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Layers of History



The Layers of History project, or Layers (as it affectionately became known), followed on from Heritage Lincolnshire's very successful Heritage at Risk project, which looked at the built heritage of the County. Layers was created to give volunteers the opportunity to discover, understand and investigate those aspects of Lincolnshire's historic landscapes that are less obvious, perhaps only a few humps or bumps in the ground, or an abandoned lump of concrete with mysterious metal protrusions.

Starting in 2017 and funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund (and others), Layers of History set out to engage over 200 volunteers during a three-year period. The project aimed to show volunteers how to study and research the landscape using archaeological surveying techniques and other research tools; it achieved this through online courses and local workshops. Eight study sites were chosen, Revesby Estate and Freiston Shore in 2017; Hackthorn, Hainton and South Ormsby Estates in 2018; and Aslackby, Harlaxton and Southrey in 2019. Three themes were used to help identify the sites: parks and gardens, medieval settlements, and military sites.



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Safeguarding Lincolnshire's Heritage

Layers set out to demonstrate how different periods of human activity have led to layers of accumulated evidence being laid down in the landscape. The project told the stories behind these landscapes and helped people appreciate their context and meaning. Volunteers learnt about the collective contribution that these layers of occupation make and how they impact on the overall character of different landscapes, thus helping volunteers understand the loss that could be incurred if they are not safe guarded for the future. The results from the project will be added to the Historic Environment Record and can also be found listed under each study site below.

Innovative Digital Technology

To help people visualise what some of the study sites would have looked like in the past, the story of four study sites has been recreated using innovative digital technology. The four sites that have been digitally reconstructed are the World War Two structures at Freiston Shore, Samuel Wesley's rectory and the 18th century gardens at South Ormsby, the early medieval settlement and the monastic site at Revesby and the Neolithic cursus at Harlaxton.

Reaching Out

The project also aimed to reach out to new target audiences, one of which was cared for people and their carer's. The Layers team worked with a charity called The People's Partnership, who specialise in enabling 'access and amplifying the voice of hidden and hard to reach people of Lincolnshire', and a special one-off event was held at one of the project's study sites.

Southrey Woods, part of the Bardney Limes Woods, was the site chosen and the project enjoyed the support of Forestry England. The team worked hard



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(advised by The People's Partnership) to ensure the event enabled access for all, where possible. Setting up a timetable for 'the woods' was a little bit of a leap of faith for the team as they did not know (at that point) the exact target audience. They did know they needed vehicle access, disabled toilets, shelter, transport and as much access to the woods as physically possible. As well as the ability to provide the all-important teas, coffee and biscuits which were a key part of all Layers volunteer events!

Flexibility was key and the ability to adapt sessions as the team went along proved invaluable. A variety of workshops were run including landscape photography, historic cookery, woodland craft reminiscence, Poet-tree, landscape art, coppicing and lantern making. One of the best ways to understand the success of the event is to see the pictures of the smiling faces.

Journeys of Discovery

However, the Layers of History project was more than all of this, its in-built flexibility allowed individuals embarking on the project to guide their own journeys of discovery. The project enabled people to make friendships, to discover new careers, increase wellbeing and to build their confidence and we hope our Layers of History volunteers will continue to be part of Heritage Lincolnshire for many years to come.

Award

The project was delighted to receive The Flora Murray Award from the Society for Lincolnshire History and Archaeology in 2020 in recognition of its contribution to local studies and public engagement.



Bergne-Coupland Charity



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