Positive Images Festival 2017 Report

Background information about the festival:

The festival, which started in 1995 as a one day Multicultural Book Fair, celebrates diversity, showcases local talent, promotes partnership working, disseminates information about services of partner organisations and offers volunteering opportunities.

Message from David Burbidge,

CBE, DL (Chair of Coventry City of Culture Trust)

“As Coventry bids to be UK City of Culture in 2021, the Positive Images Festival stands as a beacon of the city’s diversity, its creativity and its wonderful sense of community. We feel this is Coventry’s time to shine on the national and international stage and this festival proves, once again, that we are not only a city of culture but a city of cultures.”

Pre-Festival event:

Saturday 3 June

The Albany Theatre was the setting for a pre-festival event. The afternoon event started with a puppet-making session, enjoyed by children as well as adults. This was followed by storytelling and music by Imagination Reading Café. Children enjoyed playing diverse musical instruments and listening to stories.

The evening event, Poetry From the Stage, comprised classical Indian dance performances and poetry readings by national, regional and Coventry poets. During the interval, attendees were entertained by a young musician.

The link to the video of the poetry night:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v= _PJ8Y4bsYPI&feature=youtu.be

The 2017 Festival is launched....

The Lord Mayor of Coventry, Councillor Tony Skipper, and Pru Porretta, Lady Godiva, launched the festival at noon on Saturday 10th June. In his address, the Lord Mayor described Coventry’s diversity as its major strength. This was followed by a multicultural entertainment programme, featuring a digeridoo performance, Indian classical and folk dancing, singing, drumming, etc.
Jahman of Afrikan Kultural Kontraktor and classical dancers thrilled city centre visitors.

The Multicultural Craft & Food Fair was held in Smithford Way from 10.00am to 4.00pm. We were delighted to have a rain-free fair after three successive rain-soaked fairs. An evaluation questionnaire was filled by all stallholders. There were 14 participating organisations. Feedback forms were analysed and below are the findings:

- Most stallholders found the arrangements for the day very good. 11 found it very good, 2 found it good and 1 abstained.
- There was unanimous agreement that enough information had been received prior to the event.
- Most found the venue to be very suitable. 12 found it to be very good, and 2 said they found it good.
- Most stallholders found the event useful: 9 – Very useful, 5 – Useful.
- All stallholders indicated their willingness to participate next year.
The number of visitors per stall varied from 10-15 per hour for some, and 30 up to 1.00pm for others. Based on figures indicated, we seem to have received 1,110 visitors to the stalls.

Volunteers’ comments:
- More paperweights and sturdy menu holders needed.
- The City Council has nothing about PIF. Only Food Festival info.
- The programme should be advertised on Facebook.
- What about a candy stall/an ice cream van to attract younger people?
- More variety of food stalls required
- Mehandi/Face painting should have started early on.

Comment from a stallholder at the time of registration:
- Wouldn’t miss this fair for the world!

Stallholders’ comments:
- Excited to be part of this event yet again! It’s been a great 4 years, and it gets better every year.
- Coffee/refreshment arrangements should be organised for stallholders. (This didn’t happen as the electrical point for the water heater wasn’t working.)
- We enjoy being a part of the festival and having an opportunity to engage with the community.
- Having music playing throughout the day livens the mood and attracts crowds towards this area of the city centre.
- The food festival in the main square took a lot of the attention from the main festival.

Miscellaneous:
- A visitor to the fair expressed an interest in having a food stall at the 2018 Multicultural Fair.

What worked well:
- Good entertainment
- Food stalls by Sahyadri Group and Mumbai Food Corner were a big success in attracting crowds.
- Dance performances were a big hit.
- Interactive music performance gathered a large crowd.
- Volunteers were very engaged while on duty - handing flyers, assisting where needed and talking to people looking for more information.
- The Didgeridoo workshop was a novel feature and went down very well.

Positive Images Festival thanks Hillz FM, all participants (stallholders, performers, volunteers and visitors) for making the 2017 Multicultural Fair a memorable one. Further suggestions are welcome.

Report prepared by Akshitha Udayraj, a volunteer from Coventry University

It is very encouraging for us to know that some first time participants have already started making ambitious plans for next year’s multicultural fair.

Other events on the day:

Syria Day
Organiser’s comment: Coventry’s Syrian community organized Syria Day to thank Coventry city for its kindness and support. The event raised awareness about newly arrived Syrian families, who are part of Coventry’s
community and promoted community cohesion. Food tasting, dance and kids’ activities went really well. The 300 attendees represented diverse backgrounds and age groups.

The Syrian community has expressed its interest in participating in future Positive Images Festival events.

Comments from attendees:

❖ I was very glad to be told about the event. It was a very joyful occasion and it was good to see the Syrian families being able to speak to each other in their own language, to play music and dance. The children were really joining in and loved the dancing and one small boy was able to offer a song which was very well applauded. There was a lovely atmosphere, added to by delicious food.

❖ A befriender who had brought along a newly arrived Syrian family in Leamington commented:

It was good for the families to be able to come over to Coventry and be with other Syrians and to see them talking with others. Some were quietly watching and others joining in. I know that 'my family' in particular were very happy to meet other Kurdish Syrians, and I did see them swapping mobile phone numbers with one of these people. They also liked looking at the photos of Syria and pointing out beautiful places they were familiar with.

**The Weaver’s House**, restored to its 1540 appearance, held its open day, which attracted lots of online comments:

❖ Had a great time, worth a visit. Lovely people, beautiful building and gardens

❖ Fascinating 15th century medieval terrace house in Spon End. The staff are welcoming, friendly and informative. A lovely garden with weavers and knitters showing you how to make craft work. The tea room again has friendly staff, selling a lovely selection of cakes and hot / cold beverages. We had a tour of the house which was informative and fascinating. Well worth a visit.

❖ Had an absolutely wonderful time, interesting conversation & demonstration of spinning and very informative & lively talk by Tina in the Weavers House itself. Great time in the garden too.

❖ Fantastic, see you all soon, and thank you again for giving me a new place of interest and new interests.

**Malaysian Coventry Society** showcased its culture through a display of crafts, costumes, demonstrations of traditional games and drumming and food.

The event enjoyed by 240 attendees drew the following comments:

❖ In future, more events that involve selling of cultural dishes; more food stalls selling a variety of dishes; clearer information about when the sale of food starts and ends; and on-site cooking demonstrations

❖ Huge interest in the Malaysian Drums (Kompong) performance. Visitors requested clear information about performance times (many had missed the performance)

❖ More availability of Malaysian costumes for men and children to try on

❖ Bigger venue

**Wealth is Health**

Liverpool-based Collective Encounters’ Third Age Acting Company presented a sketch **Wealth is Health**, a stimulating and thought-provoking performance centred around health and wealth inequalities. The production, which used comedy, music and songs, went down extremely well with the audience at The Albany Theatre. The performance was followed by a panel discussion.
The company also performed in the afternoon at ExtraCare’s Earlsdon Retirement Village.

**From 12 June onwards...**

**Events organized by Activity Club Coventry**
Archery sessions for all ages and gender were arranged by the Activity Club Coventry. More than two thirds of the attendees were female.

**Events arranged by Age UK Coventry**
Allesley Park Age UK Friendship Group, meeting at Allesley Park Library, invited its members to reminisce about their holidays abroad.
Comment from Allesley Park Library:
The thought and organisation of the event by lead Volunteer Gillian Guglas was impressive, and this careful preparation inspired both amusing and educational discussion of people’s holiday experiences. It was a creative and accessible way people were able to talk and share their experiences of cultural difference and fears of change.

![Allesley Park Age UK Friendly Group](image)

**Dosti Lunch**
Organiser’s comment:
The Dosti Friendship Group used the time to review the importance of friendship and highlight what factors are necessary to support health and wellbeing in their communities. Ravinder Singh Kundra, supported by dedicated volunteers Daksha, Nirmilan and Kundan facilitated a passionate discussion and generated ideas to influence the future direction of the group. As usual, the Dosti group fed the imagination of its members both with some soulful South Asian traditional folk songs, and later with a tasty aromatic lunch.

Age UK Coventry also arranged a variety of Physical Activities in different venues for fitness, health and well-being.

**Bands in the Park**
Hundreds of visitors to parks were entertained by City of Coventry Brass at the War Memorial Park; Bedworth Concert Band at Holbroughs Park and Dene River Jazzmen at Allesley Hall. A special performance was arranged at the War Memorial Park on Worldwide Music Day.

**Bears Project, competition, Workshops and Collage**
15 schools were involved in competitions to produce depictions of “bears”. Several schools and one community group were involved in workshops. At least 1,000 pieces of work including recycled bear depictions, collages and bear models were submitted. The collages have been completed and are on display at Holy Trinity Church till December. The Civic Launch of Exhibitions will be held in September.
Big Lunch
2 Big Lunch events were held on Sunday 18 June.

The Big Lunch and the Great Get Together in Honour of Jo Cox attracted 119 people, who played tennis, bowls and other games at Spencer Park. There was a wonderful mix of age and ethnic groups.

More than 70 people enjoyed the Multicultural Big Lunch at the War Memorial Park. It was wonderful to see the Romanian community extremely well-represented. The large size gazebo, very kindly provided by the Parks Team, made a lot of difference. Many nationalities and languages were represented. Attendees were extremely reluctant to leave the park!!

Events arranged by the Belgrade Theatre:

Arts Gymnasium – (fun theatre sessions for Over 50s), promoting positive well-being, through imagination and movement, were held at Hagard Community Centre. Sessions at The Belgrade Theatre were for people with memory impairment and/or living with early stage dementia.

The event 11 Million Reasons to Dance accompanies the exhibition of the same name and is a special commission for Coventry, as part of People Dancing’s national programme to positively profile Deaf and disabled people who dance.

Organiser’s report:

In Coventry, presented by Coventry Performing Arts in partnership Coventry’s Belgrade Theatre, local Dance Artists Alexsis Halines and Stephanie Sandy have been working with a number of schools including: Baginton Fields School, Castle Wood school, Sherbourne Fields School, Hereward College and Creative Bridges – in collaboration with Birmingham Royal Ballet Education to create new dance performance work to be showcased alongside a duet by Kate Marsh & Welly O’Brien, who, as dancers with missing limbs, are both interested in the specificity of their own physicality and how this informs and enriches their collaborative practice and performance.

Presented in partnership with People Dancing, the development organisation and membership body for community and participatory dance, working across the UK and internationally.

Events arranged by Centre for Trust, Peace and Social Relations, Coventry University

Organiser’s comment:

In our “Big Question” public debate series we examined ‘What does populism really look like?’ Following recent victories for the ‘Leave’ campaign in the Brexit vote and Donald Trump in the US elections and the seeming rise of the ‘populist’ agenda, we sought to examine both the causes and potential effects of the rise of populist views and their endorsement through these results.

“Our Life on the Breadline” seminar explored the resurgence of poverty in the UK during the ‘age of austerity’ and the impact that this has had on faith-based activism.

Events arranged by Coventry Adult Education Service:

An exhibition of photographs and art and craft items produced by students attending Adult Education classes in the city was held at the Central Library, where visitors were able to try Taster Workshops, buy art works, talk to tutors and pick up the September 2017 Programme. The standard of students’ items was incredibly high. Everyone thought the exhibition looked amazing.

For the Worldwide Music Day, a public performance All Levels Singing was arranged at the end of a singing class. The audience, students and the tutor enjoyed the session tremendously.
Coventry City Council’s Healthy Lifestyle Programmes

The Council’s Be Active Be Healthy Team arranged Coventry Healthy Walks (part of the Walking for Health National Scheme), One Body One Life programme and free one-to-one community-based lifestyle service for people wanting expert advice and support.

Events arranged by Coventry Irish Society

Reconciliation Statue Revisited:
This event explored the enduring significance of the Reconciliation Statue in Cathedral Ruins.
Organiser’s comment:
The day went well, the feedback was very positive, many people remarked that it was nice that a young person was putting on an event for peace because usually it is an older crowd. If we were to improve something we would get more young people involved. A couple of people who had first-hand experience of conflict were very moved by the event and gave speeches in which they discussed their experiences.
This is the link from the event - it was filmed https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yuYTXlq-Wo

Reconciliation Statue, Cathedral Ruins

At the workshop What does it mean to be a Coventrian, attendees talked about their memories of the city. This session was part of an oral history project – Irish Heart, Coventry Home, funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Stories and memories of the Irish heritage were shared at Share the Craic event.
Organiser’s comment:
This was a chance to understand more about the history project that the Irish Society is carrying out. The comments were positive, people said that they are looking forward to the exhibition.

Events arranged by Coventry Refugee & Migrant Centre (CRMC)

During Refugee Week, CRMC arranged: assemblies at Sidney Stringer College & Academy and Eden Girls’ School to familiarize students with the experience of Syrian refugees and a picnic in the park, where visitors enjoyed sumptuous food, lively dancing and viewed informative displays. Volleyball proved to be popular, as did “Balancing a 20p coin on a lemon for 20 seconds”.

It was wonderful to see CRMC represented on national publicity postcards for Refugee Week.
Events arranged by Ekta-Unity Group

Confidence-building strategies were explored in a discussion session centred around everyday scenarios, such as attending appointments, speaking up in forums, etc.

Organiser’s comment: We will be following this session up with further sessions as we found that members had deep cultural beliefs and thoughts about confidence and self-worth, depending on gender.

Attendee comments:
- If I am strong, I can then make others strong.
- We are always told from a young age not to question and to do as you are told. When you get married, you have to do what your in-laws say. I am old and I still do as I’m told. Even my grandchildren say no when they don’t want to do something.

A Hindi film shown at the Diabetes Project Launch was well-received as it heightened awareness about diabetes. The group hadn’t realized that Asians are at greater risk.

At Knitting for Wellbeing and Learning to Crochet sessions, attendees realized that it’s never too late to learn.

Attendee comment: I never learnt to knit until now. My son has asked me to make a scarf in his football club colours.

At Singing for Pleasure sessions, attendees brought their own favourite songs and some members have written their own songs and poems and shared them with everyone.

Attendee comment: I never sang in front of others before.

About 60 people enjoyed the Yoga & Picnic at the Memorial Park.

Organiser’s comment: Some new members made the effort to come even though they had to change two buses and had never travelled by themselves to the park. Others met in town and caught the bus together.

Participant comments:
- We look forward to this every year.
- Next year we will go on the other side of the park.

Trails arranged by Eleanor Nesbitt:

4 trails were arranged by Eleanor Nesbitt to explore the city’s literary, faith and industrial heritage and the history of Cheylesmore.

Cheylesmore History Walk

A group of 37 enthusiastic people joined Eleanor, who took them on a guided walk, commenting on street names and the history of Coventry. The walk concluded at Cheylesmore Library with refreshments, a chat with the walk leader and a display on the history of Cheylesmore. Walkers went away with brief historical information about the streets covered. Many people commented on Eleanor being a brilliant leader with a great demeanour.

Organiser’s comment: The group were very varied in age and all seemed enthusiastic. Our walk - with many stops for commentary – was along Poitiers Road, Black Prince Avenue and via Quinton Park, Brightwalton Road, Lymesy St, Meschines St, The Chesils and Dilforford Avenue to no. 11 Salisbury Avenue (where E.M.
Forster died), then back to the library via Arundel Road. Most of the history related to the ‘Black Prince’, the Earls of Chester, and the 100 Years’ War.

The library staff were very supportive – providing copies of the annotated itinerary that I had devised, and refreshments at the end, as well as having a display of Cheylesmore’s history. Kevin Foxton from Healthy Walks helped with registering walkers, distributing PIF publicity and bringing up the rear.

Participant comments:
- Thoroughly enjoyed the walk and the information given. (2)
- I’ve lived in Cheylesmore all my life and knew a little about the history behind some of the street names, but I learnt a lot more and it was fascinating. (2)
- Eleanor’s walks are all excellent.
- My daughter liked hearing about the strong women (Mary Herbert and Queen Philippa).
- I really enjoyed the Cheylesmore History Walk. It was most informative in its own right AND it introduced me to Positive Images Festival. I would now like to register for the Faith Trail and Literary Trail.

Faith Trail:
The Faith Trail enabled participants to explore the religious history of Coventry from the Middle Ages to the present, visiting Christian, Hindu, Muslim and Sikh places of worship.

Organiser’s comment: The walk went well in fine weather.
We appreciated the informative welcome from Mr. Shabbir Ahmed at the Eagle Street Mosque – all the more appreciated as it was the month of Ramadan. At the Shree Krishna Temple, we were also made welcome and Babu Garala answered questions. Ten of us stayed for hospitality (Langar) in the Guru Nanak Prakash Gurdwara. Walkers showed a lively interest throughout the walk and volunteered a donation (to be shared between places of worship) at the end. Interestingly, one walker came last year prior to visiting India. This year she came again, with her husband, to see if she related to the walk differently after experiencing India.
Carol Donnelly welcomed walkers to Priory Visitor Centre (this had not been factored in). It could be included in a future walk. With the restoration of St. Mark’s underway, walkers may be able to see the painting inside.

Literary Trail:
As Eleanor Nesbitt was ill, Kevin Foxton of Healthy Walks took over at short notice and used her itinerary and notes. Walkers enjoyed the walk and appreciated Kevin’s input.
Organiser’s comment: This shows how crucial the help of Romilla Devi’s team of trained walk leaders can be.

Industrial History Trail:
The Industrial Trail was a roughly circular walk, mainly in the city centre, the Canal Basin and a number of other locations connected with some of Coventry’s craftsmen, designers and manufacturers.
Organiser’s comment: The walk went well. One regular Friday walk group joined us.
Walk leader Kevin Foxton’s comment: The group from AIMHS (Actively involving Mental Health Services) was very complimentary, with comments such as “really interesting”, “enjoyable” and “learned something new”. The group was eager to learn about and showed much enthusiasm for the preservation of our historical city.

Organiser’s comment about trails:
Thanks for support (the handouts and publicity) to Romilla Devi of Healthy Walks and (on the day) to walk leader, Kevin Foxton, who helped in so many ways.
It is noteworthy that walks that have run in previous years have had a lower uptake than previously whereas the one new walk (Cheylesmore History) had the biggest response yet. It will be a good idea to plan some very local themed walks for next PIF. I already have the basis for a Canley History Walk.

Events arranged by FWT:
Basic IT Sessions for email, the Internet, etc.
Health & Wellbeing Sessions, covering Crafts, Healthy Cooking, Quilling, Nail Art & Hand Massage, Jewellery making, knitting, etc.
Mamta Antenatal Sessions for women (with language support)

Events arranged by Hope in Unity:
Black elders (ages ranging from 60 to 80) enjoyed Hope in Unity’s Wednesday Luncheon/Day Centre sessions, at which they participated in stimulating activities and discussions and partook of freshly cooked nutritional healthy Caribbean lunch. One wheelchair user with a disability came with her carer.

Events in Libraries:
Coventry Libraries & Information Services arranged a variety of activities for children and adults.
Career advice – In partnership with NCS, Foleshill Library provided free support and advice for CV writing, job searches and employment.
Colouring sessions for adults and under 16s: Aldermoor Library, Foleshill Library and Stoke Library
Cook & Eat Well – Foleshill Library. Comments: a great class; informative sessions about healthy eating; helped to make new friends and boosted self-confidence.
English Conversation practice: Foleshill Library
Friendship Group – Willenhall Library’s Friendship Group shared cakes from different cultures – Indonesian pineapple jam cakes, Coventry Godcakes, Dorset apple cake and German meringue cake.
Fun activities: Foleshill Library
Homework help: Friendly staff at Foleshill Library provided advice and help to young visitors.
One Body One Life (2-4 year olds): Very positive comments about sessions – Good to see children play together and learn discipline.
Poetry: Cheylesmore Library was the setting for poetry readings by Coventry Live Poets.

[Image: Coventry Live Poets at Cheylesmore Library]
Reading Group for Adults: Allesley Park Library, Stoke Library. Members of Allesley Library Readers’ Group, which discussed NoViolet Bulawayo’s novel “We need new names” commented on the “Insight the session gave into the struggles in the daily lives of young girls in Southern Africa.”

Recipe swap: Canley Library

Rhymetime: Aldermoor Library, Allesley Park Library. Central Library, Cheylesmore Library, Jubilee Crescent Library, Stoke Library and Willenhall Library. A comment from an attendee at Allesley Park Library “We wondered how some of these rhymes came about.”

Share the Craic, Willenhall Library’s joint event with Coventry Irish Society, was about sharing Irish memories and stories. Irish refreshments were served.

Spanish conversation practice: Visitors to Earlsdon Library had a chance to attend taster sessions in speaking Spanish with the library’s Spanish Conversation Group. There was an opportunity to explore Spanish culture, sample Spanish food, watch Flamenco dancing and look at a range of library resources on Spanish history, literature and films.

Stay & Play: Foleshill Library

Storytime & Crafts: Caludon Library, Canley Library, Courdon Library, Foleshill Library, Hillfields Library, Jubilee Crescent Library, Stoke Library

We came to Willenhall: Willenhall Library. This was a joint event with Willenhall Local History Group, with people talking about why they came to live in Willenhall.

Weaving: Foleshill Library

Writers Group for adults: Stoke Library

During Youth Session at Willenhall Library, young people discussed conflict from friends and family to war across the globe. Peace Doves were made and hung on trees outside the library.

Events arranged by St. Peter’s Centre

Just4me Women’s weekly activities at St. Peter’s centre included: cooking, knitting, sewing, cake decorating, card making and other craft activities. At one of the sessions, Julie Flemming of West Midlands Police talked about keeping oneself safe.

Events arranged by Valley House

Creating your own fruit pots was the theme of the Happy Hours session, aimed at encouraging positive mental health and wellbeing.

16-29 year olds were able to have fun and get active at 2 football sessions held at Moat House.

Events arranged by WATCH

WATCH Ltd participated in the 2017 festival in a very big way through:

Active Citizen Coffee Mornings, with the aim of forming a community task force to tackle and resolve problems in Hillfields.
Employment Support Activities, providing holistic one to one support to marginalized individuals from BAME community groups to overcome barriers to training opportunities and employment. Attendee comment: WATCH staff have given me the most support to help me make a CV to find a job. They welcome everyone.

English Sessions, delivered by qualified ESOL tutors in a friendly, culturally sensitive environment. One participant, who is now volunteering and mentoring class members to improve their maths, commented: I am happy to help improve their maths as this is helping to improve my English further.

Hillz Children and Young People's Project. Young people aged 10-18 were introduced to radio training, music production, lyric or poem writing and beat making. The activities brought together young people from diverse cultural backgrounds. Attendee comment: I love coming to Hillz FM. Coming here and doing my show is always the highlight of my week.

Job Club Sessions. Attendee comment: I really enjoy this opportunity to meet up with other residents and would like us to include more crafts and activities such as a short healthy walk around the neighbourhood.

Events arranged by West Midlands Police Coventry

West Midlands Police Coventry arranged 2 sessions at which visitors could Meet their local Policing team. The first session, on 23rd June, and part of Longford Cultural Festival, was held in The Scout Hall in Partridge Croft, Little Heath. Participants included businesses, community groups and performers. Organiser's report: The event was a great success. Approximately 163 children, youths and adults attended the event. Displays were performed by some of the stallholders; they were both exciting and informative and held the audience captivated. A great sense of engagement was felt, uniting the community. It is hoped that the Longford Cultural Festival demonstrated the wealth of diversionary activities available to the Longford Community.

The second session was sited at Toys R Us, Cross Point Business Park. Organisers' Report: The event was a success and the children had a fun time trying on uniform, asking questions and engaging with officers. We engaged with 25 children and their parents who were also keen to as questions. The event really showed the children that the Police are friendly and here to help.

Individual Events

Bridges over the wall
Award-winning peace poet, Antony Owen, teamed up with sitarist Chris Cook and santoor player Koviraj Singh, reciting poetry to the accompaniment of tuneful melodies. Performers engaged with the audience very well.
Organiser's comment: As a writer it was great to collaborate with Chris Cook because he is a natural at synchronizing the musicality of language with Sitar. The events at The Albany and The Tin were well-received and I hope we can continue to develop this with Positive Images as it helps evoke anthems of what Positive Images is all about.
Visitor comments:

- A moving and positive event
- A great night... amazing talent
- Just wanted to thank you for a wonderful evening. I LOVED it... my God the Santoor! My ears were completely mesmerized!!! We were blown away by a completely new experience! And we have never heard live poetry with gorgeous and such sensitive accompaniment before. It was truly heart-opening to be in such incredible company.

**Coventry Green Drinks** – an informal Social Face-to-Face Networking event, turned out to be a thoroughly enjoyable event at which attendees:

- Shared knowledge on health and nutrition.
- Discussed ways in which we can improve the local environment and bring the community together.
- Shared information on local businesses and upcoming local and regional events.

75 people sang a wide variety of familiar and new songs at the extremely lively **Singing for the Brain** session arranged by the Alzheimer’s Society.

**Bagel Brunch in Smithford Way** was the cozy setting for the screening of two **Films from Palestine**:

- **No Worries**, the inspirational story of Abeer, a 28 year old woman who was born disabled; & **The Idol** – a fictionalised version of the life of Mohammed Assaf, a wedding singer from a refugee camp in Gaza who went on to win 2013’s Arab idol singing competitition. The screening was followed by a question and answer session about the harsh realities of life in Palestine.

**Working with a variety of partners, The Coventry Society**, a first time participant in the festival, celebrated the history of the Burges area; raised awareness of the River Sherbourne; and celebrated the 50th anniversary of the Civic Amenities Act 1967 at the recently restored Old Grammar School.

Activities aimed at adults included exhibitions, walking tours, cutting of the Civic Day Cake by the Deputy Lord Mayor Councillor John Blundell, book signing by local historian Peter Walters, sale of goods and much more...Children were able to attend quill pen making workshop, colour drawings of the Old Grammar School and watch a DVD of children’s history programmes.

The event was very well-promoted.

Organiser’s comment: The event was held on the hottest day of the year and was one of a number of events taking place in the city centre at the same time. The event was very well-attended. A
total of 229 people were recorded as attending the event. However, staff from Culture Coventry estimated the number to be nearer 400.

![Cutting of Civic Day Cake by Deputy Lord Mayor](image)

Visitor comments:

- What a brilliant informative day – absolutely loved it. The walk was great, a lovely lovely guide and it was so interesting to learn about the peregrine falcons. Our guide Anna Squires was brilliant, nothing was too much trouble for her from Bumble Bees to solitary Bees to Ladybird chrysalis to river Sherbourne to Falcons and more...
- Enjoyable and a big success (5)
- I thoroughly enjoyed my visit to your event – my only regret was that I could not manage a longer visit.

A detailed report of the event is available.

**Hillfields Readers Group** arranged an afternoon of readings, music, dance, poetry, book quizzes and craft sessions. The finale was the Imagination Reading Café’s storytelling session. The afternoon saw a performance from local poet Emilie Lauren Jones, the winner of the Positive Images Festival Peace Festival Poetry Award in 2016, and a much appreciated dance performance by Chaitrali Chitre, a traditional Indian dancer.

Tips on “How to handle life’s challenges” were provided by Brahma Kumaris Coventry through a presentation, a question and answer session and guided meditation. One attendee became aware of the event through the festival programme booklet.

At the talk entitled **Our Place Here – Materials, Makings and Memories**, artists from TheVERYidea Project talked about their experience of co-creating art with 4 different groups they worked with. Local residents’ stories and memories relating to the city’s history of migration shaped the arts project. Items created during the sessions were displayed at Coventry Transport Museum.

Organisers of a **Teddy Bears Picnic** in Spencer Park were delighted with the success of the event at which activities enjoyed by children included games, bear colouring, bear face painting, etc.

**The International Day of Yoga**, established in 2015, was marked by Sahyadri Friends Group at War Memorial Park in a session starting as early as 5.45am! An excellent article about the yoga session appeared in Coventry Telegraph (Tuesday 27 June).

Organisers said: It was an hour of tranquillity in a naturally relaxed and stimulating environment. After the session, all the participants were energized and left with a feeling of positivity and peace of mind.

Veselka Ukrainian dancers, Chitrakalaimanram School dancers and Chaitrali Chitre fascinated the audience at a **Multicultural Concert** at the Ukrainian Centre with clever, graceful and energetic moves. Senza Nome (Polish Choir) and Verkhovyna (Ukrainian Choir) sang melodiously. Afrikan
Kultural Kontractors created a stir with their brilliant African drumming. The finale act was performed by Reggae singer Juliet, who got everyone dancing. The much enjoyed concert also included raffle, free refreshments and presentation of certificates of appreciation to volunteers. Sahyadri Group arranged its own certificate presentation for those of its volunteers, who weren’t able to attend the concert.

The film **A Better Life** was screened at Coventry Against Racism’s event at The Herbert Art Gallery & Museum. The brilliant and touching film highlighted the human dimension of being a so-called immigrant. Peter Barnett spoke about Coventry City Council’s resettlement and welcome programme for refugees. During question/discussion time two issues were flagged up: where new arrivals in the city could spend some time without having to pay; and the experience of racism.

**Sing Global Harmony**
8 visitors joined the 30+ members of **WorldSong Community Choir** at their singing session, during which they sang songs from around the world. This proved to be an extremely enjoyable event, attracting positive feedback. The dynamic choir leader used ingenious techniques for everyone’s involvement. There was a very welcoming atmosphere. One of the visitors has now joined the choir.

This year’s **Farmers’ Market**, offering a variety of fresh locally sourced seasonal produce, honey, mustard and much more, seemed much busier than last year’s market because of added attractions in Broadgate.

15 first time visitors joined regular Attendees at the **Open Day at Food Union’s CV5 (Sherbourne Valley allotments)**. They explored the site and learnt how to get involved. Music, games, a bonfire and lots of home grown food made the visit an enjoyable experience.

**Exhibitions:**

**Community Arts Exhibition for Refugee Week, Belgrade Theatre**
Organiser’s report:
During Refugee Week we hosted a Community Arts Exhibition featuring artists based in Coventry (87%) and neighbouring areas (13%). More than half of the participants were from diverse backgrounds (disabled, ethnic minority groups) and just less than half were 50+. A school group also contributed to the exhibition – we wanted to engage and showcase work that represented the diverse community of Coventry and the people who use our Theatre space.

This year the theme for Refugee Week was “Different Pasts, Shared Future”. Our exhibition explored the themes of home, identity and belonging and how the themes resonated with our diverse community here in Coventry.
Accompanying the exhibition was a short film which was displayed on the 4 plasma screens throughout the theatre foyers and outside our theatre.

The film explored what home and belonging meant to our Belgrade Theatre participant groups. We wanted them to think about these things so that they could get a better understanding of what refugees, asylum seekers and migrants feel when they have to leave their home and integrate into a new community.

The participant groups who were filmed and included in this short film where from: Black Youth Theatre, Shine on – an over 50s group, Canley Junior and Canley Youth Theatre – an economically deprived area where we deliver outreach programmes. Again, we wanted to encourage participants from diverse backgrounds to reflect on their experiences and show that we have more in common than what divides us.

The Centre for Cultural and Media Policy Studies, University of Warwick, mounted a two-day exhibition entitled Mobile creativity: pathways to human development in the city.

Organiser’s report:
The venue was the City Arcadia Gallery. We deliberately did not continue the exhibition upstairs as this would reduce access (no elevator for wheelchair and other users): on several occasions people with mobility scooters drove into the Gallery, and they were welcomed. The Gallery exhibition was co-extensive with the street, and we made great efforts to engage with local people walking by within the City Arcade. As a result of active engagement, around 50 of the 152 recorded visitors, were simply passers by. We had a hugely positive experience from the Coventry Migrant and Refugee Centre, and others (like homeless people and refugees) who do not normally participate in culture.

On Friday 23rd June, students from the Centre arranged a hugely successful evening programme, comprising dancing, singing, musical recital, poetry recitation and a panel discussion centred around home, belonging and impressions of Coventry. The students gave a very good account of themselves.

Post-Festival events:
Saturday 1 June
The Community Big Lunch and Armed Forces Day, organized by Canley Uniting Communities, was held at Prior Deram Park, where there were information stalls, food, fun activities, a tug of war, entertainment and a popup café, where visitors could highlight issues relating to Canley. The Lord Mayor of Coventry thanked event organisers as well as the Armed Forces for their sterling work. The 300+ attendees included, Malay, Chinese, Pakistani, White and Indian visitors and 15 individuals with disabilities.
Organiser Nor Aziz’s Comment:

I wish to thank everyone for your effort and commitment making Canley Big Lunch another success.

The Canley Big Lunch event on last Saturday buzzed with enthusiasm and friendly atmosphere. This was very much apparent among the organiser’s team members and most encouragingly it was palpable among members of public - most of them were the Popup café visitors!

Many of you would agree that the hard work we put in the Canley popup café does weave its magic generating positive effect in the community. Shop owners from Nisa groceries visited our café and spent time chatting to people, which I found hopeful for other stakeholders to follow the same. The popup café met one of its objectives, which was to have friends and neighbours taking notice of what is happening in the area. None of this could have happened without your help so I’m very grateful for it.

I’m sharing Alan’s Youtube link that captured some of the key moments of the big day
https://youtu.be/7fuXXDbeGII

We will continue organising popup cafés at Canley Community Centre once a month until January 2018. Future Popup café dates are: Thurs 17th Aug 1pm-3pm; Sat 16th Sep 11am-2pm; Sat 21st Oct 11am-2pm; Sat 18th Nov 11am-2pm; Sat 9th Dec 11am-2pm; Sat 20th Jan 2018 11am-2pm

Visitor comments:

❖ Missed henna and nail-art (Organiser’s comment: The Ahmadi Ladies who were supposed to do henna and nail-art had to pull out due to acid attack on one of their members in London. This happened at the very last minute and we couldn’t find replacement, which was quite a frustration to many people.)
❖ Visitors praised the Indian dance and requested more cultural performances at future events.
❖ Request for on-site cooking demonstrations
❖ Massive well done and thank you for all your time and energy.

Hearsall Baptist Church was the setting for Coventry Interfaith Group’s event Beyond Group Allegiances – Towards a Common Humanity. Attendees watched a thought-provoking film Beyond Forgiving (set in Post-Apartheid South Africa) and then participated in group discussions. The event was extremely well-managed and well-attended; the choice of film was excellent; discussion topics were well-chosen and the discussions were very animated.

Saturday 15 July

Hillfields Community Festival 2017, organized by WATCH, turned out to be a fantastic event, attended by 450 people, half of whom were children. Everyone had a great time, enjoying food, entertainment and activities.

In his opening speech, Coventry’s Lord Mayor, Councillor Tony Skipper, thanked Positive Images Festival for supporting this year’s event and shared the news that Coventry had reached the final application stage of the City of Culture 2021. The Lord Mayor commented that “people need to come to Hillfields to experience the culture and diversity of Coventry”.

Saturday 22 July
Embrace Africa returned to Broadgate with an African and Caribbean Food and Music Festival, incorporating drumming, dancing, poetry recitation, information stalls and stalls selling appetizing food, colourful cultural items, etc. The festival was very well-attended and the standard of acts very high. Very positive comments have been made by attendees.

Summer events continued...

A successful bid to the Arts Council of England enabled Positive Images to arrange workshops during the summer holidays. WEA delivered craft workshops and Emilie Lauren Jones conducted poetry workshops in different locations in the city. These workshops were well-received and enjoyed by all.

Comments received about the 2017 festival:

- I think the festival was a great success this year. Congratulations! I very much appreciate the work that goes on behind the scenes.
- It’s been great to be part of Positive Images Festival. This has been a very successful year for Positive Images.
- Thanks for giving us a platform to showcase our talent to different audiences. We look forward to working with your organisation in the future too.
- The festival was a great success and gives opportunity for many communities to focus their minds and hearts.
- Many thanks for organising the festival. It’s a credit to Coventry.
- The programme looks really good, jam packed with events and activities (2)
- A job very well done.
- What a comprehensive programme! It seems to be becoming more varied year after year.
- It’s disappointing not to see Black representation on the cover.
- Indigenous culture needs to be celebrated.
Comments from volunteers:

- Thank you for the opportunity to work with the Positive Images Team. I enjoyed every moment of my volunteering.
- I thank Positive Images Festival for allowing me to volunteer. The time I spent was awesome; I enjoyed every minute of it. Please let me know just in case other events are planned so that I can join them.

Congratulations to:

- Coventry Adult Education Service on an excellent Ofsted report.
- Gabrielle Back and Savers for winning the Queen’s Award for Voluntary Service for raising awareness of environmental sustainability through a creative and artistic approach.
- CRASAC for winning the GSK Impact Award for its hard work in supporting victims of crime.
- Coventry UK City of Culture Trust—Coventry is one of five to be shortlisted to host UK City of Culture 2021

Our reflections:

- Positive Images Festival continues its association with the University of Warwick and Coventry City of Culture Trust.
- We provided guidance and sample policy documents to a new group. Also some of our paperwork was provided to the organisers of Coventry Community Fusion Festival. This meant that they did not have to reinvent the wheel.
- The compilation of the programme is a monumental job, which could become easier if event info is received in good time. Problems arose when varying information was received about the same event co-managed by 2 or more organisers. Event organisers who are going to be away at the time of checking need to make arrangements for the checking to be done by someone else.
- We need one or 2 more volunteers who can assist us with compilation as well as checking. The amended draft from the designer needs to be sent to all organisations for a second check.
- Programmes need wide distribution—we thank Tripta for the systematic way in which she distributed programmes. This needs to be discussed thoroughly and the practice needs to be replicated in other areas.
- Event monitoring forms need to be returned in good time. We need volunteers to be able to visit events.
- All posters/flyers for events during the festival should carry the festival logo.

Advance notice:


Final word:

Colin Scott, Chair of Positive Images Festival, and I thank: our funders – Arts Council and Awards for All; the Home Office for in-kind support through Building a Stronger Britain Together programme; Coventry City Council for its ongoing support; event organisers and performers; organisations that have helped publicise the festival; and the public for your presence at events. With strong support from all quarters, we have been able to celebrate diversity, promote shared values and turned diversity into unity.

Report prepared by

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