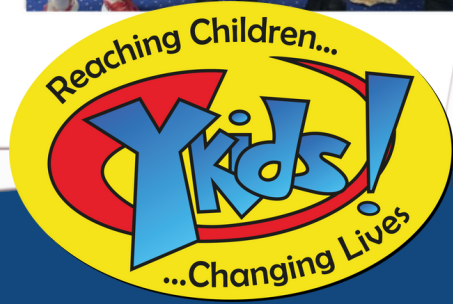




Bootle Children's Literary Festival

2021 Report

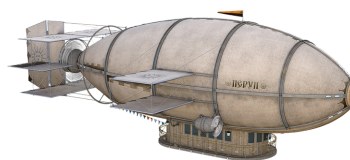




CONTENTS

3

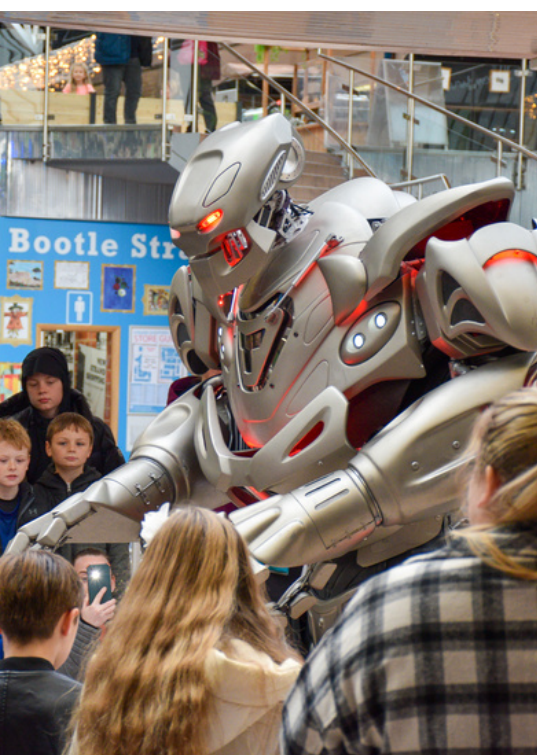
INTRODUCTION



5

DELIVERY

Pre-festival preparations, planning, our offer to schools and contributors, post-event follow up



10

FEEDBACK

What the schools, children and general public thought of our events

13

IMPACT

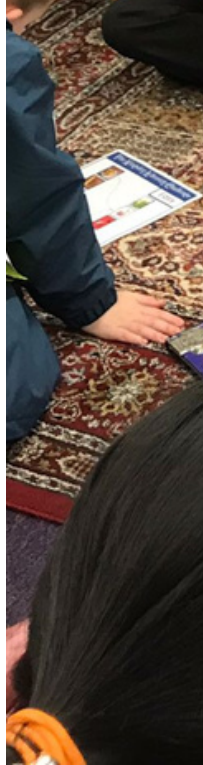
Ways we can capture the impact we made during the Bootle Children's Literary Festival



15

CHALLENGES

Challenges we faced during the festival, how we overcame them and what we would do differently next time



17

SUMMARY

A summary of events, our next steps, and thank you's



ykids.co.uk
98a Linacre Lane, Bootle, L20 6ES
Charity no : 1141530
Co No: 7150747



Bootle Children's Literary Festival



INTRODUCTION

The Bootle children's Literary 2021 is the third literary festival to be delivered by Ykids, our first which we expected to be a one off event, in 2013. Due to a huge positive response and demand for a children's bookshop, we began research into developing a longer lasting project that could both impact literacy and life outcomes from local children and also contribute to the regeneration of our community. In 2019 we finally secured funding to refurbish an empty shop, Kingsley&Co, in the local shopping centre and launched the 2019 Children's literary festival as part of our opening. The event was very successful, the project began to thrive. We started to plan a 2020 festival until plans were cut short in March 2020 due to Covid 19.

During lockdown we were successful in gaining funding for two staff, a project manager and a Storykeeper (school liaison) and were set to reopen in Sept 2020. Sadly, this did not happen until the summer of 2021 and plans for a third Bootle Children's Literary Festival in Nov 21 (BCLF21) were resumed.

Thanks to the support of the Arts Council England/National Lottery, the Siobhan Dowd Trust and the Granada Foundation, the event was able to go ahead. This report outlines the rationale of the festival, what we were able to deliver, our impact and engagement and future plans.





RATIONALALE

Bootle is an area of high unemployment and poverty with communities ranked in the bottom 1 and 2% in the multiple indices of deprivation. It is not a community which particularly sees itself as engaging in arts and culture and the only 'arts' or 'cultural experiences' available in our community are provided by community groups. We have no cinema, theatre, museums or cultural venues except for a library. All cultural activities are community led and funded, as opposed to the other end of the borough in Southport where there is a great deal of investment in cultural events and experiences. In recent months Sefton council has sought to begin to address this by beginning a Bootle Canalside development but this is only in its very early stages and development funding has not been secured. Currently this development is also more geared to an adult market with food and drink rather than children or families.

Literacy in Bootle is ranked in the lowest 6% in the UK (National Literacy Trust) and this coupled with a lack of opportunity and aspiration means that young people growing up in Bootle are at a much greater disadvantage to young people in more affluent areas of the country and even our own borough. Even life expectancy in the lower end of the borough (Bootle) is 10 years less than the northern end of the borough. (Southport)

This is simply not acceptable, and Ykids have made it our mission to give the children and young people of Bootle the ability to experience as many inspiring and aspirational cultural, artistic and educational opportunities as possible in order to promote mental and physical wellbeing and positive life outcomes. As literacy is a key to positive mental health, better attainment, and raising aspirations, we set out to impact as many children as possible through engaging them in literacy through story, literature and the arts.

Kingsley&Co is a steampunk/Victorian explorer themed magical children's bookshop designed to delight and enthrall children and adults alike and draw them into a world of story and imagination. It features a café, moving bookcases, magic doors, a secret classroom and a hands on 'discovery room.'

Based in the heart of our community in the Strand Shopping Centre, Kingsley&Co is the setting for the BCLF21 and offers a large indoor space for pop up exhibitions and performances and gives the opportunity to reach large numbers of the local community.

The literary festival was originally an idea of author Alan Gibbons, one of our patrons and our ambition is for the festival to become a biennial event impacting not just Bootle but the city region.

DELIVERY

Thanks to the generous funding we received we were able to deliver an ambitious event with multiple strands and reaching many thousands of people. Our theme 'The Time Machine' enabled us to explore the past, present and future.

PRE-FESTIVAL

AA large amount of preparation took place before the festival began. This included:

- Engaging schools through an expression of interest pack
- Engaging artists and authors to take part in the event
- Engaging and co ordinating with partners in order to expand the offer.
- Additional fund raising
- Logistical and venue planning
- Risk assessments and contingency plans
- Writing of staff and contributor handbooks
- The commissioning of an interactive 'Time Machine' and a series of children's cartoons about Mary Kingsley&Co and her associates who escaped the boredom lockdown by moving through time.
- An illustration competition offered to schools to design a magazine cover for 5 Famous magazines in 2121 including 'What Car', 'Good Food Magazine', 'Home and Garden', 'Gadget Magazine' and 'Vogue'. 5 x £50 amazon vouchers were offered for winners with an additional £50 in new books for each winners' school.
- Creation of a series of life size 2D paper doll clothes with a story book theme made by teens for an exhibition exploring the history of paper dolls and towards gaining an Arts Award.
- Refurbishment of a shop adjacent to our current shop to extend our offer and create a new larger classroom with toilets.
- Transforming our Captain Nemo's Nautilus themed classroom into a discovery room with original interactive art pieces, hands on discovery activities and an invitation to explore through infinity mirrors, optical illusions, giant wooden puzzles, a working periscope, magic flying keys, create your own picture from dice and a cabinet of curiosities.

The pre festival planning began in Spring 2020 but was obviously delayed due to Covid. Tentative plans resumed in April 21 with expressions of interest and stepped up considerably as restrictions were relaxed and once funding was secured in September.





Exhibition of Giant paper doll clothes

The dolls clothes were created by a Ykids group of teens who also explored the history of fashion. The exhibition was the culmination of a 10-week programme had a story theme and were exhibited in an empty shop unit.

Golden ticket scheme

Thanks to the Siobhan Dowd trust we were able to purchase 3000 new books to gift to children. We did this by creating a golden ticket scheme where schools were each given 100 tickets to distribute to children who may not otherwise get the opportunity to have a free book. A special bookcase was set up from which children could come and claim their free book and have their golden ticket punched. Free bookmarks were also donated by 'The Works'.

Horrid History Map of Bootle

During the pandemic we successfully gained funding from the Heritage lottery to create an interactive Horrid History map of Bootle. The map featured a key and QR codes which took users to hidden web pages which offered fun facts, photos, artwork and short historical films made by children. Each school was given 100 maps and the map was launched at the first family fun day.

Time Machine

During lockdown we had also been successful in gaining funding from the Arts council to run an online competition for children to write their own stories. Entries had to tell a tale about our main characters, Mary Kingsley&Co and Professor Cyril and how they escaped the restrictions of lockdown in a time machine by going to the past, present or future where there was no Covid. 6 winners received amazon vouchers and we commissioned the stories to be made into cartoons illustrated by Baz Sellers and produced by Simon Parry. We also commissioned the building of a Time Machine by artist Mike Walker for children to sit in and watch the cartoons. The Time Machine then became the centre piece of the festival and post event is situated in our new discovery room.

THE FESTIVAL

SCHOOL OFFER:



Exhibition of Dan Dare comics and memorabilia provided by the Atkinson Museum.

This was exhibited in one of our shop windows during the Festival and featured comics, annuals, games, toys and a large bronze bust of Dan Dare. This was a wonderful way of including older members of our community in our festival.

2 family fun days in the shopping centre

In keeping with our event theme 'The Time Machine', the first community event was themed in the past and included volunteers from the steam punk community; a Chitty Chitty Bang Bang Trike; a Steampunk rocket car; a sit in Dalek and of course our Time Machine. We had performances from Professor Elemental; a steam punk rap artist; tea duelling; craft workshops; story workshops and interviews with authors including Frank Cottrell Boyce. There was also an interview with Sophia Cole a 13-year-old author who signed her books alongside Frank Cottrell Boyce. Unfortunately, Explorer Alice Hunter Morrison was unable to attend in person due to Morocco closing its borders was still able to attend via zoom and delivered family workshops about her adventures.

The second family fun day had a future theme and included a planetarium dome; a VR experience; robot dress up competition; poetry and illustration workshops; craft workshops and performances from Titan the Robot.



PARTNER OFFER

During the festival our partners also offered a variety of activities or supported the event including

- Family story time at Bootle Library
- A performance from the Sound Agents entitled 'The Claw'
- 'The Leonards' community shop put on an exhibition of photographs of Bootle Past
- Bootle Tool Shed made one of our giant wooden puzzles for the Discovery Room.
- Artist Mike Walker created not only the time machine but other art works such as our, 'Doorbell Soundboard' feature and steampunk treasure chest.

"Fantastic day. The kids loved everything! Especially the hidden passage! They loved picking out a book to bring home and we will definitely be back!" - Teacher



CONTRIBUTERS

Contributors were given free reign with their content but were also given our theme – 'The Time Machine' and many tried to include this in the workshops they delivered.

Workshops used different artforms including:

- Drama – with Altru Theatre Company
- Spoken word with Levi Tafari
- Story Writing with Daniel Riding
- Writing raps with Professor Elemental and Jamie Broad
- Liverpool History with Arts Groupie and meeting Kitty Wilkinson
- Poetry and art with Ali Harwood
- Meet an explorer with Alice Morrison
- And multimedia with Curtis Jobling

POST FESTIVAL ACTIVITIES INCLUDED:

- Multiple Story themed workshops delivered every Saturday up to Christmas including additional visits from authors in
- The Gingerbread man – workshop story and gingerbread decoration
- Robins first Christmas – workshop and craft from its author Suzanne Schroder
- Scrooge- with Altru Theatre co, a 4-hr workshop including a short performance by children at the end
- Stories with Santa – including letters to Santa, singing carols, games, a selection box and free book and meeting the Big Man himself.
- Stories with the grinch – drama performance
- Additional author visits for schools who were too late signing up to the festival original programme.
- Additional school visits to Kingsley&Co and co from classes who 'missed out' and wished to visit the shop.
- Additional visits from schools bringing their children to 'spend' their golden tickets.
- Assemblies to present winning schools with books and celebrate illustration competition winners.
- Children's drama workshop followed by a performance of Scrooge with Altru Theatre Company.
- 3 days of Storytelling and craft workshops for Sefton Council in their new Bootle Canalside open air venue
- Live music performance from a 14 yr old harpist and member of the Royal Northern school of Music



CONTRIBUTORS INCLUDED:

- Frank Cottrell Boyce – multiple award-winning author, script writer, film maker
- Alan Gibbons – award winning author including Smarties' book prize for 'Shadow of the Minotaur'
- Curtis Jobling – creator of Bob the builder and new series Were world
- Levi Tafari – internationally renowned Liverpool poet
- Alice Hunter Morrison – explorer, author, BBC presenter, world record breaker and female Indiana Jones!
- Altru – educational theatre company
- Charles Lea – Read Now, Write Now
- Ali Harwood – poet, author, artist, tutor and leader of Liverbards
- Rebecca Fan Blinston – author of children's books promoting mental health
- Jude Lennon – Team author and ambassador for Liverpool Writes
- Natalie Reeves Billing – author
- Daniel Riding – author of best-selling Amazon series Naughty Cat
- Jamie Broad – local 'Scouse' rap artist
- Professor Elemental – steampunk rap artist, entertainer and former teacher
- Sophia Cole – 13 yr old new author
- Suzanne T Schroder – author
- Baz Sellers – illustrator
- Mike Walker – Artist
- Patafea – Poet
- The Sound agents – The Claw performance
- In Another Place – escape room
- Tish Toglet and friends from the Steam Punk Community



PUBLICITY

Publicity about the Festival and subsequent activities and workshops ran across all our social media platforms including twitter, Facebook and Instagram. We also had opportunity to speak about the event on BBC radio Merseyside and we had 4 articles in the Liverpool Echo which is distributed across the region.

Articles were also published by a number of other groups including:

- Liverpool Echo
- Liverpool Echo
- Birkenhead News
- Steve Morgan Foundation
- Bootle Champion
- The New Sheridan Club
- Newfield School

We printed 15,000 flyers which were distributed in schools, shops and public places.

Our CEO spoke at the launch of the 2022 Liverpool City Region Cultural Awards (being a previous winner) and was able to promote the event

Audience and reach

Our aim was to reach children and young people from Bootle and its surrounding communities by targeting local schools and local families, but our reach extended beyond this. During the two weeks of the festival all our social media platforms received a lot of traffic seeing our statistics increase rapidly.

Kingsley&Coandco.org - From mid-October-mid November (after the BCLF) 231% more people are visiting the Kingsley&Co website, a total of 1243 people visited the site which is an extra 868 compared to September.

Google Business Pages

Google brings in the most traffic to our websites. Here are the Google Business page statistics (recorded after the Literary Festival):

- Kingsley&Co business page was viewed 3000 times in 30 days
- Ykids was viewed 10,809 times in 30 days



FEEDBACK

To ensure we gathered enough feedback and evidence to properly evaluate the project, we gathered data in a number of ways.

School/ workshop evaluation forms

Every author artist was accompanied by a member of Ykids staff so that they could be supported, and they gave a workshop evaluation form to every teacher. The evaluation forms gathered important information such as class numbers, how many pupils were SEN, teacher evaluation and comments from children. This information was then collated, and copies sent to authors and artists. There were no negative reviews and all schools seemed satisfied with the workshops they had received.

Feedback cards from the two Community events

During the two family events we distributed evaluation cards for people to comment on the event and what they had been involved in. Questions included what they had attended and whether the event made a difference.

As both events were much busier than expected, there were less staff available to hand out evaluation cards so not as many as we had hoped were completed and of those not everyone completed all the questions.

"Fantastic afternoon session! Both members of staff leading the workshop worked brilliantly with the children. I could see the children were well engaged and enjoyed the session. The staff were patient and helped support the children throughout." - Teacher



Postcode _____ Email _____

Sign up to Kingsley & Co / Ykids mailing list - be first to hear about our upcoming events!


Which activities did you participate in?


| | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Workshops | <input type="checkbox"/> The Time Machine |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tea Duelling/VR Experience | <input type="checkbox"/> Horrid History Map of Bootle |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Performances | <input type="checkbox"/> Met an Author/Performer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Crafts | <input type="checkbox"/> Robot Dress-up/ Illustration Competition |


What did you enjoy most about the event?


Tick (x) the box if the statement applies to you:


| |
|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> After the event I/my child feel more excited about reading and writing my own stories! |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I/my child have enjoyed the opportunity for FREE cultural activities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> My child is eligible for free school dinners |

 "I don't feel more excited to read"

 "I am more excited to read"

 "I am more excited to read"

 "Yes, I am really excited to read and write!"

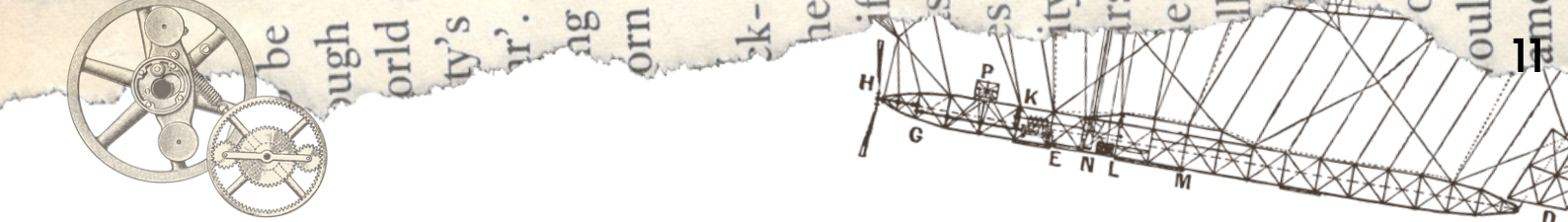
 "Yes, I am really excited to read and write!"

In all 59 responses were received:

- 44% said they had had a go on the time machine
- 36% said they were engaged with a performance
- 39% said they attended a workshop (at the events)
- 30% met an author
- 15% had engaged with either our VR experience or Tea Duelling (different days)
- 44% engaged with craft activities
- 12% engaged with our Horrid History Map of Bootle
- 7% said they were on free school meals – this is not a good indicator however as this was only 7% of those who responded. Of the schools we targeted the figures would have been nearer to 40%
- 19% said they were more excited about reading and writing

Participants told us they enjoyed:

- Seeing Professor Elemental.
- Meeting Frank Cottrell Boyce.
- Seeing Morocco.
- Zoom meeting with Alice. (explorer)
- The lovely attitude of staff.
- The Time Machine.
- All of it.
- Meeting other people.
- Art & Crafts.
- Finding out what dinosaur the footprint belonged to. (Alice in Morocco)
- Kids enjoyed themselves.
- Meet the author / workshops.
- The fun.
- Everything.
- Being able to talk to real authors and illustrators.
- The bustle. (busyness in the Strand)
- Daniel Riding workshop.
- All the different things.
- Daniel Riding.
- Seeing Titan & secret room.
- The whole experience, amazing.



External evaluation

We have appointed an external evaluator, Sue Potts from the Rule of 3's, to draw up an unbiased report and have forwarded all our evidence to her. She will be interviewing schools and participants to understand impact. This report will be published in February 2022.

Social media

The feedback from the festival was far beyond anything we expected with schools, teachers, parents and the general public taking to social media to express their joy, excitement and thanks.

Stats and quotes

Kingsley&Co

Engagement

Reach

Following



Facebook

3277 ^655%

15,009 ^390%

^93



Instagram

144 ^14%

958 ^47.3%

^91



Twitter

13,3195 ^250%

71,100 ^196%

^69



Ykids

Engagement

Reach

Following



Facebook

2193 ^655%

9689 ^66%

^29



Instagram

167 ^34%

2511 ^265%

^91



Twitter

3640 ^232%

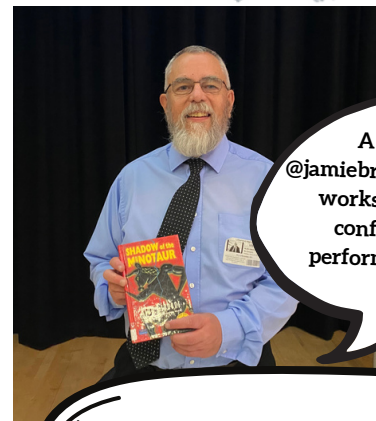
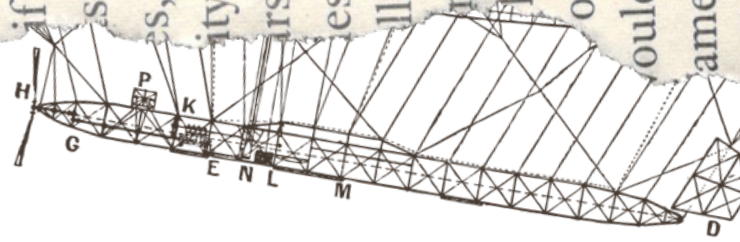
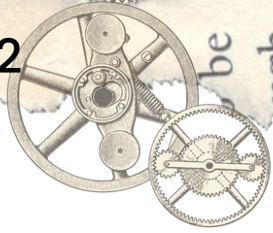
15,200 ^47.7%

^29



SOCIAL MEDIA FEEDBACK





A great visit by @jamielbroadmusic a fantastic workshop to build self-confidence through performance and inspire creativity.

"Congratulations on such a fantastic festival. Our school children loved the workshop by @altrudrama and were so excited to explore the bookshop and discovery room. They were delighted to receive a free book each too, thank you so much!" #BCLF21 @sdowdtrust

"So proud to be part of this amazing festival. @Ykids_Charity & @KingsleyandCo_ are doing incredible things for the community." Altru Drama

So much positive feedback from these events. Thanks @KingsleyandCo_ for sparking our imaginations and helping us champion the joy of reading" - Springwell Park Primary School

"Just wanted to say a massive thankyou to @KingsleyandCo_ for the amazing event put on for our community these last 2 weeks I know our boys have absolutely loved every minute of it and has got them really excited about exploring new books and ideas and just reading fantastic!!!"

Anecdotal evidence

We also gathered anecdotal evidence and feedback from partners, shops, participants etc. This included:

'We sold 300 sausage rolls on Saturday because of your event.' Pound bakery staff
'One of our new start-ups had their best day ever' (during the festival) manager of the Big Onion

'We opened on the Saturdays especially as the festival was on and We had lots of people come through the exhibition of old Bootle' – the Leonards who had set up a history display.

'There were more people in the downstairs mall than the rest of the Strand put together' .visitor comment

'Strand footfall increased during the two weeks of the festival the shopping centre' marketing manager.

IMPACT

The festival had multiple aims:

- To engage children in the joy of story
- To promote local authors and artists
- To get books into the hands of children
- To promote the ongoing work of Kingsley&Co and Co
- To offer free cultural experiences for children and families in Bootle
- To promote community pride and positive publicity for Bootle.

"It was interactive and lots of fun for the children. It was creative and allowed the children to explore new ideas"



ENGAGE CHILDREN

We wanted firstly and most importantly to impact children's lives by encouraging them to get excited about the joy of story and encourage them to read and write their own. Feedback from schools and parents was that children had indeed engaged, and many were inspired to write their own stories at home or read books independently for the first time.

"What a fantastic day we have had. Enjoyed all. Wish there was more things like today that we could attend."

All the authors we used were local to Merseyside. Some were well known such as Curtis Jobling, Alan Gibbons, Frank Cottrell-Boyce and Levi Tafari. Others were earlier on in their career, had only published one book or even though they had great 'sales' were not yet recognised as household names. The festival gave an equal platform and for some, being on the same programme as greats such as Frank Cottrell Boyce would help them in their career.

Sophia Cole, a 13 year old author who had just published her first book shared a stage with Frank during one of our events as we interviewed a 'seasoned' author alongside a new one in order to inspire children to see that they too could write stories and books.



One of the ways in which we supported local authors was to buy a quantity of their books to put in our golden ticket scheme. New books can often be too expensive for our community, however by purchasing books from local authors as that not only were authors being supported and had guaranteed sales, but also that children were getting the books they wanted after meeting the authors, but unable to afford. 70 copies of Curtis Jobling's 'were world' flew off the shelves after his 4 school visits as did Daniel Riding's 100 copies of the Naughty Cat series

"I'm gonna come back with my family and buy more books!"

With the exception of Professor Elemental and Titan the Robot, we also hired local artists and performers including Altru drama company and Arts Groupie. Mike Walker a local artist was also engaged to create a number of installations for Kingsley&Co including our Time Machine.

After the event every participating school was sent a contact list of all the participating authors and artists should they wish to book further visits or workshops in the future.

TO GET BOOKS INTO THE HANDS OF CHILDREN

As part of our offer to schools every child who attended a workshop at Kingsley&Co got the opportunity to choose a free second-hand book. Second-hand books had been carefully sorted and cleaned and only good quality books reach our shelves.

Thanks to the Siobhan Dowd Trust we also operated a 'Golden Ticket scheme' distributing 3000 golden tickets to schools which each equated to a brand-new book to be claimed at Kingsley&Co. A designated wall of bookcases was allocated to the golden tickets and a wide variety of reading books for all ages including classics, popular current and highly recommended good reads.

We also included books that were recommended for children who struggled with reading e.g., due to dyslexia, books that would appeal to early readers, children who did not generally enjoy reading and more challenging books for strong readers. Generally, we avoided 'supermarket' books that are readily available for a low price to children. Adding books for our participating authors benefited both children and authors.

"It's mine? For Free? And I don't have to bring it back?"
By the end of December 2021, we expected to have distributed over 4200 free books to children.



"Amazing Levi again! The children loved his poems and his stories. I thought that explaining where his poems came from was really useful to the children."

TO PROMOTE THE ONGOING WORK OF KINGSLEY&CO

By holding the BCLF21 we also hoped to raise awareness of Kingsley&Co and Co both to schools and the general public so that we can promote the ongoing work of the project. The publicity, events and activities have indeed raised our profile and most of our Saturday workshops have been sold out since November and sales and footfall have increased.

One of the significant impacts is the engagement with schools. 8 classes have been down to Kingsley&Co and Co for a visit post festival, many to claim their golden tickets or simple experience all that we have to offer. We encourage schools to let us know they are coming to ensure there are enough staff in place to enable them to visit the discovery room, but some have turned up unexpectedly.

One special school has been systematically bringing every class for a visit so they can chose/buy a book, take part in eth literary treasure hunt, visit the discovery room and have a hot chocolate. Schools are also enquiring about how we can work together in the future, and we look forward to building on this moving forward.



TO OFFER FREE CULTURAL EXPERIENCES FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES IN BOOTLE

Bootle is an area characterised by poverty. Many of our families simply cannot afford to give children many cultural experiences such as the theatre, trips to museums or places of interest. By bringing cultural experiences to them we are enhancing their lives, imagination and opportunities. As a result of this project children were able to meet explorers, authors and artists, take part in performances, write their own stories, experience art, make costumes, enter illustration competitions, participate in virtual reality and have lots of family fun. Our feedback and response to the event on social media evidenced that the event was welcomed. The fact that it was free gave freedom for everyone to attend. Targeting local schools ensured the majority of our audience was from the local demographic for whom the event was created.

TO PROMOTE COMMUNITY PRIDE AND POSITIVE PUBLICITY FOR BOOTLE.

Bootle has for many years suffered as a result of poor publicity and media coverage which emphasises crime and poverty. So much so that during the festival a number of negative articles were written in the local press about the shopping centre and which both we and the centre management challenged resulting in some very positive follow up articles when reporters came to see for themselves; what was happening.

The area had a poverty mindset which is seen right across our community, and it is easy to see it seep into the mindset of children. Events such as the BCLF promote the town positively and give a sense of community pride. This in turn builds self esteem and pride in our children which is so needed.

CHALLENGES

The event was not without its challenges and while some were beyond our control, others we have learned from and will take the learning into any future events we deliver.

Challenges included:

- Authors pulling out - Unfortunately, two of our authors had to pull out at last minute due to illness. This was beyond our control, but we were fortunate that other authors already involved were able to step up and fill their workshops.
- Morocco closing its borders - One of our authors - explorer Alice Morrison lives in Morocco and was set to travel to take part in the festival when just days before the event the borders were closed due to Covid 19. We arranged instead to deliver all her workshops by Zoom, live from the Atlas Mountains. This was an unexpected success with children, schools and families really appreciating being able to see the mountains, her rescued kitten, the fossils and artefacts she discovered on her journeys and ask her direct questions. This is something we will definitely do again.
- New staff - Our key worker for the event had been employed in Sept 2020 but shortly thereafter became pregnant and left on maternity in Sept 2021. This was a huge challenge as maternity cover staff did not have knowledge of the schools or the organisation and took time to orientate. This was beyond our control and not the ideal as we had to therefore add more staff to the administration of the project, and this put strain on the organisation elsewhere.

- Schools – Working with schools is always challenging as they frequently find it difficult to effectively communicate with outside organisations. We had 8 schools signed up before September, but our final count of schools involved with 35. Many of those schools came on board during October which created an administrative challenge. Many also wanted to make changes to the programme, did not respect the authors time e.g., requesting 6 half hour lessons in 3 hours with no breaks, or failed to communicate properly with their staff. This resulted in 3 schools turning up for workshops on two occasions when we only had capacity for 2 because they had failed to read their emails/letters and not had our telephone conversations passed on to them. This was frustrating but sadly also expected as we have extensive experience with schools work and this is typical with some schools. We are considering some sort of online booking system next time to allow schools to book their own slots and have automatic updates.
- Racism/rudeness – We had one incident in a school where a secretary was rude to an author, and which was perceived as a subtle form of racism. We had a complaint from the artist and are escalating this issue with the school.
- Too much pressure on staff – As we continued to deliver our usual programme of activities and the Literary Festival grew to twice what had been expected this put more pressure on staff than expected. We also saw event numbers much higher than expected and our bookshop and coffee shop were overwhelmed. We also had a key member of staff off sick which again put additional pressure on the wider team.

The learning we take away from this is that we need to do less during such a large event in our day-to-day activities or take on additional staff. We are now looking at developing a bank of sessional staff to alleviate pressure points during the year. We are also looking at how we can build the resilience of the team at Kingsley&Co ad Co and manage larger events with new systems so that they do not get as overwhelmed and are more able to process large numbers of people quickly through the café/till area.

- Working with partners – We were disappointed that a number of our partners pulled out at last minute including Spellow Library – again due to circumstances beyond their control; and the escape rooms by 'In Another Place' which were ready but unable to open due to a security issue they were waiting to be fixed by outside contractors.

We also had a few issues with communication with the shopping centre, e.g.: we had been told there was adequate access to bring the Chitty Chitty Bang Bang bike into the centre but on the day discovered that the doors which could fold out had been riveted shut and there were no maintenance staff on duty to be able to open them.

In addition, bailiffs arrived to turn off the electricity of the new unit we were using as a classroom during a workshop because a previous tenant had an outstanding £5000 bill. While we had been in contact with the electricity company when we had taken on the unit, the council had still not sent us a lease and we were therefore unable to take on the new electricity contract as they required it. We have been waiting for 6 months.

- Builders unable to complete refurbishment on time – In order to carry out the festival effectively we needed additional classroom space. We took on the vacant unit next to our current shop but the builders, while engaged in August were unable to start work until the week before the event. As a result, much of the work was not able to be completed and we had to hide and set dress the shop. The builders will return in January, and we expect work to be completed by February half term when we will be offering other events and workshops.
- Timeframe – The time frame we set ourselves was too short and despite having much in place in case funding were agreed, it would have been better had we had a longer lead into the event. This was particularly evident with partnerships and moving forward we would like to build more on these, as many partners who had expressed an interest in becoming involved e.g.: Liverpool University could not meet our timeframe.

SUMMARY

The Bootle Children's Literary Festival 2021 was a huge success involving 35 local schools, over 20 authors and artists and promoting literacy and emotional wellbeing through story and the arts.

The positive short-term impact on children and families has been evidenced through our feedback, social media engagement and positive outcomes, and we hope that this will in time have a long-term impact that will see improvements in children's attainment, engagement with their education and lifelong emotional and academic wellbeing.

Schools and the wider community had the opportunity to engage in an exciting positive cultural programme. Bootle as a town, Kingsley&Co and co as a project, the Strand shopping centre and its businesses have all benefited by increased footfall and positive publicity. Local authors have had their profile raised by being part of the festival and their contacts circulated for future bookings.

Children were able to participate at every level from audience to stage, through art, poetry, illustration, drama, storytelling, story writing, book signing, making crafts and sharing their own ideas.

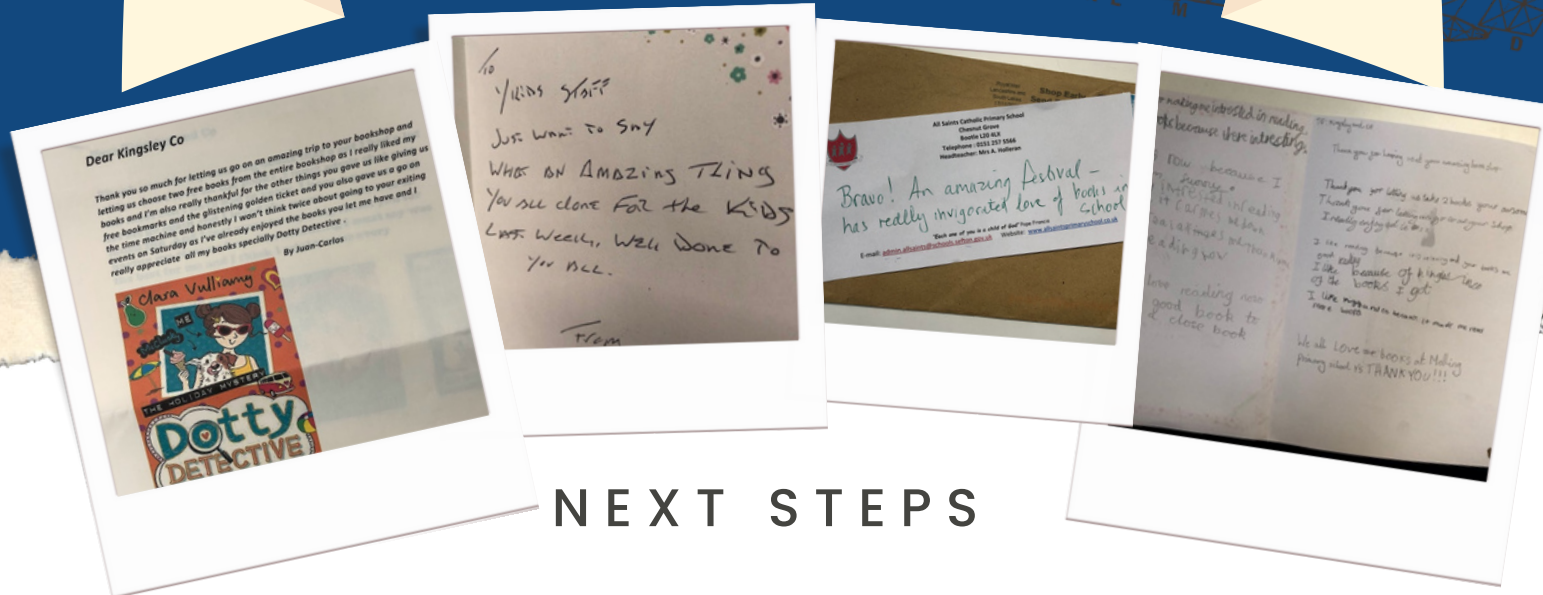
Children were inspired to create and engage independently of the festival, writing their own stories, poems and creating artwork. Over 4200 free books were distributed to children plus an additional In second-hand books and... new books through sales.

Children and the wider community had fun, felt welcomed, engaged, inspired and had a positive experience of literacy through story and the arts. The event was not without its challenges, but these will serve as valuable lessons for planning and delivering future events.





Bootle Children's Literary Festival

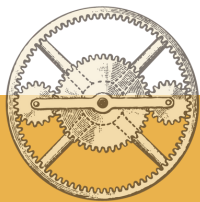


NEXT STEPS

We now have plans to develop the work of Kingsley&Co and co and the Bootle children's literary festival which we hope , one day will become a nationally recognised event for children's literature. Currently we are planning the next Bootle Children's Literary Festival with a theme of Fairytale for 2023. Our hope is that we will include old and new fairy tales, an animatronic dragon and the opportunity to for children to once again participate and be inspired through art and culture.

In the meantime Kingsley&Co and Co will continue on its mission to promote literacy through story by:

- Developing our magical classroom space and completing building works
- Adding to our Discovery Room
- Engaging with schools and setting up new projects
- Developing a programme of engaging activities and regular workshops for weekends and school holidays including
- 'Save the Rainforest' an environmental themed event, workshops and book launch during February half term
- 'Pirate Mania' – a two week pirate festival during school holidays including digging for treasure in a giant sand pit, story telling, crafts, treasure hunts, drama and workshops in the history of Liverpool Pirates; and how to follow the pirate code.
- A stall at the Pirate Festival in Liverpool in September
- Projects for other holidays and Christmas are also in discussion with partners in both the Strand and Sefton Council.
- Expanding our networks and partners in order to benefit children and young people in Bootle





Bootle Children's Literary Festival



THANK YOU

We are hugely grateful to all those who supported the Bootle Children's Literary Festival 2021. The funders of the event, principally Arts Council England, The Siobhan Dowd Trust and the Granada Foundation, but also to those without whom the staffing and management of the project would have not been possible including the Steve Morgan Foundation, Leather Sellers Company, Tudor Trust,

We are grateful too to Sefton Council and the Strand shopping Centre for the free use of shops within the Strand which has made this event and the Kingsley&Co project possible, and for their support in making it happen.

And of course, all the participants, authors, artists, performers, partners and schools who came together to be part of such an amazing event.

Finally, we are indebted to the Ykids team of staff and volunteers who went above and beyond the call of duty to ensure the vent was fun, engaging and well organised for all those involved.

Thank you



Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**

The Granada
Foundation



the
Tudortrust

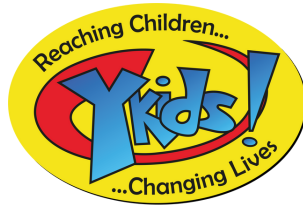


LEATHERSELLERS' COMPANY
CHARITABLE FUND

Steve Morgan
FOUNDATION

Sefton Council 


STRAND
SHOPPING



TITAN
THE ROBOT



 **St. Leonard's**
YOUTH & COMMUNITY CENTRE

