



BURY TOWN OF CULTURE 2020-21

IT'S BEEN A BLAST!



Photo: Stephen Walton



Photo: Liam Barnes

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BURY TOWN OF CULTURE 2020-21

In December 2019 Bury was named the inaugural Greater Manchester Town of Culture, an initiative to promote the distinctive culture of towns across the region.

Our offer entitled 'Happy', drew inspiration from the life of one of our most famous daughters, Victoria Wood with a special festival dedicated to her life and work. It also meant we could highlight the borough's wider arts offer as well as promoting our community culture.

As we began our year as Town of Culture the Covid-19 pandemic and resulting national lockdowns had a major impact on planned activity. Whilst causing major events to be postponed into 2021, the pandemic gave rise to creative means to promote well-being and connected us all through culture. This brochure celebrates the amazing events and activities which have been held as part of our Town of Culture programme.

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The last two years have shown that now more than ever culture and creativity is essential in enhancing our overall well-being, reducing the feeling of isolation as well as contributing significantly to the local economy.

Despite COVID-19 restrictions being in place for most of 2020 creativity flourished and we celebrated by exploring digital and socially distanced events.



CELEBRATING CULTURE THROUGH MUSIC

35,000 attended **Head for the Hills** online in December 2020 and experienced poetry, prose, and performances.

United We Stream – a virtual platform which was set up to host a diverse blend of entertainment and creative content during 2020. Bury, through The Met, was the principal home for USW and we became clubbing capital of the country by hosting many of United We Stream events.

Burrs Live by The Met saw two weeks of live music, community events and family fun showcasing culture in our much loved green spaces which also houses part of the Irwell Sculpture Trail at the end of August to the beginning of September 21. With thanks to The Met for managing a superb programme of events, Burrs Live featured a packed schedule of music with the ever-popular **Head for the Hills** festival taking place on the outdoor stage, with headliners Badly Drawn Boy and Everything Everything. The events allowed thousands of people across the borough to get together and watch live artists in person for the first time in over a year.



HEAD FOR THE HILLS



CELEBRATING THE ARTS

In May 21 **Happy Festival** came to the borough. Musical comedy and a Hallé quartet's first performance in fifteen months took place on stage at The Met and at care home settings across the borough. Alongside this streamed choir workshops and participative comedy took place, whilst creatives delved through the Victoria Wood archive to create original pieces for performances when we were able to welcome in-person audiences later in the year.

The beginning of September then saw the second Happy Festival weekend of the year – a unique programme of music and comedy to celebrate Victoria and her work. The festival started with a 'Fan Day' and included lots of activities for all ages including the chance to try out instruments; performances and talks in Bury Art Museum and Library Gardens before a unique get together with The Ukulele Club at The Met.



HALLÉ
AT THE HEART OF
GREATER MANCHESTER
SINCE 1838



MODELS



The second day took place in Burr's Country Park as part of the Burr's Live by The Met programme on the specially constructed outdoor stage and included a spectacular line up of comedians, brass bands, music, cabaret, and commissioned pieces of music for all to enjoy. Where else would you get a brass band playing the Ballad of Barry and Freda in a country park with people waving down from the Flying Scotsman as it steamed by?

Bury Art Museum and Sculpture Centre provided weekly inspiration throughout lockdown with themed art and creative activities including resources to design, print, colour, make and display. Residents were able to take a virtual tour of the latest sculpture centre exhibition - The Pothole (Mark Tanner Sculpture Award National Touring Programme), by Anna Reading. Since re-opening they have also expertly curated a new exhibition programme including Spirit of a Place, Walker Family, Food and the Black Art BAM trail and zine project.

OTHER HIGHLIGHTS INCLUDE:

- In Prestwich, the annual Clough Day returned whilst Prestwich Arts Festival continued to go from strength-to-strength with a new mural and expansion of 'Home is Where the Art Is' – a community arts tour born out of the creativity of window displays during the pandemic.
- Happy Festival Online – New Faces – local people got the chance to collaborate with professionals who worked with Victoria during her career as well as Q&As with Victoria's official biographer Jasper Rees.
- The Met's resident artist Professor Jiggitt presented live, interactive stories to help with home schooling and to keep younger residents of the region entertained.

The Town of Culture Micro Commissions and grants were also launched to celebrate local talent and encourage creativity. Funding was made available for creatives in our neighbourhoods to showcase their talent whilst also providing a source of business given the impact Covid-19 had for those involved in the cultural economy. Projects included a guided poetry tour of Bury, concertina art books of the North of the borough and a folk song created with, and for, the volunteers of Holly Mount Orchard.



CELEBRATING OUR HERITAGE

- Virtual VE and VJ75 day commemorations were held and led by The Fusilier Museum during lockdown and a new exhibition entitled Napoleon in Exile opened in autumn 21.
- The return of the Flying Scotsman to the East Lancashire Railway as well as a programme of galas on our famed heritage railway.
- Town of Culture Open Days – Walks, Talks, Tours and live music all available for free across our venues to encourage more people to engage with culture – from behind-the-scenes tours to pop-up entertainment at Bury Market, the open.

Photo: Ben Harrison Media



NAPOLEON
IN EXILE



Photo: Ben Harrison Media



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CELEBRATING OUR COMMUNITY CULTURE

- **Light & Hope** – a thank you to those who had been stars in 2020 as well as shining a light into the homes of Bury people. 1,000's of stars were put on display across Bury as part of the initiative with the names of volunteers who came forward to support Bury's Community Hubs.
- **A Charity Postcard Exhibition and Silent Auction** hosted by Bury Art Museum and local business KWOFF which helped raise vital funds for Bury Samaritans.
- We have been delighted to see community venues re-open, and groups get back to rehearsals and performances – at venues such as **Whitefield Garrick Theatre, Theatre Royal in Ramsbottom and Prestwich Community Cinema**.
- **Town of Culture Opportunity Pass** – as part of Bury's ongoing recognition and thanks a range of opportunities and exclusive experiences have been made available to key workers and volunteers as a thank you for their hard work and commitment throughout the pandemic. Over 500 people were able to enjoy Burrs Live for free thanks to the Opportunity Pass, whilst others experienced a VIP launch of the latest Fusilier Museum exhibition and even samba lessons with Bloco Ashe.



CELEBRATING OUR CULTURAL DIVERSITY

In February 21, the first **Bury Macfest** was held, celebrating Muslim art and culture, through a blend of virtual displays and distanced activity focusing on food, dance, art, and discussion. Organised through the BAME Project, this built upon profiling South East Asian Heritage Month in August and comes in the year Macfest received the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service.

The second annual **Rainbow Train** was a sell out when it took place at the end of September, organised by **Bury Pride**, and showcased within Greater Manchester's Pride streaming activity.

OTHER PROJECTS INCLUDE:

- **Seldom Heard Voices** – a project set up by The Met's Creative Case group to focus on inclusion in Culture.
- **Bury Faith Forum** led a virtual session on Light and Hope in faith, exploring Diwali, Chanukah, and Christmas.



WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

We are immensely proud to have led the way as the first Greater Manchester Town of Culture and for our year in the spotlight to leading with the **Happy Festival**.

The legacy of Town of Culture for Bury will go far beyond 2021. Throughout our time in the spotlight we have also been working on a vision and strategy for the next 10 years and we have put culture at the very heart of it by using Victoria Wood's words '**Let's Do It**' as a title. We are taking a local approach to drive enterprise, working together with communities focusing on our strengths. Culture will again be at the centre of this work and a new cultural strategy will be launched next year. Finally Bury has also submitted two bids for the national Levelling Up Fund, both of which have key cultural elements to them including a new market flexi-hall and an opportunity for a creative space in the heart of Radcliffe.



For more information about
Bury Town of Culture visit

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hear the latest on culture
across the borough:

