

INTERPRETATION JOURNAL

AHI

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AHI DISCOVER HERITAGE AWARDS 2015





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FOREWORD: CELEBRATING EXCELLENCE IN INTERPRETATION

Welcome to another issue of *Interpretation Journal*.

This issue starts with some news on recently held and attended events, in particular those that explore and challenge interpreters working on Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) projects. With many of us 'relying' on generous support from HLF, it is vital that we keep our finger on the pulse with both the developments and challenges of the UK's largest dedicated funder and advocate of heritage.

Following this, Lindsey Green reviews one of AHI's most successful conferences in recent years. The conference took place in October 2015 and saw delegates visit the new Stonehenge visitor centre and hear from a range of excellent speakers.

The rest of the journal is dedicated to the winners, runners-up and commendations in the AHI 2015 Discover Heritage Awards. Bill Bevan provides the introduction to the first awards ceremony for excellence in cultural and natural heritage interpretation in Britain and Ireland that has taken place since 2007. Bill describes the unenviable – but exciting! – task of resurrecting the awards and all of the hard work that went on to make it possible.

What this journal does is really highlight the diversity of interpretation projects that have taken place in recent years. From the large-scale visitor and interpretation centre, museum and historic property/sites and landscape developments to the more targeted projects for specific audiences and smaller-scale community-led projects. Through exploring the Lifetime Achievement Award winner, the journal also highlights the diverse paths along which interpreters travel and the many roles that we play. It is this diversity that ignites our own passion for heritage and enables us to deliver great award-winning interpretive projects.

We hope you enjoy reading about the awards and seeing just how interpretation helps to bring heritage to life, enabling people to make connections and derive their own meanings.

Finally, it's time for me to introduce our incoming Commissioning Editor. I can't say this without a final thank you to David Masters for nine years hard work at the helm. Into these big shoes steps Eric Langham, co-founder of cultural consultancy Barker Langham. Eric will certainly be bringing his experience – and a great deal of enthusiasm – to the role and we look forward to having him on the team. Welcome Eric!

Best wishes

Lisa Keys
AHI Trustee and Secretary

The next journal will focus on empathy in interpretation.

Website Members' Section

The AHI website has a '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 are adding more resources all the time and will 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. The password will change with each issue of the journal and the password is AHI40.

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

FEATURE NEWS

TOWARDS A MORE INCLUSIVE HERITAGE

Lisa Keys describes how on 30 October 2015 the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) brought together an invited audience of senior heritage and disability leaders to a conference with a view to stimulate joined-up thinking and encourage more grant applications from disability-led groups.

Prompted by the 20th anniversary of the Disability Discrimination Act now superseded by the Equality Act 2010, HLF's Inclusive Heritage Conference challenged change-makers to address the under-representation of disabled people in shaping, visiting and working within the heritage sector.

Recently retired AHI Trustee and Access and Museum Design Consultant Cassie Herschel-Shorland attended the event and reported some of the points highlighted at the conference:

- There are still many hidden stories to tell from people not engaged in heritage.
- Measures to include people with hidden disabilities need to be accounted for more often. A point made on RSPB Minsmere indicated that a step-free accessible hide is more open than a traditional closed type and takes away some people's sense of security.
- Partnership, for instance between heritage and access organisations, is essential to achieve inclusion as an embedded process.
- Even small efforts towards inclusion can make a difference.



Step-free access at RSPB Minsmere.

HLF Chief Executive Carol Souter CBE identified pledges for HLF to follow up on points made in the Q&A panel session, including:

- challenging complacency on access and celebrating successes of inclusion, especially on larger projects
- talking to architecture professionals formally and increasing expectation for Changing Places WC on larger projects
- increasing representation/influence of young disabled people
- continuing to lead, network and share good practice for inclusion
- awarding funding for internship opportunities in the sector.



The results of this debate will help inform HLF's work and stronger, more ambitious partnerships in the future. And there are implications on the way interpretation projects are delivered in the future. AHI will report any development. The conference sessions were each documented by a rapporteur and the HLF will be sharing the full proceeding on their next website later this year. Read more at www.hlf.org.uk

'Partnership, for instance between heritage and access organisations, is essential to achieve inclusion as an embedded process'

'HLF funding has clearly been transformative in widening and deepening understanding of what interpretation is'

INTERPRETATION IN HLF PROJECTS

Lisa Keys summarises a workshop that took place to explore the role of interpretation in HLF projects. The workshop took place prior to the opening of the AHI conference on 21 October 2015. The workshop was attended by AHI Full and Fellow Members and delegates currently working on HLF projects.

Jo Reilly, Head of Participation and Learning at HLF, joined the workshop to provide valuable insight into HLF's policy and strategy position. Jo outlined HLF's 2013–18 strategic outcomes, many of which interpretation help to deliver.

The main aim of the workshop was to explore and share interpreters' experiences of working on HLF projects and from this suggest ways in which AHI could work with HLF in the future.

The 'experience sharing' section of the workshop highlighted some of the clear benefits and challenges that working on HLF projects bring for interpreters.

What are the benefits of HLF projects for interpreters?

- HLF funding has clearly been transformative in widening and deepening understanding of what interpretation is.
- Projects have been enabled from creative and positive partnership working opportunities.
- On some projects there has been an integrated planning process, where interpretation has been key.
- There has been a shift from disparate separate plans to single/joined up plans e.g. the Activity Plans.
- It has been possible to learn from good examples, particularly where there has been peer-to-peer support.

What have been some of the challenges of projects for interpreters?

- The requirement and pressure to consult the community within a tight time-frame can make consultation feel like a 'tick box' exercise.
- Interpretation is too often regarded as a bolt-on.
- Interpretation budgets can be the first to be cut in large projects.
- Project planning – including timescales and budget – is unrealistic.
- There is no guidance on integrating Activity and Interpretation Plans.
- Interpretive designs are requested too early on in the process – partly due to projects being led by the RIBA stages.
- Mentor and Case Officer advice is often inconsistent and they don't always have the right skills for the project.

The HLF's *Interpretation: Good practice guidance* (2013) was also discussed. Most delegates felt that it needs updating/reviewing. Not only to include more detail about the actual interpretation planning process (in the same way the Activity Plan guidance does), but to review the guidelines costs and media recommendations. It was also clear that the document should be rewritten with a target audience in mind. In many ways, the guidance is designed for the professionals who understand the language of interpreters. What is needed is a more visual document that can appeal, in particular, to communities working on HLF projects.

So what are the next steps? What can AHI do to help interpreters and communities delivering HLF projects? A range of possibilities were discussed:

- Provide 'best-practice' case studies and experience online.
- Offer training sessions and knowledge briefings for HLF staff, including mentors and grants officers.
- Facilitate peer-to-peer learning and visits to sites.
- Meet with HLF on regular(ish) basis.
- Develop process-orientated guidance.
- Members to offer expertise or mentoring on the end of the phone.

What did the delegates get out of the session?

The chance to be part of an open discussion about their experience of working on HLF projects. It was an opportunity to gain insight into the world of HLF as a funder, but also the individual worlds of delegates delivering projects. Despite the many different backgrounds of the delegates, from planners to designers and media to programme deliverers, many of them shared the same challenges.

What did AHI get out of it? A clear indication from experienced members that there needs to be ongoing dialogue with HLF. Following the workshop several delegates stepped forward to offer their time and support with this. If you are interested in finding out more or would like to be involved, please email admin@ahi.org.uk

Lisa Keys, AHI Trustee and Professional Development sub-group leader

CONFERENCE REVIEW

NOT JUST DIGITAL AT THE #AHICONF

This October of course saw the re-launch of the AHI Awards at the Association of Heritage Interpretation's Annual Conference. But there was much more to the conference than the awards, as Lindsey Green reported...

I have to say shamefully, this is one of the first conferences that I've been to (other than the large sector conferences) that hasn't been directly about digital or innovation in cultural heritage. Many of us can be accused of only attending conferences that are about our own niche; listening to the echo chamber of people

who agree with you doesn't always help. The silos that we so often bang on about happening in organisations are happening sector-wide.

I realised that actually this was a group of people that are just as keen to understand the affordances of digital as a tool as any other professionals in the sector. As people specifying the way that meaning will be delivered, they need to understand what different digital platforms can do well, where are they likely to deliver positive impact, and where they won't.

We're all still learning what the affordances are, but the conversations and examples felt slightly behind the times – comparing apps to experiences with human guides and panels with

text on screens, 'technology is just for young people' nearly made me jump out of my seat. Many of the digital examples were standalone walking tour apps or large video screens; the echo chamber is here too. The one standout that I must mention was the (now AHI award winning) multiplayer game at Bannockburn Battle Room and the interpretative plans for Jurassic (animatronic dinosaurs swimming around in water, anyone?).

There was a glimmer of light. During a discussion about the Future of Interpretation, someone suggested that 'we haven't even seen

BELOW:

Trying to shift the sarsen stone – on a site visit to the new Stonehenge visitor centre.



what digital can do yet'. I totally agree and in fact it was the conversations that weren't about digital that got my mind firing in ways that not many digital/innovation conferences have for quite a while.

The conversations I really enjoyed were inspiring in terms of how digital could support solutions that could address these real challenges. A theme I wasn't expecting to hear was about understanding the power and role of the interpretation; there was a definite political feel to the conference for me.

Kate Pugh from the Heritage Alliance talked about the many impacts of heritage and the contradiction of a government that is overseeing massive reductions in spending on heritage while using historic sites and cultural icons to market 'Britain Is Great' throughout the world. The need for heritage to demonstrate its power and impact is becoming greater and greater.

Rob Campbell from English Heritage and David Dawson, Director from Wiltshire Museum, talked about their interpretation strategic partnership. The museum had helped deliver much-needed artefacts to Stonehenge. Wiltshire Museum was able to own and tell some of the stories from Stonehenge, and by implication to raise awareness of their collection and increase the number of visitors to a regional museum with a wonderful collection (including two-thirds of the UK's Saxon gold, no less!). Suffering from a £10k per annum deficit after a change in policy by local councils, the Wiltshire Museum has taken bold steps to really target a specific audience by leveraging the strategic interpretation partnerships. Understanding that many of those who want to lightly graze on the story of Stonehenge are likely to do the same on the interpretation at the site, Wiltshire Museum has decided to target the visitors who are the 'Time Team' viewers and specialist heritage tour



ABOVE:
Conference delegates searching for gold at the Wiltshire Museum.

groups – longer texts, more detailed displays – all working towards this audience. They have seen an increase in their visitors.

Eric Langham from interpretation agency Barker Langham spoke about how different cultures interpret time and objects using his experience from working in the Middle East. It was incredibly interesting and covered the soft power of cultural heritage organisations. This led to someone asking: as people in charge of meaning, how do you become a voice for propaganda? I shall forever remember Eric's reply: 'Well, all heritage interpreters are ministers of propaganda'. Power indeed.

Finally, it was a talk by Carolyn Lloyd Brown from Heritage Angel that showed the value and danger of interpretation. Carolyn discussed how UNESCO sites (such as Palmyra) were now being actively targeted by ISIL. Carolyn had worked as an interpretation planner in the UAE to support the accreditation of important rock art sites as UNESCO World Heritage Sites. Through this process, she realised that the accreditation could possibly increase the likelihood of the sites being targeted.

By supporting the world to understand the cultural heritage value of these sites, they were, in effect, more likely to be destroyed.

The overall result, for me, was an understanding of the importance of the stories, the impact that policy and politics is having on cultural heritage and, finally, the power of being able to deliver meaning over information.

So, a new resolution: to go to more conferences, talks and workshops that target different departments other than digital.

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<http://www.franklygreenwebb.com/our-blog/>

Lindsey Green is a partner at Frankly, Green and Webb focusing on technical innovation, user experience design and participation.

REPORTING RESEARCH

BATH ABBEY

上帝保佑你

Ollie Taylor, Bath Abbey's Interpretation Officer, explains how an initiative with the University of Bath has helped the Abbey better understand its young Chinese visitors and made its interpretive plans more inclusive.

Bath Abbey is at the heart of Bath city centre. It is currently in the development phase of a £19.3 million HLF-funded project called Footprint (www.bathabbey.org/footprint). As well as repairing the abbey's collapsing floor and installing an eco-friendly, under-floor heating system using hot water from the Roman Baths, the project's new interpretation and activities will help the abbey to achieve its vision of becoming a 'People and Place Fully Alive' through three key themes of Worship, Hospitality and Engagement. Engagement has been of particular importance to the abbey in 2014–15 as it has consulted widely with communities and organisations in the city to understand how the abbey is perceived and how people would like to engage with it.

THE CHALLENGE

As part of this consultative process, in November 2014, the abbey was selected as one of 16 organisations in Bath to take part in the Zurich-University of Bath Student Challenge. Seven students from the University of Bath were invited to spend a day at the abbey. They were challenged to devise ways of making it more accessible and engaging for students. At the end of the day, they would pitch their ideas to the abbey's Interpretation and Visitors Officers. How would they share the story of the abbey with its visitors? Which details or stories encountered would they share and which would they like to know more about? The challenge was submitted and the wait for the student team began...



Explaining the architecture of Bath Abbey to Chinese students.

As it happened, the team who arrived early on a cold November morning were all Chinese.

DRAGON'S DEN

All in their 20s, all from China, all studying one-year MSc programmes in the School of Management, the group presented the abbey with a unique opportunity to engage with and understand a young Chinese audience much better. Chinese visitors make up a significant proportion of the abbey's visitors over 12,000 Chinese visitors are welcomed each year. The abbey currently offers its Welcome leaflet in 26 different languages, including one in Chinese (the second-most-popular leaflet not in English behind German). What's more, within a mile of the abbey, 6% of the population identify themselves as Asian or Asian-British.

The students were given a short tour of the abbey, the tower, and time to explore the abbey for themselves. For most of them, it was their first visit, and all the students identified that they knew little to nothing about the

abbey beforehand. Interestingly, their sources of information about it came through Wikipedia, travel agency websites, and a TV drama series popular in China called *Triumph in the Skies II*, an episode of which had been shot in Bath.

'I think Bath Abbey is the most famous site in Bath... people would ask if you'd been when you got back [to China]'

Their pitches at the end of the day identified many barriers to engagement and solutions to them. The lack of relevance to students' lives was a key area of discussion. Why didn't the abbey offer the same workshops for students that it offered for family learning? After all, hand bell ringing, singing and bread-making sounded good to them too! Likewise, short video content targeted at them through social media showing activities inside the abbey relevant to them (e.g. graduation ceremonies) would make crossing the threshold less daunting.

Another key area involved the self-guided resources. The translation of the Welcome leaflet into traditional Chinese characters made the language harder to recognise for the students and, they felt, might lead to the assumption that the leaflet was very traditional and targeted at those from Hong Kong not mainland China. Simplified Chinese characters would be much easier to recognise.

NO STONE UNTURNED

The day was over quickly, but how could the students continue to help? They wanted to continue the conversation begun with the abbey as much as we wanted to get under the skin of their experience of it. We picked up where we had left off at subsequent meetings at the abbey. Thinking back to their experience, what had they found hard to understand and what did they want to know more about? The architecture and function of the church were two key areas where the interpretation could be much better.

'What is a church? What is its function? Why is it located here? In China, you don't really get a church in the middle of town. For Chinese, they're always separate, up a mountain or whatever'

A Chinese diptych based on the one at Bath Abbey.



The abbey's memorials were of particular interest. The abbey has 647 memorial tablets on its walls and 891 ledger stones on its floor commemorating burials from the 16th to the 19th centuries (the highest number of church memorials outside of Westminster Abbey). For the students, these were 'big curious objects that stand out' but which were under-interpreted.

'What's with all the tombs? We don't bury our dead in the middle of town'

Part of their reinterpretation would need to explain the reason for the number and location of the burials, as well as the individuals' stories. Chinese people, one student explained, would not expect the quantity of memorials they encountered in the abbey in the middle of a city. Usually, burial places 'need to be a feng shui place, a quiet place is what we are used to' Understanding these different cultural expectations around such a significant aspect of the abbey's architecture was another important lesson learned.

STEPPING FORWARD

Through the Footprint Project, Bath Abbey will continue to build on the new understanding and relationships it has developed with its audiences this year. New imaginative, layered interpretation and activities on the abbey floor and in a new underground Discovery Centre will respond to the consultations and make the church a more accessible and engaging place for all. The abbey's 1,500+ memorials will be a particular focus, with volunteers from community organisations across the city recording inscriptions and delving into the lives of those they commemorate. Seeing the abbey through a group of young Chinese visitors' eyes has played a crucial part in understanding how to make its reinterpretation inclusive.



Chinese students explore the abbey's memorials.

Current initiatives by the government and VisitBritain to encourage increased tourism from China will ensure that Bath Abbey's Chinese audience will only grow in the future. Such consultations with organisations in the city including BEMSCA (Bath's Black and Ethnic Minority Senior Citizen's Association) have already begun to attract more diverse audiences to the abbey's events. During Heritage Open Week, one Chinese mother and her daughter spent a whole day here creating a diptych based on the abbey's own. Its message: 'Bath Abbey God Bless You' Opening dialogue and opening doors are the Abbey's first steps in opening up such experiences to all.

Ollie Taylor is Interpretation Officer at Bath Abbey and has managed the development of its four-year Activity and Interpretation Plans for the Footprint Project (otaylor@bathabbey.org)

AHI DISCOVER HERITAGE AWARDS 2015

for excellence in cultural and natural heritage interpretation in Britain and Ireland



Sponsored by GeoSho

Welcome to the first awards edition of *Interpretation Journal* since 2007. AHI patron Loyd Grossman CBE announced the winners of the AHI 2015 Discover Heritage Awards at a night of excitement and tension, joy and tears, on 21 October 2015. Held at the AHI Conference in Newbury, the gala awards ceremony marked the 40th anniversary of the association since its inception as the Society for the Interpretation of Britain's Heritage in 1975. In this issue we can celebrate and learn from the winners, runners-up and commendations.

The previous iteration of the AHI awards scheme, the Interpret Britain Awards, had rightly developed a reputation for recognising excellence in all forms of interpretation in the UK and Ireland. Their reputation was based on three pillars of wisdom: peer review from experienced interpreters, assessments based on site visits and the provision of feedback to entrants. When investigating the viability of re-launching the awards after a seven-year absence, AHI was determined that all three pillars would remain at the core of the scheme.

Five new developments accompany the resurrection of the scheme as the *AHI Discover Heritage Awards – for excellence in cultural and natural interpretation in Britain and Ireland*. Site judge visits would be arenas to mentor early career interpreters by pairing them with experienced interpreters, all of them Full Members (MAHIs) or on their way to gaining this recognition. The awards would be assessed within categories to help assess like-with-like. We would form a judging panel of experienced interpreters drawn from England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales to shortlist entries, then choose the overall winners. We decided to make the awards biennial rather than annual. Finally, we instigated a Lifetime Achievement Award so that the profession could recognise those individuals who have contributed to the development of heritage interpretation through their long-standing contributions.

The AHI Discover Heritage Awards are wide-ranging in their scope – geographically, thematically and in terms of delivery. They cover all of the UK and Ireland and both cultural and natural heritage interpretation is eligible in any media. They are the only heritage awards to recognise all types of heritage interpretation, whether indoors or outdoors, and even – as we'll see – under the sea. Whatever media a project uses to

communicate the special value of a place, person or collection can be entered into these awards – from interpretation panels and exhibitions, to visitor centres and objects, costumed interpreters to tour guides, digital media to mobile applications, artwork to poetry, events to performance, puzzle games to words, images and sounds. The largest entry was Waterford city centre, Ireland; the smallest a red telephone box in Tideswell, England.

The success of the 2015 awards is evident in many ways. We received a record 49 entries, which came from all corners of England, Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland, Scotland and Wales, and displayed an extensive range of media. The quality of entrants in each category was high, reflecting the growing quality of heritage interpretation. What makes a good interpretive project? Perhaps one that blends sound interpretive planning, consultative formative evaluation and summative evaluation – stirred together with the vital spark of creativity.

We do hope that all entrants have found the awards a useful process of self-reflection and gained valuable feedback from the judging team. The following reviews of the winners and runners-up are based on the site judges' reports; those of the commended entries on the judging panel feedback statements. The entries and judges' reports speak for themselves. Hopefully, they will help to encourage best practice and inspire you to enter the AHI 2017 Discover Heritage Awards.

Bill Bevan
Chair, AHI



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LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

The Association for Heritage Interpretation is pleased to award the inaugural AHI Lifetime Achievement Award to James Carter in recognition of his major contribution to heritage interpretation as a discipline.

JAMES CARTER FAHI

James has been intimately involved with heritage interpretation for over 30 years. As a child, he developed a strong interest in human history and the natural world. He discovered a facility for written and spoken communication whilst reading for a degree in English and working at BBC Radio Brighton. Later, James loved the contact with people he met while staffing the information desk at Manchester Airport. Heritage interpretation united these passions in 1982–83 when he took an MSc in Environmental Resources and found work as a property guide and a countryside ranger. From then on, James devoted his working life to the theory, education and practice of heritage interpretation.

James ran his first interpretation course at Brathay Hall in 1983, and went on to join the Centre for Environmental Interpretation (CEI) at Manchester Metropolitan University in 1986, eventually becoming Senior Research Fellow. He edited the centre's well-respected interpretation journal and coordinated a national database of interpretation training opportunities. He developed and ran flagship training courses, including Losehill Hall's 10-day interpretation course (co-directed with Susan Cross and David Mount) and the UK's first ever interpretive writing course. James managed interpretation conferences, set up CEI's Scottish office, edited Scottish Natural Heritage's

interpretation newsletter and developed the curriculum for a Master's level interpretation course. Whilst at CEI, James also co-authored and edited *A Sense of Place*, the seminal British work on interpretive planning (since translated into French, Czech and Chinese and still pertinent and well-used today).



James receives this award from Loyd Grossman, AHI Patron.



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AHI AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN INTERPRETATION

The Association for Heritage Interpretation assessed the five category winners to see if any deserved special recognition as a truly excellent example of interpretation. The AHI Excellence in Interpretation Award would be awarded to the project that exemplified best practice in all aspects of development and delivery – clear aims and objectives, thorough interpretive planning and audience consultation, formative and summative evaluation, quality implementation utilising appropriate media and striking creativity.



The exterior of the Battle of Bannockburn Visitor Centre.

Katie Blake, Bright White Ltd.

WINNER

THE BATTLE OF BANNOCKBURN VISITOR CENTRE



IN THE WORDS OF THE SITE JUDGES:

'This is a visitor experience and interpretation project like no other that we have come across. It goes all out to explain a complicated medieval battle to visitors in an engaging and fully immersive way and most definitely has learning at the heart of the experience. The time spent in the preparation room before battle really made you think about the amount of training involved for soldiers of the time. It was also interesting that women had an important role as spies as early as the medieval period. So often in this period of history female history is ignored or it is the history of royalty. It was refreshing to hear a different story.'

The object handling was excellent in conveying how heavy the armour was and how awkward it must have been to fight in. Overall it is an innovative, interactive experience which has held fast to its intention to provide the opportunity to learn about an important historical event in a very original way.'



Visitors prepare for battle in this area by learning fighting techniques and handle replica objects to get a sense of their weight and awkwardness.

In the words of Chris Walker, Bright White Ltd 'When NTS and Bright White Ltd were formulating the interpretation strategies and plans for the Battle of Bannockburn Visitor Centre, we became very aware of the fact that the developing ideas, with such a dominance of digital interpretation delivery, had not been attempted before. The onus was on us to make sure that we created an exemplar project, that would help the chances of similar projects to gain funding, rather than hinder them. We used the phrase 'exemplar project' extensively in our documentation and used it as a driver, a design principle.

Many aspects of Bannockburn are new or innovative, but our most important innovation was to prove beyond all doubt that digital interpretation is capable of delivering learning and emotional outcomes through a process familiar to any heritage interpreter, by using standard means of identifying the outcomes, designing them into the layout and content, and then evaluating them independently at the conclusion.

Therefore, AHI recognition of this behind-the-scenes process could not mean more to us; it says that all the hard, meticulous, work was worthwhile, and that the future for integrated digital interpretation is given a huge boost. It is the highest accolade that we could hope to receive from our peers at AHI.'

bright

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MUSEUMS AND HISTORIC PROPERTIES/SITES

This category recognises projects based upon a collection, building or property. A museum is defined as a collection-based organisation rather than the display of objects at a visitor centre. Museum-led projects that take parts of their collection off-site to places that are not visitor centres were eligible. An historic property/site may be a house, castle, industrial or archaeological site.



Visitors try on replica 1930s fashion in the newly opened Virginia Courtauld's wardrobe.

WINNER

RE-PRESENTING ELTHAM PALACE

WHAT THE ENTRANT SAID:

'Eltham Palace provides visitors with a startling juxtaposition of stylish 1930s design and medieval architecture set in exquisite grounds. Bishops and monarchs dominate the early stories, wealthy industrialists and their high-profile friends the latter. Light touch, flexible and stylish interpretation brings the palace and people to life.'

English Heritage and ATS Heritage.

Eltham Palace, Court Yard, Eltham, Greenwich, London SE9 9QE.

Re-presenting Eltham Palace is an example of excellent use of a budget and delivery of a project within a ten-month timescale. The memorable and engaging site judge visit experienced a project offering an immersive experience that gives a great sense of the style and era of the Courtaulds at Eltham Palace. The interpretation is very successful at conveying the family's wealth and the luxury they could afford, the innovation they employed in technology, style and craftsmanship in the house and their lifestyle – elements such as learning about their pets and their travels adds interest and brings the narrative to life.

This project delivers good interpretation very effectively to a wide range of audiences. Diversifying the interpretation also improves the offer to existing core audiences, and provides more opportunity for family engagement and stay time with the play area adjacent to the café, and options on the multi-media guide for younger audiences to access and make choices on their preferred tour for the palace and garden.

Orientation is clear and offers a variety of routes for visitors to explore at their own pace. Opening up new spaces such as the basement and service wing and increasing





The newly opened luxury wartime bunker.

facilities available has added value and provides a broader narrative to the story of Eltham Palace and the Courthauld family.

There is a diverse range of visitors clearly enjoying Eltham, and the presentation and re-interpretation provide a real 'sense of place' and understanding that the family and their guests enjoyed living and visiting this house. We noted that visitors were spending considerable time in each space observing the furniture and fittings and walking in a very leisurely way through the rooms.

Visitors engage very positively with the space and interactive elements. Most visitors use the media guide, and a number of families and older couples engage together with the spaces and interpretation, for example trying on clothes or discussing topics of interest. The media tour is one of the best we have seen. It is broken into easy chapters and layered into

interesting elements that make use of a variety of media (music, film, reminiscence, key objects), which appeals to a broader range of people.

There is a good balance achieved in the presentation of the interpretation without any of the period rooms being compromised. The locations of physical interpretation and look and feel fit with the style of the building, and are subtle but easy to find and accessible, frequently on the tops of dressing tables,

clearly labelled, consistent display in boxes with tags and instruction cards. The interpretive panels in rooms connect with the corresponding element of the multi-media tour so the narrative is cohesive. Appropriate light-touch interpretation in the gardens uses existing benches with attached bats housing interpretation panels.

WHAT THE WINNER SAID:

'It's absolutely fantastic to be the recipient of an AHI Award. It's very valuable to us as individuals and as an organisation to have our peers in the sector recognise the projects we undertake. Apart from being very nice, it lets us know we are on the right track – moving the industry forward.'

Rob Campbell, Head of Interpretation and Resources, English Heritage

RUNNER-UP

GLORIOUS GEORGES

QUEEN'S STATE APARTMENTS HAMPTON COURT PALACE

WHAT THE ENTRANT SAID:

'A permanent re-presentation to interpret the Queen's State Apartments at Hampton Court Palace, launched as part of a wider Historic Royal Palaces season of activity in 2014 called "The Glorious Georges", marking the 300-year Hanoverian accession.'

Historic Royal Palaces.

Hampton Court Palace, East Molesey, Surrey KT8 9AU.

A major aim of 'Glorious Georges' is to challenge conventional interpretation practice often presented in historic settings, and extend the stay time within the Queen's State Apartments. A specific objective is to highlight the less known history of the Hanoverians at Hampton Court Palace. The main target audience is the Historic Royal Palaces 'Expression' segment, though it aims to be inclusive to all visitors.

The 300 years of Hanoverian accession is quite a detailed storyline and encompasses personal, social, religious and political narrative.

The changes to monarchic stability and the Hanoverian family conflict are interesting interpretative themes that introduce the difficult relationship between King George I

and his son Prince George. These themes are strong storylines in some panels; however the main thread of the storyline could be stronger to hook the audience.

The new interpretation is intended to work with the traditional room settings, and this mostly works. On a broader level, the furnishings and wall paintings could be referenced more to offer an additional immersive experience for the visitor and increase knowledge and interest in the key characters.

An ambitious mix of interpretive approaches aims to engage all the senses. This ranges from interpretation panels and captions set into the rooms with a light touch. Visually, the choices

of media add a sense of surprise to many of the rooms. We really enjoyed the Oratory room with the music and prayer book on display and these were a good example of the interpretation connecting to the room setting.

The art installations were a surprise and intrigued many of the visitors, especially the excellent presentation of the public dining room table, evocative of the period with the addition of linen sculptures.

The change of lighting levels provides alternating atmospheres and mood throughout. This is achieved by visitors experiencing brighter natural daylight in some rooms with vistas across the gardens then entering another space, such as the bedrooms with controlled lower artificial light levels. Other special features, such as the lighting sequence focused on the costumed figures in the drawing room, provide a sense of movement, patterns and colour appropriate to the period.

Overall, it is wonderful to see the Georgian apartments highlighted with improved interpretation to offer a new experience within Hampton Court Palace. There is good use of music, light and smells to evoke the use of the different rooms, while non-conventional interpretation (the table-setting) provides ways for visitors to interact with the site and explore new ideas.



The presentation of the public dining room table, where the period is evoked with the addition of linen sculptures.



RUNNER-UP

SS NOMADIC AND HAMILTON DOCK

WHAT THE ENTRANT SAID:

'SS Nomadic is a jewel of shipping heritage nestled in the heart of the Titanic Quarter at Hamilton Dock, adjacent to the landmark Titanic Belfast experience. The dock and the ship, Titanic's tender and the last surviving White Star Line vessel, collectively underwent a multi-million-pound restoration and interpretation project.'

**Nomadic Charitable Trust and Tandem Partners.
Hamilton Dock, Queens Road, Belfast BT3 9DT.**

SS Nomadic is a tender that transported passengers to the *Titanic* and is the last remaining vessel of the White Star Line. The vessel is preserved and presented to the public in dry dock as part of the Titanic Belfast visitor attraction.

The interpretation is based on a clear set of aims and objectives: developing a highly entertaining and collaborative attraction; interpretation that enables visitors to understand, appreciate the importance of both the ship and the dock and help them connect with the people who built, operated, used and travelled on the ship; and develop interpretation that speaks to the many different audiences who will visit *SS Nomadic* in an entertaining and informative way. These aims and objectives are clearly reflected in the finished product, which provides an entertaining and competitively priced heritage attraction that is well integrated and associated with the Titanic experience.

The *SS Nomadic* interpretation is driven by a small number of key messages and remains clear and coherent from start to finish. *SS Nomadic* and Hamilton Dock are important reminders of Belfast's past as a hub of shipbuilding during the golden age of the transatlantic liners. This is the story of the ship's survival and reincarnation over a century: built in Belfast, delivered to France, working through two world wars, escape from the scrap heap to be converted to a glamorous venue docked on the banks of the Seine, and finally its rescue and restoration in Belfast. For its

passengers, *SS Nomadic* was the first step on a long voyage for many thousands of people.

The choice of media and the quality of copy, imagery, design and fabrication throughout the interpretive scheme is superb. The extensive interpretation provided is designed so sensitively that it integrates very well into the restored interior of the ship, which is an artefact in itself, resulting in no apparent conflict with the restoration project.

Internally, the interpretive scheme includes a guided tour, limited interpretive panels, site-specific AV, projections of ship's characters, touchscreen panels, tactile replica clothes and luggage and recreated scenes of crew quarters all very sensitively accommodated into the restored interior of the ship. Interpretation for families is restricted to a playful learning zone for children, and could be implemented throughout the vessel to engage more with this audience. There are also a number of viewing points that give the visit a glimpse of 'behind the scenes' – these include spaces where the crew would have moved around the ship out of the sight of the passengers as well as the area behind the engine room that runs out to the propellers. Visitors are advised to take the lengthy guided tour on arrival before exploring the vessel for themselves.

This is also a restoration project and the ship's fit-out also includes many faithful replicas of its original bespoke design, including furniture, wood panelling and floorings. The colour palettes, typographies and materials chosen

Tandem/Rory Moore



SS Nomadic's displays feature different media to interest a variety of learning styles.

for the interpretation are very sensitive to the conserved interior.

Interpretation successfully enables visitors to understand the story of the ship's importance and the people associated with it. There are opportunities for this story to be more immersive, atmospheric and for characters and real people to be brought to life, in order to more fully engage the visitor. The comprehensive interpretation scheme also adds great validity to the nearby Titanic signature project and provides a sustainable use and reason to preserve the Hamilton dry dock in which *SS Nomadic* stands.



COMMENDED

JACKIE CLARKE COLLECTION

WHAT THE ENTRANT SAID:

'The Jackie Clarke Collection is the largest private archive of materials relating to 400 years of Ireland's independence struggle. Mayo County Council now host 100,000 rare items donated to the people of Mayo by Jackie Clarke's widow, in the former Provincial Bank Building in Ballina, Co Mayo, Ireland.'

Mayo County Council and Martello Media.
Pearse Street, Ballina, Co. Mayo, Ireland.



Peter Whittaker

There is much to commend about this well-planned interpretation project, which takes an interesting and well-thought-out approach to the theme. The aims of the team followed a clear overview based on exemplary interpretive planning, which considered the overall interpretation methodology and specific narratives. The ambitious practical application of the interpretation gives careful consideration to the type of presentation media to be used to communicate the key messages to a general audience, with formative evaluation suggesting a formal education market as a key component of the target audience.

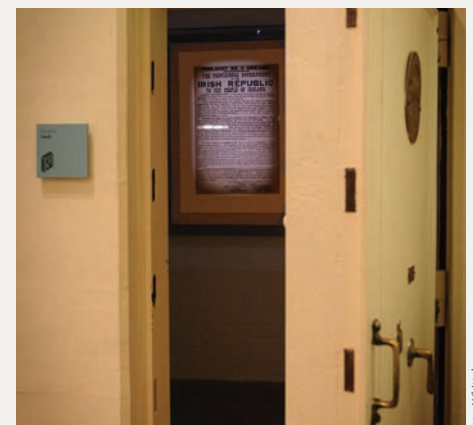
ABOVE:
The interior of the Jackie Clarke Collection with some of the thousands of items about Ireland's Independence struggle.

RIGHT:
The video booth offers visitors a chance to become part of the surrounding immersive floor to ceiling multi-projector displays.

FAR RIGHT:
The walk-in bank vault acts as a 'holy of holies' for an original Proclamation of the Irish Republic.



Peter Whittaker



Peter Whittaker



Costumed interpreters lead the family open day to launch the Visitors Welcome at St Mary's project.

COMMENDED

VISITORS WELCOME AT ST MARY'S

WHAT THE ENTRANT SAID:

'Visitors Welcome at St Mary's is a holistic project developed to provide an exemplar visitor experience at one of our flagship historic churches. The interpretation is the key part of this experience to enhance visitors, interest in the stories of the church and challenge perceptions of visiting churches.'

The Churches Conservation Trust.

St Mary's Street, Dogpole, Shrewsbury, Shropshire SY1 1DX.

This is a strong project based on clear objectives developed from sound front-end evaluation. In particular, the aim of creating more pathways to access through interpretation for those who might have attitudinal barriers to visiting a church.

The target audiences and their needs are clearly defined, and the implementation of the project uses interpretive media that have distinct user aims while being appropriate to a place of worship and in tune with the design language of the church.

Visitors Welcome at St Mary's is also commended for installing interpretation that relates to the centuries of human ritual and community use intrinsically linked to the church. These are the elements that bring the building to life and enable a more personal connection for visitor. The project demonstrates how the sharing of curatorial authority with volunteers to develop interpretation can achieve a more dynamic and engaging visitor experience.





Sponsored by Bett Associates

VISITOR AND INTERPRETATION CENTRES

This hotly contested category included new visitor or interpretation centres and established centres producing new interpretation. Eligible sites included centres linked to a property, site, landscape or whole region, whether a standalone building or set within a larger building, such as a tourist information centre.

The large number of high quality entries from across the UK and Ireland led the judging panel to shortlist a total of four entries.

WINNER

THE BATTLE OF BANNOCKBURN VISITOR CENTRE



A character from the Character Stations that flank the 'prepare for battle space'. These allow visitors to interact with historical figures from both sides in a more intimate way. Motion-recognition technology brings the characters to life, where they explain their position in medieval society or offer secret tactics for the battle ahead.



WHAT THE ENTRANT SAID:

'The Battle of Bannockburn, in 1314, was a seminal moment in Scottish history. In 2014, a new interpretation-led visitor centre was opened to mark the battle's 700th anniversary. An innovative interpretive experience combines interactive and immersive 3D and digital storytelling to bring the battle to life for 21st-century audiences.'

The National Trust for Scotland and Bright White.

The Battle of Bannockburn, Glasgow Road, Whins of Milton, Stirling FK7 0LJ.

This is a visitor experience and interpretation project like no other that we have come across. It goes all out to explain a complicated medieval battle to visitors in an engaging and fully immersive way and most definitely has learning at the heart of the experience.

The multi-media technology more than successfully communicates the key messages it is trying to put across – the importance of this battle in history to both countries involved. At all times the objective to interpret the battle

and make it understandable to a 21st century person is at its heart. The centre's key objectives of inspiring every visitor in a learning-centric, interpretation-led visitor centre is achieved through "innovative, accessible and stimulating visitor experience" – this quite obvious as you enter the battle experience from the very beginning. A key objective is to create a 'sensory and emotional experience as well as an intellectual one'.



Katie Blake, Bright White Ltd.

Bannockburn's battle room where visitors fight the battle with fellow team members under the guidance of a Battle Master. The outcome is unpredictable.

The wearing of 3D glasses to enter the battle experience alerts the visitor to the fact that something different is about to happen. Once past the theatrical beginning with puppets representing the key characters setting the scene, you are into the area in which you prepare for battle. In this area, you learn techniques of warfare, hear the swish of the arrows flying by, horses neighing and hooves on the ground, the clash of steel. If you're not careful, a horse may 'ride' past you – so you'd better get out the way!

This creates a dramatic experience designed to engage and inform – and it does. The handling objects in the preparation room are less accessible than in the object-handling session as you are not able to try on the helmets or move the objects very far, but it still does give you an idea of the weight and awkwardness of these items. You can be standing in the middle of the room and see a 'virtual horse and knight' charging towards you, which most certainly shows how scary this would have been. You really do feel as if you are there.

With learning at the core of this project, 'learning through doing' is maintained across the experience. The battle game enables you to

WHAT THE WINNER SAID:

'The AHI Award means so much, as there is no greater accolade than having constructive and enthusiastic peer review and feedback. In the face of such esteemed competition it was a huge surprise and we were really thrilled on behalf of the entire Bannockburn team. Having awards that acknowledge the careful research and creativity of interpretive planning and concept development – the foundation of every project – is a brilliant boost for all interpretation practitioners. Thank you again, this is a real career highlight.'

Carolyn Lloyd Brown, The Heritage Angel

fight the battle with your fellow team members without a predicted outcome – the English can win too! After the game has been played, the battle master explains how the real battle of Bannockburn was fought and why Robert the Bruce picked this particular site at which to meet the English. The gaming table also shows you the topography of the area today compared to the medieval period.

Visitors who do not want to play the battle game can book a passive experience of the battle after their session in the preparation room, which explains how Bruce won and allows opportunity for questions. This option was chosen by older visitors and some overseas

visitors as they were provided with ear-phones giving the commentary in their own language.

The object-handling session, set aside from the battle experience, is also a valuable learning experience because here you can try on the armour and handle the weapons with the opportunity to ask questions.

Overall it is an innovative, interactive experience that holds fast to its intention to provide the opportunity to learn about an important historical event in a very original way.

RUNNER-UP WITH JUDGES' SPECIAL MENTION

LANGHAM DOME VISITOR CENTRE

WHAT THE ENTRANT SAID:

'The Langham Dome project re-imagined a derelict World War II building as a unique, immersive and exciting visitor experience. As an anti-aircraft defence training building, Langham Dome used state-of-the-art technology to teach trainee gunners. Today, the building engages many visitors with the varied stories that the dome has to share.'

North Norfolk Historic Buildings Trust and Ugly Studios.
Langham Dome, Holt, Norfolk NR25 7BP.



Visitors play a board game outside Langham Dome. The game aims to make the technical history of the site more manageable.

Langham Dome tells the unique story of a World War II anti-aircraft defence in an engaging and thought-provoking manner using a range of media.

The project aims to bring people to the site, reveal unique social stories of local and international importance and use engaging and provocative interactive methods. The centre allows visitors to relate to unique stories of struggles and sacrifice without glorifying conflict. The emotional objectives, such as a sense of pride, and learning objectives, including the audience understanding the technological innovations of the dome, come through well in the exhibition.

Themes were developed through the interpretive planning phase that involved wide community consultation, and these are evident in the interpretation. For example, three films give different themed stories: the innovation of the dome; the experiences of people who used it and at RAF Langham; and the role Langham played during and after World War II. Langham Dome's key theme is its use to train anti-aircraft gunners during the war.

The site is welcoming on arrival, with volunteers taking money and explaining the exhibition. Volunteers could do more to orientate visitors to the exhibition and explain how to use headphones to listen to the films

or use the gun interactive. There is no obvious visitor flow or orientation, but the space is small and easy to move around and across exhibits. The display text, archive photos and films complement each other well.

The website gives a good introduction to the site for potential visitors researching a day out. The exhibition is based on a rich content resource that enables the production of the three films and a range of exhibition panels with different themes. The text is clear and engagingly written with different levels and layers enabling accessibility. Stories include the role of women. There are a range of interactives including board games, jigsaw puzzles, costumes for dressing up, and a replica of the training gun. Different media have been used effectively to tell thought-provoking social and emotional stories.

The stories are mainly shown in films, including that of the gun trainer invention being supported by the War Office and human stories such as the bomber pilot flying low over his house on the way home to let his wife know he has returned safely, or the Dutch pilots being trained at Langham in a freezing cold winter.

During our visit we saw families with different -aged children engage with the interactives, especially the gun trainer, while older people interacted with and talked about the exhibitions. We observed families sitting as a group to watch the film projected onto the inside of the dome above the exhibition.



RUNNER-UP

STONEHENGE VISITOR CENTRE

WHAT THE ENTRANT SAID:

'Stonehenge is an international icon which attracts an audience of over a million visitors a year. For many years, the visitor facilities and interpretation fell well below the standards expected for such a landmark. The project transformed the visitor offer – removing the old facilities, building a new visitor centre and restoring dignity to the setting of the monument.'

English Heritage.

Stonehenge, Amesbury, Wiltshire SP4 7DE.

The removal of the road and re-siting of the Visitor Centre have been successful in setting Stonehenge in the wider context of the UNESCO World Heritage landscape – an essential aim of the overall project. The Visitor Centre aims to communicate four key messages (Landscape, the Stones, Meaning and People) using a diverse range of interpretive media.

The initial orientation graphic model communicates the idea of Stonehenge as part of a much larger prehistoric landscape. It establishes the use of colour-coding and simple timelines throughout the interpretation to denote the periods before, during and after Stonehenge and helps to give a sense of scale and time. Different approaches are used in



Reconstructed Neolithic houses outside Stonehenge Visitor Centre are based on recently excavated sites at Durrington Walls which date from the building of Stonehenge.



The new Stonehenge Visitor Centre is able to display objects from the site and its landscape held in regional museum collections.

separate areas to communicate the key messages to particular audiences, rather than being synthesised. The timeline, display cases and wall-sized audio-visual could perhaps be dispersed a bit more throughout the available space to allow visitors easier access.

The digital displays used in the exhibition are of a high standard and successfully interpret the changing landscape. In particular, the initial immersive space, called 'Standing in the Stones'

– a 360-degree screen displaying the evolving nature of Stonehenge through the centuries and seasons – is atmospheric and effectively provides the experience of standing among the stones. The technology is enhanced by flexible live interpretation – a member of staff delivered a focused three-minute presentation synchronised with the surrounding images, and answered questions. The films exploring different meanings were also engaging and included British Sign Language narration.



RUNNER-UP

QUEEN'S VIEW VISITOR CENTRE

WHAT THE ENTRANT SAID:

'Queen's View is an iconic and much-loved destination in Highland Perthshire, which suffered from outdated site infrastructure. Following major site improvements, this project fitted out the visitor centre, cafe and surrounding site with themed interpretation, to tell the story of Queen's View and the surrounding Tay Forest Park.'

Forestry Commission Scotland.

Queen's View Visitor Centre, Loch Tummel, Nr Pitlochry, Scotland.



Andrew Howard/FCS

The Queen's View Information Room takes a sensory approach to interpreting Tay Forest Park and its trees.

A visit to Queen's View is a pleasant and memorable experience – not least because the view is magnificent. The aims and objectives for the centre are clearly set out, and the new Information Room and café are used together to interpret the site that leads the visitor to Queen's View.

The visitor facilities are well presented and the visitor is made aware that the site is run by Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS) and promotes the values of the organisation to manage the site for the enjoyment of future generations as well as for those visiting now.

FCS have identified their core audience for Queen's View as older adults visiting as a couple or with friends, which during our visit was clearly the case. Large, silhouette cut-outs on the front of the café building are amusing representations of Queen Victoria and her companion John Brown. For those who know who these silhouettes represent, they raise a smile. Victoria visited the site, had a cup of tea here, and assumed the place was named after her. In some ways, the references to Queen Victoria reinforce her associations with the site rather than Queen Isabella (wife of Robert the Bruce), after whom it is actually named. Wooden benches that play on royal phrases are funny, quirky and interesting.

The Information Room promotes FCS brand values and Tay Forest Park (TFP), with a focus on the TFP and the trees rather than interpretation about Queen's View and the derivation of its name. The room highlights the '5 Fab Forests' with suggestions of things to look for at these sites. The well-illustrated 'Great Days Out in Tay Forest Park' suggests things to see and do. The room is very tactile and includes various trees with their bark to encourage visitors to touch and feel. They are presented as if the bark has been peeled back to reveal the inside of the trees. Their leaves are painted on the floor so that all the elements that identify the trees are there. Uses of the trees are carved into the tree. It is very attractive and really does make you want to touch the trees.

Interpretation inside the café forms part of the background in the café. It comprises a message that runs along a wall – though perhaps a little long to be taken in at one glance – with large cups giving information and a cut-out silhouette of Queen Victoria pointing the way to the toilets!



Photo courtesy Leicester City Council.

The last area visitors reach at the King Richard III Visitor Centre is the grave site.

COMMENDED KING RICHARD III VISITOR CENTRE



WHAT THE ENTRANT SAID:

'In 2012 Leicester University Archaeologists excavated Richard III's remains under a council carpark built over the friary where he was buried after the Battle of Bosworth in 1485. The centre, in an adjacent Victorian school, presents his life, death and rediscovery. A new extension leads to the gravesite.'

Leicester City Council.
4A St. Martins, Leicester LE1 5DB.

The King Richard III visitor centre demonstrates very well thought through interpretive planning and visitor design. The centre is based on a clear set of aims and themes/stories delivered through a range of media. The judging panel identified the visitor surveys and consultation as a strength of the planning work, which perhaps would have benefitted from a more defined set of audiences with evidence for identifying audience motivation and choosing media to meet those needs. The panel also welcomed the use of visitor evaluation and its use to make certain changes to the use of media.

COMMENDED

THE GUILDHALL, DERRY/ LONDONDERRY



WHAT THE ENTRANT SAID:

'Quality interpretation telling the Guildhall story and the wider cultural, social and political history of Derry. Scope included providing a functional tourist welcome and orientation for visitors to the city, and developing a key experience through the provision of a variety of techniques including object displays, touchscreens, dress-up and interactives.'

Derry City Council and Tandem Partners.
Guildhall Street, Derry, Londonderry BT48 6DQ.

The Guildhall, Derry/Londonderry deals with a challenging and potentially controversial set of subjects. The project benefits from sound interpretive planning with a well-developed set of themes and stories and messages as well as a mix of media. The development of aims and objectives were based on creative client consultation, though perhaps the number of aims could have been narrowed to provide more focus for the project. Core audiences could have been more tightly and clearly defined with greater identification of their interests and motivations.



Tandem/Reyn Moore

At the Guildhall, Derry/Londonderry, large typography directs visitors to key topics while the panels do not obscure the internal architectural features.



Canal &
River Trust

Sponsored by the Canal and River Trust

COMMUNITY PROJECTS

This category recognises the work of volunteer-based community organisations or groups in heritage interpretation. Eligible projects had to be led or co-produced by a community group, whether they produced the whole project independently or in partnership with organisations such as contractors, museums, local authorities or charities.



Chris and Donna Beech with the Nine Men, Nine Lives, One Great War exhibition displayed in their shop window in Walkley.

Omar Ramsden

WINNER

NINE MEN, NINE LIVES, ONE GREAT WAR



WHAT THE ENTRANT SAID:

'The community-led research and interpretation of First World War soldiers commemorated in project-restored windows at Walkley Community Centre, Sheffield. Called 'Nine Men, Nine Lives, One Great War', interpretation comprised an exhibition, talks, open days, storytelling, YouTube and webpages. This was conducted as a part of the wider community heritage Walkley Ways, Walkley Wars project.'

Walkley Community Centre and inHeritage.
Walkley Community Centre, 7a Fir St, Sheffield, S6 3TG.



Simon Bull

The community in Walkley has taken an unprepossessing and neglected architectural feature, the memorial window in the Reform Club (now the Walkley Community Centre), and turned it into a focal point for researching and interpreting the First World War, bringing alive the stories of nine local men.

A memorial window created in 1918 comprising nine painted glass roundels commemorating nine young men of Walkley, has been restored and once again takes pride of place in the community centre, in its original setting. Members of the community have fully researched the lives of the men, their backgrounds and families, locating their homes and jobs in Walkley, creating a picture of this Sheffield community before the war.

Relatives of the nine men lay gypsophila, representing peace, fragility of life and the huge numbers of First World War casualties, during the rededication service for the memorial windows at Walkley Community Centre.



Relatives of one soldier meet for the first time during the rededication service for the memorial windows at Walkley Community Centre.

Simon Bull

Through storytelling events, talks, local shop displays, a website and a simple permanent display next to the restored window, the First World War has been given relevance, meaning and immediacy to the residents of Walkley. The programme of activity has brought members of the community together to investigate local histories and generated new friendships and a continuing enthusiasm to develop an extensive online archive and programme of activity.

WHAT THE WINNER SAID:

'Walkley Historians step forward, Walkley Community Centre three cheers, the lads remembered in the windows – our inspiration. Thank you all.'

Rick Allen, Chair, Walkley Community Centre

RUNNER-UP

STORI ABERAERON STORY

WHAT THE ENTRANT SAID:

'The Stori Aberaeron Story project is designed to raise awareness of Aberaeron's heritage in the town, making it more visible and accessible to residents and visitors alike. We've made a film and a game, built mosaics, printed some of our photograph collection, and made our extensive local history archives accessible to all.'

Cymdeithas Aberaeron Society.

c/o Gwynfryn, Lampeter Road, Aberaeron, SA46 0ED.

Stori Aberaeron Story has successfully engaged a wide range of groups and individuals within the local community and has added some beautiful items that celebrate its heritage and enhance the townscape.

We are particularly impressed with the design and workmanship of the hand-painted heritage bench, which is an attractive addition to the Tourist Information Centre (TIC). The film is well produced, nicely scripted and the celebrity endorsement by Huw Edwards is an instant attention grabber. The visitor book has many favourable comments about the film.

The simple painted house game was beautifully made, very attractive and emphasised the unusual architecture of the town. We would have liked to see it reveal why the town looked the way it does and a clearer link to the town plan.

The beautiful mosaics are an excellent choice of media and involved a wide cross-section of the community in their creation, successfully achieving many of the project objectives. They reflect a sense of pride in the community and its heritage. Better orientation and waymarking would give us the confidence to find the riverside mosaics from the TIC. The booklet is a nice memento of the project for those involved, or for those wishing to find out more about the town's history. We like the flexibility to update the display cabinet in the Town Hall, which is frequently used by the community. We would



Archive photos of Aberaeron show the working past of the town.

have liked to have seen a stronger overarching theme to link the various elements of the project together, which would have created a more coherent whole.

In summary, Stori Aberaeron Story has successfully engaged the local community and has raised awareness of the heritage of the town. It has upskilled people in collecting and archiving local history and has made some excellent media choices for engaging community members.



RUNNER-UP

TIDESWELL HISTORY BOX

WHAT THE ENTRANT SAID:

'The restoration and conversion of a disused telephone kiosk into the Tideswell History Box. BT took the phone out of the box, Tideswell Parish Council adopted it for £1 and gave it to us. Tideswell Living History Group have repainted it, installed a telephone audio player of memories and photo displays.'

Tideswell Living History Group.

The telephone box, Fountain Square, Tideswell, Derbyshire.

The community of Tideswell have come up with the brilliant concept of using an unused traditional red telephone box as a very attractive 'History Box'. Lots of residents have been involved in the development of the project, and from its pristine condition, it is evidently a valued asset to the village.

The old telephone box was a great focus for this community project. The oral histories and picture research continue to be developed, providing changing content for the box, and much of the material is presented in a blog tideswelltales.wordpress.com. This is the main route for visitors wishing to find out more about the history of the village and the wider 'Tideswell Tales' project. We would like to see the hard work strengthened by greater promotion of the box and integration with the existing village trail graphics and leaflet.

This is a good example for other community groups to learn from and adapt their traditional phone box (if still extant) to their own situation. Continuing clear focus and communication of content themes and topics will maintain the interest of both locals and repeat visitors to the village.

Tideswell History Box has rescued a disused red telephone kiosk in the heart of this Peak District village.

John Sawyerd



AHI
AWARDS 2015

RUNNER UP

COLOUR
HEROES

Sponsored by Colour Heroes

INTERPRETATION FOR A TARGET AUDIENCE

This category included interpretive projects for specific audiences that were otherwise not catered for. This may have been projects created specifically for existing audiences identified as not being effectively communicated to or to actively reach out to new audiences.

WINNER

THE ROMAN MEDICINE ROADSHOW



WHAT THE ENTRANT SAID:

'The Roman Medicine Roadshow explores medicine and health in the Roman world, exploring the historical impact of medical science, considering ideas and attitudes towards health, medicine and the human body in Roman society. The project was designed to engage specifically with an audience of young people from socio-economically deprived areas.'

Wellcome Trust and Big Heritage.
Various venues.

The Roman Medicine Roadshow is a brave project that is innovative, fun and thought-provoking. Forgive the cliché, but it succeeds in bringing science, medicine and archaeology to life. Through school workshops, public events in non-heritage venues, public lectures and web films, the project delivered a greater awareness of the history of medicine in Britain to participants who got to meet 'real' working scientists and archaeologists.

The principle aim of the Roman Medicine Roadshow was to deliver workshops to 14,000 school-aged children, run six large-scale public events, twelve public lectures and create a series of short web films. The project's objectives included raising a greater awareness of the history of medicine in Britain; increasing

interest in both history and science-related study in schools, enabling teachers to use medical science as a means of teaching wider aspects of the curriculum. Objectives included decreasing social exclusion in socio-economically deprived communities through cultural activities; creating stronger relationships between schools in socio-economically deprived communities and local museum services in the North West, enabling participants to meet 'real' working scientists and archaeologists; and highlighting male and female scientists and archaeologists as role models for students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Roman surgeons used sophisticated tools to trepan people's skulls. Trepanation was a surgical treatment for head injuries and other illnesses requiring the boring of a hole through the skull.





A Roman surgeon operates on a gladiator.

What sets this project apart is its aim to tackle poverty in an area of multiple deprivation. It tries to prevent poverty by raising education attainment in 15–16 year olds, by deliberately targeting its school workshops in this area. It also mitigates the impact of poverty by improving accessibility to heritage experiences. The live shows are delivered in shopping centres, train stations and high streets to draw in people who are statistically less likely to attend museums. We love the idea of 'taking the museum to the people.'

The roadshow promotional materials were well designed. References to contemporary TV programmes such as *'1st century embarrassing bodies'* relates well to the intended audience, and the graphic and gory imagery prepares visitors for the 'live' surgery demonstrations. The roadshows are immersive and sensory experiences. Participants are entertained with gladiatorial flights, 'live' (mock) amputations,

WHAT THE WINNER SAID:

'Thanks for your amazing award and kind words about our work. An award of this nature means a huge amount to a small company like ours. We're delighted.'

Dean Paton, Big Heritage

opportunities to smell gangrene and to try surgical techniques with Roman equipment. The participation rates are high, the activities engaging and the experiences memorable and humorous.

The workshop in Chesterfield schools on medicine and magic is an example of how the school-based sessions are deliberately provocative and result in very interesting debates between the students and the facilitator. The teachers report that they were surprised to see some of the more challenging students immersed in the workshop and concentrating for such a long time. Other

feedback suggests that the project has created a successful formula for getting disengaged pupils, particularly boys, excited about history, science and archaeology. This clearly demonstrates that the project successfully meets its demanding objectives.

RUNNER-UP WITH A JUDGES' SPECIAL MENTION IONA II DIVE TRAIL

WHAT THE ENTRANT SAID:

'The Iona II Dive Trail was created to improve diver engagement with protected wrecks. A range of stakeholders were consulted to create an integrated wreck interpretation system that not only delivered an enhanced diver experience but also enabled a self-sustaining monitoring scheme to ensure the longevity of the significant wreck.'

Historic England and Wessex Archaeology.
East coast of Lundy Island, Bristol Channel.

The *Iona II* Dive Trail is innovative interpretation of a shipwreck located in deep waters off the coast of Lundy Island. The target audience comprises the dive groups and chartered dive boats that visit the wreck. This is a highly specialised target audience of fairly advanced divers.

The project aimed to create a dive trail that provided multi-layered interpretation and encouraged responsible, and licensed, access to the protected wreck *Iona II*, enabling divers to fully enjoy their visits whilst facilitating the feedback of knowledge to Historic England. One of the key objectives was to create the dive trail using the expertise of Wessex Archaeology along with the experience and wishes of the diving community and other groups with an interest in the protected wreck *Iona II* and the surrounding Marine Conservation Zone. A wide range of stakeholders was consulted at all stages of the project, to ensure that all ideas and opinions were incorporated into the dive trail within the framework and requirements of the key stakeholders – Historic England, Landmark Trust and the Lundy Warden. A significant aim of the dive trail was to encourage repeat dives on the wreck and this was achieved through four themed underwater guides. This flowed into another objective: to design a mechanism by which divers could report changes to the site between their repeat visits with minimal administrative requirements from Historic England or the Lundy Warden.

This was achieved by designing a user-friendly interactive photographic wreck monitoring system.

The project has four clear themes: the wreck overall (orientation); history and shipbuilding; marine life; and wreck investigations and monitoring. For each of the themes there is an information booklet to be read on the dive boat while approaching the site, a smaller, waterproof underwater guide for use during a dive and corresponding interactive web pages. The interpretation materials for the monitoring theme are designed to allow divers to actively participate in monitoring the wreck. This guide identifies locations for photographs, indicates the direction to take the photo, and instructions for how to upload the photos to Flickr and compare with earlier photos from the same spot.

The interpretive materials are based on good user-focused design, with concise and targeted consultation and testing on users throughout

'We were delighted to accept the runners-up award, and especially pleased to receive a special mention from the judges, particularly considering the quality of the other projects in the Interpretation for a Target Audience category. This AHI Award is recognition for the fruitful partnership between the diving community, Historic England and Wessex Archaeology which led to such a successful outcome and which shows promise for future dive trails'

Peta Knott, Marine Archaeologist



Diver and crab at Iona II sternpost.

the design phase. The project delivered against its core objectives in a very focused manner, while the design of clearly set out dive guides has created materials that are appropriate for the environment in which they are used – low light/visibility/requirement for torch lighting from time to time.

With its clear focus on target audience, user testing and documenting of user preferences and lessons learned reported to Historic England, the project is a model for the future. It provides a method statement for future interpretation projects on historic wrecks.

RUNNER-UP

LIGHT FEVER

PAINTING THE FORT WITH LIGHT

WHAT THE ENTRANT SAID:

'Teenagers from Portsmouth Autism Support Network worked with filmmakers Butterfly Fx and sound artist Ben Claybon to explore Fort Nelson through the media of light graffiti and recorded sound. They then curated a public exhibition, made presentations and an online video was created.'

Royal Armouries Fort Nelson and Artswork.

Royal Armouries Fort Nelson, Portsdown Hill Rd, Fareham, Hampshire PO17 6AN.

Light Fever was developed by the Royal Armouries and Artswork to enable an in-depth exploration and interpretation of both the fort buildings and its collections by a targeted group of teenagers. The project was grounded on a clear set of participant development and interpretive aims and objectives for both the teenage participants from Portsmouth Autism Support Network and the target teenage audience for the resulting exhibition. The aim of communicating to this audience was identified by the Royal Armouries as part of a need to widen their audiences by 'going beyond traditional military history'.

The technique of 'light graffiti' to interpret spaces around Fort Nelson and objects from the collection is an imaginative one which resulted in striking photographs. The photographs were also used in a film with a powerful soundtrack of related noises, words and poetry, which brought the site and objects to life very effectively. This is very different to any other approach at the site.

Teenagers developed the exhibition and this shone through in some of the images selected. For example, hostile characters called *Creepers* from the popular Minecraft game were placed in a tunnel. This was picked up approvingly by several of the visitor comments. The participants were presumably guided to mount the exhibition using a very traditional approach i.e. photographs mounted on white structures with the film at one end of the room.



A teenage participant in *Light Fever* practices making light sculptures using LED lights in Fort Nelson.

The ambition and imagination of the media used could have been enhanced if they had been displayed next to the spaces and objects that inspired them.

Light Fever raises interesting questions about the difference – if any – between a community engagement/educational project (where the participants are the audience) and an interpretive project.

Light Fever – Painting the Fort with Light is an imaginative project bringing sound, colour and kinaesthetics to the site, clearly connecting with the participants and some of the exhibition audience. The participative element of the project truly connected with its target audience.



COMMENDED

OUR FIRST WORLD WAR GUARDIANS

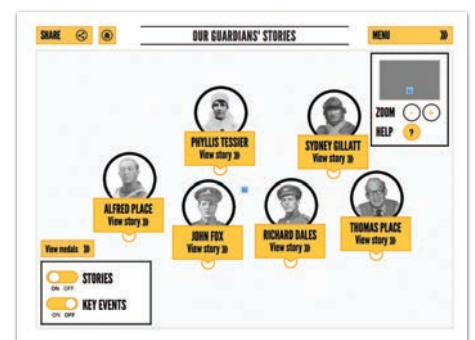
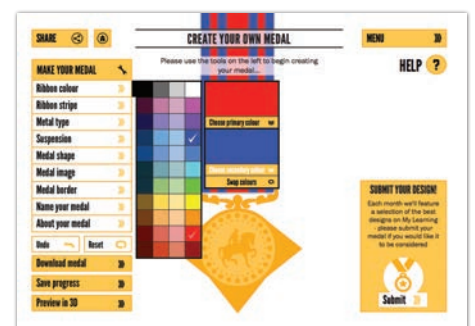
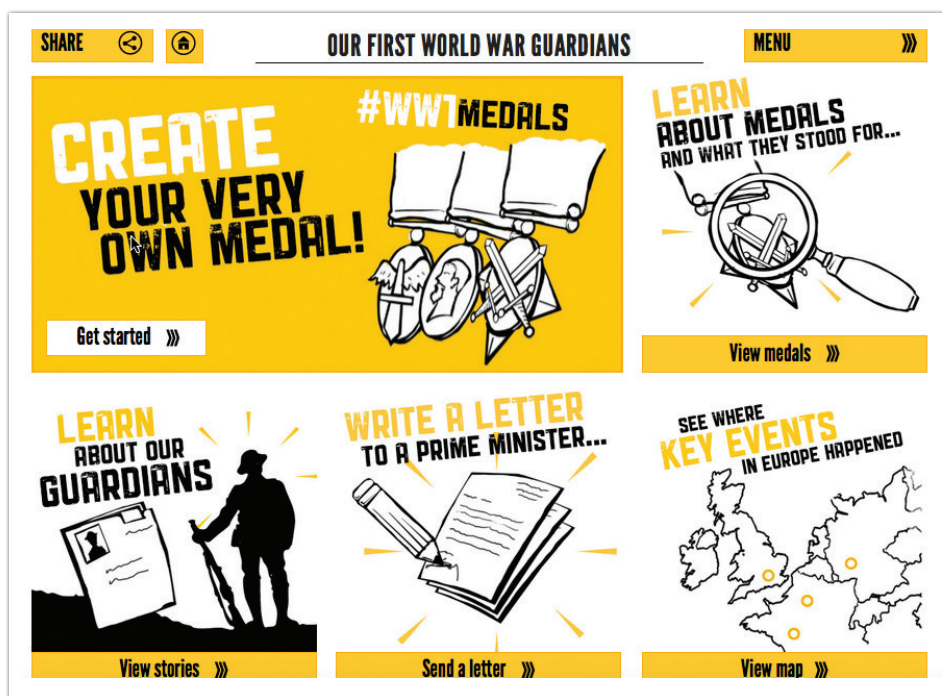


WHAT THE ENTRANT SAID:

'The Our First World War Guardians online interactive engages learners of all ages with the significance of medals through the stories of real people. It combines the latest 3-D technology with expert information, and makes the numismatics collections at Leeds Museums accessible to new, global audiences.'

Leeds Museums and Galleries/My Learning.

Leeds Museum Discovery Centre, Carlisle Road, Leeds LS10 1LB.



The panel were impressed by the clearly thought out aims of this project: the research that went into the design and content will open up a great collection to a much wider audience. A simple concept, clearly presented, brings to life the stories behind First World War medals. It allows web visitors to design their

own medal which they submit to the museum. The project could benefit from a little more interpretative planning, such as the formation of aims, themes and outcomes, though excellent formative evaluation with teachers was evident.

Screenshots from home page and other pages of the Our First World War Guardians.

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LANDSCAPES, FORESTS, NATURE RESERVES, PARKS AND GARDENS

This category celebrates the interpretation of cultural and/or natural heritage of the wider outdoors, from a small garden to the broad landscape.

WINNER

WALKING WITH ROMANS



WHAT THE ENTRANT SAID:

'Walking with Romans sets out to encourage visitation and improve the visitor experience at two remote Scheduled Ancient Monuments in the Brecon Beacons National Park: the Roman Marching Camps at Y Pigwn and Waun Ddu Fortlet. It is part of the Romans in Carmarthenshire project and the Welsh Government Heritage Tourism Project.'

**Brecon Beacons National Park Authority and Living Data Labs.
Near Trecastle, Llandovery, Carmarthenshire.**



Screenshots show how the Walking with Romans app appears on a mobile smartphone screen.

Walking with Romans sets out to encourage more visits and to improve the visitor experience at Y Pigwn Roman Marching Camps and Waun Ddu Roman Fortlet in the Brecon Beacons National Park. These are two remote archaeological scheduled monuments where traditional interpretation panels would have a negative impact on the landscape and could not be installed on the monuments without damaging the earthworks.

The project identifies clear objectives that are evident in the finished project. The combination of a traditional interpretation board, mobile app and web page works well for such a remote location. The web page provides virtual access for those not able to visit the location, as well as providing information on downloading and

using the app. The app was easy to navigate, visualisation was good and it provided flexible use of the different features, which included pre-visit information, GPS, images, video, commentary, interactivity, links to other related locations and opportunities for feedback and evaluation. A variety of appropriate experts had been consulted in the development of the app and this led to authentic and memorable interpretation.

The themes and messages interpreted are clearly defined and presented thoughtfully, in an engaging way with appropriately selected media. The key messages around the Marching Camps, Fortlet and Roman army were introduced and reinforced throughout the walk. Important features, such as Clavícula, were



The Roman Marching Camp at Y Pigw: an animation screenshot.

highlighted using the GPS feature and further interpreted through the commentary and visuals included in the app. We were particularly impressed with the virtual tours of the larger Marching Camp and Fortlet, which really brought the sites to life. Although varying weather conditions could affect how easy it is to use the app, it has flexibility built in which makes it as usable as is reasonably possible and its additional features make it interesting to use before, during and after a visit.

The project identifies target audiences of active adults and families which it successfully engages. The walk length is suitable for families but could easily be extended by adults. The interpretation board clearly shows different options for extending the walk route. The app provides small chunks of information that use non-specialist language and is structured flexibly so you don't have to stand around

if the weather is poor. In addition, the commentary, which is a dialogue between Rory (modern day) and Primus (Roman soldier), puts across the themes and storylines of a Marching Camp, Fortlet and the disciplined Roman army very effectively to both children and adults. We even found ourselves laughing out loud on several occasions; it was certainly very engaging!

WHAT THE WINNER SAID:

'We are enormously proud to have our project acknowledged with an AHI Award – the kite mark of best practice. Remote landscape can be very challenging to interpret and we are pleased to have demonstrated that with good content apps can deliver effective visitor experiences.'

Suzanna Jones, Interpretation Officer, Brecon Beacons National Park Authority

The project has been well field-tested, and has undergone formative and some summative evaluation. Measures taken following this, such as shortening audio clips, helped to improve the visitor experience. It is also clear that the project is achieving its goal of increasing accessibility/visits and improving the visitor experience.

RUNNER-UP

BLAENAVON IRONWORKS – A LANDSCAPE RE-IMAGINED

WHAT THE ENTRANT SAID:

'Blaenavon Ironworks is an iconic industrial site at the heart of the World Heritage Site. The project aimed to make the ironworks 'real' and 'alive' by recapturing its original atmosphere; creating the feeling of a working site in all its hot, dirty, noisy and glorious hellishness.'

Cadw and Bright 3d.
North Street Blaenavon NP4 9RN.



The entrance to the steel model of Blaenavon Ironworks, which depicts key industrial processes in words and images.

At Blaenavon Ironworks, the recently installed interpretation aims to bring the site to life in its noisy, fiery, dirty and sweaty heyday; provide a sensory and artistic experience appealing to a diverse audience; tell the stories of people who lived and worked in a harsh environment; and communicate the worldwide industrial significance of the site. This was a very ambitious set of aims, particularly in trying to recreate the essence of what the site was like in its prime. This worked best when communicating the industrial significance of the place.

The project is based on two themes: this is how the world once bowed at the feet of Wales' industrial giants and, that today Blaenavon Ironworks still stands tall on the shoulders of past inventors, industrialists and generations of the working classes. Both are linked as reminders of those who helped Wales take itself to the centre of the international industrial stage.

A series of seven sub-themes covers the following. Blaenavon Ironworks is a physical representation of the story of Wales' role in the Industrial Revolution. Industrial sites like Blaenavon were a 'vision of Hell' with a sensory onslaught of heat, noise, light, blood, sweat and tears mixed together in the name of profit and ambition. This site was cutting edge and represents a number of firsts in industrial development. Large-scale industry brought with it a new way of living and working, as the great furnaces and tiny cottages of the ironworks illustrate. The development of the ironworks is linked to the human desire for betterment. The architectural details at Blaenavon Ironworks are a reminder of the aesthetic current of the time, when form was almost as important as function. The site is relevance to people's lives today as its story includes current issues such as migration, fluctuating economies and social change.

Where the interpretation is particularly successful is in communicating the messages about the importance of Wales and Blaenavon during the Industrial Revolution and the revolutionary industrial firsts made at the ironworks. The evocation of the sensory experience of working at the site during its heyday, along with communicating the architectural aesthetic and modern issues around migration are particularly successful.

Interpretation is based around an audio-visual sound and light display of the iron casting shed using projections direct on to stone walls to explain the iron-making process that made Blaenavon famous. The commentary is interwoven in Welsh and English. It aims to be an immersive experience that could be taken further to cast the visitor further into experiencing the noisy, smelly and dangerous past of Blaenavon. Sculptures/artworks are attractive and appropriate interpretive interventions. Four cottages on site have been re-dressed with authentic furniture and fittings to depict workers' cottages through the 20th century. The exhibition area includes interpretive panels introducing key characters and the discovery of the processes used at Blaenavon, projected emotive images of the ironworks, an interactive model explaining the individual elements of the site, and original artefacts showing the production process.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Association for Heritage Interpretation would like to thank all members of the judging panel, site judges and awards sub-group who have volunteered their time and skills. It is thanks to their commitment and professionalism that the 2015 awards have been such a success.

JUDGING PANEL

Bill Bevan (Chair), Ruth Coulthard (Vice-Chair, Wales), Jennifer McCrea (Ireland), James Pardoe (England) and Kev Theaker (Scotland).

SITE JUDGES

Carl Atkinson, Helen Evans, Alison Herman, Helen Howells, Suzanna Jones, Sue Latimer, Maureen La Frenais, Jackie Lee, Rory McCarthy, Julie McNeice, Mark Mniszko, Ruth Taylor, Amy Wedderburn and Matthew Wood.

Awards Sub-Group of the AHI Committee
Bill Bevan (Chair), Philip Rylands, Jo Scott (Site Judge Co-ordinator) and Ruth Taylor.

JUDGE TRAINERS

James Carter and Susan Cross.

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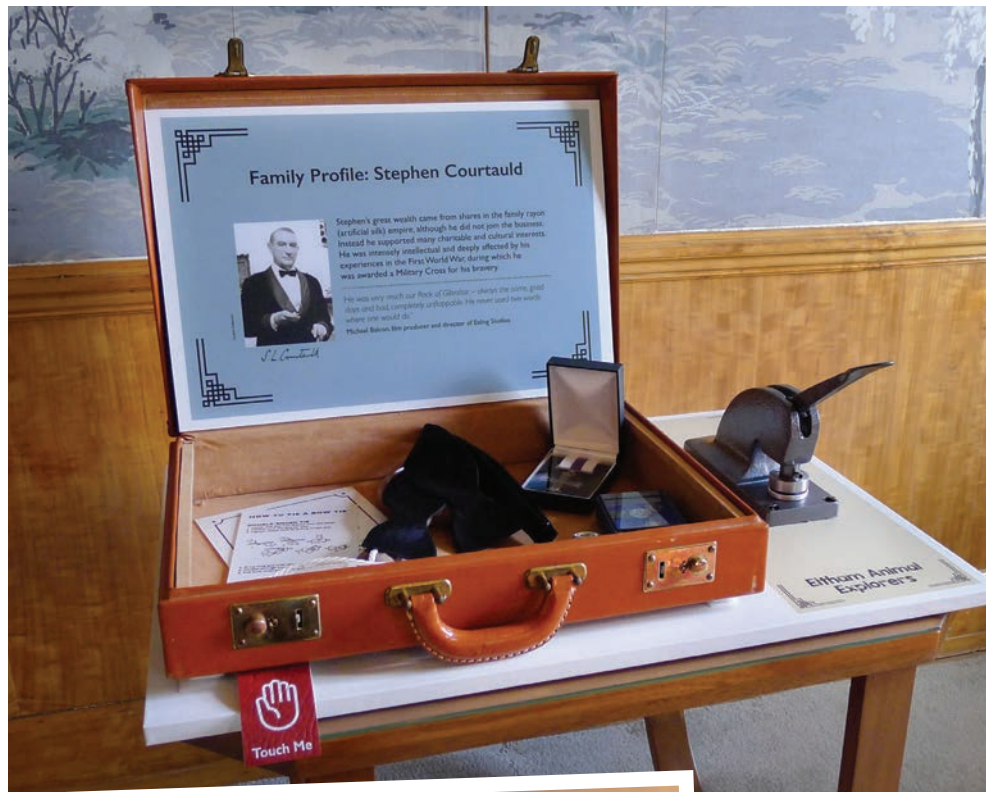
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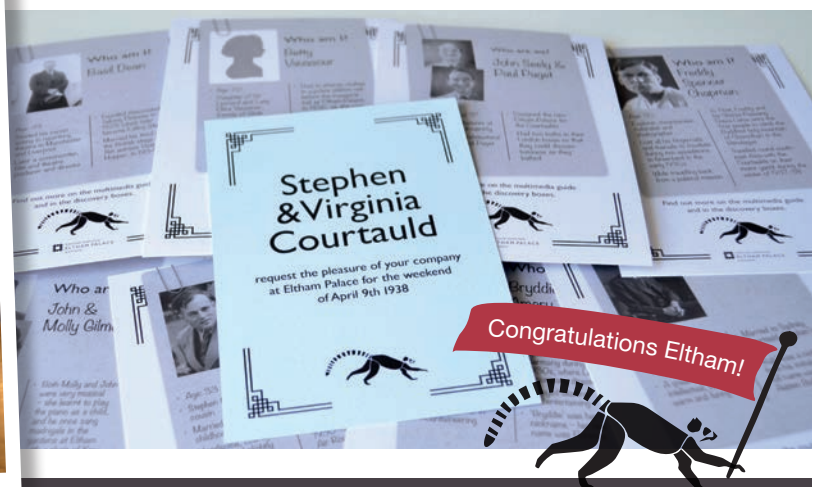
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