



December 2018

Welcome to the December Castle Transformation Newsletter

This month, we feature:

- **Project update** - Site update, press visit, caves
- **Jade's Column** - Rock Cemetery
- **Archaeology Column** - Gareth Davies
- **Advent calendar** - Only a few days left
- **#ThanksToYou** - National Lottery free tours
- **Object of the Month** - In Merry Company



Project update - December 2018

Welcome to our project news for December

Site progress - Works on site have progressed incredibly rapidly this month, with perhaps the most striking difference being the erection of the scaffolding surrounding the Ducal Palace – which due to the cliff top location can be seen for miles around. Another important piece of work which has been undertaken is the removal of the mezzanine floor in the Ducal Palace extension. What was home to the History Gallery, Hood in the Wood and the education studios has now been opened up to reveal a truly stunning full height gallery. The original features will now be restored, returning the space to its former glory

Tour for local press - We were happy to conduct a site tour for the Nottingham Post this month, who had contacted us for an update on progress. It was perfect timing as the Visitor Centre excavation was nearing completion, the scaffolding was almost complete and the mezzanine floor had just been removed – so lots to see! Despite the wet and windy weather, we even ventured to the roof for some great shots of the landscaping works and site compound. Look out for the full article due to go out between Christmas and the New Year.

Cave City 2019 - Plans for the 2019 Cave City Festival are now well underway. We are excited to announce that the Rock Cemetery Catacombs will be included in the line-up, as will the caves under The People's Hall in the Lace Market. To assist with the publicity for the festival we decided to commission some caves photography from [Nottingham photographer Lamar Francois](#), and we are so pleased with the results. Read on for Jade's column where she tells all about her recent trip to the Catacombs!

Seasons Greetings! - All that's left is to thank you for another year of support and to wish all our readers a Merry Christmas and a very Happy New Year - 2019 is going to be a be really exciting time for the project and we look forward to telling you all about it!

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Jade's Column – The catacombs

Our project apprentice Jade took a visit to Rock Cemetery to meet Cemeteries manager Dave Stretton and Nottingham based Photographer Lamar Francois who was taking some amazing photos of the catacombs as they are the latest addition to Cave City: Nottingham Underground Festival...

"The first area we visited was actually what is known as the Robin Hood caves. These caves won't be available for the public to go in during the caves festival as it is not yet safe but there will be a stop there on the tour to peek through the gates and listen to the history behind them. There is a wooden structure inside which looks like it is where people may have sat or stood to watch performances in these caves way back when. It is also thought that the wooden

structure dates back to the 1800's however none of this is yet confirmed and research is ongoing.

We then moved along to the catacombs which were dark, cold and possibly haunted according to Dave who said a stone was once thrown at him and a colleague out of nowhere when they were in there alone. Spooky right? Well it is below a cemetery!

While Lamar was concentrating on finding the perfect lighting for the almost pitch-black catacombs, I spoke to him about how he felt about the recent caves based photography he had been doing. He explained that it was a new experience as he hadn't photographed many caves before but he is enjoying doing so and finds it an 'interesting challenge.'

Lamar has found the experience very encouraging and has helped build his confidence. He looks forward to seeing his work used to market the caves festival and hopes to attend some of the events."

If you love caves and think a spooky catacombs tour at Rock Cemetery would be just the thing for you then keep an eye out for more details on Cave City: Nottingham Underground Festival in future newsletters.

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Rock Cemetery Caves



Archaeology column

This month, we have an update from Dr Gareth Davies MCIfA who is the Head Of Operations at Trent and Peak Archaeology which is leading the archaeological excavations on the site.

"On the lead up to Christmas, the set-piece excavations on the Visitor Centre site in the Outer Bailey came to a conclusion. Initial excavation to the base of the visitor centre floor slab had revealed garden features and allotments relating to activity in the Outer Bailey during the time of the Ducal Palace and 19th century.

Towards the curtain wall the possibility of buried structures requiring preservation in situ meant that a 10x5m area was shored and excavated archaeologically to a depth of 6m below ground level.

Here, although no structural remains were discovered, deposits relating to the medieval rampart and curtain wall, dating to the 13 to 15th centuries, were discovered.

Findings included organic rich soils containing pottery and animal bones, where later scientific analyses could reveal important information about the medieval economy and environment in and around the Castle.

The excavations are now being backfilled, but they have certainly provided valuable insight into the nature of activity with a largely unexplored part of Nottingham Castle."



Excavation of the medieval deposits at the base of the deep shored trench in the Outer Bailey



Last chances to visit the advent calendar

Just a few more days to go! Hope you are enjoying our advent calendar.

Watch out for **21 December** with a chance to win tickets for a **Peel Street cave tour**. We will make the draw in the New Year so loads of time to enter.

[Check out the advent calendar](#)

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December fun thanks to The National Lottery #ThanksToYou

There was a great response to our free site tours for National Lottery players event. Over 50 people braved the cold and rain to join members of the Nottingham Castle Transformation Project Team for a tour of the grounds to see changes on site and hear about the next stages of the project. The tour also included is an optional journey down Mortimer's Hole cave route and they got to meet Robin Hood!

We even got some visitors from further afield involved with people from Japan, Spain and Brazil understanding how important National Lottery funding is to the project and buying a Lottery ticket to have a look round the site.

The Castle was one of hundreds of participating National Lottery-funded visitor attractions across the UK saying 'thanks' to people who have raised money for good causes by buying a lottery ticket.

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Object of the Month

What is it? - Our Christmas choice from our collections is an oil painting by Dutch artist Anthonie Palamedes (1601-1673). It is called *Merry Company (Interior with Cavaliers and Ladies)*.

Why is it significant? - Although not immediately obvious, the Christmas connection is the swan pie centrepiece on the dining table. The meat for this delicacy came from cygnets fed on barley until their feathers began to turn white at Christmas, so swan pie became a traditional treat enjoyed from Tudor times until the nineteenth century.

Tell me more - Historical recipes show how elaborate swan pies were, but by Victorian times the only swans being eaten were moulded from butter and ice cream. There are even accounts of bits of iron & magnets being hidden in butter swans and pieces of bread so that the bread could be used to make the swan appear to swim across a wet plate for dramatic effect!

In our opinion - *"This type of elegant interior with well-dressed men and women engaged in lively conversation was popular in the prosperous Holland of the 17th century, known as the Dutch Golden Age. There are several such 'merry company' paintings in Nottingham's collection. The artist has arranged the figures across the picture space as if they're on a stage. It certainly is a display of wealth and comfortable living, full of sumptuous fabrics and fine, handmade lace. We'll be including it in a group of paintings and objects that explore people's leisure time through the art of different times."*

Deborah Dean, Visual Arts Collections and Exhibitions Manager

Merry Company (Interior with Cavaliers and Ladies) will feature in the new Art as Inspiration Gallery currently being designed by exhibition designers Casson Mann.

[Read a food blog on how to prepare and serve swan](#)
[Read an article on the evolution of the country Christmas dinner](#)

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Merry Company (Interior with Cavaliers and Ladies) - Anthonie Palamedes (1601-1673)

Nottingham Playhouse Theatre Company presents
Kenneth Alan Taylor's

Robin Hood

and the Babes in the Wood

Sponsored by
Nottingham City
Transport

Fri 30 Nov 2018 -
Sat 19 Jan 2019

Have you seen Robin Hood yet? [Click to find out more about this year's pantomime at Nottingham Playhouse](#)

