

CELEBRATING HALTON'S HERITAGE

Educational Resources



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Acknowledgements

Celebrating Halton's Heritage is a Heritage HQ project

Made possible with Heritage Lottery funding

Educational Resources created by David Bixter - www.davidbixter.co.uk

With thanks to:

Steph Davies

Ruth Darling

Norton Priory Museum and Gardens

Catalyst Science Discovery Centre and Museum

Widnes Library

Karen Highcock

Steph Kidd

Halton Primary Arts Network

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Heritage Trades Timeline:

Runcorn-Widnes Bridge by Chris Whitehouse

Activities:

Runcorn Bridge (with birds) by Alan James



CELEBRATING HALTON'S HERITAGE



Introduction

The Celebrating Halton's Heritage project was part of Halton's 2021 Borough of Culture programme. This programme stimulates talent and aspiration, promoting creativity and economic growth through cultural engagement and activity across the Liverpool City Region.

Our aim in Halton, was to increase participation in quality cultural activity, helping more people to experience the arts and heritage and to benefit from the role that culture can play in transforming lives. The project's base was Heritage HQ at St Marie's Church in Widnes, which became a central hub for heritage activity for a year. Heritage HQ hosted exhibitions, workshops and talks, all on the theme of Halton's trades through the centuries.

Working with artist and creative director Lou Chapelle, we developed the Bleach Packers project working with young people from the borough. Their video projection artwork was shown in public spaces within Halton. Our exhibitions at St Marie's were created with artists Musson+Retallick. They responded to the theme of trades by engaging with groups within the local community to create three unique exhibitions – The Migrant, The Ropewalk and The Cheeseboard.

We hope that these educational resources will capture the heritage stories which were uncovered during the project, highlight the creativity of those involved, and provide a lasting legacy for the project.

Celebrating Halton's Heritage was funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

THE BLEACH PACKERS

Young people in Halton have re-imagined the Bleach Packers, iconic workers from the borough's past, by creating holographic video and augmented reality images.

Through a series of creative workshops, lead artist Lou Chappelle collaborated with local creative practitioners and young people who live and study in Halton to create costumes, dance, poetry, and sound.

The resulting artwork enacts a surreal Bleach Packer's dream, in which he finds himself transformed, torn between chemical and nature.

The final video was presented as a double layer projection video, 7 x 5 x 4.5 metre wide, in public spaces (Widnes Tesco Extra, Runcorn Shopping City, St Marie's Church).

An Augmented Reality Bleach Packer has been placed in seven locations around Halton, and is accessible through people's mobile devices.

The Bleach Packers project saw creative director Lou Chappelle bring together a team of artists and creative practitioners to work with young people in realising the project. Other artists involved include Costume Designer, Rachael Prime, Sound Artist, Wendy Smith, and Poet, Louise Fazackerley. You can find out more about these artists in the Meet the Artist film series included in this resource pack.

Links:

[The Bleach Packers on Lou Chappelle's website](#)

[AR Bleach Packers](#)

[Meet the Artist Films](#)

[VIEW BLEACH PACKER FILM](#) 

[Back to index](#) ↑



THE MIGRANT



Artists M+R titled the first of their three exhibitions in St Marie's 'The Migrant' in reference to the people who were drawn to the area by the foundries and chemical industry.

Despite poor working conditions, the offer of employment brought different communities together from other parts of England, Ireland and Eastern Europe. St Marie's Church in Widnes, where the artwork was exhibited, exists because of the Catholic settlers, making the church a highly significant venue for the artwork.

West Bank in Widnes became a major centre for chemical factories and foundries in the mid-1800s, resulting in extreme air pollution and contaminated ground. The artists have referenced this by using core samples to represent chemical colours in the earth. The process of making the 'cores' also involves a sand-casting process used in the local foundries.

A core sample is a circular plug of earth which archaeologists and scientists use to explore the history of a location. It is a timeline displaying the secrets of the past.

For the exhibition, local families produced core samples which represent and celebrate their family history. These tell stories of the generations who worked and toiled in heavy industry to provide a future for their children in, what is now, a far cleaner and more hospitable place.



THE ROPEWALK

The second exhibition by musson+retallick wove together memories, histories and modern views on the creative trades at the heart of Halton's industrial past.

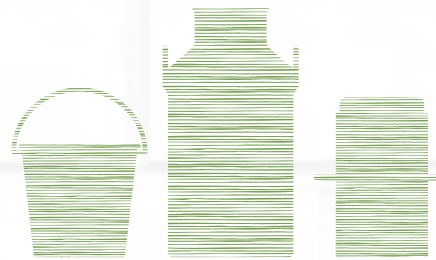
Inspired by Halton's rich history of makers the exhibition was created with the help of the local community. The artists set up a 'rope walk' and made hemp rope next to Percival Lane in Runcorn – the exact location where rope for the shipping industry was made years ago.

The rope was made using an original ropemaking machine which had been used in the Halton area for generations and was brought back to life by the artists for the project.

The artwork combined the ropemaking machine and rope made by the community with memories and stories on printed sailcloth, creating a unique exploration of Halton's past as a borough of creative makers.



THE CHEESEBOARD



The Cheeseboard is the third exhibition from musson+retallick, created with the help of the local community as part of the Celebrating Halton's Heritage project.

The installation presented twelve Cheshire cheeses on a vast cheeseboard as a symbol for the rural trades that were important within Halton in the past. Cheshire cheese was once the fuel that fed local workers. Today there is only one Cheshire cheese maker remaining as working patterns and demands have changed.

The Cheeseboard brings this history to life through recorded stories and reflections on working life and a film of the artists making the cheese at the farm.



[VIEW CHEESEBOARD FILM](#) 

Activities

Click on links below:

Halton Community History

Explore the heritage and histories of Halton's diverse community

Creative Careers

Compare heritage trades with today's career paths

Creative Writing

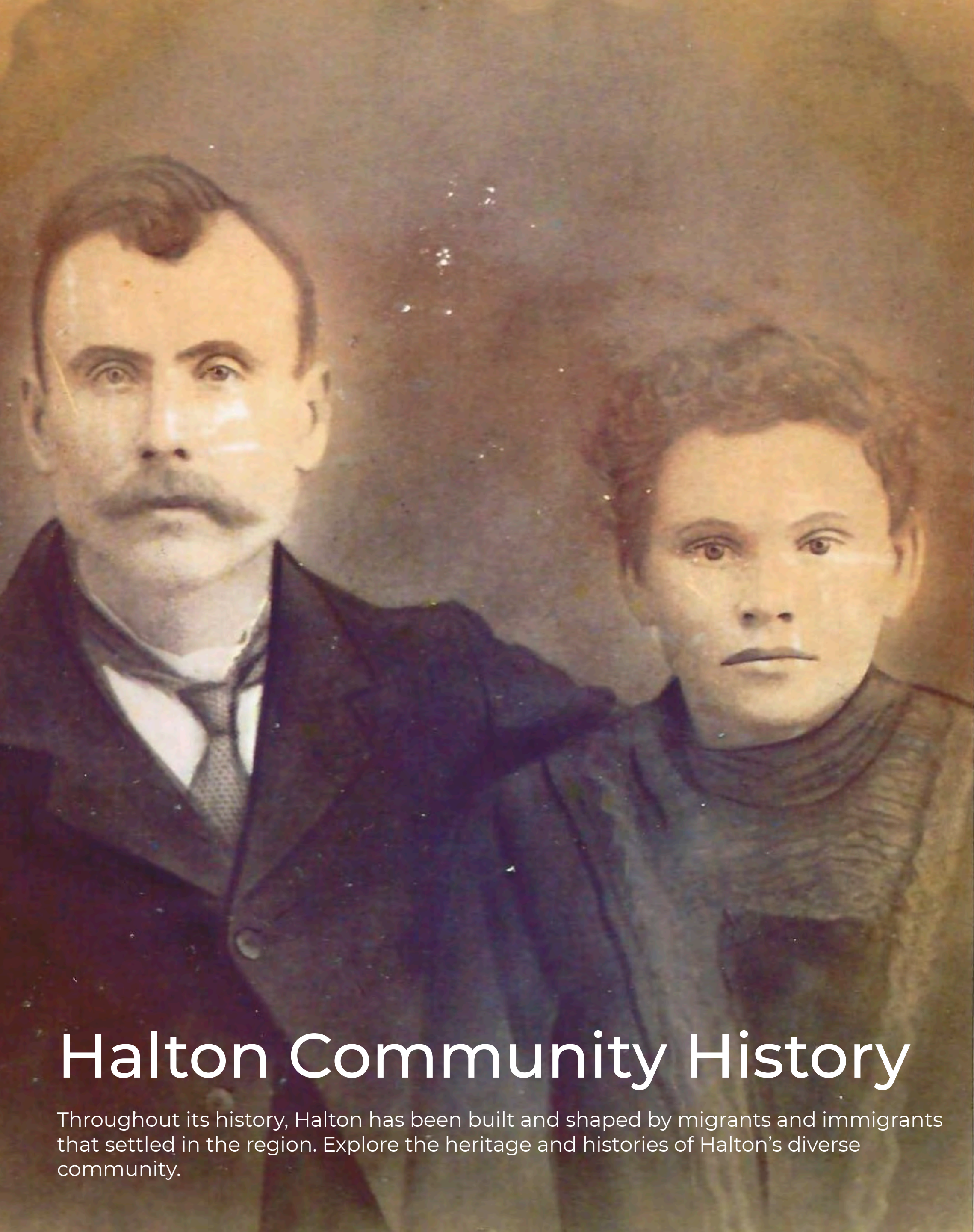
Using heritage resources as a springboard for imaginative writing

AR Map Reading

Locate AR artworks and plot locations with grid references

Costume Design Maths

Use geometry and shape nets to create masks and head-wear



Halton Community History

Throughout its history, Halton has been built and shaped by migrants and immigrants that settled in the region. Explore the heritage and histories of Halton's diverse community.

Class Discussion

As a catalyst for class discussion, you can watch the interview with local historian and author, Jean Morris, or read stories about migration and immigration from Halton's community.

Discuss the reasons why people made the decision to move to Halton.

Do you think it was an easy decision to make?

How has migration and immigration shaped our community?

Look at parallels with immigration today - do people still experience the same destitution or oppression as described in the resources?

History Hunters

Students can find out information about their community histories by interviewing grown-ups at home. Prepare questions in school, such as:

Have you always lived in Halton?
Where are parents, grandparents and great-grandparents from?
How far back can you trace your history?
Did anyone in your history move from another area? If so, why?

There will be some students who are not able to find out about their relatives. To ensure that nobody feels they are unable to participate, the emphasis of this project is placed on "community", rather than "family".

If students are not able to ask grown-ups at home, they can talk to staff in school to find out about their family histories.

Links to Key Resources:

[Interview with Jean Morris](#)

[The Migrant Core Histories](#)

[Margaret Mahoney](#)

[Slaviski Family](#)

[Kaloski Family](#)



Sharing Histories

If you have access to iPads, students can use [iMovie](#) to create short films sharing their community histories. Some students may be able to bring in photographs of people from their histories to add to the films.

Share videos or images of the histories online with the tag:

#HALTON COMMUNITY HISTORIES



Creative Careers

Compare heritage trades with today's career paths

Heritage Trades

Throughout Halton's history, there have been many trades available to the community - many people moved to the area specifically because of the work opportunities that were available in Halton industries. These jobs were not always pleasant - some were extremely dangerous, or caused serious health problems for workers.

The [Heritage Trades Timeline](#) summarises some of the most significant trades found in Halton over the centuries, reflecting changes in career opportunities and society brought about by the industrial revolution and technological advances.

Changes to jobs and society are also discussed in the [filmed interview](#) with local author Jean Morris. Jean provides a first-hand perspective on how changing job opportunities and working practices affected the community of Halton.

[The Bleach Packer film](#) - produced by Lou Chapelle, in collaboration with several other artists, is based on one of the hazardous jobs that was available to people following the industrial revolution. It uses poetry, costume design, sound artwork and film to imagine and explore the dream of a Bleach Packer and the contrasting forces of industrialisation and nature. The Bleach Packer can be further explored through the [Augmented Reality artworks](#) located around Halton, and also in the grounds of every primary school in the area.

Meet the Artist Films

This [series of films](#) provides an opportunity to find out about the work and inspirations of the artists who took part in the Celebrating Halton's Heritage project. They provide insights into their creative processes and give advice to aspiring young artists and anyone interested in pursuing a career in the creative industries.

Heritage Trades Activity

Create a drawing of you doing a job that you might have had if you were born between 1500-1900. Use the heritage trades timeline to identify different jobs - you can do further research on these jobs online - [Halton Heritage Partnership website](#) is an excellent place to start.

Imagine yourself working in one of these jobs - as a Bleach Packer, a Ship-builder, or in Domestic Service.

Are you happy doing this job? Why/why not?

Now create a drawing of you doing the job that you would like to do when you grow up.

What would you like about doing this job?

Is there anything that you can do now that would help you get this job in the future?

Links to Key Resources:

[Heritage Trades Timeline](#)

[Interview with Jean Morris](#)

[The Bleach Packers Poem & Film](#)

[AR Bleach Packer](#)

[Meet The Artist Films](#)



Meet the Artist Activity

Divide into five groups, with each group watching a different artist's film. Films can be watched on computers (if a computer suite is available in school) or on iPads. Each Meet the Artist film is approximately 10 minutes long.

Make notes of things you find interesting about the artist or their way of working. Is there anything in their way of working or how they were at school that you can identify with?

You can do more in-depth research by following the "further research" links associated with each artist - this will take you to the artist's website, or to information about other artists or artworks that have inspired them.

As a group, report back to the rest of the class about your artist. To help organise this, each group member could be responsible to finding out one fact about the artist.



You can use the different resources to enhance creative and imaginative writing skills. These suggested activities look at ways to engage with three different mediums:

1. Audio - Memory Soundbites

Snippets of oral history audio recordings collected during the research phase for M+R's exhibitions.

2. Photography - Look at the Black and White Picture

Archive photography from Heritage Partnership's online archive.

3. Film - Descriptive Writing and visual note-taking

Video artworks created for The Cheeseboard and The Bleach Packers project.

1. Memory Soundbites

Using the Memory Soundbite resource, students can select their own snippet of oral history as inspiration for their piece of writing. This method focuses on asking as many questions as possible - they don't all need to be answered, but having these questions is a fantastic starting point for writing.

Example from the Memory Soundbite website:

"We were shoved out of our beds at 6 o'clock in the morning... In the field, a field with cows. No matter what the weather, you were out in this field"

Listen to the soundbite a few times and list any questions you can think of:

- Who did the shoving, and how did they do it?
- What sort of weather might it be?
- How does the weather affect your mood?
- What does the field look like?
- What is beyond the field?
- What are you expected to do in the field?
- What do the cows think about all of this?!

There is no wrong answer to these questions - the answers will come from your imagination - think about how this felt for the person, picture the surrounding environment or compare these memories to what life is like today.

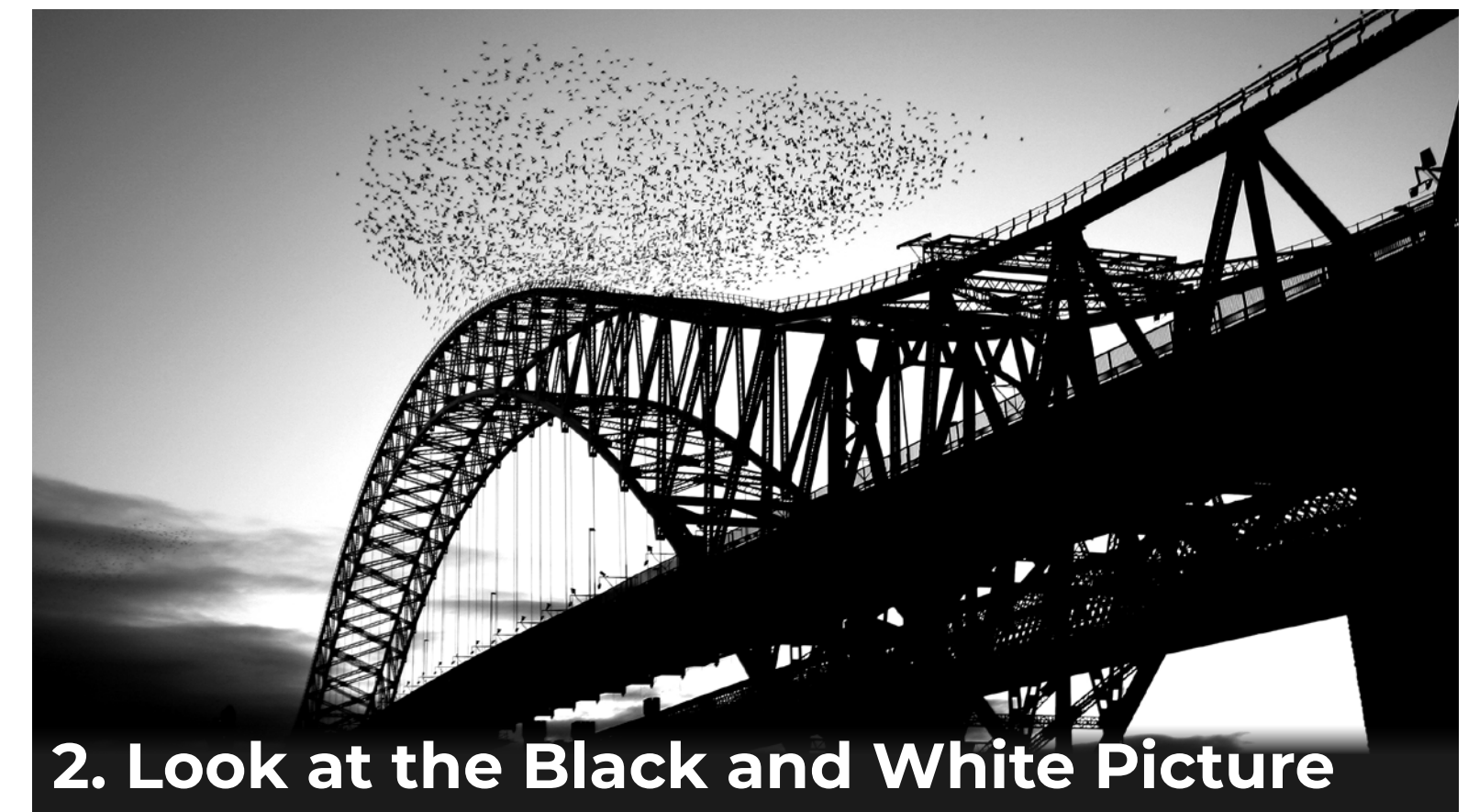
Links to Key Resources:

[The Bleach Packers Poem and Film](#)

[Look at the Black and White Picture](#)

[Memory Soundbites](#)

[The Cheeseboard Film](#)



2. Look at the Black and White Picture

Use [Halton Heritage Partnership website](#) to locate images that inspire your creative writing. The search function can provide an image based on selected themes.

For example, the photograph above could inspire a story about the community of birds that live on the Silver Jubilee Bridge. You could write about:

- What the birds thought about the noise of trains passing on the neighbouring railway bridge
- The impact that the construction of the Mersey Gateway Bridge had on this community, as some birds sought new opportunities and moved to the new bridge, separating families and friends
- The joy at being reunited when meeting up with friends and family for special occasions

Work in small groups to discuss the pictures and take it in turns to write short parts of the story. Groups can share their stories with the rest of the class.

Creative Writing

Using heritage resources as a springboard for imaginative writing



3. Descriptive Writing and visual note-taking

Imagine that an alien has landed in the school and discovered a very large lump of (probably very smelly!) cheese in the canteen. The alien loved the cheese - it was the most amazing thing they had ever tasted and they are desperate to know how it is made so they can take the secret of cheese back to their home planet!

After watching **The Cheeseboard film**, write a description of the cheese-making process so that the alien can open an artisan cheesery when they go home.

Remember, the alien might not know what things are - they might not have seen a tractor, or a bucket - so you will need to use descriptive language to explain what things look like, and how they work.

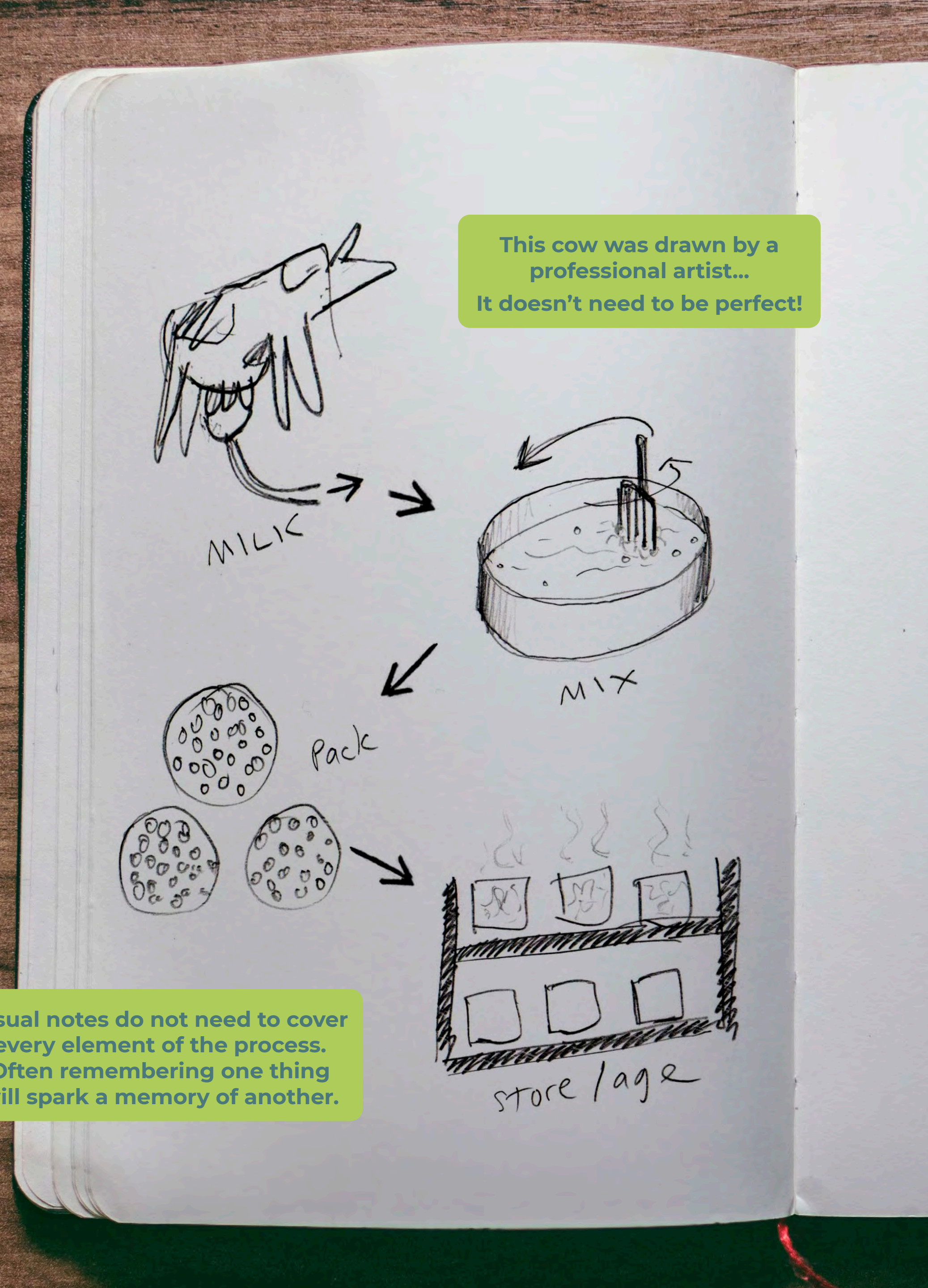
Visual Note-Taking

Students should be encouraged to write or draw notes while watching the film to help them remember key elements of the process.

Drawing can be a highly effective note-taking tool. Encourage students to make very quick drawings to remind them of what they have watched. Emphasise that these drawings do not need to be perfect and that their only purpose is to remind them of something - it doesn't need to make sense to anyone else!

Many people (not just children) find this challenging - they may be anxious about drawing or get frustrated if what they draw does not look like their expectations. Knowing that the drawing will not be part of the final outcome may help overcome this anxiety - the drawing can be a "throw-away" part of the process (although it would obviously be preferable to retain the drawings so children can see how the process worked).

Individual note books, "rough books" or sketchbooks that stay in students' desks or drawers can support this approach. Students may refer to it when completing activities, but it is not marked or assessed by the teacher and is purely for students' own note-taking.



This cow was drawn by a professional artist... It doesn't need to be perfect!

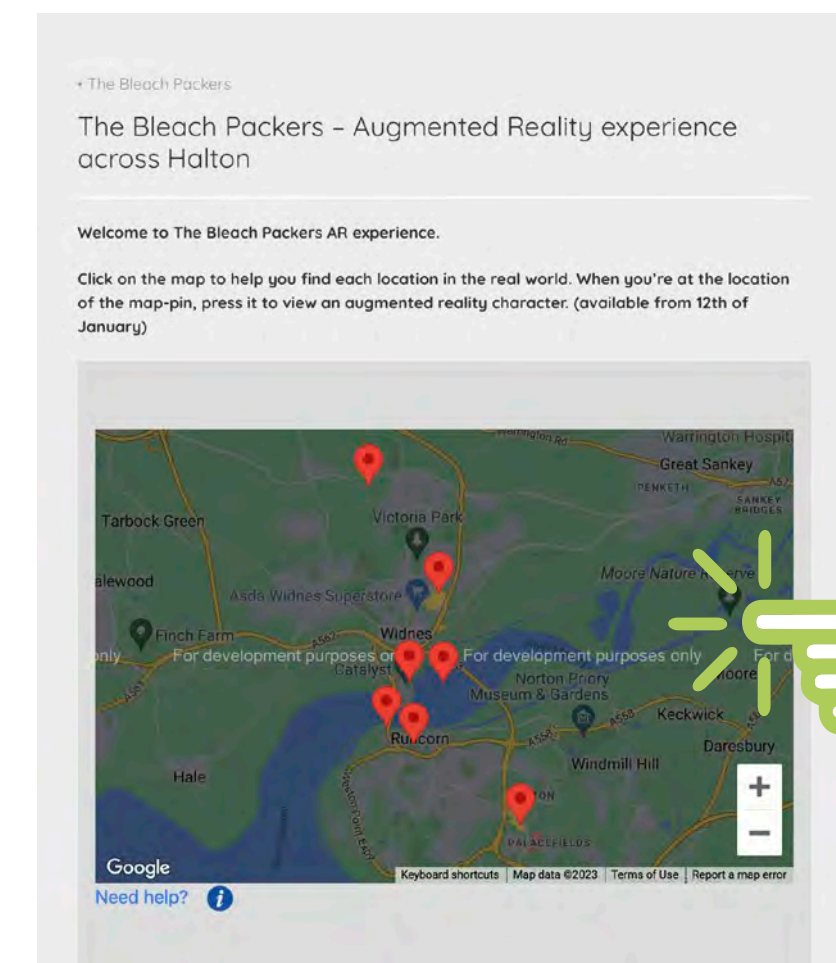
Visual notes do not need to cover every element of the process. Often remembering one thing will spark a memory of another.

Augmented Reality Artworks & Map Reading

For Teachers:

Celebrating Halton's Heritage project has placed an augmented reality Bleach Packer artwork in the grounds of every primary school in Halton.

Use the linked resource to find the artwork in your school. For help on how to access the AR artworks, visit the AR project page:



This link takes you to the AR Bleach Packers Project on Lou Chapelle's website. To access the AR instructions, click on the "Need help" icon, located under the map of Halton.

For the school AR artworks, use the link at the bottom right of this page.

This activity requires the use of tablets or mobile devices that support QR code scanning - this is usually accessible through the device's camera, but older devices may require a dedicated QR code scanning app.

For Students:

Scan the QR code provided by your teacher and use your device to locate the AR Bleach Packer in the grounds of your school.

Once you have located the AR artwork, plot its location on the map of your school.

Your school map has grid reference numbers to help you pinpoint locations on the map.

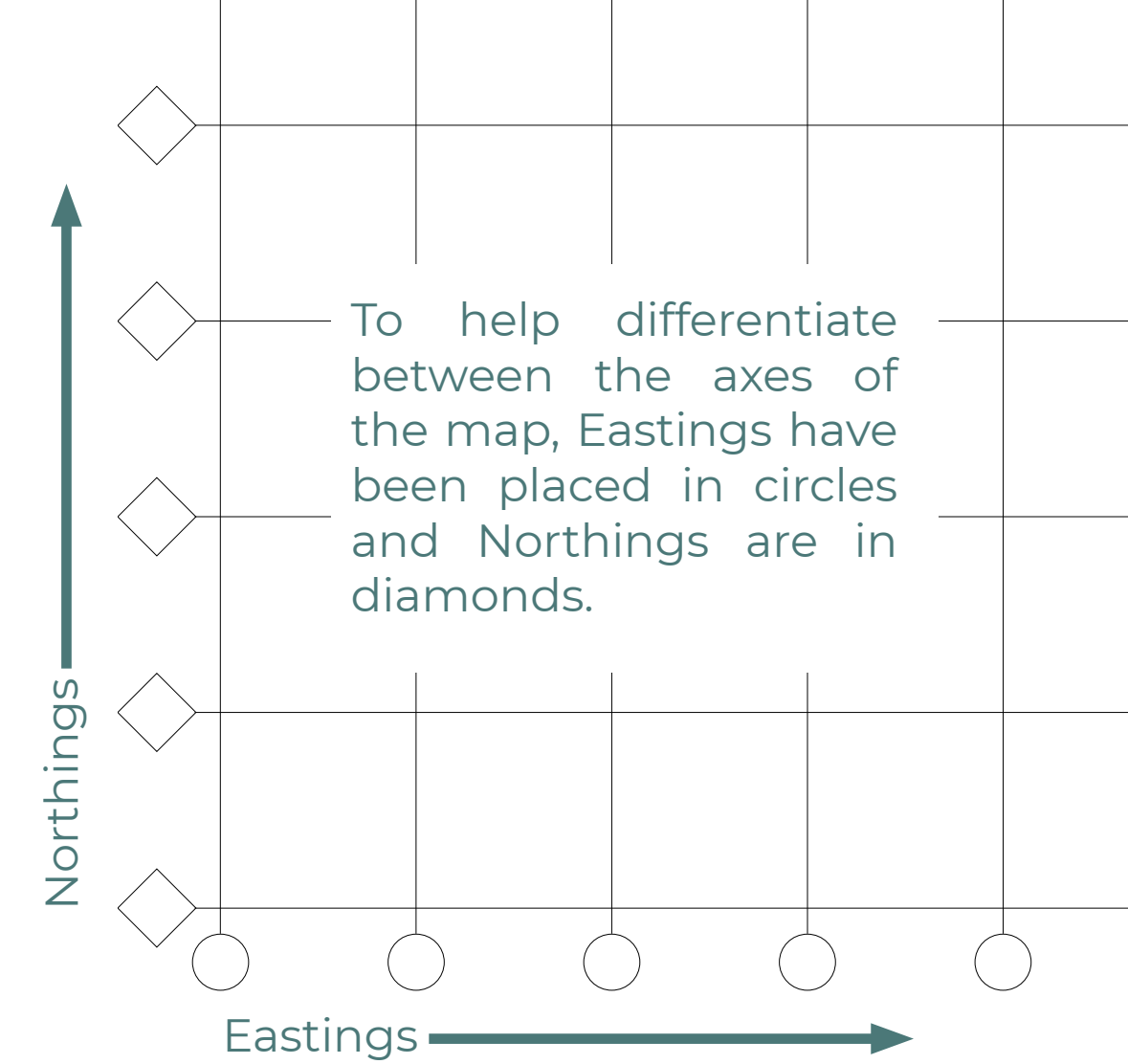
Can you work out a 4 or 6 figure grid reference for the location of the figure?

You can also use the map to work out grid references for different places of the school.

It can be difficult to visualise places from a different angle - for example, a bird's eye view. Using a map of a familiar location can help you understand how maps represent the real world.

Geocaching Treasure Hunt

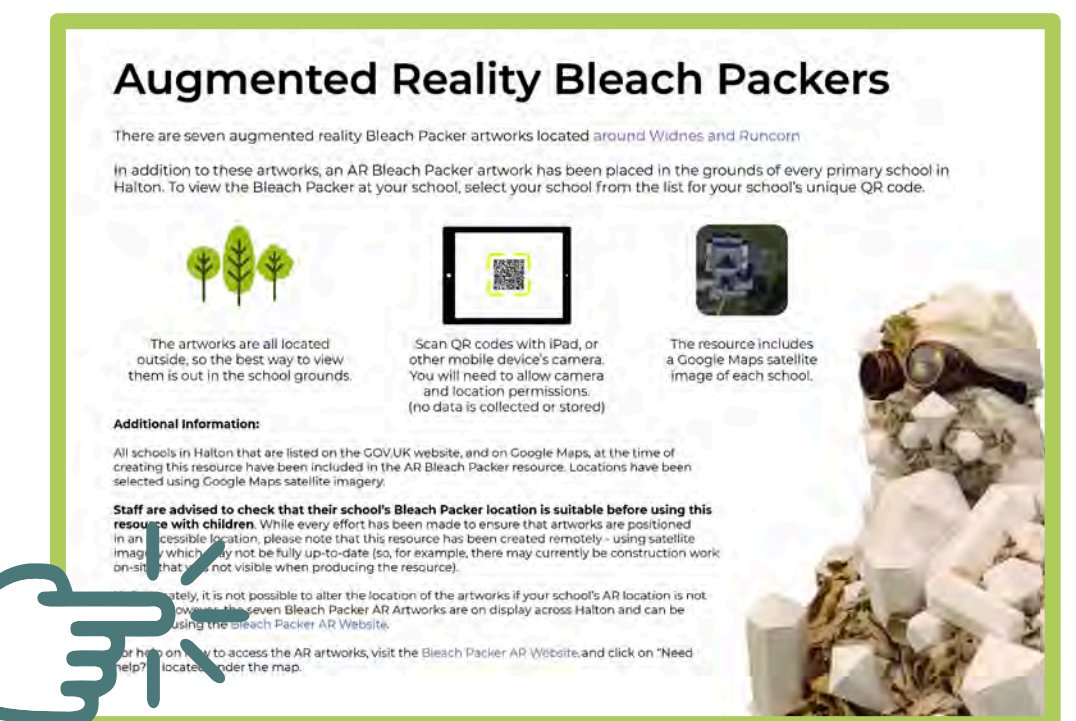
You can make puzzles or treasure hunts for your friends by hiding an item somewhere in the grounds - giving a grid reference as the clue to its location. How long does it take your friends to work out where it is hidden and bring it back to the classroom?



The AR resource includes a grid overlay which can be printed onto clear acetate and placed over the top of any map. The spaces for the grid reference numbers have been left blank on this to allow you to write in your own figures.

Select your school from the list to view the unique QR code that will load your school's artwork.

Either display the QR code on the teacher's screen or interactive whiteboard, or print the QR code in advance so it can be used outside - when printing, be sure to only print the 2 pages that relate to your school (QR code and Map) - pages can be selected from the print option menu before printing.



Link to AR Resource





Costume Design Maths

Use geometry and shape nets to create amazing 3D head-wear.

Introduction

For The Bleach Packers, Lou Chapelle and Rachael Prime worked with fashion students to create costumes inspired by the shapes of chemicals and crystals. You can find out more about this process on the [Bleach Packers Blog](#), or by clicking the images on this page.

In this activity, you will create your own piece of costume head-wear using 3D shapes as the building blocks for your design.

1. Design

Working in your sketchbook, draw as many 3D shapes as you can think of. Imagine how these shapes could be arranged into different compositions on your costume.

2. Preparation

When you know what shapes you will need, and how many, create the nets for your 3D shapes, cut them out and glue them together.

Using strips of card or paper, create a headband that fits your head. You can reinforce this with cross-pieces at the top if your design needs more support.

3. Construction

With all your 3D shapes prepared, you are ready to construct your costume. Fix the pieces together on the headband using glue or tape - you could experiment with different methods for this to see what works best for your design.

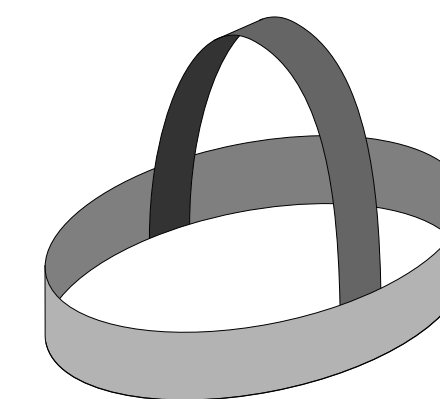
You can scrunch up coloured paper to glue between your shapes to make it look like the shapes are growing out of the costume.

4. Share your work

Take photographs of everyone wearing the costumes to stick in sketchbooks next to the designs.

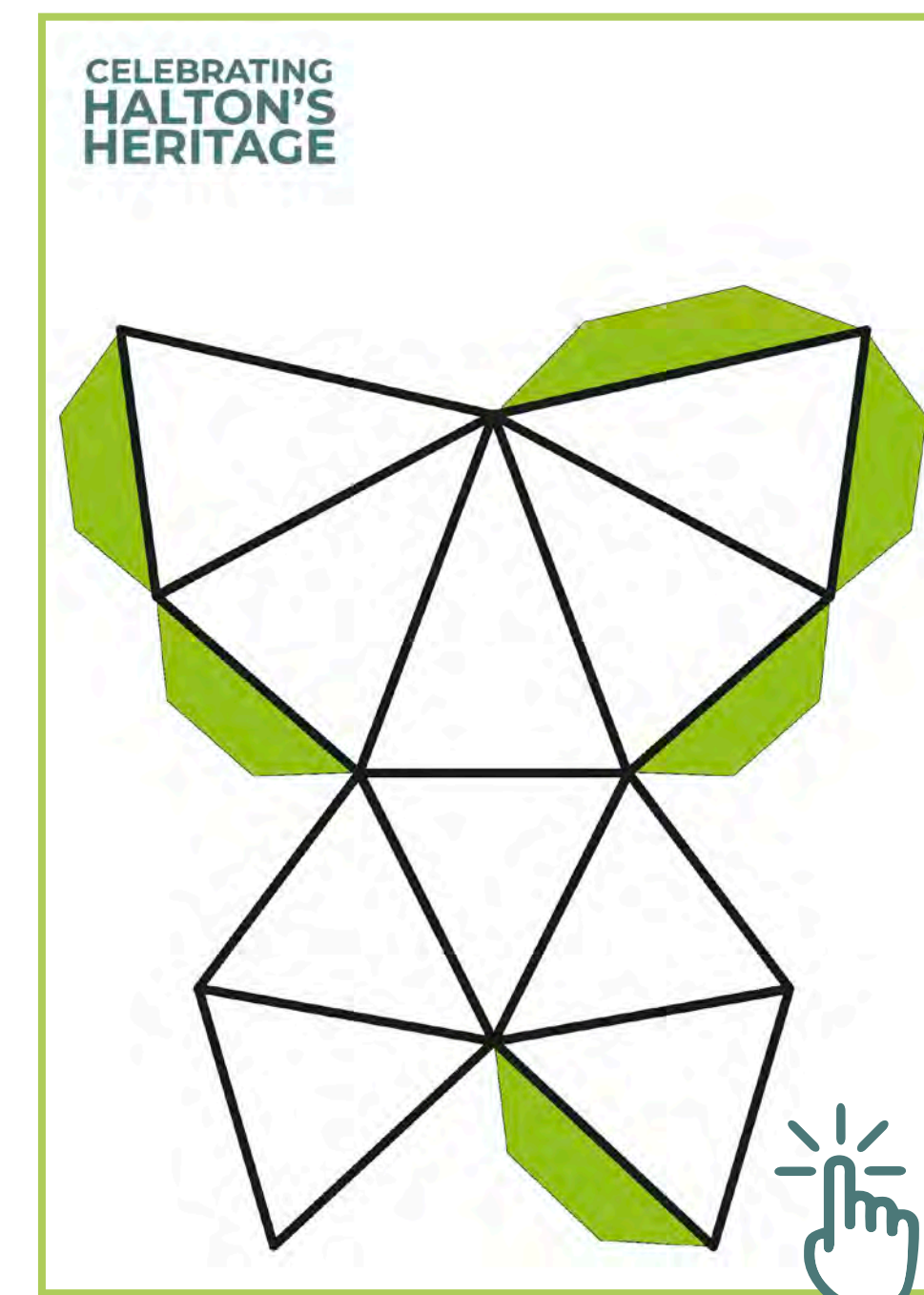
You could hold a fashion show to celebrate the work - photos and films can be shared on social media with the tag:

#HaltonCommunityHistories



Example of paper headband

The Bleach Packer costumes included **paper flowers** as well as 3D crystals. Take your design further by adding other elements. These can be based on your own themes or ideas.



Example of a net for a 3D crystal shape [click to download]

Resources

Click on links below:

Community Histories

Explore the heritage and histories of Halton's diverse community.

Interview with Historian and Local Author, Jean Morris

Three Family histories

The Migrant - Short family histories

Meet the Artist Films

Heritage project artists talk about their work and inspirations.

The Bleach Packers Poem & Film

Discover the augmented reality artworks in your school

Look at the Black and White Picture

Link to Halton Heritage Project archive.

AR Bleach Packers

Discover the augmented reality artworks in your school

Memory Soundbites

Snippets of memories from oral history recordings

Heritage Trades Timeline

Looking back at the trades that built Halton

Useful Links

Links to websites associated with the heritage project.



Jean Morris

Local Historian and Author

#HALTON
COMMUNITY
HISTORIES

In this film, Widnes-based Historian and Author, Jean Morris, discusses her memories of growing up in Halton, and the changes in society over the years.

Jean talks about four key themes:

Childhood

What it was like growing up in Halton - memories of school, entertainment and home life.

Community

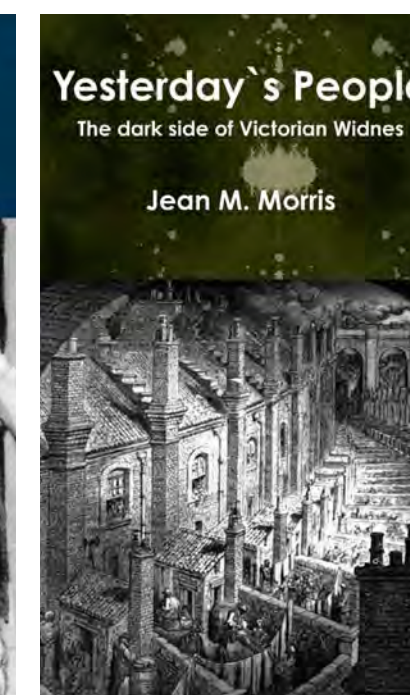
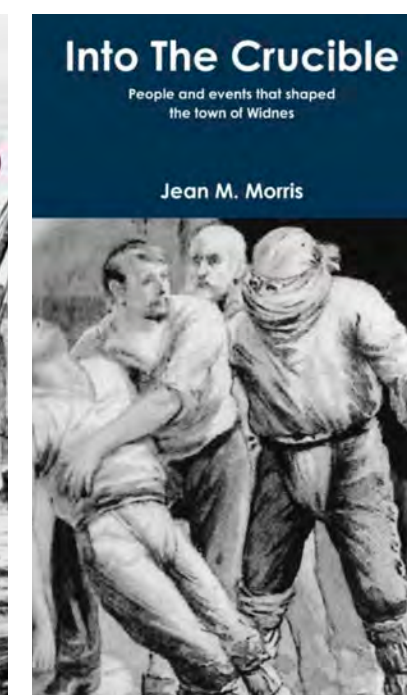
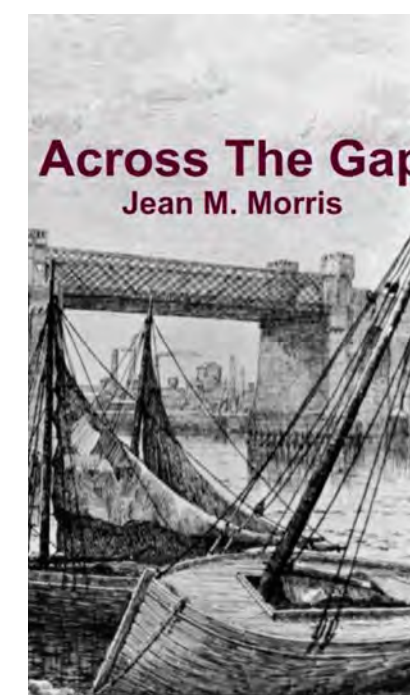
How people's sense of has community changed over time and what impacted this.

Immigration

The history of migration and immigration in Halton and its significance in building the society we live in today.

Family

Looking at her own family history, her Irish roots and stories of how her family came to settle in Halton.



Jean has written eight books, including: Across the Gap, Into the Crucible and Yesterday's People.





Margaret Mahoney – Our Mam

by Helen & Ann

#HALTON
COMMUNITY
HISTORIES

“In the mid-1930s, aged 17, Margaret (Mairead) Mahoney left her home near Gortnahoe, Tipperary.

Margaret had finished school at 14, working long hours on a farm – yet still the family were in poverty. Ireland offered few job opportunities, so she travelled to Manchester where two sisters already lived, and together they kept homesickness at bay.

Margaret worked in service and, like her sisters, sent money back home. Eventually she moved to Liverpool for a better position, a decision that changed her life again. After an operation, her employers arranged convalescence in Southport, and there she befriended a Widnes woman.

While visiting her new friend she met Felix Kaloski, a second-generation Pole. They courted, Felix popped “the question” and, just after the start of WW2, not knowing what the future would hold, they married. The couple rented, then bought, a small house in Halton View, and here this immigrant family raised three children – Leo, Helen, and Ann – and built new lives.

“Margaret would do anything for anyone” was a phrase often heard, as she quietly ensured her Widnes family and neighbours had food, care and companionship. There was constant cooking, mending, making do and – with Felix – endless work to keep our home clean and welcoming.

We remember apple pies, home-stitched clothes, and ‘our’ section of scrubbed pavement. As the children grew Margaret also worked outside the home, first as a cleaner, then an office clerk, and finally a children’s nursing assistant, by far her favourite job.

The local church – St John Fisher – was central to her religious and social life; the priest visited often for tea and chat, and walking home from Sunday Mass with friends, many Irish, was a treat.

Throughout her life Margaret stayed connected to her large extended family in London, Paisley, the Midlands, Lancashire – and of course Ireland. Taking the overnight Liverpool-Dublin boat, or flying from Speke Airport, she would travel from one home to another.

Once in Tipperary there was dancing, music, catch-up. And Irish connections continue: Helen married an Irish man and their first child, Elizabeth, was born in Waterford. Margaret doted on her, but sadly never knew her other grandchildren, Charlotte and Michael.

Margaret died in 1977, age 60, pre-deceasing Felix by 16 years. Her funeral and wake was packed with Irish, English and Polish family and friends honouring our mam – Margaret would have loved the party!”



John and Rose

Slaviski Family

by Joan

#HALTON
COMMUNITY
HISTORIES

“My grandmother, Rose, was the only child of a Lithuanian farming family who came to England in 1883 when my grandmother was eleven.

They left Lithuania because of intolerable Russian oppression. Before coming to Widnes the family settled in Haydock where there was a small Lithuanian community.

My grandmother had no formal education and was unable to read or write, not even her own name, and had to use a mark as her signature. When she was seventeen she married John Slavaskius, a fellow Lithuanian who was twelve years older than her. After their marriage they moved to Widnes where there were work opportunities.

After arriving in Widnes they first settled in the Lithuanian area in West bank but afterwards my grandfather got a job at the Pilkington Sullivan works in Moss Bank so they moved there to be nearer to his work. They felt isolated in Moss Bank as they were the only Lithuanian family in the area, and as such they were subjected to a great deal of prejudice.

John and Rose had ten children but sadly three of them died in infancy. My mother was the youngest surviving child, and she was born in Moss Bank. Unfortunately, when my mother was five her father died suddenly - at a football match on Boxing Day 1923. He had never learned to speak English, but Rose had mastered the language with the help of an English friend.

After John's death Rose only ever spoke English in the home as well as in public. Although their language was abandoned, the family still maintained Lithuanian customs, especially those connected with the rituals of death, such as burying the dead in their “best” clothes. They also continued to cook Lithuanian food such as blinis, borsch and pickled beetroot.

My mother often told me that she had been subjected to ridicule and name calling when she was a child. When walking to school she was called things such as “Bolshie”, “Poley” or “Russian bear”. It was not only children who did this but also adults, even teachers at school were hostile and her surname was seemingly unpronounceable to them.

I have a photograph of my grandfather taken by the police for his “Alien” registration during the First War, as all Lithuanians were classed as “aliens” at that time. Interestingly, despite my grandmother being unable to read or write, she was often called upon to act as an interpreter when they interviewed Lithuanians.

Slaviskius surname was later changed to Slaviski by my grandfather to make it easier for English people to pronounce.”

Kaloski Family

by Helen, Ann, Marion & Jean



Wlady (Charlie)

“Our grandparents were Polish, both from farming backgrounds.

Wlady, or Blaize, was born in 1870 on an arable farm in eastern Poland to a Catholic family. Sophia (Zosa Gudfelt) was born in 1881 into a Jewish family living on a dairy farm near Krakow.

This was a period of great unrest in eastern Europe, with many fleeing religious persecution, pogroms and poverty.

Wlady and his brother Leo left home in search of a new life. As they passed through English immigration their surname was noted as Colosco, one of many anglicized versions of their family name.

Leo travelled to America, but Wlady stayed, finding work in a St Helen's coal mine. His first name also changed as workmates called him Charlie.

Sophia travelled to Liverpool in the mid-1890s. In 1900 she was baptised Catholic, taking the name Mary Sophia. She met Charlie, they married in St Helens in 1904, and it was here their three eldest children – Bill, Felix and Annie – were born.

Nearby Widnes offered jobs in the growing chemical industry, and in 1908 the Kaloski family flitted, renting a house near St Marie's Church, and joining a community of Poles and Lithuanians.

Charlie worked in the Foundry, then Muspratts – dirty, unhealthy jobs. Sophia was a hard-working housewife, and mother to ten more children: Victoria, Alexander, John, Thomas, Charles, Leo, Mary, Joseph, Nellie – and Frank, who wrote for the Widnes Weekly News as “Ding”.

These children were baptised at St Marie's church. They all attended St Marie's school where their lives changed. Felix recalled being “breeched” – wearing trousers for the first time. The youngsters spoke Polish at home and a kindly teacher, Miss Duggan, helped them master English.

Sophia and Charlie faced many challenges. They left Poland before mobile phones and internet brought easy communication. They moved from farmland to an industrial town.

They learnt a new language. They coped with war, the Depression and poverty while raising their family. Three children died aged under 5. Yet they were a brave, strong couple, sharing their lives with fellow Poles and Lithuanians.

Sophia died in 1944 and Charlie in 1952. They are buried together in Widnes Cemetery.

The family surname changed over time and members of the family are known variously as Colosco, Koloskeiwich, Kalosca, Kolosco, Coloskie, Koluski and Kaloski.

We are proud daughters of our Polish family.”



Sophia and Bill



Grand father -> Aberdeen, Scotland.
Grand father -> Roslyn, Wales.
Grand father was going to be a doctor, but joined the RAF on the outbreak of WW2. Was a POW for 3 years before escaping.
Come home ran several businesses, became Mayor of Roslyn.
I grew up in Rhyl, N Wales, later moved to Hereford, then back to N Wales.
University in Manchester.
Sally lived in Mer Sally, live in Baydon, Thomas born in 2013, Macclesfield.

No 9

No. 18
Family lived in Ruxcom up to 1915, then in Widnes 1915-33 then back to Ruxcom. Lived in St. Mary's Villas (Blamont Street).
Grandfather was in clerical work, but was also a Conservative Councillor for West Bank.
Other family in chemical industry.
Family (paternal) - extended, lived in West Bank.
Me - I did supply work at various primary schools in Widnes in the 2000s.

Originally from the north west of Northern Ireland.
Think it was the great great grandpa who came to Widnes and surrounding area. Probably for work but they didn't make a fortune as most died in his home (now Widnes hospital).
They lived in Farnworth and Appleton as I don't know. My Non lived in West Bank her dad worked for ICI was a bare knuckle boxer. They were moved out when they were knocked down houses.
My non's family was born working for. Her dad was a baker and mum a mill worker.

My roots are family in Yorkshire and I still think of the Home Valley as 'home' despite living in Halton for over 30 years. I was in the hills, I studied in Shifhorn for four years, taking an interest in local history and writing my dissertation about the life of Arthur Evans, a 19th century 4th generation blacksmith who still had a traditional 'smiddy' or 'Kippin'.
I worked for several years as a 'chassis designer' in my local village, Halton. Alongside my job I started to write a book about the village, which was the precursor to a book on the history of Halton. I have since moved to Halton and I am now a local councillor for the ward of Halton. I have since moved to Halton and I am now a local councillor for the ward of Halton. I have since moved to Halton and I am now a local councillor for the ward of Halton.



The Migrant

The Migrant exhibition featured a series of "Core Samples", created by layering coloured sand.

Taking part in workshops led by the artists M+R, local families produced Core Samples which represent and celebrate their family history.

Alongside each Core, participants wrote a short family history, which was numbered and displayed alongside the Core Samples for the exhibition at St. Marie's Church.

Some of these histories are included in the following pages, along with pictures of the Core that represents the family's journey.



Core No. 9

My Grandmother is from Prestatyn in Wales.

My Grandfather was from Aberdeen, Scotland - he was going to be a doctor, but joined the RAF on the outbreak of WWII. He was a POW for three years, before escaping. He came home to run several businesses and became mayor of Prestatyn.



Core No. 10

We are a Spanish family who met in Liverpool Airport, since then we have been together and create a family. Hopefully will be the first generation of many here.



Core No. 12

My Granddad was from Manchester. My Grandmother was from Bagillt in Wales. They lived on Bridge Street, West Bank, until the Jubilee Bridge was built. They moved to Halebank to a new bungalow with a full bathroom that was the highlight!

My dad worked at Bolton's Copper Works. I remember him coming home from work, he was like the green man.

Mum was a stay at home wife. My mum was from Runcorn, she married Dad and they lived in Cholmondley Street for about 40 years.



Core No. 15

My Great Nan was born and lived in West Bank as a child. My Great, Great Nan was called Elizabeth. We have had an Elizabeth in every generation since.

My Great, Great Granddad had the same name as me!

My Grandmother was a wren in WWII when she met my Granddad. He was from St. Helens, and they moved to Runcorn in the late 1940s.



Core No. 18

My Mum's family lived in Runcorn up to 1915, then in Widnes from 1915-1933, then back to Runcorn where they lived on Beaumont Street.

My Grandfather was in clerical work, but was also a Conservative councillor for West Bank. Other family worked in the chemical industry.

My Dad's family lived in the West Bank.



Core No. 24

Originally from north west of Northern Ireland. I think it was my Great, Great Grandparents who came to Widnes and the surrounding area - probably for work - but they didn't make a fortune as most died in Whiston in the workhouse (now Whiston Hospital). They lived in Farnworth and Appleton, as I do now.

My Nan lived in the West Bank. Her Dad worked for ICI and was a bare knuckle boxer! They moved out when they were knocking down houses.

My Mum's family was from Warrington. Her Dad was a baker and her Mum was a mill worker.



Core No. 26

My Mum came from Maidstone, Kent, Dad from Widnes. Mum moved to Widnes with Dad in 1963.

My Dad's parents ran a sweet shop in the Lake District. They moved to Widnes in the 1980s.

My Dad worked at RTZ for many years and was made redundant in 1997. He had worked in many chemical factories before this.

Dad sadly died of a rare lung disease in 1999 - this is possibly linked to working in chemical factories.



Core No. 31

My Great Grandparents on my Mum's side both came from Scotland and settled in Widnes in a small terraced house. My Grandmother was born on the boat on the journey down.

My Granddad came over from Ireland after the first world war. They married here in 1923, but he sadly passed away in 1939, so I never met him. My Grandmother passed away in 1970.

My parents met after the Second World War and married in 1949. I was born in 1953. We lived near the church and I attended the school until I was 11 years old.



Core No. 27

I was born in bread in Widnes in Newtown, late 1950s. The houses were being demolished so, as a baby, I moved up to a Corpy house in Halton View. I was baptised at Saint Marie's and went to St. Marie's School. I was one of 12 kids.

My folks were born in Widnes, but all my grandparents were Irish. All of them were economic migrants, exchanging rural poverty for urban poverty. Their suffering and hardships were the investment that gave my generation the paradise we now live in - and relatively speaking it is. To quote an Irish phrase: "We are riding on the pig's back".

My Grandfathers both worked in the chemical industry - Muspratts and Gossages. Not surprisingly both died reasonably young - 41, 52. My parents both worked in chemicals as well - process worker and packer - and also died reasonably young - 51, 62.

Widnes was always a happy place. People might have been chained in poverty, but would still sing in their shackles. My life has been joyous.

Me and all my siblings all live here. The place has changed - very much for the better. The industrial dereliction has largely gone - or least is well hidden. The place looks "normal" now - not the dystopian otherworldly place I grew up in. The old Widnesians are still here in numbers, but thankfully there have been many newcomers to bring new life and energy to the place. Our time has come!



Core No. 30

My roots are firmly in Yorkshire, and I still think of the Holme Valley as "home", despite living in Halton for over 30 years now. I miss the hills.

Granddad Gilbert was taken prisoner in WWI, having enlisted age 18. Being a prisoner ensured his survival, but his secretly kept diary tells a story of starvation and brutal exploitation.

Grandma Nellie was the eldest of seven children. The youngest was Bessie. Bessie caught measles aged 2 and was left deaf and learning disabled.

Their mum died aged 54 and made Mary, the middle child, promise to look after Bessie. She did, and never married. They both lived into their 80s, and now are said by the new occupants of their house to haunt it!

I married Steve, whom I met at school, in 1984. We came to Runcorn in 1988 as Steve's work moved him over here. It was a bit like moving to another planet. I took my neighbours washing in for her because it rained and she thought someone had stolen it!

The "New Town" is still working on being a community as its roots are very shallow. People tend not to stay long!

After raising my kids and learning how to use and even build a computer along the way, I went to work at Norton Priory and finally found some history to dig into. Wonderful!

MEET THE ARTIST

A series of films with the artists who created the artworks and exhibitions as part of Celebrating Halton's Heritage.

In these short films, the artists involved in Celebrating Halton's Heritage projects discuss their work, inspirations, and experiences of the arts and creative learning at school. They provide insights into their creative processes and give advice to aspiring young artists and anyone interested in pursuing a career in the creative industries.

Click on the artist links (right), or scroll down for information about each of the artists and links to view the films.

Click here for links to the artist's websites and contact information.



Lou Chapelle

Creative Director for The Bleach Packers.

Lou discusses her role overseeing the Bleach Packers project and her experiences of working in collaboration with other artists.

M+R

The Migrant, Ropewalk & Cheese Board

Neil and Jono discuss their work and memories of creative learning at school.



Louise Fazackerley

Poet, The Bleach Packers.

Louise talks about what inspires her poetry and the importance of reading.

Wendy Smith

Sound Artist, The Bleach Packers

Wendy explains what a sound artist does and talks about the women artists who inspire her work.



Rachael Prime

Costume Designer, The Bleach Packers

Rachael explains her approach to the Bleach Packers Project and how she researches her work.



LOU CHAPPELLE

Artist and Creative Director, The Bleach Packers

Lou is a cross disciplinary artist, weaving socially engaged and participatory approaches with digital and new technologies. She works in collaboration with people and communities to create collective rituals and objects that question and re-invent our sense of belonging.

Recently, Lou has collaborated more directly with professionals from other fields, including digital coders, scientists, poets, choreographers and musicians, giving extra layers to her work and embracing the flexible and unexpected nature of collaboration.

Lou was Creative Director of the Bleach Packers Project.

VIEW FILM 

Further Research 

Find out more about Lou's work and the artworks she talks about:

- Kae Tempest**
- Wind Charmers**
- The Bleach Packers**
- Voicing Silence**



M+R


Artists, The Migrant, Ropewalk & The Cheese Board

Artists Neil Musson and Jono Retallick create large scale site-specific artwork for public spaces, working in architectural and landscape art, performances and events.

The duo share a desire to see artistic stories woven into architecture and public spaces to enhance a sense of community and belonging. Journeys through time, emotion and landscape are central themes behind the artworks while concepts begin with historical and social research to fully understand a site.

They produced three exhibitions as part of the Celebrating Halton's Heritage project: The Migrant, The Ropewalk and The Cheese Board.

VIEW FILM 

Further Research 

Find out more about the artist and artworks Neil and Jono talk about:

- Antoni Tàpies**
- Transformation**
- The Gathering**

LOUISE FAZACKERLEY

Poet



Louise is a poet, performer and inter-disciplinary artist based in Wigan.

She teaches creative writing at The Secret Writers Club and Ink Inc. Young Writers.

Louise has a degree in Theatre Studies, and an MA in Creative Writing. Before becoming a poet, she had many different jobs, including Library Manager, Careers Advisor and Warehouse Operative.

[VIEW FILM](#) 

Further Research

Find out more about the Louise's inspirations:

Coraline (film)

Coraline (book)

Pablo Picasso

Pina Bausch



WENDY SMITH

Sound Artist

Wendy is an electroacoustic composer who specialises in acousmatic works and sound installations. Her works also incorporate interaction, soundscape, improvisation, multichannel surround, sound design and live performance elements.

She has an MA in electroacoustic composition and sonic art from Liverpool Hope University, and is currently conducting a practice-based PhD in electroacoustic composition, exploring the concept of 'homage' as a device and approach within compositional practice, specifically to highlight and celebrate the music and output of forgotten early women electronic music composers.

Wendy also designs and delivers sound-based workshops for participants to learn how to compose with sound.

[VIEW FILM](#) 

Further Research

Find out more about the other artists Wendy talks about:

Vicky Clarke

Janet Beat

Delia Derbyshire

Daphne Oram

Elżbieta Sikora

RACHAEL PRIME

Costume Designer



Rachael graduated from Glyndwr University with a BA in Illustration, using embroidery to create her work. She then dived into the world of costumes going back into education to expand her skills at Liverpool College. After completing this course, she went on to create costumes for films and stage. She never strayed too far from the visual arts, using her embroidery skills on her costume designs.

After joining Hazlehurst Studios, Rachael started to create portraits, jewellery and other work. She has now begun to explore the role of narrative within her work expanding her practice to include digital machine embroidery combined with the more traditional techniques of hand and free-hand embroidery.

[VIEW FILM](#)



Further Research



Find out more about Rachael's inspirations:

**Robin Wall
Kimmerer**

Grayson Perry

**Grayson's Art
Club**

**Catalyst
Museum**

ARTIST DIRECTORY

Contact details and links to artists' websites



Lou Chapelle

Email: hello@louchapelle.com

Website: www.louchapelle.com



M+R

Email: info@mussonretallick.com

Website: www.mussonretallick.com



Louise Fazackerley

Email: louisethepoet@live.co.uk

Website: www.louisethepoet.co.uk



Wendy Smith

Email: smithwendy937@gmail.com



Rachael Prime

Email: rachael.prime@hotmail.co.uk

Website: www.rachaelprimeart.com



[Back to index](#)

THE BLEACH PACKERS

VIEW BLEACH PACKER FILM 

the sun is an egg, as new day dawns
the people yawning,
a tapping on the inside of their heads
is it a tapping or is it a cracking?
step behind the yolk, yellow, a flame, the colour of hope
is it a new idea or a new invention?
 $2\text{NaCl} + \text{H}_2\text{SO}_4 \rightarrow \text{Na}_2\text{SO}_4 + 2\text{HCl}$
is it fear of the 84 hour average working week?
what will grow from this majestic morning?
in the factory making bleach

look at the black and white picture
if you had a job as a bleach packer
in Widnes and Runcorn
you were elite, a fleet of top trumps
one lump of salt or two?
fortune favours the brave and the bold
and there's money in soda ash, lime and fool's gold
and the workers- the Irish, the English,
Lithuanian and Polish too
wearing capes, battled the dangerous gases,
hydrochloric acid
risked coughing and choking
to make magic, to make magic, to make
a magic potion called bleach
to clean the germs and dirt for you
to whiten cotton, linen, silk
in with chlorine gas
out with alkaline lyes and buttermilk

look at the black and white picture
the sun is a licked coin, with a thumbprint of smoke
from factory chimneys rise laughter and jokes
coz everyone knew everyone in the tight weave of streets
rallying round in times of trouble or need
crowds playing housey-housey outside on the street
Bingo! I've won! The drinks are on me
wearing brown paper leggings and brown paper hats
the bleacher packers pub is the packers hut packed
the people are a tight-knit community
they make masks of immunity

with costumes of paper and linen
greased up, protecting skin
wrapped round arms and legs,
wrapped round faces and heads
keeping the danger out
and the clean air in

look at the black and white picture
but as time passes, as the tide turns,
as the river runs,
as coal is burnt
as a new century dawns,
as copper is smelted
as Weston Point grows with red sandstone
from drum road to Weaver waters
da dum da dum da dum da dum
from the march of workers feet
from the folk dance of time
from the path of progress
as tall towers spring up like in an evil fairytale
even the moon is wearing goggles
and the morning, the majestic morning has become malodorous
in modern terms, smelly and stinky and minging
no longer are a prayer of black-tailed godwits, chirping and singing
no longer are a pleasing variety of plants, both maritime and inland found
no longer are dragonflies buzzing around
no longer are bathing parties coming to the River Mersey
no longer the rosebay, willowherb and hazel tree
because a dragon came
a dragon came and bespelled the waters
from estuary to Irish sea

look at the black and white picture
and the bleach packer dreams
dreams dreams dreams dreams
and the bleach packer dreams
a dragon came and she ate the moon
a dragon came and she ate the sun
she ate the stars and all the planets,
including Venus, including Mars
a dragon of dust

and the people were scared of her
and brought their white washing in off the line
and the lungs of the land filled with gas
her heart filled with sulph-fury
will mother earth live to tell her story?

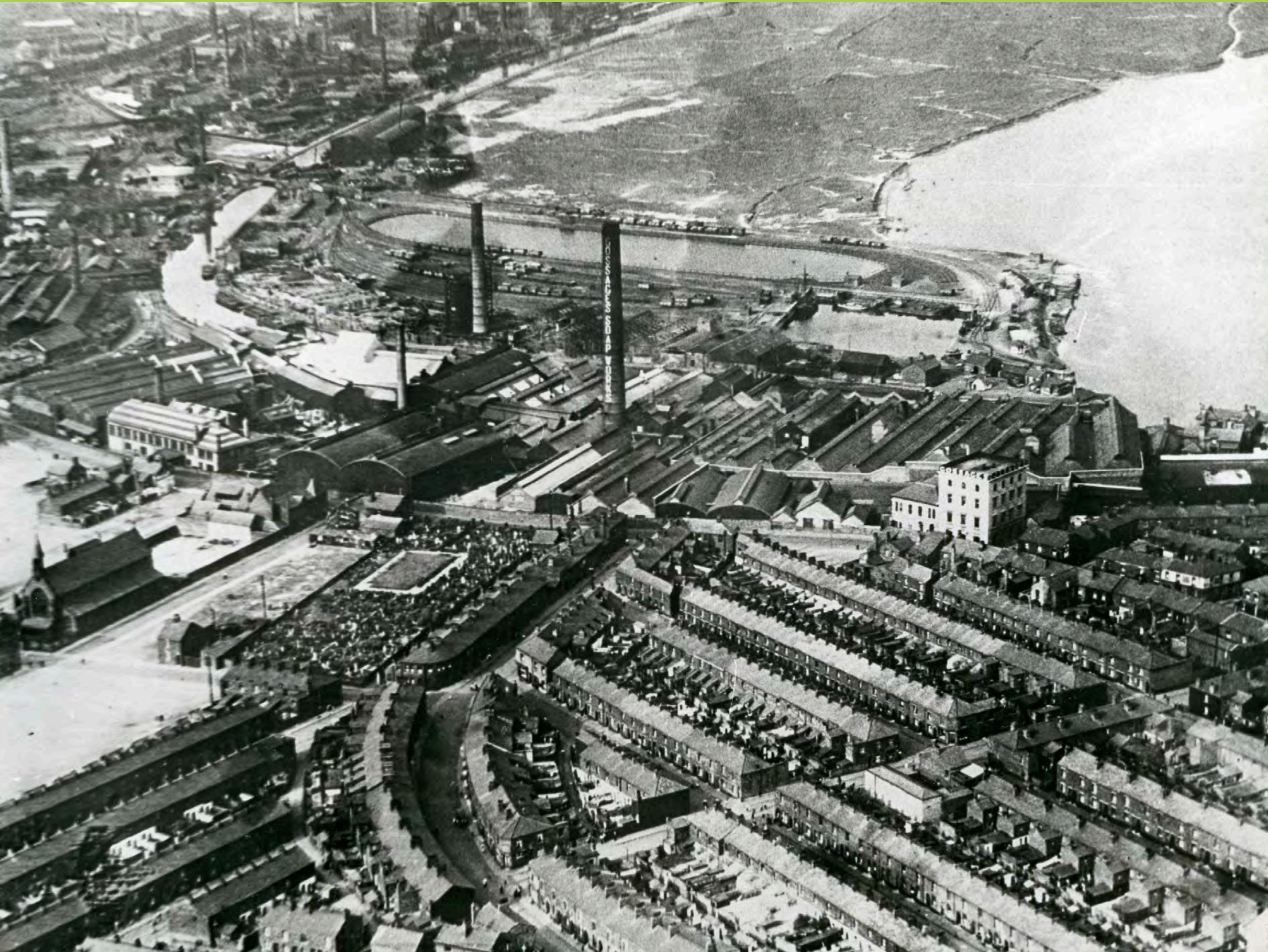
look at the black and white picture
the bleach packer dreamed
mother earth took the black from the night-time sky
and made the mute swan's eye
she took the fight, the white from
heavens above, heavens above!
she made mute swan's feathers from
the white of bleached paper
and the white of the worker's flour
and the softness of sun-bleached clouds
took back the monochrome moon
in the shape of her head
took back the yellow of the sun for her feet
and the bleach packer dreams
dreams dreams dreams
of a family of swans spinning like seeds
and spelling the dragon to sleep in history

as the workers in Widnes and Runcorn
wake to a new day
play in pastures of green
with kingfisher and crow
as new winds blow

the sun is a lightbulb, casting shadows and light
nature is healing, after day comes the night
after night, comes the day
ghosts buried but not forgotten
in their long, abandoned graves
nature could heal
if we lay a new path of progress

just after sunset, a common pipistrelle darts
seeking insects, before the world turns dark
revolves, begins again.

LOOK AT THE BLACK AND WHITE PICTURE





Advanced Search

Try one search on its own, or combine two together at most to get the best results.

Subjects	Types of object	People
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Organisations	Dates	Places
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Events	Collection	
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	

Run search

Not sure where to start? Click on one of our favorite searches below

	<h3>Dogs</h3> <p>Images of man's best friend in our collection</p> <p>Find out more</p>
	<h3>Halton's chemical industry</h3> <p>Works, workers and rewards</p> <p>Find out more</p>

Halton Heritage Partnership

Halton Heritage Partnership incorporates more than twenty Partners throughout the Halton area, all with the same interest in heritage and keeping it alive. The partnership's website includes a catalogue of collections from local museums, history groups, libraries and the Town Hall.

Click here to visit [Halton Heritage Partnership's website](#) and search the archive.



AUGMENTED REALITY BLEACH PACKERS

There are seven augmented reality Bleach Packer artworks located **around Widnes and Runcorn**

In addition to these artworks, an AR Bleach Packer artwork has been placed in the grounds of every primary school in Halton. To view the Bleach Packer at your school, click the link below and select your school from the list to access your school's unique QR code.

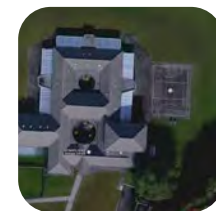
CLICK HERE FOR AR BLEACH PACKERS



The artworks are all located outside, so the best way to view them is out in the school grounds.



Scan QR codes with iPad, or other mobile device's camera. You will need to allow camera and location permissions. (no data is collected or stored)



The resource includes a Google Maps satellite image of each school.

Additional Information:

All schools in Halton that are listed on the GOV.UK website, and on Google Maps, at the time of creating this resource have been included in the AR Bleach Packer resource. Locations have been selected using Google Maps satellite imagery.

Staff are advised to check that their school's Bleach Packer location is suitable before using this resource with children. While every effort has been made to ensure that artworks are positioned in an accessible location, please note that this resource has been created remotely - using satellite imagery which may not be fully up-to-date (so, for example, there may currently be construction work on-site that was not visible when producing the resource).

Unfortunately, it is not possible to alter the location of the artworks if your school's AR location is not optimal. However, the seven Bleach Packer AR Artworks are on display across Halton and can be accessed using the [Bleach Packer AR Website](#).

For help on how to access the AR artworks, visit the [Bleach Packer AR Website](#), and click on "Need help?" - located under the map.



Memory Soundbites

Resource based on The Cheeseboard Project

While researching The Cheeseboard exhibition, artists M+R collected oral histories from community groups in Halton. These were presented alongside the cheeses in the exhibition at St. Marie's Church.

The audio was played through speakers next to each cheese, with the volume at a low level so they could only be made out when close to the speakers. This created an atmospheric soundscape of muffled reminiscences within the exhibition space.

This resource is based on these oral histories, with selected snippets, or soundbites of stories from the community accessible by clicking on images taken from M+R's film of the cheese-making process.

Click on the image (right) to go to the website.

When on the webpage, clicking on each image will play a different soundbite of oral history, recorded during the Cheeseboard project.

These can be played one at a time, or overlaid to recreate the atmospheric soundscape that was part of M+R's exhibition. By playing multiple soundbites simultaneously, the audio becomes abstract and details are impossible to make out - only when we focus on one individual soundbite can we hear the stories being told.



1500

1600

1700

1800

1900

2000

FARMING - Dairy and arable strip farming, with some pig farming in 1800s

TANYARDS & TANNERIES - first on local farms, then big factories from 1840 along Bridgewater Canal (Runcorn side)

ROW-BOAT FERRY

MARKETS & FAIRS

QUARRYING - for Triassic red Cheshire sandstone

MILLERS

FISHING

LACE-MAKING

WEAVING AND SPINNERS

CHEESE-MAKING

BUILDING INFRASTRUCTURE - mechanical, civil and electrical

SHIP-BUILDING

WATCH & CLOCK-MAKING

SAIL CLOTH MANUFACTURE

SPA & HEALTH RESORT

DOMESTIC SERVICE

SHOPS & MARKETS



1868 Runcorn Railway Bridge



1905 Widnes-Runcorn Transporter Bridge



1961 Silver Jubilee Bridge



2017 Mersey Gateway Bridge

BRIDGE BUILDING

CHEMICAL INDUSTRY - including Alkali Manufacture and Soap making

ENGINEERING

PRODUCTION OF LABORATORY EQUIPMENT SERVICE

BLACKSMITHS

DOMESTIC SERVICE

BLEACH PACKING



16th Century Farming



Lacemaker



Fishing on the Mersey

Timeline of Heritage Trades
This timeline shows some of the most significant trades and industries that have helped shape the development of Halton over the centuries.

LINKS TO ONLINE CONTENT

Resource Links:

The Bleach Packers Blog: www.louchapelle.com/category/the-bleach-packers

Augmented Reality Bleach Packer:
www.louchapelle.com/2021/12/the-bleach-packers-augmented-reality-experience-across-halton

Schools AR Bleach Packer: [Click here to open webpage](#)

Memory Soundbite Website: [Click here to open webpage](#)

3D shape Net: [Click here to open webpage](#)

Organisation Links:

Heritage HQ: www.heritagehq.org

Halton Heritage Partnership: www.haltonheritage.co.uk

Catalyst Science Discovery Centre and Museum: www.catalyst.org.uk

Norton Priory: www.nortonpriory.org

Halton Libraries: www.library.haltonbc.info

Films:

The Bleach Packers: <https://vimeo.com/671071863>

The Cheeseboard: <https://vimeo.com/734102334/f0ba03b9df>

Halton Community Histories:

Jean Morris Interview: <https://youtu.be/HBAnDK5i1Zw>

Meet the Artist:

Lou Chapelle: <https://youtu.be/PiPkhFloQPc>

M+R: <https://youtu.be/zQkkqRQqxI4>

Louise Fazackerley: <https://youtu.be/cdqhS6fm0I0>

Wendy Smith: <https://youtu.be/JVZIJr-NFko>

Rachael Prime: <https://youtu.be/rsNHyW2qa7k>