



From l-r: Bookbinder Alexandra Marsden, Dr Claudine Van Hensbergen and Dr Gareth Roddy at the Books as Treasures event at the Shipley Art Gallery in Gateshead.

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Inspiring events draw hundreds of people to Being Human Festival

Between 10 and 19 November hundreds of people attended *Treasures of the North East*: a programme of nine events celebrating Hadrian's Wall and the Lindisfarne Gospels, organised by Northumbria University and held at various locations across Newcastle and Gateshead as part of this year's Being Human Festival.

The [Being Human Festival](#) is the UK's national festival of the humanities.

Hundreds of events take place throughout the country each November, demonstrating and celebrating the ways in which humanities-based subjects inspire and enrich our everyday lives.

Northumbria University was one of only five institutions selected as a Research Hub for the UK's 2022 festival, winning funding to deliver a programme of events called *Treasures of the North East*. The University worked in partnership with [Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums \(TWAM\)](#), [St. James' Heritage and Environment Group](#), bookbinder Alexandra Marsden, and LEGO artist Steve Mayes of [Brick This](#) to organise and host the events.

The Festival's headline event took place on 10 November at the Great North Museum: Hancock, when more than 215 people attended the Museum Late and five Northumbria-led events took place.

Dr Sean McCusker (Social Work, Education and Community Wellbeing) ran a LEGO Serious Play session building models of community identity and exploring people's connection to Hadrian's Wall.

Dr Phillip Wallage (English Language) led an interactive workshop where participants discovered what the one-thousand-year-old northern English of the Lindisfarne Gospels was like, hearing the Gospels read aloud and finding out how northern English dialects were influenced by the Vikings.

Steve Gilroy (Theatre and Performance) and Newcastle University's Heike Pichler staged a performance of *From You To Me*, where the voices and stories of people who lived in post-war Tyneside were spoken by actors using verbatim theatre's Recorded Delivery method.

Dr Gareth Roddy (History) introduced a screening of St James' Heritage and Environment Group's community film, *Gannin' Along the Wall*, which draws attention to the often overlooked sections of Hadrian's Wall from Segedunum through Newcastle city centre to Heddon-on-the-Wall.

In the Hancock's Roman Gallery, visitors helped LEGO artist Steve Mayes rebuild Hadrian's Wall with LEGO, alongside the museum's scale model.

The evening was run in an exciting collaboration with academics from Newcastle University that showcased the leading research power of the North

East, and other activities included dance and choral performances, film screenings, and meditation.

During the days that followed, Northumbria's festival programme continued with Walking the West End Wall, where attendees discovered Newcastle's hidden heritage in a walking tour of Benwell organised by St James' Heritage and Environment Group and Dr Gareth Roddy. After exploring the Roman temple of the Geordie god Antenociticus, special access to the Vallum Crossing remains was provided by English Heritage, and attendees found out about the community work of the Pendower Good Neighbour Project; a charity that supports residents on Pendower Estate in Newcastle's West End.

There was also a bookbinding workshop at the Shipley Art Gallery in Gateshead, called Books as Treasures. Led by Alexandra Marsden and Northumbria's Dr Katherine Aske, Dr David Fallon, Dr Claudine Van Hensbergen, and Dr Helen Williams (English Literature), people young and old learned how to bind and decorate a book, inspired by the Lindisfarne Gospels. Also at the Shipley Art Gallery, Dr Richard Mulholland (Conservation) led the event The Science of Medieval Manuscript Illumination, where participants practiced with 7th and 8th century painting and writing materials and techniques used by the medieval illuminators who created the Lindisfarne Gospels.

At the Laing Art Gallery, Dr Richard O'Brien (Creative Writing) led a creative writing workshop called Write at the Gallery, where participants took inspiration from the Laing's Lindisfarne Gospels exhibition to produce their own piece of creative writing. Northumbria's festival programme ended with a family-friendly LEGO rebuild of Hadrian's Wall at the Great North Museum: Hancock, when over 1,100 adults and children came to the museum in a single day.

Dr Gareth Roddy, a Leverhulme Early Career Fellow in the Department of Humanities at the University, and Dr Claudine van Hensbergen, an Associate Professor of 18th century English Literature, led the programme of events on behalf of Northumbria University.

Dr Roddy said: "*Treasures of the North East* has been a roaring success thanks to the dedication and hard work of Northumbria University's academics and our community partners. We set out to celebrate two iconic treasures of our region in this landmark year: 2022 marks 1900 years since the construction of

Hadrian's Wall began, and 2022 is also the year that the Lindisfarne Gospels returned to the region for an exhibition in Newcastle. Together, and with generous funding from Being Human and Northumbria University, we delivered fun, engaging, creative, and meaningful activities that attracted hundreds of people to venues across Newcastle and Gateshead.

“The public’s response to our programme has been terrific, and many people want to know when the events will be running again. It was wonderful to hear parents, guardians, and children sharing their knowledge of Roman history while rebuilding Hadrian’s Wall with LEGO. People who attended Walking the West End Wall discovered something new about places they had known for decades, and several attendees subsequently visited the Roman exhibition at the Great North Museum: Hancock to find out more. People also responded creatively to our festival programme, producing their own pieces of writing and artwork in response to the stunning Lindisfarne Gospels.

“Northumbria University has established a global reputation as a leading research power in the humanities, and the success of our Being Human Festival programme demonstrates that our research is relevant and important to people in the community, who are rightly proud of the rich cultural heritage of the North East.

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