

THE GARDEN MUSEUM

CLAY FOR DEMENTIA

CASE STUDY



Dementia session in progress in the Clore learning space

COMMISSIONED BY THE GARDEN MUSEUM

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OCTOBER 2019

THE GARDEN MUSEUM: CLAY FOR DEMENTIA PROGRAMME: *case study*

'Thank you for all the joy you bring to others'

Introduction: the rationale for the Clay for Dementia programme

Dementia is one of the main causes of disability for people in later stages of their lives. Dementia now affects 850,000 people in the UK. The numbers are predicted to rise with 225,000 people likely to receive a dementia diagnosis this year - one person every three minutes. 2019 data from the Alzheimer's Society assesses that 1 in 6 people over the age of 80 have dementia and that over 42,000 people under 65 in the UK have dementia, and that more than 25,000 people from Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups in the UK are affected. The report goes on to note that two thirds of the cost of caring for someone with dementia is borne by people with dementia and their families, and that the UK spends much less on addressing dementia than on other conditions.¹ The condition affects all aspects of a person's life, as well as that of their family.

The Garden Museum's interest in dementia began several years ago, through conversations with Veronica Franklin Gould, of Arts 4 Dementia. This UK charity works with cultural organisations to provide training to develop arts programmes that are aimed to 'Empower and inspire people with early-stage dementia and carers through artistic stimulation and help to preserve fulfilling active life together, for longer at home.'²

Meeting a Garden Museum aim

It had long been the Garden Museum's aspiration to host people living with dementia at the Museum after a successful outreach project in 2013 at Stockwell Healthy Living Club, part of the Happy Museum Project. The Museum team learned through this project that visiting museums presents several opportunities as well as certain barriers for people with dementia. Developing a focus on dementia was an opportunity to make the Museum more inclusive, to build meaningful relationships with people in the community and to reach out to people with additional needs.

The NLHF Strategic Funding Framework for 2019 - 2024 places inclusive heritage as a priority, particularly *'those who face barriers to being involved.'* This outcome is closely linked to A Wider Range of People will be Involved in Heritage, as well as People Will Have Greater Wellbeing. This case study is an example of how one project from the Activity Plan has met these NLHF outcomes and, importantly, has made a real difference to the lives of vulnerable people.

The creation of the new Clore Learning Space overlooking the Sackler Garden was an opportunity to realise this aspiration to undertake a programme of activities for those living with Dementia and their carers.

The Clay for Dementia Programme

¹ <https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/about-us/news-and-media/facts-media>

² <https://arts4dementia.org.uk/>

Working initially with Arts4Dementia the Garden Museum developed its expertise to deliver effective, person-centred workshops through the Clay for Dementia programme. The concept of workshops with clay fits well with the garden theme because clay comes from the ground and it's a material that people enjoy working with. Project themes are linked to the Garden Museum, the collection, garden, exhibitions, and stories and also to food and plants. Using a wide variety of themes to connect participants to objects, memories, places, nature, flowers and seasonal celebrations.

The Museum then went on to commission further programmes such as the Clay for Dementia programme, without A4D involvement but building on the expertise gained through the partnership. Arts 4 Dementia commented: *'We are especially gratified that the Garden Museum has since commissioned three ceramics programmes for dementia (Clay for Dementia) without A4D involvement, illustrating the value of the pilot programme concept and increasing the number of beneficiaries of this important work.'*

The Garden Museum's Clay for Dementia is a programme of free workshops for people living with early-stage dementia and their companions. Clay for Dementia sessions were promoted through the local Alzheimer's Society and a local doctor's surgery where two Museum staff went to talk to staff to encourage social prescribing.

The feedback on the Clay for Dementia project is based on survey responses from 10 participants and volunteers; detailed feedback from Veronica Franklin-Gould and Nigel Franklin both from Arts4Dementia and an in-depth interview with Lori Hayden, participant and carer for her husband John who has since passed away.

Based in the Garden Museum, ceramic artist Katie Spragg led four series of 6 weekly workshops in 2018 for people affected by early stage dementia and their companions. Supported by volunteers, she introduced participants to working with clay, exploring connections to objects, memories, souvenirs and place. She demonstrated techniques to create objects and sculptures from clay, inspired by the nature celebrated at the museum. The pieces created were fired in the kiln and taken home at the end of the workshops. An exhibition of photographs and ceramics was exhibited on the museum's Community Wall alongside an exhibition inside the museum of Katie Spragg's ceramics. A display case in the Orangery was dedicated to a memorial display by two of the Clay for Dementia participants who had passed away. The workshops recommenced in April 2019 with some of the original participants coming back.

During 2018 the museum exhibited a changing display of Clay for Dementia ceramics

Feedback from Clay for Dementia participants and stakeholders

Janine Nelson, The Garden Museum's Learning Officer felt *'It's been a very rewarding project for participants and volunteers'*: this is evidenced by feedback from participants:

For the participants:

None of the participants had engaged in ceramics work since schooldays, if at all. All loved the experience of learning a new skill and creating their own pieces. They commented enthusiastically about exercising their brain and fighting back against the disease. One said he felt all the stress disappearing into the clay as he kneaded it.

'It's amazing doing this, the world gets better and better.'

'We all have different approaches and this is appreciated by us all.'

'The hardest part is getting out of the door – but it's worth the effort.'

'The thing I love about coming is having a chat with everyone here and having a joke and being here and seeing everyone'.

It has been an opportunity to learn skills from a talented practising artist – a wide range of techniques covered including hand-building an object, modelling, pinching, slab building, throwing on the wheel, printing onto clay, making imprints and textures in clay, surface decoration, using an extruder and other equipment, painting with slips, and stains, glazing, using templates to cut out shapes, using moulds to make bowls; all in order to create ceramics to a high quality and standard. A celebration session is incorporated at the end of every series, eating together and using ceramics in some way e.g. flower arranging into the vases that they had made or eating from their ceramics for example, brunch using egg cups and toast racks they had made.

Annette and Harry's Story

Annette and Harry Bridgman have attended for 2+ years. Annette is a full-time carer for her husband who has a dementia diagnosis. Annette feels the Garden Museum is a relaxing, attractive venue. Participating in an activity and learning a new skill is important for her well-being: *'I am not artistic and would never have thought to do a course in clay, but I am so enjoying it'.*

Annette says Janine and Katy are outstanding. *'It is a very well-run group, beautifully organised and a relaxed atmosphere. Everything gets done in a calm and relaxed way. As you return each week the group develops, you feel comfortable with other members of the group – a good group dynamic'.*

Clay for Dementia introduced her husband to a new skill; he is now taking another course in clay in Camden with people who do not have a Dementia diagnosis. The course gives them a joint topic of conversation and items they take home enable them to start conversations with visitors which helps them both. They are fortunate to live in Covent garden so enjoy a 45-minute walk to the Museum along the river and across the Park's calming green areas.

Harry enjoys *'the very warm, supportive environment, created by the instructors and other participants. They push you further and answer your questions – if you get stuck they help you.. You never think you will get out of line – I have to be careful due to my diagnosis. Harry enjoys the demonstrations and appreciates time to play with clay until he is happy with it. 'Clay for Dementia clears my mind. With dementia you can repeat negative thoughts over and over. With Clay you are using your hands and it relaxes you. It is something to concentrate on – there is no right or wrong answer; it gives you confidence'.*

Both Annette and Harry have seen people's faces 'light up'. Harry says people *'come in looking down, fearful and then relax and become chatty. You see a person opening up.'*

Lori's Story: Carer for Clay for Dementia participant

Lori's late husband John was diagnosed with Dementia at the age of 65 and she became his full-time carer. They attended several different projects aimed at people with dementia including at Ballet Rambert (dance class) and Hampton Court Palace (sensory events) before attending the very first Arts for Dementia workshop at the Garden Museum. They went on to attend regularly. Lori described the sessions as *'magical'* with 'very good' volunteers and workshop leader Katy Spragg was 'excellent'. The same volunteer worked with John each week which made a real difference to his experience as they came to understand how he would engage with the sessions. Lori explained that

someone with dementia does not want to be entertained. Hands-on, participatory activities are far more welcoming and enriching – *‘the joy in John’s face was real’* - as he enjoyed the experiences provided by the clay workshops. Lori commented that the carers also had a good time; an opportunity to have a coffee and a break as well as to participate in the workshops as they wished. It was very important to her that *‘someone cared’* for her too.

Based on her experience with The Garden Museum, Lori has gone on to become a Trustee of the Arts 4 Dementia charity; helping to build links between the Garden Museum and this organisation that works to improve well-being for people.

Jeanne and Connie Pring's Story

Connie has advanced dementia and Jeanne (her daughter in law) is her full-time carer. Jeanne is a jeweller by profession but is unable to work since becoming Connie's full-time carer 3 to 4 years ago. Connie says her favourite part of Clay for Dementia is *‘the chocolate biscuits and tea’*. Connie says she is happy, the sessions are fun, other participants are good, and Jeanne helps and is very kind. Connie happily remembers Jeanne providing her a birthday cake to be shared with the group. Jeanne commented *‘a very positive day celebrating mum’s birthday with everyone and seeing her eyes lit up’*.

For Jeanne, Clay for Dementia was *‘stimulating and creative, working with native plants, natural materials like pliable clay, friendly and fun, casual and sociable, easy to follow with wonderful end results, dementia friendly’*. As a creative ‘professional, who is now a full-time carer, Jeanne valued the opportunity to work with clay as she enjoys doing such things. Jeanne said Connie is stimulated at the sessions which they enjoy together. The opportunity for Connie to do something new with her hands, was a good way of engaging without relying on cognitive function. *‘It was fun to also see everyone’s creations and how diverse they were’*. Travel to and from the Garden Museum from their North London home can take up to an hour, is expensive and can be slow. Jeanne has been invited to join the steering group of Islington Dementia Friendly Project supported by Islington Council. She suggested the Garden Museum could consider outreach projects in other parts of London: she also said the Café at the Garden Museum is very lovely and would be missed if these sessions were elsewhere.

Clay for Dementia has helped Connie and Jeanne's wellbeing. Connie has been cognitively stimulated and Jeanne has been given an outlet to be creative. Jeanne photographs their work and adds to memory books to help her bond with Connie and share some happy memories. Jeanne described Clay for Dementia as *‘an amazing programme to participate in. I highly recommend it. It is beneficial for all parties involved both positive stimulation and raising awareness and revenue - Dementia community, volunteers, facilitators, the Garden Museum and definitely the café’*. Jeanne also described operational challenges: *‘Some of our pieces were not fired properly and there were some mix ups with the pieces however this will be difficult to resolve as there were so many pieces made by all. Perhaps providing individual trays for each pair after each session may help’*.

For the artist

For Katie Spragg, teaching the Clay for Dementia workshops at the Garden Museum *‘brightens up my Monday mornings. It has been a completely new experience for me, working with people with dementia. What has been amazing is that you think of Dementia as a de-generative thing, yet I’ve seen the participants improve massively with their making skills over the weeks we’ve been working with them. When they returned for the second term – I gave them a few instructions, turned around and when I turned back, they were all producing amazing things. It’s also lovely to see how they’ve become such a tight-knit group, hugging and supporting each other.’* Katie has become ceramics

tutor on the MA programme at the Royal College of Art since Clay for Dementia started and is interested in using Clay for Dementia in her teaching research, which the RCA are supportive of.

For the Garden Museum volunteers:

Feedback from three of the Clay for Dementia volunteers shows that they found it a very rewarding experience and look forward to the workshops. They enjoy talking, listening to and encouraging the participants and carers. They felt satisfaction from the sense of achievement and pride that comes through the participants, who are going through various stages of dementia. They commented that the new Learning Space always has the most wonderful atmosphere and how Janine creates a relaxed and welcoming space for both volunteers and participants. *'It was wonderful to see and feel just how inspired everyone was. The staff and participants alike. What a difference these classes have made to the people taking part'*. They felt that genuine friendships have formed, that it was very good to work with the other volunteers, the participants and the staff: *'They are a lovely group and they always bring a lot of joy. They make some wonderful items.'*

Helen's Story

Helen hopes to develop a career in community learning. She was looking for volunteering opportunities and approached the Garden Museum; she is interested in ceramics but had only previously worked with young people. She was unsure at first about working with people with Dementia as she didn't know what to expect. However, she met the team and felt they were a nice group, relaxed and easy going. It was helpful the participants had a carer or partner with them.

There were no real barriers to participation. At one point the established Clay for Dementia group were merged with another group with different challenges for 3 to 4 weeks and that did not work so well. On realising this, the Garden Museum separated the groups again. Helen enjoys going to Garden Museum on a Thursday, its quite sociable with other volunteers and Katie the tutor. It's a nice group and its good to help them, talk with them, its therapeutic. It's a lovely environment to volunteer in, a lovely space and you look out over greenery.

Helen describes Clay for Dementia as *'uplifting'*. *'Participants gain confidence in their learning, make good friendships and support each other. One guy who comes on his own is proud of his achievements and enjoys the connection with other people'*

Helen described *'one time an outgoing male participant started singing, a second participant then also started singing and we had an impromptu singalong'*.

For the Garden Museum staff

Janine Nelson, Head of Learning, has found it *'a very rewarding project for participants and volunteers. We share fun and laughter, but support sadness and frustration too.'* The team has learned much about working with people with dementia and meeting their needs by making a relaxed, warm, welcoming and friendly environment with refreshments. The Museum is keen to promote well-being and the project has enabled the Museum to incorporate the Five Paths of Well-being – connect, be active, take notice, keep learning, give - into its approach and in the evaluation. Nigel Franklin said of the Head of Learning, *'This wonderful thing that has been happening at the Garden Museum is down to your vision and enthusiasm and your suggesting Katie and doing ceramics in the first place.'*

For the charity Arts4 Dementia

Arts4 Dementia's Nigel Franklin partnered with The Garden Museum in the original pilot programme in autumn 2017 and feels the programme has had very positive outcomes by bringing new people into the Museum: *'I don't think any of the 18 participants in the pilot had previously visited the Museum. Many might not otherwise have visited a heritage site at this stage of their lives, particularly given the challenges of their dementia.'* He felt the programme met the charity's aim to ensure ethnically and culturally diverse attendance at workshop programmes *'The very fact that these programmes are for people with dementia and their carers adds to that. This programme is a demonstration of helping people and the Museum to thrive. It has been one of our most successful ever, as demonstrated by the start of the fifth Clay for Dementia series after the original pilot.'* The feedback from the programme was extremely positive: participants thrived, those with dementia and carers alike.

Veronica Franklin Gould at Arts 4 Dementia commented: *'I very much agree from witnessing a couple of workshops and fully endorse the value to participants, who felt restored, a sense of confidence, of belonging, wellbeing and of pride in their unexpected high-calibre achievements. Clay for Dementia at the Garden Museum was indeed Arts 4 Dementia Best Practice'*

Number of participants/people involved per season

11 people with dementia took part in the programme, accompanied by 11 carers. 5 volunteers have supported the project to date, which has involved one artist and one main member of Museum staff (supported by other staff, e.g. food session with Food Learning Officer)

Clay for Dementia outcomes

Engaging with this arts activity has resulted in these benefits to participants and their carers:

- individuals and their carers felt the experience provided a respite from the fears, anxieties and depression caused by dementia
- Getting out, leaving the home reduces the impacts of sedentary lifestyles and the risk of social isolation
- Engaging in novel experiences that were creative, sensory, stimulating and practical supports participants' cognitive function which is at risk of decline
- Pride in producing an object and attending physical creative activities which open up conversations with partners, carers and other people
- Social and communication skills are nurtured and preserved
- These activities have helped participants and carers to have experiences that are enjoyable and enhance their quality of life
- Social interaction and connecting with others who are sharing similar situations creates social capital
- Aligns the Garden Museum with good practice in social prescribing and current developments in the museum sector's focus on arts in health.