



Press release

25 July 2022

Actress Frances Barber narrates story of textiles in Wolverhampton as ground-breaking UK-wide immersive storytelling experience arrives in the city

Wulfrunian and Olivier award-nominated actress Frances Barber narrates an augmented reality trail through the city that explores Wolverhampton's role in the textile industry and fashion glamour, from Courtaulds Textile Works to department store Beatties and the city centre of the 1960s. The stories featured on the trail are among hundreds told through ground-breaking multimedia technologies as part of the UK's largest immersive storytelling experience, StoryTrails, this summer.

StoryTrails, part of UNBOXED: Creativity in the UK, features digital experiences that invite residents to experience Wolverhampton in a completely new way through augmented reality (AR), virtual reality (VR) and an immersive map of the city. On 6 and 7 August, activity is centred around Wolverhampton Library and on the streets of Wolverhampton itself. The city is one of 15 UK-wide locations that StoryTrails is visiting this summer, from Bristol to Dundee.

The augmented reality trail through Wolverhampton, accessed through mobile devices, takes people to the factory floor of Courtaulds Textiles Works, a major employer from 1926 to 1970 whose factory chimneys dominated the city's skyline, to the glamour of the pink powder room at Beatties department store that was part of the Wolverhampton shopping experience from 1877 until its closure in 2019; as well as offering a taste of window-shopping in the 1960s featuring risqué dresses and hotpants.

The trail was created using film from BBC, British Film Institute and local archives to present a window into the past. Visitors can borrow devices from the library and follow guided augmented reality trails across the two-day event as well as follow the route independently by downloading the StoryTrails app onto their own devices.

Inside the library, the immersive map of Wolverhampton reveals ten stories of local people and familiar landmarks, such as 'The Man on the Horse' statue - depicting Prince Albert and unveiled by Queen Victoria herself - and Major's Fish and Chip Shop - a culinary institution established in 1975. The map was created by Grace Gelder who used 3D scanning of people and buildings to create it. The 15-minute film plays on a loop throughout the day and a further 20 stories can be viewed on iPads in the library.

Grace and Sian Macfarlane, who created the trail, are two of 50 local and emerging creatives around the UK selected to take part in the development of StoryTrails and benefit from expert training and mentoring opportunities from StoryFutures Academy, the National Centre for Immersive Storytelling, the team behind StoryTrails. StoryFutures Academy is run by Royal Holloway, University of London and the National Film and Television School (NFTS).

Grace said: "It's taken months of work to get to this point and we can't believe we finally get to share it with everyone. It's truly been a project by Wolverhampton, for Wolverhampton, created in

Wolverhampton. We've unearthed incredible stories of powerful local characters that deserve to be told. We've worked closely with BFI and BBC archives to help tell those stories and we're using new technologies like AR to bring them to life in a way that makes them accessible to all. If you don't have a smart phone you can borrow one on the day – come along to the library on the 6 and 7 August and you'll be able to give it all a go, for free."

Time travel continues inside the libraries across the two live event days, when visitors enter digitally created worlds using a virtual reality (VR) headset. They can expect to find themselves in the shoes of a rebellious teenager as she discovers her mother's punk past; take part in one of the many South Asian daytime raves that took place across the UK in the 1980s and 1990s; and hear what earlier generations thought life would be like today. All the stories featured on the VR headsets are available at every stop on the StoryTrails UK tour.

Historian and television presenter David Olusoga, familiar to viewers of the BBC's *A House Through Time*, narrates a further AR experience that invites visitors to turn a dial on a virtual giant radio and travel back in time. From Beatlemania and the flares and haircuts of the swinging sixties, to dancing to the end of the millennium in crop-tops and trainers, audiences will experience a potted history of the UK through the decades.

This innovative project is led by StoryFutures Academy, the National Centre for Immersive Storytelling. It was developed by teams of leading technologists and creatives, brought together for UNBOXED: Creativity in the UK, a UK-wide celebration of creativity taking place in 2022, including immersive animation pioneers, ISO Design and Nexus Studios, and the company behind Pokémon GO, Niantic. It is brought to life in The Reading Agency's national network of libraries and by event-making specialists ProduceUK.

Professor James Bennett, Director of StoryFutures and StoryTrails, said: "This is about getting people excited about where they live – helping them connect with stories of their towns and cities from the past and present through a new lens. New technologies like AR and VR can help build these connections and reignite people's passion for the past. These technologies are for everyone – we want to find ways to engage people from all generations and spark a genuine celebration in each of our incredible locations."

Martin Green CBE, Chief Creative Officer UNBOXED: Creativity in the UK, said: "StoryTrails is one of ten ground-breaking UNBOXED projects taking place in 2022 that demonstrate the power of creative collaboration across science, technology and the arts to create extraordinary and never-seen-before public experiences. StoryTrails uses cutting edge technology to offer people the opportunity to hear about the places they live - the stories of individuals and communities - in a way that has not been done before."

StoryTrails' 15-stop UK tour runs from 1 July to 18 September 2022 and culminates in a new film presented by David Olusoga that will screen in UK cinemas and BBC iPlayer. The StoryTrails app, augmented reality story trails and immersive maps will be available throughout 2022. The Reading Agency's annual Summer Reading Challenge, for children aged 4 to 11, takes a StoryTrails theme.

UNBOXED: Creativity in the UK is funded and supported by the four governments of the UK and is commissioned and delivered in partnership with Belfast City Council, Creative Wales and EventScotland.

StoryTrails Wolverhampton

6 August, 10-6pm and 7 August, 11-5pm

Wolverhampton Central Library, Snow Hill, Wolverhampton WV1 3AX

The StoryTrails app will launch on the [App Store](#) and [Google Play](#) to coincide with the event.
story-trails.com

Facebook and Instagram @StoryTrailsProject. Twitter @StoryFuturesA

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The StoryTrails Live Tour

StoryTrails takes place in 15 locations across the UK, with free two-day residencies in each town centred around libraries:

- Omagh, 1 – 2 July: Omagh Library, 1 Spillars Place, Irishtown Road, Omagh BT78 1HL.
- Dundee, 7 – 8 July: Dundee Central Library, Wellgate, Dundee DD1 1DB
- Dumfries, 12 – 13 July: Ewart Library, Catherine Street, Dumfries DG1 1JA
- Blackpool, 16 – 17 July: Blackpool Central Library, Queen Street, Blackpool FY1 1PX
- Bradford, 22 – 23 July: City Library Bradford, Centenary Square, 9 Aldermanbury, Bradford BD1 1SD
- Sheffield, 27 – 28 July: Sheffield Central Library, Surrey Street, Sheffield City Centre, Sheffield S1 1XZ
- Lincoln, 30 – 31 July: Lincoln Central Library, Free School Lane, Lincoln LN2 1EZ
- Wolverhampton, 6 – 7 August: Wolverhampton Central Library, Snow Hill, Wolverhampton WV1 3AX
- Swansea, 10 – 11 August: Swansea Central Library, Oystermouth Road, Maritime Quarter, Swansea SA1 3SN
- Newport, 13 – 14 August: Unit 16, 2 Emlyn St, Kingsway Centre, Newport NP20 1EW
- Bristol, 20 – 21 August: Bristol Central Library, College Green, Bristol BS1 5TL
- Swindon, 27 – 28 August: Central Library Swindon, Regent Circus, Swindon SN1 1QG
- Slough, 3 – 4 September: Library @ The Curve, William Street, Slough SL1 1XY
- London Borough of Lambeth, 10 – 11 September: Brixton Library, Brixton Oval, London SW2 1JQ
- London Borough of Lewisham, 17 – 18 September: Catford Library 23-24 Winslade Way, Catford SE6 4JU

UNBOXED: Creativity in the UK

UK-wide, 1 March – 2 October 2022

Unboxed2022.uk

Notes to Editors

About StoryTrails

StoryTrails is a unique immersive storytelling experience, where untold stories from the past are brought to life through the magic of the 3D internet using augmented and virtual reality to reanimate public spaces in towns and cities across the UK. Audiences will time-travel via the wonder of new technologies to experience untold local histories where they happened. StoryTrails is led by StoryFutures Academy which is run by Royal Holloway, University of London and the National Film and

Television School (NFTS).

StoryTrails is one of 10 projects commissioned for [UNBOXED: Creativity in the UK](#), a ground-breaking UK-wide celebration of creativity in 2022 that will bring people together and reach millions through free, large-scale immersive installations and globally accessible digital experiences in the UK's most ambitious showcase of creative collaboration.

StoryTrails will culminate with a specially commissioned film by David Olusoga which will screen in cinemas across the UK and be made available to audiences on BBC iPlayer.

StoryTrails is delivered in partnership with the British Film Institute (BFI), broadcaster and filmmaker, David Olusoga, the BBC, Uplands Television, and leading immersive specialists ISO Design and Nexus Studios. It will use cutting edge technology from Niantic, makers of Pokémon Go, and it will be brought to life in The Reading Agency's national network of libraries and by event-making specialists ProduceUK.

StoryTrails runs 1 July – 18 September 2022. For further details go to story-trails.com

About StoryFutures Academy - storyfutures.com/academy

StoryFutures Academy is the UK's National Centre for Immersive Storytelling, run by Royal Holloway, University of London and the National Film and Television School (NFTS). Funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council, part of UK Research and Innovation, the Academy develops cutting-edge creative training and research programmes, to ensure the UK creative workforce is the most skilled in the world in the use of virtual, augmented and real-time production technology for immersive storytelling.

Alumni of StoryFutures Academy labs have so far included Oscar and BAFTA winning Director Asif Kapadia, Oscar winning VFX Supervisor Paul Franklin and Turner Prize winning conceptual artist Gillian Wearing OBE.

With our partners, over £1m has been invested in UK immersive production, across co-productions with BBC3, and Production Booster and Kickstart development funding. The award-winning VR Documentary Common Ground was the first-ever funded co-production, premiering at the Tribeca Film Festival in early 2019. Violence, an artistic collaboration between film director Shola Amoo (The Last Tree) and producer Eleanor Whitley (Marshmallow Laser Feast), had its world premiere at the Tribeca Film Festival, as part of the Cannes XR Virtual at the Marché du film de Cannes, in June 2020. Laika, commissioned by StoryFutures Academy and directed by BAFTA and Academy Award winning Asif Kapadia, made its world premiere in VR at BFI London Film Festival 2021 as part of their Expanded programme.

About Royal Holloway, University of London – royalholloway.ac.uk

Royal Holloway, University of London, is ranked in the top 25 universities in the UK. Through world class research that expands minds and changes lives, the dedication of our teachers and the feel of the Royal Holloway experience, ours is a community that inspires individuals to succeed academically, socially and personally.

The university was founded by two social reformers who pioneered the ideal of education and knowledge for all who could benefit. Their vision lives on today. As one of the UK's leading research-intensive universities we are home to some of the world's foremost authorities in the sciences, arts, business, economics and law. We are strengthened by diversity, and welcome students and academics who travel from all over the world to study and work here, ensuring an international and multi-cultural perspective within a close knit and historic campus.

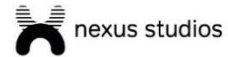
About UNBOXED: Creativity - unboxed2022.uk

UNBOXED: Creativity is a celebration of creativity taking place across the UK in 2022, designed to reach millions and bring people together. It features free large-scale events, installations and globally accessible digital experiences in the UK's most ambitious showcase of creative collaboration. Produced by some of the brightest minds in science, technology, engineering, arts and maths, UNBOXED features ten major multi-site and digital creative projects that share new ideas and possibilities for the future. Events and activities take place from 1 March to 2 October 2022 – from the Outer Hebrides to Luton and from Omagh to Swansea, and across traditional and online media. UNBOXED: Creativity in the UK is funded and supported by the four governments of the UK and is commissioned and delivered in partnership with Belfast City Council, Creative Wales and EventScotland.

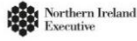
StoryFutures Academy is a partnership with



StoryTrails is delivered by StoryFutures Academy, in partnership with



StoryTrails is commissioned by UNBOXED which is funded by



UNBOXED is delivered in partnership with

