



**WATCH  
THIS  
SPACE**

# **Watch this Space Skipton**

2022/2023

# Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Pocket Residencies</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Humans of Skipton</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Yarndale</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Place-based theatre</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Budget</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Learning</b>	<b>21</b>

# Introduction

'Watch This Space' (WTS) is a Great Place Lakes and Dales (GPLD) project. Watch this Space Skipton was funded by Skipton's Heritage Action Zone (HAZ) as part of its cultural programme.

WTS is about looking at spaces (any spaces) differently and asking how they might be used to support, encourage, and build the creative and cultural sector.

Now on its third iteration, WTS previously ran in 2019 and 2021 and included artists collaborating in a holiday cottage, aerial rehearsals in a rural barn, poetry on café windows and digital art workshops in a co-working space.

This WTS is focused on Skipton town centre and has expanded on setting up artists in unusual locations, which have been termed 'pocket residencies' because they occur in pockets of time, in pockets of the town, to embedding activity within the town's regular events and institutions.

Alongside the 'pocket-residencies', WTS worked with photography and media students from Craven College to create their first public exhibition of work and partnered with Yarndale to explore community based fringe activity to the main September event. Furthermore, a place-based festival has been commissioned with a local artist who will give her own spin on the town and space within it.

Each element of the project has been evaluated and the learning has been built into a toolkit to enable other similar projects to take place, in Skipton or any other locations. The toolkit is available to download from a website that showcases all iterations of the Watch the Space project.

[www.watchthisspaceprojects.co.uk](http://www.watchthisspaceprojects.co.uk)



# Pocket Residencies

**The Watch this Space Pocket Residencies took place in four venues across Skipton; Elsworth Kitchen (restaurant), Qworkery (co-working space), Steep & Filter (refills and coffee) and On Trend (clothing boutique).**

The artist opportunities were advertised via the Arts Council's Arts Jobs website and received over 40 applications. These were shortlisted by the project team before the final decision was made by each individual venue.

## Chosen artists:

Elsworth Kitchen - [Rob Young](#)

Qworkery - [Bryony Simcox](#)

Steep and Filter - [Lucy Morrison](#)

On Trend - [Louise Goult](#)



ELSWORTH KITCHEN



STEEP & FILTER





**Elsworth Kitchen** partnered up with **Rob Young**, a writer from Harrogate. Initially hesitant as to how having an artist in residence would work in their busy restaurant, Rebecca, Bruce and all the staff at Elsworth Kitchen welcomed Rob into their midst.

Working without materials, paints and pens, Rob isn't immediately obvious as an artist, so he made himself known by chatting with the staff and regulars. Rob is fascinated by words and has been helping Elsworth Kitchen to tell their story through quirky graphics, Lego figures and playful language.

## Elsworth Kitchen with Rob Young

Image credits: Juliet Klottrup





## Qworkery with Bryony Simcox

**Bryony Simcox** spent three days as a 'Qworker' creating a series of three collages based on the architecture and textures of Otley Street. Bryony immersed herself in the co-working space over her residency, even joining the weekly 5km jog. The Qworkers celebrated her artwork creation with a mini-launch on the street with cake and inviting the public into the hallway to see the works. One of the Qworkers said about having Bryony in their office:

**"Lovely to see the process of creating art within the street and space. Bryony was super enthusiastic and friendly and easy to engage with."**

Image credits: Juliet Klottrup





## Steep & Filter with Lucy Morrison

Lucy Morrison challenged herself to create a painting a day inspired by the comings and goings inside Steep and Filter, a coffee house and refill store on Otley Street. Located just inside the door she painted away for three solid days, mastering her challenge. Afterwards she said how the residency had been:

**"A happy and joyful experience."**

Image credits: Juliet Klottrup





## On Trend with Louise Goult

**Louise Goult**, a textile artist from Saltburn-by-the-sea took up her residency in On Trend Boutique. Keen to tell the story of this boutique, Louise responded to the shop through hand embroidery. Conversations, stories, patterns and observations have been recorded in stitch by Louise onto pattern pieces that she made into a toile garment and returned to be displayed in the shop.

Image credits: Juliet Klottrup





# Artist Feedback

After the residencies had been completed the artists all took part in a reflective evaluation workshop. They discussed what worked well as part of the project and what they found challenging.

As with previous iterations of Watch this Space, the artists valued the **open brief**, having something with parameters but that enabled them to choose a theme or topic was welcome.

The **response of the venues** was also highly commended by the artists. All were welcoming, happy to help and genuinely interested in what the artists were doing. No one was made to feel 'in the way' or a burden. This is key learning to take forward, that the selection of venues and matching to the artists is as important as the artist selection process.

There were logistical elements of the project that worked well for the artists, including:

- **A supportive and enabling producer** – not being expected to carry out project management and communication tasks but being able to concentrate on creating work.
- **An accessible application process** – the artists commented that often applications are time consuming, and this isn't time they can be paid for. A simple application that they could complete quickly was appreciated.
- **A pre-meeting on Zoom** where the artists could meet each

other and troubleshoot with the producer – the artists noted that sometimes they will turn up to a venue with little to no information, not even a name of someone to ask for. A pre-meeting and clear information about their venue meant a lot.

- **Budget** - £250 per day + £350 for materials and travel and £50 for attending the reflective workshop. The artists felt this was a good budget for a three-day residency.
- **Timescale** – It was agreed that 3 days was an ideal amount of time.

Many of the challenges the artists faced were associated with marketing and communications. It was felt that more could have been made locally of the event, for example a flyer with a map of all locations or because it was near to the Christmas Light Switch On, the residencies or a celebration of them could have been linked to this event.

Due to the number of partners involved there was also an expectation to use a lot of hashtags in social media posts but then the organisations which were being tagged, were not in turn promoting the residencies. There is learning here about creating a specific communications plan and budgeting for external comms support when it is not available internally.

# Audience Feedback

**During the three days of the residency a QR code was available at all venues which invited the public to complete a survey about the artist or artists they had seen. The survey was incentivised by offering entry into a prize draw for vouchers for each of the venues.**

In retrospect, it would have been beneficial to have paper copies of the survey available as well, as some people struggled to access the QR code and could not complete it.

19 people did respond to the online survey. This is not a large enough sample to draw definite conclusions but does give a sense of how the audience responded to the residencies.

When asked how the residencies made them feel, most people responded:



When asked how much they would like to see more artists in unusual spaces in Skipton, 18/19 people responded positively (and 13 of them giving a score of 8/10 or more). Places they'd like to see artists included shops (used and empty), Craven Court shopping centre and on the canal. These options were actually all explored in the planning of the residencies but no venues came forward or committed to the project.

Feedback from audiences included:

**“It was lovely seeing Skipton community supporting something different”**

**“It was nice to see how the artist visualised our town and what they thought was interesting about it.”**

# Venues

**Even with previous iterations of Watch this Space to allude to, the idea of an 'artist' within a business or non-cultural space was a little alien to many people and recruiting venues to the project was challenging.**

The planning and application process can be worked one of two ways. Either get the venues on board first, so the artists know what spaces they are applying to, or find the artists first and then 'pitch' them to venues. Due to feedback from artists in previous WTS projects, it was decided that it was preferable that the artists knew the venues when making their applications. However, this meant venues were taking a small risk committing to a project before knowing who the artists might be. This was one of the factors that meant it was challenging getting venues on board.

Qworkery had previously taken part in a WTS project and immediately took the opportunity to be involved again. Elsworth Kitchen and Steep & Filter, although not involved in WTS had been involved in GPLD projects previously and so there was an established and trusted relationship.

On Trend Boutique was a new partnership. Janet, the owner of the boutique was really open to new experiences and supporting community based ventures.

None of the venues involved had specific expectations, such as raising their profile or introducing new customers. All embraced the idea of Watch this Space as a creative and interesting venture that would bring joy to their spaces. However, with additional comms support and a locally linked strategy there could be more tangible outcomes for the venues. This is key learning for future projects.

# Humans of Skipton

'Humans of Skipton' is a take on the [Humans of New York](#) portrait series. This part of the WTS project was run in partnership with Skipton College and students from Fine Art and Media Studies as part of their photography module.

The WTS producer and the students collectively wrote a brief and decided on the parameters of the photographs to be taken. This included how to approach people, what to say and what information they needed to collect.

The students decided they wanted to depict the different generations living and working in Skipton and that they wanted to take their photographs in black and white.

In October 2022 the students spent time photographing people in the town. They then came back together with the producer to curate their exhibition, choosing the final 8 photographs that would go on display.

Initially, it was hoped that the exhibition would be a large

scale, outdoor exhibition, utilising some of the ginnel walls in Skipton, which were undergoing refurbishment as part of the wider Heritage Action Zone programme. Unfortunately, one wall owner decided against any artwork being put on display and even though permission was gained from another owner, the wall itself was listed and planning permission would have been needed to proceed. The planning application process takes 12 weeks and with no guarantee of success this option wasn't ultimately taken forward.

Other options, including using empty shop windows were explored. Again, unfortunately, the timing wasn't right as although one shop owner agreed in principle, the shop was then let and the exhibition could not go ahead.

Finally, it was agreed that the exhibition would be held in the library, up the impressive staircase. Although not outside, the library is on the high street and has a high footfall of local people.



## Humans of Skipton: Final photographs

The final collection of photographs was curated by the students themselves. They chose to have them all the same size and orientation and chose images that depicted all generations in the town.



# Final Exhibition

The final exhibition took place in Skipton Library, using the impressive staircase as a backdrop to the dramatic photographs. All four students were involved in hanging the exhibition, choosing the placement of the images, the order and learning skills in how to hang an exhibition.

One of the subjects of the photographs happened to be working on his market stall outside the library while the exhibition was being installed and came along to see the final work in situ.



Students hanging the exhibition. Image credit – Steph Carr



# Student Feedback

Following the installation of the exhibition, the students, their tutor and the producer had a celebratory lunch and all took part in a reflective workshop. The students fed back on what had gone well during the project, what they had found challenging and what difference being part of the project had made to them.

All the students noted that being part of the project had boosted their confidence. They admitted that before



From left: Robbie, Tobias, Lucy and Rose. Image credit – Steph Carr

taking part, the thing they were most worried about was approaching people and asking to take their photograph. This took them out of their comfort zone and they enjoyed hearing people's stories.

On the flip side of this, one of the biggest challenges was other people. Some people they approached were rude to them and they admitted they felt more comfortable approaching certain people. The two males in the group were also mindful that it could be intimidating for some people to be approached by two teenage boys and they hope they might have changed the perceptions of young people for some.

The project has made a significant difference to the students. The confidence boost and experience of this project, led them to be commissioned for other photography work, with Tobias and Robbie recently photographing a wedding.

Their tutor, Steph Carr, said:

**"They are all more confident and the industry experience is invaluable, so different to the experience they get in a studio. We'd love to do more projects like this!"**



# Yarndale - community engagement

WTS partnered with Yarndale as an established festival in the town of Skipton to provide support and advice for building engagement in the local communities. Yarndale's Creative Producer, Kate Beard, is keen to convey the narrative of Yarndale and the strong local textile heritage of the town.

WTS producer, Emily Wilson and Kate worked together to create an evaluation framework that would start to capture some of the impact Yarndale is having with its community engagement, with a plan to develop this in coming years, so that Yarndale becomes a festival that local communities feel ownership of. WTS contributed £1000 to the workshop programme.

## Community Engagement:

- 20 sessions held between August 2022 and January 2023
- 4 venues: Broughton Road Community Centre, Greatwood & Horseclose Community Centre, Selfa and Skipton Town Hall
- Ages ranged from 4 to 80
- 231 attendees in total. 113 Under 18s & 118 Over 18s
- Mostly women and girls, several boys (particularly at the Broughton Road sessions) and 5 men.

The community outreach sessions developed into drop-in sessions and so creating a structure that formally conveyed heritage messaging was challenging. The team adapted and

gently started to introduce the topic as sessions built up. Sessions were tailored to ability and interest, from finger knitting with some of the really young children at Selfa sessions, to teaching the basics of both knitting and crochet, pattern interpretation and encouraging people to bring their own projects and join us to make and mend at the Town Hall.

Through the sessions in community centres, the barriers to attending events in other locations (i.e. Yarndale) were identified as:

- The physical means to get there
- Not being able to afford it
- Mental health and confidence barriers

Despite these, the team did encourage some people to attend Yarndale with the offer of free tickets, but this wasn't enough for some and it is clear that this relationship building and trust will take some time to build.

Following the community centre outreach a more structured programme of sessions ran at Skipton Town Hall, two of the community centre participants joined this programme. These sessions ran regularly on a Saturday and built a small following, with one woman coming every week from Leeds



# Yarndale - community engagement

The community based sessions have help Yarndale test and learn what works with different communities and they have identified a number of needs that they can look to programme for in the future:

- learning textile making skills
- making and mending
- establishing a social gathering with a focus

**"I enjoyed making in company and having a gentle chat with like minded folk."** *Workshop participant*

The last session was particularly chatty. One lady astonished everyone as she explained why she was making granny squares in the colours of the suffragette movement. Her grandmother was a Suffragette and, supported by her husband and brother went along to meetings where only men were allowed, disguised as a man, and halfway through the meeting would take off her hat, letting her hair loose and crying Votes for Women! .... Recording these stories using textiles could be a future element of Yarndale's community engagement.



# Place-based Theatre

**Initially considered as part of the pocket-residencies, turning unlikely spots into theatre venues was an aspiration of this WTS programme.**

The project producer approached Craven Court shopping centre to be such a venue. Partly because the space is interesting in itself and lends itself well to performance but also because the building itself was expanded from a 16<sup>th</sup> century theatre and there is rich heritage for a practitioner or artist to explore.

Initially difficult to get a response from, with an intervention from Skipton BID, the shopping centre did respond and were keen to be involved. The producer arranged site visits and wrote a proposal which was agreed with the management. However, the proposed time of year (November 2022, to coincide with the Pocket Residencies) was too close to Christmas for the shopping centre and January 2023 was agreed.

Planning meetings commenced with local theatre practitioner Clementine Bogg-Hargroves to run a co-creation weekend

with a group of local participants. However, the venue stopped responding and this particular element was unable to go ahead.

Still keen to work with Clem and with budget available for a theatre element to the project, potential new locations were explored.

In June 2023 this element was still in planning stages, with a tentative summer/autumn date for production. Clem is exploring various locations and themes around the town, including animating the amphitheatre space which is also in the pipeline for a series of public artwork murals, due to be installed in July 2023.

This report will be updated as this element develops.... Watch this Space!

# Craven Arts Intern

**Jessica Aughton, was selected to be the Craven Arts Intern from four applicants. She was chosen based on her creative practice and community organising oriented goals.**

She worked as an intern at Craven Arts from February to October 2022.

Main elements of internship:

- Successfully worked on social media and helped Craven Arts gain more followers.
- Developed the members' monthly newsletter, which is continuing to be developed by the team.
- Collaborated with member artist (Peter Wilkin) to make a "Zine" together and Jess helped him to set up an exhibition.
- Designed posters and social media posts to promote to the Grand Opening of Craven Arts House.

## **Challenges:**

- Working around other paid work.
- The pay was quite low.

## **Successes:**

- Jess gained experience working in the Creative Industries and in organising and communications.
- Craven Arts has developed their newsletter and gained some admin support.

Founding member and trustee, Virpi Kettu, said:

**“Overall, Jess was responsive and very helpful. I would rate the internship a success, it was very beneficial for everyone involved.”**

# Budget

Activity	Cost
Production and project management	£9000
Delivery (creative fees, venue hire, materials)	£12,940
Marketing (branding design and website)	£1575
Evaluation (reflective workshops, prize draw incentive, design of toolkit)	£1050
Travel expenses	£600
Contingency	£335
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£25,500</b>

# Budget - by project

Project element	Cost
Pocket Residencies	£4850
Humans of Skipton	£1840
Place-based theatre	£3500
Yarndale and Craven Music Match support	£1500
Craven Arts Intern	£1500
General (project management, marketing, expenses and contingency)	£12,310
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£25,500</b>

# Learning

**The learning, recommendations and 'top tips' from this WTS and the two projects that happened in 2019 and 2021 have been combined and brought together to create a 'Watch this Space' toolkit. This is available to download from [www.watchthisspaceprojects.co.uk](http://www.watchthisspaceprojects.co.uk) which also showcases the three WTS programmes.**

## **Main recommendations:**

- Do not underestimate the amount of time it takes to get venues on board. Be mindful that not all relationships and partnership building will be fruitful and deliver a venue for the project.
- Get the local community involved – where possible employ a local project manager/producer – the more hyperlocal the better as they will have some established links with people and organisations. This means there is already trust and relationships do not take as long to build.
- Build in budget for and commission external marketing and communications support.
- Link with existing activity – take advantage of when established events are taking place. Can WTS be a fringe element to something that is already happening and mean you benefit from their audience?
- Keep artist applications simple so they are not too time consuming.
- Consider timeframes – have definite dates for residencies at the time of briefing and give plenty of notice to successful and unsuccessful candidates as artists will keep these dates free until they know.
- Build partnerships with other organisations – colleges, cultural venues, other projects – by combining skills and sharing the load you can reach more and have a greater impact.



HM Government



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