

Picturing High Streets **204 Images Taken by the Public** **Enter Historic England's Archives**



One of the submitted photos, responding to the prompt 'Love' © Kajal Nemani

- Documenting a year in the life of the English high street, final selection of images are now available to explore online in the Historic England Archive
- Including local call outs and community-led photography produced in collaboration with locally based resident artists
- Picturing High Streets marks the final year of Historic England's High Streets Cultural Programme and the £95 million High Streets Heritage Action Zones Programme
- The final collection of 377 photographs introduces new viewpoints to the Historic England Archive
- Images can be downloaded [HERE](#)

Since September 2022, people across England have been responding to an online national call out to submit their photographs of the high street on Instagram under the hashtag #PicturingHighStreets.

Now, these 204 winning photographs have entered the Historic England Archive – the nation’s archive for England’s historic buildings, archaeology and social history – alongside 173 new images taken as part of local projects with resident artists on high streets.

Picturing High Streets has been a partnership between Historic England and Photoworks, helping to build a contemporary picture of England’s high streets through mass public participation and community engagement. It has revealed how important the high street can be as a space for communities to come together to connect.

Duncan Wilson, Historic England Chief Executive, said: “We were overwhelmed by the volume and quality of the public and artists’ responses to our invitation to photograph their high streets across England. Through contemporary photography, they have captured what makes high streets such unique and valued places of social connection, revealed the histories hidden behind shopfronts and celebrated the communities that are keeping them alive today. This new national collection is a significant historic record of high streets today for generations to come.”

Louise Fedotov-Clements, Photoworks Director, said: “This incredible and ground breaking national programme has produced a truly unique and important photographic representation of the high street. The works highlight a diversity of views featuring the places, people, histories and activities that help us to understand our dynamic relationship to, and the importance of, the high street today. Created in collaboration with Historic England alongside England’s leading photography organisations we have worked together with artists, communities and the public through socially engaged residencies and mass participation. We are very proud of the range, depth and historical significance of the images that have been created and that will now enter the Historic England Archive.

Instagram Call Out

Themed fortnightly challenges, from “high street hang outs” to “bright lights to dark nights”, invited and inspired the public to share their images and views of their local high streets across the country. To date, #picturinghighstreets has over 10,500 posts from the public and there have been over 13,877 engagements with the Picturing High Streets Instagram channel.

A number of participants have embraced the call out by submitting images fortnightly – considering each theme in relation to their high street.

Resident Artists

Works by resident artists based across England, will be seen together for the first time in the Archive. Artists in Bristol, Chester, Coventry, Leiciester, Prescot, Stoke-on-Trent and London have engaged with local communities through socially engaged practice to produce snapshots of how the high street is used and who it is used by including the local customs and traditions linked to the high street in different parts of the country.

Main photographers in residence:

Tim Mills, Coventry[SA1]

Tim explored The Burges, one of the few traditional historic high street areas surviving in Coventry. He engaged with shop owners and the wider community, inviting them to add their viewpoint to the Archive by giving his camera to shop owners, and running workshops to harness the skills and expertise of local businesses. Participants in the project included taxi drivers, retailers, students, school children, shoppers and local residents.

Natalie Willatt, Stoke-on-Trent

Natalie worked with and alongside the diverse communities of Stoke town, creating a distinctive body of work. The photographs highlight the life and community behind closed doors, often hidden from the quiet and neglected high street. With a focus on belief and faith, in its broadest sense, Natalie’s main focus was on the behaviours and gestures of people partaking in worship, music, football, culture and heritage.

Suzanne St Clare, Chester

Suzanne worked with independent business owners from a trading street, commonly known as The Rows in Chester. She collaborated with these business owners to learn about why they came to Chester, their community, challenges, the quirkiness of independent trading and their love and passion for this beautiful, historic city.

Tony Mallon, Prescot

Tony's photography residency began with encouraging residents to share their stories and photographs from their family albums revealing how much the 'High Street' has played an important and fond role in their lives. Tony then focused on using photography to create a contemporary portrait of the area by establishing a weekly photography club at Prescot Church Hall which gave local residents (aged 50+) the opportunity to come together to develop their photographic skills and confidence to document their 'High Street' and their experiences.

Rehan Jamil, Tower Hamlets

Rehan worked with residents, Petticoat Lane shopkeepers, and Tiger Class at Canon Barnett Primary School to explore their relationship with Petticoat Lane, where he also grew up and still lives today. Rehan worked closely with these young participants living in Tower Hamlets to help them to establish a young person's viewpoint of the area.

Khatun, Leicester

Khatun focused on capturing her own community, making people visible that are not always seen such as bin men, or regular shoppers. Khatun strongly believes that Leicester City, and the historic streets of Church Gate and Granby Street, would not be what they are without the people that hold it up. She captures the corners and pockets of endless heritage, all deserving of archiving and preservation.

The six main resident photographers benefitted from mentoring support delivered [ST1] [SA2] by Impressions Gallery (Bradford), Open Eye Gallery (Liverpool), GRAIN Projects, FORMAT/QUAD, London College of Communication (University of the Arts London), Redeye The Photography Network, ReFramed and The Photographers' Gallery.

Micro commissions:

Ayesha Jones, Coventry

Ayesha captured the stories behind the business at the heart of Coventry and the impact of modern developments on their livelihoods, focusing on Coventry Market and City Arcade.

Lucy Hunter, Prescot

Lucy worked with a group of students from Prescot Primary School. Using their cameras, the group explored their local area with a key focus on portraiture, high streets and playful exploration.

Ciara Leeming, Chester

Claire worked with people attending a Mental Health Crisis Space to reimagine Chester's historic city centre using a combination of Archive images and collaging processes.

DREAMLINES: Picturing Bristol High Streets

Photographers from Bristol were commissioned by Bristol Photo Festival to co-create work across Bristol's historic high streets. These photographers worked with local communities and businesses to co-create new images that tell the stories of these unique places.

DREAMLINES: Picturing Bristol High Streets, was jointly funded by Historic England and Bristol City Council, and was part of the West of England Combined Authority's Love our High Streets project

Touring Exhibition

From March–November 2023, photographs from the public and artists toured across towns and cities in England. Kicking off in London in the form of projections at Soho Photography Quarter the images then popped up in Derby, Bristol, Hastings, Middlesbrough, Prescot Norwich, Bradford and Stoke-on-Trent. The exhibition reached over 1.1 million people in these towns.

Local Call Outs

The exhibition changed to reflect each location it appeared in with specific call outs in Norwich, Bradford, Bristol and Walsall.

Ghost Signs and Bus Stops

The project also sought to engage the public by encouraging submissions around two major themes – bus stops and ghost signs.

The Picturing High Streets call out and exhibition marks the final year of Historic England's High Streets Cultural Programme and the £95 million High Streets Heritage Action Zones Programme which has been revitalising more than 60 high streets across England.

The commission was produced in partnership with GRAIN Projects, Impressions Gallery, Open Eye Gallery, London College of Communication (University of the Arts London), Photofusion, QUAD/FORMAT, Redeye, ReFramed and The Photographers' Gallery.

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ENDS

High Streets Heritage Action Zone

Taking place in more than 60 high streets across England, and receiving £7.4 million from UK Treasury, Arts Council England and National Lottery Heritage Fund, it's the largest ever community-led arts and heritage programme. By restoring local pride and attracting people back to their local town centres, the High Streets Heritage Action Zone scheme is playing an important role in Levelling Up and acting as a powerful catalyst for increasing opportunities and prosperity. To find out more visit [here](#)

About Historic England

We are [Historic England](#): the public body that helps people care for, enjoy and celebrate England's spectacular historic environment, from beaches and battlefields to parks and pie shops. We protect, champion and save the places that define who we are and where we've come from as a nation. We care passionately about the stories they tell, the ideas they represent and the people who live, work and play among them. Working with communities and specialists we share our passion, knowledge and skills to inspire interest, care and conservation, so everyone can keep enjoying and looking after the history that surrounds us all.

Find out more about how the historic environment can help our [wellbeing](#).

About Historic England Archive

The Historic England Archive holds one of the largest and most significant aerial photography collections in Europe. We also hold other major collections of national importance, including archaeology, architecture, social and local history. Our collections include over 14 million photographs, drawings, plans, documents and publications from the 1850s to the present day, covering the whole country. Over one and a half million records and nearly 650,000 images are available to be searched [online](#). [@HE_Archive](#)

About Photoworks

Photoworks is an international platform for artists and audiences that champions photography for everyone. Photoworks is an international platform, global in reach, that has provided opportunities for artists and audiences since 1995. Photoworks' programme brings new experiences to audiences and opens up new ways to encounter photography. A registered charity and the only organisation with a national remit for photography in England, Photoworks is supported by public funding through Arts Council England's National Portfolio.