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Sacred Places

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text **Brian Bath**

Editorial

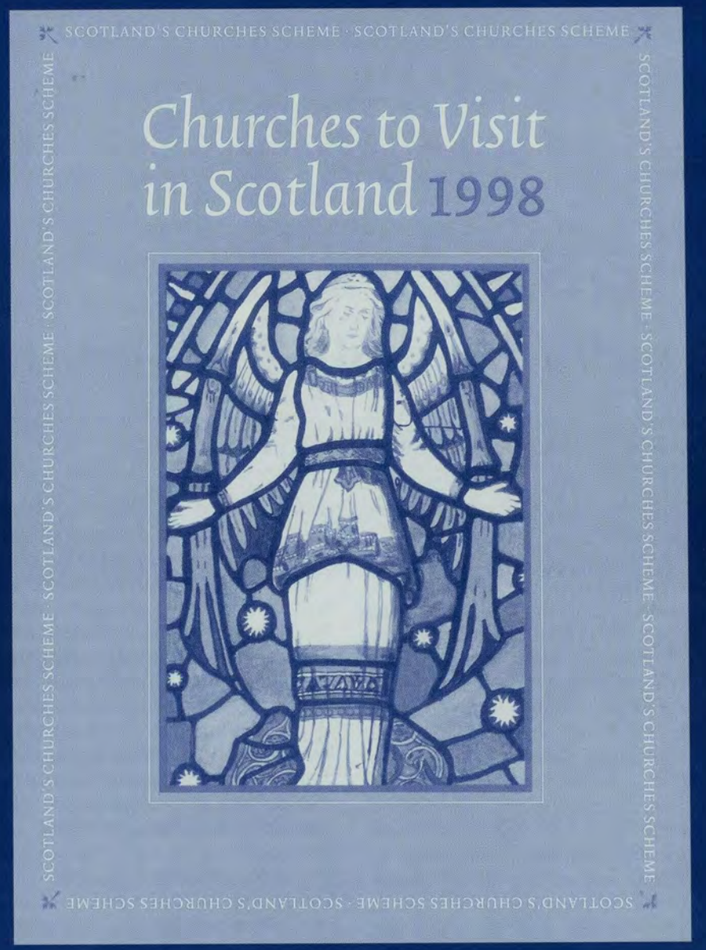
In November 1998 a conference entitled 'Sacred Sites: the Interpretation of Faiths and Religious Places' took place at St Mary's University College Strawberry Hill, organised by the Heritage Interpretation Centre of St Mary's and the then Society for the Interpretation of Britain's Heritage. This edition takes from that conference its theme, and much of its content.

The central question that arose was how people identify places that are sacred according to different cultural and traditional attitudes. In the article 'Tourist or Pilgrim?' Dr Robin Gibbons, Senior Lecturer in Theology at St Mary's, has examined the potential conflicts that this can lead to when a sacred place is a practising site of worship as well as a tourist destination, and takes the example of Salisbury Cathedral as a case in point. Such conflicts reach greater dimensions when the different points of view include extremely different cultural and traditional viewpoints. In 'Sacred Performances' Dr Susan Pfisterer, who lectures in Australian History and Literature at the Menzies Centre for Australian Studies, University of London, looks at the Australian example of reconciling the sacred when Aboriginal land rights issues are involved. Interestingly, she has linked the political implications of the significance of place to its sacred identity and the practical issues that ensue.

Margi Bryant, Interpretation Officer for the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park, develops the theme by describing how 'The Spiritual Heart of Wales' is to be interpreted through a new visitor centre at St Davids. Telling the story of the area, the article examines the many layers of sacred and traditional site that exist there. Visitor centres are looked at in a very different way in 'Worlds Apart', by Binoy Karia. Binoy tells the fascinating story of the development of the Swaminarayan Hindu Temple in Neasden, a living testament to the creation of contemporary sacred sites, and describes how the Mission has used modern interpretive techniques in Akshardham, a theme park dedicated to the Lord Swaminaryan in Gujarat, Northern India. Adaptive and imaginative re-use of religious buildings will create a new tourist attraction and educational resource in Gorton, East Manchester, at the 'Spirit of Life' cultural centre. Kathryn Sather describes the conservation of the Franciscan church and friary of St Francis.

Finally, my own contribution looks at some of the stories told in sacred sites themselves, and shows how for centuries the architects and planners of spiritual sites around the world have drawn on similar interpretive techniques. A comparison is made between the building of a traditional Hindu temple and a Gothic cathedral, showing how common architectural and interpretive approaches were used to inspire the worshipper. The continuity of this approach is demonstrated in such contemporary sacred sites as the Church of the Water by Tadao Ando, where the architect has captured that elusive sense of the numinous. •

Brian Bath
Project Director
The Visual Connection



Scotland's Churches Scheme began only four years ago but is developing rapidly and has over 400 Churches across the country, and across the denominations, in membership. It is an ecumenical Charitable Trust, formed to encourage churches to:

- work together with others to make the church the focus of the community
- open their doors with a welcoming presence
- tell the story of the building (however old or new), its purpose and the faith which inspired it
- provide information and care for visitors.

A major task for the scheme is the publication of CHURCHES TO VISIT IN SCOTLAND. This annual guidebook has a colour fold out map and gives visitors information about churches of all denominations, with details of historical and architectural interest, opening and service times, and information on special events. It is available from major bookshops, Tourist Information Centres or by mail order from Scotland's Churches Scheme (current price £4.50 inc. p&p).

A network of local representatives is being developed and advice is available on all aspects of visitor welcome, publicity, exhibitions, presentations and interpretation. It is hoped to expand this service and establish local contacts in all districts. The Scheme would be delighted to hear of any enthusiasts who would like to join this area of their activities.

If you would like further information or wish to discuss enrolment in the Scheme, please contact the Director:

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text **Binoy Karia**

Worlds Apart?

A traditional Indian temple in London, hi-tech interpretation in India

One of the fastest growing socio-religious movements in the world, the Bochasanwasi Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha, the mother organisation of The Swaminarayan Hindu Mission in London, has a tremendous building programme which includes London's now famous Mandir in Neasden, and Akshardham, a major spiritual monument and theme park in Gujarat, India.

Lord Swaminarayan was born in 1781 in the tiny village of Chhapaiya in Northern India. A child prodigy, he was an extraordinary scholar, having mastered Sanskrit, the Vedas and other scriptures by the age of 10. At the age of 11, he traversed the length and breadth of India by foot for 7 years. He began his mission and introduced innovative social reforms. He undertook charitable work to help the poor and needy, none more so than during times of famine and crisis. Lord Swaminarayan uplifted those from less privileged castes and educated the masses. In his own life time he came to be worshipped as God incarnate by more than 2 million people. Through the line of spiritual succession, Lord Swaminarayan's work lives on through His Divine Holiness Param Pujya Pramukh Swami Maharaj, who personally inspired and oversaw the entire project to build the Mandir in London.

• Building on Tradition

Sunday 23rd August 1995 saw the final completion of the western world's first traditional Hindu stone temple. Building the Mandir was the fulfillment of a dream, and it's completion a miraculous feat. The project took only 2 _ years to complete, and involved the erection of 26,300 stones individually carved in India. 1500 craftsmen were involved alongside 1000s of volunteers. The sacred architecture of India and Hindu culture had after millennia of growth and nurture finally broken the confines of the Indian subcontinent. It is the first traditional Mandir to be constructed in Europe: conceived, carved and completed according to the ancient Hindu Shilpashastras - the sacred texts of architecture. It has already become a place of pilgrimage for Hindus of all denominations throughout Europe, a vibrant source of living Hindu culture in its full trident form - worship, social service and preserving tradition.

• Solid Stone

A traditional Mandir is made entirely of stone with no steel used. The oldest Hindu temples of c. 6000BCE were constructed from solid rock, carved from the mountains. Mandirs at Ellora and Kailasknathan are such examples. In later years, Mandirs became freestanding, although retaining their mountainous diversions and intricate artwork.

Mandirs are frequently built from marble and pink sandstone; but due to the harshness of the British climate, and its unpredictability, it was ultimately decided that Bulgarian limestone provided the appropriate balance between natural beauty, durability and its ability to be carved in minute detail. The interior of the Mandir was another decision, and marble from the Carrera mines in Italy and Indian Ambaji marble provided suitable beauty and workability.

The origin of the stone meant that almost 3000 tonnes needed to be shipped to vast camps on the west coast of Gujarat where 1500 skilled stonemasons worked their trade as their forefathers had in the recent and distant past. Artists of caliber were rare and talented individuals were given every encouragement to develop their skills.

Having been worked, the stone was shipped for assembly in Neasden. During the carving period in India, work continued to clear and prepare the site for the assembly of this enormous 3-dimensional jigsaw of intricately carved stone.

• Worship, Volunteers and the Community

Building a Mandir is the most meaningful and sacred duty that a Hindu is expected to perform. From the search for suitable land to building maintenance it is the task of the worshipper to ensure that

Entrance to the multimedia theatre, Akshardham

the Mandir and the enthroned sacred images lack for nothing.

The Mandir attracted the support of thousands of volunteers; many of whom sacrificed their careers and took a 3 year sabbatical.
Enthusiasm and zeal was also evident in the hundreds of children who were able to contribute and feel part of the building programme, from the collection of 7 million aluminium cans for fund raising, through to the polishing of the stone on site.

The Mandir is not simply a place of worship, it is a place for the family to meet, friendships to form and bonds to forge. For this very reason, the Community Centre plays an integral part in the life of a Hindu. To do this efficiently community areas have been fully equipped with kitchens, conference hall, library and assembly halls where religious discourses are delivered and dances and plays performed. The Swaminarayan Independent School across the road provides rooms for language and culture classes to Britain's largest Hindu Sunday school. .

• Akshardham

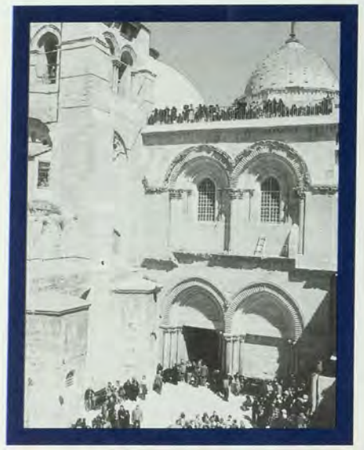
The Swaminarayan fellowship, from its founding in India some 200 years ago, has had an extensive building programme ranging from schools and hospitals to Mandirs and water tanks for poor villages. To mark the Bicentenary Celebrations of Lord Swaminarayan in 1981 it was decided to build a memorial. Built in breathtaking pink sandstone, and set in 23 acres of pristine land in Gandhinagar, Gujarat, Akshardham leaves visitors in awe. Yet Akshardham, a memorial and testimony to Lord Swaminarayan, is not a Mandir. No rituals are allowed and no worship is performed.

Built to withstand the test of time, and to deliver an eternal message, the Akshardham Monument stands 108 feet high. It is surrounded by a red stone circumambulatory which leads to exhibitions and theaters. Akshardham is a journey rather than a visit. It carries the message of a divine earthly existence. Akshardham has adopted the same technology incorporated in such arenas as Disneyworld, Florida. The audio-animatronics presentation simulates an assembly before Lord Swaminarayan in which, after a devotional song and a series of question and answers between the Lord and His devotee, the path to everlasting bliss is shown. The exhibitions of Akshardham offer education, awakening and fun. Walk through dioramas and technological wizardry contain the universal truths depicted in the great Indian Epics, scriptures such as the Upanishads, and the primary messages of all the religions of the world.

Sahajanand Vun is the 15 acre park surrounding Akshardham. Situated amongst scented flower gardens, lakes and lawns, immense sculptures depict Hindu legends. Restaurants and play facilities for children can also be found here. It is a place for contemplation and retreat, immersion and celebration.

Besides Akshardham being an awakening experience, it is also one of research. The Akshardham Centre for Research In Social Harmony is a research institute dedicated to results and practical applications. Its central aim is to preserve Indian Culture and promote social harmony through spiritual values. Its very existence embodies the purity of Lord Swaminarayan's teaching. •

Binoy Karia is a barrister and representative of the Swaminarayan Hindu Mission



The Church of the Resurrection, Jerusalem

text **Rev. Dr Robin PP Gibbons**

Tourist Or Pilgrim?

Religious Site, Tourist Plot: A Theological Appraisal of Church Heritage Sites

• The Cathedral

Approaching Salisbury from the Andover and Stockbridge direction, you come in the final few miles to a view where the city nestles in the valley. The only thing that is continually visible is the cathedral spire. This architectural feature dominates your progress towards the city itself and in the town, it continues to impress in the game of hide and seek between shop and hotel, church and pub. Whatever that spire might represent in architectural terms, it certainly provides a symbolic point of reference, for Salisbury is Cathedral and Spire. Without them, the town would be bereft; the potency of such a building cannot be underestimated. But the cathedral is more than this, it was and is a multi-purpose building. Primarily this is a Christian site with an ecclesiological reality. It is a testimony to faith, the seat (cathedra) of the Bishop, the motherchurch and centre of the local Church (diocese), a place of liturgical and sacramental celebration, daily prayer and worship, a pilgrimage shrine to St Osmund and a centre for hospitality. It has therefore been a pilgrim site and a tourist plot down the centuries. Even the Reformation, though it removed St Osmund, and replaced one style of worship with another, could not stem the visitors. Anyone familiar with Church history will know that there were particular ecclesiastical low points in certain periods, and Salisbury itself underwent vicissitudes in this way. [1] However, these periods passed and today Salisbury Cathedral still gathers in hoards of tourists and pilgrims. The Spire still points to another dimension of life. The building is never quite finished and goes on renewing itself.

• The Cathedral as House of God and the Home of the Church

My first point is a theological comment about the ecclesial nature of our Christian sites. In the past there were always antiquaries, curious tourists and sceptical archaeologists poking around in our churches. But the Church was a given and defining factor in life. The cathedral was primarily a place of worship and church activity. It took its meaning from a theology of Community as living Church. There were secular activities of many different kinds, from dancing to law courts. [2] Legal enactments made sure that the primary ownership by God and God's people was indisputable. We can see this in the problem at Old St Paul's in London:

"One of the features of Paul's Walk to which many objected was its use for the sale of merchandise; but this was not peculiar to that cathedral. Anglican visitation articles again provide evidence of a widespread attempt to stamp out this practise from all ecclesiastical buildings. As early as 1549 in a Draft for Visitation Articles the churchwardens were bidden to suffer no buying or selling in church or churchyards, especially during common prayer." 3

The Pilgrim Window, Holt, Norfolk

If there was a dispute about particular events, the Church usually won. Today we face a different problem. Though the building is still Christian and still used, there are many visitors who come knowing little, if anything, of the life and worship of the cathedral and its diocese. Their main interest is the site, the art, architecture and heritage. For some there is the added bonus of "concert and theatre", the rich liturgical and musical inheritance. This is the Tourist Market, the building as a plot of land with different activities. It provides a ready income, a source of employment and keeps the name of our church heritage sites alive, but at a cost. It is not that tourists are not welcome, they are, but the heritage market forces rest uneasily with the witness of the sites themselves. Salisbury remains a cathedral because of what it does not because of what it is. Take the context of Church and people away and it becomes a museum or a market, devoid of its true life and essence. [4]

• Parish and Pilgrimage Site

The same comments also apply to other examples of ecclesiastical plant. The innumerable local parish churches, the pilgrimage places like St Winefrides Well in Wales, the centres of cult such as Walsingham in Norfolk and the bare ruined places found everywhere. In a sense the ruins are easier, they are quite simply ancient monuments. But even here great care is necessary to help people understand what these buildings were and also to recognise that the witness they gave continues still in other monasteries and convents. Some progress has been made towards this with the many varied and interesting guides now published. Now, what of the local church? The tourist visiting one of our parishes needs a different approach to those visiting a monastic ruin. If you visit the shrine of Walsingham, you may pass the village of Binham. There, amongst the ruins of the Benedictine priory, the ancient nave stands used as the parish church. Inside it is a gem, with one of the best examples of a medieval seven-sacrament font. It is a 'combination church', part ruin, part parish church, and it is still used. The tourist cannot be anything other than a pilgrim here, everything in that church evokes a response. It is of course wonderfully drawn, John Piper had a special affinity for it and the combination of ruin and church pulls all kinds of strands together.

It is also noticeable that this place has been in constant use, less varied than our great pilgrim sites, less grand than our cathedrals, more domestic and homely. It is, to use a theological phrase, the Domus Ecclesia et Dei, the House of the Church and its God. Here there is a validity given to our wanderings, and the interpretation is part of local history, the community chest in which we discover how one generation has followed the next. There are many other examples like this, with Bolton Abbey in Yorkshire, Malmesbury Abbey in Wiltshire and Romsey Abbey in Hampshire perhaps being amongst the finest. And then the parish church as it always has been. That often small, two roomed building, added to and subtracted from, but dear to our psyche and rooted in our culture. These buildings need interpretation too, but of a different order. Often the evidence of life is omni-present and the matching, hatching and dispatching carries on regardless.

• Functions of the Religious Site

The reason these religious buildings affect us is because they have meaning and function. Firstly, they function as witnesses to a message and a value that puts people above price. Secondly, they are buildings that function liturgically and theologically, especially in relation to the Ecclesia, the Church.

"This Holy People, made one as the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are one, is the Church, that is the temple of God built of living stones, where the Father is worshiped in spirit

and in truth. Rightly, then, from early times, "church" has also been the name given to the building in which the Christian community gathers to hear the word of God, to pray together, to receive the sacraments, and to celebrate the eucharist." [5]

Thirdly, they function as places of encounter, religious sites. They have the capacity for leading us to the numinous 'Holy Places', where, as T.S. Eliot put it, "Prayer has been made valid". Fourthly, they function as building or artifact. I would maintain that the heritage industry must begin with this awareness. For tourists the defining role of a cathedral such as Salisbury, or a church site such as Romsey, is the third area, the pilgrim place. It is imperative that the regular round of liturgy and prayer, diocesan gatherings and events, funerals, ordinations and weddings carries on, interweaving with the guides and exhibitions. These are, after all, interpretive tools for the building itself. They are the visual effects which give flesh to the bare bones of the building. The heritage aspect needs these qualifiers, the four functional qualities cannot be isolated from one another. The theological context of the building as place recognises that the internal and external symbols are mediated through the action of the Community. [6] Even the architectural devices, buttress and pinnacle, groin vault and rose window, belong as parts of a whole. The interpretation of that heritage cannot be simply an audio cassette or a video presentation, it must also be an encounter with the numinous. [7]

•Tourist or Pilgrim?

How can we tackle these issues? The numbers of people visiting sites can be a cause for concern and some of our churches are far from hospitable. It is a two-edged sword, for tourists bring money, but they create a disorder by their needs and demands. The rediscovery of the pilgrim image may be the way forward. A tourist suggests someone coming to look and examine, following a patterned tour. A pilgrim may also do this, but with an added dimension, to seek and find a spiritual meaning to their quest. There is often a fine line between the two. Chaucer's Canterbury Tales give us a rich tapestry of the two combinations:

"Wel nyne and twenty in a compaignye, of sondry folk, by aventure yfalle in felaweshipe, and pilgrimes were they alle, that toward Canterbury wolden ryde." [8]

Seven Sacraments Font and Nave, Binham Priory, Norfolk

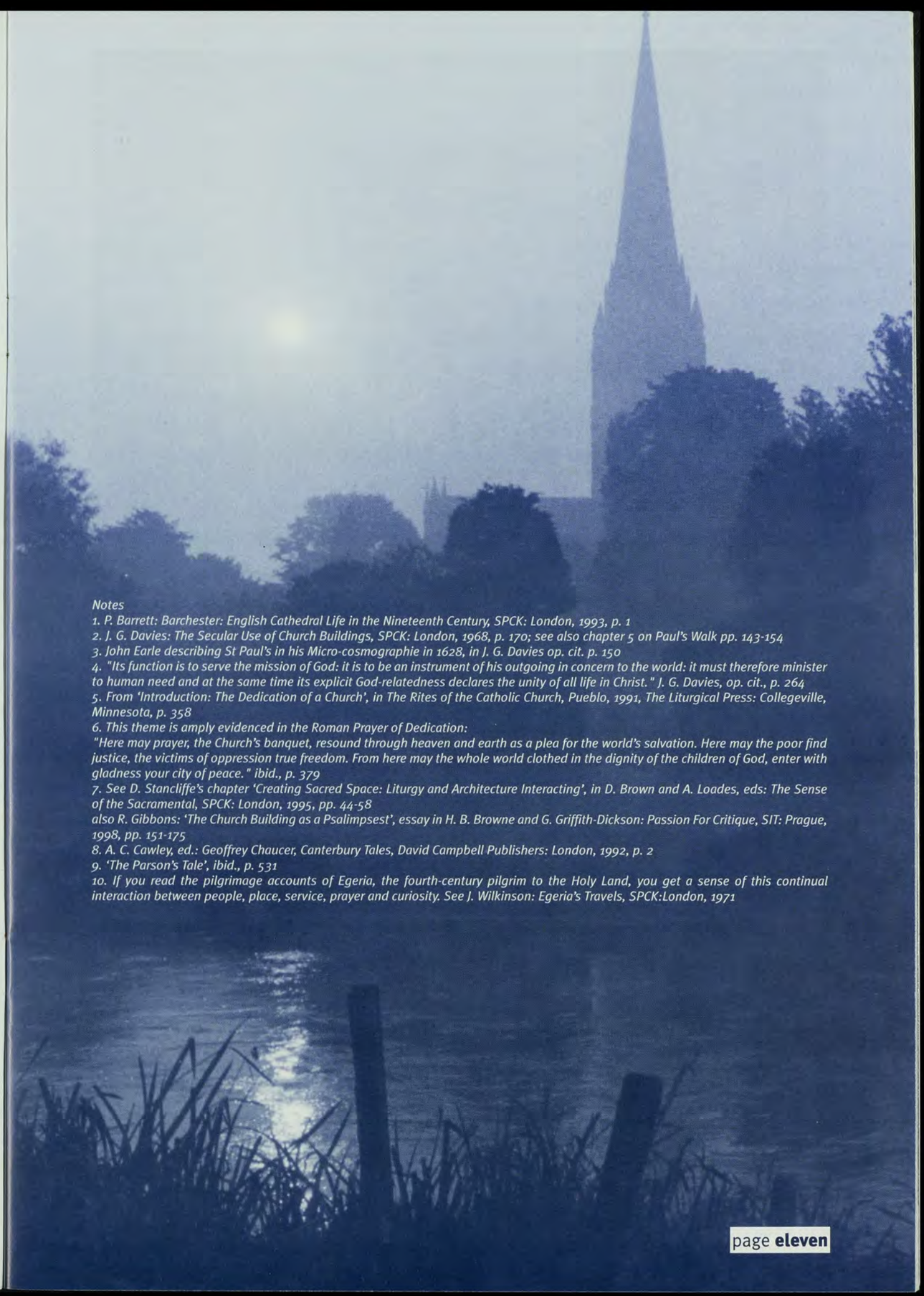
Tourists they may be, ready for the plucking (by unscrupulous people like the Pardoner) and certainly full of bawdy wit (the Miller and the Reeve), with a desire for fun and frolic (the Host and Wife of Bath), but the end of their journey was a spiritual quest and each knows that. As the Parson says:

"I wol yow telle a myrie tale in prose to knitte up al this feeste, and make an ende. And Jhesu, for his grace, wit me sende to shewe yow the wey, in this viage, of thilke parfait glorious pilgrymage that highte jerusalem celestial." [9]

The Canterbury Tales provides a paradigm of preparation. The Tourists become Pilgrims on the journey. Churches have always understood this preparation: the Atrium and Narthex, especially in the great pilgrim churches, allowed the people to experience a progression from the outer world to the inner. This is what we should ask our religious sites to do today.

It is noticeable that places like Canterbury Cathedral have resurrected the image and place of shrine. At the same time they have resurrected the approach through visitor centre and guide. The bones of St Thomas à Becket may not be present (or are they?), but his presence is noticeable. The shrine to the modern martyrs near the Corona gives an added contemporary emphasis to this hallowed place. The image of progressive pattern is being re-discovered, not only through centre, shop, entrance booth and 'narthex' but also through the ancient circulatory routes. In the past a building was, like the town itself, approached in different ways and then experienced as a route, so that it unfolded before each person, allowing people to exit or move onwards at designated points. You could also make a direct move, the worshipper went to the place of worship, be it choir, nave or side chapel, the pilgrims snooped and sloped until they came to their Saint. The visual imagery of paint, glass, wood and stone provided a book whose text would be found in the liturgy and life about them. They had all the trappings of our contemporary heritage sites, but the end of the experience was not so much an unpacking of a place, but the unfolding of a mystery using the building as part of the means to that end. [10] At a church building conference at Sarum College in November 1997, participants discussed the difficulty of catering for both tourist and pilgrim. The half-worked-out consensus was that total separation is impossible. In the end the living building has a mission, and like it or not part of that mission is to give the tourist a flavour and hint of what a pilgrim is. Furthermore, we must acknowledge that our church buildings communicate on the deeper symbolic level, where we shall find ourselves at a familiar place for the first time. •

Rev. Dr Robin P. P. Gibbons is Senior Lecturer in Theology, St Mary's University College, Strawberry Hill, Twickenham. He specialises in Church Art, Architecture and Liturgics



Notes

1. P. Barrett: Barchester: English Cathedral Life in the Nineteenth Century, SPCK: London, 1993, p. 1
2. J. G. Davies: The Secular Use of Church Buildings, SPCK: London, 1968, p. 170; see also chapter 5 on Paul's Walk pp. 143-154
3. John Earle describing St Paul's in his Micro-cosmographie in 1628, in J. G. Davies op. cit. p. 150
4. "Its function is to serve the mission of God: it is to be an instrument of his outgoing in concern to the world: it must therefore minister to human need and at the same time its explicit God-relatedness declares the unity of all life in Christ." J. G. Davies, op. cit., p. 264
5. From 'Introduction: The Dedication of a Church', in The Rites of the Catholic Church, Pueblo, 1991, The Liturgical Press: Collegeville, Minnesota, p. 358
6. This theme is amply evidenced in the Roman Prayer of Dedication:
"Here may prayer, the Church's banquet, resound through heaven and earth as a plea for the world's salvation. Here may the poor find justice, the victims of oppression true freedom. From here may the whole world clothed in the dignity of the children of God, enter with gladness your city of peace." ibid., p. 379
7. See D. Stancliffe's chapter 'Creating Sacred Space: Liturgy and Architecture Interacting', in D. Brown and A. Loades, eds: The Sense of the Sacramental, SPCK: London, 1995, pp. 44-58
also R. Gibbons: 'The Church Building as a Psalimpsest', essay in H. B. Browne and G. Griffith-Dickson: Passion For Critique, SIT: Prague, 1998, pp. 151-175
8. A. C. Cawley, ed.: Geoffrey Chaucer, Canterbury Tales, David Campbell Publishers: London, 1992, p. 2
9. 'The Parson's Tale', ibid., p. 531
10. If you read the pilgrimage accounts of Egeria, the fourth-century pilgrim to the Holy Land, you get a sense of this continual interaction between people, place, service, prayer and curiosity. See J. Wilkinson: Egeria's Travels, SPCK:London, 1971

text **Brian Bath**

Stories in Stone

The Architectural Interpretation of Spirit

Religious architectural forms have developed over centuries to embody a spiritual essence, and in effect to interpret the faith that they represent. Many interpretative principles and techniques are used to help the worshipper perceive that spirituality; in the structure of the building and in the form of the ritual. There are also strong similarities in the use and development of these techniques in different faiths.

• Symbolic Structures

The structure of a Hindu temple developed from symbolic and magical forms. The ground plan is based on the square, a mandala, a graphic symbol of the earth. The base square is subdivided into many further squares, with the central one being the shrine of the major god or gods worshipped at the temple. This shrine is always a cube. It is topped by a spire which points to god. The central vertical axis represents the scaling of Mount Meru, the home of the gods, or the tree of life, or even the celestial man Purusha. Some temples are said to be surrounded by symbolic moats which represent the celestial waters from which all life developed. This basic form is a microcosm of the universe, and the gods within represent different aspects of the natural forces that rule it.

The ancient Hindu sastras, or builders' books, are the written version of an earlier oral Vedic tradition. They describe in minute detail how the plan and elevation are developed, how the shrine to each god should be formed. While there is immense diversity in the way each temple is built, the geomantic rites and rituals, and the methods of developing the plans and elevations remain within the same tradition. Every facet of the basic form is then intricately decorated to create a sense of awe and wonder. The temple is designed to harmonise with the universe and to become a suitable home for the gods housed within. It is literally the house of the gods.

The builders of a Christian Gothic cathedral worked in a very similar way to the Hindu builders. By their use of 'true measure' they invoked the proportions that St Augustine of Hippo had much earlier described as a pathway to the understanding of God. St Augustine believed that use of true measure and proportion, derived from musical harmonies in Pythagorean mysticism, could lead to the creation of forms which echoed the vision of the City of God. Analogy was the backbone of medieval thought, and the analogous use of form in this way brought God that little bit closer to the viewer, it became the means to build the house of God on earth.

These techniques were passed on orally and kept secret until described in writing by Matthew Roriczer, builder of Regensburg Cathedral. He explained how to develop the elevation from the ground plan by means of a single square, and thereby derive all the proportions of the monument. Biblical references were used in many ways, and the Temple of Solomon provided examples of the use of true proportion for the master masons. In Hindu temples the basic measure is taken from the width of the outer wall of the central shrine, a cube, and the spire made to measure twice the height or width of the temple. Not so different.

Early Christian churches, in the form of a cube surmounted by a dome representing heaven, relate closely to the early Buddhist stupas. In those structures the

Aerial view of Borobodur

dome of heaven encloses a relic of the Buddha, and is placed above a square ground plan representing the earth and the four points of the compass. Railings separate the spiritual from the temporal, with four gateways. Entering from the east, the worshipper circumambulates the monument in the direction of the sun's movement. Hindu worshippers also circumambulate their shrines, and space is allowed for this.

• Stories

The ground plan of Borobudur shows how the Hindu mandala was elaborated in the later Mahayana Buddhist tradition. Circumambulation became the path to Nirvana. Through its nine levels the edifice represents the regions of Mount Meru, but the path has become a spiritual journey of salvation. The lower hidden level has elaborate depictions of the world of the senses and desire - seen as hell and literally buried. The next four levels tell stories of the Buddha. These storytelling avenues in stone have been interrupted to provide visual pockets, a visual hierarchy that any modern exhibition designer would seek to achieve. The stories are long and complicated, and need to be taken in a little at a time if their significance is to be understood. The upper levels of Borobudur treat the mystical Buddhas, glimpsed only through their latticed bells, and the invisible central Buddha, the unknowable. The whole structure represents an immensely complicated system of thought, but uses powerful interpretive techniques to develop its messages. It is symbol, story, exhibition, an interactive exploration of a way of thought, a way of the spirit.

The west portals of Christian churches and cathedrals tell stories in much the same way, using techniques of illustrating the Bible for illiterate congregations. These stories in stone had evolved from the mosaic-covered and painted walls of Byzantine, Early Christian and Romanesque churches. They often focused on local saints and their stories, interpreting the significance of the place.

• Light

We have looked at structural relationships to the divine, but another powerful means of expressing divine presence was through the use of light. The structural solutions of the Gothic period allowed a breakthrough in the long efforts to allow more light into churches. Abbot Suger brought an unprecedented numinous quality to the choir, and later the nave, of St Denis. Here light was not just an aesthetic effect, but, by analogy, the divine light through which the truth would become evident. In interpretive terms, the creation of such a powerful experience, over and above the stories told in paintings and sculpture, was the designer's greatest achievement. Add to this the participatory (one could almost say interactive) nature of the Eucharist as an act of worship, involving the use of incense and music, and every sense is affected. In a very real sense, the act of worship could be said to have all the elements of a well themed experience - sets, sounds, smells, participation and emotional impact.

• The New Language

While much modern architecture has been criticised for its lack of spiritual inspiration, many 20th-century temples equal their predecessors in both spiritual and

symbolic quality. The basic structure of Tadao Ando's Church of the Water at Hokkaido comprises two interlocking cubes, the larger with its altar wall built entirely of glass and facing an artificial lake from which rises a steel cross. Ando said in 1991 "I want to give all nature's power a presence in contemporary society and provide thereby the kind of stimulating places that speak directly to man's every sense as a living corporeal being. Retrieving from history's strata not form or style but the essential view of nature and life that runs through its depths - the spirit of culture, in other words." In the same way that style itself was not the origin of the Gothic or Hindu structures, Ando's use of form and light creates that numinous sense of powerful relationships between the natural world and the church. The cross is outside, and yet an intimate part of the internal space. St Augustine and the authors of the Hindu sastras would have understood the message of these spaces instantly. His use of light both here and in the Church of the Light in Osaka, where the plain monumental east wall is perforated by a giant cross of light, might receive equal praise in its combination of symbol and significance.

While light and architectural volume can create a sense of spirituality, our increasingly secular societies call for ever more sophisticated techniques to interpret faith. At the Mandir built by the Swaminarayan Hindu Mission in Neasden, a small exhibition explains elements of the Hindu faith, openly using modern exhibition techniques as instructive devices. This is but a distillation of a major development in Gurarat, India, where a monument and theme park have been created to interpret the work of the Mission and tell the stories of its faith. Every modern technique has been employed in fascinating ways - from sculpture and artistry, to multi-media shows, dioramas and animatronics. What is even more impressive is that the monks themselves designed the entire scheme, though admittedly with a little help from Disney, who supplied the animatronics, and the park now attracts 2 million visits a year. Other theme parks are even now opening in India on religious themes. A dignified link between values and entertainment has been made. In the process of elaborating the divine, religious movements around the world have drawn on techniques that are perhaps more universal than previously thought.•

Brian Bath is a Project Director for The Visual Connection

text **Kathryn Sather**

Spirit of Life

A New Use for a Redundant Friary

The Franciscan church and friary of St Francis, in Gorton, East Manchester, has been derelict for nearly a decade. The complex was designed by Edward Pugin and consists of a cathedral-sized church and friary buildings surrounding a cloister garden. The building's architectural and historical importance is reflected in its Grade II* listing, and in its designation by the World Monument Fund as one of the 100 Most Endangered Monuments in the World.

Known locally as Gorton Monastery, it was an important part of the local community for over 100 years, with schools, clubs and other community activities, as well as the church activities. It was built between 1863 and 1872, an amazing achievement at a time of the local cotton famines. In the early 1970s the congregation was severely diminished when surrounding housing was demolished and the community rehoused elsewhere. This coincided with fewer vocations and escalating maintenance costs. Inevitably, the friars moved out in 1989.

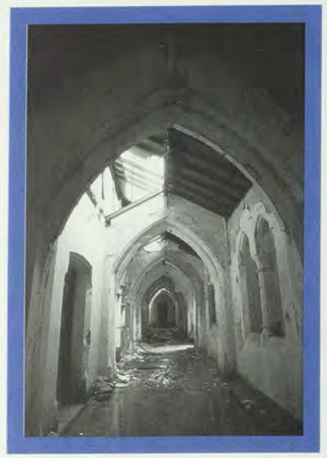
The complex was sold to a housing developer, who went bankrupt. The buildings ended up in the hands of receivers and were seriously vandalised, with everything of value from the interiors and even the slates and leadwork stolen. The condition of the buildings deteriorated, and arson attacks further destroyed parts of the friary interior.

It was due to the concern of a former Gorton resident that a Building Preservation Trust was formed to save the monastery from further vandalism. Much progress has been made by the Monastery of St Francis and Gorton Trust, a registered charity and company governed by its Trustees. The publicity generated by the World Monument Fund listing, together with the support of important members of the local business community, CIS and the Co-operative Bank, encouraged the Royal Bank of Scotland to donate the buildings to the Trust.

Acquiring the building was essentially a leap of faith by the Trustees, as there was no new use yet identified, or funding available for emergency repairs. Within weeks the local business community offered donations in kind. Public Liability Insurance was provided free by CIS. Shepherd Construction provided men and materials for six weeks, making the buildings much more weatherproof and secure. With some of the short-term problems addressed, the Trust needed to find a long-term, financially viable and suitable use for the buildings. English Heritage and the Architectural Heritage Fund offered grants to pay for a feasibility study and a team of professionals were appointed.

Finding a new use for the complex has not been a simple process, given the size and proportions of the structures. Although connected internally, the buildings provide two very distinct types of space: the very large open volume of the church, and small cellular rooms in the friary. The best use for a building is usually that for which it was designed, but this was not an option. When considering the potential future uses of a building, it is useful to consider the best features of the structure as well as the types of space. The church is imposing from the outside, but its interior is even more impressive, despite its derelict state. The awe-inspiring volume and high levels of light still express a spiritual presence.

Understanding the history of the monastery's foundation has assisted both in considering potential uses and in planning for



the interpretation of the buildings once restored. Gorton was an impoverished area with a large Catholic community, and the Franciscans came here to serve the poor and live among them. The building was paid for by believers, from wealthy benefactors including Lord and Lady de Trafford, to less well off donors such as other priories, monasteries, and the local community. Much of the building work was carried out by the brothers with the help of local volunteers, who worked here after their regular jobs. The church and friary thus stand as an expression of the faith of a community, and as a testament to the devotion of the friars to worship and life among the poor.

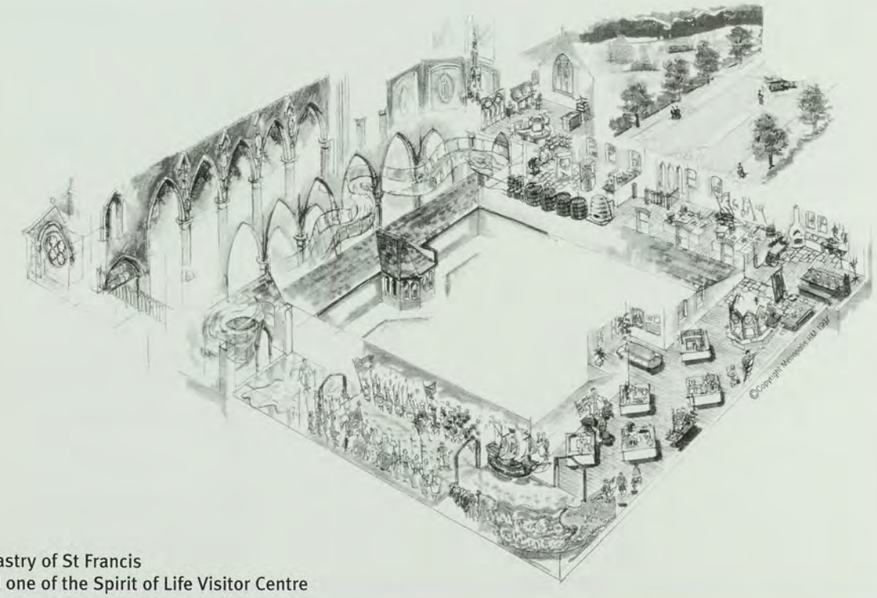
An understanding of the historical, architectural and community significance of the buildings reinforced the wish of the Trustees to find a new use which not only allowed public access, but also served the community, as well as being both architecturally successful and financially viable. This understanding also helped in evaluating differing proposals. Three options were considered in depth: a hotel, a combined residential and arts scheme, and the 'Spirit of Life' cultural centre, a new tourist attraction. Each of these schemes had its strengths, but the conclusion of the feasibility study was that the 'Spirit of Life' option offered the best use for the monastery.

The purpose of the 'Spirit of Life' scheme is to present the major religions of Britain through common themes of birth, music, food, afterlife and celebrations. The exhibitions will tie in with the national curriculum and provide a resource for school visits. The church itself will be used for exhibitions, concerts and receptions, as in the residential scheme, while the friary buildings will house the 'Spirit of Life' Centre, but in this scheme the two buildings function as one unit, with common ownership. There has been a tremendously positive response from the local education advisory service, and market research showed a strong interest in the idea. It is envisaged that families and school groups will make up the majority of the visitors. The income forecast for this option is extremely healthy, much more than the other two schemes, and provides a higher level of public access. As a tourist attraction, this option is seen as a boost to the regeneration of the surrounding area. The history of the friary and church will be interpreted in the 'Spirit of Life' exhibition, as well as in the teacher packs for the school groups.

A Conservation Plan for the complex is under preparation, made possible with a grant from the Kress Foundation, through the World Monument Fund. This plan will provide an in-depth understanding of the significance of the buildings and assist the detailed design. The next stage involves applications for project development funding, to allow detailed development. The capital costs are immense, but restoring the Monastery of St Francis and creating the 'Spirit of Life' Centre will act as a catalyst for further regeneration involving employment, education tourism and community benefits as well as rescuing an important landmark.•

Kathryn Sather is an Architectural Conservation Consultant

Monastry of St Francis
Ground Level of the Spirit of Life Visitor Centre



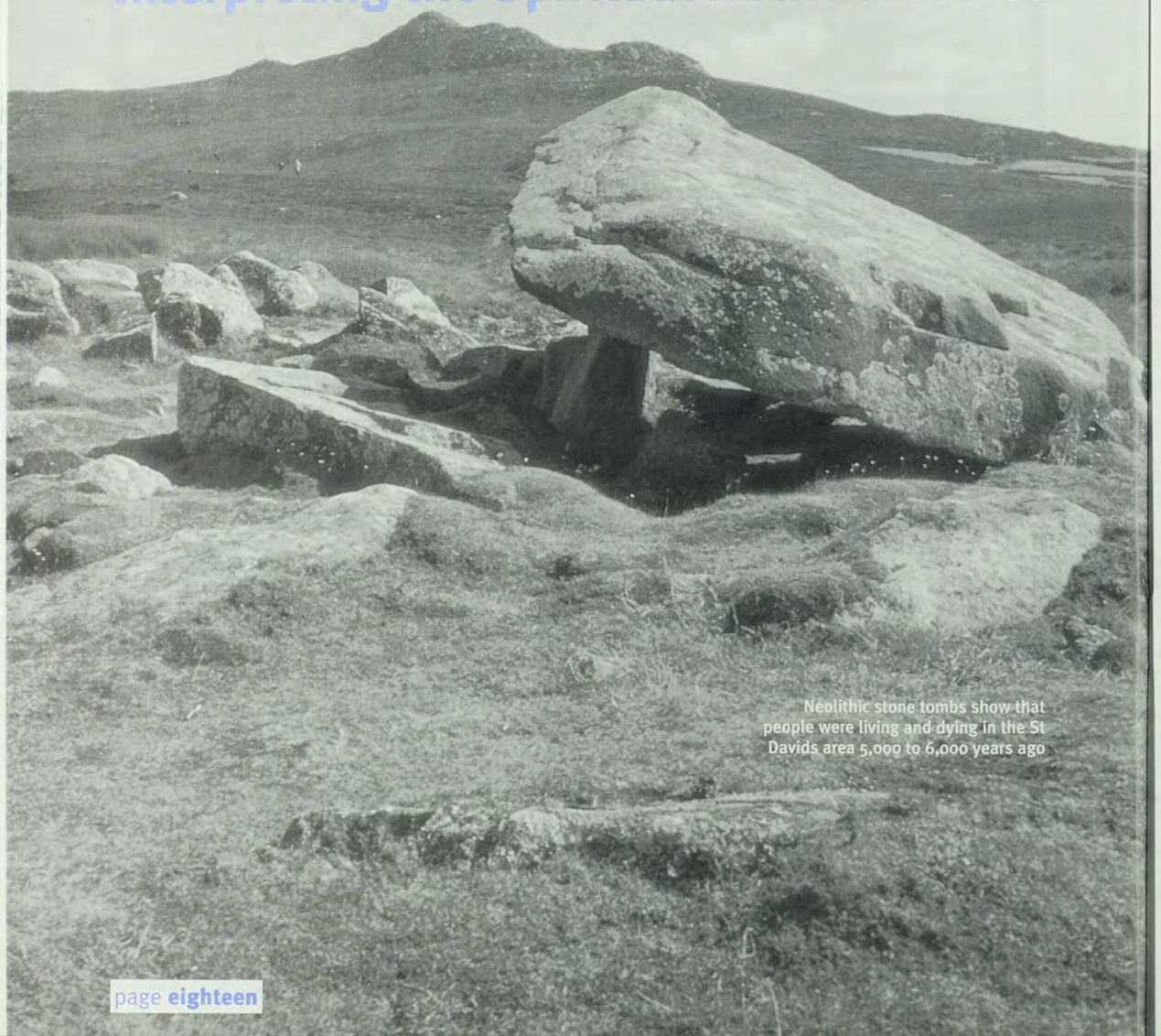
Monastry of St Francis
Level one of the Spirit of Life Visitor Centre

text **Margi Bryant**

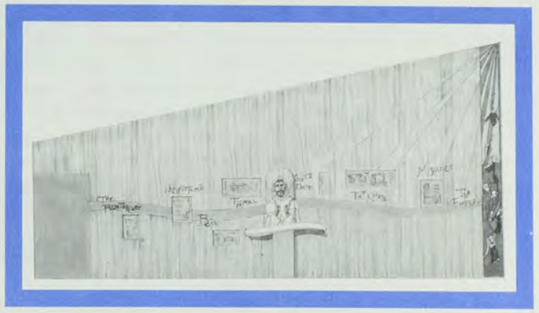
photography **PCNP**

Saints & Standing Stones

Interpreting the Spiritual Heart of Wales



Neolithic stone tombs show that people were living and dying in the St Davids area 5,000 to 6,000 years ago



The Croute round the exhibition will form a Celtic knot pattern, with one path telling the story of the area's landscape and nature and the other its history and culture
Janus Group

The Celtic knot concept determines the route round the exhibition and the shape of the three-dimensional structures
Janus Group

What defines a sacred place? Many of the examples in this issue of Interpretation are actively-used places of worship or great works of religious architecture, or both. But the sacred place in this case-study is something much more diffuse: a whole city and its surrounding landscape.

St Davids, in Pembrokeshire, is Britain's smallest city, located on a remote peninsula in west Wales. Its claim to be the spiritual heart of the nation rests on its identity as the birthplace and operational base of Wales' eponymous patron saint. The city's splendid cathedral is today both a place of worship and a major tourist attraction. But the sacred character of St Davids springs from much more than its central religious monument. It encompasses a complex web of traditions, represented by numerous sites and stories, all inextricably linked to the surrounding landscape. It is this broad definition of a sacred place that has inspired the interpretation scheme being developed for the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park's new visitor centre.

• A Diverse Heritage

St Davids has a rich and complex heritage, in both cultural and environmental terms. The historic heart of the city is designated an outstanding conservation area, while the whole peninsula boasts over 30 scheduled ancient monuments, 200 listed buildings, numerous sites of special scientific interest (SSSIs), and large stretches due to become special areas of conservation (SACs). The whole area is contained within the National Park, which has the dual responsibility of conserving this heritage and helping the public to understand and enjoy it.

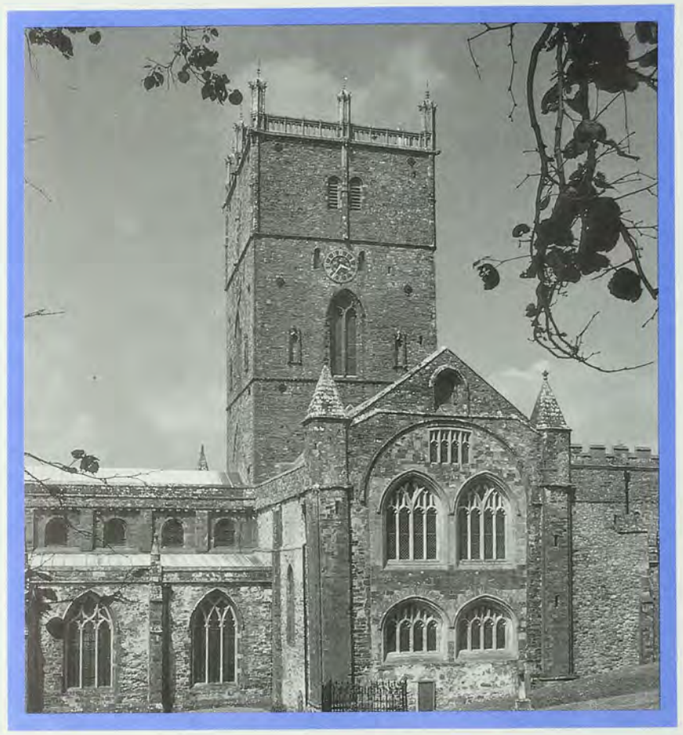
St Davids' geographical location has been a defining factor in its history. It was once the hub of the Celtic world, centrally placed for the major sea routes to Ireland, other parts of Britain and the continent. Overland, three ancient trackways - later to become pilgrim routes - converged on St Davids, reaching the sea at Whitesands Bay.

• Landscape and Legend

Human settlement in the area goes back at least 6,000 years and the peninsula is dotted with Neolithic tombs, while Bronze Age standing stones and Iron Age forts are visible signs of continuous occupation. Barely touched by the Roman occupation of Britain, the area's Celtic culture continued unbroken. St Davids has strong associations - in legend, literature and place-names - with King Arthur. The mythical hero has merged seamlessly in folk tradition with the real local Arthur, a prince of Dyfed in the 6th century AD(CE) who died in this area.

Such was the place that emerged in the 6th century as a focal point of early Christianity. St David was born, according to legend, on a clifftop site half a mile south of the present city. The site, now called St Non's after David's mother, is said by many people to be the most atmospheric spot in the area. Its ruined chapel dates from around 1300 but includes a much older incised Celtic cross. Surrounding the chapel is an incomplete circle of Bronze Age standing stones. Nearby is a capped spring said to have healing powers, which supplied holy water for the cathedral in the Middle Ages and is today used as a wishing well. Beside the well is a modern statue of the Virgin, and behind it is the Catholic chapel of Our Lady & St Non, built in the 1930s. There could be no stronger demonstration of

continuity in a sacred place. Like the site itself, the legend attached to St Non's is an intriguing fusion of pagan and Christian traditions. About to give birth, she was forced to flee from a local chieftain - possibly her own father - who plotted to kill her, because of the prophesied greatness of her unborn child. As she looked for a safe place, a tremendous storm arose, surrounding and protecting her. In labour, she grasped a stone which split into two halves, moving to stand at her head and feet, and when David was born a spring issued from the ground.



St Davids Cathedral is the best-recognised symbol of the city's spiritual tradition and a major tourist destination.

• David's City

As a young man, David is said to have studied at various centres of religious learning and his first miracle was restoring the sight of one of his teachers. Sometime in mid-life he came with three followers to set up his own monastic community on the spot beside the River Alun where the cathedral now stands. This had probably been a sacred place for a thousand years, as the Alun is thought to take its name from a Celtic river deity, Alauna. David's monastery and his reputation prospered, and the settlement - Mynyw, Latinised to Menevia - became a centre of the western Christian world and a major focus for pilgrimage. Nothing survives of the original settlement or the earliest church buildings.

In 1115 the first Norman bishop -- Bernard, chaplain to Queen Mathilda - took his seat, and Menevia's focus shifted to the English political mainstream. The first Norman cathedral was built in 1131, on the same spot beside the Alun, only to be replaced by an even grander one - which forms the oldest part of today's cathedral - in the late 12th century. Menevia continued throughout the Middle Ages to be a magnet for pilgrims, so holy that two pilgrimages there equalled one to Rome. Celebrity pilgrims included William the Conqueror, Henry II, King John, Edward I, Queen Eleanor and Richard II. The bishops played an active role in national politics, with residences in London and influence at Court. When at home they lived in a lavish palace, created in the 14th century by one of mediaeval Wales' greatest builders, Henry de Gower. Its ruins are today a major heritage attraction.

• From Pilgrims to Tourists

Today St Davids is still a magnet for around half a million visitors a year. Some are true pilgrims in the medieval sense, others are drawn to the area for more diffuse reasons. Despite its superb beaches, St Davids is not a prime destination for 'bucket and spade' holidays, though it is very popular for surfing and adventure sports. Most visitors are drawn by the landscape and cultural heritage, and over 350,000 visit the cathedral every year. Their presence is vital to the area's survival. The city itself has a population of less than 2,000. Although this is growing steadily, a high proportion - about 25% - is of pensionable age. Rates of unemployment, seasonal and part-time work are high. The area's traditional agricultural economy has declined in importance over the years, and Ministry of Defence cuts have seen a downturn in jobs at nearby bases. St Davids is therefore increasingly dependent on tourism. The city and peninsula have some 60 hotels and guest houses, 20 caravan and camp sites, and 250 self-catering properties. The greatest concentration of visitors is in summer, but there are strong 'shoulder seasons' in spring and autumn, which are popular times for seeing wildlife and heritage attractions. The local community is keen to promote St Davids as a year-round destination for upmarket, low-impact tourism.

• The New Visitor Centre

The present National Park information centre, housed in one room in the City Hall, receives 80,000 visitors a year and is one of the busiest tourist information points in Wales. It has long been recognised that the existing premises are too small. A year-long study by the consultants Veryards, covering conservation, traffic and

The new National Park Visitor Centre in St Davids will offer an inspiring introduction to this very special place
Sid Howells

tourism in St Davids, confirmed the National Park's view that a purpose-built visitor centre was badly needed. The Veryards' study proposed siting the centre on the edge of St Davids, adjacent to the main visitor car park. The strategy is to encourage people to park here and continue on foot via the visitor centre, thus easing traffic congestion in the city. The car park is known as the Grove, a fortuitous echo of Mynyw, David's original settlement.

The new centre is a stunning building, designed by Bristol-based architects Smith Roberts. Construction began in January 1998 and it will open in March 1999 as a fully-networked tourist information centre, where visitors can book accommodation, make travel arrangements, find out about attractions and activities, and purchase books, leaflets, maps and other merchandise. The interpretive exhibition, which will occupy half the indoor space, is being developed with a 2000 launch date in mind. Its aim is to capture St Davids' unique spirit of place and inspire visitors to explore the city and surrounding countryside for themselves. Outside, the circular courtyard will be a site for interpretive sculpture, a venue for drama, music, craft displays and food fairs, and a start point for guided walks. Funding for the exhibition has yet to be secured, but a design concept has just been completed by the York-based Janus Group, and a round of grant applications is about to begin. The original brief was discussed with a local focus group before being put out to tender, and two community representatives sat on the final selection panel.

• Nature, Culture and the Celtic Knot

Janus' central concept is a very Celtic one, symbolising the interdependence of humanity and nature. Around the time of St David, pagan beliefs about the sacredness of nature were absorbed by the early Christian church - as the sites and legends of this area so strikingly demonstrate - resulting in a view of humankind as the custodian of nature under God. These ideas will permeate the exhibition, through the highly recognisable Celtic motif of the interlaced knot. The exhibition's three-dimensional structures will form a vertical interlaced knot, recognisable as such only from the start point. Once visitors enter the exhibition, the knot breaks up into its component facets, which form the surfaces for interpretive media. At floor level, a two-dimensional knot will act as a pathway leading visitors from the information counter round the exhibition. It can be travelled in two directions, one telling the story of the area's landscape and environment, the other its human history. But whichever route people start down, they return by the other, discovering - as the Celts understood - that the two paths are really one.

While perfect for the subject-matter of St Davids, the concepts of interdependence and custodian-ship also have wider resonances for the National Park. "Not ours, but ours to look after" - the slogan coined by the late Brian Redhead when president of the Council for National Parks - is synonymous with the Celtic world-view. We hope that our way of interpreting St Davids as a sacred place will give people a sense of the sacredness of the world around them, and encourage them to look after it. •

Margi Bryant is the Interpretation Officer for Pembrokeshire Coast National Park

Ayers Rock, N.T.

text **Susan Pfisterer**

photography **D. McNaughton**

Sacred Performances

Aboriginal sacred sites occupy centre stage in contemporary Australia's quest to understand its heritage. The performance is political and passionate. What is sacred, and for whom?

In an Australian history text for school children published in 1917, the author declared that: 'There is good reason why we should not stretch the term "history" to make it include the history of the dark-skinned wandering tribes'. He explained that Aborigines had 'nothing that can be called history', because, 'change and progress' are the stuff of history and it was evident that 'these blacks knew no change and made no progress'. Needless to say, Dreamtime Australia and the significance of sacred sites were not on the syllabus.

From this marginal place of exile, Aboriginal history has moved to the centre of contemporary political, social and spiritual debates in Australia. This is impressive considering that Australia's population of over 18 million includes only about 250,000 (1.5%) indigenous Australians. Clearly, beyond their ritual significance, sacred sites have become a cultural currency whereby non-indigenous Australia gains access to Aboriginal history and world views. This access enlarges understanding, and forges a striking new identity for all Australians, one better fitting to take into the next century.

• Eurocentric Discourses

For some though - mining companies and similar stake-holders - this addition to Australian history and cultural consciousness was not a welcome one. Just in case you believe that the kind of thinking which excluded Aboriginal sensibilities from mainstream Australian life is long gone, and that Aboriginal history enjoys the same status as Aboriginal art does on the international art scene, then more sobering examples are at hand. In 1985, for example, mining executive Hugh Moorage claimed in an article in the Sydney Morning Herald that Aboriginal people have 'no historical sense of time,' and therefore should not be allowed to retard Australia's economic development with their 'stories' about sacred sites holding up the granting of mining licences. And in 1988 historian Ken Maddock argued that the 'charming' Aboriginal narratives, which he claimed were instances of 'folk memory,' were never to be judged as history because they were not consistent with scientific historical sources of primary documented (written words) records.

This kind of Eurocentric discourse about what defines 'real' history has dominated debates about Aboriginal sacred sites. Although it has been long acknowledged that traditional Aboriginal society organised, functioned and revealed itself in completely distinct (non-European) ways, much discourse has failed to properly respect this difference. Sophisticated belief systems, which found their expression in oral literature, songs, dances and social relationships, bound Aboriginal society to the land in a sacred way. These sacred relationships have been historically devalued by Eurocentric discourse. So often disqualified as history, Aboriginal encoding of the past - especially concerning the valuing of sacred sites - have taken second place behind other political desires.

• Aboriginal Sensibilities and Sacred Sense of Place

1788 heralded the beginning of European settlement of Australia. Along with destruction of much Aboriginal culture, Aborigines were systematically dispossessed of their land. Britain had declared Australia as terra nullius - a land without owners. This was really the first act violating the complex structure of Aboriginal society.

Unlike Western culture, where land is viewed as property, there is no such commodification in Aboriginal society. Land is fundamental to Aboriginal life in very different ways. First and foremost, land is regarded as the living record of all significant events dating from the Dreamtime. It is in fact a physical and psychic map by which Aboriginal people source their laws, their history, their kinship and identity. Some things can not be bought and sold, they simply are. The responsibility to care for and protect the land in general and sacred sites in particular is fundamental to the spiritual and culture life of Aboriginal Australia.

In this context the dispossession of their traditional land is the most keenly felt injustice by Aboriginal people. Added to this injury, until recent times, was the insult that terra nullius not only justified the dispossession of land, but did so without compensation.
Considering that Aborigines remain the most disadvantaged group in Australia it is no wonder that the legal lie of terra nullius has been challenged. Aboriginal Land Rights, given this history, are one of the most important items on the national agenda.

• Public Angst

You cannot discuss the significance of place - which is after all what makes a site sacred - without reference to recent political developments in Australian legislation: Mabo and Wik, for example. (I recommend visiting the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission web site at www.atsic.gov.au/native/wik.htm for further information.) Clearly, these issues deserve more attention than they can receive here.

What is also evident is that matters of repossession seem to be in a real mess. The important thing about these developments, however, is that discourse about sacred matters is being performed all over the country like never before, from kitchens to schoolrooms to boardrooms to beaches. 'Will my relatives lose their farm, in the family for seven generations, to a Land Rights claim because over 200 years ago Aboriginal women performed women's business by the big river bend?', asks one party. 'Can I finally go home, to my place, to my Dreaming?', asks another. Perhaps the biggest question is how can the sacred be respected by one and all in a win-win situation?

Under Wik native title can theoretically co-exist with other forms of title, and many argue that this is the 'win-win' everybody had been waiting for. Yet others remain guardedly suspicious. It seems that political and psychological re-adjustments are required in the Australian psyche in order to benefit from these recent moves towards reconciliation. The law needs to be felt and lived and perhaps challenged so that we can move forward.

It can be argued that we are living an unsettled existence as a nation because we are confused about what is sacred, and what is safe from claims of the sacred, and who is threatened and who is threatening. This contemporary unease resonates with such great themes of history as identity and power and equality. We all need some instruction to sort this out, not only for the sake of Australians but for world heritage.

Ken Gelder and Jane Jacobs in their book Uncanny Australia: Sacredness and Identity in a Postcolonial Nation go some way towards this objective, highlighting some obvious dilemmas such as the conceptual difficulties involved in identifying what is sacred. Many Land Rights claims which depend on proving and describing sacred associations involve revealing what is often the largest definer of the sacred: secrets. It is contradictory to prostitute sacred secrets in this way in order to convincingly claim possession.

And once the secrets are out, how does non-indigenous Australia feel? (Should it matter?) It is fair to say that the reaction is mixed. Some feel disenfranchised by how the sacred is used as a negotiating force for access to wealth and power; others see this as right and respect the process. While some mining lobby scare-mongers say

that all of Australia is a potential sacred site (might it be?), the performance of the sacred goes into another season. The contest is Australia's biggest show.

• Identifying the Sacred

Archaeologist Josephine Flood in her most recent work Rock Art of the Dreamtime links the history of the Dreamtime as revealed in Aboriginal rock art, and its discovery by Western eyes. Rock art is a convenient way to gauge Aboriginal relationships to the land, and to map sacred connections to place. In Australia there are more than 100,000 rock art sites. The most conservative readings of these 'maps' indicate that Aborigines come to Australia 60,000 years ago, so the connections are long and strong.

Some sites surprise with their great time-spread representing art styles from different periods. This indicates that these sites may have had particular significance to Aboriginal people, perhaps because of local resources, or due to multiple visits for ceremonies. Such artistic evidence underlines both the sacred role and continuity of association with the land, but rock art is not the only indicator of this connection. Most non-indigenous Australians, if they asked, would be surprised at the evidence of Aboriginal history in their own towns and cities. Some Aborigines themselves seek similar re-education, hardly surprising given their history of dispossession which saw them lose their land, their language and their culture.

In my own beachside village home in Australia there is a Bora ring, used long ago in rituals that celebrated a young male's journey into adulthood. It is said to be bad luck for women to venture onto these physical sites, redundant though they may often be, as it is ceremonially a place of men's business. This lore, however, has no place on the neat council sign which welcomes visitors. Nor are the endless streams of tourists to 'Ayers Rock' necessarily aware that to climb the sacred Uluru is considered to be offensive. It isn't easy for non-indigenous Australians to respect the symbolic order of Aboriginal sensibilities.

• Reconciling the Sacred

There are many environments of interpretation considering the issue of sacred sites in Australia. From terra nullius to Land Rights, from dispossession to mining giants, from Mabo to Wik, from the Stolen Generation to Reconciliation, it is problematic to say there is only one way to interpret the sacred in Australia. Writing as a white historian, it is impossible for me to represent Aboriginal sensitivities, only to say that many indigenous and non-indigenous Australians alike seek to honour the sacred as part of the larger process of reconciliation. I encourage you to visit the many Aboriginal web sites to gain an indigenous perspective on this issue. Like the sacred, it is as large as Australia, and awareness is a complex and subterranean process.•

Dr Susan Pfisterer lectures in Australian history and literature at the Menzies Centre for Australian Studies, University of London

The road which brings tourists to see Ayers Rock, snakes like a lasso around the Rock's weathered form. Another outstanding rock formation the Olgas, rises in the background

text **Lisa Kelly**

The Interpretation of Cathedrals

What the Visitors Really Say

The interpretation of cathedrals can be a complex process. How does the cathedral interpreter provide for a visiting population which can range from the most impassioned pilgrim to the most blasé, information-saturated coach tourist? A knowledge of the attitudes of cathedral visitors toward the concept of learning at cathedrals, and what they actually want to learn and experience during their visit, is a crucial factor in providing effective interpretation.

During the summer of 1998, 160 in-depth interviews were undertaken at the cathedrals of Chester, Liverpool and Liverpool Metropolitan (as part of Ph.D. study which is researching the motivations and experiences of tourists at English cathedrals). Visitors were asked whether they wanted to learn about the cathedral during their visit, if so what they wanted to learn about, whether they had used any of the interpretation provided by the cathedral, and what they thought about it. A crucial finding was that for most visitors the motivation to acquire knowledge/information during their cathedral visit was not a major priority. Indeed it was found that the 'experience' (i.e. the sensory and emotional consumption) of these cathedral buildings (in terms of their roles as ancient sites, architectural phenomena, places of sanctuary and spiritual atmosphere, examples of 'lost' craftsmanship and medieval ingenuity, centres of aesthetic, artistic, religious, musical and historic encounter) was found to be the predominant motivating and experiential factor.

Do visitors want to learn during their cathedral visit?

Those visitors who did want to learn during their cathedral visit tended to be interested in learning about a particular aspect related to their own profession. A much larger number of other visitors suggested that although they did want to learn about the cathedral, they did not want to learn about it during their visit. Hence, the learning process was most often undertaken after the visit, as suggested by a visitor to Chester who stated that: "learning facts and figures is not a first concern for me... I will buy a book from the shop and read that sort of thing later... I don't walk around with it, because I end up looking at the book and may miss something."

Even for those visitors who professed to have a strong interest in a specific facet of the cathedral, the desire to learn about it was secondary. This is encapsulated by the comments of one visitor at Chester who claimed that although he was "a history buff" he chose not to go on a guided tour (specifically provided for his coach party) because he simply wanted to "wander around the building" by himself. In essence, the overwhelmingly experiential nature of most cathedral visits is graphically illustrated by the comment of another Liverpool Cathedral visitor who claimed "I just want the feeling of the place: it is an emotional thing, not an intellectual thing."

Do visitors use existing interpretation?

Visitors' attitudes towards interpretation at the cathedrals also varied. At Chester Cathedral, the existence and location of the visitor centre (rather than its actual content) was much discussed. Visitors appeared to prefer that the centre be kept outside of the main cathedral as it "gets the museum bit over with and then you can go inside the cathedral and there is not a lot to distract". A number of visitors suggested that visitor centres have become an accepted part of any historic site, and even though Chester's centre made the building "more commercialised", one visitor pointed out that "everywhere is [commercialised] these days... it's fine, I think they have done the commercial thing nicely".

Other visitors appeared to hold pre-concieved reservations about interpretation which became evident during interviews. For example, a visitor at Chester claimed that she didn't enter the visitor centre because they "can be a bit boring... they can be too much", whilst an older gentleman suggested that he didn't read the information boards or watch the video because "that sort of thing is not for me."

What do visitors want to learn when they visit cathedrals?

Most visitors expressed interest in the basic aspects of the cathedral buildings and their builders. For example, in terms of the construction of the older cathedrals, such as Chester, a strong sense of admiration for the cathedral builders was prevalent. Many visitors believed that the medieval builders constructed the cathedrals with "their bare hands" or very simple/rudimentary tools. Visitors said that as they walked through Chester Cathedral, they asked themselves "how did they build this?... how did they achieve such beauty, such height?... how did they get that stone up there with the tools they had?" Even more fundamentally visitors asked, "why did they build these places?...cathedral builders lived in great poverty, why did they put so much time and effort into the buildings - was it for glory of God or for the love of their craft?"

At both the Liverpool cathedrals, visitors were curious about certain structural details, typically asking "why were they built so huge?... why are there so many different rooms [i.e. chapels] in a cathedral?... are they still used?... why is there so much blue in the windows, we have noticed this at other cathedrals we have been to?" In terms of architectural information, at Liverpool, visitors wanted to know why a twentieth-century cathedral had been designed in an earlier style. At Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral visitors were unsure of the architectural symbolism, asking such questions as "why was the cathedral built in a round shape?... what do the different colours in the windows mean?... what is the spikey sculpture [crown of thorns] over the altar?... why are there sixteen chapels around the cathedral?... I liked the Stations of the Cross but I couldn't find any information explaining what they meant, it would have nice to have something to explain what each one meant."

Enhancing the visitors' experience

Taking into account such wide-ranging opinions, how can the interpreter enhance the cathedral visitor's experience, while answering the questions of those who wish to learn? Conventional interpretation can provide for the latter, but the former may require a more fundamental approach.

For the overwhelming majority of interviewed visitors, the experience gained from their visit proved highly satisfactory. However, a number of visitors suggested how this experience could be enhanced. Visitors to all three cathedrals indicated that a performance by a choir or organist had, or would have, enhanced the spirituality, atmosphere, architecture and physical proportions of the building. Freeman Tilden said that interpretation is about provocation, and the provision of music for visitors within the cathedral building may be an element worth considering.

Similarly, visitors claimed that the presence of a member of the clergy in the building during the time of their visit had made them realise "what the building was all about" (i.e. that the cathedral was not just an historic building, but a place of worship).

Whilst the research findings at these three cathedrals can in no way be construed as definitive, this study revealed huge differences in visitor questions and experiences which can be generated by individual cathedrals. For truly effective interpretation, which stimulates, as well as informs the visitor, it is important that the interpreter is aware of the visitors' needs and expectations from the outset. The in-depth interview, in which the visitor is allowed to voice personal ideas and opinions, is one of the tools which can perhaps aid the interpreter during the complex process of interpreting a cathedral.•

Lisa Kelly is a research student at Liverpool Hope University College. She is currently preparing a PhD thesis on the motives of visitors to English cathedrals

text **Brad King**

Editorial

This issue of the Journal looks at ways in which different people and institutions approach the interpretation of a difficult subject - warfare and its consequences. In its broadest sense the subject is at one level compelling, at the other horrendous to contemplate. And yet somewhere in the middle is a path through which today's audience can look at and understand the nature of conflict.

As conflict has been part of the human condition since the Big(gest) Bang of all it is not surprising that most nations and many sites in the UK have a military pedigree. A large part of our culture therefore has been shaped by fearsome events, economies supported by the local military facility (East Anglia in recent years by the United States Air Force and Kent by the wooden-walled Royal Navy in the Napoleonic Wars for instance) and communities formed and scattered as a consequence.

The means by which this subject is accessed is surprisingly varied and to give examples of all those would need a Journal much larger than this edition. This being the case the articles contained herein sample a number of issues and ways in which military history is used, learnt and taught. There are also object lessons for the unwary "interpreter". Gary Perkins reflects on the nature of military exhibits and his telling of the development of the Enola Gay exhibition at the National Air and Space Museum is still a story to chill the most confident of Museum Folk. The Battle of the Somme devastated local communities in Britain let alone the effect it had on the participants in France and as such it still stands as an icon of the Great War. Dr Gary Sheffield often takes parties to the modern day site which he transforms into a snapshot of living history. "Participants" in history are represented by Henry Crawford's fascinating insights in to the world of the reenactor; in this case from the viewpoint of an African American "living" the life of a Buffalo Soldier of the Indian Wars or as a Union Soldier. Closer to home the difficult subject of displaying documents in an interesting and informative way is tackled by Phil Read, Director of the Cabinet War Rooms. Major Matthew Whitchurch of the British Army is an infectiously enthusiastic user of the "battlefield tour" approach to instruction. His innovative methods are used for the education of all ranks to instil in the modern soldier the facility to think about problems and foster individual initiative. Closer to home the Needles Old Battery and its display is described by its former curator Harriet Pilkington- Rowland. •

Brad King has worked in various capacities at the Imperial War Museum, London for 18 years. He is currently Public Services Officer in the Film and Video Archive and is responsible for all non-commercial access, educational outreach an public film screenings for the collection

text **Phil Reed**

photography **Trustees of the Imperial War Museum**

The Churchill Exhibition
at the Cabinet War Rooms

Until recently the name Winston Churchill would have brought to mind stirring oratory and images of a brave Britain, with its back to the wall, resisting the invader. In 1995, as one of the Heritage Lottery Fund's first efforts to put money into 'good causes', it paid thirteen million pounds to Churchill's descendants for the vast quantity of papers that constituted the bulk of his archive, and suddenly the name became associated with what the press and public perceived to be a squandrous waste of public money. Whatever arguments are put forward about the commercial value of the archive and whatever supporting evidence is proffered such as recent sales of Churchill's hat and slippers for exorbitant amounts, the accusation that the honest punters' money was being wasted on a vast scale has never finally disappeared.

This then was the first challenge for the Cabinet War Rooms when it was decided that what was needed to secure the identity of Winston Churchill with the Rooms in the visitor's mind was a semi-permanent exhibition on his life during the years 1938 - 1945, the period that was to set his heroic status in stone (often literally) for decades thereafter.

As an archivist of eighteen years service in the Imperial War Museum, I have long had a sentimental attachment to the idea that a personal document could tell more about an individual and could personalise an event or a story - as the average museum visitor or reader of history increasingly demands - better than any three dimensional object ever could. However, experience has also made me equally aware of the difficulties of a whole room, let alone three rooms, of documents ever sustaining the audience's attention sufficiently to allow them to follow the full thread of that story's development.

With such impedimenta I entered into negotiations with the Churchill Archives Centre at Churchill College Cambridge, where the papers are lodged, over the possibility of using documents from the collection to illustrate Churchill's wartime career. The CAC had also been confronted with challenges as a result of the malign publicity surrounding the collection's acquisition, but had faced them head on and, rejecting the exclusive 'ivory tower' approach, was making great efforts to extend access to the collection to as wide a public and age range as possible. My approach was, therefore, received with a warm welcome as another means for the CAC to fulfill its obligations and, with the reliable prospect of over half a million visitors a year seeing the display at the CWR, providing an easy means of making the collection available to a vast number of people.

The College has as one of its prime responsibilities to ensure the lasting preservation of the nation's heritage and, aware of the rapid deterioration in paper that results from exposure to light, both parties were wary of simply displaying unique documents for extended periods or of becoming involved in the costly business of redesigning a exhibition periodically to accommodate frequent changes of content. We were also keen not to 'short change' the public by displaying no more than a series of facsimiles. In the end the solution to the problem was also to be of great benefit

Text panel of the exhibition

to the College, to the CWR and to the visiting public. The basic concept was to display a series of high quality facsimiles around the walls of the display area, but to have a series of original documents on a particular theme in free standing display cases in the centre of the rooms. The content and theme of the displays of originals would be changed every six months, thus allowing the College to present much more of the huge wealth of the Churchill Archive, while the CWR could refresh its exhibition at regular intervals and the public would gain a much deeper insight into Churchill's career, achievements and personality than the limited space available might otherwise allow.

The historic Map Room of the Cabinet War Rooms

This still left the tricky problem of how to make documents, in that well-worn advertisers-speak, 'sexy', not least in the preserved historic fabric of the War Rooms.

In this we were very fortunate in our choice of designer. Andy Feast and Nickie Vincent of Carter Wong and Partners, who had so successfully put together the 'Nomads' exhibition in the cavernous halls of the Horniman Museum and the textiles display at the V&A, produced an initial concept which cleverly managed to tone in with the Spartan yellow ochre office walls, while at the same time catching and leading the eye through a storyboard of Churchill's finest hours. Cartoons of the time were used to exploit the background and perspex sheets to highlight the documents in the foreground. Mainline caption texts were strictly limited to a hundred words and item captions to twenty five - or less, where more than one item could be covered by a single caption.

Lighting was crucial and the curving walls of the displays were sharply illuminated by halogen lamps, a solution that neatly combined the slight gloom typical of the ambient lighting throughout the Rooms with theatrical spotlighting of star items.

Whatever the design setting, it could all have fallen flat in the choice of documents and, with millions of folios to choose from, this was perhaps the most difficult element to resolve. A starting point of 1938 was chosen, effectively the year of Churchill's emergence from the 'wilderness years' and the point at which he firmly advocated the then unpopular policy of rearmament and resistance to Hitler that was to make him a more or less natural choice as the nation's leader some two years later. The display ends with his electoral defeat in July 1945, although a third life-size image of his lying in state was added as a final item, its dominating position and its accompanying eulogy from his daughter capturing the nation's sentiment on his death in 1965 far better than any caption ever could.

For the choice of material to fill the space between these two points the overriding considerations were: form - much of the material in the archive comprises visually unexciting typescripts on manila paper; content - many an archivist/exhibitions officer has floundered on the inconsiderate habit of a letter writer spreading his or her most lyrical phrases sporadically over a numbing number of pages or that he or she preferred to record banalities on historically crucial dates; personality - it was crucial that we not only told the story of Churchill's course through the war, but that we should not attempt to disguise his failings, while highlighting his glories and that we should tell something of the man, rather than retail the mythic figure.

The 'embaras de richesses' that the archive encompasses was our final problem, but ultimately the process of filtering the immense scope and the volcanic personality of a man who had been personally and intensively involved in almost every aspect of Britain' s war effort for five years was achieved without seeming to mimic the West End actor who single-handedly staged the history of the world in an evening's performance.

The first theme of the display of original documents - Churchill's often tempestuous relationship with his generals - allowed the CWR to avoid accusations of hagiography - while the second selection, of letters between himself and his wife, Clemmie, gave Churchill a personal dimension that could not be fully conveyed by the permanent displays, while showing Mrs Churchill as an important figure in her own right, rather than simply as the spouse of a great man. Her letter of June 1940 berating him for his pompous and overbearing attitude to his staff also helped sustain our aim to be frank in our approach and to provide the public with personal insights that they crave.

The result was a remarkable success, evidenced by the glowing written and verbal comments, but more especially by the bottlenecks that have formed at that point on the route around the Rooms, as visitors study each document carefully. As we lay plans for a larger museum dedicated to the life of Winston Churchill, to whose displays the Churchill Archive will make a major contribution, I feel far more confident about exploiting documents as a vehicle for telling a story than I used to. •

Phil Reed is Director of the Cabinet War Rooms

Confederates from the 9th Texas Infantry charge the breastworks at the Battle of Corinth re-enactment, as the Union commander shouts orders. October 1998

text **Henry B Crawford**

photography **Henry B Crawford**

Reliving History, Revisiting Heritage

Personal Perspectives on African American Living History Re-enacting

It has now been 135 years since the most famous military event in 19th century American history occurred. Even now, the word "Gettysburg"conjures up haunting and romantic images. In that warm, humid, and sunny place, fighting men were hungry, tired, filthy, nervous, sick, and scared. We know in retrospect what happened at Gettysburg during the first week of July 1863, because we have the luxury of historical perspective. People who were there wrote down what they saw and left us a record. But what was it like for those men who did not know what was going to happen that day? No soldier, neither private nor general, knew that the American Union would remain intact at the end of the day on July 3, 1863. In "first person" interpretation, where the character, or impression is immersed in the time and place he is portraying, he can not "know" what's going to happen next.

For African Americans like myself, reenacting the American Civil War period (1861-1865) holds a special place, because that national conflict had a direct connection to our heritage. Moreover, the Union Army (the North) recruited over 180,000 black men to fight among its ranks, and served in all branches of service. Civil War re-enacting has a special mystique, in large part because of the 1989 feature film, "Glory," which chronicled the exploits of the all black 54th Massachusetts Infantry. The 54th was recruited by former slave and abolitionist Frederick Douglass, into which two of his sons had enlisted. Contrary to popular belief, however, most of the black troops in the Union Army were not ex-slaves. There was a significant free black population in the North, and it was in the North, not the South, where black recruitment began on a large scale. Consequently, free blacks were specifically targeted for service first. As escaped slaves made their way North, they, too were able to join the Army.

Parenthetically, many black soldiers remained in the army after the war and reinlisted into the units which then went to the western frontier and became the famed Buffalo Soldiers. They patrolled the American plains and earned their name from their Native American tribal adversaries. I also enjoy reenacting the Buffalo Soldier period, also commonly called the "Indian Wars," especially during the years immediately following the Civil War, because there were no significant uniform changes, making the transition more economically feasible for a reenactor.

We should also bear in mind that several thousand blacks were in Confederate (Southern) service as well during the Civil War, serving both voluntarily as freemen, and quite against their will as slaves. Indeed, the ultimate opportunity comes for a few lucky reenactors who are allowed to depict an ancestor who actually fought in the same battle at the same place, or to portray a non-combatant role an ancestor
was known to have played five generations before.

In terms of today's costs, the ideal infantry soldier would be wearing and carrying over $1000 in historically authentic reproduction clothing and equipment. There is a multi-million dollar industry in historical reproductions specifically marketed toward the living history field. Practically anything which was available during the 19th century is available today as a reproduction. Clothing, printed materials, vehicles, coin and currency, soap, and even historic blends of tobacco are available today, just as they were a century and a half ago. In nineteen years of doing living history, I have learned that most of the fun and attraction of reenacting is the paraphernalia associated with it. The "material culture" of living history always guarantees interesting comment and conversation. One of the attractions for myself to living history is that as a curator of artifacts, it is a tool to educate the public in the use of historical objects within their historical context. There is a striking difference between viewing a musket in a static museum case and watching a full company of them, albeit faithful reproductions, being loaded, aimed, and fired. Living history adds a higher level of comprehension to the interpretation of historical objects.

For those who can afford the extra expense of horses and tack, in addition to weapons, the cavalry holds it's own romantic mystique. Civil War cavalry reenacting brings African American reenactors closer to their heritage, while educating the public about the lifestyle of the mounted soldier. There were dozens of African American cavalry regiments recruited by the regular Army and the by individual states. Many blacks enjoy depicting the cavalry because they like working around horses, and many have years of experience riding. We might as well state here, that battle reenacting is usually not restricted to the male gender. At the Gettysburg 135th anniversary reenactment, Dr. Anita Henderson, a practicing physician in the Washington, DC area, portrayed a trooper in the 17th Pennsylvania Cavalry. She says she feels it is important to "educate and interpret to the public about all aspects of the war especially the roles blacks played in it on both sides." Says Dr. Henderson, the cavalry is enjoyable because she's been a "horse nut" since the age of seven. Also, finding out about Maria Lewis, a black woman who rode with the white 8th New York Cavalry Regiment for the last 18 months of the war, "gave me a verified legitimate reason for participating in being historically correct." Although there are some reenactors who object to a woman in uniform, Dr. Henderson says "most people have been very excited when I tell them about her."

There are opportunities for African Americans to reenact on the Confederate side as well. Several thousand African Americans participated on the Confederate side for a variety of reasons. Confederate reenacting must be approached objectively and with an open mind, and must be done with a love for history and heritage, not motivated by negative personal political agendas. For many Americans, blacks fighting on the side of the South during the war is inconceivable nonsense. Fortunately, however, the fact that slave and free blacks in both service and combat roles had direct involvement in the Southern war effort, is well

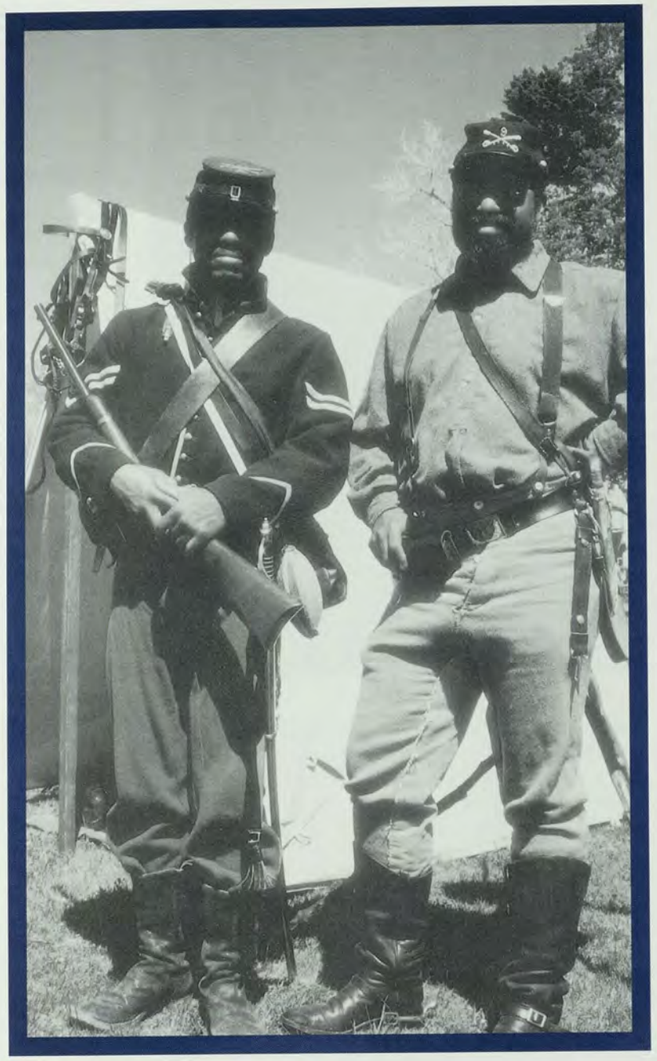
The author, portraying a private with the First Kansas Colored Infantry, wait for orders at the Battle of Honey Springs re-enactment, July 1996. The First Kansas was the first African American unit to engage the Confederate army in battle
Oklahoma Department of Tourism

documented, and the historical record allows for an entirely different context for understanding the war. Some African Americans are perfectly comfortable portraying slaves and servants on the Confederate side, while others feel confident enough, after doing enough research, to find a combat role in Confederate ranks. I personally enjoy portraying African American involvement on the Confederate side of the War. When the scenario calls for a black confederate soldier, I "galvanize," that is, change sides, to help the scenario work. It is enjoyable for me as an historian, and when done well, the public learns history from a completely different perspective. Dr. Henderson galvanized as a Confederate for General Jeb Stuart's cavalry parade at the 135th anniversary Gettysburg reenactment this past July, as it was historically correct. At the historic cavalry battle at Brandy Station, in June 1863, "there were 3 black [Confederate] troopers, and I feel this is an overlooked part of our history, and it is important to talk about and interpret even if some people feel uncomfortable with it," she says. "I feel if it happened, then interpret it and not try and inject 20th century attitudes and interpretations into it."

Civilian roles abound in Civil War reenacting and civilian roles are by far my favourites. Non-military participation in the War allows reenactors to act out scenarios that help the public understand that the battlefield was not the only place where historically significant events occurred. In Confederate as well as in Union camps, the presence of civilians, generally men, adds to the realism of the event. Free southern African American men earning a wage for their services were very common in Confederate camps. African American men earning a wage for their services, as well as unpaid slaves and servants, were very common in Confederate camps. Many were such an integral part of their units, that they applied for, and received, Confederate military pensions after the War.

One of the most interesting places at a Civil War reenactment is the field hospital. At one event I had the chance to portray a civilian doctor, hired by the Union Army to examine Confederate prisoners. Since the Southern Army scoffed at Union Army surgeons caring for them, they insisted on civilian doctors. So, there I was, dressed in a 19the century frock-coat with my cot, instruments, books, and "medicines and tonics" all laid out in my tent, ready to examine the prisoners. The scenario was played to the hilt, and all in first person. Imagine their astonishment when the Confederate soldiers took a look at me and realized that I, a black man, was to be their doctor. After a minor squabble, their officer stepped in and ordered the men to behave themselves and show their doctor the proper respect. The soldiers played it very well, and the public enjoyed the scenario. Checking the soldiers for lice was particularly amusing.
One of my other favorite civilian personas is the "contraband." A contraband was a former slave who had been freed by Union soldiers and remained with the army in a variety of service roles. The word comes from the fact that slavery was considered by the Federal government as illegal, therefore slaves were classified as contraband (illegally held property) and were thus confiscated by the Union Army. Most served as personal servants, laundresses, and cooks, paid by the individual officer or regiment they worked for. Many

The author, and comrade Corporal Clarence Watkins, as 1860's post - Civil War "Buffalo Soldiers" New Mexico, 1998.



others were hired by the Quartermaster Department as wagon teamsters, carpenters, laborers, stable hands, and blacksmiths, and were paid well for their services. Civilians in army camps add an air of authenticity to a Civil War event.

Historical reenacting gives us the opportunity to try as best we can to relive the life of someone who at the time being depicted, did not know his or her future, but who conducted their own life's work and pleasure within the context of their time and place. Living History, reenacting, historical creative anachronism, whatever one calls it, has one primary goal: to capture as close as possible the atmosphere, lifestyle, work, and pleasure of past individuals within the context of their historical time and place. It is both an entertainment as well as an educational tool, and for all who participate and experience it, living history reenacting truly does bring the past to life. •

Henry B. Crawford is the Curator of History at the Museum of Texas Tech University, Lubbock, Texas. Currently studying for a Ph.D., he specialises in 19th century material culture and living history

text **Harriet Pilkington-Rowland**

photography **National Trust**

The Needles Old Battery

Interpretation of a Victorian Fort

Drawing showing a scene in the Shell Room

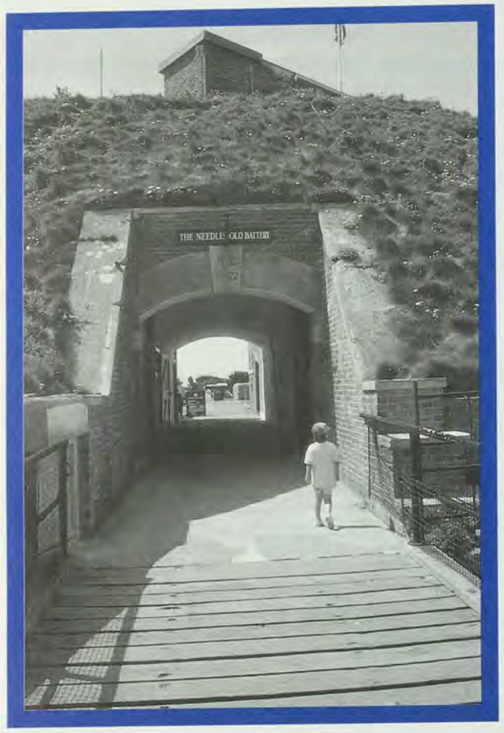
• A Brief History

The Needles Old Battery is located at the very Western tip of The Isle of Wight. As it's name suggests, it overlooks the famous Needles rocks and lighthouse. The Old Battery was constructed as part of the English coastal defence system against the French, who, in the late 1850's, were still very much the main threat to security, particularly with the Portsmouth naval base located only a few miles up the Solent. The added difficulty was that the French had succeeded in constructing the first iron-clad battleships, and there was a real fear that whilst the English struggled to complete similar craft, the superior power of the French Fleet would easily lay waste to our ageing wooden ships.

Hence, the Needles Old Battery came about as one of five new artillery works, the combined fire-power of which was intended to cover the approach to the Needles Passage. The Old Battery was completed in 1863 from a design by Major James Edwards of the Royal Engineers; it was built by George Smith of Pimlico at a cost of £6,958 and originally armed with six inch Armstrong rifled breech-loading guns.

In 1894 the Old Battery took on searchlight duties and the New Battery was built further up the Headland.

In the years between the First and Second World Wars, both the Old and New Needles Batteries were kept under "care and maintenance", and again for a few years following the last war, but the advent of sophisticated missile technology soon rendered both sites obsolete, and they were finally decommissioned in 1954.



The entrance to the Old Battery

• A New Challenge

By 1972 part of the Old Battery had been taken over by the Coastguard but apart from the sheep on the downs and the regular weekend walkers, the Headland was more isolated than ever. The Old Battery itself, apart from the former signal station used by the Coastguards, was decaying at an alarming rate, being unable to withstand the often savage environment without constant, expensive maintenance. In short, The Ministry of Defence had locked up and walked away.

The National Trust had long recognised the beauty and environmental importance of The Needles Headland, and now their moment had arrived in the form of Enterprise Neptune, which was set up to assist with the purchase and preservation of outstanding areas of coastline. Having secured the Headland in 1975, the problems then began, because no provision had been made for it's buildings, let alone for their presentation to the public. There was a conflict between the plans that the Trust had for the site, the wishes of local history enthusiasts and the fact that the site was declared an Ancient Monument in 1978.

• A New Beginning

Eventually, a compromise was found. The Trust, together with numerous interested volunteers, demolished and cleared the buildings which were most at risk of imminent collapse; they were left, fortunately, with arguably the most interesting parts of The Old Battery.

• A Sympathetic Interpretation

By 1981, the first stage of work at The Needles Old Battery was complete, and the property was opening to the public on a limited basis. It was officially opened by Prince Charles in 1982. At this point, there was not much in the way of interpretation, other than what the buildings evoked for themselves, and the input of a group of enthusiasts, who would later provide the information for most of the technical interpretation and produce the guidebook. Nevertheless, because there was no financial provision for the site, the property would have to evolve, interpretation-wise, at it's own pace whilst income, however small, was derived from visitors, with help from a small National Trust budget.

Given these considerations, the question now was what form the interpretation of the property was to take. The remaining buildings were at least now sound, but environmentally controlled displays were, and still are, out of the question, due to the ever-present penetrating damp and efflorescence. The only building which in any way approached a sound environment was the Signal Station, but this was still occupied by the Coastguard (until 1988), and eventually it would be needed for administrative and tea-room facilities. The final major consideration, and again largely financial, was to do with staffing levels; there would be absolutely no point in producing an over-sophisticated interpretation, in terms particularly of display, if there was not the qualified staff to oversee it. Clearly, then, it would not make sense to over-capitalise The Needles Old Battery.

The answer to the problems was to take a subtle, minimalist approach which would depend largely upon emphasising the isolation and bleakness of the spot as a working location, but which would also highlight the immense power and beauty of the Headland and it's Maritime setting. Fortunately, this is something that The National Trust does extremely well. Indeed, location has proved to be the key-word at The Old Battery and has probably been it's saving grace, for unlike many military installations, it is surrounded with a wealth of other interesting history and visuals, from the lighthouse, to the Island's rich smuggling background, to the flora and fauna and it's SSI status, to shipwrecks and modern-day sailing ... it can all be seen from The Needles .. in a sense, it interprets itself from so many different angles, and it was necessary to take all of this into account, given the fact that The Needles themselves are on the popular tourist trail of the Isle of Wight, and that a wide variety of visitor needs and expectations could be envisaged.

Hence, the buildings and chambers are tidy and uncluttered, in true military fashion, and the colour scheme for the entire site consists of black, white and Forces-grey. The display itself relies upon pictures and script which follow the history of the site and are located chronologically around the walls of The Powder Magazine. Elsewhere on site, there are plain black and white signs naming buildings and gun emplacements. Actual objects are kept to a minimum, partly through an unwillingness to introduce items which are not thought to be genuine, and partly because it is crucial that what artefacts there are can be removed for easy winter storage and conservation, and that they are extremely robust. This exacting criteria means that the collection consists only of rifles, muzzle-loading shells, searchlights, powder scales, and a small brass range finder.

There is, however, an innovative and popular feather-in-the-cap to the Old Battery's minimal physical interpretation; these are the full colour cartoon boards, created by Jeff Campion in the style of his own famous Dan Dare character, which adorn various key locations within the site, both externally and internally. Each board describes the activities which took place and gives a powerful visual depiction of what life must have been like for a Royal Engineer based at The Old Battery. These boards have been a great success with young and old alike over the years, and they are particularly useful as a tool for educational activities, school visits being a mainstay of the shoulder months. There is also a detailed guide book and an illustrated children's guide, again by Jeff Campion.

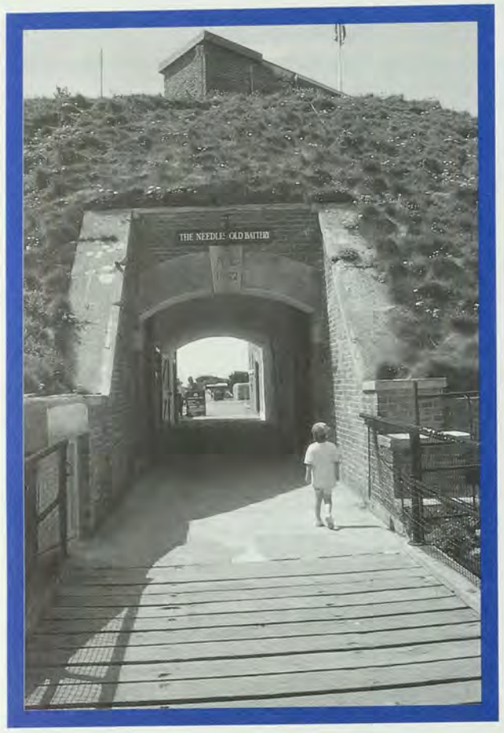
Success lies in how you use what you have got, not how much you can get your hands on! On the whole, the atmosphere at The Old Battery is on of order presentation and successful evocation in the true spirit of time and place. The Battery may not have much in the way of funds or resources to play with, but the 50,000 visitors per annum make it proof that success lies in how you use what you have got, not how much you can get your hands on! In other words, quality over quantity. Perhaps part of it's effectiveness lies in the fact that the visitor is not handed it all on a plate, as seems so often to be the case nowadays, but instead must work his or her imagination to create their own picture ... it's al there for the taking in the sea, the sky,

Interpretive panel at the Needles Old Battery

the headland, the guns and even the lighthouse; a colourful interpretation indeed! •

Harriet Pilkington-Rowland was administrator of The Needles Old Battery for three years, before going on to study for a MA in Heritage Management at The University of Greenwich. She is still struggling to finish the final dissertation because she keeps being distracted and diverted by her interest in Heritage! She lives in Cowes on the Isle of Wight where she is doing up an old Pub and re-interpreting Cowes as a major Maritime Heritage Centre

Display Room at the Needles Old Battery



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• A Sympathetic Interpretation

By 1981, the first stage of work at The Needles Old Battery was complete, and the property was opening to the public on a limited basis. It was officially opened by Prince Charles in 1982. At this point, there was not much in the way of interpretation, other than what the buildings evoked for themselves, and the input of a group of enthusiasts, who would later provide the information for most of the technical interpretation and produce the guidebook. Nevertheless, because there was no financial provision for the site, the property would have to evolve, interpretation-wise, at it's own pace whilst income, however small, was derived from visitors, with help from a small National Trust budget.

Given these considerations, the question now was what form the interpretation of the property was to take. The remaining buildings were at least now sound, but environmentally controlled displays were, and still are, out of the question, due to the ever-present penetrating damp and efflorescence. The only building which in any way approached a sound environment was the Signal Station, but this was still occupied by the Coastguard (until 1988), and eventually it would be needed for administrative and tea-room facilities. The final major consideration, and again largely financial, was to do with staffing levels; there would be absolutely no point in producing an over-sophisticated interpretation, in terms particularly of display, if there was not the qualified staff to oversee it. Clearly, then, it would not make sense to over-capitalise The Needles Old Battery.

The answer to the problems was to take a subtle, minimalist approach which would depend largely upon emphasising the isolation and bleakness of the spot as a working location, but which would also highlight the immense power and beauty of the Headland and it's Maritime setting. Fortunately, this is something that The National Trust does extremely well. Indeed, location has proved to be the key-word at The Old Battery and has probably been it's saving grace, for unlike many military installations, it is surrounded with a wealth of other interesting history and visuals, from the lighthouse, to the Island's rich smuggling background, to the flora and fauna and it's SSI status, to shipwrecks and modern-day sailing ... it can all be seen from The Needles .. in a sense, it interprets itself from so many different angles, and it was necessary to take all of this into account, given the fact that The Needles themselves are on the popular tourist trail of the Isle of Wight, and that a wide variety of visitor needs and expectations could be envisaged.

Hence, the buildings and chambers are tidy and uncluttered, in true military fashion, and the colour scheme for the entire site consists of black, white and Forces-grey. The display itself relies upon pictures and script which follow the history of the site and are located chronologically around the walls of The Powder Magazine. Elsewhere on site, there are plain black and white signs naming buildings and gun emplacements. Actual objects are kept to a minimum, partly through an unwillingness to introduce items which are not thought to be genuine, and partly because it is crucial that what artefacts there are can be removed for easy winter

storage and conservation, and that they are extremely robust. This exacting criteria means that the collection consists only of rifles, muzzle-loading shells, searchlights, powder scales, and a small brass range finder.

There is, however, an innovative and popular feather-in-the-cap to the Old Battery's minimal physical interpretation; these are the full colour cartoon boards, created by Jeff Campion in the style of his own famous Dan Dare character, which adorn various key locations within the site, both externally and internally. Each board describes the activities which took place and gives a powerful visual depiction of what life must have been like for a Royal Engineer based at The Old Battery. These boards have been a great success with young and old alike over the years, and they are particularly useful as a tool for educational activities, school visits being a mainstay of the shoulder months. There is also a detailed guide book and an illustrated children's guide, again by Jeff Campion.

Success lies in how you use what you have got, not how much you can get your hands on! On the whole, the atmosphere at The Old Battery is on of order presentation and successful evocation in the true spirit of time and place. The Battery may not have much in the way of funds or resources to play with, but the 50,000 visitors per annum make it proof that success lies in how you use what you have got, not how much you can get your hands on! In other words, quality over quantity. Perhaps part of it's effectiveness lies in the fact that the visitor is not handed it all on a plate, as seems so often to be the case nowadays, but instead must work his or her imagination to create their own picture ... it's al there for the taking in the sea, the sky,

Interpretive panel at the Needles Old Battery

the headland, the guns and even the lighthouse; a colourful interpretation indeed! •

Harriet Pilkington-Rowland was administrator of The Needles Old Battery for three years, before going on to study for a MA in Heritage Management at The University of Greenwich. She is still struggling to finish the final dissertation because she keeps being distracted and diverted by her interest in Heritage! She lives in Cowes on the Isle of Wight where she is doing up an old Pub and re-interpreting Cowes as a major Maritime Heritage Centre

Display Room at the Needles Old Battery

The B-29 Superfortress stood 29 feet 7inches from the ground to the top of this stabilzer. The tail fin was displayed as an imposing frontispiece to the exhibition

Museum War Exhibits

Propaganda or Interpretation?

text **Gary Perkins**

photography © **Smithsonian/NASM**

Museum Personnel should be required to sign a waiver before preparing exhibits: "Warning! This exhibit may be hazardous to your career - use extreme caution during assembly"

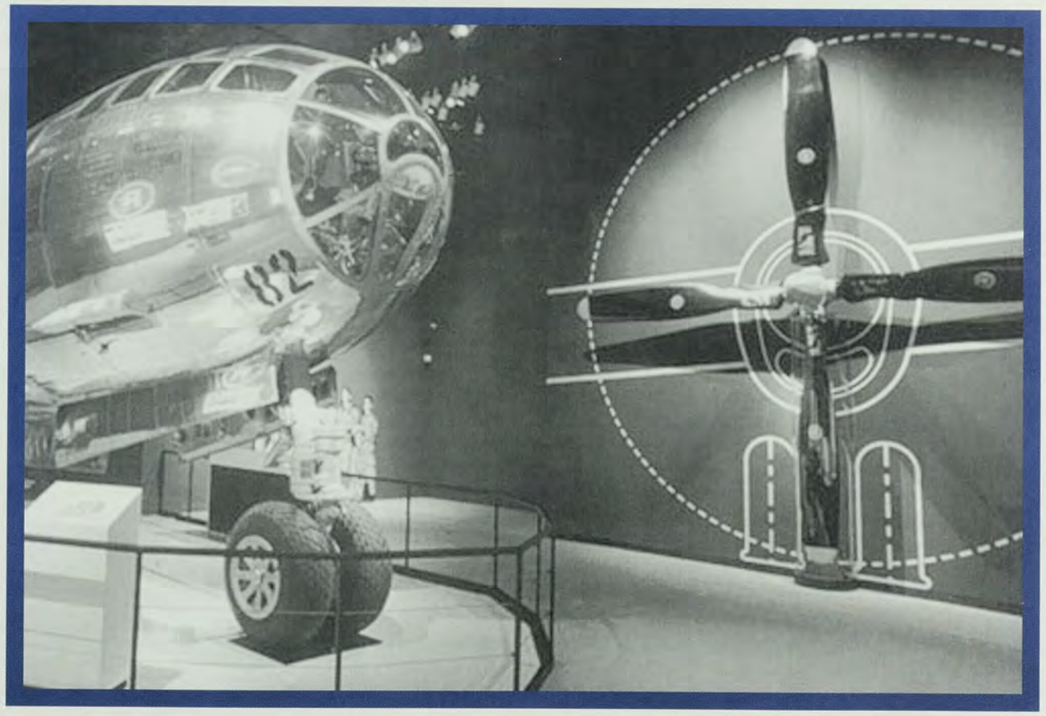
Although they may be one of the oldest forms of object displays designed to inform and sway public opinion, the question of whether museum war exhibits are an interpretation of history or the skilful use of propaganda is a relatively recent one. For many years the museum community carefully avoided exhibits that would provoke the charge that they were deliberately attempting to influence their visitors' thinking with a mixture of truths and half truths. In the half century since the end of the Second World War in 1945, the museum has moved from the traditional stance as a temple of learning to a newer one as a forum dedicated to confrontation, experimentation and debate.

• Interpretation and Propaganda

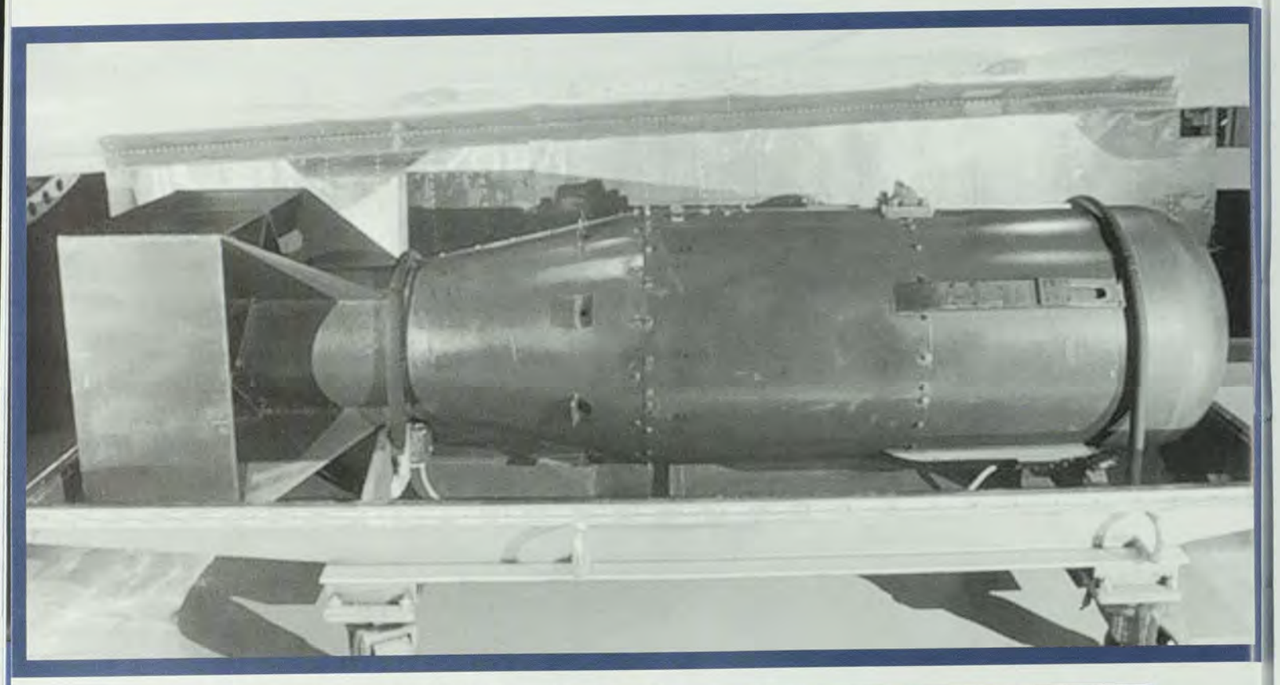
Modern museums see their roles as interpreters of objects and the past to shed light on cultural and historical events. Interpretation, which derives from the Latin work Interpres meaning to negotiate or mediate between two parties, is used in the museum as the process of making something understandable or giving it special meaning. Propaganda also has Latin roots. The term came from the name of a group of Roman Catholic cardinals established by Pope Gregory XV in 1622 to instruct and supervise missionaries. Over the years, propaganda came to mean any effort used to spread a belief; today propaganda is defined as one-sided communication designed to influence people's thinking and actions.

• Oldest Museum Exhibits?

War exhibits, even though they predate the terms propaganda and interpretation by many years, were probably always a mixture of the two forms. The first war exhibit was probably mounted in prehistoric times when the returning victorious fighters spread out the arms and accoutrements of the defeated enemy in front of their cave or tents for the home populace to see, handle, and admire. The signficance of the trophies was explained or interpreted by the veterans when they told the stories of their exploits on the field of battle. The Romans exhibited displays of captured enemy trophies, loot, and prisoners in elaborate parades and festivals which lasted for days. Later, war exhibits were mounted in regiments to inspire a sense of pride among the soldiers. Commanders often sent back trophies of



Because of the enormous size of the "Enola Gay" it proved impossible to display the whole aircraft. Here the propeller of one of the four engines is displayed against a graphic representation of the engine installation



"Little Boy" the type of atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima - equivalent to 20,000 tons of TNT

their campaigns to be exhibited in their homes as a reminder of the greatness of the family (Blenheim Palace is a good example). The war exhibit became especially important during the First World War. Travelling exhibits of captured military equipment toured the home fronts to help drum up support.

• Trying to be Objective

While the trend since World War II, at least in western war museums, has been to provide a more objective look at past conflicts, there have been charges that some museums have violated their trust and gone too far in their quest. The Smithsonian Institution's National Air and Space Museum's plans to commemorate the end of World War II with a display of the B-29 bomber, the Enola Gay, and the effects of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, were a spectacular recent example.

"The Enola Gay became a minor prop for a non aviation morality message"

Arthur Sanfelichi, Aviation History magazine editor.

• Rebuild and then Cut its Nose Off

The museum spent 35,000 hours of labour and $1 million restoring the Enola Gay, the Boeing B-29 Superfortress bomber that dropped the first atomic bomb on August 6, 1945. Exhibit curator Dr Michael Neufeld said that the planned $600,000 exhibit intended to place "the atomic bombings in Japan in a broad historical context". The museum planned to present an in-depth informational exhibit to explore the causes and characteristics of the Pacific War, the development of the atomic bomb, the decision to use it and the after effects, not only on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, but also on world history as well. It was to be primarily an informational display. Even though the Smithsonian had spent so much money and time restoring the fifty year old bomber (which had not been on public display before), the aviation museum planned to display only two aircraft: a Japanese Yokosuka M7 Okha kamikaze rocket-powered flying bomb hanging over the entrance and the forward nose section of the fuselage of the Enola Gay. The exhibit planners' choices of artefacts and displays, coupled with the desire to place the bombings and in historical context, led the museum to be accused of using the objects merely as minor props for a non aviation morality message.

• No Stranger to Controversy

The Smithsonian is no stranger to controversy and criticism. The museum refused to display the original Wright brothers' aircraft for many years, preferring instead to display a machine they claimed was flown by the Secretary of the Smithsonian, Samuel Pierpont Langley, a few days before the Wright brothers' flight in 1903. It wasn't until 1942, that the museum changed its display to recognise the Wrights' flight. In 1948, the Wright Brothers' plane was returned from the London Science Museum and placed in the Smithsonian.

• Revisionist History?

Over the years the Smithsonian has continued to mount controversial exhibits. The institution's National Museum of American Art's exhibit "the West as America" caused a great stir when it was shown in 1992. Daniel J Boorstein, the former librarian of Congress, called it a "perverse, historically inaccurate, destructive exhibit". At Congressional appropriations hearing, two senators accused the Smithsonian of having a political agenda and called for cuts in the museum's funding.

• Neglecting its Artefacts?

On the heels of the art museum's display, the Air and Space Museum changed its World War 1 aviation gallery, removing many of the objects and concentrating on informational displays instead. Aviation historians thought the new approach trivialised the role of aviation in the First World War. Editorials were written demanding the museum return to the requirements placed upon it by its charter and concentrate on restoring and displaying the objects in its collection. "It's that simple - collect, preserve and display", the editor of Aviation History magazine wrote summing up the Air and Space Museum's responsibilities. He went on to say that the Museum's treasures are suffering neglect because "its earlier artefact-orientated curatorial staff is systematically replaced by socially orientated theorists as the Smithsonian's top management creates an academic atmosphere that spurns its founding commitment to the collection". Of the 350 employees of the museum, only 15 were directly involved in restoration and preservation of artefacts. Four percent of the museum's budget was allocated for aircraft restoration at the time when over half of the institution's 350 aircraft needed major restoration work. The museum was able to restore only one or two aircraft per year.

It was into this atmosphere that the National Air and Space Museum decided that World War 2 needed a broader interpretation and the world's most provocative aviation artefact, the Enola Gay, would be the centrepiece of the exhibition. Around it, the exhibit would consider a series of "historical controversies". Was a warning or demonstration of the bomb possible? Was an invasion inevitable if the atomic bomb had not been dropped? Was the decision to drop the bomb justified? Extensive photographs, artefacts (most on loan from the Peace Memorial Museum of Hiroshima), and discussions relating to the bombing's effects on the Japanese victims would intensify the interpretation. So graphic were some of these images and descriptions that the original exhibit script began by urging parental discretion for young children.

The editor of the Air Force Association's magazine, wrote that the exhibit "lacked balance and historical context, was designed to play on emotions, and was part of an established pattern in which the Smithsonian intentionally depicts the US military air power in a negative way". The battle was on. Petitions were

Text panel for the "Enola Gay" Exhibition

The forward fuselage section of the "Enola Gay" named after the pilot's mother

circulated, editorials written, and radio and televised debates held. The Senate passed a resolution condemning the exhibit as "revisionist, unbalanced, and offensive" and demanded that the museum's funds be cut.

After months of intense pressure, the Smithsonian's new secretary, I. Michael Heyman gave in - in May 1995, Dr Harwit resigned. Mr Heyman, in a June press conference, mentioned that the museum had received a report from the General Accounting Office suggesting that the National Air and Space Museum put more money into restoration activities and less into public programming.

As the Air and Space Museum's recent experience shows, displaying war material in a balanced interpretive exhibit can be a challenge. Museums need to be forums for discussion but they must ensure that their interpretations do not unconsciously become propaganda. •

Gary Perkins, Exhibits Coordinator of the Sweetwater Historical Museum, Green River, Wyoming, USA, received a masters degree in museum science from Texas Tech University. A retired US Air Force F-111 pilot, Major Perkins was based in England for 13 of his 20 years of military service. He was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross in the Persian Gulf War

text **GD Sheffield**

photography **Trustees of the Imperial War Museum**

The Somme

Interpreting a Battlefield

• The Battle

The battle of the Somme in 1916 is imbedded deep in British folk memory. The disastrous first day of the offensive, 1 July 1916, when 60,000 British soldiers became casualties (and 20,000 died) for negligible gains of ground has become a symbol of the 'futility' of war and the incompetence of Great War generals. In reality, the battle of the Somme, which actually lasted until 18 November 1916, was a far from futile event and the standard of generalship was not universally poor. However it is the myth rather than the reality that has gripped the popular imagination, and as a result large numbers of Britons visit the old Somme battlefield every year. Visitors range from the merely curious, to those on 'pilgrimage', visiting the grave and/or scene of action of an ancestor, or even in the case of the handful of surviving veterans, the scene of their own youth. Other visitors include schoolchildren, who are studying the war poets for GCSE; amateur military historians, visiting the Somme either as part of an organised tour or in their own cars; and those with a professional interest, serious military historians and soldiers, studying the campaign on the ground.

Canadian troops go "over the top". October 1916

• The Battlefield Today

The battlefield has, in some ways, changed relatively little since 1916. Clearly some of the physical scars have healed, although shell-holes and unexploded shells are found in abundance in some places. However the area remains essentially what it was before the battle, an agricultural zone. The major physical reminders of the battle are memorials ranging from plaques on walls to the vast Thiepval monument; war cemeteries; and of course the terrain itself. Hills, ridges and woods were key features during the battle, and were heavily fought over, and at Beaumont Hamel a 'battlefield park' contains original, although now grass-covered, trenches. How can the battlefield of the Somme best be interpreted?

• Interpretative Centres and Museums

Obviously, different types of visitor have different needs. Most have one thing in common: a profound ignorance of the battle itself. It is very easy for a tourist simply to visit a series of cemeteries, be struck by the 'pity of war', and go away as uninformed about the battle as when they arrived. The one thing that most British visitors could easily do to enhance their appreciation of the battlefield is to visit the Imperial War Museum before they leave the UK, to learn fairly painlessly about weapons, strategy, and tactics. On arriving in France, they can visit several museums or interpretative centres which have recently been built in the area. There is an interesting museum at Albert, just behind the old British lines, and a major museum, the Historiale, at Peronne. However the latter is heavily biased towards a cultural interpretation of the war and is not as useful for visitors to the Somme as one would have liked. A very good interpretative centre has recently been built at the Ulster Tower at Thiepval, which explains the attack of 36th Ulster Division on 1st July, its importance in the culture of Northern Ireland, and the contribution of Ireland, north and south to the Great War. A similar but much larger venture at Delville Wood explains the role of the South Africans.
What is there to see?

A basic problem in interpreting a battlefield like the Somme for lay people is that there is not very much that is purely military to see. Hence the fascination with cemeteries, with preserved trenches like those at Serre, with the huge mine crater at La Boisselle: these are obvious things to look at. For the trained eye, the fields and woods of Somme are rich in detail. Standing on a farm track near Contalmasion on the approximate site of the German front line around 7-10 July, one can see a field with gentle rolling slope, flanked by woods. The average visitor would see little more than that. The soldier, or military historian, however can immediately see why the British troops that attacked here had so much trouble getting forward: they were advancing into a natural amphitheatre, an obvious killing ground. Only when troops on their flanks captured the woods and thus out-flanked the German position, forcing the defenders to retire, could the British infantry on this sector advance.

Unfortunately, most of the guide books to the Somme rarely rise much above a gazetteer of cemeteries and memorials, and they concentrate overwhelmingly on 1 July. Even superior books, like the generally useful Battleground Europe series published by Pen & Sword, are aimed at those who have at least a basic level of

The 1st Lancs Fusiliers fix bayonets prior to the assault on Beaumont Hamel, 1 July 1916

knowledge of military history. Despite the plethora of guidebooks, given the low level of even basic military knowledge of most visitors to the Somme there is undoubtedly room for an intelligent beginner's guide, that explains the military history of the battle and individual actions without taking too much for granted.

• The Great War: a Cultural or Military Event?

The British habit of treating the Great War as a cultural event rather than a military one, in which soldier poets get higher billing than generals, has led to a very one-sided interpretation of the battle. Most coach parties arrive at, say, Delville Wood (which is the only non-lst July site to be regularly visited, largely because it possesses not only a splendid museum but also a cafe

The 4th Battalion of the Worcestershire Regiment marching to the trenches. June 1916

with superior lavatories) not to study the conduct of the battle but to wander around and empathise with doomed youth. Perhaps the solution is to build interpretative centres which present a more balanced portrait of the battle by integrating cultural with diplomatic, social and military history. But where? I have a personal bias against such centres on the battlefield itself; I did not greet the news that the Canadians are building such a centre at Beaumont Hamel with any degree of enthusiasm. The informative plaques recently erected on the battlefields by the Australian government and the British-based Western Front Association are rather less intrusive.

• The Role of the Guide

By far and away the best way of interpreting the Somme - or indeed any battlefield - is to use a trained and knowledgeable guide. This is not always possible, and in my experience not all individuals who lead parties to the Somme know all that much about the actual conduct of the battle. At present, unless an individual has taken the time to prepare themselves for a tour by reading round the subject or visiting a reputable museum, they can leave the Somme with a very misleading impression of one of the most important events in twentieth century British history. •

The film Battle of the Somme (1916) had an enormous impact on the British public. This faked scene remains an enduring icon of the battle

Dr Gary Sheffield is a noted author on military history and Chair of Research and Academic Development at the Department of War Studies at the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst. He has published widely on the history of the First World war

The Gettysburg battlefield

text **Major M W Whitchurch MBE Royal Engineers**

Touring Former Battlefields

Learning from the Past

"Fools learn from experience I prefer to learn from the experience of others".
Bismarck.

• Background

Most armies spend the majority of their time training for something that they will rarely do, and when the real thing comes they must get it right. Yet because first hand experience is so rare, realistic training is therefore very important. One aid to realistic training is looking at case studies by touring former battlefields.

The intention of such touring is to gain an insight into how the combatants actually planned, organised and conducted themselves. Set against the theory of war this practice of what happened can make for invaluable (and fascinating) instruction.

It should be stressed that the techniques of war may be changing (the horse, tank attack, helicopter for example) but the principles of war remain constant. A former battlefield with various aids and methods can improve our understanding of war, how to plan, prepare, organise and conduct it with the intention of achieving success at minimal cost in casualties and materiel.

So what aids are needed for successful interpretation? The ideal aids needed are: a recognisable battlefield, good archives, veterans, museums, novel touches and effective instruction.

A recognisable battlefield is key to the tour. The theory of war is really absurdly simple, it is the actual practice on the ground that makes it so hard. By using the original piece of ground this point can be well made.

Good archival material comes in the form of film, war diaries, histories and tour guides. These (like all projects) need careful collection, researching and collating into concise information packages and video clips (including that of reenactors) which will aid the tour.

Chosen with care, veterans - and the oldest will now be from the Second World War - can be quite excellent "instructors". Good research will usually reveal one or two who will be very good, like Sydney Jary, author of '18 Platoon', a standard text at Sandhurst. He is famous across the British Army for his ability to relate his experience as a Second World War platoon leader to serving members of today's Army.

What can a tour do when looking at, say, the American Civil War (1861-65) which is beyond memory? Use of experts is probably the best way, although this has limitations. Experience shows that the leader of the tour must really know his battle as 'experts' can so easily get the "instruction" wrong by not knowing how

Gettysburg: the position once held by the 20th Maine Regiment. Their memorial provides a focal point

to interpret the battle for the aim of the tour or needs of the students.

Museums can be a reservoir of useful sources and help to focus the group on specific issues before going "out into the field". The Bovington Tank Museum and "Visitors Centers" in America for the Civil War are outstanding examples of places with archives, exhibits or information waiting to be used.

What about 'novel touches'? Your author tries to get the students to re-live the problem in order to understand what happened. For example in a river crossing I use boats to cross the river the same way the combatants did and this stimulates the imagination. Handling old weapons can help; walking a battlefield in assault formation is another way. Finally, like cooking it is for the cook to bring all the ingredients together to serve a 'meal' of instruction which provides effective interpretation of the Battlefield. The qualities required for this are effective leadership, imagination, energy, drive and a passion for instructing.

So how does a battlefield tour come together?
A careful use of all the aids backed up by good administration with good tour leadership and consequent success is certain.

It must be stressed that some 50% of the time is given over to group discussion of specific questions or problems to solve. Students learn best by exploring how they would have "done it", by preparing and giving short orders for the problem they face. Alternatively the veteran can say how he would do it in hindsight.

• A Personal View of Battlefield Touring

In my opinion after some 36 tours such interpretation provides invaluable food for thought and reflection. There is so much to learn from the past. It removes students from the distractions of their normal job and gives them time to think which is key to any profession. Any student of Napoleon will note how he studied others and reflected on it. It is this reflection which helped him do so well in his initial years. This is what he said:

"If I always appear prepared, it is because before entering on an undertaking, I have meditated for long and have foreseen what may occur. It is not genius which reveals to me suddenly and secretly what I should do in circumstances unexpected by others; it is thought and meditation".

Equally in 1987 a Falklands War Commander Major General Thompson had an interesting view:
"All the manuals list the prerequisites for military success but only a study of how our predecessors applied or failed to apply the principles can breath life into them".

Perhaps the final word must come from that brilliant trainer Field Marshal Wavell who in 1932 said:
"There is no more valuable form of training, especially for younger officers than a well run Battlefield Tour". •

A recognisable battlefield. The town of Vernon has changed little and events can be followed very precisely. To cross the Seine in 1944, British troops assembled along the broad avenue in the centre of the picture watched over by German flak gunners. This was their vantage point