

Human Henge: Cultural Heritage Therapy in action



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Dancing in the Stonehenge landscape

Using natural and constructed landscapes to promote health and well-being has a long and distinguished history stretching back to the pilgrimages of Medieval times. Human Henge takes the idea one step further by combining archaeology and creativity in a World Heritage Site as a way of improving mental health and reaching out to marginalised communities.

Run by the Restoration Trust in partnership with Bournemouth University, English Heritage, and the Richmond Fellowship, with support from the National Trust and Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Trust; this innovative project takes participants on journeys of discovery through the Stonehenge landscape.



The project builds on the idea that Stonehenge was once a place of healing by exploring the relationships between people and place in the past and the present. Thinking about how people might have used ancient places, come together for communal endeavours, interacted, and created social networks creates opportunities to break down some of the emotional barriers that underpin many mental health issues.

By spending time at a selection of the sites, singing, dancing, making music, and looking both inwards and outwards it becomes possible to connect with the landscape, the skyscape, the monuments, and, most importantly, with ourselves and with other participants. As one participant reflected after a visit to King Barrow Ridge: 'it was about connecting on a personal level with the landscape by listening to the birds and the wind, feeling the cold, sitting in the grass and being surrounded by these amazing burial monuments'.

Through a programme of participant-led activities, local people living with mental health problems and on low incomes, come together for fun and therapeutic adventures. Experts, carers, support workers, and contributors from a range of cultures facilitate journeys through the remarkable and inspiring landscape of the World Heritage Site. Each programme involves ten half-day sessions that are held in different parts of the landscape, including Durrington Walls and Woodhenge, the Cuckoo Stone, the King Barrow Ridge barrow cemetery, and the reconstructed houses and displays at the visitor centre. Each programme culminates with an early-morning ceremony inside Stonehenge, designed and executed by the participants themselves. The project is funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, Amesbury Area Board, and English Heritage, and will run until June 2018. To find out more visit our web-pages at: <http://humanhenge.org>

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and the Human Henge Team