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Foyle funding received

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Caistor Clarion

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Foyle Foundation funding finalised

First the good news - don't worry there isn't any bad. We have received £5000 funding from the Foyle Foundation. This, along with several generous grants from local trusts, means that we have secured the barn as our headquarters for a full year to next March and we can continue with the expansion of the present projects with the addition of professional input for advice and training leading to a yet greater degree of self-sufficiency. Beyond that we will have a small reserve to tide us over into 2016 when we hope to have made an application for a large project for that summer.

Coffee @ Caistor

Our first coffee morning is on Friday 26 June from 10.30 to 11.30 at Caistor Hall Hotel. Come and join us for a cup of coffee while you chat to members of the archive team who will share some of the knowledge that they have gained during their searches in the dark recesses of places like the Norfolk Record Office. You can also find out more about the local area and the Roman town by browsing through some historical press cuttings.

Vicky and Chrissy plan this to be a monthly event to keep everyone informed and enable them to see finds, ask questions and generally get to know more.

They look forward to seeing you there - all are welcome. For more information email Vicky vixter437@tiscali.co.uk

Two ways to get involved without digging

First, just a brief reminder about Lizzie's Connected Communities project to develop a mobile communications-based guide to the town. There is still room for a few more for this Sunday, 21 June. Contact her at elizabeth.er.stewart@gmail.com for more details and to register.

Then there is another project run by Caroline Davison of the Norfolk Archaeological Trust. This is a Historic England (English Heritage as was) project and here is what Caroline has to say:

"As promised at the meeting in May I would like to invite members of CRP to participate in the Trust's *Making Connections* project at Caistor Roman Town. This capacity building project is being funded by Historic England with the aim of interweaving the stories and images included in the new interpretation scheme (which should be on site in September) with learning materials for schools, volunteer-led activities and refreshed displays at Norwich Castle Museum. The project is starting now, and will run until spring 2016.

Most of the funding will be spent on refreshing the displays at the Castle Museum so that they integrate with the new site interpretation scheme, but we also have some money for producing learning materials, and we are lucky enough to have the support of Kate Argyle (Historic England Local Heritage Education Manager (East)) who will help bring together local schools and a team of volunteers to develop and test ideas for learning activities on site.

In addition, we are looking for people interested in undertaking visitor surveys on site to help us evaluate the project, and also to help with the design of online materials for schools. If any of this sounds like your kind of thing - you can pick and choose which bits you'd like to do - please do get in touch with me, or speak to Andrew and Lizzie who are already helping with the planning. We look forward to hearing from you!"

carolinedavison@norfarchtrust.org.uk Tel: 01603 462987

Report on Fun Day

The Caistor Roman Town Family Fun Day on 23 May was very successful, drawing a crowd of about 500 and gave us an opportunity to show off our work. Organisation was by South Norfolk Council which funded it jointly with Caistor St Edmund Parish Council. Apart from our stall and our guided walks we managed the car park and have been given the whole of the takings from the £2 car park charge.

Caroline Davison of Norfolk Archaeological Trust wrote the following item in its newsletter and it is reproduced here with her permission.

Does having fun when you visit a historic site necessarily mean that you're not taking it seriously?

Ever since the publication in the 1980s of *On Living in an Old Country* by Patrick Wright, and *The Heritage Industry* by Robert Hewison, it has been common to come across the idea that popularising heritage inevitably offers a 'dumbed down' version of history, driven by the demands of commercialisation. It's easy to dismiss re-enactment societies, or the re-creation of spotless historic interiors, or children dressing up in period costumes, as part of a nostalgia for an idealised past - just a bit of fun.

It's probably true that the emerging heritage industry of the '80s needed someone to point out the pitfalls of turning too much of a soft focus on history. On the other hand, the 'heritage industry' critique did not properly recognise or understand the genuine public appetite for learning about past lives and times. The growing demand for history-based leisure activities over the past thirty years can be demonstrated by quoting the soaring membership numbers of the National Trust, the popularity of television programmes on archaeology and history, and the literary phenomenon that is 'Horrible Histories'.

I was thinking about this as I staffed the Norfolk Archaeological Trust stall at the Caistor Roman Town Family Fun Day in May. I'm as guilty as the next cynical person of wincing slightly at the 'Family Fun' tag – but actually it describes accurately the kind of day it was. A crowd of people (circa 500) arrived with their young children and had fun.



I asked some visitors to fill in a survey before they left, and they all reported that they had enjoyed the event – most had stayed for two or more hours – and everyone agreed there had been plenty to keep their children interested. Amongst other things, they made swords out of cardboard, they met Iceniens and had their faces painted with blue patterns, they went on guided walks of the site, they heard exciting storytelling, excavated a skeleton and picked seeds out of very convincing pretend human excreta (provided by the Norfolk Historic Environment Service). Claire Bradshaw of NHES is shown above delicately dealing with pretend poo.

The purpose of picking out the seeds was to identify whether the diet was Saxon or Roman, and was an adapted version of a real archaeological investigation technique. This activity could be seen as pandering to the lowest common denominator – there was a lot of laughter and wrinkled noses as children picked away with their tweezers. But as we all know, if we're trying to learn something, it's much easier to do if it's fun. The Fun Day offered experiences that children will remember, and for some of them it might be the beginning of a lifelong interest in history and archaeology - and that was the aim.

Festival of Archaeology - our contribution

As part of the Festival of Archaeology (www.archaeologyfestival.org.uk) run nationally by the Council for British Archaeology we will be running two tours of Caistor open to the public. The first is in the evening of 15 July led by Will Bowden and the second will be run by our volunteers on 22 July. More details and exact times will follow.

Post-Roman pot workshop

Due to a cancellation here is one place available at the post-Roman pot workshop this Saturday at the Caistor Hall Hotel. For

more details contact Chrissy at prlix@icloud.com.

Congratulations....

.....to Dani Lefevvre, long time volunteer. She has been accepted onto the MA course in Cultural Heritage and Museum Studies at the University of East Anglia starting this September. We wish her luck and look forward to her advice as a museums expert in future. There is more information at gofundme.com/danismafund.

Next time....

A report on progress in developing and delivering a programme of school visits with the aid of Kate Argyle of Historic England. One school visit has been held and we hope to get photographs for a proper article next time.

Dates for your diary

20 June, 10.00 - 12.30, Workshop on post-Roman pot

21 June and 19 July, Connected Communities

26 June, 10.30 - 11.30, Coffee morning at hotel

15 and 22 July, guided walks around Caistor Roman Town

(see above for details of all these)

In the pipeline..... watch out for further details

9 August, Chrissy and Vicky are organising a sponsored walk, starting from Caistor Roman Town and following a route to take in views of the town. It will be open to CRP members, their families and friends.

15 August (provisional), Bone and antler workshop led by Sophie Cabot

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