

# INTERPRETATION JOURNAL

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## Words into pictures

The use of illustration in interpretation







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### The next issue will feature: Funding and finance

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or email: dd.masters@virgin.net

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

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## 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



# A PICTURE SPEAKS A THOUSAND WORDS

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

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?

## 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](http://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk)

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  
An illustrated map of  
Worth Matravers by Tony Kerins.

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 work 'read' deliberately, because children read the story that's being told in the illustration. Older children progress to books

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](http://www.ahi.org.uk) or try the Association of Illustrators website ([www.theaoi.com](http://www.theaoi.com)).

Cathy Lewis, interpretation consultant, and Tony Kerins, illustrator, work together for design agency Froghopper. Email: [cathy@froghopper-design.co.uk](mailto:cathy@froghopper-design.co.uk) [www.froghopper-design.co.uk](http://www.froghopper-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'**

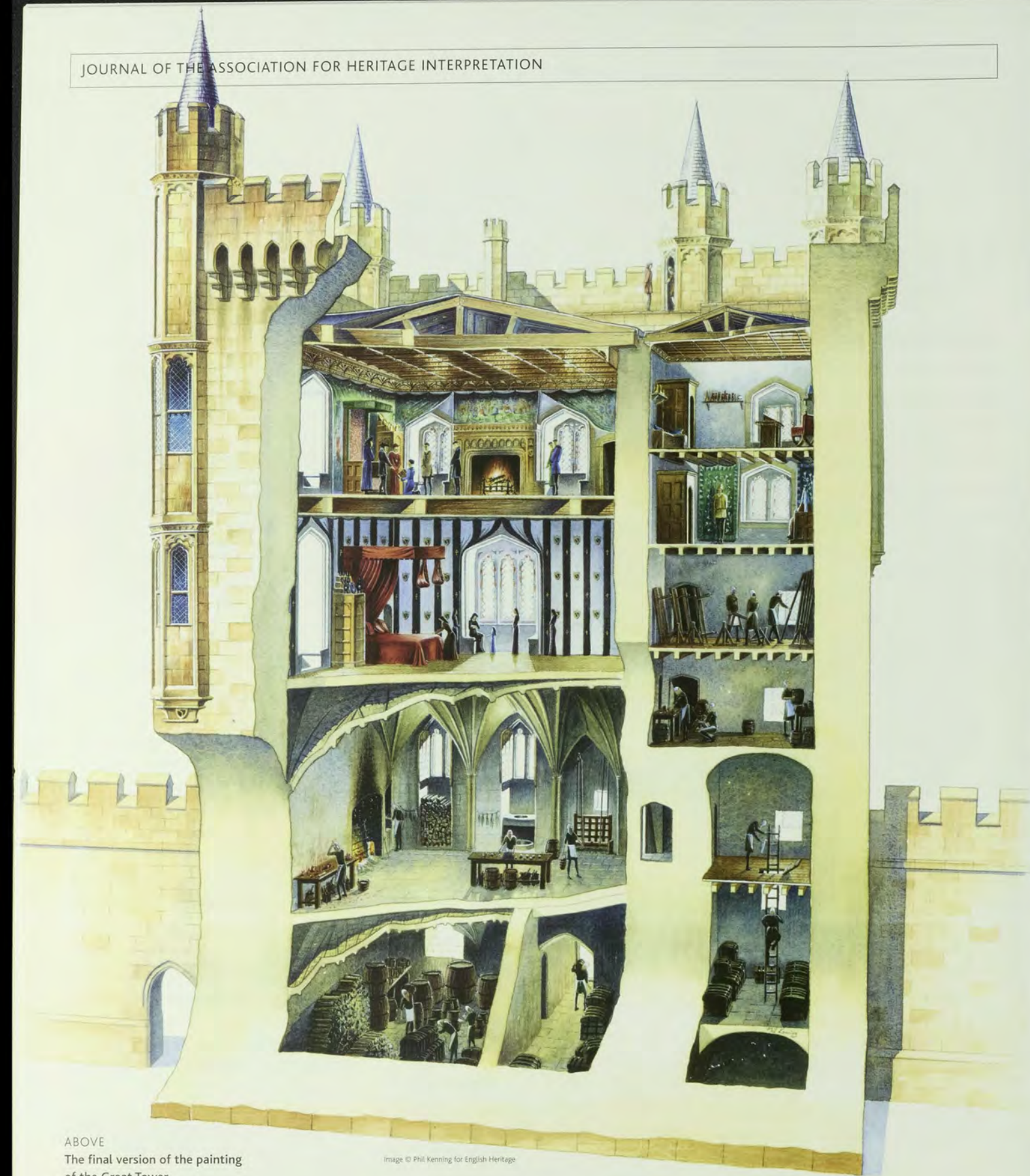
### DRAWINGS THAT TELL STORIES

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 visitor<sup>1</sup>. 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.

<sup>1</sup> 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

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.

Of equal importance is the setting of the building – portraying the landscape in which the building or monument once stood. Archaeological surveys can be helpful in identifying the positions of gardens, parks,

approach routes and subsidiary buildings, which may be visible in the final image. If showing farmland, it is important to know whether it was pasture or arable land, and how it might have been divided into fields. 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

## 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.



**'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 details,

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.



Image © Judith Dobie for English Heritage

**ABOVE**  
A birds-eye reconstruction of Grime's Graves in Neolithic times.

These unknown aspects of the past make it difficult for visitors to perceive sites such as Grime's Graves in prehistory. However, with careful reconstructions, such as these examples painted by Judith Dobie, we can go some way towards helping people understand their ancient past.

Reconstruction drawings are time-consuming and expensive to produce, but they play a unique role in bringing the past to life. They can show what was there before, unfold the story of the people, and relate the phases of building, by indicating the construction, change of use or decline of buildings. In these interpretation schemes, the historians were hard pushed to provide sufficient information to present the detailed atmosphere of the past through the personalities and architecture at Ashby de la Zouch Castle and the flint mines at Grime's Graves. When displayed at the site alongside images of objects discovered there, with texts in written and dramatised formats, these reconstructions create a representation of the past where seeing really is believing.

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

I'm not knocking words. I love words. I spend most of my day manipulating them. However, when I'm out and about enjoying my precious leisure time, I'm not a big fan. 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.

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.

### BELOW

These simple 'cameo' illustrations help bring the anatomy, feeding habits and life cycle of butterflies to life.

Gateshead Borough Council, Bensham Butterfly Station.

### The body beautiful

Like all insects the body of a butterfly is made up of three parts:

- 1 The head with two large eyes, a pair of antennae and the proboscis
- 2 The thorax with three pairs of legs and the wings
- 3 The abdomen containing the reproductive organs

### Create a butterfly

There are four rubbing plaques close by. Each has a quarter of the butterfly on it. Take an A4 sheet of paper and a crayon and see if you can recreate the drawing you see here. The notes on each plaque will help you.

### Take a tumble

Below this panel are four three-sided tumble blocks for you to match up. The background colours will help you.

- 1 Line one set up to spell another word for chrysalis.
- 2 Caterpillars are an important link in the food chain. Line another set up to create a food chain.
- 3 Line up the third set to show the four stages in the life cycle of a butterfly. The one shown here is a Small Tortoiseshell butterfly.

### Fun in the sun

Most butterflies are very choosy about where they live. All prefer a warm, sunny spot, sheltered from the wind. Many are associated with a particular species of plant. The female Small Tortoiseshell butterfly lays her eggs on the leaves of Stinging Nettles, while the Small White lays its eggs on the leaves of cabbages.

### On the menu

Eggs, caterpillars, chrysalises and adult butterflies are all in danger of being eaten by predators. To protect themselves some caterpillars are covered in spiny hairs. Others are brightly coloured warning predators that they are poisonous. Some avoid being eaten by camouflaging themselves to look like bird droppings!

### Super sucker

Butterflies have a long tongue called a proboscis, which they use to drink nectar from flowers. Nectar is a sweet sugary solution that gives butterflies the energy they need to fly, find a mate and lay their eggs. When not feeding butterflies keep their proboscis rolled up under their chin.

### Life cycle

Every butterfly starts off life as a tiny egg. From the egg a caterpillar hatches. The caterpillar then starts to feed. When it is full it finds a safe place where it changes into a chrysalis. Inside the chrysalis the body of the caterpillar breaks down into a gooey soup before changing into an adult butterfly.

## Welcome to Bensham 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.

Small Tortoiseshell butterfly (Glossa nyctaga)

Small Tortoiseshell caterpillar (Glossa nyctaga)

Small Tortoiseshell chrysalis (Glossa nyctaga)

Small Tortoiseshell butterfly (Glossa nyctaga)

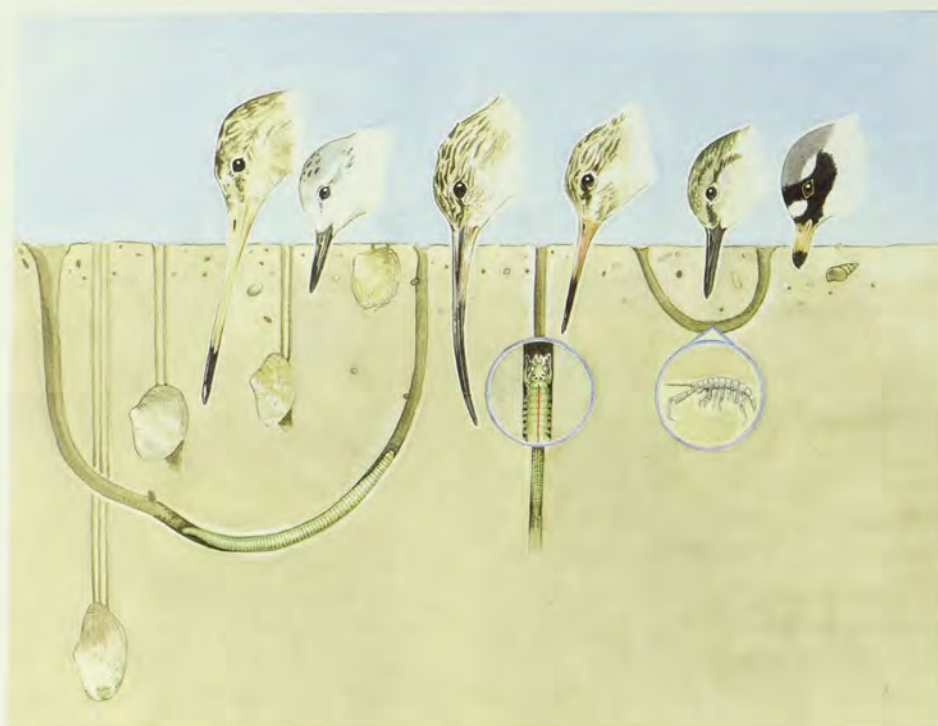
Small Tortoiseshell butterfly (Glossa nyctaga)



Image © Judith Dobie for English Heritage

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





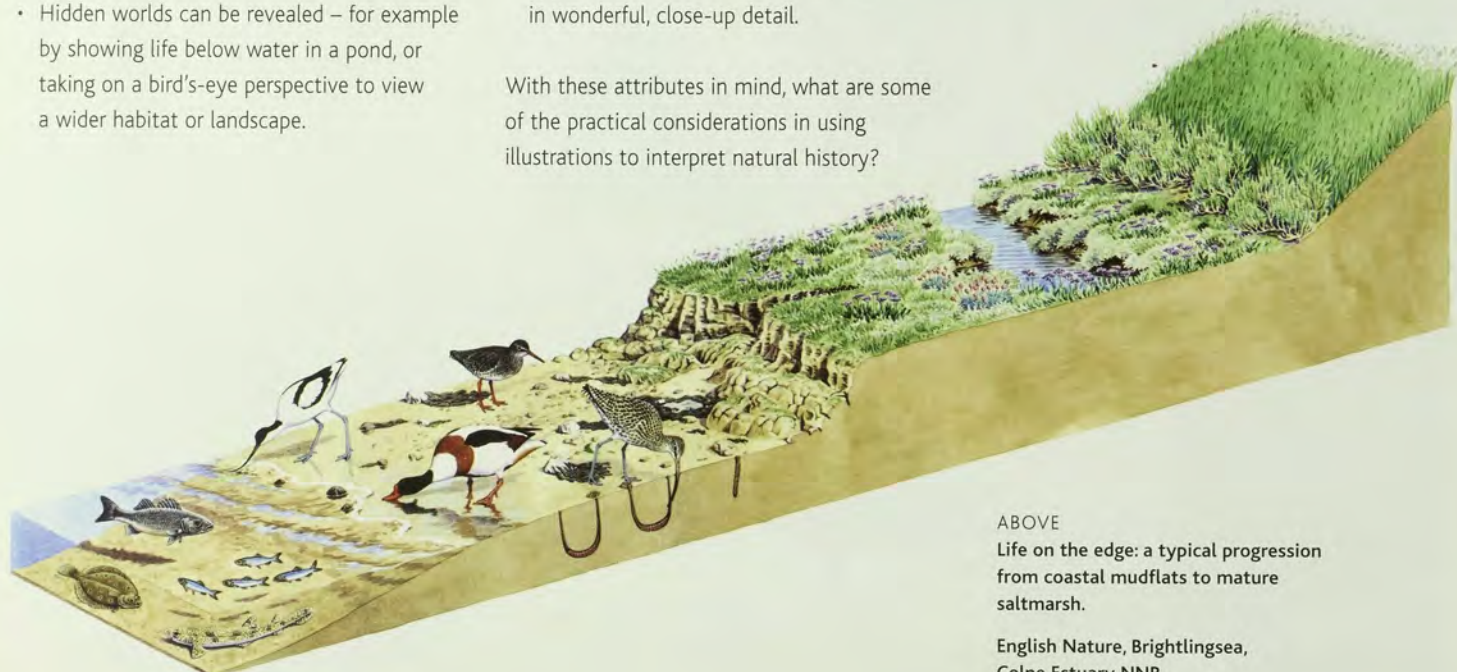
LEFT  
Mud glorious mud: mudflats may not look all that 'tasty', but for wading birds they are fast food outlets.

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'

- 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.
- 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.

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.



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

British Waterways, Kennet & Avon Canal.

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

- Firstly, consider whether you need to illustrate at all, or whether the same result can be achieved with photographs. If you have a limited budget, this will help you prioritise any subjects for illustration and make best use of resources.
- Ensure you brief your illustrator as fully as possible. The more thorough you are, the better the end result will be. It will also be easier for the illustrator to give an accurate price for the job.

- 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!

- If you have specific ideas or thoughts on the use of colours, make sure these are communicated clearly to the artist, as once the pencil rough is approved, there is no going back!

- 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.

Of course, good quality wildlife illustrations come at a price. A detailed habitat scene can cost £1,200, whilst individual cameo illustrations, of bird species for example, might cost £100 – £200. However, capturing a particular shot photographically can also be very costly, and the client will own the copyright to a high quality natural history illustration with potential uses far into the future.

Matthew Jones is Project Manager with Imagemakers Design and Consulting. [www.imagemakers.uk.com](http://www.imagemakers.uk.com)



## 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.

## 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.

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.

BELOW

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

- **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.



RIGHT

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





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.

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

- **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.

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## 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.



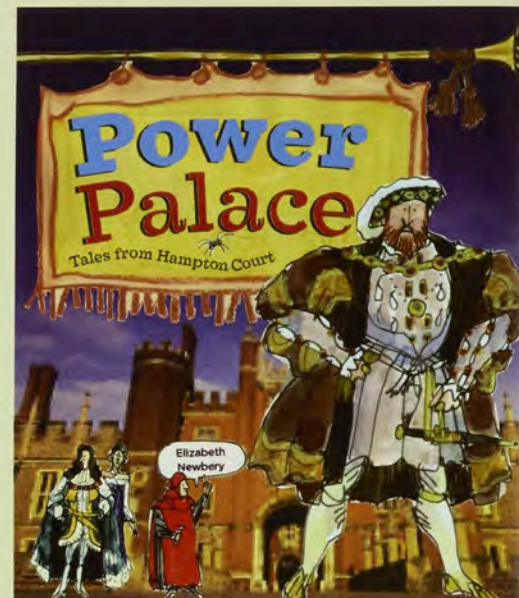


## APPEALING TO CHILDREN

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.



BELOW  
Tim Archbold uses humour  
to interpret Henry VIII.



© Historic Royal Palaces.

## 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.

## 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.

## 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 III!
- 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.

RIGHT  
Mike Spoor depicts Henry  
as a forceful character.

© Mike Spoor.



- If accurate detail is required, interpreters/editors need to provide reference material in the form of photocopies or web links.
- Whether the brief comprises suggestions or requirements. Some illustrators may need ideas supplied. They may be superb draftsmen/women but don't interpret subjects imaginatively. The brief needs to acknowledge this. Equally an illustrator needs to recognise that the interpreter/editor is usually open to discuss a brief.
- What sort of area I'll have to work in. Too many briefs ask for all the world and its mother crammed into an unrealistically small space.
- The deadline. I use a good home scanner and send work via email or FTP transfer. This usually frees time but if deadlines are truly tight then it's good to make this clear, since most freelance work involves juggling several conflicting commissions.

### 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!

## USEFUL CONTACTS

[www.childrensillustrators.com](http://www.childrensillustrators.com)

Does what it says on the tin – it specialises in children's illustrators.

[www.wildlife-art.co.uk](http://www.wildlife-art.co.uk)

Good for wildlife illustration.

[www.contactacreative.com](http://www.contactacreative.com)

Represents a wide range of illustrators.

[www.thebrightagency.com](http://www.thebrightagency.com)

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](http://www.newberyandengland.com)  
Rachel Hamdi is an art director responsible for commissioning illustration. [rachel.hamdi@gmail.com](mailto:rachel.hamdi@gmail.com)  
Mike Spoor is an illustrator.  
[Mike.spoor@dsl.pipex.com](mailto: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 Wigglesworth.

## 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 Wigglesworth, 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.

ABOVE  
Sketch of Sowerby Bridge Wharf by Roger Burnett – a rough for a front cover.

One way of working that we have found effective is to pair an artist with an interpreter. Each brings their strengths, and the sharing of their knowledge and experience can mean great end results.

As with any interpretation, having clear objectives and a sound briefing are essential. Being clear about what you want to achieve and being able to articulate this will mean a rewarding, exciting and effective project. The key is to focus on the outcomes, not the output itself – trust the artist to deliver and that trust will be repaid.

Annette Simpson is Education & Interpretation Manager for British Waterways.



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Think Graphic works closely with clients to create interpretive graphics for everyone, of all ages and ability. We develop inventive and stimulating ways of bringing our history, heritage and environment directly to life. Our colourful and informative illustrations leap from the panel or page. We intrigue visitors, drawing them into the picture.



Using cutting edge technology, we create new kinds of tactile graphics that combine braille and print with raised illustration. These guide and inform sighted and partially sighted visitors alike. They can also be used as rubbings, perhaps as part of a discovery trail.

We devise activity books so that children can take part in an historical adventure or an imaginary romp in the hills. Our award-winning printed guides enhance the visitor experience and add levels of interaction. New approaches and fresh thinking gives access to places and concepts that were once considered inaccessible.



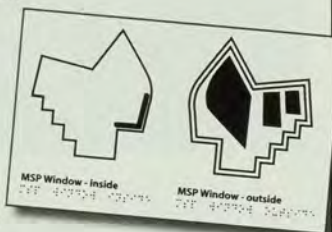
## Feel your way into politics

Our project to produce tactile orientation graphics for the Scottish Parliament is breaking new ground. With our clients, we are developing tactile guides and 3D models of architectural structures to help un-sighted users discover the complexity of this amazing building.

The graphics far exceed the Parliament's tender requirements across a range of guidebooks, objects and web-based media.

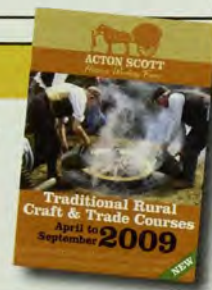
Our partner, SomervilleSCAN, uses 3D scanning, digital modelling and 3D printing technologies that enable any artefact to be copied, enhanced and re-made - perfect for museums and galleries. This new modelling technology offers boundless potential for all interpretive projects.

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.



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