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# HERITAGE INTERPRETATION

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*SIBH takes a view on the North-East*

## CONTENTS:

# THE RISING SUN ORGANIC FARM IN NORTH TYNESIDE


## LESLEY HEHIR

*Principal Countryside Officer, North Tyneside Council.*


**Interpretation for the Future?**

Much interpretation has been retrospective and has concentrated on our historic heritage. At times interpretation has addressed the heightening of awareness of the 'here and now' and at its best it has confronted controversial issues and has attempted to highlight problems and put forward alternative solutions.

Perhaps only very rarely has an interpretive project attempted to address all these aspects. The Rising Sun Organic Farm is attempting all this and more. It is a new, innovative project in social farming which aims to create a working organic farm on the urban fringe of Tyneside that is sympathetic with the local ecology and has a social and educational function. Perhaps one of the 'greenest' projects in the country; it has been described by Friends of the Earth's Deputy Director, David Gee, as 'an example of North East vision and enthusiasm'.

**The Site**

The farm, formerly leased by North Tyneside Council to a tenant farmer, who grew cereals conventionally, consists of 176 acres in the centre of a 380 acre site owned by the Council. The land surrounding the farm is reclaimed from the coal mining industry and is now designated as a country park and nature reserve.

The site has an interesting history, with land having been used and abused by people over a long period. The area is criss-crossed with paths, bridleways and former waggonways, and is used for a wide variety of recreational activities. It is very much a local resource but naturalists come from much further afield to look at the wildlife, which abounds despite the pressure of the high density of surrounding housing.

The areas around the farm consist of:

a) A hill and pond, resulting from past mining activities at the Rising Sun pit, which closed in 1970.

b) Areas of plantation woodland and grassland which have been reclaimed from land fill activities during the 70's.

c) The farmland itself which is in part reclaimed from mining activity and part long established agricultural land.

The Rising Sun Farm buildings are situated almost in the centre of the country park and on the northern boundary is the Countryside Centre which is staffed by part of the Interpretive Team of North Tyneside's Department of Leisure and Tourism. The team operates an educational and interpretive service for schools and visitor groups of all kinds. It is also a centre for courses and training on environmental and countryside management and interpretation.

The farm land has been farmed 'conventionally' over the past few years, with high inputs of chemicals to enable continuous cropping of cereals. Livestock has been limited to horses and occasional bullocks. This means that the biological activity and natural fertility of the soils is low. In order to convert to an organic system it is necessary that the soils are left several years in order to lose chemical residues and be eligible for the Soil Association symbol and to regain their natural fertility. A two year period is the minimum for this but regaining fertility is likely to take substantially longer. To this purpose all the fields that were producing cereals have now been put into the MAFF set aside scheme, which provides payments for not growing cereal crops on fields that previously did, for a period of 3 to 5 years. These fields have been sown with a grass/clover mix.

**The Project**

The primary farming objective of the project and the environmental issue to interpret is the restoration of the natural fertility of the soils and the development of a balanced ecological farming system in which there is a sympathetic relationship between the farming activities, the wildlife and the human population of the area.

A large part of the philosophy of the project is to bring people into contact with food production, uniting the producer and consumer. For most city people there is no understanding or experience of the way in which their 'daily bread' is produced. There is an alienation from the land.

The project aims to involve people in the following ways:-

**1. Education**
The farm will cater for school parties and other visiting groups on both general visits and specific projects.

**2. Work Experience**
The farm will provide a valuable base for work experience both for school and students from agricultural colleges, etc. It can be a base for projects such as IVS work camps.

**3. Special Needs**
The farm will provide a valuable resource for people with learning difficulties and physical handicaps, both as a place where they can find meaningful work and a relaxed situation. Horticulture and looking after small livestock are both particularly valuable for these groups.



**4. Training**
The farm will provide an opportunity for YTS and other trainees to learn farming, horticulture and building skills. There are already 3 trainees involved in horticulture and management aspects.

**5. Local People**
There is the opportunity for local people to get involved in the farm as volunteers. They will receive training and it is intended that the farm will have an harmonious social atmosphere as well as an agricultural one.

**6. Holidays**
There will be opportunities for people to come and stay in the hostel on working organic holidays.

**Organisation and Funding**

A Rising Sun Farm Company has been established; it is independent from North Tyneside Council although it has local authority representation.
It is limited by guarantee and is seeking charitable status. The farm will be leased to the company by North Tyneside Council and the company will determine the overall policy and direction of the project although the company's objectives are closely tied to the management objectives of the country park, and links with the countryside centre will remain very strong.

Substantial funding has already been raised for the project from both the public and private sector. An award of £65,000 has been made by the Sainsbury Trust, the D.O.E through the Urban Programme has approved £160,000 for renovation of the buildings, North Tyneside Council allocated £50,000 for acquiring the lease from the former tenant and a local charity, the R.W. Mann Trust, has made available £30,000 for an information/visitor centre. Even so, such an ambitious project will have to generate income and it is likely that a trading company or 'arm' will also be established to be responsible for marketing and sales of farm produce. It is also envisaged that social services departments throughout the region will buy into the farm's provision for groups and individuals with special needs, in line with the 'Community Care' Bill before Parliament at present. The key to the social provision at the farm will be that of integration between people of all ages, interests and needs.

**Back to the Future**
The project is still very much in its infancy, but already it has a momentum of its own.

The most exciting aspect of it (and perhaps the most daunting) is that the interpretation of the fundamental issue - that of how people have treated (and mistreated) land resources in the past and how attitudes might be changed towards management in the future, in a way more in harmony with nature - is integral to every aspect of the project.

Interpretation at the Rising Sun Farm will not simply be through on-site display panels, or on the visitor centre walls, but will be through the involvement of local people; growing vegetables, harvesting, packing and selling them, tending animals, serving coffee, talking to children, building, riding horses, collecting eggs, milking goats and a myriad of other activities.

Interpretation at, and of, the Rising Sun Farm will continually evolve. It will be the interpretation of change - truly the interpretation of past, present and future.

*With acknowledgement to*
*M. Green, Senior Countryside Officer.*

# COOKSON, HADRIAN AND BEDE - INTERPRETING THE NORTH-EAST

## SPRING CONFERENCE AND A.G.M. DURHAM, 20-22 APRIL 1990

What is yeddle? What connection has a Durham pony's rump to the gauge for railways? What was the true motive for sending Hadrian to build the wall?

Trivia gems such as these abounded as delegates to the Spring Conference were conducted around County Durham - sometimes physically, sometimes thanks to the descriptive skills of knowledgeable speakers. But as well as being immersed in a welter of colourful facts and hearing much about the culture of the North East, as always at the Society's big occasions, members elicited important themes and issues about interpretation; themes which will be influential in the activities and direction which SIBH follows in future. More of this later.

### ROME 10, IRELAND 0

This scoreline was the jokey conclusion to the struggle for religious supremacy in the North East of the 7th century. Our guide to the powerplay and politics was Dr. Christopher Young from the regional office of English Heritage. A relative newcomer to the region, he nevertheless conveyed his knowledge of and affection for its rich Christian Heritage. He described the Irish Christian tradition arriving via Iona and Lindisfarne, the Roman Christian tradition via Kent and the south and the fusion after the Synod of Whitby in 664AD. The name Benedict Biscop was new to many of the audience but the influence of this early benefactor was soon outlined: he founded the monasteries at Jarrow and Monkwearmouth. Very little of the Saxon heritage survived the Viking raids - but Christianity did and a growing scatter of parish churches testifies to its spread across the region. After the Norman Conquest came reforms with monastic rule restored and a proper ecclesiastical heirarchy installed. By the end of the Middle Ages there was an enormous number of Christian buildings, comprising, in Dr. Young's words, a rich and complex heritage. How far had it been interpreted?

Dr. Young sketched in the details of various initiatives around the region - a respectable museum near Jarrow Monastery, a recently-opened museum at Lindisfarne (newly built but disguised as fisherman's cottages at the behest of the RFAC), some displays at Whitby Abbey but not well-focussed on Christianity and minor offerings at Ovingham parish church and at Heavenfield, but covering the battle more than the church. He conceded that the cover was thin and there was scope to do much, much more. Standing in the way of interpretation were various obstacles; our old favourite, the lack of funds; the fact that many sites were still in use for Church purposes and owners or occupiers often have different and higher priorities; that alterations and additions are often considered inappropriate or unacceptable - even away from sites still in use. In the follow-up discussion, Professor Peter Fowler suggested that as British society becomes increasingly atheistic, the interpretation of the Christian heritage will become more difficult, however rich and well-preserved the legacy is.

### NEWER GODS TO WORSHIP

Graham Taylor, Regional Officer of the Countryside Commission, shared his personal perceptions of the North East with the conference. He catalogued some of the wealth of assets which lay within the region. In particular the countryside was beautiful and for the most part, unspoilt. Yet it was on the brink of a crisis as the Common Agricultural Policy began to divert subsidies to new members of the EEC in southern Europe. Will a living, farming landscape be retained?

New initiatives would be needed to bolster confidence and sustain the economy. The Commission was promoting a number of strategic initiatives which will have an effect at the regional level - the Community Forest in Tyneside and North Durham, a 'Green Tourism' initiative in the North Pennines AONB, the Hadrian's Wall project, the Pennine Bridleway and so on. It was well-established in industrial areas that environmental improvement can improve self-esteem, improve the image of an area and hence its economic prospects. This philosophy must now take root in the countryside and Graham Taylor saw the integration of conservation and rural development as a central part of the Commission's job, especially in Upland Britain. The environment must now be linked to social and economic regeneration and **interpretation** was one of the means of pulling this off. It could help local communities remember and celebrate their roots; it was a handmaiden of conservation; it might even help in reducing the tensions between the growing numbers of newcomers to rural areas and the native-born. Nowadays the strongest support for the conservation and interpretation of the industrial remains of the region came from the nascent tourist industry.

*Lindisfarne Priory.*

Graham's conclusions were that interpretation, conservation and rural development are all closely-linked and that we have under-estimated the importance of interpretation in community development. These thoughts, from one of the Society's founder members, were quite electrifying and gave the conference an unexpectedly early high spot. There was no going back on the invoking of Bede, Hadrian, etc. to conjure some image of the North East for would-be delegates to the Conference but in the light of Graham's comments, the apparent focus of the event began to look inadequate and a denial of the potential of interpretation. A tantalisingly short discussion on the relevance of interpretation to the present and to the future was curtailed by the inexorable demands of the conference timetable. But the Society will be returning to this question.

### A REGIONAL IDENTITY

Dr. Frank Atkinson, O.B.E., the former director of Beamish Open Air Museum, ruminated on the theme of whether the North East has a separate identity which might be interpreted. With the aid of slides and some well-practised argument and analysis, Dr. Atkinson explored the subject and entertained his audience at the same time. He looked at possible indicators of regional unity such as blood groups, styles of pit-lamp and village greens - otherwise strange bedfellows. He looked at dialect distribution maps - the "fossilized remains of linguistic invasions". He looked at the origins of the coal industry and the use of rivers as its arteries. He looked at farm buildings and equipment with many local idiosyncracies. During his years of study and deliberately unselective collecting of artefacts, he had unearthed many typical, curious or unique features "which anyone interpreting the North-East might grasp and go with". As a Yorkshireman, Dr. Atkinson had been able to look at the region with an outsider's eye and recognize what were its traits and special features. Beamish was one way of holding up a mirror, so that the locals could glimpse some of the truths about themselves. It was also a rattlingly good day out!

Subsequent discussion became pre-occupied with Beamish rather than with the regional context. It was an artifice but it was very popular - was that justification enough? People certainly relate to the reconstructed buildings more than to ruins or plans-on-the-ground. English Heritage know how difficult it is to interpret the typical Ancient Monument. Beamish was certainly a success as far as tourism was concerned but did it meet genuine educational objectives? Do people develop a deeper understanding of regional history having once swallowed 'the pill of history with a coating of nostalgia"? Does Beamish reinforce the 'cloth-cap-and-whippets' stereotype of the North-East? For those in the audience who hadn't been to Beamish, the discussion was certainly an appetizer for the subsequent outing.

### DURHAM'S DILEMMAS

The conference changed its location at this point from the bland modernity of a riverside University block to the magnificence of Durham Town Hall in the heart of the old city. Our guides from the City Council were Martin Boulton, the Tourist Officer and Pat Warren, Principal Conservation Officer. They sketched in the history of the building and its part in civic, regional and, indeed, national affairs.

Martin Boulton talked about the developing attitudes towards tourism in the city. As in all situations where treasures, either natural or cultural, are the main attraction, there are mixed feelings about encouraging visitors in the mass. The Council has concerns about the tightly-packed city centre, the Dean and Chapter have concerns about the Cathedral yet for different reasons, both feel obliged to keep the welcome mat out.

The City estimates that it already receives about 200,000 visitors per year and has become a well-established stop on the East Coast heritage run (London-York-Edinburgh) for international visitors. Durham is one of the few locations to qualify as a World Heritage Site. For the time being, this status is not being used as a sales point but the city's inclusion in listings, along with the Taj Mahal, Ironbridge Gorge, etc., would inevitably inflame the desire of the more discerning traveller to visit. Durham will have to face this problem sooner or later, but for the conference delegates, dinner in the Great Hall of Durham Castle was beckoning.

### EXHUMING THE PRINCE BISHOPS

That evening, David Miller, Assistant Director of Environment, Durham County Council, gave an illustrated and candid account of what his council has been doing for tourism and recreation over the last few years.

The county's image had been seen as a major problem. When people thought about Durham they pictured coal mines, heavy industry and the Great Strike, didn't they? Although this stereotype was no longer true, it was hard to erase. An environmental clean-up had been going on for years, to remove the scars of industry. Sixteen square miles of pit tips had been cleared - now the only one left in the county was at Beamish! A very watchful eye was kept on opencast mining and on tipping into the sea.

Alongside the clean-up, the County had been tackling small recreational developments to create leisure opportunities and improve the quality of life for locals. There was no strategic plan to underpin this work, just an opportunist outlook and piecemeal improvements.

Then Council Members had discovered tourism! This meant that a modest flow of funds would continue to flow into environmental and interpretive work in the interests of attracting tourist spending to Durham. The concept of 'Land of the Prince Bishops' sprang into existence; ironic, when one remembers that England's Palatine counties were established as buffers to repel foreigners rather than areas of welcoming hospitality. The concept and the logo, however, had caught on and now served as a unifying banner under which were marching many local initiatives. Christian Heritage, Industrial Heritage and Countryside were the three 'products' which the Council was pushing in its Tourism Strategy.

Arising out of the strategy had been a Tourism Enterprise scheme (perhaps the only one in the country operated by a County Council) whereby private initiatives qualified for up to £2,000 worth of grant. So the private sector was being encouraged but public investment was still going into chosen schemes to counteract 'market failure'. Thus the Killhope Lead Mining Centre was luring visitors into the unknown reaches of Weardale, a major exhibit was under construction at the Gateshead Garden Festival to raise the county's profile and a brown tourist signing scheme was achieving new benefits around the highway network. Despite the relaxed and flippant style of the speaker, the conference could not help but be impressed by the diligent and sustained efforts of a county which is far from being one of the richest in the country.

### CATHEDRAL AND CITY

Day Two of the Conference saw the focus switch from county affairs to city affairs and the day started early with a private viewing of the audio-visual show in the Undercroft of Durham Cathedral. At 18 minutes, this was judged, by a critical audience, to be a mite long but basically OK. Then the conference group was placed in the hands of a very effiecient Cathedral

*Visitors to Home Farm, Beamish.*

Steward called Janet Agar and she gave us a modified version of her usual tour of this magnificent building. Judging her audience very well, she produced a blend of three aspects - a straightforward guided tour of the building pointing out all the most popular features - the ribbed vaulting, Cuthbert's tomb, the miners' memorial, etc., plus a privileged trip behind the scenes where the public is not allowed - the Chapter House with its crumbling floor, the tiny prison cell for offending monks and, in addition, some facts about how the Cathedral is interpreted to visitors. A cracking start to the day.

The organisers had arranged for three city venues to be available free to conference delegates for the next part of the morning, Durham Castle, Old Fulling Mill (the city's museum of archaeology) and Durham Heritage Centre converted from a former mediaeval church. Most people chose the latter option and found themselves in a display area which was in some need of re-thinking and refurbishing. There are limits to what voluntary groups can do with meagre resources - a jewel in the crown was a video show on the development of Durham as a defensive site and settlement, narrated by David Bellamy. To his credit, Bellamy operates as a sort of Robin Hood for worthy environmental causes, charging what commerce and industry can pay when he does **their** promotional work but doing 'freebies' for the voluntary sector.

### PACKAGING AND PRODUCTS

The theme of promotion and marketing was addressed at the next formal session of the Conference when Andrew Duff, Marketing Officer of Durham University spoke to the group. The response which Andrew's address engendered in each participant probably depended on individual attitudes towards the idea of Marketing. Some have an innate resistance, others think it can be helpful. But at least Andrew had gone full-bloodedly through the process and was happy to share his experiences. The overriding aim was to sell the spare accommodation capacity which exists in the University during vacations and, as a secondary aim, to supplement the income of lecturers.

Conferences at the University now generate £2½ million worth of business each year, one-third of which is tourism, and there are obviously economic multiplier effects for the surrounding region. Andrew's job was to sustain and increase this level of activity and he and his colleagues had devised 'The Northumbria Experience' as an important means of achieving this.

Looking at existing patterns of tourism, they had recognized a gap between (a) the cheap-and-cheerful, mass market coach tour and (b) a full-blown study tour for the serious-minded. They came up with a concept to fit into this market niche - a weeklong package of trips and speakers based on University accommodation and exploiting the tourist resources of the region.

'The Northumbria Experience' is thus the benefit which people are buying. Andrew blended three ingredients to create a saleable product: 1. University-calibre speakers, 2. the know-how of an established, local tour operator and 3. the promotional skills available from Northumbria Tourist Board, Durham County Council and Durham City Tourist Board. Having put the 'product' together, its creators then subjected it to a SWOT analysis i.e. examining Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats, and from there on, applied the text book marketing approach which readers may be familiar with as a theory but is less often seen in practice.

Andrew rounded-off his talk with an account of the growing success of the 'Experience' and the fine-tuning which was going on to its contents, in response to the reaction of its consumers. Questionnaires were in use to gather such responses. As more people bought the package, it was possible to build a profile of the typical purchaser and then target the yearly promotional work ever more closely. A walking holiday variation had been introduced in response to visitors' comments and, for the future, a package centred on the industrial heritage of the region was being considered. The approach of the 900th Anniversary of Durham Cathedral in 1993 appeared to offer an opportunity which the University Marketing Office could not ignore.

They favoured such heritage-led initiatives rather than taking a sideways step into 'Green Tourism'. Andrew felt that green tourism would, in time, trigger a backlash because of the congestion and degradation which were its perceived, or even actual, results. In the longer term, heritage tourism is more strongly based. With this thought running through their minds the delegates broke for lunch.



### THE REGION AT FIRST HAND

In the afternoon, two guided tours were available to delegates and your reporter chose the one which went into Tyneside. Our guide was Linda Davidson, very much a local and proud of it, but also a Blue Badge guide and a good one. She escorted us to Jarrow and some of us had our first close look at the town which has an unassailable place in Britain's recent history. At Jarrow Hall, also known as the Bede Monastery Museum, we had a detailed account of the house and its collection from Susan Mills, the curator. She explained that the nearby site of Bede's monastery had been excavated over a period of 15 years. Jarrow Hall, a handsome Regency building, had been bought to house the finds and provide a display and study facility.

From 1971 to 1974, £50,000 had been spent on restoring the house, then Robin Wade Associates had been commissioned to provide the exhibit - bringing out the significance of the Venerable Bede as a world figure in his day and the importance of Jarrow as a centre of learning on the early map of Europe. The exhibition was clean and professional but tending towards the book-on-the-wall. One cannot imagine Robin Wade doing it like that if he were commissioned in 1990. Susan Mills took us through to the tape/slide auditorium where her equipment obeyed the first rule of audio-visual shows and went wrong! However, she soon got it operating and we watched a recreation of monastic life in the Dark Ages which was very effective. The group's only criticism concerned the unwarranted switch from first person to third person in the commentary as the programme drew to a close.

A short walk brought the group to St. Pauls church, parts of which date back to 681 AD and incorporate the remains of Bede's original monastery.

The site is evocative, lying at the junction of the rivers Don and Tyne. But the estuarial flat, known as Jarrow Slake, has been tipped on to create building land and the link between the monastic community and their highway, the sea, is now difficult to envisage. The young vicar extended a warm welcome and gave the group an enthusiastic and knowledgeable tour of the church and of the remains of the monastery which lie around it. He described its origins, its benefactors, its present congregation and the interpretive activities which he finds himself involved in - particularly with school parties.

Other sites and sights were in the schedule so we pressed onward into true Catherine Cookson Country - South Shields. Following closely the pre-determined route which coach parties take, we saw how



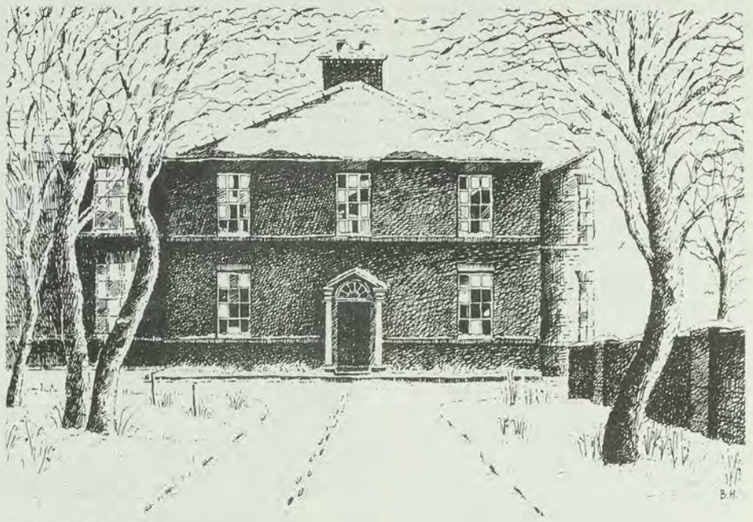
varied a place the town was. Much of the dockland terraced housing has been cleared in recent years but Linda, our guide, was able to pick out viewpoints which gave an impression of life in the 20's and 30's - the period in which many of Cookson's novels are set. She pointed out the Cookson associations and these were a bemusing mixture of places genuinely connected with the authoress' early life and places which her characters frequented (see Issue No. 36 of the Journal). This led us to get from Linda an account of how she interprets the place to Cookson devotees as well as giving us the story itself.

Beyond Cookson land lies a more prosperous town of gracious houses and Victorian parks - where the shipowners and merchants lived. The town centre has some surprisingly elaborate public buildings and the sea front has some pretensions to resort status. Then there's the colliery area at Westoe, the redevelopment of warehouses in the dockland, the vast excavations of Arbeia, the Roman fort on the headland with its controversial, reconstructed gatehouse and so on. Altogether an interesting mosaic of urban life with lots of maritime flavours, which we toured all too rapidly before heading back to Durham.

The other half of the conference group had been to Beamish Open Air Museum and, at the following plenary session, experiences were compared. SIBH Committee Member, John Iddon, had not been to Beamish before and was able to relay some very fresh impressions and also ask probing questions about policies and future intentions. Could there not be roving interpreters?, Were the workers' cottages too clean and cheery? Why not more sales of the products which were made by staff? Could the capability of the drift mine be increased by a one-way system? Notwithstanding these implied criticisms, he had been very impressed by the size of the place, by its loving attention to detail and by its professionalism. Peter Lewis, the Director of Beamish, was on hand to accept the plaudits and respond to the criticisms with soundly-reasoned argument. Delegates felt that the future of the North of England Open Air Museum was very safe in his hands.

### VISITING THE LEAST-VISITED

The least-visited of England & Wales' National Parks, the furtherst north, the least populated - these were some of Terry Carroll's descriptions of it when the Assistant National Park Officer welcomed the conference to Northumbria on our final day in the region. We were being well looked after by Terry and by Derek Proudlock, the local Ranger, in the intimate A/V room at Once Brewed Visitor Centre, after an early morning drive from Durham. Terry then gave a candid account of what the National Park Authority had been doing over recent years. It was involved, with many others, in preparing and implementing a Strategy for Conservation and Visitor Services along Hadrian's wall. Initiatives included a



*Jarrow Hall.*

*St. Paul's Church, Jarrow.*

*Excavations and reconstructed west gate, Arbeia.*

park-and-ride bus service, co-ordinated interpretive panels, the acquisition and tasteful development of Birdoswald Fort by Cumbria County Council, the reclamation of Walltown Quarry which severs the wall, a sign posting programme and so on. Beyond the Hadrian's Wall corridor, the N.P.A. was consolidating its ranger service, building an interesting programme of guided walks and, the conference felt, rather ignoring the throngs of Tynesiders who want to enjoy a day out in the splendid valleys such as Breamish on the eastern flank of the park. Conference members put in a polite protest about the neglect of this large and admittedly difficult market for the interpreter's skills. Transferring a short distance to the Steel Rigg car park close to the Wall, conference delegates were introduced to Judith Moore, the enthusiastic Project Officer, engaged by the Countryside Commission to work on the new Hadrian's Wall National Trail. This would ultimately be a Coast-to-Coast walk from the Swan and Hunter shipyard at Wallsend to Bowness-on-Solway.

Where possible it would follow existing rights of way and, where no appropriate route existed, it would be created. The project was not soley about the creation of a route; it also had objectives concerning linking footpaths, facilities at various points, the well-being of a wide landscape corridor along the wall and, of course, interpretation.

Terry Carroll gathered up the group again and chaperoned it to the afore-mentioned Wall Town Quarry - still looking rather raw, but with the evidence of a great deal of care having been put into landscape restoration. (See front cover.)

One controversial suggestion to make good use of the quarry was to establish an archaeological theme park with reconstructions of Roman features. The real archaeology having been quarried away, nothing of heritage importance was at stake. Prospects of job creation and tourist spending had led the County Council to engage consultants to examine feasibility. Currently the idea was on the back-burner but its pro-genitor, Robin Birley, was very much alive and well and waiting to meet the group at the Roman Army Museum which he founded and now runs at Carvoran. The next hour or so in

*Hadrian's Wall from Cuddy's Crag.*

Mr. Birley's company was totally fascinating as he gave a revealing account of his batles with beaurocracy, his triumphs and his tribulations. SIBH Committee promptly offered him some space in the Journal to share his experiences, and his article appears elsewhere in this issue.

So, early on Sunday afternoon, 22nd April, the Spring Conference was over and we made our way back to Durham, the principal departure point. Our programme had been a full one, as always, but the general opinion was that the balance between speaker presentations and discussion time had been got right. The Society's gratitude goes to Graeme McLearie and Moya Feehally, who bore the brunt of the organising work - a considerable burden. Thanks also to all the speakers and guides who contributed so magnificently in their allotted times and places.

Our impressions of the North-East on the final day? It is a region of contrasts and richness and it is hard at work putting the disfigurement of its industrial past behind it. The worst excesses are being erased and the best bits are being saved to remind the community of its roots. On the imperfect evidence of our flying visit, it seemed as though Durham and Tyneside are energetic in promoting themselves to the rest of the world, whilst the National Park, as one might expect, is on the defensive and seems complacent in comparison with its neighbours. There is still much to do, but it was encouraging to see so much going on and to realise that, whilst the North-East has a rather poor image within the UK, this is not the case internationally - a sign of hope.

From the Society's point of view, a new concept began to swim into focus over the three days in Durham - that our title and our inclinations tend to give us a preoccupation with the past and with the legacy of natural assets around us. Yet there is a vital and dynamic contribution which we can make for the community at large. We can identify the strands which link the past with the future; we can identify cultural roots but in order that people know where they are going; we can look ahead as well as back; we can help develop community spirit and morale. What we do isn't dusty and academic, so have we got our title and our aims right? I am sure we will be returning to this theme in the pages of the Journal and elsewhere.

*Ken Jackson.*

# STORM OVER VINDOLANDA

## ROBIN BIRLEY AND PAT BIRLEY

*Director and Curator of the Vindolanda Trust and owners of the Roman Army Museum.*

In 1970 a couple of teachers, determined to undertake full time archaeological research on a Roman site, abandoned their classrooms and began work at Vindolanda, a little known Roman fort in the heart of Northumberland's Wall countryside. Their friends and colleagues tried to dissuade them. "How can you raise money?" and "Why give up a secure job for such an uncertain future?"
Twenty years later, as we meet those former colleagues, many of whom have been persuaded to take early retirement in the harsh educational environment of today, we have to admit to employing 30 staff, receiving more than 150,000 visitors a year and running two of the largest Museums in the North of England. It



didn't happen overnight, and it was not without many trials and tribulations along the way. Above all, it has been a continuous learning process and a balancing act between the demands of research scholarship and the need to interest the general public.

When we started to plan the development of Vindolanda into what is now known as a visitor attraction site, we possessed enthusiasm, dedication to hard work, some ability to infect others with similar feelings, and absolutely no money at all. To provide remains of Roman buildings for people to inspect in what was then a grass covered field, we organised archaeological courses during the week for senior pupils of northern schools, with courses for adult groups at weekends. That provided some funds and the labour necessary to excavate the site, together with a growing source of keen volunteers for the holiday periods. A trickle of visitors came to see us, paying the princely sum of one shilling and sixpence per head. This funding was argumented by evening lectures and small donations from generous local charities. We had a small garden shed at first, for storing tools and finds, and for shelter in bad weather, but soon a marquee was purchased, followed by a couple of nissen huts. We had no water or electricity, and the effect upon our solitary Elsan when used by a busload from a W.I. can be imagined.

*Reconstruction at Vindolanda.*

It so happened that the excavations began to attract some publicity, and more people came to see what was going on. Indignant local dignitaries wrote irate letters to the press, complaining about congestion on the roads, country gates left open and all the evils of ignorant townsfolk trespassing in the countryside. T.V. directors smelt a good story, publicity swelled the customers, and the excavation's results became more dramatic.

Thus one thing led to another. We learned by experience, the hard way. The sheltered teachers had become groundsmen, employers, shopkeepers, cafe proprietors, builders, museum designers and curators, publishers, printers and even laboratory technicians.

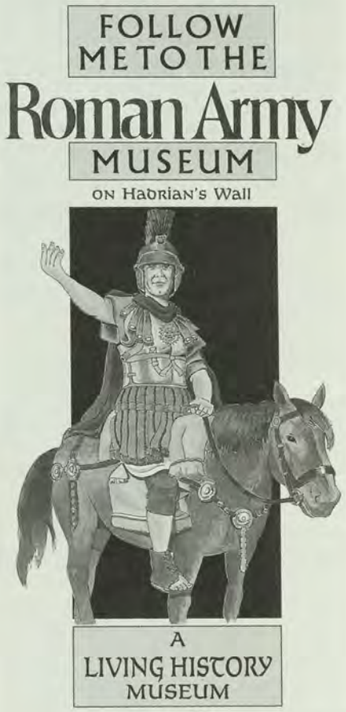
Behind it all lay a determination that the only justification for the preservation of historical remains was public interest, education and enjoyment through those remains. If the public had no interest, the money would not be made available for research and for preservation. Our passion for our chosen subject could only be consumated with the assistance of that public.

You can do anything if you have the funds these days, but we never had anything but the minimum available to us, and it took longer to achieve a respectable organisation and facilities than it could have done. There were some very interesting problems in the course of development. When in the early 1970's we applied for permission to open a small cafe at the site, we were accused in the local press of turning the place into a Disneyland. Our links with the schools, for whom we supplied an on-site education service, was condemned as cluttering the countryside with badly behaved city children. But our greatest gaff was the construction of full-scale Replicas of sections of Hadrian's Wall.

We knew that good teaching practice insisted that plans, reconstruction, drawings and models were helpful ways of illuminating difficult subjects. To carry it a stage further, it seemed to us that a full-scale Replica would be the ultimate educational aid. This had been achieved in some, admittedly foreign, places such as the Saalburg on the Roman Rhine frontier. So we went ahead, with the enthusiastic help and support of Gateshead schools and began the construction of a section of stone Hadrians Wall, with a turret, and a length of Turf Wall, with a timber Milecastle gateway.

A storm soon broke over our heads! We had failed to obtain planning permission, so we swiftly submitted accurate plans designed by Hadrian's architects. They were rejected, on the grounds that there was no damp course and the turret windows did not fit in with standard Northumbrian windows. We argued, with the help of the press, and the authorities accepted that Hadrian's designs were perhaps reasonable for his day. We were building in the Roman manner, as part of the research project, and we used Roman type scaffolding - trees tied together with rope.? The building inspector would have none of it, and mention of the statutory daily rate for fines was enough to silence our protests. Thus the project went ahead and was completed at minimal cost, to the delight of thousands of children and not a few adults. Then the final condemnation arrived by letter, from no less an eminent authority than the secretary to the Ancient Monuments Board for England and Wales. I still have it, framed on my study wall. "By building such Replicas, the Board believes that you are bringing into contempt British ancient monuments". It is a happy thought that the Board no longer exists, and that the Replicas continue to be used by T.V. crews and thousands of visitors.

Many of the perils we faced in those distant days of the 1970's have long since vanished. Ancient Monuments that provide refreshment and souvenir shops for visitors are generally regarded with




favour, and sensible replica construction is occasionally tolerated (although it remains anathema to many Heritage experts). Modern methods of display and interpretation are reducing the numbers of silent display cases in Museums, and the short video programme in particular is often the best remembered part of many a visit.

The interest by the public in its heritage continues to grow, and it is fostered by an increasing spread of Museums, Exhibition Centres and Theme Parks. Long may it continue. But our advice to any potential enthusiast wishing to start his own venture would still include strong encouragement not to be stifled by the Establishment. The Establishment is wise, honest and most worthy, but it is also dull, frequently out of date, and utterly opposed to bright ideas which it did not think of first.

# THE COUNTRYSIDE EXPERIENCE PART 2. SOME FURTHER THOUGHTS ON ENVIRONMENTAL INTERPRETATION


## ANDREW JENKINSON

*Scenesetters*


**The year is 2000. Mr Joe Public is telling John Trugreen about his visit to the newly opened** *Marshland Story*, latest venture by Naturscene Projects.

"It's a great experience. You could almost think it was real. They spent £5 million on it in the cellars of that new holiday marina. You know - the one down by the bay that was just a bit of derelict marsh and mucky beach. No-one ever used to go there - but now you have to queue to get in! Its done wonders for the place.

"You get into this thing like a plastic soap dish which drifts through lots of little creeks. Not real water of course but it feels like it - the boat rocks if you move. And they've got all the smells and sounds - that whiff of ozone (though it smells more like dead seaweed and sewage if you ask me), seagulls just like *Desert Island Discs*, the lot. And to make sure you don't miss anything there's this commentary by David Attenborough - comes at you in hushed tones from the bottom of the boat so that it doesn't frighten the birds away. Not that they're real of course, but very lifelike. There were these little sand-somethings running around like clockwork toys pecking at the beach. And you could poke the stranded jellyfish - ugh!

"When you finish the boat ride you go through this exhibition but it was a bit complicated for me. Tells you all about the environment and habitats and that sort of stuff; but there's a super shop at the end. We brought this limited edition hand-printed plate with an albatross on it - we're very fond of birds. And our Sharon got a lovely sew-it-yourself tapestry kit - Sunset over the Marsh it's called.

"Next Saturday we're going up to Woodland Glades - that big hypermarket on the north side of town. Thought we might try The Night Watch Show that Naturscene Projects have put in there. It's all about woods and owls. There was this great fuss when the shop people wanted to develop the place. The green lot objected that it was destroying some site of special interest. But the council said it was O.K. because they were including a show that tells you about the countryside. Why don't you join us? It's great value - only £10 for the family ticket".

"Sorry" says the stunned John Trugreen, trying to believe that what he had just heard was a bad dream, but fearing it was real enough, "I'm off badger watching". "How much do you have to pay for that?"....

Far fetched? Perhaps - though I'm afraid not for the reasons you might think; only because the general public find the natural environment intrinsically less appealing than history and therefore no-one is likely to make money out of it as a marketable subject for a "heritage experience".

In the last edition of the Journal, I suggested that environmental interpretation could be more effective if it was better integrated with everyday activity, thereby becoming more accessible to a greater number. Obviously I do not consider the above scenario to be the answer; but it does contain the seeds of ideas which I believe are the real reasons why our present efforts are of limited success.

The environmental lobby is motivated by a belief that there is moral right and spiritual value in appreciation of the natural world. And further that this is a common shared human experience which is frustrated only by circumstance; that "the deprived" are those without the means of access to the countryside, such as the city dwellers with no car. I seriously question this assumption which is implicit in so much of our thinking about environmental values and interpretation.

Psychologically the countryside is not immediately accessible and welcoming to the majority. The open countryside is an alien environment lacking the known landmarks that constrain and direct our increasingly artificial and materialistic daily behaviour. There are no pavements and road names, no sign posts to tell us which way to go, nowhere to spend money and nothing to buy. In short there is "nothing to do" in the countryside for the vast majority whose view of the world has become totally anthropocentric.

If we are to use environmental interpretation as an effective tool to counter this trend and to try and encourage a greater understanding, and appreciation of the natural environment amongst the majority, then we have got to adapt our interpretive methods and messages to the needs of our audience.

Amongst enviromental groups the RSPB have grasped the point that so many seem to miss - maybe because it is too simple - that personal experience and self-interpretation are the key to success. The RSPB has attracted a huge following by consciously courting the back-garden bird watcher. Birds are fun. Jolly robins hop around their bird-tables and adorn their Christmas cards. The ground swell of good will (and of course cash) generated by this harnessed to the serious cause of wildlife conservation broad-based support is then and bird species and habitat protection. Interpretation, both didactic in the form of visitor centres, exhibitions and literature and, more importantly, passive in the form of access to the best bird watching grounds, contributes to and results from this success.

Certainly I would rank amongst my own bird watching highlights the opportunity of seeing waders so close I could almost touch them from the hide at Titchwell: the result of making sure that the hide was in the right place. Hundreds of people who might otherwise have passed them by unnoticed have been given the opportunity to look closely at the herons at Coombe Abbey near Coventry or Ellesmere in Shropshire.

On three occasions recently I have been impressed by members of local bird clubs who, armed with half a dozen telescopes on tripods, a blackboard and a few books, have set up instant interpretation centres (though they don't know it!) from the boot of a car at popular laybys on the coast or overlooking reservoirs. They have chatted enthusiastically with anyone curious enough to enquire what they are looking at. At least one satisfied customer was the elderly gentleman who had been shown a yellowhammer for the first time in his life. And that is another important aspect of this type of informal interpretation - it is not about rarities or scientific interest. It is about making ordinary folk more aware of the amazing wealth of wildlife to be found in their everyday surroundings. And by implication, bringing home the extent of loss caused by damage to those surroundings.

The more overtly scientific conservation organisations - the Nature Conservancy Council, county Wildlife Trusts and the like - have yet to acquire this happy knack of popularising without patronising. A visit to the average nature reserve is not an experience which translates readily to the wildlife of your own garden. The heathland nature reserve, you learn from the sign at the entrance, is 16.4 hectares and the last remaining example of this seriously threatened habitat in Midshire. It harbours a wealth of interesting flora and fauna. Why are the providers of this disinformation always so obsessed with size? How many people have the least concept of how big an acre is let alone a hectare? And why are we not told what the interesting fauna and flora comprises? Because there is an implicit assumption that those who are already genned up on the ecology of lowland heath know what to expect and those who are not won't recognise it anyway!

"We have made significant efforts to educate the public by providing six interpretive signs at our nature reserves and publishing a series of free habitat leaflets" might say the self-congratulatory annual report of a local nature trust. I'm, sorry, but I have to disagree. You have once more preached to the converted and raised a warm glow in the hearts of your regular supporters. Your reserves are now protected and will remain enclaves of ecological diversity within barren acres of food factory. But you have not increased your constituency of popular support.

We appeal too often to experiences and sentiments that are now alas illusory. I have recently assembled a display for the peatlands campaign in which these problems of communication were brought home to me. In brief the general public is being asked to forsake the convenience of grow-bags in the interests of conservation of a habitat which the majority would find depressingly dull! The call of the curlew is described as "evocative" which my dictionary defines as summoning forth memories. You cannot have a memory of something you have not experienced. A few peatland open-days with a bus service and an evening barbecue on the egde of the nearest bog would surely do more good than half a dozen display panels.

So let us devote more of our interpretive effort towards providing those real experiences that people will cherish. And we could be surprised to find how much they are prepared to pay for the privilege.



# LIVE INTERPRETATION CONFERENCE, SPRINGFIELD, OHIO.


## JANE MALCOLM-DAVIES

*Freelance Special Events and Training Consultant.*


Museum professionals met to discuss improvements in the use of role play for interpretation at a conference in Springfield, Ohio on 17 & 18 February earlier this year. I was lucky enough to be invited to present a resume of my research on the use of live interpreters at museums and other historic sites in the UK.

The Clark County Historical Society hosted a series of discussions and workshops at the Wittenberg University. This forum for debate presented an exciting opportunity to explore a number of the problems of using amateur re-enactment organisations at historic sites. The speakers considered the needs of museum professionals and their research requirements, and compared them with the priorities of amateur organisations.

I found it refreshing to hear the problems discussed in a progressive and practical way. It was also a revelation for me to hear a discussion which did not focus on whether live interpreters are a good thing. Most delegates employed or used role players in their museums and felt that they played a significant part in explaining history to the visiting public.

Among the speakers at the conference were William L Brown III, staff curator at the Harpers Ferry Center for the National Parks Service, Burton Kummerow, executive director of the St Mary's City Commission in Maryland and Kathleen Baker, director of Opera Americana at Alexandria, Virginia.

A guest speaker from the UK, Mark Wallis, director of Past Pleasures, an agency specialising in training for live interpreters, spoke on the development of historical characters for role players.

The conference's keynote discussions focussed on the need for amateur re-enactment organisations to improve their research. Brown spoke on the success of recreating military environments at a number of museums using contemporary sources. He deplored the lack of careful consideration of these sources by amateur organisations and the resulting squalid conditions apparent in living history camps.

"We bring much myth and romanticism to historic sites, believing that Victorians lost their propriety as they went West - *au contraire,*" said Brown. He gave examples of army quarters, showing how soldiers followed contemporary decorating books, even on the frontier.

He urged the delegates to consider each object in the rooms, showing how ornaments, pictures, curtains and even pianos were commonplace in such environments and not only where women were in residence.

Martin West, director of Fort Ligionier, Pennsylvania, put forward the concept of "a spirit of critical enquiry" which all re-enactment projects would do well to adopt.

The subject of period clothing was most neatly summed up with a quotation from the Old Testament by Laurel Towns of Heritage Hill State Park: "Know first who you are, then adorn yourself accordingly." She emphasised the importance of knowing aspects of the character before atempting to dress him or her. Towns explained the influence of religion, nationality, wealth and status on the kind of clothes appropriate to an historical character. All the speakers on this subject agreed that the cut of historical garments was the most important aspect of their construction. Workshops allowed delegates to discuss any particular costume problems with the experts.

The conference attracted a large number of people who work as interpreters in museums and several groups of re-enactors. They were particularly keen to attend workshops by Mark Wallis, Kathleen Baker and myself on the techniques of playing an historical character. These covered use of language, how to wear a costume, body language, deportment and mannerisms. Delegates were expected to experiment with different techniques during the workshop and the experts commented on ways to improve their performances.

"You decide on the way you want your encounter with a visitor to go," said Baker "if you are clear on the point you wish to make, you will allow the visitor to understand by careful use of language and by watching their reactions and adapting your style to suit."

Wallis drew on his experience at Williamsburg as a character interpreter and referred to his work at Littlecote Manor: "You must read contemporary material, "he said "this is the best way to understand period language and attitudes to other people".

He emphasised the need to re-create the concept of respect for betters in society, citing the example of late 18th century prints of servants who show simpering respect to their master's face but have an insolent attitude behind his back.

Baker gave a demonstration of how to provide an insight into this complex relationship through careful use of body language. "Bowing and nodding are aspects of character interpretation that often go unused by people who have not been trained", said Wallis, who used another print depicting twelve ways of bowing depending on the social situation.

My own presentation offered an overview of various live interpretation projects in the UK and I was interested to find that

many of the problems I identified had parallels in the US. The use of actors in museums such as Wigan Pier, Lancashire, has tended to provide a performance-orientated type of interpretation which is not as powerful as an interactive technique. Actors have a tendency to retreat to a stage, whereas trained interpreters have the confidence to address visitors directly.

This is an issue which Mo Heard, the actors' company director at the Museum of the Moving Image, has taken steps to guard against. Her training programme prepares the actor/guides for this high and demanding level of contact with the visitors.

During my visit to Williamsburg, before the conference, I witnessed several "fourth-wall presentations" by the Company of Colonial Players. These interpreters are not trained as actors and therefore did not have the power of performance that actors can bring to a stage. They attempted to create an intimate atmosphere by pretending that the audience did not exist.

This does not exploit the experience of direct contact with an interpreter, which museum visitors find stimulating. The need for their response makes the relationship more dynamic than a performance which protects both the visitor and the interpreter from real contact with one another. This interaction can only be provided by a trained interpreter with a wealth of background knowledge about the period being depicted.

Pitfalls of character interpretation include the temptation to comment on the 20th century appearance of the visitor, the compulsion to explain the presence of the visitor in the most unlikely ways, and the inevitable escape into obvious humour.

During my visit to Williamsburg, members of the African American interpretation programme fell into all these habits, which tend to cheapen the effect of having real people as access points to historical information for visitors.

These escape routes are usually used by interpreters or re-enactors who lack the confidence to exploit research to entertain visitors. Perception of the visitor's area and depth of interest is an important skill, which needs to be developed.

An interesting feature of the training scheme at Williamsburg is that everyone who works there is expected to attend classes on the 18th century as part of their working week. When they have covered what is called the core curriculum, their attendance drops but rewards for long or particularly good service are made in the form of study time. "The core curriculum also includes training for customer care," said Barbara Beaman, head of training, "we expect every interpreter to understand the concept of hospitality and courtsey and be attentive to each visitor's needs."

Plimoth Plantation has a more relaxed view of its training programme. John Kemp, head of interpretation, said he felt that interpreters needed humility - "its an interesting parallel with Calvinism" - to research a character and then develop it from an experimental point of view. He was concerned to develop people's attitudes by, for example, spending time exploring the repercussions of religion on personal interaction.

At Old Sturbridge Village, the director John O Curtis was concerned not to employ people who had strong views about history as interpreters: "Sometimes it takes too much effort to make them 'unlearn' information and they tend to have their own ideas about critical facts." The interpreters join "affinity groups" to research particular areas of interest under the supervision of one of the museum curators.

*In the Governor's Palace Garden, Williamsburg.*

My discussion of the need for such supervision of amateur re-enactment in the UK struck a few chords at the conference. I introduced the subject by using stills from films such as *Excalibur* and *Highlander* as examples of the image of historical personas many re-enactors would like to adopt.

People make powerful interpretive tools but tend to bring them what Brown identified as "emotional baggage". There was a general consensus that museum curators needed to direct amateur organisations to help them improve their characterisations.

Old Sturbridge Village is another site I visited - there, staff have attempted to take a local volunteer group in hand, asking them to appear at special events: "We have a contract with them that sets out their willingness to be vetted by museum staff," said Kent McCallum, head of interpretation.

Baker commented on a production by Opera Americana in which the company used a backdrop of a Hogarth engraving without people in it. Wallis added "The empty frame shows you the importance of people - and you are the people who are filling in that picture - in your fairs, farmsteads, museums and living history sites".

This view of live interpretation offering a personal response to visitors' needs has an interesting parallel in the vogue for interactive video in museums. This method of interpretation also gives the visitor direct contact with history via technology, which necessarily has its limitations. A live interpreter is only limited by his or her research base and a lack of training in effective communication skills.

Plimoth Plantation is keen to foster a view of their interpreters as museum professionals. Their training focuses on the development of practical strategies to deal with the problems of being a first-person interpreter: "One area we are looking at is the ways in which visitors can be encouraged to open conversations with the pilgrims they encounter," said Ken Yellis, director of public programs.

All the sites I visited and all the museums professionals with whom I spoke at the symposium were convinced of the need for a secure and constantly growing research base with a training programme that develops communication skills.

The Ohio symposium went a long way to opening up these two issues, not only to museum professionals but to re-enactors. Floyd Barmann, director of the Clark County Historical Society, said he was pleased with the willingness of delegates to consider ways of improving living histories and hoped the discussions would further the causes of research and interpretive technique.

"I believe the time is now right for a critique of the living history movement", said Barmann, "we need to move beyond Jay Anderson's self-congratulatory approach and look at ways of improving it as an interpretive technique."

"We hope to run a third symposium next year," said Barmann "and to run a residential course on the techniques of role play in the spring, if there is enough interest from the museums world."

The conference was particularly stimulating for me because the discussion did not centre on why live interpreters are not a good idea, usually by citing examples of bad practice. It was a forum for improvement, using examples of good practice and focusing on how badly managed projects could be brought up to standard.

In conclusion, I will touch on an aspect of live interpretation which is constantly argued in this country: the difference in attitude of American and British visitors. There is no difference - British visitors are just as ready to talk to live interpreters. It is simply the fact that American museums are so far ahead of us in their use of this interpretive technique that Americans are astonished to discover we do not have interpreters in our historic sites.

Everyone fights shy of unfamiliar things, especially if they are sensitively and badly managed. The sooner we recognise that people are an effective form of interpretation when used properly, the sooner British visitors will expect and understand them.

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# FACE TO FACE, PERSON TO PERSON.

## MICHAEL H. GLEN

*Touchstone Associates.*

My previous visit to the States had taken in, inevitably, Williamsburg, Gettysburg and Harper's Ferry, as well as several other historic sites. I had been suitably impressed and also somewhat disappointed. It wasn't all as wonderful as we'd been told. But the people were great.

This time, I concentrated on a chunk of New England and five key locations. There was still some disappointment, but many more good impressions. The places on my list were from a tour operator's primer - Lowell , Boston's Freedom Trail, Mystic Seaport, Old Sturbridge Village and Plimoth Plantation.

**Going through the Mill**

I arrived in Lowell an hour and a half after landing and wondered for a moment if I had flown the Atlantic. First sight of the former mills harked back to their progenitors, the mills of the Pennine towns. Any doubts were quickly dispelled, however, by a plethora of confusing traffic signs, complete lack of useful signposting and an even greater air of neglect than the worst of the north of England.

The regeneration of 19th century industrial Lowell, one of Governor Dukakis' favoured projects, follows many of the same paths which are familiar here: the re-use of restored factories (largely for housing and small businesses), slow improvements to the overall environment (an uphill struggle - small town America displays depressingly few symbols of community wealth) and investment in an intepretive centre to tell the new visitors what it's all about. There was also an impressive program of interpretive events and exhibits elsewhere.

The key, as ever, is public funding through a variety of mechanisms - with some odd results. A National Parks ranger's car seemed a little incongruous parked outside a *real*, old F W Woolworth and other run down stores. But historic Lowell is now a Historical - and Heritage State -Park. (Beware Hebden Bridge!)

The visitor centre, almost lost in a huge, and well restored, former mill complex, showed the same signs of age that date older centres here - fussy little photographs, enormous chunks of 'official' text and rather half-hearted attempts to incorporate three-dimensional objects. Cut-outs of people and places were more effective.

However, the staff were eager to help at 4.30pm on a Thursday afternoon in October, and the other visitor got the same VIP treatment. Even in matey Massachusetts, we spread ourselves out a little awkwardly in the large AV theatre.

The programme *did* explain how and why Lowell had been established, how it had flourished, how the workforce lived, how the town had nearly died. What it couldn't explain was how it was ever to be fully revived. Eight out of ten for effort.

**Pushing the boat out**

The contrast with Mystic Seaport was considerable, although the two communities had their heydays about the same time. Here in Connecticut, against a background of Indian Summer colours, lay a waterside 'experience'. This was past history, not continuing history, but there were valiant efforts to make it *living* history.

(As an aside, visitors were cajoled to visit Mystic Village on the way to the port - it was totally ersatz, full of rip offs, a kind of huge souvenir and candy stall spread about a fabricated community. One admires the cheek - and the coffee was good!)

Mystic was not a major whaling port like New Bradford, but it traded widely, and built ships and repaired them. The repair shop was one of the key shops, for here real work on real boats was in progress.

Sadly, though, the chandlers didn't look as if anyone bought or sold anything (it was *too* tidy), the ropemaking shed needed ropemaking to bring it alive, and reconstructed houses and taverns looked just that, with no reconstructed life in them. Some of the explanations showed signs of boredom after a long season. It was October after all, but busy October because of fine weather.

However, and it's a big however, the sea shanties sung in the little bandstand were delightful to hear. Added interest came from seeing the singer a moment later, scrambling aloft among the shrouds of the *Joseph Conrad* to give a sail furling demonstration.

His fellow interpreter (for that's what they were, folks) showed similar agility although she had just finished an energetic half-hour presentation, from a whaling boat, of how to harpoon and secure your whale. They were just as enthusiastic in conversation.

The fresh apple cider from a nearby farm - sold with big home-baked cookies from a simple stall - was good enough to cause a detour for second helpings; the children's playroom, with its Victorian playthings, was fun to watch (real children, real toys).

But the truncated tour of a whaling ship, awash with *no entries* and *staff only*, was

less satisfying. The visitor centre was an attractive building, but apart from a model of the port, it was principally there to take your $12.50. Seven out of ten, overall, with top marks for books on sale in the impressive shop.

**Set my feet free**

I'd walked much of Boston's Freedom Trail before, just after the Bicentenary, when it was a fresh idea and the red line was fresh on the sidewalks. This time I did almost the whole length. (Because of the heat - 75 degrees - I chickened out of Bunker Hill).

It was a mistake to retrace steps; what had seemed exciting and imaginative now looked a little passé; Quincy Market, which seemed a masterly rescue and renovation job in 1977, was now just a heaving mass of tourists scrabbling for junk food and junk. Much of the area the trail follows is either modern, soulless building or run-down urban underprivileged.

I can't say it wasn't interesting, but I would rather have spent Saturday exploring the back roads of New England. The churches with their laboured notices detailing past events at least made an attempt to tell people something; the trail leaflet necessarily concentrated on key locations and only the occasional panel or plaque drew attention to important places or happenings - and not very effectively.

The fish market was fascinating; selling fish I'd never heard of at prices never heard of here, but it 'wasn't' on the Freedom Trail. The Italian quarter was alive with old folks chatting, but it 'wasn't' on the Freedom Trail.

The old navy yard of Charlestown was, if you could make it across the river and along the disused rail line. One big sailing warship and an old destroyer, plus some mediocre displays - and acres of quayside - were hardly a Portsmouth. While we could certainly pass on a few hints from this side of the pond, comparisons can be invidious when management and funding circumstances are very different.

One almost highlight was 'live' interpretation at Paul Revere's house - a suspiciously un-original timber dwelling. Here a couple of keen volunteers in soldiers' clothes (deliberately not a true uniform) were explaining (free with admission ticket) how citizens two hundred years ago defended themselves against assorted French, British and natives. It was akin to our Sealed Knotters, and brought a little colour into an otherwise rather monochrome trail.

Less drab was the Black Freedom Trail which followed a route (I think, because they ran out of signposts) through the charming 18th century Beacon Hill behind the State Capitol. Here the early stirrings of emancipation and equality of opportunity got an airing, then very unfashionably.

The trouble was, it all looked so normal and undramatic today, it was hard to conjure up a picture of old Boston's equivalent of liberation theology - particularly as the houses and studio flats cost today what was then a country's ransom.

It was fun doing one's own interpretation but I should have sought out some local help. There is, of course, a lot more to Boston, but a generous six out of ten for what I saw of their interpretive effort.

**Far from the madding crowd**

It was with a heaving, if not heavy heart, that I drove to Old Sturbridge Village to see if it could conjure up some faith, never mind restore it. I'd tried to see half of Massachusetts first that Sunday, so I arrived mid-afternoon - on the first day the clocks changed. It *is* possible to chase round the site in two hours, if you're wearing trainers (confusingly called tennis shoes in the States), and still talk to half a dozen interpreters - albeit by candlelight at the end.

It's a big village, spread out more to cope with the enormous crowds the place attracts (they were all there that day) than to replicate a real 1830s community. Although it is a fabrication, it does convey a feel of slower, but more leisured, times. It was reminiscent of the Ulster Folk Park but had more cohesion and much more interpretation content. It was also much more fun.

I was impressed by the quality of the staff: there is no attempt to role-play, although all interpreters were in period costume. This seems a happy compromise at this site and certainly appealed to those staff I asked -they would have been uneasy 'doing a Plimoth' (which see below). I was also impressed by the quality of the workmanship of those whose job it was to make things, whether barrels or baskets, candles or cookies.

*The story of Lowell is fascinating - but not always easy to discern.*

*There's a high degree of activity at Old Sturbridge Village - and good practical interpretation.*

Those involved with the farm *were* farmers - they understood the land, the seasons and the natural order. This they communicated without any sense of self-satisfication, just simple satisfaction at doing a job that pleased them and the people who came to see. The souvenirs and bookstore were excellent (as well as very ordinary). Despite the rush round, or maybe because of it, I'd go for a nine minus.

**First person singular**

Appetite whetted, I headed for Plimoth the next day. This was to be the highlight, I'd been told. A friend had kindly arranged for me to meet the director, so it had to be good! Well, it was - with one exception which threw such interesting light on cultural attitudes that it made up for itself, so to speak.

The vast new visitor centre had opened in 1987 for business - it had swallowed up much of a recent $10m appeal for funds. The architecture itself was worth going to see, for it consciously, but subtly, echoed characteristics of early periods without in any way becoming either a parody or a pastiche. Eleven out of ten before I even went in.

Staff were most welcoming, suggesting I moved smartly into one of the two AV theatres before the hordes of fourth-graders took over. They turned out to be charming too, and moderately well behaved. Whether they made much of a fairly heavyweight 'scenesetting' audio-visual is another question. It didn't quite put the whole site in context and particularly the relationships between Pilgrim and Indian which I refer to later.

Plimoth Plantation **is** 1627. It makes a valiant and as far as possible successful attempt to replicate one of the earliest of the Pilgrims' communities. Like most visitors, I didn't know just how accurate it all is; but it is pretty convincing. It is also compact, at least as far as the palisaded hamlet is concerned.

From the meeting house-cum-fort (or was it vice-versa?), you can take it all in, catch a glimpse of a few goats grazing close to houses, see thatchers at work, watch plantationers meet in the street. Yes, it's a bit like a film set, but at least the houses have side and back walls, and stairs and kitchens and box beds.

As I was ahead of the crowd at least in the first house, I was able to enjoy a long conversation with its occupants whose 17th century English was acceptably different. Many of the others' accents had an Irish lilt which was a little distracting.

I found myself falling into the same sort of measured conversation, almost like trying to speak another language. I thought it was deliberate on my part, but was it totally so? No matter, it added an edge to our dialogue and got my disbelief well and truly suspended.

The Plantation had an air of solidity and quality about it, reflecting the beliefs and endeavours of the original. The interpretive staff are clearly extremely well trained, so much so that the Governor's long political and social explanations began to sound only too real; he lived the part - and loved the part.

The same seemed true of many others, but whether the average visitor drew as much from the experience as I did, I would have to question. Certainly some did, but others seemed glazed, uncomprehending.

**Cultural divides but no dividends**

Children, too, tended to rush about and not listen for long (so what makes them different from any others?). Many had obviously been primed to think themselves into the 17th century and to play their own parts. One interpreter, explaining breadmaking, was asked by her young visitors where she came from.

"Norwich", she said, and asked where they had sailed from. A black kid thrust his hand up quickly. "Scotland", he exclaimed. (Well, nearly right!) Another boy volunteered rather breathlessly, "England, Ireland and Wales". (Closer!)

*There's no better way of learning the ropes at Mystic Seaport than getting roped in.*

*A Park Ranger on duty in Copp's Hill Burial Ground on the Boston Freedom Trail.*

*Parts of Plimouth Plantation really do have a village feel - particularly when free of visitors!*

*The Governor of Plimouth Plantation and his wife take time for their midday 'breakfast'.*

And then a small voice under a skull cap answered her question with no equivocation, no hesitation - and no imagination. "Israel, Miss". This interaction of cultures was a powerful and poignant one which I shall leave others to analyse.

I am still thinking about its ramifications and implications. Curiously, it led straight to the other clash of cultures which was the only real down side of the Plimoth visit.

After leaving the stockade, visitors returned to the visitor centre by way of a Native American settlement. Here there was a tepee and a wigwam, a canoe and a cooking fire. Here also were two rather uncomfortable, and discomforting, young native Americans (from a Canadian reservation, it transpired).

They were not role-playing in the Plantation sense, and yet for many visitors they were. They were not interpreting but explaining, and that with some difficulty, for they were trying to convey a culture rather than a way of life. I felt intrusive, almost voyeuristic, and sensed the distaste of those who were an object of derision (yes, still) as much as of history. It was a disappointment.

However, an elderly part-Indian lady helped to put this in context while demonstrating cooking. From her I learned much more about the Indian approach to the white man's life - and their own - because she could see both in and out of the culture.

I shared my unease with David Case, the Director who very candidly described the difficulties they had encountered in presenting the whole concept of the Indian settlement and why they relied on site rangers to do much of the interpretation.

Native Americans employed on site (particularly those brought up on reservations) could not attune to the five-day week; they were 'unreliable' in that sense, although this was said with understanding, not criticism. Nevertheless, it didn't make management easy and new solutions were still being sought.

Overall, I enjoyed the visit so much that it had been nearly four hours before I finally got back to the visitor centre for my conversation with David Case. The reception staff asked me where I had been - almost as an accusation!

Certainly, of all the attractions I visited, I am most likely to return to Plimoth Planatation. Setting the Native American bit apart, I could almost stretch to a straight ten out of ten for all-round enjoyment and quality of presentation.

# TOURIST GEOLOGY


## HUGH PRUDDEN

*Retired Teacher.*


Rocks and landforms have been a component of popular tourism for several centuries. One can think of Cheddar Gorge, the caves of southern France, Vesuvius, Swiss glaciers and the Giants' Causeway in County Antrim. Many popular guide books for tourism still emphasise historical, architectural and literary features and tend to neglect geological aspects of the areas that they serve. However, the tourist industry is expanding its horizons and visitors are increasingly drawn to nature trails, industrial sites, theme parks, bird reserves and so forth. The purpose of this paper is to suggest ways in which Tourist Geology might be developed for the benefit of both individuals and geology itself.

The nature of Tourist Geology can be illustrated by picturing a couple who are enjoying the relaxed atmosphere and open landscapes in north-east Scotland, visiting some of the splendid nature reserves and National Trust properties. One is interested in birds and flowers but the other has an interest in geology as a result of attending several extra-mural courses. In the Tourist Office they discover **Arbroath Nature Trail** published by The Scottish Wildlife Trust. Happily the rocks and landforms are described clearly and simply alongside the wildlife; for example, the introduction enables them to distinguish the unconformity separating the Lower and Upper Old Red Sandstone. At Carlingheugh Bay they descend to the raised beach and behold one of the great sights of north-east Scotland, namely the Old Red Sandstone conglomerates. Whilst one of them happily collects the tide-washed pebbles, the other tries to identify the varied rock types in the conglomerates and studies the way in which the beds are arranged in layers so as to try to get some idea of the conditions under which the rocks were originally deposited.

After they return home they dip into a library copy of **A Dynamic Stratigraphy of the British Isles**, (Anderton, R., P.H. Bridges, M.R. Leeder, & B.W. Sellwood, 1979, George, Allen & Unwin). The text confirms their interpretation of the sedimentary processes associated with the conglomerates. However, the maps showing reconstruction of the ancient Old Red Sandstone land and sea masses, and the shape and depth of the sedimentary basins, open up new lines of thought: eg what processes could lead to the desposition of a 10km pile of sediments? They also learn that the Old Red Sandstone displays cyclic bedding, fish remains, fossil soils and contemporary lavas. Clearly a return visit must be made to this lovely and underrated part of Britain.

This example highlights some of the problems and delights that await visitors who have a leaning towards geology. The individual tourist may have to adopt an active exploratory and questioning approach especially when there is no guidebook or guide. Then again it is important for the tourist to see the geological highlights of an area remembering that tourists may visit an area for many reasons and not just for the geology. It is important to stress that, whilst Tourist Geology may appear rather casual, there are important gains in the arousal of curiosity and the broadening of experience. It is the study of rocks and landforms primarily for their intrinsic interest rather than to pass examinations or earn a living.

### DEFINITION OF TOURIST GEOLOGY

Tourist Geology may be defined as the casual study of rocks and landforms in unfamiliar places. It is intellectually challenging and worthy of support and it has a lot to offer. It is for both novice and specialist, amateur and professional.

### INTERPRETATION CENTRES AND GEOLOGY

Could interpretation centres do more for the touring geologist? The writer would like to see more introductory displays drawing attention to some of the local geological highlights which the visitor might actually visit. It would then be useful to arrange a reference collection of maps and diagrams together with rock, mineral and fossil specimens which visitors could consult *after* they have explored the locality when interest and curiosity have been aroused.

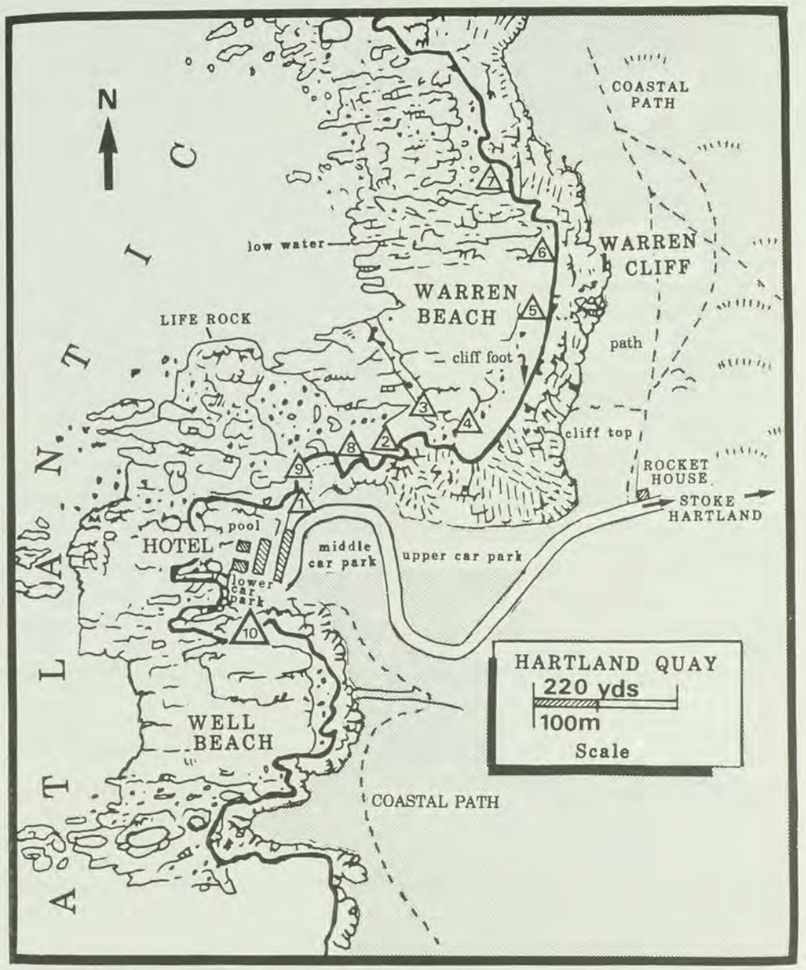
We see the landscape of the past and their associated geological events through the evidence of present-day rocks, fossils and geological structures. The problem for interpretation centres is surely how to help visitors to read the geological clues so that they can make their own mental reconstructions and interpretations. For



this reason the writer questions the value of many pictorial reconstructions for example, life in the Jurassic seas or Britain under an ice sheet, unless some of the associated evidence used for the reconstruction is provided. One plesiosaur vertebra is worth a whole diorama. The excitment comes from active participation rather than the passive reception of facts and generalisations. In the same way reconstructions of the extent of former continents and oceans without the evidence, or explanation of their significance, are just dull facts and boring.

One key resource for centres is the local building stone which is sometimes the only easily accessible rock that can be studied. It should be possible to put hand-sized examples on display so that visitors can handle them. Perhaps even better would be the provision of a few trays with free samples of local types so as to encourage people to make their own collections and remove some of the collecting pressure from fossils and minerals.

'Hands-on' exhibitions are increasingly popular and are similar to developments in the teaching of science in schools; curators arranging displays might well look for ideas in recent textbooks and especially in **Teaching Earth Sciences,** the Journal of the Earth Science Teachers' Association.




*Extract from Thematic Trails booklet (by permission.)*

### PUBLICATIONS

There is a great range of publications at national and local scales. Useful preparatory reading can be found in the **British Regional Geology** series from H.M.S.O. Rather more readable is the **Geology and Scenery** series issued by Penguin Books. These publications are useful background reading both before and after visits in the field but one really needs to look at rocks at close quarters in order to provide a sound foundation for appreciating the broad statements found in general texts. This is yet another illustration of the importance of proceeding from the concrete to the abstract and from the particular to the general. However these local publications are not always easy to track down and can be expensive when visiting a number of places. There is an urgent need for a comprehensive list of such local publications.

To what extent do field guides, museums and interpretation centres have a duty to initiate the complete novice in elementary geology and how should they do it? The question arises because attempts to induct beginners can give rise to a lot of insipid, and often condescending, general comment which is just as likely to deter as inform. A classic example is the folder issued by Lothian Regional Council Department of Planning on the physical landscape of the Pentland Hills which has a long preamble devoted to the kind of general information available in elementary textbooks. Surely the guide should start with the local ground features and places in Lothian and show how they illustrate, for example, the effects of Pleistocene ice sheets. Surely the function of a field guide is to illuminate named localities wherein the novice can learn from the specimens, features and landscapes found at those localities. If necessary visitors can be to arrive in a locality and not yet know where to go to spend an hour or two scrambling over some referred to general introductory texts. This is an important issue because there is a danger of endless repetition if each interpretation centre feels that it must set out the basics before allowing the visitor near any local rocks and landforms.

One gathers that there is a growing trend for tourists to arrange their own special interest touring holidays as opposed to the mass-marketed type of holiday. However it it is a common experience for the touring geologist rocks. This points to the need for some kind of **Good Rock Guide** on the lines of the more familiar **Good Food Guide** and similar publications. An example from Somerset of the kind of entry is given below.

HAM HILL Stoke-Sub-Hamdon 6km west of Yeovil (ST 4717) . Parking signposted. Extensive hill-top Country Park, with open access at all times, where the Ham Hill Stone has been quarried since Roman times. Although the old quarry workings have been largely grassed over, there are good exposures showing trough cross-bedded and planar-bedded bioclastic limestones (Upper Toarcian). En echelon tension fractures with calcite crystals are associated with shear fractures showing mainly horizontal slickensides resulting from compressive (Tertiary?) earth movements. Extensive gulling and tufaceous deposits. A popular locality with walks and views. Pub. Toilets. Half-day.

Montacute House and

Gardens (National Trust ST499172) are nearby and built of Ham Hill Stone; well worth a visit. A hollow lane leading down to Montacute shows a good section in the Yeovil Sands.

Refs. Yeovil District Council, n.d. **Ham Hill.**
Wilson, V., F.B.A. Welch, J.A. Robbie, G.W. Green. **Geology of the country around Bridport and Yeovil.** Mem. Geol. Surv. G.B.

Entries must be concise and yet try to give some flavour of each place. The guide lines for selecting entries for this kind of directory are quite simple: sites should be of general interest, accessible in every sense, and not likely to lead to valuable geological exposures being damaged. Of necessity such a list must be highly selective and it should not attempt to represent every rock formation in the area. It should simply suggest where visitors can enjoy an hour or two with some interesting rocks and landforms. If there are other attractions in the area then so much the better. The writer finds it sad to reflect that, whilst there are national guides to pubs, wild life reserves, archaeological sites, buildings and many more besides, there is no similar national guide for geology. Such a guide would not compete with the many existing detailed field guides. Entries would cover a wider area bit in less detail; it would instead complement and advertise the local publications.

The compilation of such a national guide must rely on the knowledge of local geologists. They are more likely to know not only the most suitable localities in their area but whether or not a pit has been filled with rubbish or visitors are unwelcome.

Tourist Geology has an important role to play in the field of tourism: it can provide intellectual puzzles as well as spectacular views. There is also the romance of, for example, exploring in Britain rocks deposited in deserts or under ice sheets or seas long before Homo sapiens had evolved, as well as enlarging intellectual horizons. As a result of television, the development of geology in schools, and adult education, there are now more people with a knowledge of, and interest in, the subject. Tourist Geology can perhaps reach many of those people who have not benefited, for one reason or another, from their years of more formal education.

A useful catalogue of geological publications including field guides is issued by Geo-Supplies, 16 Chapeltown, Sheffield, S30 4XH.
Tel. (0742) 455746.

# CHEZ "LES POMMES" - THE FRENCH EYE VIEW

**MARIANNE CARR**

*Environmental Scientist.*

October 1989: a telephone call from the Regional offices of the French Ministry of the Environment at Montpellier, and I found myself organising a study tour for the G.R.A.I.N.E. *(Groupe Regionale d'Animation et d'Initiation Nature-Environnement-)* a network of environmental professionals working on matters various to do with environmental training and initiation of the public in my adopted habitat: the Languedoc-Roussillon.

The Theme - "U.K. Environmental (natural) interpretation in practice".

The end of April: the English connection, and, oh! how she performed, my mother land! : sunshine joyfully dispelled the first cultural mis-interpretation common in those from the south, as did the regional culinary arts which greatly relieved those who see England as a gastronomic desert of soggy chips and mint jelly.

Then came work.

For eight days we examined the British and the technical minutae of how Anglo-Saxons present the natural and rural heritage : Council of Europe prize Heritage Coast, the New Forest, open air museums of maritime and rural architecture, gardens and the Broads and Peak National Parks were on the menu; meetings with private and public organizations, experts-all, involved in countryside protection and interpretation. A mini-seminar from the Centre of Environmental Interpretation closed the official working atmosphere, and the crescendo effect of half-a-day's fun at Ironbridge World Heritage Site whetted appetites for a voyage linked to the environment ("cultural")..... next time!

As various interesting articles on France and Interpretation (Issue No. 44, Spring 1990) have shown ..... the "new" heritagization industry is just being discovered, whilst, in fact, it has been in practice for years.

However, in the South of France and the Mediterranean regions in general, the natural environment has been a poor cousin to the realms of architectural or historical *patrimoine.* Today, with a fast-growing awareness of the need to preserve, the rapid growth of environmental educational activities, and the potential of "green or nature tourism", there comes the glimmer of a realisation (economic pragatism is a French trait) that "interpretation" is serious business.

For many participants, the U.K. trip was not only an opportunity to see for themselves the methods used in the field of environmental interpretation, but also provided an initiation into British culture and attitudes - which will help to bring a European dimension to their work and promote further interaction between the two countries.

We should welcome an exchange visit on the theme of natural-rural interpretation, or any other specialised environmental topic. If sufficient interest is shown amongst those we visited and other persons, we plan a reciprocal study tour for Spring/early Summer 1991 and will begin to seek funding assistance. If any readers are interested, in principle, in participating, or have any queries the writer would like to hear from them.

*Marianne Carr is a Consulting Environmetal Scientist and runs a Research & Advisory Service. She specialises in Coastal & Countryside Evaluation and Management for Conservation, Green Tourism and related interpretive projects. She can be contacted at: Le Village, 66730 Pezilla-de-Conflent, Pyrenees Orientales, France. Tel.: France (010-33) 68.97.71.41. Fax 010 33 68.59.02.64*



# CHAIRMAN'S CHATTER

By the time you receive the next issue of **Heritage Interpretation** the Committee will have chosen a new 'trading name' for the Society. This will have been after extensive consultation with the membership. Murphy's Law dictates that you are the one person we did not consult. If this is the case, please accept my apologies. We could not write to everyone because of the limited time available. It was decided at the AGM to consult those who have played an active role in the Society's affairs over the years - attending meetings, standing for the Committee, writing papers - plus a random sample of members drawn from the membership list.

Choosing a new name for the Society by this method has all the makings of the camels and committee problem. Nevertheless, on the basis of members' comments the Committee will choose a new name. It will not be perfect. It will not be liked by everyone. It will, however, be shorter and direct.

The decision to change the name by which the Society is known is a difficult one. But it is seen as an essential part of the re-launch of the Society which will take place at the end of the year. Membership currently stands at about 450. Given the growing interest in interpretation and the number of people in the public, private and voluntary sectors for whom it is a major or minor part of their work, this figure is a poor reflection of that interest. If the Society is to achieve its objectives of promoting the practice of interpretation and raising the standards then an expanding membership across the broad spectrum of the environmental, recreational and tourism field is essential.

The re-launch of the Society is not just about changing the image. It is about changing and improving the service we provide for the membership. For example, it is hoped to produce a bi-monthly newsletter listing jobs, events, conferences and other news and information. We intend to establish a regional network of support and special interest groups. We have already started a programme of practical workshops on techniques and approaches in interpretation in connection with the Gateway Interpret Britain Awards Scheme and sponsored by Gateway Foods plc.

We do want your ideas as to how your Society can provide you with better facilities, services and professional support. Do write to me with your ideas.

*David Uzzell. Chairman, SIBH.*

# FROM THE DIRECTOR

**Permanent Offices Proving Their Worth**

The SIBH offices have been established in the former Crossley Carpet Mills in Halifax, as reported in "Heritage Interpretation" No 44. Developments have been swifter than expected with a number of Society activities being supported by the unique range of services available in the huge complex.

Housed in what was once the training department of Crossley Carpets, the offices are easy to find, tucked into a building close by the main gate. There are two hundred firms in the sixteen major buildings making up Dean Clough, so some can be more difficult to locate than others. All of the back numbers of "Heritage Interpretation" are now stocked here, and a contents list is being produced for members wanting particular information. A small stock of the "Proceedings of the Second World Congress" is also held at the old price of £29.50p.

Members may notice that envelopes addressed to them look different at the moment because a tempoary computer list is being used. An Amstrad PC1640 is handling most outgoing material. It is ideally equipped for correspondence and mailing with its 30-megabyte hard disk. But the membership records so diligently kept by Andrew Jenkinson were not immediately fully operational in Halifax because other systems were being set running first. By the time you read this, the membership database will be completely up and running, ready also to support the promotional campaign this autumn.

Much of the mailing for the Gateway Awards scheme this year was done through the offices, with a wider circulation to journalists and to more visitor attractions. Additionally, the first Gateway Workshop leaflets were designed at Dean Clough and mailed out from there, the whole sequence taking only a few days from sight of first copy.

A new member of staff is dealing with phone calls and correspondence, and other matters. Lydwine Causton is on a business course with Share Training which is based in the former carpet mills. She will be on placement with us till the new year. Lydwine came to Britain from the Seychelles with her Halifax-born husband Jack seven years ago. Lydwine has several years' experience of business but decided to retrain in the mysteries of word-processors, databases and the like.

Setting up at Dean Clough has been made easier through the support of Ernest Hall who bought the mills when Crossleys closed in 1982. Besides the commercial activities there is a modern art gallery, the IOU theatre, an artist and a sculptor, and the Design Dimension Project working with schools and education authorities. An Enterprise Campus links private and public bodies in training schemes. Jazz and classical music concerts have been given regularly and earlier this year Channel 4 screened a 90-minute feature film made by a company at Dean Clough. All of the more commercially-oriented design and production services are available to the training courses and arts groups.

The SIBH Committee met at the Society's offices for its May meeting and talked to Ernest Hall. To me, two strong ideas came out of the discussions. The first was that an arts-and-the-community meeting should be held at Dean Clough soon as part of our events programme. The second was the realisation of just how great the role of interpretation is in economic regeneration as well as the environmental movement, the arts and tourism, and that being in a place like Dean Clough puts the Society squarely in the midst of activity in all those areas.

*Alan Machin*



# PUBLICATIONS

**A People's Charter; Forty Years of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, by J. Blunsden and N. Curry, London: HMSO.**

On the 10th May, 1990, five Law Lords affirmed the right of the public to wander over common land in a significant test-case (Hampshire CC v. Milburn) in which Sir Anthony Milburn tried to deregister 200 acres of common land on his estate. Since 1978, 60 common lands have been de-registered in England and Wales.

The right to wander on common land and over fells has long been an issue amongst walkers, and events such as the mass trespass on Kinder Scout have entered the mythology of English mass civil disobedience. Blunsden and Curry's book **A People's Charter** documents the forty year record of the 'National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act, 1949'. Of course, the principle of access to the countryside and the concept of 'National Parks' goes back to the 19th century, and the conflict it engenders extends to the present day. Blunsden and Curry chronicle this history in a workmanlike book which unfortunately one feels is always searching for inspiration and a bit of flair: it reads

like an 'official history'. It is repetitive in places and one senses that Blunsden and Curry wrote separate chapters but then failed to check what the other had written. The authors are at their safest when discussing the descriptive chronology of the historical-political process. They are less successful in analysing the polictical processs themselves and explaining why certain events and their consequences occurred. For example, although the authors discuss the selection of the National Parks (recommended in Dower, and subsequently modified by the Hobhouse Committee), they give no information as to the reason for the choice, as if the choice was self evident.

A wider perspective than the ethnocentric one provided here would have added not only interest but also insight. Although reference is made to the rise of National Parks in the United States, the National Park movement is a worldwide one, and indeed Britain (and France) established parks and reserves in Africa long before they were established in Britain. They may have different objectives in part, they also had features which overlapped: it would be interesting to see where the two come together and divide, and what elements of the colonial model informed (if at all) the British concept.

Indeed the book could have benefited from a greater input of political sociology or even geographical analysis, despite the authors stating the obvious: 'the history of access to the countryside ... is not simply a chronology of reconciling supply with demand. It is essentially a political issue in a social and cultural (and often class) context.'

There have been a number of books published in recent years on this theme, not least of which by Blunsden and Curry. I'm not sure there is one I would recommend - but perhaps that hasn't been written yet.

*David Uzzell*

**HERITAGE WALKING TRAILS by Roger Lambert and John Cann.** 12 circular walks per book. Four books now cover the Canterbury and East Kent area. £2.95 each Compass Publications, 191 Field Avenue, Canterbury, Kent CT1 1TS.

## DIARY DATES

**SEPTEMBER 18th-20th**
Young People, Adventure and the Countryside. University of East Anglia, Norwich. Countryside Recreation Research Advisory Group conference aiming to explore fresh ideas and experiences with delegates from a diversity of backgrounds on how a balance can be achieved between increasing opportunities and enhancing the enjoyment of young people outdoors while ensuring that the environment is able to cope. Details: Hilary Talbot 0272 741117 ext 265 or 268.

**OCTOBER 1st-19th**
Analysing Historic Buildings and Landscapes. Ironbridge. A course which provides practical skills in studying and conserving the structures and landscapes of the industrial period. Most of the teaching takes place in the field, though there are also formal sessions covering the use of historical sources and historic buildings legislation.

Ironbridge
Directors: Kate Clark, Dr Michael Stratton and Dr Barrie Trinder
Price: £750

**NOVEMBER 22nd-23rd**
A New Head of Steam: Industrial History in the Museum. Scottish Museums Council Annual Conference, Glasgow. Contact: Scottish Museums Council, 20-22 Torphicen Street, Edinburgh EH3 8JB.

**NOVEMBER 29th**
Old Farm Buildings in the Countryside. Conservation and Conversion. LONDON.
Contact: Historic Farm Buildings Group at University of Reading 0734 318660

**DECEMBER 6th**
Design and Layout of Printed Material. Edinburgh. Contact as above Nov. 22nd.

**JANUARY 31st 1991**
Warding or Welcoming? A new look at the Human Face of Museums. Glasgow. Contact - As above Nov. 22nd

**NOVEMBER 4th-8th 1991.**
Joining Hands for Quality Tourism. The third Global Congress of Heritage Interpretation International in Hawaii. Call for papers. Contact Ian Parkin (0203) 417525

**GATEWAY INTERPRETATION WORKSHOPS**
As part of their support to the Interpret Britain Awards, Gateway Foodmarkets Ltd are sponsoring a series of six workshops. The aim is to provide practical sessions related to a range of interpretive techniques which would be of value to both professionals in the field and voluntary organisations.

To encourage attendance by representatives of amenity societies etc. Gateway are providing subsided places for bona fide voluntary organisations.

A very successful first workshop was held at the University of Warwick on 10 July on the subject of 'Presenting your Small Town or Village'. The rest of the programme is as follows:

**12th September** Losehill Hall, Castleton. Interpretation, Music and the Performing Arts.

**12th October** Pendle Heritage Centre. Low Cost Publications.

**10th November** St Mary's College, Strawberry Hill. Guiding and Customer Care.

**12th January 1991** Gateway Headquarters, Bristol. Making the Most of Your Collections (in your small museum or heritage centre).

**1st February** North Tyneside. Interpretation of Change (exploring the links between environmental education and interpretation by looking at the process of change in urban and semi-urban environments)

If you would like further information please contact Alan Machin.



## IN THE NEWS

**GLASS MUSEUM**
AN UNUSUAL attraction planned for the Bristol Heritage Wharf development is a national centre for the display and manufacture of glass, the first of its kind in Europe.

A major museum of glass featuring loaned displays from The Corning Museum of glass in the USA will be part of the attraction. Exhibits will be on loan from the British Musuem, with the rest coming from private collections. A viewing gallery will enable visitors to watch glass blowing and there will be a retail area offering a showcase for UK glass manufacturers.



The company behind the £13.78m project to develop Bristol Heritage Wharf is The Heritage Group, which has leased the 2.5 acre site in the Bristol docks from the local authority. The site, which is currently derelict, includes three acres of caves which will house an exhibition on the history of the city. There will also be an audio-visual experience which tells the history of Bristol from the year 600AD.

Another attraction on the wharfside will be a replica of a three masted square rigger, built in Bristol in 1808. The ship will be built to the original plans and will provide a permanent attraction containing an exhibition of life on board.

The Heritage Group expects to attract 2,000 people a day to the wharf which will be completed by spring 1992.
Details: 01-706 1051/2.

**A DAY AT THE WELLS**
A £1.1m heritage attraction designed by Heritage Projects of York opened in Tunbridge Wells, Kent on May 26. The centre portrays a typical high society day in town, in 1740.

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council put forward the idea five years ago and the Day at the Wells is the most expensive design and build project that Heritage Projects has created for a local authority so far.

Visitors to the Corn Exchange will be able to walk through tableaux depicting scenes from 1740 which include authentic exhibits. The one hour visit includes a commentary on personal stereo headphones. The tour is hosted by Beau Nash, a notorious 18th Century dandy, and ends with a candle-lit ballroom scene.

**CATALYST PART TWO**
CATALYST, the Museum of the Chemical Industry, is planning a second phase following its opening in June this year. The £5.3m development occupies a listed building in Widnes, Cheshire, the heart of Britain's 150-year-old chemical industry, and shows the history of chemical production in the north-west and the industry's impact on people's everyday lives.

Work will begin next year on creating an exhibition area, an education and resource centre, storage space and a library. A new presentation using images, sounds, smells, and other effects will familiarise visitors with the key role of the chemical industry. Other future developments include a new main entrance, a cafe, shop and a conference centre. Details: Janice Langley 051-420 1121.

**TUNNEL VISION**
The Visual Connection has produced two programmes for visitors to the tunnel network under Dover Castle which opened to the public in April. The Dover project is English Heritage's prime initiative this year and is launched to coincide with the 50th anniversary of the evacuation from Dunkirk.

Two underground chambers, converted into viewing theatres, house laserdisc players and video projectors. The first programme explains the development of the tunnels from Napoleonic times to more recent years when they were reserved as a nuclear bunker while the second concentrates on their wartime use as control centre for the Dunkirk operation.

The TVC/English Heritage partnership is also active at Richmond Castle where the production house is responsible for a video/multi-image presentation that will form part of a new visitor centre.

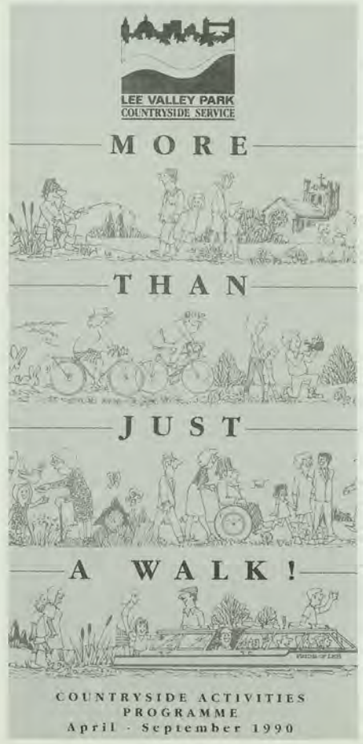
**FARMWORLD**
A THEME park project put forward by an entrepreneurial farmer from Wrexham is being considered by local councillors.

Computer technology will be used to present displays of farming past and present.

The project has been developed over the past 10 years by John Newton Jones, whose inspiration for the £1.5m educational and entertaining visitor attraction comes from what he saw in Disneyworld. Farmworld is expected to attract 70,000 people in its first year.

**CROMWELL'S PLACE**
THE HOUSE in Ely where Cromwell lived in the mid 17th century is being turned into a heritage attraction by East Cambridgeshire District Coucil.

History and Heritage Ltd, part of the Sparks Group, is carrying out the theming. The house, lived in by the Cromwell family for a period from 1636, will include the first themed Tourist Information Centre in the UK.




**BRODSWORTH HALL, YORKSHIRE, ACQUIRED FOR THE NATION**

Brodsworth Hall, the great Victorian country house near Doncaster, whose interiors, contents and garden remain entirely as they were in the 1860's, has been acquired intact by English Heritage on behalf of the nation, with the support of the Secretary of State for the Environment. After extensive repairs to the structure costing some £2.6 million, it will be opened to the public.

For some time a solution has been sought which would keep house and contents together. The former owner, Mrs Pamela Williams, has generously donated the house, stable block and seventeen acres of ground to English Heritage. After negotiations with Christie's, all the historically significant contents, including the garden statues, have been purchased by the National Heritage Museum Fund for £3.36 million, and transferred to English Heritage. Negotiations for the donation of the house and grounds were through Strutt and Parker, on behalf of the owners.

Lord Montagu of Beaulieu, Chairman of English Heritage, said

"We are extremely pleased that this unique house will now be preserved with all its precious contents, and we are indebted to both Mrs Williams and the National Heritage Memorial Fund for making this possible.

Our repair work will be kept to the minimum and the interiors will as far as practical be left intact, so that visitors will eventually experience the authentic atmosphere of a mid-Victoiran country mansion as it was in its heyday."

**A WORLD CLASS AQUARIUM FOR PLYMOUTH?**

The Marine Biological Association, Plymouth City Council and the English Tourist Board have appointed John Brown and Company together with KPMG Peat Marwick to carry out the first phase of a major aquarium in Plymouth.

The study will include a market and financial appraisal, and a review of five possible sites for this world class aquarium.

John Brown says 'Plymouth sits in the heart of the UK's prime domestic holiday area, yet in many ways it has not been considered as a major visitor destination in its own right in the past, relying instead upon its close links with the Royal Navy and the presence of the Devonport dockyards. These links together with its ferry connections to Spain and France, establish very clearly the maritime nature of the city and hence its appropriateness as a site for a major aquarium development.'

As part of Plymouth's Waterfront Strategy, the aquarium will be run as a major sceintific resource as well as a top quality visitor attraction.

## RESTORING THE PACKHORSE TRAILS

Historic packhorse trails across the South Pennines are set to be restored and developed as a major new tourist attraction:

Sue Hogg, a former book editor, of The Barn, Mankinholes, near Todmorden, has been appointed project officer for the scheme, which is currently being part funded by the Rural Development Commission under its Development Programme. The Civic Trust, the Countryside Commission, the Standing Conference of South Pennine Authorities, the Sports Council, UK 2000 and the British Horse Society are also closely involved in providing money and expertise to ensure that the project is an unqualified success.

The trails were the old trade routes which were developed over the course of centuries. The earliest - in the form of ridgeways - originated in Bronze Age times; the salt roads are probably Saxon in origin; others date from the medieval period and were used for carrying coal, lime and iron ore; many more came into being in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries with the growth of the woollen industry. They have survived because they crossed the high ground, while the later forms of communication, the turnpike roads, canals and railways, ran along the valleys.

Many of the trails are in danger of being destroyed simply because people do not appreciate their significance, according to Sue, who has been carrying out research on the routes for a number of years. One of the aims of the new project is to create an awareness of their existence and to turn what is a unique historic feature into a major recreational resource as a contribution to 'green tourism' in Pennine West Yorkshire and Lancashire.

Many of the trails are built of stone in the form of causeways crossing the open moorland. Two of them are currently scheduled as ancient monuments by the Department of the Environment: the Blackstone Edge Long Causeway, which runs from Rochdale to Halifax, and the Wakefield Gate, the old highway from Halifax to Wakefield. However, the rest are not protected and many have deteriorated in recent years due to neglect. Preserved and restored, they will be used as the basis of a regional bridleway network, linking into the Pennine Bridleway, the new national trail currently being researched by the Countryside Commission.

Many of the trails are used today by local walkers and riders who know of their existence. If they are fully restored they can be promoted to attract more people to the South Pennines, which will in turn help to boost the economy of the area with inceased business for shops,restaurants and inns, many of which were first built to serve the packhorse trade.

According to Sue, the South Pennines tends to be overlooked as a tourism centre because it is sandwiched between two National Parks. 'People simply do not know the South Pennines exists or appreciate the full beauty and variety of its landscape. By opening up the packhorse trails, the project is creating an opportunity for people to explore the uplands.

For the time being Sue is making a preliminary survey of the network. In the long term she hopes the project will attract funding from the private sector and voluntary groups to enable work to be carried out on the ground, restoring and maintaining the trails. Already a number of bridleway groups are helping with the research.

*Sue Hogg - Project Officer South Pennine Pack Horse Trails.*

## BRACKNELL FOREST

The £2.4m 'Look Out' heritage centre in Bracknell, Berkshire, is being built by Bracknell Forest Borough Council to house an exhibition examining life in the area.

The Look Out, designed by Andris Berzi and Associates, will offer a range of recreational and educational opportunities, such as two exhibition spaces, a school-room and resources centre, an audio-visual theatre and a shop and cafe. Outdoors, visitors will be able to enjoy walks, nature and heritage trails, orienteering and horse riding. Details: Ann Swinney (0344) 424642.

## HOOKE PARK COLLEGE

The Parnham Trust opened Hooke Park College in 1989 to train entrepreneurs how to utilise indigenous but wasted timber in the manufacture of buildings, furniture and wood products. Graduates will set up a network of manufacturing businesses, adding value to the produce from existing and future forests.

The Training Centre, completed this year, is built in three vaulted modules, using timber in the round - thinnings - from Hooke Park. Designed by Ahrends, Burton & Koralek with Frei Otto (Architects) and Buro Happold (Engineers).

The College with The School for Craftsmen in Wood will be showing at:

WOODMEX 90
9th International Woodworking Equipment Exhibition
National Exhibition Centre
Birmingham
3-7 November 1990

For more information about Hooke Park College, please contact:

Mrs Margaret McMullin
Hooke Park College
Beaminster
Dorset DT8 3PH Telephone 0308 863130

Hooke Park and the Training Centre are open to visitors on Wednesdays, Sundays and Bank Holidays from 2-5pm, April to October.

## SCOTTISH MUSEUMS COUNCIL TRAINING PROGRAMME FOR 1990/91

The Council's aim is to make high quality training available to all museum staff at the lowest possible cost. This year's Training Programme aims to develop skills in two main areas: Care of Collections and Museum Management. The courses are designed to support the professional development of museum staff, both through the content of the courses and through the opportunity for discussion with professional colleagues.

The courses have been made accessible in a variety of ways, by keeping costs as competitive as possible, by holding them in different parts of Scotland, and by subsidising travel costs, particularly for those with considerable distance to travel.

During 1990/91 the Scottish Museums Council will be working with the Museum Training Institute to develop new training opportunities for museum staff in Scotland, focusing particularly on induction training, management skills, training for attendants and volunteers, and for the trainers themselves.

Copies of the booklet and additional information can be obtained from Mrs. Margaret Greeves, Training Programme Coordinator. County House, 20/22 Torphien St, Edinburgh. EH3 8JB.

## DEVELOPING THE LINE THAT JACK BUILT

Leading tourism & interpretation consultancy John Brown & Company have been appointed by Kent County Council and the Romney, Hythe & Dymchurch Railway to provide a development, management and marketing strategy for the railway into the 1990s.

John Brown & Company are specialists in the field of developing and marketing visitor attractions of all kinds, but particularly industrial and transport themes.

John Brown says 'the RH & DR remains a successful attraction by most standards and is still one of the most popular steam railways in Britain. We are going to look at the underlying market setting of the railway and the scope for development of the line's adjacent land and buildings. We will be making recommendations for broadening the market appeal of RH & DR, whilst retaining its miniature charm'.

The railway, first opened to the public in July 1927, was built by Captain 'Jack' Howey as a 'main line in miniature'. Scaled-down versions of express steam locomotives take trains over a 13½ mile line between Hythe and Dungeness. More than 140,000 passengers were carried in 1989.

For further information contact Diana Taylor on (0886) 3350

## TRAINING FOR COUNTRYSIDE MANAGERS, STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

The Countryside Commission have issued their 1990/1 programme of in-service training courses for countryside staff. The Commission offers support for participants to attend these courses when they are eligible for grant aid, (usually staff and volunteers from the countryside organisations, local authorities, national parks etc).

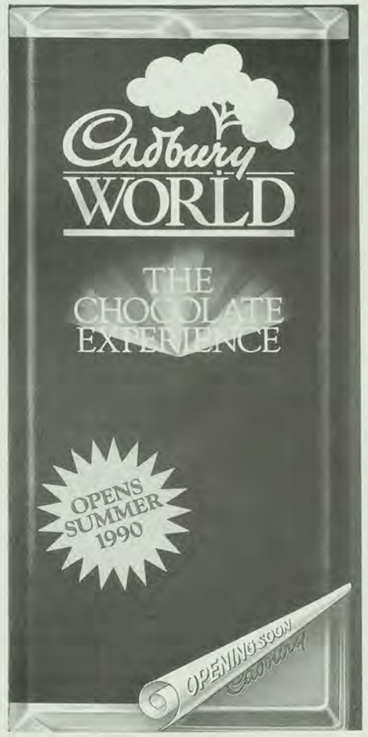
The programme will be of interest to many readers and copies of CCP 228 are avialable free of charge from:
Countryside Commission
Publications Despatch Department
19/23 Albert Road
Manchester M19 2EQ

## CHANGES AT TOUCHSTONE

It is newly announced that Touchstone is now the trading name of Derek Lovejoy Touchstone Ltd. The change took effect on 2 July 1990.

After nearly four years of successful operation as an independent practice, Touchstone Associates formed this new company in association with the Derek Lovejoy Partnership. The Partnership is represented by three directors on the board, including Chairman, Geoffrey Collens. Michael Glen and Michael Quinion are the executive directors of Touchstone.

In its new form, Touchstone will gain considerably from the national and international experience built over thirty years by the Derek Lovejoy Partnership. It is one of the leading landscape, environmental design, planning and architectural practices in the country and has established an enviable reputation for the quality and breadth of its work. Touchstone Associates' track record in heritage-based tourism consultancy will allow the Partnership to extend the range of services it offers.




## ROB ROY THEME FOR VISITOR CENTRE

Stirling District Council has opened its £1.2m Rob Roy and Trossachs Visitor Centre in Callander. Stirlingshire, thanks to a £200,000 grant from the Scottish Tourist Board. Facilities include a tourist information centre, exhibition areas, a themed retail shop with Rob Roy souvenirs and a 70 seat multi-media theatre featuring a 25-minute Rob Roy film presentation.

## DUNCOMBE PARK

MAN'S IMPACT on the landscape is the theme of a visitor centre planned for the restored Yorkshire house and estate of Duncombe Park, near Helmsley. The 18th century estate has never been fully open to the public but it is one of the finest examples of 18th century landscape design, containing medieval trees and the country's tallest ash and lime trees. It has been declared a Triple Site of Scientific Interest. York-based Heritage Projects is responsible for the exhibition design, marketing and retail. The visitor centre will be housed in a former laundry house and dog kennels, and will use AV techniques to tell the story of the estate. Details: (0904) 646411.

## SCOTTISH MUSEUMS COUNCIL CONFERENCE 1990

The 7th Scottish Museums Council Conference will be held at The Burrell Collection, Glasgow on 22-23 November 1990. Over the last six years these conferences have focussed on important issues affecting museums. This year the conference addresses the way in which the Industrial Past is presented and interpreted and examines the opportunities for future developments in Scotland's Industrial Museums.

Mark Fisher MP, Opposition spokesman on the Arts, will open the conference with a politician's view of the importance of the industrial past, looking at how its preservation and interpretation can fit with Britain's industrial - and post-industrial-present and future.

The conference will coincide with the publication of Scotland's Industrial Past by John Hume. This new book, by the country's acknowledged leading expert, will look at how well the history of Scottish industry is being preserved and interpreted by Scotland's museums. The author will present his findings, showing what challenges and opportunities are open for the future.

One approach will be put forward by Dr Robert Anderson, Director of the National Museums of Scotland, where work is now underway on a new "Museum of Scotland". To complement this, Colin Thompson, a Trustee of the Scottish Mining Museum, will present the view 'from below', in an examination of the development and work of some leading Scottish industrial museums.

Scotland does not exist in isolation, so Robert Clark, Depute Director of the Scottish Museums Council, will present a comparative study of the preservation and presentation of working life and industrial processes in museums throughout the British Isles. The day will conclude with a look at some specific examples of innovation and good practice in the interpretation of industry, including the Black Country Museum and the Museum of the Moving Image.

Victor Middleton, marketing consultant and author of a major report on the future of independent museums to be published in the autumn by the Association of Independent Museums, will set out the report's conclusions on marketing. He will consider how far industrial museums need to be promoted and presented in a different way; these ideas will be taken up by Jonathon Bryant of Dundee Industrial Heritage and Dr Patrick Greene of the Greater Manchester Museum of Science and Industry, who will look at the problems and opportunities which face industrial museums as they look towards the 21st century.

If you require further information on the conference, please contact Margaret Greeves on 031-229 7465.

## The Society for the Interpretation of Britain's Heritage

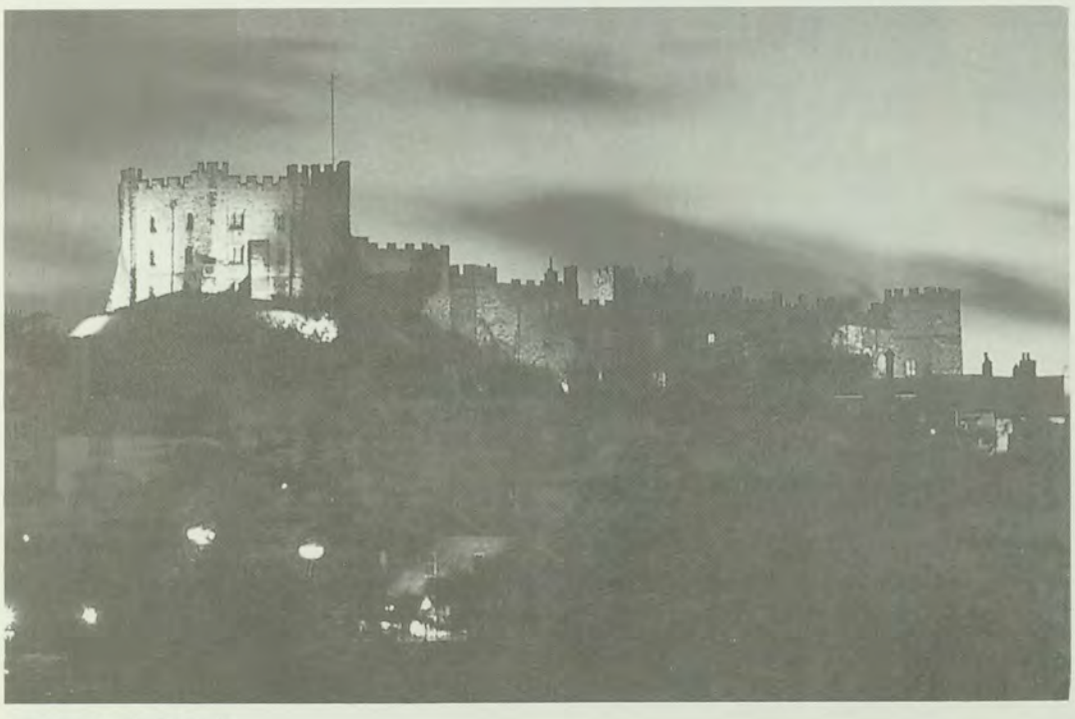
The Society was formed in 1975 to:

* 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;
* to 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 subcription rates, Individual UK £15.00, Library £9.00, Corporate £40.00, Student £8.00, Overseas £16.00 (£20 airmail).

**The views expressed in articles and reports are not necessarily those of the Society for the Interpretation of Britain's Heritage.**

*The Society's 1990 AGM in the Senate Suite, Durham Castle.*



*Durham Castle by night*

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