

Macclesfield Barnaby Festival 2023

IN A NEW LIGHT

Report for Macclesfield Town Council

Highlights

- ★ Barnaby Parade - over 450 people and 23 different groups participated; large crowds spectated.
- ★ Over 70 volunteers delivered Barnaby Festival, including 42 who helped on the parade day.
- ★ Art Trail – received 150 submissions from local people, comprised of established creative practitioners and non-professional enthusiasts alike. Engaged 100 local businesses in displaying art works.
- ★ Listening Tent - 150 'votes' were placed from over 50 people who engaged in conversation with Barnaby Festival on the parade day.
- ★ Barnaby Platform – Profiled 30 exhibitions and events across Macclesfield by Barnaby partners, coinciding with the festival and showcasing the wealth of creative talent in the town.
- ★ Barnaby reached 46,356 people through Facebook between May and July with huge spikes in the close run up to and over the festival weekend. Engagement saw similar spikes, with likes/comments/shares totalling 9,578.
- ★ Between May and July Barnaby Instagram reached 8,872, with 34,004 impressions. This reach was made up of 7982 non-followers, showing our efforts were reaching those in Macclesfield who were not necessarily already aware of Barnaby.
- ★ June saw a 278% increase in visits to the Macclesfield Barnaby Festival website with 390,000 users.



Photo: Travelling Simon Photography www.travellingsimon.com



Introduction

The global COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on the arts and cultural sector with radical disruptions to many of its routines, revenues and relationships. Yet, physical distancing has shown all of us how much we need and value connection, culture and the arts.

Research continues to demonstrate that arts and culture audiences are still slow to return post-pandemic and now further challenged by the cost-of-living crisis.¹

We are proud, therefore, to have ensured that the Macclesfield Barnaby Festival returned this year, with a free, accessible programme of creativity and participation. The festival took place on Saturday 17th & Sunday 18th June and featured its first in-person parade since 2018, delivered in partnership with Macclesfield Community ArtSpace.

For this “re-boot” of Barnaby, and given funding constraints, we took a deliberate decision to focus on a core set of activities:

1. Barnaby Parade
2. Town centre in-window Art Trail (with pre-engagement workshops held at the Silk Museum)
3. Listening Tent
4. Barnaby Platform

All while re-establishing/reinforcing links with our artistic/business communities as well as the people of Macclesfield and our community hubs.



Photo: Mick Steff

¹ The Audience Agency Cultural Participation Monitor. Spring 2023 / and Centre for Cultural Value, University of Leeds.

The arts community in Macclesfield demonstrated its strength with numerous independent and collaborative events taking place over the weekend, promoted via the specially created 'Platform' resource on the Barnaby website.

The Barnaby Art Trail extended from the festival weekend, through to Thursday 22 June. It received over 150 contributions from range of local artists, from established creative practitioners and non-professional enthusiasts alike and engaged over 100 local businesses across the town. This trail transformed the streets of Macclesfield into the 'Art Gallery'.

Barnaby Festival are grateful to have partnered with fantastic organisations such as Macclesfield Art Space, Christ Church and the Silk Museum to make this year's festival a success.



Photo: Mick Steff



A total of 450 people took part in the parade, including participation from 23 local groups representing a cross section of the Macclesfield community. Ranging from schools and faith groups, to dance and theatre troupes, led by the Macclesfield and Cheshire East Mayors.

Handmade floats, created with Macclesfield ArtSpace through their creative outreach workshops, responded to the festival theme In a New Light and animated the town centre along the parade route. These included a beautiful large-scale papier-mâché Willow Tit from the Save Danes Moss campaign, young people from Park Royal Primary School transformed into a walking rainbow, and Tytherington School and women and children from the Pearls of Cheshire celebrated African cultures and traditions. Christ Church hosted popular post-parade entertainment and refreshments.

Rain at midday didn't dampen spirits and the parade drew crowds to watch and cheer on the parade participants.

In addition to the parade participants, a number of local shops and businesses joined the celebrations with creative window displays and decorations including amongst others, Crafty Corner and Paul Peters Electrical Services. The much-loved Barnaby 'washing line' once again decorated the town centre along the railings of St Michael's church.



Photo: Mick Steff

Parade Groups & Participants



Photo: Mick Steff

Mayor of CEC & Macclesfield Town Council
Artspace
The Roe-naissance Project
Cordiality Choir
Park Royal Community School
Dance Addicts
Macclesfield Churches
Tytherington School
Pearls of Cheshire
Dzhyva
Ash Grove Academy
CYGNETS
Speaking Up Speaking Out - SUSO
Macclesfield Pride
Melody Mill
Macclesfield Musical Theatre Troupe (MMTT)
Room for Comics
The One Project
ST Barnabas Brownies
Roar
MADS Theatre
Save Danes Moss



Photo: Mick Steff

Parade Participant Comments

Parade Participants, including members of Speaking Up Speaking Out said:

- ★ *"It was the best day I've had in a long time."*
- ★ *"It was fantastic to be a part of the community and parade."*
- ★ *"Walked with the children from school, was mega."*

Parade Community Participatory Workshops

All community groups participating in the parade were offered a free creative workshop led by ArtSpace. 10 groups participated in multiple workshops sessions.

In addition to outreach workshops, ArtSpace also provided access to their facilities for groups to drop in or base themselves to create and make props and costumes for the parade this included Saturday session and midweek drop ins.

Three important community outreach sessions were delivered at Macclesfield Library, Hurdsfield's The Green In The Corner café and Grosvenor Shopping Centre.



Photo: Mick Steff

Barnaby Festival Volunteers

Macclesfield Barnaby Festival is run by a volunteer Board of Trustees. Recently, there has been a big change of trustees, with 5 new members joining at the start of the year. With none of the team having delivered an in-person Barnaby parade before, we have gained valuable knowledge and experience to build on going forward. The Board of Trustees worked with Macclesfield Community ArtSpace and a freelance Parade Coordinator, thanks to funding support from Macclesfield Town Council.

On parade day, Saturday 17 June, we had 42 volunteers supporting the delivery. With a further 28 volunteers on the Traffic Management team led by Alec Johnston. In total 70 volunteers supported the set up and safe delivery of the parade.

We received further voluntary support in the run up and during the festival, including social media and digital comms support, photographic documentation, assistance for our Art Trail creative workshops at The Silk Museum and installing the Barnaby Washing Lines in the Town Square.



Photo: Mick Steff



There was a fantastic response to the Barnaby Festival Art Trail from Macclesfield's creative community, with just over 150 artworks submitted from a wide range of local creatives from professional artists to enthusiasts, and from children up to artists in their 80's. Poetry and mixed media artworks created during creative workshops at the Silk Museum also featured.

Over 100 local businesses and organisations across the town centre offered their windows for the Art Trail. The increased footfall along the trail route raised awareness of local businesses to participants.

To increase accessibility and reach, entries for the Art Trail were also exhibited digitally on the Second Sight section of the Barnaby website that was developed during the pandemic.

Click the link below to the Art Trail webpage:

[**BARNABY FESTIVAL ART TRAIL 2023**](#)



Image Credit: Jenny Gaywood Artist, *Light over Shutlingsloe*



Image credit: Carys, *Rays of Light*

Art Trail Creative Workshops

To increase access and participation to Barnaby Festival and the Art Trail, thanks to funding from Cheshire Communities Fund, Barnaby delivered a series of creative workshops in partnership with The Silk Museum. These were focused on the festival theme *In A New Light*

Six workshops were provided (3 art, 3 poetry), free of charge, to adults and children who encounter socio-economic barriers to access. They were delivered by local artist Becca Smith and local poet and publisher Ailsa Holland and held at the Silk Museum.

Two art and two poetry workshops involved adults from a diverse range of local groups including Refugees Welcome, adults living with SEND, parents of Home Ed children, Art Society, Macclesfield Eye Society, carers, Artspace referrals, adults with physical disabilities, carers for children with SEND and adults with dementia, Space 4 Autism, Have a Dabble. One art and one poetry workshop involved children aged 7-12 years old accompanied by their parent/guardian from Home Ed. Participants came from Ashgrove Primary, Hurdsfield Primary and Tytherington High School. There was a total of 55 participants between the six workshops. For the majority, this was the first time doing art or poetry.

Participants were introduced to various methods and approaches to explore and express their individual artistic and creative voice. They were given the skills and materials to apply this to the creation of either a piece of art or poetry with the support and guidance of supportive professionals.



Feedback from the participants welcomed the friendly and enjoyable atmosphere. It also highlighted that the workshops benefited participants' wellbeing, happiness, and confidence in themselves. They were given the chance to socialise, build intergenerational relationships between family members and foster a sense of community within Macclesfield. Many expressed a newfound love of art or poetry and a keen interest to do more both in their own time and at further organised events.

Below are some of the comments from participants.

- ★ ***'The poetry workshop got my brain working and time with my son'***
- ★ ***'The poetry workshop has made me want to read more poetry and think about writing some myself'***
- ★ ***'It was great having Ailsa there and I really enjoyed spending time with her and hearing her wonderful thoughts'***
- ★ ***'I felt very happy about making the collages and I have learnt a lot'***
- ★ ***'I gained confidence and enjoyed being creative in the art workshops'***

- ★ ***'The art workshop has opened my mindset and I loved how we took breaks to come back and reach our full potential'***
- ★ ***'It was a lovely distraction from the stress of a normal week. A nice change to do something creative that I don't usually have an opportunity to do'***



The Listening Tent was located at St Michael's churchyard and designed as an open, friendly space where people could come to:

- ★ Find out more about Barnaby Festival
- ★ Meet the Board of Trustees
- ★ Share Barnaby memories
- ★ Help shape the future direction of the Barnaby Festival
- ★ Sign up for information and keep in touch.

The main activity was designed as an engaging way to ask people: *What matters most to them about an arts festival in Macclesfield?* We focused the conversation around 6 themes which were opportunities to:

- ★ *Discover?*
- ★ *Be Inspired?*
- ★ *Connect?*
- ★ *Create + Play?*
- ★ *Celebrate?*
- ★ *Learn/try something new?*
- ★ *...What else?*

In order to gain insight into what matters most to people, Listening Tent visitors were given specially designed stickers/tokens and asked to vote for their top 3 priorities and rank them.

The Listening Tent was a great success and proved popular with visitors on the day. As well as meeting the board and finding out about Barnaby, over 150 votes were cast across 50 contributors with an additional 29 comment and feedback cards completed on the day. The findings are interesting. If people had only 1 choice (i.e. what mattered most to them) the top priority is Create and Play. However, they were also asked to consider their 2nd and 3rd most important priorities. Taking this as a whole and by adding a weighted ranking (attaching highest value to 1st then 2nd and 3rd choices) we get an idea of overall popularity which was:

1. **Connect**
2. **Create and Play**
3. **Celebrate**

People were able to tell us more about matters to them by adding to comment cards displayed around the tent. Encouragingly almost 60% of people who 'voted' added expanded feedback.

Thoughts and suggestions included:

- ★ *It is lovely to use the arts to bring the community together. Great parade (Connect)*
- ★ *It is great to celebrate the community coming together after lockdown (Celebrate)*
- ★ *I've recently moved to Macclesfield so don't know anything about groups and community activities, would love to know more. (Discover)*
- ★ *Bringing the community together is important (Connection)*
- ★ *After volunteering at the Silk Museum workshops, I feel it would be nice to see more of them and to have art and creative opportunities for people who can't usually access creative spaces (Create and Play)*
- ★ *Family events cost a lot of money so we need events and activity for families and the community without cost*



Photo: Barnaby Festival

- ★ Ellie, 8 years old, wrote - in her own words (Create and Play) *"It inspires me to do more art and have more experience of being an artist. I love art and I think I can be an artist when I grow up"*



Barnaby Memories

In addition to the Listening Tent we encouraged people to share their favourite memories of past Barnaby Festivals and add them to the 'Memory Book'. One gentleman remembered a communal picnic around shared tables in Market Square and was delighted to spot himself in one of the archive photographs on the Barnaby Memories photo board.

The comments are great to read and include:

We loved:

- ★ ***-Street entertainers/acrobats and stilt walkers***
- ★ ***-Music events and the stage on market square***
- ★ ***-Thanks for starting out again after Covid 😊***

- ★ ***I loved the 'Love letter to Macc' project back in 2016 – so many people involved, such beautiful writing from everyone. So glad the lines from it are on the pavement in town.***

- ★ ***Loved the first art trail where we discovered lots of hidden buildings and studios that were not normally open.***

- ★ ***Sitting at communal benches in the marketplace in the pouring rain, listening to the bands – fantastic!***



Photo: Barnaby Festival





Barnaby Platform celebrated the wealth of artistic talent here in Macclesfield. The online platform featured 30 listings for exhibitions, events and activities across the town that coincided with Barnaby Festival and responded to the theme In a New Light.

The diverse range of cultural offerings from Macclesfield's creative community, included music recitals, arts workshops, interactive installations, guided heritage walks, virtual reality workshops, group exhibitions, performance, poetry readings and so much more!

Independent creative practitioners and artist-led projects were joined by arts organisations such as The Silk Museum, IDST!, Macclesfield Art Lounge, twentysevenb studio and The Doll's House Art Gallery. Venues throughout the town included, artist studios, Macclesfield Library, Grosvenor Centre, local cafes & businesses and more, with a concert even taking place in Tegg's Nose Country Park.

Platform was a significant part of the Barnaby Festival, presenting a high-quality artistic programme that complemented the overall festival. Barnaby drew attention to the exciting cross-section of cultural activity in the town, raising awareness and championing the creativity and culture of Macclesfield.



Photo: Flownamix Media Productions

Social Media Statistics

Facebook

Between May and July our Facebook had a reach of 46,356 people. With huge spikes in the close run up to and over the festival weekend.

Engagement saw similar spikes, with likes/comments/shares totalling 9,578.

Instagram

Between May and July our Instagram reached 8,872, with 34,004 impressions.

This reach was made up of 7982 non-followers, showing our efforts were reaching those in Macclesfield not necessarily already aware of Barnaby, and 890 existing followers.

Our Instagram profile was visited over 1000 times.

Paid for META content reached over 26,000 targeted accounts.

Photography and Videography

Barnaby Festival contracted Macclesfield based business Flownamix Media Productions to capture video documentation of activities on Saturday 17 June. In addition to Flownamix, a couple of generous local photographers agreed to volunteer to capture photographs on the day too.

To view the official Barnaby Festival film and photography visit the Barnaby Festival website using the following link:

<https://barnabyfestival.org.uk/barnabyfestival-parade/>



Website Statistics

June saw a 278% increase in visits to the Macclesfield Barnaby Festival website, with 3.9k users compared to 544 users in April and 1k users in May.

Press

There was fantastic coverage of Barnaby Festival 2023 in the Macclesfield Express and local coverage in the lead up to the festival in local printed and digital publications.



Further Feedback

The Audience Agency

We were pleased to collaborate with the Audience Agency as part of the Barnaby Festival, thanks to the support of Cheshire East Council.

The Audience Agency is one of the UK's leading arts and cultural audience research companies providing knowledge, data and insight enabling cultural organisations to increase their relevance, reach and resilience.

The Audience Agency undertook on the ground market research on the day of the parade. The survey:

- ★ Captured who attended the event.
- ★ Captured attendees' experience of the event.
- ★ Asked them about their wider perceptions of culture in Macclesfield.
- ★ Helps understand more about their wider cultural participation/cultural volunteering and barriers to engagement.

Cheshire East Council commissioned the Audience Agency to gather audience feedback about their experiences of culture, arts and heritage in Macclesfield as part of wider research with other cultural partners in Macclesfield. This will help build a foundation to develop and refresh the Macclesfield Cultural Strategy and understand local and visiting audience attitudes post lockdown.

Data from the Listening Tent consultation will add to the research giving an opportunity to create a catchment map and include the profile of attendees using The Audience Agency's highly regarded segmentation model [Audience Spectrum](#).

Data from the Audience Agency survey and research will feed into our overall evaluation of Barnaby 2023 in due course.

What next?

The overwhelming response to Barnaby 2023 from the people of our town has been *“can we have more?”*.

Overwhelmingly our community has come together post-pandemic with a hunger to:

- ★ **Connect**
- ★ **Create and Play**
- ★ **Celebrate**

The volunteer Trustee Board is delighted with the response of the Town to the re-boot of Barnaby. We will now focus on understanding the detailed feedback gathered from the Audience Agency and the MTC Events Team to inform our planning for the next Barnaby.

We will be consulting with our partners and supporters in our planning; this obviously will include MTC.

We look forward to working with you to deliver another successful Barnaby for our Town.



Photo: Mick Steff