

The Half Life of the Blitz on Hull

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Community Heritage, Place Identity, and the Built Environment

“It was just dates, battles, wars, dates, but history’s what made us. I don’t have to tell you really do I? It’s what made us, it’s what made our history and heritage, not necessarily the same thing I don’t think, it’s what made us individuals, it’s what made us as a city. Everything you see on the ground, in the future, is history. So it’s what made us, it made our lives what they are now. And I think that sums it up really.”



Our Project & This Report

The Half Life of the Blitz on Hull is an AHRC-funded project exploring the relationship between individual & collective identity, heritage, and place.

Over the past year we have deployed a range of humanities methods to investigate how people draw on heritage *through* the built environment to build a sense of self and a sense of place – focusing on the city of Hull. Alongside in-depth interviews, we have developed and utilised two new space and place-based methodologies, focusing on ‘mapping workshops’ and ‘walking workshops’. In other words, we have sought to better understand the ways that people engage with or *use* urban space and place, including heritage assets and historic sites, to articulate life stories and stories about the city.

Through this process **The Half Life of the Blitz on Hull** has produced a range of findings on the relationship between the built environment, community heritage, and place identity. This report not only shares research findings specific to the dynamics of heritage in Hull, but more importantly, also provides important insights into the relationship between people, place, and heritage more broadly. It also presents the practical tools we have developed for heritage practitioners looking to explore these relationships in a variety of settings.

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Background

Community Heritage, Intangible Heritage, the Built Environment and Hull

People's relationships to place and to the built environment are an increasingly important part of the heritage landscape. Major funders including the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) are placing strategic priority on community heritage and 'thriving places', Historic England are working on 'enriching the list' through crowdsourced place stories, while wider government-led initiatives like 'Levelling Up' demand a renewed emphasis on place identity, place attachment, and feelings about place such as civic pride.

At the same time, we are seeing a greater focus on 'intangible' elements of community heritage. There are a wide variety of applications of 'intangible' heritage in the sector, but perhaps the most prominent definition is that given by the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2003:

*'The practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups, and in some cases, individuals recognise as part of their cultural heritage....'*ⁱ

Growing interest in 'intangible' heritage offers opportunities to both expand what is considered 'heritage' and look at established, 'official', and 'tangible' heritage sites anew. Whilst acknowledging that the term 'intangible' is both limited and problematic, we explore it in this report for three reasons and in three connected ways. First, in recognition of its importance as a linguistic tool in the heritage sector. Second, to acknowledge the dynamic by which, as Laurajane Smith has suggested, heritage is an individual meaning-making process:

*'All heritage is intangible, in so far as heritage is a moment, or process of re/constructing cultural and social values and meanings. It is a process, or indeed a performance, in which we as individuals, communities or nations, identify the values and cultural and social meanings that help us make sense of the present, our identities and sense of physical and social place.'*ⁱⁱ

Finally, we use the concept of 'intangible' heritage to explore certain elements of everyday and community life, as well as the mythologies and meanings that people attach to places and spaces.

At a national and local level in the UK, these approaches to heritage often align with current emphasis on more inclusive and people-centred approaches to heritage values and practices, and a move towards more community collaboration, co-creation, and heritage-from-below. For example, clear links can be made between ideas about

community heritage, ‘intangible’ heritage, and the approach of NLHF to defining heritage more broadly:

‘Heritage can be anything from the past that you value and want to pass on to future generations.’

‘We have championed the idea that heritage is what people value and want to hand on to future generations, regardless of official recognition or designation.’ⁱⁱⁱ

In this report we approach the ‘tangible’ and ‘intangible’ as inextricable and seek a fuller understanding of this symbiotic relationship by investigating how people draw on or attach both ‘tangible’ and ‘intangible’ community heritage values to present-day places and spaces.

This is a particularly valuable area of study because of challenges to the long-standing ‘expert’ approach to the historic built environment, and subsequent tensions within projects attempting to develop a more people-centred, inclusive, or collaborative approach. English Heritage’s Blue Plaque scheme, for instance, has been driven by public suggestions over the course of its 150-year history, but the diversification of the scheme is hampered by more traditional ‘expert’ or ‘exclusive’ criteria (such as the requirement for plaques to commemorate individuals rather than ‘buildings with many personal associations’ or for buildings to ‘survive in a form that the commemorated person would have recognised’).^{iv}

This report aims to address some of these challenges and changing dynamics by exploring the relationship between people, community heritage, and the built environment. We focus on two core questions:

- **What types of buildings, public spaces, or other elements of the built environment do people attach their ideas about heritage to?**
- **How do people *use* elements of built environment to articulate more intangible community heritage and place identity?**

Hull

Our project takes the city of Hull as its case study, a city recognised as having a particularly well-articulated sense of place rooted in its past, often organised around emblematic events like the blitz during the Second World War, the catalytic role of the city in the English Civil War in 1642, or in more generalised notions of the past, particularly the eight-hundred-year lineage of Hull’s maritime industries.

This is a timely moment to investigate the dynamics of heritage in Hull. Our project follows Hull’s term as UK City of Culture in 2017, a year-long programme of cultural events which put particular emphasis on celebrating local identity and sense of place – all of which cannot be separated from ideas about heritage:

‘[The city of culture programme is] a chance to celebrate a city’s unique qualities and open its cultural life to the rest of the world’.^v

Although Hull 2017 did not focus on heritage specifically, it is clear (as will be seen in this report) that the programme played a key part in promoting particular aspects of Hull’s past, including for example the story of trawler-safety campaigners Lillian Bilocca and the ‘headscarf revolutionaries’ (in plays such as *The Last Testament of Lillian Bilocca*), or of ‘Dead Bod’ (a graffiti work that was ‘rescued’ from the regeneration of Hull’s Alexandra Dock and installed in the newly-established Humber Street Gallery).

Since 2017, several major programmes have put heritage more firmly on the city’s agenda. Hull Maritime (also known as Hull: Yorkshire’s Maritime City) is a £30million heritage regeneration project, jointly funded by Hull City Council and NLHF. It works to preserve and promote the city’s maritime heritage through the refurbishment and restoration of historic buildings, ships, and collections, ‘drawing on Hull’s unique spirit and sense of place’.^{vi}

During this period Hull has also hosted two Heritage Action Zone programmes, including the Hull High Street Heritage Action Zone covering Whitefriargate.^{vii} Meanwhile, the success of relatively more grassroots campaigns to protect and celebrate heritage through the listing of the Three Ships Mural^{viii} and the National Picture Theatre restoration^{ix} demonstrate the growing interest in community as well as architectural and historic value within the local and national heritage landscape – in terms of both the themes and sites explored in heritage programmes and who is involved in them.

Method

The Half Life of the Blitz project brings together several qualitative research methods from the humanities, including oral history analysis, urban history methods, and theoretical insights from memory studies, to interrogate the relationship between heritage, identity, and place.

This research took three main formats:

- **‘Mapping Your History’ Workshops** in heritage settings with our project partners the Hull History Centre and in community settings around the city. This involved asking people to ‘map’ stories, places, and themes that they felt were important to their own personal lives, and the story of Hull (as seen in the image on page two), using custom-made contemporary and historic maps. People also responded to questions, prompts, and historical material from archival collections.
- **‘Walking Workshops’** in which we asked small groups from Hull’s communities to explore places that were important to their story and to Hull’s story. This included the project team leading guided walks in the city centre and also facilitating community-led walks, particularly in residential areas and public spaces in other areas of the city.
- In-depth **Oral History Interviews** with volunteers and workshop participants. These interviews took a life story approach, with the aim of exploring how people use heritage, place and space to structure and articulate individual and place identity. In relaxed settings, we asked people to narrate their lives in Hull over the course of several hours and then analysed the relationships to place and heritage revealed in these conversations. Wherever appropriate these interviews also included direct questions about the interviewees’ relationship to, and feelings about, heritage in Hull.

We carried out research with a wide range of research participants over the course of a year, between September 2021 and August 2022. The participants were almost entirely residents of Hull and the surrounding areas, but they reflected a range of different age groups, socio-economic backgrounds, locations, and lengths of residence. While some had engaged with heritage projects in the past, many had not.

Key Findings

These headline findings respond to our two key research questions and will be relevant to heritage practitioners in a variety of locations and professional settings. They are elaborated on in more depth and illuminated by examples in the following sections – those working in and around Hull may find this particularly useful in exploring specific local heritage dynamics.

Everyday shared spaces were the most meaningful aspects of the built environment to people. Although civic buildings and recognised ‘historic sites’ were mentioned by our research participants, it was everyday shared spaces such as shops, schools, housing estates, cinemas, parks, swimming pools, and nightclubs that were mentioned most often. People were more likely to treasure and talk about ‘ordinary’ and ritual places than extraordinary historic moments or memories.

Shops and high streets are particularly important anchors for local memory. Department stores and city centre shops were by far our most-mentioned places, connected to shared practices, communal identity, and a sense of nostalgia for the ‘bustling’ high streets of the past. This also extended to smaller local shops and high streets more generally – people talked about these spaces with emotion and felt they were at ‘the heart’ of the city’s community and identity, often considered at threat of being lost, or already lost.

Industrial heritage was less prominent than expected, with the exception of the maritime industry in Hull. People did talk about the importance of industrial sites and workplaces, but not as frequently as other themes. Previous research has shown the importance of industrial heritage to identity and civic pride, but our research suggests that attempts to recognise more community and working-class heritage through a focus on workplaces and industry alone is limited.

People value places that speak to histories of national and international significance – but also those that speak to a hyper-local story and ‘insider knowledge’. Recognised ‘historic’ places were important to people in Hull, especially in relation to a more intangible heritage of being ‘forgotten’ or ‘left behind’. At the same time, people often spoke to local codes and elements of place heritage that make Hull unique.

People use the built environment to make the intangible tangible – particularly when it comes to articulating the perceived personality or character of the city and its people. As well as using the built environment to talk about everyday customs and practices, people used place and space to articulate the more intangible ‘character’, ‘spirit’, or ‘personality’ of the city and its communities. The specifics of this will vary in different locations, in Hull themes of resilience, rebellion, and difference were most prominent.

Dominant, official, or authorised heritage narratives were hugely influential in shaping what people talked about. While our research methods encouraged people to tell stories about less recognised or underrepresented elements of Hull's history, there was significantly less contest and conflict about the heritage of the city than expected. People tended to conform to accepted narratives – demonstrating that we need a more proactive approach to 'unlocking' community heritage, to build capacity and challenge ideas about what 'heritage' is.

Linked to this, our study demonstrates the potential impact of major cultural events on heritage discourses. It was clear in our interviews and workshops that Hull's tenure as UK City of Culture 2017 had a significant influence on popular and individual understandings of the city's past, particularly linked to place. We also recognised the influence that programmes like Hull Maritime are starting to have on understandings of the city and its history.

People recognise heritage as important – but unlocking more community and 'intangible' heritage is key to showing the value and relevance of the past. Participants frequently explained that they had not been interested in history and heritage in the past, but that engaging with community and 'intangible' heritage – seen as something more connected to local identity, local practices, and important to the present shape of the city – had changed their perceptions. There was a clear sense that heritage 'that makes us' was more interesting, and of most importance.

Our research project presents two methods or models for doing this work. The 'mapping workshops' and 'walking workshops' we have developed present two fruitful ways of exploring community heritage and place identity *with* communities. These models helped us to ground our conversations in place, emphasise the expertise of the community, expand the types of places we explored, and created informal space for in-depth discussions with our participants.

Key Findings – Quotes and Examples

Everyday shared spaces were the most meaningful aspects of the built environment to people.

Although civic buildings, buildings of architectural merit, and recognised ‘historic sites’ were mentioned by our research participants, when we asked people which places were important to the story of the city, it was everyday shared spaces, such as shops, schools, housing estates, cinemas, parks, swimming pools, and nightclubs that were talked about most.

“Bob Carvers – it was the place to go on a Saturday, have pattie and chips in Bob Carvers tent. I remember the benches round the outside of the tent.”

“The ‘Green Hut’ outside Paragon Station selling newspapers etc. Everyone used to meet their dates there, plus ‘Under the Clock’ pre mobile phone days.”

“Beverley Road Baths – [it was like] going back in time when we went in the early 2000s. They still had changing rooms around the swimming pool edge. Great tiling and staircase – then out across the road for chips and spice after the swimming session.”

“Newtown Buildings - My Grandma was a good breadcake maker and every Sunday my cousins and my brother and I would queue up for our cakes, covered with butter and jam. Cousin Jim was always first in the Q on Newtown Buildings as he was the biggest.”

“The park, especially East Park, I always get quite a sentimental, um, belonging when I go back there because we spent a lot of childhood there. And growing up as an Auntie I’ve taken my nieces and nephews there as well. So those sort of places, the parks, the marina, Humber Bridge... those places definitely and I think most people have that.”

When people talked about ‘ordinary’ and ritual places, they often linked them to a sense of collective identity and local identity.

‘We were a Fletcher’s family.’

“Fletcher’s at the corner of Jameson Street and Prospect Street was a well-known and popular shop, which nowadays would be called a delicatessen; it sold cooked meats, cheeses, pies, bacon, sausages, bread, cakes, pastries and other delights. Fletcher’s sausage rolls and pork pies were legendary, and are still discussed occasionally in various Facebook groups!”

While people tended to talk about ‘ordinary’ spaces and everyday heritage rather than extraordinary stories and major historic moments, this heritage was still discussed within a language of civic pride.

“We did a lot of cinema-going...so the ABC cinema, Cecil and some right fleapits, the Tower, which is still there, the Regent, which is opposite it, I think it’s now Horner’s, Dorchester, Criterion, which were down George Street I think. There were also back then a lot of suburban cinemas, Hull was known as a cinema city.”

“The number of cinemas – biggest in any city!”

Shops and high streets are particularly important anchors for local memory.

Department stores and city centre shops were by far our most-mentioned places, connected to shared practices and a sense of communal identity based on everyday, lived, and embodied experience.

“Now there were three stores we all remember, there was Bladons, there was Thornton Varley’s, and there was Hammonds. And each had their own specialities, Bladons was more or less furniture, Hammonds was, all sorts, as it always was.”

“Saturday was my favourite day of the week. From age 12 I was allowed to go into town with friends. We would go to Picadish in Hammonds for a sausage and chips and then spend ages listening to music in the booths in the record department.”

This also extended to smaller local shops and high streets more generally – often articulated through a local dialect of going ‘on road’ – which were similarly described through a prism of nostalgia and ‘lost’ community.

“Top Shop” was Kempton Road’s corner shop, on the left-hand corner of the street; it was converted back to a house many years ago. There are very few of these corner shops left now, as the big supermarkets have taken over. The shop’s official name was “Soulsby and Harrison’s” but we always called it “Top Shop” because it was at the top of the street.’

“It was lovely, it was absolutely lovely, and I’m not being snobby here at all, cos, I’m just not, but Newland Avenue was quite a posh area, streets were lovely, the people were. We had proper shops, proper houses on the Avenue it wasn’t all cafes and things...oh the shops were lovely.”

“We used to go down and help [Nana] go down and help her to do her shopping, take a shopping trolley out and whenever you went on road you didn’t get very far, it always took hours cos it was stop-start-stop-start cos she, you knew everybody. Also, down Hawthorn Ave we used to sometimes go to this little cake shop, I think it was either a McLeish’s, Skelton’s or a Fletcher’s...and if it was like a little treat time we’d go down there.”

People talked about these spaces with emotion and felt they were at ‘the heart’ of the city’s community and identity – often considered at threat of being lost, or already lost.

“I’d love to be able to go back in time and see Hessle Road when it was the hustle and bustle of Hessle Road, do you know, not what I’ve witnessed as I’ve seen it decline.”

“It feels as though the heart of Hull went when Hammonds went.”

Industrial heritage was less prominent than expected.

With the exception of the maritime industry, people talked about workplaces and industrial sites much less frequently than other topics, and rarely expanded on their significance in detail. The quotes below represent some of the comments made.

"My Mum worked at Reckitt's"

"Imperial Typewriters - this site is now Willerby Caravans! Typewriters have fallen victim to the computer!"

"The river was the dividing point. The two parts of Hull were very distinct in that many people would not venture to the opposite side of the city. West Hull was predominantly "the trawler fishing" and allied trades. East Hull was the "commercial docks" and engineering firms."

"Hessle Road was a community on its own because of the fishing industry. We moved to the Boulevard area and played on the bombed buildings (still not cleared). Home of the Airlie Bird's rugby team. I went to St Wilfred's RC School. Started work at Reckitt's Gipsyville (a small offshoot of the large company). Harpic was manufactured there as was Blackhead, used to clean the old fireplaces. We used to wear masks and our overalls and thick aprons. But the powder if it got onto our own clothes would rot them. If we got powder in our eyes we had eyewashes to clean them and we went for regular X-rays at Dansom Lane."

Previous research has shown the importance of industrial heritage to identity and civic pride and we do not dispute that, but our research suggests that attempts to recognise more community and working-class heritage through a focus on workplaces and industry alone is limited, and more focus needs to be placed on associated places and other everyday spaces too.

People value places that speak to histories of national and international significance – but also those that speak to a hyper-local story and ‘insider knowledge’.

Recognisable ‘historic’ places were important to people in providing a tool for expressing Hull’s importance and historical significance. This applied both to buildings of specific historic and architectural merit – such as town halls and civic buildings – but also sites which wrote Hull into well-established historical narratives.

One participant, for instance, talked in these terms about Beverley Gate, visible ruins of the old town walls situated at the top of Whitefriargate, which are usually interpreted as the site of ‘the start of the English Civil War’:

‘...it brings it home, because a lot of people think Hull’s nothing, you can imagine that, I can understand that, but when you think that basically the English Civil War started with the King not being let in, in 1642 and you think ooh, Hull’s history’s like, quite impressive innit. And 1642 it’s very old innit. You can see the ruins of the walls, the fact that Hull’s got an old town, people are clocking straight away that Hull’s got a lot more going that people think.’

Music venues were often mentioned as places that demonstrated Hull’s cultural significance beyond the local area. Seeing The Beatles in the early 1960s was perhaps the most mentioned event, grounded in stories about the concert venue, the ABC Cinema, and its demolition to make way for a new shopping centre in the early 2000s.

“The ABC was a huge loss, it became the Regal eventually and it was demolished to build St Stephen’s Shopping Centre, because it was there, it had a stage, that a lot of the massive pop groups as we called them in the 60s, played. I saw The Beatles there twice, live, and The Rolling Stones and I’ll never forget it.”

“Age 12 I went with school friends to the ABC Cinema (which was on the spot where St Stephen’s shopping centre stands), we went to see the Beatles. It was 1964, and we screamed and screamed and screamed. I still have the ticket from the concert (and many more tickets from other concerts over the years).”

“Going back to music, live music, the first band that I nearly saw was David Bowie, and that was in East Park, in the late 60s. Every Sunday, they used to have, in East Park there was a concert...they weren’t just pub bands there was some quality stuff most Sundays...I saw The Who in 1971 at the City Hall. So you’d call them premiership division.”

Participants firmly believed that Hull has not been recognised as important, historically or culturally, and told stories about important places within a framework of being ‘forgotten’ or ‘left behind’ – an important part of Hull’s heritage discourse that comes up time and time again.

“The Hull story will never be told.”

“It’s that thing of the North East Coast Town isn’t it”^x

But at the same time, our participants spoke just as frequently about places linked to local customs, codes, and elements of place heritage that make Hull different or unique. Hyper-local stories and 'insider knowledge' were also significant to narrating a story of Hull and its past.

"Carver's chips – market and Hull Fair"

"We played out in the tenfoots, which nobody else ever knows what you mean unless you come from Hull [laughs]."

"Now I've got to tell you about the impressions that anybody would get if they came from out of space in the 19-, let's say go back to 1951, 1952, and a Martian arrives and says "Will you take me into Hull?"...Well his first impressions, the first thing he'd do would be to hold his nose...Because there were three sources of the most intolerable smells you could image. One was the fish dock, the other one was BOCM British Oil and Cake Mills, which produced cattle food, and the other ones were the two breweries in the middle of town, Hull Brewery and Moors' and Robson's Brewery."

These examples are more difficult to evidence through succinct quotes and require in-depth knowledge, gleaned through working closely with local communities, to fully understand. Accessing less tangible elements of heritage like this cannot be captured through short-form polling and requires developing conversations with local people, more long-form methods of research and analysis. Our project advocates a co-creation approach which embeds collaboration from the start to enable this, in order to better understand hyper-local and community heritage values that are attached to places and spaces.

People also use the built environment to make the intangible tangible – particularly when it comes to articulating the perceived personality or character of the city and its people.

As well as using the built environment to talk about shared experiences and everyday practices, people used places and spaces to articulate a more intangible ‘character’, ‘spirit’, or ‘personality’ of Hull and its communities. Themes of resilience, difference, and rebellion were most prominent.

For example, a large number of participants narrated the story about Beverley Gate as part of a long-standing local spirit of rebelliousness.

“I am very proud of the fact that we didn’t let King Charles into Hull, as well, so I make a big thing of that.

Why are you proud of that?

Just starting off the English Civil War [laughs], I think Hull’s proud tradition of being a bit, a bit bolshie and bit alternative.”

“There’s a lovely story in history, which I just love when people are recording history, it’s not the sort of facts and figures the dates and things like that, but when Charles I wanted to come into the city, which is told time and time again now, certainly since City of Culture, we waxed lyrically that um, Sir John Hotham is not letting you in...And I just love this idea...I like the idea that we just stood up to the King and said no you’re not coming in... bolshie.”

Others talked about Hull’s past as shaping a character of resilience or stoicism. When talking about housing in Hull, one participant referenced the Second World War and its importance in influencing both the built environment and the disposition of the city:

“...I think, the war, and the fact that, the amount of damage that was done to Hull and that stoicism, that came from it. Erm, I don’t know whether it came from it or we were just always stoic and we just got on, like everybody else. And the fact that nobody knew and then everybody did know, and we learnt, later on, how much damage and what we went through. The stories are quite amazing....So I feel that what they must have gone through, losing the whole house, and every possession, losing friends and family in such an awful way, yeah I think the war played a big part in Hull’s history.”

Another talked about Hessle Road and its memorials to Hull’s fishing heritage as a reminder of the city’s strength:

“When you learn about a place that you live in, and you learn about those that have gone before you and what they’ve done, you start to see that in the people who are still there. And you start to see the, the proudness and the strength that it’s taken people to carry on and continue and, especially like I say going on Hessle Road most weekends and getting to know faces and chatting, hearing people’s stories, you start to, piece a narrative together in your mind and you start your own kind of ideas, about, about these things.”

People also used place more broadly to articulate a sense of uniqueness and difference – whether that related to the ‘living heritage’ of modern Hull or a much longer historical trajectory. Elements of the urban landscape like Hull’s cream telephone boxes or street names like ‘Land of Green Ginger’ were all described in these terms.

“It wasn’t part of the London scene or anything else, Hull sort of, had its own ways of dealing with things, which it always has done.”

‘It is a very different place, it’s strange. It has its own language, and its own sense of people, and erm, its own words... it has its own feeling about it.’

“Hull is abroad – its own climate, own fashion, own kingdom!”

Dominant, official, or authorised heritage narratives were hugely influential in shaping what people talked about.

While our research methods encouraged people to tell stories about less recognised or underrepresented elements of Hull's history, conversations generally conformed to 'core' themes of local heritage discourse.

When directly asked what the most important elements of Hull's past were, people tended to confirm authorised topics such as maritime heritage and the fishing industry (particularly the collapse of fishing and its aftermath); the civil war; the blitz; William Wilberforce; etc:

"Fishing. Maritime heritage. People."

"Blitz. Rebuilding Hull. 2017."

"The period just after the war, early 1950s-1960s regeneration of Hull and surrounding areas. The history of the fair and sport in Hull and how it affected people in Hull."

"Fishing, merchant navy, railways and bombing during the war. Rugby League."

"Which bits do you think are the most important?"

I don't think one bit is I think the whole has made Hull. The whole bit of history, I mean you can't say that the fishing and the docks and everything is more important than Charles and wanting to come here and take over and you know all the old town. I think it's just the whole bit that has made, you know made Hull."

For those working in Hull, this research tells us both about the dominant themes that people believe are most important to the city, and the need to take a proactive approach to 'unlocking' more diverse community heritage, and to challenging ideas about what 'heritage' is. In our research process it was sometimes difficult for people to think beyond powerful local and national narratives about Hull.

Working in collaboration with communities, particularly through our walking workshops, helped to break down some of these barriers and heritage hierarchies to build a fuller and more inclusive picture of place heritage.

"Every day is a learning day. Today was my turn to relate to my stories of the early 1950s."

"Learned so much from other local residents. How we all have so many memories in common."

Our research methods thus offer a model of using the built environment and place-based approaches for capacity building in relation to 'intangible' and community heritage.

Linked to this, our study demonstrates the potential impact of major cultural events on heritage discourses.

It was clear in our interviews and workshops that Hull's tenure as UK City of Culture 2017 has had a significant influence on popular and individual understandings of the city's past.

Some people directly stated that Hull 2017 had changed their perceptions of local heritage:

"Prior to City of Culture, history was about, um, just small things, you know, just small events like the Triple Trawler Tragedy, things like that which impacted me at school, cos we spent, I can remember when it happened I seemed to spend more of my time in assembly singing For Those In Peril On The Sea...but once City of Culture started, and we went on tours, and we went to learn about the city, we went on tours with Paul Schofield. I was like a child in a sweet shop, and I thought "Wow look at this", and I was just, I was fascinated with our history. And the fact that we were very wealthy, and we had a botanical gardens, and you know, famous people who lived in big houses and did, just were so significant to what happened in England, in Britain and all sorts of things. I was just, I was just in awe, and I hadn't fully appreciated this fact and our maritime history and how important it is."

"[Talking about Hull 2017's opening event, Made in Hull] It was free, it was their Hull, it told the story of their Hull, and it told the story in such a way that people suddenly went "Oh yeah, I remember, I remember the war, I remember the blitz, I remember, the trawlers going down, I remember, err, all these famous people. And it made people talk to each other about their life in Hull and their history."

"And it wasn't until 2017 that I really got to know about Lil Bilocca and all that that she did for the trawlers and the, um, the good that she did for updating the conditions that they worked in."

In other conversations the impact of mega-events like Hull 2017 was more anecdotal, reflected in the focus of people's stories on narratives that had been dominant during the year, or the framing of stories through particular language – for example through telling the story of Lillian Bilocca and the 'headscarf revolutionaries' campaign for trawler safety, or of 'Dead Bod', a 1960s graffiti work moved to Humber Street Gallery as part of its launch.

We also recognised that programmes like Hull Maritime are already starting to have an influence in shaping understandings of the city and its past. People talked about the maritime heritage of Hull frequently and often linked this to the current regeneration of the Hull Maritime Museum:

"I think [future generations] should know about their heritage. And if we don't speak about it and do something about it it's gonna be lost forever. I mean I think the Maritime Museum is doing wonderful with what's happening there, they're doing a really good job."

People recognise heritage as important – but unlocking more community and ‘intangible’ heritage is key to showing the value and relevance of the past.

Participants frequently explained that they had not been interested in history and heritage in the past, but that engaging with community heritage – seen as something connected to local identity and important to the present shape of the city – had changed their perceptions.

“How important do you think history is to Hull?”

I didn't used to think it was very important at all, and when I was at Kingston High School I had a horrible history teacher, who used to hit you on the head with a ruler when you got it wrong, I just hated it. It was just dates, battles, wars, dates, but history's what made us. I don't have to tell you really do I? It's what made us, it's what made us, history and heritage, not necessarily the same thing I don't think, is what made us individuals, it's what made us as a city. Everything you see on the ground, in the future, is history. So it's what made us, it made our lives what they are now. And I think that sums it up really. And it's what made the, physical landscape of any city, what it is now. It's so important, I also think, it's so important to grab hold of it, like you're doing, before the first-hand accounts of that history, aren't here anymore, people aren't here anymore.”

“Do you think your view of Hull's heritage has changed in this project?”

Yeah definitely, before I wouldn't be interested in history, it's nothing to do with me, but yeah, we're all part of history aren't we. This is all part of it.”

“How important do you think history is to Hull?”

Vital, absolutely vital.”

Our research demonstrates that understanding and representing community and ‘intangible’ heritage is not only an important method for developing a fuller and more inclusive heritage of places – but that ‘unlocking’ these elements of heritage also expands who engages with the past and popular understandings of what ‘heritage’ is.

Our research project presents two methods or models for doing this work.

Engaging with more ‘intangible’ and everyday heritage is key to greater inclusivity and our mapping workshops and walking workshops present two fruitful ways of exploring community heritage and place *with* communities.

In our ‘mapping workshops’, we asked people to add their personal memories and stories about the city’s past to a series of historic and custom-made contemporary maps. We also used prompts such as historic photographs from Hull History Centre collections, which emphasised everyday life and ordinary spaces as well as major or recognised historic events.

In our ‘walking workshops’, we physically went out into the built environment to have relaxed conversations with people about the places and community spaces that they felt were important to Hull’s story, and their story within that. Asking people to show us the places that matter to them helped to ground our conversations in place, emphasise the expertise of the community, expand the types of places we explored, and created informal space for in-depth discussions with our participants.

We will continue to explore these two methodologies in our project research and future publications.

Summary and Considerations for Heritage Practitioners

The findings of our research project are important to anyone interested in the relationship between people, heritage, and place. Our project is producing new understandings of the role of heritage in communities, particularly in cities, and illuminates the dynamics of history and the built environment within individual and collective place-making processes.

Our findings emerged from two central questions running through the heart of our workshops and interviews:

- **What types of buildings, public spaces, or other elements of the built environment do people attach their ideas about heritage to?**
- **How do people *use* elements of built environment to articulate more intangible community heritage and place identity?**

Taken as a whole, these findings make four key points:

People use the built environment to engage with the community heritage of places in two key ways. The first relates to the heritage of everyday life. It was places associated with everyday, ordinary life that people valued most in our study. Homes and schools, leisure spaces like cinemas, swimming pools and parks, and particularly shops and the high street were all considered most meaningful in telling the story of the city – the *people's* story.

The value of these places came from their role in people's lived experiences of the city, in shared practices linked to ideas of community, and embodied connections to place.

Second, the built environment acts as a tool for people to articulate a more intangible heritage relating to the perceived 'character', 'personality', or 'spirit' of a place. In other words, buildings help to make the intangible tangible. In Hull, sites ranging from historic ruins to residential areas to fish and chip shops were used to narrate a sense of stoicism, rebelliousness, and uniqueness, that people felt was important to the present and had deep roots in the city's past.

As such, when understanding the community heritage of places, the diverse stories, values, and interpretations people attach to the built environment are just as important as the stories of these sites themselves.

Accordingly, ‘tangible’ and ‘intangible’ elements of place and community heritage are interconnected and should be approached as such. The ‘intangible’ heritage of sites and settings gives them deeper meaning and relevance. Heritage decision-makers should focus not only on the civic, historic, or architectural significance of places, but also think about values and interpretations which reflect or anchor the stories, customs, and traditions of communities.

This includes widening the portfolio of places that we assign heritage value to, and reinterpreting already recognised places. Heritage practitioners should seek to better understand and represent the relationship between ‘tangible’ and ‘intangible’ in these settings and the significance of places to local people. Working closely with communities to understand local and hyper-local meanings of sites is critical to this.

‘Authorised’ or ‘official’ heritage discourses are powerful – so we need to take a proactive as well as responsive approach to engaging communities with the heritage of places. Our research made clear the impact of established heritage discourses on individual and community understandings of place. It wasn’t always easy to move beyond dominant and often narrow themes, or for people to recognise their own experiences and stories as part of ‘heritage’.

We need to be more proactive in growing capacity for community heritage, and challenging ideas about what heritage is and what has historic value. Collaboration, co-creation, and relationship building is key – our project offers a model of doing this work in the context of people, heritage, and place.

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- ^x This references the popular notion that Hull's experiences of heavy bombing in the Second World War went unrecognised – the town disguised by the term 'a North East Coast Town'. This term is often used in conjunction with an assertion that Hull was the 'most heavily bombed city outside of London'. We explore this topic (and more) on our project website.

Note: In this report we have made all respondents anonymous and attempted to present their ideas about places as accurately as possible, for example by retaining details of place names such as nicknames and spellings. They may not match your understandings but reflect how those individuals talked about places and spaces in Hull.

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