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Young people collaborate with Archaeologists through new design project

Children as young as seven from Walker and Cowgate in Newcastle, and Otterburn in Northumberland, have formed an unlikely connection with a group of Archaeologists thanks to a unique project focussing on the history and heritage of the North East.

The [Making History](#) project has been led by Northumbria University researcher [Henry Collingham](#) who has worked alongside the [Redesdale Archaeology Group \(RAG\)](#) and two youth groups: [Kids Kabin](#) in Newcastle and [North Tyne Youth](#) in Northumberland.



Kids Kabin, RAG, and North Tyne Youth: Making History at The Roundhouse Museum

Over the last year, the young people and adults involved in the project have taken part in hands-on activities including digging up new artefacts with RAG at the Roman site 'Bremenium', and creative workshops exploring ways young people can be more involved in history and heritage.



Uncovering Roman Artefacts at Bremenium

Young participants created new ceramics, woodwork, and artworks exploring how they share ways of working with the archaeologists, namely imagination, interpretation, and decoding clues.



Creative Woodworking in Walker

This work came together in a new set of furniture for the Roundhouse Museum at Rochester, designed and built by the young people. These three furniture pieces include hand-carvings from the children depicting things they have discovered as part of the project and will be on permanent display at the Roundhouse Museum.



New Furniture for Roundhouse Museum (Fritha and Catherine from North Tyne Youth, Henry Collingham, Lord Redesdale, and Will from Kids Kabin)

Kids Kabin and North Tyne Youth also helped researchers develop new AI-powered technologies, to share glimpses of their creative work with each other easily, despite the geographical distance between them. They built cameras, printers, and displays to send messages between the groups about the things they have made, and new things the archaeologists have uncovered.



North Tyne Youth member Matthew, helped design and build the AI 'Logiscope' Camera

Some of these technologies have been installed at Rochester Relish café so the public can engage with the work and learn more about the collaboration. These will be on display until the end of the year. Café owner, Tommy Clarke, said: "The Redesdale valley is steeped in history. We have been honoured to take part, help unearth the treasures held within the valley, and introduce them to the next generation."

Café Owner Tommy with the new installation at Rochester Relish

To celebrate the end of the project, all the work created was exhibited at an event at the Roundhouse Museum, during which the new furniture for the museum was unveiled – complete with artworks and prototypes created throughout the project. Visitors had a chance to see the journey of the young people's artworks from concepts to reality and were able to play with the new interactive technologies.

Speaking about the Making History project Henry Collingham, Senior Research Fellow in Design at Northumbria University, said: "This project really grew from a shared philosophy of Agelessness – focusing on what

people have in common rather than what divides them by age.

“We have challenged traditional age barriers and created meaningful intergenerational relationships – and the connections which have formed as a result have been extraordinary.

“Through the Making History project, we have been able to create a heritage space that truly belongs to everyone.”

The project has pioneered new approaches to heritage engagement, moving away from traditional teaching methods towards child-led and play-based learning. These innovative approaches were embraced by members of the Redesdale Archaeology Group (RAG), who welcomed young people into their practice, and let young people freely explore their curiosity and creativity.

Annette Pantall, Redesdale Archaeology Group Outreach Coordinator, said: “Making History has provided a great opportunity for the young people to learn about the fascinating 2,000-year history of this remote area through hands on exploration of the site and creativity as well as through the modern technology of metal detecting. I was very impressed by their energy, exuberance and curiosity about Roman archaeology.”

The project has provided significant benefits to both the urban and rural communities. For the young participants, it has provided access to archaeological experiences and rural heritage which may have been previously beyond their reach.

Will Benson, Chief Officer of Kids Kabin, said: “Making History has brought some brilliant new opportunities to young people living in Walker and Cowgate in Newcastle – experiences they would never have otherwise had. They’ve found real pieces of Roman pottery digging with archaeologists, explored new technology and AI with University experts, and worked alongside young people from rural Northumberland on a variety of fun and creative projects.”

Catherine Coats, Director of North Tyne Youth, added: “Through this creative project, young people from North Tyne Youth formed new connections with Kids Kabin, explored their local archaeological heritage, and engaged with technology and interpretation. The rare opportunity to visit dig sites, hear

stories from artifact finders, and transform ideas into physical creations has inspired ongoing curiosity about their area's history and strengthened partnerships.”

For those living in the often-underserved communities, the project has brought new energy and young perspectives to heritage preservation.

Devin, a Kids Kabin member from Walker said: “I really enjoyed all of it, honestly – especially the cameras and the catapult! It was fun getting to see the cool stuff, like the posters, and having our work on display in a real museum feels pretty cool, if I’m being honest. I like seeing people appreciate what we made. I’d definitely go back and say, ‘I made that!’”

Making History is part of Northumbria University's [Centre for Digital Citizens Research Project](#), funded by UKRI's [Engineering & Physical Sciences Research Council](#) (EPSRC). The project exemplifies the university's commitment to person-centred design and community engagement, building on Dr Collingham's previous work with vulnerable and underserved communities.

[Find out more about the Making History project.](#)

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Contacts



Rik Kendall

Press Contact
PR and Media Manager
rik.kendall@northumbria.ac.uk
07923 382339



Andrea Slowey

Press Contact
Head of Corporate Communications (interim)
andrea.slowey@northumbria.ac.uk
07708 509436



Rachael Barwick

Press Contact
PR and Media Manager
rachael.barwick@northumbria.ac.uk
07377422415



James Fox

Press Contact
Student Communications Manager
james2.fox@northumbria.ac.uk



Kelly Elliott

Press Contact
PR and Media Officer
kelly2.elliott@northumbria.ac.uk



Ruth Lognonne

Press Contact
PR and Media Officer
ruth.lognonne@northumbria.ac.uk
07971274253



Gemma Brown

Press Contact

PR and Media Officer

gemma6.brown@northumbria.ac.uk