

## Kite making with elders at The Grange Day Centre in Throckley



### Kite project at The Grange: Generations share the sky

With funding from the Big Lottery

The initial aim was to develop a kite project working with elders from The Grange Day Centre Throckley and involving children from the local area. Participants would work to make kites and have opportunity to come together to fly them from time to time.

Kite flying was selected as the focus for the project, as many elders have a memory of making or flying a kite but have not usually had an opportunity to revisit that memory. Kite flying can be a fun and companionable way to be out in the open air and take exercise. An interest in kites can span generations providing a common medium for people to engage with. They can be the channel for learning and sharing between different ages and different cultures.

Specialist kite maker Pauline Taylor, was engaged to lead the kite making work. Pauline is based in the North East and has been making kites for almost 20 years and receives invitations to fly and exhibit her kites at festivals in Europe as well as in the UK. Pauline has worked with participants of all ages using a wide range of materials and techniques from the simplest mini kite made from paper and scraps of wool, to more complicated constructions using fabric, silk ink and carbon fibre.

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### From the North East to the Far East

Elders at The Grange Day Centre in Throckley are excited that their own artwork has been seen in Malaysia and Thailand this year. Over a dozen elders who attend the Grange have been taking part in a kite-making project with visiting artist Pauline Taylor over the last few months. Pauline describes the work:

“Together the group have been working on a kite arch – a long string of about 30 kites each decorated with an image of a different teapot. Everyone had a chance to choose the sort of teapot they like best or remember well from the past, and then we drew and painted them onto the kites. The finished kite arch looks very British and provided a little bit of the North East in Far East.”



Regular attender Tommy was keen to be involved and not only made a teapot kite but also did most of the sewing for the arch. He also asked Pauline to take with her a box kite which he has made- so that it can be flown in Malaysia. “It has been great to go over old memories! I remember making a box kite with my dad – and I have been able to make a new one now. Of course my dad used newspaper for his and we are using plastic for ours so that it will last a bit longer if it rains.”

The kite project at the Grange helps to prompt memories from childhood, and also provides an opportunity for elders to learn new skills and to revisit some that may have been forgotten.

In 2014, Pauline was invited to attend international kite festivals in Malaysia and Thailand. She discussed this visit with the elders at the Grange and together they came up with a plan to send some kites to the Far East.



About 30 diamond shaped kites have been made each bearing the image of a teapot carefully chosen and recreated by the elders at The Grange. All the kites are joined together on a long line allowing them to be flown as an arch, tethered to the ground at both ends.

The Grange has always been keen to relieve social isolation of elders by providing the opportunity for them to take part in activities and to communicate positively with others. “When people are physically and mentally stimulated in this way it improves confidence and successfully brings people together. Our elders will feel like valued members of their community again. This in turn will help create an improved and active quality of life.” Michele Wright