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Published by the Association for Heritage Interpretation

ISSN 1357 9401

Commissioning Editor:

David Masters

0121 441 1198, dd.masters@virgin.net

Production Editor:

Elizabeth Newbery

01865 793360, elizabeth@newberyandengland.com

Copy Editor:

Rachel Minay

Editorial Advisory Board:

Aaron Lawton, James Carter,
Susan Cross, Carl Atkinson

Design:

Touchmedia, www.touchmedia.uk.net

Cover photograph: A detail of an illustrated map of Stourport-on-Severn Canal Basins by Kate Wrigglesworth.

Interpretation Journal is published three times a year in Spring, Summer and Autumn.

The opinions expressed by authors in this journal are not necessarily those of the committee of AHI.

You can visit AHI's website at

www.ahi.org.uk

Advertising rates (member/non member)

Full page £250/£350

Half page £150/£210

Quarter page £90/£130

Eighth page £55/£80

Membership rates

Fellow £65

Full Member £55

Associate Member £45

Student Member £15

Corporate Member:

1 copy £65

2 copies £95

3 copies £125

4 copies £155

5 copies £185

Overseas postage supplements

(1 copy)

Europe airmail £5.00

World airmail £10.00

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If you wish to submit an article please contact David Masters tel: 0121 441 1198 or email: dd.masters@virgin.net

FOREWORD: ILLUSTRATING A POINT

I remember reading an article about writing interpretive copy in an old edition of the Interpretation journal. To illustrate his point, the author was trying to describe a nautilus, the rather splendid, spirally, motile marine mollusc. After about 30 words of convoluted description and the tortured avoidance of technical terms, he concluded: "Don't be daft, use an illustration instead!" That piece of advice struck a chord, and in this edition of the journal, 15 years later, we celebrate the place of illustrations in interpretation.

In the following pages we explore the many ways in which illustrations are central to our work. Whether an illustrated map that welcomes visitors to a city or landscape (p 14), a historic reconstruction (p7), cartoons for kids (p17), or the revealing of a vibrant underwater habitat (p11), these pictures really do say more than 1,000 words.

Whilst there are too many styles and formats of illustration to do justice to here (you will find no airbrush, film poster or pop-art for example), we hope these examples will inspire you to make best use of this vital form of communication. In their article starting opposite, Cathy Lewis and Tony Kerins introduce the world of interpretive illustrations, setting out why and how we should use them to best effect. The subsequent authors then demonstrate the practical planning and creative processes necessary to produce illustrations that vividly communicate with and tell stories to our audience.

In the UK we are endowed with some of the best art colleges in the world, many of which have a particularly strong record in illustration. The range of illustrators we have at our disposal is second to none, as the drawings in this edition will testify. So, if you need an illustration, set the bar high and commission something of quality that really draws its audience in, connects with their humour or curiosity and reveals new meaning about our world.

David Masters MAHI, Commissioning Editor

'Interpretation enriches our lives through engaging emotions, enhancing experiences and deepening understanding of people, places, events and objects from past and present.'

For more information about the Association for Heritage Interpretation [AHI], send an email to admin@ahi.org.uk or write to the Administrator, AHI, 131 Trafalgar Street, Gillingham Kent ME7 4RP, tel: +44 (0)560 274 7737.

Individuals can join AHI as Associate or Student Members or can apply to be elected, subject to qualifications and experience, as Full Members or Fellows. Businesses can join as Corporate Members with the same rights as individual members.

All members receive *Interpretation Journal*, a bi-monthly Newsletter and other mailings. They can participate in AHI events and (if paid-up) can vote at the Annual General Meeting.

A PICTURE SPEAKS A THOUSAND WORDS

In this overview, Cathy Lewis and Tony Kerins highlight some aspects you should consider before commissioning images.

WHICH WAY TO GO: ORIENTATION MAPS

Almost all interpretative panels, self-guided trails or guide books have a map of some kind. The purpose is to orientate people to the site, let them know where they are within that landscape, where the key features lie, and what routes they can take to explore. In the case of a static panel or display, the map needs to be very simple – the visitor won't be taking the panel with them (hopefully!) so complicated route systems are a waste of time.

So do you want an illustrated bird's-eye-view map commissioned for the purpose, or simply to reproduce part of an Ordnance Survey map? The latter is less expensive, although you do have to get the correct permissions from O.S. and pay a publishing licence fee. This applies even if you have redrawn one of their maps in your own style. For details look on www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk



RIGHT
An illustrated map of Worth Matravers by Tony Kerins.

A picture speaks a thousand words – but what kind of picture? Illustration or photo? Bird's-eye-view map or Ordnance Survey? Watercolours or cartoons?

Most importantly, you need to consider which kind of map will best serve your target audience. In most cases, our target audience is the casual family visitor – groups who turn up at a site without much preplanning. They are not armed with O.S. maps and compasses. When they arrive, they need clear and simple guidance to show them where they can go.

This is where the bird's-eye-view map – orientated to the place where they are standing – comes into its own. An example is the Worth Matravers map shown below. It is sited on a panel beside the iconic village pond, but from there you can't see any of the surrounding countryside as the views are all hidden by buildings. The bird's-eye-view raises you up and allows you to clearly orientate yourself. In addition, it is a thing of beauty (indeed, many people now have copies mounted on their walls at home), designed to inspire people to explore this wonderful place – and to give them the confidence to do so.

RIGHT
The fulmar and the rat by Tony Kerins.

CAPTURING LANDSCAPES

You might want to entice people to explore a countryside estate or gardens by showing images of how lovely the place looks at its best – whether that be in the colourful height of summer, or in midwinter with snow and skeletal trees and an exhilarating sense of wilderness. Both photos and illustrations can do this – but, in both cases, they need to be good.

In this digital age everyone is a photographer – wardens, gardeners, curators, etc. When we do photo-based interpretation, we are often given hundreds of photos on a disk to choose from – and so often come to the depressing conclusion that none of them are suitable or of high enough quality.

The truth is that good photographers – like illustrators – are artists. And getting inspiring and quality landscape imagery takes time and talent. Sometimes, in cost-cutting exercises, we are asked whether the illustrator can do the job without a site visit – working from photos or websites. It is possible – but we firmly believe that you can't truly capture the passion of a place without being there. As Tony says, 'I almost always require a site visit. A sense of place is essential. I want my illustrations to prompt vague associations of collective memory, and a desire to explore.'

WILDLIFE ILLUSTRATIONS: MOOD AND MOVEMENT

If you want quality wildlife images that capture for example, the detail on a butterfly's wings with a flash of iridescence as it races by, or a peregrine falcon in its 180-mph dive from the sky, you need a specialist photographer or illustrator. A good wildlife illustrator can depict these magical moments – and emphasise the things you want people to note.



Even more difficult is trying to catch a specific characteristic of an animal in photos. A photographer might be able to snap a fulmar in action, spitting its foul-smelling oily vomit at a predator – but a photographer couldn't depict the evil glint in the bird's eye and the look of shock on the face of the rat! In this kind of imagery, the illustrator takes on the role of storyteller, in a way that a photographer can't. Similarly, the illustrator can 'cheat' by creating a vignette of several animals that you might not see together at the same time in real life.

BELOW
Bronze Age burial mounds by Tony Kerins.



HISTORIC RECONSTRUCTIONS: MAKING THE PAST REAL

Illustrations can bring ancient history to life. How many ordinary people get really excited when they see a bump in the ground and are told it was a Bronze Age burial mound? Not many in my experience. But what about if you have an illustration? How amazing to be taken back thousands of years in time to see what Bronze Age people looked like, what they wore, their actions and emotions. And to see how incredible those burial mounds really looked – when standing so high and proud in the landscape.

Illustrations can also tell the story of the recent past, highlighting people's mood and emotions. For example, the grim determination of soldiers in the Second World War battling against galeforce wind and rain to attend the searchlight. Or the immense bravery of an RNLI lifeboat crew setting out in darkness, foul weather and raging seas.



ABOVE
The RNLI boat by Tony Kerins.

ILLUSTRATIONS FOR CHILDREN: FIRING THE IMAGINATION

Children are very in tune with illustrations. From the youngest age, most children are given picture books which they read and reread. I use the word 'read' deliberately, because children read the story that's being told in the illustration. Older children progress to books

'I'VE DONE MANY HUNDREDS OF DRAWINGS IN ALL KINDS OF CONDITIONS. I WANT TO BRING THAT SAME SENSE OF "BEING THERE" TO MY INTERPRETATION WORK,' SAYS TONY. 'SO I CLOSE MY EYES AND ASK THE QUESTIONS: WHAT WOULD IT HAVE LOOKED LIKE? HOW WOULD IT HAVE FELT?'

with fewer pictures – but the front cover illustration alone will often sell the book to them. Then there are comics and cartoon strips, read by all generations. Notice if you go in any bookshop today, there is a surge of 'picture books' for older children – complex stories told in comic strip format.

Because of this familiarity with illustrations, we believe they are the best way to present printed children's interpretation. But be sure that you choose an illustrative style to suit your target audience. If you want to target 10–12 year olds, don't use an illustrator that specialises in cute picture-book animals. There is nothing that will put an older child off quicker than the notion that something is 'babyish'.

HOW TO FIND AN ILLUSTRATOR

Most of our commissions come because a client has seen previous work and tracked us down. This is a great starting point. If you are looking for an illustrator, you need to trawl round and look at lots of illustrative work, preferably in the sphere of interpretation. Be critical and decide what you like, and what you think will work for your purpose. Remember that interpretive illustrations need to convey information that the target audience will understand, not just be 'artistic'.

Look at the AHI's consultants' directory, www.ahi.org.uk or try the Association of Illustrators website (www.theaoi.com).

Cathy Lewis, interpretation consultant, and Tony Kerins, illustrator, work together for design agency Froghopper. Email: cathy@foghopper-design.co.uk www.foghopper-design.co.uk

SEEING IS BELIEVING

Louisa Sherman and Susan Westlake touch on the key steps in the development and production of reconstruction drawings, in particular those which aim to recreate the past splendour of the Great Tower at Ashby de la Zouch Castle, Leicestershire, and Grime's Graves, Norfolk.

Drawings, then, are representations of reality, not presentations of reality. Drawings can omit things that are actually there, they can distort things that are there, they can add things that are not there.

Barbara Tvesky

A VISUAL TRADITION

Drawing and architecture have been linked since earliest times. This visual tradition is employed in the interpretation of our built heritage. To commission reconstruction drawings that communicate the past in a convincing way, interpreters and architectural historians have to brief artists effectively so that they produce lively, authentic and authoritative drawings.

The representation of architecture with drawing has been closely associated since antiquity when artists drew and painted buildings. In modern times architects use plans, elevations, perspectives and axonometric drawings as thinking tools to develop and communicate their ideas. Today, archaeologists and historians use drawings to piece together fragmented objects and buildings from the past.

As part of our work as historians and interpreters at English Heritage, we regularly commission reconstruction drawings for our new guidebooks and interpretation schemes. Reconstruction drawings are useful to us in numerous ways: as thinking tools to work out how sites appeared in the past; as a visual means to communicate important aspects of the architecture or structure of the site; and, most importantly, to show the life and times associated with our historic buildings and sites.

Various techniques are required to produce convincing, authentic and credible reconstruction paintings, ranging from

traditional plans and sketches, to complex computer-aided models. Equally, a range of expertise – artistic, interpretive and historical – are needed.

'RECONSTRUCTION DRAWINGS ARE TIME-CONSUMING AND EXPENSIVE TO PRODUCE, BUT THEY PLAY A UNIQUE ROLE IN BRINGING THE PAST TO LIFE'

DRAWINGS THAT TELL STORIES

All drawings are planned for a specific interpretation purpose, and have to communicate with viewers. In this instance, for the Ashby Castle scheme, the earmarked audience was family groups. In aiming for this broad group with wide-ranging ages, we did not compromise on historical accuracy and the architectural historian provided intricate details that would satisfy the most expert visitor¹. With any reconstruction painting, certain parameters must be decided at the outset. How much information have we got to draw on? Do we want to tell them about a specific room or the whole site? Do we want to show a particular event or show the site on a typical day in the past? Most importantly, what is significant about this site that we want visitors to remember?

The answers to these questions form a brief for the artist, usually selected for his/her ability to render a particular style, period, or type of drawing well. For the Ashby painting (page 8), the artist Phil Kenning was selected for his atmospheric attention to detail and his ability to draw people, as we had good historical material which shed light on past personalities and events at the castle.

¹ Dr John Goodall was the commissioning architectural historian for these reconstruction drawings.



ABOVE
The final version of the painting of the Great Tower.
Image © Phil Kenning for English Heritage

PLANNING THE DRAWING

A site visit forms a vital part of the briefing process. It allows the artist to see the site and its surroundings, and enables detailed discussions to take place between the artist, historian/archaeologist and interpreter. The site personnel should also be invited for their valuable insights into visitor perceptions and

questions, to which the drawing may be able to provide visual answers.

At this stage, the viewpoint and type of reconstruction (ground-level view, aerial view, cutaway) need to be decided upon. These must be carefully chosen to accurately portray the space and function of the building or room,

capturing clearly as much detailed information as the viewer can comfortably manage. The Great Tower at Ashby conveniently presented its own solution to a cutaway reconstruction, having been blown up by parliamentary troops in 1644. One side was blasted away, leaving the tower interior exposed.

BELOW
The model of the Great Tower. Phil Kenning developed CAD-generated 'block' drawings for us to select a final view. The aim was to select the best viewpoint so that the details of most of the interior furniture would be visible on every floor.



Image © Phil Kenning for English Heritage

The artist's initial briefing usually includes reference material such as plans, maps, elevations, descriptions and reference images provided by the historian/archaeologist. Thereafter the process becomes much more discursive. The artist inevitably comes back with questions – 'What did the roof look like?', 'Where did that door lead?' – and further research may be needed to answer them. From rough pencil sketches or, increasingly, computer models, the basic image will begin to take shape.

REFINING OUR IDEAS

Some of the discussion will lead to a reassessment of features of the building, or looking for further clues. This may include mapping fireplaces to work out where the chimneys were, or looking for corbels to indicate the roof structure. If little evidence of a ruined building is available, either in

RIGHT
The final interpretation panel with the reconstruction drawing. This panel is the fourth in the interpretation series. The previous panels have orientated the visitor in the landscape, and to the nearby church and historic market town, and shown the relationship between the castle and its gardens.

fragmentary architectural, archaeological or textual form, the historian must resort to carefully constructed arguments for how the building might have appeared, based on information from similar buildings from the same period which survive better elsewhere. We purposefully omitted the surrounding landscape from the great tower reconstruction at Ashby, as the aim of this image was to show the great tower in detail – other reconstructions in the same scheme depicted the gardens and other surrounding features. The number and type of surrounding buildings



Image © Phil Kenning for English Heritage

'ALL DRAWINGS ARE PLANNED FOR A SPECIFIC INTERPRETATION PURPOSE, AND HAVE TO COMMUNICATE WITH VIEWERS'

must be carefully considered – a castle situated within a town will have very different surroundings to a Cistercian abbey located in a remote area.

ADDING DETAIL AND SPARK

Furnishing a historic building with the correct decoration and furniture can be based on surviving inventories of contents or contemporary descriptions of the building. Research into period costume, hairstyles, furniture, textiles and objects can provide further information about interiors and people. The furnishing of the interior tower rooms was based on a 1596 inventory of the tower castle contents. The secure storage of valuables and the presence of women at the castle were also illustrated. By adding things that are not there, and matching them to the remaining, richly carved fireplaces and other architectural detail,



Image © Judith Dobie for English Heritage

ABOVE
A reconstruction of the way
people mined flint at Grime's
Cutter.

visitors can imagine the once sumptuous tower that Lord Hastings built as a symbol of his power and status.

The final stage involves giving the image a sense of real life, activity, bustle and interest. This is achieved by peopling the painting, having them carrying out varied activities, and by adding smoke to chimneys, mud to courtyards and weather to the sky. Note the inclusion of the key in the final panel (page 9). It was found on site and one could almost imagine the hand that used it.

REPRESENTING THE PAST BEFORE HISTORY BEGINS

In addition to reconstructing historic buildings, we often want to portray monuments and settlements from prehistory. However, the further back in time, the more difficult it is to reconstruct details with confidence. At Grime's Graves in Norfolk, the site of a prehistoric flint mine, we have evidence of an extensive mining field with numerous shafts. The flint was used to make a range of tools throughout the Neolithic and Bronze Ages, and even into more recent times.

The archaeology of the mines indicates that whoever mined the shafts used sophisticated excavation techniques, using antler picks and other tools to find the best flint seams. The flint tools, the mines, and the antler picks all survive to tell the story, and so we can show the miners up close in the shaft, demonstrating the mining techniques. However, at a larger scale, we do not have any evidence for the miners – the key characters – as we do not know where their settlement lay. Depicting the mining site in its context is therefore much more difficult, and needs informed guesswork about a likely location for the settlement, its size and form, and the types of dwellings.

Louisa Sherman is Interpretation Officer, East Territory, English Heritage; Susan Westlake is Properties Historian, English Heritage.



Image © Judith Dobie for English Heritage

BETTER THAN A PHOTO?

Matthew Jones weighs up the value of using illustrations to interpret wildlife.

It is often said that a picture speaks a thousand words, yet how often have you seen a well-intentioned interpretation panel whose 'designers' have clearly ignored this pearl of wisdom in favour of a thousand words?

When it comes to the interpretation of natural sites and our wonderful native wildlife, illustrations have to be a key part of our toolkit.

Some of the key attributes of natural history illustration are as follows:

- Well thought out and executed natural history illustrations can fire the imagination and emotions, and can have more intrinsic appeal than off-the-peg wildlife photography.

Welcome to **Butterfly Station**

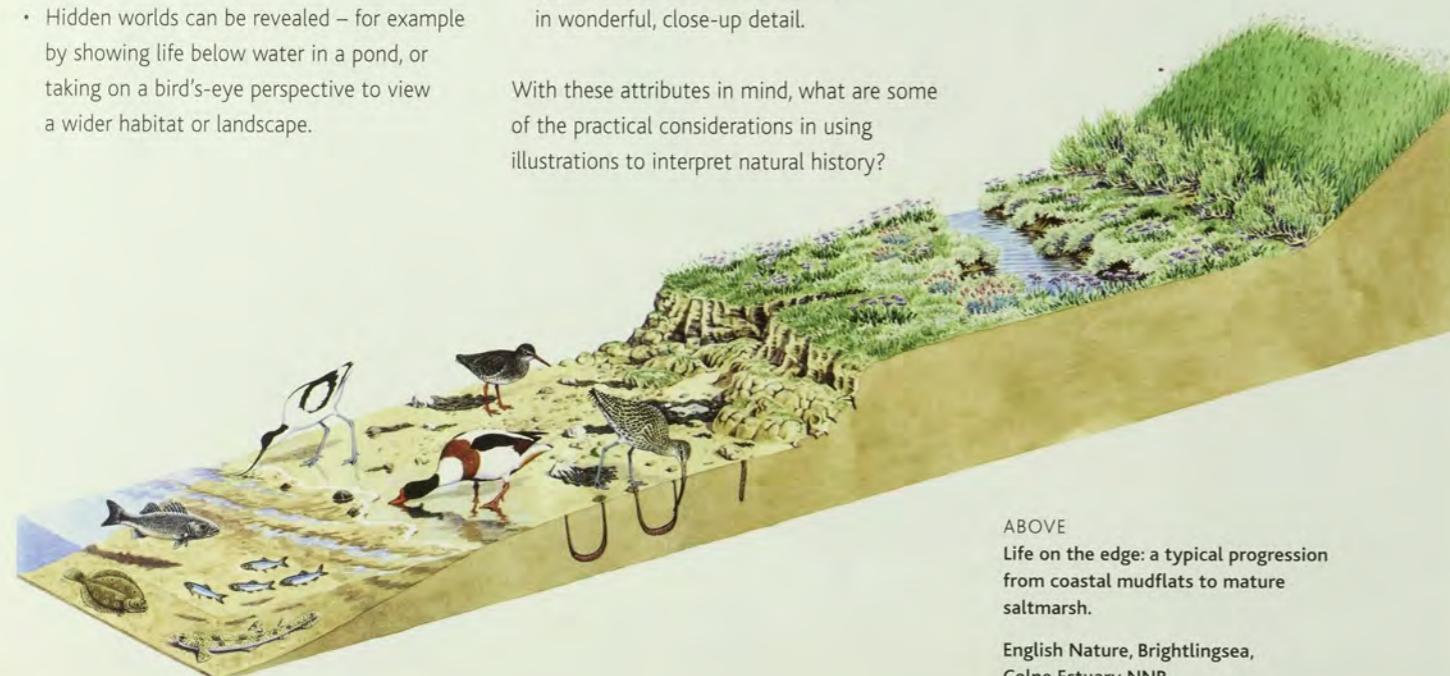
The butterfly is a colourful member of the insect family. There are around 60 different species of butterfly in Britain. Of these 14 occur here at Bensham Butterfly Station.





- The style of presentation can be tailored to appeal to specific audiences. For example, children are drawn to cartoon-like, computer-generated imagery, whereas adults often appreciate a greater degree of detail or realism.
- The artist and designer have complete freedom and control over the composition of the illustration to show off the subject in the best 'light', or for the most dramatic effect.
- Hidden worlds can be revealed – for example by showing life below water in a pond, or taking on a bird's-eye perspective to view a wider habitat or landscape.

With these attributes in mind, what are some of the practical considerations in using illustrations to interpret natural history?



ABOVE
Life on the edge: a typical progression from coastal mudflats to mature saltmarsh.

English Nature, Brightlingsea, Colne Estuary NNR.

LEFT

Mud glorious mud: mudflats may not look all that 'tasty', but for wading birds they are fast food outlets.

English Nature, Bridgwater Bay NNR.

'A LIVELY, COLOURFUL AND INTRIGUING ILLUSTRATION IS FAR MORE LIKELY TO PROVOKE MY INTEREST THAN THE SIGHT OF VAST REAMS OF TEXT, HOWEVER INTERESTINGLY WRITTEN'

- Tricky concepts or ideas, such as habitat zonation, can be conveyed in an intuitive way without the need for complex and wordy explanations.
- Specific animal behaviours and ecological relationships can be shown in ways that are unlikely to be possible through photography, unless specially commissioned.
- Smaller species that are difficult to appreciate in the wild can be shown in wonderful, close-up detail.



ABOVE
This cut-away illustration takes the audience below the waterline, revealing a rich and interconnected ecosystem.

British Waterways, Kennet & Avon Canal.

- If you have a favoured reference source, for example for bird species, supply this, rather than leaving the artist to go off and do his/her own thing. I know from experience this will save disappointment, time and money!

- Discuss styles and use of different mediums and review examples of your illustrator's work to establish the desired look and feel of the end product.

- Ensure your illustrator and graphic designer work together to conceptualise the shape, size and composition of the illustration so that the graphic layout and illustration complement one another.

- Ask your illustrator to provide a quick 'scamp' to communicate the general shape and rough content of the illustration for your approval, followed by a more detailed pencil rough, and a final coloured version. This will help ensure expectations are met by the final illustration.

Matthew Jones is Project Manager with **Imagemakers Design and Consulting**.
www.imagemakers.uk.com

'TRICKY CONCEPTS OR IDEAS, SUCH AS HABITAT ZONATION, CAN BE CONVEYED IN AN INTUITIVE WAY WITHOUT THE NEED FOR COMPLEX AND WORDY EXPLANATIONS'

LET'S HEAR IT FOR MAPS!

Aaron Lawton talks us through different types of maps to meet different needs.

Maps are marvellous. They elevate us to the realm of the gods so we can gaze upon the earth from above. They fulfil our basic human desire to understand the world and our place within it. With a map, we can travel without becoming lost, whilst knowing something of the landscape we will pass through and the facilities we will find along the way.

We use maps for a variety of purposes including building mental models of a place (cognitive mapping), locating ourselves within it (orientation), working out what there is to see and do, and where to find it (planning), making our way around it (navigation), and appreciating relationships and meanings embodied within it (interpretation).

Maps come in many forms, but there has been little hands-on research into their use at heritage and recreation sites. In the absence of this hard evidence, set out below are some tentative proposals, based on personal experience and anecdotal evidence, as to how we might describe and choose maps for different environments, purposes and audiences.



RIGHT
A symbolic digital two-dimensional contour topographic map of Ballingry in Kinross-shire (courtesy of Ordnance Survey).

VISUAL LANGUAGE

When producing maps, first decide which underlying visual language will work best.

- **Symbolic** two-dimensional maps show both physical features (hills, roads, trees, buildings etc.) and conceptual features (trails, viewpoints, refreshments, etc.) as graphic symbols that may have little resemblance to the feature itself. Ordnance Survey maps demonstrate this approach, which requires us to learn the meaning of symbols before the map makes sense. These maps can communicate enormous amounts of information to those fluent in their language, but very little to those who are not. Symbolic maps are particularly suited to communicating highly detailed spatial information to people with good map-reading skills.

to communicating highly detailed information to people with good reading skills.

RIGHT

A symbolic digital two-dimensional diagram of the London Underground (courtesy of Transport for London)

- **Pictorial** three-dimensional maps show physical features as more or less lifelike pictures that most of us can innately understand, although conceptual features are still shown as symbols. Pictorial town plans demonstrate this approach – their buildings look just like real buildings. The amount and accuracy of information carried by these maps is often lower than on a symbolic map, although the proportion of people who can access it is likely to be far greater. Pictorial maps are particularly suited to communicating general spatial information to people with limited to good map-reading skills.

MAP TYPE

Within each visual language there are a variety of map types available.

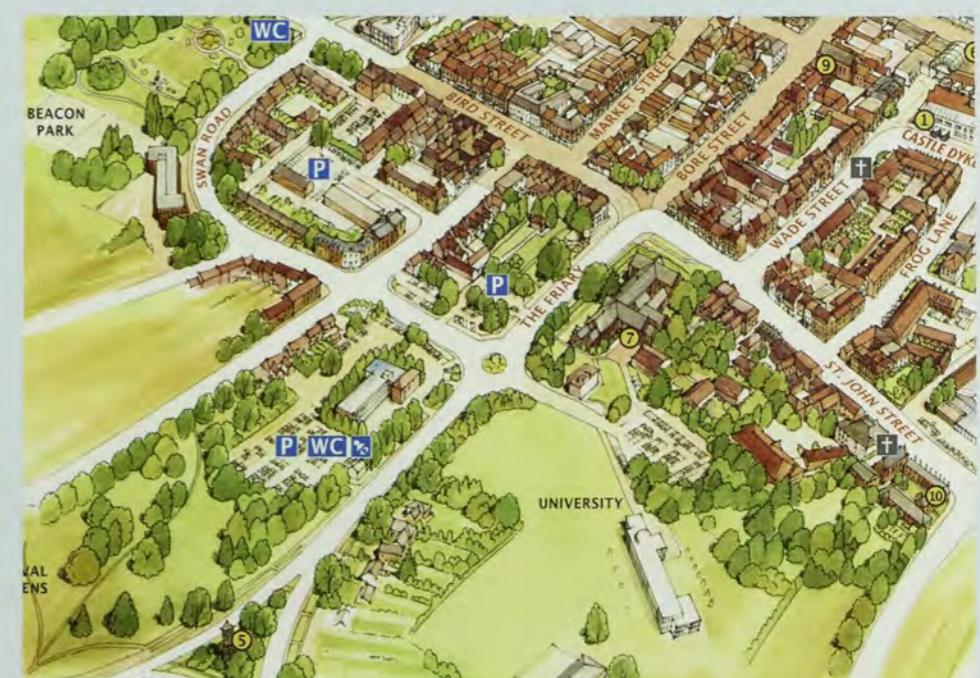
- **Diagrams** or schematics are highly simplified and often distorted two-dimensional symbolic views. The London Underground diagram demonstrates this approach where tube lines and stations are only loosely related to their actual locations in space. This is ideal where all one has to do is get on the correct train and get off at the right station. Diagrams are particularly suited to enabling a single task requiring no additional spatial information for people with limited to good map-reading skills.

- **Planimetric** or flat maps are two-dimensional symbolic views based on a true plan that accurately represents horizontal shape, distance and direction, but shows no height. Building floor plans and bus route maps demonstrate this approach, often used where height isn't an issue. These maps can contain as much or as little detail as required, but will usually be easier to understand than equivalent maps showing vertical relief. Planimetric maps are particularly suited to communicating non-height related spatial information to people with limited to good map-reading skills.



- **Plan oblique** maps are three-dimensional pictorial views based on a true plan that accurately represents horizontal shape, distance and direction, whilst giving vertical landscape relief and features a simulated three-dimensional appearance using axonometric or isometric projection. Pictorial town plans demonstrate this approach, which combines the reality of a picture with the accuracy of a plan view, making them appear fairly realistic and immediately appealing to users. Plan oblique maps can be recognised by their three-dimensional features but lack of parallel line convergence or horizon. Plan oblique maps are particularly suited to communicating general spatial and landscape character information in town or country to people with limited to good map-reading skills.

BELOW
A pictorial hand-drawn three-dimensional plan oblique map of the City of Lichfield by Chris Mitchell (courtesy Lichfield District Council).



BELOW
A pictorial hand-drawn three-dimensional perspective panorama of Yellowstone National Park, Heinrich Berann (courtesy of US National Park Service).

- Perspective or panoramic illustrations are three-dimensional pictorial views drawn in full perspective. Piste guides and other mountain area views demonstrate this approach, which is closer to landscape painting than traditional mapping. Not being based on a true plan, shape, distance and direction are severely distorted, making perspectives less valuable for navigation, especially in critical situations. However, perspectives are the most realistic type of landscape representation and provide the best way for most people to gain an in-depth understanding of an environment. Perspectives can be recognised by their three-dimensional features, parallel line convergence and horizon. Perspectives are particularly suited to communicating landscape character information where accurate navigation is not a requirement, to people with limited to good map-reading skills.



PRESENTATION TECHNIQUE

Each map type can be realised using a variety of techniques.

- Digital maps are quick and inexpensive to produce using software that semi-automatically produces two- or three-dimensional maps using lines, colours, graduated tints or aerial photographs. Although improving all the time, computer rendering is still basic; photographs do not allow for careful selection of content that is vital for clarity, and opportunities for human intervention to improve quality are limited. Overall, digital maps are inexpensive but may appear crude and often fail to communicate as well as they should.

- Hand-drawn maps make use of traditional artistic and cartographic skills to select and present information to suit its particular purpose and audience. Hand-drawn maps can range from simple single-colour line work to highly detailed full colour painting. The process of hand production usually gives a friendly and approachable feel. Overall, hand-drawn maps are time-consuming and expensive, but usually provide the best quality communication.

Aaron Lawton is principal of Aaron Lawton Associates, heritage communication consultants. www.placematters.co.uk

'MAPS COME IN MANY FORMS, BUT THERE HAS BEEN LITTLE HANDS-ON RESEARCH INTO THEIR USE AT HERITAGE AND RECREATION SITES'



ABOVE
A symbolic digital two-dimensional planimetric map of Tentsmuir Forest in Fife (courtesy of Forestry Commission Scotland).

COOL FOR KIDZ

Elizabeth Newbery, Rachel Hamdi and Mike Spoor take a look at the secrets of good illustration for children.

There are thousands of talented illustrators out there – original, creative and skilful. Many of them regard the chance to illustrate for children as the best commission of all. So how do we make use of this talent? And where to start?

SO MUCH CHOICE

A quick trawl through one of the hundreds of websites specialising in illustrators reveals a wide selection of different styles: realism, fantasy, cartoon, humour, graphic, manga and comic strip for starters. Then there is different media: do you want watercolour, black and white, collage, photographic, woodcut, crayon, inks, line only or computer generated? As interpreters, here are some factors to consider:

- Style: This will be governed by issues such as subject matter, age range and context – and of course personal preferences.
- Subject matter: Has the illustrator got a feel for history/science/art? Can he/she draw animals/figures/action? Is the style suitable for under 5s/primary school children/teenagers?
- Context: What will the illustrations be used for? Posters? Interpretative panels? Children's guides? Family trails? Web-based resources? Mobile devices? Will the illustrations show up from a distance? Will they complement the text? Will they appeal across different generations where the target audience is families? Will they 'fit' new media such as the web?

BELOW
This image has a strong outline, a sense of movement and humour suited to a children's web-based interactive for Hampton Court.

Clinton Banbury for Historic Royal Palaces.



RIGHT
Images to be seen from a distance like this activity post at Caerlaverock Castle, Dumfries, need strong outlines and clear, bright colours.

Illustrations by Alan Rowe for Historic Scotland.



My Secret SURVIVAL NOTES



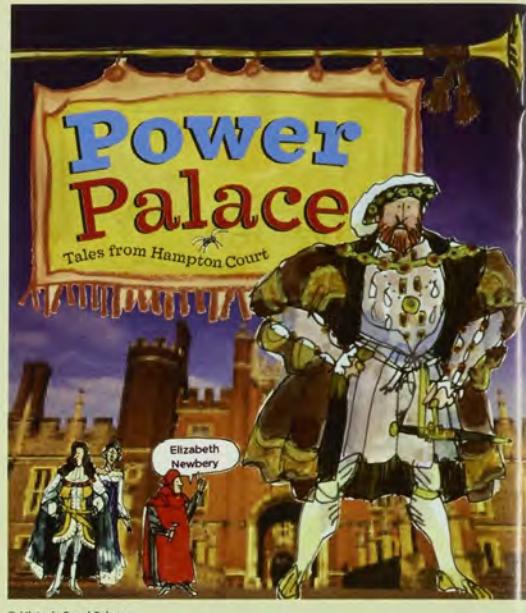
APPEALING TO CHILDREN

But by far the most important consideration is: will the illustrations appeal to children? The way to find out is to watch what they read. What grabs their attention? What makes them laugh? What comics do they buy? What books do they pick up? Which illustrated stories capture their imagination? If you've got any doubts, test examples with children – they can always be relied upon to give you an honest opinion. Remember it's not about what appealed to you as a child – it's what turns kids on today with their fondness for Facebooks and computer-generated imagery.

MAKING ILLUSTRATIONS WORK

Consider what you want illustrations to achieve. Don't try to show what words are already telling you – add something fresh, perhaps with a new take on the subject. Engage with characters, giving them an emotional inner life. Pushing the boundaries of style and content is one of most rewarding aspects of commissioning illustration. Here are three illustrators who have all recently illustrated Henry VIII for children, each adding another dimension to the text.

BELOW
Tim Archbold uses humour to interpret Henry VIII.



WORKING WITH ILLUSTRATORS

You will also need to consider format. Some illustrators work on computers and deliver their work via email or FTP transfer. Others work on paper, scan the illustrations in and send them electronically. Some post hand-coloured drawings and it's up to you or the printer/repro house to scan them in. You need to know because it makes a difference to the cost. It's more expensive to get the printer or repro house to scan illustrations – on the other hand they'll probably be better than those scanned in on a home scanner. But not always – if in doubt, ask your printer.

LEFT
Sophie Foster's deceptively childlike illustrations have a subversive edge – just like Henry VIII

Sophie Foster for the Mary Rose Trust.

RIGHT
Mike Spoor depicts Henry as a forceful character.

© Mike Spoor.



MIKE SPOOR: WORKING WITH INTERPRETERS

I am an illustrator and believe that illustrators love their work. It's a satisfying creative job and, by their nature, creative tasks invite outcomes which are more than the sum of their parts, inevitably contributing different and extra meanings to words.

WHAT I NEED

To get the most from an illustrator, he/she needs a clear brief. From my perspective, I need to know:

- Which samples of my work the interpreter/editor has in mind when they choose me for a particular job. They need to specify whether they want line work, colour, hand or computer generated etc. And also whether it should be loose and energetic, detailed and colourful, moody and atmospheric. Additionally there may be 'style' requirements. A conflict occurred recently in which the style for a book series was for bright primary colours but the story took place mostly at night and during World War II!
- Whether the pictures need to convey accurate information or to add visual interest for its own sake. This is particularly relevant in educational publications and sometimes in storybooks.

MY RESPONSE

Given that I've got a good brief, what comes next is the fun part of the job. I do a lot of work for publishers, so reading the entire book enables me to give more imaginative 'body' to my response: I want to know about characters, activity, environment, time of day, weather, moods and emotions – all of which help to add meaning. Every element is infinitely variable and it's hugely enjoyable moving things about, introducing new ideas, making a new visual

story. Ideas are then committed to paper, starting with a great number of loose sketches and ending with a pencil drawing in the space determined by the designer's layouts.

On the question of how to make illustrations appeal to children, I don't think illustrators do or should make this a priority. We do what we do. It's up to you to choose an illustrator you think will appeal to children.

... AND PROCESS

My preference is to provide quite rough 'roughs' so that I maintain a creative interest in carrying out the final work. Some illustrators provide roughs that are almost finals. This doesn't work for me because any changes requested in response to the roughs often mean redrawing the whole thing. Once roughs are approved, I look forward to the final artwork, which I do on high quality paper with good pens, pencils, paint and brushes. As in any craft, immersion in ideas, techniques and the process of making images, losing oneself in the task, allows the illustration to emerge as if I were a mere observer of something coming into existence. Magical!

www.contactcreative.com
Represents a wide range of illustrators.

www.thebrightagency
Another of the many illustrator websites available – this one is easy to use.

Elizabeth Newbery specialises in interpretation for children and families. www.newberyandengland.com
Rachel Hamdi is an art director responsible for commissioning illustration. rachel.hamdi@gmail.com
Mike Spoor is an illustrator. Mike.spoor@dsl.pipex.com

WORKING WITH ARTISTS

Annette Simpson describes at the unique place of artists within interpretation.

As an interpretation manager offering advice to a diverse assortment of colleagues within British Waterways I can often be heard repeating the mantra of: 'Have you been through the interpretive planning process?' Being clear about what you want to achieve, for whom and how, is essential if we are to deliver effective interpretation – but sometimes, just sometimes, taking a risk is very exciting!

BELOW
An illustrated map of Stourport-on-Severn Canal Basins by Kate Wrigglesworth.



ARTISTIC ENDEAVOURS

Commissioning artists to produce illustrations could be seen as one such risk. In our risk-adverse world, trusting another to deliver your vision without having complete control over the output makes some nervous. However, there are many benefits.

Both interpreters and artists work to communicate the special quality of places through engaging emotions and deepening understanding. Artists work to capture the power of place through their emotional and

'ENCOURAGED BY THE LOCAL ARTS OFFICER, WE WISHED TO EXPLORE THE ROLE THE ARTS COULD PLAY IN SUPPORTING INTERPRETATION'

personal connections to that place. However, artists are not bound by our management objectives. Their creativity is not stifled by over-planning, and the resulting medium or illustration can do much to enliven any interpretation and lighten the human spirit.

What is useful for interpreters is that artists can explore the layers of human activity at a place, responding to the ebb and flow of change. Their response can also be across time, so stories and memories can be embedded into the illustration – making these illustrations powerful tools in helping us to engage communities with places.

An artist can also unleash the creativity in others – whether its members of the community or us as interpreters; artists can encourage a safe environment for people to explore and express themselves.

ILLUSTRATED MAPS

British Waterways have been working with local communities to interpret a number of our key destinations; to explore what is really special about these places and to communicate this to our visitors. At a number of these locations, we have worked with artists to create illustrations to be used within the interpretation. So why did we choose to work in this way?



ABOVE
The Salt Warehouse by Roger Burnett.

A CANAL TOWN

Stourport-on-Severn is the only town in Britain created solely as a result of a canal. It is an inland port built originally by James Brindley where his new Staffordshire & Worcestershire Canal met the River Severn. British Waterways had been working with Wyre Forest District Council and the Stourport-on-Severn Civic Society to develop understanding and awareness of the history and current importance of the canal basins. However, encouraged by the local arts officer, we also wished to explore the role the arts could play in supporting interpretation.



ABOVE
Swimmer by Alison Palmer,
Commissioned to capture a sense
of Stourport Basins and to build
upon previous artist's work.

Kate Wrigglesworth, an artist from Bewdley who works in a variety of mediums, was appointed to work with interpretive consultant Sarah Douglas. Their brief was to develop and deliver a series of community workshops to create an illustrated map of the canal basins.

Much of Kate's work explores the landscape within Worcestershire and she has a particular way of looking at the built environment. Stourport-on-Severn is a unique place – a Georgian town built to serve an industrial need but which soon became a tourist destination. The juxtaposition of the canal basins and fairground amusements gives it a quirky feel and Kate's style expresses this sense of place beautifully.

The illustrated map also allowed us to explore the changes happening at Stourport. Following some years of under-investment the basins have recently undergone a restoration. When the illustration was created, part of the basins, the Lichfield Basin, had been filled in, but there were plans to reopen it. Kate was able to communicate the original extent of the basins and the desire to reopen them by including Lichfield Basin as a ghost image within the map.

Working with Sarah, Kate attended consultation events and led drawing activities for several community groups in Stourport. She was therefore able not only to use these memories for inspiration she was also able to incorporate these within the illustration. Can you spot the girl in the swimming costume in the picture on page 21. This is Mrs Eva Jones who wore her new costume, bought on 'divi-day' as a treat to swim in the floating pool in the River Severn.

PASSION FOR PLACE

Then there are the artists who are so closely entwined with a place that they live and breathe it. Roger Burnett, a sculptor, painter and boatbuilder, has had a long association with waterways. When we were working to interpret Sowerby Bridge Wharf in West Yorkshire, it was obvious that we would work with him – after all his studio was on the wharf and there was already a piece of his work, *Jack of the Locks*, standing at the entrance to the wharf.

Again we paired the artist with an interpreter, this time Carol Parr, to create an illustrated map, trail and panels for the wharf. This project did have community input, but this time we worked with our 'passionate enthusiasts', a term we use to describe members of the waterway community who are knowledgeable



and truly passionate about waterways. So here it was all about sharing this knowledge and passion with visitors – drawing their attention to the details which build up into the essence of a place.

COMMISSIONING ARTISTS

Working with artists to produce illustrations for interpretation requires trust and confidence in their ability and your own. There are many people who can offer support and advice, including the local arts officer, arts groups and other interpreters. The Arts Council website is a fantastic source of information, especially on the mechanics such as contracts and copyright.



LEFT
Illustration of *Jack of the Locks*
by Roger Burnett.

Annette Simpson is Education & Interpretation Manager for British Waterways.

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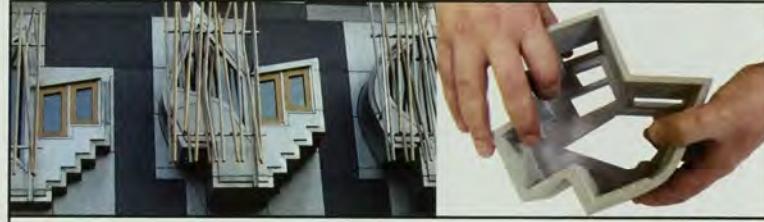
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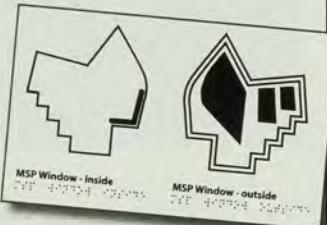
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Handle it and pass it on - this is a creative journey for us all.



STOP PRESS!

We've just taken delivery of the first print job of the year for **Acton Scott** - the venue for the acclaimed BBC programme **Victorian Farm**. Think Graphic created and applied a new identity on a range of media including print, exhibition and web.

