

society for the interpretation of Britain's heritage

Interpretation in Devon

A complete report of the Society's recent conference in Devon appears on later pages of this newsletter. However, the paper given by our Chairman was worthy of reprinting as our leading article. It pulls no punches, but does reveal Geraint Jenkins' deep and respected concern that a region must do itself full justice in interpretational terms. His comments, criticisms and compliments could equally be applied, in general terms, to regions of the country other than Devon.

The main purpose of an interpretational scheme, whether it be in the form of a museum, visitor centre or preserved site, is to explain the character and personality of a village, locality, town or region. Many facilities in Britain, although drawing thousands of visitors, cannot be strictly described as interpretation centres, and there are many in Devon that do not really fulfil the role of interpretation. Despite the fact that the County of Devon boasts a large number of interpretational facilities, at the moment it is almost impossible for anyone to point to more than a handful that really contribute to an interpretation of Devon.

The Babbacombe Model Village, for example, though located near Torquay, has nothing to do with Devon, while the Exeter Maritime Museum, despite its excellence, contributes little to our knowledge of the maritime tradition of Devon; it could be located anywhere in Britain with a suitable stretch of water.

J. Geraint Jenkins

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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.

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The Newsletter

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ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

Graham Carter of Beaulieu tells us that 44 experts from 14 countries participated in the third Council of Europe International Study Conference on Environmental Education which highlighted the potential of the urban setting for education and recognised the interdependency of the city and its wider environment.

The Bristol Conference was a follow-up to the Study Conferences organised by the Council of Europe in the Netherlands (1975), and in Denmark (1976) during which participants were confronted with the ecology and regional ethnology approaches in environmental education. All three Conferences have stressed the active educational methods and sought for means of increasing public awareness of the environmental problems of today.

In their conclusions the participants in the Bristol Conference:

- 1) Reaffirm that environmental education is not an additional subject but an approach which is relevant to all curriculum subjects in an interdisciplinary way to reach change of attitude in terms of awareness and responsibility for the environment;
- 2) Stress that the effectiveness of public participation in environmental planning and education depends on instituting channels of communication at all levels so as to develop the mutual understanding essential to a useful dialogue, and amenity groups should be encouraged by central and local government to play an important part in this process;
- 3) Recall that education to facilitate increased public participation in urban environmental issues is an item which requires further study, preferably by means of a Council of Europe workshop which should deal with the new approaches in this field and which should aim at reaching decision makers at all levels;
- 4) Welcome the proposed publication by the Council of Europe of a Handbook on Environmental Education in an Urban Setting.

INTERPRETATION IN DEVON

continued from page 1

The Furze Farm Park at Bridgewater in the north of the county, to quote another example, draws thousands of visitors every year, but it has little to contribute to our understanding of the agrarian history of North Devon.

The museums of Devon, with the exception of those at Exeter and Plymouth are small and most are run by enthusiastic bands of amateurs without professional assistance. Some of the small museums, as at Tiverton and Kingsbridge, are excellent, but co-ordination of museums in a fully comprehensive county service would be highly desirable. Although the Area Museum Service for the South West of England under the direction of Alex Cumming has done excellent work in developing numerous small museums in the county there is no real substitute for a fully comprehensive, properly financed, properly staffed museum service.

DEVON MISSED OUT

Devon undoubtedly missed out with the reorganisation of local government, for it failed to organise a county museum service as in Leicester, Somerset, Norfolk, Stafford and Cheshire. If, for example, one compares Devon with Norfolk, then one can see that Devon has suffered very badly. In Norfolk, an extensive well-staffed museum service not only administers a chain of museums, but it has also ensured the development of an exciting, all-embracing heritage programme. No development of this kind has taken place in Devon and most of the interpretational facilities have been developed as individual units and there has been no co-ordination of resources.

My plea in Devon, as in other parts of Britain, is for the setting up of a county-wide pattern of development, where museums, nature and heritage trails, preserved sites, farm parks etc can take their rightful places as elements in an over-all plan aimed at explaining the personality of the area that the interpretive facilities represent.

An interpretive facility has to be properly planned: it should be located in a certain place because there are good reasons why it should be there and

not because tourists should happen to be there. For example, a few years ago a plea was put forward to open a corn mill in Ashburton as a tourist attraction. The delightful town of Ashburton was suffering badly from heavy tourist traffic, and it was thought that a preserved corn mill would be an added attraction in the town. The building was not in itself worthy of preservation and little of value to the social historian would be lost if the building were demolished. It was not even a good example of a Devon mill. The machinery within it was mass-produced in the industrial Midlands in the early years of the present century and if the mill were to be preserved at a phenomenal cost, what one would have ended up with would have been an untypical, uninteresting building that could do very little to interpret the life of Ashburton.

SUCH A GOOD ATTRACTION

Can I pose the question? Should one provide a facility because there is tourist pressure on a particular town or village? Or should one provide a facility because there are good ecological or historical reasons for doing so? I believe that as interpreters it is our duty to provide such a good attraction that the visiting public is channelled and perhaps diverted to visit a facility. It is sometimes worrying to discover that however low the standards of presentation, however little one has to show, people still accept them.

In Devon there are one or two private agricultural collections, open to the public, that are a disgrace. Woodworm is rampant, rust reigns supreme, there is no documentation and in a few years time there will be no collection to inspect. Yet those collections draw their thousands of visitors, just because they are there, even though the standards of conservation and presentation are abysmal. Opening a scrap heap to tourists is neither good museum practice nor good interpretation.

FOUR PROJECTS

I should like to concentrate on four projects that I have been concerned with:

- 1) A regional scheme for a museum service in North Devon
- 2) A local museum financed and staffed

by a band of enthusiastic amateurs at Tiverton

- 3) A preserved site of historical importance - Sticklepath Forge
- 4) A farm park - Furze Farm Park at Holsworthy

1) THE NORTH DEVON MUSEUM SCHEME

From an ethnological and historical point of view, North Devon is a fascinating area and something should be done very soon to preserve and record details of the agrarian, maritime and industrial tip of the region, as well as its domestic architecture.

I believe before a regional museum service for North Devon can be set up, before anything except a low-key presentation to the public is planned, that a full scale ethnological survey of the region is vitally important. I believe in any scheme aimed at the interpretation of a region, that an inventory of sites - a study of the elements that all add up to provide the personality of a region - is vitally important. That study need not, in all cases, be an in-depth survey, but no programme of interpretation can be launched without preliminary research work. Indeed I maintain that many interpretive facilities in Britain are meaningless, because the preliminary research work has not been undertaken.

The existing museum service for North Devon is, to say the least, inadequate - the small, poorly financed museums at such places as Barnstable, South Moulton, Ilfracombe and Lynton are without professional or technical staff. Museum buildings are too small, there is complete lack of expertise and even of enthusiasm and little attempt has been made to collect material that demonstrates the personality of North Devon. To me, that is the prime function of a local museum - to collect, to conserve, to display material objects and supplementary information that illustrate the life of the area the museum serves. By doing this, scholars as well as the visiting public can understand and appreciate the personality of the region in question. If there is a demand for a museum service in the area, then the local authorities (the Torridge and the North Devon District Councils) should be responsible for financing that

service. Without even extending the present network of museums, the region could well do with a qualified museum officer with technical assistance to put existing collections in order.

The North Devon Museum Trust has provided an ambitious plan for the development of museums in the area. It is a plan envisaging the establishment of a central museum complex at Barnstable, a maritime museum at Bideford and a museum of agriculture and rural life at Torrington. A modest start has been made, but my main criticism of the scheme is that it is one for setting up museums, where material objects are held up to view and not a fully comprehensive interpretational scheme where museums, preserved sites, nature and industrial trails and craft workshops all have their part to play. Almost certainly the first step should have been the appointment of a project officer to look at the whole region and produce a development plan.

The estuary of the Taw and Torridge lends itself to the development of a maritime interpretation centre, for the estuary with its dependence on shipping is a unique region - it has shipyards and drydocks, warehouses and quayside cottages, sail lofts and rope yards that give the area a unique character. The huge Appledore shipyard displaying remarkable technology, and the small shipyard further downstream where replicas of the Nonesuch and Golden Hind were built could easily be incorporated into an interpretive programme, while the seine-netting for salmon in the estuary would provide an activity of considerable interest to the visitor.

There exists a great deal of photographic material that could be incorporated in a visitor centre, possibly on Bideford quay, and the scheme starts with the advantage that two members of the steering committee are experts on the maritime history of North Devon and have published extensively on the subject. The crafts and industries that depended very heavily on a maritime trade, especially the pottery industry at Barnstable could easily be tied in with the theme of the Sea.

I was never happy about the other part of the North Devon scheme - that of

setting up an agricultural museum in Torrington. A great deal of fieldwork and the careful selection of material for exhibition needs to be undertaken before a proper museum is set up. Mr. Philip Jenkinson of Alscott Farm, Shebbear, has in the true tradition of the amateur collector assembled together a vast collection that includes over 100 ploughs and 30 tractors that have taken over every building and every open space on Mr. Jenkinson's farm. This is *not* a museum - it is an undocumented unconserved collection. Many of the implements are incomplete; woodworm and rust are rampant and none of the items is documented. The collection is now open for viewing by the public but I maintain that, unless every single item is documented, the collection is almost useless. It is not the sole concern of a museum to hold objects up to view; it has a duty to conserve. It has a duty to study the objects in its collections. This is the main reason why I disapprove of the Alscott Farm Agricultural Museum - it is not a museum because it is failing in its duty to conserve and document the material in its care.

2) TIVERTON MUSEUM

Obviously, for financial reasons, the central museum complex at Barnstable will not be developed in the foreseeable future and I wish only that Barnstable had the enthusiasts of Tiverton Museum, a museum that could serve as a pattern for developments in other parts of Britain. In 17 years, without any professional staff or full time assistance, a body of enthusiastic amateurs has assembled together a remarkable collection of local material. As a result, I believe that Tiverton Museum has the best collection of material in the West of England - a wealth of material that truly reflects the life of a small rural area.

In 1973 I spent a little time in Tiverton on behalf of the Area Museums Council for the South-West. The museum occupies the premises of the old National School and the buildings are not at all suitable for the systematic display of material relating to the life and culture of the West Country town. At that time, the yard of the school was a wilderness and I felt that one of the

first tasks was to bring some order into the chaos that existed there. I was very impressed indeed with the wealth of material relating to the Tiverton district, but I was surprised to learn that collecting really started only in 1959.

I made a number of recommendations, the principal ones being:

I recommended that a full-time museum officer be appointed to build on the solid foundation already laid down. The whole collection should be catalogued and fully documented and more relevant material should be collected. A local museum should never stop collecting but the scientific collection of objects for preservation is essential. Agricultural implements that are well represented in the collection could, if indiscriminately collected, land a small museum in all kinds of conservation and storage problems. In collecting this category of material, the chief criterion must be to select and collect that material which illustrates the life of the district that the museum serves. The museum is particularly rich in agricultural vehicles and all those collected are representative of the types used in Devon.

It is gratifying to see that a small, privately-owned museum is ready to collect large objects that need special storage, conservation and display facilities. The staff must ensure that any more vehicles collected are truly representative of the local traditions of wheelwrighting, for there is an inherent danger of becoming bogged down with a heap of unmanageable material.

In 1973, I felt that I would have liked to see much more material in the museum relating to the development of local industry. The textile industry in particular has always been of great importance in the town and the history and development of this industry in Tiverton differs considerably from its development in other parts of the country. It would be unthinkable to mount a display of local life without paying attention to its most important industrial undertaking.

I also recommended that, in any future development of the museum, ample storage space for a reserve collection is very

important. In a museum that goes in for collecting agricultural and industrial objects a large proportion of objects must of necessity be stored. In 1973 too much material was being shown. The Amory Gallery, where the history of Tiverton is traced, was far too full and what greeted the visitor to the museum was a forest of obsolete cases containing too much material making it difficult to absorb the story of the town. By careful selection of objects combined with the careful use of the valuable collection of old photographs, posters, etc, a first class exhibition could be mounted.

On revisiting Tiverton Museum recently, I felt that too much material was still being shown. The Museum's main function is the interpretation of the character and personality of the town and its environs, so that local people, as well as visitors to the district, are made aware of its heritage. The collections are very rich but the visitor to the museum must be very dedicated and interested if he is to unravel the strands of the fascinating history of the West of England; the collections are first-class but the displays could well do with the services of a trained designer. The dedicated band of amateur workers, under the leadership of Mr. W.P. Authers, are to be congratulated on their work. Even the conservation work that is very efficiently carried out on all the exhibits is carried out on a regular basis by volunteers.

Within the last two years, new buildings to house the collection of agricultural vehicles and the collection of local industrial material have been built. The Transport Gallery, in particular, is very well designed and the exhibits within it are fully documented on comprehensive display labels. The vehicles have been well conserved and the gallery itself is a most pleasant, light and clean building that people will enjoy visiting. The Industrial Gallery is also new, and material relating to local industrial undertakings as well as the fascinating story of the local canal is presented in some detail. Again this is a first-class room although the visitor may feel that too much material is being shown.

3) FURZE FARM PARK

This farm park at Bridgerule near Holsworthy is a different kettle of fish, and I suspect that it is an amenity set up by private individuals to take advantage of the heavy tourist influx into North Devon in the summer months. Of course animals, even rare breeds, demand food and shelter when there are no visitors around and a farm park such as this, that has few visitors after September, can be in considerable financial straits. Sometimes I wonder whether we are having too many farm parks.

The collection of farm animals is quite a good one, although the collection does not relate specifically to Devon. As usual, the land is divided into a number of stock pens, each pen fenced in with barbed wire. I hate barbed wire, as I am sure everyone else whose best suit can get caught in the barbs hates barbed wire. The labelling of each pen is poor and distinct improvements are necessary both in the context and method of labelling.

In addition to animals, the Furze Farm Park has an extensive collection of agricultural implements and tools most of which are in need of conservation. An interpretive display has recently been set up, but I suspect that this has been done without professional advice.

Furze Farm Park for some reason or other worries me. The collections of both animals and of implements are quite impressive, but perhaps the fact that the park has nothing at all to do with the heritage of Devon is a reason why it is not quite authentic.

4) STICKLEPATH FORGE

On the other hand this is really a piece of Devon. It is concerned with an important aspect of Devonian agrarian history and the remarkable family that operate it are Devonian through and through. The Finch Foundry which operated from 1814 to 1960 was concerned with the production of agricultural hand tools - scythes, sickles, billhooks, spades and shovels. The machinery, most of which was still in place, was powered by the River Taw and the trip hammers and grinding wheels together with all

the water-driven machinery found in the forge have been beautifully restored by the ingenious Bob Barron, whose family were engaged in the manufacture of hand tools for generations.

On my visits to Sticklepath, I felt that I was looking not at a piece of museum technique of display, but at a real foundry where the essential of the farm and the home were being made. This to me proves the success of the museum - it is a piece of living history and not an exhibition, and the personal involvement of the Barrons and the Pynes in the project is a never-to-be-forgotten experience. Even the formal display of objects made by the foundry are in keeping with the remainder of the establishment - the displays are almost like a page from a trade catalogue where the products are illustrated and is unlike any formal case display that I know.

This I feel is absolutely correct, as long as the objects exhibited in the small gallery are those of the type made at the foundry.

What really strikes me at Sticklepath is the integrity of Bob Barron and his family. It would have been very easy in a place like that to over-interpret the foundry, with the result that a very valuable resource would have been destroyed. I hope that the Finch Foundry will never be over-interpreted.

The Trust that are looking after Sticklepath are doing a marvellous job of work and no effort should be spared to encourage the development of the project. In my view, the tools and implements of industry are as important as are pieces of porcelain and pictures placed in a gallery and unless something is done very soon to save these ordinary things, the opportunity will be lost for ever.

The wave of urbanisation and standardisation is reaching even the furthestmost corner of the British Isles and a way of life is gradually fading, and almost unnoticed, from the scene. The collection of materials, the preservation of traditional skills and the recording and presentation of distinctive local and regional cultures is a task of great urgency. That is what regional interpretation is all about.

Hope for Woodlands?

Woodland areas, whether natural or the result of early plantings, are an intrinsic part of our countryside, and have played a continuous role in our heritage. John Campbell, a director of the Economic Forestry Group, tells of some rays of hope for the private woodland owner.

Private woodland owners in the UK have generally welcomed the modest improvements in Government support for the industry which have resulted largely from the recent interdepartmental review. These include increases in the rates of grant for basis II and III dedication schemes and the introduction of a small woods planting scheme which emphasises the planting of hardwoods in the lowlands. The basis III scheme has been extended to existing woodlands, particularly where hardwood areas can be brought to a productive state by selective planting and natural regeneration, and now allows planting of Caledonian pine in special areas to attract grants at the rates of hardwoods.

On the fiscal side, some equally modest concessions relating to Capital Transfer Tax have been given: woodlands need no longer to be dedicated to attract the special reliefs afforded under Schedule 9 of the 1975 Finance Act, and areas of outstanding natural beauty such as the Chilterns may now be treated for tax purposes in much the same way as nationally important works of art and architecture, and, subject to fairly stringent conditions, may be exempt from CTT. More recently, in the final stages of the debate on the 1977 Finance Bill, the Government has undertaken to consider the possibility of allowing the 30% business relief to the sale proceeds of timber where disposal takes place after death.

Taken overall, these measures should lead to some increase in the levels of private planting schemes, and will do much to enhance the amenity aspect. The position remains, however, that until "Valuation at Death" is accepted by the Government as the basis for CTT on woodlands, confidence in the future prospects of the private forestry industry cannot be fully restored.

FARM OPEN DAYS

Terry Stevens of the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority sent us this report.

"We have spent two fantastic weeks in Pembrokeshire, but this was undoubtedly the highlight" - a Newcastle family talking about Pantithel Open Day.

This type of comment both spoken and written, positively brought home the benefit of sponsoring the two farm open days organised by the National Park Authority, in conjunction with the Pembrokeshire Federation of Young Farmers Clubs, National Farmers Union and ADAS, this summer as an extension of the Walks and Talks Programme.

The months of careful preparation ensured that all eventualities and contingencies had been accounted for, except of course for the weather. Two farms were chosen early in 1977, which were able to illustrate farming operations typical of those found in Pembrokeshire. The first Open Day at Skerry Back, Gurfreston involved an intensive dairying unit at which the visitors were able to experience the story of milk production. The clement weather on 8th August proved very suitable for a farm visit by the public and from the numbers arriving during the first 1½ hours of opening we were ensured of a large attendance. In fact, by 4pm over 850 people had been welcomed on the farm.

There was a different situation at the second open day where heavy prolonged showers and gale force winds throughout the day on 25th August threatened to dampen the prospects for a repeat performance and at one stage cancelling the Pantithel Open Day was considered. The presence of visitors long before opening at 11am, and the enthusiasm of all concerned ensured that this pessimism was soon dispelled. The availability of a large cow shed in which to concentrate demonstrations of hand and machine sheep shearing, carcass butchery, storing the wool, and so on, kept visitors dry during the showers, whilst the intervals between the rain allowed sheep dog handling and other outdoor activities to take place. The eventual total of 400 visitors was far

beyond the expectations of all concerned, with many staying 2/3 hours, far and above recorded lengths of stay in similar conditions.

Obviously evaluation of the success of the Farm Open Days project does not lie simply with the total numbers of visitors although this does give clear indication of the demand for such interpretive ventures. The success had to be monitored by several factors including the experience visitors had at Pantithel or Skerry Back, and whether the objectives of staging the Open Days were fulfilled. In order that the evaluation and appraisal process can be comprehensively achieved it is intended to hold a seminar involving all concerned with the Open Days (including the farmers, the stewards and the organisers) to discuss exactly these points and to establish guidelines for the future. A detailed report will be produced.

There are many intangible benefits which are a direct outcome of the Open Days, and which cannot be assessed in cost/benefit terms. Perhaps the most obvious and important in this respect has been the splendid co-operation between the National Park Authority, the farming organisations and farming community within the Park. The goodwill developed out of this exercise has undoubtedly done much to improve the National Park Authority's relationship with its neighbours.

Already one of the farmers has invited us back to his farm for another Open Day any time in the future.

Open Waterways

It's all good news these days from the British Waterways Board. With the re-opening in August, to through traffic, of the Caledonian Canal (after ten months' repair work) and the re-opening in October of the Busworth Tunnel on the Oxford Canal, the BWB are also involved with plans to improve the Sheffield and South Yorkshire Navigation. In partnership with the South Yorkshire County Council, they hope to get an EEC grant or loan to carry out work allowing 400 ton barges to reach Rotherham.

The wheels of history - as of fortune - turn slowly, but surely!

IRONBRIDGE

THE GOTHIC WAREHOUSE

Ruth Tillyard recently visited the Interpretive Centre, housed in a former warehouse, at Ironbridge Gorge. Her reactions were mixed.

This new Interpretive Centre, in a central position relative to the various attractions of Coalbrookdale, Ironbridge and Blists' Hill, is intended to give an introduction to the whole area. It is a fine building, well restored and in a good position to do this.

The available space has been used cleverly, with a good overall design, making circulation easy and effective. About a quarter of the area is devoted to a concourse and sales area, and another quarter to the auditorium. The layout is immediately comprehensible, which helps people to get the most out of the place.

The first display pulls one naturally towards it, and whets the appetite for what is to come. The subject matter is mostly comments from past industrialists and visitors and links cleverly into the AV programme. The waiting area for this is flanked by a life-size model of a furnace, which is just slightly on the plastic-y side.

A FAMILIAR TOCCATA

The AV programme, lasting 12 minutes on a single screen, back-projected by a dissolve unit, is mediocre. It consists largely of read quotes from industrialists and their associates (eg Abraham Darby and his wife), to a background of black and white prints. Sometime after these have lost their novelty and become boring, full colour takes over. The Coalbrookdale/Ironbridge area was one of exciting vitality and action, but the slide programme does not bring this out at all. The sound track, a somewhat familiar toccata for organ, is bad when one considers the marvellous noises that could be used.

The major part of the exhibition seems to be a medley of Victoriana, with little text. It has a well-designed display of interesting objects and mock-up portions of rooms, the latter,

partly simulating upstairs rooms, revealing as to construction, and allowing more to be fitted into a given space, but reminiscent of a doll's house, and therefore not alive, because of being severed. It gives a fascinating general impression of Victorian domestic life, relevant to Ironbridge in the sense that this is a very important period for that place, but not a very useful central theme to help the visitor understand the area as a whole.



Two large bay windows have interesting exhibits, one dealing with the use of the warehouse and the other, overlooking the river, on Severn rivercraft. Finally, one comes to a long wall display which the whole centre should really be about. It has a series of small panels, each devoted to another attraction in the area, although each is not related to the rest. The exit returns one to the concourse.

AN INSPIRING STORY

Ironbridge is a unique and fascinating area which has a really inspiring story to tell. Here was the major contribution to the world's Industrial Revolution, and, while one cannot criticise the excellent professionalism in the design and workmanship, I could not help feeling dismayed that an effort to make the most of a superb opportunity has fallen just short of the mark.

Booklist

Leicester University Bookshop, of Mayor's Walk, Leicester, LE1 7RO, recently sent us their booklist for Museum Studies. They point out the range of titles on interpretation that are included and invite members to send for the list.

Bookshelf

TOURISM DEVELOPMENT, CONSERVATION AND THE ENVIRONMENT. Report of a study visit to Denmark in 1977 by Mr J Hamblin, Development Officer of the Northumbria Tourist Board, and Professor A Travis, Director, Centre for Urban and Regional Studies, The University of Birmingham.

The observational part of the report is interesting but despite a denial reads somewhat as an eulogy. There are few financial details of the folk museums which weaken the evaluation considerably.

The tour was so rapid that the feedback is less than convincing. There is no recognition of previous study tours to Scandinavian Folk Museums of which there have been a number in recent years by members of this Society, eg D Aldridge, M E Burkett, and G Lonsdale. There is no recognition of existing contacts with Scandinavian Museums.

The recommendations for UK institutions have an undigested air about them. They appear as notes for a forthcoming dialogue and the reader is left feeling that the writers should have discussed their ideas with the UK institutions mentioned and incorporated the results before going into print.

MHO

SKY INTERPRETATION RESOURCE BULLETIN
Vol 2 1977

*Men judge by the complexion of the Sky
The state and inclination of the Day*
Shakespeare

This is the second annual bulletin of the American Astronomical Society's "Astronomy in Parks" project supported and financed by the National Science Foundation in an attempt to stimulate interpretive astronomy in the parks.

The series of articles indicates possible subject areas including star myths, legends, weather lore and the Milky Way. In addition materials and sources for the interpreter, together with a list of "Sky people" who are able to offer expert astronomical advice on the sky are presented.

The end result is a clear indication of the potential for expanding sky inter-

pretation in our outdoor park programmes. It is intended as a stimulant for individuals, groups and organisations to get together to use the sky as an "Interpretive domain". Certainly it is a field of interpretation given scant attention in Britain. Maybe those big dark cumulus clouds which all too often loom upon us dampen the possibilities for night sky interpretation but they too have a story which should be told.

Copies of this bulletin may be obtained from: Von del Chamberlain, National Air & Space Museum, Smithsonian Institute, Washington DE 20560.

Terry Stevens

In good time for Christmas, Cambridge University Press has published *A Nature Conservation Review* in two volumes, at £35 and £25 each. It analyses and describes the range of variation in the wild flora and fauna of Britain and identifies the most important sites that should be conserved to exemplify this rich heritage. These key sites have been chosen to represent all the main types of natural and semi-natural vegetation with their characteristic communities of plants and animals.

Directory

Greta Hart, Llewellyn's Dingle, Llanllowell, nr Usk, Gwent. Tel: (029 13) 2545.

Alan Morgan, 26 Ynys Las, Nelson, Glamorgan.

Greta is a graphics artist and Alan a taxidermist. They work as a team in construction/presentation of natural history/geological dioramas.

Creative Arts

Following the request in the last issue of the Newsletter, Tony Escritt gratefully acknowledges those forms already sent to him. They are surprisingly few in number. Anyone responsible for, or knowing about the use of creative arts in interpretive situations in Britain should write to him at Losehill Hall, Peak National Park Study Centre, Castleton, Sheffield S30 2WB.

Bwlch Nant-yr-Arian

THE EXHIBITION

Located on high ground overlooking Bwlch Nant-yr-Arian (the Pass of the Silver Stream) about 10 miles from Aberystwyth, the new Forestry Commission Visitor Centre commands fine views over forest and farmland to the Cardigan Bay coast beyond.

The Centre welcomes visitors to the Rheidol Forest and provides an auditorium, exhibition and a counter sales



and information service. There are facilities for parking and picnics and there is a magnificent five mile walk, called the Jubilee Trail, to Pendam Lake.

The exhibition, researched by the Forestry Commission and designed by Colin Baker and Christopher Bullock RIBA, Acme Design, interprets the theme "Rheidol Forest: Man in the Landscape".

HISTORICAL SEQUENCE

The information is presented in historical sequence, beginning with the arrival of the first settlers who began clearing the primeval forest and whose hill top forts and standing stones can still be seen. We see how the woodlands, which had survived centuries of sheep grazing and agriculture began to disappear rapidly into the furnaces of the lead mining industry, and how a new forest landscape has been created in our own time. Two large drawings which flank the entrance to the exhibition, a primitive man holding a stone axe and a modern man carrying a chain saw, symbolise this theme.



The exhibition designers were commissioned at an early stage in the project so that they were able to collaborate not only with the Forestry Commission's Interpretive Staff, but also with the architects for the Centre (The National Building Agency) on matters of common concern such as finishes, positions of heating and ventilation equipment and the location of the viewing window. A model of the exhibition layout was built to facilitate communications between Acme Design and the Forestry Commission during the design process. It is hoped that the end result bears witness to the degree of co-operative effort involved.

SURPRISE AND DISCOVERY

The exhibition is designed as a continuous band of information which flows around the building on curving partitions built inside the structural shell of the building. The shapes formed by the partitions create a sequence of well-defined spaces through which visitors to the exhibition pass. The design



attempts to introduce elements of surprise and discovery to the sequence such as the unexpected confrontation with the view from a window which is used to dramatic effect for the interpretation of the landscape today. The curving shapes also serve to increase the amount of wall surface available and the space behind them is sometimes used to accommodate three-dimensional exhibits which are viewed through glass.



The exhibition text has been separated into two distinct categories; the main story which expands the theme is printed in a bold type and appears in a standard format throughout the exhibition. The more detailed information dealing with specific subjects and captions to illustrations etc is printed in a smaller type. By this means a visitor may read as much or as little of the detailed information without losing the thread of the main story.

The Bwlch Nant-yr-Arian Visitor Centre is open every day from Easter to 30th September.

Grampian Workshop

REGIONAL INTERPRETIVE PLANNING IN SCOTLAND

A report of a Countryside Interpretation Workshop, held on Deeside in November 1976 and organised jointly by the Countryside Commission for Scotland and Grampian Regional Council, has now been published. In addition to reporting the findings of the Study Groups and proposing an outline framework for interpretation of the Grampian Region, the Report also explains the value of a regional approach to interpretive

planning, describes the methodology of the co-operative planning exercise and discusses many points that are of general application. The Report, *Regional Interpretive Planning in Grampian*, is available (price £1.75 inclusive of postage and packing) from The Countryside Commission for Scotland, Battleby, Redgorton, Perth PH1 3EW and Grampian Regional Council, Woodhill House, Ashgrove Road West, Aberdeen.

The *Grampian Workshop* was the subject of Valerie Thom's talk at the Society's Edinburgh meeting. Now that the report is in black and white, the true value of the exercise can be even better assessed.

It is obviously a model which other regions will do well to study - Geraint Jenkins would like to see something similar in Devon - not for its specific suggestions but for the principles it embraces. Indeed, only one well versed in the Grampian Region's wealth of interest - and of intriguing place names - would be able to comprehend the practicalities.

It might be suggested that very similar conclusions to those in the report could have been reached by one expert interpreter/planner, given weeks to visit people and places, to discuss and counter-discuss. Where the *Workshop* scored was in its compressed timescale and concentrated interchange and exchange of knowledge, ideas and expertise.

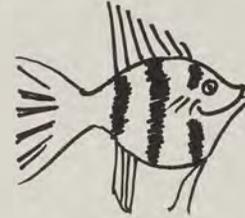
The discipline of bringing together different disciplines - interpreters and those new to the science - has resulted in a plain-spoken, common-sensical report. It seems odd, however, that the interface with formal education is given relatively little prominence.

And going back to those place names, while the *cultural history* of the region was discussed fully, no mention was made of the linguistic heritage which today has produced those fine descriptive names, a range of accents and some fascinating dialect. The sounds of Grampian must not be lost.

That aside, this will be another useful text for those seeking the best means of setting about regional interpretation. If one message comes over, it is that *communication is all*. MHG

in conference DEVON '77

About 60 of us spent a weekend at Dartington Hall, South Devon, to study the relationship between interpretation and other tourist "attractions" and how interpretive facilities can fit into holiday activities.



The first afternoon consisted of a coach tour to two sites representing existing tourist provision - the base line into which interpretation fits. The first of these was Babbacombe Model Village where we wondered at the ingenuity and sense of humour - for example, a 2" TV set working inside a model suburban bungalow. Although many of the buildings on display are "replicas" of local ones, too often the visitors are given the impossible task of guessing which.

Our second stop was Kent's Cavern, where we were met by Jim Bellchambers, DART's geologist, who warned us that the truth was likely to be disguised by the guides. Ours, with a strong Devonshire accent and a seeming desire to imitate an American Ranger, was largely incomprehensible, but entertaining nonetheless. The caves were spectacular enough in their own right.

SPEND THE WHOLE DAY

The final stop was Dartington's new Cider Press Centre, where we admired expensive and lovely craft gifts and exhibits and sniffed the aroma from Crank's Health Food Restaurant (closed). Upstairs was the Dartington Exhibition, which, the manager Chris Palmer explained, has two halves, one devoted to history, the other to an impression of Dartington ("a many-faceted and constantly changing community") by two

photographers. Also provided in the complex is a toyshop, pottery exhibition area, information desk and so on. People often come and spend the whole day there.

Graham Taylor chaired the evening meeting and introduced Michael Quinion as an escapist, whose audio-visual swan song would be the presentation entitled "Three million visitors can't be wrong?" This showed the effect of, and some of the provisions for, this number of visitors every year. (The local population is one million.) There are many facilities but not much interpretation. In general, even where the opportunity exists, such as Totnes, it has not been taken, or the subject matter is totally irrelevant to the area. The locals have a strangely ambivalent attitude towards visitors, and are stuck with a mediocrity that is difficult to get away from. Finally, he asked, "Are commercialism and interpretation compatible?"

ENTERTAINMENT FIRST

In discussion, it was said that it did not matter if the interpretation was not local except if there were a glaring gap in explanation of the local area. Most people are tourists and want entertainment and not history. Morwellham showed that minority facilities do not make money; entertainment should come first, with interpretation as a bonus.

Ian Mercer then gave an entertaining talk on the Interpretive Strategy for Dartmoor. This mostly revolved round the management strategy and the need to dispense information as near the boundary as possible. The major problem was not holidaymakers but local people (50% of visitors) especially those from Plymouth, and the lack of suitable sites at which to interpret. The places where they stopped were not necessarily suitable. He ended by posing the question "How do you reach the people from Plymouth?"

The group suggested that the answer to this was over-expensive TV advertising. Another opinion was that the way to change people's attitudes was while they were still at school, but the effect would take a generation to become obvious.

Next morning we drove by coach across Dartmoor with Ian Mercer to Morwellham.

By all accounts, those in the front coach were well entertained. We stopped to see one site (Newbridge) where the car park had been made more formal to protect the surrounding area, and an information caravan had been parked by courtesy of the Commoners and Lord of the Manor, who now want it to stay because they believe there has been an alteration in people's behaviour.

EVENTS BEHIND THE REMAINS

At Morwellham we were met by the warden, Gary Emerson. Morwellham was a place, said Terry Robinson in introducing him, which did bridge the gap between entertainment and interpretation, and was comparable in many ways with our afternoon venue. Both had thriving ports on the Tamar, with much trade derived from the mineral extraction business, and lime kilning. The aim of interpretation at Morwellham was to introduce the place and explain enough to encourage people to seek the events behind the physical remains, an aim which Emerson thought they fell short of. It is desired to rebuild the port as it was in 1868; it is "halfway between a studios venture and a tourist attraction". He then operated the AV programme (which visitors normally do), made by Michael Quinion, and giving a brief history of the place before we were released to explore the site, with its wheels, museums, trails, picnic sites and so on.

A pleasant lunch in a converted barn at Cotehele was followed by a look round the unspoilt medieval house, and a viewing of another early Michael Quinion slide-tape show pointing out some of the interesting and beautiful aspects of the estate. At the quay we saw lime-kilns again, and a wordy exhibition on shipping produced by the National Maritime Museum. Lastly, at the Mill we saw the working waterwheel not powering the working machinery, a cider press, wheelwright's shop, and pitsaw. Returning to the barn for tea, we were given the opportunity for individual questions to managers.

With sherry before supper and wine with it, there were many for whom alcohol bridged the gap between embarrassment and participation, enabling them to take part in and enjoy folk dancing in Dartington Hall's superb Great Hall.

PLEA FOR A PLAN

Sunday morning consisted of an indoor session, excellently chaired by Michael Dower, who introduced our Chairman Geraint Jenkins as the first speaker, on *Case Studies in North Devon*. In his talk, which appears at the beginning of this newsletter, he made a plea for an interpretive plan for all counties, and particularly for Devon!

Michael Dower summed up by emphasising the value of enthusiasm, courage and persistence, the use of a comprehensive county scheme, the importance of siting, and the necessity to keep museum conservation, documentation and display in that order.

OVERALL COUNTY PLAN

Discussion raised the point of how to persuade private enterprise not to display irrelevancies. It had not been a great success in Exmoor. Money could be a lever. A representative of the Devon Couriers emphasised how they were concerned for the truth but still told people about interesting legends, thereby introducing the romance that people want. Untruths matter much more when they are published. Turning to an overall county plan, it was suggested that there should be overt publicity of places that fit into one, for instance a star-rating system, perhaps administered by the Tourist Boards. The complexity of a county plan in Nottinghamshire was emphasised; a county museums service would be a help but would only reduce a little the number of agencies that have to be catered for. The desirability of combining county plans into a regional, or even a national plan was expressed.

Michael Morpurgo gave an illustrated talk about his "Farms for City Children". It provides a real experience for primary school children from Birmingham, Bristol and London and a focus of study for them and their teachers. Groups of 35 are accommodated for a week and the children play an active part in working this mixed farm. It is important that they are stretched mentally and physically. The location is not suitable for day visits but he finds, in any case, that these do not give involvement.

Another point arising was that the

sheer number of day visits can lead to wear and tear problems as at Croxtheth, and also the farm becomes subordinate to the visitors who then do not see a real situation.

LINKED LOBBIES

We then led into a general discussion (which unfortunately did not bring us back to consideration of the places we had seen on Friday and Saturday). The Chairman said that interpretation linked into very many other fields, and would have a problem holding on to the professionalism it had grasped, and still retain the links. A member from the museum field was worried by the problem of how to reconcile himself with what he wanted and what his committee wanted. In one county, party lines had hardened to the extent that the politicians were no longer concerned to provide people with the best they could. In another, the council had changed from wanting to carry out interpretation itself, to wanting commercial or voluntary interests to come in. To further the cause of interpretation, linked lobbies need to be used.

Interpretation has always been concerned too much with history. Live working situations can also enrich our lives. Returning to the question of quality, it was not too difficult to get grants for capital outlay but if day-to-day management is important in maintaining quality in interpretation, then some organisations need help with the annual account. An unfair difference in grant-aid to different parts of the county was also pointed out.



The conference was brought to an end; after lunch some of us sampled a Dartmoor Guided Walk, and others explored in different ways before returning home.

Ruth Tillyard

take note!

The Countryside Recreation Management Association is arranging a field trip, in February 1978, which will be of interest to SIBH members. It will be based in Cardiff, taking in South Wales. Full details are available from Terry Stevens, Dolwerdd, Maenclochog, Dyfed.

Neil Stamper of Strathclyde Regional Council recently sent us a copy of a new town trail through Old Glasgow, called *Discovering Strathclyde*. He explains that the trail was originally written in BEE-type format for educational use by children. We came across a copy, decided the content was too good for adults to miss and rewrote it with the author for the general public. The Editor betrays his Glaswegian sympathies in agreeing with him.

The Recreation Management Training Committee expects its study will take 2-2½ years to complete. Recognising that this is a long time for something considered to be urgent, the committee will issue an interim report in about a year's time, and will invite discussions on its findings at that point.

Robin Wade is as busy as ever. His practice has been commissioned by the British Museum to re-arrange and design the ground-floor Egyptian Sculpture Gallery. Extensions will be built between the Gallery and the Reading Room bookstacks to display small objects.

Following the completion of the Gothic Warehouse at Ironbridge, work has now started on a major project at the Abraham Darby Great Warehouse at Coalbrookdale. A museum about the Darbys, the Quakers and the early iron industry, it is due to open in May 1979.

The practice has also been asked by the Goldsmiths Company to design a Treasury for Canterbury Cathedral crypt.

Among the many fascinating schemes entered for the Prince of Wales' Award (or, as he may prefer it, Gwobr Tywysog Cymru) is *A Trail of Two Cities* or, rather of two parts of the same city. Two schools in Cardiff, both undertaking voyages of discovery, are producing trails which provide a fascinating

comparison between two parts of the city, Llandaff and Splott, contrasting in their origins and modern day usage. Bishop of Llandaff High School and Willows High School both intend to show their work to each other soon, to exchange information about the religious and industrial origins of their city. We hope that they gain as much from following each other's trail, as they did by discovering their own.

It may not be as unusual as facelifting urinals in the Rhondda or making diving surveys as part of Underwater Conservation Year, but it could be as least as interpretive!

Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust was the winner of this year's *Museum of the Year Award*. Congratulations!



We receive regularly *MAG NEWS*, the journal of the Museum Assistants' Group. The October issue refers to the use of Job Creation finance for the operation of three schemes in Portsmouth, two schemes in Glasgow, one in Perth and several in Lincolnshire. It would be interesting to hear of more projects undertaken with the help of Job Creation.

The Chiltern Society, one of the largest local amenity societies in the country, has gone into labour. Having conceived the plan to establish an Open-Air Museum of Chiltern Life some time ago, it has negotiated a site, at Newland Park, Chalfont St Giles, Bucks, with the County Council. On 21 October, a

national appeal was launched with an initial target of £20,000, but £80,000 to £100,000 being the final goal. The infant is about to be born, already provided with a goodly stock of buildings in handy CKD* form, from various parts of the Chilterns. A trust has been formed and in time we may see another Weald and Downland on rather different chalk slopes.

*Completely Knocked Down

Men of the Parks

During the summer, the Editor escaped across the Atlantic on a business-cum-holiday visit to both Canada and the States. He paid visits to Newsletter-recipients Vernon Dame and Steve Lewis in the US National Parks Service and to Gary Sealey and Grant Tayler in Parks Canada. Greetings were exchanged and good wishes brought back to all our members.

The USNPS are going through the traumatic experience of *zero-budgeting* - justifying the expenditure of every cent to the Treasury. It was not the best time, they admitted, to be launching a \$60 million *Land Heritage Programme*. In addition, the whole concept of interpretation and visitor centres is under review. A great deal of education of official circles still seems needed even after many years of successful operation.

A new area of study is the urban park concept, based on co-operative funding and joint management agreements. There are strong parallels between US and UK ideas in this field.

Parks Canada have been doing a lot of self-evaluation too. Gary Sealey sent over a library of reports and working documents and will happily provide extra copies. The titles are:

1. *Canada's National Historic Parks/Sites.*
2. *Parks Canada, National Parks.*
3. *From Spas and Gardens to Total Communication, Stevens.*
4. *F.P.P.C. Task Force Report on Interpretation, 1975.*
5. *Goals and Objectives for the Communication Programs of Parks Canada, Foley.*
6. *Interpretation in 2001, Tayler*

7. *Operational Standards for Interpretation and Extension, Parks Canada.*
8. *What the Parks should do and what the Visitor and Non-Visitor wants, Sealey.*
9. *Four Multipliers for Extension, Stevens/Gray.*
10. *How Teachers Can Benefit From National Parks, Sealey.*
11. *Parks Awareness Program Project Guidelines and Application/Contract Form, Parks Canada.*
12. *Part II Application/Contract Form, Parks Canada.*
13. *Park Awareness 77 - Data Summary - July 15/1977, Gerry Crouse.*
14. *Low-Powered A.M. Broadcast Transmitter for Canadian Federal Parks, D.H. Covill.*
15. *What kind of Visitor Centre is needed for St. Lawrence Island, by Park Visitors, and those who would like to know about the park but who will never visit? Sealey.*
16. *Volunteers in Canadian and European Park Systems, Stevens.*
17. *Bibliography, Foley/Martin.*

Please contact the Editor if you wish a copy of any of these - be prepared to wait as an 'order' will have to be sent to Ottawa. Constructive criticisms will be appreciated by Parks Canada.

Gary is himself interested in Urban Interpretation - an unknown quantity in Canada - and would welcome any material relating particularly to planners' views of interpretation in urban areas. His address is Gary Sealey, Chief, Interpretation and Extension Division, National Parks Branch, Indian and Northern Affairs, Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0H4, Canada.



WORDS
by
Jenny Edwards

LEAFLETS, TRAILS, DISPLAYS, AV etc.
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THUS SPAKE...

Since the last issue, there has been a steady stream of press notices from the *Countryside Commission*. Much of their business has more than a passing relevance to the Society's members.

JOIN IN THE PLAN!

Dennis Howell, Minister for Sport, has endorsed the importance of national parks by asking in a letter to the chairman of public landowners (Forestry Commission, Waterways Board etc) that they make special efforts to work with the plans which each national park has just prepared.

The Commission welcomed the minister's initiative. They see the public bodies giving a lead to all landowners in the context of conservation and public access.

EXMOOR PARK THREAT

The Commission has submitted a written contribution to the study of land use in Exmoor being conducted by Lord Porchester. They propose three solutions to the problem of conservation in Exmoor and the other National Parks. Firstly, they should be empowered to define and designate areas of 'mainly open country' for special conservation management. Secondly, they want more vigorous public acquisition of land, where necessary, in these designated areas, and thirdly they want owners of land, refused changes in land use, to have the right to require a park authority to accept a purchase notice or to enter into a statutory management agreement.

BAN THE BOMBERS!

In a letter to both Environment and Defence Secretaries, Chairman John Cripps expresses concern that the *military authorities are to be left as the sole judges of the changes in military uses to meet the needs of the Dartmoor National Park*. Following a report to the Government by Lady Sharp, nothing has been done to improve the situation which includes the disturbance caused by low-flying aircraft which, the Commission consider, is even

more objectionable to a great many people than the use of the Park for ground training.

NEW AMENITY TREE PLANTING GRANTS

In view of the urgent need to replace countryside trees which have disappeared as a result of disease, neglect and modern farming methods, the Commission, in consultation with the Forestry Commission, have revised their grants and the new details are contained in a leaflet *Grants for Amenity Tree Planting and Management*, published in August. The grants are intended to promote small-scale tree planting where the emphasis is upon conserving natural beauty and amenity in the English and Welsh countryside.

NORTH PENNINES AONB?

More than 900 square miles of the North Pennines will gain national conservation status if the Commission get backing for their proposal to designate this part of the countryside as an AONB. A seven-week public consultation exercise began on 16 September.

Local authorities provisionally support the proposal for an area stretching from Tyne Gap in the north to the edge of the Yorkshire Dales Park in the south, and from Hamsterley in the east to the edge of the Vale of Eden in the west. If designated and approved, it will be the largest AONB in England.

REVIEWING RECREATION

In addition to the detailed research report on farmers' attitudes, the second volume of *Recreation Review* includes a series of features on the use of volunteers, a description of *Conservation by Job Creation* and an appraisal of the Sherwood Forest Visitor Centre.

FARMERS AND CONSERVATION

The results of a study, *Farmers' Attitudes to Conservation* are reported in volume 2 of the Commission's *Countryside Recreation Review*. One of the principal conclusions is that farmers do not form a united front opposed to all environmental conservation policies. The study also found that financial incentive would have the best chance of stopping

or reversing the trend towards destruction of traditional agricultural landscapes.

Carried out in East Anglia, the study covered 198 farmers whose involvement in local government and in pressure groups was also investigated.

Most farmers were sympathetic towards the conservation cause but were hostile towards *conservationists*, many of whom were felt to be misguided and ignorant of farmers' problems. Others recognised that some farmers had gone too far in damaging the landscape through farming methods, and agreed that frequently-voiced criticisms of farmers were valid.

FARMLAND METHODS SUIT COUNTRY PARKS

In a new Commission report, *The Management of Grassland and Heathland in Country Parks*, it is suggested that cattle, or other grazing animals, should be used in preference to machines to control the grass and heathland in country parks.

Such parks should give a visitor the real feel of the countryside and large expanses of mown grass, more in keeping with town parks, should be avoided. Cattle, sheep, deer and horses, either alone or together, will normally keep growth at suitable levels, enabling an attractive range of wild plants to grow and attracting a wider range of insects and smaller animals.

WYE VALLEY EXPERIMENT

A new environmental experiment to improve countryside conservation in the Wye Valley AONB began in July. The project will last for three years with the support of the Commission who are meeting most of the costs, and the Hereford and Worcester, Gloucestershire and Gwent County Councils.

Objectives of the project include stimulating interest in effective countryside management throughout the whole of the Area and producing a management plan for future policies and work.

WALKING THROUGH WALES

The Commission's initial proposals for a 260-mile long distance footpath from Cardiff to Conwy - the Cambrian Way - have recently been sent to those local

authorities through whose areas the suggested route would pass. Amenity societies, government bodies, farming unions, landowners' representatives and other interested organisations have also been asked to comment on the general principles involved.

The proposed route begins in the grounds of Cardiff Castle, passes through Abergavenny and on through the Black Mountains. Then running west on the perimeter of the Brecon Beacons National Park, via Llandovery, it heads through the Cambrian Mountains.

Alternative routes would then take the walker either along the lower slopes of Cader Idris, via Machynlleth or through Dylife and Comins Coch. The routes converge at Dinas Mawddly. On to Ffestiniog and Llyn Ogwen, via parts of Snowdonia but avoiding Snowdon itself, the route detours around Carneddau en route to Conwy.

The original idea for such a footpath came from the independent Cambrian Way Committee but part of its route was considered by the Commission to be too dangerous for the ordinary walker. The two routes are shown on the map below.



AS LONG AS THEY ARE BROADS

Much discussion continues over the

question of the future of the Norfolk Broads. In a second consultative document - *The Broads: Possible courses of action*, the Commission says the need for improved landscape conservation and recreational management in *The Broads* would best be met by a national park authority, provided it had additional powers to control navigation.

Several, optional, courses of action are set out in the paper. They have emerged from reactions to the Commission's first consultation paper issued last November. In addition a number of short-term measures to improve co-ordination among existing authorities are mentioned.

Reactions are wanted by 31 December this year. The Commission intend to reach their own decision about which course of action they should recommend by the end of March 1978. They do not seek to impose a solution, but to seek one which will have the support of local people, local authorities, voluntary and statutory bodies.

SIGN SURVEY

A nationwide survey of signmakers started in July as part of a Commission-sponsored study into the design and manufacture of interpretive signs in the countryside. The study will incorporate the views and experiences of users and will form the basis of an advisory publication to help local authorities, landowners and others to select the type of sign most suitable to their needs.

PLANT A LOCAL TREE

Recently published is *Local Authority Tree Planting Programmes in the Countryside*, number one in a new series of advisory booklets from the Commission. The booklet is aimed particularly at authorities which are considering setting up an amenity tree planting programme for the first time or which plan to reappraise current programmes.

membership

A full list of recent members will be included in the next issue of the Newsletter in February. We hope, at the same time, to issue a second edition of the complete membership.