



July 2017

Welcome to the latest Castle Transformation Newsletter

As we move into August, we look back on our work for the month of July. Our July 2017 issue features:

- Project update
 - Caves in the news
 - Gordon AB Young - Tribute to the City Archaeologist
 - University of Nottingham Local History and Archaeology Day
 - We Dig the Castle update as Jade meets some volunteers
 - Object of the Month - Portland Vase
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Project update

Welcome to the project update for July

Work experience - The project team acquired a new member for a couple of days this month when work experience student Luke Franklin chose to join us due to his passion for history at school. During his experience he gained a lot of information about Nottingham and the Castle and gave us some ideas too.

We got him involved with our Object of the Month newsletter column and mind mapping ideas for upcoming events. He even got to experience the Castle and caves through a tour and an Access Artefacts workshop. It was a pleasure to have a fresh perspective for a couple of days and hopefully we have helped him with the process of choosing his career path. We wish him good luck for the future.

Caves Festival - The project team is currently having meetings to organise the Caves Festival, the last meeting took place at Rock Cemetery where we had a really interesting time exploring the caves and catacombs. The Caves Festival may possibly be held around Halloween so prepare to be spooked. Look out for more information in the near future.

Twitter Takeover - We will be taking part in the [Teen Twitter takeover](#) on 11 August so we have been making plans for young volunteers to come to the Castle and to have access to

the [@NottmcastleBid](#) account. We're hoping for a variety of perspectives on visiting the site so don't forget to follow us! We'll be using the hashtag #takeoverday

Gordon AB Young - The team was saddened to hear of the death of City Archaeologist, Gordon AB Young on Sunday 9 July. He was a much respected colleague and will be sadly missed by the team and within his profession. Our colleague Scott Lomax has provided more information about Gordon for us.



Caves in the news

Our very own Scott Lomax appeared in a [BBC feature this month](#)

The cave featured is on Derby Road and is a 19th century cellar. Scott's research and appeals have now identified 152 more caves since 1 July 2016.

[Read more from the BBC on Nottingham caves](#)

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Gordon AB Young

Nottingham City Archaeologist, Gordon AB Young was involved with the caves project at an early stage, and carried out recording of works at the Castle especially in the 1980s and 1990s.

Gordon AB Young (pictured on the left at a dig) first worked as an archaeologist in Nottingham in 1972, working for his brother Charles on an excavation in the Lace Market. Having enjoyed working on excavations he decided to go to university in Cardiff to study archaeology and returned to Nottingham during summer breaks in order to gain experience, helping run sites at Fisher Gate and Halifax Place.

After a period working in the northeast, Gordon returned to Nottingham in 1983 when he was appointed Assistant Field Archaeologist and was given the task of attempting to write up one of Nottingham's most complex excavations.

In 1995 Gordon was appointed City Archaeologist. As City Archaeologist, working as adviser to the planning department, he oversaw major excavations on the sites of the National Ice Centre and the tramworks in the city, as well as carrying out some excavations at Nottingham Castle and

providing archaeological advice during the early stages of the Castle Transformation project.

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University of Nottingham Local History and Archaeology Day

Ann Inscker - Collections and Access Officer reports on this recent event...

"Having spent two years delighting attendees to the Annual University Museum History and Archaeology Day event, to treasures from Nottingham Castle's caves, we decided to opt for something rather less archaeological, though still at times equally dirty – our Designated Lace collection.

We took along items from the Industrial Collection, including precision engineered bobbins and carriages, lace tools, a jenny and examples of Nottingham lace including a lace panel from the Robin Hood Marathon, all to promote the Castle Transformation Project and current Arts Council England (ACE) 'Lace Unravelling' Project.

Lace items from both the Costume and Industrial Collections and Casson Mann draft images of the new Lace Gallery were shown on a large flat screen TV, interspersed with an intriguing advert for lace makers Guy Birkin Ltd, made in the 1980s and featuring our own Wollaton Hall.

Visitors and participants enjoyed the change to our usual offering and came forward to regale us with their linked stories to the lace industry, their love of engineering and to sign up to the lace newsletter.

Back to the broken pots next year, but for now lace has definitely helped to draw both the Castle Transformation Project and our 'Lace Unravelling' Project to the attentions of a heritage-hungry audience."

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We Dig the Castle

Apprentice **Jade Everatt** visits the team on the latest excavation project at the Castle

"I was given a bright orange high-vis jacket and allowed to wander around the dig which was very exciting! I found Bethany and Samantha who were kind enough to let me interview them whilst they were hard at work. It went a bit like this..."

What sparked your initial interest in archaeology?

Bethany: "My Nan was born in Egypt and she used to give me lots of books about Egypt and they became my inspiration – I took GCSE History and then A level Archaeology but that is no longer an option at A level I think I was in the last year for it."

Samantha: "Well I was going to do classics at University but then I realised there's more money in Archaeology."

What have you been doing here?

Samantha and Bethany: "We've just finished drawing this pit which we are digging now to record it. This pit we've found was just to drop rubbish down. As it's a rubbish pit we've found lots of random stuff (there was lots of pottery already visible) We've also had to photograph it for evidence – sometimes they use an old style black and white photo because they just need it as a record of evidence."

What are you enjoying about it?

Samantha: "I enjoy the drawing, I'm no artist so I'm glad it's not too intricate."

Bethany: "Yes, me too. There are a lot of dotted lines."

Jade - "I found myself surprised by how much goes in to archaeology from digging to drawing and taking photographs. The women explained that maths is also involved when they have to measure things and that it's 'a lot of everything'."

What is your favourite thing that you have found so far?

Samantha and Bethany: "Probably the crab shells which we found in that bucket you can see there, you just find things people have thrown away over the years it's so random."

Have you had chance to wander around the Castle? What is your favourite thing about the Castle and its history?

Samantha: "Probably the cave tour, it was really interesting and the guy was all dressed up."

Bethany: "Yes, it was really interesting to learn what the caves were used for."

Follow [@wedigthecastle](https://twitter.com/wedigthecastle) on Twitter or for more information, to see the calendar of activities, at the [Trent and Peak website](https://www.trentandpeak.co.uk)

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Object of the month

What is it?

The object we have chosen to highlight this month is a technical masterpiece in Jasperware. It is a rare first edition black and white Portland Vase, made by the potter Josiah Wedgwood in about 1790.

Why is it significant?

Jasperware, which was then a new material invented by Wedgwood, is considered to be the most significant innovation in ceramic history since porcelain in China nearly 1,000 years earlier.

The Portland Vase is one of the most famous Wedgwood products of the late eighteenth century. Ours is number 29 from a limited first edition of only 30 to 40 copies.

Wedgwood's Portland Vases are exact copies of an antique Roman cameo cut-glass vase made in c. AD 1 – AD 25 in Rome. This original vase is now owned by the British Museum in London.

Tell me more

The Roman glass vase became known as the Portland Vase, taking its name from the Duchess of Portland, a noted collector of antiquities and one-time owner of the original vase. After her death it was purchased in 1786 by her son, the 3rd Duke of Portland, who lent it almost immediately to Josiah Wedgwood to copy.

This task was far greater than Wedgwood first anticipated. His first edition vases were the result of four years of trials and tribulation, blistered and fractured failures and years of work perfecting the Jasper body itself.

In our opinion

Our first edition Portland Vase is amongst Josiah Wedgwood's greatest achievements and amongst his last. The quality of the reliefs on our copy is astonishing and beautiful. They are often undercut and tinted by hand with a grey slip to give the effect of the translucency of the glass original. It is a masterpiece. It was given to the Museum in 1892 by the Wedgwood collector Felix Joseph.

Pamela Wood - Curator of Fine and Decorative Art

The Portland vase will feature in the new Art as Inspiration Gallery currently being designed by exhibition designers Casson Mann.

Further information

Read about the [story of the original Portland/Barberini Vase](#) that Wedgwood borrowed to copy. This vase has had a colourful history!

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Scott's findings

Welcome to column seventeen from City Archaeologist, Scott Lomax. This month, he explores the myth of another secret cave...

There has been a common belief that there are secret caves in the city which extend long distances and connect to the Castle. One such story, which has been told since the early 20th century if not earlier, is that there is a passage leading from the Forest to the Castle. Another involves a supposed cavernous tunnel leading from Bridlesmith Gate to the Castle.

Certainly there are a several cave passages, which lead into the Castle and land which once formed part of the Castle, including a cave beneath Lenton Road. However, could there be any truth in stories of caves stretching beneath much of the city centre?

The largest known cave system in Nottingham is quite close to the Forest and runs for almost 200m in length beneath lots of properties on Mansfield Road and surrounding streets. This cave system, which was an 18th and 19th century sand mine, is so large, and is quite a labyrinth, that people have spent a number of hours walking in it. However, it does not go anywhere near the Castle.

There is the old Great Central Railway tunnel which does run from the Forest and beyond, and runs right into the Lace Market, but again this does not extend to the Castle and was used for trains until the 1960s so could not be the source of tales of people walking many miles when they were children in the early 20th century or earlier.

In some cases these stories of a tunnel from the Forest were told, in jest, to young relatives and were then believed and passed down the generations with fiction becoming accepted as fact.



Peel Street Caves off Mansfield Road

What about a cave to the Castle from Bridlesmith Gate? Well, the origins of this story date to the 19th century. A letter was printed in no less than The Times in September 1862, written by Roger Brooke, Assistant Surveyor to the Corporation of Nottingham, with the address given as 45 Low Pavement, Nottingham. The letter was printed with the headline, 'Interesting Discovery at Nottingham' and described discoveries made when 'alterations' were made in the town, including

demolition of old and derelict buildings. Following the demolition of the pub named King John's Palace on Bridlesmith Gate a 'large underground cell' was found and upon further investigation it was found to be one of thirteen such cells. In one of the cells, the letter continued, pieces of armour were found, along with weapons including a battleaxe. Furthermore three skeletons were found. The evidence, according to Brooke, suggested the cave was used as a prison and that the skeletons were prisoners. From these cave cells a passage was said to extend all the way to the Castle.

The discovery of such caves, skeletons and artefacts would have been far more than just interesting. It would have been remarkable, if indeed there was any truth in it. The office of the Corporation Surveyors was not on Low Pavement and there was no Roger Brooke working in the Surveyor's Office. The Corporation Surveyor, Marriott Tarbotton, was able to confirm the letter was a hoax and indeed there were many practical jokes at the time being perpetrated by a man calling himself Rajah Brooke and Roger Brooke.

Nonetheless, once the claim had been put into print it was believed by many, despite the Nottinghamshire Guardian highlighting the hoax. Perhaps others who realised there was no truth in the story still liked to pass it off as fact because it made an interesting tale.

It is these jokes and hoaxes that continued to be told into the 20th century and which are still believed, by some, to be true.

Although there are no secret tunnels leading from the Forest or Bridlesmith Gate the identification of 152 more caves beneath the city's streets in the past twelve months is helping to change our understanding of subterranean Nottingham and providing more details about the development and social history of the city.

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Caves at Nottingham Castle