

society for the interpretation of Britain's heritage

The Architect on Stage

How to Design a Building - Sir Denys Lasdun on the National Theatre

Earlier this year, Peter Hall interviewed Sir Denys Lasdun on *Aquarius*. The following edited extract from the public conversation between client and architect is reproduced here by their kind permission and that of London Weekend Television.

PH: *Was the building designed as a piece of sculpture out of the site?*

DL: No.

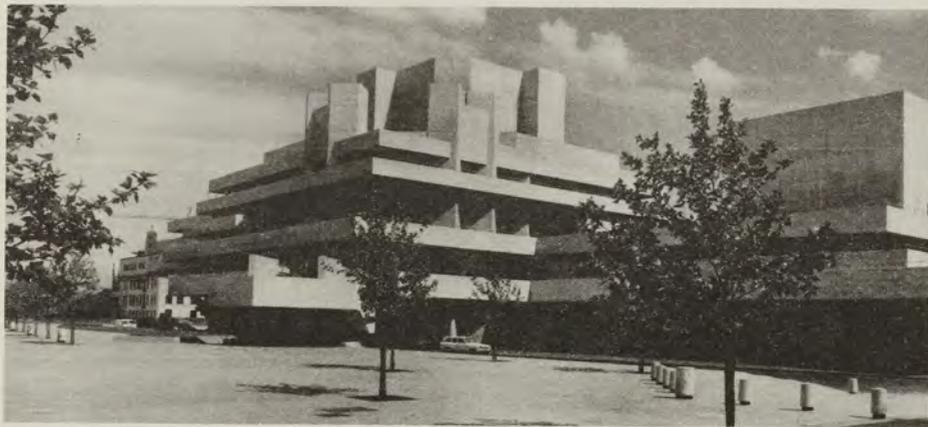
PH: *How does it happen to be as it is?*

DL: Well, this was an extraordinary

[photo: BTA]

two-year period in which Olivier drew unto himself the spectrum of theatre opinion. We met every month and I only insisted on one thing, that everything that everybody said should be recorded. I told that committee that we were going to work from the centre of the centre outwards - that meant asking and trying to answer - 'what is the relationship between actor and audience, between actor and actor and between audience and audience' if you like - and you were very much to

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NEWSLETTER FIVE

AUTUMN 1976

the society

The Society for the Interpretation of Britain's Heritage was formed in April 1975 to provide a forum for people engaged in studying Britain's heritage and in both planning and managing interpretive programmes and facilities which relate to this heritage.

It draws its members from the wide range of organisations - including local authorities, statutory and educational bodies and major voluntary organisations - engaged in interpretation of one kind or another.

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

Officers

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interpretation

Despite spending restrictions, the provision of interpretive and visitor centres continues. Their avowed aim must be to bring about understanding. But was there real understanding of this purpose in the mind and hand of the designer? Was the concept in the client's eye clearly communicated to the architect's? Did the building and its displays create or frustrate the arena for interpretation?

An architect who takes immense trouble to get under the skin, to wrestle with the sinews, to feel the bones of his commissions is Sir Denys Lasdun. In a candid and intriguing interview with

Peter Hall, Director of the National Theatre, he explains how he searched for understanding of his client's needs, and how his eventual design was as sympathetic to these needs, to the ethos of theatre, as he could make it.

We felt this approach of architect/designer to client was worthy of full attention and so a portion, the crux, of the interview forms the major feature of this issue of the Newsletter.

This issue is also distinguished by the extra pages it carries - a tribute to the many, varied and stimulating contributions from members. It is a source of great encouragement to the editor, and a healthy reflection of our members' active interest.

PARALLEL LINES...

of congratulation to the Historic Houses Association on their new, professional journal. Now three years old, the HHA has a large and active membership, many of whom are - or should be - involved in interpretation. The Autumn issue of the *Journal* includes articles by John Hodgson and Graham Carter who contribute on similar lines to this issue of *Interpretation*.

APOLOGIES...

to the Snowdonia National Park Study Centre at Plas Tan y Bwlch for wrongly ascribing its use as by the Field Studies Council (Issue Four) and to Maentwrog - and Merfyn Williams - for the mis-spellings. A gremllyn at work!

The Newsletter

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THE ARCHITECT ON STAGE

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the fore in one of the big pieces of dialogue here which was to do with what is called the 'point of command'. After listening to everybody for six months of the two years, I suddenly did a drawing, I remember vividly doing it in the room and I got a piece of paper out and I said 'really what you're all asking for is a room' - and I drew a square - 'and a stage in the corner' - and there was a sort of silence in the room because it was very basic and I said - 'Of course you'd put seats around it and that is really what you're talking about'. Somebody tried to take the drawing away from me but I grabbed it back because I knew that we were on to something but I knew it was simplistic and we had a long, long journey ahead of us before we found out what it was. Everybody was very excited and we began to develop it and we began to try and find out where in this stage would one find a place which you defined very very carefully. I have notes of what it all had to come to - where on that stage would every pair of eyes in the audience pass through a single point of command of the actor and conversely where would that actor stand so that without moving his head he felt he was addressing and signalling to everybody without moving towards the back. And we argued and argued and discussed and discussed and discussed and in the end we arrived at a position; it's not of course an exact position.

PH: *It's an area.*

DL: It is a zone. Now it's a very interesting zone when you come to look, for instance, at the Olivier theatre. We got to the position where the point of command of an actor was within an angle of about 120 degrees which is within the span of his human eyes and he can see everybody. Furthermore, no member of the audience is looking across the stage at other members of the audience.

RELATIONSHIP TO LONDON

We then developed the Olivier room until we arrived at the form, and that form generated the whole building. The terraces, the front of house, the fly towers, the relationship to London

spring from this moment.

PH: *The moment of one actor standing.*

DL: Yes, in a sense. This is how we worked and we hope it will be right. Mind you, there is no ideal theatre and the greatest theatres built at other times in history have always been the subject of tremendous criticism. PH: *But there are certain factors which don't change, aren't there? The scale of the human figure doesn't change, the need to be heard doesn't change. Practically every form of drama that we have is to do with some form of text with verbal communication, therefore the distance from your point of command to the back, both in terms of visibility, of what the human face is doing, and audibility, is fixed, is geometric. I remember that was one of the considerations that we argued about a great deal.* DL: Yes it's a bit tricky this. You're quite right but I must take up a point here - if it were purely geometric, if it were totally measurable then any bloody fool could design a theatre. The fact is that there are qualities, spatial qualities. Irrespective of how far the farthest seat is way from anything or whether the geometry is pure or irregular, there is a relationship which either hinders your enjoyment or makes you want to co-operate which what is going on on the stage. Now these are abstract qualities and none of us knows what these are and I dare say pot-luck plays an enormous part in it. PH: *It's not geometry though.* DL: It's not only geometry - it can't be. The theatres are more subtle.

COMPLICATED DEMANDS

PH: *I remember a picture you showed me years ago of your office packed with models; packed, I've never seen so many models.*

DL: Yes. Those were the two years we spent talking to the committee - feeling our way because it's a combination of feeling and reason. We talked about the point of command. Superficially it looks as though you might have put a compass in and struck an arc. In fact there are five centres operating. These are not simple curves and one of the reasons for that is that when an actor is centre stage forward and projects his voice, the sound mustn't come back to

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THE ARCHITECT ON STAGE

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him and so it's all slightly off a centre point. It is impossible graphically, for instance, to design a ceiling which has got to deal with immensely complicated demands of lighting and sound reflection except with models. I chose to jag that ceiling, I can't think of another word. It would have been very easy to imitate the same curves on the ceiling but in fact the ceiling has its own geometry which plays against the geometry of the seating plan.

There is one other thing which I think is very interesting and which I ought to mention. In the same way that the outside of the building is stepped in tiers so the centre stalls here are the lowest level. Then you raise the sides and then the balcony is raised again. The effect of all that is like a bowl - as though you are in bowl - and there is tremendous focus on that stage. When you go into that room it is you and that stage and what is on it.

BACK TO INTIMACY

PH: *We need to see the eyes and we need to hear the subtlest inflections of voice in our theatre.*

DL: This is the essence of theatre in a world where we do have mass media, which perform other functions. You have cinema, you have television and radio, but the personal relationship, flesh and flesh, is unique to theatre. Make it too big and you've lost it.

PH: *I think this is where the real innovatory quality of your three theatres will be seen historically. They've taken the theatre back to intimacy. We can say the reason is that marvellous analysis you've just given. But it does mean that the theatre now has a responsibility to be more human, and all those vast theatres, the new theatres in America, which work with only amplification, are not really theatres at all. They're a kind of substitute mass media.*

DL: Yes - that's not what theatre's about in my view. And when I say my view I mean that I learned from everybody like yourself, and all the other people with whom I learned about theatre, because I'm not a theatre man. PH: *But you love the theatre!*

DL: I love the theatre.

PH: *And you've been a theatre goer.*

DL: But I love architecture even more.

PH: *You've designed universities, you've designed all sorts of buildings, but designing a theatre, was it something special because it was a theatre?*

DL: Oh yes; it's been a very tough nut to crack this particular one, it's been a very difficult problem, very.

PH: *Because of the human usage, the human communication?*

ENORMOUS QUESTIONING

DL: We've been waiting 150 years for the National Theatre. Having waited 150 years, there it is; concrete or not, it's there. That's the first thing and it is extremely cheap at that. It has come about through hundreds and hundreds of people willing it into being - that's why it's there. It has also come about at a moment of enormous questioning so that it is at a cross-point of social history. It has come about when the language of architecture is non-existent, hence the unease, to put it mildly, which people express about modern architecture. It has come at a moment when the vocabulary for making theatres or other buildings is being discovered, rediscovered, and it has come about finally at a moment, a most poignant moment when architecture has to serve drama. So we are really in very unknown territory and if you ask me why it's complicated, it's really complicated for those reasons. God knows it's complicated for technical reasons but they are measurable.

PH: *How many years of your life have you put into this?*

DL: Well it's not been slog and nothing else but I've been with my partner Peter Softley and the team working on it - the theatre consultants with me, the structural engineers, the acoustic engineers for thirteen years. You see, that's involved, not building. PH: *No, but that's thirteen years of enthusiasm and dedication and desire to get it done.*

DL: Yes, I think the enthusiasm is based on the absolute knowledge that in spite of the gloom critics, it is wanted.

PH: *But why Denys, and I speak feelingly, has it taken so long actually to put up? Why do modern buildings*

take so long to build?

DL: The only man who does justice to this situation and explains why it's taken so long is Shaw. 'The English,' he said 'never wanted a National Theatre, they never wanted the Houses of Parliament, they never wanted the Tate Gallery or the National Gallery. They never want anything, but once they have got it they wouldn't be without it.'

INTERPRETATION THROUGH DRAMA

For three days during the summer holidays Playground Theatre, a group of eight young actor/musicians helped some 250 children to learn about the social and architectural history of Sudbury Hall, the Charles II National Trust house in Derbyshire.

The activity started as a guided tour in which the curator was able to provide the children with the necessary background information for what followed: the sudden appearance of the 17th century builder of the house, who took over control of the children, then introduced them to his wife, steward, house-keeper, the children's governor, a farmer, a travelling musician, and Grinling Gibbons, who had just completed a carving for the house. The children were then divided into small groups working with an individual actor and learned how to bow and curtsy, to blacklead grates, make pomanders and lemonade, or sat at their lessons with two 17th century children, or practised a mummer's play and morris dancing. After a short service in the village church they went out on to the lawns where they chased a poacher who was tried by the squire, then played traditional games. The visit ended with the curator again taking over.

The children clearly much enjoyed the experience, and the actors, who had not before worked in such a setting were excellent in their handling of the children, in the educational content of the activity, and in their appreciation of the problems of working in an historic house. Many adult visitors asked why they could not join in too!

John Hodgson

Hampshire Meeting

About a quarter of our membership - around sixty members - attended the Hampshire meeting of the Society which was based in Winchester. The theme of the weekend, from 10-12 September, was *Educational Activities and Interpretation* a subject that had been requested by a number of members.

On the Friday the conference gathered at the Queen Elizabeth Country Park, Butser, where we were welcomed by Colin Bonsey, County Recreation Officer.

BUTSER

In introducing us to Butser, the park and its interpretive facilities, Bonsey began, in his own words, at the end of the story, by showing us the audio-visual presentation which usually rounds off the public's visit to the interpretive displays. The slipe-tape sequence took 'Sheep on Butser' as its theme, and very charmingly told the story of grazing on the Downs.

Sheep still graze, as do cattle, on Butser Hill, but the slopes are open to the public, a quarter of a million of whom are expected to visit the Park each year. Covering 1400 acres in a heavily populated area, it is a recreation area for Portsmouth, Southampton and South West London.

The Park Centre was opened at Easter, although economics had reduced its proportions to the extent that the complete educational wing wasn't built.

The purpose of the Centre was to give the public a preliminary introduction to the country scene. It didn't profess to interpret every aspect.

An important feature was the approach to the first-time visitor. *The loos were inside to get the people inside. The coffee bar was reached logically from the building.*

In the park itself were on-site interpretations, and demonstrations at peak times. No intensive interpretation, or proliferation of interpretive plaques, had been wanted. It was important, too, to prevent a polarisation of the park's features that might result from its

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joint management by Hants CC and the Forestry Commission.

The first demonstration we visited was in the Forest Crafts Area. The aim was to involve people and this was most successful. Visitors were keen to split and peel stakes or to work as top dogs and under dogs in the sawpit.

Peter Reynolds

The undoubted highlight of the Butser visit was to the Iron Age Farm Project where its Director, Peter Reynolds introduced us, disarmingly, to the largest reconstructed Iron Age House in the world!

We were treated to a tour of the demonstration area and to the many experiments in progress. Reynolds explained that they were seeking to re-create a farmstead as an economic unit, exploring animal husbandry and food production as well as the nature of the buildings.

Reynolds described in great detail how they tested and tried theories of building, based on substantial evidence. They were reconstructing what they thought was a Celtic manor house, using mainly oak.

They had become able to distinguish between structural and constructional evidence, which allowed an explanation of how the house was actually built.

They based their experiment on evidence of the period 400-350 BC. There was then a stable agricultural society, able to export grain to the continent, and skilled in many ways. Their tools were highly developed and they dominated the landscape.

In the fields around the house were areas sown with spelt wheat, einkorn and other cereals, so that food values could be analysed. The animals included Dexter cattle, developed from the Kerry breed and as near as possible to the cattle of the Iron Age, and Soay sheep.

Several of the tools on display came from Spain where primitive agricultural techniques were still in use. And the principles were being re-introduced here, said Reynolds.

Graham Carter

The keynote talk of the day was given by Graham Carter, Director of the Countryside Education Trust. Coming from a background of education, in science, in the city, he felt well suited to talk on Countryside Interpretation! He wanted to pose a basic question, arising from the theme of the conference: are Education and Interpretation different?

He turned to what he called the Bible - the authorised version by Freeman Tilden and letters to young churches by Don Aldridge. Taking Tilden's basic definition of interpretation, he examined it phrase by phrase, applying it to education, which, of course, it described equally well.

He moved on to the second stage of Tilden's definition where again much of what is said about interpretation applies to education. The biggest difference, he said, lay in the nature of the process. Education was akin to the owning of an allotment, where seeds



Butser Ancient Farm - Model of an Iron Age house

were sown and the resulting growth nurtured. Interpretation, he postulated, was more like buying instant mashed potato - the product was tidily collected and presented ready for consumption.

Don Aldridge's principles pointed to greater differences between interpretation and education.

However, Carter asked, if the two processes are broadly similar, could the same resources and programmes be used for both. No, he contended, referring to the allotment/instant mash analogy. Children require a questioning approach, adults have been taught to expect immediate answers.

Mike Wearing

As Chief Interpreter in the Park, Mike Wearing gave a practical talk on the first few months of operation. The Park's immediate popularity, while encouraging, posed management problems. The approach was, however, to offer ideas and themes for visitors to develop themselves.

Facilities for school parties included introductory lectures, guided walks and visits to the Iron Age Farm. A teachers' pack was being developed with the Forestry Commission to provide the necessary preparation material before a visit. There was also involvement with local radio.

In a lively question and answer session, Mike Wearing said that while he didn't want the teachers' pack to take over the personal link with children, interpreters could drive themselves into the ground trying to cope with schools. Homework and guidance were needed, followed by self-help. Teachers' enthusiasm needed developing.

Another aspect of the Park was its initial development. Wearing confessed that if they could have their time again, they would plan and prepare the overall interpretive and management programme and then fit the buildings to it. Preconceived ideas must be avoided. But it was still too early to assess the real usage and value of the Park.

BEAULIEU

After a warm welcome to Beaulieu from Lord Montagu, Kenneth Robinson, Managing Director of Montagu Ventures, described the concept and management of what was once simply an agricultural estate and has now become a visitor complex.

Its 8000 acres of farm and forest, along the Beaulieu River and the Solent, were inherited by Lord Montagu in 1952. The area then open to the public was small, but increasing public affluence and mobility increased pressures and a long term plan was evolved. This Development Plan, later to become the Conservation Plan, was intended to preserve the estate intact while gaining income.

Much of the twenty year plan had already

been achieved, particularly around the National Motor Museum Complex where the monorail acted not only as an attraction in itself but also as a 'people spreader'.

The Museum's approach was a straightforward one. Simple story images created the right atmosphere, Robinson said. At present there was no attempt at interpretation other than by presenting the whole range of vehicles. The creation of a total image at Beaulieu was important - from signs to staff, leaflets to buildings. It was presentation for enjoyment. That was interpretation.

With that contention ringing in our ears we were introduced again to Graham Carter in his role as Director of the Countryside Education Trust.

He began in 1972 to look after the educational demands on the estate and immediately was aware of the problem of size and variety. Beaulieu's inventory offered so much of educational potential.

A series of teachers' packs has been devised and a range of visits offered. Children could spend a day at the tree nursery and see everything from seeding to felling. There was programme of woodland study days planned.

Carter also drew attention to the various information and topic sheets produced for school use and a wide range of other educational aids. Most of the finance comes from the Countryside Education Trust which sells its services to the Motor Museum. Enthusiasm is the other principal asset, but this must not be over-worked, or it will be lost.

BUCKLER'S HARD

After an excellent lunch we were introduced to Buckler's Hard by Lord Montagu. It was treasured as an 18th Century village, he said, built around the gravel pull-up where his ancestor's ships were to unload rich cargoes from St Lucia, granted to the then Lord Montagu in 1722. The scheme failed but after a prospectus was issued to attract business, a shipyard was established and it flourished until 1815. Its many launchings included Nelson's Agamemnon.

Kenneth Robinson took up the story at *continued on page 8*

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the village itself. It was the Estate's policy to try to find the best answer for Buckler's Hard, keeping a mix of estate workers and retired people living there. They felt it inappropriate to bring all the houses fully up to modern standards as that would hide their original form; equally some modernisation - for the residents' sake - was essential. Perhaps the answer was to renovate some of the cottages and restore others to their original state, with earth floors and other features. By charging visitors they would hope to pay for the costs of restoration.

Tubbs/Sprague

The day's slightly battered timetable brought us, breathless, to Minstead Lodge, where Colin Tubbs of the Nature Conservancy threw a spanner into the interpretive works by telling the meeting to stop and think about Interpretation.

There was a dilemma, he said, between an interpretive role and conservation needs at four resources. The implications were worrying for the sheer complexities of ecosystems in, for example, a nature reserve, led to platitudes, misleading generalisations and an avoidance of real issues. Often the interpreter was talking to the converted and the spoonfeeding of the public could create a generation who found the countryside only on a nature trail.

It was unjustified to turn a wilderness into a circus for the sake of the doubtful benefit of education or of entertainment. There were sites near to towns, less complex than wild areas, where both ends could be served.

Feeling suitably chastened, the meeting then heard from Bob Sprague, a local primary school teacher who described his term's secondment to the Schools Advisory Service. His principal task was the compiling of seven radio programmes for Radio Solent as part of the development of a resource pack.

The aims of his broadcasts, for which he recorded conversations with people connected with the New Forest, were several. He wanted to encourage greater

interest and understanding of that part of the national heritage, to prepare children and adults for the first hand experience of visiting the forest and to create more awareness of the need for conservation in local and wider environments. The broadcasts, on cassette tapes, formed the basis of the teachers' and pupils' resource packs used throughout the Solent area.

Ex Cathedra

The evening saw a complete change of scene from rural to urban matters. Corinne Wilson, architect for Winchester Cathedral gave a talk on the special problems of maintaining a huge national monument, of great antiquity, with no state or local authority aid.

WEALD & DOWNLAND

The Sunday morning shone brightly on the Weald and Downland Museum at Singleton, the last visit of the weekend. The Information Officer, Heather Jackson, welcomed the meeting to the museum and outlined its purpose.

Titchfield Market Hall



From an idea discussed in 1968, the concept grew to reality - a museum illustrating the vernacular architecture of the Weald. This was later extended to include Downland.

It was emphasised, however, that removing a building to the museum site was a second best. It was more important to try and preserve buildings in situ. However, they aimed at a total of 35-40 examples to achieve their general objective. In working towards this, there were two principal tasks.

The first was, simply, the reconstruction of buildings using carefully assembled materials from the original

site. The second was to provide information and education and to research into this aspect of history. The educational demands were considerable and a Museum Teaching Kit was only one of a range of publications on sale.

Among the craft exhibits were blacksmith's and wheelwright's shops, the latter manned by a retired wheelwright, one of many voluntary staff who helped to run the museum. Two retired charcoal burners, husband and wife, were pressed into service from time to time to demonstrate their craft.

HAMSTERLEY

Dr David Bellamy, Senior Lecturer in Botany at the University of Durham, performed the official opening of the Forestry Commission's latest Information Centre at Hamsterley Forest, near Bishop Auckland on 20 May.

Hamsterley Forest is increasing in popularity with over 110,000 visitors in 1975 and more expected this year. A four-mile scenic forest drive, various picnic places and a riverside walk have been the main attractions until now. With the increase in visitors the Commission decided to provide the Information Centre, four new way-marked walks, and a new car park.

The Information Centre, which has cost £10,000, is in fact a converted forest store. The Centre aims to set the scene for the visitor to Hamsterley and all materials and techniques used in the display are in keeping with the forest. All windows were sealed and walls and ceiling lined with a dark stained timber to help create the mood of the forest and to serve as a contrasting background



to a series of orange display panels. The floor is tiled with grass-green carpet tiles to create the effect of the forest glade.

The entrance to the exhibition is through a corridor of trees. Illustrated panels then tell the story of Hamsterley Forest and highlight the various stages in its development.

Three standing exhibits demonstrate wild life in the forest, safety for the forest workers, and use of timber in coal mines. An interesting feature of these is a



knee-rail designed to keep exhibits out of arm's reach without creating a visual barrier. Display boxes are also provided to give children, in particular, the chance to handle samples of timber, cones, foliage, etc.

The design was the work of Graham Duffy of Graphic Partners, Edinburgh, (all four partners are members of the Society!), and two features of the Centre are illustrated here.

Bookshelf

CHARWOOD'S HERITAGE, 1976, unpriced. (Leicestershire Museums, Art Galleries and Records Service)

Although the new borough of Charnwood in North Leicestershire has no obvious geographical delineations and is simply an administrative area composed of three former local authority areas, it still possesses a definite identity. This becomes apparent in *Charnwood's Heritage* which was published as a result of the curiosity aroused by the Charnwood Heritage Exhibition.

It is a comprehensive and informative, yet concise and readable, examination of the history and development of the borough. It looks at a number of topics including communications, industry agriculture, education, health, social services, the arts and recreation. JEM

GILFACH GOCH

INTERPRETATION IN THE OPEN

A mammoth derelict land reclamation scheme in 1973 changed the Gilfach Goch Valley (the setting for Richard Llewellyn's *How Green Is My Valley*) from the ugliness of abandoned mining equipment and spoil heaps to a pleasant green landform.

Now, Mid Glamorgan County Council are anxious that people enjoy its scenery and understand its history.

A start has been made by tree planting, providing car parking and picnic facilities and the setting out of an industrial trail. The next phase is to provide toilets and to extend interpretation by the publication of a trail guide.

The need to restrain public spending meant achieving interpretive media at low cost. The solution was to provide

interpretive tableaux in the simplest form possible on the sites of significant historic and social interest along the industrial trail.

The tableaux were provided by placing, at the selected sites, roughly hewn blocks of stone weighing up to 8 tons each from a local quarry. The cost, including transport, was about £20 each.

The information panels were produced from prepared art work and made entirely of pigmented polyester resin in three colours, at a cost of £42 each. Cutting a face in the rock and sticking the panel with an epoxy-based putty cost approximately £12, making the total cost of each interpretive tableau £74, excluding the cost of art work. An example is illustrated here.

The fear in providing interpretation in the open is that no material has yet been devised which can withstand determined efforts by vandals. Mid Glamorgan Planners believe they have minimised the risk of damage.

Rhondda Forest Project

To develop the recreational potential in the mining valleys of the South Wales Coalfield, the Rhondda Forest Project was in operation for four weekends and the Bank Holiday of August.

The Upper Rhondda Fawr, with its spectacular landforms and scenery, and many features of archaeological and geological interest, is an area in which careful interpretation of the landscape would be worthwhile.

To appreciate the processes underlying their formation, 'Safari' Landrovers, driven by guide/interpreters, left the Visitor Centre every hour.

For more adventurous visitors, guided walks were led by members of the Glamorgan Naturalists' Trust, with experts from the National Museum of Wales. In addition, a number of walks were waymarked on the mountains and were written up as self-guided trails.

More information on this Project, and Gilfach Goch, can be obtained from the County Planning Officer, Mid Glamorgan County Council Offices, Greyfriars Road, Cardiff CF1 3IG.

Alwyn J Williams

Countryside Recreation in Northern Ireland

A one-day Seminar, *Countryside Recreation: Interpretation and Presentation*, was held in Belfast on 13th September. It was organised by the Sports Council for Northern Ireland for those government departments, district councils, statutory and voluntary bodies and private individuals involved in planning, providing or managing national resources for recreation and conservation.

The speakers were Dr. R.H. Buchanan (Member, Ulster Countryside Committee), K.F. Parkin (Chief Forest Officer, Northern Ireland Forest Service), Dr. R.A. Gailey (Ulster Folk and Transport Museum) and Miss E.D. Beazley (Architect and Consultant).

The theme of the Seminar was interpretation and the subject matter ranged from the role of the planner and the need for an overall recreation development plan (Dr. Buchanan) to practical examples of interpretation and presentation (K.F. Parkin and Dr. R.A. Gailey) and concluded with a contribution from Miss Elisabeth Beazley who hammered home the message that 'the site must win'.

A strong recommendation came from the floor to the effect that there was a pressing need for a recreation plan for Northern Ireland to enable the various agencies involved in countryside recreation to plan ahead better.

D. G. O'Connor

CHESTER CENTRE

Following our visit there last November, members will be interested to hear that Chester Heritage Centre has had more than 30,000 visitors since it opened just over a year ago. The exhibition is now augmented by temporary displays of topical or special interest.

Assistance in planning visits for school groups is gladly given and from time to time a half-day course is arranged to introduce teachers to the Centre. Enquiries to Miss Elizabeth Joscelyne, Heritage Centre Manager, Department of Technical Services, Town Hall, Chester. (Chester 40144 x2287).

FULBRIGHT 76

University of Leicester, Department of Museum Studies, tells us that the Fulbright Scholarship for 1976-77, the final year of the triennium for which the award was made to the Department, has been accepted by Professor R. Burnell Held of Colorado State University.

Professor Held's special interests are Natural Resources Planning and Environmental Economics. He has held various US Government posts, notably in the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation, where he was at one time Chief of the Division of Research and Education. Since 1967 he has been Head of the Department of Recreation Resources at Colorado State University, Fort Collins.

Qvist's Quest

Finding the right policies for managing 6000 acres of public open space 12 miles long was the task spelt out by member Arthur Qvist, Conservator of Epping Forest, when addressing guests on the Annual Visit to the Forest.

Protected by an Act of 1878, this historic area is still the direct responsibility of the Corporation of London. It is inalienable, other than by further act of Parliament, and customs such as the marking and turning out regulations for cattle owned by commoners are rigidly continued.

It is the deprivations of the public, who have right of access at all times to both woodland and open spaces, which produce the major headaches. (The drought, followed by fires, this year was an unusual extra hazard). Despite efforts to present the forest to its visitors by way of informative panels at key points, and to explain the need for care in conserving it, trees are damaged, paths overused, undergrowth and grass worn away and ponds used for several unauthorised purposes.

The Forest is unique, but the problems are not, nor are the pressures. Could intensive interpretive facilities make a real contribution to conservational attitudes among the users of the Forest? It is a question which may remain unanswered for some time to come.



Industrial Trail

The Britannic Colliery

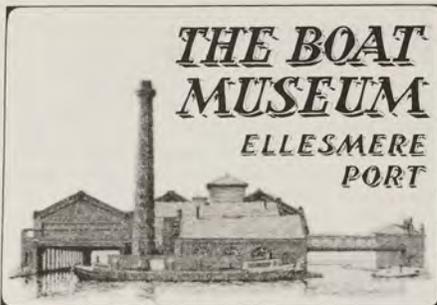
The shafts of the colliery were "capped" as part of the Land Reclamation Scheme. A mine ventilation chimney remains on the hillside above the site of the colliery. The shafts were sunk by the Dinas Main Coal Company in 1894-1895, to mine steam coal in 1910, the colliery came under the control of the Cambrian Group, and was taken over by the Welsh Associated Collieries in 1930, and the Powell Duffryn group of Companies in 1935. It closed in January 1960.

Brief History

1899	393 men employed
1924	1,130 men employed
1949	555 men employed, produced 142,000 tons
1953	771 men employed, produced 171,700 tons
1960	Colliery closed



Mid Glamorgan County Council



THE BOAT MUSEUM

ELLESMERE PORT

We acknowledge the kind permission of Waterways News in reprinting extracts from an article by Harry Arnold which appeared in a recent issue.

Saturday June 12 saw the opening of the first stage of the Boat Museum at Ellesmere Port on the Shropshire Union Canal. The idea for a Boat Museum originated in 1970.

At the start it was agreed that it should be a living museum: to preserve in full working order all types of inland waterway craft, their history, fittings and livery, the tools and equipment that made and repaired them, and the skills of the boatbuilders and boatmen who worked on them.

A site was required, accessible to both wide and narrow beam boats, and although two or three presented themselves it was obvious that lengthy negotiations would have to be gone through before the museum found its permanent home. Regardless of this, the important decision was taken to start collecting boats right away and commence their restoration.

As the society and the collection of boats grew the search for a site went on. Envious eyes had been cast on the vast complex of basins and semi-derelict buildings at the junction of the Shroppie and the Manchester Ship Canal in Ellesmere Port since the early days. But it wasn't until 1974, when it was heard that the local council were looking at preservation possibilities, that negotiations began. Since then the Ellesmere Port Council has wholeheartedly backed the society.

Physically and historically Ellesmere Port is the ideal site for the Boat Museum. As the canal network expanded - particularly with the building of the

Shropshire Union system - the port became a huge transhipment centre, with the establishment of large basins, warehouses, and ancillary facilities on two main levels.

The design and building of most of the complex are attributed to the famous engineer Thomas Telford, but the destruction by fire of the magnificent Telford warehouses, spanning the lower basins, led to an air of dereliction.

Linking the upper and lower levels is a dual flight of wide and narrow locks and at the top of these, the Upper Basin containing the Toll House, Island Warehouse and Pump House, is now the home of the Boat Museum. The long-term plan is that the lower floor of the Island Warehouse will house workshops where visitors will be able to see craftsmen working on the boats located in the adjacent basin. On the upper floor will be a large canal exhibition, a lecture theatre, class-rooms and archives. The area under the warehouse canopy will be dug out again and a dry dock and slip built.

For the opening, volunteers from the society and others, such as young offenders on community work, worked some 6000 hours to restore the Toll House, clear the basin and establish the initial exhibition. The lower floor is divided into two main sections. The first is a general exhibition.

Following this is a reconstruction of a boatbuilder's workshop with every type of tool, template and piece of traditional equipment

Much more money is required to complete the Boat Museum but the project is now really off the ground; or, rather, at home on the water. The basins at Ellesmere Port are alive again.

Bookshelf

WATERWAYS AND WETLANDS: A Practical Conservation Handbook, 1976, £3.00 (by post from the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers, Zoological Gardens, Regents Park, London NW1 4RY).

A conservation manual giving guidance and advice to all those who wish to play a practical part in saving disappearing wetland habitats.

SOCIETY FOR THE INTERPRETATION OF BRITAIN'S HERITAGE

I wish to ^{renew my} _{apply for} membership of the Society and I enclose £2.00 subscription for the year 1 April 1976 to 31 March 1977

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This form should be sent with a cheque to Martin Orrom, Forestry Commission, 231 Corstorphine Road, Edinburgh EH12 7AT.

SOCIETY FOR THE INTERPRETATION OF BRITAIN'S HERITAGE

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Please pay National Westminster Bank Ltd (Hemel Hempstead, High Street, Branch) to the credit of the Society for the Interpretation of Britain's Heritage, account no. 54060907, the sum of TWO POUNDS now, and continue to pay that amount on the first day of April in every year until further notice.

NAME:

ADDRESS:

ACCOUNT NO:

SIGNATURE: DATE:

SUBSCRIPTION RENEWAL/APPLICATION FORM OVERLEAF

pay now:
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p.t.o.

Some members have not yet paid their subscription for 1976/7. If you are one of those, would you PLEASE send it in NOW, using one or other of the forms overleaf. The threat of no more newsletters will definitely be implemented if no renewal is received.

NORFOLK'S HERITAGE

The Norfolk Carnegie Project, a study of the feasibility of interpreting the county of Norfolk as a region, presented its proposals earlier this year, and is now succeeded by the Norfolk Heritage Project - a three year experiment based on these proposals. With support from the Countryside Commission, the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust, the English Tourist Board and Norfolk County Council, an Interpretive Unit has been set up as a temporary department of Norfolk Museums Service, and will launch a system of interpretation for the county, based on "themes". Each theme (the first two will be *Water Transport in Norfolk* and *Food from the Land*) will be the subject of an illustrated booklet, and will list some 30 'sites' in the county where important points in the story can be followed up. At each site (and these range from buildings to boats, from exhibitions to trails) will be a small interpretive panel, and an explanatory card available on sale. This summer, prototype interpretive panels were erected at five sites from the *Water Transport* theme, and the reaction of visitors was monitored.

Monitoring was done at all times of day, on different days of the week and in different weather conditions. During the 54 site-hours of the survey, 751 people read the panels right through - over 60% of those who stopped to look at them. The proportion of all passers-by who stopped at the boards varied from 46% at two sites which were off the beaten track (that is, where almost the only attraction was the feature interpreted), to 10% outside a public house where visitors had presumably



Erecting one of the Project panels
[photo: Eastern Daily Press]

other motives than a search for enlightenment. But even at the latter site the panel was read in its entirety by an average of 1½ visitors an hour. At busier sites, panels were read in their entirety by averages of up to 30 persons an hour.

Tentative extrapolation suggests that in a spring and summer season of six months, over 50,000 people might have read one or other of the five panels. The scheme will officially start its service to the public in the spring of 1977.

Andrew Pierssené

town
trails



UNDERPINNING URBAN INTERPRETATION

In his impressive survey of educational contributions to European Architectural Heritage Year, Bailey (1975) has identified one strand of the initiatives which emerged from the year as the 'town trails movement'. A movement would seem to demand a cohesion and direction which the present production and presentation of town trails to the public lacks. Nevertheless, the sheer volume of trails, some 525 will be listed in the revised British Tourist Authority booklet to be published late in October, suggests that they do add up to the most widespread contribution to urban interpretation, and as urban interpretation has received little attention this far, they must be regarded as an underpinning to any concerted thought or action which may take place in the future.

In preparing the new BTA list, a number of conclusions became evident. The first is that there is an amazing range of production techniques and styles evident in the trail brochures - the fact that even the term 'trail' may be replaced by 'walk' or 'walkabout' means that the public has no identifiable style or key word to use in tracking down the trails.

GAPS HAVE BEEN FILLED

Second, while no English county is

TOWN TRAILS *continued from page 15*

without at least one town trail, the southern and eastern Midlands and East Anglia are poorly provided for, and these are just the areas where small market towns on well defined tourist routes offer excellent opportunities for planned interpretive programmes. A year or so ago one could identify some large cities without trails, but now the gaps have been filled and it is the London conurbation, with over 60 trails, which heads the list. Urban authorities such as Wakefield and Strathclyde have encouraged local trail projects, which explains some of the 23 trails for West Yorkshire and the 22 for the Glasgow area, but it is Devon's 49 which head the list. These latter, many of which are gathered in a book of Devon Town Trails, were developed through the County and District planning offices with much of the groundwork being done by local historians or amenity groups. Although uneven in quality and concentrating on rural and early urban history, to the comparative neglect of recent planning issues, the Devon book is an example of what can be achieved by a local authority. Nottinghamshire County Council has recently initiated a series of trails - already covering Southwell and Laxton, the open-field village which has long cried out for interpretation, and Cumbria and Clwyd are among the other counties that have produced, or have encouraged the development of an effective trail coverage of their areas.

MARKETING IS INEFFECTIVE

As I have suggested elsewhere (1975), local authority co-operation in the organisation of town trails is essential, not only because of the data and information on future plans which they hold, but because they offer the obvious distribution network for trails in an area. Amenity society trails - which still dominate the list - are often presented with care and an obvious affection for place, but their marketing is too often ineffective and tourist information centres seldom geared to collating and distributing local examples. In a useful account of his experiences in using trails, Haines (1976, see also Aldous, 1976) has noted the difficulty of obtaining brochures

which appeared in the 1975 BTA list. Often it seems that the trail may be a threat to sales of the official information department guide, and is therefore quietly forgotten. Comparatively few urban information departments seem to have produced their own trails, yet as gatekeepers they are able to control visitor information. The fact that a piece of interpretive literature does not bear the local authority imprimatur often precludes it from distribution.

The sheer number of trails produced does not, of course, ensure the success or effectiveness of the urban trail technique. Educators such as Keith Wheeler at Leicester Polytechnic and Spray and Stratton at Cheltenham (1975) have reported on the use of school-directed trails, but the DART study of trails, which included a somewhat premature attempt to evaluate the few urban trails available when it began, has yet to be published. The sales of brochures reported by many amenity societies suggests that there is a ready market for the information, but 'trailers' are notoriously difficult to spot in the field and formal evaluation through questionnaire survey seems to this author to be too powerful a weapon to use in combating ignorance in this, essentially free-form, method of interpretation.

WONDER WALKABOUTS

It may be that British Rail's change in attitude with regard to the trail concept is a good guide to the level of public interest? Several years ago I suggested that lineside guides for major Inter-City journeys might be revived, but was informed that these were not a commercial proposition, although the electrification of the London-Glasgow line later provided the opportunity for just such a non-commercial gesture. This year, stations are littered with signs inviting the non-peak summer user to '9 Wonder Walkabouts You Will Remember for Years' and, in addition, the Royal Windsor Walk has been featured on its own poster. The Windsor Walk, which was produced by students at Eton, was the 'adopted' Civic Trust EAHY Education Committee trail during Heritage Year. One of the major conflicts in the

practice of interpretation in Britain is between local initiative and some form of supra-local organisation. Local insights and enthusiasm have been essential for the preparation of the majority of town trails, yet these local skills seldom run to an ability to co-ordinate sales and distribution, to ensure sufficient waymarking or public facilities, or to provide a local series of trails in an area to be visited by car. These latter tasks must be the function of a local authority, wherein departments of Planning, Architecture, Recreation and Education might be expected to communicate with each other and are increasingly doing so.

Brian Goodey

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Middleton Top Opens

The last remaining winding engine on the former Cromford and High Peak Railway was set in motion again on 31 July 1976 by Mr Don Slack, the last engineman to operate the engine before its closure in 1963. The railway, a unique engineering achievement, was built in the 1820's to link the Cromford and Peak Forest Canals across the limestone plateau of the Peak District. It consisted of a number of level sections linked by nine steep inclines. Wagons were drawn by stationary beam engines of which the Middleton Top engine is the only one remaining.

When the railway finally closed in 1968 the Derbyshire County Council and Peak Park Planning Board acquired the line, which now forms the High Peak Trail, and the County Council acquired the Middleton Top Engine House, a designated ancient monument. The building has been

restored by the County Council and the engine by a group of volunteers working closely with the County Council's Head Ranger. Originally the engine was driven by steam, hauling its own water supply up the incline, but with the removal of the boilers and the loss of the railway this became impossible and it was decided to drive the engine by an electrical air blower instead.

Voluntary work is continuing to provide, among other things, a looped cable to the wheel pits outside the engine house so that the engine can be demonstrated in full working condition, and it is intended to prepare a small two dimensional interpretive display

The Engine House is open to the public on Sundays and Bank Holidays and the engine is operated on the first Saturday in every month. Midweek visits by schools and other groups are accepted by prior arrangement with the Head Ranger. Further information may be obtained from the County Planning Officer, County Offices, Matlock, and enquiries for visits should be directed to K Harwood, Head Ranger, Middleton Top, Wirksworth, Derbyshire. (Tel Wirksworth 3204).

H. Cowley



HERITAGE EDUCATION YEAR

If the country house and estate are to survive in the future, we need to take a new look at their social function. To ensure that future generations value and appreciate this heritage, it is important to encourage a closer and more fruitful relationship between local education authorities, schools and owners.

In an attempt to do something about this, the Historic Houses Association has designated 1977 as Heritage Education Year. The part-time Director of the Year is John Hodgson of the National Trust. Money for the Year is coming from charitable foundations, from which £4,000 has already been received and fund raising will continue in 1977.

The country house, as a reserve of excellence in so many ways, can help us to become more competent in taking the decisions which can improve or destroy our environment. Children and adults need a standard by which to measure their own accomplishments and the opportunity to become familiar with such excellence.

During the Year there will be a number of seminars for owners and teachers in which the educational potential of country houses can be explored with the aim of providing suggestions and resource material. A handbook of "ideas" is about to be issued for the use of owners and it is hoped that education advisers can be appointed to groups of houses.

In order to encourage the setting up of a more permanent framework for education in country houses, a number of other projects are being organised. These include a "Teach-In" for children on the Civil War, arranged by the King's Army and the Roundhead Association. There will be history camps, holiday courses and number of competitions for children. It is also hoped that the Year will see the start of a children's club especially for those interested in history and the arts.

John Hodgson

The Country House Estate and Education

While Heritage Education Year is intended to stimulate interest in our fine houses through an intensive programme of events, competitions and so on, the "Country House Estate and Education" project is taking a rather longer term view. Supported by grants from the Department of the Environment and elsewhere, the project will be concentrating solely on the development of permanent educational services in Country Houses and on their estates.

Even in the present difficult period of economic restrictions, great progress can be made in this field. These houses and their estates present perhaps one of the largest untapped educational resources in our country today. While the House itself often reflects the finest classical architecture of its period, the cottages and villages on its estate often provide excellent examples of vernacular architecture of many periods. The estate lands constitute some of the most beautiful examples of the formal English landscape and contain farms, woodland, sea coast, rivers, lakes, ponds, streams - a wealth of opportunities for environmental education.

What the owners lack, on the whole, is a knowledge of the requirements of education. The project seeks to overcome this difficulty in two ways - firstly by direct advice to owners, and secondly by establishing links between the owners and appropriate education authorities.

The first steps have already been taken. Members of the Historic Houses Association have received a questionnaire which will indicate which owners wish to co-operate and what resources they have to offer. An Education Handbook for owners will be published in November.

Once questionnaires are analysed, details of the project will be circulated to Education Authorities in an effort to enlist their support.

The great advantage of this project is that all the resources necessary for its success already exist. It will not

require capital investment, additional teachers, etc. It will succeed through the co-operation of all interested parties and anyone who would like to participate, or who requires further information should contact Graham Carter, Countryside Education Trust, Beaulieu Manor, Hampshire SO4 7ZN (Beaulieu (0590) 612345)

Graham Carter

EXMOOR & NOTTS

The Countryside Commission's two experimental projects to produce interpretive plans for large areas are now both under way.

Terry Robinson, formerly of Cheshire County Council, is working with the Exmoor National Park authority. His project aims to produce in three years a realistic plan capable of implementation within the financial and manpower resources available. It will be flexible, capable of updating and of incorporating the aims and recommendations of the National Park Plan now being prepared. Through a consultative committee of interested organisations the project hopes to promote co-operation in the area by including, where possible, existing and proposed interpretive provisions.

In Nottinghamshire, Ruth Tillyard, a geography graduate from Keele University, is working in the Leisure Services Department to the County Council. Her project will aim to stimulate the provision of interpretive services and to promote co-operation between the many bodies already concerned with interpretation in the County.

The Countryside Commission hope that the methods used in these projects, as well as the findings specific to each area, will be of value elsewhere. Members interested in the projects are welcome to contact Terry (Dulverton 665), Ruth (Nottingham 866555 x350) or Ray Taylor (Cheltenham 21381 x218).

Ray Taylor

Subscription Renewal

Page 13 is a subscription renewal form. Are you one of last year's members who should be completing it NOW?

Llywernog



At Llywernog Silver-Lead Mine Museum the National Conservation Corps have just completed several interesting projects including the clearance of rubbish from the main engine shaft to where the 'Old Mens' workings were intersected. These shallow stopes date from around 1790 when the first lease on the mine was granted by Sir Pryse Pryse of Gogerddan, one of the great landowners of North Cardiganshire. Parts of the 19th century pumping system were also located. In other parts of the site Corps members cleared debris from the pumping wheel pit and unearthed additional flooring horizons on the site of the dressing mill.

The winter development programme for the Mine, at Ponterwyd near Aberystwyth, includes the completion of restoration work on the rock crusher house and the provision of an audio-visual facility on the top floor, together with the restoration and re-erection of a 50ft diameter overshot water-wheel on permanent loan from the Trevithick Society in Cornwall. The wheel itself is Welsh, cast at the Howells Iron works in Hawarden, Flintshire in 1865. Considerable restoration is necessary owing to its delapidated condition and the entire project is likely to cost £12,000.

The Mid-Wales Mining Museum Ltd has in addition purchased the old Aberystwyth Cliff Railway, one of the longest funicular lines in Great Britain, running almost 900ft to the summit of Constitution Hill at the north end of Aberystwyth's promenade. It dates from 1896 and has some splendid Victorian features in architecture and engineering. The railway became functional again in July and carried 20,000 passengers during the season.

Peter Lloyd Harvey

Developments in Sherwood Forest

BACKGROUND

Medieval Sherwood Forest stretched from Nottingham to Worksop, covering one third of Nottinghamshire. Birklands, the larger part of Sherwood Country Park, an area of ancient oak and birch wood just north of Edwinstowe, together with the adjoining Bilhaugh is the last almost unaltered remnant of the former royal forest and is now a site of special scientific importance as a rare example of a semi-natural oak woodland. Together with the neighbouring country parks of Clumber and Rufford, and Thoresby Hall, the area attracts over one and a quarter million visitors each year. Visitor pressures are massive. Nearly a quarter of a million people, mostly from Nottingham, Doncaster, Sheffield and Derby visit Sherwood Country Park each year. In past times almost all used the same path to the Major Oak, a venerable tree with associations with Robin Hood and the main object of their visit to the park. This steady tramp of feet together with indiscriminate parking, was eroding the forest at an alarming rate. Surface vegetation was being worn away, exposing bare sandy ground which was then disintegrating into gulleys deepening by several inches each season, a process helped by the recent lengthy spell of dry springs which restricted vegetative growth. A drastic situation called for wide sweeping remedies. Clearly the forest could not be left to its own devices.

UNUSUAL SOLUTION

Deliberate channelling of the majority of visitors on to hard surfaces was called for if erosion was to be halted. Interpretation of the forest to widen the visitors' experience also had to include presentation and explanation of the conservation measures adopted. Inevitably this determined that any interpretive facilities would be concentrated, and this posed considerable problems of design. The particular importance of the Sherwood Forest Visitor Centre is that it is one of the very few such places to have been

designed from the ground up, and not as a conversion from an existing building with all the attendant compromises. It represents an unusual solution to the problem of building a visitor centre in woodland. Instead of a conventional building, the designers opted for a series of individual units around a central open space. The structural units are also unconventional in that they are largely made of reinforced concrete so their design owes as much to civil engineering as to current building practice. A particularly close collaboration between the architect and the landscape designer has led to structures blending unobtrusively into the forest scene.

FIRST THOUGHTS

With the decision to develop a centre, clearly some sort of shelter was required to protect the displays and other facilities from the weather, but need the structure be anything more? Was a conventional building necessary? Would all the needs be satisfied by a series of simple shelters in the wood? Here was an opportunity to design an "architectural" solution, but this was deliberately avoided. Initially each



[photo: Notts County Council]

shelter was seen as a round hut with a pitched roof and earth walls (these became known as "pods" and the name has stuck). Unfortunately structural calculations showed the roof would not be stable unless it was anchored more firmly. Rather than revert to a conventional building, it was decided to investigate the use of reinforced concrete for the walls, buried inside landscaped earth banks. For practical reasons the pods could not be circular, so the octagon shape was chosen as a

near approximation. This would also provide interesting design possibilities particularly inside any exhibition pods. To avoid damaging tree roots it was decided to forego conventional foundations and build instead on a concrete raft set at ground level, so the original airy turf banks were eventually replaced by stout concrete walls constructed to a thickness and strength more usually found in civil engineering works. There were a number of useful consequences to this design. By replacing a conventional building with a number of small pods, their impact would be reduced and be more in scale with the woodland settings. The pods were set around a central compound which took the place of the corridors and assembly areas in a conventional building. The individual pods would be positioned to avoid existing trees, thus retaining a mature landscape feature to help anchor the pods into the new earth mounding and planting. Thus by attempting a functional design from first principles a solution was arrived at only possible with 20th century skills.

INTERPRETATION AT THE CENTRE

Interpretative facilities at the centre were designed to cater for a variety of interests and, followed in sequence, provide an overall picture of Sherwood Forest. Firstly the main interpretative display tells the story of man in the forest; secondly the paths provide first hand experience of the forest today and thirdly the centre provides an opportunity for specialist interests to be pursued through programmes in the auditorium or by reference works or by purchases in bookshops.

THE WALK-THROUGH

Interpretative display is housed in a linked set of four pods. Each pod has an individual theme and all four follow in sequence. The themes are:-

- 1 The Norman Hunting Forest and Robin Hood
- 2 The destruction of the forest
- 3 The rise of the Dukeries and the forest's partial renewal
- 4 Modern pressures

This carefully researched display has been designed so that the visitor may walk through in about half an hour and

listen to the ballads of Robin Hood, make the acquaintance of the Dukes and Barons who wrought drastic changes in Sherwood, be introduced to the basic elements of today's forest - wood, and stone, water and coal - and be brought face to face with modern pressures and pollution. Material is presented pictorially on display boards, three dimensionally in static, working or perspective models, and by use of artefacts, by sight, sound and physical contact, in a controlled environment free of other distractions such as might have been encountered in the depth of an undisturbed forest.

Leaving the display, the network of paths through the oaks, birch, heath and grassland of the Birklands provides variety and also achieves the management objective of relieving the visitor load on the old path to and from the Major Oak, now abandoned and being restored. On returning to the centre the visitor can choose to browse in the bookshop, consult the range of natural history works held there or see a slide-tape programme on the natural history of ancient oak woodland in the 60 seat auditorium, which is comprehensively equipped for audio-visual presentations.

OTHER AMENITIES

Light refreshments and snacks are available, a very popular feature which does pose managerial problems, and the complex also houses the country park rangers' office, the nerve centre of the service responsible for the day to day management of the visitor centre and for interpretation, education and visitors information. Working within the constraints set by the conservation importance of Sherwood Forest, new planting has been restricted to a limited range of native species - oak, birch, rowan, yew and blackberry - undersown with a special mixture made up of grasses already growing in the woodlands, excluding all rye grasses and other agricultural or sports turf varieties.

THE VISITORS

This centre was designed with the average Sherwood Forest Country Park visitor in mind, a visitor travelling

continued on page 22

in a family or larger party intent on seeing the Major Oak but not disposed to wander further in the forest, coming only once a year perhaps as part of a more lengthy trip or tour and staying for one and a half to two hours. On the other hand, Rufford Country Park about two and a half miles away caters for quite a different type of visitor. The park itself, of meadow, quiet lake and woodland, together with an abbey, parts of which are an Ancient Monument under the guardianship of the Department of the Environment, is in perhaps a more contemplative mood, a place where people stroll through the meadow or sit on logs in the woods to listen to the birds. The Rufford Visitors (70,000 of them) come in much smaller groups, stay longer (three hours or more) and return frequently (five or six times each year).

RUFFORD COUNTRY PARK

One of the objectives in the development of country parks is to give each park a flavour of its own. At Rufford this will take the form of a less intensive park associated with the crafts and with additional facilities for studying and interpreting the countryside. It is proposed to convert existing buildings to house five craft workshops, namely pottery, glass blowing, wood turning, weaving and printing/paper making, with an associated art or display gallery. Themes being considered are:

Craftsmen on the estate - relating this theme to the interest created by the workshops and using the craftsmen to help with interpretation:

Food production, its use and its impact on the landscape, based on the 19th century kitchen and garden records of the estate:

Art in the countryside using the many art and craft media to interpret the landscape, its artefacts and habitats.

Other buildings are to be converted into restaurant and refreshment facilities, fieldstudies laboratory, studio workshop for preparing large displays or as additional exhibition space and classrooms/public auditorium. Work on this project will start in 1977.

M G Flinton

membership

The current annual membership fee is £2. (Renewals NOW please)

Members who joined since the last issue are listed below:

- John ALLWOOD
- R W BRADBEER
- E A J BUCKHURST, Snowdonia National Park
- M E BURKETT
- J A BUSBY, Northern Ireland Department of the Environment
- A E CLARK, English Tourist Board
- H F W CORY, Wiltshire Folk Life Society.
- C V CURL (Miss)
- R DAYNES
- J M EDWARDS (Miss)
- Jane FOTHERGILL, Dartington Amenity Research Trust
- Elizabeth GOODHEW (Dr), Horniman Museum, Keeper of Educational Services.
- Shelagh GREGORY, Peak District National Park
- Peter HUMPHRIES
- H JACKSON (Miss), Weald and Downland Museum
- Clive JOHNSTONE
- Robert JONES, ASDC, Forestry Commission
- John D LAMBE
- Robert LEE
- John D LEEFFE, BSc(Forestry), MIFor, Forestry Commission, East England Conservancy, Recreation Planning Officer.
- David LEWIS
- Eirion T LEWIS, Wales Tourist Board
- Sue J D MACKENZIE (Miss), MA(Geog), MSc(Conservation), Countryside Commission For Scotland, Assistant Planning Officer.
- L M MENDOZA
- Ian MERCER, Dartmoor National Park
- P A C NEATE, Tatton Park
- I C PARKIN
- Anne-Mary PATERSON, Nature Conservancy Council, Interpretative Liaison Officer - South East Region.
- C L PRIOR
- A M RICHARDS (Mrs), National Museum of Wales
- Sally ROUSHAM
- Ian E RUTHERFORD, Llechwedd Slate Caverns
- D S SORRELL, Leicestershire Museums, Art Gallery & Records Service
- Jane TAYLOR (Mrs)

● Ruth TILLYARD, BA, Leisure Services Department, Notts County Council, Project Officer, Interpretive Plan for Nottinghamshire.

take note!

Stan Frost writes: Static displays are valuable for many purposes and perhaps the lessons learnt at the University of Salford may be useful for others.

Hessian-covered chipboard, with improvised tubular stands, is used instead of more expensive commercially-available products. Letraset or photographically lettered headings are cut as card mounted strips and used with selected black and white A4-size photographs. We have used key words to head displays on a grid-like arrangement. This not only provides a useful training exercise for people new to display, but also gives a flexible information system.

Harold Cory, Chairman of the Wiltshire Folk Life Society writes that a feasibility study for a Centre for the society has now been completed.

It is hoped to enter into a lease with the National Trust of the post-medieval barn and out-building complex at Avebury. Anyone interested or with specialised knowledge is invited to contact Mr. Cory at High Street, Close Gate, Salisbury (Tel Salisbury 5308).

Terry Stevens has been invited to address the American Association of Interpretive Naturalists at their annual conference in Texas, April 1977.

In conjunction with this, he would like to receive news and details of any new interpretive projects in Britain - particularly in Wales - and especially those with an interpretation element used as a specific management technique. His address is "Dolwerdd", Station Road, Maenclochog, Dyfed.

The Winchester Conference produced at least one bonus for member Diana Raggett. As a result of meeting Peter Moore, there, she now has a one-year 'job creation' post as interpretive assistant on The Sandstone Trail in Cheshire.

In the Countryside Commission report, *Public Transport for Countryside Recreation*, DART suggests there will

be a resurgence of interest in using public transport for visiting the countryside. They advocate contact at national level between the Commission and the tourist boards and transport authorities to ensure a climate sympathetic to the provision of transport for recreational traffic.

Michael Quinion (Sight-Sound Productions) is now preparing the audio-visual contributions to the Museum of Tennis (opening at the All-England Club next year). Other current jobs include two slide-tape programmes for the Museum of London and the re-creation of the Carboniferous Era in sound and light for the Ulster Museum.

Frank Saunders sent us recently some examples of an attractive group of leaflets on various aspects of South Yorkshire including Abbeys, Castles etc.

In July the Minister of State, Treasury, set up an interdepartmental review to review, in the light of changes since 1972 in capital taxation and in the grant arrangements through the dedication scheme, the taxation and grant arrangements for private forestry taking account of economic, fiscal and environmental considerations - and to report by 31 December 1976. Written evidence was invited from interested organisations.

Just too late for the last issue we heard that Leicester had become the first industrial city to have a team of qualified city guides. The scheme, jointly sponsored by Leicester City Council and the East Midlands Tourist Board, began in June with a series of guided walks.

Construction work began on the Forestry Commission Visitor Centre at Bwlch Nant-yr-Arian near Aberystwyth in July of this year and it is hoped to have the Centre open early in 1977. It will provide visitors to the Rheidol Forest with information about access and places of interest within the forest.

The theme of the interpretive exhibition for the Centre is 'The Impact of Man on the Landscape'. The architects are the National Building Agency, Cardiff and the exhibition and interpretive displays are being designed and prepared by Acme Design, Aberystwyth.

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what's on ... when & where?

First YORK...

The next meeting of the Society will be held in York, from Friday 26 to Sunday 28 November. The theme of the conference will be *The Interpretation of a City*, and visits are being arranged to The Castle Museum, the Heritage Centre and the Undercroft of the Minster. Accommodation has been reserved at the Chase Hotel.

Full details of the programme have been circulated separately.

then Edinburgh

We move north for the following meeting, to Edinburgh where the Annual General Meeting will be held in conjunction with our Spring conference. The dates to note are Friday 2 to Sunday 4 April 1977. Accommodation will be in Edinburgh University Halls of Residence.

SYMPOSIUM

27 Nov, *Recent Studies on Vernacular Building*: a one-day symposium to be held at Southampton University, sponsored by the University Department of Archaeology and the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments. Chairman, R.W. McDowall, Secretary of RCHM.

Speakers will contribute on recent work in Dorset, Hampshire, Sussex and Wiltshire. Professor M.W. Barley will lecture on late vernacular house types,

TAKE NOTE *continued from page 23*

Strathclyde Leisure and Recreation Department has just produced a folder of seven simple but effective leaflets on the Forth and Clyde Canal. The prize must go to *Memories*, which lets canal folk speak for themselves. Much of the compilation and distribution of the folder has been done by interested voluntary groups.

The Council of Museums in Wales has assisted both the Forestry Commission and West Glamorgan County Council in setting up interpretive displays at the Afan Argoed Countryside Park.

and Mr. Eric Mercer (whose "English Vernacular Houses" was published last year) will speak on recording schemes.

Fee for the day, which will start at 10 am, is £1.50 (including coffee and tea but not lunch; please enclose s.a.e if receipt required). Programme will be sent after November 1st to those attending.

Please notify D.A. Hinton, Department of Archaeology, The University, Southampton (from whom application forms giving the above information may be obtained). Cheques should be made payable to Hampshire Building Record.

CONFERENCE

3-5 Dec, *50 Million People on an Island*: Great Britain is an island, an ecological system and a planning resource. How do these attributes conflict? How should they correspond? Constructive appraisal of the ecological movement in planning is the theme of this conference. Details from (s.a.e): Peter Townsend, Principal, Peak National Park Study Centre, Losehill Hall, Castleton, Derbyshire S30 2WB.

COURSE

31 Jan-6 Feb 1977, *Countryside Interpretation Training Course*: a joint venture sponsored by the Countryside Commission in conjunction with the Peak Park and neighbouring local authorities. Details from (s.a.e): Peter Townsend, Principal, Peak National Park Study Centre, Losehill Hall, Castleton, Derbys

In the Countryside Commission's 8th Annual Report, the Commission expressed their relief that the Government were not to resort to severe cutbacks in countryside expenditure. They stated: *This may have been no more than a recognition of the fact that any cut would contribute minimally to the main purpose but we prefer to think that the Government accept the importance of maintaining a minimum of investment to prevent irretrievable damage to our landscape heritage and to safeguard the production of food and fibre by encouraging the provision of visitor facilities in the countryside.*