

Village Atlas

Well the village atlas project really is about trying to encourage local people to look at their own back yard. Obviously, we've got the history there and people can maybe remember sort of 30,50 perhaps even 70 years ago. You couldn't see down the front street for people, everybody was out weren't they you know

Everything would be different completely. For a start off, the front street has hardly any shops compared to when we were ... it was a very busy village and you just played around, it could be 10 o'clock at night but you were just out playing because your mothers were there watching you . Women stood at the gate and talked to each other, there was always something going on in the village want there?

Because we are a landscape project we're very keen to get involved in the wildlife and the nature and the underlying rocks that are around so nearby here we've got Wingate Quarry for instance which was a quarry that was in the sort of early part of the 20th Century and today if we go and visit particularly round the middle of the year, June, July you see a wonderful diverse range of flowers and the associated fauna, for instance we've got the marbled white butterfly there which is actually quite unique for the area.

I think that one of the things that people gain from taking part in a project like this is that they begin to take pride in their community and their landscape you know, things that they haven't noticed before particularly start to make sense to them and they start to take pride in them for example humps and bumps in fields which they've noticed perhaps in the past or barely noticed they think: if they are made aware of them and they think oh these are signs of old farming, these are rig and furrow, you know, caused by horses ploughing the land sort of 400 years ago. Then that's a source of pride and interest.

The landscape behind me you can see lots of lumps and bumps and these are covering the remains of the old abandoned mediaeval settlement of Thornley Hall and what is also called Thornlaw in a lot of original documents. The lumps and bumps are really covering what would have been the original foundations and walls of a mediaeval village, so that includes the crofts and tofts that would have made up the village so that's basically the gardens, then the step stones into the houses.

Right, what we're looking at here is this is a chimney of which the wall is actually 8 feet thick at this point. You can see the series of steps going up the chimney. If the history isn't recorded, it isn't passed on; you know people have no knowledge of the background. The children in the village today, I don't suppose they know an awful lot about the pits, the colliery and that was in the village. That was part of our childhood, so I think it's very important that they are aware ,you know, of how life has changed.

We've been working on this for about 2 years, it's now come to a point where the delivery stage is very exciting and to see sort of local people getting involved looking at their own back yard and looking at the history, looking at the records, archives and maps. It is fantastic and I'm really excited that the local people, because it's where they live, care about where they live, want to know more about where they live and it's a fantastic opportunity for the community, schools and groups to get involved.

