



Boston Hanse Group

Annual Report 2019-20

It's been a busy and successful year for the Boston Hanse Group. We are succeeding in our aims of promoting Boston's medieval history and rich cultural heritage both at home and abroad. Whilst logistics made it impossible for us to travel to the Hansetage in Russia in June 2019 many young people from eight different schools participated enthusiastically in our Big Dig. In all more than 300 people took part in the Dig or enjoyed our Open Weekends. Students from the Giles School also made "medieval" tiles which were displayed in the Guildhall. We are pleased with the increased interest in both the Dig and our International Day in Boston from our residents from Eastern Europe, whose countries were our trading partners during the Hanseatic years. Both these latter activities are reported on later in this report. Both were hugely popular and successful!



Gateway to Boston is another exciting project to which we are contributing. It is led by artist Kathleen Smith, an expert in 3D printing who managed our Boston Unfurled flags project. This new trail will add more interest for residents and visitors to Boston with items hidden in walls with missing bricks or on top of other walls. The designs are all based on Boston history. There will be 11 objects and they will start at the station, trail past Currys, up West Street, past B & M and then over the footbridge to the last one.

Forty people from the new Hanse group from Great Yarmouth, visited us, accompanied by our King's Lynn Hanse friend Paul Richard, They learned about our projects and our supporters and hope to emulate our success. A strong East of England group is growing and we hope that together this will encourage tourism and visitors to Lincolnshire.



The Illuminate Parade opens the Christmas season in November and preparations were underway by October. The Hanse Group joined the workshops led by Ruth Piggott from Curiosity Creators, designing mermaids' tails for the parade. This workshop was swiftly followed by another led again by Ruth with the Space Cadets. We learnt how the inflatables needed to be carried - they were difficult to control – but we greatly enjoyed being a part of the parade.

Hanse Tag, in Brilon, Germany in June 2020. We are now preparing for the next Hanse trip, our fourth. We are the only Hanseatic town in the UK who participate in the Youth Hanse, an opportunity for local young people to meet with their counterparts from other countries, to explore different cultures and to make life-long friends. This year there were ten applicants from the High School. After interviews we chose four students, enthusiastic, knowledgeable girls who will represent Boston at the Youth Assembly in Brilon. Around ten adults will also make the journey to Brilon where we will have a stand in the two-day Hanse market, promoting Boston as a place to visit and handing out thousands of leaflets. We will attend the delegates meeting where we will have the opportunity to meet delegates from sixteen other countries, and of course we will explore the town and learn about its place in Hanseatic history.

We continue to update our publications about Boston and its past and our leaflets are now translated into German, Latvian, Lithuanian and Russian. We are starting work on a history of medieval Boston for year 6 pupils; the interest from schools, both primary and secondary encourages. The sale of our books continues.

Thanks go to all the members, our supporters, including the Knights of Skirbeck, and the very hard-working trustees. Thanks also to Boston Borough Council, Boston Big Local, the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Arts Council, Transported Arts, Lincolnshire County Council and to Boston Townscape Heritage.

Alison Fairman, Chairman



The Big Dig
April – June 2019

Following successful funding applications to The Heritage Lottery Fund and Lincolnshire Council, and after months of planning and preparation, the Big Dig was officially opened by Mayor Judith Skinner on 26th April 2019.

The Dig hoped to find the exact location of Boston’s Hanse warehouse next to the River Witham, in the vicinity of Bath Gardens. Whilst we did not find the warehouse there were interesting finds of medieval greenware pottery, including French pottery, limestone blocks below evidence of major flooding and a variety of shells and animal bones.

The most successful aspect of the Dig was the tremendous community involvement. Pupils from eight local schools plus 30+ district cub-scouts took part with great enthusiasm, digging and washing finds as well as learning the basics of archaeology on-site. Hundreds of adults also applied to take part and all the Dig spaces were taken. Archaeological Project Services, who ran the Dig, said that they had “never had such extensive community participation before”.

Two Open Weekends saw many visitors, including European residents, to the Dig site where archaeologists were on hand to answer questions. At nearby Hussey Tower the Knights of Skirbeck and Byron the Blacksmith kept everyone entertained and there was the opportunity to participate in geophysics on nearby school fields and at the nearby St John’s site.

The finds and relevant aspects of Boston’s important medieval history were displayed in the Guildhall for eighteen weeks and have now been moved to Lincoln to be catalogued. Important finds will be brought back to the Guildhall in due course.

The success of the project was celebrated by more than 60 people at an event at the Guildhall on 5th September. The final accolade was for the Boston Hanse Group Big Dig to be declared the Pride of Boston 2019 at a Civic Group reception on 10th February 2020.



Mike Peberdy



International Hanse Day

25th May 2019

Our 2019 event was our most successful to date, partly because the weather was beautiful and the crowds were out. We based ourselves around the Ingram Memorial corner and on the grass. A medieval tented array of 5 stands fitted well around the edge of the pavement, and the Knights of Skirbeck took up positions to the rear on the grass in their own space and tent.

The official day ran between 10.00 and 13.00 hrs, with setting up starting at 8.00hrs. The tents were assembled by the Borough staff without dividing walls and containing tables. They were used (1) for Hansa information, leafleting, handouts and as a base. Pull-ups and pictures were displayed on the rear walls; (2) The Big Dig; (3) Medieval Food re-enactment by Sadie Hirst and medieval beer sampling; (4) Demonstration of spinning; (5) Woodworkers display.

Beside the tents was a static demonstration of the Medieval Flags created by the 'Flags Unfurled' Project. There was also an eye-catching banner and an array of attractive bunting. Suitable music was provided throughout by the Lincoln Waites in appropriate dress.

The tents were manned by volunteers in varying states of attire, about 14 in all, plus 2 or 3 members of the Youth Hansa. The food demonstrations were very popular, and the beer samples kept pace with demand, which was high. The archaeology stand dealt with a continuous flow of visitors seeking information. Visual interest and entertainment were provided by Aurora Carnival, aka Chris, who was present as a Stilt-walker and Juggler. Fancy dress was in evidence amongst the volunteers – mainly Tabards, hats and smocks.

The event came to an end with a colourful fancy dress procession with music. This flowed through the Pescod Square development and Narrow Bargate, with volunteers and many hangers-on including children. This caused merriment and curiosity in the public and no apparent nuisance.

We estimated that around 1000 people visited us in one way or another and our Evaluation of Impact sampling suggested a very good reception, but general puzzlement about the Hansa and lack of prior knowledge of the International Day. It was noticeable that East Europeans were well represented amongst the visitors.

It was felt to have been a great success, and was enjoyed by the volunteers. We have also learned some lessons for next time – which boiled down to (a) a need for better marketing, publicity and liaison with media, (b) more fancy dress, (c) make more of the opportunity to recruit members, (d) all visual aids, charts, maps, pictures etc to be massively larger, (e) have small hand-outs to distribute from the procession. Money and support were derived from Boston Borough Council, Boston Big Local, and The Heritage Fund amongst others. The International Hansa Day 2020 will be on 23rd May.

Martin Fairman