The Foundling Museum stages a revelatory story-telling exhibition bringing to light the untold stories of the Foundling Hospital tokens. By reuniting the eighteenth-century tokens with the foundlings to whom they belonged, *Fate, Hope & Charity* uncovers stories that are a testament to the grief of separation and timeless bond between a mother and her child.

Tokens, small everyday objects, were left by mothers with their babies at the Foundling Hospital, which continues today as children’s charity Coram. Left between c.1741 - 1760, tokens were a means of identification, should the mother ever return to reclaim her child. Most of the tokens were textiles, which were pinned to the admission records. These textile tokens were the subject of the Foundling Museum’s previous *Threads of Feeling* exhibition. But among the tokens were also hundreds of small, three-dimensional objects - keys, coins, jewellery, buttons, poems, playing cards, medals and the like. Most were removed from the Hospital’s admission records in the nineteenth century, severing the link with the children they were meant to identify - until now.

**Heart-wrenching stories from 250 years ago**

Now over 250 years later these incredible, heart-wrenching stories are revealed. Each story offers a glimpse into the lives of the women in the eighteenth century who left their children at the Hospital. Most poignant of all is the story of Margaret Larney.

Under sentence of death in Newgate Prison in 1757, Margaret, falsely tried and found guilty of counterfeiting money, wrote a letter requesting the admission of her unborn child to the Foundling Hospital. Her newborn son was lucky and was admitted. Margaret was less fortunate. Immediately after the birth, she was taken to Tyburn (the modern Marble Arch) where she was publicly executed by “strangulation and burning.” Her astonishing letter of petition to the Hospital is on display.

Individual stories will be told through their tokens together with art works and artefacts from the period. Many address issues still current today; the hardship faced by military wives and widows, and debates around the benefits of male doctors versus female midwives in the management of childbirth.

**A modern detective story: tracing the lost identities**

Stories such as that of poor Margaret Larney have been unearthed after seven years of...
painstaking research by Foundling Museum volunteers and independent researchers Janette Bright and Dr. Gillian Clark.

A chance meeting in 2005 in the Hospital archive united textile artist Janette, and social historian Gillian, whose earlier work on the foundlings includes the time they spent with foster families outside London. Through a process of exhaustive detective work, the two researchers reunited orphaned tokens with their foundlings. The new research reveals fascinating and often deeply moving facts about the tokens themselves, the circumstances surrounding the mother’s decision to give up her baby and the moving stories of the individual foundlings to whom the tokens belonged.

Contemporary storytellers unite past and present

Despite Janette and Gillian’s meticulous investigation, the stories associated with some tokens remain undiscovered. The Foundling Museum has commissioned prominent artists, authors, songwriters and musicians to create new stories for these tokens in their chosen medium. Contributors include artist David Shrigley and DJ, poet and writer Charlie Dark, author and academic Hallie Rubenhold and poet and novelist Jackie Kay. Collected in a special publication to coincide with the exhibition, these stories will shed new light on the small, emotionally-charged scraps of history that make up Fate, Hope & Charity.

Fate, Hope & Charity is curated by Stephanie Chapman.