UNCOMFORTABLE OXFORD
PORTFOLIO

History walked differently

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ABOUT US

OUR MISSION



Can understanding the past change the present?

Our work proves it can.

Since 2018, Uncomfortable Oxford critically engages with heritage in local and global communities, challenging sanitised versions of history and sparking a connection with the past.

Through tours, educational resources, and public programming grounded in original research, we dig beneath familiar narratives to uncover the complex stories which have shaped our cities, cultures, and societies.

We believe inclusive and diverse histories can strengthen community, foster empathy, and support informed conversations about the world we live in today.

Working with museums, universities, cultural institutions and community partners, we create research-led content foregrounding histories of colonialism, class, gender, disability, migration, and social justice. Our team of historians and educators combines rigorous scholarship with accessible storytelling to foster meaningful dialogue about the past's enduring legacies.

Media coverage

Featured by National Geographic, The Times, The Sunday Times, The Telegraph, and The Washington Post

40,000+ participants engaged

Local residents, school groups, international visitors, and globally recognised leaders have joined our tours, workshops, and public programmes.

Partnerships with leading institutions

Including TORCH, the University of Cambridge Museums, Rhodes Trust, English Heritage, the Oxford Museum of Natural History, the Pitt Rivers Museum, the Institute for the Public Understanding of the Past (University of York) and Trinity College Dublin.

International impact

An Erasmus+ Cooperation Grant from the EU is funding a three-year programme developing training frameworks for inclusive, socially responsible historical tourism, with pilots in The Hague and Brussels.

Award-winning social enterprise

SME News UK Enterprise Awards
2026 - Best Social Enterprise in Heritage & Education

Southern Enterprise Award
2023 - Best Historic Oxfordshire Walking Tour Operator

University of Oxford Vice-Chancellor's Social Impact Awards
2019 - High Commendation

Growing reach

Tours operate in Oxford, Cambridge, and York with partnerships, research, and consultancy projects extending our work well beyond these cities - and we are always open to new locations.

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WHAT WE DO

HOW WE CAN HELP



Museums, universities, charities, and cultural organisations face the same challenge: how to tell complex, sometimes difficult histories in ways that are inclusive and genuinely engaging - not performative.

We can help you do this right.

Over the past eight years, we've worked with 40+ institutions, local authorities and community groups across the UK and beyond, developing research-led projects that connect people with the past, deepen understanding and reflect the diversity of your audiences.

Commissioned Projects

We develop bespoke tours, trails, and exhibitions grounded in research and tailored to your collections, spaces, and audiences.

The result: histories that people actually engage with.

Consultancy

We assess your materials to identify unexamined biases and gaps, and advise on handling difficult subjects honestly.

The result: your institution can engage critically with its own history.

Professional Development

We build your team's confidence to facilitate conversations around difficult histories, grounded in frontline experience across inclusive interpretation, decolonisation, and critical heritage practice.

The result: your team can continue this work independently.

Public Engagement

We design talks, workshops and digital programmes for public festivals that bring underrepresented histories into public spaces.

The result: diverse audiences engaging with the histories that shape their cities and lives.

Education and Learning

We build curriculum-aligned materials that support critical thinking about representation and absence in history.

The result: learners who understand history as contested, human, and relevant to today's challenges.

Looking for something different?

Many of our most successful projects span **multiple categories**. We welcome conversations about **new commissions**, **partnerships**, and **research funding**.

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COMMISSIONED PROJECTS

Bespoke tours, trails, and interpretative experiences.

We develop custom experiences tailored to your institution, collections, and audiences. Working closely with your team, we conduct research, develop content, and deliver finished tours, trails, or programmes ready to engage your public - a fully realised experience built around your institutional priorities.



(UN)NATURAL HISTORIES

Partner: Oxford University Museum of Natural History

Duration: January - June 2024

The Oxford University Museum of Natural History wanted to develop new ways for diverse audiences to understand how their collections came to exist and what they reveal about science, empire, and environmental exploitation. We developed a guided tour examining natural history through lenses of colonial science and empire, revealing museums themselves as products of historical and political decisions.

THE TOUR

- Introduced **hundreds of participants to new perspectives** on science collections not traditionally linked to colonial or social histories.
- Attracted **new adult audiences** interested in colonialism, environmental responsibility, and knowledge production.
- Now run every month, extending the museum's public engagement offer through inclusion in IF Oxford and the Right Here, Right Now Global Climate Summit.



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AFRICAN LEGACIES IN CAMBRIDGE



Partner: Cambridge Heritage Research Centre (CHRC) and the University of Cambridge Museums

Duration: January 2025 - May 2025 and November 2025 - March 2027

Dr Eva Namusoke's groundbreaking African Future Collections Report revealed crucial research about African heritage in Cambridge's institutions. The challenge: moving this research from academic circles into public conversation about decolonisation, repatriation, and what the university's collections should represent. The University of Cambridge commissioned us to develop a walking tour that could do exactly that.

THE TOUR

- Launched as part of Open Cambridge and the Cambridge Festival programming, welcoming **over 120 participants** across six pilot walking tours.
- **Significantly extended the reach and impact of academic research** by broadening accessibility within the tour's public programming funded by the University of Cambridge Museums.
- Following a successful launch, **the University of Cambridge Museums renewed it with full funding**.



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DANGEROUS IDEAS: ETHICS & SCIENCE TOUR



Partner: Kavli Centre for Ethics, Science, and the Public (now Ethics, Science, and the Public Project)

Duration: June 2025 - January 2026

Research ethics are debated in academic conferences - but the decisions researchers make shape public life. The Kavli Centre wanted these conversations happening in public spaces, where people live with the consequences. We created a bespoke walking tour that brings the ethical dimensions of scientific breakthroughs into Cambridge's streets, examining power, politics, and how ethical standards have shifted over time.

THE TOUR

- Launched as part of the University of Cambridge Alumni Festival 2026 (which welcomes over 1,000 participants across three days), **reaching audiences far beyond the university's walls**.
- Brings ethics out of the seminar room - what was once an academic conversation is **now part of public discourse, accessible to anyone** curious about the relationship between science, power, and society.
- Prompts reflection on responsibility in a changing world. Participants leave **connecting historical scientific dilemmas to urgent contemporary challenges** and rethinking what responsible science should look like going forward.



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CONSULTANCY

Reviewing content, collections, and interpretation for inclusive representation and supporting the development of homegrown projects.

Drawing on our team's wide expertise, we provide strategic guidance and assessment to institutions developing their own projects or reviewing existing work - from content audits to EDI reviews, project coordination, co-design of methodologies, and advisory support. You gain detailed analysis, practical recommendations, and the capacity to continue this work independently.

TRINITY COLLEGE DUBLIN TOUR PARTNERSHIP



Partner: Trinity College Dublin, Ireland

Duration: January 2026 - September 2026

Trinity College Dublin sought support in developing a public-facing tour exploring the city's histories of inequality, migration, empire, class, and gender. Through consultancy, project coordination, and content development, we helped launch a new walking tour centred on underrepresented voices - co-creating new methodologies to involve community partners in shaping the stories presented and to change how tours are developed in the future.

THE PROJECT

- **Built institutional capacity** for addressing complex and contested histories, providing a blueprint from concept to delivery.
- Worked with **15 community members and stakeholders** to help spotlight local voices and transform the ways stories are told.
- Included in high-profile events such as the Dublin Festival of History 2026.



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CONSULTANCY

UNCOMFORTABLE YORK DEVELOPMENT



Partner: Institute for the Public Understanding of the Past (IPUP), University of York

Duration: 2023–present

Working in partnership with IPUP, we developed a new public engagement initiative in the historic centre of York, combining local and global histories of migration, inequality, empire, and social transformation. The collaboration extends beyond the tour into professional opportunities for graduate students at IPUP through placements and internships, research projects, and training workshops.

THE PROJECT

- Successfully secured funding to establish a **sustainable critical history programme** in York and supporting IPUP's mission to engage with local public history.
- Has run **over 75 public tours and events** to involve both local residents and visitors to engage with underrepresented stories as well as annual training workshops to equip students in facilitating critical interventions with heritage.
- Led to the launch of a collaborative study in 2026 to better understand how **cultural tourism in York can become more inclusive, accessible, and reflective of diverse perspectives**, through structured focus groups and a city-wide survey, working with over 90 participants.



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PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

We train your staff and teams in critical heritage approaches.

We develop and deliver training programmes that equip heritage professionals, educators, and leaders with frameworks, tools, and the confidence to facilitate critical heritage conversations. Training is grounded in frontline experience and designed to be practical and immediately applicable. Your team leaves with skills and methodologies they can implement and sustain long-term.



CRITICAL HISTORY TOURS PROJECT

Partner: Euroclio, funded by an Erasmus+ Cooperation Grant

Duration: 2025-2028

Social divisions continue to surface in galleries, tourist routes, and urban centres - and handling these topics with care, accuracy, and confidence is vital and challenging. This ERASMUS+ project addresses a gap in opportunities for guides and educators, giving them tools to interpret sensitive histories and navigate polarised discussions. The grant is a three-year funded international collaboration developing training frameworks, adult curriculum and methodologies, and pilot programmes for inclusive and socially responsible historical tourism.

THE PROJECT

- Engaged over **250 local & international stakeholders** to develop transferable training resources for heritage and tourism professionals, through the development of brand-new case-study walking tours in **Brussels and the Hague**, and a dedicated training course.
- Featured as **part of EuroClio 'History & Hope' conference** at the European Parliament in 2026.
- Established new international networking for collaboration and best practice, by demonstrating **how critical heritage approaches can be embedded within tourism practice** and professional development.

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PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

We create engaging public programmes and events.

We design and deliver public programmes - festivals, talks, workshops, tours and digital events - that bring difficult and underrepresented histories into accessible public spaces. Often delivered in partnership with existing cultural institutions or festivals, these programmes reach diverse audiences and create new spaces for critical dialogue. You gain high-visibility public engagement that reflects your commitment to inclusive history.



CULTURAL FESTIVALS

Partners: York Festival of Ideas, IF Oxford, Cambridge Festival, Marmalade Festival & more

Duration: 2018–present

Since 2018, we have worked annually with major cultural festivals across the UK to bring difficult and underrepresented histories to thousands of public participants through tours, talks, workshops, and interactive events.

THE EVENTS

- Reached **diverse audience members** throughout the country, increasing visibility for histories often absent from mainstream narratives while ensuring financial accessibility to our events.
- Create opportunities for public discussion about the **relationship between history, identity, and contemporary social issues** through workshops and talks such as "History Taught Differently," Marmalade 2026.



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PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

HERITAGE AND HISTORY MONTHS TALKS FOR ORGANISATIONS



Partner: Allia Impact Cambridge, St. Mary's University Church, Others

Duration: Ongoing

Organisations and business leaders shape their cities' economic future - but they're often absent from critical heritage conversations. This means professional communities miss the opportunity to understand how historical inequalities, migration, colonialism, and gender shaped the cities they operate in today. In partnership with local businesses, we've been bringing this history directly to professional audiences, delivering talks and connecting underrepresented histories to contemporary conversations about equity and leadership.

THE EVENTS

- Reached professional audiences heritage programming typically misses, engaging **local entrepreneurs and business leaders** who may not have encountered this work.
- Embedded inclusive learning into organisational culture. Commitment to equity and inclusion is now grounded in historical understanding, and **participants experience how taking diversity seriously** means engaging with the histories that shaped business and society.
- Extended the reach of critical heritage work - by meeting professional communities where they gather, we've expanded who gets to engage with these conversations, and positioned **heritage as essential to professional development**, not peripheral to it.



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EDUCATION AND LEARNING

We can build educational resources and learning programmes.

We create finished educational resources - podcasts, workbooks, curricula, learning materials - designed to make complex histories accessible to specific audiences. Resources are research-led, designed for active learning, and can be used independently by educators and learners long after completion. You get high-quality, reusable materials that continue generating impact over time.



PODCAST: A BRIEF INTRO TO THE BRITISH EMPIRE

Partner: The Oxford Research Centre for the Humanities (TORCH)

Duration: 2020-2021

Schools often lack access to thoroughly researched, engaging resources that foster dialogue around critical histories - limited due to funding and a lack of inclusive perspectives. TORCH wanted to close this gap by making British imperial history accessible to schools, teachers, and broad public audiences. We designed, recorded, and published a nine-episode podcast series with full transcripts and reading lists providing an accessible introduction to key themes, debates, and legacies of British colonialism.

THE PROJECT

- Nine episodes with full transcripts and reading lists, designed **to support both independent and classroom learning**.
- Resulted in **27,000+ downloads** since publication and consistently positive feedback from educators and listeners.
- Established a model for helping **make complex research accessible** to broad public audiences at a time of social polarisation - one we have since implemented with various other projects in Cambridge & Dublin.

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EDUCATION AND LEARNING

OXFORD HEALTH HISTORIES EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES



"Hi, I'm Betty Huffer. In 1960 I became national news after I escaped from Littlemore Hospital. My story started a discussion about the lives of people who had been left in psychiatric hospitals for many years when they could have been free."

Funder: John Fell Fund, University of Oxford | Community History, History Faculty, University of Oxford

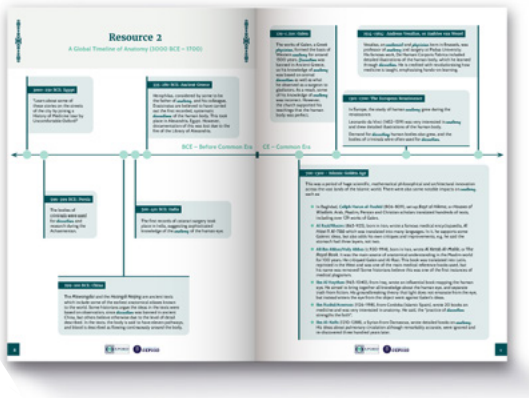
Duration: 2022-2024

Oxford Health Histories wanted new, engaging resources dedicated to uncovering, documenting, and disseminating histories of health and medicine in Oxfordshire. In collaboration, we developed workbooks for secondary school students that draw on local and global histories of health and medicine, enabling students to study histories of Oxfordshire alongside stories from medicine around the world.

THE PROJECT

- Created **three full workbooks** from initial research to design and completion, connecting historical perspectives to contemporary conversations about topics ranging from anatomy to penicillin and mental health.
- Includes **over 30 case studies, activities, and questions** supporting critical engagement with these histories, helping students understand medicine history as shaped by power, inequality, and human choices.
- Enables students to complete history modules through **local stories they can relate to** and understand.

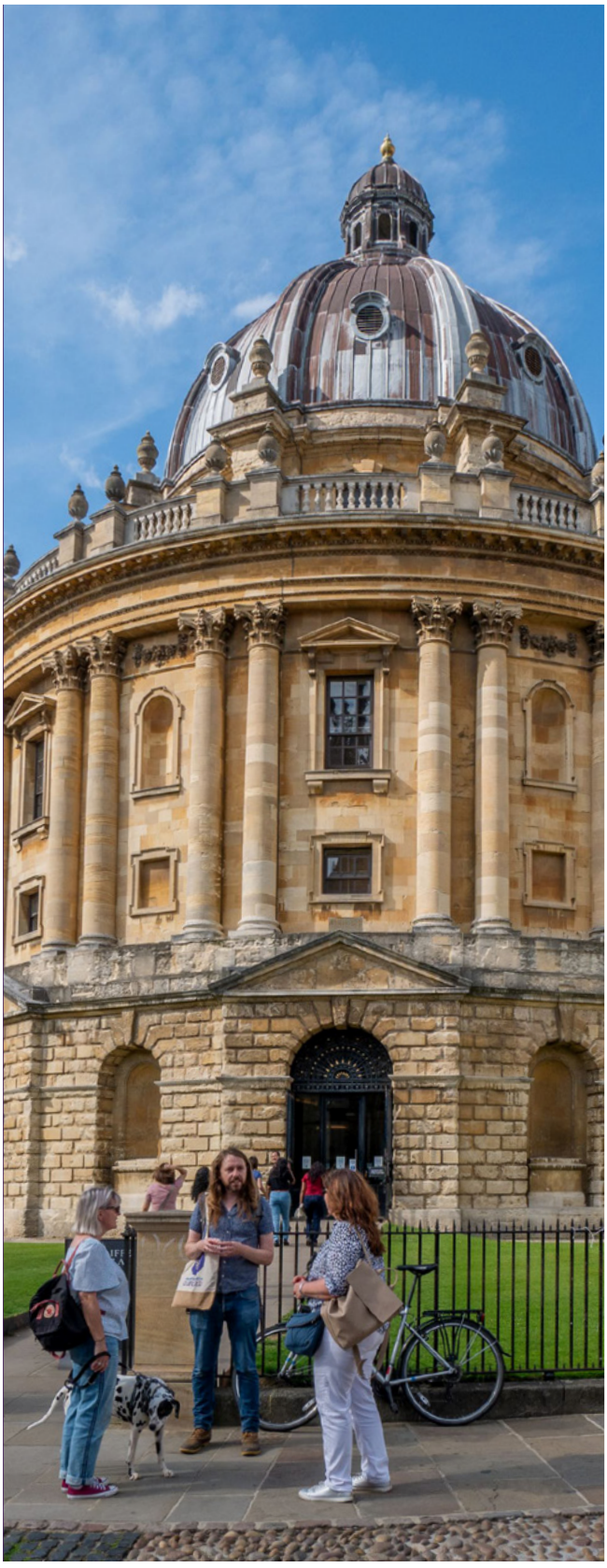




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FAQS





What does the process typically look like, and how long do projects take?

Every project we work on is different, but generally we start with exploratory conversations to understand your goals, audiences and constraints. From there, we develop a timeline and methodology tailored to your needs. A commissioned project might take three-six months, whereas a consultancy project might be a longer-term commitment. We'll outline a clear process and timeline before you commit.

Do we need to be a large institution to work with you?

No. We've worked with everything from university museums to small community groups, local authorities to individuals. The scale and scope of work adapts to your resources and ambitions; and if projects require additional funding, we have this conversation up front to ensure our work together will be sustainable. What matters most is that you have a genuine commitment to the work and clarity about what you're trying to achieve.

I'm interested in bringing Uncomfortable to my city. Is that something you can help with?

Yes! We have worked with several different institutions and local organisations to help bring the Uncomfortable methodology to their city, including Dublin, Brussels, The Hague, and Hong Kong. Get in touch and we can discuss how to build something with your community.

Can you train our staff or guides?

Absolutely. We run practical training workshops for museum and heritage staff, tour guides, educators and volunteers, drawing on our own frontline experience of interpreting difficult histories. Get in touch to discuss what your team needs.

How much does it cost?

Each project's cost is unique depending on scope, timelines, team, and requirements. We will produce an estimate at the start of each project after having done a preliminary meeting with you to understand your needs and constraints.

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CONTACT US



For any enquiry, please get in touch with Olivia Durand, Research & Partnerships Director at olivia@uncomfortabletours.com or visit our websites below:

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