

Coal Countryside Counts

The coal countryside counts project is all about exploring disused colliery sites around the area, and getting local people out and using these sites and see how they've become a haven for wildlife and different habitats have grown onto the sites now. We've also got several ways of the community as a whole getting involved, we've been doing guided walks around some of the areas and linking up between some of the old colliery sites to talk about the history and the geology.

And of course when you think of limestone landscapes this is what the geologist thinks of, but you could just as easily be saying (holds up picture) that landscape. This is in York and if you go to York, and I was there recently, that's York Minster, built totally of magnesian limestone.

We've also got community fun days at Ludworth pit heap and Fishburn. Guided walks for adults on these sites and activities for the children to get involved in. We'll be doing sort of grass sweeping activities and wildflower art and all sorts of things to try and get an idea of the different number of species that are present and flourishing on these sites now. We are finding all like little creatures and stuff. I think I've got a sea worm or something. Them little midge larvae things, them little ones that go really fast in the water. Is this a fisherboatman ? A waterboatman, yes well done, good memory.

The grasslands are very important in this area because there is a lot of magnesian limestone under the surface which gives really interesting wildflowers and then butterflies and all sorts of invertebrates and of course birds and small mammals in the area, so we've got a fantastic variety of different wildlife that we can see growing around there.

Well we're on a walk which is linked with the limestone landscapes project, to increase the knowledge of people about the treasures that are in Co Durham which has an almost unique relationship with the limestone and magnesian limestone. Behind us we see a church that is actually built originally of magnesian limestone which was a local stone basically. There is some sandstone in it now as well but I think it's significant it has grown out of the landscape and it's still now visible.

A lot of people walk down through the fields, and they'll just hear birds singing but kind of making them more aware that it's a skylark or these particular flowers are cowslips and they are really good and valuable. It gives them a much greater appreciation of the space that they live in.

For one thing it gets you out in the open air and I would imagine quite a few people who perhaps don't know a great lot about their local history because there's a lot of history just a few miles away from where people live and it doesn't take much to get out there and have a look and see what's going on. No, I believe that's the way to go and think this will help greatly.