Changing lives: Antoinette and Wayne really dig



Although not new to volunteering in their local community, Antoinette Scivier and her brother Wayne had never tried archaeology, despite Wayne being an avid fan of TV's Time Team.

But then they joined in with other local people exploring the unpublished archive of a 1950s excavation at the site of Preston Hawe, a medieval mansion at Tadworth in Surrey. The site had long since all but disappeared beneath a housing estate.

It was decided that the only way to resolve a number of unanswered questions from the archive was for the local community to carry out their own excavation, organised by the Raven Housing Trust and backed by professionals from Surrey County Council's Archaeological Unit. Thus the Community Excavation project was born, supported by HLF.

Taking part

Antoinette and Wayne were keen to take part. "It was a chance to learn more about the history of our area," she says and the pair of them soon found themselves re-bagging and cataloguing finds, sorting them by type and area found and re-ordering the archive which dated from the original excavation by local archaeologist Brian Hope-Taylor in 1952-4.

Both Antoinette (40) and Wayne (44) became fully involved. Antoinette uses a wheelchair but says that although the site was bumpy it was sufficiently flat and access was not a problem. Both are delighted with the range of skills they acquired during the course of the project, made possible by National Lottery players.

Exciting excavation

“We learned about different styles of pots and medieval tiles and weighed and sorted them into their types, cross-referencing the finds with the archive and the overall site plan,” says Wayne. They also got involved in laying and cutting a practice trench in the back garden belonging to a fellow member of the community group. They also learned about excavation, supervision and geophysical surveying.

“The whole project was exciting but especially finding the south-west corner of the chapel that matches up with the black and white photo from the Brian Hope-Taylor 1950s dig,” he says.

“It enhanced my skills, I got to engage with members of the public, and [learned] how to work as part of a team.”

Antoinette says she gained confidence, enjoyed working in a group and made some good friends.

“And I learned how to make a short film about the project.

“Our group went to the Beacon School in Banstead and used their media suite with the help of two media studies teachers.”

A DVD of the project has now been produced and will be shown soon alongside a talk at a local venue.

Planning a future

The brother and sister team are now building on their new-found interest. They are hoping to form a Friends of Preston Hawe Manor and Chapel group, are still researching the site and looking for new funding to take the project forward.

Wayne has been volunteering at other nearby digs, such as one at Woking Palace, and is also in charge of maintaining the display cabinet of finds from Preston Hawe situated at nearby Tadworth Community Leisure Centre. He also looks





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