

Framing Oxford Project Evaluation Report

Helen Fountain (March 2021)

What were the aims of the project?

The Framing Oxford project was originally planned as a series of in person group sessions at Oxfordshire History Centre (OHC) to support local older people to engage with local history archives, share their photography skills and local history knowledge whilst offering a safe space to form friendships and create community connections. We were just about to launch the project when COVID-19 changed our plans and we all found ourselves on a year-long (+) journey of social distancing and lockdowns.

It was obvious from the outset that the pandemic and ensuing lockdown would have a negative impact on older people, many of whom are already disproportionately affected by loneliness and isolation. With this in mind we didn't want to postpone the project and we developed and trialed a new, blended approach to project delivery. An initial online Zoom meeting and phone calls enabled the participants to agree on which aspects of the OHC collection they wanted to explore, and the theme of local area Cowley was agreed, as the majority of the participants lived in the local area. Each month a presentation was prepared with photos supplied by OHC around a given theme connected to Cowley (for example shopping in Cowley) and there was a monthly Zoom session which participants could also join by landline telephone and a monthly day of non-digital engagement by post and phone (non-digital participants received a printed version of the presentation by post). Everyone was encouraged to share stories and material from their own collections. Additional funding was secured from Oxford City Council's Culture Fund to enable us to work with Film Oxford to create a Digital Artistic Legacy for the project.



Framing Oxford printed resources for post/phone participants.

The project partners

[Oxfordshire Age Friendly Creative Network \(OAFCN\)](#) – OAFCN is part of the wide range of services offered by Age UK Oxfordshire (AUKO) and forms part of the AUKO Creative Team alongside the Age of Creativity project and Festival. The OAFCN exists to work in partnership with Cultural and Creative Partners to support and develop Age Friendly Creative opportunities in Oxfordshire. This is achieved by sharing best practice via a newsletter, delivering networking opportunities and delivering bespoke projects with Cultural Partners when opportunities are identified.

[Oxfordshire History Centre](#) - Oxfordshire History Centre collects, preserves and makes available historic Archive and Local Studies collections relating to the county of Oxfordshire. Located in St Luke's Church in Cowley it is part of Oxfordshire County Council's Library Service and is open to the public, a wide range of the archive material is also available on-line including photographs via the [Picture Oxon website](#)

[Film Oxford](#)- Film Oxford is an arts and creative media charity supporting filmmakers, artists and digital creators. Film Oxford run a programme of local and online training as well as supporting production, networking and exhibition.



Framing Oxford Zoom screenshot

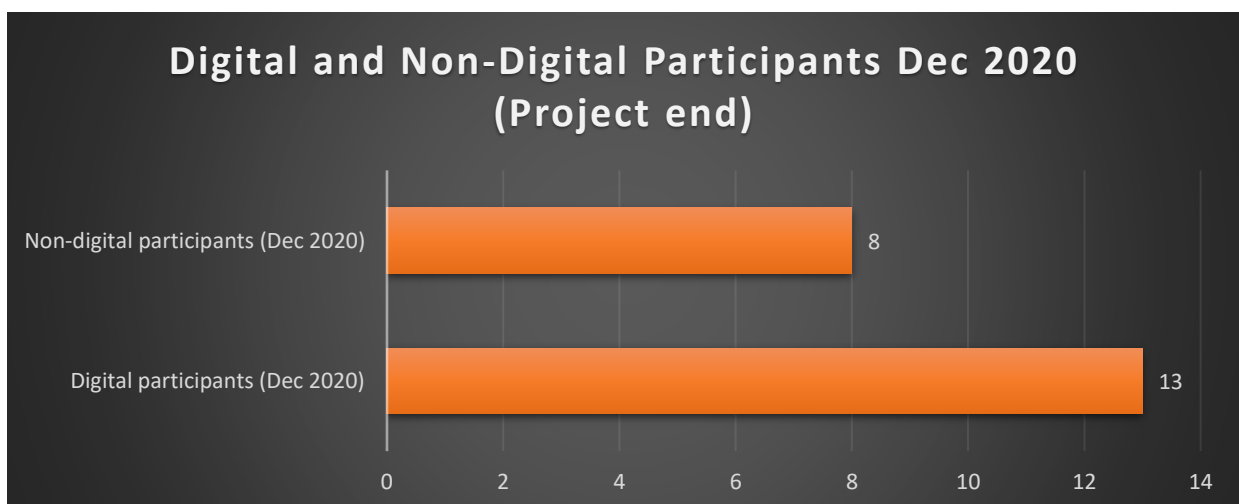
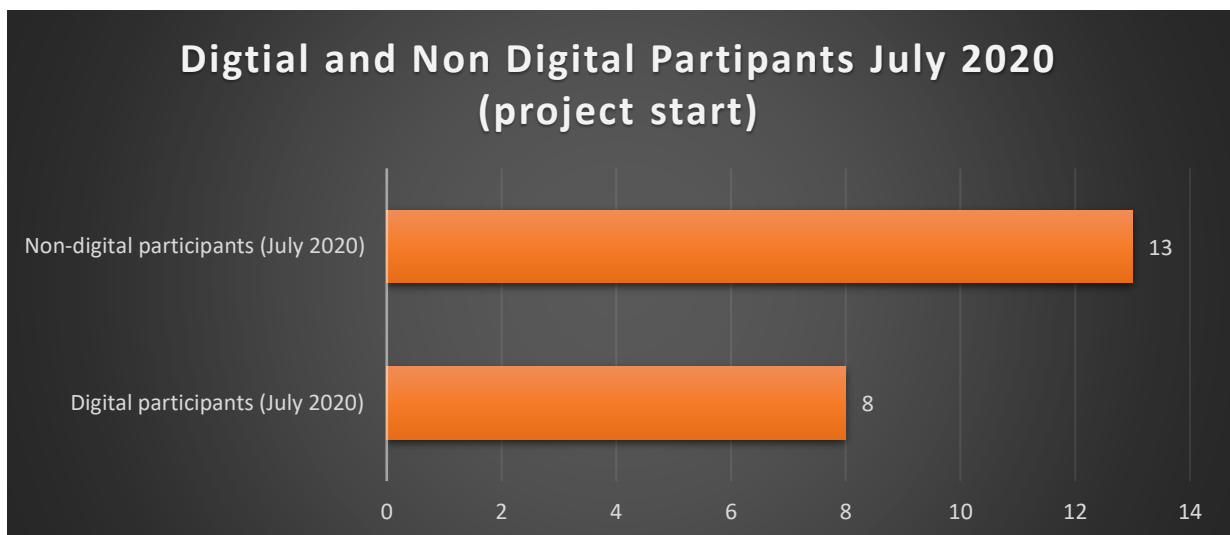
What were the outcomes and outputs of the project?

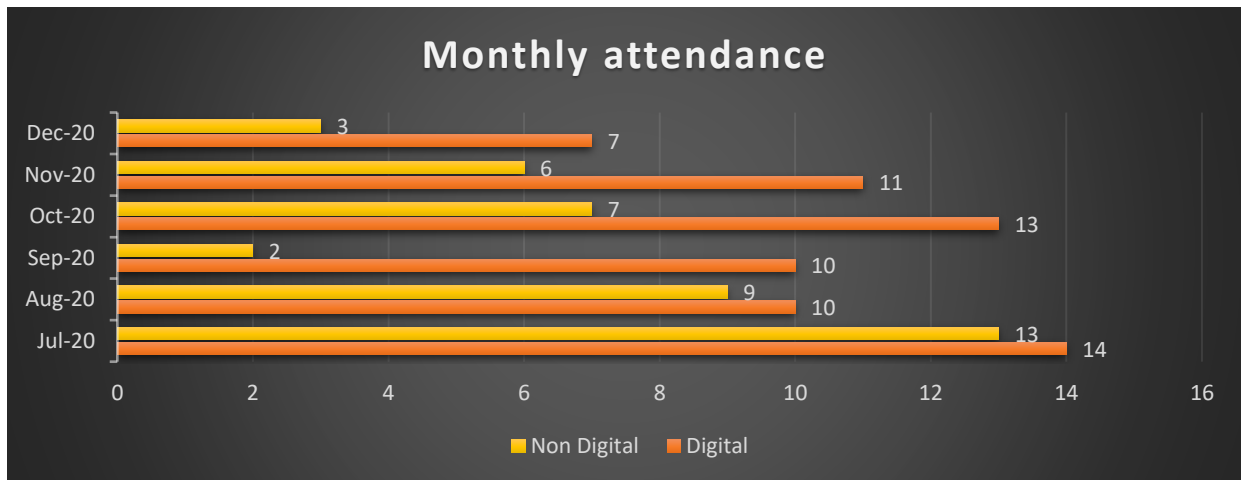
- There were a total of 6 Framing Oxford Zoom sessions and 6 days of non-digital engagement, both of which occurred monthly from July to December 2020.
- On average 17 older people participated in the monthly sessions with an average of 10 taking part in the Zoom session and 7 by post/phone over the 6-month period. The age range of the participants was from mid-60s to mid-90s. Over time 5 of the participants moved from the postal/phone group to the digital Zoom group as their confidence in the use of technology increased.
- A wide range of archive material has been unearthed and has been shared in the group sessions and with the post/phone participants.
- A total of 21 items have been added to the Oxfordshire History Centre Archives so far including the COVID-19 Archive. Further items may be donated when it is possible to visit Oxfordshire History Centre in person. Items include digital photographs, oral history audio recordings, written accounts of individual memories of Cowley, adverts from historic publications, watercolour paintings of the Cowley area, a Bible belonging to Henry Taunt, a copy of a painting and a Henry Taunt Glass Plate Slide. (Henry Taunt was a Victorian photographer who lived in Cowley for a time and took photos of Oxford and Oxfordshire from the 1860s to 1922. Oxfordshire History Centre is the custodian of the Henry Taunt photographic collection).
- One of the participants is an artist and has an extensive collection of their own watercolour paintings of the Cowley area which they generously photographed so that they could be shared with the group and included in the Framing Oxford film.



Dismantling the Paint shop conveyor bridge at Cowley Works- Watercolour by David (Stanley) Cook

- The participants have kindly agreed to keep in touch and act as Age Friendly Creative Advisors for Age UK Oxfordshire's Age Friendly Creative Network.
- Feedback on the project has been positive from both the participants and partners.
- There was a strong sense of the shared experience and camaraderie in the group, especially as the project progressed and lockdown continued.
- Some of the participants did their own research about Cowley which they kindly shared with the group.
- Some fantastic anecdotes were shared including the purchase of wire shopping basket from the closing down sale at Woolworths in Cowley Centre. The owner has raised over £26k for charity with the help of the customised basket. Also, we had a reunion when one group member who had played the role of Father Christmas and another group member who could remember visiting him as a child in the 1960s realised that they knew each other from this encounter many years ago.
- With additional funding from Oxford City Council's Culture Fund, we have made a short film to showcase the material shared with the Framing Oxford project in partnership with Film Oxford.





What are the key learning points from the project?

- We changed our project plan at fairly short notice to adapt to Covid 19 restrictions. It would have been useful to have an extra ½ day per month to spend more time on preparing the resources for sharing and to spend more time on phone calls and to have funding for phone calls if no free calls available to the facilitator.
- We did adapt after the initial stage of the project to make phone call times more flexible, and times were suggested by the participants. Sending out SAE's helped to encourage replies by post and offered other options for keeping in touch.
- It is essential to post items out from the Post Office so that they are correctly priced.
- We wanted to make the Zoom sessions welcoming but safe at the same time, so we had to discourage sharing the email containing the Zoom link but used simple passwords that were easy for the participants to remember.
- Some time spent with participants on the phone and from safe distance in person outdoors in summer 2020 was a great help in supporting participants to transition from non-digital to digital engagement.
- OHC were extremely flexible in allowing the photos to be shared in a PDF by post
- A reliable printer is a great asset when working from home.
- 1.5 hrs is a good length of time for Zoom session with a tea/comfort break.
- The Digital Artistic Legacy film gave a focus and something to aim for and has provided a lovely legacy for the project.
- Things can take longer than you expect! (even when you are already expecting them to take longer!). Attention to detail is very important in projects of this type and giving time and attention is crucial to the success and ensures everyone has a positive experience. The delight is in the detail!
- Keep calm even when you have ejected yourself from your own Zoom meeting!

What did the participants tell us?

About the Framing Oxford project

- I have really appreciated the Zoom sessions which have challenged my memories and provided insights into my family roots and community connections
- I would like to thank Age UK Oxfordshire for including me in the project for Cowley History. Having been born and brought up (still living in Cowley) it was wonderful to share photographs and memories with such a lovely group. Some of whom I had not seen for years.
- Thank you for the Framing Oxford project. I have so enjoyed seeing all the different photos depicting past lives of building and people in Cowley. I have learnt a lot.
- I really enjoyed this little historical gallery of paintings, adverts and photos.
- Please continue with this project, we have driven around several of the churches just to view albeit from the outside (Autumn 2020)
- We originally were going to meet at the History Centre - an apt place as it was the hub of the community as the local church. There was still much to share, and we could have had more sessions. I suspect the next project will be for somewhere else but as in Carole Newbigging's books - there seems to be more history in Cowley.
- Happy Christmas Helen, thanks for all your support and help during this very challenging year. I have really appreciated the Zoom sessions which have challenged my memories and provided insights into my family roots and community connections.

About the Framing Oxford Digital Legacy Project

Partners

- I've just watched the lovely film it's fab and I love the music. You have all done a beautiful job, nice to have something happy to watch for a change.
- That was just so stirring. Such a lovely way to wander through those memories and images. Really good seeing who was behind pulling it all together as well in those zoom shots. Some moments of shock as well with the lady who said black people would often be charged double beyond Woolworths. I loved that she bought those baskets from a place she had once felt valued and raised all of that money via one of their baskets. And for sailors! Well done to you Helen and to everyone else who played their part. Its BRILLIANT!
- Many thanks for sharing this – what a joy to behold, and how fab to have this record of such a wonderful project. Well done and thank you – what a great note to end the week on.
- That's absolutely gorgeousit has really lifted my day.

- That's a lovely piece of film! It's not heavyweight or too long; rather the mood is light and cheery. I think it strikes just the right note and captures the enthusiasm and informality of the sessions.

Participants

- A fine report from real people
- I think this is brilliant.....Well worth doing
- I have just viewed the Framing Oxford film and think it is excellent....I am most grateful for all your hard work and expertise in providing the opportunity for older people to be shown as having skills, memories and active minds to produce cultural and artistic abilities together to share and value each other's place in our City's history. I am sure there are still a wealth of memories, photographs and activities which will provide hours of pleasure and bring value and pride to the senior citizens of Oxford. I know I have a lot more parts of my family jig saw to find and complete my understanding and connections with the whole Shire.
- I liked the film very much. I loved the idea of the lonely bike linking it all. I have really loved our sessions. Thank you so much for organizing it all.
- Yes, very good – surprising what a wide spread of things we discussed. I liked the way the bicycle was a way of introducing us through the various aspects. Good on you and all involved. Here's to the next time



The Lonely Bicycle in Oxford - photo by Pete in Summer 2020