

society for the  
**interpretation**  
of Britain's heritage



[photo: Stratfield Saye Estates]

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NEWSLETTER TWO

AUTUMN 1975

## 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 the 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 and of the consultative document which led to the formation of the Society may be obtained from the Secretary.

### 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:** Ralph Blain (National Trust for Scotland)  
**Secretary:** Martin Orrrom, TD MA FIFor (Forestry Commission, 231 Corstorphine Road, Edinburgh EH12 7AT 031-334 0303)  
**Treasurer:** Richard F Harrison, FMA (Portsmouth Museums)  
**Editor:** Michael H Glen, MIPR (British Tourist Authority, 239 Old Marylebone Road, London NW1 5QT)

## interpretation

Stirling has come and gone. Our Society, already a lusty infant at its London christening, headed confidently for young adulthood during its first weekend conference. It still has much to learn, but its youthful zest should keep it on the tracks.

We now have Chester, a shorter affair, concentrating on an urban theme, but varied in the matter chosen for presentation. (see page 16)

The response to the Stirling Conference was most encouraging, particularly in view of fairly expensive travel costs for many delegates. The location of Chester may well tempt even more to take part. We all look forward to

developing our mutual interests, renewing present links and forging new ones. Our individual knowledge and experience are only as good as the means we have of exchanging them.

Our newsletter seemed to strike some right notes with its first issue. That this may have been due rather to good fortune than to good judgment will be more clearly established should this issue not match up to the complimentary remarks which were kindly made about its predecessor.

The enthusiasm on the part of members to provide news items has greatly helped the task of compilation.

### More Bodies

In response to pressures from planners and recreation management graduates, a new UK-wide organisation was formed on 2 April at Reading University. Called the Countryside Recreation Management Association, its aims are closely parallel to the Scottish Recreational Land Association, from whom the news of the CRMA was obtained. More details would be welcomed from members 'in the know'.

We have news, too, of the Scottish Countryside Rangers Association, formed to further the interests of those engaged in ranger services in Scotland. Their newsletter, conveniently, if not appropriately, called *SCRAP* is edited by Angus MacWilliam of the Ben Lawers Mountain Visitor Centre near Killin. Already our societies have several members in common which should aid liaison, and provide news in both directions.

### The Newsletter ISSN 0306-8897

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## in conference

Over 35 members travelled east, west, south and, mainly, north to the Elysian fields of Stirling University for a concentrated and stimulating two-day forum.

The setting was outstanding and the general standard of accommodation and meals excellent. These features played an important part in the success of the meeting.

However, we were there to work. AV had been chosen as a topic of interest to many members, and it was the principal matter of debate. But the conference opened with the more wide-ranging subject of *The Psychology of Interpretation*, the opening address being given by Professor Terence Lee from the University of Surrey.

### Professor TERENCE LEE

Professor Lee opened his address by describing *Interpretation* as an uncomfortable word. It implied, he said, that somebody knows and has overtones of *straightening out the picnicers*. On the other hand, it is difficult to suggest an alternative term to encompass the full meaning.

More seriously, he agreed that someone does have to say what things mean; interpreters must guide and lead as well. While society decides what it wants, the expertise of the interpreter lies in designing the crucial messages which will manipulate the means towards the end. He must communicate to people those things which extend understanding.

The meeting was then introduced to *schemata*, which could be described as inner representations of external environment - concepts of place. Perception of the world was a constructive process, new perceptions adding to, or modifying existing *schemata*. It was this process of building up concepts from experience which was important for the interpreter to understand. He must know what were the most effective additions to a person's cognitive structures. The processes of *assimilating* new input to

these structures and *accommodating* the structures to include it were discussed.

### PRIMITIVE SCHEMATA

Fascinating examples of more primitive *schemata* were illustrated by showing how external representations (eg Eskimo bone maps and Marshall Islanders' stick maps) were used to stop information from fading. Such maps were isomorphic, ie equivalent to something in the brain.

Concepts of objects, their location, the spaces between them and the social structure within the spacial structure built up an understanding of the environment essential to survival. These socio-spacial *schemata* give meaning to the environment; without them, navigation would be impossible and would also certainly lack purpose.

Spacial relationships were structured by man to meet his needs; he also adjusted his activities to fit space. The socio-spacial *schemata*, involving environment containing people were much more interesting for interpretation. History which showed *people* in a time/space setting caught the imagination because it allowed an interaction of the self with others. An obvious example was the fascination felt by visitors to Roman ruins when they saw the forerunners of the w.c.

The effort to gain meaning extends forward and back in time, extending the understanding of one's own relationship with the environment.

Interpretation must have a purpose, otherwise it was meaningless. Relationships of objects to each other might be interesting but the relationship must have a meaning. Man, an animal endowed with insatiable curiosity, tries to relate objects to a whole structure, to make an *effort after meaning*.

### SHEER ENJOYMENT

Lee then quoted Don Aldridge who says that conservation is an invariable part of interpretation - but is it? What is the motive of conservation - is it preservation of enjoyment? Could not sheer enjoyment be an object in its own right?

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Moving on, the question was raised of what should be selected from a site to ensure that the chosen message was received. There was probably an assumption that a message sent was also received, but it much be on target to achieve perception and assimilation. This was a fundamental part of *communication*, which demanded that the message should be compatible at some point with an existing cognitive structure or *schemata*.

Various *teaching* methods could be used, either starting with the evolution process and showing development or starting with the practical implementation and working back to the theory.

#### AVERAGE EXPOSURE

There would always be problems of dealing with different levels of comprehension and it might be necessary in interpretive facilities to strike at two levels, remembering that the average exposure of people to messages is only seconds, but that the specialist is also an important target.

Intriguing data has been gleaned from research into who looks at what, when, where and for how long. Women and primitive people were better image builders. People were more likely to absorb information if the source were expert.

Ways of improving effectiveness of messages included co-orientation - getting a person to accept understanding by making it seem a joint enterprise - and group affiliation - getting acceptance by implying endorsement by a group to which the person belongs or aspires.

In concluding, Professor Lee, who had held his audience spellbound as their *schemata* assimilated and modified constantly, emphasised that interpretation must have an ulterior motive - be it conservation or simply making people feel good.

## Out & About

The first *field visit* was to Bannockburn, where the National Trust for Scotland has developed a Heritage Centre near the site of Robert the Bruce's great victory. The early part

of the development was a powerful equestrian statue of the king and, nearby, an open rotunda with panels describing the progress of the battle.

More recently, a new building was opened, first to house the panels and an information point and now enlarged to take in a double AV presentation.

The first part, in a circular room which echoes the original rotunda, is a revolving programme outlining the historical background to the pitched conflict. It is largely a matter of taste whether or not one likes Don Pottinger's stylised figures and scenes, but the rotating effect is not always entirely comfortable.

The second part involves the down-projection of symbolic armies on to a low-relief map of the area and the visitor is *talked through* the battle. The effect is heightened by projection of suitable battle scenes on the hanging panels, above the map.

It is easy to be critical of such an adventurous presentation. Members tempered their comments with compliments on its spirited experimenting.

From the sophistication of electronics we moved to much sterner stuff. At Stirling Castle we were treated to a tour with one of the senior guides whose factual explanations and, perhaps fanciful, asides were delivered in an engaging and yet no-nonsense fashion.

There was no specific attempt to *interpret* the castle, but a picture of its past was built up by a man whose forebears must have known it too. It is in no way a criticism of him to say that the Castle could benefit from a skilful, but straightforward interpretive presentation. It has an exciting tale to tell.

It may be that an interpretive programme will be developed at the Landmark Centre near the Castle. This was our third port to call and after seeing the five-screen show there was time for discussion of David Hayes' rather brutal self-criticism. The subject of medieval Stirling was not wholly successful, and that this has been honestly recognised is to Hayes' credit. He is looking to 1976 and to changing

his approach radically. The Castle 'next door' is an obvious topic.

Compliments were paid, however, to the Landmark book and craft shop where the quality of goods drew a lot of custom!

## DON ALDRIDGE

### THE ROLE OF AV

After visiting two AV presentations earlier, the meeting was keen to hear Don Aldridge's views. He started by posing two questions: *what is so special about the role of AV in the interpretive business and what does AV do that other techniques don't?*

Leaving his audience to ponder these points, Aldridge began a *tour de force*. First he showed a ten-minute two-projector programme using semi-animation. A cartoon on climbing, it pointed to the problems facing the programme designer in deciding on the level of animation, the use of voice, of effects, of more than one screen and the various costs. The use of artwork allowed for perfect control of figures which would be seen to even better advantage on three screens. *But it was expensive.*

### POLE-AXING EFFECT

A second AV programme used Mahler's music to highlight lapse-dissolved pictures first of the Dolomites and then of the mountain's flowers. Comparative values of pace could be studied to determine what effect was wanted. Synchronising of music and picture is all very well, but the effect could be pole-axing! Nevertheless, it could be used deliberately for specific purposes - such as motivation of a group.

Talking of costs, Aldridge said one must always assess, first, the *effectiveness* of AV, before considering the cost-effectiveness. Single screen projection programmes could be much cheaper to produce and reproduce than films.

He then moved on to show one of the first 'helicopter films' made by the BBC, of the Pennine Way. It was also one of the first to highlight conservation problems. Films about

Cow Green reservoir and Lake Windermere demonstrated the film medium's capacity to gain impact by utilising movement for which it is ideally suited.

He pointed out that the life of film as a medium may be shortened by the growth of cassette TV.

A final film, made for local government, showed many of the faults inherent in a 'committee' programme - it often ended up simply as a list of chosen topics. On a more general point, a good test of a film's effectiveness was to show it backwards!

Turning to the general matters of AV, Aldridge asked delegates to assess the characteristics of the medium and its ability to demonstrate comparisons and associations, interdependencies and interrelationships. In the interpretive field, AV could be evaluated by returning always to the objectives. If the interest is environmental protest, then the programme must create public awareness and understanding; it must be affective and cognitive. Whatever means it uses, it must change attitudes.

### DON'T DISMISS DIDACTICISM

Interpretation was largely concerned with the general public and could be achieved using heuristic, simulative or didactic means. AV was most used in the second of these, re-creating reality in an imitative manner. Heuristicism demanded a greater personal involvement and first-hand experience. Didacticism, although dismissing experimental processes should not be dismissed itself. A certain element was interwoven even in a heuristic approach.

There was always room, too, for the fantastic, using a surrealistic treatment of observations, demonstrations or associations. AV could do this as well as it could simulate. It was an ideal medium for collapsing time and space, and playing with them.

As a finale, Aldridge showed a cartoon film *The Little Island*. Richard Williams spent nine years painting the animations, and in developing his ideas of the three great ideals - truth, beauty and goodness. It was a charming

*continued on page 6*

and stimulating use of symbolism, and avoided preaching.

#### RULES TO BREAK

After such a concentrated programme, the summing up tried to put things in order. Aldridge did not want to make rules for others to follow but rather for them to break - providing they thought before they acted.

AV was not good at establishing rapport, but it could establish mood, maintain interest and even provoke. Use AV Aldridge said, to observe and identify facts, to demonstrate movements, processes, skills and events, to trace associations, relationships, contrasts and comparisons, to make projections in space and time, to symbolise and to relate symbols to reality, to explain abstractions.

*But one must know one's audience!*

#### MARTIN NORSGATE

Next on the bill was Martin Norgate, from the Council for Museums and Galleries in Scotland. He had a highly personal and poetic approach to the possibilities of AV and treated us to both fact and fancy.

In introducing his work, he emphasised his interest in things, and he included words and pictures as collectable too. The words used in AV should be real words, though, from old records of parishes or businesses or societies. Words are part of the environment of objects, he said.

He cautioned us on the use of commentaries which often weakened a story, when personal reactions could add a dimension. In the museum context, the public are not keen to read, but they will listen. In any case, he said, one can't put the sound of a steam engine on a label!

#### CARTOONS HAVE USES

Norgate accepted that graphics had a place in AV work, but much preferred real pictures, as he called them. He added that cartoons have particular uses.

There was some muted surprise when he said that words and pictures in an AV programme should be able to stand

independently. Words don't need to re-inforce pictures, he said, they should be complementary, but should leave gaps for the audience to fill. In any case, a continual flow of words becomes dull.

There must be, though, a continuum of ideas, with several messages running side by side. Much of this was based on an intuitive script, then edited and distilled. Another important point was that the potential audience determines the script - in museums, one should allow for people joining and leaving an AV programme, and as such it should have no beginning or end, but be simply a series of disconnected items with sufficient continuity only to hold attention.



His ideas were then expressed in a series of excerpts from programmes. The first broke down logic and used appropriate words injected at random into a grammatical script. The result was interesting and effective but might confuse the unsuspecting public. His short piece on clocks, using words from the records of a trade guild, would have been more effective if the pictures of clock parts had matched their descriptions. A third excerpt, on computers, began to test his audience's receptiveness to new ideas!

In a final section on AV in a teaching context, he illustrated the provision of a user-selection facility where there is a choice of answers to given questions. This demanded a high sophistication of equipment.

#### MICHAEL QUINION

The evening was rounded off by Michael Quinion of Sight-Sound Productions. He emphasised that current restrictions

made it sensible that he concentrate on the bottom end of AV work, where costs were lower. He dealt, therefore, with single screen presentations using one or two projectors.

He quoted Marshall McLuhan's *The Medium is the Message* in describing AV, but emphasised that there was more than one medium even in slide/tape techniques. The biggest variation lay, however, between the use of one and two projectors on a single screen.

In talking of costs, he pointed out that while he himself had the money to undertake projects, it strictly limited his time. This was in contrast to, for example, Martin Norgate who himself had pointed out that his time was his own to use as freely as he wished.

#### COBBLER, WORKING TO INSTRUCTIONS

Quinion described himself as a skilled artisan, a blacksmith or a cobbler, working to instructions, and he then showed part of one of his early projects, the single screen, single projector programme for Morwellham Quay.

He pointed out that revision was in progress, but that the single projector method would remain. Not only was it cheaper, but it was less demanding in photographic terms. It was suitable for less sophisticated locations and there was less to go wrong! Lapse-dissolve techniques, on the other hand, required detailed scripting of visual content and as the projection equipment was more than twice as complex, it was prone to faults.

Quinion's new programme for Laycock Abbey was shown. It is shown in the museum-in-a-barn at this picture-book National Trust village, where Robin Wade Associates have converted the building.

The presentation is the last item seen by the public, many of whom are glad to sit down to enjoy a resumé of what they have seen and also a stimulus to go and look at the Abbey itself. Most lapse-dissolve techniques are employed, including cross-fading and superimposition.

Quinion emphasised the horses for courses dictum of selecting the right

sub-medium to suit the message. Lapse-dissolve was not always right, or necessary. Equally, a three or more screen production must be very good to justify its costs.

The most economical method of employing AV techniques is to choose the simplest means of conveying the message fully.

#### HARDWARING

Sandy Bolton of Audio-Visual Distributors gave a useful resumé of a range of AV equipment available through his firm. Most of the items were produced by Electrosonic who are leaders in the field. In the time available it was possible only to talk briefly of the differing capabilities of different units and unfortunately the random-access slide projector got lost in the rush. Full details of all types of equipment are available from Sandy Bolton and, in the case of their own, from Electrosonic. (For addresses, see Directory)

#### Open Forum

In a general meeting, the preceding sessions were discussed. The choice of an introductory address was a happy one, and should be repeated if possible. *The Psychology of Interpretation* had thrown up many questions and should be pursued particularly in terms of group psychology. Some research was under way and Professor Lee's bibliography would be distributed with the newsletter. He was also studying the effectiveness of exhibitions.

Topics for future meetings would be compiled by the officers, but meetings should not be regarded in any way as training sessions. They were for the exchange of ideas and information and the stimulation of interest.

It was felt that graphics and the use of words as well as teacher/children communication should be discussed in future, as well as the question of charging for entry and selling of souvenirs at interpretive centres.

Full meetings of the Society were intended to air matters of general rather than of regional interest (though drawing on local facilities). Regional matters were more properly the

province of the suggested meetings to be arranged in various areas.

The next meeting of the Society will be held in Chester on Saturday 15 November and will be devoted to the *Urban Scene*. In the morning there will be an address by the Architectural Heritage Officer of Chester. In the afternoon there will be a visit to the Wirral Country Park and Thurstaston Visitor Centre.

During the Easter period in 1976, the Society will meet at Bangor where discussion of the conceptual stages of interpretation of a resource will be augmented by meetings with local interests.

It is likely that the autumn meeting in 1976 will be at Beaulieu.

## Directory

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Specialists in audio-visual and similar  
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specialists in the audio-visual field.

Brian GOODEY has moved to The Cottage,  
14 Queen Street, Middleton Cheney,  
Banbury, Oxon.

Michael QUINION is on the point of  
moving (at press date) to 4 Salisbury  
Close, Chippenham, Wilts.

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metal signboards for continuous outdoor  
use. (F Saunders)

Before the final session began on Sunday morning, many members climbed up to the Wallace Monument, a Victorian confection built in such contorted styles that it had a strange appeal. Unfortunately we were not able to see inside. It should be made clear that the monument is not in the care of the National Trust for Scotland. Unkindly to say, it did not appear to be in the care of anyone.

Apart from this, and a slight hiccup over a missing bus, the programme ran smoothly. A special word of thanks is due to the Secretary, Martin Orom, and his press-ganged wife Elspeth, for their organisation and control of the proceedings.

## take note!

The Prince of Wales' Committee's recent meeting agreed that our Society should be asked to convene a meeting of its Welsh Members to provide further liaison to follow up interpretive matters. This is indeed a welcome recognition, in early days, of the role the Society can play.

The Chiltern Society is proposing to establish an Open Air Museum of local architecture in association with a country park development at Newlands Park near Chalfont St Giles.

History now, but worth recording: the DoE, with the International Centre for Conservation in Rome, jointly convened a seminar recently on the Structural Preservation of Historic Buildings and Monuments. Details from Brian Bayliss, DoE, 25 Savile Row, London W1.

The Carnegie Trust and English Tourist Board are grant-aiding a pilot scheme at Beamish to tell the story of *What's Different about the North East?* It will link with industrial archaeology and social history sites in the region.

We hope to have a short feature on Colne Valley Museum's *19th Century Weekends* in the next issue.

Dolly Pile reports that the summer interpretive programme at Teggs Nose Country Park (Cheshire) attracted large numbers. The enthusiasm of the local press helped. >

A 19th Century workhouse near East Dereham is to be the home of Norfolk's new Rural Life Museum. Enthusiasm is more boundless than cash at present, but work is getting under way.

Michael Quinion reports that he is now on Phase II of his work for the Sherwood Centre (for Notts County Council). Included is an AV programme on the ecology of ancient oak woodlands.

Robin Wade Associates report progress on their *Farm Interpretation Study* for the Countryside Commission (finishing Dec '75); the Witley Common Nature Study Centre for the National Trust (opening Apr '76); an interpretive display at Butser Country Park for Hants C.C. (opening Apr '76) and many other schemes - Lincoln Museum Coin Collection, Hull Town Docks Museum, etc.

A Water Festival was held on the Forth and Clyde canal to encourage conservation of the waterway. The theme was a busy canal is a safe canal.



In developing the centre at Ffestiniog, Gloddfa Ganol are refurbishing quarry buildings to house a second museum. This will cover the natural and social environment of the mining community.

DART has begun Phase I of a study for the Countryside Commission into the effectiveness of Visitor Centres. More information from Gillian Binks, at DART, who is trying to draw up a list of all visitor centres in the country. All help will be welcomed, particularly on private or commercial centres.

Cut-backs (?cuts-back) in both central and local government spending must surely have an effect on some interpretive programmes. It will be interesting, if perhaps depressing, to record any major modifications, postponements or even cancellations of projects. *continued on page 13*

## Lessons from Venice

Report on the Council of Europe Colloquium on *Urban Environment and the Quality of Life - Appreciation of*

*Environmental Aesthetics*, Brussels, June 1975.

This meeting was the third annual session convened by the Council of Europe in order to discuss the relationship between the television medium and the environment. The Venice session in 1973 and the Paris session of 1974 concentrated on national television programmes related to conservation and environmental condition problems, especially as linked to the European Architectural Heritage Year. The Brussels meeting represented a considerable revision of aims and focused on the use of video and other more local techniques in planning and environmental participation.

It is unlikely that the proceedings of this meeting will be published but several of the projects viewed and discussed contained innovations in environmental presentation and interpretation.

In terms of environmental interpretation two projects in the Venice area had obvious relevance and the Italian groups involved, and especially *Environmedia*, had a developed technique for involving the public in community decisions in an historic area. A *Liege* film also featured public attitudes to impending conservation policies in an historic area.

Sergio Antonucci of the Fondazione Angelo Rizzoli, a mass communications research centre, detailed a number of studies of which one, to be completed in Autumn 1975, summarises the extensions of traditional museum format being experimented within Italy and elsewhere.

At the conclusion of the meeting it became clear that the proposed community video experiment in the *Chioggia* lagoon area of Venice was to form the sponsored focus of activity in the coming year and that video, trails and other techniques would be used and monitored to the 1975 meeting.

Brian Goodey (from whom further information on papers etc can be obtained. His address is The Cottage, 14 Queen Street, Middleton Cheney, Banbury, Oxon).

## The Fulbright Report

The three year programme during which the Fulbright Commission is providing grants for the attachment of three Fulbright Scholars to the Department of Museum Studies of the University of Leicester, to assist with a programme of teaching and research in interpretation, has now reached the end of the first year.

Warren Johnson, Associate Professor of Geography at California State University, San Diego, returned to the United States in July, having devoted the first year to a survey of interpretation in the U.K. and to a study of the present and potential involvement of museums in interpretation and interpretive planning. With his help, the Department arranged two courses and one seminar in interpretation during the year. The first course, in September 1974 for the Forestry Commission, was attended by representatives from the twelve regions of the Commission. It covered a five day period of talks, seminars and discussions, together with a practical exercise.

This was followed by a weekend seminar organised in co-operation with the Association of County Trusts and attended by more than fifty delegates representing some thirty County Trusts in England and Wales and the Scottish Wildlife Trust, with observers from the Countryside Commission, the Nature Conservancy and the Carnegie Trust. This was largely a self-help seminar with discussion sessions on '*the purposes and objectives of interpretation*', '*resources for interpretation*' and '*planning and interpretive programme*'. A large number of short contributions from delegates were devoted to the wide range of interpretive activities now being staged by County Trusts. To look at problems on the ground, a visit was made to the site of the new Empingham Reservoir where it is planned to build a small interpretive centre. The Carnegie Trust, in addition to its financial support for the seminar, is giving a grant to enable the A.C.T. to produce a small booklet on interpretation for County Trusts.

The second course was arranged in co-operation with the Countryside Commission. Sixteen individuals representing mainly National Parks and Local Authorities were invited to attend. The course combined features of the previous course and seminar, in that talks, seminars and a practical exercise were integrated with contributions from the course participants based upon their considerable personal experiences. This course again is likely to lead to other things, including perhaps, shorter, more specialised courses. Discussions are taking place between the Museums Association and the Countryside Commission about the possibility of a course primarily for museum curators.

Looking back, the most striking feature of the first year has been the tremendous amount of high quality interpretation which is now taking place and of which we have become aware. A corollary to this is the great need for an exchange of information and experience if we are to continue to develop. It is hoped that the Society for the Interpretation of Britain's Heritage will help to fulfil this role but it is clear that there will need to be exchange at all levels. For its part, the Department of Museum Studies will hope to extend its documentation on interpretation and will be glad to receive copies of papers, reports, interpretive plans and interpretive publications and will do its best to make these available as widely as possible.

The second Fulbright Scholar, Gerald W. Sielaff, arrives in August. Mr. Sielaff is a Park Naturalist with the U.S. National Park Service, holding the position of Environmental Awareness Specialist. He has a B.S. degree in Geology from Wayne State University and has been trained by the National Park Service in Museum Methods, Interpretive Communications, Audio-Visual Media, etc. Before taking up his present post, he worked for the National Park Service as a Park Naturalist at Grand Canyon National Park, as Museum Curator at Yosemite National Park, and as Park Naturalist at Yellowstone National Park; also as Chief of Interpretation & Resource

Management at Fire Island National Seashore. He has written various management plans and visitors' guides for the U.S. National Park Service.

Geoff Stansfield, Lecturer, Department of Museums Studies, University of Leicester.

## Museum Services and Interpretation

Museums and Area Museum Services have a role to play in projects of urban or countryside interpretation.

It is pleasing to see that the Society already has a strong museum element in its membership. This is how it should be if museum people are to continue to be active in a field which has been very much one of their primary concerns for a number of years.

The objective of a museum service may be defined as *recording and interpreting change and development in man and nature through the selective preservation of tangible evidence and related information for the recreational and educational benefit of the community.*

During the last few years in particular museum people have recognised that their responsibilities do not lie solely within the museum building. They realise that their basic ideas of collecting, preserving and making available not only embrace material which can be accommodated within the museum but also feature the urban and rural environment, standing buildings, archaeological sites, Conservation Areas, Sites of Special Scientific Interest, and so on, outside it. The expertise of their staff can contribute significantly to planning decisions involving such features - one of the ways in which the museum service can be seen to make significant contributions to the life of the community.

The Area Museum Services have developed from a first pilot project set up in the south-west in the late 1950s. There are eight Area Services in the United Kingdom - six in England and one each in Wales and Scotland. They have been established to assist in the improvement of standards in provincial museums and they provide high quality advisory and technical services. All

the Area Services receive a fifty per cent grant on expenditure from the Department of Education and Science (through the Standing Commission on Museums and Galleries), a funding which is passed on to member museums as fifty per cent grant-aid on approved work.

As the Services have developed separately, different policies have been adopted, for example, in the field of design and display. Whilst all Areas can make a professional design service available some have chosen to do this by developing their own design staff and display production, whilst others have commissioned outside design services.

Details and conditions of grant-aid services are available from each Area. These will include advice on interpretive planning, on professional design services for site management, public facilities, exhibition and on-site interpretation and signing, print and publicity material etc, and on the preparation and conservation of three-dimensional exhibits.

Planning and implementing interpretive projects, particularly in the countryside, will almost invariably involve several organisations, each with their own contribution to make.

On behalf of all Areas, the Service for South Eastern England has discussed the joint roles of the Services, the Countryside Commissions and the Nature Conservancy Council in countryside projects. The Area Museum Services are anxious that the projects in which they are involved meet with the approval of other authoritative bodies to ensure that public funds are correctly dispersed and that professional standards are maintained in planning and implementing any interpretive facilities.

In this way it is hoped that museum services, and particularly the Area Museum Services, can continue to make a positive and worthwhile contribution to interpretation in terms of professional expertise, technical resources and finance.

W Martin Elliott, Assistant Director Area Museums Service for South Eastern England.

## membership

Applications for membership of the Society are considered from anyone engaged in studies for interpretations, planning, constructing or managing interpretive facilities and services. The officers of the Society have the final decision and there is no facility for corporate or transferable membership. The current annual membership fee is £2.00.

Brickmakers at Work Shire Postcards



After six months in being, the Society now has 150 members. It was clear from the last issue of the newsletter that most aspects of interpretive work were represented in the first list of members. Each issue will include a list of new members and their particular responsibilities. We hope that this will help members to hold informal meetings either locally or among those with similar jobs.

We shall endeavour to keep up with changes of job, but we depend on members to keep us informed.

The list of members in the first issue of *Interpretation* omitted the name of Geoff Stansfield BSc, FMA, Lecturer in the Museum Studies Department of Leicester University, and one of our founding fathers. For this we apologise most sincerely.

### List of Members

- The Marchioness of ANGLESEY, Vice-Chairman, Prince of Wales' Committee.
- Frank ATKINSON, MA, BSc, FSA, FMA, North of England Open Air Museum, Beamish; Director; planning, development and operation of regional museum of social and industrial history.
- J Howard BAMFORTH, MA, Cert Ed, LIBiol, Stockport College of Technology; Lecturer (General Studies); environ-

mental education and interpretive work at Colne Valley Museum.

- D O BAYLIS
- Gillian M BINKS (Miss), Dartington Amenity Research Trust; Project Officer.
- Richard BROADHURST, Camperdown Wildlife Centre, Dundee; Ranger.
- Christopher G BUFFEY, Kent County Council; Forestry Officer.
- Tom G BUFFEY, Northumbrian Water Authority; Information/Interpretation Officer.
- Christopher J BURTON, DipLArch, West Yorkshire Metropolitan County Council; Assistant Planner/Landscape Architect.
- R K BUTLER, MSc, MIBiol, Cert Ed, Countryside Commission for Scotland; Senior Environmental Education Officer; development of, and advisory and training work in, conservation education.
- P Graham CARTER, MBIol, Countryside Education Trust, Beaulieu; Director; development of facilities and services in countryside education and interpretation.
- Frank COTTRILL, MA, FMA, Secretary to Programme Committee of Hampshire Field Club and Archaeological Society; organiser of programmes.
- V G DAWSON (Mrs)
- David DEVENISH, BA, AMA, Hastings Corporation; Curator of Museum and Art Gallery.
- S T DIBNAH, Kirklees Libraries and Museums Service; Chief Librarian and Curator.
- Anna DUFFY (Miss), St Mary's College of the Sacred Heart, Newcastle.
- David M EVANS, BA, Department of The Environment; Inspector of Ancient Monuments; responsibility for monuments in North Wales and industrial monuments throughout Wales, also rescue excavations, scheduling etc.
- Peter W FREEMAN, Devon County Council; Interpretation Officer, Dartmoor National Park.
- M G FLINTON, BA, Nottingham County Council; Principal Officer, Leisure Services Department.
- Brian GADSBY, BEG, The Wildfowl Trust; Education Officer; Implementation of Trust's education policy for local requirements.
- Brian GLOVER, National Museum of Wales.
- Ruth GRANT (Mrs), BSc, Cert Ed, Countryside Commission for Scotland;

Environmental Education Officer, development of, and advisory work in, conservation education, and training of rangers etc.

- Max HEBDITCH, The Museum of London; Deputy Director.
- H Noel JERMAN, CBE, MA, FSA.
- M D JONES, Leicester Museum and Art Gallery; Keeper of Geology.
- Andrew C LAING, AMA, Council for Museums in Wales; Director; provision of services direct, and through agents, to provincial museums in Wales.
- Roderick W LUGG, Inter RIBA, Student Architect; engaged on final thesis for design of interpretive centre for Llanberis.
- Brian LYMBERY, The Prince of Wales' Committee; Executive Secretary; responsible for work of committee over broad range of environmental issues in Wales.
- Raphael MAKLOUF, ARBS
- Martin NORGATE, Council for Museums and Galleries for Scotland; Director.
- Elspeth ORROM (Mrs)
- Jane PEARSON (Mrs), University of Leicester, Department of Museum Studies.
- M C QVIST (Mrs)
- William E ROBERTS, BSc(Eng), C Eng, MIMechE, MIML, Gloddfa Ganol, Ffestiniog Mountain Tourist Centre; Proprietor.
- Ronald SANDS, BA, Cert Tech Ed, Lake District National Park Board; Assistant Director (Admin); management and development assistance at Brockhole Centre, editor of newsletter.
- Frank SAUNDERS, AIMBI, South Yorkshire County Council; Interpretive Services Officer, Department of Recreation, Culture and Health; responsible for interpretive projects.
- Malcolm A SEDDON
- Geoffrey STANSFIELD, University of Leicester; Lecturer, Department of Museum Studies.
- Ralph TARR, North of England Open Air Museum, Beamish.
- Gillian P WATTS (Miss), JP, MA, Norfolk County Council; Senior Assistant Education Officer; information, planning and development.
- Noelle M WRIGHT, Hancock Museum, Newcastle; Design Assistant.
- Sally WRIGHT, The Prince of Wales' Committee; Field Officer.

(List complete to 6 October 1975)

TAKE NOTE *continued from page 9*  
The replica of *Locomotion*, built and successfully operated this year to celebrate 150 years of passenger railways will be demonstrated from time to time at Beamish Museum.



The *Countryside Education Trust* was 'registered' this past summer after three years of planning and preparation. Based on the Beaulieu Estate, the Trust has been established to promote understanding and enjoyment of the countryside and country life. Full details from Graham Carter at Beaulieu Manor, Hants.

The Hereford and Worcester Architecture Record Group has been formed to provide a reference file on buildings within the county. The file will be at Avoncroft Open Air Museum, Bromsgrove.

The main interpretive exhibition at Murton Mere is a joint venture between the Wildfowl Trust and Liverpool Polytechnic School of Graphics.

Terry Stevens, Project Officer for the Wales Rural Life Centre, has recently published his interim report on *Interpretation in Wales*.

RSPB report that they are planning small interpretive centres at Lochwinnoch and Walthamstow, and chalet has been offered to the Society at Syon Park. Plans are afoot, too, for further courses for youngsters as well as volunteer conservation work in Cambridgeshire.

A seminar at Tatton Park, held to present the interpretive prospectus to the County Council and the press resulted in general acceptance of the proposals of the US National Park Service's study group.

Proposals in embryo exist for a Farm Interpretation Centre at Milton Keynes. We hope to have further details in a later issue.

A Roman bath house at Strathclyde Country Park is to be preserved as a major heritage feature.

*Please remember that the copy date for the next issue of Interpretation is January 15, 1976. Contributions to the Editor, please.*

## There's a Long, Long Trail ...

The Environmental Services Department of Stoke-on-Trent is in the process of preparing a long-distance town trail - the Potteries Walkway - which passes through the length of the city. When it is opened, this trail will operate in conjunction with an existing bus service which itself will form the Six Towns Bus Trail.

At eight miles in length, the Walkway must be one of the longest town trails in the country. The main justification for the length is that it reflects the linear character of the Potteries Conurbation. The trail has been designed so that it can be tackled in two or more shorter sections, and this flexibility has been one of the major considerations during the planning stages.

The aim of these trails is to introduce the trailer to the characteristic features of the industrial landscape of the Potteries. To publicise the opening of the system, it is hoped to organise a cross-country race, following the route of the Walkway.

The trails should be operational by mid-October.

Richard Stone

## PICTURE TRAIL

If 1975, European Architectural Heritage Year, is remembered by many for nothing else, it will at least be remembered as the Year of the Town Trail. All over the country, local authorities, professional, amenity and historical societies, schools and colleges have leapt to their feet, pens, pencils, brushes and cameras in hand.

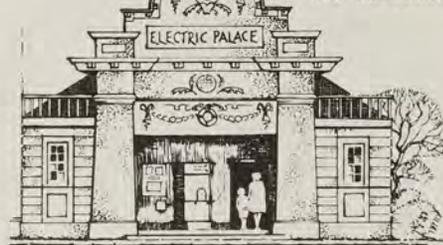
Such a rush of enthusiasm has produced mixed results, Some trails have been well planned, using a selected theme, others have become simply foot-weary lists of buildings to stare at. Not all of the resultant publications do justice to their subject and maps, on the whole, merit more attention.

However, all the intentions were good,

and most of the leaflets and booklets, plans and broadsheets are at least of a creditable standard - for the purpose and audience they were designed. Many are excellent and contain clearly written and illustrated interpretations of an area or community.

Many have been listed\*, many more are known only to a relatively small public. We thought that the range of coverage was best shown by reproducing some of the many illustrations. Not all are from 1975 publications; there have been trail and walk leaflets for a number of years. Some are saleable, others free.

The Electric Palace (A Walk around Old Harwich)



Parish Boundary and Wall Plaques (Heritage Walk 1, Chester)



CYCLE STORAGE



(Oxford Town Trail - Modern Infill)

Balliol - Senior Common Room

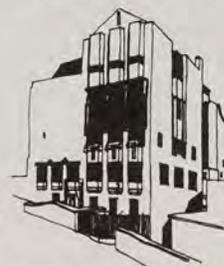
\*TOWN TRAILS - a special list for EAHY (BTA, 64 St James' Street, London SW1A 1NF, 38p including postage)

(Holywell Town Trail)

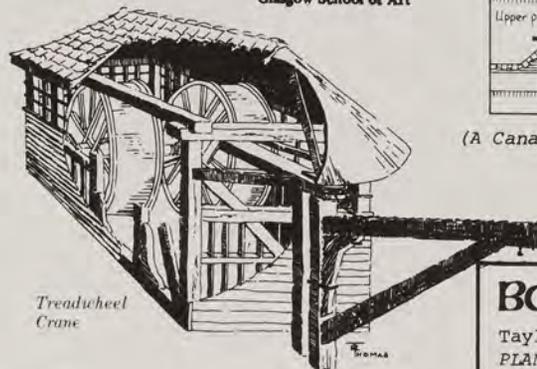


Pen-y-Maes Windmill

(Glasgow Heritage Trail)

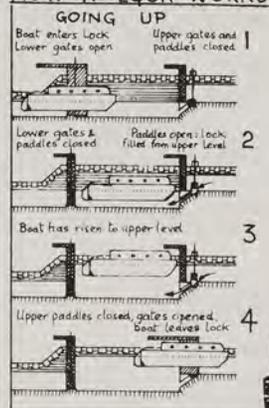


Glasgow School of Art



Treadwheel Crane

HOW A LOCK WORKS



(A Canal Trail for Wigan)

(Darlington Walkabout)



Bulmer's Stone

(A Walk around Old Harwich)

## Bookshelf

Taylor, Cox and Dickins: *BRITAIN'S PLANNING HERITAGE: a regional guide* (Croom Helm Ltd., 2-10 St John's Road, London SW11. 1975. £5.75)

As its introduction states, this guide has been written primarily for the tourist or professional who wishes to find interesting examples in his travels of the conscious development of Britain in the last 4000 years. The result is an extremely interesting and unique guide which should be carried by every interpreter. The guide is arranged according to tourist board regions, so that for each region there is a short preamble and a keyed map. Each site is referenced to that map and the ordnance survey grid. A good idea which is unfortunately not completely followed up is to suggest a tour which can be taken in each region to visit key sites. I found the selection of examples if anything too comprehensive and sometimes would have liked more information on some of the historical sites. For those wishing to find examples under particular headings, a useful index is provided. I look forward to the pocket edition! (MS)

continued on page 16



Column No. 133



Gargoyle and Shoe Scraper

(Lace Market Trail, Nottingham)



(Ironwork in Glasgow)



Gentleman's Row

(A Walk around Enfield Town)

## what's on . . . when & where?

The dates given are those supplied to us. However, please use the contact to check beforehand, if you intend to go to any of the events listed. Plans can change even at the last moment.

8-30 Nov, Photographic exhibition, *Hampshire Image*, Guildhall Picture Gallery, Winchester.

15 Nov, One-day course, *Hampshire Buildings*, at Southampton University. (Frank Cottrill, Winchester 65926)

15 Nov, Society's meeting at Chester.  
1000-1100 Visit Chester Heritage Centre

1100-1120 Visit Gamul House restoration

1120-1220 Walk Heritage Trail

1310-1400 Lunch

1400-1620 Cheshire C.C. Interpretation: visit to Thurstaston Visitor Centre

1620-1700 Visit reconstructed station area in Wirral Country Park

1700-1730 Return by coach to Chester and disperse



*The Rows, Chester*

[photo: BTA]

22-23 Nov, Knitting Machine demonstration at Leicester Museum of Technology

22 Nov-17 Jan, *A Melancholy Shell*, The

*Story of a Vanished Country House*, Museum and Art Gallery, Leicester.

13-14 Dec, Christmas Beam Engine Steam (and other celebrations) at Leicester Museum of Technology.

31 Jan 1976, Lecture, *Craftsmen of Hampshire*, 3pm, Guildhall, Winchester

26-28 Mar 1976, RSPB Members' Weekend at York. Full details from Trevor Gunton, RSPB, Sandy, Beds.

2-3 Apr 1976, CPRW Conference on opportunities for voluntary action in Wales. Details from Simon Meade, CPRW, 14 Broad Street, Welshpool, Powys.

### BOOKSHELF continued from page 15

Elisabeth Beasley: *THE COUNTRYSIDE ON VIEW*: (Triskel Books 1975. Paperback £1.50)

This book is a direct reprint of the original 1971 Constable edition and as such shares its strengths and weaknesses. As the back cover explains, the book 'gives a great deal of information about some of the many ways in which those going into the country may find out about what they have come to enjoy' - and this is its major shortcoming. For in such a small book it is impossible to provide all the answers. (RT)

65-75 - *The Chiltern Society's first ten years* (Chiltern Society, c/o Spindle Cottage, Quickmoor Lane, Chipperfield, Herts; 40p including postage). A chatty record of the achievements (and failures) of a leading conservation society.

Joachim Tourbier: *THE DESIGN RESOURCES OF DOYLESTOWN* (Bucks County Planning Commission. Doylestown, Pa, 1975)

Richard Westmacott's associate recently completed a computerised inventory of features of historical, architectural and archaeological interest in a small town in Pennsylvania (Doylestown) as an aid both to the planning department and in interpreting and identifying these features for the general public.