

Lincolnshire Echo

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GREAT GATES: A community arts project has transformed the look of a Lincoln school.

Scenes of local life have been mounted on the gates of St Faith's Infant School in West Parade.

The work, which was unveiled by Lincoln MP Gillian Merron, pictured here, has been put together by artists from the West End of Lincoln. It is made from metal and stainless steel and depicts local life, including the racecourse, homes and businesses.

Headteacher Ian Wiles said he was delighted.

"We work very closely with the community and we are pleased that our school has been asked to display these pictures," he said.

"The children really like the overall effect and we are very proud of how it has turned out."

The pictures are part of a Millennium arts project in the West End of Lincoln and this is the first of many community-based projects.



Opening the gates to new technology

ARTISTS in Lincoln's West End have officially opened the gates on the 21st Century with the unveiling of a prestigious millennium project.

A series of panels fixed to the gates of St Faith's Infant School off West Parade were unveiled by Mayor Richard Coupland in a special ceremony last week.

The project began in 1998 when people from the West End met to decide how they should mark the millennium.

They applied for and received £5,000 from the Millennium Festival Awards for All fund and set up four projects - a millennium tapestry, a music and drama project, and the art project.

For the last of these, a group of professional artists formed the West End Arts Group and set about mastering new technology which would allow them to create a series of laser etchings in steel or cast in iron. The resulting panels should last at least 50 years.

Artist Richard Bett said: "We did have some problems with the laser cutting and there was a great deal of head-scratching.

"But the result was a successful combination of new technology and art."

The unveiling was also



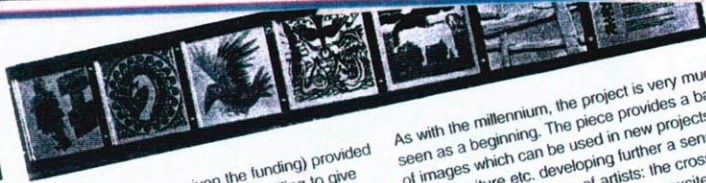
Pictured at the unveiling are, Coupland, MP Gillian Merron and Gillian Merron.

School gates images unveiled

Simon Fitch writes: The civic unveiling last month of a public art project at St Faith's Infant School Lincoln marks the completion of a series of local arts projects that brought a diverse community together in a creative marking of the year 2000.

Funded by a Millennium Awards for All grant, local artists (both amateur and professional) along with numerous individuals and community groups have produced a tapestry, a touring photography exhibition and a public art feature sited along the local school's gates.

The artwork is the result of a creative alliance of local artists, the co-ordination of which could have been a logistical nightmare. How do you get 11 artists to work together in a short space of time while each is busy making a living from their own projects? Firstly, meetings in a local public house provided a congenial setting for imaginative debate. Secondly, a visual version of Chinese Whispers, devised by artist Richard Bett, provided a framework giving each artist individual space within an overall structure.

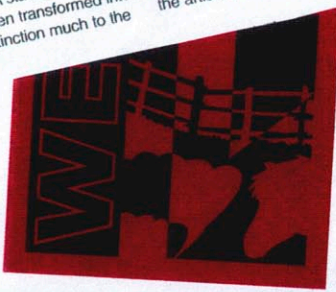


A lottery (appropriate given the funding) provided the starting point. With 11 artists willing to give their time and skills the piece was divided into 11 equal panels. Numbers 1-11 were placed in a hat and the artists drew out one each. From that point on they could only discuss their idea with the artist having the number immediately before and after theirs, so artist 4 could talk to artist 3 and 5 etc. Artists 11 and 1 could also talk to each other so completing the circle. In this way the artists responded to the images emerging either side of them but it was only when the sections were put together that the overall piece was seen.

The result is an artwork which drew a crowd of over 100 people to its official opening, including the City Mayor and MP. Each panel, laser cut in steel or cast in ductile iron, leads to the next and as a complete whole celebrates the mix of buildings, people, wildlife and creative talent and activity in this part of the city. A standard municipal school gate has been transformed into a visual story, a badge of distinction much to the delight of St Faith's School.

As with the millennium, the project is very much seen as a beginning. The piece provides a bank of images which can be used in new projects, street furniture etc. developing further a sense of place. As for the alliance of artists: the crossover of artforms and flashes of inspiration excitedly drawn on beermats could be the start of new projects to grace the streets and buildings of the Carholme area of Lincoln. Although not a Year of the Artist Project, the St Faith's school gate piece has very visibly put the work of artists in an everyday location - an initiative which has benefited both artists and their community.

The artists who gave their time to the project and worked so hard to make it a success were: Richard Bett, Janis Bowley, John Buckley, Marilyn Buckley, Jeff Clarkson, Kenny Cromar, Paul Hancocks, Den Jones, Nick Jones, Peter Moorhouse and David Parkins. Thanks should also go to three local residents, Les Acklam, Julian Bell and Robert Parker who had the vision both to set up the project and the nerve to give the artists the space to create.



Carholme Community Millennium Project

Late in 1998 a group of local people met to consider how the Millennium could be celebrated in the West End.

Following a series of public meetings, our ideas gained local support that was backed by £5000 from the Millennium Festival Awards for All committee.

The Carholme Millennium Tapestry, completed after 18 months' work and exhibited for the first time at St. Faith's Church in September 2000.

Photographing the West End, a wide ranging photography project bringing together new and old images of the area and culminating in a major exhibition at St. Faith's Church Hall in October 2000.

The Last Century, a depiction of life in the West End over that period in music and Drama, and involving local residents, unfortunately had to be postponed following the illness and tragic death of Shiela Shaw in September 2000. Shiela conceived and started the project, and we hope, as a tribute to her commitment to music and drama in the west end, to pursue this wonderful idea in the future.

The West End Art Project is the fourth initiative.



Art Project

With so many talented artists in the West End, it was felt that the Millennium presented an ideal opportunity to create a variety of artistic images of our local community. We wanted to find a way of allowing each of the artists to produce their own, individual piece of work, but at the same time maintain some unity between them. Richard Bett found the solution.

The Solution

There were 11 artists taking part, so the numbers 1 to 11 were put into a hat. Each of the artists drew a number. They were then allowed to discuss what they were planning to produce ONLY with the numbers either side of their own. For example, the artist who drew 3 could only talk to numbers 2 and 4. Number 11 could talk to number 10, and number 1, which completed the circle. No-one knew what the complete set would look

like until all the designs were finished.

Those designs, laser cut in steel or cast in ductile iron, are now mounted on the gates of St. Faith's Infant School.

Try looking along the line of them and see if you can spot how each design is related to its neighbours.

We would like to thank Mr. Wiles, the head teacher, and the staff and children of St. Faith's for their co-operation in providing such a splendid place to display the work. We want now to find further locations in the ward for these images so that they can become a feature of the local environment.

The Artists

The artists who gave their time to the project and worked so hard to make it a success are:

- Richard Bett
- Janis Bowley
- John Buckley
- Marilyn Buckley
- Jeff Clarkson
- Kenny Cromar
- Paul Hancocks
- Den Jones
- Nick Jones
- Peter Moorhouse
- David Parkins

The committee, who also worked very hard, is Les Acklam, Julian Bell and Robert Parker.

