


# GROWING PLACES





Growing Places was co-ordinated by Walking the Land artists & creative facilitators - Rachel McDonnell, Andy Freedman & Richard Keating with core support from Lucy Guenot & Deb Roberts & social media input from Zoe Ashbrook & Tamsin Grainger.

There were ten artist residencies: Huw Montgomery, Debs Hoy, Nichola Goff, Miniature Museum, Periscope, The Women's Art Activation System, Eleanor Holliday, Bennett & McDermott, Kate McMohan-Parkes, Valerie Coffin Price.

Other workshops were run by artists Ruth Illingworth, Susie Olczak, Debbie Kersley, Amanda Steer, Pearl Legay-Clarke, Mel Golding, Adam Horovitz, Rachel Wallace, Norah Kennedy, Ruth Broadbent, Sarah Tradgett, Clare Mahoney, Johnny Fluffypunk.

Other workshops & work on the land, including woodland and hedgerow management & tree planting were undertaken by the Stroud Valleys Project.

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With thanks to The Museum in the Park & people, schools & organisations around the Stroud Valleys who joined in.

Walking the Land is an artist group which has been active in Gloucestershire since 2004. Now a C.I.C it works with associated artists & others across the UK and further afield.



# **GROWING PLACES**



**ART & LANDSCAPE  
FOOD & FARMING**

Photograph of Alison Cockcroft's drawing on linen of the Gingerbread House.  
Growing Places letter press image by Lucy Guenot.

## **Growing Places: art and landscape, food and farming**

Set in the Cotswold National Landscape (CNL) close to Stroud, the Growing Places project (March 2024 to February 2025) sought to connect the wider community with farming, food and landscape through the arts. The project was based largely on the land of the four partner organisations: Stroud Community Agriculture (SCA), Oakbrook Community Farm, Folly Wood Community Woodland and Hawkwood Centre for Future Thinking.

Fundamentally the project provided opportunities for people to develop their own creativity, explore the landscape and at the same time to find out more about the progressive land management and farming happening on their doorstep.

This Narrative complements the **Growing Places Directory**

<https://walkingtheland.org.uk/directory/>

and the **Growing Places Community Family Tree Map**

<https://walkingtheland.org.uk/walks-map/>

It lays out short case histories by hearing directly from some of the artists, schools, community groups, landowners and other participants involved. We hope that the lessons learned and the embryonic partnership developed will inform the future of art and the landscape, and encourage and facilitate people to do similar things. Our intention is to highlight the role of art in engaging people in regenerative farming through creative encounter and informed exchange.

### **Summary of project delivery**

#### ***Folly Wood:***

Tree felling and milling

Dead hedging workshop

Tree planting workshop

Beech commemorative event

#### ***Oakbrook Farm:***

5 gingerbread house residencies

15 visits and workshops

Apple Wassail

Hedgerow management

Tree Planting

Construction of Compost Bays

#### ***Hawkwood:***

Woodland management

Loom Wall design and build

Compost Summit, building compost bays

May Day Festival

#### ***Stroud Community Agriculture:***

Construction of compost bays

Compost Celebration

Harvest Festival

Farm Food photography project

5 Gingerbread House Residencies

5 visits and workshops



A number of artist led workshops also took place off site, such as: an open day at Common Soil; a Compost Gathering held at at Bisley Community Compost; artists visiting Thomas Keble School's art club and local community hubs; tree planting and after care at Hammond's Farm and at Charlea Community Garden. There were also several workshops held at Stroud's Museum in the Park.

A dozen community and artist walks were also held across the landholdings and beyond, linking town and country. Participants included Ramblers, South Locality Complex Psychological Interventions Team, Head Teachers from a Primary School Hub and local artists. Additionally, two of the school groups involved walked from Stroud to workshops at the Gingerbread House.

The project exhibited work which was made by a range of local groups and schools, facilitated by artists as well as the work made by artists. To coincide with the exhibition there were additional workshops, events and discussions to share learning and ideas for the future of arts and the landscape.



Ginger Bread House - part of the Growing Places exhibition at Museum in the Park.

**Rachel McDonnell**, Growing Places Co-Lead Artist and a Director of Walking the Land C.I.C.

**Q** For a number of years you had been wanting to make a Gingerbread House. What were your early thoughts and how did making and using the Growing Places Gingerbread House match up?

**A** Yes, I distinctly remember coming up with the idea during my foundation course, about 27 years ago, though my original intention was to make a life-size edible gingerbread house that would engage children with being in a museum. Then, when we were talking about how we might be of use to regenerative farmers, this evolved into its current form: a base for a series of residencies. The idea of engagement, of having something which inspires the imagination and creates a sense of intrigue, has been retained, even though the form is quite different.

**Q** The Gingerbread House was a great success in terms of providing a base for artist residencies on farmland. What do you feel were the key aspects of this success?

**A** Well, we were quite lucky with the weather! But in a way I feel exposure to some of the elements, a feeling of being half inside and half outside, is a part of its success. It created somewhere for artists to be in the landscape, in a place where there wasn't a permanent structure, allowing the artists to feel rooted in places they would otherwise have just been passing through, or visiting.







Artist in residence, Deb Hoy, sharing skills at drop in session.

On the other hand, the barrier between the artists and the outside world was thin (and in the case of the floor, sometimes non-existent), so it was about as close to actually being resident in the landscape as it could be. Then, people passing by and using the land, or visiting for workshops were intrigued by what a Gingerbread House was doing there, and what might be going on inside it. Each artist embedded themselves in the house, made it their own, made it feel like a very personal hive of activity in a remarkably short space of time, and visitors to the house were almost invariably delighted by what they found happening inside.

**Q** Co-designing and making the house and co-ordinating the residencies was a huge undertaking. What was the key learning for you and what has been the most satisfying element of the process?

**A** It certainly has been a bit of an undertaking, and one which would never have been possible for someone working on their own. Apart from anything else, each of the three co-lead artists has had moments during the project where other things – let’s call them life – have intervened, and without each other’s support at those moments, it just wouldn’t have been feasible. So the need for, and pleasure of, collaboration is one thing I’ve learnt to value even more than I did before. I have really appreciated being able to provide opportunities for fellow artists. Paid residencies are few and far between, and being able to offer those, albeit on a small scale, and to see what people have done with their time, and how successfully they have reflected the place they’ve found themselves in, has been an absolute joy.



Generally, I'm a painter, and I haven't done much painting for the last six months or so. I'm looking forward to getting back in my studio and out painting in the woods. All the experiences of the project will feed into my other work, though, and I often find that time away from the studio refreshes what I do.

**Q** So what next for “Gingerbread House”, both as a concept and for the current fabrication?

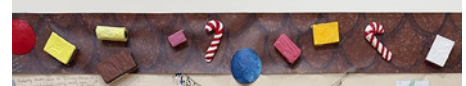
**A** The Gingerbread House wasn't quite what I originally imagined it to be. I thought I might be disappointed, but I couldn't be more delighted with what it became, and what it has produced. I think of it a little less literally now, as a place where stories, art, ideas are mixed and baked, where the treats we might make are artistic rather than sugary goodies, though still produced from the land.

We're hoping the Gingerbread House will move on to pastures new, perhaps with other artists taking over the running of it. I would like to come back to the idea in the future, though – who knows whether with this fabrication, or another iteration, or both. One day, I might build an edible house.... Maybe in another 27 years...



The first site for the Gingerbread House at Oakbrook Community Farm.





**David Poad**, Headteacher and **Jane Attwood**, Deputy Headteacher, Chalford Hill Primary School

**Q** Why did you think it would be a good for your school to be a part of Growing Places?

**A** It's a community arts initiative, and one of the leaders is a former parent and member of our community. We are community focussed and developing the arts is a key priority for our school over the next few years - we are working towards Artsmark accreditation. Anything that gets our children out in their community is good thing, and in this case, some exposure to real life artists makes this an even stronger offer!



Periscope artists Alison Cockcroft and Emily Joy settling into SCA.

**Q** As well as the arts activities, the kids were shown around Oakbrook farm. What was the difference for you between what they did, and a straightforward farm tour?

**A** The benefit of both was a 2 in 1! Tour, practical tree care following on nicely from the initial planting we did at Westonbirt children and us getting an insight into the way the farm works for and with the community, and then the amazing Glass art and visiting the Gingerbread house. All topped off with the stunning location!

**Q** Your school regularly takes classes out into the woods. Why did you feel this project would be different, in terms of what it offered the kids, to just being in the woods as normal?

**A** Children in KS2 go to the woods and follow a Forest School approach with a commissioned Forest School Leader taking a lead. This project involved arts and the management of woodland so there's a different perspective from what we do here.



Winter Works Workshop with Periscope artists in residence.





Children's' drawing made in Periscope workshop.

**Q** What do you feel is valuable about the kids engaging in arts activities with artists, in particular out and about in the landscape?

**A** Engaging with any artist offers a different perspective - some inspiration for those with an interest in art; an opportunity to think creatively and look at the world through a different lens; it's important that children have an understanding about the importance of nature and how our landscape is shaped. Any interaction with farmers, landowners etc... enables them to understand how the landscape is developed to meet the needs of humans.

**Q** Would you like to do something similar with other classes, or is there something different you'd like to do in the future?

**A** For us, any opportunity to work with real life artists is powerful, for the reasons given above. And it's the same for work with farmers and landowners. Our children live in a rural community but very few of them come from families which work the land.

**Nichola Goff;** Artist in Residence, Oakbrook Community Farm.

**Q** Tell us about your residency: What were you doing - was it what you had originally intended?

**A** During my residency week I was meeting people and communities involved in the farm projects at Oakbrook, exploring the land and soil, processing found earth pigment into painting and printmaking materials, monoprinting, drawing, reading, and writing. I was also engaging with groups to make monoprints and drawings that I intended to make into origami butterflies.

I did end up doing more or less what I had intended. I found friendly community members and earth pigment in the land quite quickly. Finding colour in the land was already something the youth groups had explored so it wasn't new to them. This meant I could follow the plan I had come with to spend the week processing and experimenting with those materials to form a connection with the place and create a method for capturing ideas (monoprints).

**Q** How did it feel to be in the Gingerbread House?

**A** I felt almost instantly at home in the house. I was bringing things in when I arrived on the first day and a robin came in to greet me and stayed around all day which felt very welcoming. The wood stove offered a focus of activity, a way of grounding in the space and a cosy feel. The solid wood and windows to see out gave it a very solid feel whilst feeling close to nature.

It felt as if the house had settled into the place when I got to it, compared to how it had felt when I visited it a month or so before just after it had arrived there. It felt as if it had made a home for itself there under that big oak tree. I remember thinking it would feel difficult to move it now it had got settled there.

It felt very safe in the house. Easy to hide away if I wanted to focus and have time to think, and easy to invite people in if I wanted visitors. I also felt myself quickly forgetting about all the other work things and life responsibilities I had and very much enjoying being in the moment there.

**Q** How do you think people working on and using the farm felt about you being there?

**A** They seemed friendly but not massively interested when I first arrived. I think they had expected it to leave quite soon so hadn't paid it lots of attention. Running the workshops helped with getting to know people there as I need to talk to them about using the workshop space and also then invite them to participate.





Artist Nichola Goff with her earth pigments made from Oakbrook farm soil. Pupils from Uplands School walked across to a workshop at the Gingerbread House making drawings using the pigments



By the end of the week I had received quite a bit of feedback with people seeming really keen to see it stay, one person said they hoped it would stay for good and that it was a way of inviting people to explore the farm and be curious as it was unusual and made people wonder what it was for. I think although people working on the farm didn't have much time to participate in the activities they did like having something creative and random happening there.

**Q** You also ran quite a few workshops, which then fed into your final piece for the Growing Places exhibition. How did you combine the social engagement element of the residency with making your own work?

**A** The printmaking workshops I ran were designed as ways for people to creatively express themselves and their ideas using materials from the land which were then made into origami moths (the butterflies evolved into moths). My own work was partly the processing of materials which as a process was informative and helped connect me to the place. The outcomes of the pigments, paints and inks were both my work and also materials with which to engage people, which I saw as a key element to my work not an addition. People's thoughts and ideas expressed on paper with the materials I had dug from the ground and laboured over were a way of me including the humas of the place.

The process of folding their drawings into moths was again laborious but also meditative. I had time to look closely at each individual one, the marks made, and see them transform. Bringing them all together to form an installation has felt like a way to express ideas of community, fragility, metamorphosis, ecology, and quiet care. I don't think I could have achieved this if I had not had the input from those that participated.





**Kate McMahon-Parkes**, Artist in Residence Stroud Community Agriculture (SCA) and Hawkwood Centre for Future Thinking.

**Q** Your residency was unique in that rather than being based in the Gingerbread House, your focus was on designing and building the Loom Wall at the interface between the farm and Hawkwood, screening a chiller unit and creating a sense of entrance.

What are your reflections on this, in particular how as an artist you produced a piece of site specific work which had to meet the needs of the farmers and Hawkwood Centre and referenced farming, nature and the local textile industry?

**A** The chiller unit is an important piece of equipment for SCA, but being positioned on a bank at the entrance to Hawkwood was somewhat unattractive. The aim of the work was to produce an outcome that was functional and aesthetically pleasing. We wanted to reflect both the heritage and current use of the Hawkwood Estate, along with the farming which now occurs both on the estate, and farming in the CNL in general.

Historically Hawkwood was owned by the Capel family who owned Capel's Mill, Stroud's dying mill. The textile mills in the Stroud Valley were particularly known for producing Stroud Red cloth, and I wanted this to be represented in the work.

We wanted to make work with a contemporary feel, but using traditional materials. Consequently we included materials that reflected agricultural practices in the Cotswolds - Cotswold stone (historically used in walls), British Larch and wire (used for fences) and corrugated steel (used in agricultural buildings). The stone and wood were used to make a river-like wall (reminding us of the streams which powered the mills in the valleys), wending its way across the bank, in front of a larch and corrugated barn-like screen which hides the chiller. Fencing materials were layered on the screen, reminiscent of woven fabrics, with flashes of 'Stroud Red' woven in.

**Q** Part of your brief was to engage a local school in the process. How did you do this?

**A** A year 5 class from a local school visited the site. We wanted them to produce work that reflected both farming and textiles. Consequently, before attending the art workshops, they visited Oakbrook Farm and SCA, learning about various aspects of farming including composting, bee keeping, animal husbandry and orchard management. They also had the opportunity to visit the artist in residence at the Gingerbread House. Inspired by their morning visit to the farms, in the afternoon, they decorated glass using a variety of techniques including painting and mosaicing for fusing. These were fired, and incorporated into larch from Folly Wood. These potentially permanent pieces were made to be exhibited at the Museum in the park exhibition.



Images showing resident artist Kate McMahon-Parkes, Malcolm McMahon and stone waller Sam Usbourne building the *Loom Wall* which screens SCA's chiller unit and creates an entrance to Hawkwood.



**Q** Did the project and close working with the growers meet your expectations in terms of developing your creative practice?

**A** Ongoing discussions with the growers, and management at Hawkwood were an important part of the project. We needed to be sure that the project met their needs and the outcome was something they were happy with, both aesthetically and functionally. We needed to be mindful that potentially the chiller may be moved at some point, so much of the loom wall was designed to be removable. Hawkwood were keen that the design reflected the forward-thinking ethos of the organisation. All of the above considerations were challenging but rewarding in terms of my creative practice and the design of the work. The whole project has been a fantastic opportunity for me to engage with the local environment and history, whilst also considering the wants and needs of those currently living and working there.

**Q** You've mentioned some additional outputs - what else would you like to do leading on from your involvement with the project?

**A** The glass pieces, set in wood will provide a permanent record of the Growing Places project and the work of the children who engaged with it. It is hoped that they will be able to visit these works in situ (at the museum, farm and school vegetable gardens) , and this will continue their engagement with local history, arts and agriculture. We are planning to work with volunteers to plant herbs around the Loom Wall. It would be great to produce further work in the future that is made in collaboration with local community groups, potentially creating a local arts trail that engages both locals and visitors in walking and appreciating the local countryside and heritage.



Glass decorated by children at artist run workshop and set into larch sculptures.

**Simon Pickering**, volunteer at Stroud Community Agriculture, talks about his experience with the Growing Places project:

Stroud Community Agriculture is based on a small farm of 30 ha spread over 3 sites). It produces organic and biodynamic vegetables and high-welfare meat from a herd of grass-fed cattle.

The Growing Places project brought a new dimension, visitors and an awareness of the farm as well providing five farm scale composting bays. The composting bays are sufficiently large to be turned by a tractor, saving timing and energy for farm staff. The use of locally cut larch provides an aesthetically pleasing but functional addition to the farm.

The construction of these compost bays brought in new volunteers to the farm, including a semi-retired builder from Brighton, who, whilst staying in the area with friends, took on a key practical role in accurately setting out the construction. He was assisted by a team of 15 volunteers, putting in various amounts of time including 2 local freelance architects taking time away from their computer screens to help dig holes and build visually pleasing structures .



Artist Emily Joy leading a clay workshop at SCA 's compost bin celebration.





Poet Adam Horovitz reading poems inspired by healthy soil at an SCA celebration.

The Talking about Compost event and the site visit to Bisley Community Composting Scheme provided new learning for the farm staff from a range of national experts, ranging from Oxford academics to large scale composters with 20 years experience. Much was shared and learned from the conversations with 70 people attending both these events. These events have also initiated the formation of a farm/community scale composting network

The Celebration event in September with locally produced food attracted a number of members, families and children to learn more about the importance of the nutrient cycle, soils and composting. This was through artist led painting of compost bays with naturally compostable paints, poetry from the nationally acclaimed soil and farming poet Adam Horovitz and with singing from the Stroud Folk choir.

**Ruth Schamroth**, Stroud Community Agriculture talks about the project:

Between June 2024 and February 2025, Stroud Community Agriculture Farm played a significant part in the Growing Places Project. This project beautifully intertwined art, the land, and local communities, creating a vibrant atmosphere for all involved. The dedicated Farm Team was thrilled to witness the joy of visitors as they explored the stunning landscapes they nurture.

Thanks to the Growing Places Project, the farm now has robust and stylish compost bays, enhancing its sustainability efforts. The construction of a Cotswold wall and timber screen around the chiller, along with innovative compost structures, transformed the farm's landscape into a work of art! This artistic screen now conceals the previously unsightly chiller unit, turning it into a visually appealing feature of the farm.

The presence of resident artists brought a new dynamic to the farm, enriching the daily activities with creativity. Their artistic contributions culminated in an exhibition at the Museum in the Park, showcasing all the art projects and fostering connections beyond the usual audience.



SCA is used to people coming to pick-up their vegetable shares. Less usual are visits from artists such as Amanda Steer from Cheltenham, shown here, visiting on an 'art walk' led by Walking the Land.



One of the audiences that Walking the Land was keen to engage were The Bristol Somali Kitchen which is twinned with Stroud Community Agriculture. In October 2024 a group of twenty people came to the SCA Harvest Festival and offered this feedback:

*‘The migrant women from Somalia, Yemen, Syria, Sudan... you know they are very busy surviving with housing and their papers and everything. It is not the norm for us to go out. We came in the bus. Lots of people wanted to come, there were six prams on the bus, mums, children. It was cold. We are not used to going out in the cold. I thought they would not get off the bus. But they loved it. We went to the Harvest Festival at the farm. They were surprised that everyone was smiling at us. It was their first time in the countryside. There has been ‘Harvest Festival’ at school but it was irrelevant. Nobody had any idea what it meant. But now, now we do! This is helping us to understand where we are living now.’*





Sarah Dixon, one of the artists in residence who initiated the "farmers' wives" discussion engaging local children at SCA.

This initiative not only highlighted the farm's offerings but also significantly increased engagement, with the farm. One of the highlights of the project was the collaboration with the "farmers' wives," an inspiring discussion that explored the often hidden role of women in agriculture.

Norah Kennedy led a workshop which also treated members to the creation of two beautiful willow sculptures in their fields, where they can pick their own flowers and herbs. These artistic endeavours not only beautified the space but also fostered a deeper connection between the community and the land. In summary, the Growing Places Project at Stroud Community Agriculture Farm exemplified how art can enrich agricultural practices and strengthen community ties. This collaborative effort has left a lasting legacy, ensuring that the farm continues to thrive as a hub of creativity, sustainability, and community engagement.



## Jessie Marcham, Oakbrook Orchard

I've been involved with the Growing Places project in a number of ways and really appreciated the way it's made possible links between creative expression and the land I love and work on.

Growing Places enabled us to hold our first ever public wassail event at Oakbrook Orchard. The event was well attended, both by those already familiar with the farm, and many new faces. It was great to have someone confidently come in to share the wassail songs and lead the singing, to have more hands on deck when it came to the practicalities of organising, and to expand the farm community through the Growing Places network. Now that we've done it once, I feel confident that we can pull it off again - and hopeful that the wassail will become a regular annual event.



January's Wassail at Oakbrook Farm's new orchard - the first of many?





I've also really enjoyed singing songs in our community choir composed by Elle, our choir leader, in response to her artist's residency in the gingerbread house at Oakbrook. It felt really special to be singing brand new songs honouring the land and the trees that I work with. I especially loved the low key performance of these songs at the Museum in the Park, when we sang with two other choirs and shared the songs with a local audience, surrounded by art created through the project.



Stroud Valleys Project volunteers Simon Arundel and Nick Miles planting new fruit trees at the Oakbrook orchard.



As a part of the Gathering which accompanied the exhibition, conversations within and between groups were facilitated. The farmer group's considered how similar collaborations between themselves, artists and community groups could happen in the future - what they felt is needed, They reported back as follows:



# GROWING PLACES

What next . . . . .

- Approach landowners with clear expectations/  
time / timings.
- Consider physical location and accessibility  
i.e. alien environment.
- Case studies and testimonials to show  
what people have learnt from their  
experience.
- To be able to ask and offer eg volunteers,  
planting, making.....
- Have a 'model' (structure) to offer, remove  
any stress to farmer.
- To build friendships - loneliness addressed.

## **Trinity Rooms Community Hub**

The Trinity Rooms Hub is a charity in Stroud which includes a community Pantry, Café and a Kids' Art Club.

**Sarah Dixon** ran a workshop for a group from the Kid's Art Club at the Stroud Community Agriculture Roundhouse:

One child said it was the best day kids club they'd had. A lot of children like the clubs for the autonomy and freedom on offer. It was just one day but the space they all had was very valuable and valued. The children expressed a wide range of feelings and ideas in their artwork again because it's not prescriptive. There isn't a great amount of provision locally especially not with the opportunity to be in a working farm environment with access to nature.

**Ruth Illingworth** ran workshops connected with Trinity in ecoprinting using leaves and petals to print onto paper and fabric. People involved in workshops included Trinity volunteers and participants from the mental health charity, Rethink.

Ruth explains her input: "I ran workshops in ecoprinting using leaves and petals to print onto paper and fabric. there were some great outcomes:

- \* Working with groups who don't think of themselves as artists and supporting them to produce beautiful ecoprints some of which were included in the exhibition
- \* Bringing people from Stroud to the local farms that they didn't know were so close
- \* Sharing time in the gingerbread house with other artists enthusiastic about natural ink and pigment making
- \* Seeing the work of participants as part of the exhibition in the Museum"





Children from Trinity Rooms enjoying drawing and being at SCA.







Eco printing at Trinity Rooms led by Ruth Illingworth.

The following comments from the Trinity Hub volunteers doing eco printing for the first time show the potential for linking people with the landscape through art:

Carolyn: A lovely new creative experience handling delicate flowers and being surprised at the beautiful results. It was altogether a great afternoon sharing such an experience with lovely people!

Caitlin: The process was totally new to me and I found it interesting experimenting with different plants, seeing which turned out better than others. It was a really enjoyable afternoon.

Vicky: When the workshop was offered I had already been growing dye plants and experimenting with natural dyes so the workshop was a fantastic opportunity for me to learn how to use the plants I have been growing to print with. It was great to connect with other people with similar interests in natural textiles and I am planning to grow some of the dye plants that we used in the workshop on my new allotment. My eventual aim is to make and sell natural textiles dyed and printed with natural dyes and I am keen to be part of a community that's moving away from synthetically dyed, mass produced textiles.

Sybille: I have never done this kind of work. I loved it and was amazed at the results. I loved the place we did the workshop and doing it together with the lovely people from Trinity.



**Ali Coles**, Art Psychotherapist, South Locality Complex Psychological Interventions Team,  
Gloucestershire Health and Care NHS Foundation Trust

**Q** How did the art element of the walk contribute to delivering your objectives for the day?

**A** I think that the creative activities helped us to slow down and observe, and be quiet alongside each other – and so definitely enhanced the wellbeing aspect of the event. The music installation in the woods made lunchtime a cultural experience!

**Q** What were the main infrastructural elements that enabled the team to participate?

**A** Before the event: The team was able to participate because the team manager is really committed to staff wellbeing – and the fact that the event was free made it much easier to arrange. During the event: The key element was a facilitator who invited us to participate in a gentle, flexible and responsive way. Alongside this, the team were inspired by the natural environment, and the encounters with artists and the community farm.



The participants were led on a walk around Hawkwood, Oakbrook and SCA. At various places along the walk they were encouraged to write three word responses to these places. "Your 3 Words" cards had been given out for this purpose.



**Q** Can you see other opportunities for your team, perhaps using a wider range of arts practices in the future?

**A** The team would love to do something similar again, and I think would be happy to engage in more and different creative activities.



The "Your 3 Words" cards written to describe the places where the participants stopped on the walk were later added to this map in the exhibition.



**Kate Rodman** of Allsorts gives her view of Growing Places:

Allsorts is a charity that provides accessible everyday experiences for disabled children, young people and their families. Groups took part in workshops at the Museum in the Park. The natural materials for the workshop came from the park and some of the work produced was on display in the Growing Places exhibition

At Allsorts we were grateful to Growing Places for delivering workshops for our members. The sessions were accessible to a range of young people who enjoy craft-based activities.

The artist Suzie Olczak was a great facilitator and gave clear guidance and helped everyone who attended to create some fabulous art works.

It's lovely to incorporate nature into art and I know the children were incredibly proud of the work they created. Here are a few comments:

“I thought the workshop was fun, awesome and amazing” - Freya workshop participant

“The artist was really helpful, and it was great that my daughter engaged in the process and made something really magical” - mother of a participant

I hope we get more opportunities to work with the Growing Places Team in the future!



Allsorts workshop led by Susie Olczak at the Museum in the Park.

**Abigail Large, Stroud Museum in the Park**

**Q** Your support in enabling the exhibition, our workshops and series of 'Gathering' events at the Museum has been central to our ability to reach people. How did the project relate to the Museum's wider role of community engagement?

**A** Growing Places is an excellent example of the kind of innovative community projects the Museum is keen to support. The Museum is seen as a welcoming, safe space by different audiences and we hope that the exhibition has sparked ideas and conversations in visitors who would not usually engage with arts activities or conservation and land use issues. As well as a place to visit and learn about local history, the Museum is a meeting place and a place for different communities to come together and explore present day issues and ideas for the future.

**Q** We are aware that the museum has exhibits about landscape and agriculture and wonder how the project chimed with these?

**A** The Museum displays tell the story of Stroud and the surrounding district, from geology, and archaeological finds relating to the area's earliest settlers to more recent social and industrial history. Artefacts on display include objects relating to the history of farming in the locality, for example milk bottles and butter churns, cow name plates, agricultural tools and much more. Paintings displayed throughout the Museum depict changing landscapes and the impact of the local textile industry, the growth of Stroud town and the coming of the canal and railway. While the Museum displays tell the story of the district's past, the gallery's role is to complement and contrast through contemporary art and to provide a starting point for discussions about current issues and concerns. Growing Places did just that and more - I'm delighted that we have been able to provide a welcoming venue for the exhibition and related workshops. I think the project team are to be congratulated in facilitating such a wide-reaching, multi stranded programme with so many community engagement elements.

**Q** How might you see further collaborations between artists, the Museum's collection and farmers?

**A** We would welcome further collaborations (funding and resources permitting!). The Museum's collection of objects relating to local farming history and rural life would make an interesting focal point for artist residencies, particularly if conversations with current-day farmers could be included.

**Q** As well as workshops we have led a number of walks from the Museum out into the countryside across the A46. We have seen the Museum and Stratford Park as a gateway to this countryside. How might this role as the Museum as a gateway to the countryside be enhanced in the future by working with artists?





One of the Museum's farming collections which inspired artists' Sarah Dixon and Sharon Bennett with their 'Farmers Wives' discussions.





The Gingerbread House at the Museum in the Park exhibition

A The Museum setting, Stratford Park, is an important green space for people who may not have access to the countryside, and we see every day how uplifting the beautiful Walled Garden is for people's wellbeing. The Garden is already used by artists as inspiration for arts on prescription courses and other health and wellbeing activities and there is much potential in this area – using the arts to connect people with green spaces and the countryside.

More artist-led walks would be welcome, and creative 'signposting' activities – perhaps history, nature and art walk maps with clear information on accessibility.







# Walking the Land

connecting art, landscape and community