

# Pilgrim Roots

2020 is the 400th anniversary of the historic voyage of the Mayflower, from England to America, carrying passengers in search of a new life in a new colony. Many of the passengers, now known as the Pilgrims, originated from rural areas of Nottinghamshire, South Yorkshire and Lincolnshire – this area has become known as the Pilgrim Roots region.

Rachel has followed in their footsteps, delving into this historic period whilst researching her own family tree, which is deeply rooted in the Midlands. In discovering her own history, she found it to be peppered with stories of migration that were, sometimes smaller in miles, but no less impactful in terms of circumstances and upheaval.

Supported by Arts Council England and endorsed by Mayflower 400 as a Spirit of Mayflower project, Rachel began a series of artist residencies during 2018/19 to help inspire a new life-size bronze sculpture **The Pilgrim Woman**.

## Residencies Exploring Migration and Family History

### Nottingham College:

Rachel's first residency was with the Computer Aided Design and Architecture students at Nottingham College. They shared their knowledge, practice and skills; Rachel taught the students to weave and they taught her about CAD. The result was a collaborative installation for Nottingham Light Night 2019.

### Nottingham Industrial Museum:

Nottingham Industrial Museum is on the Wollaton Park Estate. Here Rachel was surrounded by lace making machines and framework knitters looms, similar to the ones her ancestors would have used in Nottingham's booming lace industry of the 18th and 19th century.

### Atlantic Pilgrimage:

Then to create a modern version of the Atlantic pilgrimage, Rachel crossed the Atlantic by freight ship in summer 2019. Rachel set sail on 'Atlantic Sky' on 27 July 2019. The crossing took a total of 8 days from Liverpool, UK to Halifax, Nova Scotia, CA before heading on to Boston, USA.

Once onboard, cut off from the outside world and with only the sailors and the sea for company, Rachel spent time knotting, stitching and twisting twines and ropes to create woven textures whilst reading excerpts of journals written by William Bradford about his own crossing aboard the Mayflower in 1620. She also charted her own journey through audio and text based diaries.



In Boston, Massachusetts, Rachel boarded a second vessel sailing to Provincetown. Here she began an artist residency at the **Provincetown Monument & Museum** to continue her research and development.

And then on to the **Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology at Harvard University** where she sketched museum artefacts, researched artworks made by First Nations including the Wampanoag people who first met the pilgrims off the Mayflower, and ensured the survival of the new English settlers 400 years ago.

