



Interpretation – what's that?



What is Interpretation?

- “an educational activity which aims to reveal meanings and relationships through the use of original objects, by first hand experience, and by illustrative media, rather than simply to communicate factual information” (Tilden 1957)
- “a communication process designed to reveal meanings and relationships of our cultural and natural heritage to the public, through first-hand involvement with an object, artefact, landscape or site” (Interpretation Canada 1973)

- “the process of communicating to people the significance of a place or object so that they enjoy it more, understand their heritage and environment better, and develop a positive attitude to conservation”

(Association for Heritage Interpretation 1975)

- “a means of communicating ideas and feelings which help people understand more about themselves and their environment”

(Interpretation Australia 2002)

Tilden's principles...

How interpretation works...

- “Information, as such, is not interpretation. Interpretation is revelation based upon information... The chief aim of interpretation is not instruction, but provocation” Tilden.
- Principles of interpretation
 - Provoke the audience's curiosity
 - Relate to everyday life
 - Reveal the message
 - Address big themes/issues

What forms can interpretation take?

Discussion session

Panels



Exhibitions



Artwork



Guided tours



Sound



Trails/Geocaching





Digital Interpretation

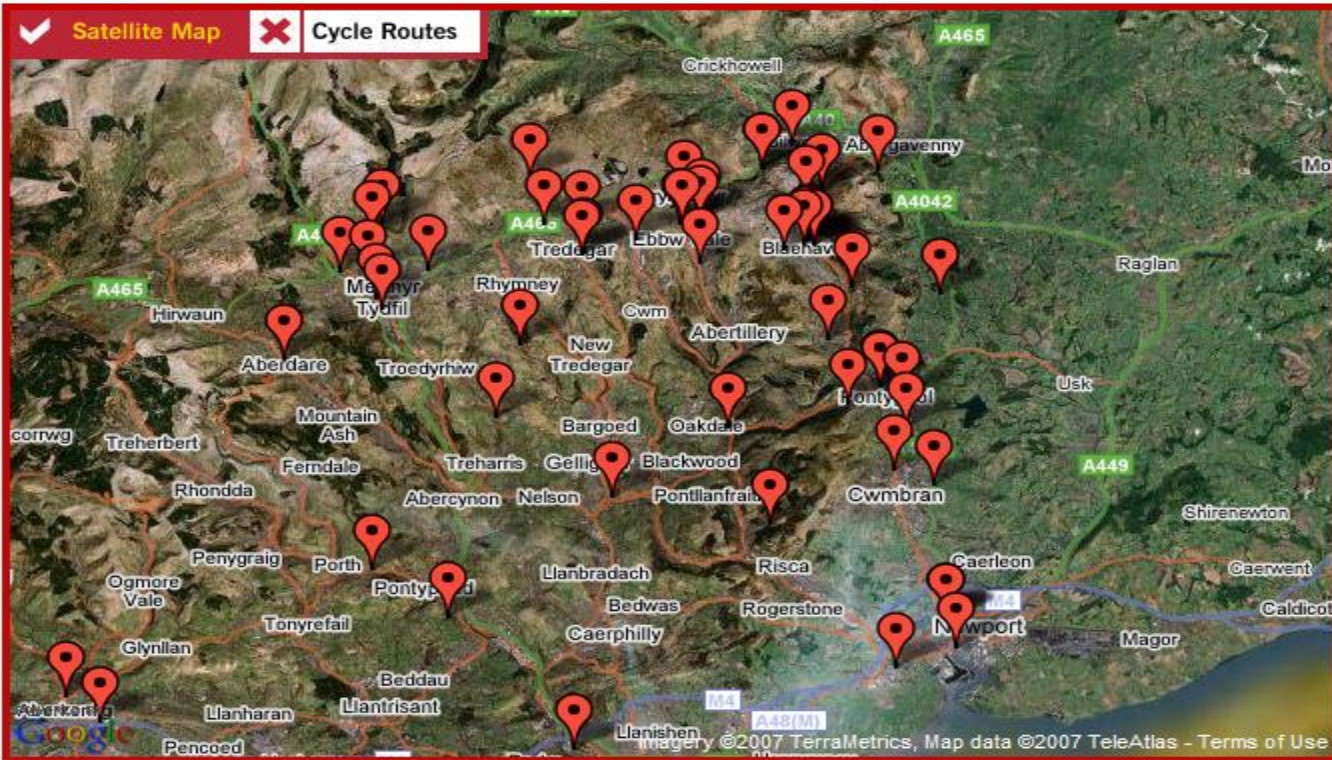


Interactive web sites

PLACES TO VISIT NEARBY : Use the map to discover places to visit nearby

☒ Satellite Map

☐ Cycle Routes



Key to symbols:

Coal

Transport

Iron and steel

Other industries

Back

Explore!

**THE LANDSCAPE
AND INDUSTRIES**

THE PEOPLE

THE COMMUNITIES

**OTHER
ATTRACTIONS**

RESET



+

ZOOM LEVEL

-

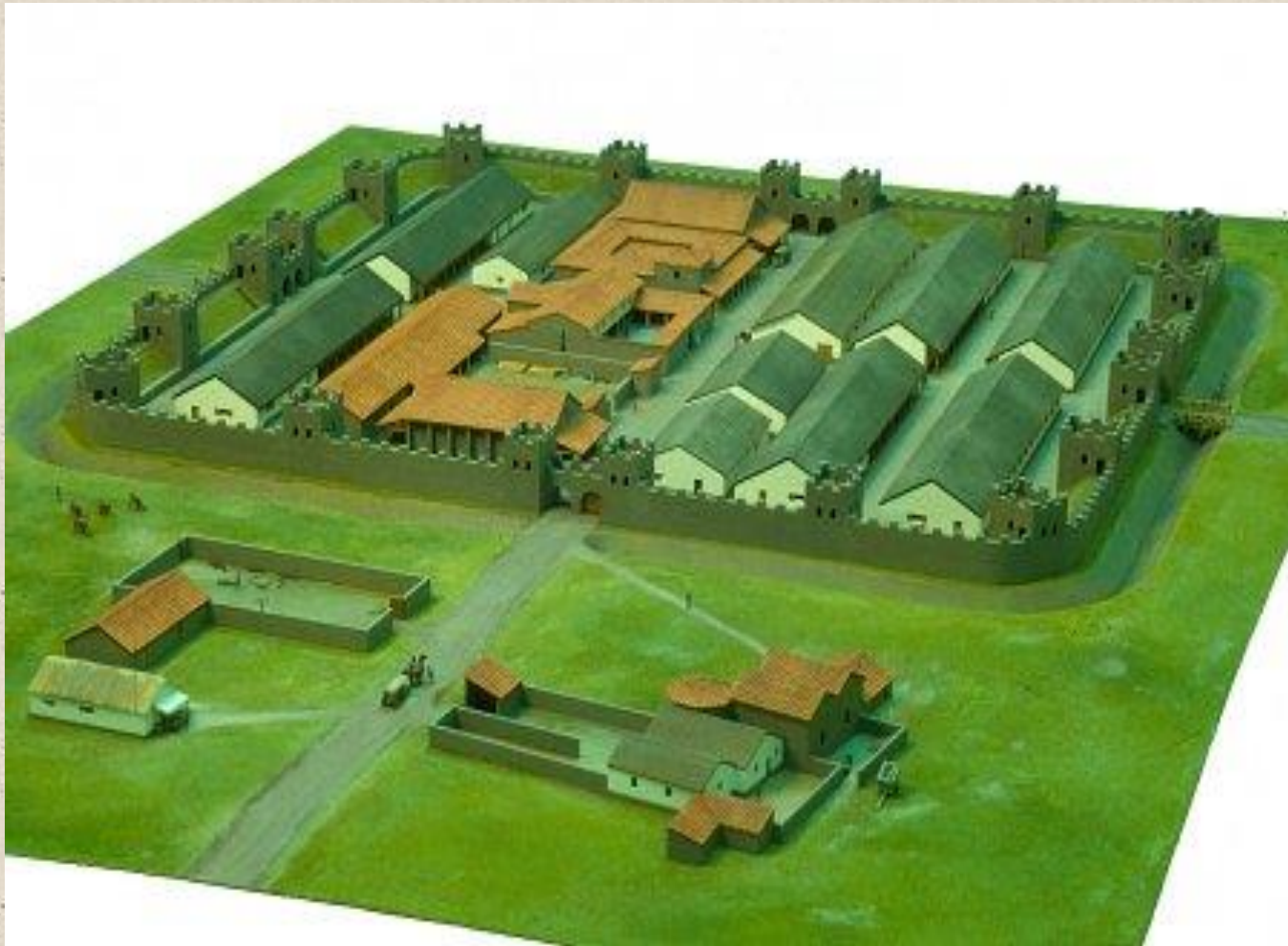


Theatre and Performance

Events



Reconstructions/Models



INTERPRETATIVE PLANNING

Good interpretation starts with a good plan.

It needs to cover:

- Who is doing it?
- What ?
- Why?
- Who for?
- How?
- Where?
- When?
- By who?
- So what?

WHO IS DOING IT?

About the organisation

- Essential where an organisation is expecting external funding for a project
- This demonstrates the organisation's credibility to undertake the project it is proposing and should include:
 - A description of what the organisation does, why it does it, how, when, where and who is involved
 - A brief history of the development of the organisation, including key milestones and success stories that are relevant to the proposed project

WHAT?

- This should include a summary of the site or heritage feature in its wider context.
- The process can involve looking at the site or feature's key *Strengths* and *Weaknesses*, *Opportunities* and *Threats* (called SWOT analysis)

WHY...

do we want to tell our story?

- The significance of the site/resource being interpreted
- The key to deciding what the story is...is to identify what is 'significant', famous or special about your heritage. It is useful to put together a Heritage Assets Inventory.

Our (interpretive) objectives

- The interpretive objectives for the project are the specific things that you would like the people visiting your heritage site or feature to:
- **Learn** or remember about your heritage (*Learning objectives*)
- **Do** as a result of visiting your heritage site/feature (*Behavioural objectives*)
- **Feel** about your heritage (*Emotional objectives*)
- **Know** about you - the organisation(s) involved in developing the project (*Promotional objectives*)
- These should be SMART

Interpretive Objectives: Examples

- **Learning / Cognitive Objectives**
 - 80% of visitors looking at the interpretive panel at Kilmuir will leave knowing that burning heather moorland is an important management technique for maintaining the moor in good condition
- **Emotional / Affective Objectives**
 - 75% of visitors to the Kirkpatrick Bay visitor centre will leave feeling angry at the increasing number of pollution events due to offshore oil spillages
- **Behavioural Objectives**
 - There will be a 50% reduction in picking bluebells as a result of visitors looking at the panel in Kirk Braes wood

Example from Carl Atkinson, NRW

WHO FOR?

- Identifying the audience i.e. who the project would like to tell its story to, and then finding out what they might like to see and do when they visit the site or feature, is crucial in the early stages of any interpretation project. There are three key stages:
- Identifying the *target* audience
- Consulting with *current* audience if applicable
- Identifying any *barriers* the *target* audience might face.

HOW? Part 1

Themes – the thinking bit!

- Themes are our story
- Themes are not topics!
 - ie.
 - Birds = **topic**
 - Birds are a fascinating group of animals because of their special adaptation to flight = **theme**
- Themes = whole sentences

Uncle Sam Ham

Why Themes?

- People remember them
- They help you to be organised.

Themes

- Think ...”so what”
- Think... “Big Deal”
- Use the theme generator
- Edit your theme until it is strong
 - Use analogy
 - Use metaphor
 - Use symbolism
 - Use active verbs
 - Avoid the verb ‘to be’

HOW? Part 2

The doing bit

- What media will be most suitable for the location and audience(s)
- Understand the why/who for and where's the best place before we decide how!
- Have funders made conditions which affect what we produce?
- How much money is available and how much will it cost?

- Will it be freely accessible or will visitors pay?
- Does the size of audience affect viability?
- Will it be cost effective and how do we decide that?

WHERE?

- Is it visibly interesting to them?
- Is it intrinsically interesting?
- Do we want to open up quieter areas?
- Do we want people to follow a route?
- Is the site big enough for a reasonable number of visitors?

- Are they constrained to a site/visitor centre or can they wander around?
- On a large site, which locations should we interpret?
- Do we need to control access to sensitive areas?
- Is it safe?

WHEN?

- Is this year round/all day; special events etc?
- What time best suits our objectives?
- Is this for existing users or to attract new users, if so what time suits them best?
- Is our location indoors or outside?

BY WHO/RESOURCES

What resources do we need to tell our story?

- Staff and / or volunteers?
- Financial and other resources
- Time

Who will deliver it?

- Contracts with consultants/clients
 - Planning
 - Content
 - Design
 - Fabrication
 - Installation

ATTENTION!

You will need this to
spot the abundance
of wildlife in this area.



#NaturesPlayground

SO WHAT?

Or...how will we measure our success?

Evaluation can be defined as the systematic examination of activities where objectives are defined, and performance in meeting these objectives is rigorously measured. (Prince 1982)

Why Evaluate?

- To determine its success
- To improve it
- To build an understanding of how visitors respond to provision
- To incorporate thinking about visitor response into the planning process

What is a visitor like?

- Searching for meaningful experiences, but not likely to be deep or complex ☐
- Sensation seeking i.e. responsive to cues which are
 - Novel / surprising
 - Eye catching
 - Exciting
 - Threatening / thrilling
 - i.e. tend to be more responsive to peripheral cues rather than central cues
 - Avoid effort & boredom
 - Window shopping mode
- People oriented (but NB gender differences)

Classification of Evaluation

- When you do it:
 - Front end analysis - during planning phase
 - Formative evaluation—during design phase
 - Remedial evaluation—immediately post set-up
 - Summative evaluation -after project completes

Methodologies

How do you evaluate?

- Indirect method does not impact on visitor e.g.
 - observational methods
- Direct method does impact on visitor e.g.
 - questionnaires, interviews, guided self reports etc
- Qualitative—
 - raw data is usually words, describing experiences, thoughts, feelings etc and analysis is descriptive and content rich
- Quantitative —
 - raw data can be anything but if not numerical it is transformed into numbers for analysis e.g. counts

Methodologies cont'd

- Observational Methods
- Questionnaires
 - closed/open questions,, rating scales, interviewer/self complete, face to face/telephone
- Structured conversations;
 - interviews, focus groups
- Critical appraisal–
 - structured expert judgement
- NB issues around sampling

Thank you for listening!

Now lets see some interpretation on the
ground!

Any questions, contact Ruth:
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