A photograph of a churchyard. A large, leafless tree stands in the center, its branches reaching across the frame. In the background, a church building with Gothic-style windows is visible. The foreground shows a paved path leading through several gravestones. The overall scene is somewhat somber and quiet.

TRANSPORTED

The Light Ships

Church, Art and Community in the Lincolnshire Fens

François Matarasso

A TRANSPORTED COMMISSION 2014

The Light Ships

A serious house on serious earth it is,
In whose blent air all our compulsions meet,
Are recognised, and robed as destinies.
And that much never can be obsolete.

Philip Larkin, 'Church Going' (1954)



Lincolnshire's churches have been a focus of art and community for more than a thousand years. Built by England's finest masons and decorated by gifted craftsmen, they are treasure houses of art and sculpture, of glass, wood, metal and needlework. Their stones reverberate with the choral singing and organ music. From their towers, ancient bells peal over field and fen, as they have for centuries.

But that would not matter if the churches weren't also where people have gathered, generation after generation, to mark the important moments of their shared life, to stop, to think and to wonder. They have seen every joy and grief, quiet happiness, anxiety and stoic resolution. They record the life of a community in parish registers, monuments, newsletters, pictures and gifts. Each one is like a ship carrying its ever changing, ever constant family across the seas of time.

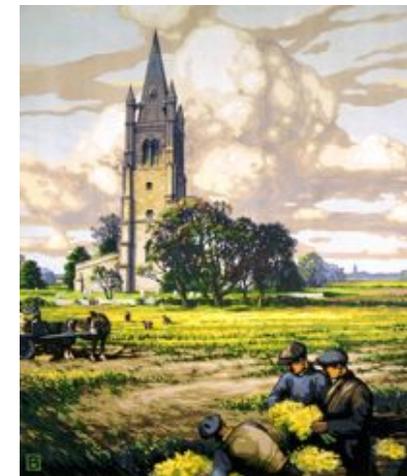
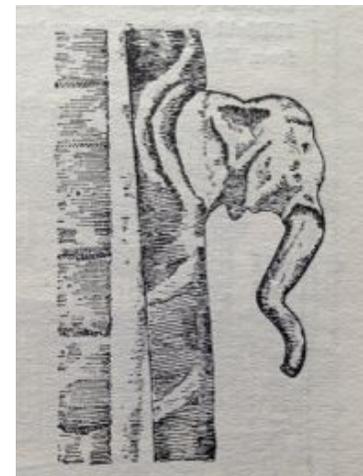
This summer, community artist François Matarasso will be exploring the church's place in the creative and social life of 14 Fenland villages in conversations with local people.

The Light Ships will celebrate every aspect of the church: fabric, furnishings and natural surroundings, of course, but no more than the memories, feelings and stories of those who are the church—the people who keep it alive, those without whom it would be just one more museum.

And that includes those who never go, except perhaps for a funeral, or to whom it's so familiar that they pass it without a thought. **Everyone is welcome: details of how to get involved are on the back cover of this booklet.**

François' work is commissioned by Transported, a local programme which aims to get more people in Boston and South Holland enjoying and participating in arts activities.

The Light Ships will include Bicker, Fishtoft, Swineshead and Wrangle (Boston); Cowbit, Gosberton, Holbeach St. Johns, Moulton, Moulton Chapel, Moulton Seas End, Quadring, Pinchbeck, Sutton St. James and Whaplode (South Holland). The villages have been chosen because they have not yet had an opportunity to be involved in Transported's consultation programme.



The **Light Ships** will culminate in publication of a short book in Autumn 2014. The larger part of the book will be a patchwork of voices and images celebrating the fenland church and its place in cultural and community life. There will also be an essay reflecting on the complex meanings of the parish church today. Copies will be given to all the contributors and to the churches, as a small contribution to their fundraising efforts.

The book will be accompanied by a short film, portraying the churches as works of art and places of continuing creation. Book and film will be presented at a special event in early autumn – a kind of artistic harvest festival – at which everyone involved will be able to celebrate the unique place of a parish church in each community's life, always changing, always itself.



IMAGE CREDITS

Colsterworth Church, by William Stukeley 1722
Gosberton Church, anon. AA Book of the Road, 1963
'See Lincolnshire by Train', by John Bee, LNER c.1937
'The Free Seat', by James Loblely, 1869
Photographs by François Matarasso 2014

For more information about

THE LIGHT SHIPS

or to get involved in the project
please contact **Lauren Williams** on
TransportedLauren@litc.org.uk
or call **07747 271824**
<http://thelightships.com>



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Transported is a strategic, community-focused programme which aims to get more people in Boston Borough and South Holland enjoying and participating in arts activities. It is supported through the Creative People and Places initiative.

<http://www.transportedart.com>