interpretation

NUMBER 10 SUMMER 1978

'A Future for the 1066 Country'
A schoolboy gets the feel of armour

(Photo: East Sussex County Council)

THE SOCIETY

The Society for the Interpretation of Britain's Heritage was formed in April 1975 to provide a forum for people engaged in studying Britain's heritage and in both planning and managing interpretive programmes and facilities which relate to this heritage.

It draws its members from a wide range of organisations - including local authorities, statutory and educational bodies and major voluntary organisations - engaged in interpretation of one kind or another.

Copies of the constitution, of the consultative document which led to the formation of the Society and membership application forms may be obtained from the Secretary.

THE OFFICERS

President: The Right Hon. The Countess of Albemarle, DBE DLitt DCL LLD
Chairman: J Geraint Jenkins, MA FSA FMA (Welsh Folk Museum)
Vice-Chairman: Peter Moore (Cheshire County Council)
Secretary: Martin Orrom, TD MA (9 Greenhill Gardens, Edinburgh EH10 4BN. Bus. Tel. 031-334 0303)
Treasurer: Terry Stevens (Dyfed County Council)
Publicity Officer: Graham Taylor (Countryside Commission)
Editor: Michael H Glen (Ryeford Lodge, Ryeford, Stonehouse, Glos, GL10 2LA)

THE NEWSLETTER

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INTERPRETATION

THE GUIDING HAND OF SERENDIPITY

This is the tenth issue of the Society's newsletter. A few cosmetic changes have taken place since it began just over three years ago but the general approach has remained unchanged. It has relied for its content on voluntary contributions and there has been no overall guiding hand in the balance of articles. The unfailing support of contributing members has been most encouraging.

The AGM at Cardiff provided an opportunity to open discussions on how the newsletter should proceed. There seemed little opposition to its continuing, at least partly, as a news medium for members about members' activities. There was little support for a heavyweight 'professional journal' at the present time. What perhaps was needed most was a structured programme of issues, with features and articles sought from appropriate sources, and much less dependence on serendipity.

The present editor sees the time fast approaching when a new hand at the wheel will be necessary. In the meantime, it is thought that an editorial advisory group might convene, at society meetings, to develop an 'umbrella' policy and to identify themes to which the newsletter might address itself. However, their deliberations would be aided by a consensus of members' views and for that reason a brief questionnaire has been included in this newsletter. Its return by all members would be greatly appreciated.

APOLOGIES

This issue of the newsletter is very late and the editor offers his apologies. The reasons are several but are not offered as excuses. The next issue, it is hoped, will be on schedule.

Some copies of the last issue were badly trimmed leaving uncut pages. Our printer - who got the issue through the press on time despite being ill - apologises to the Society.

THE CARDIFF REPORT

Vaughan-Thomas

The opening speaker was introduced by Geraint Jenkins, our chairman and host, as a distinguished broadcaster who had done much to interpret Wales. Wynford Vaughan-Thomas gave a charming and poetic talk, full of amusing anecdotes, to which this writer cannot do justice in summary. He spoke of the modern pressures on his much-loved empty and beautiful Welsh countryside by tourists and industry (he noted a two-faced attitude towards industry - some is deemed desirable and is much sought after) and wondered where the blame lay. Modern architects were criticised; or were there too many of us wanting too much, or is the car the chief villain, because people's attitudes change for the worse when they are in one? Mr Vaughan-Thomas thought it would be possible to save the last parts of his Welsh countryside, with goodwill and now education. In his boyhood, schools used to promote an attitude of reverence towards the countryside, and they are beginning to do so again. There is a need to educate industry and the public how to use it, and government to preserve the best parts.

Communication

THE NAME OF THE GAME

Brian Glover (designer) and Alison Richards (script writer) of the Design Department of the National Museum of Wales conducted the second session. Brian, having had a lot of criticism to voice at York Heritage Centre, now had the opportunity to say his piece. He and Alison started with a very short AV show illustrating the change from the old museums to the new ones which have to compete with modern media and use interpretive techniques. The rest of the session consisted of a loosely-guided discussion interspersed with some tape-recordings of designer John Lewis talking over certain points.

DO WE NEED OBJECTS IN MUSEUMS?

There had been a change from simply displaying objects in museums to trying to show their context. (Even this new approach does not enable many children to see the link between an interpretive display and the countryside itself). Each situation was different, and this and the objects (or landscape) determine the approach, not the design. The designer should relate to people's make-up and individual experiences. Does one start with the object or the information one wants to present? If the latter, perhaps museums should throw away all their objects! Another suggestion was that some old museums should be preserved as objects themselves, and not changed with fashions. That idea might appeal to us, but not necessarily to the modern public; we had to hit the right balance between now and the past.

The interpretive planning process was compared with the reclamation of derelict land (an unavoidable subject in South Wales). The engineer, ecologist and landscape designer should be brought in together as a team, not consecutively. Research is often the last stage in an interpretive centre, but is the most important part. A network of heritage sites should be developed in South Wales, rather than gathering material all at Cardiff; some things could even be returned to the right place. Was a grand plan necessary? One person thought not, another said that co-operation and co-ordination were more important. In Nottinghamshire, it was hoped to heighten the level of awareness of potential providers.

WHO?

The discussion was criticised on the grounds that it was centring on the interpreters and their methods, and not what interpretation is and for whom it is. Perhaps we should start off by entertaining. Perhaps we should take the same approach as for schoolchildren - what they found exciting we did too, and presentation for children is often much more exciting. >page 4

CONCLUSION

The discussion had been restricted to manmade objects, but nature was different - it and the visitors changed over time; not all the philosophy is applicable to all interpretation; many recreation managers are painfully aware of the need for interpretation, and at whom it should be directed.

Welsh Parks

John Davies, of the Countryside Commission (Wales), chaired the next session and introduced the three speakers: Gwilym Rhys Edwards from Snowdonia, Roger Stevens from the Brecon Beacons and Peter Hordley from the Pembroke Coast.

SNOWDONIA

Snowdonia is not a wilderness as many people like to think, because man has contributed to the landscape all over the park, but it is suited to the quiet enjoyment of (rather than in) the countryside. The information officer was very much alone at the beginning; he took money but not advice from the Countryside Commission, and there was little help from the three county council planning departments. The first stage was to write a guide, which Gwilym Rhys Edwards recommended as an exercise for oneself. The second was the interpretive plan, although in those days it was a programme of putting information facilities where the public would need and find them.

Using caravans to gauge the response, he found that small towns were much better sites than laybys, where people didn't stop. The plan earmarked sites for information offices. Then came the decision about what to say: Edwards thought that people were more interested in what was happening in the National Park than the concept itself, so the emphasis has been on explaining activities in the vicinity of the centre, putting over a view somewhere between the extremes of pressure and overuse of the countryside. During this time, the interpretive profession grew stronger, and new techniques were introduced.

There were two major problems: the first was the Welsh language; the information on the whole was geared to an English audience, but all interpretation must be bilingual. This leads to design problems; with publications, the requirement is taken liberally: the two languages do not always say the same thing. The other problem was finance, which meant that most interpretation had to be done in-house. A workshop accommodates a designer and two technicians who design and make everything necessary. A 60' x 30' exhibition at Aberdovey cost £170 at 1973 prices. There was a silk screen printing press for enamel prints.

To questions afterwards, the cost of running the workshop was given as: rent £50 per quarter, materials £1500 per year, plus heating/'phone etc and the salaries of the two technicians on the AP3 scale. The designer was employed under the Job Creation Programme.

(Gwilym Rhys Edwards's address to the meeting was a strong personal statement, too long, we regret, for reproduction in full in the newsletter. A summary can give only a taste of what was said. Copies of the complete talk are obtainable from Ruth Tillyard, Notts CC, Trent Bridge House, West Bridgford, Nottingham).

BRECON BEACONS

The talk given by Roger Stevens was a review of the different methods used to interpret the park, illustrated with slides. In the past, some buildings have been demolished which now would perhaps have been preserved and interpreted. Management studies have been done for several valleys, which have also been useful interpretive exercises. Interpretation is used to increase the honey-pot attraction of a country park managed by a national park. Guided walks have become increasingly interpretive. There is a 'mountain centre' and a study centre; as well as explaining the present, he thought there was a duty to show what the future might be. He also thought that the book is an important interpretive medium, despite the patronising attitude of some interpreters. Mr Stevens said that, for him, being a non-specialist brought a helpful degree of ignorance - he was not afraid to ask obvious questions. There is always the need to stop and think about one's own intentions.

PEMBROKESHIRE COAST

The talk was about guided walks, so Peter Hordley started with listing the other areas of activity; there are seven information centres in a variety of accommodation. The exhibitions use themes related to the immediate area. Slide-tape programmes have been done in-house, or very cheaply outside. Correspondence forms an important element of the interpretation.

Guided walks were first started by John Barratt from his home; from 1969-1974 they ran from Broadhaven information centre. In 1974 the programme was extended to 170 over the season. New guides were obtained by word of mouth, there were four assistant wardens and voluntary wardens, and other National Park staff were also encouraged. Records are kept of the numbers attending, although some walks acquire a lot of people en route; for example, one at St David's Cathedral started with 30, and finished with over 100 people. The average attendance is 25 for all walks, so over-attendance is not usually a problem. Booking would restrict numbers, but imposes a barrier and requires administration, so is only used where necessary (eg. boat trips). A suitable distribution is sought, which means linear routes in some areas, leading to transport problems. Using minibuses is not good for the Park's image, and can involve legal difficulties. Apart from guided walks, talks are held throughout the Park, there are farm walks, and in future there will be walks in the Upton Castle grounds, as earmarked in the interpretive plan.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The chairman pointed out that the Countryside Commission puts £168,000 per annum into the three Welsh National Parks. He was pleased to see the use of voluntary groups. This session, he said, had been the feast before the banquet.

Banquet

With Geraint Jenkins being the 'baron' for the night - his baroness was a lady from Penarth Yacht Club - a good time was had by all. In the guise of light-hearted entertainments, we did learn a little Welsh history, mostly at the beginning when our jollifications were put into a historical context.

Merthyr Past

Standing in at the last minute for an indisposed Professor Gwyn Williams, the President of the Merthyr Tydfil History Society, Dr Walter Grose, gave a fascinating account of the industrial and transport history of Merthyr. He was followed by Richard Keen from the Department of Industry, National Museum of Wales, whose illustrated talk neatly complemented that of Dr Grose.

We learned how the valleys of South Wales were developed to produce iron, coal and steel using the natural resources of the region including the timber for charcoal and water for motive power. The early ironmasters came from England and settled in the remote valleys, including the Taff, from the sixteenth century.

The main period of expansion was between 1760 and 1850 with the introduction of Darby's coke-production of iron using coal from the fields at the heads of the valleys. Then steel became the dominating force along with coal itself. Serving the works was a complex network of tramroads and railways which largely superseded the Glamorganshire Canal which itself replaced the road as the most economic medium for transporting iron and steel goods to Cardiff docks.

In their heyday, the Welsh valleys were supporting a large number of furnaces and such ironmasters as William Crawshay were making their fortunes.

Merthyr Tydfil became the largest town in Wales and much of Britain's economy

depended upon the sweat lost in the valleys. Times changed, though, and steel making moved largely to coastal sites, leaving Ebbw Vale alone as the surviving steel plant. For nearly fifty years now special measures have been used to assist the declining economy of the valley. Great improvements have been seen largely by the build-up of light engineering.

Considerable efforts are now being put into restoring an environment largely devastated by an all-pervading and ugly industry which was awe-inspiring and magnificent at its peak.

Taste of Wales

The Wales Tourist Board hosted the Society at a special all-Welsh lunch. In welcoming us to Merthyr Tydfil, the Mayor said in her address that the town must throw off its ugly duckling mentality. The Council was determined to preserve both its architectural and cultural heritage. As a birthplace of the industrial revolution, where the first train ran, whose rails opened up Russia and whose cannonballs brought the downfall of Napoleon, Merthyr Tydfil had a lot to answer for, she said. She wanted to see the answer lying in a town promoted into the twentieth century whilst preserving the best of its past.

Garwnant

Before wallowing in the ruins of an industry, the Society breathed fresh forest air at Garwnant where the Forestry Commission Centre on the edge of the Brecon Beacons explains, principally to the city dweller, 'why we are here', and explains the reasons for the land use. The Centre contains both two- and three-dimensional displays as well as an AV/teaching theatre.

Bute Town

In the journey down the valley, the highlight was a visit to Bute Town, a 'model' village consisting principally of two streets of houses built in 1825 to house workers at the Rhymney iron-works. Recently, a programme of external renovation had been completed, with the full support of the community and the result is a curiously appealing, if (still) slightly artificial, oasis among the spoil heaps.

(Wales Tourist Board)

Private View

In contrast to the rustic delights of the previous evening's banquet, the Society was privileged to be invited to a reception and private view at the National Museum of Wales. The kind hospitality and elegantly erudite surroundings ended the day on a most pleasant note.

Lady White

In giving the Society a 'keynote' talk on the Sunday morning, Baroness Eirene White, former MP and passionate fighter for the sensible conservation of Wales, brought together a number of themes.

She was concerned, as a 'relatively lay person in touch with conservation, if not interpretation', that there was no co-ordinating machinery which would avoid conflict and waste and welcomed the liaison between the Countryside Commission and the National Museum of Wales.

There were many situations where interpretation was desirable, but it must be well thought out. Take care, she said, that it's not too good, gathering too many people and wearing out the attraction. She advocated a strategic as well as a tactical approach - there must be a clear strategy on the location of 'honey pots' and on where people should be kept out.

With twelve million visitors coming to Wales (four times the population) irritation and conflict must be avoided. She could understand jingoistic attitudes but tourists brought economic advantages in the face of declining traditional industries, rural depopulation, changing agricultural methods and so on.

A lively series of comments on specific topics was given by Lady White. The proliferation of field centres and other unplanned uncoordinated 'study' centres was challenged and control called for. The forthcoming interpretive-cum-local centre at Llanberis was praised and held up as an example of constructive co-operation between, perhaps superficially, opposing interests. Lady White saw it having great possibilities - it was in the right place, despite bitter opposition to yet another intrusion into Snowdonia.

The proposals for the Cambrian Way met with less enthusiasm. The route was felt to be insensitively planned in certain parts. A more congratulatory note was sounded in favour of the preservation and restoration of Erddig - an 'example of going in the right direction' Lady White said.

Her hope for the Society whose aims she supported, was that it should sustain the imagination and lively interest among visitors and those who live in Wales.

Ruth Tillyard/MHG

Annual General Meeting

OFFICERS' REPORTS

The Society had applied for charitable status to enable it to benefit from a Carnegie U.K. Trust grant. A committee to review Local History, chaired by Lord Blake, had invited a submission on the working of the society. Finances looked worse than they were, but there was a plea for prompt payment of subscriptions. The time had perhaps come for a change of aims for the newsletter; a questionnaire will be produced to gauge the opinion of members. Details of events should be sent to the Publicity Officer as soon as possible, for inclusion in other journals etc.

OFFICE BEARERS

Two new officers were elected at the AGM. Peter Moore of Cheshire County Council replaces Ralph Blain as Vice-Chairman and Terry Stevens of Pembrokeshire County Council takes over as Treasurer from Richard Harrison.

FUTURE PROGRAMME

The meetings already confirmed are: 'Living History Programmes and the Interpretation of Historic Sites', at the Peak Park Study Centre from September 22 to 24, 1978; 'The Heritage of Beer' (jointly with Burton Civic Society), during the third or fourth weekend of November 1978. Meetings proposed are: 1979 AGM in London; Nottingham and Ironbridge in September and November 1979. It was suggested that a seminar should be incorporated into the London meeting, to result in a symposium volume; a branch of Methuen Publishers had shown interest in publishing a textbook although this was not thought appropriate at the moment.

OTHER BUSINESS

More information was requested about the structure of the profession and training for interpretation. The Carnegie Trust is examining training. Members of the Society were invited to comment on the interim report of the Yates Committee on Sport and Recreation by writing to Michael Eden, Department of the Environment, 17-19 Rochester Row, London SW1.

MEMBERSHIP

If you would like a complete list of Society members, write to Graham Taylor, Countryside Commission, Crescent Place, Cheltenham, Glos.

1066 AND ALL THIS

'This is where it happened'

William the Conqueror founded an Abbey on the site of the Battle of Hastings. In 1976 Battle Abbey Estate was bought by the Department of the Environment and pending more detailed proposals for the area, East Sussex County Council undertook its temporary management. Despite very little advertising and few facilities, 145,000 people, 30% of whom were foreigners, visited it in a year.

The County Council want to spread tourism over a wide area of East Sussex rather than develop the site very intensively. The aims of the County Council are two-fold - to give everyone the chance to understand and enjoy this period of history and at the same time to boost the local economy. In the area there are serious job shortages, an imbalanced age structure and a lack of leisure facilities. Battle is the key, but the overall aim is to attract visitors to a wider area. Tourism will also act as a spur to conservation.

The interpretive proposals include a visitor centre overlooking the site and signs marking the key positions of the two armies, battle re-enactments and general history re-creations for schools, research facilities, wider trails and tours to other battlefields. An annual American Festival is also proposed to celebrate American help in buying the estate. The proposals are now being discussed by the other local authorities, government and private enterprise which would all have to be involved in a partnership for the venture to succeed.

Caernarfon Display

On May 5 Barry Jones MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Wales, opened a new history exhibition entitled 'A Prospect of Caernarfon'. It is situated in the Eagle Tower and is built around a central detailed model of the castle and town around 1350. It explains why and how the castle was built and what made it stand apart from the other castles of Edward I in Wales. It also illustrates how the town grew up around it on the proceeds of slate, and how the defences have been restored and conserved over more than a century.

The display has been prepared by the Inspectorate of Ancient Monuments, Welsh Office, and is one of some half a dozen interpretive displays now at ancient monuments in Wales. It is planned greatly to extend this style of presentation in the future.

Peter Humphries

NTS NEWS

The National Trust for Scotland tell us that for the 1978 season they will have two important revisions to existing displays. At Killiecrankie, on the A9, the original exhibition area has been completely re-organised, and the emphasis turned to interpretation of the Pass of Killiecrankie, including the Battle, rather than the Battle per se. There is also an area set aside for Natural History displays, acting as an information and discussion area for interested visitors with the Ranger on duty. The main exhibition area is being designed so that it is practical to use it as a place for the Ranger to give illustrated talks and show films in summer evenings.

The last section of the Ben Lawers display, which has been unsatisfactory for some time, has also been revised. They have attempted to continue the story from 1800, where there was a gap before, and to draw particular attention to the use of the mountain today and the way in which profitable land use, recreational pursuits and nature conservation can live side by side.

The Scottish Agricultural Museum

Now standing in the Royal Highland Showground at Ingliston, nine miles west of the centre of Edinburgh, is the Scottish Agricultural Museum. At the moment the building stands as a shell, but it has had two exhibitions in it during the Highland Show period. The first in 1977 was on Muck, and in 1978 on Corn. A basic aspect of Scottish country life was examined in depth so as to throw up regional variations, as well as to show the Scottish scene in an international context.

This approach will be continued in the completed museum. It is planned that the internal building and engineering works should be completed within the next 18 months, and the Scottish Country Life Museums Trust, which has been raising funds for the project, is now seeking £45,000 to complete it. The museum, when ready, will display material collected by the Country Life Section of the National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland, and the aims of the Agricultural Museum can be summed up as follows:

1 To look at rural Scotland as a whole and to investigate the way in which its different regions vary and how they interact with each other.

2 To study and display the major aspects of Scottish agriculture over the last 200 years, and to show how the changes in it have affected the countryside.

3 To show the considerable part Scottish agriculture has played in Europe and beyond, and to see the history of Scottish rural life in its international setting.

4 To provide displays that will be attractive to tourists and visitors of all kinds.

5 To lay a systematic basis for the regional interpretation of Scottish agricultural history in a way that would be helpful to museums dealing with country life throughout Scotland.

6 To provide data and material for education in the history of the environment and especially in relation to younger people and teachers so that they may be made more aware of their background.

7 To publish and otherwise make generally available data relevant to these purposes.

The Agricultural Museum has in fact been in existence in the Showground since 1965. For the first twelve years of its life, the exhibitions were under canvas. The appeal of these exhibitions is considerable, and in the thirteen-year period from 1965 to 1977, they attracted 353,891 visitors, an average of 6,805 visitors every viewing day.

Alexander Fenton

And Old Mrs Ridout And All

Mrs Ridout's donkey cart was a rarity in the 1880s. Her work, as one of the few Victorian lady carriers, was to carry goods from the 'Haunch of Venison', Salisbury, to the outlying villages of Coombe Bissett and Homington on the donkey-drawn 'Coombe Express'. Perhaps like Mrs Dollery in Hardy's Woodlanders she even decided to wear leggings for modesty's sake.

Sam Mullings, in an article which has just appeared in the journal 'Wiltshire Folklife' entitled 'And Old Mrs Ridout and All: a Study of Salisbury's County Carriers', shows how important local carriers were to village life right into the twentieth century, bringing people and produce to market, and selling goods in the villages which the local people would otherwise have found it impossible to obtain.

'Wiltshire Folklife' can be obtained by subscription - £2.40 for three issues from Farley Farm, Farley, near Salisbury - or individually at £1.00 from bookshops or by post (please add 12p post).

S F Bigger

Heritage Grants

The Carnegie United Kingdom Trust, in association with the Civic Trust and the Scottish Civic Trust, has launched a three-year programme of grants, totalling £100,000, to assist local amenity societies in the provision of facilities which will give residents and visitors a richer insight into the history, character and resources of their areas. This will be a major component in the 'Heritage Policy' recently adopted by the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust. All local amenity societies registered with the Civic Trust will be eligible to apply for grants.

It is emphasised that the proposed schemes need not be only in pretty historical towns, nor need they be on a grand scale, but they should be of a high professional standard. Projects which are concerned with several aspects of the heritage will be preferred to those illustrating one topic, and small schemes of 'on site' interpretation are also encouraged. Societies should, where possible, relate proposals to a comprehensive interpretive plan, and grant aid is available for preliminary stages, such as the preparation of an inventory of resources.

In conjunction with the new scheme, an illustrated manual on interpretation will be published by the Civic Trust.

More details from Civic Trust, Scottish Civic Trust or the Carnegie U.K. Trust.

How to Publish

The Countryside Commission for Scotland recently held a course on interpretive publications at their Battleby Centre.

The course followed the successive stages in producing an interpretive publication. Interspersed with the discussion periods were practical sessions. These enabled participants to try their hands at stages where they had had no previous practical involvement, and to relate the theory to their own work. We also had talks from two outside speakers, one a printer, the other an illustrator/designer, and a visit to a printing works.

The Battleby staff were well prepared (they each possessed an impressive-looking dossier); this preparation was reflected in the quality of the course, and ensured that we worked continuously and effectively. Not the least benefit was gained from meeting and talking to a variety of people whose work experience is different. From the course itself, I learned most on the technical side, but even the sessions which covered familiar ground stimulated a more thoughtful approach to the whole process. It was an extremely worthwhile week.

Ruth Tillyard

Inter-national Parks

The Western Association of Interpreters (USA) have recently instigated an ambitious project - The International Park to Park Programme - aimed at matching similar parks throughout the world. The programme realises that in most nations park professionals are tackling similar problems: whether they be related to interpretation or to any other aspect of park management. IPP allows for the communication of problems and the sharing of solutions.

A profile questionnaire provides a checklist of common data and problems. Once completed, it is sent to the Development Committee of IPP for processing and assignment of a 'sister park'. From there, mutual parks can communicate, plan and work together.

Membership fees are $15.00, or own currency equivalent, for an agency to agency application, and $5.00 for a park to park application. The programme's intentions are commendable and obviously its success is dependent upon a good response everywhere.

Further details can be obtained from Terry Stevens, Pembrokeshire Coast National Park, Old County Offices, Haverfordwest, Dyfed. (Telephone 3131 ext 138) or from IPP, Wallace Cromwell, Coyote Hills Regional Park, 8000 Patterson Ranch Road, Fremont, California 94536, USA.

NOTTINGHAM'S CAVES

Writers and travellers, Asser, Leland, Camden, Defoe and others have mentioned Nottingham as a town of cave dwellers for a thousand years. Nineteenth century slum clearance destroyed most of the dwellings but even now about 200 manmade caves exist in Nottingham or were known until recently - most of them rock-cut cellars, mines and tunnels.

Although artificial caves are common abroad they are a rarity in British towns. Nottingham is one of the few exceptions but surprisingly few outsiders have heard of our caves and many of the townspeople are ignorant of them. One or two of these caves or rock cellars have been open to the public in the past but no serious attempt has been made until recently to ensure their protection, accessibility and adequate interpretation.

The lack of organised appreciation is surprising. The public appetite for exciting underground structures is insatiable, but regrettably it has been fed in the past by tales of interminable passages leading to improbable destinations by impossible routes. In Nottingham the truth is different but is as fascinating as the fiction.

THE PRESENT

In July 1978 there are only two cave systems in Nottingham containing any attempt at visual interpretation. At Brewhouse Yard Museum, opened in June 1977, there are small displays in some of the cave cellars behind the converted brick houses of c.1680 - 1700 which house the museum. One cave illustrates the 'ale cellar' theme by a selection of liquor barrels, bottles and jars and brewing equipment, while another employs a more didactic method.

This uses maps and plans of some fully recorded caves, with a few photographs, to give the 'flavour' of Nottingham caves but it is not an exposition of the whole topic. Also in the Brewhouse Yard Museum one of the caves has been used to illustrate the 'Home Front' in World War II, this cave having been an air raid shelter for which the original drawings are still extant. Mould growth is a perpetual problem in the caves and although temperatures remain constant at about 50°F, humidity levels are unacceptably high (65% - 95%) for most orthodox museum material or graphic displays. At Brewhouse Yard the visual displays are important because there is no arrangement for conducted tours, since the cave cellars form part of the museum circulation.

Adjacent to Brewhouse Yard is the Castle Museum. Here is a rock-cut passage, known since the 16th century as 'Mortimer's Hole', which descends from the site of the inner bailey of the vanished medieval castle to the corner of Brewhouse Yard. In this case, risk of injury or vandalism necessitates a guided tour and visual interpretation of this feature, associated with the capture of Roger Mortimer, Earl of March, and Queen Isabella in 1330, has not been attempted except briefly in an exhibition in the Castle Museum lasting until 3 September, to mark the Museum's centenary.

Two other groups of caves in the centre of Nottingham are now open to the public. Both have only recently been cleared of debris and during the Nottingham Festival in early June attracted more than 5,000 visitors. At Broad Marsh Centre guided tours operate on the first Sunday afternoon in each month, and for organised parties on Wednesday evenings. The guides are trained volunteers from the 'Friends of Nottingham Museums'. Here a printed booklet with plans, a photograph, descriptive information of the caves and sights to be seen on route to there from the Castle is available. During the Festival a small display on these caves could be seen at Severns' Building, a restored fifteenth century timbered house near the Castle which serves as a booking office on open days. This small exhibition, with cave plans and finds excavated from the Broad Marsh caves was only temporary. A permanent exhibition is needed to explain the unique features of the system which contains a tannery abandoned about 1639. >page 12

Nearby, in Bridlesmith Gate, two adjacent properties contain four cave-cellar systems. Again, guided tours have been provided, this time by members of the Nottingham Historical Arts Society. Here there is a cellar or basement entrance in which small explanatory displays are possible. Both property owners have constructed show-cases for finds from the sites, notably important medieval pottery and there is potential space for future interpretive exhibits on the layout and purpose of the caves, their owners and discovery.

THE FUTURE

In the next two years a much larger complex of eighteenth and nineteenth century sand mines near Peel Street may be opened to the public. This, like the Broad Marsh and Castle Caves will be owned by Nottingham City Council.

At present the limited information about Nottingham's caves, some 200 in all, refers to a few specific examples. There is a great need for a central information point, not necessarily large, where the interested native or questioning tourist can rapidly grasp the extent and variety of the cave scene in this extraordinary city. At the Broad Marsh caves is an area sheltered by the flyover road and in part covering them, which, if suitably enclosed would make both a useful vestibule for groups of tourists entering the caves and an interpretation area for the city's caves as a whole.

Here a large map of the city with known caves plotted on it is a necessity. Sections on the geology, early archaeolcgy and documentation of the caves are envisaged, followed by illustrations of the main cave types and their functions. Displays of finds, possibly models of caves and illustrations of a modern oak-bark tannery and tools similar to those probably used in the tannery at Broad Marsh would also be employed to clarify points of dating and use. Unfortunately one vital aspect is still a mystery and that is how the caves were made. A miner's pick and a chisel were found in the Drury Hill (Broad Marsh) caves, but these were not certainly connected with the construction.

THE PUBLIC

Increasing numbers of school parties are now booking to see the caves and these present potential problems of conservation and guide provision as well as of interpretation. Schools require daytime visits for 30 or more children. The optimum size for a cave tour in Nottingham is 15, therefore two or more guides must be available. For younger children the guides may need special training (unless they have children of their own in which case insight into the child mind may allow them to interpret alien knowledge and experience to the youngsters). The day-time availability of volunteer guides in regular employment is often uncertain and until this problem is overcome no large scale programme of schools visits is possible. Conservation is another aspect to be considered, particularly with the increase in school parties. With the passage of several thousand feet wear on the sandstone cave floors is to be expected. A layer of compacted dirt and a bar on stiletto heels has largely overcome that aspect, but undisciplined children jumping on to the thralls or stone benches around the cave walls has led to some damage. Touching cave walls can lead to erosion, though this is not yet a noticeable problem. In the case of scheduled Ancient Monuments this cannot be tolerated and either supervisory methods will have to be improved by providing more guides on any one visit, or children must be excluded, which would be tragic.

Foreign visitors will be provided for by translating the cave booklets into the main European languages. A German version of the Drury Hill cave booklet is now available, and a 'cave glossary' with specialist French and German versions is in preparation for cave guides with some knowledge of those languages.

Our cave interpretation is in its infancy but the interest shown by the public is enormous and growing. It justifies great effort to make the subject intelligible for everyone.

Alan McCormick, Nottingham Museums

PICKLED OR POACHED?

The newsletter has been described as like the proverbial curate's egg - good in parts. In order that the editorial team, which is being built up, may better present the thrice-yearly fare, the help of members in deciding how they like their eggs prepared - scrambled, poached, fried, boiled or pickled - is sought.

As a starting point, members are asked to complete the following questionnaire and return it by 8 September to the address below. Comments, suggestions and guidance will be warmly welcomed. Add your name only if you wish to.

1. Is the newsletter of interest to you? .....

   If yes, why? .....

   .....

2. Is the newsletter of use to you? .....

   If yes, how? .....

   .....

3. Which parts are of most interest/use? (eg. articles, news, reviews, reports on meetings, etc) .....

   .....

4. Which parts are of least interest/use? .....

   .....

5. What would you like to see more of? .....

   .....

6. What would you like to see less of? .....

   .....

7. Is the newsletter too long/too short/about right? .....

   .....

8. Does it appear too often/not often enough/often enough? .....

.....

9. Are the size and format convenient? .....

If no, what would you prefer? .....

.....

10. Are the style and layout suitable? .....

If no, what would you prefer? .....

.....

11. What job do you want the newsletter to do? .. ..

.....

12. If it had to be changed to suit the majority of members' wishes, would you be prepared to pay an increased subscription if necessary? .....

.....

13. Do you pass on the newsletter to colleagues/friends? .....

What are their comments? .....

.....

14. Are you prepared to write a 'commissioned' (unpaid) article from time to time? .....

.....

15. What other comments/views/suggestions do you have? .....

.....

.....

Please return this, completed, by 8 September, to Ruth Tillyard, Leisure Services Department, Notts C.C., Trent Bridge House, West Bridgford, Nottingham.

BOOKSHELF

Sharpe Interpretation

INTERPRETING THE ENVIRONMENT
by Grant W Sharpe, New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1976, 566 pp., $14.95.

It is not surprising that administrators are unfamiliar with interpretation. Until recently, interpretation has not been taught as part of park and recreation curricula. Interpretation reference books have not been readily available. Those that did exist explained interpretation philosophy but not how to do interpretation.

'Interpreting the Environment' would be welcome for that reason alone. A text now exists that operationally defines interpretation and provides instruction in interpretation skills. An administrator can learn what interpretation is (Chapter 1), how to plan and manage interpretation (Chapters 4 and 6) and what to look for when hiring interpreters (Chapter 25). The practising ranger-interpreter who may have had little or no interpretive training has a reference manual. The college instructor has a methods text.

The book is well written on the whole, although the many authors necessarily means some variation in quality. The breadth and depth of the authors' experience is the book's principal strength. All the authors are capable, experienced and innovative interpreters. The book is the best available collection of expert thinking on interpretation practice.

There are weaknesses. The book's scope is too great. It is written for the college classroom, the public recreation agency at all levels, and the vast and varied private sector. It is intended for domestic use and export to other nations (p.xiii). Damaging compromises are inevitable with so broad a charge.

Techniques and applications are often discussed too generally for the practitioner. More detail is required to put interpretation in practice if one is not already an interpreter. Instructors in agency training programmes and college instructors can easily supplement the book. Independent users will sometimes be frustrated.

'Interpreting the Environment' is a good text for college courses in interpretive methods. It does not deal with the underlying communication theory, an important weakness if the text forms the basis for the only course aspiring interpreters receive in interpretation. In some universities, persuasion, non-verbal, mass media, cross-cultural and interpersonal communication theory can be studied in other departments. Nevertheless, these theories must be applied to interpretation in interpretation classes just as physics must be applied in engineering classes. This is not a text for a course in interpretation principles.

It is unfair to over-emphasise these apparent weaknesses. 'Interpreting the Environment' is a substantial contribution and will have a lasting effect on park and recreation management. If it is compromised by being too broad, that is because so much was needed and so little was written. In the future, however, interpreter education and park management will benefit if authors take smaller portions and chew them well.

Ronald W Hodgson, Department of Park and Recreation Administration, University of California at Davis.

(Reproduced, in condensed form, by kind permission of the Journal of Leisure Research)

LEICESTER UNIVERSITY BOOKSHOP

Leicester University Bookshop are now stocking the following titles: Daughtrey & Malvern: Museum Accounting Handbook, American Museums Association, £6.30; Guidelines for Interpretive Building Design, National Audubon Society, £2.20; The Community Nature Centre, National Audubon Society, £1.50; Standing Commission Report: University Museums, HMSO. 85p; Grater: The Interpreter's Handbook - methods skills and techniques, Southwest Parks & Monuments Assn. £2.45.

WHERE WE'RE AT - INTERPRETING THE URBAN ENVIRONMENT
by Brian Goodey, (Urban Design Forum 1, pp 28-34) 1978.

In this offering from Brian Goodey, he takes a fairly quick trip through the history of urban interpretation in its various forms and identifies some of its present problems. Extensive references are given throughout.

The last few years have seen the development of three types of urban interpretation; public participation in planning, now required by law; environmental education, which is almost entirely focussed on schoolchildren, and heritage education, in some ways its adult equivalent, although often dealing with wider issues on a more superficial level. Many organisations are now involved in this process, such as the Civic Trust, tourist boards, local planning authorities and voluntary societies. An increasing range of literature is being produced, the best known being the town trail.

But, argues Brian Goodey, whilst all this is very commendable, it does not add up to the total programme of urban interpretation that he would like to see.

Moving on to the issues, he cites the Telford example, where the heavily interpreted Ironbridge complex is situated on the edge of a developing New Town, which is hardly interpreted at all. Why, he argues, should we concentrate on interpreting the old, but not the new. After all, although we may enjoy a visit to the old, it is the new in which we live and which affects our daily lives.

He goes on to discuss the issues raised by this example. What are the motives of interpretation? Goodey argues it should be 'the right to know'. He therefore suggests that the urban interpreter should be a 'neutral' presenter of information, in order to avoid the inevitable bias by the professional planner or architect towards presentation of (in his eyes) his more successful projects.

Surely the answer (and, one hopes, the trend) is for local authorities, New Towns and the like to employ professional interpreters, who would be allowed to present the full picture to the public and to stimulate a meaningful two-way dialogue.

Finally, Goodey considers the contribution being made by museums. Whilst praising the trend towards presentation of 'environmental experiences', he is critical of the emphasis on the art of museum presentation in an artificial environment, as opposed to experiencing 'the real thing' outside. He cites the example of the Museum of London, standing in the Barbican, which is not interpreted at all.

So where do we go from here? Goodey would like to see urban interpretation taken out of the hands of the professions and away from the museums, and brought back into the streets. Perhaps we have seen the beginnings of a trend in this direction with the widened opportunities for interpretive experiment provided by the Job Creation Programme. Let us hope it continues. In the meantime, anyone concerned with urban interpretation would find food for thought in this paper.

Sue Adams

LEISURE AND THE FAMILY LIFE CYCLE
by R & R Rapoport, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978. £3.50 paperback.

This welcome, fresh look at leisure in the context of the family life cycle, by two established social scientists, provides a detailed insight into consumer and user attitudes regarding the role and place of leisure within that situation. The stimulating text criticises and rejects many of our conventional views on the subject of leisure and recreation.

The Rapoports argue that there has been an absence of true people consideration in provision of most facilities up until now, and that in many cases the recreation provider has no idea of his facility's market appeal, or the characteristics of the users. Providers and managers, and particularly interpreters are instrumental in instigating social change; awareness of the role of leisure in the family life cycle has broad implications for establishing an interpretive facility. The suggestions in this book should be afforded important consideration within policy management and planning appraisals.

This volume is an important contribution to our scant knowledge of our market, and as users of leisure facilities, we should certainly absorb its concepts.

Terry Stevens

WALES: A GLIMPSE OF THE PAST
Wales Tourist Board, 50p

Llanberis' Dinorwic Quarry Workshops

Since the opening of the Llechwedd Slate Caverns there has been a growing interest in Wales' industrial heritage. New industrial museums have been developed on quarrying at Llanberis, canals at Llangollen, mining in the Afan Argoed Country Park and at the Llywernog Silver Lead Mine at Ponterwyd, Mid Wales.

Industrial trails in the South Wales Valleys are presented in this new guide, and other sections include items on the development of the iron and tinplate industries of South-West Wales, gold, silver and lead mining in Mid-Wales, coastal trading along the Pembrokeshire coast, the Great Little Trains of Wales and other transport features. Rural industries are also included - the many woollen mills still working in Wales and corn mills which have been restored in recent years.

Bet Davies

TRAINING FOR INTERPRETATION

A VIEW FROM ANDREW PIERSSENE

The Interpretation movement in Britain may be out of its infancy, but it has certainly not yet grown up.

The concept of 'interpretation' as a self-aware educational process particularly applicable to the environment, and of special value in informal situations, was imported to this country by one or two enthusiasts, and the character of much of the recent interpretive provision in Britain, and even its geographical location, has been much influenced by them.

The notion of 'interpreting the environment' has since been picked up, and interpretive exercises undertaken, by widely varying groups or classes of people - from planning departments of local councils to museums, from government agencies to commercial interests, from voluntary societies to professional exhibition designers.

Thus there are about as many motives behind interpretive provision as there are providers; virtually the only things that most of these providers have in common are lack of training and inadequate experience.

NO FOCAL POINT

The Society for the Interpretation of Britain's Heritage (though perhaps a little hesitant and unsure of itself) has fulfilled a useful role as a forum for those involved in, or on the fringe of, interpretation. But there is still no focal point for interpretation as an art or profession. The Countryside Commissions are limited by their terms of reference to working outside towns and cities, so that their recent joint publication was inevitably titled 'Interpreting the Countryside'. Yet the interpreters themselves within the Commissions are probably more acutely aware than any of us that you cannot appreciate the countryside without

understanding its relationship to towns - and vice versa. And what about urban interpretation anyway?

Town Trails and Nature Trails, Heritage Centres and Guided Walks, Booklets and Leaflets, Plaques and Panels .... Geology, Ethnology, Dialect, Industrial Archaeology, Social History, Settlement Patterns .....There is no limit to the forms that interpretation may take, and no limit to the aspects of the environment that are interpretable - yet the principles of interpretation remain the same in every instance. What these principles are, and an analysis of the processes of communication, should be the common basis of the study of interpretive method.

The Society for the Interpretation of Britain's Heritage appears to be deliberately dodging this problem - as well it may, for its membership comes from many professions and disciplines, and a consensus philosophy may be impossible to work out.

From one point of view this is, in these formative years, no bad thing. If there is one aspect of American interpretation that its students seem to criticise, it is the tendency to reduce the interpretive process to rule in such a way that interpretation becomes explained in terms of procedure. I hope that in Britain we are evolving something different, if only because our social, cultural and political situations are different - not to mention the size of our country, and the nature of our heritage itself.

WHO HAS THE FLAIR?

What are needed to turn interpretation into a profession are a common philosophy, an academic basis, a discipline in practice, and a system of training. At present we rely largely on the practitioners' instincts: where there is a natural flair this works pretty well - it is probably better than trying to work by the book - but who, in the present muddle, is to say who has the flair, and who not?

It is cheerfully assumed by planning authorities that planners have it; by museums, that curators have it; by proprietors of stately and not-so-stately homes that they themselves have it; by voluntary conservation or amenity societies that their officers have it. Sometimes they are wrong.

While it is pleasant to believe that there will always be a generous supply of spontaneous inspiration in this field, there can be no doubt whatever that there are going to be more professionals. Such persons cannot but benefit from some basic training - just as young artists, however talented, benefit from the discipline of an art course. Moreover, the quality of amateur interpretation is bound to improve under the influence of acknowledged professional standards, and eventually by the provision of training opportunities for amateurs themselves.

Who, then, is to train interpreters? There seems to be no completely satisfactory answer. No one would want (I hope) a stereotyped profession, so at first sight it may appear best that each of the larger agencies at least should train their own interpreters - in-service training, learning on the job, as it were.

But the weaknesses of this would be threefold. First, there would still be a danger of stereotyping within the organisation. A National Park, or a County Council Planning Department, for instance, could easily fall into this trap. Secondly, the difference in standards and aims between various types of agency could prolong the current confusion, which in the end would benefit nobody. A high professional standard is impossible where there is no acknowledged leadership or common philosophy. And thirdly it might inhibit movement of interpreters from one agency to another: this would tend to reinforce the other two faults.

Yet if there were some central, recognised authority or leadership, another equally unsatisfactory situation could develop, with the interpretive process becoming fossilised into dogma, and other ideas dismissed as unorthodox.

If interpretation is to be more professional (in the best senses of the word), somehow it must also remain an art, in which each new project, however small, is created afresh by a blend of imagination and intelligence.

SEARCHING FOR THE SIGNIFICANCE

As for the content of the training, it is not primarily the techniques of assembling display material that is important - not how to use Letraset, or draw a diagram or display an axe-head or record an audio-visual commentary - but the very bases of interpretation. The aspiring interpreter must practise searching for the significance of things; he must learn how to tackle the rather specialised form of research that interpretation requires; he must acquire some understanding of educational psychology, of group and personal behaviour.

To this extent the study should be of 'pure' interpretation (if one can imagine such a thing). I mean by this that no assumption about the nature of the subject matter, or of the ulterior motivation of interpretive projects should be allowed to cloud consideration of the interpretive process itself.

'Applied interpretation' I see as a distinct and separate item in the curriculum - only to be studied when a grasp of 'pure interpretation' is acquired. As for what it may be applied to, I would suggest that a wider range of subjects should be recognised as 'interpretable'. Why not human relationships, for example, or famine, or bureaucracy, or bad taste? Environment and heritage should be understood very broadly in a training context, I believe.

The agency most likely to achieve the objects I have described would be an independent 'Institute of Interpretation' attached to a university. It would require some (at least) central government finance, but should remain independent of any existing government department. Its staff should include interpreters of recent practical experience on short-term appointments; and there should be an absolute minimum of staff with no practical experience at all.

Such an Institute would have to beware of becoming solely academic. It should not only run courses and conferences, but should follow closely experiment in interpretation throughout the world. It should be involved in monitoring experiments in this country (and in studying methods of monitoring), and indeed be engaged in interpretive work in its own locality.

It must be in a position to speak with direct experience of interpretive strategy and planning, as well as of the design, production and use of interpretive hardware and software. It must be au fait with the logistics of various types of interpretive exercise, and their organisation, financing and cost-effectiveness.

ALL INTERPRETERS AS PARTNERS

The Institute would have to take care not to distance itself from practitioners in the field. On the contrary, it should regard all interpreters, professional and amateur, as partners. It should never see itself as having exclusive possession of interpretive wisdom: it is more likely to help formulate criteria for interpretation in Britain, and to establish standards, by encouraging all parties to co-operate with it and to contribute.

As for timing - it is urgent to work this out now. Our present national recession has slowed down what might otherwise have been galloping development in this field. At least we have a momentary breathing space, and perhaps something can be done quickly to prepare for the day (surely coming) when the band waggon gathers speed again.

New Society's Designs

The Design History Society has been founded to promote interest in design history studies. The DHS will provide a means of communication between members and will encourage the exchange of ideas, information and resources by

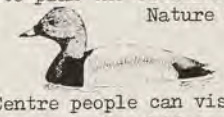
organising a programme of meetings to coincide with exhibitions of design, compiling a list of unpublished research projects in design history, and arranging joint conferences.

All those interested in design history are invited to join the Society. (£2, students 50p). The Secretary is Penny Sparke, Faculty of Art and Design, Brighton Polytechnic, Grand Parade, Brighton (0273 64141).

RSPB at Lochwinnoch

A new nature centre on Glasgow's doorstep was opened in May at the RSPB nature reserve near the village of Lochwinnoch fifteen miles southwest of Glasgow. The reserve is in two parts - the Barr Loch and Aird Meadow where the centre has been built.

Both Barr Loch and Aird Meadow are shallow areas of water with fairly extensive marshy margins and, in the case of the Meadow, fringed with scrub and mature trees. The grouping of habitats on the size of Lochwinnoch Reserve is unusual in the west of Scotland and particularly so when it lies so close to a huge centre of population. It was for this reason that the RSPB wished to take advantage of the educational potential both for children and adults, and a fulltime Nature Centre Warden, Peter Bowyer, was appointed to plan the establishment of a special Nature Centre.



From the Centre people can visit the two wooden observation hides, which were kindly grant-aided by the Nature Conservancy Council and which are situated close to the water's edge of the Aird Meadow. This should permit close views of a variety of birds and perhaps of animals such as roe deer.

Tunnels & Trains

Bill Roberts tells us of two developments at his slate mine, Gloddfa Ganol. During the winter, a new section of the underground workings has been made safe for tourists to walk through. While only half-a-mile of the 42 miles of tracked tunnel is open, it gives visitors a fair representation of mine workings in what is reported to be the largest slate mine in the world.

The 'level' open to visitors was tunnelled in the 1830s and was the main thoroughfare along which slate was hauled to the top of the incline which lowered the wagons to the Festiniog Railway for transport to ships at Porthmadog. Visitors can see the cathedral-like chambers which are reached by a network of smaller tunnels. More adventurous visitors can take a Land-Rover tour up hair-raising tracks to the upper reaches of the quarry from where all eighteen of the Blaenau Ffestiniog mines can be seen.

The second development could also be said to be on the right lines. The initial stage of the formation of the National Narrow Gauge Centre has been completed with the conversion of quarry buildings to house what is hoped to be the largest collection of narrow gauge locomotives in Britain. Some of the locos worked at Gloddfa Ganol and similar models in the collection include the delightfully-named De Winton Steam Coffee Pot.

American Visitor

Professor John W Hanna (Professor of Park Resource Interpretation, Texas A&M University) will be visiting Britain between 16 September and 7 October. It is hoped that the September meeting on 'Living History' in the Peak District will be addressed by Professor Hanna.

His possible schedule is as follows: London - Hampshire - Midlands - Peak - Edinburgh - Lakes - Cheshire - Wales. If you would like to host John Hanna for part of his visit, let Terry Stevens know and he will try to make arrangements. In addition, Professor Hanna has offered several lecture topics. He is prepared to deliver a lecture in return for hospitality. Details are available from Terry Stevens (who is co-ordinating the itinerary), 'Dol-Werdd', Maenclochog, Dyfed.

Case of the Hidden Exhibits

TAKING THE 'MUSE' OUT OF MUSEUMS

In the olden days, there were museums. A museum was a building in which was displayed a collection. The building might be huge and eighteenth-century, or it might be a tiny hut at the back of a church, but the collection was always displayed in glass cases which you could walk all round, pore over, lean on, and return to and look at again.

Museums were essentially places in which you could muse. Nobody urged you on or told you in which direction you had to go. Some of the smaller museums were not worth visiting, but one forgave them this because it only took five minutes to walk round.

Nowadays there are exhibitions. Or rather, the exhibition. So similar are the prefabricated hessian walls and the blown-up photographs of medieval effigies that one suspects one gigantic central Exhibition Centre from whence they all derive. No matter where the exhibition is staged, the aim of the presenters seems to be to turn the space at their disposal into a maze; ceilings are lowered, partitions block one's way at every corner and if, stricken by claustrophobia, you try to escape, you cannot go back; you must press on, up and down stairs, following the arrows winding back and forth until, mercifully, you reach the exit sign.

We would not object to this tendency if the exhibits were better or more informatively displayed than in days of yore. But this is far from being the case. Exhibitions are staged in semi-darkness - the prime example of this being the Thomas More exhibition, where More's letters were displayed in a cabinet so dimly lit that one could not read them. Nor do the presenters seem to be aware of the physical needs of their audience; exhibits are shut away behind vertical windows, so that you can peer at them only from a distance.

Every exhibition seems to be displayed against the same background, which is inevitably anachronistic - classical antiquities at Bath, medieval treasures at Westminster Abbey, Renaissance paintings at the National Gallery are crammed within the same angular, dimly lit alcoves, or distanced behind the same plate-glass windows. The visitor loses all sense of period or history. And this mode of presentation is the more painful when it requires that violence be done to an existing building. The pre-1066 undercroft at Westminster Abbey and the late twelfth-century crypt at Canterbury had to be boarded up lest they should detract from the desired uniformity.

One assumes that the aim of these exhibitions is to create an atmosphere - but the atmosphere is always the same. And can I be the only person who actually wants to examine the exhibits? I want to use my own imagination, undisturbed, and with plenty of time for reflection.

Exhibitions may be of benefit to schoolchildren - in which case, can they not be confined to our public libraries? Of course the treasures of our heritage should be displayed to the public, but we want to see the exhibits themselves, and not the packaging.

Jane Carpenter, Articled Clerk

(Reproduced, by kind permission, from The Sunday Times.)

Where is this sign? No prizes!

Sunderland Wildlife

The Local Wildlife gallery was opened at Sunderland Museum in December 1977, and seeks to interpret the natural history of Tyne and Wear and County Durham. An environmental theme is followed throughout the gallery, with sections devoted to the sea and seashore, rivers and riverside, wetlands, grassland and moorland, and woodland. Man's impact on the environment, and on local wildlife, is an integral part of the theme, which is brought to the fore in the areas dealing with forestry, agriculture, and the urban environment.

A conservation message features strongly in the gallery, which is directed principally towards children. Live exhibits, including marine and freshwater aquaria, vivaria and observation bee hive, 'open' displays and simple slide programmes complement the more traditional museum displays and provide a more exciting experience for the visitor - both young and old.

P S Davis

Tourist Guidelines

Don Cross, Senior Lecturer in Geography at Salisbury College of Technology, has been awarded the 1978 Travelling Fellowship of the British Travel Educational Trust to study Tourist Guide Training in Britain and parts of Europe. Mr Cross is tutor and course director for the Wessex area Guide Training courses

He is keen to receive comments on the role and required qualities of the tourist guide in presenting our heritage to home and overseas visitors. Write to Don Cross at Wyndhams, Shrewton, Salisbury, Wiltshire.

TAKE NOTE!

DODDINGTON HALL SCHOOLS PROJECT

A scheme was started as part of Heritage Education Year in which the house and its objects are made available to school parties. There are 'I Spy' sheets, study sheets, a nature trail guide, cardboard models and 'teacher packs' for sale to groups wishing to visit. Last summer there was a re-creation of a civil war battle; this summer various seventeenth century occupations including soap-making and farming will be brought to life. Further information from V. Jarvis, Doddington Hall, Lincs.

SLIMBRIDGE EXHIBITION

The new interpretative exhibition for the Wolfson Hall at Slimbridge, designed by Keely and McMahon of Bristol, is now being assembled and mounted by the education staff at the Trust and a team available under the Job Creation Programme. Contents include agriculture, habitat management, research and conservation of wildfowl and it is expected that the exhibition will be completed by December 1978.

CHURCHILL ON THE FARM

Hilary Tinley, who has been Farm Open Days Officer for the Association of Agriculture for the last four years, has given up the post. She has been awarded a Winston Churchill Travelling Fellowship to study methods of explaining farming to townspeople and will be visiting five European countries in the autumn.

FARM OPEN DAYS

The Countryside Commission has recently published its third advisory booklet. Called 'Farm Open Days', it will help farmers who want to organise such an event. It is available, free, from the Commission.

INVENTORY OF FACILITIES

Terry Stevens of 'Dol-Werdd', Maenclochog, Dyfed, is undertaking some personal research into aspects of information storage and retrieval related to interpretation and, in particular, to facility provision. He would be grateful for any details of fellow interpreters' experiences and ideas with regard to the cataloguing of information relating to this provision within their agency or park.

TAKING WATERWAYS TO HOLLAND

A delegation from the British Waterways Board, led by their Chairman, Sir Frank Price, visited Holland in April at the invitation of the Supreme Council of Groningen who were seeking advice on the restoration and improvement of unnavigable waterways for cruising and other amenity activities. The Council spent some time in this country last year gaining knowledge on how to tackle problems associated with inland waterways, having heard of the Board's success in this field.

CPRW JUBILEE

This year is the Golden Jubilee of the Council for the Protection of Rural Wales. To celebrate this, a National Appeal was launched on May 3 at Cardiff Castle. The target is £100,000 but an encouraging start was made when a third of this figure had already been given by the date of the launch.

For more information write to the Appeal Office, 4 Edward House, Plantagenet Street, Riverside, Cardiff CF1 8SE

LAKE DISTRICT LESSONS

Following a Countryside Commission/ National Trust project at Tarn Hows, a report has been published which will help to combat the problem of unintentional environmental damage caused by large numbers of visitors at other, similar sites.

Called 'Tarn Hows - an approach to the management of a popular beauty spot', the report costs £2.50, post free, from the Commission.

CROSS TALK

Keith Wheeler has just produced a 'town and country trail' leaflet describing Leicestershire's two high crosses. Cleverly designed on an inside/outside basis for use at the two locations, it interprets both medieval and Roman sites, in leading the visitor from the city into the countryside. Among the more fascinating stories told in the leaflet is the progress, over the years, from place to place in the city, of the high cross which once again stands in the heart of Leicester.

ANYONE FOR WADE?

At the risk of incurring comments that Robin Wade gets too many 'plugs' (RW always responds to requests for news), can we note that the Wimbledon Lawn Tennis Museum was one of the runners-up in the Museum of the Year Award? The Museum of London was a joint winner and next year it will feature a Wade exhibition on 150 years of the Metropolitan Police.

A LEEFE FROM OUR FORESTS

John Leefe of the Forestry Commission, Cambridge, has been 'loaned' to the Government of Liberia as an expert in forestry training administration. He hopes to introduce interpretation into the curriculum of the forest rangers' course at the Training Institute where he is advising the Principal. Liberia has 13 million acres of forest, so John will have plenty of scope.

EXMOOR PLAN

The draft plan was produced at the end of March and was circulated to some 80 organisations interested in interpretation in Exmoor. Comments received were mainly favourable and constructive and it is hoped that the final plan will provide a valid approach to providing a co-ordinated strategy for interpreting Exmoor.

The Exmoor National Park Committee have approved the publication of a revised draft as a research document and it is hoped to publish it in the new year.

what's on ~ coming events

CONFERENCES

1) 25-29 Sept, Parks and People in European Naturparke, Parcs Naturels, National Parks (U.K.). An informal conference for local managers and staff of Europe's protected landscapes. The aim will be to exchange information and consider how conflicts can be resolved between the local population and visitors to these areas.

2) 30 Oct - 3 Nov, Guided Walks - Specialist Training Course for Countryside Staff. A Countryside Commission sponsored course at Losehill Hall to examine the development and organisation of a guided walks programme and to study the techniques of conducting a guided walk.

Further details available from Peter Townsend, Principal, Peak National Park Study Centre, Losehill Hall, Castleton, Derbyshire, S30 2WB.

Society at the Peak

The next meeting of the Society will be held at Losehill Hall - the Peak National Park Study Centre at Castleton, Derbyshire - from 22-24 September. The subject will be 'Living History Programmes and the Interpretation of Historic Sites'. The cost will be £29 (non-residential £19.50). A booking deposit of £4 should be sent as soon as possible to Peter Townsend at Losehill Hall (address above). Places are limited to 60 members.

COURSES

A course is being organised by Ann Partington, of the Museum Assistants Group, on 'How to Write a Design Brief'. It will take place at Wentworth Woodhouse, S. Yorkshire, from 6 to 8 April 1979. The cost is expected to be between £20 and £25 inclusive.

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The next issue of 'Interpretation' will include news of the exhibition planned by Torfaen Museum Trust.

The **VALLEY INHERITANCE** **PONTYPOOL**

DIRECTORY

Chris Bullock, Acme Design, has moved to 26 Eccleston Avenue, Handbridge, Chester (Tel: 25116). The office address in Aberystwyth remains the same at 29 North Parade, Aberystwyth, Dyfed (Tel: 612007).

Terry Robinson, who is currently in the process of completing the Exmoor Interpretive Plan will soon take up the post of Countryside Interpretation Adviser to the Countryside Commission.

Based in the Advisory Division in Cheltenham, the post involves development of the Commission's own expertise in countryside interpretation, advising regional officers on the provision of grant-aid for interpretive projects, maintaining records of interpretive facilities existing in England and Wales, maintaining links with other organisations active in interpretation and advising on the initiation and conduct of relevant research.

Also included is the responsibility for organising training, a field in which the Commission has already established itself and which is likely to become increasingly important as a means of influencing developing standards in interpretation.