



Wales Puja Committee

We are a charitable organisation based in Cardiff. We were founded in 1973 mainly by some doctors from Bengal. Initially operating from members' houses, we first introduced various Hindu cultural festivals such as Durga Puja, Saraswati Puja and Kali Puja to South Wales.

Over the years we have grown significantly. Our pujas are now popular and well attended, not just by people from South Wales but also from southern England. In addition to the religious festivities we are actively involved in charitable works. We have matured as a cultural organisation and our music, dances, and dramas draw large audiences.

We have organised successful Indian Melas at the St David's Hall in Cardiff.

In 2002 and 2009 we organised a well received living exhibitions when new clay images were built by artists from India. The process and associated mythology were explained by our members to the viewers. In 2009, this was held at the National History Museum in St Fagans.

The present project is our most ambitious yet, with a large element of community involvement and heritage preservation. We would like to invite you all to share this experience with us and our partners.

For further information please look up and follow the Wales Puja Committee Facebook page or check our website (www.pujainwales.com).

For further details please call

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These photographs are of the Durga Idol or Pratima that is in use currently. This was made by artists from India in 2009 out of papier mache as part of a living exhibition 'Making of Goddess Durga from Papier Mache' with the support of the Arts Council of Wales and the National History Museum at St Fagans.



Preserving the Heritage of Durga Puja Festival



Wales Puja Committee



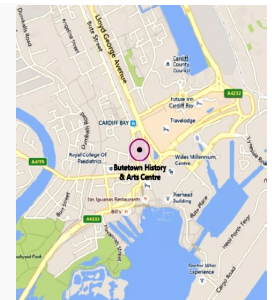
Events

April, 2016 – February, 2017: various events at various venues in Cardiff.

6 June – 5 July, 2016: Image making

**Venue - Image Making
Butetown History & Arts
Centre**

Address: 5 Bute Street,
Cardiff CF10 5AG
Phone: 029 204256757



Supported by
The National Lottery[®]
through the Heritage Lottery Fund



Objective

We aim to trace the history of the Durga Puja Festival in South Wales. We will look back at the Puja's roots in Wales in the early 1970s and its development thereafter.

In order to do this, we will record oral histories from those involved in bringing this festival from India at its inception. We will also record the history and the artistic and creative aspects of clay image making in Wales and, create a digital archive of this story for the future.

During the project, a set of life size clay images will be made in the Butetown History and Arts Centre, Mermaid Quay, Cardiff. Traditional clay artists from India will interact with the students of the Cardiff School of Art & Design demonstrating their artistic skills and techniques through workshops, lectures and provide a chance to observe this venerable art form directly.

Students from our partner schools will be able to see this process and learn from interactive and user driven sessions as part of their Religious Education & Art classes. This will help develop customised and curriculum focussed learning content.

Various cultural events and discussion forums be held at this venue during the actual image making and also in our partners' venues in Cardiff before and after it.

We will make a film of the project and develop audio visual records for archiving.

Throughout the event, members of the community will be welcome to walk in, enjoy and learn from this living exhibition. We hope to make interactive digital content available to facilitate and enhance their experience.

Goddess Durga

Goddess Durga is the principal Mother Goddess in Hinduism. The consort of Lord Shiva and an embodiment of primordial cosmic energy or Shakti, she is innately formless and takes on various female forms in times of great turmoil and leads the eternal battle of good over evil. Durga Puja festival marks her victory over the evil buffalo demon Mahishasura. Especially popular in West Bengal, Durga is worshipped as the destroyer of evil and the protector of her devotees.

The prominence of Durga Puja increased during the British Raj. Reformists identified Durga with India and she became an icon for the Indian independence movement. In the early 20th century, these festivals emerged out of the temples and palaces and become community events thus adding to their mass appeal.

The tradition also developed of creating clay images or idols of the Goddess and her family depicting her victory over Mahishasura for these festivals. These idols were housed in large marquees to allow devotees to come in large numbers and offer their prayers. On the 10th day, the idols were then submerged into the nearest river on the to signify Durga's return to the heavens.

Since India's independence, the Durga Pujas continued to evolve and developed into one of the largest festivals in the world. In Bengal, these community pujas took on a competitive streak. Artists and craftsmen strived to create the most amazing idols and, the spectacular marquees lit up by the most astonishing of light displays. It is certainly no exaggeration to say that the state of West Bengal, India becomes the world's largest and most attended 'Open Air Art Exhibition' during the Pujas today!

Our Partners

The Cardiff Story Museum



City of Cardiff

Butetown History & Arts Centre



Wales for Peace & Welsh Centre for

International Affairs



People's Collection Wales



Cardiff School of Art & Design



Cardiff Metropolitan University



Radyr Comprehensive School



Llanishen High School



Cardiff High School



The Wales Puja Committee would like to thank our project partners for their involvement in this venture.