Case Study: Danelaw Centre for Living History

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Describe the project in your own words

The Danelaw Centre for Living History gives groups of schoolchildren an insight into what it was like to live as a Viking, Roman, Tudor or World War Two evacuee. Our roles in the centre were to work on the Viking village or Roman fort, dressed in period costume, delivering activities such as contemporary pottery to small groups of children. Within our first few days, we were part of the normal working team.

Why did you apply for a team volunteering project?

I love history, particularly ancient and classical history, so would like to maybe work in the heritage sector. I know how competitive that industry is, so being able to put that I have already worked at a museum on my CV would be a great help. Also, dressing up as a Roman or Viking every day sounded like a lot of fun!

What were the highlights of your project?

I’ve made some great contacts, and being able to lead activities for groups of children within my first week was brilliant, however the biggest highlight was when we waved the buses of children off at the end of each day – all of the children were smiling and, every day, there were at least a few who told us it was the best school trip they had ever been on.

Were there any surprises?

I didn’t realise how helpful and important our work would be to the paid members of staff – on busy days when over 120 children were visiting, we greatly assisted in the running of the centre.

What did you gain from your project?

Experience of working in a sector in which I am interested, and knowledge of how learning outside of the classroom can be successful. I also grew in confidence and in my ability to control and engage a group of school pupils. Most importantly, I have come away with a great sense of achievement, and the option to return to the Danelaw Centre to volunteer or possibly work next academic year.

Did the project influence any future career plans?

One day, I got talking to a Classics teachers from a school near my home town in Kent. Classics is an subject I’ve always been interested in teaching, but did not think I would be able to because of my A-Levels and current degree course, however she gave me her details and said that I would be more than welcome to contact her for advice or to arrange some work experience. She also told me that I do not necessarily need a PGCE to work in a private school, so that could be an option for me, as a Classics teacher.

What advice would you give students considering taking part in a team volunteering project?

It looks like a lot of work, and, yes, it is. But it is so, so worth it, not only for your own experience and CV, but also for the difference you make. Definitely do it.