

IT and digital skills in the South West

Recent research has revealed skills gaps in IT and digital skills across the cultural heritage sector, potentially affecting business capacity and the ability to connect to new audiences and new markets. But heritage organisations are taking opportunities to train volunteers and community groups in new technologies on live research projects.

As part of a long-term study, in July 2012 the Churches Conservation Trust, Wessex Archaeology and other partners offered experience days in archaeological and geophysical survey techniques at St Andrew's church in Holcombe, Somerset, giving local people an opportunity to gain practical experience in a range of techniques whilst gathering information for the project. This included Global Positioning Satellite Systems (GPSS), Total Station Theodolites (TST) and Tablet computers. The hands-on sessions helped record the locations of some of the churchyard monuments and an elevation of the church itself. A team from the University of Southampton also offered sessions in cutting-edge Reflectance Transformation Imaging (RTI), which records and reveals time-obscured inscriptions and sculptural detail.

All the sessions were fully booked and there were 86 participants in total over the week. The project helped local people make a tangible contribution to an improved understanding of their local historic environment whilst developing new practical skills. Since Hidden Holcombe, two of the student volunteers have secured places at university, and two of the locals are now using and training other local people in RTI.



The start of an 'experience day' in archaeological survey as part of the Hidden Holcombe research project in July 2012. Churches Conservation Trust.

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