



Privy
dramas



Landscapes
for
interpretation



Butterfly
fun



Combined
roles

the journal for Scotland's Interpreters

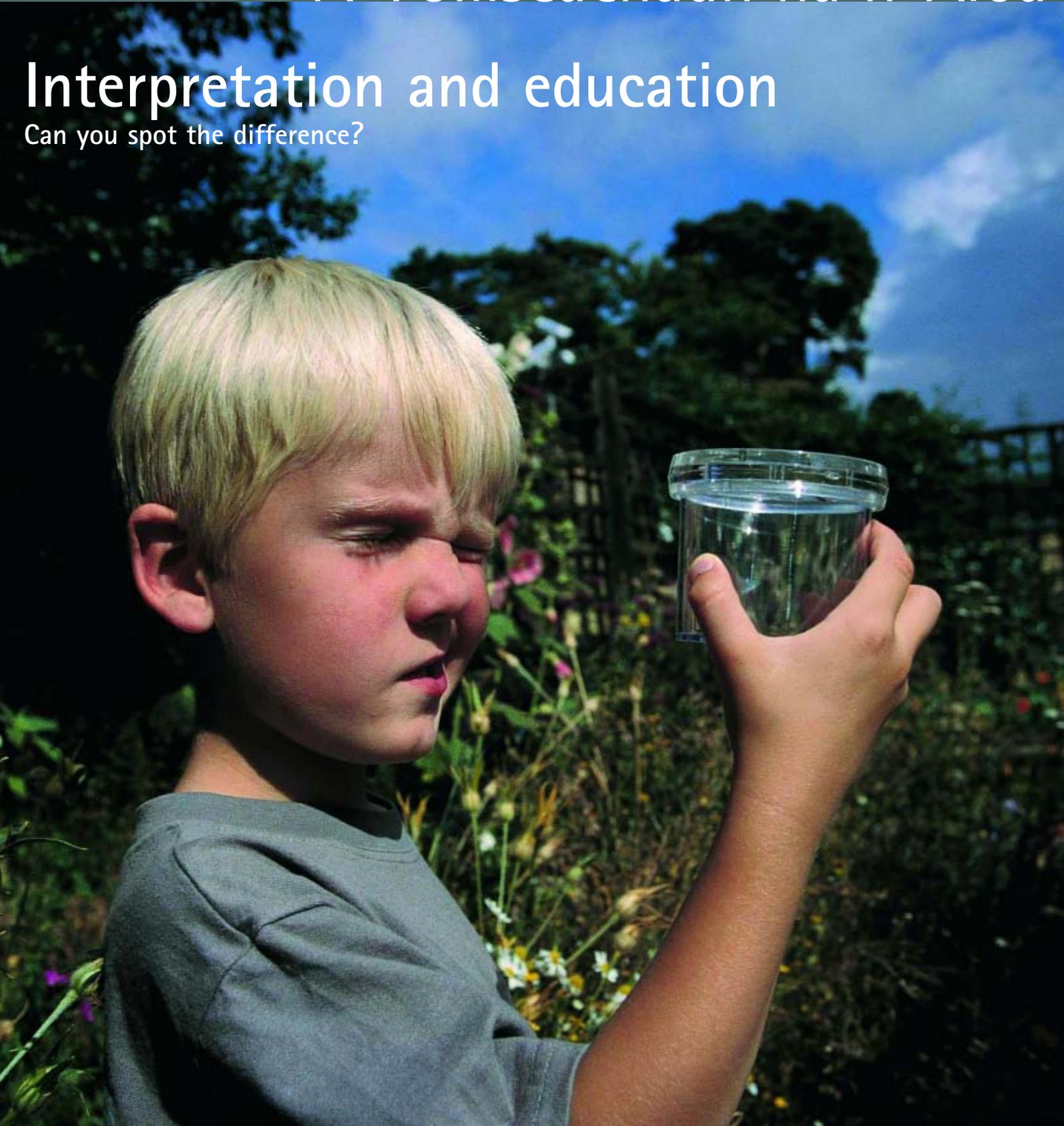
Interpret Scotland

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'A' Foillseachadh na h-Alba

Interpretation and education

Can you spot the difference?



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Interpret Scotland is an inter-agency initiative that seeks to:

- ◆ Improve the quality and quantity of interpretation in Scotland
- ◆ Promote the co-ordination of interpretation at local and strategic level
- ◆ Share resources, expertise and experience to avoid duplicating effort



We have already given up the notion that interpretation ... is direct education
Freeman Tilden

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Education and interpretation

This issue of Interpret Scotland looks at some of the issues raised by the relationship between education and interpretation, and at projects that blur the boundaries between them.

It used to be common practice for heritage organisations to see education and interpretation as separate functions, with dedicated managers and even departments for each. This reflected a clear division between the two in terms of their audience: education covered anything provided for people on a formal course of study, whether at kindergarten or post-graduate level; interpretation was for people whose main aim was recreation.

That policy of separate development is starting to change. Several organisations now combine the roles of interpretation and education manager, or have set up departments that cover "Learning", with interpretation and education staff working more closely together. Cynics might say this change is driven by economics. Funding now emphasises a view of education that is more all-inclusive, rather than tied to specific curriculum links. The number of out-of-school visits has been falling, making it harder to justify staff working solely to cater for them.

But the move towards closer integration between education and interpretation also reflects a shift in our view of what education means. Students are no longer empty vessels waiting to be filled with facts; instead educators should, as Ian Edwards argues on page 4, help them form their own ideas and opinions. Education has also left the classroom, reborn as lifelong learning. These lofty philosophies may seem remote for teachers struggling with the inflexible bureaucracy of the curriculum, but they have prepared the ground for a vision of education that draws on some of the interpreter's approach. Paulo Freire lamented in 1970 that "*Education is suffering from narration sickness.*" Let us hope that in future both interpretation and education can get, and remain, better.

James Carter, editor

Interpret Scotland is published twice a year and is distributed free on request. If you would like to join the mailing list, or if you are receiving duplicate copies, please contact Sandra Phipps at Scottish Natural Heritage on 01738 444177 or sandra.phipps@snh.gov.uk You could also visit the Interpret Scotland web site: www.interpretscotland.co.uk

Next edition

Issue 12 of Interpret Scotland will look at links between interpretation and commercial activity. Please send any suggestions for articles, or letters for publication, to the editor.

An Educated Guess



Colin MaConnachie reflects on combining the roles of Head of Interpretation and Education.

One of the questions I dread most is "What exactly is the difference between Education and Interpretation – surely they are the same thing?" Conversely, I am often asked, "How can you be head of both Education and Interpretation – surely those are two separate full time jobs?" Certainly in many comparable organisations this is the case – I can think of one example where Interpretation, Education and Living History all have independent managers on independent salaries!

So is it because I work for a charity that needs to save salary costs that I find myself having responsibility for both Education and Interpretation, as well as having a strategic input into many other areas? Possibly. In the course of my working day I am certainly conscious that I deal with two quite distinct client groups in the Education and the Interpretation communities, and my email in-box seems to have twice as many messages as my counterparts elsewhere. But perhaps it is not simply a cost saving device that finds us in this position. During one of our many recent organisational reviews it was suggested that Education and Interpretation should relocate into two different divisions, with Interpretation being allocated to Marketing and Enterprises, the logic being that Interpretation was a useful visitor management tool. Interestingly, the changes never happened. There was considerable opposition to the proposal within the organisation and I did not have to organise any protest campaigns – the commonly held belief was that Interpretation was an integral part of Education, and this core support may be a major factor in making our current approach workable. Despite the fact that my workload would have halved I felt the right decision had been made.

I believe that one premise is core to our activities: every visitor to a Trust property will probably have an educative experience of some sort – what really matters is the quality of that experience. A school group studying the Victorians will have quite clear learning objectives when they visit the David Livingstone Centre and the support offered by Trust staff during the visit should help them meet these objectives. A family visiting Culzean Castle at the weekend may not be going for educational reasons but there will be many times during the course of the day when learning opportunities are available.

One of these will be when they encounter the room stewards in the Castle. This group of unsung heroes are both inspirational as well as informative and can make a major contribution to the "feel good" factor of a visit. Most education at Trust properties is delivered by this huge cohort of permanent, seasonal and volunteer guides – they are the most common interface with our visitors. Are they educators or

interpreters? It doesn't really matter! What does matter is that they are informed, properly trained and valued by the organisation. The Education department has a role to play here – customer care training is vital and guides must be trained and supported in how they deal with learners and visitors of all ages. The Education department also has a role to play in areas such as guidebooks and web presence and many argue that Education is the most powerful conservation tool. So suddenly Education becomes a key part of the organisation. No bad thing – some would say. South of the border The National Trust has recently and very publicly promoted its education programme by putting Learning at the heart of all of its activities.



The term Learning may well be more appropriate for the activities which we currently describe as Interpretation and Education. Learning and Access might be even more appropriate, but looking after physical access would expand the activities of an already overstretched department. What is of prime importance is the quality of the learning opportunities on offer. The Trust has recognised that it must invest in a programme to upgrade its interpretation, and that through its education programme youngsters gain an early insight into conservation. It must also ensure that its resources are accessible to learners of all ages, abilities and backgrounds.

Is it feasible for one small department to manage such a range of diverse activities? Is it even desirable? I would argue that the ability to have an overview of all of our learning activities outweighs the difficulties. Visions are often clearer when held by one person or group. It remains to be seen how sustainable this approach will be as we strive to turn those visions into reality.

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Creativity is a type of learning process where the teacher and pupil are located in the same individual.

Arthur Koestler

Education or Interpretation

Work at the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh has made Ian Edwards question easy distinctions between the two.

I thought it would be relatively easy to write a piece about the difference between interpretation and education. Interpretation is site-specific: you interpret the significance of a place, the value of a collection, the stories that lurk beneath the surface of an important site or building. Education is broader: you educate learners to make them aware of issues, concepts, and ideas as well as factual information. Good interpretation can and should involve a dialogue in which the audience can pose questions and have them answered. Good education should be even more interactive or open ended, with learners discovering their own solutions to problems and developing their own ideas, opinions and perspectives.

So far so good. But then I looked at the work we are currently doing at the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh (RBGE) to revise our interpretation master plan – now three years old and due for a good overhaul. I began to doubt whether the logical division I have just applied really works. In the original plan we had six content-based topics: conservation, evolution and adaptation, classification, plant uses, Scottish plants, and home gardening. All on-site interpretation has been linked to one or more of these areas.

In revising the plan we have decided that we need to go one step further back. The next version of our Interpretation Masterplan will set out three main themes:

- ◆ What is biodiversity, why is it important and what is happening to it?
- ◆ What are we, the National Botanic Gardens of Scotland doing to protect and conserve biodiversity?
- ◆ What changes can our visitors make within their own lives to support the conservation of biodiversity?

The second of these themes will be linked closely to our four gardens, the staff that work in them and the international partners with whom they collaborate. But the first, seen as an essential starting point considering most people in the country still are unsure of what the word biodiversity means, is not site specific at all. So is it an interpretive or an educational objective?

Others must encounter similar problems all the time. We must make interpretation relevant to our visitors and we are told to start from where they are at. However, this is going to require some basic education to increase awareness and understanding of the underlying concepts, in our case the diversity and fragility of life, before talking about the significance of our collections and expertise.



Watercolour classes are just one aspect of the Garden's educational work

© Royal Botanic Gardens Edinburgh

Opportunities for more formal learning at RBGE include PhD, MSc, MA, undergraduate and HND programmes, as well as primary and secondary school visits, outreach 'roadshows' and teacher training workshops. There are adult education classes from basket making to a nationally recognised certificate in horticulture.

The really exciting and, for us, relatively new challenge is the gap between people who sign up for classes on the one hand, and casual visitors on the other who come to the much loved Botanics for leisure, recreation or just peace and quiet. How can we turn attendees into audiences? Baby walkers and bird feeders into "biodiversitists"?

This is where on-site interpretation becomes crucial. Interpretation involves 'education by stealth' – the subtle art of educating people who didn't come to learn but are seeking a day out or even trying to get away from people wanting to sell them things or influence their behaviour!

Recent live interpretation sessions have shown very clearly how different people respond to the idea of participating in a learning experience. Encountering our volunteer Garden Rangers providing an impromptu demonstration on orchids, Scottish wild plants, or ferns and fossils some visitors are happy to engage for five or ten minutes in a lively discussion; others make a wide detour to avoid any contact.

So perhaps where an individual event or activity sits on the education-interpretation spectrum depends in part on the aspirations and interests of the audiences, rather than the methodology or media. Education is for those who come specifically to learn, and they will normally be expected to contribute something to make the experience more worthwhile. Interpretation can be something people actively seek out, but more typically it is something they chance upon. It is up to the individual to decide if they want to take an interest, ignore it, or 'come back later'.

Ian D. Edwards, Director of Public Programmes, Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh I.Edwards@rbge.ac.uk

A child of five would understand this. Send someone to fetch a child of five.

Groucho Marx

Serious Fun

Butterfly Conservation Scotland has run a successful programme of workshops for volunteers, training them to record data in the field. Julie Stoneman explains how the workshops combine lifelong learning, interpretation, and sound conservation.

It is no accident that volunteer workshops run by Butterfly Conservation Scotland (BCS) are an enjoyable experience! We ensure they are set in a relaxed, informal atmosphere, no prior knowledge is assumed, and we use activities to help people assimilate new information. We also make sure there is plenty of time for participants to get to know each other, as well as the local experts and countryside staff who come along to provide support and expertise for the day.

The workshops may be fun, but their aim is serious. Butterflies are undergoing a serious decline as environmental changes affect them very quickly. We have strong populations in Scotland of some of the most threatened species, but they are very under-recorded. We need to recruit new people if we are to check on the health of these colonies or discover new ones, so the workshops are planned to encourage new volunteers to get involved.

Complete beginners often prefer introductory workshops aimed at general butterfly or moth recording; those with more confidence or experience can opt for a more specialist one aimed at a particular species. Many people come to more than one workshop to gain a range of skills, but the key message is that anyone can get involved regardless of previous experience.

After a couple of indoor presentations to set the scene, we visit a local site to see butterflies and moths in their natural habitat and practise skills such as using a butterfly net or carrying out a "timed count". By the end of the day everyone has the experience they need to do survey and monitoring work on their own. It is important that everyone leaves with a specific task to achieve, so they complete a feedback form and indicate how they would like to get involved – from a back garden count to a regular weekly survey, or a visit to one or more specific sites.

This method of recruiting new volunteers was first tried in south west Scotland through the 'Butterfly Guardians for Scotland' project, funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH), which ran from 2002 – 2004. This resulted in a massive increase in butterfly and moth recording in the project area, and over 150 new volunteers. We are now rolling out the approach in other areas, starting with the 'Butterflies and Moths Mean Business' project running until December 2005. This is part-financed by the European Community through the Lomond and Rural Stirling and Cairngorms LEADER + programmes, the Cairngorms National Park Authority and SNH.

Julie Stoneman, Project Officer, Butterfly Conservation Scotland
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Two born-again lepidopterists who went on some of the workshops give their views:

Tony Brotherton

I signed up for one of the butterfly workshops held in Galloway in the summer of 2003. The format was for us raw recruits to foregather for a morning's indoor briefing, learning and identification session, then after lunch to go out into the field for the practical side. I found these workshops great fun and hugely informative.

Since the workshop I've carried out a weekly transect over an agreed route throughout the butterfly season, recording what I see. I find my modest involvement satisfying and worthwhile, and hope it helps BCS' efforts in halting the decline of Scotland's butterflies and moths.

Anastasia Cox

My husband and I attended our first butterfly workshop in Taynuilt last spring. By mixing informative talks with hands-on field experience, the workshop made committed lepidopterists out of us in a day! It was a great way to meet people, and to develop an understanding of our local environment; looking for butterflies really opens your eyes to the details of the natural world, and makes you consider more carefully the subtle balancing act that constitutes a healthy ecosystem.

As a direct result of attending that first workshop, we began monitoring a colony of the rare Chequered Skipper butterfly behind our house. The data we have collected will hopefully help create a more complete picture of their distribution and behaviour in our area. It also provides us with something endlessly fascinating to do on our walk

Anastasia Cox learns the finer points of handling a butterfly net



Thank goodness I was never sent to school; it would have rubbed off some of the originality.

Beatrix Potter

Down in the forest something stirs ...

Sally York explains why educational visits to woods will find a lot more than teddy bears.

Education and learning can occur throughout life, but the focus for Forestry Commission Scotland education is on formal education for schools, pre-school children, and young people. Our current provision tends to be focused towards the Environmental Studies curriculum in primary schools, with the programmes generally based on the forest industry or the forest as an ecosystem. We also work with others such as groups with different abilities or with secondary schools working on subjects such as design and technology.

We have set up the Forest Education Initiative (FEI) as a partnership initiative between the education and forest sectors to encourage the use of trees, woods and forestry as an education resource. In Scotland local FEI groups have come up with some great projects including:

- ◆ The wood tour – a hands on opportunity to work with wood in the school grounds. The wood tour visits a number of schools enabling children to make wooden objects.
- ◆ New initiatives like Forest Schools, a technique adapted from Scandinavia. Forest Schools take advantage of the stimulating, flexible, robust and relatively safe nature of woodlands to build children's self esteem and confidence through a series of activities over a number of weeks.

So is there really a dividing line between education and interpretation? They both provide ways to learn, but are often placed at opposite ends of the learning spectrum and barriers created between the two. Yet there is a lot of commonality between them.

AHI Award scheme invites inspiring entries

The Interpret Britain and Ireland Awards are now inviting entries. Run by the Association for Heritage Interpretation (AHI), with sponsorship from English Heritage, the Awards recognise the very best examples of heritage interpretation.

The scheme is open to projects from small-scale community events to major commercial visitor attractions. The 2005 Special Category is for projects that use the creative or performing arts as a way of exploring heritage. Awards are made to projects that show imagination and innovation, combined with good interpretive planning.

Details and entry forms are available at www.heritage-interpretation.org.uk, the AHI website. This year's scheme is for projects that have started up since 1 January 2003. The closing date for entries is 4 May 2005



The word interpret comes from the Latin *interpret* meaning "an agent between two parties" and later "one who explains", and it is the word "explain" that crops up in any definition of interpret or interpretation.

Flicking through copies of the Times Educational Supplement (TES) I was intrigued to note that many of the articles rarely mentioned the "e" (for education) word. For example, here are some extracts from a piece giving advice to teachers on how to engage with secondary children, from the TES for 26 November 2004:

"Use practical, visual, oral and kinaesthetic approaches; hands-on, energetic activities always go down well ... Explain, demonstrate and exemplify new learning. Make the thinking visible ..."

It's not just the absence of the words "education" or "explain" here, but the way teachers are being encouraged to use a variety of techniques to get the message or course content over to their audience that makes clear the links between education and interpretation. As our knowledge of the brain, how it works and how we learn increases so, I suspect, we will see a greater blurring of the lines between the two disciplines. The best teachers are often the ones who use a range of techniques, whether they are in the classroom or out in the forest. Those involved in education have a lot to learn from interpreters but vice versa too. In the end we are all in the same game: aiding understanding and enjoyment of subjects!

Sally York, Education Development Officer, Forestry Commission Scotland sally.york@forestry.gov.uk

More information about FCS education work, together with ideas for educational activities in woods and forests, are on the Tree Trunk website, developed in partnership with SNH and Central Scotland Forest Trust www.forestry.gov.uk/treetrunk

Training events

Interpretation - Be the best at visitor communication

Losehill Hall, Derbyshire, 18th - 22nd April

Details from 01433 620373, or email training.losehill@peakdistrict.gov.uk

Smokey Bear's rough guide to successful environmental campaigning

Lessons from a successful US Forest Service fire prevention campaign

Battleby, 10 May FREE

Details from 01738 458555 or email sgp@snh.gov.uk

Planning and Conducting Live Interpretative Programs and Tours

Plas Tan y Bwlch, Snowdonia, 10 - 12 May

Course Organiser: John Veverka

Details from 01766 590324, or email Beth.Cluer@eryri-npa.gov.uk

Objects of admiration

Planning interpretation for museum collections

Smith Gallery, Stirling, 2 June

Details from Scottish Museums Council 0131 229 7465, or email lissad@scottishmuseums.org.uk

You can tell whether a man is clever by his answers.
You can tell whether a man is wise by his questions.

Naguib Mahfouz

Coordinated Culture



The Scottish Arts Council launched an Executive-funded initiative in 2002 called "Championing Culture in Schools". The aim was to establish Cultural Coordinator posts within local authority areas and help schools work across and beyond the curriculum with museums, galleries, the arts and heritage sectors. Over 80 Coordinators are now in place across Scotland, and the Scottish Museums Council has been working to encourage them to make use of local heritage resources.

With over twelve million museums objects, historic properties and 6,000 ancient monuments to choose from, Scotland's heritage resources offer infinite educational opportunities. They can appeal to young people from diverse backgrounds and with a range of learning styles. But museums and heritage sites remain underused by cultural coordinators, whose activities tend to emphasise visual arts work.

So in September 2003, in collaboration with the Heritage Education Officers Group, the Scottish Museums Council (SMC) ran a series of training days to guide cultural coordinators and teachers in using Scotland's heritage sector and museums as collaborators in children's learning. The training days introduced *Lasting Impressions*, a publication to help teachers and Cultural Coordinators make inspired and creative links between heritage resources and the schools curriculum. SMC also established a £21,000 grant for Cultural Coordinators to undertake projects for young people in partnership with SMC member museums. There will be more training in March 2005.

Behind all this work is the belief that access to "real things" – artefacts, archaeological sites, historic monuments and stately houses – and to the ideas they inspire can elicit a range of learning outcomes.

The "Museum for a Day" project in Orkney (pictured above) is a good example of the work that can be done. This outreach programme targeted the most geographically remote schools in the Orkney islands, inviting children, together with partners such as local heritage groups, to turn their classrooms into museums for a day.

The children, their families and teachers find local artefacts, document and research them, then label, display and guide visitors around them. This hands-on initiative stimulates learning and promotes informed attitudes to the communities' pasts. "Hands On Orkney's Past", The Orkney Museum's 2004 summer exhibition, built on the enterprise and initiative of the Museum for a Day participants.

In a rather different environment, Paisley Museum and Art Galleries recognised an opportunity to celebrate Renfrewshire's cultural diversity and build new audiences among groups under-

represented among in the museum's visitors. Working with the Scottish Interfaith Council and Reid Kerr College Spiritual Care Team, they came up with a series of exhibitions, events and workshops inspired by the community's faith groups. For the school workshops, the museums service worked with their local Cultural Coordinators to source funding to provide transport and educational activities for 20 classes. The project has promoted Renfrewshire Museums as a learning resource, and established creative partnerships. It allows previously excluded community groups to visit, value and enjoy learning at the museum, and to see themselves represented there. The project also links directly with strands in the Environmental Studies and People and Society areas of the 5-14 curriculum.

From these examples, it is clear that cultural coordinators can cover a number of important roles. They can:

- ◆ Encourage and facilitate cultural participation by children, including visits, production and performance
- ◆ Liaise with artists and cultural bodies, and their education officers, locally and nationally
- ◆ Develop awareness of the contribution of culture to children's learning and development – both within and outwith the curriculum
- ◆ Advise on ways of developing young people's creativity across the curriculum.

The links they can make between children and their heritage add creative, imaginative and inspirational depth to young people's formal education. By working in partnership with Cultural Coordinators, museums can develop learning programmes that are inclusive, cater for differing learning styles, respond inspirationally to pupil needs, and foster a sense of cultural identity and self-knowledge. Collaboration between young people and their shared heritage builds benefits for all participants: museums enhance their role as innovative learning organisations, and young people's growing self-confidence, which encourages their ongoing engagement in the country's cultural and creative life, builds the sustainable community benefit of social cohesion.

Emma Talbot, formerly Learning and Access Advisor; Clare Watson, Senior Policy Officer, Scottish Museums Council
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For a copy of *Lasting Impressions*, or for more information about Cultural Coordinators, contact the Information and Learning Team, Scottish Museums Council (0131 476 8591) or visit www.scottishmuseums.org.uk

Grown-ups never understand anything for themselves, and it is tiresome for children to be always and forever explaining things to them.

Antoine de Saint-Exupery

Interpretation Partners

Interpretation is a discipline that often needs to work with other professions. Some would argue that interpretation is a profession in its own right, but that's a theme for another issue! In the first of a new series about these partnerships Seamus Filor, Coordinator of the Master of Landscape Architecture Programme at Edinburgh College of Art, looks at the relationship between interpretation and Landscape Architecture.



© City Design Co-operative

The landscape architect has a key role to play in heritage interpretation. They can hold the ring between the conflicting interests of development and conservation; tourism and rural tranquillity; visitor perceptions and local values; myths and realities. They are part of a profession with an awareness of the social, natural and physical sciences, so they should be well qualified to approach these issues with a rounded, holistic view. In this short article I want to discuss aspects of landscape design attitudes that are pertinent to the field of interpretation, and look at some examples of collaborations between landscape design and interpretation. This is a very personal view, seen from the perspective of an academic as opposed to a practitioner. Since the early 1980s we have included a small component on interpretation within our Master of Landscape Architecture programme, so our graduates are aware of your profession, and of the benefits of collaboration.

There are many perceptions in common between landscape design and interpretation. A journey through a series of connected spaces, linked to an overt or buried narrative, is the essential structure of any landscape design. This journey is built on a good understanding of the site character, in terms of natural, physical, cultural and social factors. "Consult the genius of the place" wrote Alexander Pope in 1731, as William Kent, one of the first true landscape designers "leaped the fence, and saw that all nature was a garden".¹ Parks and gardens of this period carried political and philosophical messages: visitors to Stourhead in Wiltshire were immediately aware that they were participating in a journey across the Ancient world; at Stowe the parkland reflected the Whig politics of the

owner. In these cases the interpretive stories were imported, not site specific, more like a contemporary theme park. The client and landscape designer imposed the artefacts, and created the settings.

Anne Spirn, in her inspirational book *The Language of Landscape* (1998), describes and interprets her personal journeys through a range of landscapes; cultural and designed; temperate, tropical and arid. She uses the rules of language as a means to structure and communicate her dialogue with these places and their designers. This book, to me, illustrates the common ground between landscape design and interpretation, what Hal Moggridge has called retrospective collaboration across time with previous designers, recognised and unrecognised.

There have been a few examples in Scotland of landscape practices "embedding" interpretive consultants into the office. These arrangements seem to have been short-lived, and current collaboration is normally on a contract by contract basis. In some projects, the landscape practice create their own interpretation, in some cases they are engaged by the interpreter, in others the landscape practice is the lead consultant, and even more usually both landscape architect and interpretive consultant are in a team lead by an architect.

Some examples of collaboration between the two disciplines are:

The Hidden Gardens at the Tramway theatre in Glasgow (City Design - pictured left). Here a landscape architect controlled the design process to develop a garden of peace and contemplation on a former industrial site. In an ethnically mixed part of Glasgow, the perceptions

If you can give your son or daughter only one gift, let it be enthusiasm
Bruce Barton

Real World Learning Campaign



© Andy Hay/rspb-images.com

of the local community have driven much of the conceptual thinking. Plant species have been chosen primarily for their structural, space defining qualities; they also mix exotic species with native. This is to encourage a sense of ownership by the users, and reflect their multicultural diversity.

At the **Falls of Clyde**, the boardwalk, designed by Martin Berkley, provides the circulation spine from which the natural and cultural values of the site are communicated. Interpretive material came from the ranger service, the landscape architect put it on site.

Henderson Park, in Coldstream (opposite page on right), is an example of collaboration between interpreter, landscape architect, poet and artist craftsman. It was also part of a wider project to interpret the heritage of the River Tweed. The Coldstream site adds to the enjoyment of visitors to the existing park by exploiting the view over the river as an interpretation point. In this case interpreter, James Carter was the project coordinator, and Peter Daniel the landscape architect.

I hope this short article has demonstrated how landscape architects can contribute to the delivery of interpretation. They are trained to be aware of the contextual issues related to each particular site, to regard, respect and work with existing landscape components, and to weave these into a continuing design narrative. They are used to working within a team of other specialists, and to evolving design principles and realised contracts through group dynamics. I believe the skills of a landscape architect are important in interpretation projects at both the strategic level of defining and choosing themes, and at the detailed level of establishing and managing projects on the ground.

Seamus Filor, Coordinator, Master of Landscape Architecture, Edinburgh College of Art s.filor@eca.ac.uk

¹ *Horace Walpole, On Modern Gardening (1780)*

There was a time when going on a school visit was the norm, but fewer children now get the opportunity to leave the classroom and learn about the world at first hand. Andy Simpson describes an English campaign to reverse the trend.

With the increasing demands of league tables, literacy and numeracy targets and school inspections, not to mention increased fears of litigation, out-of-classroom learning is being squeezed out of the timetable. It is not seen as a priority to deliver against the National Curriculum, yet it is one of the most effective forms of education. It broadens children's outlook, improves their motivation and personal and interpersonal skills, as well as helping youngsters keep fit and healthy, physically and mentally.

The Real World Learning campaign is working to get children out of the classroom to discover the world around them. The campaign is a partnership between RSPB, Field Studies Council, National Trust, Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust and PGL Ltd. It is seeking a commitment to school visits from each political party in their election manifestos. If the current ethos of not taking children on school trips is to change, it is essential that the government provides clear guidance and support.

The campaign has already achieved a significant profile. More than 170 MPs signed an Early Day Motion which acknowledged the importance of field visits and urged the government to make out-of-classroom learning an integral part of every child's education.

The partners have also held face-to-face meetings with education spokespeople from all the major political parties, and the signs are that the issue is moving up the agenda. So much so, that the Education and Skills Select Committee last year convened an urgent inquiry to investigate out-of-classroom learning. Publication of its findings is imminent.

The campaign will continue post-election, irrespective of outcome, and partners will continue working with MPs and teaching unions to help more children benefit from school trips.

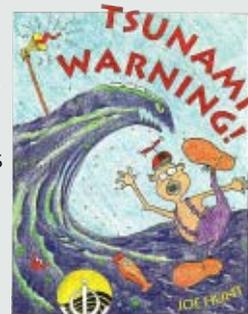
Andy Simpson, Head of Education, RSPB andy.simpson@rspb.org.uk
More information about the campaign, and RSPB's work, is at www.rspb.org.uk/policy/education/realworldlearning/index.asp

Serious cartoons

In the last issue of Interpret Scotland George Mitchell described how humorous illustrations can be an effective tool in interpretation. Clive Mitchell (no relation), a National Strategy Officer with SNH, has come across an interesting and topical example in a brochure about tsunamis. The brochure is produced by the West Coast/Alaska Tsunami Warning Centre, so unfortunately wouldn't have been available in the countries affected by the Indian Ocean tsunami.

You can see the brochure at wcawtc.gov/book01.htm Have your loudspeakers turned on for the full effect!

Clive points out that you couldn't surf a tsunami, as suggested in the images, since they are more like a rapidly rising tidal surge. But the illustrations, supported by well-written text, certainly get the message across.



Education is an admirable thing, but it is well to remember from time to time that nothing that is worth knowing can be taught.

Oscar Wilde



what's ^{up} elsewhere

More than Tigers

There are active education programmes about heritage and the environment in many countries. Meena Nareshwar describes the work of the Centre for Environment Education in Ahmedabad, India.

The Centre for Environment Education (CEE) is a Centre of Excellence supported by the Ministry of Environment and Forests of the Indian Government. It has been working since 1984 to improve public awareness and understanding of environmental issues so as to promote the conservation and wise use of nature and natural resources. CEE creates expertise in the field of environmental education, and develops innovative programmes and educational materials.

CEE's main office is in Ahmedabad, Gujarat. Its work must be relevant to the very diverse cultures and circumstances of India, so the Centre has established Regional Cells to cover major zones of the country, State Offices to intensify its programmes at the State level, Field and Project Offices to implement activities with a strong localized focus, and camp sites in different bio-geographical

areas. CEE also has international offices at Australia and Bangladesh. Altogether about 250 staff work for the Centre.

The Centre's interpretation programmes seek to convert peoples visits to national parks and heritage sites into exciting educational opportunities. Increasingly interpretation is also emerging as a vital tool that helps impress on visitors the critical link between environment and sustainable development.

The focus of CEE's interpretation has been to observe and appreciate the lesser-known organisms in nature, and appreciate and understand the diverse interrelationships in nature. By being only "tiger centric" or "lion centric", one tends to miss out a lot. The centre's work covers signs, exhibits and visitor centres, as well as publications such as brochures and posters. It also organizes training and capacity building programmes which aim to develop skills for the staff involved in interpretation programmes.

Among the sites the Centre has worked with are Kanha National Park, a Tiger Reserve in Central India (in collaboration with the US

National Park Service), Chilika lake, the largest brackish water lagoon in the country, and national parks and sanctuaries like the Gir National Park in Gujarat, which is the last natural habitat for the Asiatic Lion.

In the area of cultural heritage interpretation, CEE has had the privilege of developing the exhibition and signing for the Gandhi Ashram in Ahmedabad. Cultural trails for understanding and appreciating Ahmedabad's cultural heritage have also been developed. CEE is also involved in developing the Gujarat Archaeological Monuments Interpretation Project. This project, sponsored by the Government of Gujarat, Directorate of Archaeology, involves the development, design, fabrication and installation of wayside exhibits, and the production of brochures and booklets to interpret around 200 cultural heritage sites under the control of the Directorate.

Meena Nareshwar, Programmes Officer,
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www.ceeindia.org

News

Support when you need it

A new support network for interpreters and educators offers regular email information bulletins and news of local networking events.

Log onto www.sdenetwork.org to join the SDE Action Network, an informal set up for people involved in practical sustainable development education. The venture is being funded by SNH through the SDE Policy Network (formerly Education 21), a forum promoting sustainable development education in Scotland).

North Uist Museum shortlisted for Gulbenkian Award

Taigh Chearsabhaigh Museum & Art Gallery, in Lochmaddy, North Uist has been shortlisted for the Gulbenkian Prize for Museum of the Year. The Museum's Carn Chearsabhaigh exhibition could win the £100,000 award, Britain's biggest single arts prize. Last year the award went to "Landform", the striking installation outside the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art in Edinburgh.

More details from
<http://www.gulbenkian.org.uk/pressf.htm>

ICT and interpretation

Many new interpretation proposals involve some use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT). ICT often involves considerable amounts of time and money in planning, installation and maintenance, and many interpreters are looking in vain for guidance on how to use it to best effect.

SNH have recently contracted Imagemakers to review the role of ICT in interpretation, and develop a set of guidelines for site managers, organisations and designers. Results will be available in the autumn.
Further information from
sue.atkinson@snh.gov.uk

Condense some daily experience into a glowing symbol, and an audience is electrified.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

Drama in the Privies

Judith Stones describes how education and interpretation combine with drama to bring Aberdeen's archaeology to life.

Aberdeen is famous for granite and castles, but its medieval archaeology is just as special. Several factors make it easy to interpret the past here. Aberdeen possesses the best civic archives of any Scottish burgh, while the City Council Archaeological Unit has been working within the medieval burgh since the 1970s. Medieval organic remains are well-preserved, placing Aberdeen in a small "elite" group of European towns that includes York and Oslo.

The Archaeological Unit is within the City Council's Museums and Galleries Service, which is in the very early stages of working towards a new Museum of Aberdeen. In the meantime, lack of permanent display space for archaeology and local history has stimulated the search for other ways to bring people close to a past with a tangibility second to none in Scotland. The recent Environment of Medieval Aberdeen project was one of the first Scottish archaeology programmes to be supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund. The central aim was to process 25 years' worth of soil samples which had lain in museum stores owing to lack of money to analyse them. The project also aimed to examine historical records for evidence of Aberdeen's medieval environment. Both were rich seams; and there were some remarkable synchronicities, challenging the accepted view that archaeological and historical evidence fail to meet.

The results will be published in academic reports, but they were made public in a variety of other ways. Some members of the community found themselves integrated into the project in its early stages – sorting samples, preparing displays and even searching Aberdeenshire cowpats for dung beetles to use, suitably decontaminated, in the schools "lab".

The results also fed into our drama work. For some years we have used drama to help young people absorb the past. But it has to be authentic and relevant, and preferably atmospheric too. School visits to "Privies and other filthiness", the public display element of the project (the name was a quotation from a 17th century environmental report) started with an exhibition tour, but moved into a

drama set in late 13th century Gallowgate. Here pupils helped a wounded supporter of William Wallace, while experiencing the environment of a medieval backland in a set based on excavated evidence. In another part of the project, pupils excavated a medieval backland pit and determined from its contents whether it had been used for rubbish, tanning or to contain human waste. A CD-ROM for schools, based on the exhibition and schools project, will become available soon.

Our use of dramatic episodes in the context of guided historical walks has also been well received. "Fittie Trails and Tales", in the former fishing community of Footdee near Aberdeen harbour, became something of an institution over several years. Here we were using architectural and historical evidence to present snatches of local stories – with the emphasis on the less well-known and obvious. Following suggestions from the public we have since run a similar series of walks in Old Aberdeen, featuring topics such as grave-robbing, drunkenness and the departure of the last bishop from his palace (recently discovered by excavation) in the 17th century.

Obviously, we try to base our interpretation on original research and evidence from Aberdeen itself. Drama scripts are based on archive searches, while we have tried to move beyond the "lucky dip" approach to simulated digging, which tends to reinforce the view that archaeology is only about finding objects. Most successful was a reconstruction of an urban medieval site for National Archaeology Days, excavated over the space of a weekend by volunteer diggers ranging in age from 18 months to 80. Working under expert guidance they uncovered the various layers, complete with stone and wattle walls, post-holes and a ceramic pot containing a hoard of replica medieval silver pennies.

Judith Stones, Keeper of Archaeology, Aberdeen City Council. The projects described were funded by Aberdeen City Council, the Heritage Lottery Fund, Nave Nortrail and Historic Scotland. judiths@aberdeencity.gov.uk

Below from top to bottom

1. Repairing shoes as part of a drama session inside a reconstructed wattle dwelling.
2. Old customs die hard – a 17th century dispute over doing the laundry in the street was part of one of the walks around Old Aberdeen
3. Children excavate a "medieval" hearth at the award-winning Step into Medieval Aberdeen project
4. Getting down and dirty in the schools lab at "Privies and other Filthiness"



All images © Aberdeen City Council

True education flowers at the point when delight falls in love with responsibility
Philip Pullman



We were pupils again

The SpeyGrian group is a network of people interested in environmental learning that crosses traditional boundaries. The concept was devised by Scottish schoolteacher Dr Joyce Gilbert, and inspired by courses in the Canadian Yukon looking at the role of both science and the arts in shaping our attitudes and values.

SpeyGrian has run a range of courses and workshops, all of them with an emphasis on a reflective outdoor experience that will have very different outcomes for the different people taking part. Courses based on *Leader*, a converted Brixham trawler sailing off the west coast of Scotland, have been a particularly successful format. Here Alistair Thomson shares his experience of these physical and emotional journeys.

Teaching at one of the pilot Sustainable Secondary Schools alerted me to the opportunity to join the first SpeyGrian course on *Leader* in July 2002, sailing from Argyll around Mull to Rum and Eigg. From the start it was clear that we had to work together to make sail and keep the vessel in good shape. Before we knew each other's names we were pulling on lines, sweating to make them fast, and finding that there was much to learn. We were pupils again. My experience that first year convinced me of the merit of the underlying philosophy and encouraged me to volunteer as a facilitator for the following summer.

Sailing on *Leader* is spectacular. As we travel from port to anchorage and beyond, we meet storytellers, ecologists, musicians and others who share personal perspectives of their environment. A journal, sometimes a sketchbook, provides focus and helps to crystallise thoughts. We analyse articles collected from across the world that present new thinking in environmental learning. Together these elements provide a cohesive



experience, facilitated by discussion or by simply being there.

The deck adapts itself as a meeting area. Even in less than kind weather we often gather there – somehow the seascape around us sets the perfect scene for enquiry and discussion. Formal themes are set, but issues raised by members often overtake them. It has become a philosophy of the group that participants influence the character of the experience, allowing this encounter with nature to be felt in very personal terms. Some folk see this learning as a model for work with pupils, others are focussed on the opportunity to see and do what are for them extraordinary things.

The social side of our meetings are a strong factor in building a sense of belonging. The journey can be punctuated by "wow moments": often shared sightings of sea life revealed in the waves around us. Music and storytelling translate the experience as an equally valid expression of belonging.

After a week of discovery, participants reported feeling re-energised and better able to tackle whatever challenge awaited them back home. For some the experience was almost spiritual and afterwards they spoke of a catharsis of sorts. This direct experience, exploring ideas and themes and

the physical landscape by sea or by foot, has become a vehicle for contextual learning for SpeyGrian.

Now we aim to take these insights back to our daily lives. What can be done to deliver such experiences to others? How can we resist the constraints of fear and ignorance that will see our children confined in playgrounds, only to habituate them to contentment behind a fence? Are we content to see the world as others might like us to?

Having taught Art and Design for over twenty years, I had found my love for my subject being challenged by the routine and confinement of examinations and classroom based pedagogy. My SpeyGrian experience has reminded me why my subject is important to me, but better still, it invites me to reconnect with the world in a way that adds meaning to my learning. I have taken my first step.

Alistair Thomson, Principal Teacher of Art & Design, Alford Academy, Aberdeenshire
meetme@thecorner.plus.com

*SpeyGrian plan an event on Canna this year from 16 – 23 July, and hope to run further trips on *Leader* in 2006. More information, and a mailing list for news of the group's activities, is at www.speygrian.org.uk*



All photographs: Joyce Gilbert