

# interpretation

number 21

summer 1982



## 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.

## Subscriptions

The subscription for membership is £5 per annum for individuals and £15 for corporate bodies.

## The Newsletter

'Interpretation', the newsletter of the Society for the Interpretation of Britain's Heritage, is published three times a year, on April 1st, August 1st and December 1st. It is distributed free to members. Non-members may buy copies at 70p each.

Editors: Anthony Fyson and Gillian Binks (Centre for Environmental Interpretation, Institute of Advanced Studies, Manchester Polytechnic, All Saints Building, Manchester M15 6BH tel: 061 228 6171).

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Full page 260x170mm to reduce to 180x120

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Unprepared text for adverts can be copy typed and prepared for camera by the editorial office free of charge but only in the 'house style'.

Loose inserts are normally charged at the standard rate of £15 plus any incidental costs - for example extra postage.

## Contents

No. 21, Summer 1982

ISS 0306-8897

VIEWPOINT: THE INTERPRETATION OF WAR	SIBH ANNUAL CONFERENCE, STRATFORD
Anthony Fyson 3	Session Reports Terry Robinson 15
BOOK REVIEW	Site Visit Reports Terry Robinson 18
Anthony Fyson 4	Syndicate Reports
A LONG THIN OPPORTUNITY	Margaret Mitchell 19
Andrew Piersenné 5	AGM Report Ian Parkin 22
OGLEBURY TOWN TRAIL Arthur Percival 7	NEW TRUST GUIDES National Trust 23
AN ALTERNATIVE CODE C.C. Mole 10	NEWS AND NOTES 24
INTERPRETATION IN CHURCH BUILDINGS	Cover picture: Mr Weston and his
David Bishop 11	assistant make an early survey of a
BOUGHTON ESTATE OPEN DAY	route for the proposed 'Western Canal'
Alison Maddock 14	(see page 5)

Readers please note:-

The copy date for the next issue of Interpretation is October 8th 1982

## Viewpoint: The Interpretation of War

It makes no judgment upon the morality of a particular conflict or the justice of a particular cause to say that we, as interpreters, face a dilemma in the interpretation of battlefield sites. Do our usual preoccupations with the tactics and skill of the soldiers, the magnitude of their success (or failure), and the historic significance of what took place in fact serve to obscure wider questions about war as a means of resolving differences and war as a source of great human suffering?

These thoughts are brought to mind not only by the Falklands events and the rumours of instant tourism to the battle sites there, but also a perusal of literature advertising various battlefields as places to visit. "An unusual and exciting day out ... picnic and walk on the Battlefield ... gifts and mementos ... tea and refreshments ... slides and films ... you'll go away feeling you've almost taken part in the Battle, history suddenly becomes fun!" Let those who run Bosworth Battlefield justify this ghastly jollity. I doubt its acceptability. Battle locations certainly can be memorials to a worthwhile cause or to personal bravery; often they commemorate a multitude of follies; but always they represent individual suffering and social failure. Can we afford to allow visitors to such places to leave without their dominant experience being the awful solemnity which the contemplation of armed conflict should bring upon us?

After the First World War, a thriving tourist traffic developed across the Channel to visit scenes of the carnage. Guidebooks - and guided tours - thrived, but on site the miles of battle-torn land and metal detritus spoke largely for themselves, aided only by the occasional discreet plaque of remembrance and the eloquent acres of war graves. As late as 1965, around the subterranean forts east of Verdun, you could step gingerly from the path and scoop dozens of live .303 rounds from the soil. Not far away through the tangled wire a small thicket of rusting bayonets protruded from the ground. They were still fixed to rifles held in the locked fists of the remains of soldiers buried alive by a freak shell burst. Such evidence and such exhibits are a

more honest interpretation of war than a thousand diagrams of tactical manoeuvres or any number of 'battle re-enactments' or 'hand-to-hand combat displays' by grinning week-end pseudo-soldiers in cardboard chain mail.

The remoteness of long-past events and the quaintness of old methods of killing must not distract from the horror of battles. Nor must an obsession with personal and national glory. In the latter connection the French pavilion on the Waterloo battle site must be the worst example: a large number of visitors are said to leave under the impression that Napoleon was such a marvel that he must have been the victor.

Interpreters faced with the attraction which historic battlefields have for us all, should entertain the possibility that the need to know, see for oneself and understand what happened there, may be a powerful motive for a visit not immediately compatible with a fun day out. Our duty is to see that neither frivolity nor military prowess nor political justifications distract from the unpalatable essence of what took place. Perhaps we should respond to the lead of those who believe that while the British Falklands action was justified, so too was the decision to make the now notorious St Paul's thanksgiving service a ceremony to regret the events rather than to glory in their outcome. If you wish for peace, prepare for - interpretation of the true nature of war.

Anthony Fyson

READERS ARE INVITED TO CONTRIBUTE VIEWPOINTS OF 400 TO 500 WORDS ON ANY SUBJECT, IDEA OR ARGUMENT

## Book Review

### Our Past Before Us: Why Do We Save It?

Ed. David Lowenthal and Marcus Binney  
Temple Smith £6.00 paperback

### Valued Environments

Ed. John R Gold and Jacquelin Burgess  
George Allen & Unwin £15 hardback

I once walked through a Northern town in the company of the Mayor. While the populace shrank from our path he waved airily at a modest side road of shops and announced that the Council aimed to redevelop there but that conservationists were against the idea. "I can't understand what they see in it" he said "It's an ordinary street of pretty scruffy buildings".

Reading these two books - both collections of rewritten conference papers - helps us understand aspects of the subjective views people have of their environment. Our Past Before Us traces the evolution of conservation ideas, looks at what we treasure and why (archaeology, antiques, landscapes), examines selected environments (Dartmoor, Inner Leeds, Suffolk, 'Metroland' suburbia) and discusses cathedral tourism and problems of popularity. Valued Environments also takes us in close to selected locations - Bedford, Hartlepool, the Fens, Moorlands and the Georgian approach to

landscape gardening are discussed. Other essays examine general themes - past landscapes, landscape aesthetics, the local area, valued environments and planning, and understanding within and between interested parties in specific environmental issues.

Such a cramped summary cannot do justice to the originality and stimulation these books offer. I specially appreciated (in Valued Environments) Brian Goodey's record of first impressions in Bedford and Jacquelin Burgess's evocation of the Fenlands which is real even to a Fenlander. In the other book Marion Shoard's passionate advocacy of the case for proper planning control over farmland wins applause, as do David Lowenthal's thoughtful introduction and summary. Professor Lowenthal's paper in the volume he didn't edit, in which he discusses the difficulties of trying to recreate past landscapes with special reference to the imaginary landscapes of fiction, is also a marvel of readable scholarship.

Is preservation the 'fad of the moment' or the 'harbinger of a permanently resource and heritage conscious world'? If interpreters are to be involved in the resolution of this issue - as I think they should be - they will have to take positions on a host of questions raised or hinted at in these books.

Anthony Fyson

## A Long Thin Opportunity

- interpreting the Kennet and Avon Canal

Andrew Pierssené, Interpretive Planning and Design

An area of just over a square mile - the size of the City of London, or the town of Hexham but rather a different shape. In fact about 60 feet wide by 87 miles long, reaching from central Berkshire, through Wiltshire, to Avon.

Not only do the size and shape of the Kennet and Avon Canal pose problems to the interpreter: it also consists of three different navigations created at different periods under different conditions and in different styles.

The western end is part of the Bristol Avon, made navigable (or rather, re-made navigable) under an Act of Parliament of 1712, from Bath down to Hanham, not far above Bristol. The Eastern end is the river Kennet made navigable under Acts of 1715, 1720 and 1730 from Newbury down to the Thames at Reading. The Kennet and Avon Canal proper is the middle bit, completed in 1810 to link the two between Bath and Newbury - and thus provide an inland waterway route from the Bristol Channel to the North Sea.

With John Rennie as Chief Engineer it is not surprising that this middle section has some impressive features to show: splendid bridges of stone, of iron and of brick; two stately aqueducts; two pumping stations, one powered by water, one by steam (and both, incidentally, now back in working order); and a superb flight of sixteen locks at Caen Hill, Devizes.

But like so many flourishing canals, it suffered from the advent of the railway system - indeed, it was ignominiously bought up by the Great Western Railway in the mid-nineteenth century when it had been open for little more than forty years. The railway company should have maintained the navigation, but not surprisingly did not look after it as it deserved (after all, their railway line ran closely parallel to it

for much of its length), and by the time British Railways took it over in 1947 long stretches of it were choked and almost useless.

It would have been closed completely by the British Transport Commission (No 2) Bill of 1956, had not the Kennet and Avon Canal Association stirred up massive public support for a petition against its closure. The canal was repleved by Parliament.

Now the British Waterways Board owns the Kennet and Avon, and the Kennet and Avon Canal Trust tirelessly raises money for the Board to re-instate the crumbling locks and restore the navigation. Extra navigable miles are won back year by year.

There is still some way to go, but the K and A Trust, which has always been far-sighted, recognises that its role must eventually change. Since it wants the public to enjoy and appreciate the canal, it commissioned in 1981 (with the financial help of the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust and the Countryside Commission) an interpretive study with outline script and design proposals. This was watched over by a small group representing the K and A Trust, the Countryside Commission and the British Waterways Board. A number of meetings were held with local groups of Trust members, Planning Officers of District Councils, representatives of two regional Tourist Boards (West of England and Thames and Chiltern) and others: together these contributed information, ideas and opinions to help the study forward.

The formula recommended by the report, which has now been accepted, is to use four main media scattered (not too thickly) along the full length of the canal.

First, the Trust is to publish a series of twelve illustrated 'Towpath Guides', each covering a section of the canal about seven miles long, with a three-inch (six-inch for town centres) map keyed to the text. Basic paragraphs about the origin of the canal and about the K and A Canal Trust are repeated in each guide. As well as interpretation of particular features to be found along that section, each guide carries one or two brief articles of general relevance,

such as the story of Bath stone, or canal-side wildlife, or the career of John Rennie, as appropriate.

Secondly, occasional outdoor panels will be placed at sites of particular significance or popularity. These will each carry some 300-350 words of text and an illustration.

Thirdly, four or five 'mini-displays' will be provided at certain canal-side properties owned or leased by the Trust, relating chiefly to the buildings in which they are housed and the immediate locality.

Fourthly, one larger, central display at the Trust's Headquarters at Devizes Wharf - a simple, balconised former warehouse - will tell the story of the canal as a whole, and its construction, management, decline and restoration. It is planned to do this mainly through the various categories of people who created and operated the waterway - the shareholders, the engineers and surveyors, the navvies, the Canal Company, the boatmen - with particular emphasis on the period of the canal's heyday in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

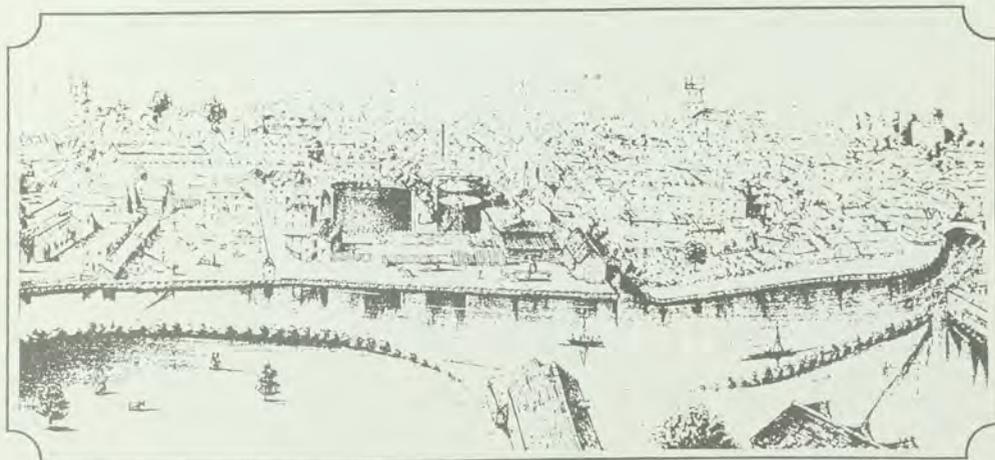
There will of course be other media, and guided walks and waterway trips

must surely be among them. A small travelling display is also envisaged; that can be placed for a week or two at a time at libraries, schools or public halls along the full length of the canal. And one idea that arose after the completion of the report is to construct a concrete 'sculpture' of stacked bales and barrels and cheese casks and other goods on the wharf at Devizes, just as they used to be seen a hundred and fifty years ago. You could sit on it and eat your sandwiches as you ponder the canal's rich past (and hopeful future) on a sunny day.

The first two Towpath Guides (Bath and Reading) have already been published with the assistance of the English Tourist Board. It may take two or three years to complete the full scheme, and the work continues this year with the help of further grants from the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust, the Countryside Commission and the Thames and Chiltern Tourist Board.

The Kennet and Avon Canal Trust, The Wharf, Devizes, Wiltshire.

Interpretive Planning and Design, Old Sun House, Damgate Street, Wymondham, Norfolk, NR18 0BH



## Oglebury Town Trail

Arthur Percival, Civic Trust

### OGLEBURY TOWN TRAIL

WELCOME! to Oglebury, seat of Saxon Kings, port of call for many a monarch, famous in history, and home today of the bedspring industry - and countless others. We hope you will enjoy this trail, which has been devised by the Oglebury District Council (Civic Design Team: team-leader Bill Thomas, MA, MCD, ARIBA, RTPI) to bring home to residents and visitors alike that Oglebury is no ordinary town.

### A BRIEF WORD OF INTRODUCTION

Oglebury, in the valley of the Bassetshire Avon, lies on sedimentaries laid down in an interglacial. Hence the market-gardening industry which still flourishes in the area. The Romans came this way, witness finds of mortaria and Samian 'B' in the Museum (not on view at present owing to re-organisation). Then followed the Dark Ages, of which little is known, save that according to tradition King Ethelfrith (victor at the famous battle of Lossenden Down, AD 762) had his palace at Hogleburh, identified by some as Oglebury. After the Conquest the Normans soon established a presence here and the infant town was granted its first Charter in 1384. As the natural focus for the surrounding area the community went from strength to strength and many a merchant made his fortune here. Noted in local annals is Henry Bliss, inventor of the renting loom, who left his entire fortune to the town when he died (in Lisbon) in 1735.

A fresh wave of prosperity swept the town in the 19th century. First the Avon Navigation was improved and then the iron road arrived. You can picture the busy scene as the huge embankment from Regent Street to Crispin Street strode purposefully across the town's eastern horizon.

Today Oglebury is famous not only for

bedsprings but for a hundred other things besides. Conscious of the need to conserve the heritage, the District Council has designated virtually the whole town centre a conservation area. Pedestrianisation plans have had to be shelved owing to the economic situation so - a final word of warning - mind how you go!

### THE TRAIL

START at the Market Place. The Town Hall is an interesting Venetian Gothic building of c1865, said to be built on the site of a Roman temple. Notice the windvane in the form of a crouching leopard - the town's emblem. (1)

Today the Market Place is used as a car park so, to look across it, you need to mount the Town Hall steps. Opposite notice the fine row of Georgian shops, with moulded architraves, Ionic pilasters and dentilled cornices. Though you cannot see it with the naked eye, one of the chimneys is dated 1747. It is thought to have been built to commemorate the Mayoralty of noted local figure, Theophilus Gosford. (2)

Turn into Marsh Road, now given over mostly to offices. Notice the plaque on No 39 recording the site of the birthplace of the 18th century dialect poet, Josiah Ellis. At the corner of Watling Street, note the Victorian pub, The Standard Bearer, with its unusual name and sign. (3)

At the next corner turn into St George Street, now the town's main shopping street. Some of the modern shop-fronts are rather at odds with the buildings to which they relate but the Council's policy, as formulated in the Local Plan, is to ensure that replacements are more sympathetically conceived.

Continue past Castle Street, with its interesting terraces of Italianate houses, now mostly occupied by the Department of Tourism and Interpretation. The attractive iron railings are said to have been cast from weapons captured at Sebastopol.

You are now in Union Street, taking its name from the old poor house which stood at the junction with Nelson Street. Sadly, this fine neo-Classical building with its Doric portico and entablature, flanked by

the figures of Hope and Charity cast in Coade Stone, had to be demolished three years ago to make way for Oglebury's third multi-storey car park. Thanks to the sterling efforts of the Oglebury Civic Society, the figures of Hope and Charity were rescued from the bulldozer's jaws and are held in store by the District Council pending a decision as to their re-use. (4)

Take a short detour, if desired, at this point to visit Barber's Grove, a characterful municipal housing development of the 1960's. Alderman Geoffrey Barber was Chairman of the Housing Committee at the time. Plans for landscaping this area are now in hand and it is possible some of the taller (system-built) blocks may shortly be replaced by cottage-type units. (5)

Silver Street, alas, is not as thriving as it was before the Arndale Centre opened off Broad Street. However the Council's officers are making sustained efforts to find tenants for many of the empty shops. Nos 64-66 had an exceptionally fine two-storey mid-Victorian shop front (see illustration) but unfortunately fell empty and prey to vandals and had to be demolished following a fire. (6)

In a courtyard behind No. 108, but not on public view, is the original workshop of Ebenezer Dyard (1717-1791), who first introduced bedspring manufacture to the town. It is a characteristic building of the period, though rather spoiled by later additions. (7)

Hoorn Way is perhaps most notable for its synagogue converted into a mosque. Some of the shops hereabouts sell interesting oriental delicacies. The street takes its name from a town on the Zuider Zee, now known as IJsselsmeer. (8)

Though now lined by imposing buildings, Salters Lane was once a mere country lane. Picture, if you like, sheep and cattle being driven to market along here before the days of the motor vehicle. Research by students of vernacular architecture has shown that behind the Georgian front of No 209 lies a cruck-frame building. (9)

Turn into Church Lane, so called because it leads to the Church. A

glance at the map will show that this is in fact the longest road in central Oglebury. The Cattle Market was opened in 1874. Continuing down Church Lane and passing Telstar House you reach the Parish Church of SS Cosmus and Damian. The original Early English building was substantially enlarged in the mid-19th century. There is an exceptionally fine fan vault under the tower. Note the cusped lights in the N transept. Many of the town's distinguished sons and daughters are immortalised in stone here. Popular place of pilgrimage in the churchyard is the ornate headstone commemorating Jack Tar, a prize bull terrier. Legend has it that a faculty was needed for its erection. (10)

At the next junction turn into Albert Avenue, once a gracious tree-lined promenade where the local 'quality' made a point of being seen. Walk past King Henry VI School into Wharf Road, under the massive railway embankment, over the Avon bridge and into Adelaide Town, laid out for the artisan classes after the opening of the navigation. This is now a 'GIA' - note how selective demolition and sensitive re-paving etc have given the local environment a substantial lift.

At the foot of Gosford Street, turn into Regent Street. Getting weary? Don't worry - you're on your way back to base. The Avon bridge here is still paved with stone Mountsorrel setts. Be careful as you cross - the bridge is narrow and many heavy lorries use this route as a short cut to the Kennedy Industrial Park.

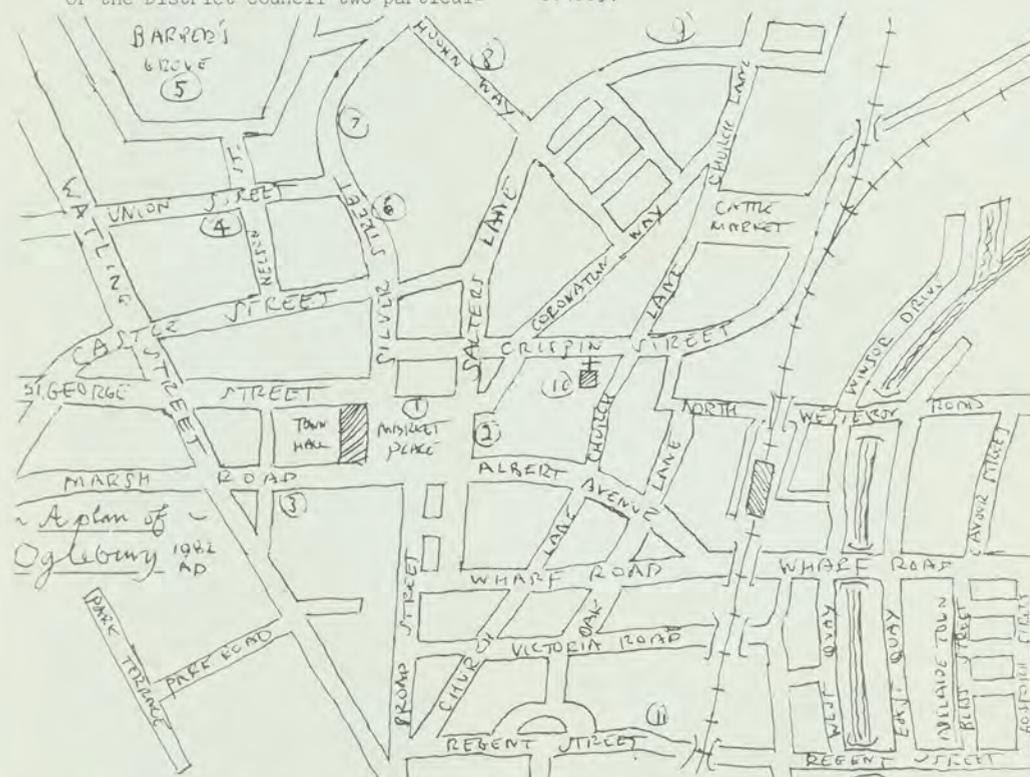
Continue along Regent Street past the modern hospital and note No 93, an imposing early Georgian mansion now doing humbler duty as the HQ of ASBIO (Amalgamated Society of Bedspring Industry Operatives). Particularly noteworthy are the mansard roofs and rusticated ground floor elevations. Architect was the well-known Joseph Rennet, who also designed Simpering Hall and Frowning Court. Pevsner describes him as 'perhaps the most inventive of 18th century mason-designers'. He is buried in Plymouth and died at the age of 104, leaving the whole of his fortune to his youngest great-grandchild, then aged 12. The will was contested in Chancery, but un-

successfully. Who would have dreamed that the death of the designer of so serene a building could have led to such strife? (11)

Regent Circus, as might be expected from its name, was once a most imposing sight but no town can afford to stand still and the present blocks were put up by the PSO a few years ago. The garden in front is now a car park. The iron railings had to be scrapped but thanks to the efforts of the District Council two particu-

larly fine trees have been preserved.

Broad Street, which leads back to the Market Place, is perhaps the town's most attractive street. Here took place the periodical hiring fairs immortalised in the works of Eliza Sinclair. Next door to the new Theatre Royal note George Court, to and from stage coaches once plied. Beyond, at the Northern Bank, are some remarkable bas-reliefs depicting typical scenes from local industry c.1885.



We hope you have enjoyed the trail. If you need further information about the locality, call in at the Tourist Information Centre in the Town Hall (Room 454c).

Standing strategically at major communications crossroads, Oglebury is well sited for new industrial and commercial enterprises. Interested developers should get in touch with Ron Leaves, Industrial Development Officer, at the Town Hall (Room 454c).

For your functions the District Council can provide first-rate accommodation at King Ethelfrith Suite. For details, please contact Amanda Crinkle, Assistant Amenities Officer, at the Town Hall (Room 454c).

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# An Alternative Code

(supplied by Countryside Commission mole)

An unofficial version of the new Country Code, with amended drawings.



Report all UFO sightings



Guard against tornados



Collect firewood sensibly



Kick your dog into close control



Beware of pickpockets



Exercise the hips and thighs



Park only at the meters



Bury your dead hygenically



Protect hedgerows with Klingwrap



Take only mature birds  
(min. 21b 8oz oven-ready)



Take your litter home



Riders under 5 must be accompanied by an adult

# Interpretation in Church Buildings

## THE PROBLEMS AND POSSIBILITIES OF INTERPRETATION IN CHURCH BUILDINGS

David Bishop, Canon Residentiary of Norwich Cathedral

Of all of the large buildings of historical interest in this country, churches, numerically, exceed greatly any other type. What is more, many of them are treasure houses of historical and aesthetic content of which none but a few "locals" are often aware. Further, they are historic buildings which have remained in constant use since their creation, and thus demonstrate what few other historic buildings can, a living tradition, with everything in them related both to the past and to the present.

Yet it is reasonable to say that the majority of these buildings are visited by few people during the year. With the exception of Cathedrals, Abbeys, and the larger, or famous churches, they remain silent parts of the environment. Yet often they colour or shape that environment to a quite remarkable degree, and not merely from a religious point of view. They and their churchyards remain silent witnesses of the social life of a community, and of the influences of other communities on them.

Now to bring them into the general consciousness of the public at large as worthy of study is a big problem. With, in many parts of the country, one incumbent caring for a number of parishes on his own, with his staff voluntary and therefore available only for a limited time during the week, and the ever-present threat of vandalism and theft in open, unattended, buildings, the problems are only too obvious.

However, there are signs that we are becoming more conscious of our heritage in this direction, and much can be and is being learned from the Cathedrals and other large churches which are forced by their size,

geographical location, and historic importance, to come to terms with visitors, often in dauntingly large numbers. The many imaginative schemes that have been inaugurated can provide considerable feed-back to the many smaller churches, which are, nonetheless, worth visiting, and continue to hold their places as interpretive elements in our communities.

To begin on an optimistic note: the effect of the Faculty Jurisdiction Measure over the years has meant that far more churches are lovingly cared for today than ever before. In the past necessity often caused the steady ruination of churches no longer viable as centres of worship. Again, when changes were needed, old churches were pulled down and new ones built. This of course has brought about the wide variety of buildings in our heritage today, and is, from some points of view, beneficial. However, much of beauty was lost in the process, and today I believe that that speed of destruction has been slowed down greatly.

So the heritage is there, and it is cared for.

Again, many of these churches possess treasures in the form of ornaments and vessels that are priceless. Nowadays, with the increase in the number of diocesan treasuries, these objects can be brought out of the bank vaults where they have lain too long and be exhibited.

Further, nearly every church produces its own guide, and a recent competition organised by the Council for the Care of Churches has enabled them to improve the standard of these works and to learn how to make them more attractive to the public. The English Tourist Board is actively interested in churches and in helping to demonstrate to the public that they are worthwhile places of interest, and, rightly interpreted, enriching additions to the cultural heritage of this country.

However, a great deal remains to be done, and nowhere can the problems and opportunities be seen better than in our Cathedrals.

Like parish churches, each one is

different from the next, but most of them are receiving visitors in large numbers, ranging from 100,000 to three million each year. Without any effort on their part they are being seen by these people, some tourists, some "pilgrims", (though it is questionable whether there is much difference between the two categories), and one of the biggest problems of the major Cathedrals is the sheer cost of paying for the wear and tear of the fabric caused by such large numbers. Indeed there is a limit beyond which the use of old buildings becomes counter-productive. Furthermore, the scale of these numbers itself tends to destroy that for which many of them come, the serenity and inspiration that Cathedrals can offer, and it would seem that the case for returning to the practice once common of charging for entry, can, in many cases, be justifiably made. There is a choice in extreme cases between coming in for free while the building remains standing, or paying in order that it may be kept up and in good condition.

At the bottom end of the scale are those Cathedrals which, because they are off the usual tourists routes or too far distant to attract any but the more ardent devotees, are dying through sheer lack of use. The pitiable fact that many people give when they are allowed to do so on a voluntary basis cannot begin to help towards the maintenance of the fabric, let alone the staffing of such buildings.

However, in between is the large number with between a quarter and half a million visitors per annum who can afford to look at something which is much more of an opportunity than a problem, and the emphasis is usually that of welcome. To help people feel that this is their spiritual home, that they are wanted, is vital, and to this end all kinds of facilities are laid on, usually manned by an army of devoted volunteers. With the help and advice of local tourist boards, visits are integrated with those to other local places of interest. Guides are trained annually to take groups round, and in the case of some Cathedrals, these are planned under the guidance of a Visitors' Officer. In such cases tours can be adapted to

specialist demands, from old age pensioners to school educational visits. Indeed one Cathedral at least has a Project Room for the young to use in connection with their visit. Guide books abound, together with "Cathedral Trails" for the young, and those wishing to make a brief passing call. Guide books are usually bought as souvenirs, to be read at leisure afterwards.

Integrated with the guides are honorary chaplains, whose complimentary role is to be available for those needing pastoral counselling, yet who wish to remain anonymous. Not everybody needing spiritual help wished to be "followed up"! Attached to some Cathedrals are exhibitions describing the work and construction of the building, and attempting to explain the spiritual relevance of the Cathedral today. Models, photographs, tape/slide shows are used to do this, and close by is a refreshment room where snacks or meals can be obtained. This all means considerably increased plant, for cloakroom and lavatory facilities must accompany them. Often at the centre of such activity is a shop, where relevant and not so relevant souvenirs can be bought, together with a considerable range of theological books. It must be admitted that the aesthetic standard of goods sold is not always as high as could be desired, and this is a concern to a number of us. The day must come when we look seriously at this and ask ourselves whether poor taste is really directly proportional to the rate of the sale!

Again it is often in the Cathedral that a Treasury is to be found. The Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths has done a great deal to foster this development, and its value to the Cathedral and the diocese cannot be over-estimated. Exhibitions of a temporary nature are frequently held in the Cathedrals, and are a sure indication of the aspirations of their communities. If one adds drama and music, then it can be seen not only that a great deal is going on, but that complete environments are being created and interpretations being made.

If are added the pattern of worship,

the choice of services provided and the use made of the Cathedral by the diocese, not only do the possibilities of opportunities expand enormously but the numbers and methods of interpretation increase likewise. And it is in this sphere that much needs to be done. The Cathedral has to decide what it wishes to "put across" of itself, and then be prepared to go to the professionals outside and learn. And the techniques can be learnt from museums, those dealing with nature conservancy and a host of other people. I believe that each Cathedral has to find its own unique identity, which is not so much an ecclesiastical one as that of a mirror to its local geography and community. It is a microcosm of all that goes on around it, and it is for this reason principally that every Cathedral is different, and has therefore not only a different interpretation to make but a different way of making it. This calls, I believe, for a greater discipline of thinking than we have hitherto given to it. We have much to learn from our continental counterparts, who frequently seem to use more imagination than we do and are less afraid to depart from the well-tried. There is a dual role that Cathedrals, and parish churches, can play successfully: to continue to be living places of worship and to take on the creative

role of the visible interpreters of the places in which they find themselves.

Many of these problems and opportunities were highlighted some years ago in an excellent publication of the English Tourist Board\* following careful research into English Cathedrals and Tourism, but it is yet to be seen that the ideas promulgated have been taken up to any degree. Though each Cathedral is different yet all will benefit by sharing their knowledge and expertise and experience, and they can if they will do what they have always said that they are here to do, and that is express to the full the glory of God. And that can be found partly in worship, but very largely in the secular community of which they are part.

I realise that this is only an appetizer, that many things have been left unsaid, but if it will start some of us looking at the problems and opportunities, as has evidently been done in many other fields, then it will have not been altogether wasted.

\*English Cathedrals and Tourism - Problems and Opportunities,

Published by the English Tourist Board, March 1979.

## One for the record at Abbey

By Nick Davies

WESTMINSTER Abbey had a special message early yesterday morning, recorded on its information service and played back to worshippers who rang the Abbey's number.

"It hasn't come out. Oh, sod it. (click). Oh, no," it said.

The soft female voice went on to detail the times of the Abbey's services for the week to the sound of a phone ringing and indecipherable background mumbling from sundry other voices.

Later yesterday morning it transpired that the message had been available to callers since Monday evening, and had passed without criticism until Independent Radio News heard it and broadcast it on its early news bulletins.

The girl who recorded it

heard it as she ate her breakfast. "She was horrified to hear her own voice coming over the radio," said

Major Iain Radford, assistant receiver general at the Abbey.

"She arrived at work in a state of acute confusion and embarrassment."

The tape was removed just as its popularity was reaching a new peak, but the Abbey was quick to forgive.

"I imagine there was an element of human error," said Major Radford, "perhaps a slight exasperation with the fact that the recording machine wasn't working terribly well, and a moment of stress."

"It's recorded by the young lady who acts as receptionist and telephonist. She has to operate the internal switchboard, which has five outside lines and is very busy. She also has to deal

with a constant stream of visitors.

"Some of them come to ask questions in connection with the Abbey. Some are cranks. Some have just wandered in by mistake. She has a very busy time there. She has been making the recording for several years now and this is her first mistake."

Major Radford could not understand how the message had survived for more than two days without comment. "He was sure that people used it. "I can see the lights flashing on the switchboard from my home at night," he said.

Through all the commotion the unfortunate girl carried on with her work, declining to talk to reporters and grateful that by midday she was able to listen to the radio again without hearing her words repeated every half hour.

THE GUARDIAN Friday December 5 1980

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## Boughton Estate Open Day

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Alison Maddock, Croxteth Hall and  
Country Park

On June 9th SIBH members were invited by Northamptonshire Leisure Services Countryside Section to join in the second of the two 1982 Boughton Estate Open Days for schools. In spite, or perhaps because, of being the only member to attend, I was warmly welcomed and found the day very useful and enjoyable.

Of particular interest because they represent a co-operative effort by the County Council and a private landowner (the Duke of Buccleuch and his estate staff), the Open Days have now been held for each of the last four years. Continued support in the form of attendance by some thousands of school-children is evidence of their success. Although originally open to the general public, the event is now exclusively for schools. This change seems to be strongly favoured by many of the estate staff, apparently on the basis of the future benefits of 'catching them young', but Countryside Officer Alan Teulon would like to see a similar interpretive effort aimed at the family visitor.

The school groups visit a number of sites (though not the House itself) illustrative of elements of a working country estate - farming, gamekeeping, forestry, wildlife, historical landscape features etc. Informal exhibits, temporary information signs and - most importantly - an informed member of staff or volunteer, are available at each site. This year for the first time the Northamptonshire Naturalists' Trust provided interpretation of a wildlife site. The estate staff seemed extremely enthusiastic about the Open Day scheme. Occasionally this enthusiasm led to their laying on instant exhibits and labels of their own which could perhaps have benefited from professional advice as to their educational value, but such intervention would undoubtedly have been tactless and counter-productive at this stage! The personal contact component of the visit was a vital

aspect; any group which missed out on a talk with the person manning the site would also miss much of the learning potential of the situation. Most of the teachers I saw seemed to be fairly well primed with relevant information. They had been invited to attend a briefing session several weeks beforehand, and were sent packs of resource material and background notes, including some prepared by a STEP scheme and some by local teachers themselves. Any understanding of the workings of such an estate which the children took away with them would have depended heavily on the amount of pre-visit preparation and follow-up by their teachers. (Without this, the children's most enduring impression would certainly be of the excellent Adventure Woodland.) Perhaps unavoidably there was nothing else on the day itself to draw together the series of disjointed impressions into a cohesive picture.

The Open Days do not claim to present a comprehensive view of the working estate, and any attempt to do so would have to increase the length of the visit beyond the children's capacity to assimilate information. Already the circuit is rather a long one for a hot day, as June 9th was; some concentration of sites into a smaller area may be needed. Nevertheless it might be useful to include such concepts as the House being the focal point of the estate and to develop the Home Farm interpretation further. The organisers may find themselves faced with the choice of reducing the number of aspects of the estate at present superficially treated, in favour of increased emphasis on the interrelationships of certain key activities.

In some ways the wildlife site was the most successful and easily understood section when taken in isolation, and the technique could I am sure be usefully employed at another natural history site on the same basis of co-operation between the Countryside Section and the Trust. Similar use of a partly manned, partly self-guiding natural history trail for schools, with activities and exhibits, was recently used during a Wildlife Week on the country estate at my own place of work, Croxteth Hall, and proved very popular. ■

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## SIBH Annual Conference Stratford

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SOCIETY FOR THE INTERPRETATION OF  
BRITAIN'S HERITAGE

ANNUAL CONFERENCE 1982 INTERPRETATION  
AND TOURISM STRATFORD-UPON-AVON 16-18  
APRIL 1982

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### SESSION REPORTS

Terry Robinson, Countryside  
Commission

#### STRATFORD-UPON-AVON

#### The Image and the Reality

#### Chairmans Introduction:-

Peter Moore the outgoing Vice-Chairman of the Society chaired this session. He explained the reasons why he thought Stratford would be a good base for a conference. He was impressed on earlier visits by the unfulfilled opportunities and by the amount of business going on in an unconnected manner. He introduced the first speaker, Richard Denman acting Chairman of the Heart of England Tourist Board.

Richard Denman:- Tourist boards need to take a broad view. They are constituted and financed by a variety of bodies including Hotels, Local Authorities and Local Tourist Boards.

The contrast between image and reality is most striking for people on their first visit to Stratford.

Views differ on the impact and importance of tourism to Stratford.

There are two thousand seven hundred bed spaces in Stratford District and this is second only to the Birmingham District in the Heart of England tourist board area. Stratford has the greatest concentration of tourist attractions in the area. The Shakespeare birthplace is twelfth in the national stakes of visitor numbers, receiving 480,000 per year. Anne Hathaway's cottage receives 360,000 and the Parish Church 250,000. The surrounding area is also well pro-

vided with attractions: Warwick Castle receives 460,000, Ragley Hall 100,000 and Coventry Cathedral 600,000. It is also in an area of very attractive countryside with idyllic villages and the Cotswolds.

The figure of 10 million visitors to Stratford is an overestimate. A quoted figure of one and a half million is however an underestimate. 20% of the population in Stratford is employed in tourism.

Stratford is important to overseas visitors, which in 1981 saw a downturn in numbers. The image of Shakespeare's Country has been key in marketing the area overseas.

Over the last two years there has been a decrease in hotel occupancy, the drop in 1981 being 16%. In the same year overseas visitation fell from 11% to 8½% in the Heart of England Tourist Board region. Enterprises in Stratford underwent much greater falls in numbers. The unemployment in Stratford in 1981 was 9%, compared to 2% two years ago. The need for tourist enterprises in Stratford is therefore strongly apparent.

There is an acknowledged need to widen the appeal and to encourage the spending per head. Markets have however been notoriously unstable, fluctuating exchange rates being a major cause. The town still has unfulfilled potential in more stable markets such as for conferences and short breaks.

There is a need to do more to captivate the visitor through better information services, signposting and generally making people more aware of surrounding attractions.

John Northage:- As the proprietor of the "World of Shakespeare" attraction, Mr Northage spoke on behalf of all attractions. The World of Shakespeare is the first of a series of projects set up by M.D. Heritage Theatre Series Limited and was first conceived as a modern version of an Elizabethan pageant. Shakespeare is the best selling point for Stratford but there is more to tempt people with once you have attracted them to the town. 50% of Stratford's visitors come independent of any organised tour. One of the aims of tourism management is to keep people at a resort. Shakespeare is very

convenient for visits to other resorts such as Coventry Cathedral, Warwick Castle, the Cotswolds and Broadway.

In 1973 Stratford-upon-Avon held an arts festival which was of some impact in drawing providers together. An association of 14 attractions has now been formed to market themselves.

Harry Piggott-Smith:- Mr. Piggott-Smith represented the Chamber of Trade, wishing to emphasise that individual traders might have different views.

Prosperity is indivisible and tourism is important to Stratford. One of the early actions of the Chamber of Trade was to clear obstructions from the river in order to facilitate boating. The Chamber now gives financial support to marketing the town. It fulfills a role in planning, seeking to protect the townscape. It has a view that there are too many shops overall with too few of the right size.

5% of businesses out of a total of 240 to 250 in the Chamber of Trade have failed to thrive. Rates can be very high and these threaten very large stores especially. Much business property is in the hands of estate agents and rents are therefore high also. Shopkeepers need to sell what they can sell and this sometimes means tatty tourist goods.

Roger Thompson:- Roger Thompson is Managing Director of Guide Friday Limited, Stratford's guiding company. Mr Thompson was emphatic about the importance of tourism to Stratford. SCATA, the Shakespeare Country Association of Tourist Attractions aims to extend the length of stay of visitors. Stratford-upon-Avon and Shakespeare are some of the best known names in the world of tourism. 1½ million people go through the Shakespeare birthplace properties. This vast body of people passing through fail to benefit the locality.

The through-put of 6 million people in the SCATA properties has dropped 700,000 in the last two years. The present number still come over the same time period.

The fair market rental for properties in Stratford pushes out domestic retailers and Stratford is therefore no longer a traditional market town. A major drop has occurred in the number of

overseas visitors coming in groups: they now come individually and are very conscious of money limitations. The need is to prolong the length of stay in the area and give value for money.

There is a lack of political support for tourism, which is a fragmented business. There is political ignorance of the benefits of tourism, perhaps because tourism is not a major influence in the areas of the district where most of the political power lies.

One of the detailed needs is for greater professionalism amongst tourism management and the provision of trained guides.

Tourism affects everybody across the whole community.

Thomas Letham:- Mr Letham represented the hotel group and the marketing group.

There are 10 hotels in Stratford which are considered large, i.e. with more than 50 rooms. The arrival of the Hilton was the first thing to wake the town up. (Mr. Letham is the Manager of the Hilton) All that existed before the Hilton was the Theatre and some summer tourists. The importance of conference business is now being realised, especially as delegates at conferences spend more.

At one stage Stratford was removed from the tourist map as a result of a Local Authority study which recommended that tourism should be discouraged.

Richard Denman:- Mr Denman made a second presentation on the study carried out for the Standing Conference on Tourism in Stratford, a forum which incorporates local authorities, tourism operators and residents. The study recommended a scheme to decrease the inconvenience of tourism to residents.

The scheme aims to segregate visitors from residents and channel visitors around the town, dividing them off before they reach the heart of the town system. It recommended three zones, a tourism zone, a shopping zone and an outer zone. Tourists were to be restricted to the outer zone and tourism vehicles were to be fed into one point, a major car park in the outer zone. This would be the base for a park-and-walk scheme and would also incorporate a tourist information

centre. The aim would be, through the use of tourist information and sign-post, to get people into the areas where they wanted to be and to keep them moving.

The scheme was not accepted. The Chamber of Trade do not want to see people so heavily channelled and wanted tourists in the shopping area spending money. There was also concern over the amount of signing that would be needed.

Bill McFarland:- Mr McFarland spoke as the Chairman of the tourism sub-committee of the Stratford-upon-Avon District Council. He welcomed the conference to Stratford.

A 1p rate in the District produces £154,000. This is considered to be a small return and insufficient to support desirable provisions such as a car park.

Mr McFarland claimed little conflict between tourism operators and the District Council. The Council has to balance the interests of those who want tourists and those who do not. The Council recognises that tourism is important and in fact may be the most important industry. It is an industry which puts incremental costs on other services such as parks and gardens, public conveniences, street cleaning, but also brings benefits, for example in improved cultural services.

Mr McFarland claimed 70% of visitors come to enjoy the general attraction of Stratford. He therefore claimed it is the town that attracts the people not the attractions in it.

Discussion:- It is notable that there is no overall authority for tourism and visitors to Stratford.

There is a need to improve communications with Stratford. The British Rail service is not economical at present. Offers of help have been made to the company willing to open the Stratford to Cheltenham railway but replies have not been received.

Provision needs to be made for day and short-stay low-spending visitors. Some operators want to pick and choose among visitors, excluding those who want to picnic, race around on motor-bikes or not spend enough money.

Some argue for a tourism tax on tour-

ism companies in order to help raise revenue for the provision of common services. Tourism however works for the common good, the whole community benefits and common services should be rate supported.

The view of tourists purely as a source of money may be misguided. It might be better to consider them as people with a variety of needs and expectations for their visit to Stratford.

#### THE HISTORY OF SHAKESPEARE AS A TOURIST ATTRACTION

Roger Pringle, Education Officer, Shakespeare Birthplace Trust

Residents of Stratford took a long time to realise the legacy that Shakespeare gave them. The 1662 diary of the Stratford vicar notes his concern to equip himself with information in order to answer questions on Shakespeare. In the 17th century a few trippers came to Stratford. A real tourism movement however awaited the national recognition of Shakespeare; this only happened in the early 18th century when cheap portable volumes became available. The first biography of Shakespeare was published in 1709. In the early 18th century the town first realised it had produced a genius worthy as a source of pride and of cash.

In 1746 the first production of a Shakespeare play in Stratford took place: it was Othello.

Shakespeare's house, New Place, attracted sightseers. In 1756 Gastrell, a cleric and the owner of New Place, decided to fell the mulberry tree that Shakespeare had planted there. Public consternation followed. Consternation rose to a storm when a few years later, he demolished the house and left town soon afterwards. Thomas Sharp, an entrepreneur cashed in on this by fabricating souvenirs such as snuff boxes, pipe boxes etc. out of the wood of the mulberry tree and started the souvenir trade. A remarkable volume of goods was made from the wood of one mulberry tree!

The town authorities built a new Town Hall in the middle of the 18th century and wanted to place a statue of Shakespeare in one of the niches.

They approached David Garrick, who worshipped Shakespeare, and asked him to provide the statue in return for giving him freedom of the borough. Garrick agreed and decided that the official opening of the Town Hall would be an opportunity for a Shakespeare festival. In 1769 the town was invaded by artists and craftsmen who built a temporary amphitheatre and brought in all the properties and accoutrements for such an occasion. Most local people were suspicious but the hoteliers seized their chance. The event was a three-day jubilee with concerts, fireworks, horse racing, a public breakfast, an oratorio, a masked ball and the presentation of Garrick's Ode. It rained on the second and third days. The success of the jubilee itself was questionable but it drew attention to Stratford and put the town on the map. Most intellectuals had avoided the festival. It was notable that Shakespeare featured very little in the jubilee: there were no plays but there was a procession of costumed characters. Many more festivals followed in the 19th and 20th centuries.

The true emergence of Stratford as a tourist centre waited on social changes in the industrial revolution, increase in personal spending power, increase in leisure time and better transport provided by the Turnpike Trusts. Better educational provision also led to a better knowledge of Shakespeare and more reading of him which again added to interest.

Perhaps even more crucial was Stratford's importance as a coaching centre in the early 19th century. It was a focal point where many cross-country routes crossed in the Midlands. It saw 24 coaches a day pass through. There was therefore heavy provision of services for travellers, many of whom began to deliberately visit Stratford as part of their journey. Many were travellers from the United States making their way to London from their landing in Liverpool. Even in those days, their desire to see everything in the shortest possible time was notable. In the 1860's a real railway service came and replaced an inefficient horse-drawn tramway. Occupying a central position in all this was the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust.

Shakespeare died in 1616 and his house was occupied by his descendants for several generations. In the early 1800's the house received 1000 visitors per year and the Heart and Court families exploited the house's commercial potential by showing visitors over it for a fee. They also accumulated spurious relics and visitors were allowed to sign their names on the wall. In 1846 Mrs Court died, providing in her will that the house should go to auction. A debate rapidly ensued to try and get Government to buy it for the nation. The Government replied that it could not afford it and raised public indignation. Five weeks before the auction Shakespeare committees were formed to gather support for the cause. Notable supporters of such committees included Prince Albert, Dickens and Thackeray. The committees organised fund-raising events.

Three weeks before the auction, Phineas Barnam, an American circus owner announced plans to attend the auction, buy the cottage and export it to the USA for trundling around with his circus.

The sale took place in September 1847 in London. Bidding began at £1500 and the Shakespeare Committee immediately offered £3000 which was the final bid. The National Committee then needed to raise more money in order to restore the cottage. The Stratford Shakespeare Committee took on this task. In the 1890's the Committee became a charitable trust with the object of restoring the house and opening it to the public. From those days the work of the Trust has expanded into running the properties for public visitations and preserving them, buying land etc. around the properties, keeping up the gardens, accumulating and managing libraries and archives and running the rural museums that are on some of the properties.

#### SITE VISIT REPORTS

Terry Robinson

The Conference broke into syndicate groups who visited properties around Stratford-upon-Avon

An open-top bus run by Guide Friday

takes visitors from the bottom of the town on a tour around the streets of Stratford, pointing out the important properties. A courier on the bus gives a running commentary on Stratford and its Shakespeare connections. The tour calls at Ann Hathaway's Cottage and Mary Arden's house. The tour is very much concentrated on Shakespeare and served more to give a factual account of his presence rather than seeking to set his influence into the context of the town and the surrounding areas. A tour which did this last year had to be called off due to lack of adequate support.

The Shakespeare properties visited contrasted strongly. At Anne Hathaway's Cottage, groups had to go around in parties. They were lectured on arrival by a clockwork guide who reeled off an ad-hoc list of artifacts that would be found in each room and explained what they were. They were then sent round the rooms of the house upstairs and were met again in the last room in the kitchen where they had the same quick treatment followed by directions as to where the shop was on the way out and how they might like to buy something. The total tour of the house took 6½ minutes and the guiding was inadequate. At Mary Arden's house the pace was altogether more leisurely but again it was the artifacts which were the centre of attention rather than the sort of lifestyle the house represented. This property also houses a quite good collection of rural life exhibits which are not outwardly connected with the Shakespeare story or the significance of the property. At the birthplace, the level of guiding depends on the pressure of visitors. Guides may give conducted tours or, when the pressure is greatest, visitors may just file through the house with the guides acting more as stewards. The house again comes across very much as an empty shell: more of a shrine, less an aid in understanding Shakespeare in his times.

The picture gallery of the Royal Shakespeare Theatre was also visited. It is the whole unimpressive, being a collection mainly of second-rate or worse paintings connected with Shakespeare's plays and actors. It does present something of the atmos-

phere of a brush with the theatre but the potential for what could be done in such a centre is not realised.

The only attraction which does attempt to put Shakespeare into the context of his time and explain his significance is the son-et-lumiere show, the World of Shakespeare. This in fact is not about Shakespeare but about Queen Elizabeth and Elizabethan England. It is truly what it sets out to be, an Elizabethan pageant of the more visible side of festive life in Elizabethan England and it does have moving moments when it conjectures the sort of experiences Shakespeare had which got translated into some of the more famous passages of words he wrote.

In Chipping Campden a visit to the Woolstaplers Hall Museum revealed to some people that large collections of curiosities and "old things" such as a massive collection of typewriters or cameras can have interest if the collection itself has enough objects of excellence in it and an enthusiastic presentation to keep up the interest level. This is truly a collection of by-gones with little reference to the place where it exists or indeed to the significance of the objects themselves. However, it is an interesting and delightful place to wander through, giving a somewhat wry view of our life and times.

We also tried a guided walk around the town organised by the Cotswold Voluntary Warden Service. The interpretive content was high but with a different person planning and constructing the walk from those who actually act as guides. The level of enthusiasm and interest was not great enough. The walk missed several tricks such as taking people where they would not normally be able to go, tracing a theme of the town's history and significance and giving an account of the town in an lively and engaging way.

#### SIBH SYNDICATE REPORTS AND DISCUSSION

Margaret Mitchell, Notts County Council  
Sunday 18th April, 1982

#### Notes

On the panel: Harry Pigott-Smith,  
Secretary of the Chamber

of Trade

Roger Thompson, Managing Director of Guide Friday Ltd.

John Northage, Director of World of Shakespeare

Geoff Stansfield, in the Chair

#### Syndicate 1

Reporting on tourism without Shakespeare

It was decided Stratford could attract tourists without the benefit of the Shakespeare connection, as it is a town with interesting historic features, a pleasant river and good transport links.

Visitor numbers, however, would probably be far lower.

Two questions were posed:-

1. What form would tourism take without Shakespeare?
2. What would the town now look like if the Shakespeare connection had not influenced its growth and building conservation?

It was noted that there appeared to be a lack of co-ordination between the many varied interests, and no cohesive overall interpretation.

#### Syndicate 2

Reporting on whether visitors should be encouraged to stay longer

It was felt that the critical word was 'encouraged'.

The syndicate members felt 'processed' as they were 'pushed' around the sites, and this resulted in a feeling of discouragement.

A more coherent approach to interpretive planning and the identification of a key theme could ease this situation.

It was felt that some sites (Shakespeare houses) had only very tenuous links with the poet, and that there was a marked lack of reference to the thing for which he is world famous, namely his work. 'Shakespeare is the body of literature for which he was responsible' - Tony Fyson.

'The World of Shakespeare' production

was praised, but it was pointed out that it was not about Shakespeare.

More plays could be done more cheaply, and there should be an opportunity for discussion groups with the actors. Programmes of short extracts from plays could be staged. Apparently some American visitors only see half a play, spending the remainder of the evening in the bar.

More non-spending relaxation, like picnic sites, is needed to encourage the visitor to stay longer. An atmosphere exists where visitors expect to be ripped off, and are on their guard.

Even in mid-April the five Shakespeare houses were at saturation point. There should be some way of calling a halt to this, thereby improving the quality of experience.

Availability of low-cost accommodation could attract longer-stay visitors, and it was felt that visitors were not aware of its availability.

Mr Pigott-Smith here leaped in to assure the meeting that there is lots of accommodation in the £5 - £7.50 price range, and that the large hoteliers are very experienced at their job and know exactly what they are doing when setting prices.

Mr Fyson assured Mr Pigott-Smith that no criticism of either accommodation standards or prices was intended.

It was felt that a traffic-free town centre, and a/v and interpretation in the entrance to the Birthplace would increase visitor satisfaction and encourage longer stays.

#### Syndicate 3

Reporting on levels of visitor satisfaction

A recent Visitor Survey indicated that 80% of visitors were satisfied with what was offered in Stratford, and the question was posed 'Who are we to say that visitors are not happy with what they get when 80% of them say they are.'

This group also felt that little conscious effort had been made in the area to form a cohesive interpretive scheme. The World of Shakespeare was felt to be a major contribution to interpretation, and there was some

discussion on its merits, the views of group members differing somewhat on aspects of its success.

It was suggested that since family groups in particular arrive at Stratford looking for a pleasant day out in a famous place, rather than for an educational or artistic experience of some quality, then their expectations might not be high or wide enough. It is possible that they are too tolerant of present standards and are prepared to muddle through without complaint, not really knowing what, if anything, they are looking for or expecting.

#### Discussion

It was agreed that had the Visitor Survey been made available to SIBH members in preparation for the conference, our observations could have been based on a more thorough knowledge of the principals involved.

The panel asked that the meeting suggest ways in which the quality of experience could be improved at Stratford.

Mr Thompson, defending the lack of Shakespeare-based information in the five houses, defined 'genius' as "the capacity to know without experiencing" and claimed this was true of Shakespeare, who wrote articulately about countries and problems of which he could have had no first hand knowledge. "The life of a person who writes about others", he continued, "is often not half as exciting as we expect it to be. Shakespeare lived a very ordinary life, much like any other small town inhabitant, except that he left home to join the theatre". On these grounds, Mr Thompson claimed, the interpretation done in the houses is appropriate. Anyone wishing to know all about Shakespeare, he added, should read Schoenbaum's definitive work on the subject.

Mr Thompson was asked if bus guides were provided with a set script, and replied that it was not policy to do so, as the intention was to avoid 'parrot-fashion' delivery.

It was suggested that a larger and more detailed tour on a higher intellectual level might prove popular with Shakespeare enthusiasts, but Mr Thompson said that such a tour had

been tried, but that it had not proved economically viable. He expressed regret at this.

It was felt, after some discussion, that perhaps the Trust should cater for lovers of Shakespeare, and avoid involvement in popular tourism, leaving this to commercial enterprise.

Mr Northage suggested that one possibility was for the various interests to combine to major on town interpretation with Shakespeare as part of it, and G Stansfield added that an interpretive and visitor management plan could help solve the problem of conflicting interests and problems.

Returning to the delicate subject of guide quality in the Trust's houses, it was suggested that a non-commercial tour should be viewed as a service, rather than as a profit-making venture. Also, that Trust profits should be utilized to provide better interpretation and information, and better-trained guides. (Guides in the houses had told course members that they were not formally trained, and were given no written information. They picked up what information they could by listening to more experienced guides). There was some discussion on the lack of/low intellectual standard of/poor presentation of displays in the houses; the inappropriate items available in their shops eg. items largely unrelated to Shakespeare, and poor choice of Shakespeare-related items such as books; and the very varied quality of guides.

Mr Pigott-Smith pointed out that the Trust is entirely independent and receives no outside grants or funding. It has done extremely well in renovating the properties, and it has a huge store of Shakespeare manuscripts and related literature. He posed the question "Is it now an anachronism?" He claimed that it will change, but slowly, and that it had done a good job within its parameters, but was now outdated.

Mr Thompson said that many visitors just want a day out by the river.

Mr Pigott-Smith said that the Shakespeare properties offer a superb day out for £2.50, and that if one spent a whole day in them it was good value for money.

Further discussion followed in which the following points were made:-

An indictment of the Trust is that it doesn't make Shakespeare's works and his place in literature more comprehensible to the visitor. He is a figure of national importance, and the Trust should do this as a service to society.

Is it not sound marketing to improve the quality of experience? The majority of visitors are probably interested at least in the Elizabethan period, and the World of Shakespeare is the only project dealing with this to any extent at all. A local radio station could perhaps be established to prepare visitors for a more enjoyable visit by giving information on the attractions available; car parking; accommodation etc., thus helping them to plan a constructive use of the time available to them.

A traffic-free town centre could perhaps ease congestion and make the town more congenial for both residents and visitors.

A large main car park with a visitor centre and an integrated signposting system was seen by group members as a major contribution to the quality of visitor experience in Stratford, and it was felt this would also make life easier for residents by easing central traffic congestion. There are no plans for such a scheme, however.

Mr Pigott-Smith pointed out that the residents were not wholly in favour of the present situation. It had to be borne in mind that Stratford was only one part of the district represented by the Council and that however hard its representatives pressed for improvements they were outnumbered on the Council and therefore often outvoted.

There are a great many influential people in the district who do not believe that tourism is a good thing. Therefore it is difficult to achieve an integrated approach to planning.

Mr Pigott-Smith went on to say that there is a tremendous will on the part of private enterprise to work together with local authorities, hoteliers etc., - but that there is a lack of positive communication.

#### AGM REPORT

Ian Parkin, Warrington

The 7th AGM of the Society was held on Sunday 18th April in the Shakespeare Centre, Stratford upon Avon. Some 29 members were present and Graham Taylor was in the chair. The meeting approved the revised constitution, copies of which are available on request from The Secretary. The constitution included an additional officer - a membership secretary - to take on the growing task of dealing with membership affairs.

Graham Taylor reported that the year 1981/82 had been one of considerable achievement for the Society. All the proposals embodied in the "New Direction" paper, which had been first discussed at the Manchester meeting and again at the London Meeting in December 1981, had been progressed, and he paid tribute to the efforts of various committee members in:

- (a) establishing a very successful regional and national events programme
- (b) establishing working links with other kindred groups and societies
- (c) developing the Society's public image through a prospectus and poster
- (d) stabilizing membership and financial affairs
- (e) preparing the Society's first publication - the proceedings of the London meeting, and
- (f) establishing a process whereby the Society can publically respond to Government circulars etc thereby widening its influence.

Alan Machin (treasurer) presented the accounts for 1979/80, 1980/81 and 1981/82 - he has also reviewed the overall accounts of the Society from its inception - no mean feat, and he was generously thanked for all his efforts to stabilize the Society's financial affairs. Alan had also looked after the membership which on 14th April 1982 stood at:

Corporate	12
Library	38
Ordinary	256
<hr/>	
Total	306

The meeting then elected its officers

for 1982/83:

Chairman	Geoff Stansfield
Vice Chairman	
(Retiring)	Graham Taylor
Secretary	Ian Parkin
Treasurer	Alan Machin
Editor	Tony Fyson
Membership Secretary	Michael Quinion
Events Secretary	Terry Robinson
Publicity	Janet Cornish

Two other interesting subjects were aired at the meeting. Graham Taylor and Terry Robinson had put forward resolutions proposing a change of name for the Society. They considered that SIBH was too long and cumbersome and something more appropriate to the new image of the Society was required. Their suggestion of "The Interpretation Society" was rejected by the meeting, but the committee were asked to investigate the matter further, canvassing the views of the membership, and make positive recommendations to the 1983 AGM. If you have any bright ideas please do not hesitate to share them with the committee!

The idea Alan Machin raised through

Correspondence about the weekend in Stratford will be published in the next issue. If you have views - do write!

## New Trust Guides

The National Trust is producing a series of map guides to its coastal and open country properties in Devon. The first five guides are now on sale in Trust shops at 20p each.

It is planned to produce a series of over 30 map guides to some of the most beautiful stretches of coastline, open country and parks in Devon. The first guides cover Dartmouth, Wembury and the Yealm Estuary, Watersmeet, Countisbury and Plym Bridge Woods. Each guide has a detailed map showing the area covered by the guide, including roads, car parks, footpaths, as well as major landscape features of interest. The text points out and explains natural, pre-historic and historic features, as well as drawing attention to the natural history such

"viewpoint" of an Interpretation Award Scheme to recognise good interpretive practice was discussed. The English Tourist Board had responded positively to the suggestion and offered to sponsor a pilot scheme in 1982: the other Tourist Board's would be invited to become involved as observers, with the aim of a UK award scheme being introduced in 1983. The meeting was receptive to the idea in principle but expressed some caution regarding the capacity of a voluntary society to undertake the administration involved. Further discussions will take place with the ETB and the other Boards bearing in mind the reservations discussed.

Chairman Taylor summed up by thanking the meeting for the measure of encouragement and support given to the committee and was confident that the committee, in turn, would make further progress in the coming months. Geoff Stansfield, the newly appointed Chairman, received the unanimous support of the meeting when he proposed a sincere vote of thanks to Graham Taylor for his work as Chairman over the previous twelve months.

as birds, animals and plants that can be seen at the site.

Brian LeMessurier has carried out all the field work and has written the text for each guide. David Parry painted the full cover illustrations, while the maps and other illustrations are by John Dyke or Michael Griffin. The leaflets are designed by David Craddock.

It is hoped to have map guides for East and West Salcombe areas, the coast in N.W. Devon, the East Devon Coast and Castle Drogo estate available during the current season.

In conjunction with these map guide leaflets the Trust is also preparing a simple poster map with limited information for display at selected sites in Devon. These will be used experimentally to start with and, subject to appearing successful in helping and guiding the visitor, will be extended to further sites in future. ■

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## News and Notes

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### HERITAGE MONITOR

Just published is English Heritage Monitor, the indispensable annual summary of trends affecting England's architectural heritage. Max Hanna's summary of the year includes an interesting section on "Presentation" from which the following points emerge:

"Historic buildings advertised as being regularly open to the public in 1982 amounted to at least 1,481. Of these 19 historic properties are opening to the public for the first time ... The average historic building is open to the public for 225 days a year but this varies from 113 days in Bucks to 332 days in Tyne and Wear... There is considerable variation in the range of visitor facilities available at historic properties open to the public. 927 properties include a museum, exhibition, or a collection of fine paintings or furniture. Indeed, 249 properties are museums located in old buildings of which most are owned by local authorities. No less than 632 properties have gardens which are open to the public. 335 properties have a park, many of which have been adapted to include a safari park, golf course, nature trail, adventure playgrounds or other attractions. Guided tours are offered by 502 properties and audio-visual slide shows or interpretive exhibitions by a small but growing number."

There is lots more, and a mass of statistics, on Visitor Trends etc. Every interpreter should have access to a copy. Order from Department D, English Tourist Board, 4 Grosvenor Gardens, London SW1W 0DU. £4.00 post free.

### COMMISSION PROSPECTUS

Countryside Issues and Action is the title of the Countryside Commission's prospectus of its work in its new slim line non-civil service form. The new emphasis is characterised thus:

"Proportionately rather more of our resources will go into conservation, and that could include modest contributions to wildlife and historical

conservation where they add to a wider public enjoyment of the countryside. Similarly, recreation and access will continue to receive a very substantial part of our funds and energies.

Higher priority will go to applying lessons already learned: to ensuring the wider application of experience that we and others have built up in dealing with countryside problems and developing opportunities. Rather lower priority will go to looking for new solutions.

Higher priority will go to the early resolving of conflicts. Allowed to develop, conflict gets in the way of people understanding the facts and adopting workable solutions.

We shall give a new emphasis to supporting the voluntary and private sectors - key partners in countryside management. In particular, we are determined to build on the growing interest and enthusiasm of local people working to improve their own environments."

The prospectus is available from the Commission at John Dower House, Crescent Place, Cheltenham, Glos GL50 3RA, and the reader's comments are invited to help the Commission draw up its 5 year strategy for the period 83-88.

### MUSEUMS SEMINAR

A day has been arranged for a seminar to discuss Friends and Volunteers' work in Museums. It will take place at York on Friday 29th October and will be run by the Museums Association. Details however may be obtained from The Hon. Sec of the British Association of Friends of Museums, 66 The Downs, Altrincham, Cheshire WA14 2QJ

### CODE BOOK

The Country Code just issued by the Countryside Commission replaces the one that first emerged in 1951. A limited number of glossy booklets are available elaborating on its commandments. And a larger number of leaflets summarising them are for wider distribution. The leaflet is lampooned gently elsewhere in this issue. Seekers after the genuine article should write to Countryside Commission,

John Dower House, Crescent Place, Cheltenham, Glos GL50 3RA

### BUNKER NEWS

The massive concrete edifice, (now mercifully ivy-covered and with a lawn on its flat roof), which towers over the Mall near Admiralty Arch in London, is the top of Churchill's old war time bunker. Seventy feet below lies a massive complex of rooms which have been undisturbed since 1945. Once when your reporter was in Westminster City's planning department, there was discussion of removing the offensive top building. But the amount of dynamite needed would have blown away half Whitehall. Incredibly this likely outcome was seen as a reason for not proceeding with the project. Which perhaps is as well, for next year the complex is due to become one of the major London Tourist attractions.

The subterranean layout has set some pretty problems of visitor management however. The latest idea to keep public fingers off the evidence of a frozen moment in history (which is scattered everywhere just as it was left) is to run a glass tube right through the walls of the main rooms. Big enough to walk along, the tube is intended to bring people right into the heart of the complex and the middle of the rooms without the need of guards - physical or human. Fine, but can the atmosphere of the complex survive - can this essentially private and secret command post of the war-lords survive such a public invasion? Professor A J P Taylor, for one, doubts it. We'll all be intrigued to go down, but is the tubular walkway the right interpretation solution? Or is the cheap through-put of visitor numbers the over-riding consideration?

### FORESTRY COMMISSION

The following valuable summary of the F.C.'s work in interpretation is taken from the Council for Environmental Education's News Exchange 4

"Monitoring the Effectiveness of the Forestry Commission's Visitor Centres.

1. The first of the Forest Commission's visitor centres and forest trails were developed in Grizedale Forest in the Lake District

in the early 1960s. There are now more than 160 trails, totalling 400 km in length, scattered over the country. Capital costs of creating these trails and other on-site interpretive facilities at 1981 prices is in the order of £3m.

Today there are 25 main visitor centres throughout the country, together with a further 15 information points.

All of the main centres provide other facilities such as toilets, car parks, picnicking areas and are linked with forest trails and walks. The capital costs at 1981 prices of creating these visitor centres, excluding external developments such as car parks, walks etc, is of the order of £11m. The Forestry Commission is therefore concerned that these levels of interpretive resources are maintained and developed as effectively as possible.

2. It is estimated that 24 million day visits are made to forests each year. Of these, somewhere of the order of one million people come to the visitor centres and it is important to ensure that the Forestry Commission's interpretive objectives are communicated as effectively as possible. These objectives are in outline as follows:

- i. To encourage the general public to take an active interest in all aspects of the forest from wood production to environmental studies.
- ii. To inform the public about the recreational opportunities in the forest and to promote their use and enjoyment.
- iii. To interpret features of special interest in the forest and surrounding areas for the public.
- iv. To provide educational opportunities and lecture room facilities for visiting school parties and their teachers.

3. In 1979, Professor Lee of Surrey University was commissioned to undertake the more detailed research into visitor reaction to various interpretive techniques, suggested by the DART study, and to devise an evaluation package to assess their effectiveness which the forest staff could use on a DIY basis.

The 'package' was based on 6 centres

and piloted at one centre in 1980. In 1981 between July and October, the full 'package' was used at 5 centres and the visitor centre questionnaire at a further 8. Results are currently being analysed at Surrey University."

Readers who would like to know more about the services and publications of the Council for Environmental Education should write to C.E.E. School of Education, University of Reading, London Road, Reading RG1 5AQ

#### PARTICIPATION

Some of us believe that the ultimate goal of all environmental interpretation is to stimulate a better informed, more creative approach to participation in the solution of environmental problems, whether of conservation or development. The Royal Town Planning Institute (26 Portland Place London W1N 4BE) has just taken another look at this thorny subject. The framework established for participation since 1968, when the famous Skeffington report on People and Planning was published, has proved inadequate. And though some public authorities see participation as an improvement to democratic processes, others see it as a cause of delay and even as anti-democratic. Interpreters should all read the RTPI's new 100 page report on the subject. Order from the Institute at £6.00 inc p + p. A summary leaflet in multiples of 20 at £1.50 per 20 inc p + p is also available.

#### WARRINGTON SUMMER

A lot of exciting interpretation goes on in Warrington in the summer. And it is well publicised. Explorer, for example, is a schools newsletter, and the summer issue gives notice of the Waterways Festival, a new ranger service, farm open days, and WATCH activities in Warrington. The guided walks and talks look fun too. Two talks by John Holmes, entitled Hey! You're standing on my supper Parts One and Two, discuss wild foods that can be found locally. Good to see Walking with a Map as the title of one ramble. Others please copy. The O.S. needs the sales and we all need greater map literacy. The map is still a relatively under-developed

tool of the environmental interpreter.

#### NOTICE TO CONSULTANTS

The CEI likes to be able to put potential customers in touch with interpretive consultants when it is unable to help with particular projects.

So all consultants are invited to deposit details of their services, records of work done etc with the Centre. A number of copies of any hand-out leaflets would be useful. Needless to say our aim is to be entirely even-handed about this, and a full list of firms and individuals will be prepared from the information we receive. It will be given to all enquirers who ask to be told about consultants whom they might approach.

#### HERITAGE COMMISSION

Bill Lanning is drafting an SIBH response to the DoE on the Heritage Commission proposals. Any strong views to him at East Sussex County Council Planning Dept., Lewes.

#### WATERWAYS

The British Waterways Board's Annual Report for 1981 shows an encouraging tendency for government to take this form of transport seriously. Grant-in-aid is to rise from approximately £31 million to nearly £38 million this financial year.

The Board says that "waterways are now an important national resource for leisure and recreation but they are still an underdeveloped asset which could generate more wealth for local communities." The figures selected for a press release certainly seem to bear out this assertion: fees and charges income totalled £1,927,600 against just £288,700 contributed by the Freight Services Division towards the Board's general expenditure.

#### CITY FARMS

Of growing importance in helping urban youngsters understand the processes of husbandry which feed them are the city farms. At least 32 such enterprises were established in Britain by the beginning of this year.

"City Farms have great potential as

working bases for small-scale husbandry, renewable energy systems, recycling centres and urban wild-life projects. The city farm movement and the environmental movement have much in common, and, together, they could make a wider range of educational experiences available to the general public", say the National Federation of City Farms.

One way to help the process is by joining the Federation. Membership is open to Voluntary Organisations, Charities and Individuals. Write for full details of aims and objects and membership to NFCE, 15 Wilkin Street, London NW5 3NX

#### RSPB SPEAKS OUT

Under the new Wildlife and Countryside Act the Nature Conservancy Council has powers to make management payments to any landowner who is refused agricultural improvement grants on a site of Special Scientific Interest on nature conservation grounds. The question was always whether it has enough money to thus 'buy off' threats to the natural environment.

The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds thinks the NCC has not sought enough funds to enter into agreements or to buy land. In a strongly worded press release the RSPB castigates the NCC for failing to fight a plan to drain a wet meadow on Romney Marsh, and for not protecting nine moorlands in Wales. The criticisms seem to centre around the idea that the NCC should be pressing the conservation and SSSI designation causes to their utmost leaving the politicians to reconcile these claims with those for agriculture and forestry developments.

The Society is now taking legal advice over the possibility of court action against the NCC for allegedly failing to fulfil its statutory obligations to protect important wildlife sites.

#### ECCLESIASTICAL ENTERPRISE

Following our article by Canon David Bishop in this issue anyone interested in looking further into the matter of tourism and church buildings should read, among other things, the Spring issue of Tourism in England (quarterly from ETB). Four more views are to be found . parish church

as well as cathedral policies are considered. And then there's the ETB's own English Cathedrals and Tourism at £3.80 post free from 4 Grosvenor Gardens, London SW1.

#### FARM TRAIL

Acton Scott, the very successful working farm museum featured in Interpretation number 20, has just issued a useful printed trail around the property. There is a very full text and attractive line drawings. An invaluable adjunct to your next visit.

#### SCOTTISH MUSEUMS

A recent press release from the energetic and resourceful Council for Museums and Galleries in Scotland welcomed the announcement of a 25% increase in central government's grant to the organisation, which gives assistance and advice to local museums north of the border. The increase itself is something of an achievement these days, and must be regarded as endorsement of the CMGS approach, which the council's chairman, Trevor Clarke describes as involving links with Tourist Boards, the Countryside Commission for Scotland and similar bodies.

#### FORESTRY

A good summary of some of the issues of present British forestry policies and problems may be had from a conference report just published by the Youth Hostels Association. Papers cover the economics and aesthetics of forestry and viewpoints from the private grower, the Forestry Commission, Lake District Special Planning Board etc.

Copies £1.00 including p + p from Rob Wightman, Countryside and Education Officer, YHA, Trevelyan House, St Albans, Herts AL1 2DY

#### TECHNIQUES IN HISTORIC BUILDINGS

A new English Tourist Board publication is Interpretive Techniques at Historic Buildings. It summarises the results of a joint DoE/ETB survey of interpretive services at selected buildings. It is presented in conjunction with work done by the

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# interpretation newsletter

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National Trust and Nottingham University. Visitor characteristics interpretation types, visitor reaction and visitor preference are all analysed. The data is expected to be useful in both the marketing and management of different types of historic building. But there is a welcome recognition, too, that all sites are different, presenting different opportunities: "The appropriate interpretive techniques for any site depend on the interaction of many influences - objectives, constraints, types of visitor and others. The recognition of these influences during the interpretive planning stage helps to ensure

that the most appropriate techniques are used on that site. Evaluation of the chosen techniques during the planning stage and at regular intervals after that, highlights the modifications which are needed to improve interpretation. The interpretive programme for a building should therefore be continually evolving as it reacts to changes in circumstances. Through evolution the interpretive techniques used at any one building may be improved or replaced by more appropriate techniques."

The publication may be obtained from ETB Department D, 4 Grosvenor Gardens, London SW1W 0DU

## INTERPRETATION & MARKETING - COMMUNICATING WITH VISITORS

A Weekend Seminar in the Lake District 29 - 30 - 31 October, 1982

Booking has now started for the seminar on interpretation and marketing organised jointly by the Society for the Interpretation of Britain's Heritage in association with the Historic Houses Association. The seminar is based in the Lake District at the Prince of Wales Hotel in Grasmere. The programme has now been finalised and can be obtained, along with a booking form from the SIBH Publicity Officer.

Communicating effectively with visitors is a common concern to all who run visitor attractions whether in museums, galleries, visitor centres, historic houses or country parks. Through a combination of site visits, lectures and discussions, the seminar will attempt to provide practical guidance on improving methods of presentation, marketing and communication. Of particular interest will be a contribution from Research Bureau Ltd., who have made an extensive survey of visitor attractions for the Countryside Commission, and advice from a freelance journalist on how to work with the media and exploit publicity opportunities. The seminar will also provide the opportunity to visit and assess some of the latest developments in the interpretive and museums field in the Lake District including the Lake District History Centre, Windermere Steamboat Museum, Dove Cottage, Grasmere and Wordsworth Museum and the Stott Park Bobbin Mill Industrial Monument.

Both residential and non-residential bookings can be made. The seminar is open to any interested person, although SIBH, AIM or HHA members will be entitled to reduced fees.

### For Further Information:

Janet Cornish  
Publicity Officer, SIBH  
6 Gwent Terrace  
Porth  
Mid Glamorgan  
Tel: Cardiff 373600(o)  
Parth 3245 (h)  
(for copy of programme and booking form)

Ron Sands  
Interpretation & Marketing Seminar  
Lake District National Park Centre  
Brockhole  
Windermere  
Cumbria  
Tel: 09662 2231 (o)  
(for queries on the programme and  
booking)