Summer 1984

HERITAGE INTERPRETATION

THE SOCIETY FOR THE INTERPRETATION OF BRITAIN'S HERITAGE

No 27

Times remembered with 'natural' interpreter Roy Coles at Bough Beech Centre (see page 4)

In this issue

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And now . . . Heritage '85

Chris Martins
PR Co-ordinator for Heritage '84

The 'Heritage' campaign of the British Tourist Authority, to be extended into 1985, is creating vivid new examples of interpretive tourism.

An Old Knockers Trail of Norwich, highlighting the medieval, Georgian and Victorian doorways of the historic city is one unusual interpretive idea featuring in the year's holiday theme, *Heritage '84*. Organised by the Norwich Tourist Association, it has been launched as part of a 'Second City Celebration', a programme of events recalling the position the city held in England from 1660 for a century. Among other ideas is a silver heritage trail, linking church, cathedral and museum collections from an assay held by the city from 1565 until 1702.

This is just one example of the degree of innovation and enthusiasm prompted in what has proved to be Britain's largest ever co-operative marketing campaign for tourism.

An initiative of the travel trade and the British Tourist Authority, it has involved the spending, worldwide, of £10m, and is likely to see a record total of 13m overseas visitors to this country in 1984. In addition, local and regional tourist organisations within Britain have been promoting the 'enjoy your heritage this year' message to the domestic holiday market.

The range of new heritage products is diverse. In Scotland an East Coast Fishing Heritage Trail links Eyemouth to beyond Aberdeen. In Brighton, hotels have launched 'The Heritage of the Dirty Weekend' - the history of a railway line as much as anything else! Plymouth has taken an Elizabethan slant, with costumed walking tours of the Barbican area.

Significant, too, has been the spectrum of organisations attempting locally to promote their past. Among them predictably are seaside resorts, museums, stately homes, but more surprisingly women's institutes, theatrical groups, crafts workshops, villages, radio stations, shops and traders, and other non-tourist bodies. A Wolverhampton rose grower has responded with an Old English Rose called Heritage '84 and there's a namesake English wine from a Sussex vineyard.

The BTA decision to continue the theme into 1985 reflects the momentum achieved, and also the range of opportunities and ideas already apparent for next year. For instance, there's the 500th anniversary of the founding of the Tudor dynasty (and for example, Hever Castle, Edenbridge, hopes to share in the establishment of a Henry VIII Trail). In the south west the tercentenary of the 'Pitchfork' (alias the Monmouth) 'Rebellion' is involving Somerset particularly, as well as neighbouring counties, in a programme of re-enactments, signposted trails, holiday packages and collective tourism effort intended 'to recapture the past'. Also within the West Country will be widespread celebrations for the 150th anniversary of the Great Western Railway. 'Huguenot Heritage' (again a 300th anniversary) is a national project, and so is the English Tourist Board's 'England Entertains' promotion, in which the heritage of entertainment is an underlying element.

To the scholar and purist perhaps some of these so-called interpretive initiatives will be considered weak, possibly unnecessary. To counter this argument there is evidence that many places have for the first time discovered their 'heritage' and suddenly see the need to plan its interpretation, even if their motives are geared rather more to marketing than solely the process of explanation.

To help more organisations become involved in the heritage campaign, the British Tourist Authority offers a number of free advisory services.

For specific ideas for activities or publicity, members of SIBH may contact Chris Martins, The Manor House, Helperby, York YO6 2QS. Telephone: 09016 230, Telex 57553, who is available at any time. There is also a free guide to *Marketing Heritage Tourism*, and copies are published regularly of *Heritage Herald*, a summary of what is happening around the country. For possible inclusion in the BTA events lists, please contact Liz Riley 01-262 0141.

Lucifer Responds

Dear Editor,

I felt I must respond to the final comment in Cathie Macfie's letter *(Heritage Interpretation 25)* from 'GodZone'. When I left the UK, a year ago, the marketing debate was in full swing. At the risk of being passé I must raise the subject again.

Cathy's comment that "over-successful marketing might destroy the essence of the product we seek to promote" is a direct result of the common misconception of the differences between marketing and selling.

The result of successful marketing will never destroy a product. The term marketing, correctly defined, is the satisfaction of customer wants. Its success is measured by the level of satisfaction gained by the individual user, not by a count of the numbers who trample footpaths.

Therefore if interpretation is part of the product, and if the product has been successfully marketed, the result will be a well-informed satisfied visitor ready to leap to the defence of the resource - not ready to destroy it.

How interesting it would be to see the results of a study to assess the success of a country park in terms of how satisfied the visitors are rather than the impressive visitor figures that are regularly trotted out to score political points.

A marketing orientation is considerably more than just promotion, and requires an organisation to have a different approach from selling in many ways. The following matrix, reproduced from Howard & Crompton's *Financing, managing and marketing recreation and park resources* (1980), has helped me to reflect on why my attempts to practise marketing met with such varying levels of success in local government in the UK. I hope it might be of use to Cathy and others grappling with this subject.

Anyone passing through Texas is welcome to seek me out. I'll be in purgatory for the next 2½-3 years!

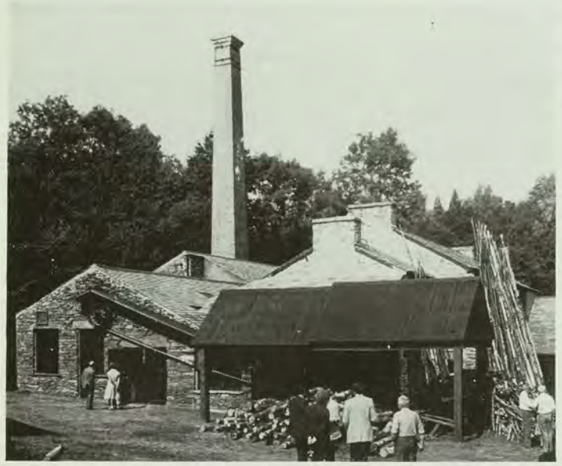
Yours sincerely,

David Botterill,
Dept. of Recreation & Parks,
Texas A. & M. University

	FOCUS	ORGANISATION	MEANS	ENDS
SELLING ORIENTATION	programs and services	inward-looking 'empire builders'	hard selling	numbers through the door
MARKETING ORIENTATION	consumer wants	integrated outward-looking	co-ordinated set of marketing activities	customer satisfaction

Stott Park Bobbin Mill

Olive M. Rummens
Publicity Officer, Abbot Hall Art Gallery & Museums



A general view of the Mill, and Albert Graham showing how bobbins are made (photographs: The Westmorland Gazette)

If we delve into any family sewing box, we can be sure to find an assortment of bobbins wound with coloured thread. But how often do we spare a thought for how the bobbins were made?

The coppice trades and woodland industries of the thickly forested Furness Fells have had a pronounced effect on both the scenery and the local rural economy since at least the 16th century.

Apart from the now overgrown coppice woodland itself, the charcoal burners' pitstead platforms and the potash pits which litter the fells, and the piles of iron slag marking the sites of the bloom-smithies, little tangible evidence of these activities remains. There are place-names like Force Forge, Eelinghearth, Cinderhill, and surnames like Ashburner and Woodburn, Turner, Tobman or Tubman and Cowper or Cooper. And there is Stott Park Bobbin Mill, providing unique educational potential.

Stott Park Bobbin Mill is situated on the western side of Windermere, on the road between Lakeside and Hawkshead. In its heyday, it supplied bobbins to the Lancashire cotton mills where there was a colossal demand for bobbins on which to wind the thread. It closed down in 1971, after some 136 years of continuous working since producing its first bobbin in 1835.

Now the mill has been re-opened; its Victorian buildings have been carefully restored to their original appearance and the belt-driven machinery is now in full working order after intensive overhauling. Over the years, however, changes have been made to the power source, from the waterwheel using a fast-flowing beck to a steam engine and turbines used at the end of the last century and, finally, during the last war to electric power.

The wood mostly used in bobbin making was birch, ash and sycamore, an abundance of which could be found on the nearby Furness Fells. The technique of 'coppicing' was to crop trees in such a way as to encourage the sprouting of several small trunks from the roots, ensuring that new growth was an ongoing process for harvesting the woodlands. The timber would be brought to the mill by the woodcutters and stored and stacked in the yard. The sawyers would cut the long poles into manageable lengths of about 4ft with a circular saw. After crosscutting, it was sorted into piles of similar diameter sizes, and the wood was de-barked and stored for partial drying in 'coppice barns'. Children often earned a few coppers de-barking the wood. The butt ends of the thicker poles were known as 'blocking' wood, the thinner pieces were called 'toppings'. Blocking wood was sliced into various thicknesses, according to the size of bobbin required. These cut slices were known as 'cakes', which were brought to the blocking machine and as many pieces as possible were punched out of each cake then bored through the centre. The toppings were cross cut into lengths required, mostly 4 inches or less, and collected in 'swills' (baskets woven from riven oak strips). For every swill filled, a notch was made on a long lathe of wood, for counting the daily output.

The rough cylinders of wood were then taken to the main lathe shop, the very heart of the mill, where the toppings were bored, as the turner held the block and fed it onto a revolving drill. The roughing machines then shaved the wood into cylinders and roughed out the central recess in the bobbins, taking no more than two or three seconds to complete each bobbin. Once roughed into shape, the bobbins were dried out further in drying rooms, positioned over the boiler house, with lattice type floors and slatted shelves to allow the heat to rise. Small bobbins were left in for a day, larger ones for a couple of days, before returning to the lathe shop to be turned on the finishing lathes. The final stage was when the bobbins were loaded into a large drum, along with three or four lumps of paraffin wax. After being rotated for about thirty minutes, they came out beautifully smoothed and lightly polished. Sometimes the bobbins were coloured or dyed to the customers specifications, in which case a separate drum was used. Lastly, the bobbins were counted and bagged in sacks and carted to Lakeside Station for despatch to the mills of Lancashire and beyond.

These processes are explained and demonstrated to visitors by two men, Jim Dixon and Albert Graham, who have each spent over thirty years in the bobbin trade, (the former at nearby Spark Bridge and the latter actually at Stott Park until its closure in 1971). Their appointment has ensured the success of Stott Park as a working museum: they have proved to be the ideal interpretive aid, for they live and breathe bobbins, communicating their enthusiasm directly to the visitors. They know the bobbin trade inside out - and visitors appreciate this. The personal touch is much more effective than the sophisticated explanatory graphics displayed in the wood-drying shed at the entrance to the museum.

Jim Dixon, a fitter and turner by trade, had looked after all the machines and

adapted some for specialised aspects of the work. The cutters on the lathes were not only sharpened by the turners; they forged those needed in special shape. Now he is looking forward to making sure that every piece of machinery works in perfect order.

Albert Graham began work at Stott Park when he was 14, following in his family's footsteps. He worked alongside his father, two brothers and two uncles for a period of time, and his grandfather had earlier been employed at the mill. He tells stories of a rough and tough life under often dangerous conditions, with few amenities for the workforce, and demonstrates the machines with expertise.

These two guides can authentically recall how the mill looked in a working day. The drying rooms would be stocked with a day's output, loaded by the shovelful onto shelves and inches deep on the floor. The boiler, never short of fuel, was fed with shavings to keep the working areas clear of waste, as within hours, the floor level could rise from the tons of shavings. They can demonstrate the tools and their use and, in a unique way, bring the mill back to life with their extensive personal knowledge. This season, Jim Dixon and Albert Graham are training Mike Smith, a Loughborough graduate, so that he can assist in the demanding schedule of guided tours.

For safety reasons, parties are limited to twelve; a full tour takes thirty minutes. Despite a six week trial season last summer, the extent of public demand is difficult to gauge. It may prove necessary to switch off the main drive at peak periods, when visitors will thus see the mill static and 'dead'.

The second stage of the interpretation of the site includes a 'coppice trail' through a small area of woodland within the main boundary. This will not only demonstrate coppicing but will also show how the wooded landscape of the Furness Fells has developed. The mill pond and dam, and the old smithy offer further potential for expansion whilst still maintaining the integrity of the site.

Due to the vicissitudes of the Lancashire cotton industry - and, in particular, as a result of the cotton famine of the 1860's, which sprang from the American Civil War - Stott Park diversified its products. The range included wire-holding bobbins, tool handles and shafts, rollers, dowels, pulleys, poles, ratchet bobbins, spout bobbins - and toggles for Royal Navy duffel-coats.

Stott Park Bobbin Mill thus provides a fascinating insight not only into the manufacture of bobbins but also into the local economy, the Industrial Revolution, Victorian engineering and inventiveness, and working conditions prior to the Factory Acts and Health and Safety at Work legislation.

It is a preserved monument in the care of the Department of the Environment and is managed on a day to day basis by Abbot Hall Art Gallery and the Museum of Lakeland Life and Industry in Kendal. It is open daily from 1 April to 30 September: Monday to Saturday from 9.30 a.m. - 6.30 p.m. and on Sunday from 2.00 - 6.30 p.m.

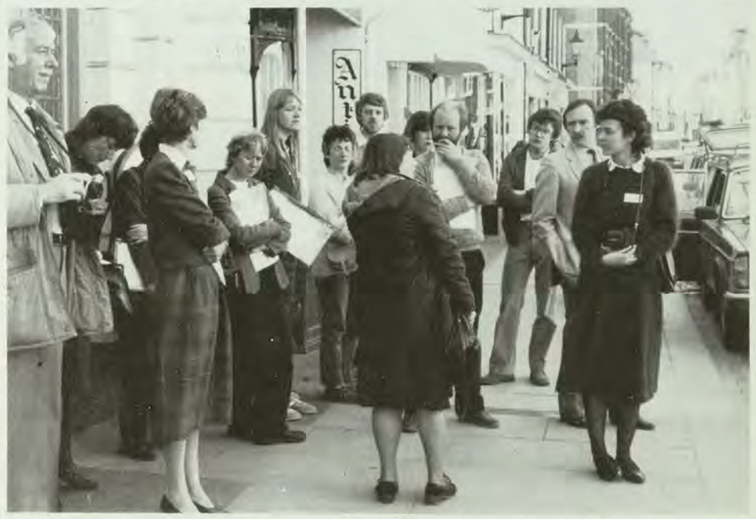
SIBH at Rochester

Weekend Meeting and AGM, 13th-15th April 1984

Photographs by Michael Glen

Although attended by rather fewer members than usual, the national meeting was greatly enjoyed, and the AGM very successful. Members found that the area had much more to offer than they had expected, and grateful thanks are extended to co-ordinator Alan Courtney and guides Angus Petrie and Shirley Wright. Angus in particular made a great impression with his enthusiasm for and knowledge of Chatham and its history. Two members here describe the weekend's events.

I approached Rochester with the pre-conceived idea of a traffic-snarled High Street. It couldn't have been more different. The walk from the car park on a beautiful spring day to the St. Andrew's Interpretation Centre was along a traffic-free High Street, restored in the main to its last century delights, and without the degrading double yellow lines too.



A guided tour with one of Rochester's voluntary tourist guides

At the Centre we listened to an outline of its aims, and then saw a very informative twin projector AV presentation, which proved that one can be clever without becoming over technical and costly.

The remainder of our first afternoon was occupied by a guided walk around the City of Rochester Heritage Trail with an all too short visit to the Dickens Centre on the way. It is a fascinating city and there is a lot to see but we managed most of the trail via La Providence (the Huguenots' 'hospice'), the Restoration House, Cathedral and Castle. It was rather a rush to get back to the hotel and prepare for the Civic Reception back at the Guildhall, hosted by Councillor Wilkinson, Chairman of the Council's Recreation and Tourism Committee. Enthusiasm exuded from our hosts and they even opened up the Museum and Charter Room for us. Their hospitality was much appreciated too and after votes of thanks we returned to our hotel for dinner. It was nigh on the hour of midnight before discussions ceased.

Saturday dawned spring bright, and following a substantial breakfast, we split into our two groups. The architectural heritage section sallied forth to the famous Pembroke Gate of Chatham Dockyard under the leadership of Angus Petrie, who has been deeply involved in the rescue of buildings and equipment, often before it could come under the auctioneers' hammer, or worse, that of the demolition men!

What a fantastic tour we had. Angus had quite a task to control 20 enthusiastic SIBH members who wanted to see everything. We toured the mast ponds connected by Brunel's underground tunnels to the sawmill, mast houses and mould loft of c.1753 where the lines of HMS Victory are still visible, past seasoning sheds, with Angus always at the head urging us along and no time to tarry. Through one of the officer's houses (now fitted with all mod. cons) a quick peek at their gardens intriguingly set at a higher level above the old carriageway, into the Commissioner's House after a dash into the Church with original box pews where seating was strictly according to rank. Through the hemp sheds and into the still working, third of a mile long, double ropery building. Still continually questioning Angus and marvelling at his ability to have rescued so much in so little time, plus his negotiating powers which enabled us to see this ancient dockyard during this 'in between' period. We raced in convoy back through the security-guarded gateway and reached the Chatham Heritage Centre (without a tea break) late but elated.

Brought back to earth for a little while by the not quite completed display, we heard about the struggle to get this centre in St. Mary's Church into being. Perhaps now that other interpretive schemes are afoot 'locally', the Centre will forge ahead in the next few months. It is not easy to create the right atmosphere when re-using an ecclesiastical building.

Still behind schedule, we crossed Dock Road to Fort Amherst, being reclaimed by the Lines Trust; where we were led on a fascinating tour of the fortifications via a series of underground passageways cut into the rock. We were amazed at the quality of the restoration carried out in record time, mainly by a MSC labour force. Eighteen months ago a mound of broken bricks and brambles - today one third almost ready to open to the public (at Easter). The tour was breathtaking in more ways than one. The cleverness of the fortifications, the restoration, the speed of the climb, the enthusiasm, the views. The Riverside pub lunch was more than welcome.

We were rather late at Arthur Percival's Fleur de Lis Heritage Centre in Faversham. Nevertheless, we were welcomed by him and proudly introduced to the centre. Run continuously throughout the year by volunteers, it disseminates local knowledge to all comers. The Faversham Society was founded just over 21 years ago and having acquired the ailing Fleur de Lis property in 1971, opened it in 1977 after much back-breaking effort. It achieved a BTA Award in 1978 and remains in the forefront of all that goes on in the area. We duly bumped heads on low beams in the cellar museum, gathered books and leaflets from the shop and departed for our next port of call, the Dolphin Boat Yard and Museum at Sittingbourne.

This was a delightful if somewhat distressing scene of bygone days. Vessels were lying at odd angles with 'never to sail' looks, although a barge listing slightly in the mud bed of the creek, with smoke wisping out of its galley stack, led one to believe that some refreshment might be at hand, and it was. We were welcomed into the 'restored' boatbuilders' shed, a lovely aroma of tarred rope and . . . tea. Again, manned by volunteers but only one day a week (specially opened for us this Saturday) it is incredible how this type of place survives, but survive it does and enjoys quite a high visitor rate. After wandering around the 'collection' many took their drinks into the sunshine and relaxed on bench and boat (set in grass with concrete bottom!) to reflect upon the day's events.

More energetic members went on to visit yet another local attraction, the remainder wended their way back to Rochester, hotel and dinner. But all was not ended, for after dinner Angus Petrie returned with a batch of video tapes encapsulating some of the historical facets of the dockyards which we hoped might be re-enacted again one day in the interpretive future. Very few people survived to see the end of his show; the full day of events had proved a little overwhelming and thoughts of the AGM on the next morning rolled about beneath heavy lids. I wish we had a video of the weekend . . . a basis for Society archives perhaps . . . a thought for the future?

Kenneth W. Favell

Part of the 3-dimensional display at Bough Beech Centre near Tonbridge

The secrets of hop-growing: demonstration by Mr. Coles at Bough Beech

Saturday's 'Countryside Option'

We 'countrysiders', as we were referred to, enjoyed a very pleasant and enlightening mixture of interpretive experiences.

Having carefully avoided the Dartford Tunnel, we finally came upon Trosley Country Park, plunging in at the deep end with the park's interpretation centre.

We emerged after learning the rudiments of a downland ecosystem, to encounter first-hand the woodland walk. Quite innocently, our poor guide asked if the bole of a long-ago felled oak could, or indeed should, be used for interpretation in any way. She was immediately set upon by an onslaught of suggestions. Eventually, we agreed to leave the poor bole alone . . . Within five minutes we were entrenched again, seriously discussing whether the Society should be more of a pressure group, as well as providing an advisory and supportive role to local authorities and organisations like the Countryside Commission; perhaps defining such things for the public as the difference, if any, between a warden and a ranger.

Trosley Country Park: Tim Laker leads the discussions on an old tree stump

Journeying on to Bough Beech Nature Reserve, we found a picturesque oast house, run by Kent Trust for Nature Conservation. Here, we experienced first class interpretation in the form of Mr. Coles. This delightful man, who seemed to fit the scale of the building so well, very proudly illuminated for us the hop-growers' trade. Up in the loft we were subjected to the hands-on experience: smelling the hops and concluding that "a good sniff and a rub said it all".

Tearing ourselves away for lunch (a quick magic-mushroom and chips in the Frog and Bucket), we returned to Bough Beech Centre to indulge ourselves with a few more of Mr. Coles' anecdotes, before making our final stop at the Commonwork Land Trust Farm.

Here, 350 cows eat 'chemical-free' grass, not appreciating that their slurry is whisked away to a digester to extract the methane. Gas-generated electricity runs sliding grabbers to collect the slurry, all the milking equipment and a small brick factory. This ultra-efficient machine then literally 'digests' the slurry into a dry, odourless mixture which is mixed with bark to provide fertiliser for the land.

This 500-acre farm also houses in its collection of converted barns a field study centre with accommodation, a construction company and a design consultancy. There aren't many poor farmers left scratching a living out of the land are there . . .?

Christine Williams

Postscript on Portsmouth

Members who attended our 1983 Portsmouth Conference, at which a co-ordinated approach to promoting the region's defence heritage was discussed, may be interested in developments since then. Local authorities and organisations on both sides of the Solent are pooling resources under the name of Project Solent Stronghold, organised by Portsmouth & Gosport Area Heritage Advisory Committee, with Portsmouth City Museums Officer Tony Howarth as Co-ordinator. Tourist attractions for promotion under the scheme include the new D-Day Museum recently opened by the Queen Mother, the RN Submarine Museum, Victory, Mary Rose, Carisbrooke Castle and Fort Victoria Country Park. About £4m will be spent in capital projects, and several grants have been made by the English Tourist Board.

Launching the Award Scheme at the House of Lords

Speech by Timothy Colman
Chairman, Carnegie UK Trust

Lord Sandford, Mr. Cormack, Ladies and Gentlemen, before launching an Award Scheme for interpreting Britain, forgive me if I spend a few minutes in considering what we mean by interpretation.

In ancient Britain, when the total population would probably have been measured in thousands, the people of these islands were concerned with defending themselves against the elements, against animals, and invaders. They were totally occupied in scratching a living from the soil. History had not yet 'happened' and they had neither need nor time for interpretation.

Today we have some 55 million residents and several million annual visitors. We have education, leisure.

As a nation we may not find it easy to match the economic performance of some of our competitors, but no one can take from us something which is the envy of a great many other countries. It is our *history* or, to widen the term, what has lately come to be known as *our heritage*.

Ours is a heritage of quite exceptional diversity, quality and interest. It embraces not only history but architecture, our villages, the countryside, coastline and wildlife. It is renowned for its variety. It is very precious and in some instances fragile. People are entitled to enjoy it and it is important that both our own and future generations should recognise the need to conserve it.

There are probably still very few people, and I hasten to except the members of the SIBH, who know what we mean by interpretation. Even the experts don't always agree. There are many formal definitions, but to me the first and simplest example of interpretation is a parent introducing his or her child to a new experience - perhaps a church or a mountain or the animals in a zoo - and explaining what it is all about.

When numbers start to increase, we find a guided tour comes into use: perhaps a school teacher taking a party of children on a field visit or a park ranger explaining the rock formations to some hikers. I remember one description from America: 'Not having an interpreter in a park is like inviting a guest to your house and then disappearing'.

Those of you who may have been watching David Attenborough's programmes on The Living Planet have seen a brilliant interpreter addressing millions, making use of the very latest techniques and leading us all into new enthusiasms and a new discovery and understanding of the wonders and interrelationships of the world's natural history. Is he perhaps in the process developing in us all an urge to conserve this miraculous planet?

But unfortunately, there being so many of us, we can't always enjoy the luxury of a small guided tour - nor do we want to spend our whole life in front of a television set. It is at this point that the need for the high standards of interpretive facilities becomes imperative, and it is to encourage those standards and best practice that this Award has been introduced.

You have been kind enough to invite me here this afternoon as Chairman of the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust and I would like to explain to you briefly how the Trust has come to be so closely involved with this subject.

In the Trust we do our best to support developments and to take initiatives in many different fields related to the changing needs of society. The name of Carnegie is probably best known in the country in connection with libraries, most of which were originally built with finance from the Trust's resources. Less well known is the fact that we have been concerned for over 30 years with the development of

Carnegie
INTERPRET BRITAIN
Award

museums, helping many of them with expert reports which have helped to make museums the enlightened places they are today.

In the early 1970's, following the work of a study group, the Trust moved its interest towards the countryside, and we became closely involved with a number of visitor centres, open-air museums and other means of widening people's appreciation and enjoyment of that part of our heritage. Later this interest was widened again to embrace the whole heritage and in particular to try and develop the skills of interpretation, at which it is fair to say our friends in the United States and particularly those connected with their National Park service had made much earlier progress. It was about this time, in 1975, that the Society for the Interpretation of Britain's Heritage was formed, backed by the Carnegie UK Trust, and we have been delighted by, and I would like to congratulate the Society on, its subsequent growth towards maturity.

More recently the Carnegie Trust has continued to support a whole range of practical developments - 11 Heritage Centres across the country are a good example. We have also been concerned with many schemes of practical conservation, of which the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers is a typical example. An even later development arising from our interest in education and training led to the establishment in Manchester Polytechnic of the Centre for Environmental Interpretation.

The Carnegie Interpret Britain Award which we have come to launch here this afternoon is a typical admirable development of all these trends, and I would like to warmly congratulate the SIBH for their initiative and indeed for everything else they are doing to encourage the highest standards and to further spread the understanding of this important new benefit for visitors to all parts of our heritage.

It has been a guiding principle of the Carnegie Trust to encourage co-operation between volunteers and statutory bodies working together for the benefit of the community.

Ladies and Gentlemen, there have been many pioneers of interpretation and lately several in this country, but probably the most far-seeing description of what it is all about is embraced in the words of Freeman Tilden from America in the 1930's:

'Through interpretation - understanding.
Through understanding - appreciation.
Through appreciation - participation.
Through participation - protection.'

If the Award achieves all of those objectives this will have been a great day. I have pleasure in formally launching the Carnegie Interpret Britain Award Scheme.

Impressions of the day

Ian Parkin

It really was a splendid occasion for the Society - perhaps the most exciting day in its short history - after the inaugural meeting, of course. And what a marvellous building in which to stage the event! In his speech Patrick Cormack suggested the Palace of Westminster is one of the top six buildings in the country, and we all agreed.

A number of us arrived at 11 a.m. on launch day, 21st March, and were immediately subjected to security checks normally associated with airports. Once inside, however, we could enjoy the architectural splendour of the building as we made our way along corridors and up stairs to Committee Room 3A where we set up our new exhibition. We had hardly composed ourselves before Lord and Lady Sandford arrived with Timothy Colman, Chairman of the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust and his wife Lady Mary Colman . . . and soon the room was full of familiar faces as public figures, journalists and friends gathered together for this unique occasion.

At 12 noon prompt Lord Sandford opened the proceedings by welcoming everyone, introducing the top table, and briefly describing the Society, its membership, aims and objectives, before inviting Timothy Colman to formally launch the Award.

He spoke highly of the Society and its contribution to fostering the profession and to raising standards of interpretation generally across the country. In particular, he congratulated the Society on promoting the Award scheme and stressed how delighted the Trust were to support it in its pioneering days.

Patrick Cormack is Chairman of the All-party Parliamentary Committee for Heritage and the Arts. In this capacity he agreed to co-sponsor the launch and to invite the members of his Committee. My postman realised the significance of this as several dozen letters postmarked House of Commons or House of Lords suddenly appeared in his postbag in the days leading up to the event itself. Some 15 Lords, Ladies and MP's were actually able to attend and this, hopefully, will spread our message a little further. Lord Renton has already joined the Society following the occasion, whilst my own MP attended and even took the trouble to introduce himself to me afterwards.

Mr. Cormack spoke about the enormous heritage of the United Kingdom and the great change that has taken place in Parliament's attitudes over the past 15 years. The importance placed on conserving and protecting the heritage was instanced in the budget speech which mentioned the saving of Calke Abbey for the nation. He talked about the Palace of Westminster: its history and architectural splendour which is ripe for interpretation; he spoke also about the new Heritage Commission and the need to present our most famous buildings in a more informative and appealing way to the visitor. He, too, spoke highly of the Society and wished us well with the Award scheme. It was a most encouraging speech from someone who has championed our cause for many years without actually knowing of the existence of the Society!

Lord Sandford then invited questions and comments. Several Lords and MP's expressed their support for the scheme and took the opportunity to promote the importance of better interpretation in the historic buildings and sites managed by the DOE, including Stonehenge and various castles. There was also a need to interpret new buildings and modern architecture as well as the old. Michael Glen and I were given the opportunity to answer several queries and say a few words, but before we knew it the occasion was brought to a close by Lord Sandford at 12.37 p.m. All the preparation - entry forms and guidance notes, invitation cards, guest lists, notes of speakers, press releases etc. - had been worthwhile. Fifty people had attended the event, some travelling from Wales and Scotland, and the award scheme was well and truly launched.

Lady Elliott of Harwood (a Carnegie Trustee) invited a small party to lunch in the House of Lords dining room, and Michael Glen, Janet Cornish and I represented the Society. Lady Elliott organised the menu for us all - soup and cutlets - but the cutlets were miraculously transformed into chicken to the great glee of Patrick Cormack who likened it to the famous 'water into wine' episode.

The Award scheme, and indeed the work of the Society, was obviously touched upon, and various ideas and suggestions made: an article on the Society for the House Journal of the Palace of Westminster (which just happened to be edited by Patrick Cormack), an exhibition of the Award Winners and Commendations to be put up in the House and a simple reception held, the opportunity to involve the media in the presentations and possible access to commercial sponsorship. The Society was given enormous help and encouragement by everyone.

Lunch was over by 2.45 p.m. and we were escorted out by Lady Sandford, an excellent interpreter and enthusiast of the Palace of Westminster. It was just a shame that there was not the time to enjoy a debate and learn more.

However, the business of the day had been successfully concluded with the Society given tremendous support and encouragement by all concerned, despite Peter Simple's notes of 23rd March (reproduced in this issue). We all learnt a lot and the various ideas will be followed up by the Committee in due course. All we can do now is wait and see what response we get in terms of entries. There is still quite a lot of work to do in establishing an acceptable approach to the judging and we will involve all the Regional Assessors in this process.

It would be remiss of me not to mention the immense help, support and encouragement given by Lord Sandford in the concept of the Award and in the launch itself: he has also agreed to chair the National Panel. Geoffrey Lord, Secretary and Treasurer, Carnegie United Kingdom Trust, too, has given tremendous encouragement and assistance in successfully ferrying our initial approach for financial help through the various draft applications to the final version which he presented to the Trust's November meeting where it obtained approval for three years. Pat Riley also gave an enormous amount of time in designing the invitation cards, application form, guidance notes and travelling exhibition which collectively have improved our public image. We must also mention the members of the National Panel and the Regional Assessors who have agreed to give up their time to assist the smooth running of the scheme. Lastly, I should mention CEI who have kindly agreed to provide the essential administrative back up for the scheme.

Now it is over to you the members, to spread the word and encourage every interpretive facility to enter - if not this year, then next!

Stop press - 85 entries received

Simple-minded?

This piece appeared in the Daily Telegraph's 'Peter Simple' column on 23rd March. Mr. Simple, well-known for his anti-interpretation views, appears to be unaware that his entire attack is based on a (simple) misprint.

Nowhere to Hide

"HERITAGE Interpretation: the Society for the Interpretation of Britain's Heritage. Launch of the Carnegie Interpret Britain Awards," announces a handout. "The Awards will recognise and publicise, for the first time, good practice in the provision of interpretive facilities and activities such as visitor and heritage centres, or ranger services and guided walks, which help the general public to gain greater enjoyment and appreciation from Britain's heritage and the environment in general . . .

"To enrich the experience of visitors to all types of heritage and countryside recreative facilities . . . an increasingly wide range of organisations concerned with the conservation of our heritage and its use for recreation and tourism have begun to use interpretive skills and techniques to help visitors derive enjoyment from greater appreciation and understanding of a particular area of place . . ."

There may still be people who think the booming interpretive environmental tourist conservation industry is a good thing. This horrible jargon should be enough to make them think again. How can people who cannot express themselves in the English language be trusted with the English "heritage"? They have made it a dirty word.

What is the proliferating heritage industry? Potentially at least, it is a particularly wretched, loathsome and humbugging aspect of State Socialism. Interpreting away, greedily capturing more and more dwindling "areas of place" which have been getting along quite well without it, it will eventually ensure that there is nowhere left in England where people can go and discover their real heritage for themselves.

Reduced to grown-up parodies of schoolchildren, they will have to go where they are told, appreciate what they are told, have everything they see environmentally interpreted for them and like it.

Exhibition venues wanted

In addition to its appearance at the Award launch, the new SIBH display has already travelled to meetings and conferences in Norfolk, the Pennines, Rochester and Liverpool, and is scheduled for our Cornwall meeting and Losehill Hall later in the year.

The display consists of 5 clip-together panels each 350 x 900mm. Janet Cornish would be very pleased to hear from members with ideas on occasions when it might be used to promote the Society.

Preserving and Interpreting the Heritage of Wales

J. Geraint Jenkins

Curator, Welsh Industrial & Maritime Museum

In recent years, with the ever increasing rate of technological and social change, there is amongst men a deep desire to preserve that which is being replaced. The last quarter of a century in particular has witnessed a spectacular growth in the business of preserving the past, and there has been a proliferation of museums and heritage centres, of historic houses and of industrial sites that are open to the public. These are all supposedly representative of the disappearing heritage of these islands, of man's attempts at searching for roots that can supply solidity in a world that is in a constant state of flux.

> 'In all of us', said Alex Haley, 'there is a hunger, marrow deep, to know our heritage: to know who we are and where we have come from. Without this enriching knowledge there is a hollow yearning. No matter what our attainments in life, there is still a vacuum and the most disquieting loneliness'.

In Wales, the degradation of the countryside, pollution, unemployment, industrial decay, the demise of a language and the lowering of traditional values are all symptoms of the present age's rush into the future. The reactions to the crisis are well-known - the establishment of National Parks and statutory bodies such as the Countryside Commission; the growth of Amenity Groups and Preservation Societies, and the conservation of parcels of the natural and cultural environment. In Wales we have seen the proliferation of institutions that are concerned with the interpretation and conservation of the heritage of the Principality. Although many parts of Wales, especially the tourist centres of Gwynedd and Dyfed, have many sites and centres that are concerned with the heritage, in many other parts of the country there are appalling gaps. In those tourist areas, a great deal of the work on the conservation and interpretation of the heritage of Wales has been haphazard and fortuitous and many of the developments that have taken place have depended to a great extent on the enthusiasm of individuals and of local groups.

There is no overall plan that indicates what is worthy of preservation, with the result that there has been considerable duplication and the misuse of valuable resources. In North Wales for example, the narrow gauge railway lines that once served the slate quarries have been the focus of much attention from railway enthusiasts, and the visiting public can obtain more than an adequate experience of this form of steam-age transport. It may be time to sound a cautionary note before further schemes are contemplated. Resources are becoming scarce and the physical and financial efforts needed to rebuild long abandoned lines and to restore old neglected locomotives are crippling. The slate industry itself is rapidly reaching the stage of over-interpretation with preserved quarries at Blaenau Ffestiniog, Llanbedr, Glynceiriog, Corris, Bethesda and Llanberis.

The new growth area in North Wales is the establishment of local maritime museums at Nefyn, Porthmadog, Caernarfon, Aberdyfi, Barmouth, Menai Bridge and Holyhead, but not one of those museums can call on the services of a single professional officer and none can offer conservation facilities.

The coal industry in South Wales, to quote another example, is fully interpreted at museums and collieries at Blaenafon, Nantgarw, Cardiff, Abertillery, Merthyr, Pontypool, Afan Argoed, Swansea and Crynant to name but a few. As the coal industry in Britain generally declines, plans are always forthcoming for the preservation of colliery workings as tourist attractions. In some cases as at Big Pit, Blaenafon, underground visits are a part of the attraction, but without that attraction a visit to a disused colliery ceases to be a novelty and visitor numbers will consequently decline as more and more mining museums, presenting almost exactly the same story are established in the coalfields. As far as underground visits go, there are very few pits in Wales, due to problems of water and gas, where they would be feasible. Never forget that the preparation of a coal mine for visiting by the general public is most expensive and it is unlikely that annual expenditure will decrease as the years go by. Big Pit, Blaenafon is a dry pit; it was left almost intact when coal mining operations ceased in 1981 and despite its many limitations as an interpretive centre, it should remain as the only one in South Wales that can provide the facility for underground visits by the general public. We do not need more; indeed we cannot afford more.

Establishing interpretive objectives

Selective conservation is both desirable and necessary, but have we, for certain categories of material and in certain regions, now gone as far as we can? Is Wales, in particular, becoming one vast museum so that one can very soon erect a notice at Queensferry and another on the Severn Bridge saying, 'This Principality is now open to the public'? An interested visitor to some parts of Wales could be forgiven for thinking that the country is geared entirely to attracting tourists. There are working corn mills that produce tons of stone-ground wholemeal flour, working woollen mills that produce miles of supposedly traditional tapestry quilts, while everywhere there are craft workshops, mainly operated by immigrant craftsmen, turning out endless quantities of traditional items from candles to stoneware pots and from knitted garments to shepherd's crooks. In every village, there are retail craft shops, in every market there are craft stalls all geared to supplying the needs of the tourist market.

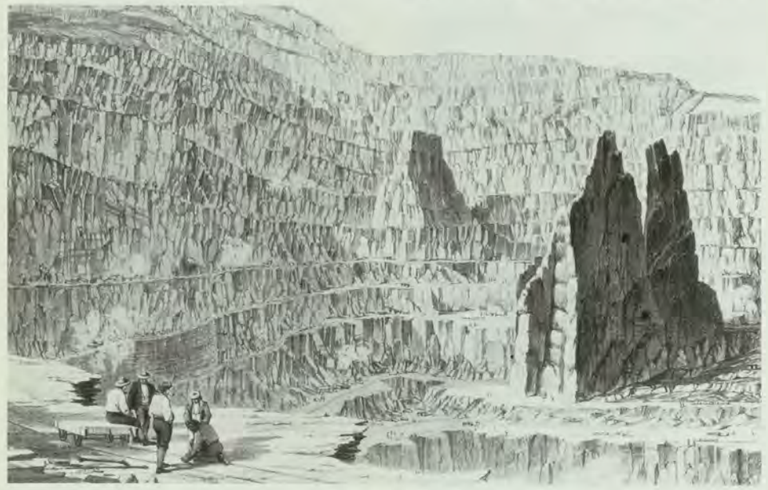
On the face of it, Wales or at least some parts of it, is well blessed with institutions, sites and commercial enterprises that are concerned with some aspects of heritage, but whether all those establishments authentically represent the heritage of Wales is questionable. More often than not, as far as some of the preserved sites and buildings are concerned, no questions are asked of whether the resource is truly representative of the heritage that we wish to conserve and interpret. There is a grave danger in saying 'We have a site, be it an empty church or a disused quarry, a coalmine or a derelict industrial site and since we are in a tourist area, let's interpret it', rather than in saying, 'We have a theme that needs interpreting, let's find the best possible site where this can be done'.

For example, a major project that has been contemplated recently is the provision of a full-scale heritage centre for the Rhondda. With the closure of the Lewis Merthyr/Ty Mawr Colliery complex at Trehafod that site has been earmarked as the best for the development of a Rhondda Heritage Centre; again the utilisation of a derelict site was the prime consideration in the planning of the proposed centre. Of course a major facility to interpret the heritage of the Rhondda is essential and the function of that facility must be to present in the most concise and inspiring way, something of the character, personality and spirit of the Rhondda. This could attract tourists, but above all it should be a monument to a people that created a unique community. The centre should provide inspiration so that a visitor could say with pride 'These were my people'; but a disused colliery site, just because it is available, may not be the best place to present the story of a community. Perhaps a disused chapel or miners' institute would be far better; perhaps what is needed is not a large prestigious centre that acts as a honeypot for tourists but a series of key sites dotted throughout the valleys with various aspects of the heritage interpreted in each one.

Priorities for preservation

In the conservation of historic sites and in the creation of interpretive facilities, it is important that a heavy programme of research is pursued before a decision is made as to what should be conserved and interpreted. This is a pre-requisite of good interpretation and it seems that many of the facilities provided in Wales would not have been established if proper scientific research had been carried out. On the other hand, as a result of detailed survey work, priorities could be recognised and earmarked and preservation orders issued to ensure that when a site or facility becomes available it is handed over in fairly intact condition.

In the case of the Kidwelly Tinplate Works, for example, a golden opportunity was missed about twenty years ago to create a first-class facility for the interpretation of one of the most important industries of



Penrhyn slate quarries: is the over-romantic view of Wales' industrial past still a pitfall for modern interpreters?

West Wales. Demolition contractors and scrap merchants were allowed to dismantle one of the earliest tinplate works in Europe before the local authority purchased the remains of the complex. It is only within the last three years, when it is already twenty years too late, that plans have been put forward to create a museum of the tinplate industry at Cydweli. If public opinion had been harnessed years ago, if a detailed survey of the tinplate industry could have been carried out, then we would by now have a major attraction in South Wales.

In the preservation of the heritage, the way forward must be the drawing up of national or at least regional plans of priorities. The inventory of what is worthy of preservation and what is representative of the heritage that we wish to protect and interpret has to be drawn up. In other words, for every field of activity, I would like to see a 'blueprint' for development, based on good academic research and a thorough understanding of each subject by those compiling it. Selectivity must be the keynote and someone has to make the decision as to what should be preserved and what should be allowed to go to the scrapyard. We cannot as some people maintain, preserve everything, and it would be far better to keep a carefully selected example of each category of material and be content with plans, specifications and illustrations of the remainder. The themes, the story line that will provide an insight into the heritage of Wales, have to be selected first, so that we know what we should be interpreting. 'Imagine what the world, especially the western world, would look like today' says Niels Janasch, Director of the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic in Nova Scotia, 'if past generations had been as keen on collecting and preserving as we have been during the last hundred years. Perhaps one fifth of our countries would by now be covered by museums, historic buildings, villages, towns and industries with historic harbours full of historic ships'.

There is, I believe, such a thing as trying to preserve too much, and in certain fields we have already reached saturation point. We cannot accept more warehouses turned into industrial museums, more water-driven corn mills, more collections of agricultural hand tools and ye olde Welsh kitchens, more slate quarries and coal mines open to the public, or yet more great little trains of Wales.

Unfortunately, although on the face of it we have a vast number of interpretive facilities in Wales today, the distribution is uneven. Some subjects are over-interpreted; some areas have too many facilities while other areas and other subjects are hardly represented. Areas such as the industrial valleys of South Wales, industrial Deeside and the towns of Mid Wales have been largely ignored. Certain themes such as the non-ferrous metal industries in the Swansea Valley, the iron and steel industry in the heads of the valleys, the brick and pottery industries in Clwyd have been almost entirely ignored by the conservationists and interpreters and in the future development of interpretation in Wales, I would like to see those less attractive settlements develop their own facilities. Valleys such as those of the Rhondda and Rhymney and their dependence on coal and their own particular brand of political, social and cultural life badly need interpretation. The spa towns of mid Wales that were of such great importance in the life of Victorian and Edwardian Britain have been by-passed by interpretation and the textile towns of the Severn Valley that were once more important than Leeds and Huddersfield have been ignored. We must recognise the gaps and make some attempt at filling them.

Conservation and expertise

The preservation of substantial buildings and of the artefacts of industrial history in particular are both expensive and time-consuming and their conservation may demand an expertise that may no longer exist. To preserve a sailing ship, for example, needs endless attention. Without an almost bottomless pocket and an extensive staff of a very skilled nature it is difficult to envisage the possibilities of ship preservation. One would need staff with considerable knowledge of the techniques of ship-wrighting, anchor chain smelting and smithing, mast or spar making, block making, sailmaking, iron founding and copper smithing, while a plentiful supply of raw materials in the form of slowly seasoned oak, cast iron and copper sheathing would be necessary. All these essentials are today virtually unobtainable.

This is true of many other large items that have attracted the attention of conservationists in recent years. Millwrights and fullers, slate splitters and wattle weavers are few and far between and I have the feeling that some of the interpretive centres in Wales are also very short of trained conservators, trained research workers and communicators. We have far too many establishments run by one or two people on a strictly part-time basis and although the holidaying public may visit these establishments in their hundreds, such centres do very little to further the cause of conservation and study. What is also very worrying is the fact that many interpretive facilities in Wales have obtained considerable financial grants and vast sums of money have been invested in some dubious enterprises. Obviously, feasibility studies of projects have not been carried out to the extent that they should, and there is no machinery whatsoever to ensure the monitoring of developments to ensure authenticity.

I believe that far greater control is necessary, and financial assistance and expert advice should be channelled towards those facilities that can make a very real contribution to the interpretation of the Welsh nation. Furthermore, I believe that grant-aiding bodies should be able to turn to a group of people who can supply expert advice before any funds are committed to a particular project. In the days when the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust were concerned with grant-aiding museum projects in all parts of Britain, they always engaged someone to produce a full-scale report on conservation facilities, on staffing and on all the buildings, before they committed any funds. The same should be done for interpretive projects in Wales. Those people who are determined to do their own thing may not like what they regard as interference in their freedom but if their establishments are to attract public money, if their standards of interpretation are to proceed beyond the provision of a

curiosity shop, that I believe is the only way forward. A far more professional approach is vital. The days of taking over a country cottage, a disused chapel or defunct mill, and filling them with a miscellaneous collection of bygones to amuse tourists on a wet day should be gone for ever.

Artefacts in context

In the interpretation of man-made features in the environment no single feature can be considered in isolation. It is wrong and artificial to understand the life of man in Wales without considering the other factors - natural or economic, cultural or social - that played their part in determining human progress. The significance of the impressive Coal Exchange building in Cardiff's dockland cannot be appreciated without an understanding of the economic factors that brought it into being; of its creation as a symbol of wealth in a port that became the coal metropolis of the world. The lack of a vital background may be one of the reasons why so many of our museums, collecting historical artefacts are so dull and uninspiring - they show 'things' treating the odds and ends of a community's life as pieces of fine art, rather than as a link in man's cultural development. In many museums in Britain today we are still far too 'glass case' orientated; our aim must be not to hold things up to view like a Monet painting, but to attempt an interpretation of those three-dimensional objects. Six years ago I inherited one of those institutions where steam engines and boats, buses and models are treated as pieces of almost fine art, that tell you nothing about anything except about themselves. One of our main duties now is to attempt to humanise the collection of three-dimensional objects on view at the museum, for the history of industry in Wales is not just a history of machines, but the history of industry of a people that were concerned with making a living.

But outside the four walls of museums in Wales today, 'the glass case' mentality is still in evidence, although in this case it may be the Welsh landscape that acts as a glass case.

The Elliot Colliery at New Tredegar may be cited as an example. There an engine house has been taken into care by the Ancient Monuments Department of the - Welsh Office, and one of our duties as a museum is to care for the machinery contained in that building. Due to vandalism all the windows have had to be boarded up and the engine house, that never sees an interested visitor from one year to the next, looks incongruous in the middle of a reclaimed industrial desert. It is of course described as 'a monument' which in itself gives it the kiss of death, but the reality of the Elliot Colliery has been obliterated. There are now no miners or pit head gear, the banks of terraced houses and the railway network have all gone; there is no slag heap or coal-laden stream for all that now remains is a slightly derelict, abandoned and forlorn engine house in the middle of a site that has been 'landscaped'. The headgear at the Morlais Colliery, near Llanelli will soon be a monument in the middle of a country park at Cydweli to join a couple of steam engines and a few derelict buildings that were once an integral part of the famous tinplate works. The possibility of re-creating something of the spirit and character of that remarkable undertaking is rapidly ebbing away. I could talk of other monuments that do very little for interpreting the spirit of Welsh industry - the Beam Engine at the Dorothea Quarry, Nantlle Valley; the Dyfi furnace at Eglwysfach in Dyfed; the Copperworks flue at Cwmafon; the Melingriffith Tinplate Works Water Pump at Cardiff and the scant remains of lead mining at Dylife in Powys. All these, if they are to be preserved, need interpretation and placing in an environmental or historical context.

Reality versus nostalgia

In all establishments concerned with interpreting the heritage there is a danger in presenting only that material which has nostalgic and romantic connotations. The long story of man's encounter with the sea could easily be biased by collecting only material that relates to 'the romance of the age of sail'. It is no longer enough to present a nostalgic picture of a few ships in full sail, for those vessels, beautiful though they may have been, represented a very short span in man's utilisation of the oceans. More often than not even in dealing with those ships, their role as the most dangerous form of transport ever devised is glossed over in an attempt to present a picture of romance and *hiraeth.* Sailing ships, said one author, were 'a dangerous form of travel and the loss of life and hardship connected with them has been appalling. The truth about sail is that it was cruel and unrelenting and nothing was ever done easily'.

When we visit the cosy, tourist-orientated slate quarries of Gwynedd, is the picture of the slate quarryman presented to us a truthful one? Were they all concerned with composing *englynion?* Were they all concerned with philosophical and literary discussions in the *caban?* Were they all concerned with making slate fans in their leisure hours and did they all take rides along the network of narrow-gauge railways? The main pitfall in the presentation of the slate industry as of the coal industry, is to present a sanitised, innocuous industry and a happy community of men and masters who conformed to the most popular stereotype of 'The Welshman'. Death and injury, poverty and oppression, insanitary houses and ill-health, trade unionism, class conflict and hatred of Anglicised masters are themes far too often ignored or merely glossed over in an anxiety to hurry on to more desirable issues. There is a grave danger in clouding reality in an aura of romanticism when reality according to one writer was this. 'They suffer regularly from rheumatism and often die from chronic and debilitating effects of consumption. Many things associated with their work are of necessity detrimental to their health. Notice the buildings, holed, bare and cold where the slate splitter and slate dresser sit all day long. The walls of their shelters are but a heap of stones built in the most careless way . . . the wind and the rain drive through with ease and since the huts are built high up on the slate galleries, they are completely unsuitable accommodation for men to sit in for some twelve hours a day'. Little of that misery is presented in the current guide book to one of the tourist honeypots of Blaenau Ffestiniog today: 'Slate was to North Wales what coal was to the south - a hidden mineral wealth that fired the imagination of Victorian speculators and attracted the migration of a remarkable generation of God-fearing Welshmen who gradually shed their rural cocoons to establish new urban communities with a distinctive folk culture. Some of our best known towns and harbours and their connecting roads and railways grew out of the new mines and quarries. So did many of our best poets and preachers, singers and writers'.

Those concerned with the preservation of the heritage in Wales must not become mere purveyors of nostalgia. Not all our ancestors lived in Welsh kitchens complete with dresser, bible and a framed picture of William Williams Pantycelyn: not all coal miners sang 'Myfanwy' in four-part harmony on the way to work. Indeed in interpreting the heritage of Wales today it is not enough to preserve the beautiful and discard the ugly, when the ugly might have been far more representative of the heritage that we wish to interpret. As the 19th and and 20th centuries fade further into the past the task of creating awareness and understanding of the past will become ever more complex.

There may be a grave danger too that in setting up an interpretive facility tourist potential rather than local needs is the prime consideration. Tourists may be of great importance in the economy of the Principality, they may bring in staggering sums of money to areas that would otherwise be very poor, but I maintain that interpretation should be aimed above all at those people whose heritage we are trying to interpret. Interpretive facilities should be a part of the educational system of the community; they should inspire awareness and pride in those people who share the national heritage. I believe that the most successful interpretive facilities in Wales today are those that have grown from within a community. Tourists may visit the museums, sites and heritage centres of the Principality in their thousands, but authenticity and honesty of presentation should not be sacrificed in an attempt to attract the multitudes.

I fear that without an intensive programme of research into the nature of the heritage by those responsible for museums and visitor centres, all that can be provided is a nostalgic peepshow into a largely fictitious past. In interpreting the character of Wales, there must be far more authenticity, far more professionalism, or we shall be plagued for ever with collections of bygones held up to view behind glass cases, or a selection of unrelated monuments stuck in the middle of industrial deserts that do very little to tell the world of the realities of the heritage of Wales. Our public and certainly our nation deserves more.

Two Views of the Burrell Collection

1

Burrell's Miles Better

or *Is the Collection a Confection or a Reflection of Selection?*

Michael H. Glen

Wealth, well presented, need not be pretentious. Glasgow's Burrell Collection - and it is Glasgow's, not the nation's - is an excited and exciting pot-pourri of art and craft, creativity and skill.

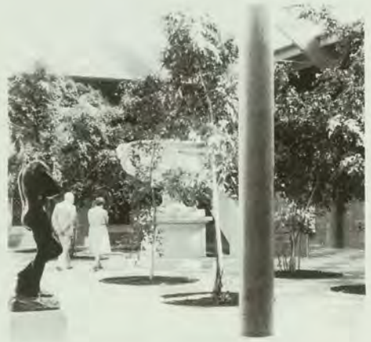
It is, first and foremost, a *collection*, a personal selection of fine things from around the world and near at home. Tapestries from Switzerland, ceramics from Greece, prints from Japan, vases from China, paintings from Northumberland all rub shoulders round unexpected corners - if that is physically possible!

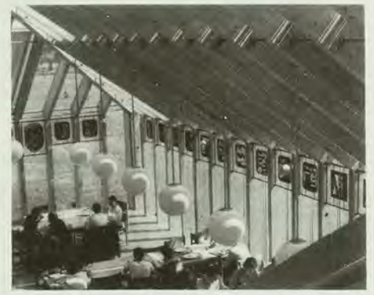
Sir William Burrell and his wife, made wealthy from shipping, spent their money and time on building up one of the world's most glamorous collections of art which they presented in 1944 to the City of Glasgow - and then kept adding to it. They stipulated that the collection be opened freely to the public, in a specially constructed gallery, far away from the city's pollution.

With air pollution largely a thing of the past, the more recent (1967) gift to Glasgow of the Pollok Estate, only a few miles from the heart of the city, made it the ideal location. An architectural competition produced Barry Gasson's winning design and the result is a dramatically sited, low, ranging gallery set on sloping ground right on the edge of woodland. So close are the trees that they appear part of the gallery when seen from the main display area.

It is this integration of natural building materials with the delicate trees and spreading parkland which presents the visitor with a feeling of impending surprises. Through a medieval doorway, the entrance hall stretches ahead and opens out into a sunlit atrium. On three sides are reconstructed rooms from Sir William's Hutton Castle, which he had himself brought from other locations, and as you move from one to the other you pass - as you would in any other homely surrounding - many of the pieces from the collection.

My personal favourites were the Buddha with his back to the light and the trees, benignly welcoming all and sundry to his domain; the imaginative placing of stained glass in front of corridor windows and right round the restaurant glazing, the watercolours of Joseph Crawhall (a real 'discovery' for me), Rodin's 'Thinker' and the building itself.





Burrell's light and shade: tree-filled atrium, restaurant with stained glass, and sun-dappled Buddha (photographs by Michael Glen)

Everywhere were patterns of light and shade, sudden changes of material to reflect different display needs, the brave use of the outside world to open up the inside and the warmth of the sandstone.

Perhaps the greatest pleasure of all was seeing so many people just enjoying themselves: wandering through, stopping to admire, bent on study or quietly absorbing the whole range of fine and decorative arts and crafts. Youngsters, hot and sweaty from jogging through the park, elderly ladies still in winter coats despite the soaring temperatures outside, mothers and children, city men and plain tourists, all were there, all with smiles.

And the smiles were reflected in the custodians' faces; they stopped visitors to describe exhibits, or gave enthusiastic explanations of wheres and whens. 'They even pay us to work here', said one. 'What a place to be *allowed* to work in!'

Such euphoria deserves to last. Here is one of the most stimulating new public galleries - both building and contents - and it is just asking to be visited. After six months it seemed the invitation had got passed on. We were not alone.

But, *delectation without explanation is not interpretation* - or is it?

2

Not the Burrell Collection

Ruth Tillyard

Appreciations of the Burrell Collection have appeared throughout the national media. The building itself, though, is deserving of some comments, situated as it is in Pollok Country Park - the former grounds of Pollok House, also open to the public.

The Gallery fits into its parkland setting extremely well: from a distance it looks like an attractive estate building, perhaps a large greenhouse in a sheltered position at the bottom of a wooded hill. As you get nearer, it becomes a visually exciting, very modern construction with an imposing fourteenth-century carved red sandstone doorway. The materials of the building are important for the presentation of the Collection, and inside red sandstone, yellow sandstone, white paint, glass, pine and other wood, carpets and white tiles (all smooth-surfaced) offset each other and the

items on show most pleasingly. Special mention must be made of the impressive woodland panorama seen as a full-length backdrop to the displays at the back of the building.

The entrance/exit area is large enough to cope with the huge crowds that the building has had to accommodate, and there are seats. The shop sells mostly postcards and posters and you have to cross the general flow to take these to the cash desk. I feel there is great potential here for the sale of more items with an interpretive content or those which might bring in more profit. (Entry to the Collection is free, but there were donation boxes stuffed full with banknotes).

The next area the visitor comes to is a high-ceilinged hall, reminiscent of museums in America, where the sun shines in through potted trees. This must be an ideal area to assemble large parties, and indeed study rooms are close at hand on a mezzanine level apart from the public flow. Its centrepiece is the Warwick Vase, a large sculpture on a pedestal, purchased by the Trustees in 1979. Most people do not appear to wish to linger over it, as they are then led, quite naturally and in a sensible order, through the medley of galleries. These include the Hutton Castle Rooms, reconstructed as they were in Burrell's home in the 1930s. They are skilfully incorporated into the whole, but their comparative darkness was not conducive to full appreciation of their contents. One particularly effective display technique is the incorporation of medieval stained glass in the windows of the restaurant - a fine place with lots of tables and a long queue.

The Burrell Collection saw its first million visitors within six months, not surprising given the combination of an extraordinary Collection and a piece of architectural brilliance to surround it and show it off.

Some people may have questions about placing such a gallery in a country park. However, the only obvious damage is where cars have been parked on the verges of the exit road. This was already an unusual country park, being well within the built up area of Glasgow and providing a number of 'non-countryside' attractions. It seems utterly appropriate that people should be able to see and enjoy these works of art in the context of a relaxed leisure experience.

Better Britain

The Shell Better Britain Campaign, a partnership between Shell UK Ltd., the Nature Conservancy Council, the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers and the Civic Trust, has published its first report, describing activities in 1983. Since 1981, the competitive element in the Campaign has been largely removed and grants to voluntary and community groups substituted for prizes. These are to encourage practical work to protect and improve the environment, especially involving young people.

The impressive list of grant-aided tasks includes city farms, tree-planting, ponds, community gardens, youth centres, riverside walks, nature trails, derelict land reclamation, fencing, hides, murals, play areas and canal restoration. A Campaign newsletter is also published; the latest issue has details of training workshops and an article on designing a community garden.

VHS copies of videos about the Campaign and about work at Benwell Nature Park (illustrating what can be achieved) are available on free loan from regional BTCV offices. The Campaign Administrator's address is c/o NCC, P.O. Box 6, Huntingdon, Cambs, PE18 6BU.

English Heritage and Cadw

The Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England (see last issue) will be known as English Heritage, as will the new membership organisation for the public (subscription £8 p.a. free entry to monuments). There will be a junior branch called Keep.

The Commission is independent of central government but grant-aided by it - this year to the tune of £52m - and has responsibility for all ancient monuments open to the public in England. Its advisory and grant-giving remit extends to historic buildings and gardens, conservation areas and rescue archaeology. High priority is being given to presentation of monuments to the public, with improvements for Stonehenge top of the list, and there will be close consultation with the BTA and tourist boards. 1000 DoE staff have transferred to the Commission.

In Wales a new non-departmental body of this kind was not thought appropriate, but the need to improve marketing and presentation of sites was accepted. Accordingly a new unit called 'Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments' has been set up, combining staff of the Wales Tourist Board, concerned primarily with development and marketing (including interpretation), and staff employed by the Welsh Office who continue with the administration and care of monuments. The unit will have a Director responsible to a steering committee of the Secretary of State for Wales, and the Chairmen of the Wales Tourist Board, Ancient Monuments Board for Wales and Historic Buildings Council for Wales.

Help Wanted

Water-mills

Writing on behalf of a group of Birmingham teachers who are preparing a teachers' guide for Sarehole Mill, Paul Archer is seeking information on interpretive material associated with visits by primary school children to water-mills. Anyone who has been involved with, or can provide references to, projects of this nature should contact him at Urban Base, The Bordesley Centre, Camp Hill, Stratford Rd, Birmingham B11 1AR, Tel. 021-772 5912.

Circular walks

Bruce Atkins, Southover House, Southover Road, Lewes, East Sussex, is working on a joint Countryside Commission/Sports Council project looking into the Marketing of Circular Walks. If any members have leaflets/guides/maps/posters for walks in their area, he would be glad to receive copies, particularly anything to do with the sponsored promotion of walks.

CEI Advisory Service

The Centre's brief is to promote the philosophy and practice of environmental interpretation throughout the UK. To this end we operate in 3 main areas all of which are closely related and interdependent: training, information and advice, and research and studies.

The Centre is currently developing its advisory and information role. We have secured an ICI secondee, Stuart Hogg, to be the Development Officer for the service, and have an MSc application in at the moment for a back-up team of nine people on full and part-time basis to develop the resources base.

We see the service offering initial advice for those planning and designing interpretive projects. It will provide information on current good practice and on the application of specific techniques. Essentially it is seen as a first line information service dealing with specific enquiries but also advising for example on helping to prepare briefs for consultants where development projects are concerned.

In the initial stages the Development Officer, aided by the MSC team will concentrate on building up a data/resource base of interpretation practice - this will include trade literature, examples of interpretive publications, information on sources of funding and professional advice, research and evaluation studies, records of examples of good practice etc. It is proposed also to collect basic data on interpretive facilities and services throughout the country and to produce a summary of this for publication if possible.

The service will incorporate the production of occasional papers, conference proceedings, research reports and advisory publications as appropriate. We envisage that there will also be a regular newsletter/bulletin which will report additions to the library and news of new developments in techniques etc.

There will be an initial period to establish the data base and assess the nature and scope of the advice and information required. We then expect to launch the service on a subscription basis and see the subscribers being drawn primarily from the voluntary and public authority sectors - an approach to a range of such organisations locally and nationally about the prospect of such a service brought a favourable response.

in brief

The Imperial War Museum has opened the restored Cabinet War Rooms, Churchill's underground emergency accommodation at Great George Street, London. A suite of nineteen rooms, including the Map Room and Prime Minister's Room, are displayed as they appeared during World War II.

The Centre for Agricultural Strategy at the University of Reading has proposed a study to improve the public image of farming. Funds for this are being sought by the NFU, worried by criticism relating to over-production, lack of regard to conservation, the appearance of the countryside etc.

The Cotswold Warden Service is continuing its strikingly popular programme of guided walks. The voluntary wardens, organised by Head Warden Ted Fryer, are kept in touch by a monthly newsletter and a well-supported annual study conference.

Norfolk Adult Education Service have extended their successful guided walk and day course programme to 'Discovering Norfolk' heritage weekends, with talks and visits on the themes of Breckland, The Heritage Coast, The Broads and West Norfolk.

The South Yorkshire Trades Historical Trust is looking for funds to extend its preservation activities at Wortley Top Forge. Much enthusiasm and hard skilled work by volunteers has gone into the restoration of this 'live' exhibit of early ironmaking and forging. The site includes cottages, forge, ancillary workshops, waterwheels and attractive riverside grounds (the subject of educational worksheets). Dating from the 18th century, the Forge was working until 1912. An illustrated booklet explaining the site has been produced.

The Museum of London, in collaboration with the Corporation of London and the DoE, has produced the London Wall Walk, a town trail from the Tower of London to the Museum at London Wall. The route is marked by blue and cream ceramic panels, with illustrations explaining the City's defences. City businesses and charities have sponsored the scheme.

A series of Architectural Tours have been organised by Victoria Thornton under the auspices of the Festival of Architecture. Coach tours of up to 6 nights explore topics such as Great Architects of Britain, Romanesque Architecture, English University Towns, Garden Cities, Industrial Architecture and Edwin Lutyens. Information on 07916 4849.

Sweetwork, successor to the Education Unit of the Town & Country Planning Association, is the new charitable company formed to promote and advise on Urban Studies Centres. It will continue to publish BEE, the Bulletin of Environmental Education, and other reports and leaflets, to run workshops and seminars, and to research aspects of Urban Studies. The address is 189 Freston Rd, London W10 6TH.

Derbyshire County Council and the stone industry are backing the setting up of a National Stone Centre at worked-out limestone quarries near Wirksworth. A charitable company will run the Centre, where old and new quarrying techniques will be demonstrated and all aspects of the stone industry displayed, with study and research facilities.

The Historical Association's new magazine, *The Historian*, carries a section on societies, courses, tours, historical celebrations, exhibitions, new openings of museums etc. and the Association Secretary would be glad to have details of any suitable items of this kind to include. The Association also organises a series of regional events at places of historical interest, which are open to non-members. Details from the Historical Association, 59a Kennington Park Rd, London SE11 4JH, Tel. 01-735 3901.

book reviews

Women's Work and Leisure: A Guide to the Strangers Hall and Bridewell Museums

by David Jones and Gail Durbin, Norfolk Museums Service, published by The Open University, Milton Keynes 1983, paperback 40pp. price £1.95, ISBN 0335 103103.

There is some research evidence now emerging that women's interest and response to exhibitions is different from that of men. Clearly the content of the exhibition will be a major factor, but the differences appear more subtle than this. It was thus with some interest that I approached this Open University publication which is a trail guide around two Norwich Museums, and part of an OU course on The Changing Experience of Women.

The trail through the Strangers Hall Museum focuses on domestic life, and is largely a factual account of what's in each room in the best National Trust guidebook tradition. Now and again the narrative touches on a potentially interesting theme such as the provision and disposal of water in the Victorian household, which was almost totally a female domestic chore, only to pass on within eight lines to more statements of the obvious such as 'Things to look at: Fireplace, c.1840'.

Some of the most incisive and intriguing comments are relegated to the position of references to Open University course texts. For example, one footnote remarks 'For a description of how female servants were treated in one particular wealthy household and how servants regarded their role in service, see Unit 7, Section 4.1, pp. 29-32'. For my money, this is exactly what would make the Guide highly effective in uncovering the history of women, yet it often fails to provide the reader/user with the tools to do this discovery work.

The trail around the Bridewell Museum is considerably more interesting, and focuses less on the Davenports and dumb waiters and more on women's industrial working lives. A compulsive introduction to the harsh life of the Scots herring girls, who used to travel south to Great Yarmouth by train to meet up with their menfolk and split and clean the fish catch for smoking, is followed by discussions of the role of women in other famous Norwich industries such as Colman's Mustard factory.

The Guide is at pains to demonstrate the differences between male and female employment opportunities and conditions of which there were undoubtedly many. Yet through the examples it gives, one has just a sneaking suspicion that the real difference was between employer and employee, although this remains largely unacknowledged and unexplored.

The Guide suffers from two major shortcomings. It is difficult not to get the impression that the authors were hard pressed to find anything significant and different to write about women's work and leisure from some of the evidence in the Museum. This is not to say that it doesn't exist, but the lack of interpretation and a thematic treatment means that it isn't revealed.

The Foreword indicates that the Guide will 'be of interest to anyone who wants to discover more about how to uncover the history of women'. Thus, the authors/publishers want it to appeal to both undergraduate level students, and the general public. This it cannot do. The Guide is an excellent idea and every encouragement should be given to the Norwich Museums to write a more interpretive account specifically for the museum visitor.

David L. Uzzell

Directory for the Environment

by M.J.C. Barker, published by Routledge and Kegan Paul, price £8.95, ISBN 07102 0227X.

The book's cover notes claim that it is the 'most wide-ranging and detailed guide of its kind in Britain'. That may be so, but the decision to produce a volume of this kind and at this price, with information that changes annually, is surely ill-judged. The information is based upon a questionnaire survey of over 1000 organisations to which there was only a 55% response/return rate. One reason for this inadequate response is surely the inaccuracy of addresses etc. It is therefore inexplicable that these unproductive addresses should then be included in the references.

The details that are included show many inconsistencies in their structure and more importantly in the organisations that are absent. Why for example is Losehill Hall included and not Plas Tan y Bwlch or Danywenallt?

It is suprising to find the following national organisations are not included: Folklife, Centre for Environmental Interpretation, English Heritage, Mary Rose Trust, Countryside Recreation Management Association and I.L.A.M. It is alarming that S.I.B.H. and C.U.K.T. are excluded! In addition the Author shows a marked ignorance of the Welsh. There is no place for Antur Teifi, Cymdeithas y Iaith, Adfer or even Cadw. Yet space is given to such 'influential' organisations as Positive Health Network, The Progressive League and FAFS! Heard of them?

In short I cannot really recommend that you spend almost £9.00 on a volume that is already dated and so incomplete.

T.R. Stevens

resources

The Council for Environmental Conservation have brought out a new *Environmental Film Directory*, listing nearly 1000 films. The guide costs £2.50 incl. p. & p. from CoEnCo, Zoological Gardens, Regent's Park, London NW1 4RY.

Still available from Carnegie UK Trust is *Interpretation of the Environment - A Bibliography* (see issue 25), price £3. Send to CUKT, Comely Park House, Dunfermline, Fife KY12 7EJ.

The Museum Documentation Association has published the first authoritative guide to *Microcomputers in Museums*, providing evidence on which to base an informed decision about the use of microcomputers for word processing, information management, research etc. MDA Occasional Paper 7. ISBN 0-905963-50-4, it is available price £6 plus p. & p. from MDA, Duxford Airfield, Duxford, Cambs, CB2 4QR.

Two recent supplements to *Countryside Commission News* have been a revised summary of the Commission's 5-year plan, updated to meet changed circumstances, and a resumé of the report 'A Better Future for the Uplands', with its wide-ranging proposals for the social, environmental and economic well-being of upland areas.

Heralded by full page advertisements in the wildlife press, the Electricity Council has produced a duplicated A4 leaflet entitled *The Wilder Side of the Electricity Supply Industry*. This lists nature trails, reserves, field study centres and fish hatcheries in England and Wales, and comes as part of a 'pack' consisting of the Council's annual report and a 1980 publication on Electricity Supply in the UK. Available free from: The Electricity Council Marketing Department, 30 Millbank, London SW1P 4RD.

The *Journal of Rural Studies* is a new journal from Pergamon Press focusing on interdisciplinary and international studies of the rural environment. With an international editorial board, it will publish research from the fields of geography, economics, sociology, demography, agriculture and planning.

The Society is in contact with the Centre for English Cultural Tradition and Language, a research institution at the University of Sheffield. Archive material held by the Centre includes tape-recordings, questionnaires, manuscripts, photographs, films and videotapes on linguistic and material culture, as well as a collection of objects reflecting urban and rural occupations, pastimes etc. Further details will appear in the next issue. The address is CECTAL, University of Sheffield, S10 2TN.

courses & conferences

30 August-3 September. **Museum Professionals Group Annual Study Weekend, Liverpool.**
The International Garden Festival, Maritime Museum and Beatle City will be among developments under review in the context of the theme 'Museum growth and industrial decline'. Contact: Loraine Knowles, Prescot Museum, Merseyside. 051-430 7787.

17-21 September. **Museums Association Annual Conference, Guernsey:**
'Museums and the Public'. Information from the Association, 34 Bloomsbury Way, London WC1A 2SF, 01-404 4767.

24-26 September. **Cathedral Visitor Managers Conference, Guildford:**
The Cathedrals & Churches Pilgrim Association.

16-18 November. **Farm Buildings: their history and conservation, Oxford.**
Conference including study, preservation and interpretation. Details from University Dept for External Studies, Rewley House, 3-7 Wellington Square, Oxford.

Courses at the Peak National Park Study Centre, Losehill Hall, Castleton, Derbys (Tel. 0433 20373).

15-19 October. **Education in the Countryside.**
Liaising with local education authorities and teachers, assessing the teaching potential of an environment, providing for children of different ages and abilities.

19-23 November. **Design & Graphics for Countryside Interpretation.**
Graphic techniques for good quality 2-dimensional material on a limited budget, including practical design project.

18-27 January 1985. **Countryside Interpretation Training Course.**
Workshops, discussions and instruction in the principles and practice of environmental interpretation.

Courses at Pennine Heritage Network, The Birchcliffe Centre, Hebden Bridge, W. Yorks. (Tel. 0422 844450).

17-21 September, 15-19 October. **Practical Information and Interpretation Techniques.**
Preparing and producing publications, displays and AV programmes cost-effectively.

2-3 November. **Drama and Interpretation** (joint with CEI). With the Mikron Theatre Company.

19-20 November. **Artwork for Print.**
Workshop using the Network's bromide and typesetting facilities.

Reports to the 1984 AGM

Secretary

I see my job as 'oiling the wheels' of the Society. In trying to do this over the past twelve months I have:

a) Dealt with some 100 general enquiries from people wanting information, seeking advice, requiring reports, offering help, wanting to join etc.

b) Submitted an entry for the Directory of Environmental Organisations.

c) Finally obtained charitable status for the Society.

d) Obtained official confirmation of tax relief on subscriptions.

e) Represented the Society by being elected onto the Executive Council of the Council for Environmental Education.

f) Attended the presentation of the Sandford Awards for Heritage Education at Moseley Old Hall.

g) Sat on the Conference Committee and assisted in promoting interpretation as a key element within the Green Towns and Cities UK/USA Congress in Liverpool.

h) Assisted with the Carnegie Interpret Britain Award from conception to reality, including preparing the submission for grant aid to the Carnegie UK Trust.

i) Represented the Society in forging links with the Centre for Environmental Interpretation, which now include reciprocal representation on the CEI Advisory and SIBH Committees.

j) Promoted further links with other groups including the Council for Environmental Education, the Heritage Co-ordination Group and the Group for Museum Publishing and Shop Management.

k) Assisted in furthering our links with Carnegie UK Trust regarding the proposed September 1985 Conference in Dunfermline, and possible future assistance.

The last year for me, however, could not have gone so smoothly without the enormous help of the whole Committee and Michael Glen in particular.

Ian Parkin

Continued on back page

Bargain Offer!

☆

Back numbers of *Interpretation* (old format) 1977-82

Issues 6 - 10 40p per copy
Issues 11 - 20 65p per copy

Prices include postage.

Obtainable from the Secretary (address on back page).

Consultants Register

Bill Lanning writes:
Judging by the response to the appeal for entries for our register of interpretive consultants, there is a great depth of talent out there in our membership. We could have done with more returned forms, of course, but 30+ at the time of going to press does allow for a spoonful of jam all round.

Many thanks to all who replied and for the helpful and constructive comments. The first register is in draft form (thanks to Bruce Atkins) and is due for publication in the early autumn. It won't be perfect for lots of reasons, but if at all successful should run to a second edition next year, so if you missed this one get your entry in now for 1985.

COPY DATE FOR NEXT ISSUE:
October 8th 1984

The Society for the Interpretation of Britain's Heritage

President: The Rev. and Rt. Hon. Lord Sandford DSC.

The Society was formed in 1975 to:

* provide a forum for discussion and exchange of ideas on the interpretation of Britain's heritage, both urban and rural;
* disseminate knowledge of interpretive philosophy, principles and techniques;
* promote the value and role of interpretation to those involved with recreation management, conservation, education, tourism and public relations in national and local government, charitable bodies and private organisations.

Annual subscription rates: Individual UK £7, Library £5, Corporate £20, Overseas £7 (£10 if the Journal is to be sent airmail).

Officers 1984-5

Chairman: Brian Lymbery (59 Ermine Rd, Ladywell, London SE13).

Vice-Chairman (ascending): Terry Lee (Dept. of Psychology, University of Surrey, Guildford, Surrey GU2 5XH).

Vice-Chairman (descending): Michael Glen (Ryeford Lodge, Stonehouse, Glos. GL10 2LA).

Secretary: Ian Parkin (4 Holmewood Close, Kenilworth, Warwicks. CV8 2JE).

Treasurer: Graeme McLearie (19 Pepper St, Lymm, Cheshire, WA13 0JG).

Membership Secretary: Michael Quinion (18 Pittville Close, Thornbury, Bristol BS12 1SE).

Events Secretary: David Uzzell (Dept. of Psychology, University of Surrey, Guildford, Surrey GU2 5XH).

Publicity Officer: Janet Cornish (Prince of Wales Committee, 6th Floor, Empire House, Mount Stuart Sq., Cardiff).

Editor: Alison Maddock (Croxteth Country Park, Liverpool L12 0HB).

Committee changes

As Brian Lymbery takes over as Chairman, warmest thanks go to Michael Glen for his efforts of the past year, and to retiring members Geoff Stansfield and Terry Robinson for theirs during their term of office. We are extremely fortunate to have such dedicated and hardworking members. We welcome Terry Lee as new Vice-Chairman, and co-opted members Ruth Tillyard and Bill Lanning.

Details of the Cornwall meeting, promised for this issue, are being circulated separately.

SIBH matters

AGM Reports

Continued from page 14

Publicity Officer

Over the past year a considerable amount of effort has gone into improving the Society's publicity material and image. With the help of Patricia Riley our letterhead and prospectus were redesigned and the 'new look' has been followed through in the journal. The consensus seems to be that it is a change for the better and long overdue.

An important addition to our publicity material has been a small travelling exhibition, designed by Patricia Riley. We were also grateful to receive a £250 grant from the Countryside Commission towards production costs. A number of members responded to our request for photographs for use in the prospectus and exhibition, which was much appreciated, but could we make a plea for more people to take black and white photographs?

With our new publicity material a major membership drive was initiated just after Christmas. Personal letters and supporting information were sent to individuals in a variety of organisations who could benefit from membership. This produced an encouraging response in the first few months and mailings will continue to other organisations.

We have also continued to circulate regular press notices, giving details of the Society's events and activities, to a wide variety of organisations and publications. The launch of the Award provided a particularly useful opportunity to promote the work of the Society in general and make it more widely known.

Janet Cornish

Membership Secretary

On 11th April, we had a total of 272 paid-up members on the books. This total comprised 21 Corporate, 3 Honorary, 198 Individual, 36 Library and 14 Overseas Members. These figures are rather better than at the same time last year because of the membership campaign, which added 34 new members in six weeks.

However, of the 66 members who joined in 1983, only 40 have rejoined for 1984, a loss of 40%; in fact, about half of all those who did not renew this year joined last year. The Committee is concerned about this, and is looking into the reasons why.

We are also worried by the very slow response by some members to renewal requests. In mid-February, six weeks after the beginning of the membership year and nine weeks after renewal notices were sent out, about half the membership had still to renew. This causes cash flow problems for the Society, increased expense in chasing non-payers and is unfair on members who pay promptly.

Some members have asked whether payments by standing order could be re-introduced. We stopped them two years ago because of administrative problems. Standing orders are not a good way to pay annual subscriptions because rates increase so frequently that the orders have to be changed almost every time they are used. But the Treasurer and I are very much aware that an effective automatic payment method would reduce administration, and we are investigating payment by direct debit. This would be especially valuable now that the Society is a registered charity, and can increase its income by asking members to covenant their subscriptions.

Michael Quinion

Regional meetings

In 1983-84 the Society had the difficult task of trying to follow the imaginative programme which Terry Robinson had organised in previous years. Besides the Annual Meeting and AGM, nine meetings were held in Scotland, Wales, Yorkshire, the Midlands and southern England, covering such diverse themes as the use of volunteers in interpretation, latest developments in AV techniques, computers in design and interpretation, and consumer psychology. The average attendance at these meetings was 24, but this hides a variation between 6 and 71 (for the computers meeting); 18 participants is generally a good attendance.

We have continued to arrange a number of meetings with cognate organisations - a useful way of extending awareness of interpretation and SIBH, and informing our own membership of the aims and interests of other organisations. This policy will continue, when appropriate, in the forthcoming year.

The Society hopes to increase its range of publications over the next few years: in some cases these will be produced as a consequence of regional meetings. The recently published Proceedings of the Conference on Design/Interpretation/Computers is an example and the Society's second publication.

It is essential that members contact me with suggestions for meetings and with feedback to ensure that we are meeting your needs. The Society represents a commonwealth of interests and these should be reflected in all its activities.

David Uzzell

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