

Volunteering Opportunities with the Quantock Landscape Partnership Scheme

The Quantock Landscape Partnership Scheme (QLPS) is a NLHF-funded, £2.6m, 5-year project, created to address changing pressures on the on the Quantock Hills and surrounding parishes, an area of some 400 square kilometres. The scheme comprises 23 individual projects spanning natural history, historic heritage, education and future planning, each intended to contribute to the long-term future of the hills by protecting, restoring and increasing understanding of the distinctive features of the Quantock landscape.

Of those 23 projects, a number specifically relate to the history of the hills, including archaeological excavations, archival research, and a wide ranging and inclusive events programme. Central to our work is the desire to increase the capacity and skills of the volunteer base working in the area, providing more people with more opportunities to contribute. The Covid-19 crisis has inevitably had an impact on our first year and we have some catching up to do. But, hopefully, the vaccine roll-out will allow us to get our programme of community archaeology projects up and running in the summer, by which time we might also have been able to commence some of our archival work at the Somerset Heritage Centre.

In the meantime, there are several projects which lend themselves to working remotely, and for which the QLPS is now seeking volunteers.

LiDAR Survey.

The QLPS has commissioned a high-resolution LiDAR survey of the entire project area. For the uninitiated, LiDAR (Light Detection and Ranging) is a remote sensing technique which uses laser scanners, mounted on an aircraft, to produce detailed 3D maps known as Digital Terrain Models (DTMs).

The great advantage of LiDAR data to archaeological work is that, unlike conventional aerial or satellite imagery, DTMs can be processed in various ways. For example, simulated light can be cast across them to create shadow effects from various directions, helping to reveal archaeological earthworks which may be indiscernible on the ground or to aerial photography. Perhaps most excitingly, LiDAR allows the effective 'removal' of tree cover, allowing us the potential to identify archaeological features previously hidden beneath the canopy, as well as helping to more fully understand existing ones.

The aerial survey work was completed just before Christmas and we are now in need of volunteers who are interested in receiving training in LiDAR interpretation and helping to explore this exciting new resource for understanding the history, heritage and archaeology of the Quantocks.

Trees in the Landscape

Focusing on how the number, size, and species of individual trees has changed over the last 200 years, this ambitious project aims to provide a detailed historical understanding of the changing use of trees in the Quantocks, uncovering the accompanying social changes affecting parkland and hedgerows. In doing so, we hope to renew interest in the importance of trees in the lowland landscape and to create a strategy to ensure that they remain a key element of the Quantock's identity.

The current Covid restrictions means we are unable to access the archives at the Somerset Heritage Centre, but we are seeking volunteers to begin the process of exploring the online catalogue of Estate Records in search of any documents which might prove useful for this study of tree use in the Quantock parklands.

We are also seeking volunteers, interested in using digital maps of various dates to identify changing patterns of tree use and note potentially significant, individual trees.

All of these roles are intended as pieces of work which can be done from home following some online training.

Full details of the various projects are available on the QLPS website: <https://qlps.org/>

If you are interested in assisting with any of the above roles, please contact me: **Dan Broadbent, Historic Heritage Officer, Quantock Landscape Partnership Scheme, dbroadbent@somerset.gov.uk**