



THE RESTORATION TIMES

CULTURE THERAPY WITH PEOPLE WITH MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES • Volume 1 Issue 1



Laura Drysdale DIRECTOR OF THE RESTORATION TRUST

“I’ve lived nearby Burgh Castle for so many years and had never been. Now I don’t think I will ever stop going.”

John Durrant spoke for many of us when he said this in an interview for the National Lottery Heritage Fund. Since Burgh Castle Almanac ended in October, I’ve missed walking companionably there together, inside the Fort’s ancient walls with its long views, and the

soundscape of wind in the rushes and feet on the Boardwalk. But the project’s legacy is already underway. This month we’ve a film making workshop with Julian Claxton so that we can create content for online sessions, members are setting up a community group to encourage the use of historic landscapes for wellbeing, and in January Ellen Hardy begins compiling the actual Almanac during a placement with us as part of her creative writing PhD at the University of East Anglia.

Learning to live again

TWO YEARS OF THE BURGH CASTLE ALMANAC

BURGH CASTLE ALMANAC, one of the Restoration Trust’s most successful creativity and wellbeing programmes, began in 2018. Based at the Roman Fort in Burgh Castle and Time and Tide Museum in Great Yarmouth, it was largely funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund as part of Water Mills and Marshes, the Broads Authority’s £4,000,000 landscape project, and was a partnership with Norfolk Archaeological Trust, Access Community Trust and Norfolk Museums Service.



■ Members on the last day of the Burgh Castle Almanac.

Promoting wellbeing

The group had its final meeting on the 27 October this year, celebrating almost three years of gatherings, where members enjoyed a diverse cross-section of creative activities and guest experts, which helped promote positive mental health within the BCA. Even the COVID-19 pandemic didn’t defeat the ingenuity of the BCA team, as we took the BCA online to Zoom, offering art that could be made at

home, using materials sent out to members through the post. In all, the BCA met a total of 71 times, every fortnight and more.

The various members of the BCA have nothing but praise for the journey we embarked on together. “I’m quite a nervous person,” says John Durrant,

Ellen Hardy

WRITING THE ALMANAC

I am a PhD researcher in Creative-Critical Writing at UEA, but starting in January 2021 I will spend half of my weeks working on the Burgh Castle Almanac. It is clear how much the past two years of Almanac excursions have meant to its members, and how many wonderful moments they've created.

My PhD supervisor is a previous Almanac speaker, the writer Rebecca Stott. She introduced me to Laura Drysdale when I was looking for a placement, as part of my research funding. Laura and I talked about our shared passion for historic sites, for Norfolk, and for mental health recovery.

It made sense for me to find a way to celebrate the BCA, communicating the life-altering possibilities of culture therapy.



"but I've managed to take part in so many amazing things, and this project has more than exceeded my first opinion of it." "It's opened me up to so many new friends and different types of activities," enthuses Philip Wells. "The best things I've gained from the BCA are a sense of being more adventurous and an appetite for trying new things."

Sue Tyler singles out artist Ian Brownlie and Laura, who ran the project, for special praise regarding activities the BCA undertook in the wider community: "They really went the extra mile to bring an idea I had to life – the BCA participated in the Raveningham Sculpture Trail in 2019, which led to us running an art workshop for the public in the Forum in Norwich, as part of their Norfolk Makers Festival."

In 2019, the BCA acquired a grant from the National Lottery Community Fund to make a film

NEW AWARD

CHANGE MINDS, our archives and mental health partnership with Norfolk Record Office, has won the 2020 Arts and Humanities Research Council/Wellcome Trust Medical

Humanities Award, for Community Engagement, for our research collaboration with the University of East Anglia. Special thanks to lead researcher, Dr. Victoria Scaife,

and research team members Dr. Corinna Hackmann at Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust and Amander Wellings, Patient Public Involvement lead. We're thrilled!



■ The BCA's installation at the Raveningham Sculpture Trail in 2019. Members contributed a roundel each.

about the project, enlisting the services of local filmmaker Julian Claxton. The eleven months he spent working with the BCA were a highly rewarding experience for him. "Without a doubt, the best moment was at the end of July 2020, when the group came together for the first time in months. Their sense of joy was palpable and, for me, created a wonderful ending to a tremendous project."

The resulting film, 'The Return of Happy Times', has more than preserved the spirit of the BCA. The hope is that this legacy will inspire similar cultural heritage projects throughout the UK. ■

"This project helped me so much: to recover, to mend, to trust, to laugh, to be creative again."

SUE TYLER



■ Julian Claxton, director of 'The Return of Happy Times'.

