

# Ceramic Pandemic

Connecting COVID-19 with historic pandemics reminds us of human resilience. Research has shown the impact of the Black Death plague pandemic which killed 60% of the medieval predecessors of today's living communities. In 2021, people across Lincolnshire commemorated their experience of COVID-19 by designing ceramic tiles in the style of those adorning church floors during the Black Death.



*Medieval ceramic tiled floor in Westminster Abbey*

Making the new tiles was a complex process. Working first on paper, each person devised their own unique design representing something important to them during COVID-19. Some chose pastimes, people, pets or places that helped them get through, others remembered what had been endured, lost or changed.



Tile designs had to be simple and use just two colours, like the medieval tiles. Once complete, each image was pricked out through paper onto soft red clay square tile blanks, and then meticulously carved into the surface.



The tiles were dried, and the cut-out areas carefully filled with soft white slip clay. Once dry the surface was filed away to reveal the design anew, now in red and white. The tiles then had to be glazed and fired. This was the riskiest part of the process: it was poignant that not all tiles survived unbroken...



The completed tiles are stunning - glossy dark red with striking images in gleaming creamy white, all different but all harmoniously connected. Individually, each tile is a unique work of art showing one experience of something done, loved, feared or lost during COVID-19; together, the tiles are a vivid collective commemoration of the many impacts of COVID-19 and some of the paths taken through it.

# The COVID experiences inspiring the tiles

Notes from conversations with tile makers discussing their choice of design. Some experiences depicted will be familiar to many, others more unusual. All are relatable.



1. PE lessons near the beautiful Crowland Abbey kept me sane while home-schooling my children!
2. I painted – it's what I do.
3. With much less traffic, it was lovely to hear birdsong.
4. I baked cakes most days.
5. Washing hands so much made your skin terrible.
6. A skull and crossbones, locks and facemasks; an NHS rainbow and kites flying over fenland walks.
7. I gardened - a lot!
8. My indoor gardening friends lived in my smart phone, and we posted each other plant cuttings.
9. Medieval daisy wheel graffiti were to keep away evil, as I learnt on an online course: it seemed appropriate.
10. Redesigning our garden overcame virus thoughts.
11. The sun symbol from 'Tangled' - watching this movie made me happy.
12. I missed people most - we met no-one on our daily walks but felt connected by seeing new stones added to a small heap every day.
13. My daily working-from-home view.
14. I was a fishmonger but during lockdown I decided to go to university. The owl symbolises the town I left and the knowledge I've gained.
15. Being on my allotment more, I noticed a nest for the first time and loved watching the blackbird feeding its babies.
16. Domus is medieval Latin for home, which was so important.
17. Supporting each other got people through long days and nights.
18. We spent Lockdown 1 lambing
19. We were like little ninjas, we just shot out to do things and then shot back in again.
20. My egg is cracked by the stress of months shielding, but also symbolises new beginnings afterwards.
21. Tree blossom in Spring 2020 was beautiful, I felt sorry for people unable to get outside.
22. Covid was all around the world.
23. I loved learning to knit socks – but now have eight pairs I haven't yet used!
24. I gave away our asparagus glut around the village. It was brilliant to see so many people – even if socially distanced.
25. The covid virus.
26. I did a lot of spinning.
27. Before retirement, I was a nurse practitioner, so I was fascinated by the vaccine.
28. A medieval Grim Reaper's skull and scythe - I lost my eldest sister to covid.
29. Spectacular Lincolnshire sunrises and sunsets comforted.
30. A Tudor rose, for us gardening in England.
31. Me and my family bought goats, which we'd wanted for a while. They represent us coming together during the pandemic.
32. Bells for our wedding we had to postpone, but we loved seeing the Starlink satellite convoy.
33. It was difficult to do my MSc dissertation with only online help, and my graduation ceremony was delayed by 2 years!
34. My dog loved trampling through bracken on our daily walk, when we'd often see the Red Arrows.
35. We clapped for carers & the NHS.