

NEWS

Published this month a book on Bath's counterculture of the 1970s (with Widcombe at the forefront)

By Harry Mottram. The late 60s and early 1970s was seen as a golden age of counterculture in Bath as bands, artists, poets and actors emerged to bring vibrant creative life to the city with an energy whose legacy continues today in venues like the Widcombe Social Club, drama groups like The Natural Theatre Company and various festivals including the Comedy Festival.

Now that era of creativity has been encapsulated in a book written by some of the leading figures of the time.

Bath Arts Workshop: Counterculture in the 1970s, is published this month and features the personalities and events of the time.

Co-author Corinne D'Cruz said: "The Bath Arts Workshop was created just as the swinging 60s gave way to the turbulent 70s. A unique counter culture that sprang up in the city, it was a spectacular flowering of creative activity, community technology and social enterprise."



Corinne D'Cruz

The authors Brian Popay, Corinne D'Cruz, Jennie Potter-Barrie, Penny Dale, Phil Shepherd, Thornton Kay and Victoria Forbes Adam tell the story, from its birth in a Georgian basement in 1969, to the end of the next decade.

The book takes the reader behind the scenes of an organisation that had a significant impact at the time, describing how it worked, the extraordinary range and scale of its activities, and how many of its ideas still resonate today.

The publicity captures the zeitgeist of the time and also its

legacy: "They thought art could change the world. Thousands joined in and things were never the same again."

And in a way this is true as the authors of the book who were behind much of the activities have gone on to - yes - help change society if not the world.

The authors worked in the Arts Workshop in the 70s. Since then, Brian has toured the globe with The Natural Theatre and his own company, Fine Artistes.

Corinne continued making innovative theatre, touring internationally whilst being based in Germany. Phil specialised in film and media and set up the educational charity Somerset Film. Penny is a well known author and illustrator of children's books.

Thornton is involved in a major EU project to promote the reuse of building materials. Jennie became a specialist teacher of children with different needs, and Victoria has worked mainly in human rights, living at various points in Mexico and Haiti.

Back to the book. It's an intimate and often hilarious account of how it all came about told by those involved at the time, with contributions from performers, artists, green technology pioneers, and the children and adults who joined in.

Essential reading for anyone interested in 1970s counterculture or were growing up at the time. An era of emerging free festivals, of the rise of folk rock, community theatre, street art, experimental rock music, reggae, world music and a time when people would try anything creatively.

The book *Bath Arts Workshop* is in paperback, priced £25, and is out on 12 September published by Bloomsbury and is available from Tangent Books. Contact: Richard Jones, 07890 267983. Email richard@tangentbooks.co.uk



Yoga in 1976 before it became fashionable



The books cover gives a flavour of what's inside



Rock concert in 1975 - when prog rock and experimentation was thriving



The era saw a variety of creative events from street theatre to festivals and concerts

