to be under estimated. I am very proud of the way these pieces have turned out. They are of a very high broadcast-able quality and it is a joy to finally see the results of everyone’s hard work, they are a credit to the people whose story’s we recorded.”

## 5 Achieving the aims

The aims for the Lives on Loan and Reel Histories project were: -

- Record older peoples life experiences stories and histories
- Engage older people with the arts, culture and heritage
- Develop museum audiences understanding of local heritage
- Create opportunities for younger generations to value older people

### **Aim 1 Record older peoples life experiences stories and histories**

Overall the project has engaged directly with over 100 elders over the two year period and has created resources including 40 digital stories of people's life experiences and memories, over 100 storybags using 10 original designs, and plaques, and 7 animated video stories. 7 film posters, 32 storyboards, and postcards, 37 'film star' portraits Many of these resources have been fabricated and duplicated to form the content of loans boxes for Tyne & Wear Archives and Museums. The participants have shared their memories and life experiences prompted by the subject matter of the various loans boxes in the museum. The fact that their work will be on show to a wider public and has been valued by TWAM, is a massive boost to participants.

All of the services users of The Grange Day Centre have been given an opportunity to be involved in the two phases of the project. The work has encouraged and challenged participants to think back, to talk together, to undertake active research and to share their stories.

### **Aim 2 Engage older people with the arts, culture and heritage**

Many elders from The Grange have had the opportunity to visit the Discovery Museum, to explore some of the archives, to meet and work with several professional artists and to create their own artwork. This process is always a two-way development with participants learning from their engagement with the arts and the artists they work with having the opportunity to learn from the participants often developing new aspects to their own work.

The lead artist, Chris Robinson engaged with participants from the centre through art activities, reminiscence sessions. Make-up artists Abby and Joy Sanders, and animator Dominic Smith also worked with the participants to create imagery and artwork for loans boxes and final project exhibition. Training on Oral History was undertaken by Chris Robinson with Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums outreach team as well as involvement in Video Animation and Editing with Dominic Smith.

Participants have not only engaged with culture and heritage but have contributed their own stories to help others understand the past. The Arts Officer felt that she benefitted from the energy the centre holds as it continues to grow and expand its arts programme.

### **Aim 3          Develop museum audiences understanding of local heritage**

The resources that have been developed through this project include storybags and plaques, film posters, postcards and animated histories. Some of these have already been included in a variety of TWAM Loans Boxes and are available to groups and schools throughout the North East. Other resources have yet to go live and will soon be benefitting museum audiences and helping to develop their understanding of local heritage.

In terms of community groups using the resources, approximately 400 participants benefit per year as the four loans boxes are continually let out to a variety of groups.

Members of the TWAM Learning team have reported that having Lawrence's real life story to include in the schools object handling session about 'Working Lives' and 'Work and Leisure' made the miner's lamp come to life complementing the museum's loans box resources.

### **Aim 4          Create opportunities for younger generations to value older people**

The resources which have been created through this project now form part of the content of the Loans Boxes which are used by young people in schools, from across the North East. Pupils now have a chance to read and learn about the real life experiences of the people from the Grange and may even be prompted to do further research by contacting The Grange or speaking first hand to other elders in their own community.

Schools access to the resources can be calculated at approximately 3000 pupils having access per year via the loans boxes, to a real life resource which can help them to understand the older generation.

A teacher's response after using the museums' World War 2 Childhood loans box showed that the story bags helped to stimulate learning about the past. The children really liked the story bags and the teacher felt they added value to the learning experience as a different way to learn about children who were evacuated during the war.

### **Additional Outcomes**

Already the project has proved its worth in terms of direct benefits to participants and to those using the resources which have been created. However, The Grange is keen to continue to promote the project through a variety of means and many of the photos and resources are already available on the Grange website. It is intended that the animated histories will be made available on YouTube and that this element of the work also be submitted for relevant awards such as the Royal Television Awards.

Appendix 1 – report on the matinee days

### **‘REEL LIVES ON LOAN’**

### **Classic Matinee event at The Grange – August 2008**

Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> August

On the day there was a lively atmosphere as visitors arrived and were seated for their tea and toast, with several new faces (Kath from the museum and Alison from the Arts Team, Joy and Abby for the hair and makeup, and some young visitors) and boxes of things being unpacked and set out. There were some questions about what was going on and what would be happening.

At eleven everyone was invited to move to the cinema area, this was met with enthusiasm from the majority with only a few men refusing to leave the familiarity and comfort of their usual table and comfy chair. With a little persuasion this was reduced to two individuals, one who was adamant he was sleeping and the other felt his back was not up to it.

The cinema tickets were well designed with an image of 40's children at the cinema, the place, date and admission price-admit one child two pence.

The group had adapted songs in the previous week and song sheets were handed out and a quick song got the morning started. Blinds drawn, the screen down, the setting had an authentic feel. The idea of hanging red silk drapes either side of the screen was scrapped, as the brightness of the silk may have been an unnecessary distraction and a hazard if taken to the floor. The size of the screen was appropriate to the space and visible from all the seats.

The usherettes were lively with the torches and while it was entertaining, the combination of 4 torches and several cameras trying to catch the moment felt a little manic, staff encouraged calling out at the movie clips cheers and boos which brought out a great response, the group got involved and there was a lot of laughter, nudging of ones neighbour, pre-empting classic lines, naming actors and recognition of classic events like the breaking of the four minute mile.



Sound was a slight issue at the beginning as the clips had different levels. Few cinema goers were silent throughout, but only one gentleman left to return to his usual seat saying as he was deaf he couldn't hear and the torches were blinding him.

Ice creams were handed out by the cigarette girls at a midway point, in the dark and during the film, this did not look easy, the ice cream was delicious however.

The end of the reel brought a cheer and applause, bags of assorted old fashioned sweets were handed out by two of the young visitors as guests were reminded of their cinema ticket, the number on the back was used for the raffle. Extra prizes were given to those who had picked up 'a lop' (a stickered image of a flea that had been secretly pressed to the odd shoulder) during the films. This was well received, I saw a couple of people notice the sticker on the person in front of them and then as they were about to say something realise it was a 'secret' and hold back.

## The Grange Day Centre – Lives on Loan and Reel Histories

The image on the cinema ticket may have been one that the group had looked at during discussions previously. In the excitement of getting seated, breaking routine and for some general confusion about what was going on, few people took much notice of their ticket, until the raffle, for many the image would have been too small to see, enlarged it could be used as a stimulus for memories about the cinema. Several of the men remembered going to the cinema more than once a week.

“I was a film buff you know, I went to the cinema 4 times a week when I was a boy, it was a penny entry, there were two cinemas where I lived and the programmes ran from Monday to Wednesday and then Thursday to Saturday so you could see 4 different films a week. When they used to spray the place people would jump up and shout ‘spray me’, there wasn’t much hygiene in those days.

Yes I remember the silent films, I’m 91 you know, the pianist was a local woman and she would come and play for all the films, Al Johnston was the first talkie I saw. There were subtitles which was good for the people who were deaf, sometimes the film snapped and it would take ten minutes to fix it, we didn’t think it was funny, everyone would shout”  
Nick

Standing for the national anthem ended the session, although difficult for some, was a definite moment for the group. “Come on we’ve got to stand up you know”- two ladies helping each other to stand, faces intent on the screen. The general comments and mood as cinemagoers returned to their seats for lunch were positive and though some individuals were tired there were many smiling faces. One observation of the whole morning despite the group being seated for the hour on chairs that were not as comfy as usual, the stimulation level very high with sound, the film itself by nature of it being edited clips was at times, very colourful, startling, dramatic, intense and emotional, plus the external stimulus from the staff, the whole group managed to stay with it and focus, only one gentleman was seen nodding off. The pace of the morning was fast with a lot to squeeze in and there were moments where this was noticeable.



## The Grange Day Centre – Lives on Loan and Reel Histories

Friday 15<sup>th</sup>

For the second morning some slight changes were made which created a very well structured session. The same two men opted out of the session. Joe who had left the cinema half way through Tuesday's screening stayed for the duration on Friday.

The morning was introduced as the cinemagoers were seated with the whole day outlined and the 'visitors introduced.' The song was different to Tuesday and although several pages long the repetition gave those joining in a chance to 'get it' and it ended with a big finish. Cigarette girls came round with their boxes before the film, this time the boxes (a mixture of theatrical and authenticity-made specially for the event) contained sweet cigarettes and sherbet fountains, the presentation was very good, the sherbet fountains caused a ripple of chat (but I did not see many being eaten).

During the films there was less photography and less torch action the roles of the usherettes felt more realistic and there was some great usherette/torch moments when there were toilet visits or the three late comers and a little bit of canoodling in the back row. The role-play demonstrated by the staff encouraged and stimulated role-play by many of the cinema audience, mainly in the form of naughty children. The children present were however very quiet and well behaved at the front with only a couple escaping to the toilets.

Staff had a great deal of fun throwing small peanut missiles into the crowd, which received a mixed response. There was an interval for the ice cream, which worked well, as the tubs could be distributed and collected in the break, and the concentration break was a release for some. The grange staff were engaged on many levels throughout the whole session, and this created a very entertaining, lively and interactive morning. It seemed that everyone was focussed on the activity and the ideas around how the staff could engage with the cinema experience worked very well.

The 'Reel' was a good balance of clips, definitely something for everyone, Laurel and Hardy and Abbot and Costello got lots of laughs and the dancing numbers had lots of feet moving. As with the first session the mood of the group was very upbeat, the session ending a little later due to the interval and more structured start and so lunch was ready to be served as the group were re-seated.

### Themed Lunches

The themed lunches on both days had a mixed response. It had been realised that on the Tuesday there had been no real feedback gathered on the themed lunch so it was decided that each table would have an 'interviewer' to talk about the food, memories of availability, Americas influence, allotments etc, this was interesting as not all diners had the same experience or views.

"Opposite the cinema was a fruit and veg shop, we used to get apples we didn't take sweets"



Friday's lunch of tripe, spam fritters and rhubarb and blancmange brought a mixed reaction but also started some great discussions about food, some comments suggested that tripe was known as a food for old people, interestingly only four of the diners had any, many remembered spam arriving with the American forces.

## The Grange Day Centre – Lives on Loan and Reel Histories

The afternoon session was design to offer

- Movie quiz-relating to the movies in general
- Hair and make up session
- Photo opportunity with hats and furs
- Exploration and discussion of museum loan boxes

Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> August

The make up area had been set up in the back of the room along with the museum loan boxes in a corner so that a backdrop could be created using the window bars as hanging space. It was thought the table could be pulled out later in the day for easier access.

To set the tone the table was covered in red silk, a 40's clock was set as a prop, a box of vintage gloves, hand bag and headscarf were displayed along with the makeup.

Abby, a 17-year-old beauty therapy student was responsible for the make up and had to learn how to do the 40's look. 40's colours had been chosen for the day, researched by availability of the times and movie star fashion, demi-wave clips and hairnets rounded off the collection. It was hoped that the ladies might enjoy a make over 40's style and the opportunity to be photographed. (I had brought some of my collection of vintage dresses to display as a stimulus for the glamour session, a mixture of 40's and 50's all very small and therefore not initially intended to be worn but used to talk about movie stars, dressing up, first dates etc.)

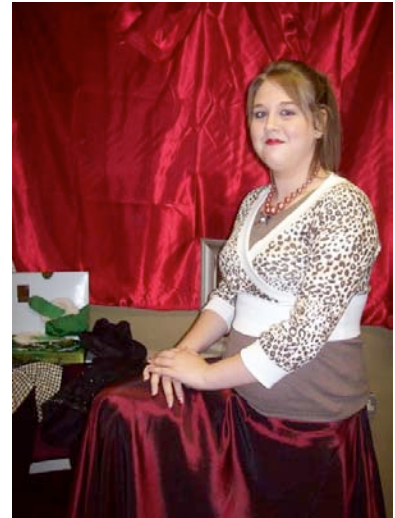
Only one of the younger visitors stayed for the day and her enthusiasm for dressing up and lovely smiling personality was an asset to the Tuesday afternoon.

After lunch the make over area was still in the corner when the dressing up began, and what had been intended to be a gentle, intimate session of remembering first dates, and a chance to play a little with the glamour of hats and furs became a little chaotic and rushed. There was some confusion over the 'wear ability' of the clothes and this caused some frustration, as the dresses did not fit. Although the dressing up brought much laughter and theatrics and some wonderful photographs were captured, there were some points when the moments of reminiscing were compromised by the need to be photographed and make way for the next makeover.

There was not a great deal of interaction between the young people in attendance in the morning and the grange regulars so no feedback was gathered specifically from them.

### **Do you remember your first date?**

"Oh yes, it was when I was in the army, we went to the pictures, he was an army lad, long dead now, he was shot down, I saw it happen, I didn't want to see it, the bullet just missed me and hit him."



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“Yes but I’m not telling you, what do you want to know for, its none of your business... I want to do my own make up, I wont let anyone else do it... this if a farce, I am choosing what I want to wear, your not making a fool out of me, I feel stupid, I’ve got sandals on they don’t go with this dress”

### **Do you remember wearing gloves for special occasions?**

“Yes, I can’t wear them now because of my hands, we used to wear them all the time”

After some reassurance that there was no intention to ridicule anyone this lady then sat down in Abby’s chair allowing her to do the makeup and choosing with us the colours she wanted, which gloves were best suited and some beads to finish off the look.

(I took a photo and showed her, You look lovely!

“I look tired, I’ve not been well you know.”)

The dressing up session involved less than half of the women and other than trying on one of the few men’s hats available, none of the men. The museum loans boxes were underused in the excitement of the session, which came to a natural end as those wanting to dress up petered out. The afternoon was rounded up with the movie quiz, which involved everyone, at least one member of staff per table, the level of engagement was good, as although many did not remember many of the answers there was an involvement by being in a team.



After reflection and feedback from the afternoon some changes were made for Friday. Michele was keen to open the activity out to involve the whole group and to have it in the main space once the cinema chairs were cleared.

The music was changed to a CD of tunes from show tunes of several eras to tunes of the 40’s. The loans box items were to be taken to all the tables and bodies allocated to this.

The makeover area was to be spread out more so that those intimate moments could be nurtured whilst the theatrics of the dressing up could be accessible to all. A clothes rail was introduced which meant the clothes, with some additions from Tuesday, were easily viewed and played with.



The chairs had been cleared after lunch and the dressing up tables and rail set up with consideration to, being near enough to the comfy chairs and tables to be visible, not having to walk too far to access the activity and yet maintaining a little distance for creating intimacy.

The floor space between became a little dance floor as one man began to dance with excellent technique and agility (he continued to dance for the rest of the afternoon sometimes accompanied and sometimes not). Some of the women followed suit especially one whose feet had not stopped moving since watching the dancing clips in the morning’s film. There was much more opportunity to spend time over the make up some of the women had been particular film stars in previous activity sessions and so requested that style of

## The Grange Day Centre – Lives on Loan and Reel Histories

makeover. The movie posters that had been created from Tuesday's session were displayed well and these acted both a talking point and a stimulus for more dressing up.

"Can I have this poster, my family will be so proud of me" anon

"Can I be Audrey Hepburn, I like her, when I was younger I used to wear my eyes like this, I don't wear much makeup now"

The photography was set up away from the main space where there was more privacy and light. Instead of waiting in a queue to be photographed there was gathering at the makeover table for talking and trying different hats etc.

The loans boxes circulating, brought the men into the activity, which resulted in some of them coming over for a make over. It was not the intention to take this too far but just putting a little colour back into the cheeks and lips and darkening the eyebrows make quite a difference for the photo.

Who is your favourite film star?

"Laurel and Hardy"

Can I give you a little Hardy tash and dark eyebrows?

"Why not"

One gentleman sits in the chair wearing the maroon beret

"I'm going to be Monty"

"Who the hell is Monty?" says Abby!

Billy is brought to the table

Have you come to get dressed up?

"No"

Putting some gloves in his hands, do you remember when girls wore gloves to go out?

"I can't remember much now"

Have you been married? Did you get dressed up for your wedding?

"No"

Did you wear a suit?

"Oh aye I wore a suit"

What did your wife wear?

"I can't remember"

My mum wore a suit; can you remember if she wore a suit or a dress?

"A dress"

Was it white?

"Yes it was white"

I bet she looked like a princess!

Long pause and a tear roll down his cheek

"She looked like a princess to me"

(We sit for a few moments holding hands)

The afternoon session lasted for two hours, the changes made worked very well, making it more inclusive on several levels, the staff were a continuous source of entertainment and encouragement for the group, and their energy and jollity have allowed Kath and Christine from the museum and Abby and myself more time to probe into memories and work on a one to one basis. It has been an emotional rollercoaster for some of us and it seems that the combination of music, clothes, dancing and the cinema matinee worked well collectively.

**Cinema Day report – written by Joy Sanders August 2008**

## Credits

### Photographs

Throughout the document photos are included which were taken by Infinite Arts or by Chris Robinson the lead artist on the project.

### Management

Michele Wright

### Funded by

### Artists

Chris Robinson	Lead artist
Alina Trewitt	Animation workshops
Dominic Smith	Animation Editing
Abby and Joy Sanders	Make up Artists

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