Association for Heritage Interpretation

Interpretation Journal
27-1
Summer 2022

Focus: Peatland Progress – a new vision for the Fens
Digital: Unlocking the landscape history of Cissbury Ring
Review: Addressing sustainability – learning from the Horniman Museum
Connection: CARGO Movement

Association for Heritage Interpretation

# Contents

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## Next issue will focus on: The Midlands

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*Cover: Great Fen, sphagnum moss planting.*
*Part of the Peatland Progress project featured on page 14.*
Rebecca Neal

# Foreword

**This edition marks the third summer *Interpretation Journal* we have worked on since being appointed editors in 2020. It's been an enjoyable, sometimes challenging, journey to bring you a range of thought-provoking case studies from across the UK. We started in Scotland, travelled to Wales, then to the South West of England and in this edition, we go to the East of England. We also travelled the world, metaphorically, with articles covering seasonal-themed exhibitions in Japan, the impact of Covid and the Black Lives Matter movement on America, and discussions about heritage relating to migration and refugees. We look forward to hearing your views about the parts of the Journal you most enjoy reading in the survey we have created (pg 10).**

In this issue, we have put the 'Debate' feature on hold to be able to include interviews with the Young Interpreter of the Year, Lihem Tesfaye and Bob Jones, MBE, who received the Lifetime Achievement award in the AHI Engaging People Awards. We hope you enjoy reading about their journeys and find the content from all our contributors to be topical, inspiring and inclusive.

**News & Views** brings together latest news, opinion pieces and research from academics, Fellows of the AHI and across the globe. In this edition, Michael Hamish Glen states his conviction that folksong should be used as a valuable interpretive medium (My view). In his new research feature (Bitesize), Philip Ryland finds out what interpretation means to visitors of heritage and natural settings. Dominique Bouchard and authors outline how multi-sector and creative partnerships have helped create a platform for research and raising awareness of the heritage of under-represented communities (Global view).

We journey to the East of England for the **Focus** section, where Tom Williamson enthuses about the heritage of apples, and other fruit, and lays to rest some commonly held myths about orchards (Orchards East); and Rachel Duffield shares how resilience and ingenuity kept staff and the young people motivated as the 'Kick the Dust' programme went through the pandemic and beyond. We also take a trip to the Fens to find out how peatland and wildlife habitats are being restored and the work underway to address eco-anxiety.

**In Practice** shares best practice, knowledge and skills and encourages opportunities for debate and interaction. James Brown gives an insight on a pilot project to trial a digital interpretation trail around Cissbury Ring in the South Downs National Park (Digital). Charlotte Dew interviews Nick Merriman from Horniman Museum and Gardens on addressing sustainability and embedding this within the museum sector (Review); while Lawrence Hoo talks about the important work he has embarked on through his project CARGO, to embed new narratives of people of African descent into the national curriculum (Connection).

We look forward to receiving your feedback through the short survey and welcome ideas for future editions by email: journal@ahi.org.uk ■

**Nicky Temple and Nicolette Evans**

# View from the Chair

**Beth Môrafon, MAHI**
*Chair, AHI*

**The world has changed. Not little by little, (or trickle by trickle and sudden flood), but drastically, globally and with grave momentum.**

And with so much change, it can be hard to find structure, purpose and meaning in our lives and in the world. It can be hard to proceed with good purpose and conviction.

But now, it's more important than ever to sift through what remains and find that which will help us grow and thrive.

*We are Tilden-ites, highly skilled in the art of meaning-making. We are equipped with storytelling stanzas, placemaking extravaganzas and tools to build mile-upon-mile of digital meanders.*

Let's not forget, we are the Association for Heritage Interpretation; a professional network of intrepid interpreters. We are Tilden-ites, highly skilled in the art of meaning-making. We are equipped with storytelling stanzas, placemaking extravaganzas and tools to build mile-upon-mile of digital meanders. If anyone can make meaning from this surge into a challenging decade, it is us – the interpreters!

But why is meaning-making especially important right now? And why must we dedicate ourselves to it, with fresh zest and vigour?

Author Emily Esfahani Smith argues that finding meaning in life is ultimately more satisfying and rewarding than searching for happiness. She highlights the four pillars of a meaningful life as Belonging, Purpose, Transcendence and Storytelling. Don't these ring true as pillars for creating good and meaningful interpretations? And with the potential to bring more reward than happiness itself, there is a lot at stake.

So, with the power to curate and shape so deeply, we must make really good decisions about the kind of meaning we make. Our work by its nature doesn't just impact us, it has the potential to imbue significance into the hearts of our audience through the objects, places, stories and culture we exalt. This is why it is so important right now.

And so, in the words of singer Curtis Mayfield (and so many others), we must 'keep on keeping on'. We must keep on making meaning from the world in every way we can. We must stand with (and up for) the causes we hold most dear. We must pour our hearts and souls into social and climate justice. We must create meaningful interpretations about the subjects that matter most.

Because a life filled with meaning is a life a step closer to happiness, or at least fulfilment.

"Don't aim at success... success, like happiness, cannot be pursued," said neurologist Viktor Emil Frankl, "[it comes]... as the unintended side effect of one's personal dedication to a cause greater than oneself..."

Personally, I look forward to enjoying the meaning I find in the interpretation curated and created by all our members – observing this crafty dance between science, art and so much more – as it unfurls so very meaningfully. On that note, join us for our Snowdon Conference on 12–14 October. You can share ideas, engage with best practice projects and presenters and have a lovely time, too. Hold the date!

I want to say thank you to all our members for your continued membership, engagement and passion. For the Journal, I send big thanks to our editors Nicky and Nicolette, Trustee Philip, all our contributors and special thanks to copy-editor Kathrin, who completed her final edition last issue. Thank you, Kathrin, for all your valuable work and best wishes for the future. I welcome Greer to the role, who has skilfully copy-edited this Journal. I'd also like to thank former-Chair Jim, for his ongoing international work with GAHI, our dedicated administrator Lyn, all our Trustees, volunteers and of course the Fellows for their appreciated work and support. ■

→ Beth is the founding Director of VisitMôr – a public realm and visitor experience consultancy creating magical ways for people to reconnect with natural and cultural heritage. With over 20 years' practice in international visitor experience design, with the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust and WWT Consulting, she is a passionate advocate for social and environmental justice.

AHI360 Programme

# The singer is the servant of the song

**Michael Hamish Glen**
*AHI Honorary Fellow*

**Michael has been involved with interpretation since 1969. As a wordsmith, he strives to deliver great explanations that establish context, make connections, provoke responses and widen horizons. Folksong does all these things, hence his conviction that it should be used as a valuable interpretive medium.**

Brian Aris

*Barbara Dickson's rise to stardom began with folksong, which still features strongly in her performances*

Playwright Willy Russell described Barbara Dickson as 'the servant of the song'[1] – the message is more important than the messenger. That should resonate with heritage interpreters as 'servants of the story'. Folksong could be the servant of interpretation.

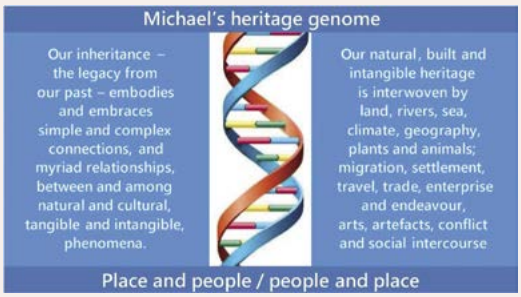
Neil Diment's *Rooted in place* (Journal 26–1) described working with young people on the revival of folk music, song and dance in Teesdale. I'm grateful to Neil and to Bill Bevan, Bob Jones and Kev Theaker for advice on this article which leads from Neil's specific examples to this general overview. Their comments suggest there is room for a further piece on contemporary folksong, allied to more about music and dance.

Folksong can enhance our sense of place and illustrate the impact of the environment on our lives, loves, work and struggles – and vice versa. Folksong is a demotic way of illuminating how natural and human heritage are indivisible, which I hope my 'heritage genome' encapsulates.

A century ago, the [English] Board of Education gave this definition of folksong:

*'Folksongs... are the expression in the idiom of the people of their joys and sorrows, their unaffected patriotism, their zest for sport and the simple pleasures of country life... folk-songs are the true classics of the people.'* [2]

They do not mention, however, the 'hot topics' which are poignantly the meat of folksong, particularly in recent times. They have reflected radical politics through recording anti-establishment unrest, class and cultural disharmony, disaster and conflict and much more. Sadly, but also gladly, we are now hearing defiant renderings of Ukrainian folksongs.




In the United States, Alan Lomax (pictured) helped start the American, Irish and British post-war folk revivals which brought many new songs, often of civil protest, to the canon. Numerous US folksongs are, of course, rooted on this side of the Atlantic and given a new twist in a new home.

IMDb

*Opposite: Alan Lomax (1915-2002) was an outstanding recorder of folk song*

The UK and Ireland's rich heritage of folksong has, in recent times, encouraged greater interest in, and respect for, indigenous languages and dialects. Scottish and Irish Gaelic traditional music often echoes the sounds of nature and also includes, for example, tweed waulking songs, those rhythmic refrains that help →

1 BBC Four. 30th Jan. 2022. Quoted in *Fern Britton meets... Barbara Dickson.*

2 Baring-Gould, S. & Sharp, C. J. 1906. *English Folk-Songs for Schools.* London: Curwen.

repetitive tasks as do other working chants and boisterous sea shanties. North East Scotland is noted for its bothy ballads in Doric, a dialect of Scots that school children now learn. Scots itself, with its powerful vocabulary, is widely used in traditional and contemporary folksong.

This is mirrored across England's regions, with their formidable traditions and in Wales, whose vibrant ancient language adds a special dimension. Urban areas, where the industrial revolution sucked in people from the countryside, have produced, fittingly, many gritty folksongs. The life of weavers, coalminers, shipbuilders, oil rig workers and other trades were, and are, favourite topics.

We shouldn't forget the contribution of travelling people whose songs contribute yet another dimension to this 'expression in the idiom of the people'. It will be interesting to see how our immigrant communities make their contribution. Is rap a type of folksong?

The continued popularity of folk music and song is evidenced not only by national and regional festivals but also by great annual events. Celtic Connections in Glasgow is the world's largest music festival of its kind. A Prom in 2018 featured folksong around Britain and Ireland. Folksong is now fully recognised as an established part of national culture and has its own radio programmes. But why is it not a more established part of heritage interpretation?

Folksong is a mirror of universal human values, a compendium of 'life lessons' and even a social medium. It is, above all, an important contributor to intangible heritage. It is storytelling at its best. But folksong is also about collective memory, memorials to events and individuals as formidable as cenotaphs, murals and blue plaques. These memories can be anchored in the community psyche through folksong and its music.

Folksong, music and dance are ancient – they are a part of the human condition. Archaeologists have dated folk music, in China, to at least 8,000 years ago. It is part of the continuous tradition of 'newsmongers' such as bards, troubadours and ballad singers. Folksong is closely linked to the folktale tradition and is a continuing chronicler of protest and revolution, among other cultural phenomena. Folk music has also been an inspiration for many musicians in genres from classical to jazz to rock.

Barbara Dickson summed it up:

*'The subject matter, and the storytelling of it, is culturally very important and must be kept alive. The function of folk music is to 'speak' to the listeners and to guide and comfort them. Its universal stories make us aware of our humanity. Folksongs are the most important of the music I play – they're the music of my heart.'* [3]

Getting to the heart of things is a task folksong can bring to the interpretation of heritage. Folksong brings together the intertwined stories that link people to their environment and shares many valuable characteristics with conventional interpretive methods. It is simple and meaningful, thematic and focused. It is usually pertinent to a place, a community, a conviction, an event or individuals.

Folksong is entertaining, thought-provoking, memorable and relates to people and their lives. There are opportunities for using folksong in digital and wayside media as well as in presentations by interpreters working with local writers and performers. Sadly, it's been hard to find many examples of folksong encouraging community engagement where local people compose or commission new folksongs and music – as in Teesdale and on the Monsal Trail, a former railway line, in the Peak District.

However, the stage is set. Let's hear more examples of folksong as the servant of interpretation! ■

3 Dickson. B. Feb. 2022. Personal communication.

→ Michael was a library assistant, printer, broadcaster, bookseller, publicity officer, tourism administrator, graphic designer and public relations director before becoming an interpretive planner with Touchstone Heritage and, later, creative writer with QuiteWrite. He administered AHI for eight years, having helped to establish AHI (as SIBH) in 1975, Interpret Europe in 2010 and the Global Alliance for Heritage Interpretation in 2019.

# What does interpretation mean to you?

**Dr Philip Ryland**
*MAHI and Trustee*

**In the first of a new series of articles, Dr Philip Ryland asked visitors at a range of natural and cultural sites the question, 'What does interpretation mean to you?'**

Seventy-five groups of visitors were approached providing a total of 187 comments. Of the 75 respondents, 42 were visiting a heritage attraction and 33 a natural site. In terms of their social grouping: 12 were alone; 29 were with a partner and 34 with family and/or friends. A breakdown of this by site is detailed in Table 1.

Table 1. Profile of visitors by site

| At heritage sites | At natural sites |
|---|---|
| Alone = 5 (12%) | Alone = 7 (21%) |
| Partner = 14 (33%) | Partner = 15 (46%) |
| Family & Friends (F&F) = 23 (55%) | Family & Friends (F&F) = 11 (33%) |

Asking this simple question felt timely with the release of a new definition of interpretation in August 2021 by the National Association for Interpretation (based in the USA). Their new definition states that interpretation is:

*'A purposeful approach to communication that facilitates meaningful, relevant, and inclusive experiences that deepen understanding, broaden perspectives, and inspire engagement with the world around us.'*

Whilst historically, it was back in 1957 when Freeman Tilden, the son of a Boston newspaper publisher, defined the profession and developed his own philosophy for interpretation in his book *Interpreting our Heritage*. In this book, Tilden (1977:8) defined interpretation as:

'*An educational activity which aims to reveal meanings and relationships through the use of original objects, by first-hand experience, and by illustrative media, rather than simply to communicate factual information.*'

In answering the question posed, nine main themes emerged, which are summarised in Table 2 above:

Table 2. What does interpretation mean to you: main themes identified, reported by actual number and overall %

| |
|---|
| Understand people/wildlife (n=32, 17%) |
| See things otherwise not available to the visitor (n=30, 16%) |
| Entertain the family (n=25, 13%) |
| Simplify the story (n=23, 12%) |
| Introduce the site (n=16, 8.5%) |
| Importance of the site (n=16, 8.5%) |
| Explore the site (n=16, 8.5%) |
| A souvenir (n=15, 8%) |
| Orientate the visitor (n=14, 7.5%) |

'Understanding people or wildlife' proved the most popular theme (n=32, 17%) and whilst it applied to both types of sites, comments focused around bringing the past and/or wildlife 'to life' in a way which made them accessible for the visitor. Here are two examples of what visitors actually said:

*'We felt the exhibition brought Victorian people to life'* (Respondent 6, 2021)

*'I felt I really appreciated the challenges they faced every day, scraping a living was really not easy, was it'* (Respondent 15, 2021)

The second most popular theme was viewing areas of the site which were normally not open to the public for administrative, safety or resource protection reasons. As a result, visitors were asked to book access in advance and were typically accompanied by a guide. A number of visitors commented specifically on a feeling of privileged access which they liked and appreciated. Here are two examples of what visitors actually said: →

*'My daughter loved being able to go behind the scenes, she was thrilled by it'* (Respondent 47, 2021)

*'We got closer to the birds than we ever expected to be able to do'* (Respondent 21, 2021)

The third most popular theme, perhaps somewhat inevitable given the proportion of visitors with families in the respondent group (n=25%) was 'to entertain the family'. Comments here focused on activities and experiences that involved and engaged the whole family. Two examples of comments made include:

'The clothes we tried on, were really itchy, my son didn't like them at all' (Respondent 71, 2021)

'The speed at which he wove the willow stems was incredible, we tried – it was really hard work' (Respondent 50, 2021)

In terms of themes which are missing from this data set, it is interesting to note that none specifically identified resource protection and its associated messages as a role for interpretation. Although within 'importance of the site' (n=16, 8.5%), two comments were made about 'rarity of species' and one comment about 'fragility of the site'.

In considering Table 3, for visitors 'on their own' or 'with a partner' at a heritage site, the two strongest responses were 'seeing things otherwise hidden' followed by 'understanding people/wildlife'. Whilst for 'visitors with family and/or friends', the strongest response was for 'entertaining the family', followed by 'understanding people/wildlife'. At natural sites, 'importance of the site' was the strongest response for those visiting 'alone' and/or 'with family and/or friends'. For those visiting 'with a partner', the strongest preferences were identical for both natural and heritage sites.

Table 3. What does interpretation mean to you: main themes ranked by the different visitor groups and sites

| | Heritage sites | | | Natural sites | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Alone | Partner | F&F | Alone | Partner | F&F |
| Understand people or wildlife (n=32) | 2nd | 3rd | 2nd | 2nd | 3rd | 2nd |
| See things otherwise not available to the visitor (n=30) | 1st | 1st | | 3rd | 1st | |
| Entertain the family (n=25) | | | 1st | | | |
| Simplify the story (n=23) | | 2nd | 3rd | | 2nd | 3rd |
| Importance of the site (n=16) | 3rd | | | 1st | | 1st |

What might the implications of these results be for your site?

1. *This survey demonstrates the importance of 'telling a good story' and 'revealing meanings'.* How well do you introduce your 'people and their history' or 'the species of wildlife' for your visitors? Do you have evidence that the stories you tell about them resonate and relate well with your visitors? Could you do more to bring the people, history or wildlife of your site 'to life'?
2. *Balancing education and entertainment through visitor experiences.* Enjoyment of their visit clearly remains critically important to visitors. Do you feel that you have the balance right on your site? Do your visitor surveys confirm this? Is there a greater opportunity for your visitors to engage with the messages of the site through a range of activities and experiences?
3. *Added value through experiences remains important.* This survey seems to suggest that going 'behind the scenes' with a guide is highly valued by visitors. Is this something you currently offer on your site? If not, what additional hands-on experiences can you offer? Are visitors encouraged to engage as a social group with these activities and experiences?

In concluding, Tilden (1977:13) said that *'successful interpretation should focus on the relationship between the visitors and the site'*. So, do you know your visitors and what they really think about your site? ■

**References**

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**Next issue:**
What do visitors want from a visitor centre at a heritage site?

→ Philip teaches tourism and is also Associate Dean (Student Experience) in the Faculty of Management at Bournemouth University.

# My route to becoming an AHI fellow

**Sunita C. Welch talks to us about her career following her recent award as Fellow of AHI.**

One of my pandemic tasks was to sort through 'paperwork'. I imagine a number of us have tackled this hard copy and/or digital task in the last 24 months. I came across my letter from AHI awarding me full Member status in 2005. I had kept that letter in my 'award and certificates folder', so last year was such a privilege to be awarded the status of Fellow of the Association of Heritage Interpretation (FAHI).

So, how did I get here? I started my career with a Bachelor of Sciences (Hons) from the University of Hertfordshire in Environmental Studies, a degree I enrolled in because a wise teacher said 'you like the science of the environment and people' – something that has turned out to be true for 30+ years and is still the case today.

*One of my favourite memories from my degree (and one that ages me) was when a professor took our organised slide carousels that we had prepared, dumped them out and had us put the slides back, in no particular order and then give the interpretive talk.*

After graduating, I had a couple of un-exciting jobs unrelated to my education and then an important experience through the US-based Student Conservation Association, where I spent three months in Colorado delivering education programmes with the US National Park Service. When I returned, I started work, actually as an interpreter, I just didn't know that was what it was called at the time, working with visitors in the countryside. However, having delivered Environmental Education programmes (think back to Tilden) I realised I wanted more, but not via a PGCE, which was the only route at the time. So I applied to a number of universities in the USA for a master's degree in Environmental Education and was accepted by The Ohio State University on to their Master of Science Degree in Natural Resources, focusing on Environmental Communication, Education and Interpretation. One of my favourite memories from my degree (and one that ages me) was when a professor took our organised slide carousels that we had prepared, dumped them out and had us put the slides back, in no particular order and then give the interpretive talk. Through the work of Freeman Tilden (the founder of Interpretation), I became an interpreter and loved the work so much I stayed on for a PhD, for which I did my research in US National Parks looking at how well visitors were receiving the parks' messages.

After completing my degree, I was lucky enough to become a faculty member at Colorado State University, which some of you may know was the original home of the National Association for Interpretation (NAI). I worked closely with Tim Merriman and we co-taught the Interpretation degree elements and I advised the student chapter of NAI.

In 2006 I was delighted to be offered the opportunity to return to the UK and take up a position with the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority and by 2008 was managing the interpretation function, along with visitor information and education services. My role further developed over the years and the team delivered some exemplary interpretive projects, winning an AHI award in 2015. I was also able to facilitate AHI and NAI, working together to bring NAI's Certified Interpretive Planner course to the UK.

In 2021, during the pandemic it was time for a change. I now work as an Evaluation Senior Specialist with Natural England and am really enjoying looking at the 'so what?' of projects. I've also delivered some webinars for AHI in the last 12 months. In 2021 I joined the judging panel for the AHI Interpretive awards, meeting new colleagues and judging some amazing interpretation. I also work with the AHI panel supporting interpreters to become Members of The Association of Heritage Interpretation (MAHI) – which is lovely having benefited so much myself from my membership. For 2022? Well, most of all, I'm looking forward to our in-person conference and I look forward to seeing you all there. ■

# Readers' survey

## A note from the editors

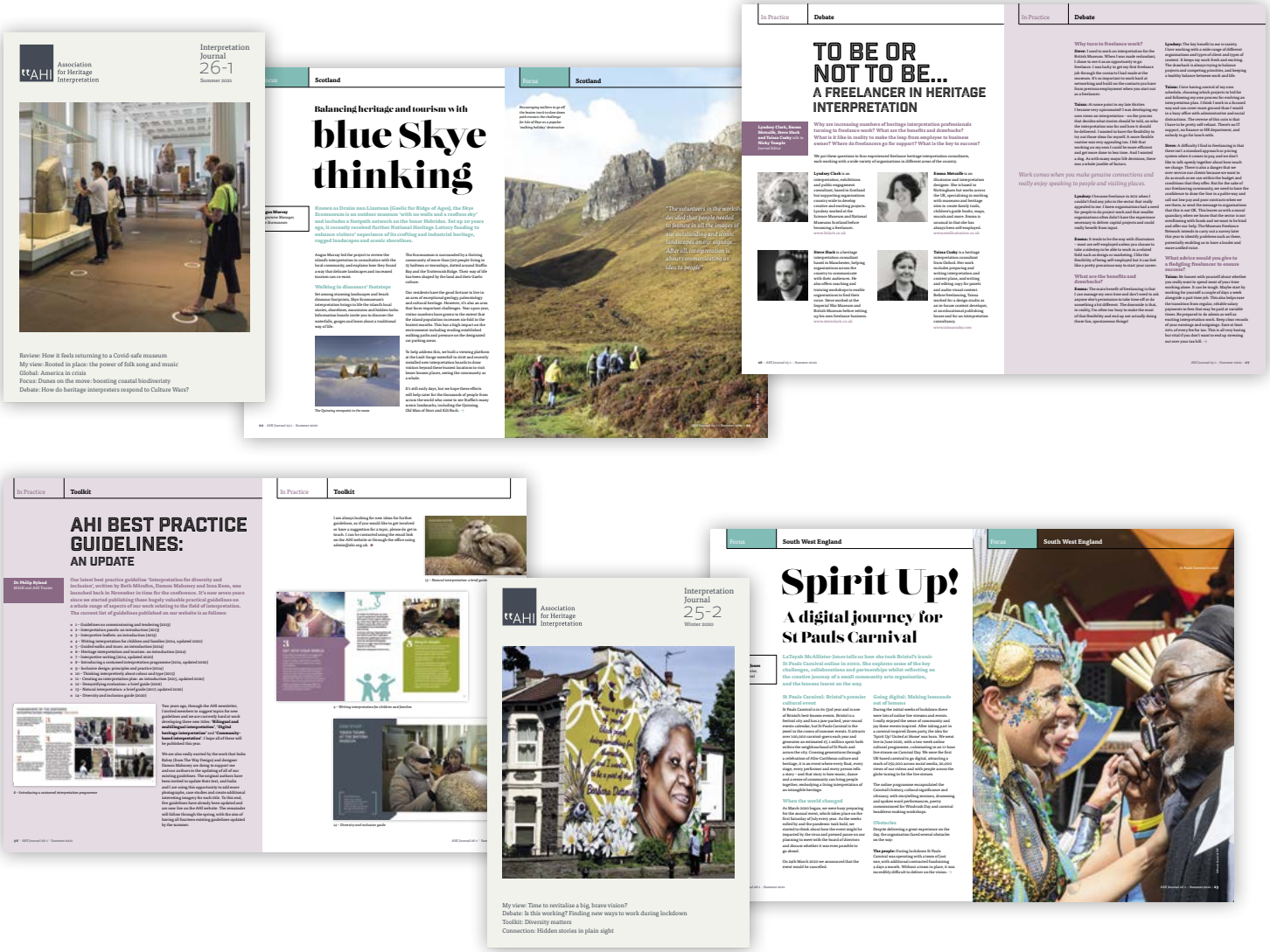
Nicky Temple and Nicolette Evans

Our first Journal as editors arrived through your letterbox in May 2020. In our first Foreword, we outlined our aspirations for a new-look Journal, dividing it into three distinct sections: **News & Views** draws together opinion pieces and the latest research news from home and abroad and from a wide range of contributors. **Focus** looks at a range of interpretation projects from one particular area of the UK, bringing transferable ideas and inspiration nationwide. **In Practice** creates opportunities for interaction, debate and the sharing of skills, knowledge and best practice.

Now, two years on, we'd like to hear from you. We have created a short survey via Survey Monkey and we'd like to know what you think about the structure of the Journal and the content we've commissioned. Have you found it useful? Which parts have you enjoyed the most, or least? Could we be doing something differently?

We look forward to hearing your feedback. ■

**Give us your views – www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/KRXDRHG**



# *Liberty & Lottery: partnerships, voices and multiplicious storytelling*

**Dr Dominique Bouchard, Dr Tola Dabiri, Dr Andrew Hann, Eleanor Matthews, Joe Savage, Sandra Shakespeare**

**In Autumn 2021, English Heritage opened a temporary exhibition at Brodsworth Hall and Gardens, 'Liberty & Lottery: Exploring the legacy of the transatlantic slave trade at Brodsworth Hall and Gardens'. The exhibition takes its title from two slave ships part-owned by Brodsworth's former owner, Peter Thellusson (1735-97), who amassed considerable wealth through financial dealings connected to transatlantic slavery.**

This article explores the multi-layered partnership approach which underpinned the development and delivery of 'Liberty & Lottery', and which included sector experts, academics in the UK and the Caribbean, artists, young people, community groups and local heritage organisations, all of whose voices appear in, or have made, significant contribution to shaping the final exhibition. It argues that heritage institutions with collections connected to the complex histories of colonialism and empire can use partnerships to create platforms for the voices of museum professionals and researchers from under-represented communities and from the Global South to share their expertise and ideas with wider audiences.

## Context and project

Built near Doncaster, Brodsworth Hall and Gardens is a mid-Victorian house with extensive landscaped gardens. The building visible today was built between 1861 and 1863 for Charles Sabine Thellusson (1822-1885), whose great-grandfather Peter Thellusson purchased the estate in 1791. A successful banker and financier, Peter Thellusson had extensive, lucrative financial ties to the transatlantic slave economy. Research by Kaufmann (2007), Seymour and Haggerty (2010) and Hann and Dresser (2013) has shown that he lent money to plantation owners, insured slaving ships, traded in goods and currencies used to acquire enslaved people, and had additional financial interests in the production, distribution and sale of commodities produced by enslaved labour.[1]

Brodsworth Hall has a regular temporary exhibition programme exploring the history of the house and broader local stories. Visitors to the hall often ask volunteers and staff where the wealth of the owners came from, a topic not currently explored in detail in the permanent interpretation. Given this interest, English Heritage identified that the connection between the Thellusson family wealth and the slave trade would be a good topic for the temporary exhibition programme. →

© English Heritage Trust

*'Lottery' bent steel wire sculpture by Carl Gabriel, in situ at Brodsworth Hall and Gardens*


*Carnival artist and sculptor Carl Gabriel working on 'Commodities'*

The aims of the exhibition were to communicate this history, to help visitors understand better the nature of the links between transatlantic slavery and Brodsworth Hall, and to give a voice to the experiences of the enslaved people whose history was linked to the Thellusson family's wealth.

## Partnerships, voices and multiplicious storytelling

Partnerships played a key role in the development and delivery of 'Liberty & Lottery'. Our objectives were that they should contribute particularly in three overlapping areas: bring in additional specialist expertise; navigate sensitive subject matter and ensure that the institutional voice of English Heritage would be augmented and enhanced by artistic and other voices.

Partnerships with external researchers were essential to finding out more about the enslaved people in the Caribbean whose labour created much of the Thellusson family wealth. English Heritage has been exploring the links between transatlantic slavery and the properties in its care since at least 2007, [2] but in-house expertise was weaker in relation to the human impact of enslavement. We therefore worked with John Angus Martin, a historian and archivist at St George's University, Grenada and at Leiden University, the Netherlands, who has special expertise in Caribbean archives, to find information about the enslaved workforce of the plantations financed by the Thellusson family. [3]

We also decided early on to work with external museum professionals in developing the interpretative approach and engaged Sandra Shakespeare and Dr Tola Dabiri of Museum X and the Black British Museum Project. Aiming to create Britain's first museum celebrating Black British history, art and culture, Shakespeare and Dabiri note that 'We need to tell our stories and have the freedom to express our own narratives or other people will tell them for us'. [4] This emphasis on multiple narratives from diverse voices was essential to the 'Liberty & Lottery' project. We also worked with the arts charity Culture& to bring a young museum professional onto the project, New Museum School trainee Edinam Edem-Jordjie, whose research will be included in a forthcoming publication.

We took a collaborative, partnership approach to our relationships with the artists working on the project. To support the multiplicious approach to storytelling we wanted to achieve, we identified that artists' voices should be celebrated in 'Liberty & Lottery' as a counterpoint to the institutional voice of English Heritage, with narrative freedom as well as points of connection. Carl Gabriel, a prominent carnival artist and sculptor, who works in the traditional Caribbean artform of wire-bending,

*To support the multiplicious approach to storytelling we wanted to achieve, we identified that artists' voices should be celebrated in 'Liberty & Lottery' as a counterpoint to the institutional voice of English Heritage, with narrative freedom as well as points of connection.*

worked with the project team to identify themes for five artworks produced specifically for the exhibition. The sculptures present a coherent perspective which materialises Gabriel's unique voice, with each sculpture providing a point of reflection against which the exhibition panels provide historical context. With the poet Malika Booker we worked to explore how her poem 'Songs of Mahogany', a response to Brodsworth Hall commissioned by English Heritage for the *Untold Stories* poetry project, [5] could be physically manifested within the house itself. As with Gabriel, our objective was to foreground the specificity of Booker's perspective and work, rather than to elide it into the exhibition as a whole.

We also used community co-production as a valuable way to help us explore sensitive material in ways that engage audiences, and to incorporate community voices. Young volunteers from 'Shout Out Loud', English Heritage's national youth engagement programme, undertook research and gave input on what resonated with them.

## Conclusions and lessons

Overall, the different partnerships on 'Liberty & Lottery' contributed in intersecting ways to produce the final exhibition and programme, underpinned by a shared commitment to the goals of the project and a willingness to be open and collaborative.

The multi-level, multi-sector and transnational partnerships made a contribution towards redressing inherent inequalities in sharing research and access to resources and audiences, and influenced and enriched English Heritage working practices.

The multi-voice approach to 'Liberty & Lottery' has been well-received by both visitors, staff and volunteers. By acknowledging different kinds of expertise, adopting a co-curation and co-production approach at all stages, and acknowledging inherent hierarchies in exhibition production, we were able to create space for a multi-voice interpretative approach without either homogenising those voices or placing them in competition. ■


*'Songs of Mahogany' poem by Malika Booker on display in the dining room at Brodsworth Hall and Gardens*



**Footnotes**

1 Research about the sources of Peter Thellusson's wealth include: Seymour, S. & Haggerty, S. 2010. *Slavery Connections of Brodsworth Hall (1600–c.1830). Final Report for English Heritage*, 19-36. Also see Dresser, M. & Hann, A. (eds). 2013. *Slavery and the British Country House.* Swindon: English Heritage, 78–88. Authors cite Polden, P. 2002. *Peter Thellusson's Will of 1797 and Its Consequences on Chancery Law*, Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press 108, 109, 110.

2 Kauffmann, M. 2007. *English Heritage Properties 1600-1830 and Slavery Connections*, London: English Heritage; Seymour, S. & Haggerty, S. 2010. *Slavery Connections of Brodsworth Hall (1600-c.1830). Final Report for English Heritage,* (report for English Heritage); Dresser, M. & Hann, A. (eds). 2013. *Slavery and the British Country House.* Swindon: English Heritage.

3 Martin, J. A. 2021. 'Connections between Peter Thellusson of Brodsworth and the Slave Trade and Slavery in the Caribbean', draft report for English Heritage.

4 Black British Museum Project, www.blackbritishmuseum.com (accessed 6th March 2022).

5 Malika Booker, 'Songs of Mahogany', in *Untold Stories: Poetry at English Heritage* www.english-heritage.org.uk/learn/untold-stories/digital-anthology

**Resources**

'Shout Out Loud', English Heritage's national youth engagement programme is a Kick the Dust project funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, www.shoutoutloud.org.uk

Culture&, arts diversity charity www.cultureand.org

→ The 'Liberty and Lottery' exhibition at Brodsworth Hall and Gardens runs until November 2022. www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/brodsworth-hall-and-gardens

# Peatland Progress

## A new vision for the Fens

**Caroline Fitton**
*Media officer*
*Wildlife Trust*
*for Bedfordshire,*
*Cambridgeshire and*
*Northamptonshire*

**Up in the Fens, new futures are being formed – fresh horizons are bringing scope for conservationists, farmers and the hopes of young people alike. In the wilds of north Cambridgeshire between Huntingdon and Peterborough, at the Great Fen nature reserve, new habitats are gradually evolving, being transformed from once-degraded and carbon-emitting agricultural land into a mosaic of nature-rich habitats, providing a haven for wildlife and visitors. A current project is expanding on this thread – 'Peatland Progress: A New Vision for the Fens', is looking to tackle climate change, biodiversity loss and the anxieties of the next generation head-on, evolving pioneering 'wet farming', inspiring a new generation of farmers and engaging with young people over concerns about climate change.**

### The Great Fen

Under exhilaratingly vast skies, rolling grasslands and shining waters form the visionary landscape of the Great Fen, now 20 years into a 100-year vision to recreate long lost ancient Fenland habitats, led by the Wildlife Trust in Cambridgeshire and partners. The recreation of habitat and restoration of lowland peat is well underway in this evolving 14-square mile nature reserve, providing sanctuary for a myriad of species, from otters and water voles to dragonflies and butterflies, and a rich diversity of birdlife from apex predators, such as rough-legged buzzards and short-eared owls, to shy secretive bitterns.

JBarnard

*Woodwalton Fen, The Great Fen*

### Peatland Progress: Paludiculture

Restoring peatland is vital in global solutions for climate change. Peatlands cover only 3% of the world's land surface but hold 25% of the global soil carbon, making them the world's most effective terrestrial carbon stores. However, if drained, they excessively emit carbon rather than storing it due to decomposition of organic matter. Damaged peatlands are a major source of greenhouse gas emissions, annually releasing almost 6% of global $CO_2$ emissions – restoration therefore brings significant emissions reductions. Paludiculture, now in practice at the Great Fen, is the productive use of wet peatlands; a land management technique to cultivate commercially interesting crops on

wet or rewetted peatlands under conditions that maintain the peat body, facilitate peat accumulation and sustain the ecosystem services associated with natural peatlands.

The Peatland Progress project has been made possible thanks to generous funding – a Heritage Horizon award of £8m from the National Lottery Heritage Fund was made last July and the work is expanding on a three-year trial of paludiculture novel crops, of which planting includes sphagnum moss, bulrush, reed, cereal crop sweet manna grass, flag iris, water mint, wild celery, meadowsweet, cuckoo flower and hemp-agrimony. In collaboration with experts in wet farming, these selected crops have potential applications in industry and medicine, or for use in food and flavourings, bringing the possibility for new, sustainable income streams for the region's farmers and growers.

Kate Carver, Great Fen Project Manager, says: 'Our project tackles some of the biggest challenges of the day – climate change and biodiversity loss: Peatland Progress will bring genuine improvement to people's lives, and to make sure that happens we'll be talking to our local communities to make sure we get it right. We'll show people that climate change is being tackled on their doorstep and empowering them to take action. We have exciting times ahead!'

## Project partners

Within the Peatland Progress project, the Wildlife Trust has three partners: the UK Centre of Ecology & Hydrology (UKCEH) are leading climate change scientists and are measuring greenhouse gas flux, gathering data to show how wet farming locks in carbon dioxide, using equipment ranging from flux chambers to a small weather station. As experts in paludiculture, University of East London (UEL) are advisers on the wet farming methods and choice of crops.

## Addressing climate anxiety

On the community strand of the project, the Young People's Counselling Service (YPCS), based near Peterborough, is a local partner. Work is underway to create nature-based interventions and programmes to support young people experiencing mental health issues and their families, connecting them with nature, giving them the confidence to know that small changes can make a big difference, bringing hope to the future.

To deepen the understanding of this audience, Trust staff have undertaken training in adolescent mental health, LBGTQ+ language, concepts and best practice and a media training course for making short films, enabling them to interact with more confidence and sensitivity, particularly around vulnerable young people. →

*Right: Sunset over the water, The Great Fen*

*Far right: Wreath workshop with YPCS*

Martin Parsons

Mariana Delgado

*"We are very happy to be working alongside the Wildlife Trust BCN in the project. As children and young people are facing more anxiety relating to the climate change crisis worldwide, we want to work with the youth here in the Fens to process that 'eco-anxiety' and show that small changes that we make in our personal lives can have a big impact in how the world will function in the future."*

**Mariana Delgado Vásquez, Operations Director**

With the mental health of many young people at crisis point and the number of referrals to mental health services at an all-time high, the Trust recognises that access to the natural world can be a significant recovery tool for young people and their families. The Trust will work closely this year with therapists to develop sessions centred at the Great Fen with a focus on nature-related activities. Some therapists have already visited for an introduction to the work of the Great Fen and trial workshops planned. Community consultants Bright Culture have been appointed to capture young people's thoughts around nature, conservation, climate change and climate action, and are developing a range of online surveys to gain an understanding of the connection people have with the local environment.

## Avenues ahead to explore

The project funding has facilitated the purchase of a parcel of land, bringing together the north and south 'halves' of the Great Fen, enabling the creation of further new wetland habitats, linking and protecting two ancient fragments of fen habitat, Holme Fen and Woodwalton Fen National Nature Reserves, and providing a new planting site for the further paludiculture work that lies ahead. An interesting wet farming link has been formed with start-up SaltyCo – a young, innovative company developing new natural textiles from paludiculture plants. Their preliminary target is for a 'fill' for quilted jackets. They are a spin-out business from Imperial College London, have centres elsewhere including Scotland and with strong marketing they have buy-in from a number of fashion houses. The potential application of wet farming crops is already forging links with innovative, forward-thinking entrepreneurs. A further tangible use of trial crop typha bulrush (a hardy, native plant which can be used for animal fodder) is for building materials in the form of fibre board and lightweight cavity wall insulation. It is hoped that a small trial building may be constructed demonstrating future possibility – watch this 14-square mile space. ■

**Editor's note:**
We have invited Caroline to report back to us towards the end of the project so that we can hear what progress has been made in this important and timely work. In the meantime, find out more about the project via the website: www.wildlifebcn.org

→ Caroline.Fitton@wildlifebcn.org
Find out more:
www.greatfen.org.uk
Facebook, Twitter and Instagram:
@wildlifebcn

# Young people Kick the Dust off museums in Norfolk

**Rachel Duffield**
*Kick the Dust project worker, Norfolk Museums*

**By March 2020, Kick the Dust Norfolk, a National Lottery Heritage Fund programme focusing on skills development and engaging young people with heritage, had been running happily across ten museums for nearly 18 months. In West Norfolk, a diverse range of young people, aged 12 to 25 years, had begun to visit our museums to interpret the collections in new ways, effecting change in ways that were meaningful to them through project work, youth groups and work experience. Any barriers to engagement were familiar to staff: transport issues, lack of confidence and perceptions of museums as boring and elitist.**

Then overnight, the world locked down. None of us could go anywhere. How could 'Kick the Dust' (KtD), which relies on young people being actively involved in interpretation, find a way to continue?

Eventually, like the rest of the world, we discovered video calls. Immediately, barriers to engagement began to topple. Transport issues? Gone! Not only were we able to engage easily online with young people throughout rural Norfolk, we also gained participants from elsewhere in the UK – and even two from Nigeria. Zoom also catered well for the shy and worried. They could keep their cameras off and use the chat box and icons to communicate until their confidence grew. Any perceptions of museums as elitist were soon banished by the sheer ordinariness of the project workers, as we practised our hastily-learnt new tech skills in front of our groups.

In a moment of creativity, we realised we could develop a flexible framework for online work experience which built upon our existing face-to-face programme of skills-led workplace activity modules. We developed a simple idea for creating a museum about experiences during lockdown, by displaying objects in a 'Museum of Me' jam jar, which became the basis for discussion about every aspect of museum work: curation, events, conservation and display, learning and marketing.

Sharing the stories behind their object choices allowed young people to connect with each other and to broader themes, and from there, to find areas for further exploration within the museums' online collections. This led to team projects on themes that mattered to them: race, gender, disability, poverty and childhood.

Early in lockdown one group chose to use the collections at the Stories of Lynn and The Lynn Museum to talk about local attitudes to poverty. Unable to visit the museums, we co-ordinated weekly Zoom meetings and the young people used their phones to access digital images from the curator, record interviews and create an exhibition on the Google Arts digital platform. A year later another group shared the stories of workhouse children using the extraordinary animation skills of one of its members, Harriet-Rose Carter. The final film is on show at the museum and online.

## Creative responses to the collections

Some groups came ready-formed and with a clear purpose. A group of History master's degree students were able to fulfil their required work placement during the first lockdown without being on-site. They interrogated willing museum staff for relevant source material to research, script and direct a short film. Staff were able to visit the empty site to film and act in a clever, documentary-style drama which →


*A panel from the 'Nothing About Us Without Us' exhibition highlighting opportunities for disabled artists, objects for those who rely on touch 'to see' and mental health*



*Some of the Museum of Me jam jars on display at Stories of Lynn museum*

was screened in the museum once it reopened. At home, one student created a textile piece linking the documentary to other objects in the collection; clothing stitched with the gendered, judgemental language of Victorian England. Her work, with additional printed research, accompanied the documentary film: three different interpretation styles in one.

One KtD participant designed a collaborative community textile project to raise the profile of little-known black abolitionist lecturer Moses Roper. Of mixed race herself, this participant aimed to challenge the predominantly white narrative of her beloved local museum, Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse. We used our own experiences of online group working to mentor her through the process of co-ordinating dispersed participants towards a joint outcome. The resulting beautiful artwork provided an eye-catching and thought-provoking accompaniment to a more traditional touring exhibition on the same topic.

## Neuro-divergent perspectives

Another individual project, 'Nothing About Us Without Us', was conceived before lockdown and then adapted to online working. Bethan, who is autistic, wanted to develop leadership skills by working with other disabled young people to create an exhibition to raise awareness of physical and hidden disabilities. Unable to visit museums in person, we supported Bethan to create five criteria for the curators to use in choosing objects from across the collections as if they were a disabled person, such as an object used, or made by, a disabled person or if it had significance in some other way. An online forum for young people with disabilities became a sounding board to create a shortlist from the items the curators had suggested, and Bethan worked with an online collective of disabled young people from existing KtD project groups to create pop-up graphic panels, audio and visitor interactives.

A talented artist, Bethan used these skills to write and illustrate an information booklet explaining disability terminology, which became part of the youth forum's online resources for the public. It also featured in Bethan's portfolio for her successful higher education application. The 'Nothing About Us Without Us' exhibition toured local libraries in Norfolk earlier this year.

Focusing on giving the under-25s the opportunity to co-create temporary exhibitions in this way means that our collections are interpreted in ways anyone aged over 40 might shrink from. Their ideas are bold and brave, yet unerringly thoughtful. Subjects like disability, gender and sexuality are not seen as 'other' in any way. Inclusivity is embedded in every way; implicit in their language and tone in written interpretation, and shining bright in their choices of themes, objects and interactives.

As staff we can guide them through museum protocols, tell them about the objects, stories and documents we hold and share our own experiences. But we have learnt that these young people will listen to all we say, then go right ahead and treat our collections with both the respect – and the questioning – they deserve, in order to interpret new meanings for new audiences. Be they online or off, they've got this. The future of our museums is in safe hands. ■

*Focusing on giving the under-25s the opportunity to co-create temporary exhibitions in this way means that our collections are interpreted in ways anyone aged over 40 might shrink from. Their ideas are bold and brave, yet unerringly thoughtful.*

→ Kick the Dust Norfolk:
www.museums.norfolk.gov.uk
Facebook: @KTDNorfolk
Children of the Workhouse by Kick the Dust (animation): https://youtu.be/gqDy1eR5bNY

# Orchards East:

## Understanding the orchard heritage of Eastern England

**Professor Tom Williamson**
*School of History, University of East Anglia*

**Many people are fascinated by ancient orchards and the old varieties of fruit they contain. And in recent years their importance as habitats has been increasingly recognised by both local and national nature conservation bodies. But orchards have been disappearing from the English landscape at an alarming rate over the last 60 years and, while new 'community' examples and heritage collections have been widely planted, this has not been on a sufficient scale to compensate for the loss. It was against this background that the Orchards East project was launched in 2017, with a £470,000 grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund.**

*Spraying in a commercial orchard at Cockayne Hatley, Bedfordshire in the 1930s*

The four-year project, a partnership between the Landscape Group at the University of East Anglia and orchard enthusiasts from across eastern England, had three strands. Firstly, it funded and oversaw the planting of 60 new community orchards in both urban and rural locations across Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Essex, Hertfordshire, Norfolk and Suffolk. Each was planted with 'local' varieties of apples and other fruits, or those closely associated with the area, and discrete interpretation boards explaining what the trees were and why they were selected. Secondly, the project wanted to upskill people and so shared practical advice →


Orchard East

through orchard management workshops; talks to community groups; and cookery classes, often targeted at disadvantaged groups, on how to make meals using different kinds of fruit.

Thirdly, the project had a research aspect. Volunteers were given maps showing the location of orchards recorded on early Ordnance Survey maps and asked to ascertain their continued existence and, where they survived, their current condition. Over 10,000 historic orchard sites were examined on the ground, confirming the scale of destruction. Around 85% have been lost from the region over the last six decades, their sites converted to other uses. Landscape Group members, working with volunteer surveyors and postgraduate students, recorded people's orchard stories and memories, conducted detailed surveys of sample orchards and pored over county and national archives. Recruited by word of mouth and well-publicised county launch events, the volunteers also helped professional ecologists with habitat and biodiversity surveys.

Orchards East shows the potential of projects which bring together university academics, community volunteers and amateur enthusiasts. It had major heritage benefits, in terms of new orchards planted, skills disseminated, and raising public awareness through public lectures, social media (twitter) and local radio. Yet the project's research component also served to raise interesting questions about the true character of our orchard heritage.

## An ancient heritage?

Enthusiasts often assume that many ancient orchards exist and that 'traditional' fruit varieties await discovery within them: our old orchards, that is, provide a direct connection with a lost, rural past, when distinctive local varieties were propagated and exchanged between neighbours. Yet, at the same time, conservationists value orchards mainly for the dead wood they provide in old, hollow trees, an important resource for a number of rare invertebrates, and this is because fruit trees age

Orchard East

*Large old Bramley's Seedling trees at Tewin Orchard (part of a wildlife reserve owned and managed by the Hertfordshire and Middlesex Wildlife Trust). In spite of its ancient, 'traditional' appearance, the orchard was planted in 1933*

fast – and die young. But this in turn means that what appears to be an ancient orchard, often turns out to be a commercial planting from the inter-War or even post-War period.

Moreover, the results of the project suggest that few surviving fruit trees in eastern England were planted before the First World War and fewer still before the start of the 20th century. By this time, most fruit trees were supplied by commercial nursery companies and these vied with each other to market novel varieties to tempt consumers. As early as 1851 the great pomologist Robert Hogg argued that 'the Golden Pippin, and all the old varieties of English apple' had been 'allowed to disappear from our orchards' because they were 'not worth perpetuating, and their places supplied by others infinitely superior'. Newton Wonder, Emneth Early, Beauty of Bath, Grenadier, Worcester Pearmain, Allington Pippin, James Grieve, Tydeman's Early, Ellison's Orange, Gascoyne's Scarlet, Peasgood's Nonsuch and Tyler's Kernel may sound like survivors from some lost rural world but in reality they are recent products and a testimony to the skills of late-Victorian and Edwardian nurserymen. It is for these reasons, rather than for any links with a deeper past, that our heritage of apple varieties should be conserved and celebrated.

## The nature of a habitat

The project also raised important questions about orchards as habitats for wildlife. Old orchards may be good for wildlife now but were they in the past, when more intensively managed? Even those not regularly sprayed would have had few old and decaying trees; dead wood was routinely removed for fuel; and in many orchards the ground between trees was used to grow soft fruit, flowers or vegetables. What we see as wildlife-friendly 'traditional' orchards would perhaps have been viewed by our ancestors as neglected, even derelict ones. The survey results also emphasised the essential instability of orchards, doomed to degenerate to open pasture if not replenished, or to secondary woodland if more seriously neglected. Orchards, even more than most habitats, are a haven for wildlife, yet highly unnatural in character.

None of this detracts from the importance of orchards, not only in cultural terms and as a way of sustaining biodiversity, but also for the more essential pleasures they provide in terms of blossom, fruit and birdsong. The results of the Orchards East project have been disseminated through public lectures, a website and two books. Some activities continue through the Orchards East Forum, working with partner organisations to champion the orchard heritage in eastern England. Orchards East achieved a great deal, but much more needs to be done to sustain the region's orchards into the future. ■

**Resources**

Askay, M. & Williamson, T. 2020. *Orchard Recipes from Eastern England*. Lowestoft: Bridge Publishing.

Barnes, G. & Williamson, T. 2021. *The Orchards of Eastern England*. Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press.

Orchards East Forum: www.orchardseastforum.org

Orchard East

*Opposite: Local volunteers planting a new community orchard at Great Wymondley, north Hertfordshire, in February 2020*

*Opposite page: Old fruit varieties on display at an 'Apple Day' held at the Gressenhall Museum of Rural Life, Norfolk*

→ Tom is a landscape archaeologist and Professor of landscape history at the University of East Anglia (UEA). He co-led the Orchards East project with Dr Paul Read from the Suffolk Traditional Orchard Group. www.uea.ac.uk/web/groups-and-centres/orchards-east/about-us

# UNLOCKING THE LANDSCAPE HISTORY OF CISSBURY RING

**James Brown**
*National Trust Archaeologist*

**Cissbury Ring is an iconic Sussex landmark owned and managed by the National Trust. It dominates the surrounding landscape, with views south across the coastal plain to Worthing and as far as Brighton, and north across the Weald. Alongside its well-documented historical importance, the site is also a special place for nature, reflected in its Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) status. Cissbury has drawn an increasing number of walkers and visitors over the last year and our ambition is to share all of the site's fascinating and hugely important stories with local residents and visitors. The challenge for many years has been how to do this in a way that doesn't damage the buried heritage or detract from the character and appearance of the site. A new partnership is working collaboratively to create a digital interpretation trail that will help new and returning visitors connect with the multi-layered history of the site.**

## A little history

Cissbury Ring is most recognisable as an Iron Age hillfort (c.400 BC–AD 450). However, over 6,000 years of human activity can be explored across the site from our earliest industrial evidence comprising some 270 Neolithic flint mine pits and shafts, Bronze Age bowl barrows, traces of Roman and later medieval cultivation, a post-medieval beacon, a Napoleonic advanced infantry post and World War II anti-aircraft gun positions and trenches. These layered features survive as visible earthworks and as less visible buried features. Together, these remains illustrate the changing function of the hilltop over more than two millennia.

National Trust

*Eastern ramparts of Cissbury Ring looking south to the coast*

However, it is not just the 'lumps and bumps'; Cissbury Ring is hugely significant in the development of modern archaeological techniques in Britain. It captured the attention of characters such as Augustus Lane Fox and John Pull. In 1870 Lane Fox recognised and recorded the chronological relationship between the Neolithic flint mine shafts and the Iron Age hill fort defences; a key development of the principles of archaeological stratigraphy. Pull, a local self-taught archaeologist excavating in the 1950s, encouraged ex-servicemen to join his excavations (an early form of therapy for PTSD employed by military initiative Operation Nightingale today) alongside local families – some of whom retain lasting memories to this day.

## The challenge

The National Trust property team at Cissbury Ring have been scratching their heads for over 10 years trying to find a suitable way of interpreting the complex history of Cissbury


*Southern Entrance Way to Cissbury Ring*

Ring. As an open access, 24-hour site, it can be approached from different directions on foot or by bike. There are several non-National Trust-owned car parks, which do not have any information boards or counters. Several failed attempts have tried to distil all information into one interpretation board on the trig point, or in a car park, but it regularly came up against the same issue of being too challenging to do the site justice and became pretty uninspiring for such a magnificent place. The increase in recreational use due to Covid was positive, but created visitor pressures and some negative impacts, making site interpretation and visitor management even more important.

## The response

Thanks to funding made available by the South Downs National Park, the National Trust has worked collaboratively with Worthing Museum and local filmmakers to pilot a new digital interpretation trail embracing technology that has become more recognisable to the public during the pandemic. A series of 10 small plaques have been installed around the site that can be used to unlock an augmented guided tour. The content is accessed using personal handheld devices using either QR (as used for NHS Test and Trace) or NFC (as used for tap-to-donate) capability. The locations of the plaques were dictated by a combination of the stories we wanted to tell, the existing infrastructure such as gates (negating the need for consents), but also data on how people engaged with the site courtesy of Strava Heat Maps. Heat maps show 'heat' made by aggregated, public activities recorded on the Strava fitness app over a year and is updated monthly. Though only a small percentage of site visitors record their visit on Strava, the behaviours captured have been shown to reflect most users and its use can be considered more accurate than on-site surveys.

*Heat maps show 'heat' made by aggregated, public activities recorded on the Strava fitness app over a year and is updated monthly.*

The choice to use digital interpretation has allowed us to start telling the site's fascinating stories in a more engaging, informative and relatively low-cost way, combining more varied content and, most importantly, reuniting artefacts from the local museum with the landscape they were originally created in and discovered by archaeologists, helping to build a more tangible link with the past. →

Reproduced courtesy of Sussex Archaeological Society

*Digital Project recreating Lane Fox's 1875 excavation showing the Iron Age ditch cutting a Neolithic Flint mine. This image is the first recorded image showing an excavated archaeological section 'stratigraphy'*

## The lessons

The use of technology has further allowed us to capture basic analytics on the reception of the trail by users and the current preference of QR over NFC. Further questions will be tested on the site to see if QR continues to perform strongly post-pandemic with declining use of the NHS app, and whether explaining NFC technology on the plaques puts people off rather than just telling them to tap to unlock. The analytics further reinforced the behaviours of visitors on-site suggested by the heat maps; all plaques on the popular trails saw good engagement as did the ones located on benches due to dwell time. Plaques located for specific stories in quieter areas had about a quarter of the traffic, showing the trail is not yet creating a change in how people move around the site. The next steps will be to promote the trail from spring and create a supporting trail map when the new National Trust website launches this year.

Ultimately the aim of this pilot project was to ensure that visitors to the site leave with a better understanding and appreciation of it; Cissbury's history, its symbolism within the landscape and its continued relevance and connection to our sense of identity today. By fostering a deeper understanding of the site, the project team hopes to lead to greater public advocacy and care for this internationally important place. The digital offering at Cissbury has shown that rich content can successfully augment the experience at our sites in a positive way, and there is certainly appetite for it (as seen in the analytics). However, the answer of how we offer that in the most seamless, unobtrusive way is still a little unknown. The National Trust in the South East is now seeking to address these questions and others by convening different disciplines into a small and agile Digital Pilot Group to test, explore, evaluate and learn about how we can make digital work across our varied sites. ■

*"The videos enabled us to capture all that complex history in a really engaging way and that really was the game changer for me. Combined with the fact they could fit onto existing infrastructure was the icing on the cake! I can think of so many other sites that will be in the same predicament and this could be the answer. I know if I was a Ranger reading this, I would really relate to some of these challenges."*

**South Downs Lead Ranger**

→ James has worked as an archaeologist across protected landscapes for over 10 years. His interest is in helping visitors better understand and appreciate the landscape and how it is not as natural or wild as first perceived, but has been shaped by human hand over thousands of years. Through this understanding, the ambition is to show that all of us have a right to be included within and help shape these landscapes, as the generations before us did.
Twitter: @NatTrustArch
Instagram: www.instagram.com/nationaltrustarchaeology
Facebook: www.facebook.com/NationalTrustArchaeology

# LIHEM TESFAYE

**Lihem Tesfaye was awarded the AHI Young Interpreter of the Year (2021) for her contribution to 'Represent', a project exploring creative responses and reinterpretation of the industrial heritage of Leeds and its links to Britain's colonial connections and Black History.**

Ashley Karrell

'Represent' was a finalist in the AHI 2021 Engaging People Awards (*Untold Stories* category) and a collaboration between Ignite Yorkshire (We Are IVE Ltd), Geraldine Connor Foundation and Heritage Corner, hosted by Leeds Industrial Museum and funded through the government's 'Kick the Dust' programme.

Lihem was nominated for the award by Marie Millward, Ignite Yorkshire Project Manager at We Are IVE Ltd, who emphasised Lihem's commitment and sensitive, mature approach to the project. Marie highlighted her leadership skills including 'listening and genuinely considering others' ideas.' 'Lihem's ideas were brave and she was prepared to be bold in interpretation, ambition and delivery,' Marie wrote in her nomination. Lihem embraced all opportunities for gathering information. 'She not only asked the most questions, but also the most probing ones. She understood how engaging in the deepest way would enable her to think about curating ideas differently,' Marie added.

### *How did you hear about 'Represent' and what made you want to get involved?*

I found out about it through a friend who had already worked with the Geraldine Connor Foundation and initially joined as something to do during my half-term. It was also something that I realised I knew nothing about. So I signed up out of pure curiosity and a chance to do a project with friends related to social issues that I was already passionate about.

### *Which part of the project was the most challenging or enlightening?*

I found it particularly challenging processing how a city I have grown up in all my life could have been so heavily involved in atrocities that took place in the transatlantic slave trade, and more, how I wasn't even aware of this despite living in Leeds. It concerned me that it was not common knowledge and taking part in the project enlightened me. I realised how much 'history' has been hidden from us, even while being educated about the transatlantic trade and its ties to America at school.

### *Was there one part of the project that really got you 'fired up' and excited?*

It was definitely exciting getting to respond to everything we had learnt and experienced within a few days in a creative way through presenting ideas on PowerPoint and especially seeing the film made during the project!

### *Is there a change you'd like to see in the heritage sector?*

I would like to see more diversity in the people involved within the heritage sector. Any curator that came to talk to us during the project was White, which spoke volumes in itself. Therefore, including more young people as well as people from different demographics and ethnicities within staff and especially managerial roles, is a change I would like to see.

### *Based on your experience, would you recommend taking part in similar heritage projects to your peers?*

Yes, most definitely! I personally believe that it is so important to include young people and introduce them to the heritage sector in order to maintain relevancy within society. In addition, many of us aren't even aware of how 'local' international trade links can be, so taking part in projects like this is really eye-opening and helps stimulate conversations that may have not taken place otherwise.

### *What are your ambitions for the future?*

I plan to go to university next September and in regards to heritage specifically, I would say that I have no clear ambition but do hope to continue on this journey of interpreting local, hidden histories. I also hope to carry skills gained through 'Represent', such as being critical of what is around me in my future professions, whether that be medical or scientific. ■

# BOB JONES, MBE, HFAHI

**Bob Jones was the recipient of the Lifetime Achievement award at the AHI 2021 Engaging People Awards. Bob talks to us about his career and shares some advice for those just starting out on their interpretation journey.**

***What was it that inspired you to embark on a career in interpretation?***

*"If I have seen farther, it is by standing on the shoulders of giants"* – Isaac Newton.
We all stand on the shoulders of giants, those people whose paths we cross on our individual 'journeys' through life and career. People who took the trouble to guide and inspire us.

The '**giants**' from my journey would mostly be unfamiliar were I to name them – but whatever I have achieved that led to this award, I have done so because of their encouragement. Principal amongst them, however, must be Martin Orrom, a forester with vision and a founder member back in 1975 of the Society for the Interpretation of Britain's Heritage (SIBH) – AHI's forerunner. A senior forestry officer within the Forestry Commission (FC), it was Martin's inspiration that foresaw the need for what became the FC Design & Interpretation Services unit. His next inspiration was to recruit me as senior designer (no mention of the word 'interpretation' at this point!) And I went along for the ride. Initially. Within months I was drummed into the ranks of SIBH, doused in their conferences and coach trips, and so began my rollercoaster ride as an 'interpretist'. I was privileged to head up that unit for some 30 years.


***Is there a project you've worked on that you are particularly proud of?***

I find it impossible to pick just one out of the many. They differ so widely in terms of scale and context – from the Magical Forest exhibit at Glasgow Garden Festival, to a community-gain strategy for a major Highland windfarm; from the original Kylerhea Otter Hide on Skye, to the humble SignalSign and the non-invasive SackSign. To the sense-of-place programme for the FC's Forest Parks; or the major refurbishments of the Grizedale, Kielder and David Marshall Lodge visitor centres, along with new-build visitor centres at Westonbirt, Whinlatter and Glenmore to name but a few out of 30 or so centres. And the challenge of a National Interpretative Strategy for the now defunct Forestry Commission Scotland.

If pride is not a cardinal sin, I am extraordinarily proud of them all. But grateful to have been supported in the Design & Interpretation Services' journey by an amazing in-house team, many of whom have grown – rightly – in their own career 'journeys'. And to the many external contractors, not a few of whom will be found in the ranks of AHI today – many good friends and fellow travellers.

***In your acceptance speech at the awards ceremony, you voiced concerns about digital overdrive in methods of interpretation, advocating for less is more. What is your advice to the sector on this?***

When I first picked up my 'interpretists' pencil some fifty years ago it was all hard copy media – media you could hold in your hand, walk around or up to. Today it is all about being 'digital' savvy – websites, apps, social media and

virtual reality. True enquiry is haemorrhaging in favour of quick hits and sound bites. The thirst for knowledge stumbles despite the promised 'accessibility' of the media. I fear we are now in digital overdrive – simply because we can be. Budgets voraciously consumed by the latest must-have tech – the medium becomes the message – and too often with little thought to its sustainability. Picture the tour bus spilling out its 'captives', each plugged into a smartphone or staring at the subject of interest through its camera screen, then piles back into the bus for the next five-minute experience! Beware all you 'interpretists', engaged too long, overdrive quickly leads to overload. I favour the serendipitous discovery, the non-invasive media, seasonal pop-up centres, or the minimum-impact installation that actually adds to the site. Long-in-the-tooth 'interpretists' may remember Don Aldridge's call-to-arms in his 1988 conference presentation, 'The Tempest: How The Ship of Interpretation Was Blown Off Course' – I worry that with attention spans diminishing we may still be heading for the rocks.

***What advice would you give to a young interpreter (or 'interpretist') at the beginning of their career, such as Lihem Tesfaye, the recipient of the AHI Young Interpreter award?***

In his book – *A Promised Land* – former US President Barack Obama writes:
*"If I'm talking to a group of young people, I'll describe how over time I have trained myself to take the long view, about how important it is to* ***stay focused on your goals*** *rather than getting hung up on the daily ups and downs."*

Taken out of context – ie his campaign trail – this may sound trite to some, but it resonates with me, most importantly in taking 'the long view', be it in career or professional outputs. I doubt I ever 'trained myself' but I do know I have favoured the 'long game' – eschewing short-term wins in favour of long-term results. I find the now-frequent obsession with short-termism is inevitably hollow, like a fast-food meal – filling at first but leaving you craving for more an hour later. The satisfaction from looking ahead, beyond the obvious or the easy, reaping the reward of delivering something of substance, brings a greater peace-of-mind and the satisfaction that you have 'given it your best'.

***What are your ambitions for the future?***

My days of consultancy are numbered... I see my contribution to our profession now as one of advocacy; to see AHI grow, not just in number, but as a respected and go-to professional body. As we did in drafting and adopting our recent Code of Ethics, so I would like to see us address other aspects of good professional practice. Obama again: *'The world of experienced, high-level (interpretists) is not so different from that of other professions, in that young people... consistently have little access to mentors and networks'*, whereby for instance we could pursue a programme of paid internships and apprenticeships funded through the likes of HLF, which might help us to build a more robust profession. I also believe we would do well to set some limits to our activities – no physical interpretation above the 350-metre contour, nor on the seabed. These I would happily lobby for, in the name of serendipity. I will also continue to push for an AHI archive and archivist!
(see page 28 for more on this...)

So, treasure your membership of AHI – keep it close for it is a true 'giant'. When next you have a quiet moment, take the time to recognize the '**giants**' who have guided your journey, and do honour to those who have gone before... and don't leave it too long! ■

*The profession of the 'interpretist' is demanding, but it should also be fun – and if you are not enjoying it, stop doing it.*

→ Bob Jones, MBE, HFAHI is Principal of BlueSkyBlueWater, Strategic Design & Interpretation Planning Consultancy.

# PAST FORWARD: FROM THE ARCHIVES

**Bob Jones, MBE**
*HFAHI*

**Looking back over ten years or so in the life of our Journal it is clear there is an incredible wealth of content, practical experience, polemic discussion and case studies on many aspects of our profession that is as relevant today as it was on its first 'outing'. Much of it written by experts in their fields – including some of our own members and associates – who were, or have gone on to be, highly regarded exponents and champions of our profession.**

We can assume that many new full and associate members now in our kirk will have joined our ranks in the period since those earlier Journals rolled off the presses. Although digital copies of the Journals are available (currently back to summer 2007) in the members section of the website, it is likely few will have been moved to seek out those 'kists' of collective memory. The value of that content may not have been recognised, far less consulted in the process of tackling a current project or challenge, or simply as part of a member's learning curve. Those that have made this journey of discovery may have had to wade through an ever-growing library of content before finding the one contribution that is particularly relevant to their interests. In this article, the first in a series depending on how you receive it – and intended to be edited by a different guest reviewer from within the AHI Fellowship360 programme – we will look at the content of just one Journal from the archives. It is important to note however that whilst we will focus on a selected number of articles, there is much more worth revisiting in each issue.


To kick off, in this issue we look back to **autumn 2011** and **Journal No.2/Volume 16**.

The core content theme was all about maps, and the commissioning editor at the time was David Masters: "*(Maps)... enable us to understand our location, to conceptualise where we are in space and even to interpret our surroundings.*"

The cover title 'Where are we?' is perhaps particularly prescient today as we emerge (hopefully!) from the bleak pandemic experience of the last couple of years.

Of particular note, the articles include:

- **'You Are Here – the role maps play in interpretation'** – Aaron Lawton (former AHI Chairman). A self-confessed map geek Aaron discusses how maps are like teleporters or time machines, portals to another dimension. How smartphones now enable all of us to interrogate 'place' as well as topics.

- **'Making Maps Work for Visitors'** – Mick Ashworth (Ashworth Maps & Interpretation Ltd.) explains the use of maps and the role of cartographers: Are maps really necessary? What are the different types of maps? What are the issues surrounding copyright?

- **'Beyond Geography: Digital mapping'** – Paul Davies (Digital Media Manager) explores how digital data is opening up how people can access maps in more meaningful ways; how map 'mash-ups' can tailor content to suit individual needs or interests.

- **'How People Use Maps'** – Carl Atkinson (Countryside Council for Wales) reports on research into how people interact with maps. What sort of maps? What sort of users? What do we think we know about our visitors when choosing a mapping format?

- **'Panoramic Paintings'** – Peter Crane (Cairngorms National Park Authority) explains how park staff came to use the traditional art of panoramic painting to portray the distinct character of an area.

- **'Sensing the Way'** – Stuart Spurling (The Sensory Trust) describes how sensory mapping is an important technique for analysing and enhancing visitor experience; how smells, sounds and touch are all experiences that help us explore the environment around us.

Case studies include:

- **'Putting Orford Point on The Map'** – case study from Jo Scott and Ewan McCarthy (interpretive consultants) looking at the transformation of a popular but tired stretch of the Devon coastline.

- **'How a Map Became an Icon of London'** – Oliver Green (London Transport Museum) describes the story of the London Tube map. A lesson in creativity for us all.

- **'Excuse me, where does the trail start?'** – Steven Richards-Price (Forestry Commission Wales) describes some of the myriad different ways the Forestry Commission has marked their trails over the years.

- **'A Map of Our Own'** – Kim Leslie (Director West Sussex Parish Map Project) describes an approach to documenting local identity, in the process establishing a permanent record of their own community.

- **'Mapping Ghent'** – (STAM Ghent City Museum) looks at how multi-media maps were used to engage visitors in a new museum in Belgium. A rare and welcome look at how innovative interpretation is being tackled out-with our own island.

So, looking to the **Past** – what has changed since 2011? *Quite* a lot if we take just new-media technology as our measure. Much of our hand-held tech for instance was already around back then. But it has become better, more reliable, more available. However, there is also an alternative view that says *not* a lot really. At the heart of our profession, *it is the message, not the medium*, that is paramount. The problem with new-tech is that it is not available to all in equal measure, it is not affordable to all, and tends to make us lazy, to spoon feed content. It also costs a lot, so funding becomes more of a challenge, never mind sustainability and maintenance. We need more research into just how much of our carefully crafted interpretation actually sticks.

There is also no denying that a lot has happened in the interpretation milieu over these years, but looking **Forward**, where can we expect to see the next big strides? Perhaps in the field of augmented reality landscapes and heritage sites where the past can be portrayed in and against the context of today.

Even from this short (and incomplete) summary of the 2011 copy of the Journal, such archive material must surely be of immense value to student and practitioner alike. Similarly, it must be of immense importance to AHI as a body in laying the very foundations of our profession. We need to guard and nurture such a resource well. Which surely begs a call for the creation of a formalised and professionally led archive within our Association. ■

It is also worth noting that copies of the equally 'essential reading' journals published by the disbanded **Interpret Scotland** (2000 to 2009) and **Dehongli Cymru/Interpret Wales** (2004 to 2016) cohorts are now also available on the AHI website.

This article is developed from an original proposal – "We Need Roots" – by Bob Jones, MBA, HFAHI.

# ADDRESSING SUSTAINABILITY:

## WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM THE HORNIMAN MUSEUM AND GARDENS' APPROACH?

**Charlotte Dew**
*Public Programme Manager at The Goldsmiths' Centre, London*

**In Malcolm Gladwell's book *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make A Big Difference*, he defines a tipping point as 'the moment of critical mass, the threshold, the boiling point'.[1] The Horniman Museum and Gardens, in South London, was among the first museums to acknowledge that the climate emergency had reached a tipping point, and on 29 July 2019 issued a press release stating:**

'The Horniman has declared an ecological and climate emergency, pledging to place carbon reduction and environmental issues at the heart of its work… Declaring an ecological and climate emergency is a consolidation of existing work and a commitment to renewed ambitions to reduce our own environmental and pollution footprint, increase biodiversity, and inspire others to do so…'[2]

Many cultural organisations, especially those worst hit by the effects of Covid, are faced with addressing sustainability whilst operating with few resources and/or environmental expertise. For those in this position, and for cultural organisations more broadly, there is much to be learnt from Horniman's approach.

*Museum Director Nick Merriman*

Horniman Museum and Gardens

Museum Director Nick Merriman, who took up the post in May 2018, describes a 'light bulb moment' when they recognised the museum's unique position – it is 'the only museum in London where you can see nature and culture together'.[3] A connection was made between this collection distinction and the '75%–80% family audience'[4] the Horniman attracts. The museum's research showed that parents and grandparents are worried about the world their children will inherit if climate targets are not met in 2030, 2040 or 2050. This audience also feels 'powerless'.[5]

Understanding this has led the Horniman to address sustainability, and the interconnected issue of social justice, by placing audience needs and the collection attributes at the core of its strategy. The issue of sustainability is 'front and centre' as is the mission to 'empower families', focusing on the idea that 'small actions can make big changes'.[6] This underpins all work, rather than being an add-on.

Sophia Spring

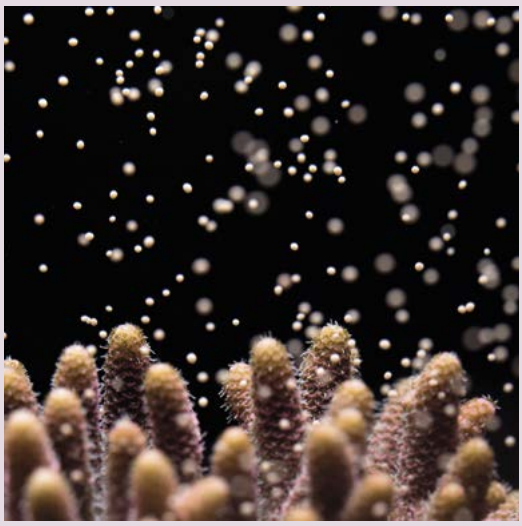
Merriman believes that making a formal declaration was important in communicating the museum's message internally and externally – it required the agreement of trustees and staff.[7] But to embed sustainability in the museum's workflow, it was essential that it was followed by a manifesto and action plan, which is available to read on the museum's website.[8] The action plan is a live document and currently in the process of review to ensure it continues to be relevant. The museum keeps the whole workforce informed and involved in the commitment – there is a not a separate 'green team doing this work on top of their job, peripherally… this is core business, our mission, so it's everybody's job'; it's become holistic through a 'combination of staff briefings, weekly staff messages and embedding it in everybody's work programmes'.[9]

Horniman Museum and Gardens

*Horniman World Gallery*

To present accurate interpretation, Merriman describes the museum team as 'learning all the time', drawing from reliable secondary information in many areas, except in the field of coral, where the museum's aquarium is undertaking original research to support the 'international efforts to conserve and repair reefs damaged by climate change'.[10] There is a reassurance in understanding that reliable secondary sources can be used to support this work, and it serves to emphasise the important role of information sharing within the sector. The Horniman participated in the recent National Museum Directors' Council conference 'Museums and Galleries Responding to the Climate and Ecological Crisis', where much pertinent knowledge and experience was exchanged.

A visit to the Horniman Museum and Gardens, or exploring the website, reveals the extent to which sustainability is informing and embedded in practice. During the Covid period, museum staff took the opportunity to accelerate work on refreshing collections interpretation. In planning exhibitions and events 'the sustainability angle is always considered to ensure the museum is living its values'.[11] For example, the interpretation that accompanied the presentation of touring exhibitions *Hair* and *Monkey Business* was enhanced to make appropriate sustainability connections. From the Horniman's homepage you can navigate directly to information and activities concerning 'Climate and Ecology', 'Women's History Month', and 'Black History'. Currently, opportunities detailed on the →



Horniman Museum and Gardens

*Opposite: Project Coral Acropora millepora spawning releasing egg sperm bundles into the water*

*Right: Recycling bins and compostable cup bins at the museum*

*Far right: Panel in the Natural History gallery about eating less meat*


C Churcher


Horniman Museum and Gardens

*The museum is still testing the type of information concerning sustainability that is most impactful; exploring the effectiveness of the macro and the micro, and how to best equip people to change and act if they choose.*

'Climate and Ecology' page include the chance to 'Join the Environment Champions Club', visit the *The Sustainable Way* exhibition curated by Horniman's youth panel, exploring the impact of the cotton trade and *Top tips for tackling the climate emergency* for children and young people.

The museum is still testing the type of information concerning sustainability that is most impactful; exploring the effectiveness of the macro and the micro, and how to best equip people to change and act if they choose. Merriman emphasises that this work is never complete; they are always learning and evolving. [12] For example, the 'Environment Champions Club' has been much harder to get going than they envisioned, most particularly online as the pandemic demanded, but they have persevered.

The Horniman Museum and Gardens' holistic approach to sustainability is inspiring. In *The Tipping Point*, Malcolm Gladwell suggests that what underlies change is 'a bedrock belief that change is possible, that people can radically transform their behaviour or beliefs…'[13] This faith is expressed through the museum's actions and commitment. Merriman's advice to museums looking to start tackling sustainability is 'get going, do something… start with something manageable, don't wait for perfection, there are lots of resources out there such as those available through Julie's Bicycle'. By taking small steps and sharing best practice, the cultural sector can play an important part in the seismic shift required to tackle climate change. ■

**Footnotes**

1 Gladwell, M. 2015. *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make A Big Difference*. Great Britain: Abacus. p.11

2 www.horniman.ac.uk/story/horniman-museum-and-gardens-declares-climate-emergency

3-7, 9, 11-12 Interview with Nick Merriman 4th February 2022.

8 www.horniman.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/horniman-climate-manifesto-final-29-jan-2020.pdf

10 www.horniman.ac.uk/story/double-celebration-for-hornimans-coral-researchers
National Museum Directors' Council 'Museums and Galleries Responding to the Climate and Ecological Crisis' conference recording: www.youtube.com/watch?v=OR2RV2Cij1g https://juliesbicycle.com

13 Gladwell, M. 2015. *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make A Big Difference*. Great Britain: Abacus. p.258

**Resources**

National Museum Directors' Council (NMDC) 'Museums and Galleries Responding to the Climate and Ecological Crisis' conference recording: www.youtube.com/watch?v=OR2RV2Cij1

Julie's Bicycle, is a not-for-profit organisation that mobilises the arts and culture to act on the climate and ecological crisis. www.juliesbicycle.com

→ Charlotte Dew is Public Programme Manager at The Goldsmiths' Centre and a freelance Curator and Museums and Galleries Consultant.

# CARGO MOVEMENT

**Lawrence Hoo**
*CARGO Executive Producer and*
**Prince Taylor**
*CARGO Project Manager*

**Formed in 2019 by Charles Golding and Lawrence Hoo, CARGO Movement is a creative collective developing digital heritage resources for schools and the broader public. CARGO's work evocatively celebrates the resilience and visionary leadership of African individuals who catalysed change and moved society forward. CARGO puts forward those missing narratives from our past and inspires the public to visualise a future full of pride and possibility.**

CARGO aims to enhance and broaden the national curriculum, contributing creatively engaging materials, which are as pedagogically strong as they are innovative in form and content. The purpose of this is demonstrably to improve outcomes for Britain's children.

CARGO also aims to enrich the cultural and civic landscape by representing a fresh and empowering response to history, which has traditionally been subject to restrictive interpretations. The purpose of this is to engage a broader spectrum of communities and create a more informed and more cohesive society.

## Project Manager, Prince Taylor, talks to Lawrence Hoo about CARGO

*CARGO Classroom workshop, Bristol*

### *What started CARGO?*

CARGO's genesis was a collection of poems called HOOSTORY, which were a reflection on the bicentenary of the abolition of the Slave Trade. This was in 2007 when I noticed that the information being relayed was the same information I was given as a young boy growing up. A whole 30 years later, the same negative story was being regurgitated. It was so disempowering and I knew there was more to the story than we were being told. There was a revolutionary side to the story: people who fought back for their freedom. It wasn't all just given away. It wasn't just a victim's story. The collection represented a non-Eurocentric view of the transatlantic slave trade.

As a young man growing up, the education I received made me very anti-establishment. It made me angry and I felt a great deal of shame because I was being taught that people who looked like me didn't fight back. I discovered people had been fighting the entire time, and in fact slavery was abolished because people were taking their freedom back regardless. Learning that the decision to abolish slavery was to avoid admitting that so-called savages were on the verge of overthrowing western military, my understanding of history shifted and so did my understanding of education.

### *What has been a moment of personal success for CARGO?*

Being able to look at the timeline, once we'd mapped out the resources and see a story that didn't have African people playing a bit-part role in their own emancipation. The story →

### I WISH

I wish as a boy growing up, more of my history was shown
There was so much missing, that could have helped me, before I was grown

The history I was taught, helped fill me with anger and pain
Because it taught me, my ancestors, were slaves with no name

Captured, kidnapped, traded and taken from their home
That's what I remember, when my ancestors were shown

So when it came to history lessons, my interest was none
Because whenever it covered my ancestors, they were savages and dumb

But many years after leaving school, my interest started to grow
And that, is when I realised, there was so much I didn't know

Much of what I was taught in school, and told was fact
Was really, like someone explaining all your life, on just one act

There is so much to be proud of, there is so much that has been achieved
But without going in search of the truth, I would of been deceived

From kings and queens that built great nations
To teachers and scholars that helped with our educations

From people who stood up when what they saw was wrong
To people who risked their life to help the sick get strong

From warriors that fought with so much pride
To all the people who for our cause... died

These are just a few facts, I found, that turned my anger to joy
And I just wish, they were taught to me, when I, was a boy

Lawrence Hoo

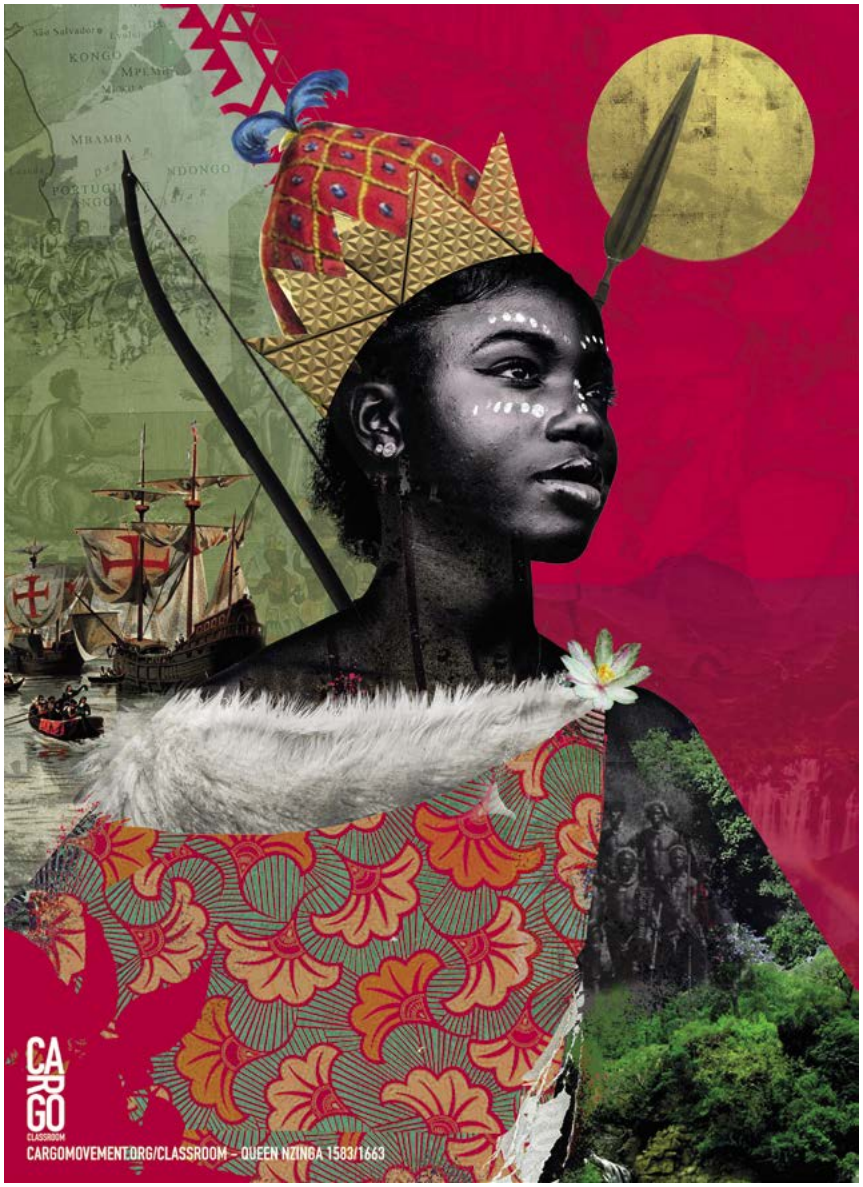
would always be about the transatlantic slave trade and abolitionists, with a sprinkle of Africanism in there. But from an African perspective, the stories were always painful and belittling. Now we could see the fight, and those who fought, all in different ways. Then reflecting on it further, we realised that we could share this with younger versions of ourselves, and help them get to this feeling we are experiencing a lot earlier than we ourselves did.

***Was there a moment where you felt the organisation had achieved something?***

At the launch in 2019, we debuted the CARGO book of poetry and created a 360-degree video installation at the Watershed in Bristol. This was when we believed we were doing something special. We had people from our community in a space they wouldn't usually attend, mixing it with the upper and middle classes of the city. Collectively exploring the period of time traditionally known as the transatlantic slave trade, but from a gaze that didn't inflict trauma on the audience. Stepping back and looking at a scenario where people have an opportunity to celebrate the resourcefulness of African people during this period of time, and can contribute to conversations that aren't formed on taking sides and arguments over who takes responsibility for what during a very dark period of history. Also, to witness others having the realisation that there is a lot for people of African descent to be proud of in this story. Yes, there is a lot of pain, but there is pride too and we've plucked it out and put it into a timeline for you to see. This was a big moment for our organisation. People weren't crying out of pain; they were crying out of joy.

***What challenges/hiccups have you faced?***

There have been challenges throughout. The initial plan for a national touring exhibition within CARGO shipping containers was shelved due to coronavirus restrictions. This seemingly frustrating limitation turned out to be a strength as we pivoted the project to




*Queen Nzinga, one of the Key Stage 3 history resources available from CARGO Classroom*

a predominantly digital offering. This gave birth to CARGO Classroom, a truly limitless platform intending to break down any barriers of learning and engagement. Charles Golding's expertise in digital content creation enabled him to take my thinking and poetry and give it a bold visual identity. CARGO Classroom was born out of a pandemic and fed the growing need for free, visually rich, engaging historical material. Uniquely, CARGO Classroom resources focused on the stories of marginalised individuals within history, giving an opportunity for celebration that has barely been researched, let alone told.

We've been very intentional in maintaining an independent approach, and the freedom this comes with can make us seem threatening. It works for us in terms of the relationships with our desired audience, but not always with other people in the industry. However, we continue to build great relationships with people who can see the value in our work.

### *What valuable relationships have come out of this work?*

We've built a really strong working relationship with the University of Bristol where there are some professors, lecturers, researchers and students who have been massive advocates for our work. At the start I was sceptical. For me to not have an education and be advocating this work meant I carried some insecurity into these spaces. We're conditioned to look at each other a certain way, but we have had the university come on board as a partner, not dictating to us but ensuring that our work maps onto current curriculums. They're also helping us develop resources specifically for teachers empowering them to use Afrocentric resources. The National Education Union also selected CARGO as part of a small coalition of organisations to tackle the systemic exclusion of alternative historical narratives in the current curriculum. Their backing and inclusion into a pantheon of high-profile organisations like the Runnymead Trust and the Lewis Hamilton Foundation gave us a renewed belief and confidence in the work we had been producing.

### *What's next?*

We are at the point now where we are refining our offer and making our resources more accessible, as well as adding more engaging levels of digital interactivity. It's important that the resources are useful to everyone, so you can use it on your phone, computer or laptop. So we're working on continual lesson plan creation, development and accessibility.

### *Words of encouragement*

We're working with a lecturer from the University of Bristol and when they've looked at some of our work, they can't believe they were never signposted to such rich history for the entirety of their study. They said to us, 'Now I know this I want to make sure everybody knows.' So that's our encouragement to teachers: 'There's nothing wrong with not knowing, but once you know, you can't continue to pretend that you don't.' ■

→ Lawrence Hoo is a poet and educator, based in Bristol. He is the Executive Producer of CARGO. www.cargomovement.org
Instagram: @cargomovement

# INTERPRETATION²

metstudiodesign.com

MET

CELEBRATE HERITAGE
DISRUPT THE PRESENT
CREATE THE FUTURE