

## **Iron Duke community engagement projects**

There will be four community projects exploring the town's Avon Rubber heritage through a variety of media. These will be:

### **1. Sound and word workshops to explore factory sounds (imagined and anecdotal) to produce a digitally-recorded piece of music.**

There would be a set of six two-hour workshops at the Wiltshire Music Centre involving 5-8 Year 10 and 12 students in the 'dedicated musicians' group at the town's secondary school, St Laurence, followed by a public performance. The workshops would have input from a music teacher, two professional musicians, a sound technician and a poet/writer, who would encourage the students to explore the soundscape of the factory (including the Iron Duke) in music and word formats. The first workshop would involve 6-10 volunteers drawn from the former Avon Rubber workers community, who would talk to, and be questioned by, the students, about the day-to-day working sounds in the factory: machinery, voices etc. The second would be a workshop around those sounds with a music teacher, and the third would feature two professional musicians (there is support in principle from members of The Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment) who would give the students the opportunity to hear different sounds, eg clarinet and violin, to see how they can interact with each other. Working to the students' direction, they would record sounds for use in a digital production which would give an interpretation of factory noise. A writer would work with the students in the fourth workshop to add in a textured overlay of words echoing those sounds. In the fifth workshop, the musicians would return to explore live music elements (played by the students and/or the professional musicians) to go on top of the digitally-recorded piece during the performance, and a sixth session would draw together all the elements – digital and live music and words – ready for the performance at the Wiltshire Music Centre. The former Avon Rubber workers would be invited to the final performance.

The anticipated outcomes of this project would include students interacting with (older) members of their own community, perhaps for the first time (and vice versa), learning about the town's rubber-making heritage from first-hand accounts, and exploring ways to communicate that knowledge with the wider community. They would learn about the production and recording of sounds to produce a musical score, gain first-hand experience of working with professional musicians, a sound technician and writer; and have the opportunity to perform live as part of a professionally-produced project. They would have developed project management skills, and will think differently about their town's place in the industrial development of the country – and about the people in their town who were part of that work. The former Avon Rubber workers will have the satisfaction of passing on details of their working experiences to others, they will have been listened to with interest and will feel that they are making a contribution to the perception of the former factory among young people.

The activities would take place between September and December 2016, so that they fall within one school term, and with a view to spreading the flow of community engagement projects through the year. This would allow for a second wave of interest in, and focus on, the Iron Duke/Avon Rubber project in the town.

Costings: The music teacher would incorporate some of the workshops into school time, and would volunteer out-of-school time for the other sessions, so no costs are involved. Two musicians for two days: £900 (they would work together, so

preparation time is shared); One writer for two days: £700; One sound technician for six days: £2,100. Transport to get former Avon workers to and from the Wiltshire Music Centre for the first workshop: £50. Total: £3,750.

## **2. Community Film about the changing social and economic structure of Bradford on Avon following the demise of the Avon Rubber factory, based on inter-generational oral interviews**

This project would feature a series of workshops with a film company to produce a short community film about the changing face of Bradford on Avon in light of the loss of the Avon Rubber factory. This would involve 6-10 children/grandchildren of former Avon Rubber workers interviewing up to 20 relatives/family friends/community contacts about their memories of work at the factory, and the older generations asking the younger ones about their feelings on the breakdown of the Avon Rubber community, the broken continuity of employment with the demise of the factory, and employment opportunities generally within the modern-day town.

The film company (two people) would deliver basic film-making workshops, to include tuition on storyboarding, sound recording, filming subjects and interviewing skills. Decision-making on points such as who and where to film (for example, in the home, re-tracing steps in the journey to work etc) would be a team effort. The film company would produce a rough edit, then get input from the group towards creating the final film. If particular members of the group have specific talents, they might be involved further, for example if they are musical, they might help produce the soundtrack.

As the interviewing/oral history element of this will also create new archival material, the project would involve at least one member of Bradford on Avon Museum's oral history group (they have expressed interest in participating, and have good contacts among the former Avon Rubber community).

The project would include working with disengaged youth, and would draw out the skills of young people and embed them into the project in an organic approach. The project would bring together several generations who don't necessarily have contact with each other in everyday life, who would together dig through generational strata to find out about life in the town at different periods in time, with the Avon Rubber factory as the starting point for that exploration. This would encourage soft skills among the young people; they will learn interviewing techniques, and experience working as a team – skills they can take forward into their working lives. They would also benefit from an enhanced sense of 'belonging' within their community. Participants would also learn about the process of making a film, how to use recording equipment etc. The older and younger generations would benefit from a greater understanding of, and insight into, each other's lives, problems and viewpoints. Both would have the opportunity to spread those elements to a wider audience through the medium of film, and the former Avon workers will be able to preserve for future generations memories of their working lives and of the town's industrial heritage. The older generation would have the opportunity for increased social interaction, and to encourage others to get involved. Both generations would benefit from an increased sense of purpose and the feeling of satisfaction in having made a contribution to heritage and to the town. The involvement of the young people in the project would raise their awareness of other local heritage sites – and

to consider their possible significance – in the town and beyond. They would feel a greater sense of belonging to ‘their community’.

The workshops would take place between March and July 2016, so that the film produced could be shown at the Bradford on Avon Fringe Festival 2016, in the Vaults, Lamb Yard, Bradford on Avon.

Costings: Film company - £5,000 project fee. The oral history group input will be voluntary, so no costs involved.

### **3. Creative arts interpretation of the health implications of lives lived in a polluted environment, from the Avon Rubber factory’s notorious ‘Black Hole’ to the town’s latter day traffic fumes.**

This project would use the strong, edgy feel of performance poetry as a creative platform for young people to make serious comment about health issues connected with employment and life in an industrialised society. The starting point will be an existing poem written by Merv Grist about the Avon Rubber factory’s ‘Black Hole’, a notoriously dirty, toxic work area from which workers emerged covered in black dust from the rubber. The students would conduct research into the chemicals used in the facility, including gathering first-hand accounts from 8-10 past workers about what it was like to go into the ‘Black Hole’, visiting the archives at the Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre for Census data, and consulting the existing Avon Rubber factory in Melksham. The students would relate this to research into toxins they might be exposed to in their own lives, including fumes from traffic passing through the town (a Bradford on Avon Street was named in 2010 as the worst in the county for air pollution by a Wiltshire Council report).

Using the students’ research, a performance poet would work with them to produce informative pieces of creative performance poetry. The aims of the project are for all participants to develop an understanding of the environmental, social, cultural and economic impact of the production of rubber in their local community, and to see that in the wider context of pollution in a modern world. The project would enhance the students’ research techniques, and the performance element would boost both their confidence and their CVs. They would be taught the skills to communicate their knowledge to the community in a creative environment through the medium of performance poetry/spoken word, and the local community will thereby gain knowledge about the significance of the Avon Rubber factory in the town, and an appreciation of the Iron Duke as a significant representation of the community’s history. There will be a benefit to the former Avon Rubber workers in that they will be given the opportunity to be heard, and to be involved in a proactive exploration and recording of what it was like to work in the factory – with the result that they will have engaged, perhaps for the first time, in a community heritage project.

The aim would be to produce a performance with an overall running time of 30-40 minutes. The workshops would involve 10-15 students from the town’s secondary School, St Laurence, and would take place between March and July 2016. The piece would be performed during the Bradford on Avon Fringe Festival in July 2016, which has an established platform and audience for poetry.

Costings: Six two-hour workshops plus preparation time and time spent editing, researching and preparing for the festival by a professional poetry performance tutor:

£2,100. Transporting students to and from the Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre (one trip): £150. Transporting former Avon Rubber workers to talk to the students: £50. Total cost: £2,300.

**4. This project would resurrect the *Avon Rubber News* newspaper to inform people about the progress of the Iron Duke restoration project and to tell them about ways in which they can get involved.**

The project would involve 12-15 St Laurence School students in a series of visits to the school by a journalist/sub-editor, to help students research, write, lay out and publish a new incarnation of the former *Avon Rubber News*, which formerly acted as a newsletter among the factory's workers. The project would incorporate a visit to a newspaper/magazine to see this process happening on an established publication.

The students would be encouraged to interact with all those involved in the project, including those undertaking the Iron Duke restoration work, and 'officials' including representatives from the Bradford on Avon Museum, the Town Council, plus the former Avon Rubber workers. They would be guided through the various stages of production, including interviewing techniques and recording strategies; photography for publication; writing for a specific audience and to a specific length; and layout and editing skills. The project would include a visit to see the Iron Duke restoration process in progress in Bristol with the opportunity to speak to those involved in the work, and a visit to a local newspaper/magazine to get a feel for how publications are put together and to give the opportunity for questions. The Bristol-based *Western Daily Press* is particularly keen on community-based stories, would be interested in the return of the Iron Duke story, and would be an ideal newspaper to bring on board this project.

The first issue of the new *Avon Rubber News* would also report on the community engagement projects underway as detailed in this bid.

The direct outcome of this project for the students would be that they would learn valuable skills, including how to research material for publication: to consider what information is available, how to obtain it, which parts to disseminate, and how to do that effectively. Students would also learn about the Iron Duke and the restoration work first hand, giving them a sense of involvement in the project, and they would find out about the significance and heritage of the former Avon Rubber factory in the town.

Those people interviewed, across all levels of the project (around 20 in total), would have a sense of the acknowledgement of their involvement, both during the interviewing process and on seeing the publication, and would be able to share that publication with a wider audience to spread the word about the work being done. The newspaper would be distributed via various channels (the museum, library, Tourist Information Office, school etc) so the community at large would find out about the project and identify with the sense of heritage in the town. They would also find out how they could get involved themselves.

There is already funding in place (£1,500 from the Local Youth Network – a Wiltshire Council scheme) to be used in activities for young people aged 13-19, which would cover a small, practitioner-led project prior to the rolling out of the newspaper. An effective use of this resource, which would feed into the *Avon Rubber News* project,

would be the setting up of an Iron Duke Facebook page to get the promotion of the project underway as early as possible: perhaps in January 2016.

The work on the newspaper would follow on naturally from that on-line presence in March 2016, with a view to the first issue being published in April. Subsequent issues would be produced at key times, eg following the return of the Iron Duke to the town, with a picture spread and report on the celebratory event; reports on the final performances of Projects 1, 2 and 3.

Costings: The transport of students to and from Bristol for the visit to see the restoration work in progress and to visit the *Western Daily Press* offices: £200; the journalist's input into the project, including interviewing, writing, layout and editing workshops: six days: £2,100. Further journalistic support for the second issue: one day: £350. Printing costs of two issues of the newspaper (full colour): £900. Total: £3,570.