Connecting communities: from the frontline to the



Nurses on the Mournes walk

For Local and Community History Month, we find out how a Northern Ireland heritage project has brought people together through online talks and wellbeing walks.

We believe heritage brings many benefits for communities. To mark Local and Community History Month this May, we caught up with the ‘Mourne Memories of Places from the Past’ project in County Down to discover how it’s supporting the local area.

> “We found that the walks were a fantastic opportunity for us to regroup and bond again as a team and everyone has benefited from them.”
> Sister Geraldine Macauley, NHS nurse

Exploring local heritage

With lockdown limiting travel, Tollymore Football Club came up with an idea to help people stay connected to the South Down area.

The club hosted a series of 10 online talks throughout March and April covering local history. Topics included the linen industry, Saint Patrick and the story of Lady Mabel Annesley, who lived in Castlewellan Castle.

Each talk attracted an average of 50 attendees, with people joining from as far away as Lancashire. Many people got together to watch with their partners and families.

Project Manager Andy Hall said: “The interest in the project was way above our expectations. Feedback from participants was overwhelmingly positive, with many commenting that they had learned something new about their local heritage that they did not know before.

“Some were even inspired to share their own memories of what it was like to grow up in the Mournes.”



Screenshot of one of the 10 online talks. Recordings are available.

Boosting wellbeing

In addition to the talks, the club also arranged four guided walks of the area. These took place at local heritage gems including Slieve Donard, the Newcastle harbour area and Castlewellan Forest Park.

Twelve frontline NHS nurses who were deployed on coronavirus (COVID-19) wards joined one of the walks, using it to reconnect with one another.

Sister Geraldine Macauley said: “The Covid pandemic has been an extremely difficult time for the whole community, and as a consequence our out-patients department was closed, and we were all deployed to work on Covid wards.”

“Naturally when you are used to working together as a team, and then broken up to work in different areas, it is a bit strange when you are able to return to your old job.”

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What’s coming up

The club plans to release a virtual tour of the Mournes area in the coming weeks. Many locals are already talking about planning future heritage projects in the area.

Andy added: “People are much more knowledgeable about the history of the local area, and there is also an increased awareness of the support The National Lottery Heritage Fund can provide.

“It’s also inspiring that the project has helped create new friendships and sparked a collective interest in our local heritage.”

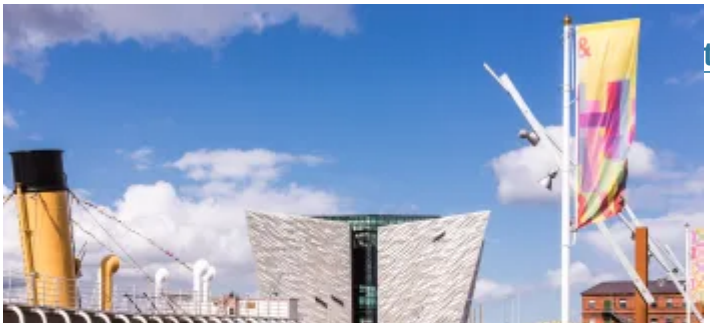
> “It’s also inspiring that the project has helped create new friendships and sparked a collective interest in our local heritage.”
> Andy Hall, Project Manager

Have a project idea?

Mourne Memories of Places from the Past was funded through the Community Heritage Fund, which The National Lottery Heritage Fund delivered on behalf of the Department for Communities.

Inspired by this project and want to run something similar where you are? Find out more about our current funding opportunities.





th their local heritage



Titanic Belfast and SS Nomadic



very thanks to £5.28million funding

Northern Ireland Committee Chair Mukesh Sharma with Denise Murphy from The Woodland Trust at the new footbridge, which links Brackfield and Red Brae Woods.

Faughan Valley’s ancient woodlands open to the public