

Making friends through heritage: four stories

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Getting involved in heritage can be a great way to make friends. Those who have, tell us what a difference it has made to their lives.

Nelli and Zara

Aratta: Armenian Heritage in the North West

Zara, project manager: We were organising a food event on Albert Square and I posted about it on Facebook to see if people would like to take part. Nelli messaged me straight away saying that she would make a few dishes and bake a cake.

Nelli, volunteer: My first impression was: "I do not like her" [laughs]. I usually need to get to know someone before I move the relationship from acquaintances to friends. So we talked quite a bit on Facebook Messenger and found a lot in common.

Zara: Nelli was an interesting person to talk to, and most importantly, she would get my sarcastic jokes.

Being friends with her brings me a feeling of security and joy. It is good to have someone you can rely on, have a laugh with someone who doesn't judge you.

Nelli: Zara is a caring person and I know I can rely on her if I ever need any help. She can rely on me too. Both married to grumpy Englishmen, we have the same sense of humour, but we both like to get things done. Who knows what other projects we will be involved in next!

- Find out about The National Lottery Heritage Fund-supported project on the [Aratta website](#) and the [Ahmed Iqbal Ullah Education Trust website](#).

Abi and Katy

Museum 4 Watton



Katy and Abi

Katy, trustee: I found Abi through Facebook. I had been told of this amazing new volunteer with mad museum skills and qualifications but was too impatient to wait for a formal introduction.

When we met I was slightly awestruck at her skillset but she seemed friendly and importantly meant I was no longer the youngest in the building!

Abi, trustee and treasurer: I'm really shy so it took me a while to reply to Katy's message but she was really patient. I think we first met at a funding meeting. She very quickly put me at ease: I felt like I'd found an ally.

Katy: Thanks to National Lottery funding our dream of a museum is now a reality and Abi and I have designed and run the monthly children's club, worked on leaflets, policy and events together. She also kept me sane while my husband deployed to the desert for four months!

Abi: I feel like Katy, her husband Matt and their son have been part of my life forever. We've had some really great experiences, like day-tripping to another museum and somehow not falling out of a boat.

It was never a doubt that I would invite her to my wedding just a few months after meeting her.

Katy: Abi is someone I can truly be myself around which is a rare thing. She's someone I hope to remain friends with for a long long time.

Abi: Katy's enthusiasm is infectious; she's a real motivator. She really has been encouraging me to come out of my shell and has inspired me to be more fearless.

- Museum 4 Watton was funded by The National Lottery. Find out more on the [Museum 4 Watton website](#).

John, Mary and Don

Shorne Woods Archaeology Group



John, Mary and Don

John, volunteer: We have always seemed to be friends from day one. Those that came along later just slotted in as if they'd always been there. When I first started, the group was a fantastic antidote to the stresses of making a living. Since retirement I've had a couple of issues and they have been very supportive.

Mary, volunteer: We meet twice a week - over time I have got to know them very well, we always stop for coffee and a chat at the end of the day.

The conversation is not always about archaeology, we also chat about our families. There is always a lot of banter. This group has brought a great outside interest to my life and I always look forward to my time with them.

Don, volunteer: I was looking for something interesting to do when I retired after 49 years working in engineering. Through joining the group I now have good friends that are great fun. They are supportive and the good-natured banter makes even the tedious tasks (pot washing) enjoyable.

Being a widower whose children have now left home, and after working since I was 15 alongside people that I knew and respected, it seemed a daunting task to make new friendships.

By joining this group, I am not only able to do something I enjoy with a great bunch of people, but it has given me a feeling of doing something worthwhile in my retirement.

- The Cobham Landscape Detectives Project was supported by The National Lottery Heritage Fund. Find out more on the [Shorne Woods Archaeology Group website](#).

Becky and Laura

Victorian Nights festival



Becky and Laura

Becky, heritage and cultural consultant: We met when we worked on a National Lottery Heritage Fund-supported project, [Victorian Nights](#), that brought a community heritage festival to North Norfolk. At the time, I was also leading the [Wells Maltings redevelopment project](#). Since then we have worked together on many different projects around the UK.

Laura, heritage and cultural consultant: My first impressions of Becky were of her creativity, tenacity, her amazing experience and skills, and her sense of humour.

Becky: Laura is consistently positive, inspiring and supportive. Working with her always helps me to see the bigger picture. Laura has, on many occasions, literally helped me stay sane. Sometimes, working on projects with diverse and fragmented communities can be quite an isolating experience, and having Laura's support has been invaluable.

She is always there for me as a friend to offer a listening ear over a glass of wine or two!

Laura: I'd like to say exactly the same about Becky. I've always been able to turn to her for advice about everything from marketing to fundraising. Having her support over the years has got me through some tough times. I'm very lucky to have her as a friend.

Becky: Laura is now one of my closest friends as well as my colleague and consultant partner in crime! I honestly couldn't imagine life without her.



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people overcome isolation

Five ways museums can improve mental health and wellbeing