

CHICO: Drama of wartime history encapsulated in tribute to clown who lost his voice in Blitz trauma

Join us on the trail of an incredible true story



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 ■ ZANY PERSPECTIVE... Performers (front) Lance F.S. and Kurt Zarniko and (back, from left) Sam Charlton 'Shaz', Cancan-Ann Fraser, Alice Lesley Pocklington and Mr Farr feature in The Pollard Trail. *Picture: James Balfour*

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THE incredible true story of a Coventry clown who was so traumatised by the Blitz that he lost his voice and his memory, is being told in a history trail this month.

By Dayle Crutchlow and Marion McMullen

Irving Pollard worked under the name of Chico and was born into a circus family who lived in the Primrose Hill area of Hillfields.

After the Blitz destroyed his workshop containing his collection of puppets, he fell silent for years.

It was only by carving a new puppet that he was finally able to communicate with friends and relatives.

Only the chance discovery of a box containing Pollard's clown memorabilia in a storeroom at the city's Herbert Museum, in Jordan Well, sparked the search to find out more about him.

Irving's amazing life is now being commemorated in The Pollard Trail, a fusion of performance, music, talks and tours in and around Primrose Hill Street, from next Thursday to Sunday, August 20.

Participants on the trail will encounter playful guides and clown curators, see displays of original Pollard memorabilia and meet his friends and local residents who lived through the Blitz.

They will even get the chance to meet Irving's only surviving nephew, Brian Pollard. Brian said: "I'm

delighted that my uncle and his life is being remembered in such an imaginative and creative way.

"I am proud to be part of this unique portrayal of an extraordinary man."

Hillfields is currently undergoing a transformation and Triangle, the Herbert's resident performance group, believes the trail is relevant to the experience.

Clown curator Kurt Zarniko said: "The themes of memory, loss and recovery are important to people living in and around Hillfields at the moment. The area is in a process of huge redevelopment and this trail brings the drama of true historical events together with modern myths about Hillfields."

The trail can be joined at any time and lasts from half an hour to all day. From Monday to Saturday it runs between 11am and 5pm and on Sundays from noon to 4pm.

On Monday, August 14 it is free to Hillfields residents. From Tuesday to Thursday there is a "pay what you can" policy and from Thursday to Sunday it costs £5, £3 concessionary or £2 to Hillfields residents.

Trail maps and timetables are available from The Herbert, Coventry Tourist Information Centre, Coventry Transport Museum, local libraries and participating venues.