

INTERPRETATION JOURNAL

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A MARITIME NATION





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CONTENTS

Foreword: A Maritime Nation David Masters	3
<hr/>	
FEATURE NEWS	
Book review David Masters	4
View from the AHI chair Ruth Taylor	5
<hr/>	
REPORTING RESEARCH	
Rock art goes mobile Aron Mazel and Areti Galani	6
<hr/>	
FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT	
I tweet dead people Paul Davies	9
<hr/>	
EXHIBITION REVIEW	
Making waves at Giant's Causeway Sarah Shiel	10
<hr/>	
A MARITIME NATION	12
Head to the coast and set free your inner child: Jo Scott	13
A contemporary home for a Tudor ship Robert Lapraik	14
Geology for toddlers Mel Border	16
Southampton and the sea Maria Newbery	19
On the beach Rebecca Evans and Jill Simpson	22
Interpreting an icon Jessica Lewis	24
An Antarctic adventure Julie Millerick	26
The Belfast Titanic Experience Victoria Kingston and Eithne Owens	29

The next issue will feature: **The Philosophy of Interpretation**



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FOREWORD: A MARITIME NATION

Ooh argh me hearties, 'tis with great pleasure we offer you real treasure here – nuggets of pure interpretive gold...

Website Members' Section

The AHI website has a 'new members only' section full of useful resources for the practising heritage interpreter. This is the place where you will find back issues of *Interpretation Journal*, conference papers, best practice guidelines and a host of other materials relevant to professional development. We will add more resources over time and publicise them in the AHI e-News as well as on the website.

You need to be a member of the AHI and register with the website to access this section. To register, you will require your AHI membership number (shown at the top of your e-News) and the email address your copy of the e-News is sent to.

You then enter your membership number and the common case-sensitive password to log in. Wonders will then unfold to you. The password will change with each issue of the journal and the first one is HER1tage.

The resources link is <http://www.ahi.org.uk/www/resources>.

As anyone with young children knows, pirates hold an enduring fascination for us. But our buccaneering past is only one manifestation of the deep and defining relationship we have with the sea – a relationship we celebrate in this edition of the journal.

We begin though, as usual, with a range of news and review articles. These include a report from the recent AHI annual conference, a review of Larry Beck and Ted Cable's new book *The Gifts of Interpretation*, and a review of the new Giants' Causeway visitor centre in Northern Ireland – which touches on the subject of how we interpret contentious messages and ideas.

We also feature the RAMP research project into the use of mobile technology to interpret prehistoric rock art, and our regular technology column reports on a demonstration project using mobile technology, tweeting and SMS messaging to interpret the 'Ivory Bangle Lady' at the Yorkshire Museum.

Jo Scott then introduces the main maritime section by taking us back to the childhood pleasure of a visit to the seaside – including trips to the beach, hopscotch on the rocks and a real '99' ice cream.

Thereafter we explore the interpretation of some of Britain's most famous and celebrated ships – each a character and personality in its own right. We take a sneak preview of the new *Mary Rose* exhibition in Portsmouth, the final resting home of one of the world's oldest warships. We discover how the National Maritime Museum is interpreting the recently restored *Cutty Sark*, and we review how the RRS *Discovery* and its interpretation has become the focus for the rebranding of Dundee. We also celebrate two new arrivals – the opening of Titanic Belfast and the SeaCity Museum in Southampton.

In complete contrast, we also explore a beach-based interpretation project in the beautiful Pembrokeshire Coast National Park, and the playful challenge of interpreting geology for children at a coastal Geopark on the 'English Riviera' in South Devon.

Each of these projects demonstrates the power of popular and innovative interpretation. We hope you will find them inspiring.

So, with a yo ho ho and a bottle of rum, I bid you adieu until the next edition.

David Masters MAHI,
Commissioning Editor

FEATURE NEWS

THE GIFTS OF INTERPRETATION: FIFTEEN GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR INTERPRETING NATURE AND CULTURE, THIRD EDITION, BY LARRY BECK AND TED CABLE SAGAMORE PUBLISHING, 2011

BOOK REVIEW BY DAVID MASTERS

There are very few books regarded as seminal works in our field. Freeman Tilden's *Interpreting Our Heritage* and Sam Ham's *Environmental Interpretation: A Practical Guide* most readily come to mind. To that short and distinguished list we can add a further publication – Beck and Cable's *The Gifts of Interpretation*.

Get beyond the rather uninspiring cover and this book is a treasure trove of ideas and practical guidance, grounded in many years' experience, research and inquiry. Sam Ham even describes it as 'a landmark achievement in the interpretation literature.'

The basic premise of this book is the deepening and widening of Tilden's original six principles of interpretation into 15 comprehensive principles for the 21st century.

In this third edition, each principle is reinterpreted as a 'gift' – from the interpreter to their audience, to human culture, and to the environment. Each gift/principle is described and explained through practical examples, quotations, reference works, and in some cases evidence-based research (more of the latter in the fourth edition please!).

The tone, language and examples are clearly American, and may not appeal in every respect to a British audience. However, get beyond the stylistic differences and the essential content of this book is highly relevant to our work here in the UK.

Experienced heritage interpreters will find this a useful aid in their continuing professional development, and it will reinforce best practice, challenge assumptions and broaden horizons.

Those newer to our field will find *The Gifts of Interpretation* a comprehensive, easily digested and inspiring account of what we as interpreters do, why we do it, and how to do it to the best of our ability.

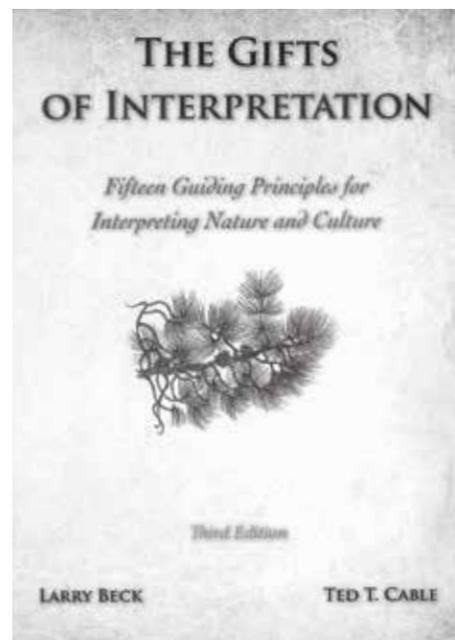
David Masters is Commissioning Editor of the *Interpretation Journal* and Lead Consultant with *Imagemakers Interpretive Design and Consulting*.

A NOTE FROM THE AUTHORS

We wrote *The Gifts of Interpretation* as a follow-up of two earlier editions of the book titled *Interpretation for the 21st Century: Fifteen Guiding Principles for Interpreting Nature and Culture*. The 'Conclusion' of earlier editions had addressed interpretation, in a broad sense, as a gift.

The interpretive site itself is a gift that offers inspiration. In addition, the interpretation of the site is a gift that may offer insight, a deeper understanding and a more enriching experience. This perspective, we believe, is our unique contribution to the interpretive literature.

We begin with the gift of a spark; finding common ground with visitors to draw them into the wonders of the site. We then proceed through a series of gifts including chapters on the gift of story, provocation, personalising the



past, illumination through technology, relationship, beauty, joy, and passion. We delve into each of these gifts, and more, to suggest the value and meaning of what the interpreter does.

We conclude the book with a chapter on the gift of hope. Hope raises our awareness and motivates us in the right direction. Furthermore, interpreters can offer hopeful messages while acknowledging and confronting the many problems that shape the world. The beauty of human integrity commemorated in events of the past and the beauty of the intricacies of nature give rise to hope, and these are the tools of the interpreter.

FEATURE NEWS

VIEW FROM THE AHI CHAIR

Ruth Taylor outlines a few of the highlights of AHI's latest conference, 'Placing Interpretation at the Heart of the Visitor Experience', and the AGM.

This year's conference in Shropshire consisted of a delightful mix of presentations, site visits, discussions and evening entertainment, which all ran smoothly thanks to the hard work of Ruth Coulthard (Conference Director) and Lyn Redknap (AHI administrator).

The conference began with Graham Black giving us a wake-up call to the demographic and behavioural changes taking place in our audiences, 'Heritage in the age of participation'. Museum visitors look, think, behave and process information differently from the way visitors used to in the past. Generation Y – The generation of young people growing up now – access information in quite a different way from the way people used to. Graham exhorts us to build long-term relationships, entice visitors and clasp them to our bosoms. We need to encourage users to share their reflections and to plan our work forward for

the 2020s. If we do not encourage innovation and develop new approaches to meet visitor's changing needs, we will drift towards inconsequence.

In contrast to this, Alex Gaffikin showed how Historic Royal Palaces had grasped the nettle and worked towards a more personal visitor experience in the reinterpretation of Kensington Palace. She described how by treading on people's toes she had truly embraced interpretation working across disciplines and showed how interpretation 'pollinates' everything.

Tony Berry explained how the National Trust had changed their attitude to visitor interpretation to take an experiential approach with all aspects of the visit contributing to the interpretation. 'If you charge for the feelings customers have, because of engaging with you, then you are in the experience business.' He described THEMES as standing for: Theme, Highlight positive reinforcement, Eliminate negative signals, Mix in memorabilia, Engage all five senses.



ABOVE:
View of the follies, Hawkstone Park, Shropshire.

BELOW LEFT:
National Cold War Exhibition at RAF Cosford.

David Masters described how Imagemakers have embraced globalisation and are ploughing a new furrow for visitor interpretation in China, leading to a number of areas of international cooperation.

Visits got off to a flying (well golf buggy driving start), with a tour of the follies at Hawkstone Park. Such a masterpiece of an 18th-century Romantic garden and views across Shropshire didn't need interpretation – just a map, as two of our party got lost!

Also memorable was the visit to the National Cold War Exhibition at RAF Cosford. As we sat listening to the build up to negotiations over missiles in Cuba, came the chilling realisation that these events were happening in our childhood and the outcome could so easily have been different...

The AGM and Annual Report show what has been achieved by your committee in the last year. Looking forward, AHI has a new business plan and is developing ongoing support for its members with an increased number of training events planned, including interpretive planning at RHS Wisley in May, and the development of a mentoring scheme. However, the committee is small, and volunteers to help with events and sponsorship are needed.

Further details and presentations are available on the members' section of the website.

Dr Ruth Taylor is Chair of AHI (2010-) and a Strategic Manager for Artswork, the Arts Council funded SE Bridge organisation.



REPORTING RESEARCH

ROCK ART GOES MOBILE

Aron Mazel and Areti Galani report on the 'Rock Art on Mobile Phones' (RAMP) project undertaken by the International Centre for Cultural and Heritage Studies at Newcastle University.

The North of England is endowed with a large corpus of Neolithic and Early Bronze Age rock art, dating to between 6,000 and 3,800 years ago. In Northumberland alone, over 1,100 abstract carved panels are scattered across the countryside. Ever since this rock art was first confirmed as ancient, around 150 years ago, there have been various initiatives to make it known to the public. This has, for example, been exemplified in the large body of popular literature published by Stan Beckensall, doyen of British rock art studies, during the last 40 years. Northumberland's carvings have also been made available via internationally groundbreaking websites: Beckensall Archive project (<http://rockart.ncl.ac.uk>) and the Northumberland and Durham Rock Art Pilot project (<http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/era/>). Despite the rich offerings of publications in hard copy and on the web, venture into the Northumberland countryside and there is almost nothing to assist people in locating rock art and understanding what it is about. An Arts and Humanities Research Council grant to Areti Galani and Aron Mazel (International Centre for Cultural and Heritage Studies, Newcastle University) has helped to begin remedying this situation.



ABOVE:
RAMP navigational windows as seen on mobile phones.



ABOVE:
Lordenshaw, Main Rock carvings. This images also reflects the extensive vistas that are sometimes visible from Northumberland rock art panels.

DIRECT TO YOUR MOBILE PHONE

Together with Research Associates Debbie Maxwell and Kate Sharpe, Areti and Aron undertook the RAMP project, which supports public engagement with carvings out in the Northumberland countryside. The primary goal of RAMP is for visitors to discover rock art panels *in situ*, perhaps inadvertently, and through the mobile experience enhance their understanding, awareness and appreciation of this enigmatic heritage resource and its surrounding landscape. Through a mobile platform, RAMP bridges the gap between the well-established digital resources and the carvings themselves, by bringing the web-based data into negotiation with the Northumberland countryside, and directly into visitors' reach. In essence, it 'brings photographs, diagrams and commentaries about rock art directly to your mobile phone when you're out in the Northumberland countryside' (<http://rockartmob.ncl.ac.uk/>). Thus, in consultation with local heritage agencies, eight panels were chosen at the Lordenshaw, Weetwood Moor and Dod Law rock art areas.

TECHNICAL STUFF

To make the mobile experience available to as many people as possible, it was decided to have a mobile website rather than developing a platform-specific app. Along with enjoying a larger user base, this approach should provide increased longevity compared to an app – a key consideration in the rapidly evolving field of mobile technology. Testing of signal strength for the five major mobile providers showed that a mobile website was viable at the targeted rock art panels. Attractively designed, non-intrusive panels were installed at the nearest car parks informing the public about the RAMP interpretive facility. The RAMP 'desktop' website is hosted by the Archaeological Data Service via the England's Rock Art (ERA) website, which advertises and provides access to RAMP through its home page. The mobile websites designed for use onsite are: Lordenshaw – <http://rockartmob.ncl.ac.uk/r/>; Weetwood Moor – <http://rockartmob.ncl.ac.uk/w/> and Dod Law – <http://rockartmob.ncl.ac.uk/d/>.

RIGHT:
RAMP entrance sign at Lordenshaw.

MIDDLE:
Weetwood Moor rock art.

BOTTOM LEFT:
Workshop participants examining the RAMP initial design on a mobile phone at Lordenshaw, Main Rock.

WHAT PEOPLE WANT

The public were involved in designing the content and interpretive mechanisms of RAMP from the outset. We wanted to know what visitors were thinking and saying to each other in their everyday encounters with rock art and its surrounding landscape. How do visitors use and experience these phenomena and what types of content and interpretive mechanisms would be most useful for them and mobile phone deployment? In order to elucidate this issue, five experience-centred, participatory workshops were held in Northumberland with members of the public who have an interest in rock art and/or the countryside. A total of 39 people attended, and their observations and comments directly influenced our design.

The workshops used an informal and low-tech approach, and included exploring the participants' favourite spots in North East England, visits to either the Weetwood Moor or Lordenshaw rock art areas, and participants talking about how they used their mobile phones. In addition, participants were encouraged to examine booklets containing drawings of rock art, and make notes on wooden lollipop sticks, which carried prompts

such as: 'This reminds me of...' and 'This landscape makes me feel...'. These activities encouraged the participants to engage in multi-faceted ways with the rock art and to reflect on their experiences. Ultimately, we wanted to obtain a deeper understanding of visitor needs and behaviours at rock art panels.

BUT IS IT ROCK ART?



Understandably, the frustrations of being unable to find rock art in the countryside were strongly expressed. This can be especially difficult in long grass and thick heather. The question of 'findability', however, concerned not only the challenge of locating rock art panels, but also appreciating the extent of the carvings on the rocks, especially as participants sometimes struggled to discriminate between



what was natural and what was carved. These frustrations, however, gave way to enjoyment when the discussions focused on the rock art, with participants exploring its meaning and social context. It was also evident that Northumberland's striking natural environment and interesting archaeological landscapes were powerful catalysts in encouraging people to visit rock art. In a nutshell, three of the key issues identified by the participants for consideration by RAMP were: (i) help with locating rock art; (ii) the desire for ambiguity and to speculate about rock art; and (iii) connecting to the landscape. These insights were instrumental in guiding the final design.

AM I IN THE RIGHT PLACE?

It was evident that the carvings intrigued the workshop participants despite the lack of *in situ* information and interpretation, and that they were prepared to spend time searching for them. Unfortunately, the technical specifications of RAMP's mobile websites prevented the use of devices with GPS or reliance on QR codes. To satisfy this urge to search, however, a visual map has become the central navigational mechanism, connecting the digital and physical environments. Each stopping point by a rock panel is linked to navigational information and specific content, such as text and photographs. Visitors are also guided from one stopping place to another and the orientation is confirmed with 'Am I at the right place?' text and a contextualising image of the rock art panel. Annotated Beckensall line diagrams have been provided for the panels because the workshop participants had indicated that these clearly revealed the carvings to them.





LEFT:
Workshop participant using one of Stan Beckensall's diagrams to examine the Lordenshaw Main Rock carvings.

AMBIGUITY AND SPECULATION

The workshop participants enjoyed exploring the purpose and possible meaning, or meanings, of the carvings. The question 'What do they mean?' underlay many of the workshop discussions and the wish to embrace ambiguity with speculation was linked to this. As a result of that input, speculation and ambiguity has been incorporated into the design through:

- (i) purposefully scripted conversations;
- (ii) presentation of evidenced insights; and
- (iii) directly soliciting visitor response through interactive questions.

So, for example, the conversation at Channel Rock includes the following text: 'large cups are clustered near the top of the panel. Why might that be?' Questions are also used as an activity type. At each of the three project rock art areas, visitors are able to select what they think the reason for rock art is through a multiple-choice question. On answering, they are presented with a screen telling them how popular their choice was, and what other visitors selected, along with a short piece of text offering more possibilities.

SENSE OF PLACE

An overwhelming aspect of the rock art experience expressed by workshop participants was their own connection with temporal, social and physical aspects of the landscape through the rock art. The landscape was often cited as its own reward, regardless of successfully finding rock art. Perhaps the most challenging participatory design outcome for RAMP was

the question of how to incorporate 'sense of place' into the conceptual design, especially as this phenomenon represents a personal relationship with the landscape. To preserve this direct relationship with the landscape, we wanted to avoid technology becoming intrusive even though the participants clearly used technology onsite (e.g. taking photographs) and during the workshops (e.g. making calls on mobile phones). The mobile involvement was thus designed as a 'dip in and out' experience – a set of interpretations presented in distinct chunks and media that can, therefore, be accessed in any order. Reflection on the landscape is prompted in a few instances, avoiding being overdone. For example, in one of the contextualising 'Am I at the Right Place?' pages it is stated: 'You should now be at the Horseshoe Rock... Take a moment to enjoy the view, then turn to face up the slope with the carved rock in front of you.' It was evident at the workshops that participants wanted to connect to and learn more about the landscape through the human history of the sites. In an attempt to address this, RAMP encourages

visitors to consider the carvings in their archaeological context – for example, drawing attention to Iron Age forts that are nearby to the carvings at Lordenshaw and Dod Law.

GOING FORWARD

Evaluation of RAMP has revealed that, although mobile phones are still novel interpretive tools in the countryside, people are largely positive about using these devices to engage with Northumberland rock art: 'I liked the sense of discovery. When you're looking at it – you've got the little map and you actually find the things. [i.e. rock art panels].' Great potential exists to build on RAMP by expanding the number of rock art panels accessible via mobile phones and exploring how we can make a wider range of heritage resources in the countryside accessible to visitors using mobile technologies.

Aron Mazel and Areti Galani teach in the International Centre of Cultural and Heritage Studies (Newcastle University).



ABOVE:
Workshop participant reviewing one of the initial RAMP designs.

BELOW:
Promotional material for the launch
of I tweet dead people.

FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT

I TWEET DEAD PEOPLE

Paul Davies describes how a 1,600 year old lady is using Twitter to enhance museum visitors' experience.

In 1901, workmen digging in York found the stone coffin of a woman buried 16 centuries ago. Her remains and possessions were put into storage in the Yorkshire Museum and her sarcophagus kept in the museum gardens and then for decades she was more or less forgotten.

During a multi-disciplinary research project conducted by the University of Reading Archaeology Department the remains of this woman were 'rediscovered' and she became known as the Ivory Bangle Lady. As part of the Heritage Sandbox project, run by REACT and funded by the AHRC, Imagemakers worked with Dr Chris Knüsel and Dr Stephany Leach from Exeter Department of Archaeology to explore new ways to tell people the story of this fascinating lady and the science behind the facts.



ABOVE:
Dr Stephany Leach reunites the Ivory Bangle Lady with her burial goods for display.

Dr Stephany Leach comments, 'The aim was to target the modern-day visitor to the museum; the digitally enabled families and tech-savvy couples who want a thought-provoking experience rather than a passive visual tour. We also wanted to connect artefacts of her life that are located throughout the museum so visitors start to piece the story together for themselves.'

An actress was filmed as the Ivory Bangle Lady in several short films. She talks about her life, Roman York and the questions surrounding how we can know so much about somebody who lived and died over 1,600 years ago. Visitors to the museum 'unlock' these videos by taking part in a trail through the galleries and tweeting the Ivory Bangle Lady.

Dr Stephany Leach explains, 'In the videos, the Ivory Bangle Lady tells you what you are about to see and poses a challenge for you to uncover. When visitors solve the puzzle, they tweet her (or text her) the answer and, if they're right, she fizzles into life and leads you deeper into her story.'

The project uses several small pico projectors around the museum and Imagemakers have programmed them to constantly check Twitter for activity surrounding the codewords. As soon as the codeword is detected the film is triggered and the Ivory Bangle Lady comes to life – often appearing in dark, quiet corners of the galleries.

The whole system is designed to have a very small footprint within a museum environment and was designed to work between existing displays, utilising dead spaces such as awkward corners and the sides of cabinets.

The pilot day in the Yorkshire Museum saw visitors taking on the challenge of the Ivory Bangle Lady with enthusiasm. One visitor commented, 'I think this technology is incredibly innovative. It attempts to access younger people through the devices and means



they use daily to communicate and learn. I think it did a fabulous job of linking one room/exhibition hall to another and it kept us engaged and looking at the artefacts to learn more. I would very much like to see similar technology made available in other museums.'

The ambition for the project is to create a network of 'I tweet dead people' across the UK, with museums taking advantage of the new system to engage people in the lives – and not just the skeletons – of their exhibits.

You can watch a video of the project at <http://bit.ly/ibl-vid>

Paul Davies is Digital Design Associate with Imagemakers.



ABOVE:
A school group on pilot day.

EXHIBITION REVIEW

MAKING WAVES AT GIANT'S CAUSEWAY

Sarah Shiel looks beyond the headlines and explores the new interpretive centre at Giant's Causeway on the Antrim coast.

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

The new £18.5 million interpretive centre at the Giant's Causeway World Heritage Site in Northern Ireland has been the subject of much attention since it opened on 3 July. Hitting the headlines have been its innovative architecture and the interpretive focus of one of its exhibits.

The building, designed by Dublin-based architects Heneghan Peng, replaces a temporary structure, in use since the original centre burnt down in 2000. It is inspired by and sympathetic to its surrounding environment and invisible from the site it interprets. Beautiful and understated, it is currently being showcased at the 13th International Architecture Exhibition at the Venice Biennale.¹

BELOW:
The new building is inspired by the basalt columns it interprets and is cleverly concealed within the landscape.



1. Correct at time of writing – the 2012 Biennale runs from 29 August - 25 November



ABOVE:
The audio exhibit at the centre of the recent controversy: the final track presented a creationist perspective on the Causeway's formation.

THE INTERPRETIVE APPROACH

The new centre's key interpretive themes are 'science, myth and man'² and the exhibition is accordingly divided into three colour-coded sections: red (science), turquoise (folklore and people stories/popular culture) and green (the Causeway's coastal ecology).

First-person narrative dominates across the three strands: scientist Iain Stewart takes us on a tour of the Causeway and gives us an insight into the work of a 21st-century geologist, actors recreate the imagined conversations of famous scientists while re-enacted vignettes depicting local 'characters' fill other holes in the archival record. Visitors will have to look closely for the inauthentic, as these techniques are not always highlighted or obvious.

THE VISITOR EXPERIENCE

There is a wealth of hands-on learning opportunities for visitors of all ages, from hi-tech touch screens detailing continental drift

to a simple stereoscope featuring stunning 19th-century images of local people along the Causeway coast. The majority of these elements are purposeful and well planned, and nearly all were in constant use during my visit.

As one might expect in a centre of this kind, artefacts are not the focus of the visitor experience. Of the few objects on display, one of the most interesting is a facsimile of the visitors' book from the 1870s. Closer examination of the book is made challenging by the case's lighting and its positioning flush to a perpendicular panel, however. In keeping with the visitor-centred focus, perhaps a better use of this facsimile would have been to display it openly alongside the contemporary comments book for hands-on engagement, helping visitors to make a more direct link between themselves and the visitors of 140 years ago.

Projected to the large rear wall, a looping animation of approximately five-and-a-half

2. http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/northern_ireland/8233664.stm

RIGHT:
The centre interprets the Causeway's coastal ecology.



minutes' duration playfully interprets the mythical origins of the Causeway stones. The animation is beautifully observed and has been rendered to a very high standard. There is no dialogue, removing the need for subtitles and making this element accessible to visitors of all nationalities. Despite this, during my visit, the animation did not manage to hold most visitors' attention for its duration: a movie of this length would benefit from a subtle time bar, allowing those unfamiliar with the story to know at which point in its narrative they have arrived.

The movie's audio permeates the surrounding area – indeed, sound spill is a problem throughout the open-plan interpretive space – and its animated characters have also found their way across the centre, into the shop and embodied in the costumes worn by staff: 'Finn' and 'Oonagh' circulate the space and pose for photographs with visitors, supported by a veritable army of red-shirted staff and volunteers, all eager to help and to encourage visitors to engage with the exhibits.

THE CONTROVERSY

Despite its best efforts, the interpretation has made the news for different reasons. Media interest has focused on an exhibit which, until a recent review and amendment by the National Trust, appeared to acknowledge a creationist perspective on the Causeway's origin. This exhibit, an interactive audio feature, explores the historical study of the rocks and includes a series of imagined conversations based on some of the early debates about their origin. One of the six audio tracks originally stated that:

'This debate continues today for some people, who have an understanding of the formation of the earth which is different from that of current mainstream science.'

Young Earth Creationists believe that the earth was created some 6,000 years ago. This is based on a specific interpretation of the Bible and in particular the account of creation in the book of Genesis.

Some people around the world, and specifically here in Northern Ireland, share this perspective.

Young Earth Creationists continue to debate questions about the age of the earth. As we have seen from the past, and understand today, perhaps the Giant's Causeway will continue to prompt awe and wonder, and arouse debate and challenging questions for as long as visitors come to see it.'

In its press releases, the National Trust was at pains to point out that this exhibit is just one element within the centre and that the overwhelming focus of the centre's interpretation 'clearly reflects mainstream scientific understanding that the Causeway stones were formed 60 million years ago'.³ The exhibit provoked vehement reactions on both sides of the debate, with critics arguing that this element of the exhibit could lead visitors to infer that creationism offers a serious alternative to what the exhibit terms 'current mainstream science'. In response to this furore, the National Trust eventually conducted its own internal review and, in early October,

substantially modified the exhibit script, removing the explicit reference to New Earth Creationism and restating its own, scientific, position on the rocks' formation.⁴

The extent of the National Trust's consultation in arriving at the original text with evangelical Christian group, the Caleb Foundation, which has close links to the power-sharing Democratic Unionist Party, was also questioned. The episode has raised big questions about the involvement of vested political interests in publicly funded interpretive projects and also challenges us as interpretation professionals to reflect on the roles and responsibilities of heritage interpretation.

THE VERDICT

Controversy aside, the centre packs a lot into what is ultimately a relatively small exhibition space. Having gone through the centre, however, the first-time Causeway visitor will be well prepared for their visit to the rocks; the interpretation begun at the centre is also continued across the site through an excellent AV handheld tour and is picked up in carved text on the outdoor furniture.

Sarah Shiel (MAHI) is Senior Interpretive Planner at Tandem Design.

3. <http://ntpressoffice.wordpress.com/2012/07/05/giants-causeway-visitor-centre-interpretation/>

4. The original and revised transcripts can be read at <http://ntpressoffice.wordpress.com/2012/07/05/giants-causeway-visitor-centre-interpretation/>

A MARITIME NATION



“The sea, once it casts its spell,
holds one in its net of wonder forever.”

Jacques Cousteau

“Don’t grow up too quickly, lest you forget
how much you love the beach.”

Michelle Held

HEAD TO THE COAST AND SET FREE YOUR INNER CHILD

I've never yet been able to visit a beach without immediately running down to the water's edge and splashing about in the shallows. I can't help it – I'm Cornish and there's saltwater in my blood – but it can be embarrassing if I'm on a site visit with a client.



© Jo Scott

ABOVE:
The spectacular 95 mile Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site starts at Orcombe Point's geoneedle.

Once I've recovered my poise, assuming I do, there inevitably follows the moment when I stop and stare out to sea. We all do it: stilled, like Antony Gormley's figures on Crosby beach, by the sea's beauty and power, with its dark undertow of danger.

As an island nation, the sea and our stunning and varied coastline have shaped our history and continue to define us. So it's no surprise that we're passionate about our maritime heritage; it is an integral part of who we are. So, as the articles that follow demonstrate, one feels a great sense of responsibility when called upon to interpret it.

When I was invited with Bright 3D to develop interpretation for Orcombe Point in Devon, western gateway to the Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site, I felt the weight of this national pride and passion on my shoulders. So I went for a paddle on Exmouth beach to mull over our options.

Art seems to be well placed to complement significant maritime moments – consider the immensely poignant spectacle of 1,517 tiny ice figures, representing Titanic's lost souls, melting on the Custom House steps in Belfast in October¹. Or the humorous wooden 'fish and ship' forks, for use at local chippies, celebrating South Shields' shipbuilding history². But where does more 'traditional' interpretation fit? The words of real people – above and below decks – take us straight to the trauma and heroism of a shipwreck (Titanic again), and walking amongst the real timbers help us time-travel to a Tudor world (Mary Rose). But what of a world before there were people...?

Standing looking up at Orcombe's ancient red sandstone cliffs, I knew we had a vast and awe-inspiring geological story to tell. Looking around

at the families picnicking on the sands, and the couples promenading along the clifftop, I also realised that our audiences were mostly already here, already having a great time. We somehow had to complement the emotional intensity of a fun family day at the beach, a ramble along the cliffs or an encounter with the lifeboat crew. The challenge wasn't the busy semi-urban promenade below the cliffs, where we could add value for families with fun and eye-catching stuff about rock pools, dinosaurs and ancient deserts. It was the peaceful grassy clifftop above, with its elegant geoneedle sculpture, where folk go to simply soak up the stunning views east to Portland and west along the great scoop of Torbay. Any interpretation there had to be discreet: scattered to discover like treasures in the sand. It needed to provoke the same kind of emotive responses as a visit to the beach below: the grown-up appreciative wow meets the unfettered inner child!

We tackled this in several ways, including a simple stone compass rose set into the grass and hopscotch stones in the pathway. By skipping along the different Jurassic Coast rocks, you follow a geological journey spanning 185 million years.

Does it work? I watched a young boy jump into the middle of the compass and excitedly point out the views to his smiling parents. But I felt we'd really cracked it when a neat, middle-aged lady walked past me. Then she hopped and skipped along the full length of the hopscotch stones, giggled to herself, glanced around to see if anyone had noticed and then continued along the cliff. She walked away with a lighter step and I, delightedly embracing my own inner child, celebrated with a two-scoop '99'.

Jo Scott is a proudly Cornish heritage interpretation consultant who now lives in Northumberland. If she doesn't answer the phone, she's probably paddling at Newton by the Sea. www.joscott-heritage.co.uk

1. www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-20020498

2. www.shieldsgazette.com/lifestyle/entertainment/art-exhibition-will-brighten-up-the-seafront-1-4761702

A CONTEMPORARY HOME FOR A TUDOR SHIP

Robert Lapraik describes the final chapter in the story of the *Mary Rose* in which the ship, now displayed in a new purpose-built museum, is largely interpreted through the men who lost their lives when she sank in 1545.

ENGLAND'S POMPEII IN POMPEY

As Henry VIII stood at Southsea Castle watching his favourite ship, the *Mary Rose*, tragically sink, little could he have imagined that 437 years later, much of the ship and her contents would be the subject of a unique collection which Dr David Starkey describes as 'England's Pompeii'. The outside broadcast at the time of the raising of the ship in 1982 was watched by some 60 million people worldwide and the raising became one of the memorable events of a generation. Since that time, the museum and ship hall in Portsmouth Historic Dockyard have been visited by over eight million people who have enjoyed seeing the amazingly preserved Tudor objects and witnessing the long conservation of the ship.

The surviving hull of the ship was recovered to a dry dock next to HMS Victory and, as it transpires, this positioned it only some 50 metres from where she was built. After reviewing all the possible locations for the new museum, in 2005 the *Mary Rose* Trust decided to build the new museum over and around the ship while her conservation continued. This article reviews the approach to displaying and interpreting this iconic collection in its new location, reunited above

water for the first time since its sinking under controversial circumstances fighting a large French invasion fleet.

THE PEARL IN THE OYSTER

The new museum, which is now in the process of being fitted out was designed 'from the inside out' by architects Wilkinson Eyre and Pringle Brandon. The elegant elliptical building takes its overall concept from a mussel or oyster shell with the pearl, the *Mary Rose*, at its centre. The external black-painted rainscreen wooden planking reflects the carvel (flush seams) planking of the *Mary Rose* itself, while the zinc-coated roof gives the building a modern feel that blends easily with the operational Royal Navy nearby. The considerable technical challenge was to construct the new building over the existing ship hall, modifying the supporting structure whilst continuously spraying the hull with a wax-like solution of polyethylene glycol, and also observing the special nature of the dry dock, which is itself a Grade 1 Scheduled Ancient Monument. However, that is a different story.

A MOMENT IN TIME

The *Mary Rose* Trust team has been particularly conscious of the significance of the collection – the ship and the many thousands of objects that together represent a time capsule of Tudor England, created not by curators but by the dramatic sinking, capturing a 'moment in time' on 19 July 1545. The result is that we do not just have the tools that, for example, the carpenter used on board, but also his cabin, sea chest, personal possessions, the skeleton of his dog (the on-board ratter) and indeed his very bones, from which we can forensically reconstruct his face to reveal the individual who was drowned nearly 500 years ago!

The concept of the museum design is that the objects are once again set in their proper context, reunited with the ship. The ship itself

BELOW:
The west end view of the new museum.





A view of the Walkway.

© Pringle Brandon

is divided into three levels – the upper decks; the gun decks; and the lower decks. Longitudinal walkways running the length of the dry dock at three levels give views looking one way into the starboard side of the ship while looking the other way at hundreds of objects presented in the precise location they occupied moments before the ship capsized and sank. All the objects displayed are authentic and any missing parts are indicated by frosted Perspex to aid understanding. There is no written interpretation here as these sections of the museum are designed to be experiential. To this end, the main gun deck walkway not only aligns with the main deck of the ship but also matches its slope in order to heighten the experience for the visitor. In addition, subtle sound effects capture the ship's actual bell striking the watch every half hour and the background sound of wind and sea.

BELOW:
The reception area.



OBJECTS TELL THE STORIES

At both ends of the walkways, at three levels, are the six galleries that explore and interpret the collection. A number of characters who lived, worked and died on the ship have been selected to tell their stories. This approach gives unrivalled insights into the lives of the officers and men both at work and also at leisure. The interpretation is intensely personal, and the visitor is introduced not to the abstract noun 'archery' but rather to the Archer, the man, and his personal possessions.

While audio-visual displays give more detail of the collection and how the objects were used, the real objects are the stars and are being used to trigger the stories of the ship and her crew. Although the ship will remain inside its 'hotbox' being carefully dried until 2016, long views of the hull and gun decks are used to give the visitor dramatic views, interspersed by

BELOW:
A view of one of the galleries.



more poignant reflection on the horror of the sinking and the memorial to the men who died. A sense of place is created by the sounds and the relatively dark environment. The objects appear to glow in the darkened galleries, enabling each space to generate its own atmosphere.

TAKING DOWN THE WALLS

When the ship is dry in 2016, the internal walls surrounding the *Mary Rose* will come down and she will be visible from all the main galleries. The visitor will pass through air locks into the main ship hall, separated from the ship by only a low glass balustrade and will effectively be walking inside the display case with the ship. At this stage, more of the ship, its stem, many deck timbers and companion ways will also have been conserved and will be ready to be replaced into the ship.

The men of the *Mary Rose* are the focus of the new museum. On 19 July 1545, their world ended, but it was at that moment that our story began. It is a story of great endeavour and one that will continue to develop as advanced techniques help us to discover more about life on board Henry VIII's great warship.

Robert Lapraik is Deputy CEO of the Mary Rose Trust and is coordinating the New Museum Project.

GEOLOGY FOR TODDLERS

Mel Border describes how Paignton Geoplay Park aims to introduce young children to the wonders of geology through play.



© ERTC

The 'English Riviera', namely the three towns of Torquay, Paignton and Brixham in South Devon, has a superb landscape and natural heritage with its mosaic of headlands, coastal cliffs, rocky islands, sheltered proms and bustling harbour areas waiting to be explored. Despite its mostly urban setting, this area has one of the highest concentrations of protected geological sites in the UK.

GLOBAL GEOPARKS

This rich geological heritage has influenced the area's remarkable marine and terrestrial biodiversity and shaped its diverse human history, from the cave dwellers at Kents Cavern through to the millions of visitors the area welcomes today. It is this legacy that has led to international recognition and designation as a Global Geopark. This places the English Riviera in a global partnership, supported by UNESCO, alongside some of the most interesting and stunning places of natural beauty in the world. To date, there are 91 Global Geoparks located across 27 countries.

TOP:
The climbing net.

BOTTOM:
The story-telling chair.



© ERTC

A STRATEGIC DRIVER

As with all Global Geoparks, the English Riviera is not simply about geo-conservation; the status should be seen as a strategic driver for community benefits, quality tourism and sustainable economic regeneration. The Global Geopark offers an opportunity for us to use our rich geology, landscape, heritage and culture to promote a sense of belonging and pride amongst local residents, particularly young people. With wide support from the

tourism sector, the Geopark is now securely placed within the new tourism strategy of this area. Seen as a new hook to reverse the gradual decline in visitor numbers and spending, the designation will be used to increase the value of tourism to the economy, and to reposition the English Riviera as a leading UK destination.

A BOOK AND A FILM

So what's actually been happening on the ground to interpret the local geology when a vast majority of the population might consider rocks to be inanimate and – let's face it –

BELOW:
Interpreting for Quaternary period for young children.

rather dull? Working to bring the Geopark's incredible stories covering the last 400 million years to life has been essential. With that in mind, the Geopark worked in partnership with the local community and Torbay Council's creative sector to produce a short film (see www.englishrivierageopark.org.uk) that combines animation, live action and guidebook.

LEARNING THROUGH PLAY

However, by far the most exciting project to be completed during 2012 has been the half a million pound Paignton Geoplay Park, an amazing three-year project driven by the Paignton Community Partnership. The majority of the funding – £447,000 – was provided by

the Big Lottery Community Spaces Grant Fund. Torbay Council provided £50,000 of match funding and the Community Partnership is making up the small balance.

CHILDREN'S WISH LISTS

The design of the park is based on the area's geological history – and it was certainly a challenge to condense such epic stories in a fun and imaginative way. Public consultation was really important and it was through this consultation that local children decided, from a wish list what pieces of equipment they wanted in the park. The Geopark and the Community Partnership worked really closely with the designers Kompan (www.kompan.com)

Quaternary
500,000 years ago...

Challenge yourself... Early man had a hard life, are you fit enough to survive?

Mammoth

Hyena

Exploring where the savanna lived at Kents Cavern

Sabre-Toothed Tiger Skull (from Torquay Museum)

Sabre-Toothed Tiger

Visiting Torquay Museum

By this time the dinosaurs had appeared and disappeared and now it was the time of mammals.

Rainwater and underground streams carved out caves in the limestone rocks in Torquay and Brixham. This is when Kents Cavern was created.

Mammoth and woolly rhinoceroses lived here and the caves became home to wild animals like sabre-toothed tigers, hyenas, cave bears and real cavemen.

Ancient bones and tools have been found in the caves and you can see them at Torquay Museum.

THE ENGLISH RIVIERA GLOBAL GEOPARK TIMELINE

The beginning... 4568

PRECAMBRIAN 442

CAMBRIAN 440

ORDOVICIAN 443

SILURIAN 416

DEVONIAN 359

CARBONIFEROUS 298

PERMIAN 251

TRASSIC 251

JURASSIC 199

CRETACEOUS 145

PALEOGENE 65

NEOGENE 23

QUATERNARY 2.6

Today...

© ERFC

and the children's ideas to create the park design. Fundamental to success was ensuring the designers had a good understanding of the geological stories that we were trying to tell.

THE DEVONIAN PERIOD FOR TODDLERS

The toddler area represents the Devonian Period when the English Riviera was south of the equator and under tropical coral seas. Toddlers are able to ride on bespoke pieces of equipment that are based on the sea creatures that lived 400 million years ago – they can jump on a trilobite and swing over a sparkling wet pour sea. There is a trilobite and goniatite seesaw and even the trampoline and spinner bowls recreate the ancient corals.

GEOLOGICAL FAULTS FOR JUNIORS

The junior area has a giant climbing net symbolising a time during the Carboniferous Period – roughly 300 million years ago – when two major continents collided and our rocks were effectively caught in the middle of the collision. A major mountain range the size of the Himalayas was formed as a result – hence the mountain-shaped net. Looking down from the net, the children will see a pattern in the wet-pour surface that recreates a major geological fault.

BELOW:
The play flash flood.



BELOW:
Permian sand.



The sand and water play area represents the Permian Period, around 270 million years ago, when all the bay's distinctive red sandstones and breccias were formed just north of the equator. During this time, flash floods occurred after violent storms in the distant mountains and giant millipedes crawled around! This area has a purpose-built and sculpted water channel, created by Eccleston George (www.ecclestongeorge.co.uk), which recreates the ancient wadi environment, along with the giant millipedes for children to pump and dam water and digging equipment and tables for sand play.

SURVIVAL SKILLS

Then we skip to the Quaternary period, which is the teen play zone and links with the geology of Kent's Cavern. The Neanderthals and early humans who sheltered in the caves would have had to push themselves physically to survive, and the idea here is that our young people are challenged by their environment in a similar way. This is the largest area of the park and has the zip wire, towers, play huts, a six-way swing, climbing logs, stilts and climbing trees.

The interpretation panels on-site, designed by Bex Glover using the Geopark characters from the film, are bright and colourful to attract attention. They provide challenges for children, create the links between the park and places that can be visited within the Geopark, plus provide a little more information for the adults. Lastly, a fabulous story-telling chair in the picnic area helps to put the Geoplay Park's stories into the context of 4,600 million years of Earth's history.

The park has been a resounding success. Over 3,000 local people attended the official launch celebrations at the start of the Geopark Festival 2012 in May and, come rain or shine, there has not been a day since when the park has not been full of children, parents and grandparents all having fun and perhaps, without realising, learning about the local geology too!

www.englishrivierageopark.org.uk
www.europeangeoparks.org
www.globalgeopark.org

Melanie Border is Coordinator of English Riviera Global Geopark.

SOUTHAMPTON AND THE SEA

Maria Newbery explains how Southampton's new SeaCity Museum commemorates the *Titanic*, which had her home in the port, but its primary focus is the story of the city and the sea.



RIGHT:
The Gateway to the World gallery,
showing the interactive table in
the centre.

SEACITY MUSEUM

The new SeaCity Museum opened on 10 April 2012, 100 years to the day since *Titanic* sailed from Southampton. Although labelled in the media as a 'Titanic Museum', SeaCity Museum is much more: once fully developed it will embrace the relationship of Southampton to the sea.

Due to time and finance constraints, the project is phased and the galleries developed in Phase 1 include: Southampton's Titanic Story, about *Titanic's* crew, most of whom gave a Southampton address when they signed on to the ship and Southampton – Gateway to the World, about people who have departed from, or arrived in, the port of Southampton since prehistoric times.

Phase 1 also includes a Special Exhibitions Gallery, intended to host a wide range of historical or art exhibitions, some generated in-house, some brought in from outside.

The first of the exhibitions, *Titanic the Legend*, explores the international fascination with the story of the *Titanic*. It was developed and produced by the same team responsible for the two permanent galleries.

BELOW:
SeaCity Museum.



A NON NEGOTIABLE OPENING DATE

Located in Southampton's former magistrates' court and police station, the project took off in earnest with the award of a Stage 2 HLF grant in 2010. Although the magistrates had already relocated to a new court building, the police were not due to move out until early 2011. Hence, the main challenge for everyone involved was the timescale: the opening date of 10 April 2012 could not be changed!

In November 2010, the main builders moved in and started converting the building. The first task was to remove a large amount of asbestos, which was a favoured building component in the 1930s, when the Grade 2 listed building was constructed. By the time the museum opened in April 2012, a total of more than 80 contractors had been involved in delivering the project.

SOUTHAMPTON'S TITANIC STORY

We were very concerned that the galleries should tell a distinctively Southampton story. Particularly, we were determined that the Titanic gallery would not just tell the story of the ship and the rich/poor passengers as is done in so many other places. We wanted to tell Southampton's *Titanic* story. We also wanted all the galleries as far as possible to feature our own collections, which, like other museum collections, have their own strengths and weaknesses.

The gallery focuses on the history of the *Titanic's* crew and uses this story to explore what it was like to be in the merchant navy 100 years ago. It tells the story of the impact *Titanic* had on Southampton. Visitors learn about Southampton in 1912 and are able to explore different areas of the ship through a range of interactive displays and reconstructions. Through the stories of

individual crew members, visitors get a sense of the people on board and the range of jobs that they did. The interactive elements include an opportunity to steer the *Titanic* down Southampton Water, to stoke coals into a 'boiler' and to listen to oral history interview extracts.

The story of the sinking of the *Titanic* is told by people who were there, through an audiovisual show using interviews with local survivors from Southampton's excellent oral history collection.

A more detailed story of individual crew members and what happened to them and their families after the *Titanic* sank can be explored on a touch-screen interactive, which has been designed so that museum staff can update it as more information becomes available.

SOUTHAMPTON: GATEWAY TO THE WORLD

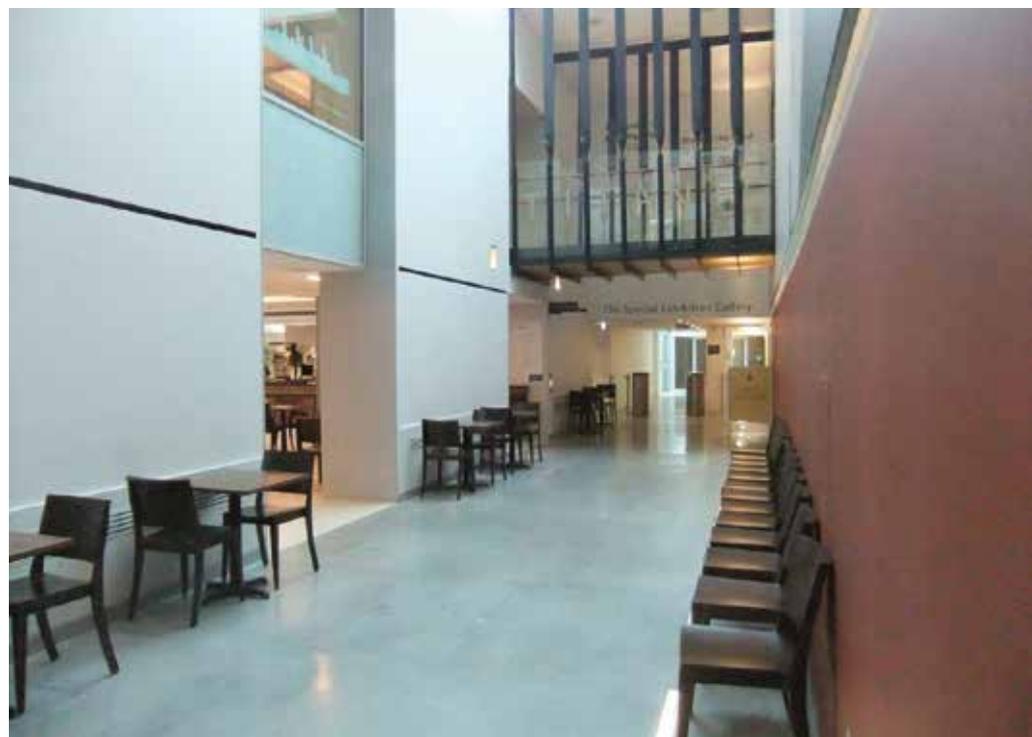
The Gateway Gallery recounts the stories of people who have departed from or arrived in Southampton over the last several thousand

years. Using themes of Settlers, Traders, Exiles and Soldiers, the exhibition features items from across the city's wonderful archaeology and local history collections. The display focuses on the stories of the people behind the artefacts and illustrates Southampton's rich history.

With the intention to attract a wider range of visitors than normally visit museums, particular attention was paid to the development of interactive elements, both digital and physical, throughout the galleries. The main part of the gallery includes 12 encounters with local people from the past and each one is designed to be a different type of experience. With the help of interactive touch screens, visitors are able to 'excavate' artefacts belonging to an Anglo-Saxon woman, whose burial was discovered during the excavations for Southampton Football Club's St Mary's Stadium in the 1990s. The actual artefacts are on display in a display case next to the interactive.

BELOW:

The former prisoner exercise yard has been converted to an atrium with access to shop, café and exhibitions.





LEFT:
Some of the artefacts in the Southampton's Titanic Story gallery are displayed behind doors, inviting visitors to explore artefacts on display.

At the entrance to the gallery, replicas of Stone Age artefacts act as contacts for display cases faced with 'smart glass', which transforms from opaque to transparent when anyone touches the replicas. The display cases house the actual artefacts from which the replicas were made. One of the main features of the Gateway Gallery is a large interactive map, on which visitors can explore the city's development through time. Touch areas open hot spots on the map, highlighting key features of Southampton's history.

Aware of the difficulty of telling the stories of Southampton immigrants since 1945, as this is a continuously developing topic, we decided to feature these stories in a series of 'Story Boxes'. These are small display cases located in a display area off the main Gateway Gallery. In order to tell these stories differently, we brought in two artists, who were each allocated a number of different stories and communities to work with. As the boxes are independent of each other, we will be able to change individual boxes as time goes on in order to feature different stories.

TITANIC THE LEGEND

In the first year, the Special Exhibitions gallery features the 'Titanic the Legend' exhibition, exploring why the *Titanic* story has caused such enduring fascination since 1912. Through

literature, poetry and film, every element of the tragedy has been studied in minute detail and, in spite of many maritime disasters since 1912, the *Titanic* has never been forgotten. It led to changes to ship design, maritime safety laws and regulations aimed at making shipping safer. Today, Southampton is the home to centres of excellence in several of these areas.

The discovery of the wreck in 1985, made possible by advances in underwater research and technology, sparked renewed interest. It raised controversial ethical issues surrounding the salvage of artefacts from the wreck. The exhibition explores many of these intriguing and sometimes controversial aspects of the *Titanic* story.

SO HOW DID WE DO?

Although the project experienced a few delays, the museum opened on the appointed date, 10 April 2012. Because of the *Titanic* connection, there was interest from media from around the world. So far, visitor numbers have exceeded projections and we have had much positive feedback. Most of the criticism we have received relates to the phasing of the project – people want to see more, **now!**

We had anticipated that relatives of *Titanic* crew members would contact us once the museum had opened and the response has

been overwhelming! People have contacted us with photographs of the crew and their families as well as information for us to include in the Southampton's Titanic Story exhibition.

We are now planning future developments in the exhibitions, both new exhibitions in the Special Exhibitions Gallery and amendments to the two permanent exhibitions.

Maria Newbery works for Southampton City Council and was Curator of the SeaCity Museum project.



ABOVE:
The Gateway to the World gallery, showing the interactive table in the centre.

ON THE BEACH

Rebecca Evans and Jill Simpson show how Pembrokeshire County Council and Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority overcame the problem of wonderful but isolated beaches with no facilities.



ABOVE:
Parked up on the beach.

You've come to Wales' wild west, all set for a week of lounging around on some of Britain's finest beaches. Home to Britain's only truly coastal National Park, with more award-winning beaches than any other county in Britain, there are plenty to choose from. However, there's nothing worse than arriving in an area you don't know, looking forward to a day of frolicking in the waves and rummaging around in the rock pools, only to discover there are no toilets, no cafe, no kiosk and your pet dog is unwelcome on the beach over the summer months.

RESCUED BY A MOBILE BEACH UNIT

A partnership project between Pembrokeshire County Council and Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority, the unit provides practical information to help visitors enjoy a day at the beach, and interpretive material to spark curiosity about what lies beyond, behind and upon the beach.

In an effort to promote the blue flag and green coast beaches for which Pembrokeshire is

renowned, Pembrokeshire County Council successfully bid for funding from the Green Sea (Beach Improvement) Programme, a Visit Wales coastal tourism project jointly funded by the European Regional Development Fund and the Welsh Government. Chris Payne, Leisure Services Manager for Pembrokeshire County Council, and Myrddin Dennis, Pembrokeshire County Council Beach Warden, were the brains behind the bid. They then contacted potential partners to add value to the mobile beach unit.

As both the County Council and the National Park Authority own and manage beach car parks, have shared responsibility for the foreshore and have a vested interest in encouraging responsible and safe behaviour on the beaches, there was an obvious partnership between these two organisations. Others, such as the Pembrokeshire Outdoor Charter Group and Keep Wales Tidy, have also been involved.

INTERPRETATION IN REMOTE LOCATIONS

In addition to supporting the work of the County Council, the National Park Authority

RIGHT:
Two of the interchangeable panels, with the background panel below.





LEFT:
In action on Manorbier Beach.

saw it as an opportunity to take coastal interpretation to places it would not usually be found. We have three visitor centres in the urban areas of Newport, St David's and Tenby. The mobile beach unit would be a chance to provide interpretation in the remote coastal areas in between the visitor centres; places where it would be inappropriate to have permanent interpretation. It would also be an opportunity for the National Park Authority to reach new audiences and engage with those visitors less likely to put down their buckets and spades and stray from the strandline into a visitor centre.

National Park staff are often asked about wildlife-related information: 'What can I see, where can I see it, and when?' These are frequently asked questions at our visitor centres. Being able to communicate this information more widely may go some way to managing visitor expectations, so visitors do not go home disappointed that they haven't seen a puffin in August, or a Manx Shearwater in the middle of the day!

National Park rangers engage with visitors through rock pool rambles and crabbing sessions during the busy holiday periods. The mobile beach unit provides a good visible base for these activities. We have also been able to maximise use of the interpretive material by adapting it for display in our visitor centres.

WHAT'S ON OFFER?

Our aim was to let the visitor know that there is more to do than just lie on the sand and splash in the waves. We give them little snippets about the wildlife and islands out to sea, the fascinating dune systems behind the beach and what they may find just below the surface if they rummage in the rock pools.

The unit has maps and safety information on the outside, designed and produced by Pembrokeshire County Council and interpretive content inside, designed by Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority staff. Pembrokeshire has been divided into five areas, each of which has an interchangeable map with colour-coded text and illustration boxes describing what there is to see and do beyond, behind and upon the beach. The maps are changed according to where the beach unit is located. To accompany these, there is a film, which covers the same five areas. The area films, each lasting about two minutes, can be viewed separately, or in sequence as part of a journey around the Pembrokeshire Coast. The films touch on topical issues such as biodiversity and climate change and relate to local habitats and the coast path. They provide an additional layer of interpretation and encourage visitors to explore further, both on a physical and intellectual level.

EARLY DAYS

This season has been used as a pilot, with a limited number of outings. Partners and interested parties will get together in the autumn to collate feedback and devise a schedule for next year, to ensure that the mobile beach unit is 'on the road' and used to its full potential in 2013. When not in use at the beaches, the unit will be used at other events, such as Iron Man Wales, agricultural shows, and food and countryside festivals. It may also be parked outside Pembrokeshire County Council Leisure Centres and National Park Centres to attract the attention of local residents and visitors.

Future improvements include adding options for more public engagement, such as a system for people to record wildlife sightings. It was originally intended that QR codes be put on each internal panel. These would link to a web page with more information about that area. However, lack of mobile phone signal on the Pembrokeshire Coast meant this was impractical. As mobile phone providers improve reception, and with other advances such as NFC, it might be possible to add these technological tools to the interpretive panels at a later date.

INFORMATION OR INTERPRETATION?

Arguably more on the side of information than interpretation, the mobile beach unit may not necessarily provoke a reaction from visitors, but it will provide them with practical information to make their visit more enjoyable, encourage further exploration of the surrounding area, raise awareness of the local biodiversity and of the National Park as a whole and ultimately foster better awareness of and respect for the landscape.

Jill Simpson and Rebecca Evans are Interpretation Officers, Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority.

INTERPRETING AN ICON

The six-year project to conserve the world's last remaining tea clipper presented a unique opportunity to re-present the stories of this international icon. Jessica Lewis describes the design approach for interpreting *Cutty Sark*.

THE CHALLENGE

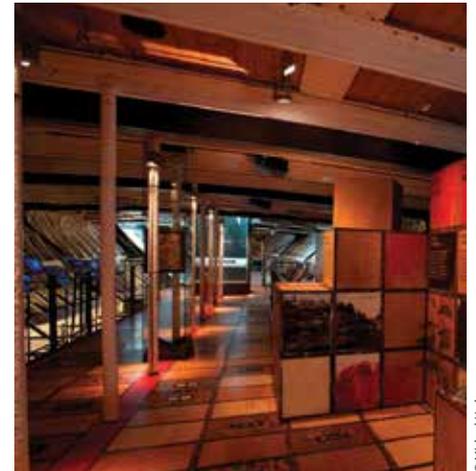
In interpreting *Cutty Sark*, we were dealing as much with the idea of *Cutty Sark* as with the ship herself. An internationally renowned icon and much-loved London landmark, she represents a bygone era of sail, from a notional 'golden age'. Indeed, the first term used to describe the ship by the focus groups informing the interpretation was 'romantic', not perhaps a term you would expect applied to a cargo ship.

Launched in 1869, the majority of the structure was devoted to the storing of goods and, as such, we were presented with the challenge of making an empty space interesting, engaging and meaningful. There are no gun decks on which to tell the story of dramatic battles, or fine quarters for passenger who travelled to exotic locations: *Cutty Sark* was simply built to make profit for her owner by transporting all manner of cargoes from port to port as quickly as possible.

Finally, perhaps the biggest challenge was presented by the ship herself. With 90% of her hull being original fabric, *Cutty Sark* is the only ship to be a Grade I listed building. As with any listed building, this presents particular parameters the designers must accommodate. The original material is a key aspect of her significance and therefore it is important that it is clearly visible, and all new interventions are distinguishable and not confused with the original structure.

SEEING THE STRUCTURE

The root of *Cutty Sark's* significance is in her shape. The vessel's fine lines enabled her to make record-breaking passages back to London, securing her fame and renown. Since 1954, the ship has been resting on her keel in dry dock in Greenwich and because the entire weight of the ship was concentrated on her keel, *Cutty Sark's* unique shape was deteriorating as the ship began to sag. In order to preserve her shape and to allow visitors to truly appreciate



ABOVE:
Cargo displays in the lower hold. © Designmap

these elegant lines, the ship has been lifted over three metres from the bottom of the dock she previously rested in. Now lifted, the *Cutty Sark* is supported by new steelwork which bears the weight of the ship, and the pressure on the keel has been relieved.

Visitors not only have the exceptional opportunity to walk under a three-masted ship, but lifting the ship dramatically reveals the distinctive shape which carved the passage through the water at high speeds. Tactile half-hull models in this newly created area beneath *Cutty Sark* clearly demonstrate the refinement of the ship's shape, which is so beautifully evident when viewed from below.

Visitors can closely examine the original structure from within as well. Entering the ship into the lower hold, visitors pass by the thick teak hull planks and wrought iron frame of the ship's construction. These are the very planks and frames that sailed thousands of nautical miles across the world, crossing the South China Seas and rounding Cape Horn. The original framework is painted white and the new steelwork supporting the ship's fragile frame is painted grey to identify new intrusions, and also to show the extent of corrosion of the original fabric, designed to last just 30 years.

BELOW:
Cutty Sark's hull, viewed from below. © Designmap



© Michael Heide

© Michael Heide



ABOVE:
Bow view with Nannie, *Cutty Sark's* figurehead.

A visit to the ship is a 360 degree experience, going through the belly of the ship in the lower hold, up to the cramped spaces of the 'tween deck, visitors can then explore the main deck where they find the crew living quarters, the working apparatus for loading the vessel, the masts towering nearly 50 metres above them, and the 11 miles of ropes and wires that make up the rigging. The braille guide for *Cutty Sark* encourages visually impaired visitors to interact with the structure to get a sense of the framework, the low head height on the 'tween deck, the diameter of the masts and the feel of the ropes, but this tactile experience of *Cutty Sark* is a key part of everyone's visit. Physically climbing into a bunk or looking out from the raised quarter deck at the bow invites people into the shoes of the crew.

UNDERSTANDING THE SPACES

The design team chose to use the ship's cargoes as the canvas on which to tell *Cutty Sark's* stories. In the lower hold there was originally no deck and so the appearance is of walking on tea chests, with even a few above your head to indicate that all this space was used for cargo. Tea chests are used for exhibition text on this level, and up on the 'tween deck, which covers *Cutty Sark's* career

as a wool clipper, wool bales are used as well. Visitors can now explore every inch of the ship, whereas before the project there were many areas off-limits to the public. The design team worked to maintain the clear views of the structure by using glass and free-standing exhibits. In particular, the feeling of space created on the 'tween deck now enables visitors to appreciate the camber of this deck, causing many people to ask, 'Is it moving?'

The communication strategy for the interpretation was to tell the key stories of the ship using a variety of media. This offers a layered interpretation that visitors can dip into as they choose. In particular, the scheme seeks to offer a multi-sensory experience with evocative smells, dramatic lighting, audio presentations, manual interactives and a number of tactile exhibits, many of which were designed specifically for visually impaired visitors but are used and enjoyed by all.

SHIP SPEAKS FOR ITSELF

The approach to interpreting *Cutty Sark* was led by the desire to let the ship speak for itself. The design team worked to ensure a lightness of touch in the interpretation, and sought to set the scene for visitors by creating the right

atmosphere on board, opening the doors to encourage visitors to use their imagination while ensuring they do not feel abandoned.

Visitor response has been very positive to date with 82% of visitors from the first quarter very satisfied. Many exclamations of 'Wow!' can be heard on the main deck, where visitors are transported to a life on board, with another series of 'wows' in the dock, where the stunning view of the gleaming hull above takes one's breath away. Two 'wows' in a visit is a heartening response to the re-presentation of an icon.

Jessica Lewis is the Curator of Cutty Sark.

BELOW:
Tween deck interpretation on board. © Designmap



© Michael Hedge

AN ANTARCTIC ADVENTURE

Julie Millerick explains how Dundee Heritage Trust interprets RRS *Discovery*, originally designed for scientific research, through a variety of fun and informative techniques.



ABOVE:
RRS *Discovery* docked in Dundee.

Dundee Heritage Trust is a small charitable organisation that runs two five-star museums Discovery Point and Verdant Works. Discovery Point is the home of the historic vessel RRS *Discovery*. Built in Dundee, it was the first ship specifically designed for scientific research. Opened in 1993, the displays focus primarily on the British National Antarctic Expedition of 1901–1904 led by Captain Robert Falcon Scott.

NOT JUST A SHIP

A visit here involves much more than just a trip aboard a historic vessel. Discovery Point tells the story of the *Discovery* from her beginnings in Dundee and Captain Scott's remarkable Antarctic expedition, through her long nautical career until her final journey home. The museum galleries use a variety of interpretation techniques to help visitors find out about Dundee's shipbuilding heritage and skills, what made *Discovery* such a unique vessel, the heroic story of the men who served aboard her, the value of the scientific work

undertaken, and the history of the vessel to the present day, including care and restoration issues.

RETURNING HOME

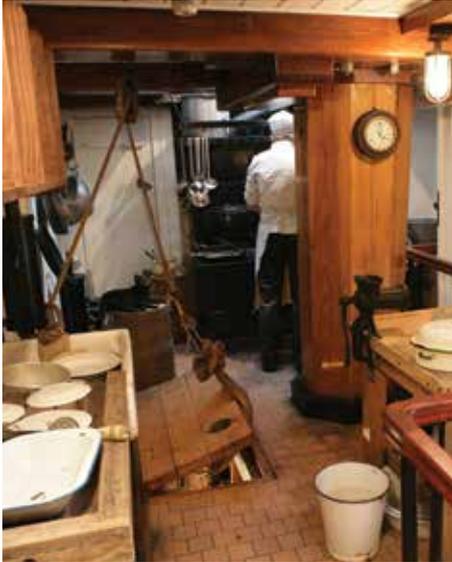
Discovery's return to Dundee, her home port, in 1986 was a historic occasion with thousands lining the shores of the River Tay to watch her arrival. Since then, she has acted as an icon for regeneration with the city even branding itself Dundee, City of Discovery. The highly successful campaign has seen the image of Dundee lifted and a new pride returning to the city. *Discovery* is home and the people of Dundee can be very proud of the ship that was launched in their city over a hundred years ago.

INTERPRETATION TECHNIQUES

Discovery Point remains a driver for Dundee's tourism and attracts large numbers of new visitors to the city. Last year we welcomed over 50,000 visitors, with 43% of these from outside



RIGHT:
A volunteer guide showing a family around RRS *Discovery*.



LEFT:
Discovery cook Charles Clarke in the galley.

panting beams which helped to prevent the ship being crushed by the pressure of ice.

Below deck areas of the ship have been dressed to give a flavour of life on board. Visitors can see the difference between the crew's quarters compared to the officers' cabins, see where the food was prepared in the galley and even visit Dr. Koettlitz, the ships surgeon, in the sick bay.

OPENING NEW AREAS

Over the last few years, more areas of the ship have been opened up, including the Bosun's store, the lower engine room and the coal bunkers. In the lower engine room, many of the original fittings have been removed so interpretation panels are used to explain some of the key features as well as giving additional history on the men who worked in the engine room. The panels are made from treated textile to prevent any damage that may be caused by leaks, inevitable on a historic ship. This new

interpretation of specific areas, previously closed to the public, has increased visitors' understanding of key aspects of the ship's construction and her fascinating history, vastly improving the experience onboard.

Audio guides were introduced this summer, providing visitors with the opportunity to explore and experience the dramatic story of *Discovery* and her crew. Helping to conjure up life on a scientific expedition to the Antarctic 100 years ago, they have opened up the museum and ship, enabling us to reach new audiences and connect better with existing audiences.

Julie Millerick is Curator at Discovery Point.

BELOW:
Discovery Ocean Odyssey Gallery.



THE BELFAST TITANIC EXPERIENCE

Victoria Kingston and Eithne Owens describe how the Titanic Experience in Belfast forms the cornerstone of the Titanic Quarter, Europe's largest urban regeneration project.



James Newton

ABOVE:
Gallery 6, 'The Sinking'.

A hundred years after the RMS *Titanic* set sail, the world's largest *Titanic* exhibition – Titanic Experience, Belfast – opened on 31 March 2012 in a dramatic new building designed by Eric Kuhne/Civic Arts on the very site where the ship was built. Within this building, the visitor attraction designers created a fully immersive exhibition that explores Edwardian Belfast, the city which produced the world's greatest ship, and charts the growth of the Harland and Wolff shipyard, the story of the *Titanic*, the people who crafted her, the passengers who sailed on her and the scientists who found her.

DISPELLING MYTHS

The centre aims to become recognised as an international standard visitor attraction and sets the story of the *Titanic* and her sister ships in the context of the thriving city that was Belfast at the beginning of the last century.

It was a time when Belfast was a key industrial hub – the home of, among others, the biggest ropeworks, tobacco factory and tea machinery plant in the world. The exhibition also aims to dispel some of the myths and legends that have become associated with *Titanic*, with content firmly rooted in research and fact, and act as a starting point for those who wish to explore the wider maritime and industrial heritage of Belfast and Northern Ireland.

Titanic Belfast uses a range of interpretative techniques to bring events to life, with oral testament, film, photographs, archival material and a range of media combined to create an engaging and thought-provoking experience. Working closely with the architects, the experience designers ensured that the gallery spaces take advantage of the building's scale and proportion.

The interpretive design team set out to combine the highest academic standards and the best of experiential entertainment and to deliver a visitor attraction that appealed to the family audience without alienating the scholar. The exhibition includes objects and techniques that imbue the visitor experience with reality from oral history, film, photographs and memorabilia to posters, postcards, and archival material. Across nine galleries, five floors of approximately 2,000 sqm of exhibition space, the Titanic Experience includes a ride, a 3D 'cave' that allows visitors to walk through the ship and unique HD footage of the Titanic

BELOW:
Gallery 1, 'Boomtown Belfast'.

taken by explorer Robert Ballard after he found the wreck in 1985.

TOWARDS A POSITIVE FUTURE

In developing the Titanic Experience at Titanic Belfast, the challenge was to create an integrated destination that uses the status of the *Titanic* story as the basis for the creation of a distinctive and unique development, i.e. the Titanic Quarter, supporting the wider regeneration objectives. The visitor experience needed to communicate the rich history of Belfast, and inform and celebrate its past as a thriving hub of commerce and industry, prowess in technology, design and innovation

– particularly shipbuilding whilst – taking a sensitive approach to a human tragedy. The content interpretation team worked to rationalise a vast amount of material, sift the myths from the facts and showcase scientific breakthroughs that enabled the discovery of the wreck.

THE BELFAST PERSPECTIVE

There are many organisations, museums and visitor attractions across the world offering their take on the *Titanic* story. A few are artefact-led; others display objects and stories with tangential connections to the ship; others still offer visitors the opportunity to re-enact



James Newton

RIGHT:
Gallery 1, 'Boomtown Belfast'.

James Cameron's blockbuster. What sets Belfast apart is that the city offers its visitors authenticity. A *Titanic* attraction in Belfast provides a perspective on and evidence of the story that cannot be reproduced elsewhere. Only Belfast can offer an experience rooted in the people and place that created *Titanic*: here the story is told by and in a community with a direct link to the ship. No other *Titanic*-themed attraction of this scale can claim a similar emotional connection.

Titanic Belfast uses this authenticity to underpin the interpretative approach. Throughout their visit, the audience is aware that they are in the very place where *Titanic* and her sisters were built. Emotional connections with the shipyards, with the city and with the people who built *Titanic* are created through the use of oral history, photographs and personal archival material – bringing the story alive in a way that cannot be replicated anywhere else.

CONTENT DEVELOPMENT

The interpretive designers developed the storyline using directed research that fed into ongoing content development. Early on, certain elements were agreed as being essential to the project and an outline interpretative approach, based on these, informed the design of the building. These initial fixed elements emerged from a four-month preliminary research programme into the story and related themes, and extensive stakeholder consultation carried out by the designers during the 2004/4 Feasibility Study commissioned by Belfast City Council and Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB). The framework for storylines was discussed with subject experts at, among others, the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum and the Ulster Museum, and was confirmed by the steering group appointed to the project. Community consultation included talking to groups representing descendants of shipyard workers. Local contacts were initially made



Christopher Henney

through Una Reilly, chairman and co-founder of the Belfast *Titanic* Society who also became a member of the exhibition design consultancy's expert panel.

The principles on which the exhibition narrative is founded were tested during stakeholder and community consultation undertaken for the Big Lottery submission in 2007, and feedback from this consultation further shaped the narrative. The first, and most important, principle – with universal agreement among stakeholders – is the understanding that the Belfast perspective on the *Titanic* story is what makes the exhibition unique. By focusing on this angle, the interpretation could draw in content from far beyond *Titanic*. And while visitors have every opportunity to learn about the building of *Titanic*, her maiden voyage and the disaster, they will also experience the wide and rich story of the city of Belfast, Northern Ireland's industrial and maritime heritage, and, in particular, the people whose personalities, industry and skills contributed to that heritage. This foundation offers a unique context in which the *Titanic* story sits.

The storyline makes it clear to visitors that *Titanic* and her sisters owe their birth to an extraordinary combination of people and place. This emphasis is introduced in the first gallery,

'Boomtown Belfast'. In this large space, displays dedicated to social and industrial history allow detailed exploration of Belfast's emergence as an industrial powerhouse in the 19th century.

THE PEOPLE AND PLACE

Interpretation addressing the city's communities and the evolution of the city's identity helps make the attraction a must-see destination for all visitors to Belfast – even for those less interested in *Titanic*. From the beginning to the end of the experience, it becomes clear that *Titanic* doesn't belong to any one group: many people from different backgrounds and walks of life played a part in her creation, directly or indirectly.

The emphasis on the 'bigger picture' of people and place is carried through the experience. In gallery 2, 'The Shipyard', the narrative addresses not just Harland and Wolff but a bigger story of shipbuilding in the city, including the Workman Clark Yard.

Titanic's fit-out is another cornerstone of the storyline. Not only is the fit-out fascinating to visitors who want to know every detail of *Titanic's* famously luxurious interiors, but it also offers an opportunity to connect back to local craftsmen and tradesmen who supplied many of *Titanic's* fittings.



Christopher Henney

BELFAST'S RESPONSE TO THE DISASTER

The stories of *Titanic's* maiden voyage and the subsequent disaster clearly have a place in the experience and they are dealt with sensitively and in a way that fits with the overarching approach to the content, foregrounding Belfast's response to the events. What did the sinking mean to the city? How did the subsequent decline in shipbuilding and industry affect the city? How did the discovery of the wreck change the way Belfast felt about the ship – and does it link to a resurgence of

pride in the city? Here, it was felt that an opportunity for visitors – whether from Belfast, elsewhere in Northern Ireland, or further afield – to say what *Titanic* means to them was an essential component.

At the time of opening, March 2012, Titanic Belfast had set an annual target of approximately 400,000 visitors. Having welcomed more than 500,000 visitors in just over five months, expectations have been far exceeded.

ABOVE:
Gallery 9, 'Titanic Beneath'.

Victoria Kingston and Eithne Owens developed the interpretation for Event Communications who designed the exhibition.