



NEW WORTLEY
community centre

New Wortley Community Writing Workshop

Bringing the community together to create a mural celebrating and sharing stories of the history and life in our area

29th Feb 2016 10am-3.30pm NW Community Centre

This one day workshop encouraged participants to share their knowledge of local history, including anecdotal events that have become part of the area's story. The aim of the workshop was to generate a range of new narratives that will tell the history of New Wortley and will go on to be used by a graphic designer to create a mural for the walls of the top floor in the new community centre. The workshop was run by professional writers, producers and academics who united to lead sessions on community history, creative writing and performing the past.



The day began with a tour of the site so participants could see the space that the new mural will occupy. The tour explained the purpose of the new community centre building, and the significance of the mural in tying together the past, present, and future of the community.



Following the tour, the workshop day began with a session on performativity and confidence building led by Nuala Cavanagh. Nuala graduated from RADA, and is an experienced drama teacher who devises and directs new creative projects.



Her session encouraged participants to communicate and engage in dialogue about themselves and their connections to the local area/ Through exercises that drew on drama and acting skills, Nuala mobilised memories through movement and developed story telling techniques through character building and hot seating. Her session culminated in a self-scripted performance piece bringing to life a scene from New

Wortley past, one set in the old cinema, another in the old shopping district.



The afternoon workshop was directed by Dan Ingram-Brown. Dan is a Yorkshire based author and playwright who specialises in writing for children, community theatre and contemporary performance.



Working with objects from the area and memories of streets and place names, participants sketched out characters from the past – literally, by drawing around one another and populating their drawings with character-building post-it notes to build the layers of characterisation informed by the past. This led to a session in which new community banners were created. The banners drew on the tradition of trade union banners of the past to create new images and mottos to represent New Wortley in the twenty-first century.



At the end of the day, community participants gathered and shared their thoughts on the workshop with staff:

- 'It has made me think differently about the community and about writing'
- 'It has created new ideas – you only see world through your own eyes, but working as part of group and meeting new people has really opened up new communities'
- 'It's been fun! Really interesting and enlightening'
- 'I've worked with people I would have walked past in the street, its brought us together'
- 'I feel like our confidence has grown during the day, it's made us positive feeling and thinking differently'
- 'we have new insights into our community it's been educational and inspiring '
- 'It has made me more likely to attend future workshops'
- 'there was a real sense of connection to people and ideas, generations connecting with different ages'
- 'It's been great to have the freedom to think and speak in public without being judged'
- 'it was completely different to what was I expected – writing at school made me feel stupid, but this was really inclusive and has built my confidence through getting everyone to contribute, you can't just hide away'

Two follow on workshops are being held at New Wortley Community Centre in March 2016 to develop the ideas generated as a result of the community writing day and inform the creation of the new mural which will launch as part of the opening of the new community centre in Summer 2016.