

Being Human in and around Swansea

Embedding and showcasing the humanities in the local community as part of a wider civic mission

From 2015-2021 Swansea University was the only Welsh Being Human Festival hub, producing a huge variety of events in both English and Welsh and working across different demographics and with a variety of educational and community organisations.

Programmes have included film screenings, live music and theatre performances, online exhibitions, Q&As with composer Rhian Samuel, authors Michael Morpurgo and Kamila Shamsie, and poets Owen Sheers, Simon Armitage and Daljit Nagra; family-friendly workshop days on themes as diverse as folktales, Egyptian demons, and Swansea's coastline; and discussions on topics such as the history of assassination, the legacy of coal mining, and computer games that use scarring and facial disfigurement as entertainment.

One ongoing legacy of the festival hubs is the strong relationships with schools and education providers in and around Swansea that have developed through Being Human Festival activities produced in collaboration with local and national charities, arts venues, and heritage organisations. This work has built on Swansea University's existing schools engagement and outreach, particularly the DylanED programme and International Dylan Thomas Prize. Workshops, creative writing sessions and interactive events produced as part of the festival programmes have engaged students and participants in both English and Welsh language contexts at primary school, college and university.

The Being Human Festival is now part of Introduction to Being Human, a compulsory module taught in the foundation year in Humanities as part of the four year integrated degree programmes at Swansea University. The module engages Level 3 students across twenty-three BA (Hons) courses - including American Studies, Egyptology and Ancient History, Early Childhood Studies, Education, Medieval Studies, International Relations, and Politics – with key ideas and literature from humanities and social sciences to develop their critical thinking and creative abilities. Students are encouraged to attend and participate in national festival events in person and online, and to reflect on how public engagement informs interdisciplinary approaches to academic study.

For the 2022 festival the Swansea University team produced a series entitled 'Breakthrough Welsh Women' in collaboration with the South Wales Miners' Library and the Richard Burton Archives. The events in this series explored archival collections including oral histories, and culminated in the design and construction of a new banner celebrating the collections and created by school children and workshop attendees.

“ The fact that we have been part of the festival for so long means that we have a following... the festival has allowed us to grow a series of partners who keep coming back to us and saying, “we really want to be part of this again,” so it's helped us not just to nurture but also to consolidate really strong relationships with a whole series of organisations

– Dr Elaine Canning



People:

- Dr Elaine Canning, Head of Cultural Engagement and Development, Swansea University

Institutions:

- [Swansea University](#).

Partners include:

- Cultural Institute, Swansea University
- South Wales Miners' Library
- Richard Burton Archives
- National Waterfront Museum
- Sound UK
- Clyne Farm Centre
- Academi Hywel Teifi
- Disability Wales
- Haford Morfa Copperworks
- Volcano Theatre
- Glynn Vivian Art Gallery
- Mary Rose Trust
- Swansea Museum
- Cinema & Co.
- Disability Arts Cymru
- Swansea Asylum Seekers Support

Area:

- Wales

Being Human Festival year:

- 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022