

Forgotten Skills

An artwork by Natalie Rose Philpott

FREE

June 2014

nataliephilpottart.blogspot.co.uk

TRADITIONAL SKILLS AT RISK OF BEING LOST

Fine artist, Natalie Rose Philpott from Falmouth, Cornwall discovered a photograph of her great-great-great grandfather, Alfred Webb, standing alongside a cart advertising his domestic engineering business. The writing on the front of the cart specifies Webb's skills to include, glass and china riveting, saw sharpening and general repairs.

Natalie explains that, *'The photograph immediately got me thinking about traditional skills such as darning socks, knitting, bread making and saw sharpening and how these and many others are at risk of being forgotten in our current consumerist, throw away society.'* She continues, *'I began to contemplate the possibility of locating people who*

have traditional skills, with a desire of bringing them together in some way.'

Natalie's first task was to find ways of discovering as many people with skills as possible, who were keen to participate in some form of collaboration. She realised that in order to get a wide range of participants involved, she needed to find a variety of ways to reach this network of people. Therefore, she came up with the idea of designing and printing her own beer mats for distribution throughout local pubs. Her thoughts behind this were that, *'Pubs provide an environment where relations are formed and strengthened and this felt like the perfect place to start searching for people.'* These beer mats explained that she was *'seeking people with skills which are at risk of being lost'* and invited them to get in contact.

Below is a list of Pubs where Natalie left her beer mats in Falmouth and Penryn:

- Finn McCoulls
- The Star and Garter
- The Chainlocker
- The Seven Stars
- Penryn Bowling Club
- The Kings Head
- Prince of Wales
- The Grapes Inn

She also created flyers to display in shop windows, post through letterboxes, hand to people on the street, post on-line and this flyer also got published in her local newspaper, The Falmouth Packet. It was this that led to Natalie being contacted by the local press who asked if they could run a story on her 'Forgotten Skills' project. The news editor wanted to know what inspired her to do this and what she was planning to do with the owners of these forgotten skills. Although uncer-

tain of the exact direction her project would take, Natalie shared her initial thoughts and intentions which were then published in The Falmouth Packet Newspaper. (See page 2 for article)

Still unsure whether she would receive any response from the public, her thoughts returned to the photograph of her great-great-great grandfather. In particular the cart in the image was of great interest as Natalie discovered, through discussion with her family, that Alfred Webb used to pull his cart through the streets of Falmouth, in order to publicise his trade. She says *'I decided I wanted to attempt a re-creation of my grandfather's cart, with the possibility of pulling it through the streets myself to generate interest and conversation around forgotten skills.'* She continues, *'Remarkably, a gentleman who responded to my flyer mentioned that he would not only be happy to participate in my project with his saw sharpening skill, but he would also be keen to help me make the cart.'*



Photograph of Alfred Webb, The Prince of Wales Pier, Falmouth, Cornwall. Date and photographer unknown.



The beer mats used to get in contact with potential participants

Reviving those forgotten skills

INSPIRED by an old photograph of her great-great-great-grandfather, a domestic engineer who worked in Falmouth many years ago, Natalie Philpott of Falmouth University decided that something needed to be done to remind people of skills which are being forgotten.

She plans to gather a group of local people with skills such as darning socks, tailoring, garment customisation, shoe mending, saw sharpening, plate riveting to offer a "make and mend" service to locals.

Determined to follow in her ancestor's footsteps, Natalie would like to copy the image in the photograph, *above*, by re-creating the cart used by her great-great-great-grandfather and take it to the Prince of Wales Pier, where she plans to hold an event at which she will offer the wide variety of services to local people who wish to bring items to be mended or altered for free.

People who would like to collaborate with her on the project should call 07966599266.

The Falmouth Packet's article explaining Natalie's initial intentions which altered during the development of her project.



Photographs of the flyers displayed in local shops



FINE ARTIST RE-CREATES GREAT GRANDFATHER'S CART



The re-created cart near completion

It was during the re-creation of the cart when Natalie realised that the actual making process had become a turning point in the direction of her project. She elaborates, *'I became aware that whilst building the cart and working alongside this gentleman, he was sharing and teaching me new skills. This made me realise that the exchanging of skills could potentially become a crucial part of this project. This made me more determined to find individuals who would be willing to share their skills with others.'*

The response to Natalie's adverts began to come in via text messages, e-mails, social networking sites and phone calls and the project's potential began to unfold. She said, *'I arranged to meet with the potential participants after they got in contact and we swapped ideas. I felt this was a really interesting part of the work as I conversed with new people and gained their individual input on the project.'*

Natalie describes the construction of the cart, which took a series of weeks, as being *'a challenging task but also really rewarding.'* She elaborates, *'I have never attempted to make anything like this before, so to look at this re-creation of my great grandfather's cart and know that I played a part in making it, is a great feeling.'* Once the cart was completed and she had decided to hold a 'Skill Sharing Event', she took it to The

Prince of Wales Pier in Falmouth, where her grandfather stood for the original photograph. She also dressed in similar clothing as her grandfather to re-create the image, as well as pulling the cart through Falmouth town's main street.

Taking the cart to various locations was a great way to promote the upcoming event. She also employed other advertising strategies such as, creating a poster and flyer which she gave to local shops, pubs, and handed to people on the street. Natalie then made a sandwich board, which she placed in the middle of town on the day of the skill sharing event. She explains, *'I tried to create a visually recognisable theme around the project. So, I used the same font and image for all the posters and flyers and I even made the sandwich board reminiscent of the cart by painting it black, attaching brass knobs and stencilling 'Forgotten Skills' onto it. I think it paid off because quite a few people said they had seen the image before and had heard about the project'*

'I attempt to create conditions through my work which invite participants to share something with each other, be it time, conversation, or just the experience.' Natalie Rose Philpott

'The craftsman is proud of what he has made, and cherishes it, while the consumer discards things that are perfectly serviceable in his restless pursuit of the new.' Matthew Crawford



The making of the cart - page 3

'I am very aware that a lot of these skills and techniques do get lost in time and people just forget how to do them.'
Richard Harding, Participant

CREATING THE CART

'Does the use of tools answer to some permanent requirement of our nature?' Matthew Crawford



Natalie staining the wooden cart



Natalie cutting the wood for the cart



Fixing the top of the cart to the frame



Natalie writing 'Forgotten Skills' onto the front of the cart

'...to look at this re-creation of my great grandfather's cart and know that I played a part in making it, is a great feeling.' Natalie Rose Philpott

'Determined to follow in her ancestor's footprints' The Falmouth Packet Newspaper, 2014

'When I took the cart around town, I engaged in conversation with local people about the project. It was great to hear so many people enthusiastic about what I was doing.' Natalie Rose Philpott



Natalie stood in the same spot her grandfather did many years ago



**RECOGNISABLE
'FORGOTTEN
SKILLS' LOGO
REAPPEARING
THROUGHOUT
THE TOWN**



Natalie taking us back in time by pulling a saw sharpener's cart through the streets of Falmouth



Putting up one of her posters outside a local church to promote the event



Sandwich board in the middle of town on the day of the event



Advertising the event in the Falmouth Packet Newspaper

SKILL SHARING EVENT!

‘With the aroma of fresh cakes and bread filling the air and the curious excitement building up outside, quickly the hall began to fill up with local people all eager to be involved’

Rebecca Telling, Journalist

‘I find myself repeatedly drawn to projects where my work has the potential to bring people together.’
Natalie Rose Philpott



The saw sharpener and pattern cutter sharing their knowledge with a visitor



The hall getting busier as the day progressed



Richard Harding showcased a traditional method of pattern cutting



Sue Trevaskis shared her crochet skills with many visitors on the day

AN EXCHANGE OF SKILLS AND CONVERSATION



Sue Trevaskis had visitors amazed at her crochet creations

There was a variety of skills available to the public on the day of the event such as, saw sharpening, sock darning, knitting, crochet, spiling, hand sewing, bread making, home baking and cross-stitch. The local visitors not only got the chance to talk to people with these traditional skills, but they also got to try their hand at it themselves. Natalie said, 'I was amazed at the amount of people who were so keen to come in and get involved. There was a point in the day when the hall was so busy, it was difficult to move around!' She continues, 'I was also extremely touched at the effort the skilled participants put in to the event. Local man, David Cummins, who presented his saw sharpening skill, had actually made a bench from scratch for demonstration purposes and Sue Trevaskis spent the night before the event finishing off her crochet giraffes and teddy bear.'

'Throughout the morning the hall was filled with conversation, tea drinking and cake eating, of course.' Rebecca Telling, Journalist



June Smith shared her knowledge of knitting



Bread Maker, Rebecca Vinnicombe, learnt how to hand embroider with the help of Lisa Martin



Richard Harding teaching his 'spiling' technique to an enthusiastic visitor

'The embellishment and crochet stalls generated tight competition from the locals who had picked up a new skill by the end of the day.' Rebecca Telling, Journalist



MEET THE PARTICIPANTS WHO SHOWCASED THEIR 'FORGOTTEN SKILLS'



Bridget Baldwin demonstrated 'Darning'



Rebecca Vinnicombe showed off her 'Bread Making' skills

'Anybody my age, they know how to do it. I guess people just don't learn how to do it any more. They just bin the old pair and replace them.'
Bridget Baldwin, sock darner

The local press, journalists and visitors were all eager to ask the participants questions about their skills at the event. Natalie said, *'On the day, many of the people with skills were filmed doing demonstrations by a journalist. Some of the footage is really great to watch as the participants are so enthusiastic about what they are doing. I plan to get the videos uploaded onto a website, where members of the public can add their own videos and comments about their traditional skills. I think this project still has so much potential.'*

'I feel a sense of achievement when others taste and enjoy my different types of bread'
Rebecca Vinnicombe, bread maker



June Smith's 'Knitting' skills amazed visitors



Lisa Martin was working on her fashion degree collection by 'Hand Sewing'

'I learnt this as a boat builder'
Richard Harding



Richard Harding taught people how to pattern cut using the traditional 'Spiling' method.



David Cummins passed on his 'Saw Sharpening' knowledge

MORE PARTICIPANTS



Susan Toy's 'Home Baking' stall was a hit with the locals

Susan Toy's home baked goods were very popular at the event. Here is one of the recipes she shared on the day:

'OLD FAITHFUL' YOGHURT CAKE

1 carton yoghurt (any flavour)

3 cartons of self-raising flour

1 carton of cooking oil

2 cartons of caster sugar

3 large eggs

Use the yoghurt carton for measurements. Set oven to 175°C or gas 3 to 4 and line and grease an 8" cake tin. Mix all ingredients together, preferably using an electric mixer, and pour into the prepared cake tin. Bake for approximately 70 minutes until firm to the touch. Ice as required.



Sue Trevaskis shared her 'Crochet' skill

'I think that it's wonderful to see the mixture of both young and old all coming together for an event like this.' Sue Trevaskis, crocheter

Public learn to make do and mend from those who have know-how

Art project preserves craft skills in a throwaway world

Craig Blackburn
craig.blackburn@westbrتون.co.uk
01872 247564

A 19TH-CENTURY photograph of a distant relative has inspired a young woman to revive some of the traditional 'make do and mend' skills from a bygone era.

Third-year fine art student Natalie Philpott even built a replica of the cart which was used by her great-great-grandfather, domestic engineer Alfred Webb, as he sold his services in Falmouth more than 100 years ago.

The Forgotten Skills event drew people together with abilities in sock-darning, saw-sharpening and an old form of measuring known as spiling.

The inspiration for the event was a crumpled black and white picture of Mr Webb, who advertised his skills in glass and china riveting, saw-sharpening and general repairs on Prince of Wales Pier.

Consumerist

"The photograph immediately got me thinking about traditional skills which are being forgotten in our current throwaway, consumerist climate, where people no longer 'make do and mend'," said Miss Philpott.

"I decided to try and gather a network of people with skills and bring them together in an attempt to remember and celebrate skills which were once a significant part of our everyday life.

"I created beer mats, flyers and posters with a photograph of my grandfather printed on the front, along with text asking for people with traditional skills to get in contact."

Local pubs and shops were

PHOTOS
See more pictures of this event online at westbrتون.co.uk



Natalie Philpott with the replica cart.



The old photograph of Natalie's great-great-grandfather Alfred Webb on Prince of Wales Pier.

who still use them in their everyday lives.

The skills available to the public on the day were saw-sharpening, sock-darning, knitting, crochet, spiling, hand-sewing, breadmaking, home baking and cross-stitch.

Miss Philpott said: "I was amazed at the number of people who were so keen to come in and get involved.

"I was also extremely touched at the effort the skilled participants put into the event.

"Local man David Cummins, who presented his saw-sharpening skill, had actually made a bench from scratch for demonstration purposes, and Rebecca Vinnicombe spent the night before making countless loaves of home-made bread."

@blackburn_cj