

# INTERPRETATION *journal*



*Murals in Moosejaw – interpretation for the host community becomes a tourist draw.*

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INTERPRET  
BRITAIN

# SUSTAINABLE TOURISM: A New Concept for the Interpreter

BERNARD LANE *Director of the Rural Tourism Unit, University of Bristol*

In a little more than a century, tourism has grown to be one of the world's leading industries. Over the same period it has acquired a bad press. Some of this bad press reflects the carping which all success stories attract from an ever critical media. Further deprecation comes from a residual snobbishness, now that long distance travel is available to everyman. But most anti-tourism sentiments arise because of the enormous environmental impact which modern leisure activities can have. These impacts were reviewed by John Julius Norwich in his paper on "Tourist Pollution," given as the 9th Nicholas Bacon Memorial lecture to the Royal Society of Arts in 1988, and reprinted in *Heritage Interpretation* No. 43 in 1989. Development pressures, ecological damage, wear and tear on historic fabrics and places, cultural attrition and the decline in the satisfaction given by many visitor attractions because of overcrowding - all of these issues have provided easy meat for the media moguls. Now, even the British government has recognised the problems. In August 1990, it commissioned the "Tourism and Environment Task Force," which reported in five slim volumes in May 1991.

One of the first places where the pressures of modern mass tourism were felt throughout the year was in the Alps. During the 1970s, Austrian, French, Italian, German and Swiss academics, planners and tourism industry representatives began the search for a new form of visitor industry. It had to be environmentally and community friendly, but yet still attractive to the holidaymaker and profitable for the trade. These discussions resulted in the concept of Sustainable Tourism. The concept has many alternative names - partly because of the rich diversity of languages spoken in the Alpine region. These names include Green, Sustainable, Soft, Post-Industrial, Responsible, meta-Tourism and Eco-Tourism. Green Tourism is one of the most popular. However, because of its catch-all nature, it can have problems as a piece of professional nomenclature. The term Sustainable Tourism is often felt to be more useful.



Tourism - the Eternal Triangle

(Note the deliberate difference between Bernard Lane's version (lower) and the one offered by the Minister's Task Force in "Tourism and the Environment". Editor.)

## BUT WHAT IS SUSTAINABLE TOURISM?

The concept of Sustainable Tourism sees conventional mass tourism as an eternal triangle of forces, with host communities and habitats, visitors and tourism businesses in an unstable relationship. In such situations the growth requirements of the industry can lead to the domination of host areas by visitors and tourism businesses. The aim of Sustainable Tourism is to bring the opposing forces of the triangle into equilibrium, for the long term benefit of all parties.

For the host area, sustainable tourism should provide carefully planned economic growth which provides satisfying jobs without dominating the local economy. It must not abuse the natural environment, and should be architecturally respectable. Developments should be in scale in all senses. Decision making should have a strong local input, and land speculation should be avoided. Traditional values and societies should be maintained. The benefits of tourism should be diffused through many

communities, not concentrated on a narrow coastal strip or scenic valley. There have to be limits to growth; that growth should be gradual and organic.

For the holidaymakers, it should provide a good value, harmonious and satisfying holiday experience. The experience must respect the intelligence of both the visitor and the host and not patronize. Host and holidaymaker should be on equal terms. The successful sustainable tourism operation will develop brand loyalty and repeat visits; the visitor will gain an in-depth understanding and knowledge of the area, its landscape and peoples. The tourist will become concerned and, therefore, protective of the host area.

For the tourism industry, sustained brand loyalty will bring its own rewards in long term economic success. Responsibility will be a key to this reward. Responsibility entails accepting and building up the role of go-between - explaining the need for the long term ecological care of the tourism resource (scenery, place, people, culture, fauna, flora), to the host area and its politicians, and to its visitors. Responsibility means accepting that some forms of tourism activity are not suitable in some areas; developments must be carefully tailored to the places and regions involved. There will be a need for co-operation between the tourism industry and the planning authorities, (and *vice versa*), to protect the industry's seed corn for the future.

## WHERE CAN SUSTAINABLE TOURISM BE SEEN IN PRACTICE?

Just as in the nineteenth century it was difficult to implement Ebenezer Howard's new ideas on sustainable urban growth, so it has proved difficult to implement in full the concepts of sustainable tourism. Implementation is evolving gradually and often in piecemeal ways.

In mainland Europe, the Hotel Ucliva development in Waltensburg, Switzerland, is often quoted, as is the winner of the Council of Europe's 1991 "Village que j'aime" contest, Laas in the French Pyrenees. In Canada, the provinces of Alberta and

Saskatchewan have adopted community-led tourism planning procedures. Both provinces have a number of interesting projects in hand; the new ecological resort of Jacobsen Bay, adjacent to Saskatchewan's Prince Albert National Park is particularly noteworthy.

In Britain, pioneering projects include the Country Village Weekend Breaks Group and the Big Apple Festival, both in Herefordshire, the Penwith Peninsula Project in Cornwall, the Centre Parcs holiday villages and Berwick Borough Council's Sustainable Tourism Development Strategy.

All these examples reflect the need for sophisticated tourism management which is sensitive to heritage and nature, to grass roots community feeling, and to the demands of an increasingly mature and demanding visitor market. All depend on carefully worked out, and evolving, visitor management and marketing strategies. The value of these new approaches is now being recognised by official bodies on a worldwide basis. In Britain, the "Shades of Green" Conference held in Leeds in 1990 examined Sustainable Tourism in detail; it was backed by the Countryside Commission, English Tourist Board, and the Rural Development Commission. The first two of those organizations have also produced published principles for tourism in the countryside generally and in national parks which embrace some of the tenets of Sustainable Tourism.

## HERITAGE INTERPRETATION AND SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

How do the principles of Sustainable Tourism impact upon the world of the heritage interpreter? Five main points of contact can be considered.

**1. Interpretation within a wider strategy.** Sustainable Tourism depends on visitor management strategies which optimize visitor enjoyment, minimize environmental damage and maximize community benefit. Heritage interpretation strategies should, therefore, try to fit in with these wider plans. Within the wider context, interpretation sites have a special role to play. They can be used as magnets or motors to manage visitor flows in both time and space. They can help influence the likely future pattern of visitor behaviour. This can be done by revealing alternative attractions, routes and areas, and by subtle exhortation

and suggestion. In some cases, interpretation sites can change the modal split of the visitor's transportation - usually by diverting people out of cars into public transport or onto feet.

All this sounds very worthy and obvious enough, but it is a situation seldom attained. Most heritage sites have been developed for their own sakes, on an *ad hoc* basis, rather than as part of a wider concept. Linkages between community goals and heritage site management goals are rare. Even links between individual heritage sites are not common. Sometimes, sites themselves have become environmental and community problems by attracting visitor flows into sensitive areas.

**2. Community involvement** is a hallmark of sustainable tourism planning. This means that whenever possible local people should be involved in interpretation, giving their views of their place in their way. More tangibly, heritage buildings should be able to serve the community as well as the visitor. A recent case in remote rural Northumberland required a decision whether to erect a brand new building to house an interpretive display, or to use an existing church and village hall. Both the church and the hall needed help to maintain their

fabrics; the tiny village community was struggling to pay for their upkeep. Visitor use would have helped, without major disruption to their original functions. But it was technically easier and less taxing for the interpreters to opt for new build, and this they did, even though capital costs were greater. The chance to sustain the living community was lost - and so was a lot of local goodwill.

**3. Linkages to the local economy** are important. So many opportunities exist on heritage sites, on museum premises, and on trails to promote local shops, pubs, cafés, craftspeople, accommodation, bus services, church services and arts events. Too often these opportunities are missed or not fully exploited. Some interpreters take a purist, non-commercial view. A lot of local businesses do not bother to think of the advantages they might gain from small scale, active sponsorship of heritage conservation and interpretation. Yet even people on church trails need guidance on the proximity of beer and sandwiches as well as on the special features of the nearest decorated tympanum. The impending imposition of new legislation (The Beer Orders) is threatening the viability of many rural pubs: country churches and hostels could yet make common cause.

**4. The valorization of small assets** can be a vital role for the interpreter, especially in rural areas. This means drawing them to the attention of the visitor, explaining them and encouraging their use if appropriate. In these ways the assets acquire economic as well as historic value. But what are they? They range from bollards, paviers and mileposts, through stone walls and little used footpath network via small shops and sub-post offices and on to sparsely used rail halts and branch lines. In a world of economies of scale, fast, thoughtless travel and multi-national sameness, locals and visitors alike will thank interpreters for helping to conserve amenity, heritage and the spirit of place. Practitioners should remember those classic catchwords, "doing more with less," and "less is more" in this context.

The process of valorization can encompass local history itself, as well as artifacts. The town of Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, Canada, provides an interesting case study. Moose Jaw's history from the turn of the century up to the 1920's was an exciting one of rapid growth, fast living and

AYLTON  
LITTLE MARCLE  
MUCH MARCLE  
MUNSLEY - PIXLEY  
PUTLEY - WOOLHOPE



OCTOBER 7/8TH,  
14/15TH AND 21/22ND 1989

A HARVESTIME  
CELEBRATION OF  
ENGLISH APPLES AND  
CIDER IN THE  
HEREFORDSHIRE  
PARISHES OF THE  
MARCLE RIDGE

prosperity. Since then, the fluctuating fortunes of the grain trade and the declining importance of Moose Jaw's railway connections have seen the town fall upon much more difficult times. Now, the great days of the past are being celebrated by a local group, "Moose Jaw Murals," who are depicting the town's colourful history by painting massive murals on walls throughout the town centre. There is a twin purpose - to revive local pride, and to attract visitors into Moose Jaw from the nearby Trans Canada highway. (see front cover.)

**5. Is this the Ecomuseum dream?** The ecomuseum concept has been an elusive but attractive one for many years. The French, the Swedes and the Canadians have made great play of the concept, but it has eluded us here in Britain. Its great value lies in the high value it puts on people, existing buildings, businesses, ongoing life and development. This contrasts with the low value it places on capital intensive new museums and centres. It is a dynamic concept rather than a static one; there are interesting comparisons here to be made with the ever changing marketing-led world of tourism. The ecomuseum concept can also be used as a management tool within a sustainable tourism strategy. A visit to St. Jacobs in the heart of Ontario's

Mennonite country provides an interesting example of this technique. This small town attracts those interested in the Mennonite story, uses their economic potential for the community and then deflects and diffuses the visitor flow through the region.

#### WILL SUSTAINABLE TOURISM SUCCEED?

It will not succeed overnight. To refer back to Ebenezer Howard's ideas of a century earlier, experience shows that new ideas were often slow to take off, even if they are now taken for granted. Interestingly, the same demographic, economic and social forces which Victor Middleton recently highlighted as being crucial to the success or failure of our independent museums will probably determine the success of Sustainable Tourism. A more highly educated, discriminating, mobile, affluent and ageing public will all help. But much depends too on the environmental awareness and the managerial skills of the industry itself. The tourism world, like the interpretation world, is living in interesting times. Both have been targets for criticism because of their expansion and growth. Perhaps sustainability offers both a way forward, and a new way of working together.

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#### INTERPRETING THE VISITORS

One way of enhancing the visitors' understanding of a tourist destination - and of its residents - is by providing interpretation of their involvement as visitors in the destination. It is curious that interpretation rarely considers the involvement of visitors in the places they visit. This is despite these places experiencing environmental, social, economic and ideological changes as a consequence of being visited.

These changes can be beneficial, adverse or both and can differentially affect particular individuals or groups. One of many possible changes is that the presence of visitors alters the meaning and significance attributed to places. For instance, people learn that others consider a place worth visiting, which can lead to its "sacralisation" or "enshrinement". Such changes can be highly significant and this highlights the need for more interpretation of the involvement of visitors in tourist destinations.

It is important to be aware, however, that interpretation is itself intimately bound into the changes associated with visitors. For example, the decision to interpret a place often follows from it already having attracted visitors or from plans to attract them. The enhanced interpretive activity resulting from visitors will also tend to establish for a place a new and often heightened significance and value.

The use of interpretation which considers such interactions between visitors and tourist destinations may increase the likelihood that visitors will modify their behaviour in ways which are more sustainable for the destinations.

#### MORE QUESTIONING INTERPRETATION

One likely pre-condition for more sustainable tourism is that people look more critically at the world around them and more self-critically at their own involvement with it. This more critical outlook might encourage people to be more considerate tourists. Unfortunately, interpretation does not always encourage such a critical outlook. In particular, interpretation sometimes leaves people with the impression that the material was presented according to a single view shared by the "experts". Clearly this impression is misleading as the selection of themes and stories and the interpretation of them all vary according to the views of each interpreter and the prevailing

ideologies of each generation. Interpretations are both value-laden and contested.

One way to promote a more critical outlook is for more interpretation to show that there may be different interpretations rather than one consensus "expert" view. Such interpretation can invite visitors to consider different views and to reach their own conclusions on them. Of course this must be done with care so that the visitors are not confused.

#### URBAN HERITAGE QUARTERS

These issues come to life in the interpretive potential of the dominantly nineteenth-century industrial, mercantile or maritime quarters of towns and cities, many of which are emerging as important centres for tourism. Notable examples of such districts include Little Germany in Bradford, where merchants built magnificent warehouses which blazon their wealth and power, and Birmingham's Jewellery Quarter, a district of specialised industries related to the jewellery and precious metal industries.

Urban public authorities are increasingly turning to these districts as tourism resources and are developing and marketing them as such. Interpretation is developing with orientation maps, trails, interpretive panels, visitor centres and so on. These processes are well illustrated in the Rocks, a waterfront district of Sydney, Australia. The Rocks was the site of the first European settlement in 1788, which became a mixture of warehouses, slum housing and houses of ill-fame. By the 1960s it was a run-down area fringing Sydney's central business district. Since 1970 Sydney Cove Redevelopment Authority has helped revitalize the quarter, including conserving historic buildings, and it is now a major tourist focus, with restored buildings, speciality shopping, museums, interpretive trails and panels and a visitor centre.

There is ample potential in the interpretation of such districts to consider both the relationships between these districts and their visitors and the influence of different personal perspectives and interpretations.

There are many relationships between such districts and their visitors. One of these is the process of "commodification" of these districts as

they increasingly become evaluated in terms of their value for tourist consumption. Their physical landscapes have also changed to appeal to visitors. This includes their self-conscious construction with antique-style street furniture, cast-iron street signs and interlocking brick pavements to accord with a popular concept of the past and the deliberate incorporation of local and vernacular architectural styles, landscaping and mixing of commercial, culture and leisure uses.

These districts have also been "animated" to appeal further to visitors, with festivals, street theatre and sculpture adding new layers of colour and vitality. The "commercial gentrification" of these districts relates to their life-style associations and numerous visitors and includes the opening of speciality shops, restaurants and theme pubs and wine bars.

There are many opportunities in such districts to consider how different perspectives can alter interpretation. For example, their historical interpretation may emphasise the famous people or colourful characters associated with them. This may reflect a more "heroic view" of the influence of individuals in history as opposed to the importance of the "common people" and of social organisation. Their historical interpretation can also vary according to whether prominence is given to conflict or consensus; welfare or exploitation; progressive improvement or historical struggles; gender or age; and so on.

#### CONCLUSION

The interpretation of urban heritage quarters clearly can consider alternative perspectives and interpretations as well as the relationships between the visitors and these quarters. More frequent incorporation of these issues in interpretation may promote an enhanced appreciation of these places - including their residents - and may encourage a more critical outlook. It has been argued that both these consequences can produce changes in attitudes and behaviour among visitors which further the aims of sustainable tourism. While such interpretation is worthy and well-intentioned it could also be provocative, stimulating, participatory and, very importantly, great fun.

## INTERPRETATION AND SUSTAINABLE URBAN TOURISM

DR. BILL BRAMWELL *The Centre for Tourism, Sheffield City Polytechnic*

Sustainable tourism is not only concerned with the conservation of environment and resources in tourist destinations. Among other issues, it is about the quality of experience and depth of understanding for the visitors. If visitors more fully understand the unique character of a tourist destination - including its residents - then they are more likely to value that place and to want to sustain it. This may lead them to reflect more on the effect of their visit and to modify their behaviour to make it more compatible with the needs of the place, including the preferences of its residents. It may even encourage them to support others who are working to conserve and improve these places.



Interpretation which enhances people's understanding of the places they visit - including their residents - can benefit the visitors themselves through their own personal development and self-realisation. This would benefit us all as visitors, and could help foster the emergence in the long term of personal life-styles and of a society which are more supportive of sustainable tourism.

These are just some of the ways in which interpretation can promote more sustainable tourism. Certainly the value of interpretation for sustainable tourism is much more than its use for the immediate and limited purpose of controlling visitor movement, such as by directing visitors away from fragile environments.

# INTERPRETATION - ITS ROLE IN SOUTH SOMERSET'S TOURISM STRATEGY

MARTIN WOOD *Tourism and Marketing Officer, South Somerset District Council*

“The promotion of tourist enjoyment of the countryside should be primarily aimed at those activities which draw on the character of the countryside itself, its beauty, culture, history and wildlife.”

*Countryside Commission/ETB - Principles for Tourism in the Countryside, 1989*

South Somerset began actively promoting tourism in 1987. The approach at the outset was to develop a selective and sensitive form of tourism development that brought the benefits of tourism to the area, but was of interest to, and did not alienate, the local population.

## TOURISM STRATEGY

A process of analysing the resources of the area, the motivations for coming to South Somerset and establishing directions for marketing revealed the following facets:-

- (1) the greatest resource that South Somerset has to offer is its countryside;
- (2) people's motivations for coming to South Somerset were primarily peace, quiet and relaxation;
- (3) the area had little identity.

On the face of it South Somerset nestles fairly anonymously between the existing, well defined, designated landscape areas of the West Wiltshire Downs, the West Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), the Blackdown Hills AONB, the Quantocks AONB and, further afield, Exmoor.

This “polo” effect leaves us with the hole in the middle. We felt it crucial to identify early on **sectors of interest** as the basis for marketing, rather than to rely on a major sustained promotion to create awareness of the destination.

Destination marketing alone we felt would leave us in a position of a comparative lack of awareness beside the evermore widely known National Parks designated landscape areas, and traditional West Country destinations like Devon and Cornwall. Further, large sums spent on promotion really would not give anything of lasting value to the residents of South Somerset.

Early marketing thus concentrated on establishing an image for the area, but interwoven with this were a series of threads to be brought out in more detail and to provide the basis for future marketing activity. These were:-

- (1) walking
- (2) historic houses and gardens
- (3) cycling
- (4) villages and churches

The medium term strategy, which we are in the midst of now, is to produce a range of themed publications that relate to our resource strength and can be the basis for targeted marketing. These publications are essentially interpretive in nature.

They are designed to contribute to the knowledge of the reader and to increase his/her appreciation of aspects of this area.

## CHURCHES

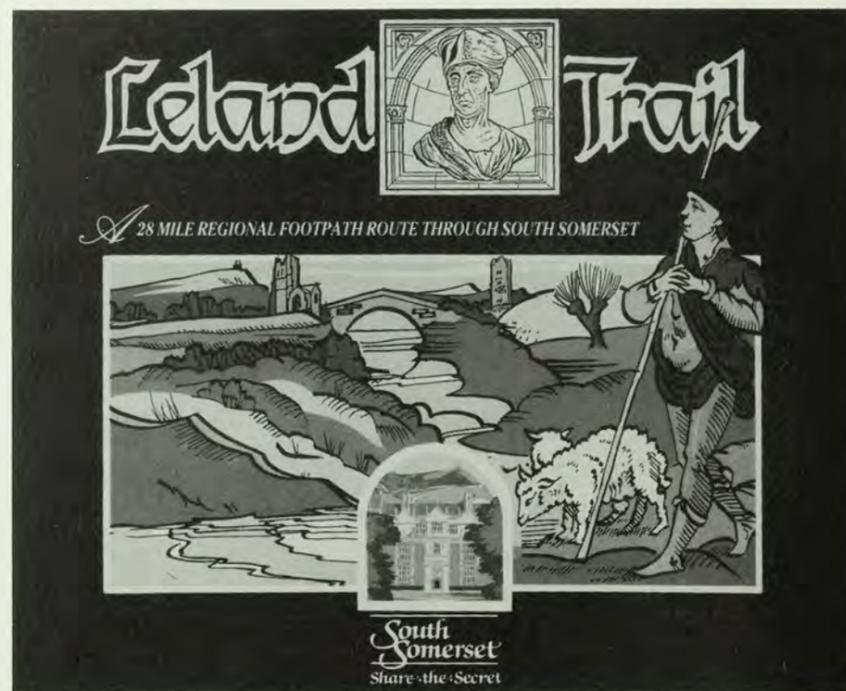
Our first publication - “Churches in South Somerset” - was very specialist in nature. It is sold in a booklet form through existing Churches in the area, whom we knew to be attracting already significant proportions of overseas visitors in particular.

The object was to encourage them to pick up the book and then to follow defined tours around the other Churches in the area. The guide was cheap and aimed at people who already knew a little bit about Churches, but had a considerable amount of interpretive information, provided by our own researcher and the County Historian.

## WALKING

Churches and churchgoers are a definite but less lucrative and easily accessible market than the emerging casual walking market. In 1987 we identified this as a major growth area, using market research reports from the Countryside Commission and the Tourist Board.

At that time, the Council was already preparing a walks booklet for local consumption. We undertook to transform this booklet into a marketable commodity, to compete with the best that was available within Britain. Based on a French design from one of their National Parks, we developed a package of walk cards that were waterproof and sturdy, that had good maps and good descriptions and



View from Cadbury Castle

undertook to identify some landscape feature or points of interest that walkers could identify.

The “Walks in South Somerset” series now has 30 walks and is part of an ongoing programme that will provide two more booklets in the next two years. The booklets have received considerable national and specialist interest press coverage which, allied to limited but selective advertising, has reaped rewards.

Our sales now number 12,000; about 70% to 80% of these are from local bookshops, and local awareness is very high.

This is important because we have provided an amenity for local people that they associate with tourism but are very pleased to enjoy themselves, and take their friends on the walk to show them what a lovely area they live in.

The Leland Trail is an extension of this walks project. What we have done is followed the route of John Leland as he travelled through this area in the mid 16th Century.

What is particularly fascinating is the fact that his description can be directly related to the landscape as it is today. We have thus included a complete itinerary within the Leland Trail pack. The walker at South Cadbury can today look up the scene and compare what he sees with Leland's description. This is a particularly fascinating insight into medieval landscape history. Interpretative plaques at Cadbury Castle and Ham Hill back up this theme. Our Leland Trail sales now number some 2,000 and we have plans for the route's extension with Dorset and Wiltshire County Councils. The Leland Trail was researched and

The problem, if there is a problem, is that when we produce something like our leisure drives, then the demand for these from local people is so large we are left with very few for visitors. The leisure drives project is based on landscape areas within the district:-

- (1) The Ham Stone Country
- (2) The Levels and Moors
- (3) Blackmore Vale & Camelot Country

These areas we are utilizing to add further identity within South Somerset.

## CONCLUSION

Interpretation is really central to our approach towards tourism development in the area. However, it would be wrong to assume that we are solely interested in interpretation, since at the end of the day we are judged not only on the style and quality of publications, but by the growth in the tourism sector of the local economy. We therefore have to divide our time very carefully between these and more commercial activities, like revenue raising, involving the private sector, advertising and distribution of brochures to the market.

I believe that the two approaches can be completely complementary - you can have growth in local tourism industry, and you can do it in a way that is adding to, rather than detracting from, the area. We have been fortunate in having considerable back-up for this approach from the Countryside Commission. We have adopted the principles in *Enjoying the Countryside*, and I hope we are providing a working example of one form of making Green Tourism work in practice.

written by us with the help of the County Archaeologist, the County Historian, descendants of the famous Montacute House and with considerable input from our Footpaths Officer, who was able to gain anecdotal information about places along the route.

## WHERE DOES ALL THIS FIT IN?

Our next publications include ones on the Follies within the area and a range of village leaflets with small walks around village centres, explaining their growth and history. The aim at the end is to have a myriad of simple to understand, easily available pieces of information that add to the interest and enjoyment of visitors' stay in the area. After all, visitors spending only two or three days in a location will have neither time nor inclination to do their own research.



Ham Hill Interpretive Plaque

# THE TARKA PROJECT

NICOLA OLIVER *Project Officer*

Devon County Council's Tarka Project is an exciting new initiative in Green Tourism. It was set up in 1989 with the aim of promoting conservation, recreation and tourism in "Tarka Country" - the area that inspired Henry Williamson's classic tale, *Tarka the Otter*. It works as a partnership between Devon County Council, North Devon, Torridge, Mid Devon and West Devon District Councils and the Countryside Commission.

The *Tarka the Otter* story is set in the countryside of north Devon in the 1920s, and describes not only the life of an otter in the rivers Taw and Torridge, but also the other wildlife that shares the otter's world, the varied habitats of this part of Devon, and indeed the culture of its human inhabitants.

"Tarka Country" comprises 500 square miles of varied landscape, from the dramatic cliffed coast of Exmoor, the sandy beaches and dunes, the river valleys and combined estuary of the Taw and Torridge, and the inland farmland; a patchwork of hedged fields and woods. Henry Williamson was one of our earliest conservationists, and the book sets an ideal theme to promote conservation. The Tarka Project is proving to be very successful in this aim: in particular it has attracted sponsorship from two private companies (South West Water plc and Intervet UK Ltd) to employ an Otter Conservation Officer. She is working with Project staff, other organisations and local farmers and landowners, to ensure the otter population of Tarka Country remains healthy.

As well as working to ensure that this symbol of a healthy environment, the otter, is protected, and its habitat enhanced, the Tarka Project is now working to integrate conservation and environmental principles into the other aspects of its work: recreation and tourism. When the Project was set up, Green Tourism was a rarely heard term. Now it is on everyone's lips and the Project is leading the way in Britain, as its principles fit neatly into Green Tourism principles of helping the local economy whilst ensuring tourist activity is not detrimental to the

environment. A tall order perhaps, but things are looking very positive so far.

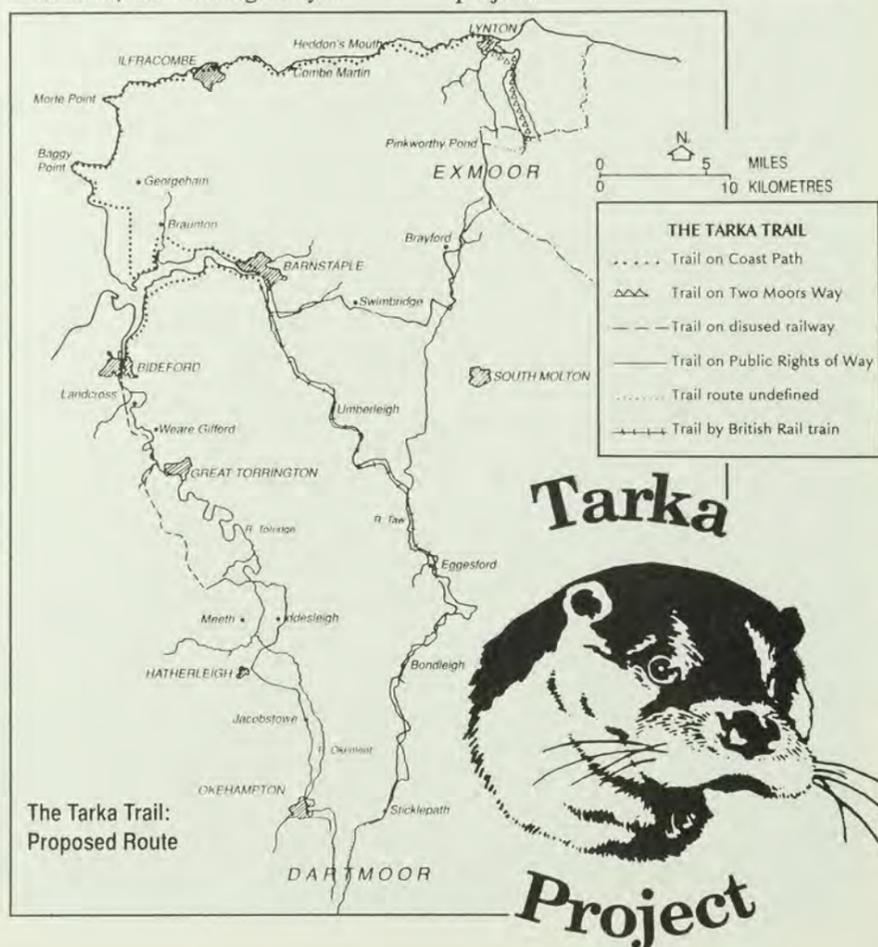
The local population is firmly behind the Tarka Project, as they appreciate the opportunities of facilities such as the Tarka Trail, in terms of their own use as well as the potential economic benefits. The Tarka Trail is really the centrepiece behind the whole project. It will be a long-distance route of 180 miles, allowing quiet exploration of the countryside that inspired *Tarka the Otter*. As well as setting up this route for walkers, the Project is working to enhance the wildlife value along the route.

By May 1992, the whole Tarka Trail will be officially opened, and in preparation for this, a Working Party (made up of representatives from the local tourist trade) has been formed to promote the Tarka theme and integrate "green" principles into tourist operations. In order to achieve these aims, the Working Party is

helping the Project to set up an Association, whose members will sign a "Green Charter" (based on Countryside Commission principles), to ensure their commitment to the environment (see page opposite).

An important part of the Tarka Project's Green Charter is that members should ensure there is sufficient, readily available information and interpretation to encourage visitors to explore the countryside by foot, bicycle or public transport, and to enhance their stay by encouraging a greater appreciation of the area's wildlife, landscape and culture.

It is generally recognised that visitors to the countryside respond to good interpretation, and widely agreed that greater awareness contributes to greater understanding, and hence support for conservation. Therefore information and interpretation should be a vital aspect of any Green Tourism project.



The Tarka Project has published a number of leaflets about the Project and Trail, which are distributed to Tourist Information Centres, libraries, schools and a variety of individuals and organisations. The Project also has a number of temporary and semi-permanent displays. This works quite well, but there is a definite need to reach more people. The idea of setting up a major Interpretive Centre has been mooted, which clearly has the potential to provide many different forms of interpretation, and thus reach different audiences. However, for the next few years the Project will have to rely on the present network of Information Centres, and therefore is exploring other ways of getting the message across to a majority of visitors.

The Tourist Association will play a very important part in the provision and dissemination of information and interpretation. One of the main requirements of being a member is to give visitors access to countryside information. Indeed, many Bed and Breakfast enterprises and camping sites already have their own information points. Just imagine how many more people could be reached by providing information at each bedside! Certainly, there should be a copy of *Tarka the Otter* for bedtime reading - to learn about the countryside that you are about to see, or have seen. Reading about the wildlife and countryside, particularly through the imaginative and perceptive eyes of an author such as Henry Williamson, can really capture the magic of an area.

Both locals and visitors stand to gain from a more informed approach to countryside exploration. Tourism has in some ways become very unpopular in the last 20 years - and with good cause. Increased pressure on sensitive sites has caused erosion, degradation, congestion, and often because of this, bad feelings with the local community. Inherent in Green Tourism must be the involvement and support of the local community, in order that problems can be identified in time, and that economic benefit can be directed to the local economy. Through the involvement of local people, and particularly the local tourist trade, this can be achieved and a larger audience can be reached. Certainly working with local tourist operators in northern Devon is proving exciting and positive. Through their enthusiasm and commitment, a lot can be achieved to promote a greener tourist industry.

However, another side of the question that has to be addressed is the greening of the tourist.

The industry, in partnership with local authorities, can only do so much. The positive lead is gradually coming, but we all need to consider how green we are as tourists. We are *all* tourists at some point in our lives - even a trip to visit a relative, a business meeting or a walk in the countryside are tourist events. So our own individual effect on the environment needs to be addressed. We need to stop and think about our own personal responsibility: do we always need to take the car? have we taken time to learn about the area we are visiting? To many, the idea of conservation is cranky, ridiculous, unimportant and indeed economically unsound. However, increasing numbers of people are realising that

the only way we can survive in our shrinking world is to maintain a balance with nature. Our rural communities are particularly under threat. The tourist industry, now our main industry in Devon (overtaking agriculture), has to be a priority. In the long term that means the environment which tourists come to see - the resource of the tourist industry - must be maintained. The economic arguments for a healthy, balanced environment become stronger every day.

So, as in most aspects of life, personal responsibility is paramount. In Tarka Country, the most we can do is to provide the facilities for quiet enjoyment of the countryside, and make important and interesting information available to visitors. The rest is up to you...



Walking the Tarka Trail

## Tarka Project Green Charter

.....is a participant in the Tarka Country "green tourism" initiative.

As a condition of membership to the Tarka Country Tourist Association, we have signed this Charter to confirm our commitment to the conservation of the character of the area.

We will strive to ensure that so far as possible our activities have minimal impact on the environment and in particular:

We will endeavour to use environmentally friendly products and services, recycle waste where possible and conserve energy.

We will promote to visitors alternative ways to enjoy the countryside other than private cars, such as foot, bicycle, horseback or public transport.

We will provide information for visitors on the wildlife and natural beauty of Tarka country and will encourage them to respect the life and work of the countryside during their visit.

We will manage our grounds so as to maximise their wildlife and landscape potential and will seek to ensure that our buildings contribute to, rather than detract from, the character of the locality.

We will actively support conservation in Tarka Country.

We will favour quality local products where possible.

## EXPLORING SHROPSHIRE

### Evolution of an Interpretive Tourism Strategy for the Countryside

ANDREW JENKINSON *Scenesetters, Countryside Interpreters*

The past four years have seen a growing concern for the impact of tourism on the countryside with a spate of publications and conferences expounding strategies, policies and principles. The English Tourist Board and the Countryside Commission have been well to the fore with *Visitors in the Countryside - Rural Tourism, a development strategy* (1988), and *Visitors to the Countryside - a consultation paper* (1991) respectively, and a joint statement in 1989 on *Principles for Tourism in the Countryside*.

Throughout the debate there has been encouraging reference to interpretation, and perhaps this is where the subject will find its true vocation in the 1990s. Indeed many of us in interpretation are surely ahead of the game in "green tourism".

Interpretation reinforces the ETB/Countryside Commission's first Principle for Tourism in the Countryside: *Promotion of tourist enjoyment of the countryside should be primarily aimed at those activities which draw on the character of the countryside itself, its beauty, culture, history and*

*wildlife*. Interpretation also underlies the Marketing Principle from the same statement: namely that *Publicity, information and marketing initiatives of the tourism industry should endeavour to deepen people's understanding of and concern for the countryside leading to fuller appreciation and enjoyment*.

This is echoed in the Society's own distilled definition of interpretation (which incidentally I applaud, and find more relevant now than the classic Freeman Tilden definition).

I have the good fortune to live in a particularly attractive part of the country, in the centre of a small village at the heart of the Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It would have been very easy for me, as a keen conservationist, to share the antagonistic views of my neighbours as soon as the word tourism is mentioned - "We don't want hordes of tourists causing traffic jams in our lanes, leaving gates open, discarding litter, destroying the wildlife and disturbing the peace of the countryside."

Nor of course do I. But I do want enough visitors to stimulate the local economy and thereby help to keep the village shop, guest houses and transport services in business. I want enough visitors to support my own vested interest in selling interpretive books and leaflets that I have written about the local countryside and landscape. And I pursue this local interpretation because, most importantly, I want enough visitors to share the enjoyment of our beautiful countryside so that they will add their voices to those of the locals when it comes to opposing undesirable development.

That development might itself be "tourism" but of the un-green sort: the building of large hotels or leisure complexes, creating of theme parks or opening mass attractions. Success of such ventures will be measured in terms of narrow commercial profitability of the enterprise in question. And that in turn will be generated by appeal to a mass audience.

Over the years Scenesetters have tried to use interpretation in Shropshire to promote tourism of the type that is now widely recognised as "green" - though at the risk of proliferating terminology, I prefer to describe it as interpretive tourism: tourism based on a countryside product that is brought into focus through interpretive media.

Shropshire has something of an identity crisis. Surprisingly few people outside the county can locate it with accuracy! The very essence of the place is its variety, from the rugged moorland of the South Shropshire hills protecting a little known network of hidden valleys to the lush pastoral acres of the North Shropshire plain, dotted with meres and threaded by the Shropshire Union canal. But variety does not make for nice, clean-cut marketing images. We all know what to expect (even if it is only a part of the truth) if we go to the Lake District, or The Broads or the South Downs.

In Shropshire the one dominating characteristic of the place is its apparently unspoiled rurality. Even the Iron Bridge, seen by many as the symbol of the birth of the Industrial Revolution, spans the river Severn amidst a scene of verdant splendour. The attraction of countryside, of country life and of rural customs was the main plank of the recently completed Tourist Development Action Programme. But marketing of the countryside through the TDAP was based almost entirely on a Public Relations approach. TDAP manager Ingrid Jones did a fine job in securing hundreds of column inches of free media publicity through a number of off-beat promotions such as muck-spreading weekends, tea with the vicar and welcoming Sunday drivers. But where was the real product? Alas I fear that the rather wishy-washy image of rural nostalgia is not enough to generate an interest that will sustain rural tourism into the next century.

It is at this level that interpretation can help us to retain and enhance our existing quality, while actively promoting tourism. That is why, in the name of interpretation, I have also taken a keen interest in the local tourism business for many years.

We have got to use interpretation constructively to create a specific countryside product that embodies the essence of Shropshire; even if that essence is the tricky one of variety. The variety of the county means that there

are many different stories to tell. It also means that many of the interesting aspects are well hidden from normal view. The visitor on a short stay will inevitably take the easy option of going first to the well publicised 'attractions', but these are only part of the story. And if they are doing their interpretive job properly they themselves should be encouraging the visitor to look further afield.

The Ironbridge Gorge Museum embodies only a part, albeit a very substantial part, of the industrial archaeology story of Shropshire. Fired with enthusiasm and understanding of industrial processes the visitor should be able to take off alone to explore other remains within the county. Acton Scott Historic Working Farm demonstrates agricultural practice which shaped the whole of the Shropshire countryside, yet how many visitors can translate the experience of a pleasant, and informative, day out there to an overview of the pattern of south Shropshire? Attingham Park is the very epitome of the 18th century country house and estate - an essay in social history and landscape manipulation of the period that is reflected, if on a more modest scale, the length and breadth of the county.

The list is long - border castles, National Nature Reserves, historic towns, long distance footpaths and many more areas of interest. Of interest, it must be said in many cases, to the more specialist visitor, but all capable of telling a story that puts another piece into the jig-saw that is Shropshire.

That is where the interpretive strategy concept of Exploring Shropshire comes in. It is an attempt to provide the picture on the box-lid that will help the visitor to piece together the puzzle. Though unlike the box-lid it uses more than one medium. At Scenesetters we have specialised over the years in trying to present an overview of the countryside, especially in respect of landscape and wildlife, that is independent of the coincidental aspects of land ownership. There is a story that can be told about the imposing limestone escarpment of Wenlock Edge that is independent of the conservation interest of the National Trust who own the fine woodland, or English China Clay who exploit it as a mineral resource, or the Shropshire Way long distance footpath that follows its ridge. It is a story that has something of interest to the resident of Much Wenlock, to the

visitor to Wilderhope Youth Hostel, to the caravanner at Presthope Caravan site, to the drinker at the Wenlock Edge Inn.

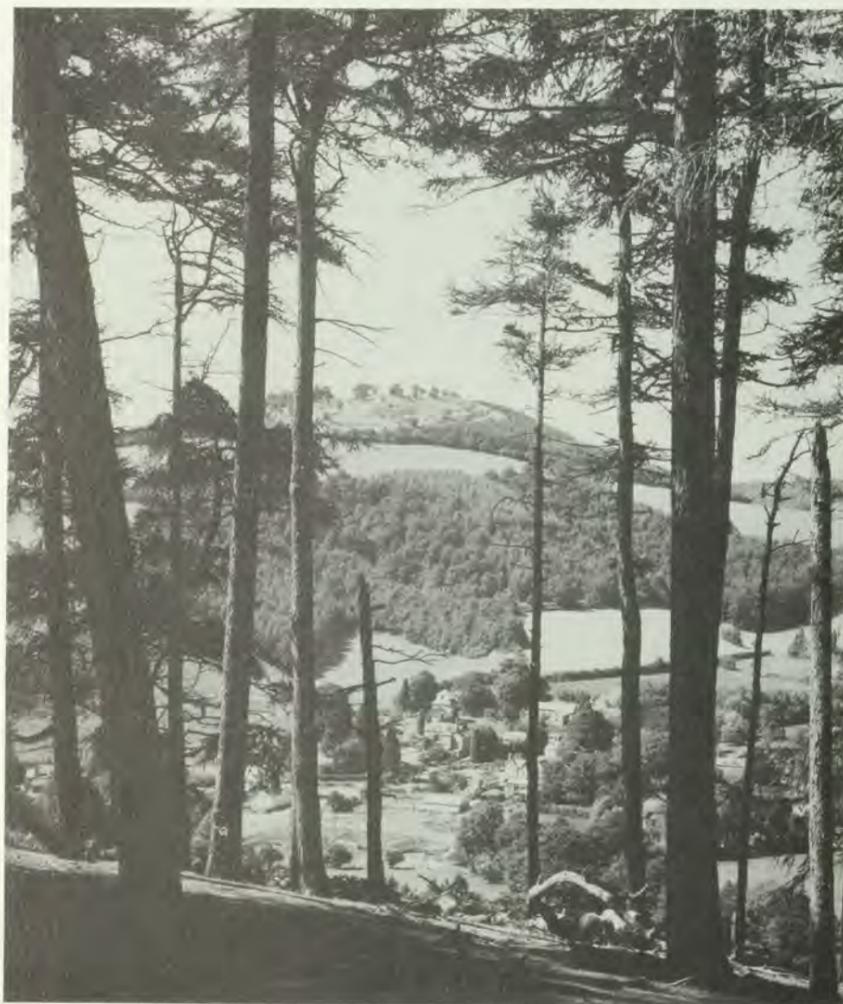
For the benefit of all these people we published some years ago our little leaflet on Wenlock Edge, which along with its companions on The Meres, The Stiperstones and The Long Mynd secured us a commendation in the first SIBH/Carnegie Awards Scheme.

This independence of view, whilst packaging the information in such a way that it comprises an identifiable interpretive product for the visitor, is the key to our thinking behind Exploring Shropshire. The title has been used by us for many years to cover a range of interpretive activities. It conveys, we like to think, that element of entering into the unknown - which is certainly true for most of our visitors. At first Exploring Shropshire was a series of guided walks which I organised under the auspices of the Adult Education Service from 1973 to 1980. In 1985 it reappeared as a tourist newspaper, the prime function of which was again to promote guided walks. From then on it has been increasingly associated with the countryside tourist paper, supported by local authorities, the Countryside Commission and private sector advertising.

In 1992 Exploring Shropshire will take a further step towards providing the visitor with a coordinated view of what the Shropshire countryside has to offer. The tabloid format free paper will continue to form the core of the strategy, expanded from 12 to 20 pages and with two printings to cover the spring and summer holiday periods. The paper will co-ordinate the publicity for a wide range of guided walks and related activities provided by such bodies as the Forestry Commission, the Shropshire Countryside Service, the National Trust, Shropshire Wildlife Trust similar organisations. The programme of guided walks will thereby become another medium for "exploring Shropshire."

The same title will be used by Shropshire County Council Leisure Services as part of a promotional campaign for those of its walking leaflets and books that cover the same end.

Finally there will be a planned distribution of countryside information through a specially designed point-of-sale unit. This will be placed wherever retailers are willing to handle sales



The Shropshire Hills: a ready-made countryside theme park. Attractions here include an Iron Age hillfort, Saxon village, medieval church with churchyard managed as a wildlife meadow, Georgian farms, National Trust hilltop and the Shropshire Way footpath. Admission free. But is this a tourism product without some interpretation?

from it - TICs, village stores, garages, pubs, hotels etc. It will contain all the saleable information necessary for the visitor to explore the immediate locality. And to ensure that there is reasonable coverage, a range of interpretive leaflets and walking guides will be written specifically for it.

In this way we hope that by making material readily available to the widest range of visitors we can encourage a

D-I-Y approach to Shropshire interpretation. The countryside will become one large visitor centre, paying for itself not through turnstiles, but through the pick-and-mix purchases of those visitors who are motivated enough to want to get information. And it is those visitors whose needs will have been consciously catered for by planned interpretive provision.

We will be looking to the accommodation sector to play their part in this. Although traditionally obsessed with little more than bed-nights, we see encouraging signs that the more enlightened appreciate the need to give their guests help and guidance on where to go and what to see. Many, I am pleased to say, are now buying our publications (even the rather specialised guide to the Mortimer Forest Geology Trail) for resale or loan to guests. We have prepared a visual display on local attractions for a guest house that prides itself on its information provision. And guests at the renowned Feathers Hotel in Ludlow will find a customised country walk included "free" in their hospitality pack.

These are just some of the relatively low-key interpretive initiatives which, if spread throughout the county, could stamp an individual character on Shropshire tourism, will encourage return visits, will benefit the local economy, yet will have minimal harmful impact on the environment which is its own "attraction". This, for us, is interpretive tourism.

of 4,500 tourists only 30% showed no interest in environmental issues - and yet this is the target audience of almost all UK tour operators, certainly in their brochure production and their information supply.

Twice that number (60%) identified themselves as "nature lovers" or "open air holiday goers", interested in general nature orientated activities, such as exploring an area on foot or bicycle and making long beach or country walks to look at nature conservation.

The third group (10%) went even further and described themselves as nature investigators. They placed a value on nature orientated activities and actively sought out conducted walks, nature lectures and opportunities to observe flora and fauna. They visit nature parks and historical sites and campers choose sites close to or in national and nature parks.

If one transposes these findings into the UK market - and they are very much in line with UK tour operators' own surveys - six million tourists are not interested in environmental issues, 12 million seek a nature conservation experience as a part of their holiday and two million make a positive choice (in so far as they are able to) of a holiday with nature conservation as a central theme. That, to my mind, leaves as many as 14 million travellers who would be attracted towards holidays where nature conservation and the environment were a central feature of their itinerary. Clearly there is a major role to be played by the "interpreter" in developing both the product and the information supply.

And yet with few exceptions Green Flag International is still failing to convince the industry of the validity of these statistics and that travellers will choose holidays with conservation and environmental interest in preference to others. This in my view represents a similarity to the head in the sand attitude of the British manufacturing industry of the 1970s. Unless there is an industry led change I fear that environmentally aware European companies will be the equivalent of 1970's Nissan or Sony.

Green Flag International has been fortunate to find 40 or so operators who do care about the environment. These companies show a strong sense of environmental awareness and I am sure that they will be amongst the best prepared for changing demand. Similarly a number of national tourist

officers from Russia, Canada, Switzerland, Mexico, Cyprus, Grenada, the Falklands, St Vincent and the Grenadines and Malta are also seeking advice from Green Flag International about environmental issues.

But that still leaves 80% of the industry relatively immune to the environmental changes that have taken place in other industries and these are the ones likely to be at threat from the Dutch and Germans and, considering the size of the industry, are the Japanese going to be that far behind? Just consider the inroads they have made into other service industries such as banking. Also the Americans are now moving in to the development of "green tourism". Recently a large American organisation has entered into discussions about environmentally aware tourism in the eastern bloc where countries are now seeking capitalist style help with the development of their tourism potential.

The UK companies likely to survive and benefit from the change I foresee will rely on two factors. The right product at the right price and an increased trend towards client/operator loyalty. It is in this latter area that the environmentally aware company and Green Flag member is likely to score highly.

As the public interest in sustainability grows, as it surely will with every new man made disaster following Chernobyl and Kuwait, we are going to see an increased demand for environmental assurances and safeguards. Companies not providing these will not receive or deserve the client/operator loyalty bonus.

Many small companies already support conservation projects in a meaningful way at the local level. Larger operators tend to contribute to what might be termed "marketing conservation projects"; very few have informed conservation advisers on their staff. Current funding is therefore unstructured, it is not strategic and it is often short term or wrongly targeted. Good projects which enable local groups to adopt green tourism principles within the cultural and community traditions of their region or country are hard to find.

The case for a good environmental policy should not be seen simply as altruistic, it is also economically sound and good for business. The evidence for this occurs in both negative and positive forms. The negative case is

easy to show - Spanish resorts have been badly hit because of their lack of environmental care. Health scares, pollution and intensive development have hit other areas in a localised manner. To date many operators have simply moved on to new destinations - this is of course a short term and short sighted response.

The positive case is a developing one. Some companies are increasing their market share and new companies are entering the environmental/conservation field. Holidays with a wildlife/nature conservation theme sell quickly. I know of one conducted tour of 24 people that sold out in two weeks. Holidays linked to wildflowers or bird migration also benefit local economies. They are generally "off-peak" and in rural areas - so helping to create local interest - and in many cases they lead to the establishment of environmental protection schemes because of increased local income.

In my discussions with tour operators, national tourist officers and carriers such as British Airways, it is apparent that many are prepared to build environmental policies and awareness into their businesses. As green tourism develops there is an essential role for the interpreter to play in drawing the links between the needs of those running the industry, the travelling public and the wonders that are left to be enjoyed. If this can be achieved within a framework of sustainability and the environmental enhancement then interpreters will have played a significant role.

*Green Flag International is a non-profit making conservation company limited by guarantee. It was formed to work with the tourism and travel industry to help it to improve its environmental performance.*



*Countryside consumers - learning more on a guided walk*

## THE TOURISM INDUSTRY - Time for a Change?

DICK SISMAN *Chairman, Green Flag International*

Have you noticed that there is one benefit in sitting in a Doctor's - or preferably Dentist's - waiting room? They are superb reference libraries for old magazines. No recycling there, just an accumulation of years. The more rural the practice, the more ancient the supply. Is this what "distance decay function" meant in those old economic lessons?

Well, I could not help noticing some old holiday magazines in my Doctor's, pretty recent by his standards, circa 1980 to be exact. They set me thinking because they were almost identical to this year's crop. Oh yes, there are now more glamorous locations, the photographs are better, but the content - well, every hotel development and beach sounds idyllic - if anything the PR machinery has invented even more imaginative descriptions. I often wondered what had happened to all of those redundant estate agents.

But where in the 1991 brochure was the recycled paper, where was the company environmental policy, where was the contribution to sustainability, where was the information about local ecology, wildlife and culture, where was the wider information about the natural environment? In almost all cases, sadly missing.

Since I started working with the tourism industry I have quickly realised that it is very much a conservative island within a sea of change. Tour Operators know and understand their market niche or, to use the jargon, USP (unique selling point). There are advantages to this because it gives a consistent product and clients know what to expect - that is, once they realise that they get what they pay for.

But is the current service the one that travellers really want? Or is the

industry, as I suspect, going to be pulled through a change similar to the one experienced in farming over the past 10 years? Current evidence supports the view that there will be a change, and there is significant possibility that when EC barriers come down in 1992 this change may be led from outside the UK. I fear that as with other past captive markets many current operators will not match up to the latent demands of the traveller. There is a sameness about the mass holiday industry reminiscent of the UK motor car industry of the 1960s and 70s.

Let me illustrate this argument in detail. The Dutch Economic Ministry of Affairs is working with tour operators and environmentalists to relate the changing perception and environmental awareness of travellers into how holidays - and the information supplied about them - are promoted and constructed. In a survey

## IS YOUR JOURNEY REALLY NECESSARY?

### Transport and green tourism

DAVID GROOME *Board member, Sustrans Ltd.*

Until recently little attention was given to the ways in which transport, and sustainable transport in particular, should be seen as an essential component of green tourism. This is surprising, since at a national level there are indications that transport policies have passed a watershed and that a "new realism" is now emerging. Although a "car culture" affects the lives of all of us, a consensus of opinion now appears to accept that transport policies can no longer be based simply on building more roads to meet an expected 143 per cent increase in vehicle ownership by the year 2025 (Goodwin *et al.*, 1991). Mirroring this change in mood, active thought is now being given to ways of fostering use of public and non motorised modes of transport and with devising more energy efficient land use patterns (Owens, 1991).

The increases in motor vehicle ownership and use which have been forecast will have important implications for tourism. It was not surprising to find that a major concern of this year's "Tourism and the Environment" studies was with the widespread impact of the private motor car on the countryside (English Tourist Board, Employment Department Group, 1991). Much urban tourism and most rural tourism will clearly continue to be dependent on use of the private motor vehicle. However, an essential part of green tourism practice must be consideration of ways of reducing dependence on the private car.

#### PUTTING PRINCIPLES INTO PRACTICE

An organisation which has sought to adopt a "green" approach to transport provision is Sustrans Ltd. It is a company limited by guarantee with charitable status which is committed to reducing dependency on the motor vehicle and to achieving a more efficient use of resources. The organisation began its life as Cyclebag, a cyclist's group in Bristol, which was keen to convert a disused railway line from Bristol to Bath into a cycleway. Since that time in the late 1970s, the

company has developed its operations in four ways. Firstly, the company has purchased disused railways to turn into off-highway "railway paths", carefully designed for use by walkers, cyclists and wheel-chair borne disabled people. An example of Company owned path is a twenty kilometre track running between Washington and Consett, Co. Durham which links a number of tourism attractions in the area to the North of England Open Air Museum at Beamish. Secondly, the Company takes out leases on land owned by local landowners and creates off-highway pathways for public use. In York, for example, the Company has taken out twenty-five year leases on five kilometres of route on land owned by the National Rivers Authority and a local landowner. Cyclists and walkers can follow this route which runs from the centre of York to country lanes which lead to the National Trust property of Beningborough Hall. A third approach involves the company acting



David Kemp: *The Old Transformers.* Sustrans, Consett. Photo - Roger Levett

as an agency for local authorities, designing, implementing, and in certain cases, managing completed schemes on behalf of the client. Finally, the Company undertakes feasibility studies and designs schemes for clients who include local authorities, water companies and the Forestry Commission.

Although by no means exclusively so, many of the Sustrans schemes are found in areas used for recreation and tourism, in urban fringe areas or in Forestry Commission woodlands. They experience high levels of use by walkers and cyclists, reaching an estimated million visitors a year on some paths. The ambition of the Company is to develop a network of off-highway routes for cycling and walking which extend the length of Britain. As part of the development of that strategy, Sustrans was centrally involved in launching the concept of the Trans-Pennine trail running from Southport in Lancashire to York. That scheme is now being promoted by the local authorities through which the trail runs, with sections of route currently being constructed, for example, by North West Water plc in Longdendale east of Manchester.

Financial support for the schemes is obtained from fees earned from commissions, derelict land grant, local authority environmental improvement programme funding and the Countryside Commissions. Income from rental and land sales associated with individual projects is intended to cover maintenance and development costs of routeways. Projects are undertaken in partnership with environmental agencies including Groundwork Trusts and Community Forest teams. Much use was originally made of volunteer groups to construct paths, but this feature of company activity, together with use of labour from government sponsored job creation schemes has declined in recent years. The specialist skills and established work record of the company mean that it is often called on by local authorities for advice.

#### INTERPRETATION

Sustrans has not consciously set out to produce interpretive plans for its sites and interpretation is undertaken in an informal way. At every milepoint of Sustrans owned railway path, raised viewpoints are provided, typically constructed from old railway sleepers. Here, the intention is to give users a chance to look out over the area through which they are travelling. Working with regional arts councils, sculptors have been appointed on Sustrans routes to interpret themes related to the locality. Railway paths not only perform the role of transport routes but also sculpture parks as well.

Sustrans relies to a considerable degree on self interpretation on its sites but underlying its efforts are attempts to widen an individual's sensitivity to transport issues. It is clear that Sustrans' activities match the commonly accepted criteria used to define green tourism: it champions the sustainable use of scarce resources; users of Sustrans paths are able to achieve a deeper and more satisfying understanding of the countryside; and schemes can be shared by and be of benefit to the local community.

In a recent Interpretation Journal the case was put for clarifying the purpose of interpretation policies. Are they expected to educate, persuade or entertain? (Lee, 1991). Sustrans unashamedly seeks to encourage users of its facilities to adopt a questioning attitude towards transport provision and to be aware of the full environmental costs of using private cars. That this message can be conveyed in an enjoyable way is of importance in encouraging "green" attitudes. The message is directed at users of schemes but, in addition, it seeks to change professional practice and attitudes and encourage providers to take greater account of green policies.

#### WIDER ISSUES RELATING TO GREEN TOURISM

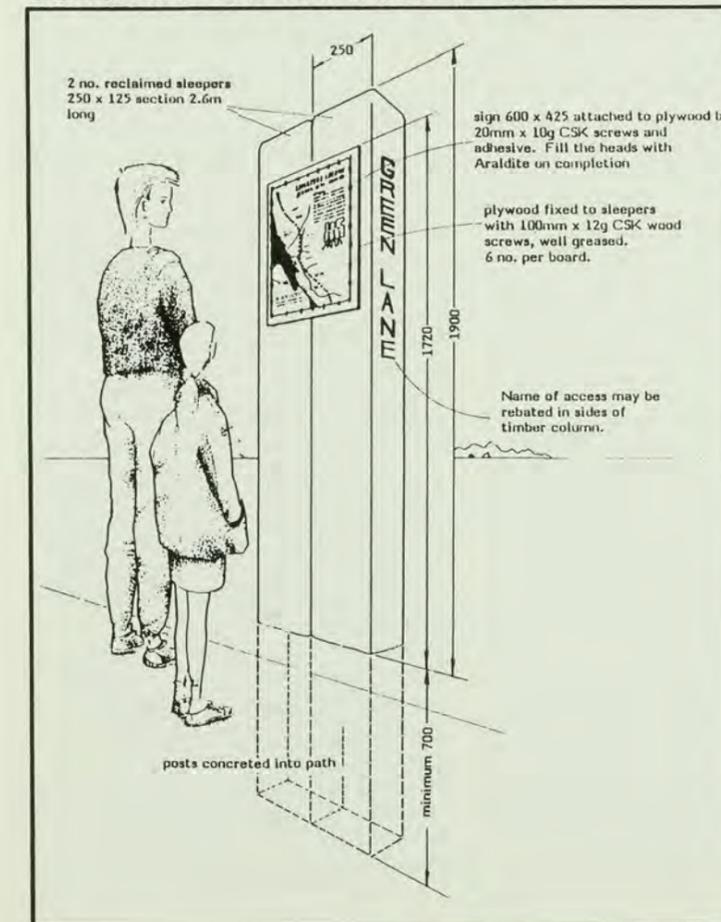
Sustrans' experience raises a number of questions about transport and tourism policies, and in particular the price that people are willing to pay for constraints on their own choice of where they can go and what they can do (Groome, 1991). Proposals to limit the harmful effects of recreational motor traffic in national parks have met with opposition from local tourist

providers. Preoccupied with maintaining revenue, questions of transport and mobility may appear to them as being of marginal interest only. In the case of Sustrans too, some of its initiatives have been less than welcome. In one case in Leicestershire, a railway path scheme met with much local opposition from residents who were worried about the disturbance following the opening of a route. Planning permission for the scheme was refused by the district council, a decision which was overturned at appeal. There have also been disagreements with local wildlife conservation groups. The latter have found it difficult to come to terms with limited increases of recreational use of sites, even if their users travel by environmentally friendly forms of transport!

To ensure fuller development of green tourism policies, the activities of Sustrans and other organisations involved in developing railway paths need to be underpinned by wider measures to favour "alternative" transport. In other European countries traffic control mechanisms have been used to favour walking, cycling and use of public transport. In Britain, despite some notable efforts in the Peak District National Park, efforts have been timid and have barely tinkered with the problem. The £60,000 spent every year by the Peak Park on public transport is more than the total contribution to public transport support of the other ten national parks combined (Speakman, 1991).

For planning and highway authorities, opposition to measures to control the car has provided them with little encouragement to press for provision of alternative transport for visitors at tourist destinations. However, failure to take the right kind of action and resorting to the traditional approaches of increasing roads and car park capacity to meet increased need, may simply lead to added problems of congestion and disturbance. In its review of traffic management issues, the Tourism and the Environment Countryside Working Party outlined several possible approaches ranging from closure of whole road systems to visitor traffic except for walkers, cyclists and possibly minibuses to placing charges or tolls on roads, traffic calming and coordinating bus and train services (where they exist) (English Tourist Board/Employment Department Group, 1991).

#### STANDARD INFORMATION POST



SIGNS

More attention needs to be paid to the ways in which sustainable forms of transport can contribute to achieving green tourism objectives. Environmental audits of tourism ventures should consider not just the contribution that they make to the welfare of the local community, but should also refer to transport issues.

What choice of transport mode is available to visitors in order to reach a destination and to get around once they are there? Visitors are increasingly being asked to scrutinise carefully the impact of their activities on host communities. Transport should be one of those factors which features in personal decision making.



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*Opening of Sustrans cycle track from Bridge of Weir to Kilmacolm, 22 June 1990, by Lord James Douglas-Hamilton (R. on penny farthing)*  
Photo - Roger Levett

## DEVELOPING A LITERATURE FOR THE FIELD OF VISITOR STUDIES

GIANNA MOSCARDO *Department of Tourism, James Cook University of North Queensland*

In 1983 Brian Morris posed the following question to his audience at the 13th General Conference of the International Council of Museums: "If the director of a great art gallery finds his gallery on fire and he can save either a child or a Rembrandt, which should he choose?" (p.15). Morris used this question to argue that museums should put their users before all else; that directors need to know who their users are, their needs and expectations and how to enrich their experience.

This theme is taken up by several authors in the second volume of *Heritage Interpretation: The Visitor Experience* (Uzzell, 1989a) and this volume includes several papers reporting on a variety of visitor studies. Also included in this volume is a paper by Shettel on the history of evaluation research. His major conclusion is that while visitor research is playing an

increasingly important role in interpretive planning, design and management, it is still a small role and has a long way to go. In a similar paper given to the first Visitor Studies Conference, Shettel (1988) gives several reasons for the failure of evaluation research to have a substantial impact on interpretive programmes. Included in these are limited resources, perceived threats to the existing power structures in institutions and weaknesses in current evaluation practices. He goes on to argue eloquently for visitor research and reply to its critics.

At the same conference Loomis discussed the question of whether or not visitor studies was yet a distinct field of research. He suggested that there were three major indicators needed to define a research area: the existence of a critical mass of researchers; increased staff

commitment; and the development of a literature. These three indicators are not independent and it can be argued that the best measure of the first two lies in the third. That is, it is through the development of a literature dedicated to visitor studies that the existence and commitment of workers is manifested.

This literature has in recent times been greatly expanded. The last four years has seen an emergence of two journals dedicated to the publication of visitor research and several volumes directed to visitor studies. These volumes include *Heritage Interpretation* and *Visitor Studies*, both of which were referred to in previous paragraphs. The two journals are *Visitor Behaviour*, published by the Center for Social Design in Jacksonville, Alabama, and the *ILVS Review*, published by the International Laboratory for Visitor Studies at the University of Wisconsin,

Milwaukee. *ILVS Review* is a classic research journal published semi-annually (although the first volume took two years to be completed). Both of the first two issues devote the bulk of their contents to empirical studies of visitors. The topics covered include: the impact of interactive computers on visitor experience, use of questions in labels, use of behavioural mapping techniques, understanding perceptual processes in visitors, visitor motivation, uses of evaluations and perceptions of exhibitions at the Natural History Museum, London. Additionally, there is a section in each issue containing short articles on a wide range of new interpretive techniques, evaluation techniques and ongoing research projects. The major articles are of a uniformly high standard in research methodology, statistical analysis and theoretical discussion, qualities which have often been lacking in visitor studies. These articles set a standard for visitor research which will be valuable in improving the quality of the field in general. The value of the other sections lies in communicating current research activity and allowing for smaller, less rigorous studies to be reported. This gives a much needed sense of community for all those committed to visitor research who often work alone in institutions.

This role is also filled by *Visitor Behaviour*, which has been in existence since 1986 and appears four times each year. It has a newsletter style with short research articles and reports on relevant studies published elsewhere. These reports allow access to important theoretical and methodological advances made in related fields such as psychology and recreation.

Richard Wurman in his book *Information Anxiety* (1989) points out the difficulties in our present information age, of keeping up with information relevant to our work. He quotes William Schramm as saying "at the moment, I feel it necessary to be familiar with the contents of about fifty scholarly journals...To keep up professionally I should read several hundred new books each year" (pp 204-205). As a solution to this impossible task, Wurman suggests many ways to be selective in our information gathering. The journals described previously both provide a path to this necessary information.

One source of relevant information much under-utilised in the world of

interpretation and visitor studies is the tourism journals. Tourism, as a field of study, has many parallels with visitor studies. Pearce and Sofield (1990) describe tourism as a "soft, unrestricted, applied, pre-paradigmatic, rural and content based specialism" (p.3). By this they mean that tourism's problems cross interdisciplinary boundaries and are based on everyday human activity, that the pressures for research came from outside traditional research institutions, that there is a lack of consensus on questions and methods for research, that researchers are spread across topics and that it is a recent concentration of scholarly activity. All these features are applicable to the area of interpretive and visitor studies.

Many of the questions currently asked by interpreters and evaluators have already been asked by tourism researchers. One classic example is that of authenticity. The first volume of *Heritage Interpretation: The natural and built environment* (Uzzell, 1989b) contains many papers concerned with this concept of authenticity. This topic has been discussed at great length within tourism (see MacCannell, 1976; Cohen, 1979; Pearce and Moscardo, 1986; and a special issue of *Annals of Tourism Research*, 1989), but none of this material was referred to by the authors in *Heritage Interpretation*.

To further emphasise the relevance of tourism research to interpreters and evaluators, a brief review of some of the contents of the 1990 volumes of two tourism journals is valuable. The first is *The Annals of Tourism Research*, a well-established journal published by Pergamon Press. In 1990 *The Annals of Tourism Research* included articles on community involvement in tourism planning, the environmental learning of first-time travellers, human ecology and sustainable development, the integration of recreation and tourism, motivation for travel, cultural tourism and architectural images in tourism.

The second journal is *The Journal of Tourism Studies*, a publication of James Cook University of North Queensland. In its first volume, published in 1990, it included articles on the disabled, assessing changes to heritage buildings, the environmental impacts of tourism and recreation in national parks, sustainable tourism, the economic impacts of the North of England Open Air Museum at Beamish, and the participants of educational travel.

Both journals include articles concerned explicitly with methodological and theoretical issues and thus provide nutritious food-for-thought for interpreters and evaluators. In combination with *Visitor Behaviour* and the *ILVS Review* these journals represent foundations for the development of a field of visitor studies and contribute substantially to the better understanding of visitors that Morris called for when he asked his audience to "remember the user...Remember me, and teach me, and entertain me, and learn who I am."

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## CHAIRMAN'S COMMENT - SUSTAINABLE INTERPRETATION

BRIAN GOODEY

Sustainable development, the minimising of pollution and use of global resources, should become the single, guiding concept for our lives as we approach the 21st century. It demands fundamental reconsideration of purpose in industries (Hill, 1991) and in professions (e.g. Perry, 1991). So what of interpretation, certainly an industry, and possibly a profession?

Superficially there is an impression that interpretation is well set to take a lead in both practising and promoting sustainable development. Our work is predicated upon the endorsement of "heritage", cultural resources invested in the past and conserved to the present, and our methods suggest skills in amplifying cultural value for the visitor. In both green and built environments we highlight the significance of past practices and methods which often reflect a more sustainable approach to resources.

Added to this is the rapid, possibly overhasty, adoption of sustainability by the adjacent tourist industry, where warnings as to the impact of tourism have been translated into a sometimes contradictory search for packages which treat sustainability as just the latest visitor theme, ripe for exploitation in a distinctly unsustainable tradition.

If interpretation is to play an effective role in developing a sustainable environment, significant contradictions in our work will have to be debated and resolved.

Interpretation is, for example, closely associated with saving and re-cycling the past. But at what cost? Twelve Finnish steam engines are under restoration at very considerable cost in Suffolk (*Independent*, 4 October 1991). The 700 acre RAF Hullavington in Wiltshire, a 1937 aerodrome, is caught between declaration as a conservation area, and development as a new community (Dunn, 1991). Although emotions and aesthetic arguments dominate in the reporting of both matters, it will be economics which eventually determines the outcomes. But will sustainability be amongst the considerations?

In a recent survey, Morton (1991) has

suggested that conservation area designation has declined in value as the development and enhancement of such areas has been neglected. Whilst campaigning for conservation opportunities, and possibly the novelty and returns from new interpretation, we tend to forget the long list of failures and lost opportunities.

It is good to see a debate over enhancing the attraction of London's Tower Bridge (Young, 1991). But only a month before the Bridge appeared in the press as a backdrop to the pioneer, but demolished, William Curtis Ecological Park, briefly a landmark in the greener London (Nicholson-Lord, 1991).

Sustainability seems far from the minds of those who have closed Birmingham's Barton Arms pub, a Victorian interior which any latter-day theatre-set themer would be proud of (Arnot, 1991). Far too from the spirit in which the Queen Mary is presented at Long Beach (Hiscock, 1991), or from the mind of the digger driver who demolished a local village landmark, The Target Wall, in the High Peak (Bartlett, 1991).

It seems easier to attach the sustainable tag to new developments such as H.R.H. The Prince of Wales' recently revealed new town at Poundbury near Dorchester, where a "green design code" will be adopted within a commercially viable framework (Grigsby, 1991), or at the European Recreation Centre at Genk in Belgium, where RPS Clouston will design the "Gardenpark" surrounding the centre (Landscape News, 1991).

In all areas and scales of design and development we seem caught in a process which diverges from any consideration of sustainability.

Far from managing and developing our heritage as a sustainable resource, we seem increasingly intent on viewing it as a consumer good, to be repositioned in the visitor market every five or ten years. John Punter (1990 & 1991) makes the point well in his assessment of public spaces:

"User analysis can also point the way to better management and

maintenance of existing assets, to low cost improvements that might have a significant effect on the quality and appreciation of the environment. There is a tendency for designers to think in terms of radical redesign of space and the evidence of successive 'design initiatives' adding (but seldom taking away) landscape, street furniture, and all manner of clutter and ephemera, is widespread."

In urban design there is now a clear conflict between Punter's position of public participation and gradualism in design decisions and, for example, the claims for the Parisian "Grands Projets", massive design revisions of the urban fabric justified by Biasini (1991) in the following terms:

"Let the measure be the number of visitors who have illustrated the success of these facilities since their opening. The Cité de Science and Industry receives 4 to 5 million visitors annually, that is, about 13,000 per day. The number of visitors to the Louvre has grown by more than 40 per cent since the completion of the new reception area. Four thousand per day contemplate the historic axis of Paris from the roof of the Arche de la Defense. These are only examples."

There are, to my mind, depressing parallels between Biasini's flimsy market justification for Parisian design interventions and the plethora of themed experiences which have come to dominate discussion in commercial interpretation over the past decade. In putting heritage into the market-place we have sometimes been easily overwhelmed by design novelty, losing sight of the very heritage which we are committed to interpret. In competing for the visitor market we have allowed the quantity rather than the quality to dominate our presentations. Although distantly founded in a concern for ecology and cultural conservation, the all-singing/all-dancing heritage experience often reveals energy and resource profligacy when stripped bare.

It is time to re-state some fundamental values which are shared by those who have laid the foundations for interpretation. We are concerned with adding value and meaning to the

individual's experience of place or artifact. This is seldom achieved by replacing the place or artifact by a novelty contrivance. As the art critic Roger Fry (1919) noted:—

"...human perversity goes further even than this in its misapplication of the gift of sight. We may look at objects not even for their curiosity or oddity, but for their harmony of form and colour. To arouse such a vision the object must be more than a 'curio': it has to be a work of art. I suspect that such an object must be made by some one in whom the impulse was not to please others, but to express a feeling of his own. It is probably this fundamental difference of origin between the 'curio' or ornament and the work of art that makes it impossible for any commercial system, with its eye necessarily on the customer, ever to produce works of art, whatever the ingenuity with which it is attempted."

The desire to divert and please the visitor or viewer has come to dominate interpretive design, although user surveys and discussions with visitors more often emphasise the persistent gap between the object or environment displayed and the visitors' desire to connect, to share more fully in the value system which has endorsed the heritage or cultural significance of a site or object.

Neil MacGregor, Director of the National Gallery (1991) is accurate when he notes:

"I believe that the threat to scholarship comes from an assumption that the enterprise of exploring the past is, or can be, an easy one. It is related, I think, to the whole problem of a short attention span, of a society in which, to use the memorable title of a recent book, we are 'amusing ourselves to death.' This is not a venture to be entered on lightly or wantonly. Although I believe it to be an enjoyable venture, it is one that requires a great deal of very hard work by every person who takes part."

This hard work involves a number of issues which have been given little attention in the immediate past:

1. Which values dominate our contemporary assessment and retention of heritage?
2. How best might these values and their implications be communicated to a society on whose behalf the heritage is conserved?
3. Is such conservation set within a framework of sustainable development?
4. What is the shape and composition of the team required for effective interpretation of the heritage?

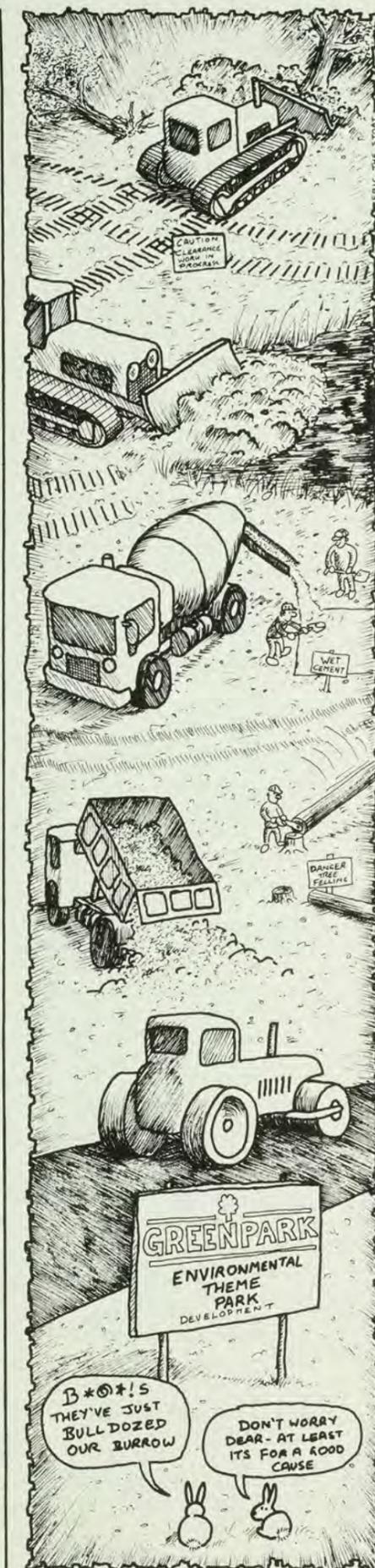
3. Is such conservation set within a framework of sustainable development?

4. What is the shape and composition of the team required for effective interpretation of the heritage?

It is within the answers to these questions that the future of interpretation will be found. Sustainable development, both of the interpretive profession and of the environment, will demand a considerable reappraisal of user, rather than market, domination. Concern for husbandry of resources may also lead to more emphasis on design intention rather than design product. Most significantly, we are required to examine our present purpose and its relationship to those claimed by cognate professions. Are we subject to, or part of, the current debates in communication, design, management and education?

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## TOURISM CONCERN by PATRICIA BARNET

Last year over 40 million people were classed as tourists. Their spending has made tourism the world's biggest and fastest growing industry. An estimated \$3 trillion changes hands annually. But what about the people and the lands pictured so invitingly in holiday brochures and travel posters? Do they also benefit from tourism? As more of us travel, and travel further, what impact are we having on the people and places on the other side of our cameras?

Tourism Concern was set up in 1989 to address these questions. It is a network advocating tourism that takes account of the rights and interests of those living in the world's tourist areas. Our focus ranges from the local to the global, from Scottish land erosion caused by the tramp of tourist's feet, to sex tourism in Thailand and the

deteriorating environment of the Alps and Himalayas. Our membership includes environmentalists, journalists, teachers, academics, students, travellers and people working within the travel industry.

Tourism Concern is fast developing into an organisation which aims to inform and put pressure on decision makers in governments, industry, the media and education. Past campaigns have included the Himalayan Tourist Code, produced in consultation with people from the Himalayan area and British tour operators, which is a list of guidelines for tourists to help them preserve the unique environment and ancient cultures of the Himalayas.

We are presently campaigning to have tourism included in the United Nations Conference on Environment

and Development to be held in Brazil in June 1992. This, the world's biggest conference, will address the impact of development on the environment. But while representatives from a wide range of industries and non-governmental organisations are taking part, tourism, the world's biggest and fastest growing industry, is not on the agenda.

While Tourism Concern believes that with careful management tourism can, and does, contribute beneficially to the people and environment of the host area, we feel it is important to make people in the tourist industry aware of the problems that insensitive and poor management of tourism can generate.

If you would like more information please contact: Tourism Concern, Froebel College, Roehampton Lane, London SW15 5PU. Tel: 081-878 9053

## PUBLICATIONS

### The Management of Visitor Attractions and Events

by John Walsh-Heron & Terry Stevens

Prentice Hall. 1990. £23.55 softback.

At 128 pages, this is a slim volume indeed and I, for one, cannot get used to the idea of parting with so much folding money for such an insubstantial purchase. In addition to its overall brevity, the book is liberally supplied with black and white photos - averaging one per page - making the text manageable at one short sitting.

It appears to be aimed at the student of leisure or the newcomer to commercial leisure operations and adopts a light, checklist style to each of its chosen subjects: operations, marketing, presentation, finance, etc. Don't expect an in-depth discussion - this is basic, no-frills writing by authors aiming to turn out practitioners or improve practice. But the writers own up to this in the preface, so expectations are not over-heightened.

Interpretation has a tightly-written section to itself and all Members would, if their copy of Tilden was not to hand, benefit from a refreshing read of this! Overpriced but full of good advice and common sense.

Ken Jackson

### The Handbook of Public Relations for Museums, Galleries, Historic Houses, the Visual Arts and Heritage Attractions

by Ylva French

Published by the Museum Development Company; price £24.95

This is a good book - but not a perfect one. It is good because it sets out to fulfil an objective - to provide a useful, accessible and comprehensive resource for a specific group of institutions - and succeeds admirably. It is also a tactful book because it is able to address both those bodies who already have their own in-built PR systems and the staff; and those who have to paddle their own PR canoe, netting information and advice as they go. Written by a professional, this book serves its purpose for amateurs and professionals alike.

Its coverage is wide: fitting PR into the organisation; taking an audit; finding the strategic approach, media relations, events, and crisis communication. The treatment is clear, economical and well presented. It also takes into account the good management, as far as it is possible, of the human factor - the submerged

areas of self interest, manipulation and mixed motives. PR must be the art of making the best of what is at times a rather bad job.

Sometimes, however, in this book, things happen in a funny order. A printer's error results in some repeat pages; an author's idiosyncrasy devotes a chapter to strategy after the questions as to how PR might be organised, made to fit into the organisation, and the organisation itself assessed for its available resources.

Equally, as an example of crisis management, the security officer, on finding a night fire first rings his Director, who, with an overdeveloped PR sense, then contacts his publicity man. This is an unusual tribute to and belief in the significance of PR: first secure your story and then tackle the blaze, by which time we will have an even bigger blaze.

Remember, we've yet to call the fire brigade.

But these are minor blemishes.

Marista Leishman,  
Insite

### Mortimer Forest Geology Trail

edited by Andrew Jenkinson

ISBN 0 85538 243 0 Price £1.95

This booklet is a thoroughly revised version of a trail originally written by Dr J D Lawson of Glasgow University and published by the Nature Conservancy Council in 1977. The new guide is published by the Forestry Commission in association with Scenesters of Little Stretton.

The first ten pages of the 24 page booklet introduce the geology of the Ludlow district and how Murchison unraveled the history of the Silurian system in the area. The introduction also identifies, with brief descriptions, the fossils which might be found on the trail.

The walk consists of 13 locations, numbered in the field, which roughly follow the Ludlow anticline and, if followed in order, provide a well-defined sequential journey up through the Silurian rocks of the district. The trail begins some 3½ miles west of Ludlow on the Wigmore Road which provides vehicular access to much of the route, although some of the sites lie off the road. From High Vinnalls to Ludford Corner is a walk of about 4½ miles.

This is a well-written, clearly thought-out guide. For the amateur geologist, the teacher and those with an already developed interest in rocks, fossils and the landscape, this booklet provides a good updated geological introduction to the district, linking well with an interesting, structured geological walk. The shape (15 x 21 cm) is handy for the pocket and the cover and paper sufficiently robust for field use.

Criticism would be unnecessary were it not for the stated intention to "cater for the widest audience." In this respect I fear that the editor may be disappointed. Trouble has been taken to avoid the jargon of the initiated, descriptions are simple and easy to understand and attractive illustrations, such as the composite view of the Ludlovian seabed, are included. Nevertheless there are elements of the lay-out and content which will inhibit the less intellectually adventurous. These may find the historical geology of the introduction, and the plethora of terms associated with the table of older and revised rock divisions, a rather daunting start. They may also be put off by the lack of scale on the geological map which, with the addition of one or two roads, serves as

a route map. At the initial site they could also be discouraged by the difficulty of identifying any of the features as labelled in the field sketch. All this is a pity because, if they persisted, there is much in this booklet which could appeal to the more hesitant explorer.

These comments simply draw attention to the long-standing difficulties which seem to be inherent in producing geological guides which attempt to span a wide target audience, from the interested amateur to those who simply love the countryside. This booklet serves the first group well, but it is worth remembering that the vast bulk of the walking public remains in the second category.

Peter Keene,  
Faculty of Environment  
Oxford Polytechnic

### Beyond the Glass Case

by Nick Merriman

Leicester University Press 1991  
140 pp plus notes (2 pp) and two  
appendices (33pp). £35

Readers will be well aware that the museum profession is going through something of a crisis concerning the role of museums. Leicester University Department of Museum Studies has recently established a new series "Leicester Museum Studies", to provide an academic background to this debate.

Merriman's volume is fifth in the series to be published and the first to take the museum audience as its theme. It is a revised version of his doctoral thesis, which was based on a nationwide postal survey of 1,500 people. The survey's aim was to measure public use of, and attitudes to, the past and to museums, historic buildings, archaeology and collecting. The publication of the results of the survey is a major achievement.

Much of the data is fascinating and of direct relevance to our work as interpreters. It certainly makes an impregnable case for on-site interpretation. In answer to the question "If you wanted to find out about local history or some old local place, what would be the most enjoyable way of doing it?" 39% preferred a self-guided or a guided tour. Only 16% suggested television and only 7% said visiting a museum.

It is Merriman's conclusions which are in doubt. The dustsheet suggests he makes "a powerful case for a new

approach". This reviewer was not convinced by his recommendations. The author gives an unsatisfactory two pages to "Explaining the popularity of museums" which concentrates on "a genuine wish to come to terms with the past" and "museums can be used by those wishing to assume a more cultured lifestyle to achieve or demonstrate upward social mobility."

The "case for a new approach" covers only nine pages. Merriman's stated aim is to encourage museum visiting by social groups who currently do not use museums, through "cultural empowerment" - local people mounting their own exhibitions; outreach work using a museum bus; oral history; positive discrimination in staff recruitment; "opening up collections", etc. He makes very few references to where his suggestions have been applied and has no case studies. Despite having a whole chapter on archaeology and actually saying "archaeologists could do more to make their subject better understood and more widely enjoyed", there is no reference, positive or otherwise, to Jorvik.

Merriman is aware that 50 + % of museum visitors are family groups, that 20 + % are school parties and many others are visitors to the area. None of his proposals reflect this. He also seems effectively to play down the role of objects. Yet his survey, and the many other more limited ones which have been carried out, are a savage indictment of the performance of non-national museums. Their future development is a debate which all should enter and our role as interpreters must begin with a case for obvious audience needs to be met.

There are other criticisms. The type is too small. The prose is at times turgid in the extreme. The price of the book is too high to spread the debate far enough.

Yet nothing can detract from the importance of this survey and its relevance to the debate. Read it.

Graham Black

## IN THE NEWS

### Park's Prehistoric Purchase

THE PEMBROKESHIRE COAST national park has just purchased a "des res" with a difference - an Iron Age hill fort at the foot of the Preseli Hills.

Castell Henllys is a reconstructed hill fort on the site of an Iron Age settlement close to the medieval town of Newport in the heart of the stunning North Pembrokeshire countryside.

The site boasts three authentically constructed thatched fortress homes along with a smithy and a granary, whilst alongside the reconstruction archaeologists from York University are involved in an ongoing excavation programme. This has shown that the site was occupied by the Demetae tribe between 250 BC and 150 AD.

Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Chairman, Halket Jones, said: "This purchase provides us with a golden opportunity to acquire a site in North Pembrokeshire that can be developed sensitively to reflect the historical and cultural heritage of the area."

### The Miller's Tale

THE PRINCESS OF WALES has formally opened King's Mill, a sympathetically restored former corn mill (dated 1769), which forms part of the Clywedog Valley trail in Wrexham. The valley boasts a number of new attractions. King's Mill - which lies at the start of the trail - has been developed as the first Interpretive Visitor Centre by PLB Design Group, for owners Wrexham Maelor Borough Council.

Her Royal Highness spent 20 minutes with an 18th Century miller, John Lowe - a character researched from the Mill's records - who told her the fascinating story of King's Mill. As the Royal guest enjoyed "The Miller's Tale", she learnt what life could offer an apprentice in Georgian Wales.

"It was the first time a 20th Century Princess had met an 18th Century miller" explained PLB Partner, Carolyn Lloyd-Brown. "Her Royal Highness told me that she had enjoyed 'our exhibition' tremendously." The Royal visit has prepared the miller to tell his tale to an estimated 200,000 visitors annually.

Visitors to the Clywedog Valley can follow the woodland trail to Nant Mill - another PLB-designed project. Nant Mill is a Countryside Centre, offering visitors a "mole's eye" view of the world; explored through a large-scale mole tunnel.

### Wuthering Waymarks

BRADFORD CITY COUNCIL and the Countryside Commission have launched a new trail guide and signposts for bemused Japanese visitors to the Brontë country around Haworth.

Charlotte, Emily, Anne and Branwell are big in the Far East, reports *Planning 932* (23 August 1991), but Japanese tourists lack the information they need to enjoy the area and tend to get lost on the moors. The trails, signs and guides are the brainchild of Bradford's countryside officer, David Parsons.

### The Look Out - Bracknell's Heritage

THE LOOK OUT WAS OPENED in April 1991 by Her Majesty The Queen. The Centre houses an exhibition which examines the history, natural environment and contemporary life of the Borough of Bracknell. Set in 2,600 acres of Crown Estate woodland, The Look Out is the starting point for a range of walks and trails, designed to suit most ages and abilities.

Facilities at The Look Out include a gift shop, coffee shop, audio visual theatre and schoolroom. A look out tower gives a bird's eye view of the surrounding woodland.

The centre runs a programme of events and courses which are aimed at increasing public awareness about the local environment in the very broadest sense. Schools are being encouraged to use this important local resource and already the Centre is proving to be a popular venue for school trips.

The Centre is open throughout the year.

For more information contact:

The Look Out, Nine Mile Ride  
Bracknell, Berks. RG12 4QW  
Telephone (0344) 868222.

Ann Swinney  
Centre Manager

### Another New Museum?

FIRST INTERPRETERS were commissioned by Hampshire County Council and New Forest District Council to consider the feasibility of establishing a new museum in historic Lymington to serve the town and its immediate hinterland. There was strong local support for this initiative but it was felt important to test it against a number of important criteria and to establish whether such a museum stood a chance of surviving and maintaining appropriate professional standards in a climate where it is generally accepted that there are too many new museums.

First Interpreters felt able to endorse the initiative and also made proposals for the museum's management, collections policy, location, the services it should provide to the community and the large numbers of visitors to the area and, finally, an outline business plan. The recommendations have been accepted by all parties and are now being actively pursued by a local steering group with the active encouragement of the two Local Authorities.

### More at Prestatyn

RHUDDLAN BOROUGH COUNCIL, whose contribution to an interpretive centre in the sea-front Nova Leisure Centre was reported in the Spring 1991 issue of *Interpretation Journal*, have a further interpretive venture for 1992.

The trackbed of the railway branch line to Dyserth has been converted into the 2.7 mile Prestatyn-Dyserth Walkway. This gives easy access to a fascinating stretch of limestone and lead-mining countryside overlooking the Vale of Clwyd.

The Borough Council with support from the Welsh Development Agency and BTCV/UK2000 have engaged Scenesters to research and produce the interpretive literature for the Walkway.

Scenesters' graphic designer, Jon Dixon, has devised a novel booklet with themed walking routes that cover not only the history and wildlife of the Walkway, but interconnect by public footpaths with the nearby Offa's Dyke National Trail to give a series of circular walks.

### Gulbenkian Awards

TV PERSONALITY ANNA FORD presented Gulbenkian Awards to ten museums in the United Kingdom who had shown great imagination and resourcefulness with limited budgets.

"Winning this award will ensure that more people will hear about our work to improve access and facilities and I hope it will encourage further grants and sponsorship to make it even better," said Val Bott, curator of the Passmore Edwards Museum and joint winner of the Gulbenkian Awards for Museums & Galleries 1991 for the Best Provision for Disabled Visitors.

The categories and winners are:

#### Best Imaginative Education Work

Joint winners:  
*Archaeological Resource Centre, York*  
*Bersham Industrial Heritage Centre, Clwyd*  
Commendation:  
*Derby Museum and Art Gallery*

#### Most Improved Museum or Gallery in a Rural Area

Joint winners:  
*Margrove Heritage Centre, Cleveland*  
*Priest's House Museum, Wimbourne*

#### Best provision for Disabled Visitors

Joint Winners:  
*Yorkshire Mining Museum, Wakefield*  
*Passmore Edwards Museum, London*

#### Most Outstanding Improvements Achieved with Limited Resources

Winner:  
*Surrey Heath Archaeological Centre, Bagshot*  
Commendations:  
*Moot Hall, Aldeburgh*  
*Fry Art Gallery, Saffron Walden*

#### Best Provision for Young Children

Winner:  
*Audley End House, Essex*  
Commendation:  
*Overbecks Museum, Salcombe*

#### Most Improved Catering Facilities

Joint Winners:  
*Café Museum, Cheltenham Art Gallery & Museum*  
*Balcony Café, Worcester Museum*  
Commendation:  
*Bosun's Whistle Restaurant, National Maritime Museum*

### In Print Again

THE EDITOR HAS RECEIVED notice of the latest book by Society member Elizabeth Newberry.

*COLLECT IT! - Making collections - from fossils to fakes*, is just published by A&C Black. It explores the ways in which children can start a collection, restore objects and display them effectively. It includes weird and wonderful museums, fakes and how to make them and specialist clubs.

Published in hardback at £7.99 and paperback at £3.99. Colour and black and white illustrations throughout.

### Under Siege!

MISTS OF TIME is a company best known for producing replica artifacts and archaeological models; but now the team is thinking big and is literally laying siege to a castle!

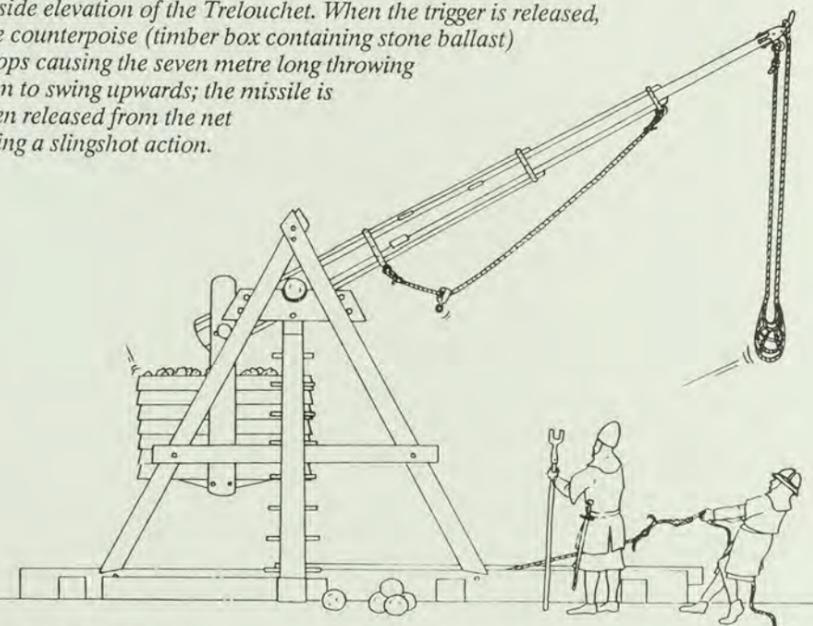
The company was commissioned in 1990 by Cadw-Welsh Historic Monuments to build four full-sized, working siege engines as part of an interpretive display of medieval warfare at Caerphilly Castle, mid-Glamorgan.

Mists of Time Director David Lazenby said "... most of our references were gleaned from contemporary accounts, manuscript illustrations and from our study of comparative technology of the 11th to 15th Centuries - for example, woodworking techniques used on timber-framed buildings and the mechanics of medieval cranes and winches such as the one still in place at Salisbury Cathedral.



Mists of Time engineers at work on the twin towers of the Perriere

A side elevation of the Trelouchet. When the trigger is released, the counterpoise (timber box containing stone ballast) drops causing the seven metre long throwing arm to swing upwards; the missile is then released from the net using a slingshot action.



"...this project is being seen as serious experimental archaeology - we hope to learn a lot about their actual capabilities and more about the logistics of a medieval siege."

It is the first time that such a collection of siege engines has been assembled in Britain. Some 17 tons of oak have been used to recreate the Trebuchet, Perriere, Mangonel and Ballista, and it

is hoped that these giant catapults will be demonstrated regularly, hurling large rocks over the South lake. The engines will be in place at Caerphilly Castle by January 1992.

David Lazenby  
Mists of Time  
Creative Historical Images  
67B Pembroke Road, Clifton, Bristol,  
BS8 3DW (Tel: 0272 731860)

# 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 subscription rates:-**  
Individual UK - £20.00.  
Library - £20.00. Corporate  
£45.00. Student - £10.00

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

## DIARY DATES

**January 17-26** Countryside Interpretation. Losehill Hall, Derbyshire. Peter Townsend, 0433 620373.

**January 22nd** Customer Satisfaction - Are You Achieving It? South Wales, ILAM Training. 0491 874222.

**February 3rd-7th** Managing Your Message: Effective Design in Countryside Interpretation. Losehill Hall, Derbyshire. Peter Townsend, 0433 620373.

**February 4th & 5th** Training Skills for Managers: one-day travelling workshop.  
**4th:** Wolverhampton; **5th** Exeter. Centre for Environmental Interpretation, Manchester. 061-247 1067.

**February 21st** Marketing Tourist Attractions, Joint Centre for Heritage Conservation and Management, Bournemouth Polytechnic, Poole Campus. Miss Una Lyon, 0202 595178.

**February 21st-28th** Countryside Interpretation Training Course, Capel Manot, Bullsmoor Lane, Enfield.

**February 29** Day Out Fair, The Historic Dockyard, Chatham, Kent. Peter Varlow or Sally Day, 0892-540766.

**March 2nd** Cycling in the Countryside: Business Opportunity and Planning Issues. Cheltenham Museum. Bernard Lane, 0272 303620.

**March 2nd-4th** Green Tourism. Losehill Hall, Derbyshire. Peter Townsend, 0433 620373.

**March 5th** Making Marketing Work - Marketing Plans. South East of England ILAM Training. 0491 874222.

**March 16th-20th** Involving Young People in the Countryside. Losehill Hall, Derbyshire. Peter Townsend, 0433 620373.

**March 19th-20th** Celebration! Festivals, Rural Tourism and Community Development. Burwalls, Bristol. Bernard Lane, 0272 303620.

**March 23rd-27th** Presentation Skills, Losehill Hall, Derbyshire. Peter Townsend, 0433 620373.

**March 24th-25th** Management Skills for Countryside Staff. Play Tan Y Bwlch, Gwynedd; Centre for Environmental Interpretation, Manchester. 061 247 1067.

**April** New Permanent Dinosaur Exhibition Opens. Natural History Museum, London..

## NOTE FOR MEMBERS

Alison Maddock has taken on membership matters for the time being. Her address is:-

All-Sorts

"The Pigeon-hole", 36 Westhaven Crescent,  
Aughton, Nr. Ormskirk, Lancashire L39 5BWE  
Tel: 0695 422369

## Committee of the Society

### CHAIRMAN

Brian Goodey  
Joint Centre for Urban Design  
Oxford Polytechnic  
Headington, Oxford,  
OX3 9BP  
Tel: (H) 0295 710554  
(W) 0865 819407

### SECRETARY

Ted Jackson  
Croxteth Hall Country Park  
Liverpool L12 9HB  
Tel: (H) 07048-70216  
(W) 051-228 5311

### TREASURER

Richard Harrison  
47 Pelham Rd  
Portsmouth, Hants. PO5 3DT  
Tel: 0705 8310135

### EVENTS SECRETARY

John Iddon  
St. Mary's College  
Strawberry Hill  
Twickenham TW1 4SX  
Tel: 081-892 0051

### PUBLICITY SECRETARY

Gillian Taylor  
Church Cottage  
61, Fore Street,  
Chudleigh  
Devon TQ13 0HY  
Tel: (H) 0626 852045  
(W) 0626 832093

### EDITOR

Ken Jackson  
201 Buryfield Road,  
Solihull,  
West Midlands  
B91 2BB  
Tel: (H) 021-704 3961  
(W) 021-722 4000

### OTHER COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Ruth Tillyard  
Tel: 0952 606511

John Gittins  
Tel: (W) 0244 376333  
(H) 0978 364 357

Andrew Pierssené  
Tel: 0379 741230