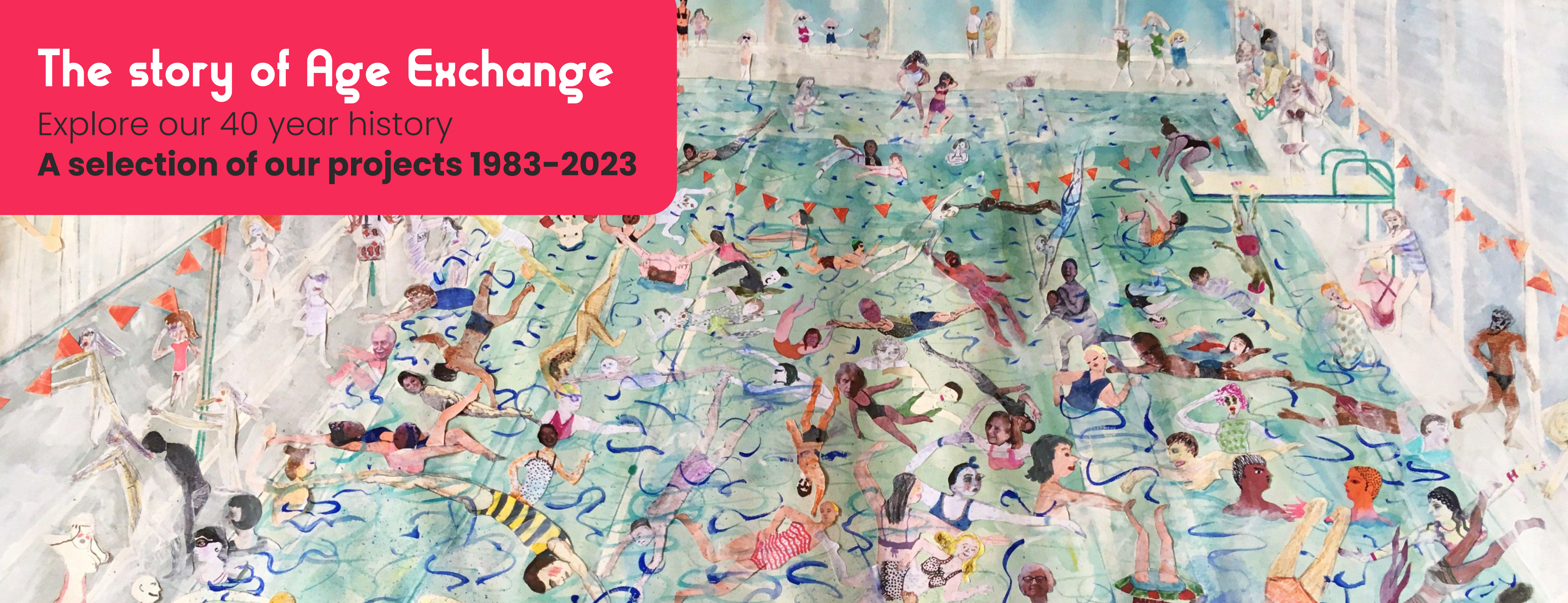


The story of Age Exchange

Explore our 40 year history

A selection of our projects 1983–2023



1982-3

Age Exchange Theatre Company established in April 1983 with a GLC grant of £17,500 for 6 months.

Co-operative Retail Service CRS funds us to produce a theatre production and a book of memories marking the centenary of the Co-op Women's Guild.

CRS loans us an old furniture van for professional theatre tours.

1984

We appoint permanent stage and company manager

1985

We hire a rehearsal space at number 11 and a small office upstairs

Glenda Jackson opens the Reminiscence Centre

1986

Nuffield Foundation start an endowment fund of £50k.

The Reminiscence Project launched pilots in SE London. 16 newly trained project workers start 8 week projects.

Age Exchange Youth Theatre launches with 2 groups aged 10-13 and 14-18.

1987

We buy the lease on number 11 and convert the building from a card shop to the first Reminiscence Centre.

Volunteers help run the centre. Disabled access and a gallery space is established.

Short courses are offered from the Reminiscence Centre.



1988

Neighbouring building is leased and converted for theatre scenery, props and costume storage and rehearsals.

Reminiscence Boxes project launched.



1989

Reminiscence Training days run 30 days a year for health and social care professionals, community arts and museum workers.

Reminiscence Project established with 20 placements across London. We train staff and help them set up reminiscence work.



1990

Baring Foundation funds a press officer.

Lewisham council supports the building of a photographic darkroom and disabled access to the basement.





1992

We buy freehold of all our buildings and buy the Old Bakehouse for training and development. The Nuffield Foundation agrees to a £100k mortgage.

1993

Funded to deliver international theatre and workshops in Germany, Denmark, Ireland, France, Belgium and the Netherlands. Company tours for 42 weeks

The Reminiscence Handbook published with practical advice.

25,000 visitors see our exhibitions on the theme of women's war work and the role of the co-operative women's guild.



Our first international conference: "Reminiscence - a Celebration" attracts practitioners from across Europe.



Joint show with Good Companions and the Youth Theatre: Grandmother's Footsteps is a hit with audiences in London, Brussels, Salzburg, Cologne and Lille.

1994

Computer classes for the over 60s start in our basement led by volunteers.

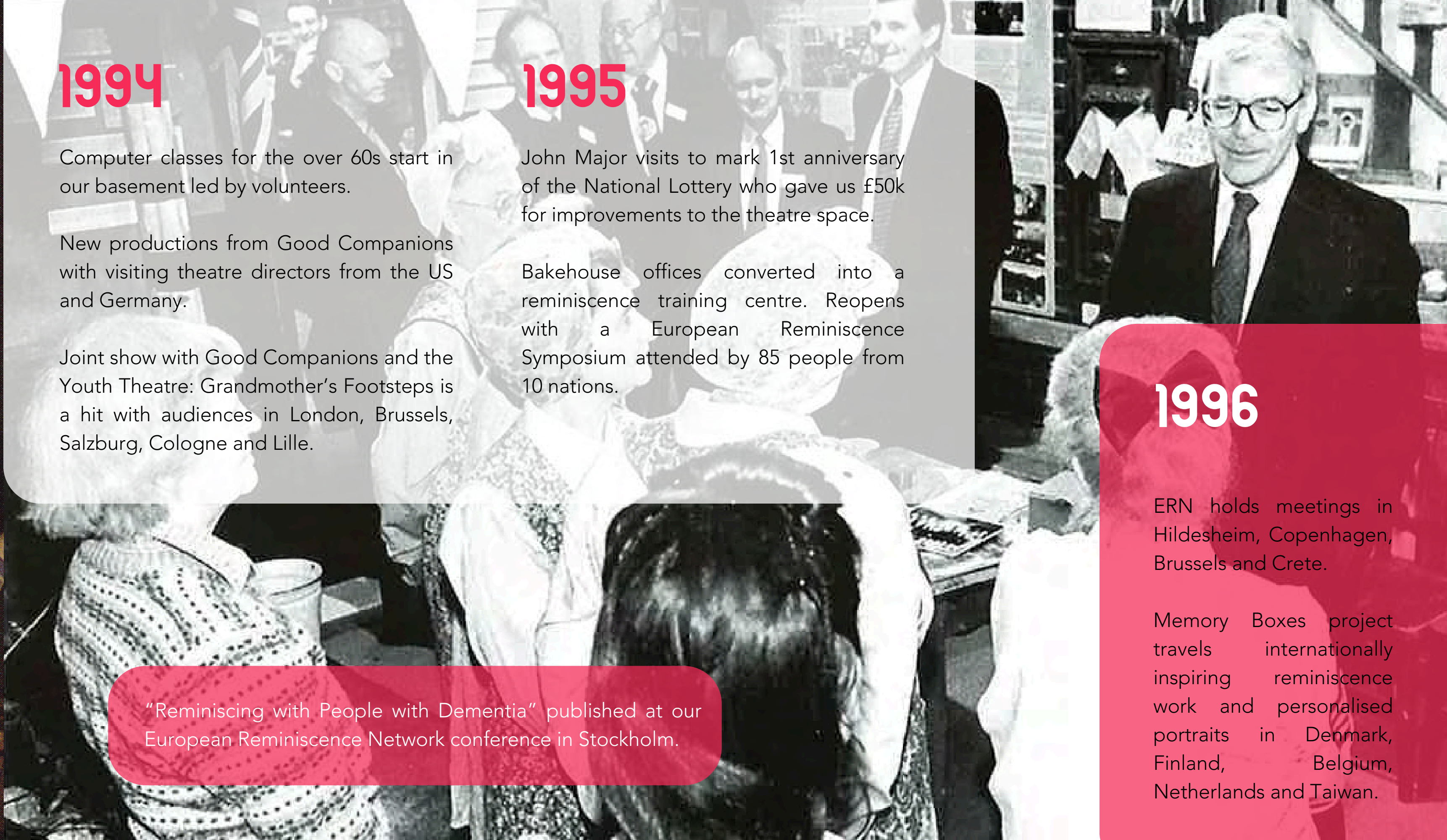
New productions from Good Companions with visiting theatre directors from the US and Germany.

Joint show with Good Companions and the Youth Theatre: Grandmother's Footsteps is a hit with audiences in London, Brussels, Salzburg, Cologne and Lille.

1995

John Major visits to mark 1st anniversary of the National Lottery who gave us £50k for improvements to the theatre space.

Bakehouse offices converted into a reminiscence training centre. Reopens with a European Reminiscence Symposium attended by 85 people from 10 nations.



1996

ERN holds meetings in Hildesheim, Copenhagen, Brussels and Crete.

Memory Boxes project travels internationally inspiring reminiscence work and personalised portraits in Denmark, Finland, Belgium, Netherlands and Taiwan.

"Reminiscing with People with Dementia" published at our European Reminiscence Network conference in Stockholm.



1997

Linbury Trust funds arts projects over 3 years.

A new European dementia project is funded.

1998

Theatre modernised with removable seating, drapes and video projection.

3-year funding plan from Department of Health. Arts and Education officer and Reminiscence coordinator appointed.

Community theatre projects with Caribbean elders and young black drama students in Lewisham.



1999

£50k funding from Lottery Arts for Everyone for a reminiscence project and community play about the river Thames: "On the River." London memories from dockers and lightermen results in an intergenerational theatre production (Albany Theatre).

UK Reminiscence Network launches at a conference in London.

We train 35 new project workers.

Age Exchange co-organises an International Festival of Older People's Theatre in Cologne.

Caribbean Elders' Theatre Company "The Islanders" formed.

Jerwood Award for excellence in the small to medium-sized charity field. Presented by Martin Bell MP. IMPACT award of £25k for excellence in public health from the Kings Fund.

2000

Department of Health supports us coordinate an international festival of older people's theatre: "The Time of our Lives" attracting 250 participants from 4 continents and included 14 productions and workshops across 5 London venues.

Funded to run Lewisham Millennium Project. Artistic, intergenerational, health-based activities including an exhibition, schools workshops and a book.

Pam Schweitzer receives MBE from the Queen.

Funding from Millennium Commission to put on a production based on our memories of the Thames: "On the River." Plays in 60 venues in South England.

2001

Friends of Age Exchange launched.

"Remembering Yesterday, Caring Today" receives 3-year funding from Bridge House Trust and Tudor Trust.

Reminiscing with People with Dementia translated into 6 languages.

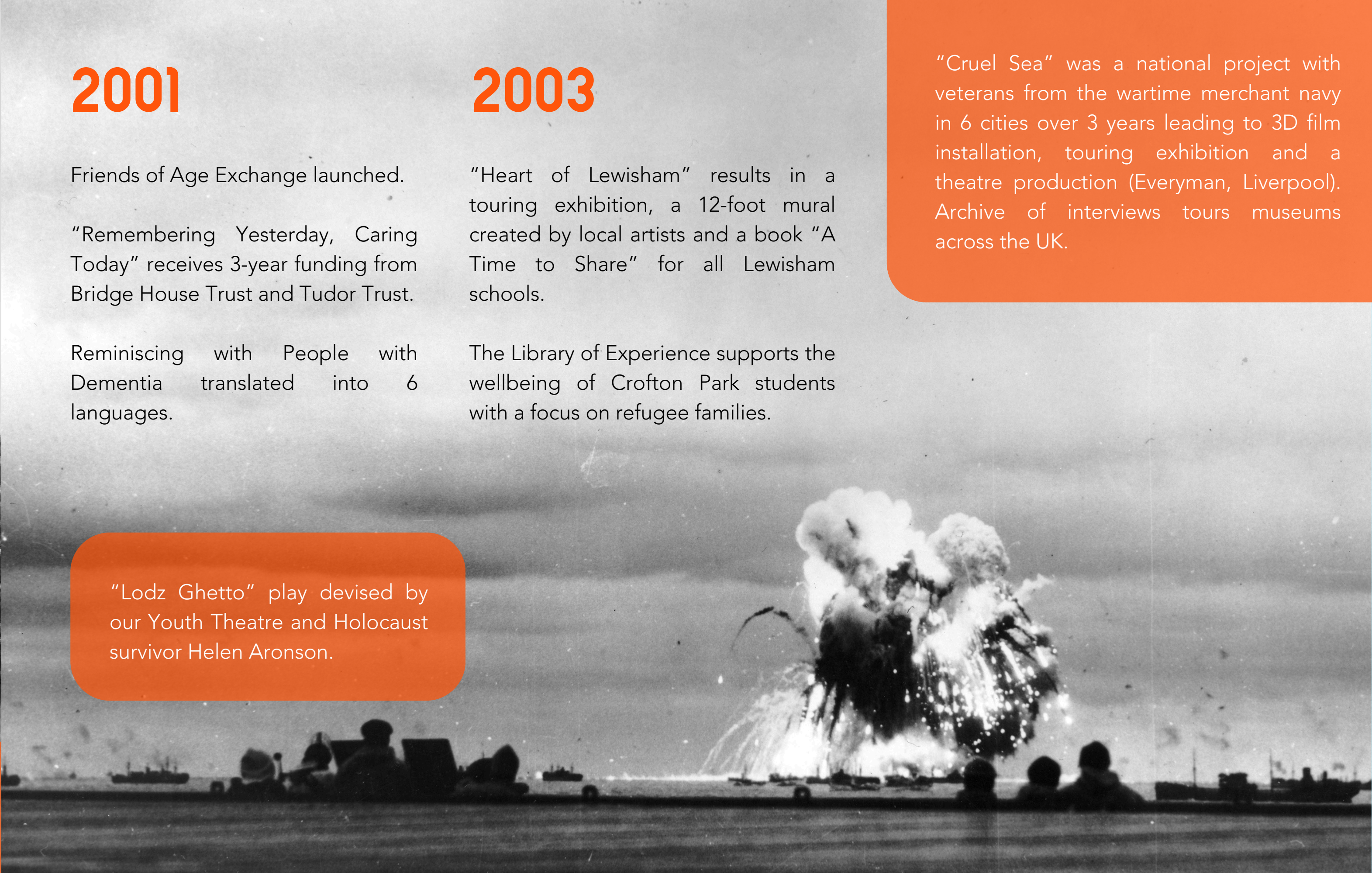
"Lodz Ghetto" play devised by our Youth Theatre and Holocaust survivor Helen Aronson.

2003

"Heart of Lewisham" results in a touring exhibition, a 12-foot mural created by local artists and a book "A Time to Share" for all Lewisham schools.

The Library of Experience supports the wellbeing of Crofton Park students with a focus on refugee families.

"Cruel Sea" was a national project with veterans from the wartime merchant navy in 6 cities over 3 years leading to 3D film installation, touring exhibition and a theatre production (Everyman, Liverpool). Archive of interviews tours museums across the UK.

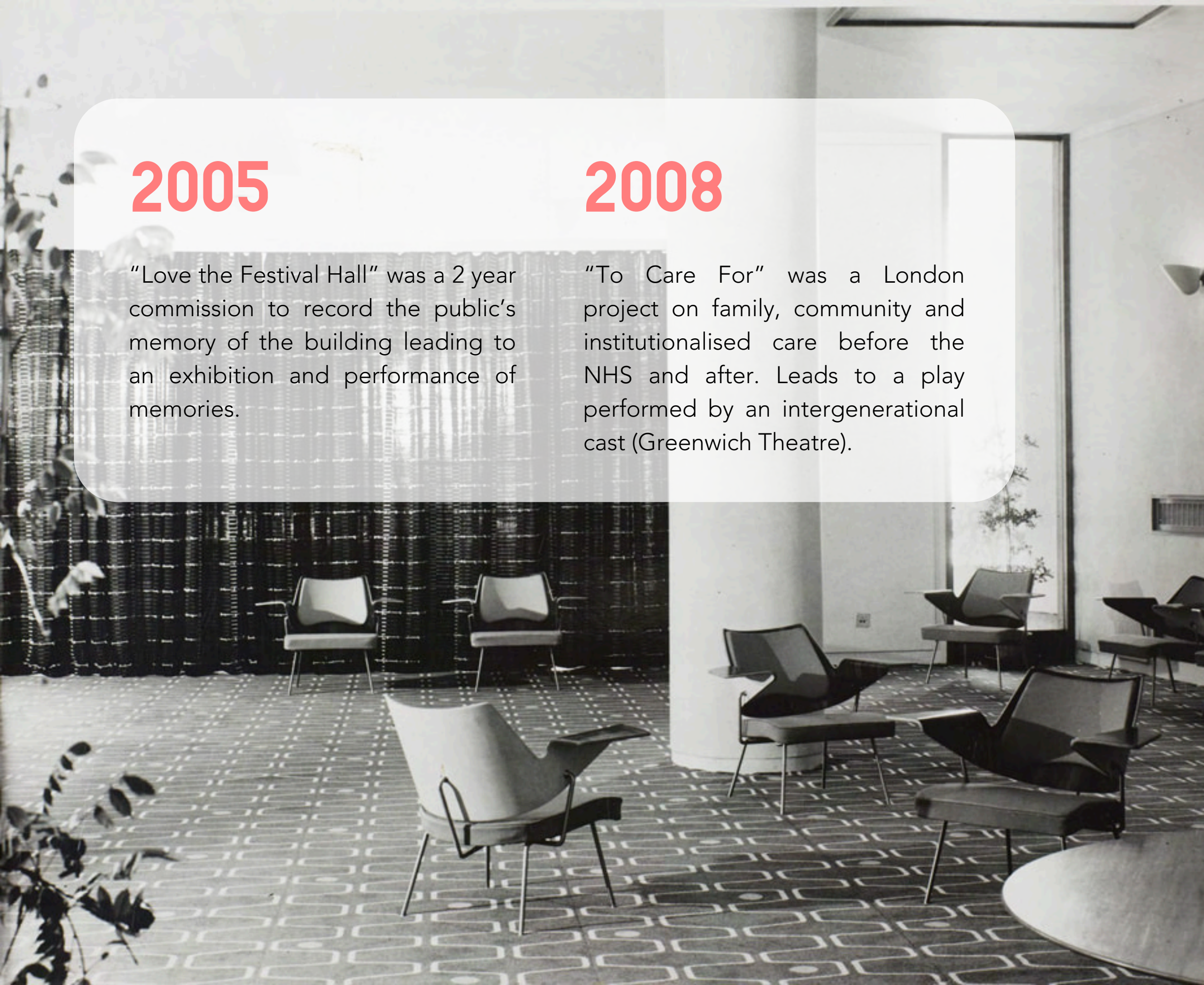


2005

"Love the Festival Hall" was a 2 year commission to record the public's memory of the building leading to an exhibition and performance of memories.

2008

"To Care For" was a London project on family, community and institutionalised care before the NHS and after. Leads to a play performed by an intergenerational cast (Greenwich Theatre).



2010

"Age to Age", the Lewisham Intergenerational Festival, produced by Age Exchange.

"The People's Story" an intergenerational theatre and documentary film produced.

Funding from the Merchant Taylors' Livery Company to deliver a major programme supporting almshouse residents, Lee and Christopher Boones' Court, Lewisham.

2012

"The Goldington Street Gang" told the story of Unity Theatre through a combination of research, documents and personal reminiscence.





2013

“Children of the Great War” was a London-wide record of family histories of the Great War with University of Oxford leading to major intergenerational theatre production (Bridewell Theatre) and a touring film installation. Archive of almost 1000 family papers, letters and photos from the War.

2012

Age Exchange’s support methodology RADIQL™ (Reminiscence Arts and Dementia, Impact on Quality of Life) independently evaluated by Royal Holloway, University of London. Piloted in Residential Care, 2012-2015, supported by Guy's and St Thomas' Charity.

Mayor of Lewisham Sir Steve Bullock opens the new refurbished Age Exchange after a £870k makeover.



2016

“Meeting in No Man’s Land” was our second heritage project focusing on the centenary of WWI. With German and UK partners we brought together 24 German and British “children” (in Munich and Roseheim) of those who fought to share family history and in many cases experience of inter-generational trauma. Resulting a film documentary which premiered in July at the BFI to mark the 100th anniversary of the Somme.



2017

“Paddling to the Palais” was a joint project with Trinity Laban and participants with dementia and their carers, and older volunteers.

RADIQL research results in 7 years of funding from National Lottery Community Fund. Our Reminiscence Arts model combines reminiscence, visual arts, music and movement.

“Creative Journeys.” A project in Alexandra House, Harlow, delivered thematic reminiscence and a film project. Led by Anglia Ruskin University and Essex CC Cultural Development with Older People’s Research Group in Essex.

2018

Partnership with South London and Maudsley NHS Foundaton Trust developing reminiscence training and tools to hospital staff. Our Activity Recipe Cards are the result of this project.

We merge with Community Integrated Care.

“Revealing the Maritime History of Leigh on Sea” was a series of interviews with cockle fishing families resulting in a book of memories and an oral history archive.



“Combat Stress 100” marked the 100th anniversary of the UK’s oldest military mental health charity. We trained veterans in filming and interview techniques at Combat Stress centres in England and Scotland. Documentary screened across the UK.

2019

Awarded contract for Supporting People with Dementia Project funded by Lambeth Clinical Commissioning Group. We roll out weekly groups providing support, friendship and creative activities in the Lambeth borough.



2020

Age Exchange closes its doors on 17 March and sets up a Virtual Day Care service during the pandemic.

Partnership with Royal Museums Greenwich. "All Aboard" combined their historic collection of travel journals, diaries, letters, photos and artwork and the art created by Age Exchange participants.

All Aboard

Reconnection and reminiscence for people living with dementia

National lockdown made 2020 a difficult year for all of us. For some it meant increased isolation and loneliness, something that can particularly affect people living with dementia. In response, the Museum began a project called 'All Aboard'. This used stories of sea voyages contained in journals and diaries to inspire memories and creativity around the subject of travel and better connect with people living with dementia and their carers.

Journals and diaries as inspiration

The journals and diaries in the Museum's collection reflect almost 350 years of sea travel, from the 1630s to the 1980s. They describe voyages made for work, pleasure and exploration, and the experiences and responses of people travelling at sea for long periods of time. They describe feelings that many of us can relate to from lockdown.



2021

Through the Virtual Day Care Service lots of outstanding art was created at home. The Arts Council and National Lottery Community Fund helped us to launch our Age Exchange Gallery.

40 All Aboard reminiscence boxes delivered and inspired a major exhibition at the RMG.



2023

Age Exchange celebrates 40 years working in reminiscence and dementia support using the creative arts.

PIN. 13/1/25