

15 August 2023

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



## **Museum of Stories, a community audio walk in an new app, launches in Luton**

An innovative digital community arts project in Luton's Bury Park will premiere as part of the town's Heritage Open Days week, 11-16 September 2023.

*Museum of Stories: Bury Park* is a new app containing twelve mini audio dramas, each inspired by real people's experiences of the area. They were created in partnership with Bury Park communities past and present, who also perform the plays. Each story is pinned to the location in Bury Park where it actually happened. An audio teaser of community voices can be heard [here](#).

*Museum of Stories: Bury Park* is launching as a free app from 1 September, with timed walks met by live hosts taking place daily at **4pm and 6pm from 11-16 September**, which is also Heritage Open Days week across Luton. Tickets are free and can be booked via [Eventbrite](#).

**An invitation-only preview walk exclusively for press will take place on Tuesday 5 September 11am-12.30pm.**

**This will include the opportunity to interview the project co-producers Fin Kennedy and Shemiza Rashid. (Interviews with participating community members can be arranged by request). To book a place please email [fin@appliedstories.co.uk](mailto:fin@appliedstories.co.uk)**

After Heritage Open Days week, the app will remain online for anyone to do in their own time, until the end of 2023. A folder of high res images can be accessed [here](#).

The app is the brainchild of award-winning playwright Fin Kennedy, based in nearby St Albans, where he runs production company [Applied Stories](#).

Kennedy has been working on the project with Luton creative producer Shemiza Rashid for almost two years. It began with a seed commission from [Revoluton Arts](#) which allowed the pair to set up a [Story Hotline](#) which anyone could call and leave real-life stories and memories. Callers to the line were then paired with a professional writer to develop their tales, which are all performed by a community cast.

Conceived as an 'audio art gallery', audiences on Dunstable Road will download the *Museum of Stories* app which geolocates them, then shows them the stories as pins on a map around them. Locations on Dunstable Road where a story is pinned include Alexandra Opticians, Solomon's Solicitors, Chai and Chapati, Bury Park post office and many more.

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The stories range from the 19th century founder of Bury Park, one Charles Mees, right up to the contemporary story of a young optician who only recently came to Bury Park from Pakistan for her own safety. Almost every decade of the 20th century is represented, with memories of the queues outside the Empire Cinema in the 1930s, a story about the thriving Jewish community in the 1950s, another remembering the National Front marches and local resistance movements of the 1980s, and yet more about the snooker clubs and halal chicken joints of the 1990s. There's even a real-life ghost story!

Fin Kennedy said: "The beautiful thing about place-based audio is that you can add a whole new layer to a modern street just using sound. You can go back in time, or walk a mile in someone else's shoes just by putting in your earphones. The idea was always to try and build a new kind of museum, using the smartphone and GPS tech we all carry around now. We think it's a bit of a first, and we're proud to say it's happening in Luton. This place is so buzzing with stories, as a writer I've always found it really inspiring."

The project is funded by Arts Council England and Luton Community Engagement Heritage Fund (with thanks to the National Lottery Heritage Fund) is supported by Revoluton Arts and Luton Borough Council's Curating Luton: place-making project (as part of our Heritage Open Days Program)

The stories are all between 5-15 minutes in length, and can be experienced in any order, or across different days. To complete the walk in full takes about 90 minutes.

*Museum of Stories: Bury Park Luton* launches as a free app-based walk from 1 September 2023. More about the project, including links to download the app once launched, can be found at [www.museumofstories.co.uk](http://www.museumofstories.co.uk)

The project's co-producer Shemiza Rashid said: "From producing to writing the audio pieces has been rewarding and exciting. It has been humbling to discover and nurture the stories that may have remained lost as echoes or whispers amongst the buildings and locations of Bury Park. Now they have been captured for everyone to hear proudly and share."

Lindsey Pugh, CEO and Creative Director of Revoluton Arts said: "Lutonian stories have a global footprint, connecting the town we are proud to serve to the rest of the world. We have been delighted to support Museum of Stories, an audio walk with Bury Park residents that enables the wider public to recognise the creativity of Luton."

Javed Hussain, Luton Borough Councillor with portfolio for Heritage said: "We are delighted to support the *Museum Of Stories* project, and Fin Kennedy's innovative and creative approach to preserving living histories and enabling connectivity, through digital story-mapping to strengthen our sense of pride and community in Bury Park."

**Ends.**

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## Notes to Editors

***If you would like to run a piece about Museum of Stories, Shemiza Rashid and Fin Kennedy are both available for interview.***

Fin Kennedy is an award-winning playwright and producer, and former Artistic Director of touring theatre company Tamasha. His new company, Applied Stories, specialises in place-based audio drama with social impact. [www.appliedstories.co.uk](http://www.appliedstories.co.uk) Recent clients include the National Archives and the British Museum.

Shemiza Rashid is an award-winning Luton based community broadcaster, creative producer and theatremaker. Shemiza produced *The Mother Monologues: Resisting Austerity* at Luton Hat Factory in 2019 and since then has worked producing impactful pieces of theatre and audio digital projects locally and nationally exploring themes of political and social justice, and women's voices.

Revoluton Arts is a people-powered project on a mission to cultivate grassroots creativity in Luton and put on big, high-quality creative events that delight the town's diverse audiences. They run events and programmes that aim to inspire and support more Lutonians to engage in creativity in all its forms. [www.revolutonarts.com](http://www.revolutonarts.com)