



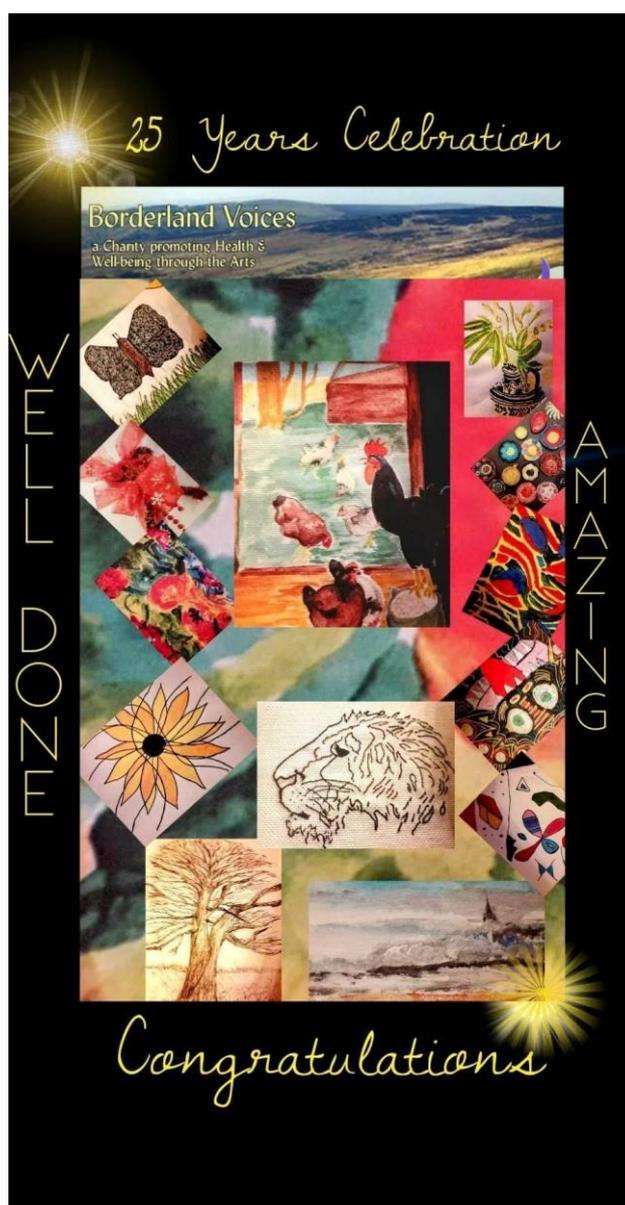
**The Queen's Award
for Voluntary Service**

The MBE for volunteer groups



Celebrating 25 years of arts for well-being

**Borderland Voices: Art
for health &
mental wellbeing**



Digital collage of our calendar, created by supporter Kath Parry-Thomas

Borderland Voices Annual Report, 2022-23

Introduction and executive summary, Andy Collins, Coordinator



Spring collage, mixed media

This year, 2023, Borderland Voices (BV) will be 25 years old. What an achievement. We've survived pestilence (the COVID pandemic), flood (water coming through my office ceiling on two occasions), famine (although many members are suffering the effects of the cost of living crisis), fortunately not fire (fingers crossed). We've survived moving premises, more times than I care to remember. We've also lost friends, again more than I care to remember including, this year, David Picken and participant trustee Paul Brady.

We continue to support participants' mental well-being via two face-to-face creative sessions every week (writing and expressive art) and outreach activities to counteract stigma have largely returned to pre-COVID levels.

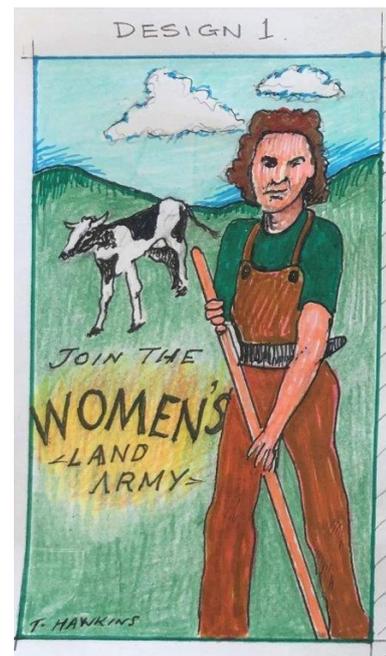
A steady trickle of referrals and self-referrals challenges the physical capacity of our premises to the rear of Leek Health Centre (LHC) on Fountain St. We have use of the large room on only 1 day/week but, as we currently have no funding for additional arts facilitation, we are restricted to the two sessions and putting people on a waiting list.

Sarah Males is our writer in residence but as always, various visual artists facilitate expressive arts workshops and I fill in gaps as necessary, which saves money.

Getting together, meeting people, chatting over a cuppa and a biscuit; these remain almost as important a part of the BV experience as learning or developing arts skills. Thankfully this has largely reverted to where we were pre-COVID. This year you'll also notice more images of events, visits and awareness-raising which demonstrate that most, if by no means all, people are now ready and able to re-engage with activities.

Delivering outputs connected to the Women's Land Army (WLA) has featured largely during the year. This creative exploration of the local history of the WLA is funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) and has included writing, art, visits and exhibitions. We have also secured an extension to summer 2024, to enable us to reach our targets. Put Saturday 18th May 2024 in your diary, for a major 1940s Gala Day at the Foxlowe to celebrate the wonderful work BV has achieved.

At the start of Phase 2 of the WLA project I undertook a baseline well-being study with BV participants. Excerpts, plus selected creative writing, form the backbone of the section on Impact/Value which I've set alongside a European study



WLA poster design, pencil crayon



Lyn presenting her mayoral charity cheque to BV, at a writing group session

support and practical help which we all need from time to time. Indeed, I had to rely on others this year while I was briefly in hospital and then recuperating (which called for a trial run of our Succession Strategy). As the majority of volunteers are participants and vice versa, people instinctively know how best to help.

It hasn't been a particularly productive year on the fund-raising front. A major grant application which might have employed an additional part-time staff member was unsuccessful. However, we did, with some difficulty, secure an extension of the WLA project as mentioned above and hence all but 10% of the remaining NLHF grant, to deliver further creative activities. Also, our benefactress, Lyn Swindlehurst, swelled our coffers by just over £2,000 as a result of her charity fund raising efforts while Leek Town Mayor.

Networking, sometimes face-to-face at events or meetings, frequently in a 'Zoom room', helps to keep BV in people's minds, as does the calendar. One never knows what may develop from chance encounters.

I would like to thank the Board members for their support, encouragement and, sometimes, practical help. We are fortunate to have a group of individuals with a diverse range of skills, who are willing to devote some of their precious spare time to steering BV through what can, at times, be choppy waters.

What shines through for me is the love and support of the wide Borderland Voices family. Here's to the next 25 years.

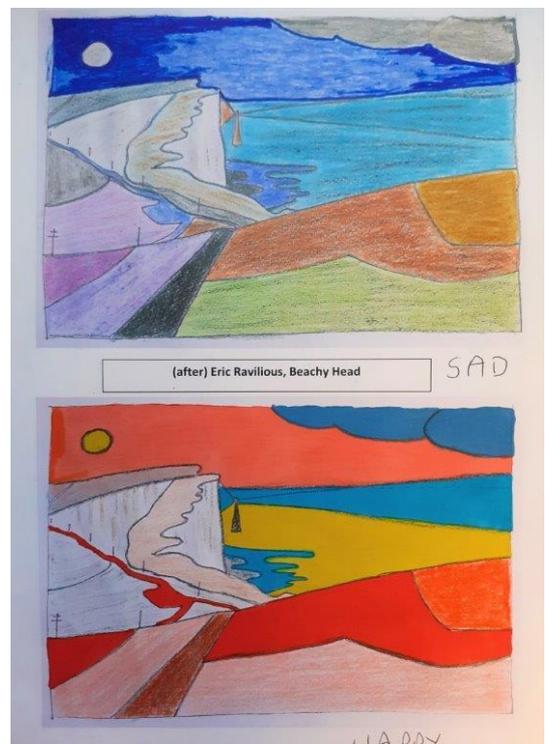
Our objectives. This year, largely freed from Covid restrictions, we've continued to:

1. Provide weekly, enjoyable arts activities, in many forms, to support the health and mental wellbeing of regular participants, in and around the Staffordshire Moorlands;

of culture's contribution to health and well-being. The feedback from BV participants leaves me in no doubt of the ongoing value of our services to them.

I still do all admin work from home but am almost invariably at LHC on Wednesdays to set up the room and clear away. As this necessitates carrying folding tables and other heavy or unwieldy items from the office to the activity room, arranging time off involves more than simply letting someone have a key (as at Bank House).

'Volunteering' at BV is very often about maintaining the vital web of emotional



Colour affecting landscape mood, felt-tip

2. Employ local professional artists to facilitate arts sessions;
3. Encourage participants to socialise and support one another, whether or not they have mental health issues, to help combat stigma;
4. Tackle stigma through displays, exhibitions, public events, publications, media coverage etc. which also raise awareness of our work;
5. Participate in community arts events as funding permits.

Under each heading, these are our Key Achievements:



Folding books, mixed media



WLA landscape, 3-d clay

1. Weekly creative writing and art sessions.

We maintain core activities (creative writing and expressive art sessions) in-person, at our base in Leek Health Centre. Our Women's Land Army Project has inspired a proportion of this creative output.



A WW2 kitchen, pencil crayon

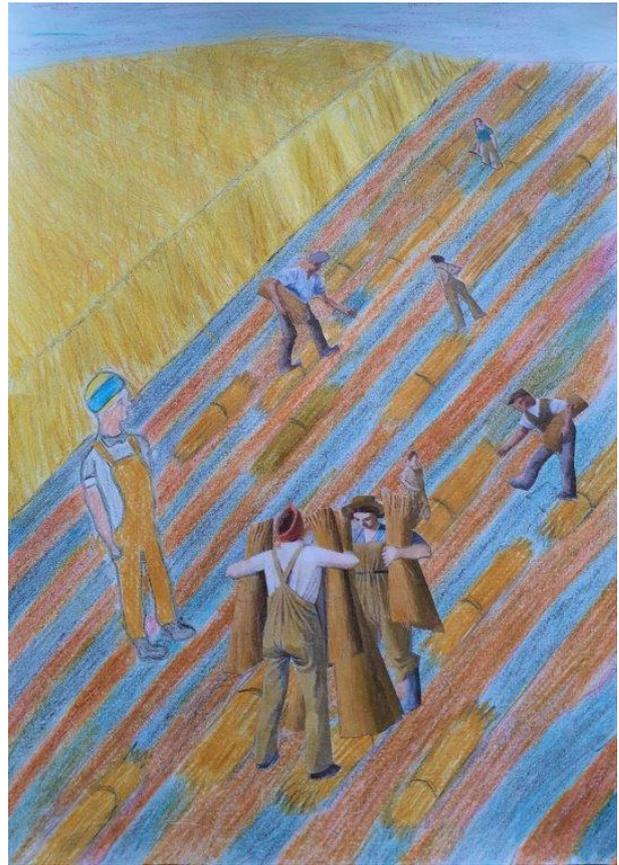
A suitable room is available only 1 day/week, which means setting up beforehand and clearing everything at the end of the day. Most participants who attended pre-pandemic have returned and we've welcomed new ones. All enjoy the writing, art, drinks and biscuits plus the supportive, informal conversation which is integral to BV activities. Many participants continue generously to make weekly voluntary donations to support the sessions, even though money is tight.

2. Arts-sector employment.

Jess Vere, our Derby University student, completed her 3-month placement with us. This will enable her to pursue a career in Art therapy.

Sarah Males has facilitated most of the writing workshops as well as much of the WLA-themed art, while the arts sessions have as usual included a wide range of media. Andy too has led several sessions in order to make our resources stretch further.

Hence, in the course of the year, art sessions have included abstract colourful landscapes (Jess), dot mandalas (Nelly Ferrari), Jubilee (Andy), 1940s' farms (Sarah), Summer Holidays (Andy), WLA poster design (Gavin Bowyer), 3 WLA WELLIES visits (incorporating art and hand skills – see below for more detail), decorating WWII recipes (Andy), Harvest (Sarah) (inspired by the paintings of official WWII artist Evelyn Dunbar, who made many studies of Land Girls at work), 'taking a line for a walk' (but based on Miro) (Andy), how colour affects mood in landscapes (using work by Peplow



WLA collage based on a work by Evelyn Dunbar



Impromptu leaving party for Jess, our placement student from Derby University

3. Socialisation and peer support.

To reiterate the comment with which concluded the introduction: 'what shines through is the love and support of the wide Borderland Voices family.' Socialisation and peer support are apparent and all-inclusive during the writing and art sessions. What is less obvious is the complex web of support which holds people throughout the rest of the week; it includes phone calls, visits, shopping, emails, texts, car shares and practical help with the most challenging situations e.g. burst pipes.

and Ravilious) (Andy), 'Love-crows' - a variant of scarecrows using only natural, compostable materials and designed to attract wildlife into the garden (Ruby Sufi), 2-D Christmas tree 'baubles' (Andy), WLA style Xmas cards (Sarah), BV's Silver Anniversary in 2D and 3D (Andy), Approaches to Still Life (Frances Naggs) and Spring Collages (Sarah).

A selection of the wonderful and colourful artwork illustrates this document while examples of written work are included in the Impact/Value section.

Although it's perhaps invidious to pick out individuals, given that the BV support network is so inclusive, Bill Taylor and Mark Johnson were recognised in the 2022 Volunteer Star Awards arranged by Support Staffs (SuS). Bill was unfortunately unable to attend the ceremony, as he was in hospital.

Once more, 'socialisation' has included visits: Treasuring Trees exhibition in Buxton Art Gallery, which included BV artwork; Buxton's Pump Room to see 'The Word on the Street' exhibition to which, again, BV contributed via writing workshops. We also enjoyed 3 very special day-visits to the WELLIES project near Sudbury as part of the art and training aspect of the WLA project (horticulture,



Visitor enjoying BV pieces. 'Word on the street' exhibition, Buxton Pump Room

harvesting, food preparation, cooking on a budget, WWII recipes, wood turning, needlecraft)

[WELLIES is a

Community Interest Company (CIC) delivering therapeutic learning activities (with animals, plants, creativity and the countryside) for people recovering from mental ill health. We invited Rethink participants and trustees to join us.] Finally, trustees and friends joined us for an excellent Christmas lunch at the Blue Mugge.



Mark's volunteer award; Bill was in hospital

4. Tackling stigma and raising awareness.

Many meetings where Andy represents BV, including the Staffs Moorlands Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) Forum, the Green Network and the VCSE Alliance

Mental Health Forum remain on Zoom or Teams. These platforms also help the visibility of our message in larger national seminars (e.g. Andy's presentation to the Coalition for Efficiency).

Our Facebook group (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1398672493722468>) is another virtual space which continues to grow and allows us to share news and views. But finally the number of local face-to-face events is bouncing back to pre-COVID levels.

The Association for Heritage Interpretation's (AHI) Journal editor kindly drafted an illustrated article about BV and the WLA project, based on Zoom interviews with Andy and photos she provided. The article appeared in the Winter 2022 edition of this glossy and prestigious publication.

There was a Mental Health Awareness Week stall in May '22 and we contributed, not least by coordinating the event, but at the last minute Andy had to attend a family funeral. We had a display of artwork in the constituency office window of our MP Karen Bradley; a stand publicising BV at two events organised by Karen Bradley; a stand promoting BV and especially the WLA project at the Foxlowe Hug festival; and BV participants read at John Hall Wellness Garden's 'Horticultural Hurrah'.

Andy delivered an (online) presentation on 'measuring impact as a small organisation' to a meeting of the Coalition for Efficiency.



Colourful display of BV artwork in the constituency office window of our MP



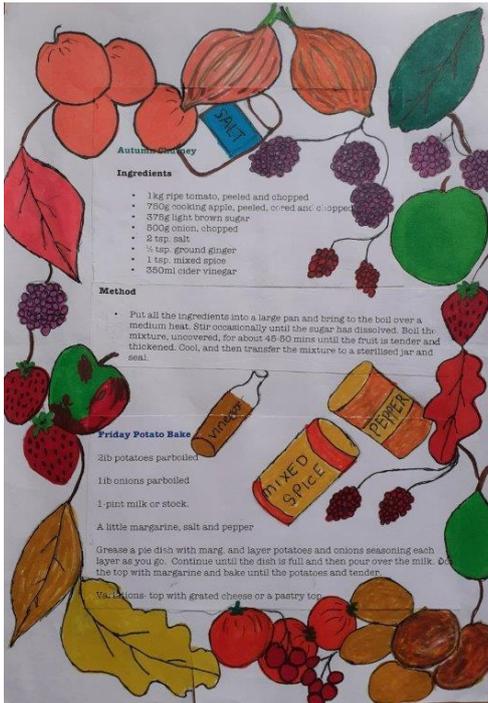
4-page spread, Association for Heritage Interpretation Journal

Once again, assembling the 2023 calendar was eased by having the writing group face-to-face, although some inefficiency on the part of our printers meant that many were delivered late. The calendar is nonetheless as popular as ever and remains a vital awareness-raising tool.

5. Community involvement.

As the previous section shows, civic and community life is back to normal for most people and we have taken part in relevant events. These help both to showcase the artwork of BV participants and to spread messages about the importance of mental well-being and the damage caused by stigma.

But it is important to remember that the pandemic has had a profound and lasting effect on some lives. Within the wider BV family, some have lost friends and relatives to COVID; some are no longer physically capable of joining us or have health conditions which make it unsafe to take part in indoor activities (relying instead on the monthly newsletter and/or phone calls); others have young people whose schooling and mental health have been severely impacted.



WLA recipes, BV images, mixed media

The Women's Land Army Project

Supported by a grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, it was initially scheduled 2020-22. However, we received the go-ahead just as we entered the COVID pandemic in March 2020. We maintained slow, steady progress even in lockdowns, gradually expanding activities when restrictions eased, as mentioned last time. With greater freedoms, progress accelerated in the first half of this year but we knew it would be impossible to deliver all agreed outputs and outcomes without an extension. Liz and Andy submitted a budget claim and interim report respectively which have enabled the project to continue to August 2024. Make a date in your diary for the grand 1940s Gala Day on Saturday 18th May 2024 at the Foxlowe, showcasing the project's achievements.

The emphasis this year on WLA activities explains the number of related images featured here.

Impact/value

Andy carried out a baseline participant survey as we entered the 2nd phase of the Women's Land Army project. Tailored to BV's activities, it is based on the widely used Shorter Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (SWEMWBS). Respondents read a series of statements (e.g. 'I deal well with problems') and compare how positive they feel when at BV as opposed to in their everyday life. All recorded an improvement in many aspects of well-being while at BV. The survey also enquires whether people enjoy BV and if it helps them cope better at home. Again, everyone responded positively. Finally, there is space on the back of the form for people to leave their own unprompted comments. This is a selection:



'Summer holidays', mixed media

'Over the time I've been attending BV, a whole new world has opened up for me. I've been enabled to do things I never thought possible. Just to be able to put my thoughts on paper is quite a release to me. I've always felt wanted, accepted and needed, which is great, and I have some really lovely friends whom I know have all had their personal issues and problems. So I feel close to them, because I realise ever more acutely how much we need one another.'

'The things I most enjoy about BV are the comradeship, the caring, the quality of the work and the voices.'

'BV has helped me so much since I first arrived. I was a nervous wreck who didn't wish to interact with anyone and shook just be being in a room of strangers. Through the writing, I've realised my thoughts matter, that nothing is wrong when it comes to writing and I've been accepted. It's helped me interact with new people, create a social group, something I don't have a lot of outside this space, and I've made good friends. I've gained some confidence back, interact more in group discussions and enjoy it. Something I never thought I'd achieve, all through the support of BV.'

'I most enjoy the company, routine, support, ideas and conversation.'

'As a therapist myself, I judge BV to be a truly therapeutic space. As a group facilitator, I can honestly say that the BV group is safely and lovingly held. I've gained enormously from being in the group and wish to thank all the group members.'

'I enjoy being able to share my stories and creations with people.'

'I joined BV after escaping from an abusive relationship and it has really helped me to regain my confidence.'

'I look forward to the painting and colouring; it makes me feel better.'



Spring collage, mixed media



BV stand at Karen Bradley's Community Volunteers Celebration, with Deputy Lieutenant Admiral Sir Trevor Soar

'BV is a valuable resource to all who use it. Without BV, many people would suffer in silence on their own, alone. The mental abilities of many would be 'frozen' if we never experienced the groups of learning skills and great improvement shared. It's vital that BV remains a positive meeting point, every week, every year, which delivers a very experienced and caring service to everyone.'

'I enjoy learning new art skills and mixing with new people.'

'BV helped me when I desperately needed it.'

'I most enjoy the art and the company; and I don't feel so lonely.'

'The BV community has supported me through the pandemic and beyond. It's an integral part of my life.'

Writing Leek which took place last year involved many BV writers and attracted accolades, such as this from long-time supporter Moira: 'So many interesting Land Army stories, books and displays. What a lot of work; you must all be so proud.'

The writers are no less active throughout the year than the art group, whose efforts lavishly illustrate this document. Here are a few of their pieces, many of which reflect the value to them of BV.

The Right Track (Bill)

The Right track:
don't look back.
Sometimes life's unkind,
so keep an open mind.
Life's bigger than you think,
goes by in a blink.
Look, look again,
till vision is more plain.
Relax, relax enjoy the ride;
all are coming on yonder tide.



Colourful abstract landscape, acrylic

Home (Linda)

Home is where the heart is,
that's what people say. Be it
ever so humble or a big
mansion, it doesn't matter. But home for me is where my family, my friends and wherever I may wander, I don't think you can beat the glorious countryside that surrounds us in our little town of Leek.

Hope (Jane)

Hope. It's a beautiful word. When we're in the deepest darkness and despair. Hope is the light in the dark. The angel you needed when all else seemed lost to you. Hope is the strength when you feel defeated. Even just an ounce of it can keep you going. We all need hope in whatever form it manifests. When you feel it, grasp it hard and never let it go. For like the phoenix, hope will raise you from the ashes anew.

Holding on and Letting go (Rachel)

Trying to balance things in life is difficult. Holding onto things is easy but letting them go is more difficult. We like to collect a lot of clutter. Trying to find a balance between day-to-day tasks. Watching my feline friend trying to balance as she lies on my legs, now she is older and unstable on her feet. Trying to balance as I walk with my stick is a task in itself. Walking on the ice, frost and snow is all about balancing. Watching trapeze artists as they hold their balance. Life is all about balance and holding on and letting go of things.

On the ocean (Mary)

There is often something, sharp, and separate as a star that shows the way when you found yourself fixed; that pulls you in its direction, so that you make a boat, by yourself, or happily, with others and go out on a dark sea to follow. And it probably doesn't matter if you don't find a destination. The companionship in the boat or in waving to others floating lonely around you, only a little distance away, and the striving and the beauty of the great waters and the star may be enough.

Sense of place (Jane)

A place where I belong,
where attachments grow.
A place I have a bond
with people I love and know
A place I can find peace
and enjoy all that's around me
where I fit in like a jigsaw piece
somewhere I can be free.

WELLIES health and wellness project visit.

Learning how to turn a dibber on a lathe.

No-one had ever tried this before

All came home with a beautifully finished hand tool which was a memento of a fascinating day.



WELLIES health and wellness project near Sudbury, where we enjoyed a series of Women's Land Army visits, inspired the following three pieces. We picked produce, cooked WWII recipes and learned new skills, including wood-turning.

At the Lathe (Mark)

It's frightening at first — the spindle's spin, its whirr that — oh-so-tentative — first move
A burr left and groove

indistinct. *I'll never get the hang of this* you think. But then reassuring hand, the guiding touch, and suddenly you realise

I have done this before — not in wood, not on a lathe, nor with skew chisel, or parting tool, but

in life. *I have made something new from raw stuff before.* Well, raw — yes, but perhaps not new. Damaged, waiting

to be remade. But, still, you placed yourself in the hands of someone who knew — listened, took heed. Accepted proffered knowledge

and skill in the manner intended, found the grain, worked round the knots — instinctively sensed that your guide, too, may have made

a journey all their own. That journeyman once was apprentice, tentative as you now are, paid their dues. And so found the squared block fully turned around.



Another new skill, which would have been part of many Land Girls' lives, was making sausages.

We also made (and ate) Friday Pie — onions, pastry, potatoes and not much else except seasoning.

Day Out at WELLIES (Tia)

Travelling with friends on this beautiful sunny day, arriving at our destination, looking out at the views, cows in a field and space with much colourful greenery with the trees, what a lot to take in! I kept an open mind because you never know what to expect and boy, was I amazed at everything offered to encourage a positive response. The whole day was inspirational...learning, listening, being educated into a wonderful and important part of growing and healing activities, besides not forgetting that bit of exercise we got from the four-legged friends.

WELLIES (Pauline) I went on an outing last week. To the WELLIES project. A sanctuary in the world's wilderness. A paradise complete, with nature's gifts. A place content, they made us lunch, and taught us some things. How to grow your own, and how to combat the loneliness confusion brings. No hierarchy here – we were made most welcome, walking in the freedom fields, under no one's thumb. The chance to learn new skills at last. No payment required, as in the past. Do we really have the chance to un-mortgage our lives from the banks, the universities, the governments, husbands and wives? I'm here again today. So I'd just like to say "I'm grateful indeed for the chance to be here. And I will join in with activities. But I must make it clear, the two main reasons I am back, are two precious canines called Spike and Jack."



WLA uniform – too hot in high summer

(Will)

Here's a little message to you. Hope your new year is one of joy and happiness but, if it's not, or one of them dark days, just know you're not alone and are loved, for you are one of many lights that make this world bright and fulfilled; for you matter, now and forever.

(Mark)

Nothing is so fearful you cannot laugh at it. You can cry too.....

(Pauline)

Borderland Voices and all potential members.
I give you a star
Wherever you are
May there be peace, kindness and contentment.

Short New Year messages written for the January 2023 newsletter conclude this section of BV-specific feedback.

(Rachel)

A message for fellow members of Borderland Voices. I enjoy coming to the group and meeting people and developing my writing skills, making friends and listening to different stories and keeping my brain functioning.

(Maggie)

I have been a member of Borderland Voices for almost a year. I really appreciate the safe space to express new thoughts and heartfelt memories. It is a space to share kindness, humour and biscuits.



'Love crows' – an environmentally friendly variant of scare crows – using only natural materials and designed to attract wildlife to the garden

The CultureForHealth report. Culture's contribution to health and well-being. A report on evidence and policy recommendations for Europe (published December 2022) sets the evaluation of our local impact in a much wider context.

The following are selected quotes which include both original and Andy's emboldening.

The 2019 WHO study's findings demonstrated that **the arts can potentially impact disease prevention and health promotion in both the mental and physical health areas**, as well as in the management and treatment of illnesses.

While it has been pointed out in several forums that **focusing on disease prevention and health promotion is more cost effective, on average in the EU, public and private expenditure on preventive care accounted for only 2.8 % of total health expenditure in 2018.**



Dot mandalas - so simple, yet so varied, paint on canvas

Culture is an important resource in this context when approaching health holistically. Through culture and the arts, **targeted initiatives can be adaptable to diverse audiences with specific needs** – whether those people are young or old, or of working age. The findings of the CultureForHealth scoping review confirm this. **Arts and cultural activities are important in promoting the positive mental health and well-being of populations, both individually and at a collective level.** Our review has shown **that the interdisciplinarity, accessibility and personal approach that arts-based and cultural activities provide can have significant health benefits.** Additionally, as the WHO stated, 'the arts provide cost-effective interventions for complex health challenges that may not have current health-care solutions, while alleviating pressures on limited health resources'.

Arts and cultural approaches can have a role to play in management and treatment of illnesses. This is not to be regarded as just an add-on to existing medical treatment; **cultural and arts-based methods can prove effective as healthcare responses in their own right.**



Design for a WLA poster, pencil crayon

A holistic approach can be offered by cultural activities, as they help shift the focus away from specific illnesses to a broader understanding of health. In this way, culture supports health and well-being at the **individual level** (supporting **physical and mental health**, and **subjective well-being**), at the **community level** (supporting **social inclusion**, and engaged, **resilient communities**) and at the **economic level** (resulting in what the OECD describes as an economy of well-being).

The evidence points towards associations between art-related cultural activities and positive health outcomes. The benefits include:

- **improvements to quality of life;**
- **general and psychological well-being;**
- **increased social engagement;**
- **a reduction in personal experiences of depression and anxiety;**
- **improved health-related quality of life in patients with chronic health conditions;**
- **prevention of cognitive decline in older adults;**

- **and the development of cognitive, emotional and social skills.**

Participation in cultural activities can help with health promotion and the prevention of illness, as well as with the management and treatment of conditions. As the above suggests, studies were gathered on a range of topics that covered a broad spectrum of health and well-being related issues, ranging from: the inclusion of disadvantaged groups; improved empathy and meaning-finding; improved perceptions of the healthcare environment; and physical, psychological and social benefits for those with chronic obstructive pulmonary diseases. **Most studies included in the scoping review refer to art-based interventions in which participants were actively involved in the creative process**, though this may reflect the studies that have been undertaken rather than indicating that active cultural involvement is necessarily more effective.

Volunteers

Andy indicated above how vital the participants' peer support network remains to all of us, including her. But most people do lots of other things as well, to oil the wheels.

We rely on Liz, our pro bono accountant, administrator and IT whizz (in particular, she had to re-enter all the data in the clunky NLHF online Payment Request form); Richard who takes photos for the calendar; Bob, our webmaster, who also convenes and chairs the steering group for the 2nd phase of the WLA project; Chair and single-handed WLA talk-giver Pauline; secretary Lyn and Sheena who generally mounts any displays.



After the restrictions of the pandemic it felt liberating to meet with friends and trustees in the Blue Mugge pub, and return to a more traditional Christmas lunch



Simple yet effective Christmas decorations, mixed media

Gordon MacLellan has been a good friend to BV: contributing to grant applications (even though ultimately unsuccessful) and working on various projects bringing BV to a wider audience in Buxton. Sarah and Mark both help set up and take down the activity room, when Andy is unavailable. Tia often clears away after art sessions; Will sets out chairs every week; and Linda supported Tia when a burst pipe flooded her bungalow. Many people

give lifts when we go on visits and others maintain phone contact with people who can't come along to BV. And of course Andy's husband and daughter were both towers of strength, especially when she was ill.

Medium to Long-term strategy



Black and white rose study, watercolour wash

As always 'maintaining funding' and 'planning for succession' are key.

Bob's 'succession' document was given a test-run in late summer '22 when Andy unexpectedly had to spend a week in hospital. Thereafter, we've made some minor adjustments: Sarah now has (paid) responsibility for choosing and formatting writing for the newsletter before Andy writes the front cover and selects images.

We know that ultimately BV's future depends on finding new faces to fill key roles especially accountant, Liz, and coordinator, Andy. Andy applied for 'Levelling Up' funding to secure a new part-time post, in hopes that this might be a way to attract the right sort of person. Sadly, the application wasn't successful.

On a brighter note, as mentioned above, the NLHF have extended the WLA project to the end of August 2024 and given us the 2nd half of the grant. This document shows how much WLA activity has taken place in the last 12

months. However, coordinating delivery of outputs and outcomes for the NLHF takes up a good deal of time and this effort cannot simultaneously be spent on new grant applications.

A supernova in our funding firmament came in the form of a cheque for just over £2000. During her year as town mayor (and in spite of residual COVID restrictions) Lyn Swindlehurst managed to raise equal amounts for her 2 chosen Mayoral Charities, of which we were one.

We have waiting lists for both groups, but Andy has so far raised only a small amount of money to fund facilitated sessions in another part of the district. But as she has indicated elsewhere, she delivers some Wednesday afternoon art sessions (having to be onsite anyway) thus saving some unrestricted funds.

Networking and links

Whenever possible, Andy 'attends' online meetings which are a legacy of Covid; they save time and the environment while helping us maintain important networks.

We are able to afford our LHC premises by sharing an office with **Support Staffordshire (SuS) (Staffordshire Moorlands)**. As our VCSE umbrella organisation, they also deliver various useful, free training courses.

We also network with the following:

- Staffordshire Moorlands District Council: Officers and Councillors

- Staffs Moorlands Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) Assembly
- W Midlands Arts, Health and Wellbeing
- Staffs County Council: Library Service; County Archives; Councillors
- Stone and Water (Buxton-based artists' cooperative)
- Brighter Futures and the Mental Health Helpline
- Staffs Moorlands social prescribing link workers
- SIL Leek (support for complex mental health needs)
- National Council for Voluntary Organisations
- Changes – 12 Steps to Mental Health
- National Association for Social Prescribing
- Institute for Voluntary Action Research
- Together we're Better/Integrated Care System (ICS) for Staffordshire and Stoke
- Adult Community Mental Health Team
- Baring Foundation
- Leek Town Council
- Small Arts Network
- Samaritans
- Citizens Advice Bureaux
- The Foxlowe Arts Centre
- Leek College of Art
- Leek Arts Forum
- Dove Valley Centre
- SuS Health and Care Forum
- Dr Plot's Festival
- John Hall Wellness Garden (Rethink)
- WELLIES health and wellness CIC
- Community Council for Staffordshire
- OUTSIDE Arts Project
- Healthwatch



BV at the Voluntary Community & Social Enterprise forum



Still life with flowers and fruit, acrylic

With new referrals and self-referrals and, occasionally, familiar faces turning up after long absences, both writing and art groups are often at capacity. However, some long-standing participants attend approximately every other week, which makes it difficult to assess numbers. But undoubtedly, if everyone turned up at once, we wouldn't have enough space. We must trust that BV survives for another 25 years, to deliver its vital local service supporting mental well-being.