



Culture in Dorset 2022

Celebrating a year of Creativity



What a year it has been for culture in Dorset.

As we emerge from Covid, which had a particularly disastrous effect on our sector, we find communities desperate to return to creativity activity. This year the county has witnessed hundreds – maybe even thousands – of creative projects. Many are below the surface, quietly delivered in community centres, villages halls, pubs or parks. Others are in our diverse network of venues; in art centres, libraries, theatres, museums and galleries.

We've selected some to showcase, to give a flavour of the richness of the cultural life of Dorset and to reflect the ten ambitions of the new Dorset Cultural Strategy, an ambitious plan to deepen and grow engagement for every citizen in the county.



Requital. by Babar Suleman at b-side Festival 2022, image: Pete Millson

None of this would be possible without the unique combination of collaborators, artists, volunteers, producers, venues, audiences, and participants. Most of the projects chosen wouldn't have been possible without the backing of funders.

87%

of people living in the South West engaged with culture

that's
330,600
People in Dorset

For every



Invested in art & culture, up to

£6 is generated for the local economy



The value of the arts and entertainment sectors in Dorset is

£84
Million

Sources: Creative Industries Federation, Dorset Council, UK Government

In particular I'd like to thank Dorset Council for their support, a local authority that not only understands the value of culture, but backs it with vital seed funding that allows the sector to flourish. This creates jobs for the local economy, boosts the quality of life for residents, increases tourism and makes Dorset one of the finest places in the country to visit, work and live.

I hope you enjoy reading about these projects. And look forward to a wonderfully creative 2023.

David Lockwood
CEO, Arts Development Company

The Arts Development Company is a social enterprise formed as a spin-out from Dorset County Council in 2015. Proudly based in the heart of Dorset, we develop innovative, collaborative and creative ideas and programmes to transform people, places and communities across the county and beyond.

Get in touch

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Breaking down social isolation and building empowered communities

Swanage

“Every time one of us is creative, it has an impact across all of our lives” – Claire Hodgson, Co-Artistic Director, Diverse City

On Midsummer’s Day, 50 local women swimmers came together for a new, one-off performance - Sw!m. This community shared and celebrated their conversations and stories of unity, joy and bravery. These were performed on the stage of The Mowlem Theatre before the audience moved outdoors for a choreographed dance/swim extravaganza. This production showed the power of culture to bring communities together and transform places.

Creatives: Claire Hodgson, Deborah Paige

Collaborators: Diverse City, The Mowlem Theatre

Images: Top - still from a film by Pageant Productions, bottom: by Millie Haines



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Our environment inspires our cultural offer

Badbury Rings



Dorset is rich with history and creative collaborations bring it to life.

For this year's national Festival of Archaeology, 4,000 years of history at Badbury Rings was brought to life through animations and living history. Activities included bronze casting, flint knapping, pottery, textiles and jewellery as past met present in this stunning heritage site.

Creatives: Beth Darlington

Collaborators: The National Trust

Image: Courtesy of the National Trust

Improving health and wellbeing in our communities

Sturminster Newton



"Home. Art. Draw. I cannot do without." - Bill, Participant

To mark the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, four cultural organisations came together to create a special project. Over three days, a group of learning-disabled adults in Sturminster Newton worked with the professional creatives to explore the rich archive of the Queen held in Dorset. Each participant created their own art, with music composed in real time, sharing their own stories and memories in this safe, creative and empowering space.

Collaborators: Emerald Ant, Paper Cinema, Arts Development Company, Dorset History Centre
Images: Pageant Productions



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Embedding access, inclusivity, diversity and equality at every level

Dorchester

**"They have a genuine commitment to inclusivity"
- Mel Lane, Space Youth Project**

The voices often overlooked in history are given centre stage at Shire Hall Museum. The histories of women, refugees, child perpetrators and working people are shared through a programme of talks, events and exhibitions. They also hosted Black History Month Diversity Day, which brought together speakers, stalls, music, art and poetry.

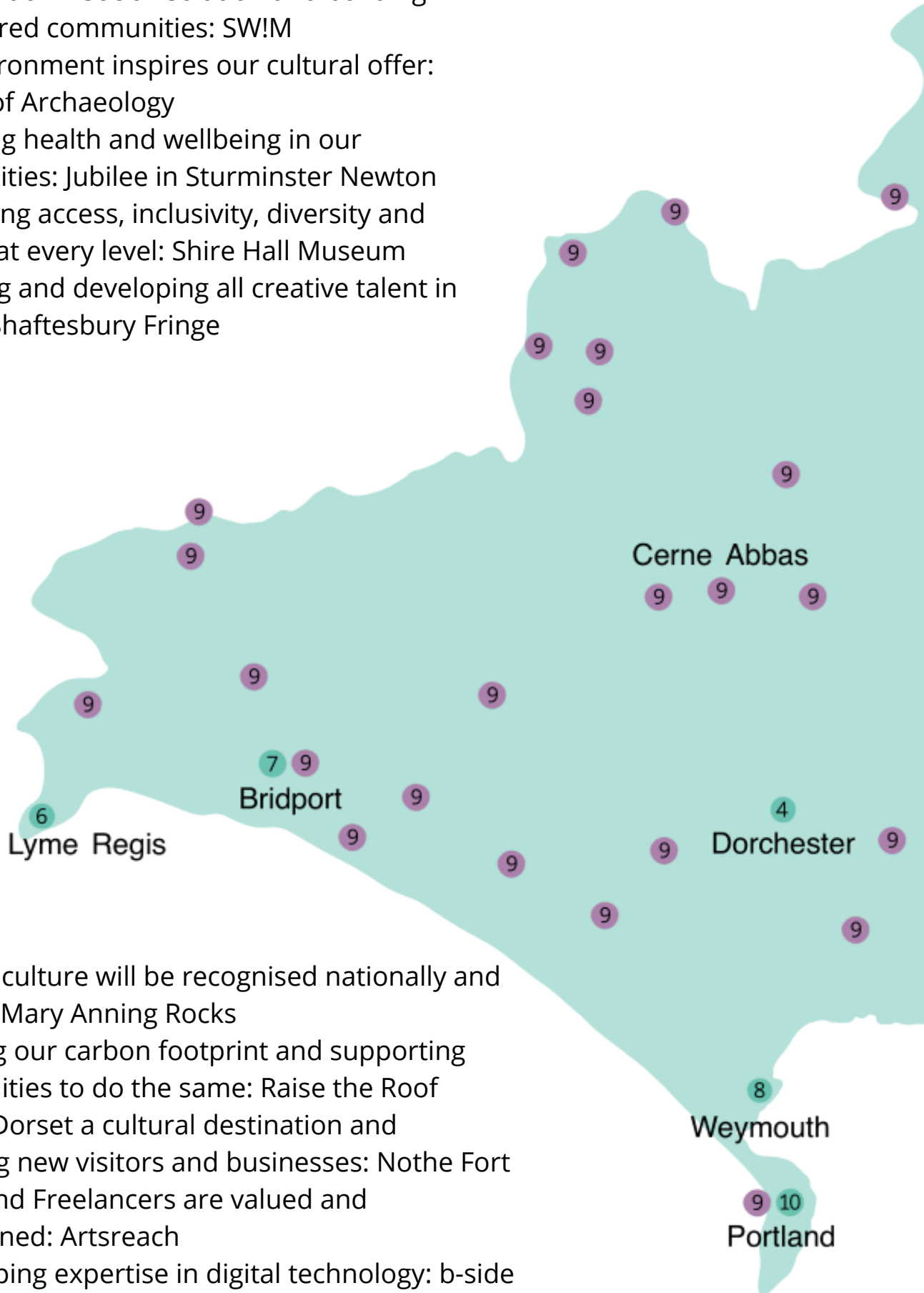
Personal stories were recently on show in an exhibition by the Dorset Community Mental Health Artists group. The exhibition helped to build the confidence of members and provided a supportive space to show their artworks.

Image: Courtesy of Shire Hall Museum

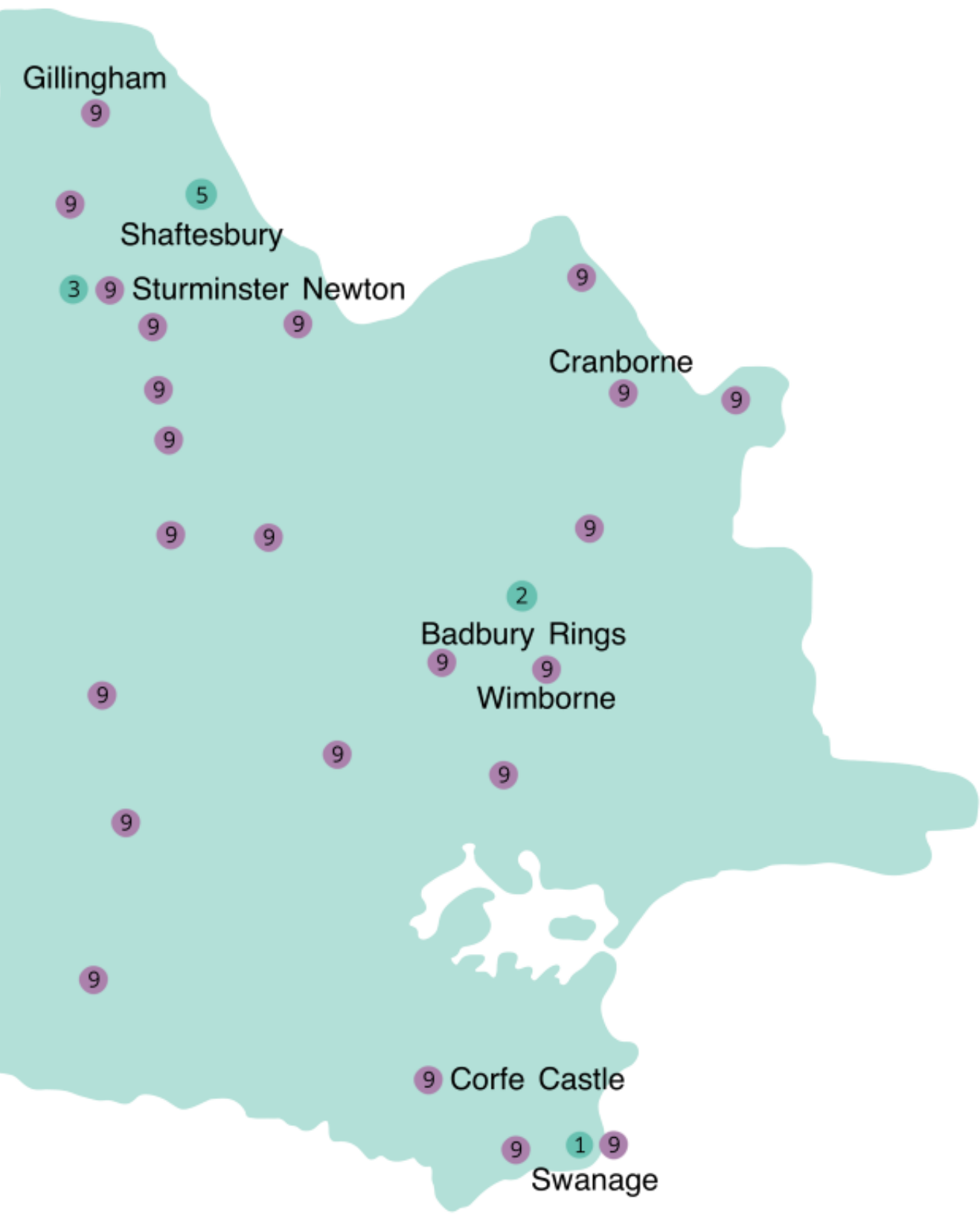


Culture in Dorset 2022

1. Breaking down social isolation and building empowered communities: SW!M
2. Our environment inspires our cultural offer: Festival of Archaeology
3. Improving health and wellbeing in our communities: Jubilee in Sturminster Newton
4. Embedding access, inclusivity, diversity and equality at every level: Shire Hall Museum
5. Nurturing and developing all creative talent in Dorset: Shaftesbury Fringe



6. Dorset's culture will be recognised nationally and globally: Mary Anning Rocks
7. Reducing our carbon footprint and supporting communities to do the same: Raise the Roof
8. Making Dorset a cultural destination and attracting new visitors and businesses: Nothe Fort
9. Artists and Freelancers are valued and championed: Artsreach
10. Developing expertise in digital technology: b-side Festival



Nurturing and developing all creative talent in Dorset

Shaftesbury

"The Shaftesbury Fringe served as the springboard for launching the Project Dance Company" - James Bamford, Artistic Director



140
events



in 30 venues

For one weekend in July, Shaftesbury Fringe Festival brings together 30 venues that host over 140 events in just three days. Pulled together by an incredible dedicated group of volunteers, this festival is free for both venues and performers, and provides a springboard for new creative talent from across the county and beyond. James Bamford, 19 year old ballet dancer and founder of Project Dance is now able to tour his dance production 'Growing Pains' as a result of success at the Fringe.

Image: Promotion of 'Honey's Happening,' courtesy of Shaftesbury Fringe



Dorset's culture will be recognised nationally and globally

Lyme Regis

“Kids now grow up knowing who she is; it’s just part of their educational DNA” – Anya Pearson, co-founder, Mary Anning Rocks

Over 85% of statues in the U.K celebrate men and only 2.7% of civic monuments commemorate named women. In Dorset, there are more statues of animals than there are of women. A six-year campaign to install a statue of Mary Anning at Lyme Regis successfully concluded in May this year. It began when nine-year-old Evie Swire asked her mother where the statue of Mary Anning was in their hometown. Realising there wasn't one, and Anning had been largely forgotten, the pair spent years campaigning and fundraising over £150,000 to create a new statue for Lyme Regis. Covered by national press and TV, this project has inspired a national movement for more historically significant women to be celebrated through public statues.

Sculptor: Denise Dutton

Image: Courtesy of Mary Anning Rocks



Reducing our carbon footprint and supporting communities to do the same

Bridport



The climate emergency and affordable housing crisis are being creatively tackled by Raise the Roof. Through collaborations, open conversations, research and community events, Raise the Roof aims to find a more sustainable, community-focused way of building affordable housing that benefits the local industries and economy.

This year, Raise the Roof led an investigation into hemp as a break crop in a regenerative agricultural system. The aim was to explore the potential of growing this heritage crop locally again. A study group of local farmers was formed, and together they developed a funding bid for four hemp field trials, and connected farmers to construction projects using hemp and UK hemp research, including the Innovative Farmers Network.

Collaborators: The Arts Development Company, Assemble, Bridport Area Community Housing, Bridport Town Council, Common Ground, Plymouth University, Wessex Community Assets

Image: Courtesy of Wessex Community Assets

Making Dorset a cultural destination and attracting new visitors and businesses

Weymouth

On Dorset's south coast stands England's Small Visitor Attraction of the Year. This June, the historic Nothe Fort won the prestigious award from Visit England, with judges praising its "excellent community work, management during COVID, and its accessibility considering it was originally designed to keep people out."

The venue, run by Weymouth Civic Society, welcomes visitors all year round and is currently planning major developments to their Cold War bunker and Victorian gundeck.

Image: Courtesy of Nothe Fort



Artists and Freelancers are valued and championed

Rural Dorset

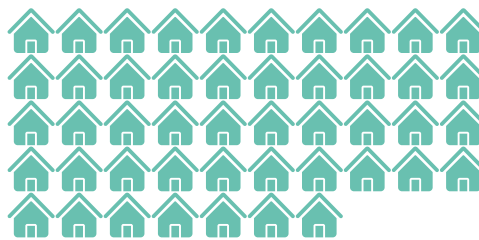


"We were valued, supported and encouraged as artists by them"
- Sharp Teeth Theatre

115
performances

and 29 workshops

in 47 rural communities



Through a staggering 150 cultural events, Artsreach brought culture to 47 rural communities across Dorset in 2022. They work with freelance performers in music, dance and theatre, programming around 40 small-scale companies each year. Their door is always open to new talent, which they champion with guaranteed fees, contributing to more sustainable careers in our rural county.

Images: Left - AKA Dance Theatre, right - Norwich Puppet Theatre

Developing expertise in digital technology

Portland

For one night in September, Portland's Pulpit Rock was the venue for a piece of artistic innovation. The island's b-side festival commissioned digital artist Babar Suleman to create 'Requital.', an immersive augmented reality artwork. Text was visible only through a phone or tablet, combined with atmospheric audio and a glorious location. The artwork brought together exciting new technology, contemporary art and Dorset's natural beauty.

Creatives: Babar Suleman

Collaborators: University of the Arts London, Creatives Garage

Images: By Steve & Marcus at Portland Bill Watch



