# INTERPRETATION JOURNAL

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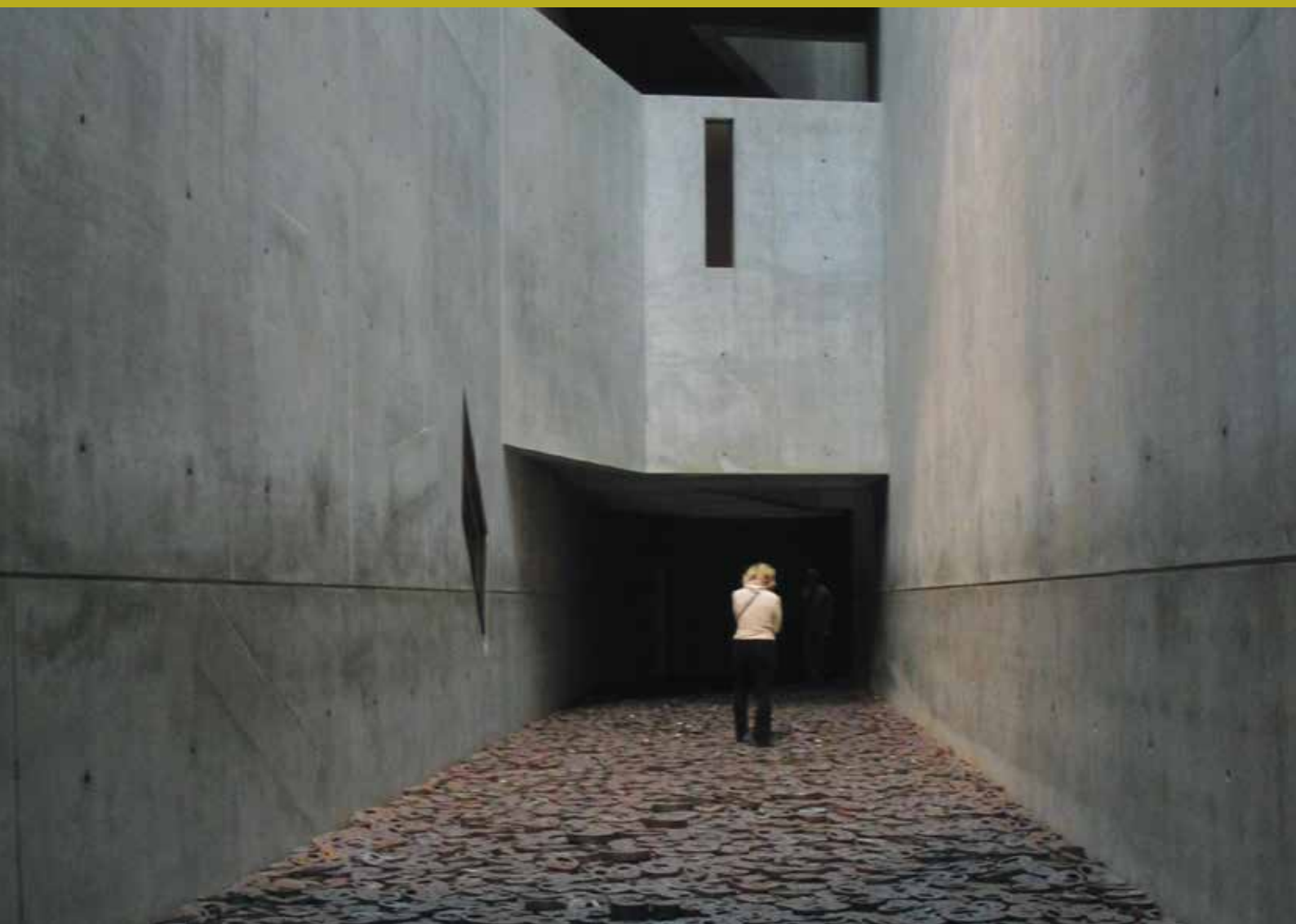
## THE PHILOSOPHY OF INTERPRETATION



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*Commissioning Editor:*
David Masters
0121 449 1600, david.masters@zen.co.uk

*Production Editor:*
Elizabeth Newbery
01865 793360, elizabeth@newberyandengland.com

*Copy Editor:*
Rachel Minay

*Editorial Advisory Board:*
James Carter and Carl Atkinson

*Design:*
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**The next issue will feature: Learning from other disciplines**

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# FOREWORD: THE MEANING OF LIFE

Sometimes it's good to stand back, take stock and have a look at life. My wife has just had her 40th birthday, and a friend gave her a sign with the following message: "What if the Hokey Cokey really IS what it's all about?" Now, anyone of my generation will know that the meaning of life is, of course, 42. But, as heritage interpreters, what is the meaning of our work in the 21st century?

**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 new password is Edinburgh2013.

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

A review of the 'philosophy of interpretation' was suggested as a journal topic at the 2012 AHI annual conference, and it does seem like an opportune moment for this. 2013 sees the launch of a new strategic plan period for the Heritage Lottery Fund, the bedding in of the Arts Council as the quango for museums and archives, proposed changes to the National Curriculum, and a continuing digital revolution.

To this end we have assembled a stellar cast of writers, policy makers and practitioners, each of whom addresses the place of interpretation in the 21st century from their own perspective.

We begin with an introduction from Dr Ruth Taylor, Chair of AHI, and a scene-setting three-way conversation between some of Britain's most experienced heritage interpretive 'heavyweights' – James Carter, Susan Cross and Carolyn Lloyd Brown.

Tony Crosby of the Heritage Lottery Fund then explores the role of interpretation from the most influential perspective – that of funder. Jane Stoneham, Director of the Sensory Trust, explores the importance of accessible, multi-sensory interpretation, whilst Stuart Frost, Head of Interpretation at the British Museum looks at the state of interpretation in the museum sector. Marilyn Lewis, Director of Cadw, examines the role of interpretation in economic development, whilst Annette Simpson, Head of Education and Interpretation at the Canal & River Trust, examines the relationship between interpretation and education. Athene Reiss, AHI board member and formally with the Wildlife Trusts, explores the contemporary role of interpretation in the field from which it came – wildlife and landscape conservation.

Their collective conclusion is that, with the exception of couple of natural heritage agencies, interpretation is more central to the visitor experience than ever before. The fundamental principles of interpretation haven't changed because people haven't changed. But some of our communication tools have changed, and the role of interpretation – in education, conservation, museums, tourism and engaging people with heritage – has clearly grown. Interpretation is also vital in defining and delivering 'sprit of place', another important aspect of the many contributions our work makes to 21st century Britain.

Elsewhere in this edition we publish case study reviews, the results of a study into the use of QR codes, and a report on new developments in digital media from the recent Digital Past conference in Wales.

So, the conclusion of this edition can be summed up with a simple message 'keep up the good work and believe in what you do.'

**David Masters MAHI,**
**Commissioning Editor**

Latest smartphone designs.

# REPORTING RESEARCH

## SMARTPHONES AND MOBILE INTERPRETATION

**Andrew Kerry-Bedell field tests smartphone scanning technology.**

**The smartphone is the mobile tool of choice for people of all ages – the essential 'hub' from which people run their busy social, family and leisure lives quickly and easily.**

With the ability to be scanned by most smartphones, QR codes can now be seen almost everywhere. With steadily growing public awareness, QR codes are also now starting to appear at UK heritage sites, together with newer NFC tags and Augmented Reality.

Six months of QR code research on the 100 mile South Downs National Trail clearly showed visitors are keen on this type of easy-to-use smartphone scanning technology in an outdoor heritage setting.


QR codes highlight local points of interest.

### THE RISE OF THE MODERN SMARTPHONE

95% of people In the UK own a mobile and 60% a more sophisticated smartphone or device, such as an iPhone, Android phone, iPad or tablet. The modern smartphone is a light, powerful pocket computer that can do almost anything a computer can, whilst on the move. 81% of smartphone owners now keep them on 24/7 to access emails, download files and mobile applications (apps), play games and audio or watch video, view websites, surf the internet or access their favourite social networks.

Most people also upgrade their mobile every 22 months, partly because smartphone contract prices have dropped significantly.

### SCANNING QR CODES IS EASY AND INFORMATIVE

Quick Response or QR codes are 2D barcodes that can be quickly scanned by a QR reader mobile app and any smartphone built-in camera. With 85% UK awareness of QR codes, and with most people having the type of smartphone that can scan them, they are currently the most popular type of scanning technology used by mobile device owners. QR code scanning apps can be downloaded free from any mobile app site, such as Google Play or iTunes. They cater for most smartphones, tablets and mobile device types.

QR codes have been around since 1994, but it's only since 2008 that smartphone users have had the ability to download a mobile app to read these codes. With the advantage of having one global standard, QR codes are also free to create, by anyone with suitable skills using any free online QR code generation website.

Scanning a QR code provides text on a mobile's screen to most types of online content over the mobile web, such as websites, pictures, web links, audio or video. QR codes are also easy to use and locate, for example on posters, leaflets or interpretation signs.


Siting QR codes using existing wayfinder posts.

### SOUTH DOWNS QR CODE RESEARCH

Whilst common in magazines, QR codes have rarely been used in an outdoor heritage setting. As part of an MSc Conservation dissertation, in summer 2012, I teamed up with the South Downs National Park to look into how the public responded to QR codes in an outdoor mobile scanning environment.

After discussions with the South Downs National Trail Officer and team, nine points of visitor interest were selected. The sites varied from the Roman villa at Bignor to local villages such as East Meon, the working museum at Amberley and ancient human settlements such as Chanctonbury Ring.

## HOW THE QR CODE INTERPRETATION RESEARCH WORKED

Each QR code scanned led directly to a special web page designed for a mobile's small screen, with content that could be easily digested in a few minutes. These pages allowed visitors to find out all about a location, its management, history, habitants, key buildings, visitor facilities and local wildlife.

Each web page had text, pictures, audio and video links and other South Downs related online content, together with a Google Map cycle route covering the whole of the South Downs National Trail, plus information on local pubs, shops, events, parking and accommodation.

An online questionnaire was created to assess visitor responses, comments and views about the QR codes. One was filled in on the South Downs prior to being sited and a second by visitors who had then scanned the onsite QR codes.


**Each QR code reads to a mobile-friendly website page.**

## CREATING SIGNS AT LOCATIONS TO ATTRACT VISITORS

One of the biggest challenges was working out how to attract visitor attention to the planned QR code signs. After consultation with interpretation sign specialists Fitzpatrick Woolmer, it was decided to design the QR codes in hard-wearing PVC and to use UV resistant inks, with each code being 60mm square and of a design that could be spotted from a distance. The QR codes were fixed with tamper-proof screws and located at key points along the South Downs Trail where visitors gather, such as car parks, gateways and other pathway and rights of way crossover points.

**QR codes sited where most visitors pass by.**

100 QR codes in total were sited, with each code design having the South Downs National Trail logo and colours, with a location number and description so it was clear they formed part of a trail.

## VISITOR RESPONSES TO QR CODES

Over six months 165 people responded to the online QR code research and gave their views at interviews.

| SURVEY RESULTS | PRE QR SITING SURVEY (105) | ON-SITE VISITORS (60) |
|---|---|---|
| QR code awareness | 91% | 85% |
| Scanned a QR code | 67% | 65% |
| Found it easy to scan a QR code | 82% | 88% |
| Likely to scan a QR code at a heritage site in the future | 70% | 89% |

Two other sign types were also sited, one describing how to scan QR codes and download a QR reader app and one with information on the research and a link to the online visitor survey.

- There were 1,250 QR codes scanned (around one scan per visitor location per day on average)
- Most people browsed the mobile website pages for between one minute and two minutes
- 95% of those scanning the codes were UK based, with others from the US, Germany and Belgium
- Data was also gathered on mobile type, operating system, service provider and screen size.

Whilst QR code awareness and use was similar in the pre-survey and onsite survey results, it was found that visitors had actually scanned a South Downs QR code they were even more in favour of their future use at heritage sites.


**Scanning in QR codes is quick and easy.**

The positive attitude towards QR codes was borne out at visitor interviews, with some respondents trying out the QR codes for the first time and being so impressed with the results they then committed to seeking out the other eight QR code scanning points:

*'A great way to use easy technology and also save money on printed material, which dates.'*

It seems that once people knew what QR codes are, what they linked to, and had scanned one for the first time, they respond very favourably to them. It was also interesting to note that many visitors saw the use of smartphone QR code scanning as a way forward for other interpretation:

*'These QR codes would also be perfect for historic monuments and memorials.'*

## MORE ABOUT QR CODES

**Compared to expensive visitor site interpretation boards, QR codes are cheap to create and easy to site, such as on existing posts or way-markers, and can be easily stored and replaced if they get damaged.**

The majority of large UK heritage sites, such as castle ruins or National Parks, can't offer easy access to a site expert or a large array of intrusive visitor interpretation. So, when visitors want more information about something they've discovered on their visit, they can use their mobile to scan a nearby QR code quickly and easily to obtain more details about a particular point of interest.

Used cleverly, QR codes can act as a personal tour guide, providing background details at key points all around a visitor site, in a quick self-service way, adding in links to audio, video and other interesting online content. QR codes are distinctive and can be sited so they're easy to spot, but their small overall size avoids any negative impact on a user's visual enjoyment of a heritage location.

The content each QR code links to, such as a mobile website page, can also be changed or updated with the seasons, or the content improved over time so the information won't go out of date.

By using the practical guidelines created as just one outcome from the MSc project research, QR codes appear to offer significant benefit to heritage sites for quick, low-cost and effective site interpretation.

As a result of the positive outcome from this research, further South Downs trials started in January 2013 with new, larger waypost-sized signs adding NFC Tags, a newer type of mobile scanning technology. The new signs also include pictures that visitors can scan with a free Augmented Reality mobile app to gain more interactive information through clickable mobile buttons.

## QR CODE RESEARCH CONCLUSIONS

The research showed QR codes were liked by visitors, mainly because people enjoyed using their mobiles, found the codes were quick and easy to scan, and each QR code led them to instant 'on-the-spot' information about local points of interest.

The future looks bright for QR codes due to their ease of use. There is clear potential to help heritage site visitors to gain an appreciation of our unique conservation and heritage, and aid people of all ages to understand our history and culture better.

Andrew Kerry-Bedwell formed IT's in Conservation to provide advice on the effective use of smartphones in visitor interpretation.

**QR codes with Google cycle maps.**

# FEATURE NEWS

## NEWS FROM THE AHI COMMITTEE

**The most recent AHI committee meeting in March was followed by an extraordinary general meeting attended by 20 members. Members were reminded of the key points of the new constitution and unanimously voted it through. We were hosted by the People's History Museum in Manchester who kindly gave us a tour of the main galleries of the museum after the meeting. Members had an enjoyable time meeting the committee and networking.**

Items for discussion at the committee meeting included planning for the conference in Edinburgh from 9–11 October. The proposed theme is 'taking inspiration from other industries'. Inspirational speakers are being contacted and exciting visits are being planned to places including Edinburgh Royal Botanic Garden and National Museums.

By the time you read this, AHI will have been at the Museums and Heritage show with our stand and presentation. We decided this year to host a stand rather than sharing with another organisation.

Meredith Wood has joined us as AHI's lead intern for six months, along with Rosie Paterson who is GEM's lead intern. Meredith studied the history of art at Homerton College, Cambridge and recently completed her MA in the cultural and creative industries from Kings College, London. She has already been working on making arrangements for the AHI stand at the Museums and Heritage show and will be raising the profile of AHI membership, as well as helping with the Edinburgh conference arrangements and supporting our communications through twitter and on the website. One of her key tasks is to develop a fundraising bid to relaunch the Interpret Britain Awards.

Our LinkedIn forum continues to host active debate, ably moderated by Steven Richards-Price and we have been looking at a way of hosting some more reflective writing as an online blog on the website.

We have welcomed two new members to the committee: Clare Sulston, who is helping out with events, and David Thomas, who is our English Heritage representative. We are keen to find a new Scottish rep to serve on the committee to replace Jackie Lee, who stood down for personal reasons. The amount that AHI achieves is, in a large part, due to the hard work of the committee backed up by Lyn, our administrator, and we welcome anyone who is keen to volunteer support – even if it is only hosting a single event.

Our next event is on interpretive planning at the magnificent RHS Garden at Wisley. Participants will be able to see the planning and formative evaluation behind new interpretation at Wisley and new approaches to interpretation. The date is 17 June and places are limited, so book soon. Further details and booking forms are on the AHI website: www.ahi.org.uk

Dr Ruth Taylor
Chair AHI

# EXHIBITION REVIEW

## THE WIND IN THE WILLOWS

**Eloise Chapman describes how an exhibition of a much-loved children's story is proving inspirational to audiences of all ages.**

### RAT, TOAD AND THE WILD WOOD

The River & Rowing Museum's Wind in the Willows exhibition at Henley has attracted thousands of visitors every year since opening in 2004. The book's creator, Kenneth Grahame, grew up on the Thames at Cookham and lived out his life in a house on the Thames in Pangbourne. It was this environment that inspired the world of *The Wind in the Willows* and E H Shepard's later illustrations. Reflecting on meeting Grahame at Pangbourne, Shephard wrote: 'He told me of the spots on the river where his little animals lived and where to find them all, where was Toad Hall, where Rat kept his little boat'. The river as inspiration is integral to the story that the museum tells, and the book's underlying imagery relating to the environment, wildlife and the modernisation of the rural idyll are invaluable to the work of the education department.

The attraction was originally in Rowsley, Derbyshire, where it was built by Further Adventures Ltd, who also built the Beatrix Potter exhibition in the Lake District and Tailor of Gloucester in Gloucester. After five years in Derbyshire, the exhibit was moved to Henley on Thames where it was completely reengineered to fit the museum's space and requirements.

### LIGHTS, SOUND, ACTION

The exhibition was redesigned for the River & Rowing Museum as an immersive experience incorporating sound, light and smell to create the atmosphere of the River, the Wild Wood and Toad Hall. Sculptors, costume designers and set designers worked to recreate in minute detail the much-loved illustrations of E H Shepherd to bring the book magically to life. Added effects include a snoring badger, a moving fight scene and red eyes that glow above you as you enter the Wild Wood.

**Mr Toad being chased by the police.**

When in Derbyshire, the exhibition originally incorporated an introduction that included a short film telling the *Wind in the Willows* story and a rolling map showing the world of the book. Due to limited space, this design was impractical at Henley, so instead audio guides were created to accompany the exhibit. These provide the visitor with extracts from the story relating to the scenes in the display, adding to its immersive quality. In 2007 we launched a guide for the visually impaired and in 2008 a Punjabi language version, following an outreach project with a group in Slough.

### INSPIRING LOCAL AUDIENCES

The Wind in the Willows is a permanent display at the museum. Its first year saw visitor numbers double and they continue to grow, with 2012 seeing a record 117,000 people enjoy the museum's four permanent galleries and temporary exhibitions. It has remained a huge favourite with local families, who make repeat visits using the museum's year-long tickets. It has also proved to be a fantastic way of engaging older visitors and helping to inspire intergenerational experiences.

In 2008, the museum created a display in the River Gallery to provide visitors with more information about Grahame, Shepard and the history of the book, and has begun actively collecting related objects and archive material. The exhibition and work relating to *The Wind in the Willows* has become an integral part of the museum's popularity and continues to bring enjoyment to new generations of visitors.

Eloise Chapman is Collections Manager at the River and Rowing Museum, Henley.

**Mr Toad at Toad Hall with his new car.**

RIGHT:
**A sculpture depicting the body's sense of touch welcomes visitors to the exhibition, inviting them to explore the gallery using their senses.**

# EXHIBITION REVIEW

## A HEALTHY CURIOSITY

**Duncan Smith describes how Glasgow Science Centre's new BodyWorks exhibition about health is seeking to inspire the next generation of scientists.**

Questions are at the heart of the BodyWorks exhibition. This new hands-on destination is a laboratory of learning where visitors become scientists. As they explore the space, their curiosity is piqued by questions about the human body. The interactive exhibits give them an opportunity to experiment and discover answers for themselves.

### ENGAGING MINDS

Science centres are destinations that delicately balance education and entertainment. As visitors interact with the exhibits, it is the job of interpretation to ensure that their minds are engaged, not just their hands.

To do this effectively in BodyWorks, the exhibition team and I developed a strategy to explore how all the elements of interpretation could guide and extend the visitors' experience. The foundation of our approach was to begin each exhibit label with a well-crafted, concise and intriguing question. Yet, as we discovered with an exhibition containing four styles of visitor experience, implementing this approach presented some challenges.

### THE SCIENTIST

The most common type of exhibit in BodyWorks gives visitors the opportunity to take on the role of a scientist. This style of interactive exhibit is synonymous with science centres. One example in the gallery is a table-top exhibit featuring two clear plastic cylinders. Within each cylinder is a pair of lungs: one a healthy pink colour, the other blackened and damaged by smoking. To emphasise the differences, visitors can force air into each pair of lungs by squeezing two soft plastic balloons.

Unlike some health campaigns, this experience was not designed to tell visitors that smoking is unhealthy; everyone knows that already. The exhibit was designed instead to allow visitors to explore the reasons why smoking is unhealthy.

BELOW:
**Glasgow Science Centre was Scotland's largest Millennium Commission project. The £2 million BodyWorks exhibition represents the biggest redevelopment since the centre opened in 2001.**

For the exhibit label we were keen to move beyond the standard format, where labels begin with a title then instructions. We wanted a new format that would provide visitors with a reason to follow the instructions. So we developed a label with the opening question, 'How does smoking damage your lungs?' This explains what the visitor can see but it also acts as a challenge. The question frames the exhibit as an experiment where the answer can be determined by using the apparatus.

### THE EXPERIMENT

With the lungs exhibit, the visitor carries out the experiment, but in other areas of the exhibition the visitor becomes the experiment. A typical example is an exhibit that allows visitors to measure their own grip strength.

When developing the interpretation for this style of exhibit, it was the answers to the opening questions that presented unique challenges. With questions such as 'How strong is your grip?' the answers are personal to each visitor. But a grip strength reading of 50 newtons lacks the context to make it a meaningful answer.

To find meaning, visitors share and compare their results with each other, triggering an element of competition. We developed a system to make comparing results easy and informative using each exhibit's touch screen. In the exhibition, visitors are shown their result on a scoreboard of previous visitors' results. And if they wish to delve deeper into the data, visitors can pick up a unique barcode and scan it at each of these exhibits to save their results. This allows them to log in to the exhibition website and access their personal data where

they can compare it against anonymous results, broken down by categories including gender and age.

## GAME ON

It seemed the approach of using questions with exhibits was working well until a new challenge appeared: characters. Several exhibits allow visitors to play games. One example is Mucus Ninjas, which uses motion sensors to detect the visitors' full-body movements. This allows visitors to control a character, a piece of nasal mucus, where the aim of the game is to defend the nostrils against an onslaught of viruses.

For this exhibit, the opening question could have been 'Why is there snot in my nose?' But that question does not reflect the visitor's role in the game. We wanted a question to explain the aim of the game together with enough of science to avoid demoting the game's key learning outcome to the conclusion.

We decided on 'Mucus Ninjas: Can you stop the viruses?' We were satisfied that this contains the key message that snot helps to defend your body from viruses, as well as describing the aim of the game which communicates the role of the visitor. The question-driven approach remained.

## DON'T TOUCH

The exhibits described above predominantly focus on the fundamentals of science. Telling the story of current scientific research is difficult in the standard science centre experience. To address this, BodyWorks features five 'research capsules'. These are areas dedicated to telling the story of current research, from prosthetics to advances in heart surgery.

One capsule focuses on anatomy and how the study of donated bodies is leading to new surgical breakthroughs. The capsule contains just two exhibits. A touch screen the size of a desk allows visitors to perform a virtual autopsy, showcasing advances in imaging techniques that are revolutionising surgery.

Alongside this multi-touch, interactive experience is an exhibit with no interaction at all. Within a glass case sits a real preserved human torso. In total, the exhibition features three specimens of human tissue, all on loan from the Laboratory of Human Anatomy at the University of Glasgow. The displays highlight that, despite the advances in imaging, nothing compares to studying real human tissue. Developing the label, however, uncovered new difficulties.

We found that the question-driven approach just did not work with the human tissue. Indeed, it was clumsy with all of the non-interactive experiences. Draft questions were too prescriptive of the visitors' experience and came across as bossy. We were reminded that sometimes a traditional label is best, allowing the object to reveal its own mysteries.

## SPARK OF CURIOSITY

From setting the interpretation strategy and implementing it, we discovered that flexibility is key. Different styles of interpretation are suited to different types of visitor experience.

In BodyWorks, questions are a key part of the interpretation. We hope that the exhibition will spark a healthy curiosity in visitors, who will leave with more questions than when they entered. After all, this is something that is essential for the next generation of scientists – asking their own new questions.

The major funders of the exhibition are the Wellcome Trust and GlaxoSmithKline.

Duncan Smith is part of the Science & Interpretation team at Glasgow Science Centre.


LEFT:
**Many of the exhibit labels begin with a question. The answer can be found by using the exhibit or by lifting the flaps to reveal further interpretation.**

BELOW:
**Over 600 QR codes are located in Monmouth and accessed free via wi-fi.**

# FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT

## CHAMPIONING A DIGITAL WALES

**Dan Boys reports on the Digital Past conference held in Wales.**

How many countries can claim to have heritage interpretation as a government priority? As far as I am aware the answer is just one – Wales.

Dave Penberthy, Head of Interpretation at Cadw, proudly boasted this claim on the opening day of the annual 'Digital Past' conference in Wales[1]. He went on to explain how the subsequent pan-Wales interpretation plans have allowed a coordinated approach to interpretation that ignores municipal boundaries.

Cadw, which means 'to keep' (and not **C**ome **a**nd **d**o **W**ales!) could be an acronym for 'Championing a Digital Wales', with one important caveat: 'how' the project is delivered comes after the 'who, what, why, where, when'. Something echoed throughout the event.

Some mobile experiences have been tainted because they have been technology, rather than content, led. Often this is the result of IT companies, with little or often no interpretation background, wowing potential clients with their latest offering. A similar principle can be applied to panels (although this is not the fault of IT companies!).

The Digital Past conference, run by the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales, showcases innovative digital technologies for data capture, interpretation and dissemination of heritage sites and artefacts.

Now in its fifth year, the conference was held in Monmouth, the world's first Wikipedia town. Over 1,000 QR codes adorn listed buildings, lamp posts, shop windows and museum cases across the town and link to multi-language-supported content – although interestingly, not Welsh!

Co-founder of the Monmouthpedia project was John Cummins. He also addressed 3D printing, which has already been deployed in several successful projects to support conservation, transport and engagement with collections. Take, for example, the work done by Loughborough University using 3D printing to help conserve the beautiful collections of the Forbidden City Palace Museum in Beijing. Such replicas could be sent to schools (pre-visit) or ordered by visitors as they peruse a museum collection. Printer costs have reduced dramatically and kit form versions are available for as little as £500.

1. Digital Past held February 2013

**Screenshot from The Lost City of Clonmacnoise.**

John also touched on DIY 3D modelling. With a digital camera, a computer and a piece of free software (such as www.123dapp.com) you can digitise artefacts and even buildings with excellent results.

At the other end of the cost spectrum, 3Deep Media illustrated how their background in the gaming industry enabled them to bring the shipwrecks of Scapa Flow to life. For those who think that the idea of diving into cold and murky Scottish waters is a visitor experience too far, then the www.scapaflowwrecks.com website allows you to see this marine graveyard in all its glory , from a drier vantage point. Mike Postins went on to explain how a full immersive experience, using an X-box controller, allows you to 'swim' around each of the wrecks.

Another fascinating project that heavily borrows from the gaming world is the 'Lost city of Clonmacnoise' app. Clever use of 3D rendering has allowed the recreation of the whole ninth-century Irish city in a little over 50mb.

These were just some of the highlights of a very interesting conference, where the importance of community involvement at all stages of an interpretative project was a key underlying sub-theme.

Dan Boys is Creative Director of Audio Trails Ltd.

# THE PHILOSOPHY OF INTERPRETATION

‘Through interpretation, understanding; through understanding, appreciation; through appreciation, protection.’

Freeman Tilden

# THE PHILOSOPHY OF INTERPRETATION

Chambers Dictionary describes philosophy as 'the pursuit of wisdom and knowledge' or 'the principles underlying any sphere of knowledge'. Dr Ruth Taylor asks: what are the principles of interpretation today, and are they different from those of the past?

To my mind, the basic principles of interpretation have not changed since Freeman Tilden's six principles of interpretation were written in 1957 (see box), but we have developed considerably both in our understanding of audiences and in the range of media we use.

Of the three main elements which make up interpretation: the messages or story, the audience and the media used to convey the messages, one of the biggest changes has been the explosion in media available to promote interpretive messages. This has increased accessibility and flexibility, with the internet available for inspiration for a visit beforehand and afterwards as an extension to the visit, and many digital ways of presenting stories. On AHI's LinkedIn discussion, there is more discussion about digital media than any other sphere of interpretation. However, this explosion of media masks the fact that the core of interpretation is the message. No amount of high-tech gizmos will improve a dull and uninspiring message.

Jane Stoneham's article (page 19) shows that we do not always need to use words in conveying our message. She writes about the experience of walking on metal faces in the Jewish Museum in Berlin and the importance of using all the senses. We may want visitors to experience the sunset or be inspired by birdsong and the natural world, and words can get in the way of the experience, see Athene Reiss's article (page 26).

When words are used, we need to appreciate more how words are selected and shaped by the writer, and how this can lead to a partial or biased interpretation. Helen Coxall (1990) researched texts in museums and discovered fascinating biases through the way the language was constructed:

'Those involved in writing museum texts are often unaware of the implications of the language they use. Indeed some would be surprised to discover prejudices that they were unaware of appearing in the words they have written. It is clear that all discourses are socially constructed'.

It is refreshing to hear other voices in interpretation, especially young people's ideas and opinions through being involved in co-production. A good example can be seen in the World Stories: Young Voices gallery at Brighton Museum and Art Gallery (Mears, 2012).

We now have a much better insight into our audiences through more sophisticated research. We are much more aware of their motivations in visiting. Visitors are now thought of as a unique collection of individuals rather than a one-size target audience. This leads on to the importance of the visitor experience and their search for memorable experiences. Pine and Gilmore (1999) describe different types of visitor experience in their book *The experience economy*.

- Entertainment experiences, such as watching a video, playing a computer game or watching a play.
- Educational experiences where you learn a new skill, or increase your knowledge of a subject, or use problem solving skills.
- Aesthetic experiences such as seeing the sun set, being in a garden or nature reserve and smelling the flowers, visiting an art gallery.
- Escapist experiences like walking in the countryside, flying in a hot air balloon, reading a good book.

Tony Berry (National Trust) proposed, in his presentation at last year's AHI conference, 'If you charge for the feelings customers have because of engaging with you, then you are in

the experience business'. The National Trust has truly embraced the experience economy and plan interpretation at their properties in terms of experiences offered to their different visitor segments, and their membership keeps increasing.

For the future in developing principles and practice, there is still a long way to go in truly inclusive interpretation, not just in bringing out the hidden histories, for example, the role of women or people with disabilities, but also in making sure there is true accessibility in the media used.

Interpretation is a hugely creative process and there is plenty of scope for more creative and artistic approaches to interpretation, such as the way artists were used at Kensington Palace in The Enchanted Palace (Souden, 2011).

And finally the role of interpretation in bringing in value to the organisation, as well as to the people who experience it, has not been universally grasped, for example the importance of interpretation to tourism, highlighted in Marilyn Lewis's article (page 24) on CADW's pan-Wales interpretation plan. In a time of recession, demonstrating the impact of interpretation and that there is a greater return than investment in interpretation for the organisation as well as the value and benefits the visitors gain could never be more important.

**Dr Ruth Taylor is chair of AHI, a fellow of RSA and Strategic Manager at Artswork the SE Bridge organisation.**

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## FREEMAN TILDEN'S SIX PRINCIPLES OF INTERPRETIVE COMMUNICATION

1. Any interpretation that does not somehow relate what is being displayed or described to something within the personality or experience of the visitor will be sterile.
2. Information, as such, is not interpretation. Interpretation is revelation based on information. But they are entirely different things. However, all interpretation includes information.
3. Interpretation is an art, which combines many arts, whether the materials presented are scientific, historical, or architectural. Any art is to some degree teachable.
4. The chief aim of interpretation is not instruction, but provocation.
5. Interpretation should aim to present a whole rather than a part, and must address itself to the whole person rather than any phase.
6. Interpretation addressed to children should not be a dilution of the presentation to adults, but should follow a fundamentally different approach. To be at its best it will require a separate program.

# WHERE ARE WE NOW?

James Carter, Susan Cross and Carolyn Lloyd Brown, three experienced practitioners of AHI, discuss whether the role of interpretation has changed and what the future might hold in store.

## HAVE THE UNDERLYING PRINCIPLES OF INTERPRETATION CHANGED SINCE TILDEN'S TIMES?

**JC** If we're thinking about whether the principles of how to communicate have changed, I think the answer's no. In fact I suspect they haven't changed for thousands of years. Effective communication has always relied on getting people's attention and telling them a story that means something to them in words (and pictures) that have some impact.

**CLB** I agree: Tilden's principles remain rock solid and effective communication is more important than ever, as we live in an age where people are bombarded by messages constantly, so the competition for time, attention and engagement is intense! I think that thanks to some excellent research we have a much better understanding of how and why people respond to different communication methods and media – but we need much more of that in-depth understanding to ensure interpretation is effective in its purpose.

**SC** To continue the geological metaphor; the underlying rocks might be the same but we are much more savvy about their composition, can mine them more effectively and have more uses for them than ever before. Tilden's very oft quoted 'provoke, relate, reveal' is good as far as it goes as a simple mnemonic for compelling communication. I don't think it goes anywhere like far enough to equip a 21st-century interpreter to make her voice heard in the heart of the Communication Revolution.

## IS THE ROLE OF INTERPRETATION ANY DIFFERENT NOW THAN IN THE PAST?

**CLB** I think that on the one hand interpretation has been recognised as having a valuable role to play in creating enriching visitor experiences (even if it is not always called 'interpretation' – it happens!) but on the other, sometimes too great an expectation can be placed on interpretation, and the aims for what it can achieve – within a regeneration scheme, for example – are just not realistic. It plays just one part of a much larger and very complex picture that creates a successful and sustainable destination. The trick is to understand how interpretation complements and adds value to other aspects, from branding and marketing, including social media presence, to infrastructure investment, public realm, museum design, and staff or volunteer training and so on (and on…)

**SC** I agree with Carolyn. Interpretation now seems hugely different, much more diverse and complex. We use heritage interpretation skills (as opposed to generic communications skills) for an amazing range of purposes including: to improve mental and physical health; for community development; to encourage creativity and community arts projects; as a part of branding; and to promote behavioural change, as well as in the more familiar areas of conservation and culture. Interpreters now need more diverse skills and familiarity with a greater range of media and audiences.

**JC** These changes that have taken place in what interpretation is expected to do are fascinating – and pretty significant. The 'classic' view of interpretation was very didactic, rooted as it was in the need to convince people of the value of conserving heritage. Back in the day, the experiences people had when they visited national parks, museums and nature reserves might often have been the only contact they had with those ideas; now primetime TV programmes debate the merits of saving this building or that, or give you an intimate window on an osprey's nest with superstar commentators waxing lyrical about how wonderful they are.

Interpretation today needs to recognise that it's only one part – and perhaps a pretty small part – of a big jigsaw. We can be humble about just how much influence we can have while at the same time being passionate about the potential!

James Carter.

Susan Cross.

Carolyn Lloyd Brown.

## WHAT HAS BEEN THE GREATEST CHANGE IN INTERPRETATION OVER THE LAST DECADE?

**SC** I think there are three, all of which actually began more than ten years ago. The obvious one is the huge increase in the range of media that are available to us and to our public. Portable computers and mobile phones have changed the world. Sticking my neck out here, I don't think we as a profession have fully grasped the impact of this. I don't think it's just about putting stuff we could have put on a panel or a leaflet onto their screens. It's about a huge participatory debate opening up and profound questions about where interpreters stand within that.

Secondly, I would highlight the role of the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF). Many interpreters and the organisations they work for are heavily dependent and, possibly in the current economic climate, over-dependent, on HLF funding for innovative interpretation. The HLF has changed the landscape of the heritage interpretation industry in the UK for the better, particularly in its unequivocal stand that the benefits of culture and heritage should be made as widely accessible as possible.

Probably the most important change is the increased understanding of visitors and their diverse motivations for visiting heritage sites. This has forced modern interpreters away from cosy assumptions about their visitors being 'like us'.

**JC** Changes in available media are certainly a big deal, but I'm frustrated by how fancy new toys are seen as 'the answer'. You get this even from organisations that should know better, like major funding bodies. There's a moths-around-a-candle-flame obsession with apps, often with no real questioning of what an app can and can't do.

Apart from that little rant, I think the biggest best change has to be the formal adoption of interpretation as an essential part of the organisation's work, together with recognition of how to do it well, by a much wider spread of organisations, like Historic Scotland, Glasgow Museums and the British Museum. You can see the effects of this change in the stuff you encounter onsite: I think there's a lot more good, adventurous interpretation around now than there was 15 years ago. Not everywhere, mind you!

The biggest bad change? I feel there's less clear vision for interpretation among statutory natural heritage organisations. I'm sorry that Scottish Natural Heritage no longer have staff who specialise in it, and from what I can gather Natural England has lost the focus that the former Countryside Commission had.

**CLB** It makes a tremendous difference when the role and value of interpretation is recognised by organisations and commissioning bodies/individuals and the sad loss of many excellent people in formal roles due to reorganisation and funding cuts will have a negative impact for many years to come, in terms of the quality of visitor experiences. The greatest changes are the gradual erosion of funds for heritage generally (conservation, management and engagement) which give us considerable challenges, and the rapid changes in communication media – presenting an exciting but also potentially bewildering array of possibilities!

## WHAT DOES THE FUTURE HAVE IN STORE?

**JC** Trying to predict the future is dangerous! I'd *like* future interpretation to concentrate more on getting people to be still, and to absorb a place, an object or an event in the present moment, rather than encouraging them to spend more time staring at the little black mirror in their pocket. And I've yet to see an app that does that…

**CLB** I couldn't agree more with James. In the end, it's all about good storytelling and the basic human desire to create, narrate and perform or to listen, imagine and wonder. Hopefully, the present and future will always be about emotional engagement – the bit so many people shy away from, but with good research and evaluation we will understand even more about the effectiveness of those journeys of discovery that reveal new insight.

**SC** Loads of excitements. Cultural tourism is a major global growth industry and interpretation has a key part to play in it. Our built heritage is the major attraction of the UK for foreign visitors – interpreters are needed to help them get the most from what they have come to see. The country and communities we live in are increasingly multicultural. For all these reasons, interpretation in the future will require skills in cross-cultural communication and increased awareness of audiences who do not share our cultural background and biases. This is simply an extension of the current trend towards more audience-focused interpretive provision.

We also will continue to play with new technologies until we find what really works for people who visit our places and collections. My guess is that it won't be apps.

**James Carter FAHI is a consultant, writer and trainer based in Edinburgh; Susan Cross AHI is Director of TellTale, and Carolyn Lloyd Brown MAHI works on heritage-led tourism and regeneration projects.**

# SUPPORTING HERITAGE INTERPRETATION

Tony Crosby outlines the Heritage Lottery Fund's latest Strategic Framework, current funding situation and HLF's perspective on the value of inclusive interpretation to the sustainable management of heritage assets.

ABOVE:
**Tudor House Museum & Garden, Southhampton with the guida rotate.**

BELOW:
**The Cardiff Story consultation with young people.**

Established in 1994, the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) distributes money raised through the National Lottery to sustain and transform a wide range of heritage for present and future generations to take part in, learn from and enjoy. Since then we have supported more than 33,000 projects, allocating over £5billion across the UK, from multi-million-pound investments in well-known sites such as the Cutty Sark and Giant's Causeway to small grants making a big difference to local communities and their heritage. We offer a range of grant programmes, awarding grants upwards of £3,000.

## STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK 2013–2018

In July 2012 we launched our new Strategic Framework 2013–2018 which sets out our goal to make 'a lasting difference for heritage and people' (see our website at: http://www.hlf.org.uk/aboutus/whatwedo/Pages/StrategicFramework2013to2018.aspx). When assessing applications, we take account of the outcomes that projects will deliver for heritage, for people, and for communities. We give extra weight to the outcomes that we value most, such as learning.

This Strategic Framework sees the continuation of a number of our familiar grant programmes, but also the introduction of a number of new initiatives. The familiar ones include the Our Heritage grant programme, offering grants from £10,000 to £100,000, which replaces Your Heritage but is essentially staying the same, and is primarily aimed at community groups. The two-round Heritage Grants programme continues to offer grants over £100,000, while Young Roots, our grant programme for projects led by young people aged 11–25 also continues, offering grants from £10,000 to £50,000.

Interpretation of the heritage remains a fundamental element of all the projects we fund, including in our targeted programmes for Parks, Landscapes, Places of Worship and Townscapes (see our website at http://www.hlf.org.uk/HowToApply/programmes/Pages/programmes.aspx). To coincide with the

RIGHT:
**The raised model at Southhampton Museum & Garden.**

introduction of the new Strategic Framework, most of HLF's guidance documents are being revised and an updated version of *Interpretation – Good Practice Guide* will be available on the HLF website this Spring.

## NEW INITIATIVES

In February 2013 we introduced a new small grants programme called Sharing Heritage, with grants from £3,000 to £10,000. These grants are for any not-for-profit group wanting to explore, celebrate and share their community's heritage, and interpretation will play a key role in activities such as exhibitions that will be used to help people learn about their local heritage.

Ahead of the new framework, in July 2012 we changed our policy on digital projects, which will open up new opportunities for innovative projects where the creation of, and public engagement with, digital materials is the main focus and all project activity is delivered digitally. Needless to say, we will continue to fund site-based projects too and can fund digital interpretation to help people understand heritage, for example audio guides, interactive kiosks which provide a visualisation of how the site once looked, or an app which uses the power of smartphones to give the visitor location-specific information.

## PROJECT OUTCOMES

Interpretation is firmly embedded in our new outcomes framework. We have set out 14 outcomes that we are seeking to achieve with our investment over the next five years: four that articulate the difference we want to make for heritage, five for people and five for communities. Interpretation is positioned under the heritage outcomes – '*with our investment heritage will be better interpreted and explained*'. This will involve providing clearer explanations and/or new or improved ways to help people make sense of, enhance their understanding of and improve their experience of heritage. If people understand and enjoy heritage more, they will value it and want to look after it.

Good interpretation, however, will help applicants achieve other outcomes, for example ensuring that '*people will have learnt about heritage*' and that '*people will have had an enjoyable experience*' – two of the outcomes for people. Providing inclusive interpretation which meets the needs of, for example, people with sensory impairments and those from diverse communities will help to achieve the outcome for communities that '*more people and a wider range of people will have engaged with heritage*'. For a full list of the outcomes, see our website at: http://www.hlf.org.uk/HowToApply/programmes/Summaryofprogrammes2013/Pages/Assessment.aspx

## GOOD PRACTICE

We welcome innovative projects and those that clearly meet the needs of a wide range of audiences and communities. As well as being created for local people by heritage staff, HLF encourages the creation of displays and exhibitions by local people. For example, at Cardiff Museum, the Cardiff Story project sought to tell the story of the city through objects drawn from the local community, industry and personal donations. Individuals and community groups were able to administer collections, develop the interpretation and be involved in the design process for the stories that were told. This resulted in new interpretations and allowed for personal perspectives from different sections of the community to be told, e.g. by disabled people and people from BAME communities. Interpretation needs to be accessible by all and this does not mean having something separate for people with sensory impairments or those whose first language is not English. Inclusive interpretation is best practice. At Tudor House in Southampton, the model that shows the house in the context of the Old Town street layout is a touch model, so that people with visual impairments can also learn from it. At Rochester Cathedral, the hand-held audio-visual guide has subtitles and BSL interpretation for people with hearing impairments.

As mentioned above, digital technology is being increasingly used in interpretation both generally and for inclusive interpretation. Both Tudor House in Southampton and the Museum of Oxford are using screens on rotating kiosks in order to present different views and perspectives of items displayed.

## OUR BUDGET

We will have around £400 million to award in grants during 2013–2014, more than twice the figure of five years ago, and we expect funding levels to remain constant throughout the period to 2018. Although competition for grants is at an unprecedented high as other sources of funding dry up, we do encourage you to submit your ideas for high-quality heritage projects incorporating good interpretation, which will help to attract more and a wider range of people to heritage and help sustain it for future generations to enjoy.

**Tony Crosby is Policy Advisor – Participation & Learning for HLF.**

# WHAT DOES GREAT INTERPRETATION FEEL LIKE?

Jane Stoneham makes the case for making connections with audiences through the senses.

The Jewish Museum, Berlin.

My memory is fed by my feet. They were the first to experience it directly through my slightly unsteady walk over the thick metal discs. Then my ears, picking up the chilling clink..clink…clink of the discs knocking against each other, and echoing up the tall concrete walls. My skin prickled in response to the sombre tune. My eyes fed me the story… the discs were faces, punched with raw eyes and mouths. I was in the Jewish Museum in Berlin, making a three-minute walk over metal faces.

## POTENT MEMORIES

I had read and listened to many other interpretation materials in the museum before I came across this one, all focused on the same poignant story. Yet this was the only one to engage me through my different senses, and the only one that, six years later, I remember as if I was back there now.

Interpretation gets defined in different ways, but the theme that remains consistent is the conveying of story. Implicit in the act of interpreting is the aspiration of making a connection with someone that is meaningful and lasting. And, in our experience, engaging through more of the senses is particularly effective at making this happen.

At the Sensory Trust, our work explores the experiential side of interpretation, the aspect to do with how people connect, how we make personally meaningful and memorable experiences. Even when the focus is on sharing information, we advocate making the experience as rich as possible so it is more likely to resonate, to be absorbed and recalled.

We also promote sensory engagement as an effective way of making interpretation inclusive so it can connect with the widest range of people. How inclusive was this particular piece of interpretation? Disappointingly, not as much as it could have been (it would be difficult for anyone unsteady on their feet and wheelchair users), but it would have been simple to have made it so. For example, adding a simple integrated rail, and making a portion less uneven, both of which could be achieved without detracting from the overall look and feel.

## REASONS TO BE INCLUSIVE

Inclusive design takes into account the diversity that comes with different ages, backgrounds and disabilities. It recognises the various ways that some people get excluded, for example from barriers that make it difficult for people with limited mobility to get around a venue, communication issues for visitors without basic literacy or who don't use English as a first language and entrance charges making it difficult for people living on low incomes.

It challenges designers to think about how a particular interpretation can engage as wide an audience as possible, for example by including lower view heights to make the experience

RIGHT:
**A local care home resident enjoying a hands-on exploration of grain as part of a sensory-rich farm visit.**

child and wheelchair friendly. And it challenges the collective experience to add up to something equally great for everyone. So, within a collection of different interpretation, what is the combination of experiences available to someone with a visual impairment? Or with limited literacy? This can reveal a need for specific additions, such as sign language to accompany performances, pictorial symbols to assist visitors with learning disabilities or reduced entry for people on low incomes.

**We recognise some key motivations for taking an inclusive approach:**

***More satisfied visitors.*** It can't be in the interests of any visitor attraction to exclude some of its audience. And it isn't just those individuals whose disappointments will lead to no repeat visits; research has shown that families and friends are often more upset and react more strongly than those directly experiencing barriers to access.

***Happier staff***. Frontline staff will be the ones who witness and have to deal with the disappointment of visitors who aren't able to join in. Conversely, they gain the satisfaction of seeing all visitors having a great time.

***Setting a new norm***. Inclusive practices are increasingly expected by visitors and by funders, who often want to see how their support is benefiting those who most often experience exclusion.

***Better design***. Contrary to the idea that making things more accessible makes them less interesting, in our experience creativity is fed by the challenge of thinking how to create something richer that can be interpreted in different ways and by different people.

***It's the law***. Legislation including the Disability Discrimination Act and the Equality Act make it a legal requirement to ensure the visitor experience is equally great for everyone.

## ARE WE SEEING DIVERSITY FOR WHAT IT REALLY IS?

Terminology turns people into issues. Terms such as 'wheelchair users', 'visually impaired', 'ethnic minorities', 'elderly' and 'low income' help highlight those most in need of changes to conventional design, but can imply a separateness that doesn't exist in reality. To move the agenda forward, in a way that really changes things, we believe there needs to be a shift in how diversity is seen.

Diversity doesn't exist as separate and discrete groups, rather it weaves its way through families, groups of friends, couples and individuals. It might be the elderly grandparent in a family group, a parent with a young child in a buggy, a wheelchair-using partner or a group of students with learning disabilities.

## AN OVER-FOCUS ON THE TECHNICAL?

We are sometimes asked if too much emphasis on being inclusive can reduce the overall quality of experience. This seems to arise from a fear that being inclusive means 'dumbing down', simplifying things to the point where they lose their depth and spontaneity. Designers can worry that their creativity will be curbed. But our experience finds the opposite, where designing for a wider range of people challenges designers to think more creatively, to incorporate ideas they would not otherwise have entertained, to consider a richer mix of ways of engaging people, not just through the visual.

We suspect the problem arises at least partly from an assumption that access is a technical issue, rather than a challenge to think more widely and creatively about quality of experience. For example, transcribing text into Braille while overlooking the opportunity for visually impaired visitors to explore materials through touch. It doesn't mean the Braille isn't useful, but enriching the wider experience will ensure people can share it together.

## A WELCOMING APPROACH?

A key ingredient of inclusive design is making all people feel welcome. In our work with the Eden Project we wanted to improve interpretation for people with learning disabilities. We wanted them to be able to enjoy the site with their families and friends, so rather than making separate materials we integrated pictorial symbols in the general interpretation. We started to hear positive responses from people, saying how much they appreciated finding these symbols in the mix. And a visitor told us something especially valuable: 'You know, the most important thing is, it shows you expected us to be here.'

This brought home something we hadn't fully appreciated – that many people who tend to be forgotten in the design of places and materials come to expect they will be forgotten. One of the most significant things is to show people they are expected and welcome. They don't get a dusty visitor guide from the back room, they find their language in the language of the place. At its simplest, even translating 'hello' into different languages will be a positive gesture. With some investment in training, guides could learn basic phrases so they can welcome visitors in their own language.

## A SENSORY APPROACH

By designing for our senses, we have the opportunity to create new, compelling, inclusive environments that stimulate and encourage all

BELOW:
**The Jewish Museum, Berlin.**

visitors to explore, discover and remember. This is valuable for all visitors, as well as for people with a sensory impairment.

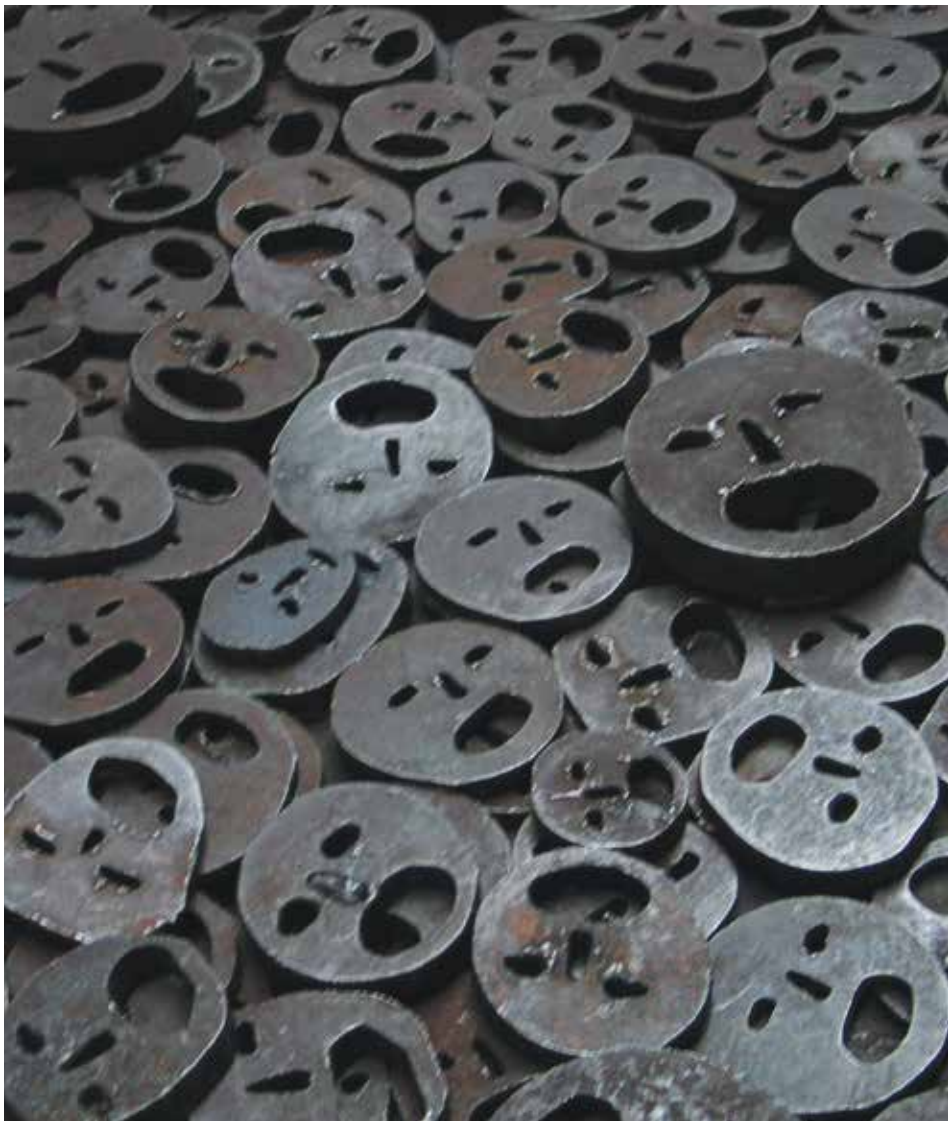
We experience everything through our senses. We use our intellect, memories and assumptions to process the information, but it all starts from the raw materials we receive from looking, touching, smelling, listening, tasting and a whole range of lesser headlined senses. They trigger different parts of the brain and elicit different responses, – smell, for example, is strongly connected with memory.

## INCLUSIVE INTERPRETATION IN PRACTICE

There are increasing examples of an inclusive approach to interpretation. These two are close to home and show different aspects of an inclusive approach.

## AN INCLUSIVE WELCOME

For anyone who has visited the Eden Project in Cornwall in the last five years, your visit most likely started and finished with this series of banners. They were designed by Stuart Spurring of the Sensory Trust and Jo Elworthy of the Eden Project. The banners are designed as a conversation, each piece of text positioned to match a gentle stroll down the path to the visitor centre. What makes them inclusive? The text is large and well contrasted against a plain background and the images help carry the message so it's not all reliant on words – good news for visitors with visual impairments, anyone without basic literacy or English as a first language.



## ENGAGING THE SENSES

Our Let Nature Feed Your Senses project with LEAF is working with farmers and wildlife managers to interpret their farms and nature reserves through sensory-rich techniques. Visits are running throughout England for people who do not normally have the chance to enjoy such opportunities, including older people with dementia, young people with autism and children from families on low incomes. The techniques are designed to engage people with food, farming and nature. Some are as simple as a collection of sensory props – a handful of silage, bags of seed to dip hands into, a lamb's fleece to feel. Others have involved more preparation. For example, a farmer's barn has become a cross between a 1950s tea room and a local museum with tea tables surrounded by old farming tools, crockery, pictures and old dresses, all so older people from local care homes can come to reminisce and share stories.

## LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

We would like to see a world where the philosophy of interpretation embraces the challenge of making our stories, conversations and messages open to the widest audience. We believe an inclusive approach that has at its core the engagement of the senses is an ideal way of making this happen.

**Jane Stoneham is Director of the Sensory Trust.**

# THE WAY AHEAD?

Stuart Frost looks at how interpretation and visitor studies have become more widespread in the museum profession, spreading beyond the science and natural history focused collections that initially led the way.



ABOVE RIGHT:
**Summative evaluation of the recent Hajj journey to the heart of Islam at the British Museum revealed that the audio-visual elements were highlights for many visitors, successfully evoking the atmosphere of the annual pilgrimage to Mecca.**

The museums sector in the UK is characterised by extraordinary breadth and diversity and the challenge of summarising the position of interpretation in it is better avoided than tackled head-on. I have no intention of speaking comprehensively, or for the sector as a whole, but rather to offer some thoughts based on personal experience.

## LEADING THE WAY

When I left the Education Department at the British Museum to join the Victoria & Albert Museum in 2001, there was no permanent specialised interpretation team at either institution. The V&A had however allocated staff with a specialist educator role to work on the British Galleries, which opened in November 2001 and which won the European Museum of the Year Award. The interpretive approach in the British Galleries represented an impressive synthesis of best practice (as it was then) from leading museums around the UK and overseas, from institutions who were already working in a visitor-focused way. Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of the British Galleries project was the level of staffing, budget and prominence given to interpretation.

The demands of the V&A's ten-year master plan to transform the permanent displays, and the success of the British Galleries, drove the creation of a specialist Interpretation Team in

2004. The following year, an Interpretation Team was created at the British Museum. Other museums have also created similar specialised teams or posts in recent years, and elsewhere interpretation has become, I suspect, a more integral part of existing roles. The precise wording of job titles may vary, reflecting institutional politics and priorities, but the profile of interpretation across the sector has risen, and the same is true of visitor studies and evaluation.

## MIXED RESPONSES

The role and value of interpretation is debated, of course, at all levels in the sector and on every new project. It has arguably been in the context of art galleries that some of the most heated dialogue has taken place. The redisplay of Glasgow's Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum, which reopened in July 2006, is one high-profile example. Family-focused text associated with paintings, some of which were also placed at lower heights, proved to be particularly controversial. Susan Latimer has written a compelling defence of the approach, noting that the revitalised Kelvingrove attracts the most diverse visitors of any museum of comparable size in Europe. The redisplay was clearly successful with the target audiences, but several art critics were less appreciative. The response to Kelvingrove indicates that the questions of who art is for and how it should be interpreted (particularly for children) is still contested.

Penelope Curtis, Director of Tate Britain, remarked recently, *'I want people to engage directly with the art… not to read what an interpretation team has cobbled together.'*[1] a statement which reveals philosophical reservations at a senior level about current interpretive approaches to paintings and sculpture. Despite the proliferation of digital and hand-held interpretation, the role of the object label continues to be at the centre of the debate. The humble label has been the focus of a number of illuminating papers, which often adopt contrasting, even contradictory, positions. Some of these arguments seem shaped as much by personal preference as solid evaluation. However much we may disagree with some of these views, rigorous and honest debate about interpretive philosophies, informed by visitor research, is both healthy and essential to keep the sector moving forward. We need to continue to challenge received wisdom, to generate new strategies for deepening visitors' engagement with 'collections' and to remain relevant by responding to changes in society.

## EXPECTATION AND MOTIVATION

The role of special exhibitions has become more prominent, and museums have arguably become more sophisticated in the way they plan and develop exhibitions. That is certainly the case at the British Museum, where the evaluation archive demonstrates that since 2005 the museum has become more effective at developing exhibitions and built a reputation for them. The admission charge for a special exhibition raises expectations and increases visitors' motivation. The challenge of meeting the needs of demanding, motivated and critical audiences, and the need to bring something new, imaginative and creative to each exhibition has led to the development of many inspired pieces of interpretation and important iterative improvements in special exhibitions at the British Museum and elsewhere. The centrality of special exhibitions in attracting sponsorship, generating income, attracting first-time visits, encouraging repeat visits and developing audiences means their importance is unlikely to diminish in the foreseeable future.

## OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

To say that museums are operating in a difficult financial climate and will be for the foreseeable future is something of an understatement, but the next decade offers great opportunities as well as some serious challenges. Digital technology is continuing to open up new possibilities for museums to reconfigure their collections and engage with visitors in more imaginative, participatory and personalised ways. The potential is there to use digital media to reach much wider audiences than ever before, to share collections and expertise with national and international audiences, and to convert one-off visitors into regular online users. The actual impact of the increasing prominence of digital content online and the presence of digital interpretation onsite remains to be seen. I would argue that, in terms of physical visits to collections-focused museums, objects need to occupy a central position in the interpretive philosophy of the institution: the real, authentic thing should be at the heart of the visitor experience.

Not all museums are in a position to participate fully in the digital revolution, and the importance of collections also varies, but it is undeniable that museums and the public have more opportunities than at any other point in their history to engage in creative, stimulating and democratic ways. This is not without risk of course and whilst the potential ways of interpreting collections with digital media are increasing, the fundamentals of interpretive planning remain as important as ever to realise potential and avoid expensive disappointments. The potential of new technology excites most of us, but it is essential to establish the fundamentals first before deciding which interpretive media is most appropriate to realise the approach. In other words, the need for interpretive planning, interpretive expertise and rigorous evaluation is as strong as ever, and that is unlikely to change.

**Stuart Frost is Head of Interpretation at the British Museum, London.**

1. *The Spectator*, 15 January 2011

# PASSION, PRIDE AND PRINCES

Marilyn Lewis explains how passion for the Welsh landscape, pride, identity and a sense of belonging underpin Cadw's Pan-Wales Heritage Interpretation Plan.

ABOVE:
**Caernarfon Castle from the waterfront.**

RIGHT:
**Guarding Conwy Castle.**

The people of Wales are passionate about the landscape and heritage of their country, but there is also an economic driver behind this initiative, in that its sponsor, the Welsh Government, sees heritage interpretation as a vehicle for economic regeneration.

## CLEAR PRIORITIES

The Welsh Government has clear priorities focused upon economic wellbeing, sustainable development and improved life chances for young Welsh people. The role of the heritage sector in supporting these priorities was outlined in a new Historic Environment Strategy, published by the then minister in October 2012.[1] It is no accident that the minister then responsible for heritage, Huw Lewis, was also the minister for housing and regeneration, who saw heritage as a potent force for the physical regeneration of characterful Welsh towns, as well as a core product in the Welsh visitor economy. Very recently, the Welsh Government has reshuffled portfolios, but its collective priorities remain the same.

The Pan-Wales Heritage Interpretation Plan was initiated as a framework for delivering a £19m EU-funded Heritage Tourism Project. Tourism is one of the primary industries in modern Wales, providing 8.3% of all jobs across the country. In 2011, total tourism spending in Wales was estimated at £4.5bn.[2]

While the landscape and heritage of Wales are cited as the main motivations for visiting the country, the heritage tourism product was in need of modernisation and coordination if it was to maximise its potential. The Heritage Tourism Project began in 2009 with the aim of developing improved visitor facilities and making interpretative connections between historic places. All this with the intention of encouraging more visitors and longer stays to increase visitor spend. By the time the project is completed at the end of 2014, it should have:

1. Historic Environment Strategy, Welsh Government, October 2012.
2. Tourism 2020, Welsh Government, 2013.

RIGHT:
**'Rekindled' by Jessica Lloyd-Jones: a digital projection that reignites a fireplace at Conwy Castle.**

BELOW:
**Engaging family audiences at Conwy Castle.**

delivered a minimum of 15 initiatives to promote cultural and heritage tourism; delivered interpretation and access development programmes at a minimum of 25 key sites; created 170 jobs in the cultural tourism sector; and attracted a minimum of 210,000 extra visitors per year.

## CASTLES AND PRINCES

The Pan-Wales Heritage Interpretation Plan[3] provides a framework of lively, compelling but authentic stories around which Welsh heritage can be presented and promoted. The storylines are thematic or chronological and some also have a strong geographical characteristic. *The Castles and Princes of Medieval Wales* story, for example, is sub-divided into separate storylines which include a focus upon the Princes of Gwynedd, in north Wales, and the Princes of Deheubarth, in south-west Wales. Connections can be made and trails developed between sites by means of the 'Follow the Story' icons and cross-promotion between sites. The plan is complemented by a free online toolkit, which advocates visitor-focused and engaging interpretation, and success stories are becoming clear.

Conwy Castle was already a popular visitor destination, attracting nearly 200,000 visitors annually, although 'dwell time' was often disappointingly short. In 2012, the old, tired visitor centre was overhauled, artists were engaged to reinterpret the new storylines and high-and low-tech family activities were introduced. In the face of the recession and a year of bad weather, retail spend at the site increased, visitor numbers held up and, encouragingly, visitors are now spending much longer onsite. The new interpretation and activities integrate Conwy's fabulous medieval town walls into the mix, and it is clear from observation and visitor feedback that more people are exploring the walls and, consequently, the town. This can only be good news for the shops and restaurants of Conwy.

At the other end of the country, Oystermouth Castle was for centuries a romantic but little-visited ruin providing little to tempt anyone but the most enthusiastic castles addict. Led by Swansea Council, with local community commitment and Heritage Lottery and Cadw funding, a programme of conservation and interpretation has transformed physical and intellectual access to the castle and provided visitors with a reason to linger in Oystermouth village.

In mid-Wales, the small town of Harlech is almost wholly dependent upon tourism, with its spectacular castle the most recognisable feature in an evocative landscape. That castle can, however, be disappointing to visit, with no covered spaces and only a few wordy panels to help visitors appreciate its tumultuous past. The imminent re-presentation of the castle and conversion of the adjacent hotel as a visitor centre will, at last, provide a rewarding visitor experience for castle enthusiasts and families on holiday who currently find little to hold their interest once inside the monument.

## MAKING ECONOMIC SENSE

These projects will be subjected to rigorous analysis to establish their economic impact, using a methodology developed by Cardiff University. This argues that, for every 19,000 extra visitors, a new job is created in the Welsh economy. Another study, produced in 2010 and looking at the wider economic value of the historic environment, suggested that the sector supports over 30,000 full-time equivalent jobs in Wales – in conservation, heritage management and information provisions, as well as tourism.[4]

Looking beyond heritage tourism attractions, the historic fabric and character of most Welsh towns is what helps make them attractive places to live in. Cadw has developed a very particular interpretative tool to inform the physical regeneration of Welsh towns. Urban characterisation studies seek to interpret the ways places have evolved – and why. They highlight the street patterns, building materials, massing and styles which, together, give a town its distinctiveness. In many cases, these studies help remind decision makers and developers about the things which made their town special in the first place. In Caernarfon, for example, the focus of regeneration ignored its historic waterfront, but a new urban characterisation report has encouraged local interests to look afresh at these forgotten but potentially spectacular assets. There is scope to use characterisation as a means of involving communities in the process of regeneration planning.

In Wales, the Welsh Government is committed to a holistic approach to regeneration. Innovative heritage interpretation is a vital part of this package to help energise our communities and stimulate our economy. For further information visit the website of Cadw, the Welsh Government's historic environment sector – www.cadw.wales.gov.uk.

**Marilyn Lewis is Director of Cadw, the Welsh Government's Historic Environment Service.**

3. Pan-Wales Heritage Interpretation Plan, Welsh Government, November 2012.

4. Valuing the Welsh Historic Environment, Ecotec Research and Consulting Ltd., 2010.

# IS ALL INTERPRETATION EQUAL?

Athene Reiss discusses the challenges of interpreting the natural environment.


ABOVE:
**Eden Project banner.**

The interpretation business brings together people from a wide range of institutions: science and art museums, archaeological and architectural sites, garden and landscape attractions and wildlife hotspots. The key qualities required to interpret these diverse destinations well are the same – clear writing, focus on the target audience and visual appeal. Interpreters of archaeological remains use many of the same techniques, materials and philosophies as interpreters of the natural world. However, when we look in detail at the purposes and characteristics of interpretation across these sectors, we see many differences in opportunities and challenges, and these are particularly stark with regard to the environmental sector.

## ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION BODIES

Many conservation organisations don't take interpretation as seriously as other heritage institutions do. The environmental sector is disproportionately underrepresented in AHI, although there are more individual nature reserves looked after by conservation bodies than there are museums. Heritage interpreters outnumber environment interpreters by two to one in AHI's membership. This is partly practical and economic, but there are also ideological causes.

For many nature conservation organisations and the people who support them, the overriding priority is to conserve biologically rich places. While paintings often need active conservation, wildflower meadows need cutting and grazing every single year. When resources are scarce, environmental charities will prefer to buy and manage (and thereby protect) land than talk about it. Furthermore, there are conflicts between the desire to protect the natural feel of wild places and the architecture of interpretation. No one wants to see nature reserves covered in signs or interactives. Even electronic interpretation causes anxiety, as there is a reluctance to encourage visitors to listen to and look at mobile devices, and thereby isolate themselves from the natural sounds and sights that form the context for what is being interpreted.

## WHY DO THEY COME?

The philosophical differences of emphasis between environmental and other heritage interpretation also characterise their audiences. Visitors to museums, architectural sites and even structured garden attractions generally attend with an overriding focus on seeing the heritage they have selected. Of course, there are many other motivations, such as socialising, learning or passing time, but the fulfilment of those sits comfortably within a context of viewing something that they have elected to explore. In contrast, visitors to natural outdoor spaces come for much more varied reasons. They may come to study wildlife or appreciate biodiverse habitats, but they might be just as likely to engage in completely different activities – perhaps walking dogs, having a family celebration picnic, mountain biking or flying a kite on an open hillside. These leisure objectives are often at odds with environmental features and with the interpretation of those features. For environmental interpreters, there is less synergy between organisational and audience objectives than for practitioners in other sectors.

## NOW YOU SEE IT, NOW YOU DON'T

Environmental interpreters can thus be battling their visitors' proclivities as well as their own organisation's priorities. On top of that, even the wildlife doesn't cooperate; the objects of environmental interpretation are highly unpredictable and variable. Often the most interesting species or ecosystems are subtle, nocturnal, seasonal or ambient. Lapwings fly off, plants bloom and die and foxes run into the underbrush if they catch just a whiff of a human visitor.

Interpretive signs are no guarantee that visitors will see the featured wildlife. Even highly visible attractions, such as bluebells, often appear only for short periods during the year and without precise predictability. Dinosaurs in natural history museums never walk away from their signs and visitors don't have to know which week to turn up to see Stonehenge, a predictability that might well justify some professional jealousy on behalf of nature's interpreters.

## AN HONOURABLE PAST

A glance backwards towards the origins of writing about interpretation should be some measure of consolation for beleaguered environmental interpreters. There can be no doubt not only of the importance of interpretation to the environment, but also of the environmental sector to interpretation. The history of interpretation philosophy and guidance owes its very origins to interpretive practice conducted in the environment sector. Freeman Tilden's sector-defining *Interpreting Our Heritage* emerged from his work in the US national parks. His oft-cited phrase: 'Through interpretation, understanding; through understanding, appreciation; through appreciation, protection' is one that all environmental organisations can support with whole-hearted enthusiasm.

Tilden's work, and a lot of interpretation guidance since, has assumed that interpretation will frequently be delivered face-to-face, a mode that probably disproportionally benefits natural world interpretation. And much of the work in raising the standards of environmental interpretation through the second half of the 20th-century was about making live interpretation truly relevant and interesting to its audiences. In this regard, environmental interpretation is highly successful – guided walks and family activities both are exceedingly popular (as they are in other sectors), and they allow interpreters to get around some of the difficulties caused by disparate visitor focus and unpredictable wildlife. However, there is a capacity limit for live interpretation, and this is why there is still work to be done in finding the most effective ways of delivering engaging and relevant interpretation for the widest possible audience.

## ARTISTIC INTERPRETATION

One solution that has worked well for a number of environmental organisations is to produce interpretation in the form of art made with natural or nature-friendly materials. Often the interpretive element of such art installations is implied more than stated, but a sculpture trail installed at Aston Rowant National Nature Reserve in July 2012 shows how the interpretive potential of art can be made explicit. The Aston Rowant Talking Trail consists of six wooden artworks inspired by the local landscape and wildlife, each of which contains a wind-up listening post. Each post has six channels, which between them offer commentary by the artist, stories about the local wildlife, a verse about the location, songs about the people of the reserve, a knowledge challenge, and personal views about the reserve from visitors, staff and volunteers.

As is often the case with ambitious ideas, the project relied on partnership working, with Outdoor Culture producing the trail for and with Natural England. Between them they have ensured that the trail, like much modern interpretation, exists within a web of technologies and access points. There is a printed leaflet, a downloadable leaflet and the trail itself can be experienced from home via two video clips embedded in Aston Rowant's Talking Trail webpage (www.naturalengland.org.uk/). Links to the videos, web pages and a web survey are facilitated by QR coding in the car park.

The trail has been called a 'warden in a box' and has proved very popular with visitors – the 'warden' has been listened to over 25,000 times since last July. While there are numerous factors behind the trail's success, some inherent characteristics of environmental art projects are important to its success. Art can seem contemporary without offending the conservation sector's desire for visual congruity and maintenance of a natural feel; and art

LEFT:
**Aston Rowant Nature Trail. The project aimed to use the creation of the trail as an opportunity for local groups to deepen their understanding of the site.**


**Eden Project banners.**

installations offer the additional benefit of lending themselves to a process-oriented approach through which local children and local communities can engage with both art and nature, giving them a lasting enthusiasm for the site and its wildlife.

## WAYS FORWARD

There is no doubt about the importance of environmental interpretation. Those of us who care about the natural world and want it to thrive know that we have to bring people with us, and interpretation is one of the key ways to achieve this. We want people to cherish the wildlife around them, for sheer pleasure, and also so they will help protect it. For this reason, the key aim of environmental interpretation must be inspiration. There are temptations for example, to try to control visitor behaviour through interpretation; to tell people all the details of the special (but invisible) wildlife; or to convey the urgency of the organisational need to conserve the natural landscape. But these are, fundamentally, red herrings. What interpretation can best achieve for the environmental sector is inspiration: instilling visitors with a profound appreciation of the natural world.

Inspiration is hard to do well. Many environmental organisations have looked to the entrance banners at the Eden Project for their own inspiration. On their own they are not interpretation, but they create an inspirational context that gives deep meaning and strength to the site's more content-focused interpretation. If we can persuade visitors to *believe* in our natural spaces, our interpretation will have a ready audience now and in the future.

**Athene Reiss is Project Manager, The Hamilton Trust.**

**Text of entrance banners at the Eden Project.**

If you believe…
…there should be a place…
…that explores what a great future might look like…
…that celebrates life..
…and puts champagne in the veins…
…that's all about education…
…with Mud Between Your Toes…
…to hold conversations…
…that might just go somewhere…
…where research is experience…
…to be shared with everyone…
…that's a sanctuary…
…for all those who think the future belongs
to us all…
Then welcome to the Eden Project, home of the Eden Trust.

That's why we built this place and that's where the money goes.

# AN EMOTIONAL HEART

Annette Simpson argues that the boundaries between interpretation and education are too blurred to matter.

ABOVE:
**Education or interpretation?**
**Or are the boundaries too blurred to matter?**

*Culture is the way we come to know the world, individually and collectively.*[1]

When I started writing this article, it nearly turned into a very large rant about the proposed changes to the National Curriculum for England – how the teaching of history should not be based on facts and figures because, as all good interpreters know, learning is all about relevancy and experience. So I took a deep breath and focused on the theme I was asked to write about: how does interpretation relate to formal education?

I have worked for the Canal & River Trust (C&RT, formerly British Waterways) for over 20 years, mostly as an interpreter. Over the years my responsibilities have widened as the organisation's objectives have shifted and now I am also responsible for education. To some, the links between these two disciplines are obvious; after all they are both concerned with learning, but to me the quick definition that one is formal learning and one informal often blinds us to the important crossover issues that help us to plan and deliver effective work.

1. Imagine Nation: The Case for Cultural Learning

## WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE TO YOU?

When I picture what education and interpretation look like, the images I see are place specific. Education is full of people indoors within a dedicated space and time. Interpretation on the other hand is outdoors, unrestricted by place or time and the people are in much smaller groups. C&RT education programmes take place predominantly in the outdoors, without a worksheet in sight, where the most effective method of learning is physical – children investigate forces, survey habitats and gather historical information. So no confined spaces (although school hours still apply) and children are actively engaged in small groups led by our education volunteers. Schools rely on the cultural sector to provide visits which help to generate excitement and interest as well as knowledge. We aim to provide unique experiences that cannot be replicated in the classroom.

This has many similarities with the interpretive programmes we deliver, as it's the direct connection with the cultural resource which dominates. Interpretation encourages

LEFT:
**Our education volunteers are now learning some live interpretation skills to help them deliver guided walks and storytelling.**

understanding through a vast range of media which engage the senses – by seeing, hearing, touching, smelling and tasting. The biggest difference is the audience itself. For us, in one image its groups of children, in the other people are in smaller mixed-age groups with differing needs and interests.

## IT'S ALL ABOUT AUDIENCE

The audiences may be different but the process of planning learning for both is the same. It's all about ensuring we understand our audience – so we as interpreters can make learning as intellectually and physically accessible as possible to our identified target audience – whether that's a family walk on a canal towpath or a school party looking at the life of a Victorian boatman on the River Weaver.

If you can answer these questions – who are they, what are their motivations for visiting, what do they want to achieve, what are their preferred learning styles, who are they visiting with or what do they enjoy doing? – then you can plan and deliver experiences with brilliant learning outcomes, whether these outcomes are set for you by external factors (such as the National Curriculum) or fluid and decided upon by the audience themselves. For example, with schools we need to understand the lesson planning process. If we use the same structure and language as teachers (e.g. plenary, differentiation, carousel learning) we can be confident we are meeting their needs. But for other groups there might be a different set of criteria. A cub scout leader told me recently that they do not do 'education'. Fun and activity in the great outdoors was more important for them – which has meant that we have just produced some resources specifically tailored to this audience. Find them at canalriverexplorers.org.uk

## AN ORGANISATION WORTHY OF SUPPORT

But of course there are many other factors that come into play when planning and delivering learning programmes. Critically we need to understand what our organisation or employers want to achieve. When British Waterways became the Canal & River Trust (in England and Wales) a change of focus was essential. How do we become an organisation worthy of support? Will people support us and ensure canals and rivers are here for the long term? Well, interpretation, mixed with marketing, mixed with fundraising, will help. The plan is to find and communicate our 'emotional heart'. Setting strong behavioural and emotional objectives for our interpretive work is therefore more important than ever.

Are C&RT formal learning programmes free from this organisational influence? Do we deliver education for its own sake or can it also help us to deliver our emotional heart? As a charity, the Trust has a charitable objective:

'To educate the public about the inland waterways, their history, development, use and operation by all appropriate means, including the provision of museums.'

So we know education is at the heart of the new charity, but this objective is very broad – how do we focus our work to meet the needs of our organisation? The strategic objective;

'To inspire more people to enjoy the waterways and support our work'

gives us a great steer – we need to inspire, encourage enjoyment and create new supporters!

RIGHT:
**Explorers education volunteer delivering Who Lives Where?**

## CANAL & RIVER EXPLORERS

This year we launched the Trust's new learning programme Canal & River Explorers following an extensive review with children, teachers and group leaders. This programme is delivered through two key media – one web based and the other people based.

The website (canalriverexplorers.org.uk) houses learning resources to download. Some are place orientated, such as a Fact File for the Grand Union Canal, others are thematic, such as the Waterways at War Topic Pack. There are also interactives, games and craft activities – one currently favoured by teachers is the new Build a Trail interactive where you can create your own trail for any part of the waterway network. There's a lot on water safety and visit planning – as we all know safety is a key concern. The website provides the backbone of our offer giving a central point of contact, allowing us to distribute large amounts of material to great numbers of teachers.

But for inspiration, you need to spend time with Dave on the Mon & Brec, Janice on the Grand Union, David at Foxton Locks and the many other education volunteers who lead towpath and classroom visits. Our education volunteers generally come to us with experience of working with children either as teachers or group leaders. They join us because they want to share their enthusiasm for waterways and the great outdoors with children. They deliver set programmes devised by our education coordinators, but adapt them for their locations, personality and interests.

We recently commissioned an external evaluation as we wished to demonstrate increased knowledge and understanding amongst children participating in our learning programmes. The results are just in! Teachers value the links to the National Curriculum that allows site visits to be, on the one hand, tailored to meet their specific needs, and, on the other to be a cross-circular experience. They emphasised that onsite visits were vital to pupils, learning because they provide unique experiences and that there was a great deal of Social & Emotional Aspects to Learning (SEAL) Outcomes, including interpersonal skills, empathy, responsibility and teamwork.

**Hands-on learning!**

And what did the children say? Our visits were seen as a unique and genuine treat with fun activities where you could have a go, investigate and even operate locks.

## THE SECRET TO OUR SUCCESS

I believe that many things have made the C&RT learning programmes such a success. These not only include understanding our audience, but great volunteers and brilliant volunteer management, well-planned learning resources and practical visit planning – but also good understanding of interpretive practice. This enables us to celebrate and communicate our emotional heart, hopefully inspiring a new age of passionate waterway enthusiasts. The final mention must go to over 80 inspirational and dedicated Explorers education volunteers who even at this moment are planning the next mission to lead guided walks and activities for families at a canal or river near you!

**Annette Simpson, Education & Interpretation Manager for the Canal & River Trust.**

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