

Event review



The Summer Solstice Largactyl Shuffle: From Madhouse to Modern Psychiatric Hospital

A guided walk from Tate Modern at Bankside to The Maudsley Hospital in Camberwell, June 20

IT IS midnight on the summer solstice. Although there's no moon, it is not completely dark in central London as about 90 people set off to walk the five miles between Tate Modern on and Maudsley Hospital in Camberwell.

We are a mixed bunch, including healthcare staff, volunteers and service users, along with other people who are just curious to learn some local history and enjoy stretching their legs and making new friends. Definitions are unnecessary, however, as in CoolTan parlance we are all 'participants'.

Ari Henry, CoolTan Arts founder, and chief executive Michelle Baharier lead the way. The charity works to enhance participants' wellbeing by the power of creativity, named after its original location in a disused sun lotion factory.

This has been billed as a guided walk 'from madhouse to modern psychiatric hospital', aiming to promote mental and physical health through art, exercise, humour and history, and to destigmatise mental health.

We hear about Chaucer, Shakespeare and Dickens's connections to the area, Charles Booth's studies of poverty and poor housing, and about Charlie Chaplin's mother's mental breakdown, although the promised link between history, heritage and mental wellbeing is less clear.

Two thirds of the way along the route we stop at CoolTan's base in Walworth Road in the London Borough of Southwark for refreshments.

Creative activities for people with mental health problems take place here, including visual arts, drama, batik, IT skills, podcasting and volunteering workshops. Southwark residents can be referred by their community mental health team worker – CoolTan has good links with South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust – and people from other boroughs may be offered a place if funding is agreed.

The final push takes us past Camberwell Green Magistrates' Court, the proposed site for one of several pieces of public sculpture to be created jointly by CoolTan Arts and the local community. At 4.30am, the numbers having dwindled somewhat, we reach Maudsley Hospital, where we are able to rest our aching feet for a while and reflect on our journey.

The event was part of the Mayor of London's *Story of London Festival*. A slide show of the walk can be viewed at <http://cooltanarts.org.uk/category/imagegallery/>.

The Largactyl Shuffle, named after the side effect of the phenothiazines once commonly used to treat psychosis, takes place at noon on the third Saturday of every month. The following walks are scheduled to set off from Maudsley Hospital (<http://cooltanarts.org.uk/category/largactyl/>):

- September 19 – Harvest Moon, Food and Well Being.
- October 10 – World Mental Health Day sponsored walk: Walking Sculptures.
- October 17 – walk.
- November 21 – All Saints' Day walk.
- December 19 – A Christmas Light (Christingles, mince pies and a Christmas Carol).

Further details of all CoolTan Arts activities, including workshops and the largactyl walks, are available at <http://cooltanarts.org.uk>
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What's your view?

If you want to express your opinions about any of the issues in this journal, write a letter to the editor, Colin Parish, at RCN Publishing, The Heights, 59-65 Lowlands Road, Harrow-on-the-Hill HA1 3AW or email colin.parish@rcnpublishing.co.uk