

ANNUAL NEWSLETTER 2025

Investigating Lost Landscapes

EVERY INVESTIGATION IS A GRADUATION

Since our early beginnings back in 1999, we have been pursuing the cloaked mysteries of the historic landscape, and with each investigation we have been able to build on our knowledge, skills and experience. 2025 came and went in the blink of an eye, and yet the learning from this year alone has been amazing.

The Spellow Hill field survey at Radcliffe on Trent earlier in the year cemented the value of incorporating metal detecting, field walking, off-the-field research and forging learning collaborations into our focused historic landscape studies. Building relationships and lasting partnerships takes time, trust and sincerity.

We are extremely fortunate to have built a strong foundation of friendship with so many wonderful, generous and supportive people over these last 26 years. It is a value that is never taken for granted and a cornerstone of who we are. Nothing can be achieved alone.

At Hoveringham in Nottinghamshire and at Stathern in Leicestershire, encouraging and developing community involvement alongside a 'working together' model of togetherness has seen a church tower saved, a young person's dream visualised, and lost ghostly remains slowly emerging from the ground to tell their previously unknown stories.

Having developed a well-established field survey methodology, informed through many years of experience, enabled us to complete a six-year historic landscape study this year at Owthorpe in Nottinghamshire. We managed to survey seven fields in twelve weeks, which, by anyone's standards, is a phenomenal achievement.

It is testimony to The Detectives' teamwork, communication, problem-solving and field survey techniques, not to mention their fitness and their incredible determination to succeed. There are, of course, times when learning happens in the face of adversity, and the illegal metal detecting experience we endured at Owthorpe in August of this year informed an improved landowner communication strategy for dealing with similar incidents that we might have to confront in the future.

Sharing the learning has, without a shadow of a doubt, been one of the highlights of the year. We have performed, talked, displayed and provided guided tours to around 700 people. Our website enables us to open our door so that visitors can freely explore our world of learning, and our collaboration partnerships continue to grow. If the 26-year journey of The Field Detectives could be measured by the amount of education we have received and in turn shared our learning with others, then we would have graduated from the University of Historic Landscape Studies with honours. Next step: a Masters!

Every Field Tells a Story and Every Investigation is, indeed, a Graduation.

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Moley has been keeping a keen eye on progress on the muddy hill excavation at Stathern

***“An
opportunity
to learn”***

SPEECH HILLS

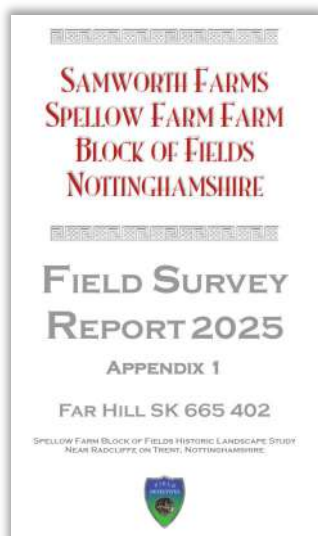
THE SPELLOW HILL INVESTIGATION

On Sunday, 2nd March 2025, The Field Detectives concluded the Far Hill field survey. It was the first survey of nine fields in the Spellow Farm historic landscape study. Our interrogation of the field in search of clues that could shed light on the history of Spellow Hill and its potential use as an administrative meeting place by our Anglo-Saxon/Scandinavian ancestors.

There is enough evidence from the field walking pottery finds to suggest that the landscape around Spellow Hill was frequented by people for many hundreds of years. If we take into account the pre-housing development archaeological report of 2018, which identified an Iron Age and early Romano-British site 1,000 metres to the west of Spellow Hill, then we have additional evidence to back up the field walking survey findings.

There is a long way to go, and in historic landscape study terms, we have only just begun. One field survey is not going to provide the broader historic landscape understanding that we are searching for. Thanks to Samworth Farms, we have an opportunity to learn more about the land around Spellow Hill.

The investigation continues.



***“We have found
much more”***

THE SEARCH FOR STATHERN HALL

COLONEL FRANCIS HACKER

In 2019, The Field Detectives set out to build on the search initiated by the Framland Local Archaeology Group (FLAG) from 1999 until 2005. Thanks to their six years of research and archaeological activities, we had a wealth of material to help inform our own investigation. To ensure that the original information was as precise as it could possibly be, The Field Detectives carried out their own archival research, geophysics surveys, a focused boundary wall examination and two metal detecting surveys.

None of this could have been achieved if it wasn't for the generous and kind support of Sarah Bedford and her colleagues at the Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust and the absolutely amazing people of Stathern.

This year we revisited a previously dug area on Coombs Meadow. Over twenty years ago the FLAG team found a wall, and now we have found much more!

THE GOUSHILLS OF HOVERINGHAM

A LOST MEDIEVAL LANDSCAPE

On Wednesday, 22nd October 2025, The Field Detectives concluded Phase B of the Church Farm, Hall Close investigation at Hoveringham in Nottinghamshire.

Having set out to build on our learning from Phase A of the investigation, we have made excellent progress. At the close of 2024, we were certain that the field south of St Michael's Church once featured a set of medieval buildings dating to the c. 12th-14th century. Following eight months of further excavation work throughout 2025, we can confirm that the field cloaks a significant medieval site that once belonged to Sir Robert Goushill and his wife, the Duchess of Norfolk, Lady Elizabeth Fitzalan.

From what we have uncovered to date, we can see the remains of stone foundations that suggest a complex of associated buildings constructed to serve the needs of a manorial estate, with self-sufficiency at the heart of the design. The exciting discovery of a bee bole alcove at the south end of the barn further enhances that picture. This was a medieval manor providing itself with nearly all of the food and goods it required.

“cloaks a significant medieval site”



“A most wonderful journey”

OWTHORPE, NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

6 YEARS OF TIME TRAVEL

We are working with people from Owthorpe to create an event for The Field Detectives to present their findings following six years of historic landscape investigations at Owthorpe from 2019 to 2025. The event will provide a much-needed opportunity to raise funds for the village hall and St Margaret's Church. It is something that both Samworth Farms and The Field Detectives would like to do as a way of saying Thank You to everyone in the village, who have been so kind, supportive and generous to us over these last six years.

It has been a most wonderful journey.

The Field Detectives

Historic Landscape Studies

Who We Are & What We Do

The Field Detectives seek opportunities to survey fields that can tell us more about how our historic landscapes evolved – by sharing the stories that we uncover from our field survey activities, we help to inform a better understanding of how our historic landscapes evolved over the centuries. On completion of the field survey activities, a field survey report is produced that precisely records all of the associated survey finds (coins, artefacts, pottery, etc.).

Once the field survey reports have been processed, the artefacts are curated as a landowner-held Historical Landscape Study Collection, where they are safeguarded for further research and study. With landowner approval, a community presentation/display can then be arranged where the information is shared and an opportunity is provided for the local community to get involved in future research activities.

By submitting the completed field survey reports as an exact finds location record and by working closely with our heritage sector colleagues, we are establishing a growing archive of landscape-focused historical studies. These context-recorded studies are held in trust by the respective farmers & landowners who act as heritage custodians, which in turn, safeguards a unique set of rich historical landscape investigations for further study and learning.

If you want to be the focus of our next investigation, give us a call – Every Field Tells a Story...

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