



6th Shared Learning Project Langdon Down Museum 2019 / 2020

The 6th Project Title: Normansfield and the Written Word: Correspondence and Newspapers

Part of the 6th project will focus on correspondence. This will include letters between the families, whose relatives were living in Normansfield, and the Langdon Down family. Additionally local and national newspapers have included obituaries and regular reports on developments, activities in the institution and events held in the theatre and grounds.

As well as the materials in the Langdon Down museum Archive, volunteers will need to visit the London Metropolitan Archives in Islington and other local history museums.

Previous U3A Shared Learning Research Projects at the museum

2018 | Local suppliers to Normansfield, 1868 to the 1930s

2017 | The Staff who worked at Normansfield, 1868 – 1997

2016 | The History of Normansfield's Buildings

2014 | Long Stay Institutions for People with Learning Disabilities

2013 | Normansfield: The Early Years 1868 to 1913

The Langdon Down Museum of Learning Disability

The museum in Teddington tells the story of Dr John Langdon Down and his institution at Normansfield.

It includes artifacts from the Royal Earlswood Asylum and one of its residents, the savant James Henry Pullen. The Grade II* building includes a Victorian theatre. Langdon Down and his family brought a revolutionary and enlightened approach to care, education and training for those with all conditions of learning disability. The institution opened in 1868 and closed as an NHS hospital in 1997.

Today part of the original building is home to the Down's Syndrome Association, Langdon Down Museum and Normansfield Theatre. The museum researches the history of Normansfield and social history of learning disability. It is open to the public on specific open days with talks and tours.

For further information see: www.langdondownmuseum.org.uk

How the project works for volunteers

Volunteers on a U3A Shared Learning Project enjoy working as part of team and learning from each other. They develop new skills in researching local history.

To decide if this project interests you, look at the museum website www.langdondownmuseum.org.uk or visit us on an open day and learn about the history of Normansfield.

Next museum & theatre open days 10am-5pm on Saturdays: 22 June, 20 July, 24 August.

While some research can be conducted online it is usually necessary to visit various archives including: Langdon Down Museum Archive, London Metropolitan Archives in Islington, Richmond Local Studies Library and Archive, Kingston History Centre, National Archives at Kew.

Meetings

The first meeting of the group will discuss the overall theme of the project and consider what each person may like to research.

Volunteers should ideally attend all the group meetings to report on progress and have the opportunity to learn from each other. Prospective volunteers should consider before committing to the project if they have enough time to attend the meetings and carry out the research.

This year the group will be attending a 2 hour introduction to research at the London Metropolitan Archives and a behind the scenes tour in September/October, date to be advised.

Some volunteers will have been part of previous U3A projects at Normansfield or elsewhere. Other volunteers are coming with little previous knowledge of a Shared Learning Project. All are welcome.

In between meetings volunteers work on their own though they can email each other for advice. The topic for each volunteer will be something that interests them but within the broad theme of the project. For new volunteers unfamiliar with Normansfield it may take several weeks at least to find this topic. We will not tell you exactly what to research.

Volunteers will need to use Microsoft Word, the internet and email. PowerPoint or Excel may be useful.

What happens at the end of the project

At the end of the project the group deliver a PowerPoint presentation of their research to an invited audience. Each volunteer prepares their own section. The research from the project is kept in the Langdon Down Museum Archive with a short version appearing on the museum website. The material may also be used in future talks and displays. The research provides invaluable new insights into the history of Normansfield.

Meeting dates in 2019

Provisional dates are as follows, every two weeks, and are all on a Wednesday from 11am to 1pm:

- 18 September. First meeting. Outline of the project. Discussing possible topics for research.
- 16 October, 30 October, 13 November, 27 November
- Further dates to be agreed including the final presentation date in April 2020

Special event: 2 October. 10.30am. 2 hour training event at the London Metropolitan Archives

Location for meetings

Langdon Down Museum of Learning Disability,
The Langdon Down Centre, Normansfield, 2A Langdon Park, Teddington, Middlesex, TW11 9PS.

Nearest BR station: Hampton Wick, then a 10 minute walk. Buses: 281 and 285 stop outside. Free parking.

To Apply

For an application form please email: Jen Cobb nifercobb@gmail.com

Closing date for applications: 26 July 2019