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journal

A H I

of the Association for Heritage Interpretation

Interpretation

Inclusive heritage:
attracting new audiences

Seven award winning schemes from Interpret Britain 2001

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The next issue will look at:

Interpreting cultural identity

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In 2001 the Interpret Britain Awards Committee, with the support of English Heritage, decided to nominate non-traditional audiences as its Special Category. By 'non-traditional' we meant any groups who would not normally feel that museums or heritage sites had either anything of interest to offer them, or were not accessible or welcoming enough.

The response was excellent and seven winners of awards and commendations are described in this Journal. The variety of activity they show is impressive. In these articles we come across asylum seekers in Hackney creating art that reflects their past lives and ordeals, people in Enfield recording their childhood memories of their town and Chester City's drive to interest a wider section of its population. We hear about Boughton House scheme to open all year, the Ratho Canal Trust's scheme to make a popular canal side walk accessible to all, ground-breaking interpretation for the deaf at Colchester Museum and Tate Modern's audio tour for the people with sight difficulties.

AHI is pleased to publicise these accounts of initiatives that we hope will encourage others to try similarly imaginative and worthwhile schemes. In 2002 the Awards' Special Category will be 'Interpretation and Volunteers'.

John Iddon, Organiser, Interpret Britain Awards

For more information about the Association for Heritage Interpretation (AHI), send an email to admin@heritage-interpretation.org.uk <<mailto:admin@heritage-interpretation.org.uk>>, write to the Administrator, AHI, Cruachan, Tayinloan, Tarbert PA29 6XF or telephone / fax 01583 441114.

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What makes a winner?

Judith Franklin looks at some of the factors which determine the granting of the awards

Judging the Interpret Britain Awards is never an easy task. The standard is uniformly high, and the range of entries is huge, from events and exhibitions to websites and guidebooks, and from small-scale projects on a shoe-string, to major exhibitions and multi-million pound developments.

How can you possibly judge between such very different projects that often also have very different resources at their disposal? The task is made easier when the purpose of the awards is kept in focus - they are the only awards which seek to recognise and encourage excellence in interpretation and successful interpretation does not depend purely upon the size of resources available, the nature of the project or its subject. In fact, it is possible for a low-budget project to be more successful in interpretive terms than an expensive one which may look beautiful or be full of high-tech gadgets, but yet fail to inspire or communicate any real message to its intended audience. Sometimes, simply an enthusiastic voluntary guide who can respond and adapt might actually provide the most successful interpretation to a varied audience.

The range of elements that contribute to good interpretation is huge. In addition to major factors such as the type of media chosen or the style of delivery, there are more subtle aspects of interpretation such as the quality of the orientation or the standard of maintenance, which can make an important contribution to whether a project succeeds or fails. After all, how successful in interpretive terms is a site where visitor orientation is poor, or an exhibition where the interactive elements no longer work?

Methods of interpretation may also vary according to the intended audience. Providing interpretation for non-traditional audiences is perhaps even more of a challenge, requiring still greater levels of imagination to find ways of engaging those who perhaps in the past have felt that a subject or site is not for them. Achieving success in this area is even more satisfying than providing successful interpretation for a more 'traditional' audience.

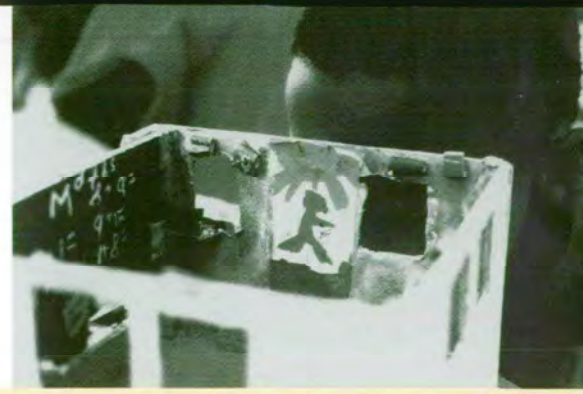
With all this in mind, no one should be discouraged from entering an interpretive project for an award. Remember, in this instance size really doesn't matter. It's quality that counts, and it is particularly encouraging that this is reflected in the variety of this year's winners. Hopefully others will be inspired by their success.

For the winners, the value of the awards lies in the recognition of the quality of their work, and a higher profile for their project, which in turn will encourage others to visit. For visitors, an award is a mark of quality in a world of increasing choice. But perhaps most importantly of all, for the professional working in interpretation, the awards are a way of sharing best practice, inspiring new and creative solutions for interpreting and understanding the world around us.

Judith Franklin is Tourism & Visitor Services Manager, Stafford Borough Council

Suitcase sculptures

Claire Adler recounts how children created sculptures to illustrate why they live in Hackney



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'The population of Hackney has always been mobile and cosmopolitan; from Saxon settlers 1,500 years ago through to Jewish, Vietnamese and Kosovan refugees over the last century'

In April 2002, the new Hackney Museum opens and will tell the story about the history of immigration and settlement in the London Borough of Hackney over the past 1,500 years. The museum will use objects, art works, oral histories, reconstructions, interactives, as well as sculptures by schoolchildren, to illustrate how and why people have moved to the area.

Cultural diversity

Today, Hackney is one of the most culturally diverse areas in Europe where over ninety-two languages are spoken. But the population of Hackney has always been mobile and cosmopolitan - from Saxon people who arrived 1500 years ago, to Jewish, Vietnamese and Kosovan refugees who have settled here during the last century.

This varied history is the background to Hackney Museums 'Suitcase Sculptures' project funded by the Regional Arts Lottery. Its primary aim was to get children to investigate why their families lived in Hackney and illustrate their stories by creating a sculpture which would fit into a suitcase. The project was designed with the intention of integrating four of the final sculptures into the museum displays, to give a child's perspective of the issues raised in the museum.

Getting started

Before the project started I contacted the Refugee Council for advice. This led to a training course about working with refugee children and talking to children about what it is/would be like to be a refugee. We decided that the project could only be successful by working with a single class over a period of time, so that we could focus on the children and give each child time to explore and develop their ideas. Due to the sensitive nature of the topic and the fact that many children in Hackney are recent refugees, we wanted to work with a class who knew me and felt confident working with me.

Shacklewell Primary School was chosen because it has one of the most diverse, multicultural communities within Hackney. I knew the class teacher, Stephanie Kennedy, well and had met the children many times over the past three years. The children were all eight to nine years old and came

from at least fourteen different communities. The challenge was to make the project both relevant and inclusive for all the children whether they had recently moved here or their family had lived in Hackney for generations.

The project

May Ayres, the artist-in-residence, had lots of experience of working with children, and had a particular interest in getting children to express their personal identities through sculpture. Her own work is issue-led and investigates being homeless, old and disconnected from society.

The project took place over five months. Once selected the teacher and artist were involved in all the planning from the outset. This was to ensure it was appropriate for all the children, that it was relevant to a cross-section of the National Curriculum and that the artist would be involved in the preliminary work.

Preparatory work in school

The project would not have been as successful without Stephanie Kennedy's enthusiasm and commitment to incorporating the project into her scheme of work for a whole term. She sourced and bought books that looked at children moving home, whether moving house within England or escaping a war. Stephanie used the books for Literacy Hour, asking children to think about why people move without making any direct references to the children's own stories. She also undertook work related to the geography and maths curriculum.

Using Hackney Museum

Hackney Museum collects objects that relate to the history and reflects the cultural diversity of the area, for example an Anglo-Saxon log boat, posters for political rallies and fabrics worn by West African women in Hackney. In conjunction with this policy we collect objects that relate to individual's lives in their country of origin, such as Nigerian drums and Vietnamese toys. We used a variety of these objects to stimulate children thinking about their families and their countries of origin. We used the objects for observational drawing, imaginative drawing and storytelling. Unprompted, the children began to



Above from left:

Donald's sculpture:

'My mum came from Cameroon to get a good education'

Diana's sculpture:

'My dad moved to Hackney to find a job'

'In the end, only one child was able to say that her family had lived in Hackney for generations'

'Mohamed's sculpture was about 'me being safe inside my house in Sierra Leone, while there is a war going on outside'

recount stories about when they used similar objects or observing that their families came from the same country as the objects they were handling.

Moving to Hackney

The children then recorded their own stories of why they lived in Hackney. Some of the stories were very disturbing. Mohamed had only recently arrived in Britain from Sierra Leone. Stephanie worked closely with him, as she was unsure of his circumstances and it emerged that he had travelled to England via four other countries, having seen atrocities in his own country. Other children's stories were less straightforward. We discovered that Frances was part Chinese, Maltese and Irish. A couple of the children who were assumed to be primarily white British were in fact Irish and Spanish. In the end, only one child was able to say that her family had lived in Hackney for generations. The stories became a learning process not only for the children, but for the teacher too.

Making sculptures

The children were given the opportunity to experiment with different types of materials and tools. The final sculptures were made from a wide range of materials including wood, papier-mâché, plaster-of-paris and found objects. Each child also produced a short label describing their sculpture.

Temitope's sculpture was about 'the evil king giving money to the soldier to kill all the people in Nigeria'. It shows the torsos of three figures, including a woman running away with terror streaked across her face.

Mohamed's sculpture was about 'me being safe inside my house in Sierra Leone, while there is a war going on outside' while Michael's sculpture was about 'me going to the job centre when I am older'. This may sound depressing, but Michael's aspirations are to get a job and not be unemployed as the rest of his family has been for many years. The imagery that was produced was astounding.

Exhibiting the sculptures

The finished sculptures and accompanying artwork were opened in an exhibition at the new Ocean Music Venue, opposite the site of the new museum. The exhibition was opened by a representative from

the United Nations High Commission for Refugees and was attended by all the children and many of their immediate and extended families. It was then displayed in Stoke Newington Library during summer 2001. The response from the public was overwhelming. The visitor's book was filled with overwhelmingly positive comments including: 'It is a brilliant reminder of the imaginations and creativity of children despite often painful experiences'; 'I saw two exhibitions this week. This and Vermeer at the National Gallery. This is the one I'll remember and talk about. Well done, it's a fantastic concept really well executed.' The children themselves were so proud of their work that many brought their extended families with them to both the opening of the exhibition and to the library display.

Where next?

The strength of the work means that ten of the final sculptures will be integrated into the new museum display, rather than the original four. The incorporation of the sculptures into the displays gives a uniquely personal view of living in Hackney, as well as placing value on children's work, but they will also give visitors a new perspective on the lives of local children.

Claire Adler is Community Education Officer for Hackney Museum Service

What the judges said

- A most imaginative outreach scheme
- Recent immigrants and asylum seekers (many of them Kosovan) have been helped to consider what is important to them about the culture they've left behind
- Many sculptures are profoundly touching and moving, evoking, as they do, feelings of loss and nostalgia

Breaking down barriers

Judith Bolton discusses how work on a canal-side walk at Ratho addresses a wide range of issues relating to access and interpretation for disabled people

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'We need to get away from thinking that access for people with disabilities means paths for wheelchair users'

Access for all

On June 28th 2001 Magnus Magnusson, Chairman of the Paths for All Partnership, launched a scheme at Ratho that breaks new ground in countryside access and heritage interpretation for people with all kinds of disabilities.

Ratho is a pretty village just to the west of Edinburgh. The Union Canal passes through the village and the towpath is a popular route for walkers and cyclists heading out of the city. In fact a staggering 33,000 visitors pass through Ratho on the towpath each year. The attractions are obvious - easy access to beautiful countryside a stone's throw from Edinburgh. But it hasn't always provided easy access for everyone.

Ratho has long been linked with leisure trips for disabled people. The Seagull Trust operates barges from here offering canal cruises to 6,000 disabled people a year. But that was where their visit ended: access controls, narrow paths and steep gradients meant that they couldn't use the towpath. They couldn't get the full experience of a visit to the canal.

In 1997 serendipity struck. British Waterways was looking at improvements as part of the Millennium Link. The Paths for All Partnership, then newly formed, was looking to develop a demonstration site in good practice for access for all. The Edinburgh Green Belt Trust was already working with local people on environmental and access improvements around Ratho. So when a local disability group, ECAS, approached British Waterways about access along the towpath for people with ambulant difficulties, a steering group quickly came together.

Not just paths for wheelchairs

The work began with British Waterways upgrading the towpath at Ratho to make it suitable for wheelchair access, but this project goes far beyond that. As Magnus Magnusson said on launching the project, *'We need to get away from thinking that access for people with disabilities means paths for wheelchair users. Only 5% of disabled people use wheelchairs. Access for all means just that - access for everyone - people with visual impairments, people with learning difficulties, people who can't hear, people who are frail through old age, parents with pushchairs - all should have equal opportunities to enjoy the outdoors.'*

The access works that have been carried out include widening the path between the car park and the picnic site and installing a sculptural gate, which allows vehicle access when necessary but also pedestrian, wheelchair and pram access at all times. A variety of picnic tables allow wheelchair users to sit alongside friends and family. Carefully disguised hand-holds in the table provide assistance in sitting and standing. Resting perches have been installed along the towpath at intervals of 100m or less and many have a dual function as interpretation panels. A larger seat has been placed at the furthest point from the picnic area.

Information for all

But enjoyment of a visit to the countryside depends not just on physical access but on access to information too. Interpretation boards can aid appreciation by providing historical details or information about flora and fauna, but they rarely take into account the needs of people with visual impairments. The height at which interpretation materials are placed can render them next to useless for people in wheelchairs. Barriers are found even before people reach a countryside attraction. Many leaflets aimed at encouraging visits don't provide vital information such as how steep are the paths? Are there benches to stop for a rest? Are accessible toilets provided?

The promotional leaflet for Ratho was designed specifically with the visually impaired and people with learning difficulties in mind. Large text, simple layout, plain language and the strong colour contrast of black on yellow have been employed whilst keeping the leaflet attractive and appropriate for a wider audience too. The leaflet gives plenty of advice about what people can expect to find at the site - path widths and inclines, directions to the nearest accessible toilets and mention of the availability of resting perches and wheelchair accessible picnic benches.

At the site itself, all of the interpretation has been designed to be accessible and interesting to a wide range of people. The aim was to show how the Union Canal is a living connection with Ratho's past, present and future. The canal was an important transport link and source of work for villagers in the past. Now its importance is more as a venue for

Below (top): the picnic area before work started; (bottom) the picnic area completed





*Above from left:
Detail from the main
interpretive panel;
Discussing the hand-
holds in the picnic tables*

**'The wheelchair
accessible height of
the panel makes it
equally appropriate
for children'**

**'People resist
making changes and
adaptations to
provide access and
interpretation for
disabled people
because they think
that the adaptations
will be ugly and
utilitarian'**

leisure activities and as a habitat for wildlife. All of these diverse links are explored in the interpretative panels around the site.

The centrepiece of the picnic area is a two sided, lectern-style panel in cast metal topped by a sculpture of a horse-drawn barge. The wheelchair accessible height of the panel makes it equally appropriate for children. The panel content (words, maps and pictures) is raised to make it 'readable' by touch and of course the sculpture is perfect for those with severe visual impairments.

The resting perches follow the form of the main interpretative panel, being made of cast metal with raised interpretative panels set into their backs and small sculptures relating to the canal and its surroundings atop each perch. The clever combination of function and education encourages people to stop every 100m or so to admire the artistry and take in another 'bite-sized' piece of information about the heritage of the area, whilst getting the chance for a discreet sit-down! At the furthest point of the walk, a larger seat follows this principle by allowing a longer rest whilst taking in a larger interpretative panel depicting the local wildlife.

Well-designed adaptations

All too often, people resist making changes and adaptations to provide access and interpretation for disabled people because they think that the adaptations will be ugly and utilitarian and will detract from the experience for others. This project lays that excuse to rest for good. The on-site furniture is beautiful. It serves three purposes simultaneously with little or no compromise - it allows physical access and opportunities to sit down for disabled and elderly people; it interprets the heritage of the site in a way that is accessible to all and it stands alone as artistic sculpture which can be admired for its own sake. All of the furniture and interpretative panels were made by local artist blacksmith, Phil Johnson in his Ratho forge.

Getting things right

We don't claim to have found all the solutions but we like to think that we have asked all the questions and opened up the debate. The key to success was the active involvement of people with a variety of disabilities in all stages of planning and executing the project. This real commitment to getting things right was clear at the open day early on in the project when people came along to look at models and sketches of the planned work. The steering group asked what people thought and listened to what people said. It was the comments from this day that led to additions such as the hand-holds and back rests on the picnic benches - little details that are easy to overlook but which can make a huge difference. Specifying these requirements at an early stage enables them to be incorporated into the overall design rather than tacked on at the end as ugly add-ons.

*Judith Bolton is the Fundraising and Marketing
Co-ordinator for the Edinburgh Green Belt Trust
www.egbt.org.uk*

What the judges said

- This is a brave and well-executed scheme reflecting a widely-based partnership to increase access
- The thought and implementation that has gone into this project is highly commendable

A word in your ear...

Felicity Fallon explains how two audio tours have been created for specialist audiences at Tate Modern

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'The Children's tour at Tate Modern communicates to younger visitors the message that Tate values them and has something special to offer them'

Audio tours are increasingly seen by museums as an important means of meeting the diverse interpretational needs of visitors. Advances in digital technology, and a more sophisticated creative approach to interpretation, have revolutionised the audio tour experience. This article looks at ways in which individual museums and galleries have successfully targeted certain audiences with tailor-made audio interpretation. Two Acoustiguide tours from Tate Modern are taken as case studies - a tour for children in family or social groups, and a tour for visitors with sight difficulties.

Technological advances

Digital audio technology has moved on since the 'one-size-fits-all' days of the cassette tour - where every visitor followed the same route around the museum and listened to a single continuous commentary. Many visitors were frustrated by this inflexible approach, either finding the commentary pitched at the wrong level for them, or the navigational cues confusing and difficult to follow.

While there are undeniably some sites where the 'linear' approach still works, most museums now are taking advantage of more sophisticated digital technology. This allows visitors to take tours at their own pace, using the random access facility on the handsets to access individual commentaries as they wish: if they want to hear about a certain painting they simply key in a number next to the painting. At the end of the commentary visitors might also be offered the option of hearing a further 'layer' of information on a related topic.

In addition, the new handsets have much more memory than before, enabling museums to store more than one tour on the same unit. This allows museums to reach out to a much larger audience than previously, in a far more targeted way.

Tailor-made audio interpretation

Tate Audio, launched at Tate Modern in May 2000, takes advantage of this new technology to offer an unprecedented range of tours. Visitors can choose from a Permanent Collection tour in English, French, Spanish, Italian and German, a Children's tour, a Director's tour, an Architecture tour, and a tour for

people with sight difficulties.

Not all museums and galleries will need such a range. The crucial first step is for the museum to decide exactly how its audio tour service will fit into the overall interpretation strategy, and where the institutional priorities lie. For example, when Manchester Art Gallery prepared its vision for redevelopment, staff identified the need to be an organisation that 'values the cultural diversity of the City and reflects this in its work'. When the Gallery reopens in Spring 2002 there will be tours available in Cantonese and Urdu, as well as English, reflecting the priorities identified by visitor research. In this way, the Gallery aims to make its audio interpretation as accessible as possible to its local community.

External funding or sponsorship can be key components of an audio interpretation strategy. A new audio tour, especially one reaching out to desired audiences, can be immensely fundable by outside sources. For example, Acoustiguide's forthcoming tour for visitors with sight difficulties at Manchester Art Gallery, is sponsored by Lloyds TSB. Tate Audio is sponsored by Bloomberg as part of major sponsorship package. On the benefits of sponsoring Tate Audio, Bloomberg says '*As a global, multimedia news and information company, Bloomberg is constantly using the latest technology to bring information to an ever expanding audience. We are delighted that our sponsorship of the innovative audio guides has helped audiences of all ages and all cultures to fully appreciate and enjoy Tate Modern's wonderful exhibitions*'.

The tours in the following case studies are innovative and high-profile; they increase access to the collections and also offer great enjoyment to visitors - all key elements that sponsors look for in today's market. Digital technology, by its very nature, allows for sponsor logo placement on an LCD screen embedded in the handset. Sponsors can count on measurable impressions - much more tangible than the traditional plaque on a gallery wall.

Right: Young visitors to
Tate Modern using
Tate Audio



MARCUS LEITH

**'The tour for people
with sight difficulties
is as similar as
possible to the
experience of the
fully sighted visitor'**

The Children's tour at Tate Modern

Although it has been estimated that children make up approximately one third of museum visitors in the UK, historically there has been remarkably little specialist provision for them. In recent years, this has of course begun to change and audio tours for children are just one example of this new way of thinking.

The tour for children at Tate Modern is the main interpretative tool for children aged 8-12 who visit the gallery in family/social groups. It offers two 40-minute 'audio trails' around the Landscape and Still-Life suites of the Gallery. Children follow clues to identify works of art and are encouraged to look closely at the displays en route. The trail format enables children to focus on individual works of art (in a space where they could easily be overwhelmed by the vast range of works on display) and to take the tour at their own pace rather than one that is pre-determined for them. Michael Rosen, the popular children's author, poet and broadcaster, narrates the trails.

This tour was the first audio programme specifically designed for children in a modern art gallery in the UK. It communicates to younger visitors the message that Tate values them and has something special to offer them. Children do not always enjoy visits to contemporary art galleries and can often find them puzzling or intimidating. The tour challenges any preconceptions children, and their parents, may have by introducing them to contemporary and modern art in a fun, entertaining and stimulating way. It is hoped that by having a positive experience of art at a young age, the children involved will start a pattern of museum/gallery visiting that they will continue throughout their lives.

Museums throughout the UK and worldwide are looking to Tate Modern as a trailblazer in terms of imagination and interpretation. The tour takes a totally different format from conventional adult tours in its interactive trail format. By using recordings of local children talking about the art, rather than academics or museum professionals, the two trails convey the idea that children do have valid opinions about art and clearly pitch the discussion at their level.

Audio for visitors with sight difficulties

The aim of this tour for visitors with sight difficulties at Tate Modern was to make modern and contemporary art more accessible and enjoyable. The first decision to be made was whether it should be a tour with significant orientational content to enable people with sight difficulties to navigate the galleries on their own. Or a tour that assumed that people with sight difficulties were accompanied by a fully sighted visitor and that they therefore did not need orientational content. After much discussion the latter approach was taken.

The one-hour tour contains detailed audio descriptions of the works of art, which then link back to segments from the mainstream Permanent Collection tour where relevant, such as archive recordings and interviews with curators. This enables the tour for people with sight difficulties to be as similar as possible to the experience of the fully sighted visitor taking the Permanent Collection tour.

The section of the tour that is specially scripted aims to build in the visitor's mind an idea of what is in front of them, using very rich and vivid imagery and metaphor. The description uses relative sizes, such as 'as big as an adult's hand' rather than actual measurements. It also employs imaginative analogy to convey the impression created by the work on a sighted visitor. For example, the commentary accompanying sculptor Richard Long's Red Slate Circle begins 'If you were an ant, approaching this work would be like walking towards a huge mountain range rising from the floor. The work is made up of hefty lumps of slate, laid close together but rarely touching. They have jagged edges, sharp corners, irregular slopes and sides - they really do look like little mountains, with cliffs, peaks and plateaux.'

The future for audio tours

The audio tour market has exploded in recent years. No longer is the audio tour audience confined to 'the general visitor' or tourist. As this article has shown, audio tours can also offer extremely fulfilling

museum experiences to audiences hitherto neglected by traditional interpretation. As museums make ever greater efforts to achieve full intellectual access and social inclusion for their visitors, the role of the audio tour can only grow.

Felicity Fallon is Senior Business Development Manager at Acoustiguide

What the judges said

- As well as using clear descriptions the tour for visitors with sight difficulties also incorporates, where relevant, some of the excellent interviews with artists and curators so successful in the standard audio tours
- Michael Rosen, who narrates the children's tour, is supported by a 'trail team' of children from a Southward Primary School who offer fascinating insights and responses



Above : The redesign and interpretation of the Roman Gardens opened up access, and the story of the Roman stones displayed there, to an audience for whom the gardens had not been fully accessible previously

Doing things differently. . .

Eileen Willshaw and Sarah Oswald describe how Chester Community History and Heritage has worked hard to achieve exactly what its name suggests

Chester Community History and Heritage was formed in April 2000, with the aim of delivering local history and heritage services in a completely new way. The central philosophy was a belief that history and heritage can play a key role in community development. By encouraging active participation in local heritage issues, we can use history to facilitate community regeneration, social inclusion and personal development. But to do this, we need to take a proactive approach to heritage services, taking history out to the wider community and, by engaging with new audiences, making history accessible to all. Admirable aspirations - but the challenge has been to turn theory into practice within the financial and resource constraints of a local authority environment.

Out of the archives

The opportunity to re-focus history services came with the decision to merge the City Council's Record Office

with that of the County Council, forming a joint county-wide archive service. This gave the freedom to completely restructure local history provision, building up the skills and resources needed to deliver community programmes. The post of Community Heritage Officer was created to develop outreach programmes and heritage projects - taking history out to local people. A Community Heritage Co-ordinator was appointed to build up new local and family history resources and to devise ways of making them accessible to different sectors of the community. Existing clerical staff were re-designated Heritage Support Officers and encouraged to participate fully in outreach and educational activities.

In November 2000, this small team moved from traditional Record Office accommodation into the redundant St. Michael's Church in the heart of Chester. Here, we have established an informal 'drop-in' local and family history centre, which has become



*Right: Children on a
Midsummer Watch
workshop*

**'By encouraging
active participation
in local heritage
issues, we can use
history to facilitate
community
regeneration,
social inclusion
and personal
development'**

a venue for small exhibitions, workshops, family 'hands-on' sessions and which is also our base for outreach activities.

During our first year, Community History and Heritage has been able to forge strong working partnerships with a range of organisations, to develop new ways of engaging a wide range of audiences, many of whom are new to heritage activity. These have included inter-generational community projects, interpretation schemes, public art, living history, performance, festivals, educational projects and children's activities.

Out and about

Our first step was to get to know our local communities. Once a month we visit a different part of Chester District, taking our local resources and encouraging people to talk to us about their history and heritage. We always suggest that they bring their own local materials, particularly old photographs, to share with others. Roadshows have been targeted at rural or West Chester audiences, who would normally feel excluded from a city-centre based service or who would never have thought their community had a history which was relevant.

*'The maps, and talking about Hoole in past times
and meeting an old friend who I grew up with'*

A lady's response on a feedback form when asked what she enjoyed most about the Roadshow.

Our History Roadshows are clearly appreciated by the local people who attend them. They enjoy it because it is not just history for history's sake. Roadshows give them the chance to talk about their memories, and to see that we value their local stories as much as any national historic event. And the fact that we actually leave Chester City Centre and take history out to communities, with a cup of tea and a biscuit thrown in, is part of the Roadshow's success.

The contacts made at Roadshows have led to a number of interesting projects, including work with local primary schools, input into Village Design Statements, reminiscence sessions with older people and practical hands-on projects with teenage

volunteers. Two new village local history societies have been established and now that communities know who and where we are, they approach us for advice in developing their own local history books, village trails and events. In many cases these contacts benefit our collections, adding new and contemporary material to our library, or photos to be scanned onto our computer-based Image Bank.

Everyone has a part to play

Our approach to interpretation seeks to actively involve local people, giving different sections of the community a part to play. *The Millennium Trail*, links forty key buildings chosen by local people, with unique and distinctive way-marker plaques designed by artist Michael Johnson as part of a community project. The Trail and accompanying self-guided walking leaflet, was devised as part of Chester's '2000 Years of Building' Millennium Festival, a partnership programme of community and educational events, aiming to introduce the city's architectural heritage to new audiences.

The '2000 Years of Building' festival, provided the theme for 'Our House', a temporary exhibition mounted in the main gallery of Chester's Grosvenor Museum. The exhibition, which included a third scale model of a Rows building, computer interactives and a range of hands-on activities told the complex story of Chester's unique two-tiered Rows buildings. Partnerships with Chester College and its students provided the model and the interactives, as well as students to act as enablers for those who visited the exhibition. The exhibition broke down a confusing architectural history in a way which made it accessible to a whole range of visitors. Its popularity, especially with local people, has led to it being given a 'stay of execution' so that it is now available at another venue, and a booklet has been developed from the exhibition.

Currently, we are working on an Access and Interpretation Signage Scheme for the Rows area of Chester. In developing our strategy we have and will be involving all aspects of the community. Work by local school children as part of a SEEN project fed into the brief to appoint a consultant artist. Our newly appointed artist will be working, alongside the officer team, with children from a special needs and a

**'The fact that we
actually leave
Chester City Centre
and take history out
to communities,
with a cup of tea
and a biscuit thrown
in, is part of the
Roadshow's success'**



Above: Children involved in a project on the Rows area of Chester:

Below: The Mulberry Players make some noise during the Midsummer Watch Parade



mainstream school in a joint SEEN project to inspire and develop the designs. At the same time, local businesses will hopefully be engaged in the history of their surroundings.

SEEN in Chester

Much of our work with children is delivered through SEEN (Sustainable Environmental Education Network): a local partnership initiative, which aims to involve schoolchildren in the issues of planning design and regeneration which will shape the future of local communities.

History's alive

We take history into the community in every way we can - including through living history. At Easter Weekend, we took 40 soldiers and camp followers, several tents and some fierce looking weaponry into the Water Tower and Gardens in Chester for two days of 15th-century re-enactments. Such a visual interpretation, with person-to-person interaction, and the venue of a historic tower normally closed to the public combined to engage visitors in a lesser-known period of history. The physically accessible nature of the gardens site made it particularly suitable to a wide audience.

Our major living history project of the summer is the Midsummer Watch Parade in which schools, community groups, and individuals help to recreate this traditional Tudor street procession. This year, in association with the Access Service, we've developed the involvement of the Mulberry Street Players, a group of adults with severe learning and physical difficulties, who not only performed in Chester, but took their Midsummer Watch performances to Sens in France and to a whole new, international audience.

There's also a role for our service in strategies, policies and plans being developed. We're finding ways in which our history and heritage skills and services can be included in the new Neighbourhood Action Plans for West Chester wards.

It takes two, three, or four...

We are a small service (a staff of six only three of whom are full-time) and we could not achieve a half of what we have without strong partnerships. We work with other City Council services to deliver activities and events, or projects such as SEEN, and we link wherever possible with the resources of Chester College. We are now forging links with more diverse partners such as the local housing trust, community and health organisations with a view to developing our future activities.

Our view of the future is that we will build on and develop what we have achieved so far. New reminiscence projects are in the pipeline, which we hope will have creative outcomes addressing social inclusion and mental health while at the same time giving participants a good, fun experience. As for what else we will do... watch this space.

Eileen Willshaw is Heritage Development Manager for Chester City Council and joint Co-ordinator of SEEN. Sarah Oswald is Community Heritage Officer for Chester City Council

What the judges said

- The range and breadth of the interpretative projects carried out by a small team in its first year of operation is impressive
- The outreach activities are particularly effective in terms of lifelong learning, reaching new audiences and encouraging interest in and appreciation of local heritage

'Twinkle, twinkle little star'

Georgina Colthorpe shows how a children's nursery rhyme became the inspiration for museum displays for the deaf

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Did you know that 'Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star' was written in Colchester? Not many people in the town did, so when it was proposed to open the new Childhood Gallery in Hollytrees Museum with the story of this rhyme, visitor evaluation showed it would be warmly received. There was, however, an exception from the deaf community who felt the subject was irrelevant to them. Further more research showed that such was their perception of local museums, few deaf people in the town would consider visiting the new displays. Addressing the issues of how to interpret an important aspect of the town's history for people who are deaf and initiating a relationship between the museum service and the deaf community resulted in Colchester Museums undertaking the 'Twinkle Twinkle Little Star' Video Arts Project.

The Star

Hollytrees Museum re-opened to the public in July 2001 after extensive redevelopment funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and Colchester Borough Council. One of the main aims of the redisplay was to make it Colchester specific. With the new Childhood Gallery this did not present a problem because the history of the town includes Jane and Ann Taylor, two of the most influential writers of children's literature in the 19th century. They lived in Colchester between 1797 - 1811 and in 1806 a five verse poem by Jane was published called 'The Star'. Today, the first verse of this poem is one of the most famous nursery rhymes in the English language and known as 'Twinkle Twinkle Little Star'.

Most of us encounter and remember this rhyme through sound. Whether it was sung to us as children, or whether we picked it up from musical toys, it can now be considered part of the oral tradition of childhood. It is these methods of remembering and communicating the rhyme that concerned the deaf community. The fact that the poem is one of the most well known in the English language means that to people who are deaf and use British Sign Language (BSL) it is in the equivalent of a foreign language, while its association with sound compounds their alienation.

Understanding the issues

These concerns were uncovered by visitor research undertaken during development of the redisplay proposals. This took the form of qualitative evaluation, which looked at specific topics that were being considered as part of the new displays. The extent of the challenge faced by the museum service was highlighted by further research of a more general nature conducted with a deaf group that meets regularly in the town. This revealed that while the members would visit national museums while on holiday, by and large they never went to local museums. They stated that because of the absence of deaf people, deaf history and deaf culture, together with a lack of provision for their specific communication requirements, local museums were not relevant to them.

In order to address the problem of communicating the poem to deaf people it was decided to include a video of 'The Star' in BSL in the new displays. It was also decided to actively involve members of the deaf community in making the video. The aim was to engage them in interpreting the poem and begin to build an understanding between the museum service and the deaf community. To do this we obtained funding from the Millennium Commission and the project formed part of the Millennium Festival celebrations in Colchester. Although it turned out to be more complicated to implement than we had anticipated, we have found that the project has worked on a number of levels.

Creating credibility

Rather than employ a production company to produce the video, Colchester Museums worked in partnership with a number of local organisations to achieve our goals. Signals Media Arts, the local community media centre, helped implement the video production. Theatre Resource, who specialises in working in performance art with disabled people, led art workshops for people who are both deaf and have learning disabilities. While the Royal Association in aid of Deaf People (RAD) were crucial partners in liaising with the deaf community and hosting several of the workshops.

Overall the cost was roughly equivalent to

Ramon Woolfe directing
a scene for the video



COLCHESTER MUSEUMS

Below from left:

A scene from the video.

Charlotte Moulton

Thomas (left) leading a

workshop in signed

poetry; An art workshop

for children; Artwork

produced by children

involved in the project

engaging a single production company for the whole process, but the additional value gained through the fostering of partnerships combined with the number of people from the deaf community involved in creating the video, was invaluable.

Crucial to this success was identifying a deaf director, Ramon Woolfe, and a deaf workshop leader with an understanding of signed poetry, Charlotte Moulton Thomas. As well as ensuring the success of the project the recruitment of two prominent deaf artists led to its credibility and that of the video with the deaf community, helping to raise the profile of the museum service.

Additionally, Ramon had recently founded his own production company, Remark!, and the decision was taken to use his company in producing the video. This meant we also worked with a professional deaf cameraman and production assistant. The importance of this decision with participants in the project was summed up by Russell Moon, Head Teacher of a local school with a hearing support unit with whom we also liaised:

RAD, and her involvement throughout the project means we now have a strong advocate for the museum service who is a part of, and actively involved with, the local deaf community. For Dorothy and many people involved in the project the inclusion of the video in the museum was an important recognition of their language and cultural forms of expression. Commenting in the visitors book during the launch of the video Dorothy wrote '*I am proud to show that I am Deaf, BSL, Sign Language [user]. Children are beautiful, [both the] sign and story.*'

Encouraging deaf visitors

Artwork made during the workshops together with the finished video initially formed part of a temporary exhibition in Colchester Castle Museum from June to November 2000. The project was also designed to act as a touring exhibition and visited four libraries in Essex. Since Hollytrees Museum reopened in July this year the video can be seen on permanent display in the Childhood Gallery.



COLCHESTER MUSEUMS

'Pupils have limited contact with successful deaf adults and this sort of liaison has a profound effect on their perception of themselves within the deaf community and their self-esteem, and raises their awareness of the possibilities that they may go on to achieve.'

In order to ensure the successful implementation of the project we made sure a member of the deaf community was part of the project planning team. We made contact with Dorothy Morris through

We have found that throughout the project and since Hollytrees Museum reopened, this work has been successful in attracting families with deaf children to the museums. The project workshops for children immediately filled up, and the families then visited the museum to see the video on display, often returning to see it again. We have sought to build on this connection by having BSL interpretation at certain events aimed specifically at children and families. These events are in different



Above: Art workshop for deaf adults with learning disabilities

museums and have resulted in an increase in the number of visits from families with deaf children.

This success is due to the fact that a children's rhyme was at the heart of the project. We had anticipated this bias towards children and planned certain workshops for adults and teenagers. These, while working towards the finished video, would be geared more towards the skills of video production and signed poetry than the content. However, although we managed to involve a number of deaf teenagers, problems in marketing this aspect of the project meant that we failed to effectively communicate this approach to adults. This has meant that we still do not attract the number of deaf adults to the museums that we would like. However, the impact of doing the project means the profile of the museum service amongst the deaf community in the town has been raised and is a foundation on which to build.

We are now beginning to explore ways to continue to attract deaf people to the museums and

build on the bridges that have been created during the project. Consideration is being given to ways of working again with members of the RAD family groups and the RAD special needs group. While we have also been invited to speak to adult groups through the RAD centre to explore ways of working with deaf adults.

Georgina Colthorpe is Assistant Curator, Social History at Colchester Museums and project managed Twinkle Twinkle Little Star Video Arts Project

What the judges said

- This may be the first time that a museum has sought to add to its interpretation in recorded sign language
- The video display stimulated us to thinking creatively about the use of sign language in museums

Working with a sceptical community

Nick Lane explains the rationale behind a touring exhibition that traced aspects of the lives, histories, faiths and cultures of many of Enfield's local communities over the last century

'I don't go for the melting pot thing because it means that everybody looks alike, like it a cloning thing. I think I go for the salad bowl instead so we can appreciate the red pepper and the greens, and the green salad and whatever'

Daoud Laurence . Interviewee

The north London borough of Enfield has a population of 265,000. About 30 % of its people are from ethnic minorities, and include Greek and Turkish Cypriots, Asians and Afro-Caribbeans, to name some of the largest groupings. In 1999 Enfield Council began planning a major exhibition which would form the centrepiece of its Millennium celebrations in 2000/ 2001. The project, which was funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Council and three major



'This particular task was made all the more challenging due to the antipathy of some of these local people and groups'

local businesses, was conceived as a different and more inclusive approach to reaching new and non-traditional audiences.

A sceptical community

What made this project unique was that it was based entirely on the oral testimony and direct contributions of local people. This particular task was made all the more challenging due to the antipathy of some of these local people and groups, towards what they regarded to be an insular and racist local authority, and one that, rightly or wrongly, was more focused on a white middle class view of history. Studies which have attempted to discover the reasons for poor levels of ethnic community involvement have often shown that people from those groups often feel that museums have little to offer them and do not reflect their culture or contribution to history. With this in mind, the Council and the project team were determined that the research and developmental stages and then the exhibition itself would be wholly reflective of the diverse communities that make Enfield the vibrant place it is.

In late 1999 a small project team of three was set up in an office in Edmonton, one of the poorer parts of the borough. The office was in a building shared by a wide variety of community groups and voluntary sector bodies. This was a stroke of luck that was later to prove vital to the project's success. The team, who shared skills in reminiscence work, oral history and exhibition production faced the immediate challenge of determining how to engage and involve the community.

'I decided to come to England and to see whether England is what I was told...'

'In our school you learn everything about England. We know about the counties, we know about all the historical places... We would learn about all these things. So we know some of what to expect. What we didn't learn is that the people here didn't learn about us...'

Vince Campbell, founder of Enfield Community Relations Council

Making contact

To begin with finding people willing to be interviewed for oral histories was a problem.

Recognising that there were no existing contacts with the community, or with local groups or schools, the research team began by identifying just who they thought the local community were. This was achieved partly from demographic and census data held by the Council and also by talking to some of the community groups in the building and community liaison officers within the local authority. A soft target of 60 participants / interviewees was set in the hope that this number would provide sufficient material on which to base the exhibition.

The early attempts at appealing for participants began with appeals in the local press and posters and leaflets in libraries and other council buildings. All literature produced included text in Greek, Turkish and Urdu. The response, however, was limited, coming mainly from older, white, middle-class people who lived in areas such as Winchmore Hill and Enfield Town. All respondents were contacted and many of these early volunteers were interviewed, but reaching and convincing Enfield's ethnic communities proved to be more difficult.

'He caught hold of my arm once and he said, "Look I can either take you to the Police Station, or I can give you a clip round ear". So I looked and said, "I'll have the clip round ear please". And he just tapped the back of my head like that, didn't hit me, you know, but I always remember saying, "I'll have the clip of the ear!"'

Frederick Gilliam, Interviewee (talking about a brush with the law in 1925)

Many lived in areas such as Palmers Green and Edmonton and this meant a more focused and proactive approach to finding potential interviewees was needed. Fresh appeals were launched, but this time targeted at particular communities through ethnic publications. Working through Age Concern, Enfield, contact was made with a variety of ethnic elders groups, luncheon clubs and community centres. Getting onto the premises was a positive step, but persuading individuals to talk to the team still required a great deal of effort, as suspicion and reserve was the norm. Some groups and individuals

*Above from left:
Enfield Revealed: an oral
history on display at
Community House,
Edmonton; Local
primary schoolchildren
visiting the exhibition;
A visitor listens to some
of the interview extracts*

seemed to remain sceptical of a Council project and declined requests for interviews, others were less receptive for personal or perhaps religious reasons.

Earning trust

After several visits and many hours of establishing relationships and developing a rapport, a small number of people consented to be interviewed for the project. Central to this was the establishment of strict codes of conduct with regards to confidentiality, reproduction of material and consent. All interviewees were to receive a taped copy of their contribution, together with a full transcript. Before any of the material could be used, consent had to be obtained by the museum team. In certain instances, when requested, the team readily agreed to acknowledge contributions under a pseudonym or even anonymously.

These safeguards seemed to pay dividends and from a slow start the numbers of people involving themselves with the project increased steadily. Word of mouth played an important part as people interviewed by the researchers introduced them to friends, relatives, and other contacts. Some interviews were also carried out as part of projects in local schools as a way of increasing the representation of young people among interviewees. The number of completed interviews increased rapidly from three by the end of 1999 to 30 by the following March, and a total of 102 by August, of whom 25 were from ethnic-minority groups. While the original problem of under-representation of ethnic-minority groups persisted, by the end of the project the researchers had interviewed at least one individual from each major community in the borough.

Outcomes

The exhibition has been generally well received and has prompted more people to contact the museum service with offers of oral history material or objects for the proposed new museum. The contacts established with local people have been perhaps the most important legacy, demonstrating that the Museum Service is committed to involving and responding to all of Enfield's communities, and that some of these communities are in turn, now stakeholders in building a new service.



'The exhibition is very good and if you decide to add to what you already have, I would congratulate that'
Black man, 24 year old, Interviewee

While only between 5-10% of the total amount of information collected has been made accessible directly through the exhibition, care was taken to include at least one quotation or audio-clip from each of the interviews. This leaves an untapped mine of information which can be used as source material for a variety of community exhibitions and educational use in the future. Other benefits have included the production of an educational resource pack, which focuses on one individual - Vincent Campbell - a prominent local businessman, who established the Afro-Caribbean Association and founded the Enfield Community Relations Council in 1975.

Enfield Revealed: An Oral History, the exhibition and its associated archive represents a particularly valuable resource as it reflects the borough's long history of multi-culturalism, and the contribution made by ethnic-minority groups to the economic, political and cultural life of the borough. The great strength of *Enfield Revealed* is that it shows people as individuals and not as part of a group with the consequent stereotyping that this involves. It also demonstrates that history does have an impact at an individual level and that, perhaps more importantly, individuals do contribute to the course of history.

Nick Lane is Museum Development Manager for the London Borough of Enfield

What the judges said

- A superb exhibition of the life and times of Enfield from before the 2nd World War, dealing with such themes as work, housing, health, recreation, shopping and transport.
- The exhibition crosses the boundaries of age, race, faith, belief, gender and physical impairment, and has successfully introduced new audiences to the history and cultures of the area



Closed for winter?

Gareth Fitzpatrick looks at how Boughton House developed a web-site to overcome restricted access

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THE LIVING LANDSCAPE TRUST

the Web Channel Guide Customize Links Film Home Internet Start

BOUGHTON HOUSE



'The English Versailles'

Northamptonshire home of the Dukes of Buccleuch and Queensberry (Montagu Douglas Scott)

Click for different Views of Boughton

Above: Front page of the web site

'Traditionally, such houses are open for a summer season and few invite the public to visit during the winter'

Being frustrated in the depths of winter by being unable to get a fix of heritage and culture, you have no doubt wondered why historic houses are not open throughout the year in the same way that most museums are. Traditionally, such houses are open for a summer season and few invite the public to visit during the winter. It is not just so that the resident families can enjoy their homes, but it is principally for conservation reasons. Historic houses were built as family homes in which were displayed collections of fine art, or pieces of particular interest, collected over the years. Unlike museums, their primary function is to be a home and hence the curatorial methods to contain environmental damage must be organised alongside the resident's needs.

Resting Boughton

Boughton House, the Northamptonshire home of the Dukes of Buccleuch and their Montagu ancestors since 1528, first opened to the public in 1977 with a season extending from April to October. From October to April the House was rested. The 16th-century rugs were wrapped in acid-free paper and put into storage, the silver likewise. Furniture was dust-sheeted and the whole House thoroughly cleaned. The resting of the House continued a pattern that had been established from the late 18th century, when for family reasons, Boughton House was not used as a home for over a century and went into a deep sleep. During that time the House warmed up gradually during the summer and cooled gradually during the winter. There were little comings and goings and the environment was more or less constant. The tapestries, the furniture, the paintings, were all subjected to these seasonal changes and were stable.

Conservation v visitors

When the House was revisited as a family home from the early 20th century, little was done to disturb the environment until the public were admitted in the late 70's. Then in a very short time, the changes brought about by visitors became noticeable. The humidity levels soared due to water vapour from breath. Fabrics absorbed the water vapour, most noticeably in the tapestries hanging in the room for which they were originally commissioned in mid-

17th century. As they absorbed the moisture they became heavier and the weight caused the delicate threads to break. With over a hundred tapestries in the Collection, the concern over conservation and expense was considerable: the Duke of Buccleuch wished to continue access for the public, but had to temper this with the thought of preserving the chattels for future generations. To this end, he formed The Living Landscape Trust, with a brief to maintain educational access to the House and Collection, whilst conserving the environment as far as possible.

Possible solution

The winter programme of resting the House continues, but alongside this, we aim to give opportunity to greater access the world-renowned fine art collection. One way this can be achieved, is to embrace modern technology through the Internet, allowing visits and study 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Being a small organisation we could not undertake such a project on our own. The opportunity presented itself in 1996 when the DTI launched its Information Society Initiative, which was to award grants to demonstrate and promote the use of modern technology in a range of specified sectors. One of the sectors identified was heritage.

A co-operative scheme

The Living Landscape Trust sought advice from Leicester's De Montfort University in order to draw up a bid to produce a website for Boughton House. The aim of the project, called Heritage on the Web, was to interpret the family home, the historic house, the Estate that surrounds and supports the House and its fine art collection. The web site was to provide access to the House when it was not directly available. The project had three partners; The Living Landscape Trust that provided the knowledge and expertise on the house, collection and access; De Montfort University that concentrated on computer and web-related technology, and Glass Page, a small company of designers who undertook the design and integration. 'Heritage on the Web' was awarded a grant of £30,000 by the DTI in September 1996.

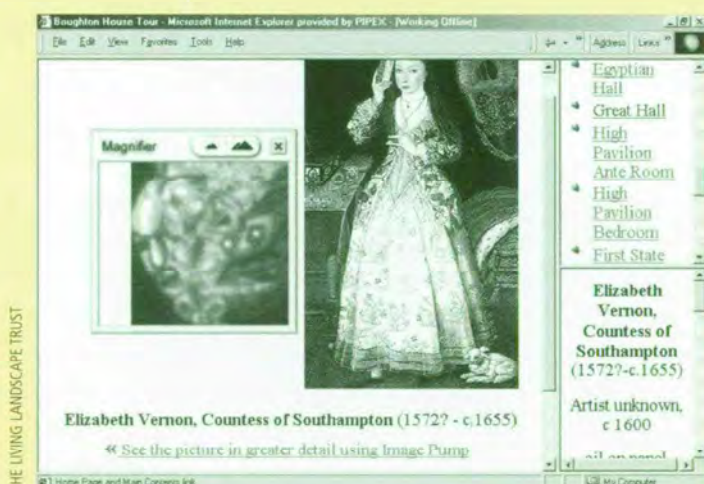


Above from left:
Boughton House in
winter; Boughton House:
various items from the
tour bought together in
one room

**'To allow visits and
study 24 hours a day,
7 days a week'**

Access for all

The Trust receives many enquiries from students and researchers for information relating to its work and to the Collection, but with a small permanent staff, it is not always possible to answer queries with the speed and efficiency that we would like. We worked with the premise that the web was a good way to disseminate information at all levels of enquiry and to provide access and interpretation useful to schools, universities, colleges, researchers and the general public. It was also recognised that, as a family home, the Collection accumulated by family members over the centuries and the juxtaposition of the chattels with their surroundings, was important. Indeed, this is one of the aspects that sets a private collection apart from museums. To demonstrate these factors, virtual reality techniques were incorporated on to the site, including 360° imaging, using IPIX, Image Pump, and Quick Time Virtual Reality. Interpretation of images was furthered with 'hot spot' indexing. The site includes video sequencing and animation and demonstrates the almost limitless way in which a static collection with restricted access can be interpreted.

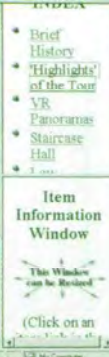


Above: Zoom facility on
the website

Security implications

As part of the project, we looked at the implications of placing a historic house and its contents on the web. Our main concerns were security, not just physical matters relating to the House and the collection, but also virtually through the ability of visitors to

Tour Highlights - various items from the tour brought together in one room!



download information and use images over which we wished to retain control and copyright. Consultation took place with the police, security experts, insurance companies, archivists and lawyers.

The launch

The Boughton House website was launched by Chris Smith, then Secretary of State at the Department of Culture, Media & Sport, who said *'one of the most fascinating things I saw was the new website which has been developed for Boughton House, and to see the way in which technology is used in a superbly educational way.'*

Since the launch, the site has continued to evolve as we develop more facets of its interpretation to disseminate information. It is currently over 500 pages, with a growing number of links to other relevant sites, an integral part of the interpretation process. We know it to be used by researchers, schools, commercial agencies, location scouts, students and most importantly the general public. It is also used as an integral tool in our internal staff induction and development programme. We are currently looking to use the site to aid access for disabled visitors, who are unable to negotiate the 72 steps encountered on the public tour, by making inaccessible areas available virtually.

The Boughton House website can be found on www.boughtonhouse.org.uk

Gareth Fitzpatrick is Director of the Living Landscape Trust at Boughton House, Northamptonshire

What the judges said

- Without doubt the website whetted my appetite for a visit
- The Estate's programme of educational visits, events, literature and guided tours are efficiently, thoughtfully and imaginatively integrated with systems of conservation and security

Informed Conservation:

Understanding historic buildings and their landscapes for conservation

Kate Clark

This book is an important reference tool for all those involved with historic buildings. Its key message is that the successful management and conservation of a building can only be brought about if it is thoroughly understood. It is an important point since such research has often been regarded as something of an unnecessary luxury, and of purely academic concern. However this publication seeks to make clear that without the understanding that research gives, all conservation work is blind and meaningless. An understanding of what is significant and why, needs to be available before key decisions are made, not as a result of them.

Of course research of this kind is equally important for the successful and appropriate presentation of a building or historic landscape to the public - a function of CoBRA (Conservation-based Research and Analysis) which is overlooked in the book. Such work is crucial also if interpretation and visitor management schemes are not to damage the heritage resource.

However, for its size the book is extremely comprehensive, covering everything from the various research techniques used for CoBRA, and the role of understanding in defining significance, to the management of conservation, alterations and

maintenance in historic buildings in relation to the legal framework in England. Although of necessity, some topics are treated briefly, the author presents an overview of a potentially vast topic in which a wide range of professional disciplines are involved. No single professional can hope to encompass all the specialist knowledge required, hence the need for a book of this kind to highlight the role of each in the wider context of interdisciplinary projects.

It is an extremely practical guide, where the information is presented in a clear and easy to read fashion, with informative illustrations and case studies, and at only £10.00 it is well worth the investment for anyone concerned with the management of a historic building. As Clark herself points out, an important outcome of informed conservation is that 'in the long run, it will lead to a better public understanding of why places matter' - surely this is what interpretation is all about.

Informed Conservation is available from:
English Heritage Postal Sales, Knights of Old Limited,
Kettering Parkway, Kettering, Northampton, NN15
6XU. Telephone 01536 533500.

Review by Judith Franklin