

Photographing rural Holderness now titled; *The Land That Connects Us*.

Final report.

Fiona Caley

First, thank you to St Hugh's Foundation for the Arts for supporting and encouraging me by funding this part of my rural project. There have been ups and downs, areas that I expected I would produce more results and haven't, and areas of unexpected developments. Some aspects took longer than others, so a project which I had anticipated would last about a year, in fact concluded in July 2018.

Areas developed

During the funding period, I spent a good percentage of time recording dad's story by encouraging him to write about his life. This is still a work in progress, but we have the bones of a life story written by dad himself. He is still writing.

Alongside the photographic work, aimed at producing work for exhibition I have begun developing products for sale, and have been selling them. I have been selling cards on line and at home, in small pop up events. The cards have done better at home, as the personal contact helps and this has been my best way of selling to date. I am particularly pleased with the canvas bags I began to produce. Examples below.



These bags were sourced from online, they are good quality landscape canvas bags, the brand is (currently) used by national retailers, such as the V&A. I came across them whilst working on another project. I decided to buy blank bags and print at home. Through research and trial and error I have discovered an excellent transfer paper which enables me to reproduce colours accurately on an inkjet printer. I invited a pool of friends and customers to vote for their favourites. This is ongoing and the images will no doubt change as my work does. My aim is to develop a range featuring local landscapes and familiar places. Appearing on Countryfile and using some of the featured images on the programme has certainly helped with the popularity.

Cards

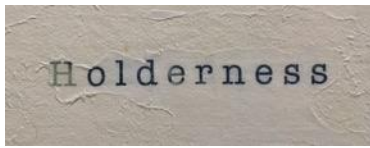


The black and white cards were something of a test, particularly for me. I've so loved selling the blue range that to go to purely black and white took some doing, but somehow the landscape, particularly Sunk Island lends itself to black and white. The cards have sold better than anticipated.

I have been surprised at which ones have sold the best. The tree in fog, Stone Creek have sold well, as has Channel Road. Everything has sold bar two. The top left picket fence and middle row, left, the telegraph pole at stone creek. Both are still favourites of mine; they represent the landscape I see.

The Giclee prints have sold, slowly. I will see how I go forward with this, it could be that the scale and/or the presentation of the subject isn't right for general sales.

Sketch book transfers, developing...



Sunk Island transfers. I have included these as I am interested in using images on other surfaces and using these images to create a more textured, aged look is an area I want to develop.

Photography

Since receiving the funding my focus has shifted a little. I struggled to find a 'clean, logical' ending for this project, the reason I've been struggling is of course the reason I set about this project in the first place. It is a life long journey for me, the journey and the work continues... it is still a work in progress.

I also didn't photograph as many people as I'd envisaged. This was as a result of two things. The first was that I found myself drawn more to times of solitude in the landscape, and photographing it took more of my time, and secondly sometimes it was more difficult to photograph part of a community so used to living and working in isolation, I understood this completely. However only once was I regarded with suspicion, which was quite extraordinary. I am very thankful to those people who welcomed me in to their homes and lives and allowed me a glimpse of the joys and hardships experienced.

In other areas of the project I have begun to look in other directions too. Ideas are still forming, but in effect my eyes have been drawn to the soil under my feet, and how I respond and connect to it. The life-giving resource which changes with each area I visit. I am exploring this slowly and its in its early stages. The soil and this landscape has given me life, and it still supports my every step. At this stage, it feels an instinctive next step in a project that looked to the land and the people that work on it. How has this landscape influenced and affected me?

Frames for exhibition



These are a sample of the frames sourced from a variety of places, charity auctions and gratefully received donations. They required more attention than genuine old frames, as they seemed the right choice for the subject. I did reclaimed timber frames along-side these, to show a contrast. These can be seen in the exhibition images supplied.



sample of the frames sourced from a variety of places, charity auctions and gratefully received donations. They required more buying to fit a print, however I wanted the aged appearance of frames, as they seemed the right choice for the subject. I did reclaimed timber frames along-side these, to show a contrast. seen in the exhibition images supplied.

Funding the practical, the essentials.

I have purchased a small camera, with a great lens, for inside farm buildings and portraits. Following extensive research into the best small cameras, this one was ranked high in reviews. As with all equipment this is still a learning exercise, I am still using the SLR, however with this smaller camera, I can be more discreet. Other items purchased with the funds were as follows; Canvas bags for printing on to, art cards, Giclee prints, recycled frames, prints and mounts, software, the more interesting farming items were a pitch fork and a sludging tool. Other expenditure was in the form of time and fuel, for visits to Sunk Island and Holderness.

Spin offs.

BBC Countryfile, April 2017, on Sunk Island.

Introduction to the Heritage Centre whilst filming and then whilst taking part in;

Hull University, supply of image for publicity for the Hubert Nicholson Sunk Island event, November 2017.



Left top. Inside the Sunk Island Heritage Centre

Left top middle/right. On the bank of the River Humber for the Hubert Nicholson event. The Land That Connects Us at the marquee at East Newton

Bottom. The exhibition.

Bottom right. Pete, a resident of Sunk Island, retired farm worker, creator of a wildlife area and a member of the Holderness Threshermen's group.

Presentations at Driffeld Photographic Club. Barton on the Humber photography Club and Sutton Photography Club. Towards the end of 2018 I gave two presentations at 3rd Floor at Furleys as a consequence of being funded by St Hugh's, I am now a patron of the studio.

Exhibition.

I held an exhibition at the Sunk Island Heritage Centre, on 13th May 2018. This was done with great support from the Sunk Island Heritage Centre, who also loaned the easels for the day, at this point I still was short of a name. The body of work which I later entitled *The Land That Connects Us* was held at the East Newton farm, approximately seventy people attended including Co-founder of 3rd Floor at Furleys Nigel Walker and St Hugh's mentor Edwina Parker. My father offered great support during the project and continues to be active in his interest in all aspects of farming in Holderness.

I think it might be good to finish with some of dad's words and an explanation of two of the items I've also bought with the St Hugh's funding!

1. "Pitch Fork" (Fork), this was a two-pronged fork used to move straw or the pitch sheaves on to another worker. There was also another "Fork", with a longer shaft, this was used either to pitch sheaves in the field on to a trailer or wagon to be "stacked" in to a load by usually a young lad on the trailer. In the days before herbicides this was quite a hazardous occupation as the sheaves were usually full of thistles, docks and wild oats. This long handled fork was also used to pass sheaves in the stack (or rick if you were a southerner). As the stack grew taller, the sheaves would be passed on to a "monkey"! Just why this contraption was called a monkey, I do not know, but it consisted of a platform on stilts, where another man stood to pass the sheaf on to greater heights. There was of course great care and pride taken in building the stack, to make it waterproof until threshing day.

- 2. Sludging tool. This tool illustrates the amount of change in my lifetime, from a peasant labour intensive industry replaced by mechanisation. This tool was used to maintain the ditches, and ensure they drained the fields properly. It was more or less a wooden shovel, with a long handle to reach the bank top. The shovel blade was carved out of wood, but had a metal cutting edge to be able to cut through the sludge and the roots at the bottom of the ditch. The technique was to ensure that the tool was always wet so that the mud did not stick to the shovel part, and could be thrown out of the ditch with ease. Sludging the ditches was all part of yearly task of maintaining the farm. The job was undertaken during the winter when the ditch was running water, and provided a satisfying job in the bottom of the ditch out of the winter wind.*

To finish, I am still of the mind that one day I shall link with Tofield, Alberta, Canada through photography and our shared family connection to the two landscapes. Here dad offers an insight as to reason for my grandmother's departure for Alberta;

"I believe my mother was born in Preston, near Hull. There the family of 10 children lived in a two-bedroomed semi-detached house which still stands, the two houses joined together. Probably because there were so many in a small house, my mother and her sister Freda were, at the ages of six and eight, sent across to Canada to be raised by their childless aunt who had emigrated and married my great uncle Jack Cookson who originated from Chorlton cum Hardy in Lancashire. Great Aunt Jesse was married in 1893 near Edmonton in a log cabin church which is still preserved in Fort Edmonton Museum in Alberta.

The two girls were sent across, I believe, in the company of a young woman of 22, whose name appears on the passenger list alongside theirs. My mother did tell my sister that the two girls cuddled each other in the bunk and cried themselves to sleep. The journey in total took 24 days, 14 days by boat and 10 days by train."

We are in a different place, time and country now, however those early days and the Alberta landscape has possibly influenced who I am as much as my current surroundings.

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