Association for Heritage Interpretation

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Next issue will focus on: South West England

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Individuals can join AHI as Associate or Student Members or can apply to be elected, subject to qualifications and experience, as Full Members or Fellows. Businesses can join as Corporate Members with the same rights as individual members. All members receive *Interpretation Journal*, and other mailings. They can participate in AHI events and (if paid-up) can vote at the Annual General Meeting.

Front cover image: Mural of civil rights campaigner, Barbara Deterring, by artist Michele Curtis. Part of the Seven Saints of St Pauls project, featured in Toolkit on page 38.

Foreword

Since publishing the last edition of *Interpretation Journal*, we've seen so much change in the world, with the huge impact of the coronavirus pandemic on the sector and the surge in support and solidarity for the Black Lives Matter movement.

As editors, we have used these developments to help shape our plans going forward. Our ambition for the Journal content was always to encourage debate, address topical issues and foster greater inclusivity. With the support of AHI's Trustees, we will be working hard to ensure that future editions strive to achieve this balance.

In this edition, our Debate throws a spotlight on the different ways Covid-19 has affected people's jobs in the heritage and cultural sectors, while Jim Mitchell, AHI Chair, offers some positivity for the coming months in his round-up. His 'View from the Chair' includes details of webinars and other initiatives AHI is working on to support its members.

We have handed the Toolkit over to AHI Trustees Beth Môrafon and Damon Mahoney to outline their work to support the Association's anti-racism pledge, and incorporate greater diversity and inclusion into our working practices as interpreters.

We are sad to report the death of Honorary AHI member, Geoffrey Lord OBE, who supported the Association in the 1980s, when it was known as the Society for the Interpretation of Britain's Heritage. We send our condolences to Geoffrey's family and are including an obituary written by Michael Hamish Glen.

In this edition

News & Views brings together latest news, opinion pieces and research from academics, Fellows of the AHI and others across the globe. In this edition, Carolyn Lloyd Brown makes a case for revitalising the pan-Wales Interpretation Strategy to continue support for local communities (My view). Peter Seccombe discusses how heritage interpretation can help migrants to feel more integrated and welcome (Global view). Philip Ryland shares recent research on visitors' perceptions on the importance of object authenticity in museums (Reporting research). In Interpretation news, Bill Bevan gives an update on the new-look AHI awards; and we report on a new Digital Skills for Heritage initiative offering practical advice on using new technologies and ways to consolidate your digital skills.

Our **Focus** for this edition is on Wales, where we present three projects spanning social history, climate change, outdoor education and language. In this section, we aim to share projects that inspire you and give working examples of interpretation that you may want to consider using yourself. In Pembrokeshire, we hear how a park ranger's conversations with local people led to an oral history project to record a farming community's memories about their land being requisitioned for WWII (Reflections of Castlemartin). Along the coastline, CHERISH (Climate, Heritage and Environments of Reefs, Islands and Headlands), an archaeology-based interpretation project, reminds us how fragile our heritage sites are and how easily history can be lost to the impact of climate change and extreme weather (Interpreting coastal heritage in the face of climate change). In Gwent and Monmouthshire, we talk to Pavla Boulton about the creation of a toolkit for use in schools to help preserve the language we use to describe our natural heritage (The lost words).

In Practice shares best practice, knowledge and skills; it encourages opportunities for debate and interaction. We ask about people's mental health: the views of those returning to work after furlough, the challenges of working through lockdown and people's fears for the future (Debate). We talk to Adam Koszary about his experience of using historical content and interpretation on social media as an effective way to reach new audiences and build online relationships (In conversation with…). And we find out how the creation of a trail of the University of Oxford's collections has led to a long-lasting relationship with the LGBTQ+ community (Hidden stories in plain sight). Charlotte Dew explores how the sector has embraced 'going digital' to adapt to the Covid-19 restrictions, and in Toolkit we look at AHI's new best practice guidelines for supporting diversity and discuss how we can do better when it comes to inclusive interpretation.

We welcome your feedback on the articles published in this journal, so please get in touch to share your views or suggest ideas for future editions: journal@ahi.org.uk

We hope you continue to keep safe and well in these challenging times. ■

Nicky Temple and Nicolette Evans

View from the Chair

Jim Mitchell
Chair, AHI

Welcome to the Winter 2020 issue of the *Interpretation Journal*.

Join us in November!

We are excited about our first ever virtual conference taking place in November, on Wednesday 11 and Thursday 12 November, with a follow up session on Tuesday 24 November. We have three topical and urgent themes under the title 'Reignite: new opportunities for interpretation following unprecedented times'.

- Black Lives Matter and the response by heritage interpreters
- Covid-19, the challenges and opportunities for interpretation
- A new-found engagement with the natural world? The benefits and challenges of lockdown for interpreters

We are running it on the Hopin platform which has lots of additional features to make it a great virtual event.

Sharing good practice

AHI is working on all new and upgraded best practice guides, which members will be able to exclusively access via the resources section of the website from late Autumn. Just log in with your username and password to access them. We are always looking for feedback on the resources we provide so please do contact us with any thoughts or ideas.

Have you joined an AHI webinar yet? We have held several over the Summer and intend to keep producing these at least every couple of months to keep sharing knowledge and thoughts about the profession. At the moment these are free to all (members and non-members alike) and can be about any topics related to interpretation. Please share with contacts who you think might be interested in AHI and if you would like to either present yourself or have ideas for future topics then get in touch.

Diversity and inclusion

Trustees Beth Môrafon and Damon Mahoney are working with AHI member Iona Keen to develop case studies for a new best practice guideline on diversity and inclusion. You'll also find an article in this Journal and you'll see from our conference that we are working urgently to both develop our resources for interpreters as well as increasing diversity directly in our membership and awards panels.

Difficult times

The disruption and uncertainty caused by Covid-19 looks set to continue for the foreseeable future. It has been incredibly difficult across the heritage, environment and arts sectors and it is with huge concern we see how many organisations are or intend to lose staff, often those involved in visitor engagement. In addition, many businesses and freelancers are struggling.

We will continue to advocate for the role interpretation can play in any green recovery from the pandemic. You can share your thoughts and ideas on the AHI members Facebook page or contact us to discuss this or indeed any other topic. I know that we will continue to support each other through the Winter and that, despite the challenges ahead, interpreters and interpretation remain vitally important roles and skills to foster and develop for the future. ■

AHI360 Programme

Time to revitalise a big, brave vision?

Carolyn Lloyd Brown
FAHI

AHI Fellow, Carolyn Lloyd Brown, takes over the *My view* column to discuss the pan-Wales Interpretation Strategy, putting forward a case for its future.

Gather round, fellow practitioners, let's join one of those lively late evening post-conference conversations. If we were co-creating content for a timeline of the Association, what are the milestones in our profession since its creation in 1975? How would we chart the Association's journey from a gathering of enthusiasts to professional cohort? What were the key events, and who were the key movers?

A contribution I would like to offer for discussion is the **pan-Wales Interpretation Strategy**, a far-seeing and hugely ambitious project that held interpretation up as a cornerstone of a nation's cultural development and national identity. A visionary concept championed by Marilyn Lewis (then the Director of Cadw*), it started in 2007 with a review of Cadw's interpretation provision. This led to investment in a series of major thematic plans during 2010–12, commissioned by David Penberthy, Cadw's Head of Interpretation. The aim was to present *'key themes of Welsh heritage at national, regional and local levels for the benefit of local community identity and pride, lifelong learning and tourism. A national heritage interpretation plan would provide the foundation for a more co-ordinated and coherent approach to interpreting Wales' heritage and culture.'* [Cadw, Nov. 2009]

Cadw felt that a co-ordinated approach could have a number of potential benefits, as it presented an opportunity to:

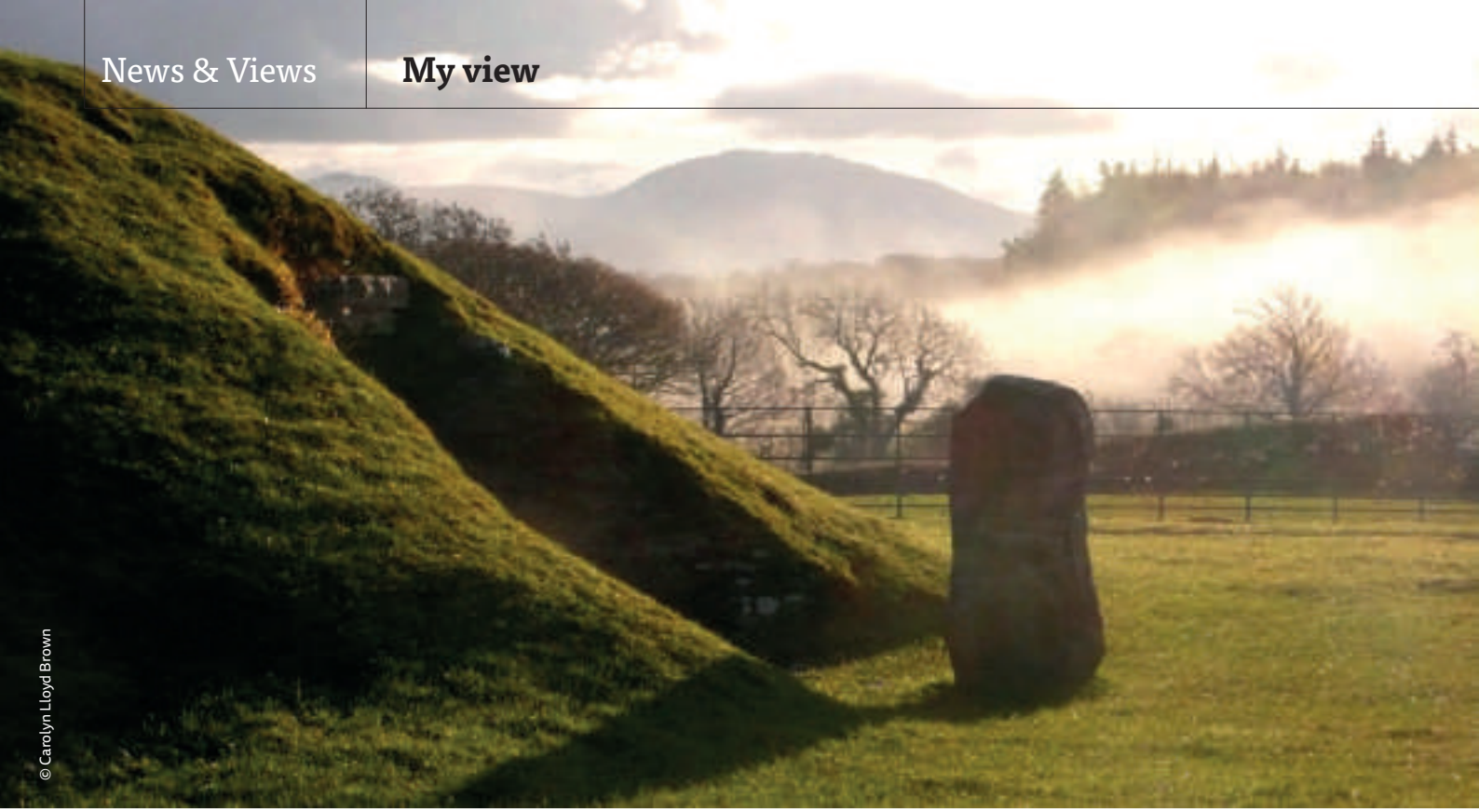
- Present the history of a whole nation in a co-ordinated way, and use this as a unique selling point in promoting Wales as a tourism destination
- Improve understanding and awareness of Wales' rich stories
- Improve the visitor experience and increase appreciation
- Raise awareness of current best practice and interpretative media options, appealing to a wider range of audiences
- Engage with other key national partners more effectively
- Increase the role of local communities and provide positive guidance as to how they might add value to other heritage initiatives
- Enhance local and national pride.

A period of consultation with key organisations from local to national level distilled the 'Story of Wales' into a series of chronological and thematic strands, from prehistory to medieval Welsh princes, the growth of towns and manors to the first industrial nation, spiritual landscapes and maritime Wales. In parallel with this major planning stage, Wales received significant European funding to support heritage tourism investment, which organisations from community councils to national agencies could apply for over a four-year period.

I worked at strategic level, writing the national plan for prehistory, and also with local communities and individual sites, delivering interpretation, using guidance from other plans. So how successful was such an ambitious approach in practice for the planning and implementation process? And what has happened since then in terms of delivery and evaluation? I'd like to share my reflections and the application of lessons learnt.

Personally, the opportunity to develop ideas at a national level was excellent experience, underpinned by the understanding that, no matter what scale, the discipline of a logical process of analysis remains essential. The lesson learnt is to get good and continuing buy-in from a range of partners, all with their own strategic directives and priorities. The practical advice I always give to clients is to seek partners whose values and demonstrable commitment align with your own. →

Comic book interpretation developed for Bryn Celli Ddu, a neolithic burial chamber on Anglesey



Bryn Celli Ddu, a neolithic burial chamber on Anglesey

More consultation and collaboration after the planning (and project funding) stages helps sustain commitment and delivery, but is rarely given the resources. For example, setting aside funds to provide a long-term or permanent project champion to support organisations with training workshops, specific site planning and capacity building greatly adds value and leverage to the investment. In my experience working groups tend to be created for specific projects but then disbanded as soon as the funding has been expended, missing the long-term opportunity to build meaningful and effective relationships, even when team members, including volunteers, move on.

Harlech Castle: Cadw developed interpretation to appeal to its core family market

When using the plans to deliver interpretation on the ground, it was helpful to have the background and historical framework. Interestingly, I didn't always agree with the themes suggested, which perhaps reflects how personal the development of ideas can be in terms of practitioner interest, knowledge and selection. There is no 'right' or 'wrong' here, just a demonstration that a strategic approach needs to offer context and guidance, but developing individual regional and local plans really helps to capture local significance and stories of specific interest.

Cadw invested in a set of resources that summarised and contextualised a large chunk of Welsh history that was thematically linked, helping communities and their visitors to make connections between people, places and events. This resource is still being used to support new interpretation projects and their delivery. The challenge I've reflected on is how successfully an organisation can distil and interpret a nation's history, and enable multiple perspectives and voices to be heard and shared, through the experience of visiting (mainly) landscape sites and monuments. Bringing together a range of resources including relevant artefacts and archive material, and using these with community groups to explore history, identity and sense of place, is one approach and enables regional and local distinctiveness to be articulated. The increasing use of co-creation and co-curation is brilliant, and needs time

to develop, but funding timescales tend to be relatively short, making it challenging to engage people, then build skills and capacity relatively quickly.

Cadw's evaluation of some 25+ heritage tourism projects demonstrated that organisations had continued to use the pan-Wales Plan and recommended its use to others as a framework to inform their development ideas. In one area the Plan was rolled out to heritage and tourism businesses through a Toolkit and via Business Engagement Workshops, an excellent way to underpin the aims and desire to build advocacy.

© Carolyn Lloyd Brown

Tre'r Ceiri: on the Llŷn peninsula, one of the best preserved Iron Age hillforts in Britain

Cadw invested in a set of resources that summarised and contextualised a large chunk of Welsh history that was thematically linked, helping communities and their visitors to make connections between people, places and events.

Looking back on the pan-Wales Plan, I think the vision was brilliant, and brave. The £18.1m investment across Wales during 2010–15 was incredible, producing 25+ new visitor experiences. It delivered some £19m GVA** per annum to the Welsh economy, and additional tourist visits contributed at least £0.5m GVA. Given those investment impacts, isn't it time to review and revitalise the project, establish evaluation metrics, build new partnerships and develop training workshops to help organisations use the Plan effectively? This would continue the support for communities on the ground, who now more than ever need to creatively engage with visitors and be ambassadors for exploring Wales' rich cultural landscapes. Embedding interpretation within tourism development is longstanding good practice; 2020 is demonstrating the desire for people to connect with outdoor spaces, supporting mental and physical wellbeing. Historic places and monuments are needed, and Cadw can demonstrate it has the Plan to make those places and stories part of our recovery.

Conwy Castle: the guard sculpture by John Merrill, part of a series of artistic responses to the castle

© Carolyn Lloyd Brown

To continue the discussion: do you feel it is useful to create a national interpretation framework? Do you know of other places that have tried a similarly strategic approach? How do we communicate 'big histories' to visitors? Lots of current 'hot topic' relevance here! ■

With thanks to David Penberthy for collaborative reflection

* Cadw – Welsh Government's historic environment service.

** GVA – gross value added is the measure of the value of goods and services produced in an area or sector of an economy.

→ Carolyn is Principal Consultant for The Heritage Angel. www.heritageangel.co.uk

Authenticity in museums

Dr Philip Ryland
MAHI and Trustee

Philip Ryland presents recent research on visitor perceptions of the importance of object authenticity in museums.

For many visitors, part of the excitement in visiting a museum is to view real-world objects which represent the culture, heritage, science and achievements of historic peoples and civilisations and the landscape around them. Many museums regard this legacy of objects as part of their distinctive attractiveness and indeed will celebrate these objects as, in some cases, the 'crown jewels' of their collection. In recent years, the practice of allowing visitors to touch and/or handle objects has become more widespread. Often this personal connection with cultural or natural objects is achieved through the creation of exact copies or replicas which can be handled safely. This has reignited debate on whether the authenticity of the object being observed or handled really matters. This article reports on an interesting study by Schwan & Dutz published in 2020 which explores visitor perceptions of the role of authentic objects in museums. To illustrate some of the comments being made in the study, this article also includes direct quotes from museum visitors which have been posted on social media platforms.

For museums, providing the visitor with the opportunity to see 'the real thing' has always been of great importance in enhancing the telling of a story, but it is known that the use of authentic objects goes well beyond this, by stimulating a much deeper experience and therefore increasing the impact of the story. It is widely accepted that an authentic object can encourage a much greater level of reflection and immersion, such as: *'When I gazed at Tutankhamun's ebony and ivory chair, I imagined him sitting in front of me'* ('*Fred34*', 2019).

Reisinger & Steiner (2006:69) suggest that authenticity refers to the 'non-contentious genuineness of an observable thing such as an artefact', whilst Theobald (2005:88) simply states authenticity as meaning 'genuine, unadulterated or the real thing'. However, it is not always possible to obtain the authentic object for reasons of fragility, scarcity or value, of where it is currently being housed and, in some cases, because the real thing may not exist anymore. In these circumstances, copies or replicas are often used; the level of accuracy of the copy does of course need to be considered, as does the way in which it is presented to the visitors, such as: *'I didn't realise the cup was not the real thing, until I read the label'* (*'Janey69'*, 2018). Interestingly, Hampp & Schwan (2014:354) found that only 46% of visitors 'preferred authentic objects' whilst 47% were 'happy to accept copies or replicas', particularly where they were 'true to the original', such as *'The colours on the engraving were wonderful... even though the sign said it had been touched up'* (*'PondCleaner6'*, 2016).

Nine museums in Germany formed the basis for Schwan & Dutz's study which used six main questions to explore the role of authentic objects in museums. Whilst their study focused upon the differences in response between visitors visiting science, cultural or natural history museums, for the purposes of this short article the results have been combined. A total of 703 responses were obtained with the average age of the respondent being 43. In terms of gender, 357 (50.8%) were female and 341 (48.5%) were male. Whilst 339 (48.2%) were visiting a museum for the first time, 364 (51.8%) were repeat visitors and 418 (59.5%) of the respondents were visiting the museum in a group.

In preparing for their study, Schwan & Dutz (2020:219) summarised the perceived value of authentic objects as follows: they attract visitors' attention; heighten their situational interest; arouse their curiosity; surprise them; touch them emotionally; stimulate

For museums, providing the visitor with the opportunity to see 'the real thing' has always been of great importance in enhancing the telling of a story, but it is known that the use of authentic objects goes well beyond this, by stimulating a much deeper experience and therefore increasing the impact of the story.

their imagination and make them think more intensively about the object and its history. This is nicely illustrated by '*Jock*' (2017) who said: *'I could feel the heat of battle unfolding in front of me as I stared at the painting.'*

In Table 1, the left-hand column presents the results relating to the characteristics of authentic objects. Perhaps unsurprisingly 'truly showing how it was' scored the highest level of agreement and, interestingly, most visitors felt that the monetary value of the object was not a key requirement for it to be authentic. The right-hand column reports on the different psychological effects of viewing authentic objects. The most popular effects being: 'enhanced comprehension', 'brought the story to life' and 'encouraging greater curiosity', as illustrated here: *'How did they make it? It was so small and delicate'* ('*FiremanJoe*', 2016).

Chhabra's study of 200 museum curators in Iowa, USA, recorded similar findings on the role of authentic objects with: 'representing the past' (4.49), 'having a documented history' (4.24) and 'representing the community' (4.00) some of the highest responses (2008:436). In that study, the representation of an actual period in history was deemed to be the most important factor, illustrated here by a comment from a visitor to the British Museum, London, who said: *'Pompeii came to life for me – what a fascinating time it must have been'* ('*Chris27*', 2013).

In Schwan & Dutz's study, the visitors were also asked about the impact of restoration or conservation activity upon an object. The responses they posed to the statement 'To me an object is authentic even if....' were as follows: 'it has been conserved' (4.13), 'it has been restored' (4.08) and 'some parts have been supplemented' (3.87). This is illustrated by *'Sukie2'* (2019) who said *'the wooden handle was restored, but that was ok'*. However, visitors were less positive in their response where 'many parts had been supplemented' (2.88) and 'It is not obvious what is original and what is not' (2.70) (Schwan & Dutz, 2020:230).

Schwan and Dutz posed two further questions to gauge the visitors' reaction to the use of non-authentic objects; the results are in Table 2.

There was not a particularly strong response to 'not looking at an object if it was not authentic'. Indeed, most visitors agreed that replicas had a role, particularly where the original was very fragile or did not exist any more.

Replicas were also regarded as a valuable inclusion for completeness in telling the full story associated with an exhibition. →

Table 1. Response of visitors to the Likert statements about authentic objects in museums (adapted)* from Schwan & Dutz, 2020:226, 228).

*Note: for simplicity, not all of the results obtained in this study are presented in the table below.

**Score is measured here on a Likert scale where 5= strongly agree and 1 = strongly disagree

The most positive scoring responses were:

Question 1: 'To me, an object is authentic if it...'	**Score****	**Question 2 Authentic objects...'**	**Score****
Truly shows how it was	4.55	Bring a topic closer to me	4.32
Tells stories	4.01	Help me comprehend something	4.25
Has endured	3.87	Make me curious	4.23
Provides important insights for research	3.80	Make me wonder	4.04
Shows many details	3.79	Make me think	3.89
Is of historical importance	3.64	Transport me into a historical period	3.89

Whilst the least positive scoring responses for these two questions were:

Is complete	2.96	Stimulate my fantasy	3.70
Is related to a famous person	2.44	Surprise me	3.56
Is beautiful	2.35	Touch me	3.42
Is valuable/Is expensive	2.34/ 1.50	Make my heart beat faster	3.14

Table 2. Response of visitors to the Likert statements about non-authentic objects in museums (adapted* from Schwan & Dutz, 2020:230, 231).

*Note: for simplicity, not all of the results obtained in this study are presented in the table below.

**Score is measured here on a Likert scale where 5= strongly agree and 1 = strongly disagree

Question 4: 'If I notice an object is not original...'	Score**	Question 5: 'The role of replicas is...'	Score**
I search for explanations	3.13	I would look at a replica if the original does not exist anymore	4.61
It makes no difference to me	3.07	If an object is important for completing an exhibition, then a replica can be shown	4.53
I do look at it more closely	2.95	It should be explicitly indicated if an object is not an original	4.49
I am disappointed	2.43	Only under a few circumstances do I find it justified to show replicas	3.16
I do not look at it further	2.04	In a museum, I expect to see original objects instead of copies	2.89

Chhabra (2008:443) talks about the object being there to represent the past but equally to create a personalised connection between 'then' and 'now', as illustrated here: *'Glad I saw it, but didn't agree with its use by them, blimey!'* (*'Skater6'*, 2018).

In offering a brief summary of some of the results revealed in this study, it seems reasonable to suggest that:

1. Authentic objects should be used to show 'how it was', to bring the past to life and connect the visitor to the story being told.
2. Authentic objects undoubtedly help the visitor to greater levels of comprehension; they make them think and stimulate curiosity.
3. Most visitors accept that conservation (and in some cases modification) of original objects is necessary but explanation of which parts are original remains important.
4. The use of copies or replicas was accepted by most visitors providing the object was explicitly marked as such. Indeed, where hands-on experiences or demonstrations were taking place, it was often deemed to be desirable to use copies or replicas.
5. Whilst this study did not specifically focus upon the needs of a younger audience, other studies (such as Bunce, 2016) have done so and seem to have found that children tend to value authentic objects more than replicas and in consequence when exposed to them explore the topic more deeply.

In summary, recent events have perhaps reminded us that for a museum authenticity is only one aspect of a broader set of domains which also include the dilemma of identity and reflection of the current societal climate, its norms and relationships. This indeed recognises the delicate balance that museums face in presenting objects (be they authentic or replicas) and their need to reflect on and consider the values of the original donor (where relevant), the feelings of the local community, which may well represent a significant part of their core audience, as well as the needs and perspectives of a broader audience, who they may be hoping to attract to the exhibition in particular or the museum in general. ■

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→ Philip teaches tourism and is also Associate Dean (Student Experience) at Bournemouth University's Business School.

Geoffrey Lord OBE, 1928–2020

Michael Hamish Glen
AHI Trustee

In the early days of AHI, when we called ourselves the Society for the Interpretation of Britain's Heritage (SIBH), we were fortunate to receive financial aid from the Carnegie UK Trust (CUKT), based in Dunfermline. Apart from some initial funding when we were founded, the Trust was able to support us with a generous grant of £15,000 in 1984. This enabled us to launch and run the Interpret Britain Awards for three years.

The man behind this grant was Geoffrey Lord, Secretary of the CUKT from 1977 to 1993. He was a Rochdale boy with a degree in social sciences from Bradford University and an ongoing interest – which lasted all his years – in the arts and disability. He prompted the creation of organisations that promoted access for disabled people to arts and cultural venues. This was an important element in our awards scheme. He saw interpretation as being an integral part of social services in the broadest sense.

Geoffrey took a personal interest in SIBH for a long time, in addition to joining us at many events including, of course, our award ceremonies and dinners. He was a man of gentle disposition, generous of spirit and always determined to help those less able to fend for themselves. AHI should be proud of, as well as grateful for, its association with the Carnegie Trust and, in particular, with Geoffrey, an Honorary Member of AHI, who died in July of this year at the age of 92.

As a personal postscript, Geoffrey and I had another link – my father had been Treasurer of the CUKT in a previous generation. ■

New look for AHI 2021 Awards

Bill Bevan
AHI Trustee

The AHI 2021 Awards will open for entries later this year, with a new name and some exciting new categories to respond to coronavirus and to make the awards more inclusive and diverse.

AHI 2021 Engaging People Awards, sponsored by The Creative Core

Celebrating the best heritage, nature, culture and science experiences in Britain and Ireland.

Are you telling great stories about your place, people or collection? Do you inspire your visitors or local communities to explore and discover more? Would you like more people to know about the excellent work you are doing? If so, these are the awards for you.

Project eligibility period is 1st April 2019 to 5th April 2021. If you would like to register your interest in the awards please email admin@ahi.org.uk with subject 'Register interest for AHI Awards' and we will email you when we are open for entries.

2021 Categories

1. Indoors, sponsored by NovaDura

For projects that engage people and provide interpretative visitor experiences inside.

2. Outdoors, sponsored by HDC International

For projects that engage people and provide interpretative visitor experiences outside.

3. Lockdown Response, sponsored by Bright White Ltd.

Online or physical interpretation developed in response to Covid-19 when your site or venue was closed, or your event cancelled, due to lockdown.

4. Untold Stories (can you sponsor?)

For projects telling the story of groups, communities or events that have been overlooked or excluded in the past.

5. Community Engagement (can you sponsor?)

For projects where the community takes the lead or where organisations work in equal partnership with their communities to tell local heritage, nature, culture or science stories.

6. Temporary Event or Activity (can you sponsor?)

A time-limited activity such as a performance, exhibition or heritage activity, including events that have taken place indoors, outdoors or online.

The winner of each category will, once again, go on to contend for the prestigious AHI Award for Excellence.

You will also be able to nominate individuals for:

Young Interpreter, sponsored by Michael Hamish Glen and VisitMôr Ltd

An inspirational person aged between 16 and 21 who has been involved in or led a project that has shared our heritage, nature, culture or science. The recipient will receive mentoring from the recipient of the Lifetime Achievement Award.

Lifetime Achievement

For an outstanding and lasting contribution to the interpretation profession over a significant period of time.

Would you like to sponsor the 2021 AHI Engaging People Awards?

We have still some individual category sponsorship packages left, as indicated. If you are interested in becoming an awards sponsor for 2021 please email admin@ahi.org.uk for details. ■

Developing digital know-how in the heritage sector

Nicolette Evans
Journal Editor

With the emergence of Covid-19 and the heritage sector moving online, the National Heritage Lottery Fund (NHLF)'s new Digital Skills for Heritage initiative will be a useful resource for those looking to consolidate their digital skills and knowledge.

Split into two strands, the initiative consists of the Digital Heritage Lab and Heritage Digital.

The Digital Heritage Lab, managed by the Arts Marketing Association (AMA), provided workshops and events, digital bootcamps and The Lab digital skills academy to support 60 small and medium heritage organisations develop their individual digital capabilities and capacity. There are still opportunities to watch their online workshops.

Insung Yoon/Unsplash

The Heritage Digital portal offers free digital skills training and events, delivered by The Heritage Alliance and their project partners Charity Digital, Media Trust and Naomi Korn Associates.

This website is worth checking out for its free, practical digital guides, such as how to create a heritage trail app, growing and engaging with online audiences, copyright factsheets, how to keep data secure and online marketing strategy tips. Webinars, in-depth masterclasses and virtual events on this platform will continue until July 2021.

The NHLF is also running a Digital Confidence Fund for 20 organisations across the UK, offering one-to-one mentoring and consultancy advice. Case studies, insights and resources will be shared on the NHLF website about ways organisations can thrive using digital. ■

Further resources:

Heritage Digital: www.heritage-digital.org

Arts Marketing Association: www.a-m-a.co.uk/digital-heritage-lab

National Heritage Lottery Fund: www.heritagefund.org.uk/blogs/digital-skills-heritage-meeting-coronavirus-covid19-challenge

A sense of place

Using heritage interpretation to help migrant integration

Peter Seccombe
Co-director, Red Kite Environment

Migration and refugees have been in the news for decades, and never more so than in the present time. But how do we, as interpreters, face the challenges of creating heritage interpretation for, and with, people with varied ethnic backgrounds? How can we help to integrate migrant people into their host communities? One project, funded by the EU's Erasmus+ programme, has been investigating some of these issues.

The catchily titled 'Heritage Interpretation for Migrant Inclusion in Schools' (HIMIS) looked at how heritage interpretation can help young people with migrant backgrounds to understand the heritage of their adopted homes, and how this can help them develop a sense of inclusion. The project also used heritage interpretation to challenge exclusionary attitudes from the host communities, aiming to foster the EU's fundamental values of respect for human dignity and human rights, and for democracy, equality and the rule of law.

Migration in Europe

Migration has taken place for millennia, resulting in the complex mix of cultures that make up Europe today. But the last century has seen a significant increase as people have escaped wars, sought refuge and solace, and searched for better economic conditions.

Aside from learning a new language, migrants have to cope with unfamiliar customs, beliefs and value preferences. It is, of course, a huge challenge and even by the third generation many immigrant families still struggle to feel integrated into their communities.

Student band from 3rd Geniko Lykeio Kerkyras

The HIMIS project

HIMIS was set up as a pilot project to explore how heritage interpretation could help alleviate some of these issues. The project involved students and teachers from four secondary schools – from Wrocław in Poland, Waldkirch in Germany, Anzio in Italy and Kerkyra (Corfu Town) in Greece – together with CeSFOR, an Italian adult education training provider, the University of Freiburg and Red Kite Environment as the UK partner, all providing training and support. Interpret Europe joined HIMIS as an associated partner, supporting the project with its expertise and networking opportunities.

Using heritage interpretation techniques, each school developed a programme of events and activities involving students from varied backgrounds to help them understand their local heritage better. The students worked with their teachers and classmates from the local area, 'co-creating' exciting interpretative projects for an audience of visitors. They explored stories from different perspectives, developing ideas, building activities, recording their experiences and engaging with each other

Students from 3rd Geniko Lykeio Kerkyras leading their tour of Kerkyra

and their audiences. They worked together to produce a collective first-hand experience of a place from their different cultural backgrounds.

The schools' projects

So, what did they do? The students chose the places, themes and stories themselves, discussing at length the things that interested them and then going on to develop exciting projects.

- The **3rd Geniko Lykeio Kerkyras** in Corfu developed a guided tour of the Old Town using four sites to tell a love story over different periods of time, with role-play and puzzles. A different activity was presented at each stop to an audience of students and teachers from other schools. At the end they discussed how their attitudes towards Kerkyra and its history may have changed.

- Students from the **Zespol Szkol Nr 6** in Wrocław chose to explore the history of the medieval Town Hall, which traditionally was both a meeting place for traders and the municipal judiciary. Through photography, drama, storytelling and a blog, they developed a role-play of a medieval courtroom trial, presented to an audience of students from invited schools.

- The **Kastelbergschule Waldkirch** in southern Germany explored the notions of 'home' from different perspectives, investigating students' own family trees. They then explored Waldkirch's history of organ-making and how it was enhanced by the knowledge and skills of workers from near and distant places. They developed stories through drama and role-play and created a video called 'Heimat', which means home.

- The students of **Marco Gavio Apicio School** in Anzio, Italy, chose a local park which had evidence of settlement by the Volsci people. Their project focused on the war between the Volsci and the Romans around 600 BC which was the subject of Shakespeare's play *Coriolanus*. They developed a tour of the park telling stories using site, sound, touch, taste and smell. →

Students from Marco Gavio Apicio School in Anzio sharing food baked using ancient recipes

Students from Marco Gavio Apicio School in Anzio explaining the use of spelt flour, which was common in Roman times

"The audience realised that the involvement of migrant students was the most significant aspect of all. The history of Anzio, learnt thanks to students that are not from Italy, has been appreciated even by the youngest visitors... The students acquired an awareness of the fact that they have been a part of an important event regarding the local community they live with."

Feedback from a teacher from Marco Gavio Apicio School in Anzio, Italy

Students learnt about audio and video recording, explored drama and storytelling and used art, crafts and cookery to bring their histories alive. And what was really fantastic was the close relationship that developed between the students of different ages and backgrounds, and the teachers.

What did we learn?

We learnt that teenagers, often considered a challenge for interpretation, can be massively enthusiastic if they are co-creators, and explore stories that are relevant to their lives. By working together, they were helping to break down barriers, getting involved in fascinating activities and achieving great satisfaction in developing a project and presenting to an audience. We also learnt that, while 'teaching' and 'interpretation' often have different approaches, by adopting heritage interpretation and 'co-creation' the learning process can be so much more fun and engaging.

Want to find out more?

The project and its outputs are explained on the HIMIS website – www.himisproject.eu – where you can also find HIMIS Guidelines for teachers, a HIMIS Teacher Training Course and videos of the schools' projects. ■

Further reading:

Lehnes, Patrick & Seccombe, Peter (eds). 2018. How to use Heritage Interpretation to foster inclusiveness in schools – the HIMIS Guidelines for teachers. Published online: http://himisproject.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/HIMIS-Guidelines_EN.pdf

Giampieri, Gabriele, Lehnes, Patrick & Seccombe, Peter (eds). 2018. Facilitating *Heritage Interpretation in Secondary Schools* – The HIMIS Teacher Training Course. Published online: www.himisproject.eu

Interpret Europe. 2017. Engaging Citizens with Europe's cultural heritage. How to make the best use of the interpretive approach. Published online: www.interpret-europe.net/top/material.html

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Reflections of Castlemartin

A lifeline to a community's past

Lynne Houlston
National Park Ranger
Jill Simpson
Interpretation Officer, Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority (PCNPA)

How do you hold on to past events as the people who lived through them gradually disappear? This was the dilemma facing National Park Ranger Lynne Houlston, as the 80th anniversary of the establishment of a military range at Castlemartin in Pembrokeshire approached. 'A few years ago, I realised we were losing the generation of people who could remember what this area was like before the military moved in. So, in early 2019, I started searching for people born before 1939, so I could record their memories and preserve them for future generations.' Lynne explained.

Stories to be told

Castlemartin was a productive agricultural area on the south Pembrokeshire coast, when in 1939 the War Office requisitioned 6,000 acres of the vast Stackpole Estate. The residents of 14 farms and 11 cottages were evicted, having been given between six weeks and six months to leave.

As a National Park Ranger, Lynne has many duties including recording the populations of chough, peregrine and other birds, and plant species. She ensures that cliff climbers observe rules about nesting birds, liaises with the military and meets north Pembrokeshire hill farmers, bringing their sheep to graze at the range during the winter months. Through conversations with these people and others, Lynne realised there were stories to be told. She wanted to capture people's memories and find a way of recording them. A film seemed the best option.

Jill Simpson, one of the two Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority (PCNPA) interpretation officers, saw the huge value of this project for not only the communities involved, but as a story to tell the wider world. With her support and that of a local film →

© Gordon Smith

Brownslade Mansion

© Gordon Smith

Crickmail Farm – nothing remains of this house and farm

maker, the project began, with funding from the Defence Infrastructure Organisation's (DIO) Stewardship Fund, for whom the significance of the anniversary was a key factor.

Lessons learnt

Gradually people began to talk, produce old family and school photos, farm accounts and other source materials. Through word of mouth, Lynne made contacts and set up interviews. Although people were happy to share their memories, most did not want to be recorded or filmed.

For an oral history project, finding the right people who are prepared to be recorded is vital. Finally a couple came forward: one was May Roberts, another was Tom Richards, both in their 90s. Although the sight of a microphone or camera was off-putting, with support and understanding, we found a way to share their stories.

Once filmed, 'Reflections of Castlemartin' told the story of the land, the people, their displacement and their memories. Its first presentation to ex-residents and their descendants, at the 80th Anniversary event, brought tears to the eyes of many. Seventy-eight people attended, including seven who remembered being evicted. 'It wasn't a celebration, but a time to remember and reflect on what had happened and why,' said Lynne. 'It was an emotional day for some, as the majority of farms their families had lived on had been destroyed, and for some barely a stone or wall was left.'

Lynne Houlston installing a new information trail on St Govan's Head on Castlemartin Range

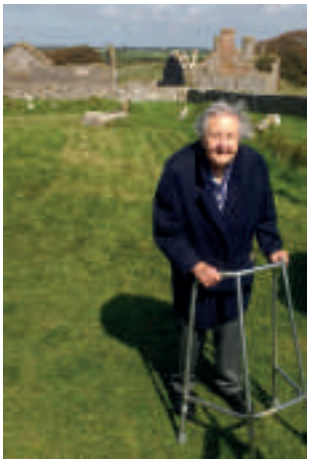
Subsequent showings attracted huge crowds, who heard about it mainly through word of mouth. Village halls were filled to capacity, especially at Castlemartin and in the Welsh-speaking upland community of Brynberian, where the grazing farmers lived. It took the story to people who empathised: 'There but by the grace of God…' as there had been a plan to create a military range on their hills too, though defeated, known locally as the 'Battle of the Preselau'. It was helpful too, for the families of the farmers, to see on film the land where their animals and the farmers disappeared to for much of the year!

It gradually became clear that people would have liked even more information about those mentioned in the film. Frequently they asked, 'How did they all end up?' People wanted closure and a happy ending. In retrospect, conducting a pilot project might have indicated this need.

"It wasn't a celebration, but a time to remember and reflect on what had happened and why," said Lynne. "It was an emotional day for some, as the majority of farms their families had lived on had been destroyed, and for some barely a stone or wall was left."

A Challenger II tank firing with Flimston Chapel & Farmhouse in the background

May Roberts on the 80th Anniversary of the range, in front of Flimston Farmhouse where she was born in 1928



A film for the future

Now a second film is in the making, funded because of a DIO underspend, which moves the story on. It describes the continuing grazing projects, set up jointly by the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park, the military and the farmers, who bring their animals to the military range and how this benefits local flora and fauna conservation work. This will be a film about conservation and biodiversity but also about working with farms and food production. It is a partnership. Out of the ashes of the past and through current conservation, the land lives on in a new guise.

Project's legacy

Making the first film and sharing it with the community has meant that the older folk now know that their story, and that of the land they worked and the farming they did, will not be lost. Instead it has been made into a DVD, which will be available through the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park website and the People's Collection Wales for the next generations and others to see. The buildings may have gone, the material history lost, but the stories, the photographs and films will remain.

Part of the project's legacy is the aspect of well-being. It took the story of what years ago was a traumatic event, and gave it back to the people, to those still with us, who lived through it, and to the younger generations, who maybe have had little or no knowledge of it.

It is surely the mark of a successful community project that, each time the film has been shown, audience numbers have been well beyond expectations, and people's responses to it showed it will now be a significant part of the community's legacy and sense of well-being. ■

'Reflections of Castlemartin' is available to watch on YouTube: https://youtu.be/9hqLtqyYJF8

→ Lynne is a National Park Ranger at the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority (PCNPA) and came up with the idea for the film. She was supported by Jill, one of the two PCNPA interpretation officers.
To find out more, please visit: www.pembrokeshirecoast.wales

Clare Lancaster
CHERISH Project Manager
talks to
Nicolette Evans
Journal Editor

Interpreting coastal heritage in the face of climate change

CHERISH (Climate, Heritage and Environments of Reefs, Islands and Headlands) is a six-year EU-funded Ireland–Wales project that sets out to increase knowledge and our understanding of how climate change (past, present and near-future) and extreme weather affects the cultural heritage of the Welsh and Irish coastlines. Clare Lancaster shares with Nicolette Evans how cutting-edge archaeological techniques can help uncover the history of these fascinating at-risk sites.

A truly cross-disciplinary project, CHERISH is led by the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales in collaboration with Aberystwyth University (Department of Geography and Earth Sciences), The Geological Survey of Ireland and the Discovery Programme – Centre for Archaeology and Innovation Ireland.

Staff use a 'toolkit' approach for interpreting sites, merging the disciplines of archaeology, remote sensing, geography, paleoecology, geomorphology, maritime survey, underwater archaeology and geosurveying.

Don't look down! CHERISH team members Patrick and Louise battling with heights and ropes to record eroding features

Case study – Dinas Dinlle, a prehistoric coastal fort

Owned by the National Trust, Dinas Dinlle, a coastal fort, has been a significant part of Gwynedd's coastal landscape for over 2,000 years, over which time it has seen huge amounts of change. Climate change has undoubtedly had a large part to play, transforming it far beyond what would have been recognised by the original builders. As an archaeological site, Dinas Dinlle presented a unique opportunity to uncover the human story, most notably how people responded to the challenges faced in such a formidable and dynamic environment.

Going over the edge

In June this year the CHERISH team investigated the archaeological and geological features of the western cliff face, which was exposed by heavy erosion during Winter 2018–19, to understand how the fort may have been constructed and over what timescale.

Stony material from coring samples suggested some construction works, meaning the people responsible for building Dinas Dinlle could well have exploited pre-existing natural features to steepen the slopes and accentuate their constructed banks. Perhaps the existence of natural 'ramparts' and 'defences' – coupled with a prominent coastal position – first attracted prehistoric settlers to the site.

The work was continued by CHERISH and Gwynedd Archaeological Trust, who oversaw the first ever open-trench excavation at Dinas Dinlle in August 2019, dug by 50 volunteers from the local community. For many volunteers, this was their first dig where they were able to learn more about their local history and gain key archaeological skills.

As the archaeologists watched the diggers strip away the turf and topsoil it became clear that all was not as expected. They were faced with tonnes of sand overlaying the archaeological layers and features.

By far the most impressive discovery was the monumental stone-built Iron Age roundhouse uncovered within the interior of the fort. Measuring an impressive 13m in diameter, it is believed to be one of the biggest of its kind ever found in Wales and perhaps one of the most threatened by erosion anywhere in the UK. The stone walls themselves are striking, measuring over 2.4m in thickness and at least 1.5m in height.

The excellent preservation of the stone walls of the roundhouse suggests that the initial sand deposition at the site may have been rapid, likely during periods of major storm activity. →

Set on a hill of glacial drift sediments overlooking the sea, Dinas Dinlle coastal fort is a Scheduled Monument whilst the cliff face itself is a Site of Special Scientific Interest, designated for the geological importance of exposed glacial sediments

This work has provided an exciting insight into the history of Dinas Dinlle, but it's clear that some of its secrets may never be revealed. Why build such a huge fort with such well-built, robust structures within it? Were the inhabitants protecting themselves from the threat of violence from neighbouring tribes, or were they actually fighting a long battle against relentless winds, storms and the dynamic environment all around them? CHERISH will continue to pursue these questions in the hope of unlocking more of the story.

"We may never find all the answers, but what is certain is that this extremely valuable heritage site, like others along the Irish Sea coastline, is currently fighting its own battles to survive against climate change, sea-level rise and severe erosion."

Community engagement

In August this year, CHERISH secured a further €1 million for interpretation and promotional activities to support schools, local communities and 'blue economy' businesses, such as those involved in coastal tourism. This will include creating educational resources that align with the curriculums on climate change and adaptation in coastal communities, and a range of media products that businesses can use to offer an enhanced visitor experience at their sites, improving the promotion and understanding of their coastal regions.

The northern wall of the roundhouse uncovered by excavation. The impressive walls appear to have been constructed from large stones to a width of 2.4m

Engaging with schools using drones and 3D models

This builds on previous community engagement programmes including guided coastal and archaeological walks, a mobile travelling exhibition that visited local libraries, museums and visitor centres and attended major cultural events such as the Welsh National Eisteddfod, one of the largest music and poetry festivals in Europe. Staff have spoken at conferences throughout the UK, Ireland and further afield and a virtual CHERISH conference is planned for 2021.

All aboard

One of the more unusual community engagement tools was hosting open days on boats. Using the Geological Survey of Ireland's survey vessel, staff met more than 400 people and made many useful connections with diving groups, local archaeologists and local authorities when the vessel docked at ports around both Irish and Welsh coasts.

Staff also embraced 3D printing to bring digital data back into the real world, which proved to be a hit with school children across Wales! Just before the Covid-19 lockdown, a few sites were printed in miniature including the one of Dinas Dinlle, showing the extent of the site and highlighting how it is being affected by coastal erosion. In the future, staff hope to take this work forward and to begin to develop reconstructions and digital animations showing how sites previously appeared and how climate change is dramatically changing their appearance today.

© CHERISH project. Produced with EU funds through the Ireland Wales Co-operation Programme 2014 – 2020.

Smiling volunteers and staff! This project would not have been possible without the fantastic group of volunteers that worked through the wind and rain to uncover the archaeology

Sustainability

As climate change continues to change our weather systems, CHERISH staff have been looking to the past for clues and setting up procedures for the future. They have been gathering evidence on historical storms, flooding and coastal change in the UK from a range of archival sources (personal diaries and correspondence; travelogues; newspaper reports; log books; maps; charts and literary sources). They have also developed best practice guides to standardise the community recording methods and management of cultural coastline heritage, to support citizen scientists and professionals wishing to continue this type of work in their own communities.

'We have reached the halfway point in CHERISH and have achieved a lot within those three years,' said Clare. 'If I could give any advice for future projects it would be to be prepared for the unexpected. As we find ourselves in unprecedented times you must have the ability to adapt. We are finding new ways to achieve our objectives and the strong working relationship between the four partners has allowed us to keep delivering across both countries and to coastal communities in Wales and Ireland.' ■

Further resources

www.cherishproject.eu

Follow CHERISH on Facebook @CHERISHproject and on Twitter @CHERISHProj

Podcast about how archaeology can play its part in the wider climate change debate: www.podbean.com/eu/pb-a87is-e30720

The CHERISH team met with members of the public and discussed the impact of climate change on cultural heritage, the process of seabed mapping and our plans for research in the Wexford area

→ Clare is the CHERISH Project Manager with the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales. The project received a grant of €4,133,996 through the Ireland-Wales Programme 2014-2020, part of the European Regional Development Fund, which is split between the four project partners.

The Lost Words

Preserving the language of our natural heritage for our children

Pavla Boulton
University of South Wales
talks to
Nicky Temple
Journal Editor

"Once upon a time, words began to vanish from the language of children. They disappeared so quietly that at first almost no one noticed – fading away like water on stone. The words were those that children used to name the natural world around them: acorn, adder, bluebell, bramble, conker – gone! Fern, heather, kingfisher, otter, raven, willow, wren... all of them gone! The words were becoming lost: no longer vivid in children's voices, no longer alive in their stories..."

(*The Lost Words: A Spell Book*, 2017)

Dandelion, The Lost Words: A Spell Book, taken from p47 of the toolkit

The Lost Words: A Spell Book was created by author Robert MacFarlane and artist Jackie Morris as a response to the removal of everyday nature words from the _Oxford Junior Dictionary_. Words such as dandelion, conker and ivy were considered no longer worthy of inclusion due to a lack of use. Pavla Boulton, Senior Lecturer in Education at the University of South Wales, used _The Lost Words_ as the inspiration for a student-led project to remember these words, resulting in the creation of a toolkit for schools as part of the Early Years curriculum. Nicky Temple talks to Pavla about the development of the toolkit and its importance in keeping the language of our natural heritage alive for future generations.

Where did the idea for the toolkit come from and how did you use _The Lost Words_ to inspire your students?

I'm always looking for new ideas to inspire my Early Years (EY) Education & Practice students and help them develop their creative thinking for lesson planning. When I came across *The Lost Words* I was instantly drawn to the beautiful illustrations. I was also extremely saddened to see that the language we use to describe the natural world was beginning to disappear and words that seem so much part of our memories of childhood might be lost to future generations. How can we captivate children to learn that stewardship of the planet is everyone's responsibility, if they lose their connection to nature?

My Year 2 students take a module called 'Children Learning through Landscapes', so I was keen to introduce them to *The Lost Words* and get their thoughts on the reasons why the book had been published. They were completely astonished that this important vocabulary had been excluded and, along with it, the opportunities to encourage children to develop descriptive language. This exploded into many conversations with the overriding feeling being that we needed to come up with ideas for EY practitioners to use to ensure these species remain part of children's experiences. The students started to develop their ideas and I really wasn't expecting them to come back with such a lot of rich and well-underpinned concepts and teaching ideas. From there, the toolkit evolved into a more structured teaching resource.

Pavla Boulton

Students working on ideas

Robert McFarlane and Jackie Morris have provided us with the inspiration in creating this beautiful book and it absolutely captivated my students. The illustrations make you want to turn the page and the language in the spells is quite mesmerising. They are spells, rather than poems, as they are intended to be read aloud or sung, to keep the words very much alive.

Can you give us an example of an activity within the toolkit that you think worked particularly well?

Students focused on ten words from the book, with ideas ranging from using conkers for solving maths problems to making cupcakes with dandelions. I particularly love the kingfisher activity, which takes the children out into the natural environment to collect leaves and sticks to make a kingfisher collage. That inspired sensory learning experience is then brought back into the classroom where the discussion is continued in a more structured way.

I also really like the lesson based on the word 'otter', as it focuses on the children's physical development by encouraging them to think about where otters live, how they move and →

Kingfisher, The Lost Words: A Spell Book, taken from p72 of the toolkit

what they eat. The children then pretend to be otters as they explore a natural obstacle course, collecting sticks to make a nest and foraging for food. This again transfers back into the school setting, where an obstacle course is made from crates, chairs and trays of water to continue the otter play, bringing it to life.

As to the student practitioners, they observe and experience the benefits and the challenges of outdoor provision during their placements and as they start their careers, or go on to further training, they now have the confidence to take children outdoors to learn. This can encompass Forest School, though that is not essential. Forest School is not a place, it's a pedagogy, but it is taking some time to re-educate our education system! There has been a misconception that you can't take children outside to learn if you are not Forest School-trained. Of course you can – and you absolutely should! You can teach children the curriculum outdoors in many different and exciting ways.

Students focused on ten words from the book, with ideas ranging from using conkers for solving maths problems to making cupcakes with dandelions. I particularly love the kingfisher activity, which takes the children out into the natural environment to collect leaves and sticks to make a kingfisher collage.

You collaborated with several other organisations. What support did this offer to the students?

I've worked with both Gwent Wildlife Trust (GWT) and Natural Resources Wales (NRW) for some time, but it was wonderful to pull these partnerships together for this project and their support was invaluable. Working in partnership was a key element and the students really benefitted from their expertise in different areas.

NRW has been very supportive in helping to develop the toolkit and now host it on their website. They were also crucial in the translation of the toolkit into Welsh, which was extremely important to us – especially as we are talking about language and words being lost.

GWT supported the students in exploring the outdoors and learning about our natural heritage at their local nature reserves. GWT were also able to fund the purchase of a copy of *The Lost Words* for every primary school in Gwent and Monmouthshire.

Jackie Morris and Robert McFarlane have also been very supportive of the project and excited that their work has inspired the development of the toolkit and its use in schools.

What do you hope the toolkit can go on to achieve in the future?

My hope is that the toolkit can become embedded in teacher training and that the activities inspire an appreciation of our natural heritage in children for years to come. Our approach has been shared with colleagues at other universities and I'm hopeful that it will inspire similar projects to emerge. I'm looking for other books to use as inspiration and stimulus for my next cohort. The ideas that students come up with are so fresh, and far better than anything I could think of – I've been in the game a long time! ■

References:

McFarlane, R. & Morris, J. 2017. *The Lost Words: A Spell Book*. Penguin.

Toolkit: www.outdoorlearningwales.org/images/uploads/resources/files/Toolkit_of_Thematic_Plans_and_Lesson_Ideas.pdf

→ Pavla is a Senior Lecturer at the University of South Wales, lecturing on the Early Years Education & Practice Degree.

DYNAMIC INTERPRETATION
IN A CHANGING WORLD

Dominique Bouchard
Head of Learning and Interpretation
and Joe Savage
Senior Interpretation Manager, English Heritage

English Heritage cares for over 400 historic buildings, monuments and sites across England, from prehistoric earthworks to grand estates. As with all heritage organisations, Covid-19 had a dramatic effect on their operations, from closing sites to furloughing more than 85% of their staff. In this article Dominique Bouchard and Joe Savage share the remedial actions they undertook which now form a new central strand of ongoing work they call 'Agile Interpretation'.

English Heritage sites receive millions of visitors annually. In March 2020 we closed all our sites due to Covid-19. Making the most of the collection during lockdown was important, but prioritising the visitor experience during the phased reopening required a new approach entirely: Agile Interpretation. While this began as a crisis management approach with an emphasis on innovation, rapid turnaround and bridging gaps in the visitor offer, it soon evolved into an exciting way to think differently about interpretation and is now a key part of English Heritage's on-site storytelling strategy.

Lockdown

When the country locked down, the Agile Interpretation programme created new digital-led initiatives in three areas: online historical content, support for free-to-enter sites and home learning. Existing digital assets and resources were quickly repurposed and repackaged to maximise access and serve a remote audience. But the biggest challenge was looming – when sites eventually reopened some areas would remain inaccessible and key interpretation would be withdrawn (guidebooks, play areas and interactive etc.). We also knew that with limited staff we had reduced capacity to respond to rapidly changing Covid guidance. →

New 'Watch' panels and QR codes help visitors access content that can be changed easily, such as audio guides and video demonstrations

Behind the scenes inside Audley End House – the wildly popular Mrs Crocombe character from English Heritage's YouTube cooking series

Two key initiatives allowed us to create a dynamic approach to visitor routes, accommodating either a relaxation or tightening of restrictions: the use of existing digital media as part of the on-site experience and transferring our audio guides to a Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) platform.

Space syntax and dynamic routes

Dynamic routes, which could direct visitors around a site and change according to public health guidance, required a consistent framework and exciting interpretative content. We had some exploratory conversations with architects at University College London specialising in 'space syntax', a spatial analysis approach that represents and compares the way people move through complex, interlinked spaces. It was fascinating and it showed us quickly where our visitor routes would need to be rethought.

We recognised the value of QR codes in temporarily allowing us to create flexible interpretation that could be produced quickly and moved around sites, adapting to changes in the visitor route.

We started to remodel how visitors move around sites, identifying 'nodes', locations where key decisions influence each visitor's journey around a site, for Agile Interpretation interventions. We recognised the value of QR codes in temporarily allowing us to create flexible interpretation that could be produced quickly and moved around sites, adapting to changes in the visitor route.

We created a suite of seven panel templates with a QR code and simple text to indicate the type of content available: Watch, Listen, Family Fun, Look Inside, Explore the Collection and Find Out More. The content came from a variety of material that had never previously been part of the visitor experience.

Audio guides and BYOD

Audio guides are the principal form of interpretation at 30 of our sites with a take-up of 40–60%. Although we now have a protocol in place to distribute handsets safely, some visitors still feel apprehensive, so we decided to extend all our audio guides to a BYOD platform.

Working with our current handset provider, Guide-ID, the BYOD approach lets visitors choose an option that best suits their needs, either a proprietary device (Podcatcher) or a Progressive Web App (PWA). A QR code at the entrance enables visitors to stream individual audio guide stops on demand. The flexibility of the system allows our staff to turn the audio stops on or off instantly according to the changing accessibility of the rooms or spaces.

As an organisation with hundreds of large and complex sites, it is not feasible to wholly refresh the interpretation every few years. However, the Agile Interpretation programme has challenged us to be more flexible, to work more effectively across departments and to be nimbler, more responsive and more playful. While the project certainly has its limitations, the approach allowed us to address restrictions at more than 50 sites in time for their reopening this summer.

Lessons learnt

- You can never have too many or too varied digital assets. Investment in digitisation, photography, reconstructions/illustration, audio visual assets and education resources is a key part of organisational adaptability and sustainability.
- Gardens and landscapes were our summer offer bulwarks and have more potential. New gardens/landscape-focused Agile Interpretation projects are in development at Battle Abbey and at Belsay Hall and Gardens.
- Visitors delight in informal contact with clear and engaging experts. By supporting experimentation, teams can be empowered to create rich, dynamic and multilayered experiences to draw visitors in and give them unique interactions with experts at low cost.
- Breaking down the barriers between 'web' and on-site content provides flexibility to vary interpretation over time, and dynamic content encourages visitors to return so they can discover new stories. ■

→ Dominique leads English Heritage's national portfolio which includes interpretation, digital curatorial, learning and youth engagement teams. Joe oversees the interpretation and enhancement of English Heritage's 375 small and free sites.
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Audley End House and Gardens, outside Saffron Walden, Essex

IS THIS WORKING?

FINDING NEW WAYS TO WORK DURING LOCKDOWN

Rachel Mackay, Sam Jenkins, Jim Mitchell and **Louisa Blight** talk to **Nicolette Evans**
Journal Editor

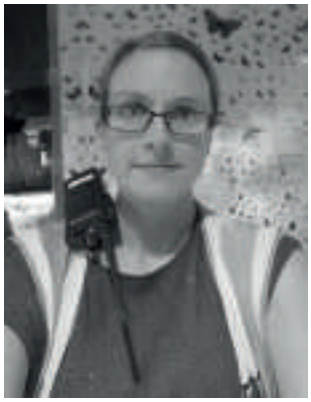
What do you do if you can't work during lockdown? How do you work off-site? What's your biggest fear for the future for yourself or the sector? Can good things come out of these challenging times? How will you protect your mental health going forward?

We put these questions to four heritage professionals in different parts of the UK to hear first-hand how they've been adapting to working in lockdown.

Rachel Mackay manages the Historic Royal Palaces buildings at Kew: Kew Palace, the Great Pagoda, the Royal Kitchens and Queen Charlotte's Cottage. All four buildings are now shut until 2021, so she's currently on furlough. Rachel has used this time to set up The Recovery Room to share research and resources for heritage operations as we all try to recover and rebuild after lockdown.
www.therecoveryroomblog.com @rachmackay

Jim Mitchell is Chair at AHI. He's been an AHI member since 2007 and a Trustee from 2013. As Chair, Jim is committed to help AHI grow and help interpreters develop and gain from its support and professional network. Jim works at the New Forest National Park Authority, developing interpretation and outreach programmes and partnerships.

Sam Jenkins is a Collections Officer at People's History Museum in Manchester and co-founder of the Museum Wellness Network on Twitter. The People's Museum is the national museum of democracy, telling the story of its development in Britain and the history of working people.
@SamJamJenkins @Museum_Wellness



Louisa Blight is the Collections Manager for The Box in Plymouth. The Box was due to open its doors in spring this year, as the flagship project for the UK's Mayflower celebrations, marking 400 years since the Pilgrim Fathers set off for America. The heritage centre, which includes a museum, art gallery and archive, opened on 29th September 2020.

What it's been like working through lockdown?

Sam: I started working from home in March and, like others, we had to move to a more digital way of working – loan agreements were made by email and virtual meetings. One of the big lessons we learnt was that we needed to do less, but better. The situation also encouraged a lot more collaboration and joined-up thinking between teams as we tried to use the resources we had.

My new ways of working have also been about my attitude to work. It's always been a struggle to divide time between the various commitments in work because, as in all museums, we're usually working at (or over) capacity. This time has given me a chance to stop and rethink how I manage this work. Moving into 'hybrid' working means I can go into the museum building for a day or two a week and just focus on working with objects, or doing the back-of-house collections work. My time working from home can cover the programmes, loans and other bits that always need doing.

I've also had to rethink what productivity means to me. Early on during lockdown, I realised that I was getting really, really tired trying to do 7 hour days, 5 days a week, even though that was my normal working pattern. Then I thought about it, looked at old calendars, and worked out how much time was actual work, and how much was 'other stuff'. Walking to meetings, grabbing a drink, having a quick chat, phone calls – between all of these, I worked out that the seven hour office day would usually mean about five hours of productive work. So I decided to stop feeling bad for doing less work and instead look at what I have achieved in the day, and let myself take regular breaks to decompress.

We were already talking about more video conferencing for AHI Trustee meetings, but this has helped us along and for the foreseeable future these meetings will be virtual.

Jim: We were already talking about more video conferencing for AHI Trustee meetings, but this has helped us along and for the foreseeable future these meetings will be virtual. This has saved us time and expense, and enabled us to meet a bit more often. Sadly we had to cancel our conference and some training events this year, but we've taken the opportunity to run a virtual conference and start a webinar series which has been very popular. So while we miss the face-to-face interaction, we are still reaching out and connecting with new people – both members and those interested in joining AHI.

Louisa: Like all heritage institutions, The Box was significantly impacted by the pandemic and the lockdown period. However, we were at a point in our development programme that meant we were unable to completely halt activity on-site. So I've been going to The Box site at least once a week throughout the lockdown.

Adaptation has certainly been the name of the game in the last few months. When Covid testing was limited, anyone with a cough, or whose family member started showing symptoms, or had a family member in a risk category, had to stay away from the workplace. This meant that in the early days we were constantly reassessing staffing and our ability to continue with our installation programme. Added to this there was confusion in the construction industry. The base-build contractors were extremely keen to continue, but the fit-out contractors were facing the same issues as us. Eventually we had to pause the installation, whilst continuing with the base build. Thankfully the project team was able to work from home and we all soon became experts in virtual platforms whilst juggling home schooling like everyone else.

Luckily, because of the importance of The Box for Plymouth, which became increasingly more obvious as time passed (it officially became the spearhead of the city's economic recovery 'Resurgam' programme), no-one was put on furlough within the internal team. In fact, we only 'closed down' operations on site for a matter of weeks and were back working on the installation from early June. However, we haven't completely returned to a post-Covid framework of working. We have all seen the benefits of conference calls, working from home and working more flexibly.

Rachel: Because I've turned my focus to my support website, I've learnt a whole new way of working! Building a website, blogging, producing video content are all things I didn't do in my day job, so being able to develop my skill set whilst on furlough has been great. It's also a bit of a lifesaver, to be honest, because my initial reaction to being furloughed was not a positive one! I felt completely useless at first, but then I realised I didn't need to be in my normal job to make a difference. Like many of us, I'm learning to deal with professional uncertainty, but I think it's also important to find the opportunities that exist in these circumstances and do the best we can for our own development, and that of the sector. →

What's your biggest concern for the future?

Sam: It's hard to pick the biggest concern from the general dread of 'what is going to happen?' My worries for the sector, my concerns about how we move to hybrid working, or if I'm going to have to brave the commute, or even for my friends and family are all summed up with that one question.

I'm in a fairly stable position at the moment, and I know I'm incredibly lucky for that, but I am worried about how the sector will fare in general. How will we cope with more redundancies, or museums closing? How will our mental and physical health suffer if we have to take on even more work, or struggle for fewer jobs? And will the sector do any better at looking after employee mental health?

Jim: I worry about the long-term impact on the interpretation sector. We've seen many charities, environmental and heritage organisations struggle and we are still a long way from the end of the disruption. Interpreters will be able to adapt to new ways of working, but when charities or jobs are lost, it may be a long time before they can return, if at all. The sector then loses that expertise and knowledge, in addition to the personal difficulties people are facing.

Louisa: I think it has to be uncertainty. The landscape is still changing daily and it is very difficult to plan ahead. Every heritage professional is concerned about two things: the heritage and the people who access or engage with it. Whilst we have done everything we can to protect our collections throughout the pandemic and create exhibitions of national quality and interest, we're at the mercy of our customers and the government in terms of who is able or prepared to engage with them physically. I am also concerned about changes in expectations.

Rachel: I worry about younger people coming up into the sector now; with jobs being lost all across the heritage sector there is bound to be less choice, and more competition. This could have a real negative impact on attempts to diversify the sector. In 2019, @FOHMuseums, a Twitter account that champions front-of-house (FOH) roles, carried out a survey and found that 91% of early year FOH staff had a Masters degree; and this was before the pandemic.

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There are already too many barriers into museum and heritage work. We need to get smarter at recruitment, stop pushing people into Museum Studies degrees and focus instead on the qualities that this crisis has shown the sector really needs: adaptability and people skills.

Have there been any positive outcomes?

Sam: While it's been hard, there have been some positives. I've been able to help our team do some really interesting things, as we've had a bit more time and space to think and plan, and my work/life balance is much, much better. Without a two hour commute a day, I focus less on what's been happening at 'the office'. I go for walks in the evening, and find it much easier to decompress that way than sitting on a crowded train.

My work also feels more balanced. I've finished jobs that had been sitting on my to-do list for months, if not years, so that's definitely a win. And we've also worked on our team communication a lot.

Jim: A shock like this gives us the opportunity to take stock and think about what we are doing. It can give individuals and organisations a reason to make changes they have perhaps thought about or would like to see. It also has meant people are connecting with things that are important to them, like family, friends, hobbies, nature and heritage. This is an opportunity for interpreters and for AHI.

Louisa: There is so much to be positive about! As a heritage professional I, like the rest of my team, am keen to ensure that paperwork surrounding collections, whether that relates to condition, location or governance is up to date. With all the preparations for the opening of The Box and the major collections moves, which had taken place in Autumn 2019 and early Spring 2020, we had so much to catch up on. Working from home has enabled us to update thousands of catalogue entries and finalise documentation around our most recent and fascinating acquisition – a huge piece of Martinware studio pottery, a grotesque crab made by the Martin Brothers in the 19th century.

Rachel: A real positive for me is seeing the sector pull together. This has always been a sector that's really happy to share ideas and experience, but in the current crisis we have really come into our own. Sector bodies such as ALVA (Association of Leading Visitor Attractions), the Heritage Alliance, AIM, MA have been amazing at disseminating and clarifying information – at one point my primary source of news was the ALVA daily bulletin because it was the only thing that seemed to make any sense! There has been a real sense of camaraderie: people reaching out across the sector to check people are ok, sharing experiences around shutdown or reopening. It's been great to see, and was a real lifeline for me when we were isolated from our more immediate colleagues.

It's all going to be changing again as we get used to hybrid working, with some of us going back, others working from home and some doing both, so I think the biggest thing is to be kind to yourself and others.

How will you look after your wellbeing in the coming months?

Sam: I'm going to continue with my walks and try to keep my work/life balance in check. It's all going to be changing again as we get used to hybrid working, with some of us going back, others working from home and some doing both, so I think the biggest thing is to be kind to yourself and others. Remember that we're all experiencing things differently, so what you like, others might hate; what others like, you might hate. So don't beat yourself up if you don't like working from home, or if you're not ready to get on the train yet.

I'm going to be taking things slow – let myself get used to things as they are before I force myself to make another change (two days a week in the office is next). And keep letting myself have breaks.

Jim: I will make sure I keep getting outside. I used to cycle to the office every day, so now I do that in the morning before work or in the middle of the day. I've enjoyed noticing nature and appreciating it more and doing extra things to help it. I'm also making the most of the new opportunities flexible working and not being in the office has given me, such as meeting colleagues and friends outside whenever possible.

Louisa: The Box opened to the public in September and, for the next few months, we will be focusing on delivering the best possible customer experience. We've begun to show small groups around the venue and the feedback has been incredible. There is nothing more uplifting than praise from the people you have worked so hard to impress.

It has been extremely demanding to have to work so intensively throughout the last few months, so I will be looking forward to spending time with my family too. I've been amazed at how resilient my children have been to everything which has happened to them and this has really helped me to keep a positive outlook. They now deserve to have some of my time back!

Rachel: Lockdown was a real exercise in dealing with uncertainty, and I think that practise will serve us all well in the weeks and months ahead! Many of us are in limbo right now which can be difficult; even more so when you're working from home and the lines between work and personal time have become blurred. I find it really useful to maintain a routine; I have times when I'm at the computer, but then strict times, when I try not to think about work anymore. I've also found it really therapeutic to start visiting museums and heritage sites again. Not only have I missed them during lockdown, but it reminds me why I got into this sector in the first place: because I love heritage!

Further information

Toggl – free software that helps you track your time. https://toggl.com/track/

Culture, Health and Wellbeing Alliance shares UK projects to raise awareness of the benefits that the arts or cultural activity can bring to health and wellbeing. Their Covid-19 resources include guidance for restarting work, tips for digital training and working online as well as creative resources, freelance support and help for small businesses, venues and charities. www.culturehealthandwellbeing.org.uk

ALVA (Association of Leading Visitor Attractions) has a list of the latest government guidance for reopening and managing visitor sites safely under their Covid-19 resources. www.alva.org.uk

GOING DIGITAL – ONLINE EXHIBITIONS IN LOCKDOWN

Charlotte Dew
Public Programme Manager, The Goldsmith's Centre, London

Charlotte Dew goes on a virtual tour to explore the visitor's experience of online exhibitions and to what extent the sector has embraced new forms of digital interpretation.

When asked to explore what has happened in the digital exhibitions space during lockdown, I reflected that online exhibitions are not a new interpretative format, unlike much that the pandemic has compelled heritage organisations to trial. For example, the Bodleian Library has been presenting online shows since 2001 and its archive[1] provides access to 41, ranging from 'A Nation of Shop Keepers' (2001) to 'Alice in Typhoidland' (2020).

So, this raised the question – have online exhibitions been embraced in this period of expediated digital development? I believe 'yes' – in two ways. Firstly, via the promotion of existing online exhibitions, or those already in development that were launched during this time. Secondly, through the creation of 'new' online exhibition experiences, which are different to the typical format.

Covid-19 has exposed the relative limits of good-quality online exhibitions that meet visitor needs and expectations of a rewarding digital experience.

The Bodleian Library archive illustrates that usually an online exhibition has been a formulation of text, images and increasingly films that a user navigates through and around – billed as an 'exhibition' and not usually targeted at a specific audience. Sometimes the interpreted 'assets' are arranged hierarchically, or the structure can be flat and limited to a single webpage. Links to additional external resources may be made.

Arguably, the relatively didactic nature of a typical online exhibition reflects that – until now – they have not often been a priority output for museums. Their comparatively low importance is reflected in a paucity of critical discourse on the subject. This is alluded to in an April 2019 paper about an online exhibitions training tutorial for the British Museum International Training Programme: 'Online exhibitions present a relatively unexplored frontier in museum curation…technological inexperience prevents the universal adoption of online exhibitions in museums. Creating for an increasingly digital world requires technical skills…While museums have sufficient content to put online, the means for doing so are not readily at their disposal.'[2]

For this reason, it is not surprising that many of the pre-existing online exhibitions, promoted by sector bodies such as Art Fund during the pandemic, are on the 'Google Arts and Culture' platform, rather than hosted by the organisations themselves. For example, the British Library's 'Harry Potter: A History of Magic'[3] and the 'Faces of Freda [Kahlo]'[4] exhibition are both Google experiences. In the Evening Standard article 'The best virtual museum and gallery exhibitions from around the world to visit online'[5], seven of the eleven examples are part of 'Google Arts and Culture'.

Covid-19 has exposed the relative limits of good-quality online exhibitions that meet visitor needs and expectations of a rewarding digital experience. When exploring how to take a physical exhibitions programme online during lockdown, I was surprised by the lack of discoverable examples of good practice, especially on a small budget, or of rigorous thinking about how digital exhibitions can be tailored for different audiences. My research took me into the commercial gallery sector, where companies such as Artlogic[6] are creating software packages that enable virtual exhibitions and viewing rooms. Such platforms are not ideal for conversion to the public sector but are reflective of another industry

finding a cost-effective solution, from which something may be learnt. My findings and experience were corroborated when Tamsin Russell, Workforce Development Officer at the Museums Association, advised me that through her future museum skills research: 'one of the things that has come up as an immediate need is for organisations/individuals to develop skills in digital interpretation and digital exhibition design. There seems to be a gap in provision.'[7]

The 'new' online exhibitions content developed during lockdown has predominantly employed film to provide access to physical exhibitions that were forced to close, especially blockbuster shows at national museums. The approach varies between venues and the products do not fit the usual online exhibitions form. Virtual access to the Royal Academy's 'Picasso on Paper' show most closely develops the structure of a traditional online exhibition into a 40-minute film. The text from the interpretative panels displayed in each room scrolls up the screen and then the camera moves around the related exhibits, focusing on specific works.

© Will Barrett/Hastings Contemporary

The Tate's 'Andy Warhol' exhibition film experience is shorter – seven minutes – and takes a documentary style, with a curator and collections director in conversation, in the galleries. The viewer is shown certain parts of the show, and archival material is displayed on screen for context. There is less depth, but a good sense of the exhibition and its curatorial aims are shared. At seven minutes it is focused. Viewers can follow links to resources, including the interpretative text from each room of the physical exhibition, and some imagery, a practical guide to printing like Warhol, an article from Tate Etc. on Warhol and Ronald Reagan and a resource designed to introduce his work to children.

Hastings Contemporary's approach is the most experimental identified, and by contrast time-specific and interactive. 'Visitors' book to join a digital tour of an exhibition, navigated by a 'telepresence' robot, who moves around the show in real time. Five people tour virtually at once, with a member of the gallery staff to whom they can speak. The group can direct the robot and conversation. The project has been developed with two disability charities.

Each of these three film-based exhibition encounters looks to recreate the experience of visiting the 'real' exhibition. This is potentially more rewarding and engaging than the form online exhibitions have traditionally taken. Interacting in this way helped me to better understand the scale and form of the objects in the exhibitions. The films and virtual tour have a clear duration and linear structure, which reduced the potential to become distracted and click away from the experience.

Indeed this research has made me question whether using the term 'exhibition' is useful for heritage organisations in the online environment. It may be limiting the scope and understanding of online activity using collections. The Oxford English Dictionary defines an exhibition as: 'a public display of works of art or items of interest, held in an art gallery or museum or at a trade fair' – a physical experience. In preparing this article I found many examples of innovative online content and experiences developed during lockdown (most especially by museum learning teams), which do not fit the definition of an exhibition, but do involve engagement with collections. A more plural vision of online exhibitions – not based on replicating the structure and formalistic aspects of a physical exhibition – could serve to innovate the genre. It feels like the beginning of an interesting conversation, which the exceptional circumstances have made timely and critical to the sector's relevance and our audiences. ■

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2. Creating a Tutorial for Online Exhibitions for the British Museum's International Training Programme: digitalcommons.wpi.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=6411&context=iqp-all (accessed 19 September 2020)
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5. Evening Standard 'The best virtual museum and gallery exhibitions from around the world to visit online' (26th March 2020)
6. artlogic.net
7. Email correspondence (August 2020)

→ Charlotte is Public Programme Manager at The Goldsmith's Centre in London and a freelance Curator and Museum and Galleries Consultant.

ADAM KOSZARY

Adam Koszary is the Interim Content Lead at the Royal Academy of Arts. He is well known on Twitter for raising the profile of The Museum of English Rural Life (MERL) through his 'absolute unit' sheep meme, as Programme Manager and Digital Lead for The MERL and Reading Museum, and gained popularity for his animated gifs for the Bodleian Libraries. He also had a stint as Tesla's Social Media Manager before coming to the Royal Academy. Nicolette Evans talks to Adam about his career and how he has combined his love of history and digital storytelling to bring the quirkier side of museum collections to a wider audience.

There's a statistic which says only 1% of internet users create content. People are desperate to share and consume interesting things, and heritage organisations sit on mountains of content.

What does your current job involve?

I've only very recently been promoted to Interim Content Lead, managing the team which handles our video, website and social media content. As a lot of that is in flux at the moment, I can give you the short answer for my previous role as Social Media and Content Editor, which is that I make sure we have something interesting going out on Instagram, Facebook and Twitter every day of the week. A lot of people consider social media as purely digital marketing, but it's actually more like a virtual gallery. I work with our learning team to provide family activities, with our collections and curatorial team to tell stories about art and artists, and have conversations with the public every day. Usually we're reflecting what the Academy does in its programme but we're also creating new content based on what's trending and what our audience needs. This means we can be exploring Picasso's use of maquettes (sculptor's rough models) in one post, and discussing an article on the best art podcasts during lockdown on the next.

What inspired you to work in the heritage sector? What did it lead you on to do?

I work in the heritage sector for the same reason everyone does: to touch the objects other people aren't allowed to, of course. Other than that, I just knew I wanted to keep studying and learning from history while ideally getting paid for it.

Exploring and telling those stories led me to a job working on the redisplay at The MERL. Because the museum had to close to the public for two years, I got much more involved in the website, blog and social media. I realised I enjoyed the faster pace of digital storytelling – where instead of labouring over a label for six months, we could get stories written and published very quickly, and then have a direct conversation about those stories with the public. I also enjoyed adapting our stories and collections to how people used the internet, which meant animating medieval manuscripts, creating memes and having more fun than we're usually allowed to in the galleries.

Are there lessons from your work at Tesla that could benefit the heritage sector?

Only the lessons which any business could benefit from: have a clear plan, over-communication is the best communication and employ the right people.

What advice would you give to others wanting to reach different audiences?

To be honest reaching new and different audiences is just a matter of understanding that audience and its needs, then employing or training the right people with the right skills in creating content which satisfies that audience's needs. If you run community projects or do any kind of audience engagement, the methods are exactly the same for digital, but you also need to understand the correct skills and the level of investment. Learning how to use social media isn't necessarily going to reach new audiences if you're still telling the same stories to the same people. Instead the stories and programme of the whole organisation need to diversify if you want to reach different people. Social media is then a great tool for delivering and engaging people with that interpretation.

How important is it for museums and heritage organisations to be using their social media platforms as a way to interpret their collections or sites and connect with new audiences?

I've spoken to a lot of people from heritage organisations small and large about social media, and the sticking points are invariably the same. The most common argument is that it doesn't result in something useful, i.e. people through the door, or making money. My usual reasoning is that if we believed this then we wouldn't do any marketing at all, as it's very difficult to draw a straight line from someone seeing a leaflet, advert or social media post and then coming to visit. It's the same principle of raising awareness which will lead to a visit further down the line.

The second reasoning is that social media is just one tool of many. Social media's job is to try and reach as many people as possible to then lead them to your website or a visit. The point is that people won't find your website, search for you on Google or end up visiting if they haven't heard of you in the first place.

The third and most basic reasoning follows on from that, and it's the simple fact that your audience are on social media. The vast majority of people use the internet and social media every day, and it plays a major part in decision-making. Most people, however, aren't on social media to see adverts and marketing. They're on social media to hear something new, interesting and entertaining.

There's a statistic which says only 1% of internet users create content. People are desperate to share and consume interesting things, and heritage organisations sit on mountains of content. If part of your mission is to educate and inform people, then it's essential to be fulfilling that mission online. It does, however, require communicating that heritage in slightly different ways. Very often we write interpretation to appeal to the broadest amount of people, but it's not enough to just use the same labels online. You have to be quite agile in adapting your stories to what is relevant and trending day-to-day and week-to-week, writing with personality and engaging directly with the community. Those who have grasped this have seen amazing success – whether it's York Museum's Curator Battles, where different museums compete for the best object on a theme, or the National Trust's very chatty and personal interactions or the Carnegie Museum of Natural History's TikTok videos. ■

Further resources:

Adam's useful social media resources: https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1ovWotNQHqmwnHn-mVKDIKgwcUZewj3nB2ihLP7zY6x0/edit#gid=0

Find out more about the Royal Academy: www.royalacademy.org.uk

Follow Adam on Twitter: @AdamKoszary

DIVERSITY MATTERS

HOW #BLACKLIVESMATTER HAS SHAKEN UP THE HERITAGE SECTOR

Beth Môrafon
VisitMôr Ltd and AHI Trustee

It's almost a year since AHI Trustees highlighted a need to actively support greater diversity in the museum and heritage sector. More significantly, the organisation identified a desire to achieve broader diversity among our Trustees, contributors and members.

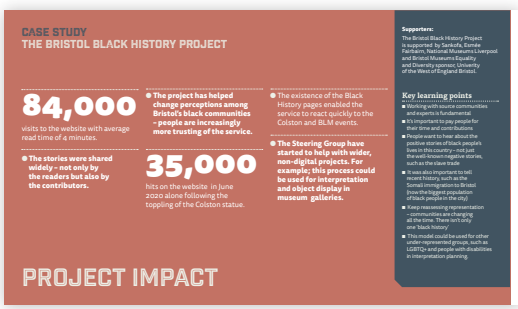
At first this was motivated by a desire for greater parity and driven by a hope to celebrate many voices for the enrichment of all. And then the world witnessed the killing of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, and the bitter pain of so many black people lost to police brutality. The AHI stood with the #BlackLivesMatter movement and quickly signed up to the joint statement, pledging to end racism in the sector.

Throughout our journey so far, we have been directed to a wealth of amazing, brave and passionate people taking direct action, creating incredible projects and communicating complex heritage narratives. Not least of these were stories and events catalysed by the #BlackLivesMatter movement in June.

The powerful influence of historic actions such as the tearing down of slave trader Edward Colston's statue during the #BlackLivesMatter protest in Bristol, cannot go unrecognised for its monumental impact on the museum and heritage sector. However huge the splash, as the statue was plunged into the docks of Bristol, the international waves created were far greater, refreshing new vigour into old debates of who and what is commemorated.

By September, Bristol Open Doors released Hidden Harbour, an audio walking tour of the docks. Created by the multi award-winning city poet Vanessa Kisuule in collaboration with the people of Bristol, it provides a rich and evocative history of the portside. The tour nears its completion at the statue's empty plinth, telling of the rallying events of June, before tracking listeners across the city centre to the dockside where the effigy was cast into the water. The encapsulation of modern history in the guide makes this probably one of the most contemporary history tours in the UK today.

Meanwhile, we have soaked up interpretative debate from webinars such as Race, Social Justice and Interpretation with the USA National Association of Interpretation led by C. Parker McMullen Bushman. Our minds have been broadened by the conversations of Dr Sushma Jansari on The Wonder House podcast series, speaking with Sara Wajid, Museum Detox founder. Amongst other points, they discuss



The new AHI best practice guideline for diversity and inclusion, with case studies, available to download from 11th November

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Roy Hackett mural from The Seven Saints of St Pauls project

the experimental, bold and tentative approach that was carefully adopted in the making of colonially themed The Past is Now exhibition at Birmingham Museums. We took solace in their acknowledgement that by trying to get things right, they will often get things wrong, but we must all try.

It is from within this powerful 2020 frame of reference that we have sought to improve diversity and inclusion at AHI. We looked to broaden our circle of influence, and more importantly broaden how the organisation is influenced and structured going forward. Spurred on by the issues of the #BlackLivesMatter movement, we have sought to improve diversity and inclusion for the benefit of all.

In broad brush strokes this is where we are:

- AHI has signed up to the joint statement pledging to end racism in the sector.
- The Awards have been reshaped, bringing new judges onto our panel with new categories added to diversify expertise, interest and reach. See Bill Bevan's feature on page 12 for details.
- A best practice diversity and inclusion guide has been developed, to work alongside our many downloadable resources. It will be available to members from 11th November, in time for the virtual conference. Diversity and inclusion approaches were celebrated, looking at exemplar working practices across the sector. We used case studies to allow a breadth of voices and working approaches to permeate the guide. They include: The Seven Saints of St Pauls, led by Michele Curtis founder of Iconic Black Britons (featured on the Journal cover); Prejudice and Pride at Kingston Lacy, led by The National Trust; Bristol Black History, led by Finn White at Bristol Museum; and Desire, Love, Identity: exploring LGBTQ Histories and Touch Tours: Egyptian Sculpture, both led by Stuart Frost at The British Museum. →

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Carmen Beckford mural from The Seven Saints of St Pauls project

The empty plinth where Colston's statue stood

© VisitMôr Ltd/Beth Môrafon

- We have devised a format to broaden and diversify our membership base. We are offering up to 30 free new memberships to people who face barriers in the sector due to ethnicity, disability, socio-economic background, gender identity or sexual orientation (LGBTQ+). Applicants must work within the museum and heritage sector (or within a suitably transferable field) and significantly benefit from the support. Details will be released on social media, so please do share the news with eligible prospective new members.
- A richer breadth of voices has and will continue to be sought, to contribute to our resources. New articles have been commissioned in the Journal and relevant contributors have been invited to speak at the AHI virtual conference which has #BlackLivesMatter as one of its themes.
- We are also seeking to diversify our Trustees and welcome new Trustee nominations. Please email admin@ahi.org.uk in the first instance.

We are really excited to continue progressing this work with the support of our valued members and new recruits. ■

→ Trustees Beth Môrafon (https://visitmor.co.uk) and Damon Mahoney (damon@damon-design.co.uk) have been working to support diversity and inclusion over the past year with invaluable support from Iona Keen, AHI member and Trustee of the South West Federation of Museums and Art Galleries (www.linkedin.com/in/iona-keen), who has acted as a critical friend to AHI in this work.

BOOK REVIEW

Interpreting Heritage

Steve Slack
Publisher: Routledge

At a time when the representation of our history is under close scrutiny and misrepresentation of facts is commonplace, a new text on interpretive practice is to be welcomed. When that text comes from a highly experienced interpreter then it is doubly welcome.

Steve Slack sets out to give an overview of interpretation, a discussion of what heritage is and then a look at the interpretive planning process. The approach is clearly based on a working model derived from extensive experience with a wide range of clients. In an effort not to be didactic and to present the one infallible interpretive planning model (recognising that there isn't one), this book sits between being a practical guide and a theoretical work. It offers a good overview of various models and theories, and it serves very well as an introduction to the subject.

There are some aspects of contemporary work that are touched upon which the author acknowledges are bigger subjects than can be encompassed in it. Participatory practice and co-curation are explored well and good examples given. Questions of community authorship and ownership of heritage might have been discussed in greater detail, if space had allowed, but suggestions for further reading are offered.

This book is set firmly within the museum sector. One of its great strengths is the range of practical examples used to illustrate the points. A demonstration of how the Tenement Museum, New York, changed delivery practices after their vision statement changed is used excellently. The methods discussed are transferable to other sectors and it would be interesting to see how it might be implemented in natural heritage or community settings.

At a time of great uncertainty in the UK museum and heritage sector, a reflection of what interpretation is, and why it is important, is very timely. Interpreting Heritage is strongest when questioning the values of institutions with the 'WHY' question. ■

AHI members are eligible for a 30% discount on this title. They will receive an offer code by email in early December 2020.

→ Kev Theaker is an interpreter, documentary film maker and former lecturer in Interpretation and Countryside Management.

HIDDEN STORIES IN PLAIN SIGHT

Beth Asbury
Project Manager, Out in Oxford

Out in Oxford was the University of Oxford's first cross-collections trail and the collections' first LGBTQ+ project. Initially conceived as a low-tech, low-budget booklet to support access to the collections by the underrepresented queer audience, interest was so great that 51 new interpretations written by volunteers who identify as LGBTQ+ or as allies are now available online, alongside the booklet and a mobile-augmented trail website with audio descriptions and BBC radio interviews. The trail was launched during LGBT History Month 2017.

A little gay history

I am not a member of the LGBTQ+ community, nor do I have a background in queer theory, but as an Egyptologist I admire the work of Professor Richard Parkinson of the Institute of Oriental Studies at the University and of the British Museum. Having read Richard's book, *A Little Gay History* (2013), which was a result of the British Museum's Desire and Diversity trail, I attended a lecture he gave during LGBT History Month 2016. Back then, I was not an active ally, but I had a lightbulb moment when Richard said,

'One day, hopefully, every museum will have at least one LGBT item openly identified as such on permanent display, so that visitors of any sexuality can feel empowered by their human heritage… Silent and implicit support is not enough… Public gestures by institutions are crucial in embodying, consolidating and legitimising our history. Prominent institutions have a responsibility to stand up for inclusive human rights – prominently.'

I learnt that one simple act of explicit inclusivity could transform museums into safe spaces for people who might otherwise feel excluded. I had been ignorant of how impactful representation could be to the LGBTQ+ community, especially for young people. It occurred to me that, as a museum dedicated to human experience and creativity, the Pitt Rivers Museum of Anthropology and World Archaeology (PRM), where I worked as an administrator, must be able to answer Richard's call to action. To be truly representative of human experience, then LGBTQ+ lived experiences should be represented in museums too.

I was encouraged to apply to the Oxford University Museums Partnership Innovation Fund for a pilot project, a criteria being that the project had to involve more than one of the University's museums. An email to the collections' curators quickly snowballed into an unprecedented collaboration of the University's four museums, the Bodleian Libraries, Bate Collection and Botanic Garden.

Collaboration

Collections staff were asked to identify items that reflected non-heteronormative sexualities or fluid gender roles (in the objects themselves or their makers/donors) from a variety of different cultures and periods of time. The items proposed were discussed with our volunteers at a workshop and training was provided on writing museum interpretations. Multivocality was important and we wanted to give everyone the opportunity to promote a wider understanding of the items' meanings. Many of the volunteers already had excellent knowledge of the collections and their own suggestions of items to include.

My biggest anxiety was that, being an outsider, I might unwittingly offend with a tokenistic or naïve gesture of representation or, worse, damage the collections' relationship with a valued source community. I was frightened of using the wrong language. Having grown up in the 1980s–90s under the dreadful Section 28, 'queer' was a bad word. It took training and lots of reading to feel comfortable using this reclaimed, by some, collective term. My honesty and wish to get things right helped build the

Mini Pride parade during the Party at the Pitt trail launch event, 11th February 2017

trust that made the project special, and it was a volunteer at this workshop who gave the trail its name.

Out in Oxford

The trail features forewords by Richard Parkinson and Stephen Fry, and a logo designed by a local LGBTQ+ youth group, My Normal. The volunteers agreed what language was appropriate beforehand, and submissions were checked by collections staff for cultural sensitivities and by a volunteer from the University's LGBT+ Staff Network for LGBTQ+ sensitivities. Community input was also valuable for recognising what was inappropriate to include and there was a desire to not identify individuals in a way they would not have identified themselves.

Launch events were co-curated with our volunteers and local community groups. The first event, Party at the Pitt, was attended by 445 people and included a mini Oxford Pride parade! The project was shortlisted for three awards and one very active volunteer, Dr Clara Barker, received a Points of Light award from the Prime Minister. The trail was a model for a second cross-collections trail to celebrate the centenary of women's suffrage and for the University of Cambridge's Bridging Binaries museum tours. The National Lottery Heritage Fund used it as an example of the sort of community project it would like to fund.

Untitled watercolour featuring the pink recorder by Claire Daverley (née Davis) explores sobering feelings of marginalisation

Beyond the Binary

What we did was not a new idea, but what made a difference was involving community members from the start. Fears of tokenism became irrelevant. The project was unsustainable in the long term, however, because, alongside our volunteers, it relied on several individual members of staff volunteering on top of full-time jobs and, in the case of our Pitt Rivers team, junior staff on temporary contracts. But it met its targets and feedback was overwhelmingly positive.

My Normal now holds its regular monthly meetings at the PRM and in 2018 the Museum was awarded £91,200 by the National Lottery Heritage Fund for a new LGBTQ+ project called Beyond the Binary. This project is commissioning new artwork and purchasing new objects, supporting voluntary community curators and hosting inclusivity events. The collections are now being thoroughly queered and an exhibition will be held in due course. Watch this space!

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Beyond the Binary: https://www.prm.ox.ac.uk/beyond-the-binary

Twitter: @BeyondBinaryPRM (hashtag #pittbeyondbinary)

Further Reading:

Parkinson, R.B. 2013. *A Little Gay History: Desire and Diversity across the World*. London: British Museum Press.

Parkinson, R.B. 2016. *'A Great Unrecorded History': LGBT Heritage and World Cultures*, 25th February 2016, University of Oxford: https://podcasts.ox.ac.uk/great-unrecorded-history-lgbt-heritage-and-world-cultures.

Vincent, J. 2014. *LGBT People and the UK Cultural Sector: The Response of Libraries, Museums, Archives and Heritage since 1950*. Farnham: Ashgate.

→ Beth was the Assistant to the Director and Administration Team at the Pitt Rivers Museum during the Out in Oxford project. She is now the Assistant Archaeologist at West Berkshire Council.