

## **Thank you**

First, very many thanks for your financial support, enabling *Stretch Didcot* to put on Didcot's first Greek and Roman festival. We received a great many positive comments from both participants and visitors.

## **Objective**

The objective of our group is to organise fun and educational events for the local community.

We had some home educators and their children attend the event. They were very enthusiastic. Other adults told me that they hadn't learned so much in such a short period of time and they were particularly effusive about our blacksmith, the soldiers, slingers and the mosaicist. Our photographs and comments show the enjoyment of our visitors.

## **Number of Visitors**

The festival happened to be held on Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> July, when England played in the World Cup semi-final. The also weather put some people off; it was 31 degrees, some people didn't leave their homes.

Nonetheless, we had 160 visitors and made £565.00 profit. This profit will enable us to hire the Civic Hall in Didcot for our next festival, which will cost £400.00 for the day.

## **Community Engagement**

We attempted to engage the community in a number of ways. The most obvious was through schools, both primary and secondary. We wrote to all seven primary schools in the town and all primary schools in the villages around Didcot as well as some further afield. We did this at numerous points throughout the year, from July until May. One reason for doing so was to avoid clashed of dates – so that our festival would not fall on the date of a school fate. Despite our consideration, this was not reciprocated. Each time we contacted them we emphasised that we didn't require the help of teachers and that they did not need to do anything other than what they already do in their history lessons, where both the Ancient Greeks and Romans are taught. Having taught in primary and secondary schools, our Chair was alive to the fact that pupils often write outstanding stories and make Greek and Roman temples, for example, for homework. It was extremely disappointing to be ignored by schools because our aim is in alignment with theirs. We can only conclude that the focus of Ofsted Inspections is their prime concern and that events in the community are not thought to be important. However, unlike primary schools, the town's secondary schools did retweet Tweets about the mythological competition. We intend to remedy this by speaking directly to Head Teachers next year.

We wanted to provide an opportunity for as many children to get free entry as possible. Children could post/ deliver a picture of a deer, which could be coloured in or decorated. This was advertised on social media and was taken up by many children.

We also had a couple of articles written for our local ‘Round and About’ magazine which publicises local events and writes about local issues. The reporter studied Classics and so was particularly keen to write about us.

Additionally, we emailed every archaeological and history group and museum in Oxfordshire, as well as societies, and posted to as many of their Facebook groups as we could find. Our Chair contacted the curator at Wallingford Museum who was kind enough to loan us a bag of small finds, which we mixed with some glass gems in a small finds box of sand that children were welcome to take home. The small finds included Roman coins. This was to engage even the smallest children.

**competition**

# Mythical magic

Youngsters are invited to get creative and be a part of Didcot's first agon. This competition takes inspiration from ancient tales, ahead of Stretch Didcot's Greek and Roman festival

**S**tretch Didcot is a local group whose aim is to inspire, and inform people. This year the Stretch team are organising a Greek and Roman festival at Didcot Girls' School, on Saturday, 7th July.

Melissa Mallows, who is also a teacher and MA Classics student and chair of Stretch Didcot, says: "Competition was very important for the ancient Greeks. They were a bit obsessed with competitions, or as they called them, "agons", or "struggles", which is where we get our word "agony" from. We would like to invite the young people of Didcot to take part in this festival's very own agon."

The competition is based around Graeco-Roman myths. Students are invited to submit any work in any medium, as long as it is inspired by myth. Participants may wish to work in partnership with others and they may send in recordings of song, music or drama. A selection of tales, for inspiration, from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* can be found on the Classical Tales' website, visit [www.classictales.educ.cam.ac.uk](http://www.classictales.educ.cam.ac.uk)

All stories involve some form of transformation and explore many aspects of human nature: greed, curiosity, vanity, generosity, arrogance, creativity. This makes them a very powerful springboard for discussion and creative work!

There will be an awards ceremony for the winning students, where prizes will be given and their work will be on display, for all to appreciate.

● For details on how to submit work, email [stretchdidcot@gmail.com](mailto:stretchdidcot@gmail.com)

The objective of our mythology competition was to engage as many young people as possible before the event, but also so we could extend the pleasure after the festival, by giving prizes to the winners.

We also wanted to involve adults. The woman below won our cake decorating competition. She is shown here with Lawrence Payne, who took a particular liking to her mosaic design.



**Caroline Lawrence** @CarolineLawrenc · Jun 26

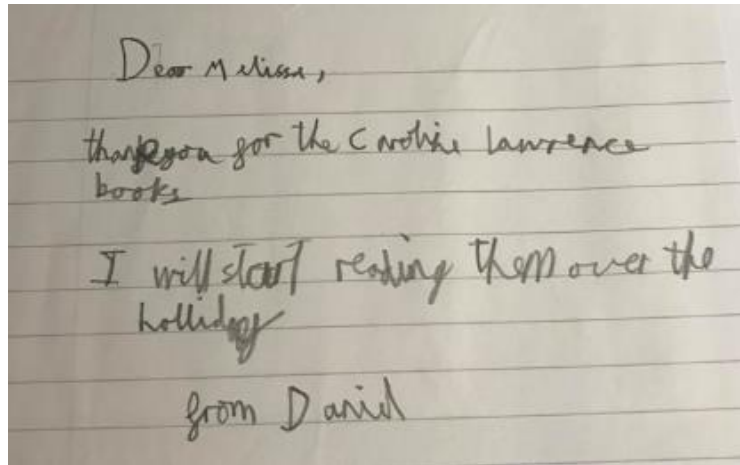
Attention! Roman-loving kids in #KS2! These books are some of the cool prizes to be awarded for your competition entries at the #RomansInDidcot Festival next Saturday 7 July. For info go here: [stretchdidcot.blogspot.com/2018/03/compet...?](http://stretchdidcot.blogspot.com/2018/03/compet...?)



You, Didcot Girls' School and OrionChildren'sBooks



Here is a Thank You note we received after the event:



We didn't want to exclude anyone, so rather than focus on written work we opened up the competition to work in all media, rather than concentrating on just a story writing competition.



Depicting the story of Icarus and Daedalus.



The Argo from Jason and the Argonauts



Papier mache Medusa head.

### **Committee Members**

Organisationally, our committee has many strengths. We have qualified, experienced and committed members:

- Our Treasurer is a Chartered Accountant and was very prompt at paying bills.
- Our Secretary is just starting a PhD in involving the public in archaeology and so was keen to involve Oxford Archaeology, her employer.
- One member is a senior civil servant at Whitehall who has always harboured a desire to be a teacher and so our objectives very much appeal to her, and her planning skills were invaluable.
- Other members worked for the local council organising very similar events and have been active on school committees, for example.
- Another is a keen metal detectorist who donated Roman coins he found for our small finds box. He knew one of our experts – Anni Byard – from her work with the Portable Antiquities Scheme.

- We recruited more members – one is a marketing specialist, another, an ex-classics teacher – because they approached us on the day asking to be involved.
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### **Social Media Connections**

We made as much use of social media as possible, in order to forge contacts with contributors. The Roman Mosaic workshop was run by Lawrence Payne. We initially ‘met’ on Twitter and first made contact when our original mosaicist - a well-known local - had to cancel due to family illness. Travelling all the way from Bury St Edmunds, he made the event fun for the children, adapting his usual workshop to meet the needs of a younger demographic.

We also found our graphic designer on social media. She designed both our community group logo and the logo for the Greek and Roman Festival. Cristina recently moved to Didcot from Latvia and advertised her skills on ‘Mums in Didcot’, a Face Book page in the town which provides the means for mums to share information (and which was set up by a Committee member several years ago). She agreed to design our logos for free, in exchange for free entry and advertising. She said that she was very happy to help out because she wanted to do something which would help her feel part of the community. We gave her and her family free entry in return for her help.

### **Building Community Connections**

Like Cristina, Claudina Mayorga Romero has also not lived in Didcot for long. Originally from Portugal and now living in Didcot, she is the curator of the Ure Museum at the University of Reading. She ran the Ancient Greek wool spinning workshop. We are really pleased to have these European connections because Didcot is growing rapidly. We have residents from all over the world coming to live here and the lack of homogeneity presents Didcot to our visitors as welcoming to all.

Anni Byard, mentioned above, was in the same tutor group as our Chair when they attended Didcot Girls, our venue. It is very important to our Committee that local connections are forged and used as much as possible. For this reason we were sad that Bill Darley, who found the Aureus Gold Hoard in the grounds of the Great Western housing estate in Didcot, could not attend.

### **Nominations for Awards**

We were recently informed by *Didcot First*, an ‘Independent organisation, committed to connecting business and community so that Didcot is a positive place to live, work, invest and grow’, that *Stretch Didcot* received a nomination for a business and community award and is a finalist. The awards are on Friday 12<sup>th</sup> October.

We have also been invited to an awards evening, on 19<sup>th</sup> October, run by Didcot Town Council, as a recipient of a grant given by them.

### ‘Networking’ between our experts:

In addition to members of the public offering their expertise, links were made between participants. James Lloyd, a Greek music specialist from the University of Reading, was asked by Simon, from the Panoply Project, to attend a future event at Roehampton University. Apparently, there are perhaps four Greek music specialists and we were lucky enough that James agreed to come along. In addition, our Roman slinger, David Hawkins, and our Greek Hoplite warrior forged a great connection and plan to work together when the opportunity arises. Members have since recommended participants for local school workshops. I hope that in addition to having earned their fee at our festival, their skills will be in demand from other organisations.

Here is an extract from an email from our Roman slinger:

*“Do you have the contact details of the fletcher and the blacksmith? It would be good to get in touch with them to see if I can get involved with other Roman events around the country”.*

### Our Experts

Lawrence Payne, our mosaicist, was very well received. Lawrence, who came all the way from Bury St Edmonds on the day, does not usually do big workshops, especially involving children, but he said that he had many ideas for future events.



**RomanMosaicWorkshops** @romanmosaics · Jul 8

Thanks to @StretchDidcot for the event yesterday. It was great to see the kids getting so absorbed in making their mosaics. It's given me so much to think about and go forward with. Lovely to meet @CarolineLawrenc and everyone else who came over. 😊



Greek Hoplite Warrior



**The Magic Ink Pot** @MagicInkPot · Jul 7

Thank you @StretchDidcot for an absolutely stand-out day. 6 hours in, the kiddos still weren't ready to leave. Brilliantly absorbing talk by the wonderful @CarolineLawrenc and some spellbinding storytelling from Daniel Morden and Hugh Lupton, which left us all quite emotional.

Dr Sonya Nevin’s Panoply Vase Animation Project was very popular. Speaking with her afterwards, it seems that those who went to look become very engaged and spent a long time there.



You Retweeted  
**Dr Sonya Nevin** @SonyaNevin · Jul 7  
Some lovely detail on this new ancient vase fragment! @StretchDidcot @OMChildhood #classics



We were delighted to see that our community event inspired children. This little boy listened to James Lloyd’s talk on Greek music and to hear him play his aulos.

**Aliki** @moothing · Jul 8  
Replying to @jtloyd3  
It was fascinating! And seemingly also quite inspirational... @StretchDidcot



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Although there are always aspects to improve upon, in any event, we are pleased with the quality and range of experts and we know that our guests both learned a lot and enjoyed the event.

You Retweeted



**RomanMosaicWorkshops** @romanmosaics · Jul 10

That really makes all the work worthwhile when you get such positive feedback. 😊 I loved the combination of stories, crafts & reenactment all tied around the classics.

David Hawkins

“Thank you again for organising such a fantastic event and have a good week”.



**RomansInDidcot** @StretchDidcot · Jul 7

So many people told me today what a fabulous time they had, thanks to our AMAZING guests! Lawrence's @romanmosaics was a hit! Our visitors were delighted to hear @CarolineLawrenc . The Roman soldier from @educationgroup was praised by everyone who saw him. Thanks again!

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**RomansInDidcot** @StretchDidcot · Jul 7

It was lovely to meet you! I am so glad you came :)

**Dr. Marchella Ward** @LuxMea

Today I am going to stand in a field and tell everyone about Ovid at @StretchDidcot's #RomansInDidcot festival and I can't think of a better way to start a sunny Saturday! ☀️🏛️

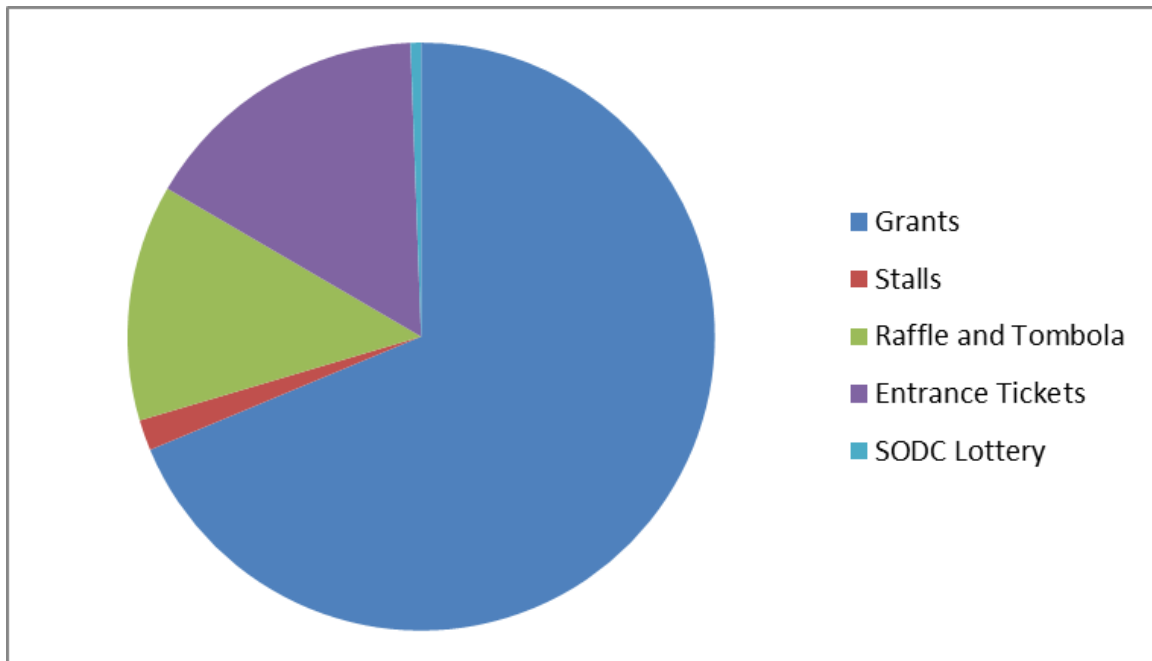
### Money Raising Opportunities Arising from your financial help:

The committee applied for our community group to be a beneficiary of the South Oxfordshire community lottery, in order to help finance next year’s festival. Players of the lottery nominate a community group to benefit from a portion of the money they pay of the local authority. We have decided to use our monthly payments to fund a website that we will use to publicise our next event. They add up to £208.00 a year, at present. We hope we can increase this amount.

We were also able to apply for the Tesco’s Bags of Help scheme and local people are currently casting their votes with their tokens. The smallest amount we can be awarded is £1000.00. In addition to the profit we made, we should have £1,565.00 towards our next event. I know that many people are supporting us through this scheme because of your generous contribution this year and the enjoyment they derived from the day. Both of these money raising methods will help to raise the profile of the group.

Grants in Total: £3,250 (6 grants)

**Pie Chart showing Sources of income for the Didcot Greek and Roman Festival**



#### **Changes to income for next year**

We plan to sell some merchandise on our website and at the next year’s event. This may include t-shirts, mugs and tote bags, printed to order, with our ‘Romans in Didcot’ logo emblazoned on them.

#### **Future Events**

We are planning the next festival for Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> September, away from the heat of the summer, the crowded calendar of summer sporting events, school fairs and events competing for the attentions of potential visitors. We would also like to make our next event free.

#### **Conclusion**

It is impossible to accurately assess the qualitative impact of the financial assistance you gave us, other than by relating the experiences that people had, above.

We believe that we would have attracted more visitors had the football World Cup not been a factor. The only other alternative would have been to cancel the event, but after months of preparation this was not an option. As it is, we did make enough profit to be less reliant on grants and donations for the next event, and we did raise awareness of our community group.

Once again, thank you for your help.

The Committee of Stretch Didcot.