

Might a Sense of Place Approach Help the Public Connect to Brayford Pool's Medieval Heritage?

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It is challenging for people to perceive a particular aspect of an area's rich history when it is not obvious, prominent, or interpreted (Hunt, 2021). This article draws on and develops this assertion by establishing the importance of the Brayford Pool in the Medieval Period (1066–1540) and explores the challenges people face when perceiving the influence of this time period within the current landscape. The article uses the perception aspect of Sense of Place as a framework to suggest that these challenges may be overcome through shared authority and public curation. The article argues that this approach could help to re-establish the importance of the area during the medieval period. The article then considers how the principle of shared authority might be applied to create a public history project on the medieval history of the area, owned by the different communities who live, work, study, and engage in leisure activities on and around Brayford Pool. Finally, it considers the way in which this might impact positively on the other aspects of a Sense of Place: how people value a place, how people describe and interact with it, and the importance of its sustainability.



Introduction

Lincoln is a small city of just over 100,000 people (Office for National Statistics, 2021), in the East Midlands, of the United Kingdom (UK). Like so many UK and European cities, it had to refocus its economy from one that thrived on ‘engineering, manufacturing, and supply chain networks’ in the 19th and 20th centuries to a ‘retail, leisure and education-based economy’ as deindustrialisation took place in the twenty-first century (Hunt, 2021: 177).¹ The Brayford Pool area of Lincoln, in the south and towards the west of the city, has been at the centre of this transformation.

Archaeological and environmental studies have shown that the area around the Brayford Pool was the earliest inhabited part of Lincoln, with evidence of human activity from as far back as the Mesolithic, and ‘Roman, Saxon and medieval occupation of a major city in such close proximity to that city have not been found elsewhere in Britain’ (Lincolnshire County Council, 2023). For the purposes of this article, the Brayford Pool area is understood to be within the grid reference (SK 971 711) and measurements (555 m by 444 m) from the monument record (MLI70189) on Lincolnshire County Council’s Heritage Explorer website (2023). Its northernmost boundary sits behind the modern leisure waterfront buildings and bisects Lucy Tower Car Park. To the east it includes buildings facing the Brayford Pool, a small section of Wigford Way and the High Bridge, although just outside of its boundary, can be seen. The southern boundary includes the current railway line and a section of the university of Lincoln campus, which is bounded by Rope Walk. Finally, to the west the boundary follows the line of the university’s Janet Lane Claypon building, cuts across the railway line and a small section of the A57 (Brayford Way) and stops at the Far Wharf (See **Figure 1**).



Figure 1: Map Showing the Brayford Pool Area of Lincoln Extracted From Location Map of Central Lincoln. Map: John Armagh (2013). OpenStreetMap via Wikimedia Commons. Image from https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Location_map_United_Kingdom_Lincoln_Central.png [Last Accessed 10th June 2024]. Reproduced under the image license terms CC BY-SA 3.0.

The impact of industrial development, deindustrialisation, degradation, and then post-industrial reinvention has had a significant impact on the Brayford Pool itself and the surrounding landscape. Arguably, most recent development has been positive and has contributed to the environmental,

¹ See also City of Lincoln Council (2008) and Heritage Connect (nd).

economic, and social sustainability of the area and wider. However, with each development over the last several hundred years, the existing landscape has been altered and even erased. This leaves very little tangible evidence of the past in the built environment for local people and visitors to perceive, identify, engage with, and appreciate (Hunt, 2021).

In the case of the Medieval period (understood for the purpose of this article to be the period identified by Historic England (2023 and nda) as dating between 1066–1540), there is further complexity; in addition to nearly all tangible evidence being expunged by later developments, the Brayford Pool area is in the south or ‘downhill’ part of the city (Chitwood, 1991), which presents a natural contrast with the north or ‘uphill’ area of the city which has a medieval area that is particularly well preserved and features a medieval castle and cathedral (Historic England, ndb). Moreover, the University of Lincoln campus, which stretches along the south of Brayford Pool, has been subject to the development of a series of large scale buildings to meet the needs of modern university provision (Hunt, 2021); the conscious decision was for the ‘scale and architectural language [to] juxtapose themselves to the medieval fabric of the inner city and foremost to the cathedral’ (Borsi, 2009: 43; Hunt, 2021).

Tourist marketing for the Brayford Pool does mention a long history but focuses on the Romans, the Industrial Revolution, and the development of the university over the last 25 years (Visit Lincoln, nd). Simultaneously, the uphill area of Lincoln has been successfully branded and promoted as the Cathedral Quarter by tourism marketers and is so aesthetically distinctive that it draws attention away from the harder-to-interpret medieval character of other areas of the city including the Brayford Pool (Medievalists.net, 2009; Visit Lincoln, 2018a). It has also created a view that the ‘uphill’ area was, and still is, ‘medieval’ Lincoln and the medieval city did not stretch beyond this part of the city; yet, there are perceivable medieval buildings of note on the Brayford Pool, or close to it, along the Lower High Street (City of Lincoln Council, nd). The stone High Bridge is tucked away on the far east side of Brayford Pool and is the only medieval bridge in England that has houses built on it (Figure 2). The bridge itself was built in 1160 over the River Witham and the current Stokes Café building on it dates from 1540 (Visit Lincolnshire, 2023; Stokes Coffee, nd).



Figure 2: The High Bridge, Lincoln. Photo: David Dixon (5th August 2014). Image from [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:High_Bridge,_Lincoln_\(geograph_4114804\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:High_Bridge,_Lincoln_(geograph_4114804).jpg) [Last Accessed 10th June 2024]. Reproduced under the image license terms CC-BY SA 2.0.

Significant medieval buildings along the Lower High Street include: St Mary Le Wigford Church, with Anglo Saxon, or Early Medieval origins (St Mary LE Wigford, nd); Whitefriars House, a 15th century timber framed building hidden by a modern shop front (Society for Lincolnshire History and Archaeology, nd; City of Lincoln Council, nd); St Mary's Guildhall dating from 1157 (Historic England, 2023); and, St Peter at Gowts Church, another church with Anglo Saxon, or Early Medieval origins (Lincolnshire City Council, nd).

In contrast to perceived notions about the exclusive medieval character of the Cathedral Quarter and Uphill Lincoln, archaeological excavations, first driven by a flurry of rescue archaeology projects in the 1970s and 1980s (Colyer, 1975; Chitwood, 1991), and then by planning requirements as the area was redeveloped, provide a picture of an industrious area during the medieval period.

The aim of this article, is to explore the significance of the Brayford Pool area during the medieval period, the evidence (or rather lack of) of these activities left in the modern landscape, and to consider why people may find it challenging to recognise and engage with this aspect of the area's past using Sense of Place as a framework. Finally, it proposes that public curatorship could offer a solution to these issues, again using Sense of Place to demonstrate.

A comprehensive Desk Based Assessment (DBA) of existing literature on the history and archaeology of the city, alongside a review of all available existing archaeological reports on the Brayford Pool area, was carried out to draw together historical and archaeological narratives on the area. However, it became quickly apparent that the multitude of Watching Briefs, DBAs, and archaeological reports produced during various redevelopment projects utilised the same literary sources and largely relied on earlier reports for contextual information. With this in mind, the earliest source for information or the source where a direct quote was used in the discussion on the significance of the Brayford Pool are in the medieval and footnotes acknowledging later reports have been included where there are multiple references to the feature. It is worth noting that two full assessments of the archaeology of the Brayford Pool area were published in the early 2000s: K Steane *et al*'s 2001 book *The Archaeology of Wigford and the Brayford Pool*, which contains reports on excavations between 1972 and 1987 and D Stoker *et al*'s 2003 book *The City by the Pool*. These two publications include sections looking at the medieval period as part of a comprehensive overview of the area's archaeology. Sadly, both books are out of print and could not be accessed at the time of writing, although the author plans to remedy this for future work.

This article aims to move discussions on the history and archaeology of the Brayford Pool and its surrounding area beyond traditional representational interpretations of the landscape and repetitive linear historical narratives (Harvey and Waterton, 2015; Hunt, 2021). It seeks to take an interdisciplinary approach to this urban area; including history, archaeology, landscape history, and geography to understand how people understand and relate to the built and natural environment (Carter, 1980). The original piece of research and this article will form the basis of field work in 2024 where it is intended to re-establish the importance of the medieval through the practice of shared authority, to create new public interpretation of the period.

Significance of The Brayford Pool Area in the Medieval Period

The Brayford Pool is believed to be a natural lake that sits at the junction of two rivers, the Witham and the Till, which was first canalised and renamed the Foss Dyke during the Roman period (Hill, 1948).² The purpose of the Foss Dyke was to link the Brayford Pool with the River Trent at Torksey, which is about eleven miles northwest of Lincoln, thus linking Lincoln to waterways further inland (Hill, 1948; Hockley, 1992).

The Brayford Pool sits in the south of the city, and during both the Roman and medieval periods would have been located outside the defensive city walls (Allen Archaeology, 2016). However, it is worth noting that the west wall was moved further south in the 13th century to Brayford Pool (Wragg, 1994). Little was known of what happened at Brayford Pool in the medieval before the 1970s, when rescue archaeology excavations took place as modern development occurred in the area. In 1975, Colyer wrote that ‘no modern scientific excavation had ever been conducted in this area, or indeed anywhere in the city south of the defences of the lower Roman town’, but ‘the Brayford Pool was known to have played a part in the commercial life of the city in the past, and it was felt that the remains of quays and warehouses of medieval date might be uncovered’ (259).

Like so many other towns in medieval England, Lincoln’s commerce and fortunes relied primarily on wool. By the mid-13th century, Lincoln had the fourth largest waterfront in England and Lincoln itself was the sixth largest city in the country (Chitwood, 1991); it was famed for its production of red fabrics, drawing merchants from Florence in Italy to buy these in such quantities that cloth produced in Lincoln

² See also Chitwood (1991), Hockley (1992), Wragg (1994) and Lincolnshire County Council (2023).

equated to half the wool exported there (BBC, 2014).³ However, the waning of the wool trade led to a period of decline in the city between the 14th and 17th centuries and the fortunes of the Brayford Pool did not improve until it was developed into an inland port in the 18th century (Colyer, 1975; Lincolnshire Life, 2023).

Perhaps one indicator of its significance is the reclamation and development activity that was undertaken during the medieval period, suggesting that land was required for human activities linked both to the water and land of the city. Curtis and Campopiano 2014 explain land reclamation as ‘the process by which people bring ‘unused’ or ‘waste’ land into ‘productive’ use ... in order to create new land for cultivation and settlement’ (93). In the case of the area of the Brayford Pool, it would appear from the archaeology that settlement rather than cultivation was the driving force behind the reclamation of land (Colyer, 1975). This is not unique to Lincoln and has been recorded in other urban areas during the medieval period, for example in Thetford, Norfolk, riverside land reclamation took place ‘that may have been associated with revetments or wharves’, and structures dated to the 13th and 14th centuries and interpreted as possible workshops were built on the new land (Antrobus and Ayers, 2023).

It is generally accepted that Brayford Pool was much larger in antiquity than it is today as it has been subjected to reclamation activities since Roman times (Chitwood, 1991).⁴ Hockley suggested that there were ‘several periods of reclamation as the waterfront advanced ... before the Norman Conquest’ (Hockley, 1992: 3).⁵ However, there appears to be significant reclamation activities during the medieval period. To the north of Brayford Pool, archaeological evidence demonstrates that this area of Lincoln became more urbanised in the 10th and 11th centuries, and the new ‘suburb of Newland occupied land to the north of Brayford Pool and the Foss Dyke beyond’ (Hockley, 1992: 3), was built on the reclaimed land (Trimble, 2002).⁶ However, it is worth noting that the first historical reference to Newland is in a mid to late 12th century document; the pipe rolls of 1181 (Colyer, 1975).⁷

Archaeological finds on Brayford north mirror the documentary record, with Mudd and Lewis (2003) noting that Northamptonshire Archaeology excavations uncovered pottery assemblages with very few pieces that could be dated to the 12th century but

³ See also Lincolnshire Life (2023) and BBC (2014).

⁴ See also Hockley (1992), Wragg (1994), and Lincolnshire County Council (2023).

⁵ See also Mudd and Lewis (2003).

⁶ See also Wragg (1994), Hockley (1992) and Connor and Rackham (2016).

⁷ See also Hockley (1992) and Connor and Rackham (2016).

noting renewed activity in the area in the 13th century. Archaeological excavations on the medieval Lucy Tower Street site, which has been home to the modern concrete Lucy Tower Car Park designed by renowned local architect Hugh ‘Sam’ Scorer in 1973 (Scorer Hawkins Architects, 2022), revealed that the north bank of Brayford Pool was relatively established by around 1250 AD and was mostly unaltered until developments in the 18th century (Chitwood, 1991). Pullen (2005) reported as part of North Wharf Glassmill excavation that there was an expectation that preserved timbers from earlier wharves could be found, and an excavation on land at Mill House on Brayford north in 2016 expecting to find evidence of Roman and medieval wharves and jetties bordering the Brayford (Connor and Rackham, 2016). Excavations have also revealed ‘substantial stone revetment walls’ from the medieval and later periods (Wragg, 1994), and to the north of Lucy Tower defensive stone walls and a ditch were found (Colyer, 1975). In the 13th century, the western Roman defensive city walls, which had been maintained, were moved further south and terminated at a round stone tower that sat on the bank of the Brayford Pool and became known as Lucy Tower (Hill, 1948).⁸ There has been some debate in the past about if the name Lucy was wrongly attributed to the tower on Brayford Pool (Colyer, 1975), as there are records of a Lucy Tower in the Castle, but Hill (1948) was confident that the name was correct from a citation of a document that ‘Lincoln common council were granting a lease of Leucie tower at Brafordside in the west ward’ in 1611 (86). Excavations revealed sections of the wall including ‘A boundary wall [that] ran east from the tower along the edge of the Brayford Pool’ (Hockley, 1992: 2; Wragg, 1994).

Archaeological work on the land reclaimed to the north of Brayford Pool has also revealed medieval pits, wall footings, small domestic finds, building materials such as roof tile, ‘timber and stone structures, waterfront walls, areas of hard-standing, and a late medieval limeslaking kiln’ as well as timber revetments (Trimble, 2002: 2).⁹ So, people were living and working in the Newland area abutting the Brayford Pool to the north in the medieval, and the area was deemed important enough for the city’s defensive walls to be extended to encompass it.

To the far eastern boundary of the Brayford Pool is the previously mentioned medieval High Bridge. It is believed that the stone bridge, built in 1160 AD possibly superseded an earlier wooden bridge. The first building on the bridge was a chapel dedicated to Thomas Becket, which was removed in the 18th century, but there are also medieval timber framed buildings dating from c. 1540–1550 that remain on the

⁸ See also Hockley (1992), Colyer (1975), Wragg (1994), and Connor and Rackham (2016).

⁹ See also Wragg (1994), Mudd and Lewis (2003), and Connor and Rackham (2016).

bridge today and is unique in England (Visit Lincolnshire 2023; Stokes, nd). In fact, Haes wrote in 1898 that the buildings were ‘a peculiar feature not to be found elsewhere in England’ (180). The passage beneath the bridge is known locally as the ‘Glory Hole’ and allows boaters to move between the River Witham and the Brayford Pool (Visit Lincolnshire, 2023).

Much like on the north side, evidence for reclamation and land use during the medieval on the east side of Brayford Pool has also been discovered through archaeological excavations and between the 10th and 16th centuries the edge of the Brayford Pool moved further west (City of Lincoln Archaeology Unit, 1999; Rowe and Savage, 2011), but it was suggested by Chitwood (1991) that it was the 13th century when the area developed to have a distinct port featuring wharves and warehouses. Other archaeological work supports this idea as there is evidence on the east side for ‘hardstanding which may have provided access for boats at the river edge’ (3), with a terminus post quem of the tenth century. Excavations on the site that was formally Dickinson’s Mill revealed that during this period the waterfront moved west by fifty metres and stone buildings dating back to the late 12th or early 13th century were built on the land (City of Lincoln Archaeology Unit, 1999). In 1972 an excavation revealed a possible stone jetty dating from the medieval 25 metres to the east of the modern edge of Brayford Pool, demonstrating the movement of the shore westwards during the period (Pullen, 2005). Much later in the 2000s, excavation on the east side of the Brayford Pool uncovered ‘timber piles [that] may have formed a jetty following the waterfront westwards’ (Rowe and Savage, 2011: 2). The remains of a repurposed boat hull in a vertical wharf were also found at the Dickinson Mill site (Chitwood, 1991; Rowe and Savage, 2011). North of the Dickinson’ Mill site, on an area now occupied by flats, reclamation moved the land sixty-five metres to the west between the 10th and 13th centuries and, much like in the case of the north, the modern boundary of the pool is close to that of the 13th century (City of Lincoln Archaeology Unit, 1999).

Archaeological excavations in the 1970s revealed several structures on the medieval waterfront, though these were interpreted as being linked to local food supplies and lacked significance if trying to demonstrate that the Brayford was an important port for longer distance trade during the period (Chitwood, 1991). To the south of the Dickinson’s Mill and the University of Lincoln Sarah Swift Building, archaeological excavations have uncovered evidence of the use of city waste during the medieval period to reclaim or raise the level of the land (Casswell, 2017). Evidence of a 10th or 11th century wooden structure was found, as well as a 12th century cellar constructed of stone, destroyed

in the 14th century, along with later industrial destruction and construction phases (Casswell, 2017). Immediately to the south of the Sarah Swift Building, on the former Lincolnshire Echo site, now the University of Lincoln's Business School and known as the David Chiddick Building, showed the River Witham had also gradually moved westwards during the period 'with the 12th–13th century river bank lying some 9 m west of the 10–11th century bank' (Pullen, 2005: 3). Archaeological excavations also uncovered the remnants of a stone medieval structure dating from the early to mid-13th century that had been demolished in the 15th century (City of Lincoln Archaeology Unit, 1999). Interestingly, evidence for medieval fishing has been found on the east side of the Brayford Pool; specifically, fish weirs from between 900 and 1200 AD, which were put up in parallel to the shoreline and were designed to funnel fish into the water close to the shore (Chitwood, 1991; Wragg, 1994; Johnson, 2012). Johnson (2012) suggested that fish was a food staple in the medieval and that 'the Brayford Pool itself does seem to have been the base for a number of commercial fisherman over the centuries'; there is documentary evidence not only recording around 12 fishermen in the area in the 13th and 14th centuries, but also how fishing was managed by the city at the time (9). The archaeological evidence concerning reclamation, structures, and buildings on the east side of Brayford Pool suggests that the area was developed as an inland port during the 13th century, but for the local movement of supplies. The apparent fishing industry shows that the Brayford was an important food source for people in the city.

The south of the Brayford Pool Area, or Holmes Common, was very different in nature and less significant in relation to this research, as it was common land and therefore 'virtually uninhabited' (Hogue and Telford, 2017) until the 19th century and the arrival of the railway companies (University of Lincoln, nd). The common was marshy land during the medieval and likely to flood (Hill, 1948; Young et al., 2006). Hill (1948) commented that the land to the south of the Brayford Pool would have featured several lakes down to the Swan Pool and that 'for a great part of the year it was under water and formed part of Brayford' (338). Hill also indicates that the earliest documentary reference to Holmes Common is 1547, in which the number of livestock people were allowed to have on the common is set out. A painting from 1802–03 titled, *Lincoln Cathedral from the Holmes Commons*, by Joseph Mallord William Turner (**Figure 3**) shows how under-developed the area was at the start of the 19th century as a natural shoreline is shown, with a few people working or sitting in the foreground, and the remnants of fishing boats and the fishing industry are scattered across the ground.



Figure 3: Lincoln Cathedral from the Holmes Commons. Painting: Joseph Mallord William Turner. Usher Art Gallery. Public domain (out of copyright) via Wikimedia Commons. Image from https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Lincoln_Cathedral_from_the_Holmes_by_Joseph_Mallord_William_Turner.jpg [Last Accessed 10th May 2024].

The western border of the Brayford Pool as outlined in the Introduction appears to have not yielded archaeological evidence from the medieval period, although further west on Carholme Road there is evidence of industry and habitation (Lincolnshire County Council, 2024).

Evidence Left in the Landscape, A Sense of Place, and Challenges of Perceiving the Medieval around Brayford Pool

At its core, Sense of Place is a ‘strong and recognisable character’ of a landscape (Hunt, 2021: 181; Lock and Cole, 2011). A working definition of Sense of Place from the existing literature, which extends to this work is:

the way we perceive places such as streets, communities, cities or ecoregions [and how this] influences our wellbeing, how we describe and interact with a place, what we value in a place, our respect for ecosystems and other species, how we perceive the affordances of a place, our desire to build more sustainable and just urban communities and how we choose to improve cities (Adams et al., 2016; Hunt, 2021: 180).

The previous research on The Brayford Pool did not consider wellbeing as it was not as relevant in that context as the other parts of the framework; the same is arguably true in this case. Previous research looked extensively at how humans describe and interact with places as ‘a socio-physical construct’ (Carmona, 2019: 1), how we form relationships with and create value in places (The Getty Conservation Institution, 2000;

Adams et al., 2016), how we develop and enact respect for the environment (University of Lincoln, 2010), and how we are driven to create fairer urban communities (Davidson, 2012). However, this research focuses specifically on *perception*; the concept of human perception is particularly pertinent when considering the challenges of engaging with the medieval past around Brayford Pool (Hunt, 2021).

In archaeological terms, the definition of Sense of Place is reflected in the notion of Historic Landscape Character Areas, with landscape being defined by the Council of Europe in 2000 (2) and restated in Lord and Macintosh (2011) as ‘an area, perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors’ (2 and 5). Humans have a unique perception of the landscape within which they live, work, and engage in leisure activities that is complex in nature — it is constructed by the ways in which we interact with our environment, the relationship and attachments we create with it (Adams et al., 2016), and the ever evolving symbolic meanings we attribute to it, that are defined by the multiple experiences that take place within it (Lynch, 1960).¹⁰ To add to this complexity, as well as having flexible group and individual meaning, it is also accepted that a Landscape’s Sense of Place is not temporally static (Tobe, 2009a), which is particularly true of urban landscapes such as that of the Brayford Pool area. Cities evolve, transform, aggrade, degrade, and are ever changing environments with ‘no final result, only a continuous succession of phases’ (Lynch, 1960: 2; Hunt, 2021). Perception is inextricably linked to this idea as it can include long stretches of time and multiple cultural time periods as urban landscapes often have both old and new features (Lynch, 1960).

A further challenge in perceiving the medieval around Brayford Pool is that aesthetically humans perceive landscapes on a particular scale known as the perceptible realm (Lynch, 1960).¹¹ The perceptible realm only occurs when it is possible to perceive human intervention in the landscape (Gobster et al., 2007). Aesthetics and perception are of course both individual and subjective, are experienced through a cultural lens influenced by several sociological factors (Lynch, 1960; Lock and Cole, 2011) and are inextricably linked to emotion created by multi-sensory interactions with the landscape (Lynch, 1960; Carter, 1980).¹² Arguably nostalgia is a key cognitive and emotional process that takes place within the landscape that can trigger particularly intense emotional responses through memories of previous encounters, thus creating layers of personal meaning linked to aesthetics and perception (Hunt, 2013; Hunt, 2018; Hunt, 2021). These factors create further complexity when considering how peoples’

¹⁰ See also Carter (1980), Lock and Cole (2011) and Adams et al., (2016).

¹¹ See also Gobster et al., (2007), DEFRA (2011), and Tribot et al., (2018).

¹² See also Gobster et al. (2007), Lock and Cole, (2011), and Tribot et al. (2018).

perceptions of the landscape might be changed to encompass elements of the past that are hard to perceive and to enjoy aesthetically (Hunt, 2021).

Perception also has a practical purpose for human navigation, which also presents challenges in being able to perceive the medieval. Lynch (1960) and Hospers (2010) suggest that urban landscape features are perceived as a built image and are developed into cognitive maps; 'paths, edges, districts, nodes, and landmarks' are used to navigate (Hunt, 2021: 187).

To navigate the landscape, we create mental maps as we move through it and our brains place more importance on features linked to a task that is to be performed or key reference points in the landscape (Appleyard, 1973). When the brain exaggerates or places more emphasis on a feature, such as the landmarks around the Brayford Pool, other features can become invisible to human perception because they are of no consequence to the journey through the landscape and therefore aren't remembered or used as anchor points in the journey (Carter, 1980; Downs and Stea, 2011). This warping of place and space through brain processing is another complex layer of how landscapes are perceived.

In the case of Brayford Pool, despite the richness of the archaeology of the medieval it is incredibly hard to perceive the medieval landscape because of a lack of easily identifiable remaining evidence. There are some traces of medieval plot boundaries and street patterns to the north of Brayford Pool (Wragg, 1994), but there is 'little tangible left in the landscape from the medieval period and therefore the longevity of the landscape is not visually apparent' (Hunt, 2021: 184).¹³ This is because of activities during later periods, most notably the Industrial Revolution, which is demonstrated throughout the preceding section in the names and nature of the sites explored for post-industrial leisure and educational building works. The most recognisably medieval structure and buildings are the High Bridge and its timber framed houses (currently shops and a tearoom); however, it is worth noting that it sits back from Brayford Pool and is overshadowed by modern buildings and a road, and therefore isn't immediately apparent. It is almost impossible to discern the surviving medieval plot patterns, and the road and area names do not immediately stand out as medieval in origin. There is only one discrete interpretation panel next to the pool. Coupled with this lack of evidence is the domination of the aforementioned medieval uphill area of Lincoln that is easily perceivable (Historic England, ndb), aesthetically pleasing, well interpreted, and well promoted as medieval Lincoln to locals and tourists alike (Medievalists.net, 2009; Visit Lincoln, 2018a). The character of the standing historic industrial buildings and nature of the new 20th and 21st century buildings also move perception

¹³ See also City of Lincoln Council (2008) and Hunt (2021).

of the history of the area to the Industrial Revolution and the later development of a leisure and educational zone in the city (Tobe, 2009a; 2009b). Whilst the remains of the buildings and landscape features that dominated the area from the Industrial Revolution until the deindustrialisation of the late 21st century are only fragmentary; as in many urban areas, they are large enough to focus peoples' perception of the area to that time period and to be part of collective and individual memory (Shackel and Paulus, 2006; Hunt, 2021).

Brayford Pool was, for a time, the location of intense industrial activity in the city; linked to agricultural production in the county (Hunt, 2021), the need for food stuffs to be processed, and for them to be transported to other areas of the county. There were a number of large warehouses, mills, maltings and food processing factories situated around the pool (University of Lincoln, 2010: 12), although many of them have since been destroyed (City of Lincoln Council, 2008).¹⁴ However, there is one notable building on the south side of Brayford Pool, the Great Central Goods and Grain Warehouse (now known as the Great Central Warehouse), which was built in 1907 by the Great Central Railway and now functions as the University of Lincoln Library (Figure 4) (City of Lincoln Council, 2008). This building competes in size with the large, new buildings on the university campus and is easily recognisable as a Edwardian industrial building, as it is typical in style and built of red brick. Next to it stands the Students Union, known as the Engine Shed, which is built around the original shell of the Engine Shed built by the Great Northern Railway in 1876 (City of Lincoln Council, 2008). Both sit next to a major railway crossing built in 1848, and just across from this is the East Holmes Signal Box, which is a well preserved signal box and distinctive within the landscape setting. This cluster of railway related activity means that the Industrial Revolution is within the perceptible realm and creates a landscape character that is distinctive and at the heart of university activities, thus shaping the focus of the historical and archaeological narratives of the area (Gobster et al., 2007; Giesecking et al., 2014).



Figure 4: The Great Central Warehouse.
Photo: Ian Carrington (22nd January 2006).
Image from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Lincoln_University_Library_-_geograph.org.uk_-_110793.jpg [Last Accessed 10th June 2024]. Reproduced under the image license terms CC BY-SA 2.0.

¹⁴ See also Wragg (1994), Hill (2001), City of Lincoln Council (2008), Tobe (2009b), and Heritage Connect (nd).

The character area to the south is complemented on the north side of Brayford Pool by new buildings such as a cinema, restaurants, and hotels that were designed and constructed to provide the illusion of redeveloped warehouses with industrial roof lines, the use of red brick, and to the scale of industrial buildings (Tobe, 2009b). It can be argued that the aesthetics of these buildings aim to create a pastiche of a mythical, imagined, industrial past around Brayford Pool, to achieve a nostalgic response in those who experienced the area when it was still industrial and an emotional attachment that will encourage repeat engagements with the businesses in the leisure zone including hotels, restaurants, shops, the marina, and public houses and bars (Hunt, 2013; 2018; 2021).¹⁵ The industrial character of both the large historic and new buildings mean that the Industrial Revolution is the most perceivable historic period in the area; the one people can readily experience, resulting in this time period being prominent in perception, experience, emotional attachment, and narratives of the area (Hunt, 2021). Conversely, most of the south side of Brayford Pool is now characterised by huge purpose-built university buildings and retail units, that also fall into the perceptible realm and are used by a variety of people on a daily basis; the extensive building programme to meet the needs of a modern university means that the perception for thousands of people of this part of Brayford Pool is as ‘the university’ with an emphasis of the recent past and now in temporal terms (Hospers, 2010). This almost resituates the area as a new or contemporary zone, rather than being a historic part of the city. These factors mean that for those without an expert knowledge of the area’s historical and archaeological narrative, from an extensive body of academic work, there is little chance of perceiving, experiencing, and developing an emotional attachment to a medieval dimension of this landscape (Medievalists.net, 2009; Visit Lincoln, 2018a).

In terms of navigating the landscape (Hospers, 2010), Brayford Pool features a number of paths including pedestrian pathways and roads, rivers and a canal, and the railway line; it has clearly delineated edges created by the water and the railway line, its character makes it a district, and there are road junctions, bridges, and the railway crossing that create nodes for the stages of a journey. But the extent to which these impact on the perception of the past is debateable. It is arguably the landmarks that are described above that have the most impact on the perception of the Brayford Pool’s history. The modern buildings on the north side designed to create an image of industrial, Victorian, Britain, the survivors of that period on the south side, and the new education buildings are landmarks that are prone to be exaggerated by the human brain (Appleyard, 1973).

¹⁵ See also City of Lincoln Council (2008), Davidson (2012) and Walker (2012).

Shared Authority, Public Curatorship, and Sense of Place as a possible solution

If it is accepted that Brayford Pool was an important place in the medieval period, and that that this history has been obscured in physical, archaeological and written narratives, then it is not only important to consider why this is the case, but also how it might be addressed to re-establish its importance —as well as why this might be worth doing. This can be done by considering the use of shared authority, public curatorship, and other aspects of the Sense of Place framework.

It has already been established in this article that much of the information about Brayford Pool during the medieval is held in academic texts and professional reports and that, with the exception of the nearby High Bridge, there is very little tangible evidence left of the period in the landscape. These factors make it almost impossible for the general public to engage with the medieval aspect of Brayford Pool's history. A possible route, then, to making people more aware of, and engaged with, the period is by experts engaging in collaboration with local communities in the production of publicly accessible interpretation through the framework of shared authority.

The term shared authority was coined in 1990 by Michael Frisch in *Shared Authority: Essays on the Craft and Meaning of Oral and Public History*. In his 1990 text, Frisch used the term to describe 'the relationship between public historians and those who contribute to historical understanding through their lived experience and knowledge' (Hutchison, nd: 1). But it has come to be understood as also encompassing the systems 'in which responsibility for decision making ... is shared between ... staff, visitors, and specific community groups' in heritage related activities (Shear, 2023: npn). This type of relationship is crucial in this case, as it has the potential to shift power, and therefore ownership, from professional and academic historians and archaeologists to the public (Wood, 2019). The rebalancing of power could encourage a sense of shared accountability for sharing this important part of Brayford Pool's history (Legget, 2018). There is also the potential to engage the public with this aspect of Brayford Pool's historical narrative (Ting, 2012), bringing 'about local social change' (Shear, 2023: npn), and aiding in the understanding that 'there is rarely one unassailable historical perspective about anything' (Crew, 1996: 85–86; Hunt, 2013). There is a significant gap in the literature on public curatorship, which is being addressed by this special collection, but it is understood here to be the sharing of authority and collaboration on public history projects. It is also understood to be the key element in shifting public history towards:

a movement, methodology, and approach that promotes the collaborative study and practice of history; its practitioners embrace a mission to make their special insights accessible and useful to the public (Weible, 2008).

It is also conceptualised as embedding ‘a level of expertise outside of the fixed university environment’ (The Historical Association, 2023); moving towards being truly collaborative, as exemplified through ‘dialogue and participatory engagement’ (Oral History Association, 2023). It is therefore inclusive; by working *with* the public collaboratively where there is equity of engagement, contribution, and experience for all participants (Bryans, 2019). It also allows the deconstruction of typical hierarchies that exist within cultural institutions and the removal of a top-down approach to history, which is not a new idea, and has been championed in the sub-discipline of Social History since the 1970s (Oral History Association, 2023).

In light of preceding research, it has been the intention of the author to develop a public curatorship project to explore Brayford Pool’s history through the Sense of Place framework, to address the imbalance in the understanding of the area’s history by exploring ways to make time periods other than the current and Industrial Revolution more prominent in narratives on the Brayford Pool. Undertaking this research has reshaped this idea and provided a framework for a focussed pilot project. In line with the concept of shared authority and public curatorship, the approach to this project will be to form a Brayford Pool History and Archaeology Group of representatives from the communities associated with the Brayford Pool area, to look at what is known about the Brayford in the medieval and to ascertain how this can be better communicated to the public through consultation and the development of appropriate forms of interpretation. This will be achieved through collaborative workshops and events and will form the basis of a funding application.

The forms of interpretation for this project might include digital applications such as Augmented and Virtual Reality (AR and VR), multimedia approaches, oral testimonies to capture memories of the High Bridge within living memory, trails, guided tours, an exhibition, or performances. The author’s role will be to draw on expertise within the University of Lincoln to share existing knowledge, build the skills needed to acquire new knowledge and to create and manage interpretation and marketing.

Ultimately the project’s aim will be to help people perceive a part of Brayford Pool’s history that is currently relatively intangible but an important part of its story. There will be other positive impacts linked to Sense of Place. The value of a place to people is an important aspect of Sense of Place that can be challenging in the urban context. Whilst Lock and Cole (2011) assume that all local places are valued by people, this is not necessarily the case. Cities are composites of distinct areas with their own local communities. In the case of Brayford Pool, communities are a combination of university staff and students, employees of businesses situated around the Pool, and tourists, visitors and local people using the leisure facilities. This means that place within urban

environments is 'a socio-physical construct' (Carmona, 2019: 1; Hunt, 2021), where the buildings in the landscape have different values to different people, including aesthetic value, social value, historic value, economic value, and political value (The Getty Conservation Institution, 2000).

Arguably, the Brayford Pool has clear aesthetic value through the buildings, green spaces, and waterways that comprise it. Social, economic and political value are demonstrated through the University of Lincoln and its commitment to developing a previously run down area of the city through the renovation of existing historic buildings, the creation of new purpose-built educational facilities (Borsi, 2009; University of Lincoln, 2010), and the reestablishment of public spaces once represented by Holmes Common (Tobe, 2009b). There is also clear economic value in post-industrial growth represented by the hotels, restaurants, public houses and bars, cinema and shops in the area (Tobe, 2009b). There is some sense of historic value, particularly on the University of Lincoln campus to the south of Brayford Pool. The sensitive restoration, reimaging, and redevelopment of the Great Central Warehouse is a prime example of creating historic value in relation to the Industrial heritage of the area (Tobe, 2009a; Clarke, 2012). However, it might be argued there is a gap in terms of historic value due to the ownership of current historical and archaeological narratives by experts, the inability to perceive large swathes of the area's history—including the medieval—because of historic and modern progress, the decision of the university to engage in large scale building programmes that do not reflect medieval buildings in size and style, and the perceptibility and incredibly successful marketing of the uphill area. Arguably, a publicly curated project to examine the medieval Brayford Pool could go some way to boost the perceived historic value of the area by a diverse range of people, most notably by helping this aspect of the past become perceivable, but also to make explicit links to the recognisably medieval uphill area.

Another important aspect of Sense of Place is how individuals describe and interact with a place. Humans develop relationships with places that they express in different ways, from their emotions, biographical stories, to their imagination and personal experiences (Adams et al., 2016). These expressions are important within a social context and can form the basis of collective memories and narratives (Lynch, 1960). Currently, local collective narratives on Brayford Pool focus on the post-industrial dereliction that took place in the area, and indeed across Britain, in the 1970s and 1980s (Middleton, 2018; Visit Lincoln, 2018b), as this is the period of the area's history within living memory. This period was also the focus of narratives created as part of the rationale to bid for funding to regenerate the area during the 1990s and continues to be an important part of the University's narrative around its foundation and contribution

to the city of Lincoln and the county of Lincolnshire (University of Lincoln, 2010). There are also growing collective memories of the university experience through the growing alumni community of more than 95,000 graduates from 135 countries across the globe (University of Lincoln, 2023). These narratives tend to be digital in nature, often playing out on social media, and are either created by individuals and small groups or co-created through the University's alumni office.

A project has the potential to engage people with the medieval, describe and interpret the landscape to create wider-known narratives about the period, and to create a community that can share memories about the experience of learning about and sharing the area's history. This may add another dimension to how people describe and interact with the Brayford Pool. It may also allow engagement with more diverse audiences in line with work in the disciplines of:

public history, museum studies, oral history, historic preservation, and historical archaeology... in seeking to serve a diversity of stakeholders connected to historic sites and promoting discussion of poorly documented and marginalized communities (Sikes, 2015: npn).

Finally, there is the concept of the sustainability of places. Urban landscapes stay sustainable by changing over time, by being redeveloped and reimagined for uses that meet the needs of people at a particular point in time (Tobe, 2009a). Brayford Pool has maintained its contribution to the local, regional, and national economies over centuries by becoming a focal point for trade, transport, industry, and then the service and knowledge-based economies (Salem, 2016). It has been reimagined time after time, with each new phase of development overshadowing its predecessor and changing the landscape irrevocably, with only small elements retained and repurposed (Tobe, 2009b). A publicly curated project with interpretative outputs has the potential to feed into the sustainability of the area, specifically by re-establishing the historical importance of the area in the medieval. It could bring new audiences to Brayford Pool who may contribute to the leisure economy, engage University students and staff with the rich history of the area, engage local people, visitors, and tourists with the public spaces the university has created, and create a shift in the sense of ownership of place.

Conclusions

This article set out to establish the importance of the Brayford Pool in the medieval period (1066–1540), to explain the challenges the general public face when trying to engage with this history using Sense of Place as a framework (Hunt, 2021), and to

suggest how these challenges might be overcome through shared authority and public curation to re-establish the importance of the area during the medieval. These ideas are set against the external ‘competition’ of uphill area of Lincoln, where the Castle and Cathedral are situated, being the most obviously medieval in character and successfully branded and marketed to locals, visitors, and tourists as such.

It is recognised that significant medieval buildings survive in the downhill area of the city in the vicinity of Brayford Pool and contribute to the character of this area (City of Lincoln Council, nd). The article established that during the medieval period, the Brayford Pool was developed as Lincoln grew in size and became more urbanised (Chitwood, 1991). The area was subject to periods of reclamation to increase the amount of useable land around the inland port (Colyer, 1975). It had an important commercial function as part of the fourth largest waterfront in England during the period, and featured quays, warehouses, industrial and domestic buildings built of stone (Pullen, 2005). Evidence of commercial fishing has also been discovered in the form of fish weirs (Johnson, 2012). There was also Holmes Common on the west side of Brayford Pool, which would have played an important role in people being able to graze animals on the common land (Hogue and Telford, 2017). Extensive archaeological work and historical research has captured this rich history, but it is arguably owned by the academics and professionals that have produced it and is not very accessible to, or well engaged with, by the public. This is a challenge.

A further challenge is that there is very little tangible evidence of the period left on the landscape, apart from the nearby High Bridge, which is not visible from many points of the Pool, unlike in other areas of the city. Coupled with the lack of tangible evidence is the survival of an iconic building from the early 20th century, the Great Central Warehouse, the existence of large modern buildings that replicate features from the same period, and large scale new educational buildings (University of Lincoln, 2010). We can consider why this is a challenge using the part of the Sense of Place framework that discusses perception, noting that in the case of Brayford Pool the lack of surviving evidence means that the medieval does not fall into the perceptible realm, whilst the industrial, leisure, and educational buildings do and therefore dominate how people perceive the levels of historical activity in the area (Lynch, 1960). These large-scale buildings are also most likely used by people to navigate their way around Brayford Pool and therefore become exaggerated in terms of importance to individuals, whilst other landscape features become invisible and unimportant (Appleyard, 1973).

Therefore, narratives about the Brayford Pool and its importance to the urbanisation of Lincoln and trade and commerce in the medieval are vulnerable to being lost to the general public. The article suggests that this might be addressed by sharing authority

with the public to engage in a public curatorship project that will seek to explore and interpret the history of the area in innovative ways, thus transferring ownership of the narrative to communities who live, work, study, and engage in leisure activities on and around Brayford Pool (Frisch, 1990). Through the co-creation of interpretative materials, the importance of this area in the medieval within the context of the wider city, including the uphill area of Lincoln, and the lower High Street, can be re-established. The re-establishment of this importance can be placed within other aspects of the Sense of Place framework and aid in ensuring a diverse range of people value the Brayford Pool as an important heritage asset in the city, meaning that more people interact with and keep alive narratives around its historic importance. This could in turn lead to the area becoming more sustainable by introducing new audiences and shifting ownership back to local communities (Adams et al., 2016).

In terms of future research, permission will be sought from the University of Lincoln to engage in fieldwork in the form of setting up a Brayford Pool History and Archaeology, group comprising members of the different communities who engage with Brayford Pool. By supporting the public to engage in a research and interpretation, this important part of the Pool's history will be promoted. It is then hoped that such a group can be supported to engage in further projects to celebrate and share the history and archaeology of the area with diverse audiences.

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Competing Interests

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