



Remote Reminiscence – Getting Elders Online **Resources**



Online ways to engage older people in
reminiscence



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Strike a Light - Arts & Heritage

Introduction

Strike a Light – Arts & Heritage is a Community Interest Company, which creatively explores heritage through life stories, project themes and local memories with diverse audiences.

Based in Brighton, we work flexibly across the UK to deliver training, consultancy, and projects – both in-house and commissioned. Our diverse portfolio offers something for everyone, and we are unique in blending culture and history.

Our programmes find connections between community, history and culture, with the aim of manifesting pride in public memory.

WE WORK across sectors and with organisations, clients, local authorities and individuals to deliver exciting, engaging and collaborative cultural heritage programmes.

WE DELIVER arts and heritage projects, development schemes, activities and support for venues, archives, schools and communities.

WE ENGAGE groups including young people, the third age, intergenerational participants, volunteers, and professionals in creative and heritage activities.

WE RUN bespoke and off the peg training to educate and share knowledge.

Strike a Light – Arts & Heritage has been working with older people since its inception in 2010. Prior to that our directors have extensive experience and engagement with older people and groups too.



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We create projects regularly with older people and want to support them to participate in new technological ways of engagement. One of the noticeable things about 2020 onwards, is that due to lockdown, how many people in our communities found it difficult to make the switch to living in a more digitally focussed way.

Some of the third age groups we work with stopped meeting and have become far more isolated as a result. As a key part of our remit as an organisation is to work with people over 60, we realised that we wanted to look for ways to support and encourage communities to gain new skills and still be able to engage through reminiscence.

Throughout this current period, we have been engaging with, talking to and discussing with individual older people, third age services and their users via email, Zoom and phone about how best to support engagement without physically being able to deliver our existing activities and services.

This new project, *Remote Reminiscence* is part of our commitment to those who've felt isolated or missed seeing friends and family during a challenging time.

This is a way to encourage older people to find new ways to engage with peers, supporting and enabling those 65+ to become part of the new online developments taking place as a result of Covid, to support those finding this difficult, and to explore new ways to meet for company and conversation in this digital sphere.

Through this [National Lottery Community Fund](#) project, we have spent time developing these resources, creating activities and making a series of short films to encourage the sharing of memories, experiences and life stories in a relaxed and informal way. It also offers suggestions for carers, family, volunteers and staff to be able deliver or support reminiscence activities using these materials.



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This is an entirely new project for us and means we can change, adapt and respond to new and future challenges by building strong relationships in and across communities both in person and online.

It means we can offer reminiscence to older people, their families, carers and care homes. We also hope it will feed into our potential new online reminiscence training for staff, volunteers and organisations.

Now it means you can use these resources to share with others too!

Let us know if you use these resources.

Please take a few minutes to complete our evaluation form:

<https://forms.gle/62ygwXRc5BRx9smy9>

Tag us on social media too!

Twitter: @StrikeaLight

Instagram: @strikealight_artsandheritage

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/strikealightartsandheritage/>

Contact us for information, projects and training too:

<https://strikealight.org/>



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Figure 1: Postcard of Brighton and items related to going out - Image by Summer Dean. Courtesy of Strike a Light - Arts & Heritage.



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Project information

Remote Reminiscence is a multi-platform resource aimed at engaging older people in reminiscence in a way that makes it easy for them to access memories, share experiences, encourage lifelong learning and have both digital and practical resources as a way to develop a sense of community and reduce isolation at this challenging time.



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We do this through recorded video activity sessions and written downloadable resources which can be used distinctly or in conjunction with the sessions.

For *Remote Reminiscence*, we have created:

- 20 recorded video reminiscence activities (utilising physical resources and materials) on a variety of themes: childhood, working life, courtship, going out and food etc.
- A new stream situated on our [YouTube channel](#) for participants. These can be accessed at any time.
- Accompanying activity support packs created and saved as a PDF resource and hosted on our website to download.
- Activities designed to be used in conjunction with and to support the online sessions, encouraging those unsure or concerned about computers to engage more easily.
- Project signposting to ensure continuity of service.
- Additional reminiscence training for groups and organisations to access for extra support.

What is Reminiscence?

'Reminiscence' means sharing life experiences, memories and stories from the past. 'Reminiscence is the act or process of recalling the past' (Butler, 1963). Talking about the past can also bring up happy memories and good feelings, and this can be wonderful in itself, but particularly if a person is finding life difficult.

It is also the case that reminiscence can sometimes provoke painful memories. Emotional reactions are not necessarily a bad thing, but we need to respond sensitively.

Reminiscing can be a good way to make connections between people from different backgrounds or cultures or between staff and the people they work with. When



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choosing topics or themes for reminiscence in groups, think about ways in which you can include people who may be in a minority, for example, someone who is a different religion or culture or someone who is lesbian or gay.

Memory Boxes

Also think about the objects you could use too, to help trigger memories and to encourage those with visual impairment to participate too. You can use everyday objects to encourage this, even a wooden spoon is sufficient when talking about cooking and the home, but often museums and libraries offer memory boxes full of themed objects to help support you and your participants to join in with reminiscence activities.

Some people may find it hard to talk about certain topics. Sharing memories of family life can be fun and create group cohesion but can also be challenging for those who haven't had children or lived with a partner. So, knowing individual life stories can help to ensure that you are aware of potentially difficult topics.

Benefits of Reminiscence:

- Stimulates social interaction and communication
 - Reduces the feeling of isolation
- Shares and captures family and local history
 - Increases the feeling of self-worth
 - Helps keep the mind stimulated
- Allows participants to reflect on past and present
 - An enjoyable experience
 - Builds confidence
- Generates community and support



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Reminiscence at Home or Online

Objects are wonderful conversation starters and help to get people thinking about and discussing their memories. Strike a Light - Arts & Heritage is offering free video resources to help people create their own reminiscence activities at home.

These videos can be used by anyone as a conversation starter and we hope they may be particularly useful for:

- Those living alone
- Care settings
- Carers supporting someone at home
- Older people who are isolating or shielding and family members living separately.
- Families and friends to share and enjoy the act of remembering

Each film:

- Focuses on a different theme and objects related to that theme i.e., Courtship and dance cards or wedding photos
- Each film is between 3 and 5 minutes long
- Contains an introduction to the object and some questions to get people thinking about their memories

We all possess memories; we all have our own unique life history. Recalling the past is a means of owning it and hence preserving ourselves. It is a here and now process which holds the teller and the told in relationship with each other.

Faith Gibson (1998)



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We have picked 20 themes for you to select from. These are:

- Introduction to Remote Reminiscence
- Schooldays
- Childhood
- Holidays & Celebrations
- Jobs & Work
- Courtship (Part 1)
- Courtship (Part 2)
- Going Out
- Staying In
- Food
- Family
- Make Do & Mend
- Friends
- Hobbies
- Housework
- Image slideshow to use with activities
- Talking stick – Managing a session
- Food Prompts
- Holidays - postcards
- Going Out – Prompts

We are pleased to have launched a set of free video resources for the Remote Reminiscence project.

You can access all 20 of these on our new YouTube channel [here](#).



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There is no topic that is entirely straightforward for everyone to discuss, although ‘food’ and ‘holidays’ may be simpler themes to start with than ‘courtship’ or ‘childhood’ as these can sometimes be triggering, however there are so many topics to choose.

“Our new free online reminiscence sessions and resources are aimed at both the over 65s and also those who work in the care sector, heritage and the arts.”

Contact us for training and activities:

contact@strikealight.org

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