

The Electronic Revolution

An overview

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The e-revolution transcends organisations and national boundaries and will require vision, partnership and an understanding of audiences to make it effective.

Few would dispute that we are experiencing a global e-revolution and that for the historic environment sector this provides the potential to deliver conservation services with greater efficiency and effectiveness, as well as to engage with communities and individuals in new ways in the provision of learning and leisure opportunities. The first beneficiaries were researchers who had access to the technology, but public and commercial organisations delivering front-line services to a wide public are now in the driving seat. In this process, individuals and communities are becoming empowered through the electronic supply of services and information.

The first two decades of computer applications in the sector were driven by archaeological researchers and curators who created databases at national and local levels, often for their own use and that of peers. The challenges of historic environment data have led to software being exploited to its limit, for example through using geographical information systems to model change through time. More recently, the development of much wider internet access, including broadband and mobile technologies, has attracted the attention of business, which sees the potential of e-commerce, and government, which regards information technology as a way to transform its products and services to create an improved and interactive experience for citizens.

Central to the concept of e-government is a network of shared knowledge and a knowledge economy, global in dimension, with improved opportunities for all. Close to the historic environment sector, the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister is pressing ahead with the concept of e-planning to simplify the burden of the regulatory system, but also to help achieve the government's social and economic objectives for sustainable communities.

In England, the proposed new heritage

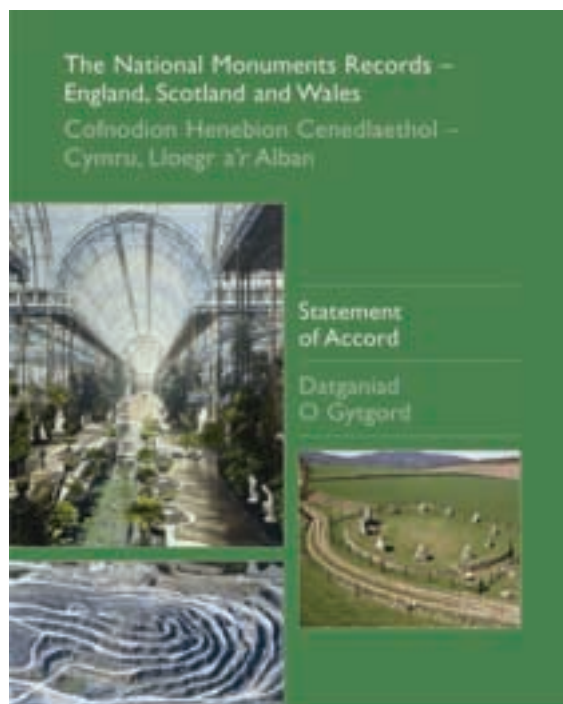
protection system is based on public engagement in the debate about what in the historic environment reinforces our sense of place, belonging and well-being. As well as the potential for greater efficiency and effectiveness in delivering heritage protection services, there is much in the e-revolution to fuel the English Heritage cycle of understanding, valuing, caring for and enjoying the historic environment, both for heritage professionals and for a much wider audience. Perhaps the greatest potential benefit is for users to be able, if they wish, to move seamlessly from front-line casework, advisory, education and leisure services to the conservation principles, research, databases and archives which complement them and back again.

There is much progress to celebrate in our sector and beyond. Local authority Historic Environment Records are moving online. There have been astonishing developments in online resources in the museums and archives sectors. Co-operation in England between English Heritage and local records on future strategy has never been better. The National Monuments Records of England, Scotland and Wales have signed a co-operation statement. At a UK level, the Archaeology Data Service and the Historic Environment Information Resource Network (HEIRNET) have pioneered partnerships beyond national and organisational boundaries. New forms of searching have brought text, images and spatial data much closer together. The best online services are linked to educational and outreach activities. A good example here is the joint DCMS, English Heritage and CABE initiative, *Engaging Places*, designed to inspire learning in the built environment.

There are risks to be managed if the sector is to exploit the technology effectively. The most successful commercial online services have raised the expectations of the customer. Websites must be dynamic and always offer something new. We should avoid a culture that



NATIONAL MONUMENTS RECORD



In November 2005 the National Monuments Records for England, Scotland and Wales signed a joint *Statement of Accord* that will help to ensure the development of compatible information systems across the three countries.

'dumps' resources on the web and considers the job done, without much thought given to the business need, mediation, interpretation, marketing or promotion. On the other hand, the updated list of historic buildings in England is still not publicly available, although it was computerised with Department of the Environment funding nearly 10 years ago. While the concerns of individuals about details of their homes being placed on the internet must be respected, there are great dangers that the historic environment will be marginalised in the awareness of the public if information is not delivered through the medium expected, whether for planning or learning purposes, including the context of the proposed historic environment reforms.

The key to success for the sector will be understanding the impact of the technology on organisations, communities and individuals and their changing demands and expectations. E-heritage services must be designed around front-line service provision to the user, rather than the convenience of the providing organisation, which may have to learn to associate its corporate identity with other organisations. Indeed, individuals and communities will want to be able to determine and shape the services they require in the form that suits them, irrespective of whether they are provided from the business, public or voluntary sectors.

Impressive statistics of web hits are often quoted as evidence of extensive use, but there is very little systematic market research on existing users, let alone on how audiences are to be

developed. This is where our sector is at its weakest. As users of services personalise them, audiences may become more segmented and harder to reach. 'Blogs', which chronicle the thoughts and times of individuals, and 'Wikis', which enable individuals to re-engineer web content in their own image, may be just the start of this trend. In an age in which individuals may select types of information and entertainment that can follow them around wherever they are in the world, there will be increasing competition to reach new audiences, which will in turn require great creativity on behalf of the providers. On the other hand, like-minded people will seek each other out through the internet and, perhaps, engage more profoundly with the historic environment in a demanding, vocal and democratic way. Developments in search-engines are likely to have a major impact as the established engines provide ever-greater access content, while new ones explore niche markets.

How is the sector to react to the opportunities and challenges? First of all, its numerous component organisations need a broad and shared vision of the potential. They must work in partnership on analysing the business models behind the delivery of more effective systems and on market research, as well as a common understanding of technical change and audience development. Data standards must satisfy all parts of the sector and technical infrastructure must be based on interoperability. Portals, such as the proposed Heritage Gateway for England, provide a firm basis for partnership in delivering at one point a range of services from different organisations. The potential will only be realised if there is common agreement on strategy, which needs to be developed at local, regional, national, European and international levels. We must also ensure that our sector provides itself with the necessary leadership and skills.

Finally, we must never forget that the historic environment is about physical reality, not virtual reality, although virtual experience can complement and enhance real experience. The technology can help us to be more efficient, effective, engaging and enjoyable. It can enable us to generate revenue through e-commerce. While we cannot afford to let it pass us by, we must never go down the road of directing people through a website or telephone system to a call centre abroad as a substitute for real engagement with experts who can communicate the excitement of the historic environment. We must also retain the capability to engage with those who choose not to, or are unable, to consume e-revolution services.

Developing Effectiveness

Connecting people and data

New networks are providing professional users with fast seamless access to vital historic information.

DEVELOPING INFORMATION RESOURCES

Within the overall initiative that is e-government, 'effectiveness' has been identified as one of the three key areas that needs to be targeted for improvement. From the start, effectiveness has been seen as the measure of how well a public service organisation, whether it be local, regional or national, is going about its business and therefore how it is perceived by those who use its services and those who operate them.

Many of the broad issues of effectiveness in public service delivery are directly reflected in the historic environment sector. The e-government initiative has therefore provided the context and impetus for historic environment professionals in local and national government to address some of the fundamental underlying issues that they need to face if they are to meet the expectations both of their customers and their partners – issues such as compartmentalisation and a lack of easily available shared information. The historic environment sector, with its responsibilities spread in a seemingly random way across various government departments and among different tiers within local authorities, is a perfect example of the way in which the robust application of e-government principles can increase the effectiveness of the sector as a whole.

The public arm of the historic environment sector will not become truly effective in the e-government sense until it fundamentally changes the way in which it views both itself and the enormous array of cultural assets for which it is responsible. For many generations there has been a functional split between the archaeologist, who in the main deals with buried sites, and the conservation officer, who deals with built remains. This professional divide had been further mirrored by the internal structures that have evolved across large

parts of local government. Within these the archaeological team tends to be located in the upper-tier authority (ie county council) while conservation officers inhabit the lower-tier authorities. Effective integration of the two facets of the historic environment in these circumstances is inevitably more difficult to develop and sustain; it also tends to rely very heavily on the technical compatibility of the authorities and their willingness to co-operate with one another.

As English Heritage's own new draft *Conservation Principles* show, the successful management of the historic environment draws upon the understanding and expertise of many different stakeholders. Underpinning this understanding, and assisting the professionals and other interested parties to reach sustainable mediated decisions, is a vast body of primary and interpreted data. This information is often held on separate stand-alone systems, whether computerised or not, and so is difficult to access and use. Within local and national government the e-government initiative is providing a technical environment in which many of these issues can be overcome.

Many of the issues that once militated against the effective introduction of e-government in the heritage sector are in the process of being resolved, although not always through the simple application of technology. Invariably, the effective management of the historic environment is linked to the operation of the wider local authority planning system. One of the principal drivers for change within local authorities has thus been the speed at which their planning services have embraced the technologies necessary to bring about e-government. The effort and funding that the ODPM has invested in e-planning is now beginning to bear fruit, as exemplified by the example of the Planning Portal, discussed elsewhere in this issue. As a result, some local authorities are beginning to handle planning applications in an entirely



Photograph © Mr. Ian Garman

Sheldon Bush and Patent Shot Company Limited lead-shot tower, Bristol, Grade II-listed, loE number: 458483.

electronic format. By contrast, some of the statutory national authorities still lack the technology and systems to follow their example.

The case studies described below demonstrate the rapid and vigorous progress that is now being made both at local and national levels to increase the effectiveness with which historic environment information is collected, managed and disseminated. These and similar projects have nevertheless highlighted some of the very serious problems that still beset historic environment data. Many of these centre around the use of language or changes in recording media, and until they are resolved the full benefits of e-enablement will remain beyond our grasp.

Two of the case studies below demonstrate the ways in which English Heritage is addressing the effectiveness component of the e-government agenda at a national level. The first of these, Listed Buildings Online, shows how information that used to be disseminated in cumbersome hard-copy form is now being put into easily accessed digital format. The second case study demonstrates how the re-engineering and upgrading of English Heritage's IT systems is allowing staff across

the organisation to access and use digital information in a GIS environment.

Looking more widely, the example of the national Planning Portal shows how the process of submitting and dealing with a planning application has been simplified for all of those involved with the process, wherever they live and whatever their personal or professional interests in the case. At a more local level, Essex County Council's experience provides an excellent demonstration of the way in which a local authority that has embraced the e-government targets has simultaneously been able to develop and enhance its own heritage services to the public. The Essex case study also demonstrates how important external funding sources such as the Heritage Lottery Fund and New Opportunities Fund are to the realisation of such projects. The final case study, from the Archaeology Data Service, shows how information sources that sit outside local and national government structures are being developed along a parallel path and should eventually allow seamless connection to data held within traditional local authority Historic Environment Record systems.

The e-government initiative, and in particular its e-planning component, is providing some vital new opportunities and structures for the historic environment sector. In particular, it will for the first time allow specialised and often marginal heritage services in local authorities to become fully integrated with their mainstream counterparts. This is not just a question of interoperable systems and exchanges of data, but also involves a fundamental change in the way in which the historic environment is approached within local government. Over the next few years, a major influence on this will be the integrated and simplified legislative system for designated monuments, buildings, parks and gardens that is expected to emerge from the government's Heritage Protection Review (HPR). Alongside these proposed legislative changes there will be a parallel realignment and streamlining of the managerial and curatorial roles of local authorities, English Heritage and DCMS. Taken together, the HPR and the current round of e-planning initiatives have the potential to hugely raise the profile and effectiveness of the historic environment in local authorities – provided that we are all prepared to work in co-operative partnership to unlock the information resources on which the vision depends.

Dave Batchelor

Head of Local Authority Liaison, English Heritage

MAGIC – a shared resource of rural, countryside and environmental information

MAGIC (Multi Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside) was the first web-based interactive map to bring together information on key environmental schemes and designations. It was initiated in 2001 by a number of public bodies charged with developing and implementing rural policy in England.

Before MAGIC, organisations maintained their own environmental schemes and designations evidence base, in a variety of formats and collected to variable standards. Much of this data was both digital and spatial – it had a geographical reference relating to a specific place. The MAGIC project collated a single definitive set of data, using an agreed common standard, and made this information available via a web-based Geographic Information System (GIS).

The application was formally launched in July 2002 and is freely accessible to partners and the general public over the internet at www.magic.gov.uk. The current partnership comprises the Countryside Agency, Defra, English Heritage, English Nature, Environment Agency, Forestry Commission, ODPM and RDS (Rural Development Service).

At the launch, the main elements of the MAGIC website were the interactive map, metadata for all of the 65 datasets and a help resource. A data download facility has also been developed, to allow access to the underlying digital data. Static maps have been introduced to provide a quick view of the data either at regional or national scale.

The MAGIC interactive map, however, still remains the main delivery tool. It provides direct access within a GIS interface to the thematic datasets and Ordnance Survey baseline mapping. It also provides users with standard GIS tools to view the data, navigate around the map, measure lines and areas, print maps and interrogate the data. More advanced features are also included. The site checking and reporting functions allow user-specified spatial searches for environmental information. There is also a tool that generates a URL (Uniform Resource Locator) for opening the interactive map at a specified map extent with specified map layers displayed.

MAGIC has now been expanded to include core data from Wales, Scotland and the Great Britain marine environment, with the purpose of meeting the needs of MAGIC partners with GB-wide interests.

As a result of the new facilities, the additional datasets and a general increased awareness of the site, the use of MAGIC has increased steadily since the launch. In autumn 2002 the number of daily user sessions was 350 (a session is a period of continuous web-site use by a single user). MAGIC now receives an average of over 2,500 daily user sessions.

The initial focus for the MAGIC project has been to increase access to rural, countryside and marine datasets. It is now possible to view more than 150 thematic datasets, sourced from more than 20 different organisations, with metadata in one place. MAGIC demonstrates the potential of the Internet for data sharing. It also plays a part in a wider culture of change supporting the e-government objectives and greater joined-up working.

There are still opportunities ahead. In 2006, MAGIC will begin to source data from SPIRE (Defra's Spatial Information Repository), which aims to rationalise data storage, allowing Defra and its delivery partners direct access to greater volumes of more accurate and timely geographic information.

MAGIC is an excellent example of what can be achieved by working in partnership, using the opportunities provided by modern technology to improve the quality and efficiency of services. Open and shared access to integrated information about the countryside is seen as essential, particularly where the same information can be made available at all scales from local to national. The MAGIC partnership will continue to develop and to seek new innovative ways of working based on this approach.

Alison Dickson

MAGIC Project Manager, Defra



Screenshot of MAGIC interactive map showing Scheduled Monuments, National Parks and Sites of Special Scientific Interest layers near Kirkby Lonsdale, Cumbria.

The Planning Portal

When a local business, architect or householder needs planning permission for any reason, their first stop is their Local Planning Authority (LPA). The environment is a vital issue taken into account by LPAs regarding planning permissions. If the application will affect a protected heritage site, a listed building or the environment, then often, a statutory consultee, such as English Heritage is approached. Like it or not, planning permission and lengthy consultation is a vital part of protecting our heritage. But surely there's a more streamlined, less laborious way to go about it?



The Planning Portal has been live since 2002, and has become an invaluable tool for LPAs, members of the public researching rules and regulations, and planning agents too. Statutory consultees will find the wealth of knowledge available online absolutely invaluable as well.

More than 620,000 planning applications are made every year in the UK and given that the vast majority of these are paper based it can be a slow and costly business for councils, agents and statutory consultees. The Planning Portal was designed to revolutionise this process, providing agents and citizens with the means to create and submit applications electronically to local authorities.

The Planning Portal offers a comprehensive range of information on the planning system in England and Wales. It is aimed at everyone, from central government and local authorities to planning professionals and the lay person. The website offers the latest planning news, and jobs in the industry. You can also determine whether you need to apply for planning permission and how to obtain it. The site provides access to development plans, maps, regulations and guidance upon which most application and appeal procedures are based.

In addition to the information held by the Planning Portal, citizens and businesses can access information on the latest policy and research via links to numerous sources, including the ODPM.

Users can also view local development plans

on the Planning Portal and use interactive proposal maps to view policies that affect environmental issues in their local area. The site also acts as a database of contacts for all users, including statutory consultees, with an extensive list of environmental bodies and contacts.

More information about the Planning Portal can be found at www.planningportal.gov.uk.

Paul Kilner

Director, Planning Portal

English Heritage's webGIS System

webGIS provides all 1,800 English Heritage staff, in 10 offices, at home or on site, with access to textual and spatial data necessary for their day-to-day work. More than 750,000 records, across 6 legacy databases are now accessible through a single gateway, together with modern and historical Ordnance Survey (OS) data.

webGIS had four main objectives, all of which have been achieved or exceeded. The first was to create a corporate GIS infrastructure as the initial building block for an enterprise GIS. The 'store and manage once, use many' concept means that staff can access data as they need them rather than having to order and obtain them from other partners before starting work, thus making time savings. Hardware costs are also lowered as data are only stored once. This infrastructure will constitute the basic building block for all future developments of GIS within English Heritage and will be the key to future projects requiring GIS functionality, such as the Heritage Gateway. The new infrastructure also helps streamline processes such as data delivery to MAGIC.

The second objective was to provide a read-only GIS that would enable Planning and Development (P&D) teams to conduct their casework more efficiently. Before the introduction of webGIS, regional casework teams were forced to employ slow, cumbersome, paper-based methods to obtain and use spatial designation information; now cross-dataset querying is possible on the desktop. All staff have access to the data they need and using webGIS allows them a holistic view of the historic environment rather than seeing cases as individual datasets. In webGIS, administrative units are generated automatically from the latest OS Boundary Line data, obviating the need to enter these manually.

The third objective was to improve the value of the OS pan-government service level agreement. Before webGIS only 32 staff had access to these data; now all staff have access on their



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desktop. All OS datasets are maintained centrally, rather than on a project-by-project basis, and are readily available.

The fourth objective was to increase staff awareness and knowledge of GIS. More than 500 staff have been trained in GIS theory and the practicalities of webGIS. Many more have attended demonstrations of the potential of GIS for their work. Extensive information is held on the intranet for staff to improve knowledge in their own time. As staff are realising the benefits that GIS can bring to their workflows, there are increasing demands to incorporate GIS technology with other English Heritage systems.

The value of webGIS is that it enables more informed, efficient business decisions to be made because relevant, accurate statutory and non-statutory information is accessible to staff quickly and easily. webGIS is part of English Heritage's modernisation agenda and provides a framework for future delivery of spatial data internally and to partners and the public.

Alice Froggatt

Corporate GIS Co-ordinator, English Heritage

Unlocking the storehouses of Essex's heritage

Essex County Council operates as co-ordinator for a wide range of services concerning the history of the county. These include the archival heritage, the historic environment, and the museums of Essex. In recent years, these services have all been seeking to improve access to their information collections via electronic means.

The Essex Record Office (ERO) contains a vast range of documentary, cartographic and pictorial sources for the history of Essex. For many years, this huge archive was searchable via an extensive series of catalogues that provided useful summaries of the contents of

the actual documents themselves. Users could browse the catalogues as a necessary preliminary to ordering the original sources themselves. However, searching these catalogues could be a time-consuming business and necessarily involved direct access via the ERO's search rooms at Chelmsford and Colchester. As a remedy, the SEAX system was developed to enable users to search digitised versions of the catalogues. This is accessible via www.essexcc.gov.uk, then 'Enjoying Essex' and 'Archives and Museums'. At present, the volume of the digitised catalogues is equivalent to over 80,000 pages of A4 text, and these are being supplemented by digitised images. Users can now carry out a wide variety of searches, for example, images of Chelmsford High Street from between 1900 and 1950, or a catalogue search for Brentwood parish registers between 1800 and 1850 but excluding baptisms.

In 1999 the County Council's Historic Environment Branch obtained Heritage Lottery Funding (HLF) to make its Essex Historic Environment Record (HER) available online (see <http://unlockingessex.essexcc.gov.uk>). Consideration was originally given to using the SEAX system but it soon became clear that the different structure and detail of the HER database precluded this. Instead, it was decided to create an SQL server database, with a similar look and feel to SEAX, that would contain a subset of the more specialist Historic Buildings and Sites and Monuments Record system used by the Essex HER. Essex was one of the first organisations to apply for HLF funding to put its HER on the internet. Unfortunately, at the time the application was made, this type of project was restricted to what were called

Left: Screenshot of English Heritage webGIS, showing 1:10,000 OS Mapping with Listed Building and Scheduled Monument data for Kenilworth Castle in addition to some of the attribute information which is read from our legacy textual databases.

Shell and cartridge stores (1868–71), Tilbury Fort: one of the thousands of images accessible through Essex County Council's Historic Environment Record.



© Cesart photography

Virtual reconstruction of a Second World War bombing-decoy site.



Iain Bell © Essex County Council

'revenue grants', with the maximum funding limited to £90,000. This restricted what could be achieved – for example, it was not possible to rewrite the Essex HER descriptions. Instead, a number of easy-to-read accounts of different aspects of the county's past were provided, for example 'Essex Through the Ages' or 'My Town' with summaries of the histories of Essex's towns.

A major step forward in digitising actual content across the heritage services (archives, historic environment and museums) came with a successful application to the New Opportunities Fund (NOF). A convenient port of call is provided by the NOF-funded website (<http://www.eesop-e.co.uk/>). Users can obtain easy access to the various strands of the county's heritage, as well as a series of learning packages designed to help newcomers to make the best use of the resources that are on offer. Searchers can now browse more than 18,000 images of some 10,000 objects from many of the county's museums. The Essex HER is also making available thousands of aerial and other photographs, as well as a number of digital reconstructions of archaeological sites and historic buildings, accessible as 2-D images or as QuickTime 3-D videos.

Much has been achieved over recent years, but many challenges remain. Funding, of course, is the major hurdle, especially for the continued support and development of websites on completion of grant-aided projects. Technical issues must also be addressed, especially how to enable users to search the

three main areas all at once, for example the documentary, architectural and archaeological records from a medieval church in one search. To achieve this will require finance, but especially a more co-ordinated approach across the three subject areas.

Paul Gilman

Heritage Information and Records Manager, Essex County Council

Listed Buildings Online

The Listed Buildings Online project was begun in Autumn 2000 with the aim of allowing widespread access to the electronic version of the Lists (first created in 1996 as an in-house management system for English Heritage), initially for the use of local planning authorities and national amenity societies.

Local planning authorities are in the front line: they are responsible for curating the nation's historic building stock but have limited resources to check paper records. They therefore need instant access to information to enable the rapid responses required for the planning process.

As small national organisations, amenity societies struggle to maintain a national set of 'greenbacks' (including amendments), in order to check whether they have an interest in an application that is submitted to them for comment. Proposals to alter a Georgian façade, which might affect both the Victorian fittings and the medieval timber-framing, could attract

interest from any or all amenity societies.

While the Listed Buildings Online project has ultimately been successful, it is best described by the adage 'if you want to get to there, I wouldn't start from here'! Challenges included a major upgrade to software platforms, a vast improvement programme for the quality of data (which, until 2003, included virtually no Ordnance Survey grid references), and, following the liquidation of English Heritage's software supplier shortly before completion of the project, the redevelopment of virtually all of the project's products. All of this, however, has now been recovered and delivered.

The primary product of the project remains its website (<http://lbonline.english-heritage.org.uk>). This reflects the current content of the Lists, and therefore incorporates facilities for updates at regular intervals. It is an easy means of checking the location and nature of listed buildings for users who are familiar with administrative boundaries. This should be of considerable value to both local planning authorities and amenity societies. For reasons of human rights and privacy, access to this database is restricted. If you believe you should be considered for access, please contact lbonline.enquiries@english-heritage.org.uk.

It has become clear, however, that the website could not meet all of the requirements of local authorities. Many need to include Listings on development control, strategic planning or conservation systems. Bulk supply of data to local authorities, therefore, was an issue the project had to address. This was further complicated by the range of software used across 400 local authorities, and the range of purposes for which the data might be required – from complex historic environment records



Photograph © Mr Malcolm Harwood

Milepost approximately 50m east of the entrance to Gelsthorpe Farm, Whixley, North Yorkshire, Grade II-listed, loE number: 330653.

to layers on geographic information systems.

Data have now been supplied in a standard format (xml), which allows complete portability between software systems. Following the pioneering work of the project, this has been adopted as a heritage standard (MIDAS XML – <http://www.heritage-standards.org/>). Listed Buildings Online shows new List entries, delistings, grade changes and other amendments. This will enable users to keep their data fully up to date. Users are also encouraged to inform



© English Heritage

Hundreds of volunteers, like Bob Cottrell in Newcastle, have been working in their own communities to record the listed buildings of England as part of the Images of England project described elsewhere in this issue.

us of inaccuracies in our data or in the Lists.

Feedback from users will inform the development of future requirements for disseminating statutory data via the proposed Heritage Protection Register.

Duncan Brown

Listed Buildings Online Project Manager, English Heritage

biab online – The British & Irish Archaeological Bibliography online

The British & Irish Archaeological Bibliography (biab) is a Council for British Archaeology service, funded by a consortium of key heritage organisations from the UK and Ireland. Since January 2005, the biab e-bibliography has been available as an online service available to all (<http://www.biab.ac.uk>).

The biab online dataset is a key support to research and knowledge discovery in the UK and Ireland. The relevance of e-service implementation for bibliographic datasets is easy to see. The biab online service means that instead of trawling through more than 100 hard-copy volumes to find information, the entire dataset can be searched online through a single digital interface. biab online provides access to a resource of bibliographic references – many with abstracts – from the latest publications, plus extensive archives, in a database of some 200,000 digital records, some dating as far back as 1695. This constitutes a unique archive of information on the literature and practice of archaeology in these islands.

That service is now moving into a further phase of development. The already broad range of content will expand to include related areas and datasets, and the full functionality of new and emerging technology will be utilised to improve delivery and interoperability. As a responsive service, our coverage needs to be re-evaluated periodically to reflect the evolution of the historic environment sector. Recent work in this area has indicated that it would be useful to extend coverage to standing buildings and to make related datasets available alongside biab data. In extending coverage of the literature to the built historic environment we will not be duplicating existing architectural information services, but covering literature that relates to standing buildings as a key part of the historic environment sector.

Other relevant datasets will also be queried by the search mechanism. Records from The Gazetteer of Archaeological Investigations in England in the Archaeological Investigations Project (AIP) can now be searched ([\[csweb.bournemouth.ac.uk/aip/Gazetteers.htm\]\(http://csweb.bournemouth.ac.uk/aip/Gazetteers.htm\)\). Making this dataset searchable alongside biab online will provide access to information on desk-based assessments, field evaluations, estate-management surveys, building recording and environmental assessments. We will also link to the Archaeology Data Service's library of grey literature for online versions of some documents \(<http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/catalogue/library/greylit/>\).](http://</p>
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The online service will also provide access to data from the ARCHway project (<http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/catalogue/ARCHway.html>), which provides information on library journal holdings across the UK, thus allowing the user to find out where hard-copy versions of documents are held. Data on research in progress from the CBA's Online Guide to Archaeological Research (OGAR) will also be incorporated (<http://www.britarch.ac.uk>).

biab online is free at the point of access, in line with CBA Information Service policy. This enables full co-operation with other services without the need for subscriber access restrictions, and has opened up the possibility of collaboration with bibliographic services in related disciplines and the use of data in other services such as e-planning, OASIS and professional and academic report compilation (subject to our terms).

As the next stage in making the data fully interoperable, biab online is drawing up a new integrated Information Management System. With developments in digital interoperability and the ability to conform to the right protocols, datasets such as those in biab online can be accessed and the information used in the digital environment across the community. Because the digital service was brought into being using appropriate technical and data standards, it provides two important broad attributes for present and future development: the ability to be interoperable with other services (horizontal data transfer) and the ability to upgrade to new standards and technology (vertical data transfer).

The principles that we should accurately reflect the historic environment sector and ensure optimum information delivery will continue to be applied as developments occur and resources allow – for example we are currently investigating the feasibility of basic map-based searching of bibliographic data. We welcome feedback and suggestions from our user communities to inform our development. biab can be contacted at info@biab.ac.uk

Isabel Holroyd

Chief Bibliographer and Editor, biab online

Encouraging Engagement

Opening up the datasets

Wider public engagement in the planning process depends on people having easy access to heritage information.

ENCOURAGING PEOPLE TO ENGAGE

By the end of 2005 all English councils should be 'e-enabled'. All interaction between residents and councils that can go online will be online. However, the latest figures suggest that only 60 per cent of the UK's population have and use internet access, and only about 40 per cent of these people have had dealings with government online.

In the historic environment sector it is not easy to provide directly comparable statistics about the percentage of the online population visiting relevant websites or using web services, but we do know that we have one huge advantage: much-sought-after content with which many people wish to engage.

Major projects in recent years, many funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, have provided a number of major digital resources that are now available online. These include English Heritage's Images of England project (<http://www.imagesofengland.org.uk>), which aims to publish a defining image of every listed building in England, and the Council for British Archaeology's Defence of Britain project (<http://www.britarch.ac.uk/projects/dob>), which pulls together information on Second World War anti-invasion sites across the UK. The other key factor that connects these two projects is that the content for the digital resource was primarily provided by hundreds of volunteers working across the country, facilitated by a small staff team. Even more people are now engaging with the results of these projects, utilising the resources for educational projects and linking in with their personal research.

There is a general thirst for knowledge about the historic environment, and for many people the easiest way to engage with the accumulated

information now is through online services. The proposed Heritage Gateway for England will be a particularly widely used channel through which users will access information on national and local HERs. It will build on the work of the Archaeology Data Service (ADS) (<http://ads.ahds.ac.uk>), which 'supports research, learning and teaching with high quality and dependable digital resources'. The ADS has been one of the key players in the development of the Historic Environment Information Resources Network (HEIRNET) and its gateway service HEIRPORT (<http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/heirport>). This service demonstrates how information from different public sources can be drawn together and searched through a single interface, using geography as the underlying theme.

Increasingly we need to think about different ways to make our information available, rather than expecting users to engage with us on our terms. The 'traditional' computer, with its QWERTY keyboard and large colour monitor,

Unlocking the local historic environment. An outreach event at the County Museum, Taunton, one of many held around the county of Somerset.



© Somerset County Council

Photograph © Mr. Chris Broadribb



Chapel of Our Lady of the Crag, Knaresborough, North Yorkshire, Grade II-listed. The Chapel was carved out of the rock in about 1408 by 'John the Mason', and is believed to be the third oldest wayside shrine in Britain. The relief figure of a knight was probably added in the late 17th or early 18th century.

is being replaced by smaller devices such as mobile telephones. As a result old barriers to engagement (for example poor keyboard skills) are disappearing. Many people who would never dream of learning to type can bash out text messages and, significantly, seem to be prepared to pay for access to information to be supplied to them. Many mobile devices already 'know' where they are located and can provide context-specific information about the local historic environment ('What is this site I am looking at?'), with supplementary information ('Where is the nearest local history museum?') to enable those interested to follow up the information in greater detail.

But the public will not just want to use the existing information that is available to them. They will also want to contribute to the knowledge base and add their own thoughts, reminiscences and interpretations to enhance the records. And why not? We all recognise the value of oral-history projects and what we want to do now is enable everyone to add their perspective on their heritage. As the Culture Minister, David Lammy MP, recently suggested, we want to turn our 'Island's story' into our 'Islands' stories' and celebrate the diverse views of our diverse population on their heritage with connections across the world. The portal to the projects funded through the Local Heritage Initiative (<http://www.lhi.org.uk>) already shows the varied work of local community groups, often building on the national record.

Which will be the first organisation to throw open its historic environment database to all as a 'Wiki' (a web database which anyone

can edit)? The initial wikis, perhaps not surprisingly, have come in for some criticism. Some people find it hard to accept that a web database that anyone can edit and help build will be accurate. But research for the journal *Nature* has recently found that the main online Wikipedia (<http://en.wikipedia.org>) is just as accurate as the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*! There are already fantastic digital resources created by groups of volunteers (have a look at the Megalithic Portal – <http://www.megalithic.co.uk>), and in an area which thrives on respecting different views and interpretations of past events we should promote opportunities to encourage more people to engage with the historic environment and use information technology to contribute their thoughts.

The next step is to allow others to use the information contained within our databases and record systems in their own web services, providing multiple 'shop windows' on to the information. Releasing our content for others to use will enable rich community-based portals to be built by enthusiasts, linking historic environment information with other relevant content. An example of this is the recent Google initiative to allow access to maps and satellite images (see <http://maps.google.com>), which users can overlay with information that links into particular locations. How about English Heritage making the National Monuments Record available to overlay on Google maps?

Since 1995 the CBA has run an email discussion list called *britarch* (www.jiscmail.ac.uk/lists/britarch). It has more than 1,700 subscribers, who discuss wide-ranging issues relating to the archaeology of the UK. Since *britarch* was started, tens of thousands of emails have gone out on the list and during some debates the emails pour in thick and fast. Some within the discipline are sceptical of its usefulness, but how many other academic subjects can run such a vibrant community-based discussion group, sustained over 10 years and still going strong?

Information technology, particularly the new generation of web-based services, is enabling far greater engagement with content. Some of these technologies are still looking for a use, but many of them have a direct application in linking people to places. Adding the historical dimension can unlock the real power of these places.

Mike Heyworth

Director, Council for British Archaeology

The Heritage Gateway project: multi-level engagement

The ambitious new Heritage Gateway project aims to build a virtual monuments record of England operating at local, regional and national levels. This project has been conceived and developed by English Heritage, the Association of Local Government Officers (ALGAO) and the Institute of Historic Buildings Conservation (IHBC), working in partnership. The Heritage Gateway, for the first time, will be able to search across statutory and non-statutory data from national and local sources in order to present a more complete picture of England's heritage than has previously been available.

Engagement can be defined as the action of entering into a contract or commitment to achieve an objective. English Heritage, ALGAO and IHBC have all expressed a strategic desire to promote access to the historic environment through their roles as lead bodies in the sector. A strategic solution has been these organisations' joint commitment to a five-year project to build a Heritage Gateway, or portal, to England.

Engagement can be more loosely defined as the action of participating, or being involved in an activity. The historic environment sector as a whole is engaged at this level. The project aims to build a product both to which the broader sector can contribute and that it can consult. Professional needs will be articulated by the sector itself, through questionnaire responses and consultation. Sectoral participation also enables the Heritage Gateway and its users to engage with forthcoming Heritage Protection Reform. The website is being developed in accordance with national and local register specification in order to deliver broad public access to register information. In addition, as part of the project, assistance will be provided to non-web-enabled Historic Environment Records (HERs) for making their digital data available online. This will allow them to reach national benchmarks, which are likely to be a mandatory aspect of statutory status through Heritage Protection Reform.

Engagement can alternatively be defined as the action of attracting interest or attention. This is the type of engagement envisaged at the audience level of the Heritage Gateway. The website will target the general public as well as professional users and, following focus-group research, will be designed to appeal to a broad range of users. The primary interface will be modern, user-friendly and visually appealing, presenting the historic environment and its

concerns in terms that are accessible to all.

The final level of engagement identified in the Heritage Gateway project is defined as the 'action of association'. At this level, the project looks to engage with common sectoral standards. Participants will be encouraged to provide data that comply with the Forum on International Standards in Heritage toolkit (FISH: www.fish-forum.info). By complying with sectoral standards, organisations will be able to share information more easily.

Catherine Cayley

*Heritage Information Partnerships Supervisor,
English Heritage*



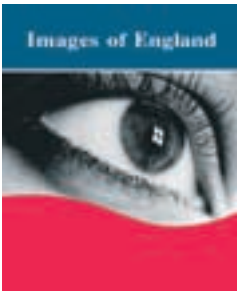
© Winchester City Council LA 08610X, 2002.

Bringing the records together – the local record for Winchester Cathedral (above) adds supplementary detail to the national record (below), while the national record provides wider context for the local record.



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Listed buildings at your fingertips: the Images of England project



The National Monuments Record (NMR) has pioneered the delivery of heritage across the internet through the creation of the world's biggest online image library of its kind: Images of England. With more than 240,000 photographs of listed buildings already displayed on the website alongside the statutory list description, the project now provides unprecedented free access to the rich stock of built heritage in England.

Volunteers from all over England have been working in their communities to create a 'point in time' photographic record of each one of the country's listed buildings. The volunteers are tasked with capturing just one single exterior photograph that will be the 'defining image' that encapsulates the whole structure.

From its inception Images of England has had at its core the government's e-delivery ethos and in many ways was ahead of its time in seeking to deliver heritage over the web. The NMR, then under the auspices of the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England (RCHME), submitted the initial proposal for a web-based project in July 1995. It is worth reflecting that the web was at that time in its infancy: Amazon.com had just been launched and Google.com was still another three years away. Contingencies were made for images to be distributed on CD

ROMs and a risk that the internet 'may not persist as a viable mechanism for public access' was highlighted.

Since the main project began in 1999 it has overcome many challenges and is now delivering on its promise to improve public access to heritage. The following groups can now engage with and enjoy their built heritage online:

- **General public**
Images of England presents information about the built heritage in a format particularly suited to non-specialist users. Someone researching the history of their town can simply type its name into the quick search field of the home page and instantaneously receive a list of associated images. A search under 'Knaresborough' (North Yorkshire), for example, returns 230 hits, including hidden gems like 'Chapel of Our Lady of the Crag' (see p 21) and 'Milepost approximately 50 metres east of entrance to Gelsthorpe Farm' (see p 18). Local history and heritage groups, family historians and many others can all now take advantage of having an online national index of listed items supported by a full colour illustration.

- **Conservation professionals**
For conservation professionals Images of England offers the ability to conduct detailed searches for buildings by a variety of criteria. A 'Period Search' under 'Roman' reveals 173 images, including an early 3rd-century Roman sarcophagus in the gardens of Withington Hall,



Tinside Lido and Changing Rooms, The Hoe, Plymouth, Grade II-listed – one of a series of photographs in 'The Seaside' image album, part of the Images of England Learning Zone, IoE number: 471689.

Photograph © Mr Andrew C Letchford

Macclesfield, Cheshire (see p 11). It is possible to search by a huge variety of building types and materials: a search for 'Shot Tower' under 'Building Type/Industrial' reveals images of the country's three remaining lead-shot towers including the 1969 Sheldon Bush shot tower in Bristol (see p13). This tower is a direct descendant of the first lead-shot tower, which was built in 1782 by William Watts, the inventor of the tower process of lead-shot manufacture.

• Teachers and children

The Images of England Learning Zone is an innovative educational resource that can be used in classrooms to help children learn about historic buildings in their local area as well as putting such buildings into a larger national context. It contains themed images albums on 'The Seaside', the '1930s' and 'The Poor', which teachers can quickly relate to their lesson plans. All of the resources in the Learning Zone are linked into the subjects covered by the National Curriculum, including History, Geography, Citizenship and ICT.

Today, Images of England offers a unique and comprehensive photographic record of England's architectural heritage for anyone seeking to engage with the historic environment. It is scheduled for completion in 2007, by which time there will be approximately 323,000 photographs online. For more information please email: ioeenquiry@english-heritage.org.uk.

Ian Webb

Survey Co-ordinator for Images of England, English Heritage

Historic Environment Local Management (HELM)

While our most precious heritage assets enjoy national protection, most public decisions concerning the historic environment are taken at a local level. Working with key partners, HELM is committed to helping decision-makers in local authorities, regional agencies and national organisations to develop the skills, knowledge, advice and capacity to make the most of the historic environment.

The HELM website at www.helm.org.uk provides easy access to high-quality information, good-practice case studies, guidance and services that support and assist those whose actions affect the historic environment. The website is a one-stop-shop that plays a key role in delivery of the HELM initiative and English Heritage's local authority capacity building strategy. It backs initiatives such as Historic

Environment Champions and will support changes that are brought about by the heritage protection reform.

The HELM website was launched on 31 March 2004 and achievements so far include:

- a fully accessible site (meets Web Accessibility Initiative guidelines*) that conforms to government metadata standards and is accessible to all major browsers

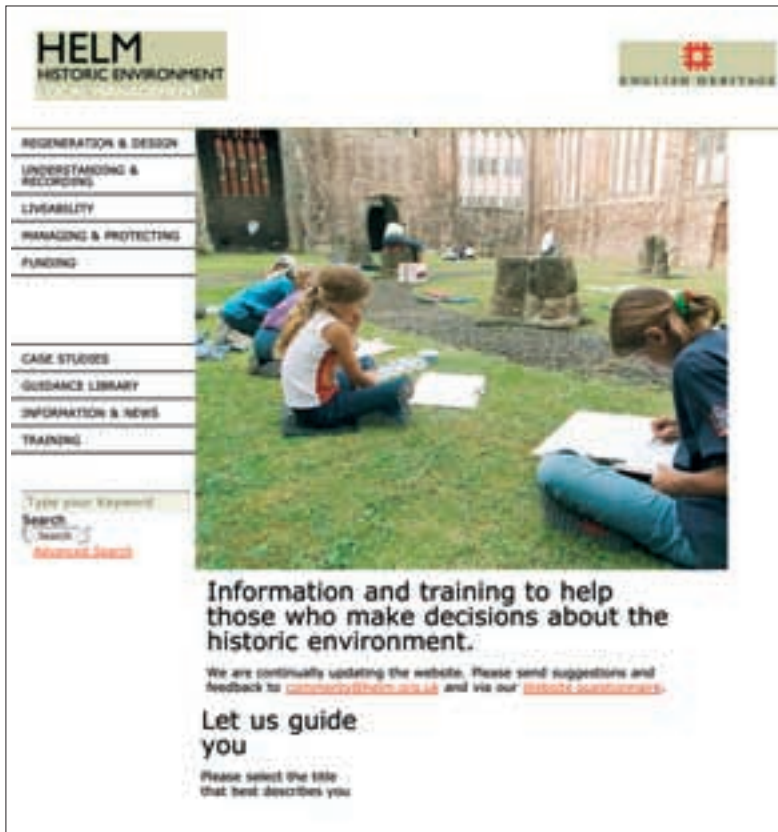
* The World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) is evolving a set of standards to sustain and improve the technology that will achieve a high degree of usability for people with disabilities. The Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI) guidelines are considered the international standard for Web accessibility.

- 33 thematic sections on topics such as regeneration, liveability, funding, and managing and protecting our heritage
- 8 user group pages to support specific audiences, such as elected members, planners and highways engineers
- a library of current English Heritage guidance, policy and standards, many specially written for HELM
- a searchable list of more than 400 local authority publications on the historic environment that give guidance on specialist topics
- a database of over 100 good-practice case studies, collected from around the country
- a training section with information on historic environment courses
- a news section, including an online newsletter to keep users up to date and to support the Historic Environment Champions network.

The increasing number of visits to the website shows its growing popularity across a wide range of interest groups. Between May and October 2005 there were some 50,000 visits, with an increase of more than 3,000 in October alone. HELM links to more than 120 related websites, with partner websites now reciprocating.

Further development of the website needs to have the flexibility to meet the challenges facing the heritage sector, new initiatives in government, respond to user demands and also to a constantly changing internet environment. Current projects include:

- expansion of the Guidance library with links to publications from across the sector, to encourage a more holistic approach to management of the historic environment
- the development of a local and regional government section that will provide a dedicated area on the HELM website for historic



© English Heritage

The HELM website home page. In less than two years the HELM website has moved from conception to creation and is establishing itself as a popular access way to the historic environment.

environment services and support delivery of the Heritage Protection Reform. This will be developed with ALGAO and IHBC

- expansion of the Historic Environment Champions section to increase support for existing Champions and to encourage new appointments. It will include a 'checklist for champions' and an interactive map to 'assess' local-authority provision for historic environment services.

HELM is currently considering the provision of e-learning facilities on its website, an initiative that could help transform the way that local authorities and other decision-makers learn about the historic environment. As well as supporting e-government agendas and other government modernisation targets, it would benefit English Heritage by increasing HELM training capacity and providing a vehicle for the fast delivery of key messages, policies and good practice. E-learning also has the potential to facilitate the exchange of information through the use of message boards and areas where information can be uploaded to the site.

English Heritage and its partners are currently discussing these benefits and hope to conduct a pilot scheme next year. It is proposed that e-learning modules will be aimed at specific user groups and be topic based, supplementing existing offline training. The pilot topic is likely to be Championing the Historic Environment, an e-learning module

for local-authority members, senior officers and historic environment champions. The overall aims of the pilot scheme are to:

- develop an exciting and easy-to-use interactive e-learning system
- measure effectiveness for delivery of HELM training
- ensure practicality of management/costs
- establish potential use by initiatives, such as Continuing Professional Development and external partnerships
- encourage the appointment of Historic Environment Champions and support the existing Champion network.

In less than two years the HELM website has moved from conception to creation and is establishing itself as a popular access way to the historic environment. The real measure of success, however, will be the long-term use and support that will enable this digital asset to develop and maintain its flexibility as an informative and readily available historic environment resource.

Adina Gleeson

HELM Project Officer, English Heritage



© Mr Brian R Faulkner

All Saints Church, Edingthorpe, Norfolk, a late 12th-century round tower church remodelled in the 14th century. The church is one of 240,000 listed buildings illustrated in the Images of England online picture library.



OASIS: an online index to the mass of archaeological grey literature produced as a result of large-scale developer-funded fieldwork.

OASIS: sharing information across the profession

The Online AccesS to the Index of archaeological investigationS (OASIS) project brings together a number of strategic partners, including the Archaeology Data Service (ADS), English Heritage (Historic Environment Enabling Programme and National Monuments Record), the Archaeological Investigations Project (AIP) of Bournemouth University and, from 2005, Historic Scotland and The Royal Commission for Ancient and Historic Monuments for Scotland.

In line with the government's agenda for e-service delivery on the historic environment, the overall aim of the OASIS project is to provide an online index to the mass of archaeological grey literature produced as a result of the advent of large-scale developer-funded fieldwork. As part of this overall vision, the online OASIS data-capture form has been designed to assist the flow of information from fieldworkers. Its aim is to engage contracting units with local and national data managers in Historic Environment Records (HERs) and National Monument Records (NMRs) and, at the same time, to provide access for professionals and amateurs alike to a wealth of untapped archaeological resources in the form of grey literature reports.

The volume of grey literature reports of small to medium-scale developer-led

archaeological investigations produced annually in the UK is both a problem and an opportunity. Planning laws and associated guidance require that any development likely to impinge on archaeology must be the subject of an archaeological investigation before building can be undertaken. In the 10 years since they came into force, these planning guidelines have given rise to some 28,000 archaeological investigations, at an annual cost of around £35 million, largely funded by commercial developers (Darvill and Russell 2002). The trend is towards growth and the implications for the archaeological profession are profound. For small excavations, surveys, desk-top evaluations and watching briefs, the lack of any formal publication means that it is often difficult to find out about the archaeology of a site at anything but a cursory level. Ironically, it can be harder to obtain a 20-page excavation report than a 10-volume set (Kilbride and Hardman 2004). Without sophisticated mechanisms for capturing this data, like those provided by OASIS, future generations of heritage professionals and the public will be denied access to this invaluable archaeological resource.

OASIS is essentially a large database. Access to enter information into this database on-line is given to those carrying out fieldwork. Subsets of appropriate information can then be made available to various interested bodies. Archaeological units, researchers or amateur interest groups can enter information about their fieldwork, attaching a copy of any grey literature report. The entry is validated by the HER and NMR entered into the appropriate regional and national historic environment records. A copy is provided to ADS for inclusion in its online catalogue, ArchSearch. This enables users to search for the latest information pertaining to a particular site and to follow web links through to the grey literature report. Reports are also being made available directly through the ADS Library, where it is possible to search and retrieve literature based on a variety of different data fields, all based on data originally input into the OASIS system.

Catherine Hardman

Collections Development Manager, Archaeology Data Service

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The Archaeology Data Service (ADS)

The ADS was founded 10 years ago, in 1996, as one of the constituent parts of the Arts and Humanities Data Service (AHDS). It joined established services for history and texts and new services for performing and visual arts in order to provide digital preservation facilities for the UK arts and humanities communities in further and higher education.

The requirement for such a service stemmed from a growing awareness of the fragility of digital data, and a realisation that such resources required active curation with back-up, refreshment and migration, alongside documentation. Such metadata were essential to allow preservation and to enable users to discover resources for re-use. It was recognised from the outset that there was little point to preservation unless data were made available for researchers and therefore the online delivery of archives and a strong service culture were fundamental to AHDS. Initial support came from the British Academy, and from the Joint Information Systems Committee (responsible for the Information and Communications Technology infrastructure in further and higher education). The Arts and Humanities Resource Board, now the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), took on a key role in providing core funding for the AHDS, which in turn provided preservation and technical advice services for AHRC grant holders. It was also recognised that such roles were discipline specific and so the five subject-based centres were an essential part of AHDS.

For the ADS, hosted in York, it was self-evident that research was not confined to the university sector, and that in order to provide a holistic data service it was essential to embrace work undertaken on behalf of public and commercial organisations. Students and academics required access to data held by a number of public bodies, and there was a

growing demand for guidance and expertise on digital preservation across the historic environment sector. ADS, therefore, established an advisory committee representing all stakeholder communities. In providing free access to digital data it has not distinguished between users, provided that their work has been in support of learning or teaching or research destined for the public domain.

It was clear that users wanted access not just to primary fieldwork archives but also to electronic publications and grey literature as well as to secondary data, such as databases and national and local sites and monuments inventories. Fortunately, this placed ADS in early partnership with English Heritage, providing online access to the NMR excavation and microfilm indexes, a relationship that has subsequently been extended to give access to a complete set of basic records drawn from the National Archaeological Inventory, each linked to fuller records within the NMR's own online database, *PastScape*. Through similar brokerage arrangements the ADS catalogue, ArchSearch, now provides open access to almost 1 million summary records for the historic environment of the UK, allowing users to cross-search a number of national databases and, in many cases, drill down to complete digital excavation archives, including online finds databases, photographs, and plans.

This access role has been further extended through partnerships at both UK and European levels. On behalf of HEIRNET (the UK network of historic environment information providers), ADS developed HEIRPORT, a geo-spatial portal providing simultaneous searching of a number of distributed historic environment information services. With funding from the European Commission Culture 2000 programme ADS has also worked with five European partners to develop the prototype multilingual ARENA portal. Ongoing research is investigating the use of web technologies to allow search facilities to be embedded in external web sites, such as institutional and personal pages, so that rather than expecting users to come to us, data is available within their customary web space. Partnership is essential in a sector where there are so many agencies, and ADS has a particular role in providing a university shop window for a number of bodies, ensuring that significant digital assets are preserved and that teaching and research are based upon primary source materials and the latest digital information.

Julian D Richards

Director, Archaeology Data Service

The Archaeology Data Service's ArchSearch service provides open access to nearly a million summary records for the historic environment, allowing users to cross-search a number of national databases.



Fostering Enjoyment

Popular heritage online

Across the country, new websites and digital resources are unlocking the story of places and their people.

ACCESS FOR ALL

In 1999 the UK government made a commitment that by 2005 all services to the citizen would be capable of being delivered online. In response, substantial funding and effort has been put into the development of portals such as UK Online and into government websites, many of which work effectively and well – and a few of which, like the 1901 census site and the online filing of tax returns, have proved overwhelmingly popular with users. Take-up by the public is by and large strongest where people want to use the sites for their own personal interest and/or where good promotion has excited public attention.

Apart from websites funded and run by the broadcast media as part of their core remit, few UK public sector or ‘public good’ websites have the level of investment behind them to be consistently at the cutting edge of technology or innovative services. In the alexa.com global-usage rankings of websites, only www.bbc.co.uk is placed alongside the Googles or Amazons of the cyberjungle. But those ‘public good’ websites that have unique and significant content have been able to develop significant presences in their own areas and many have developed innovative ways of serving their users. The websites that focus clearly on what their online customers want are the most successful in terms of ‘stickiness’ (for which one widely quoted, though it must be stressed very broad, indicator is alexa.com’s statistical data on website usage – in this case measuring the average number of page downloads per user over the previous three months).

Examples from the information and documentary research areas are www.bl.uk (the British Library, in mid-December 2005 ranked by alexa.com at around 8,700 in the world with

a very strong 6.1 page views per user); www.nationalarchives.gov.uk (The National Archives, ranked at around 13,700 with 5.1 page views) and, punching well above its weight, the small niche site www.oldbaileyonline.org, funded by both Higher Education and the Heritage Lottery Fund and appealing both to academic researchers and to the general public in search of criminal ancestors (356,000 and almost 4 page views). By contrast, www.ancestry.co.uk, the UK arm of the global genealogy site, was ranked 4,500 and achieved a strikingly high 10.5 page views per user. Both the British Library and The National Archives have entered into partnerships with publishers or large commercial online content providers (in The National Archives’ case, one being [ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk)) for specific aspects of their service delivery in order to increase their reach, and both clearly put a strong effort into marketing their online services.

How do the ‘public good’ historic environment websites compare with the big documentary and informational websites? In terms of alexa.com’s world rankings, in mid-December 2005, www.english-heritage.org.uk was to be found at 73,700 and www.nationaltrust.org.uk at 37,900. The excellently designed www.rcahms.gov.uk (the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland) languished undeservedly at 938,200. In terms of stickiness English Heritage achieved a respectable 3.8 pages per user, the National Trust 4.6 and RCAHMS 4.1. Strikingly however, www.imagesofengland.org.uk, while ranking at 620,300, achieved a splendid and thoroughly well-deserved 8.5 page views per user. The indicators are, therefore, that the large historic environment websites are achieving far fewer page views than their documentary and informational counterparts.

And yet the potential is there. The historic environment plays a central role in today’s history boom. A recent survey of the UK

Artwork relating to the Festival of Britain, 1951. This is an example of the rich material relating to the historic environment held at The National Archives.



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public commissioned by The National Archives revealed that three-quarters of those polled had indulged in some form of historical activity in the previous year, including visiting sites, properties and archives and watching TV programmes. TV schedules are awash with factual programmes on archaeology and history, and following on from the BBC's success with *Restoration*, Channel 4 has screened its logical twin, *Demolition*. The family history programme, *Who Do You Think You Are?*, topped the viewing figures for BBC2 and is now moving to BBC1. The history and archaeology section of www.bbc.co.uk is one of its most popular. All this is evidence that the UK public's enjoyment of the historic environment is going from strength to strength.

How can this public fascination be translated into a higher profile in cyberspace for the publicly funded and charitable historic environment websites? As this issue of *Conservation Bulletin* well demonstrates, there is a wealth of material and expertise already there (the proposed Heritage Gateway (see p 22) marks a major step in England in providing integrated searching of national and local records for professionals and public alike). This is increasingly beginning to meet the aspirations of potentially vast numbers of online users world-

wide to find out about the many facets of the UK's historic environment through time, via catalogue data and images, as well as continuing to inform those who are able to be in the UK about how to visit the sites. Increasingly, too, there is a will and a commitment to fund digital content creation, and for the lead content-holders to work together to enable users to search Sites and Monuments Records through one portal, such as HEIRPORT. The recent concordat of the National Monuments Records of Scotland, Wales and England to work in partnership is particularly encouraging.

It is to be hoped that large bold content-creation schemes for both catalogue data and images will emerge from these partnerships. These would raise the profile of the UK's rich landscapes, monuments and sites still further in cyberspace. They would both open up the UK's enormously valuable documentary and visual evidence on the historic environment to informed and professional researchers, and promote and enhance the enjoyment of our heritage by wider audiences worldwide.

Elizabeth Hallam Smith

Until recently, Director of National Advisory and Public Services, The National Archives

Hitching wagons to stars: delivering a digital National Monuments Record

The National Monuments Record (NMR) Access Programme is an ambitious five-year campaign to transform the NMR and make it fit for purpose in the global digital information age. It was set up in mid-2005 following a review of the NMR, in which a major corporate commitment to providing more information online was announced. The headline recommendations of the review were threefold: vastly improved access to NMR archives and information, on the world-wide web; a new and vigorous portfolio of digital services and products; and a drive to develop new audiences and partners.

The Access Programme has been funded to date via a redirection of internal resources, but as plans for the various projects in the programme portfolio develop, there will be opportunities for public and other funding, and for essential partnership working. A transformation of existing business processes and flow-lines will also be essential to delivering the changes required in the timescales needed.

The NMR has already made significant forays into the e-heritage environment with such projects as Images of England (images.ofengland.org) and *ViewFinder* (viewfinder.english-heritage.org.uk). These Lottery-funded initiatives have been invaluable learning experiences. Following on from their success, and work on other in-house developments such as *PastScape* (www.pastscape.org), the NMR teams have the knowledge and expertise to deliver significantly more of our images, catalogues and records relating to the historic environment online. Although at the last count an estimated 1 million images and/or text records are already published on the internet, through our own or others' websites, the NMR's specialist archive building alone contains an estimated 10 million items and this number is being added to daily.

We plan to make the best use of available technology to enable people from all walks of life, irrespective of their geographical location, to gain a fuller appreciation of what the NMR holds and how it might be of interest to them, through browsing the web. We aim to provide online finding aids to make it easier to search through the wealth of the material the NMR holds. We will digitise as many historic and contemporary photographs as possible so they can be viewed remotely on the web. It will never be possible to digitise everything but with digital storage costs reducing all the time, it is now much more feasible and affordable to plan large-scale scanning and digitisation projects.

Targeted marketing and publicity campaigns will accompany the Access Programme initiatives, to tell existing and new audiences about the developments and encourage them to browse the websites for themselves.

Specific projects include the addition of up to 20,000 new images per annum to the *ViewFinder* website, to showcase the best of our historic photographic collections. A parallel project to make more-detailed catalogue information available on the internet will enable people to find out about our other holdings, which have yet to be web-published. Working in partnership with others the Heritage Gateway project will facilitate online access to local and regional HERs as well as to the statutory and non-statutory records of English Heritage (see p 22 for more details). Through creative 'packaging' of images and archive information the NMR Learning Zone aims to interest children, students and educators in the historic environment that is all around them in new and enjoyable ways. If one adds possible projects to web publish the historic architectural red boxes and some or all of the aerial photographic collections to this portfolio, it becomes clear it is going to be a challenging five years! However, it is only by aiming high that the NMR will succeed in delivering the anticipated benefits and improvements and 'unlocking heritage information'.

Victoria Fenner

Head of Programme Development, National Monuments Record, English Heritage

Coal Wagon, Cannon Wharf, Westminster, London c 1856 from the *ViewFinder* website. The coal wharf off Cannon Row was swept away during construction of the Victoria Embankment. Reference no.: BB57/01541



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Somerset's online Historic Environment Record: unlocking local heritage

Somerset's Historic Environment Record was launched as an online resource in September 2003 (www.somerset.gov.uk/heritage) and is one of a number of HERs around the country that has been made more accessible in this way, many as a result of grants from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF).

Somerset's HER is a vast collection of information concerning 28,454 archaeological sites and events, listed buildings, registered battlefields, parks and gardens and scheduled monuments. It has been in existence since 1974 and is maintained by the County Council. Although an amazing resource for research and planning purposes alike, the existence of the HER and the ways in which it could be used were not well known to the general public.

The record was computerised for office use in the early 1980s and by 2002 existed as a computerised map layer, MS Access database and several filing cabinets. Accessibility for the general public was by appointment or often lengthy correspondence. Access was difficult for people unable to travel to Taunton and therefore relatively straightforward queries could take some time to resolve.

HLF funding was awarded in 2002 for the creation of the website and a targeted programme of outreach to educate a wide audience. The user-friendly website features a searchable map and HER database. To respond to a great public thirst for archaeological information, further pages were written on specific heritage projects and topics, as well as explanations of technical terms, monument types and summaries of the known archaeological information for each time period. There is also a facility for users to report new or amended information.

The website was launched at a high-profile event at the county museum in September 2003, which happily coincided with the launch of an online catalogue of the county's archives. Historic documents and evidence of the historic environment could now be revealed at the touch of a few buttons, from the comfort of people's homes, schools and local libraries.

The outreach programme consisted of talks and workshops; attendees included the general public, students, local archaeological societies, U3A Groups, Women's Institutes, District and County Council colleagues, and many more (see photograph on p 20). In conjunction with the outreach activities a range of publicity material was produced, including bookmarks,

information sheets and leaflets. These were distributed to libraries, museums, schools, district councils, parish councils, parochial church councils and local societies.

There has been a very positive response to the website from all quarters. Recent statistics showed an average of 236 visitors per day, each taking an average of 16 minutes. Thirty-six per cent of the users visit more than once. Users come from countries across the globe, including Australia, America and even Iceland. The main advantage for the users of the HER is that queries can be answered much more speedily through direct access to the information, leaving the HER staff with more time to deal with follow-up enquiries.

Providing the Somerset HER as an online resource has enabled a great number of people to engage more easily with the diverse heritage of their county. The existing audience have been involved in this process and are benefiting every day from the enhanced access that has been created to their heritage. New audiences have been gained through the effective and wide-reaching outreach programme.

Talya Bagwell

Historic Environment Record Officer, Somerset County Council

Enjoy Britain's digital heritage with the 24 Hour Museum

Christmas 2005: we're celebrating at the 24 Hour Museum offices in Brighton. Britain's National Virtual Museum has just had its best month ever – 1 million visitors during October. Our readers enjoy lively news stories, exhibition notices, reviews, venue info and listings and we spread the word about our great museums, galleries and heritage sites. A public sector organisation, modestly funded by DCMS through the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA), we succeed in a competitive environment dominated by major institutions and affluent commercial publishers.

The site (www.24hourmuseum.org.uk) was set up in 1999 by the MDA (Museum Documentation Association) and the Campaign for Museums. Since then, we have used our experience as journalists, digital publishers, e-learning specialists and marketers to develop successful editorial strategy and interesting partnership projects. We have introduced innovative technology like RSS (Really Simple Syndication) to the sector – getting right to the heart of Google (Pratty 2004).

To make sure we remain sustainable, 24

Hour Museum develops and matures as the web information space grows in size and popularity. How? We have always approached our digital mission in a holistic way. We plan new content with readers in mind; marketing is second nature and we maximise existing assets. We designed templates for our Culture Online-funded City Heritage Guides to be reusable (www.24hourmuseum.org.uk/cityheritage). Now they form the basis of our successful Untold London mini-site, shortly to be re-used as themed sections on the site too (www.untoldlondon.org.uk).

Where do we go now? Today's fertile web has been seeded by rapid take-up of broadband in the home, school and workplace, and the all-conquering success of Google – at least 70 per cent of our own users arrive deep in our site from Google and other search engines. In response, we have adapted our publishing strategy: we will tune our site design to accommodate Google users and examine the possibilities of weaving our institutional database into the fabric of the information environment via bigger partners such as Visit Britain. We are doing this because the site is focused on the public as an audience.

It is clear that museum web mistakes of the past will be repeated, unless the heritage sector understands how others publish – in newspapers, on the broadcast media and in the commercial new media sector. At the moment there is no strategic content planning happening across the sector and scant discussion about who should do what, and recognition of what has already been done.

At 24 Hour Museum, though, we are excited that the web is such a superb route to audiences worldwide. The database behind the site grows daily. More than 3,800 museums, galleries, heritage sites, archives and libraries can be found onsite, 1,600 of them updated regularly with venue, event and exhibition information by the institutions themselves. It is a powerful, live and authoritative database, offering potential partners credible data that is alive, always improving. We have just user-tested our Direct Data Entry system and the latest model went live in November 2005 (www.24hourmuseum.org.uk/etc/formuseums/TXT17733.html).

We are getting ready to welcome the convergence of technologies such as GIS and RSS with platforms and channels of delivery like 3G phones and Wi-Fi-enabled PDAs. These advances give us an opportunity to serve heritage information in new and exciting ways. Our venue records are already equipped with OS-derived postcode data, getting us ready to



In October 2005 more than 1 million people logged into the 24 Hour Museum – the online guide to the UK's museums, galleries and heritage sites.

offer information to GIS-referencing devices when they become common.

Web 2.0 is the title coined for the next incarnation of the internet. Look around at maps.google.com, Google Earth, Outlook Web Access, Flickr, Technorati and Deli.cio.us. This is the new wave of the web – opportunities for personalisation, enhanced services, online applications and massive computing power at everyone's fingertips – and 24 Hour Museum is aiming for a place its heart.

Jon Pratty
Editor, 24 Hour Museum

REFERENCE

Pratty, J 2004. 'The 24 Hour Museum RSS newsfeed'. In D Bearman and J Trant (eds) *Museums and the Web 2004: Proceedings*. Toronto: Archives & Museum Informatics

From Domesday to born digital: putting archives online at The National Archives

The National Archives (TNA) works to increase public enjoyment of archives through its online services. It holds one of the largest archival collections in the world, spanning 1,000 years of British history, from the Domesday Book to born-digital government records. We are responsible for preserving and providing public access to the historical records of central government and the courts, and the potential of the web to reach new audiences has long been recognised. Use of the TNA website has grown enormously in recent years, with 160 million visits in 2004–5. In response to the e-government agenda, TNA has developed a wide range of online services.

Our online catalogue (www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/catalogue/default.asp) allows users to search our collections, and contains descriptions

of more than 9.5 million records. One of the major benefits of an on-site visit is the availability of expert staff in the Reading Rooms who can assist with individual research enquiries. Although the same level of personalised help is not yet possible for online users, we provide over 250 'research guides' that give detailed guidance on specific topics or record series (www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/catalogue/researchguidesindex.asp).

Through our DocumentsOnline service (www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/documentsonline/), we provide online access to digitised versions of our most popular collections. In 2004–5, more than 225,000 digitised records were delivered to users in this way. Although it is not feasible to proactively digitise everything we hold, we have recently launched an on-demand scanning service, which allows users to order a digitised copy of any available record.

Digitisation and online delivery of unique and fragile records is expensive. TNA therefore works with commercial partners to broaden online access to particular record collections. Under our Licensed Internet Associateships scheme, TNA provides preferential licences to partners to digitise and host these records. Records that have benefited from this scheme include the national censuses of 1851–1901 (www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/census/).

Not all of our partnerships are commercially based. The Lottery-funded Moving Here project (www.movinghere.org.uk/) collates online resources from a wide range of participating organisations. These record and illustrate the migration of the Caribbean, Irish, Jewish and South Asian communities to England over the past two centuries. In addition to providing free access to these resources, Moving Here also allows visitors to contribute their own stories, in text and pictures, thus developing an ever-growing collaborative collection.

Although increasing online access to our traditional holdings remains a major activity, the shape of the future can be seen in the increasing emergence of 'born digital' records.

In response, TNA has been developing a digital preservation service, to allow us to securely store, preserve and provide access to this new breed of record. Our digital archive became operational in 2003 and, since then, we have embarked on the ambitious Seamless Flow programme, which is developing end-to-end processes to appraise, select, transfer, preserve and deliver born-digital public records. Our pilot online delivery system, Electronic Records Online (www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ero/), was launched in 2006, and a more advanced system is planned for 2007.

We also work to increase enjoyment of our records. More than 30 online exhibitions are currently available on various themes: recent examples have included a selection of post-war public information films (www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/films/), and 'The Art of War' (www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/theartofwar/), a collection of posters, cartoons, films, and posters produced to support Britain's war effort in the Second World War.

Public records also have a key role to play in supporting the teaching of history within the National Curriculum. Our Learning Curve website (www.learningcurve.gov.uk/) is structured to tie in with the history curriculum for Key Stages 2 to 5. It includes a wide range of original source material, such as documents, photographs and films, together with lesson plans, games and exhibitions. For schools unable to pay us an on-site visit we offer an innovative video-conferencing facility, which allow many of our workshops to be delivered in a fully participatory online environment.

Finally, through initiatives such as Access to Archives (www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/partnerprojects/a2a/) and the National Register of Archives (www.nra.nationalarchives.gov.uk/nra/), we are working with a range of partners to develop the National Archives Network, providing integrated access to archival collections within the UK and overseas. The A2A website currently provides an integrated catalogue to 8.6 million records from 390 archives across England, while the NRA indexes more than 44,000 unpublished catalogues.

Through initiatives such as these, TNA is working to open up its collections to as large and diverse an audience as possible, and to promote public enjoyment of the unique records we hold.

Adrian Brown

Head of Digital Preservation, The National Archives

The Art of War
online exhibition.



© TNA 2005

Mass access: using the web to engage new audiences in heritage

The Outreach Department at English Heritage exists to engage new audiences in enjoying and valuing the historic environment. We work with hard-to-reach community groups to tackle issues like social exclusion and community cohesion through creative grassroots projects that promote a sense of place and identity.

Several of our projects have used the web as a tool for engaging people and sharing information. Below are details of two such projects: an online Black history trail in Manchester and a community website in Swindon.

The web is a vital tool as it not only offers the opportunity for mass access to the historic environment but also enables people to share personal and individual stories about it. Drawing together the values that individuals place on the past, their memories and their sense of history enables us to build up a montage of England's diverse histories.

Miriam Levin

Head of Outreach, English Heritage

Manchester's first online black history trail

An ongoing collaboration between the Black Arts Alliance (BAA) and English Heritage is turning a virtual spotlight on the people and buildings connected with Manchester's and Salford's Black presence and culture.

Black history trails in Manchester, delivered through talks and coach tours, were developed by the Ahmed Iqbal Ullah Race Relations Archive with Dominique Tessier, Maria Noble of Manchester Education, and the BAA.

Collaboration between BAA and English Heritage's Outreach Department established that there was huge potential for creating an online version of the trails, which would be able to reach a much greater audience. The website – www.actsofachievement.org.uk/blackhistorytrail – was launched during Black History Month in October 2005.

Intended to be a journey of remembrance, the website encourages people to follow a route around areas of Manchester and Salford that highlights the contribution made by black people to the two cities, through a broad range of historic and culturally significant landscapes. The website includes a place where people can leave their own memories.

Images from the Manchester City Council Local Studies Archive illustrate many of the pages, which were compiled for the online version of the trail by local historian Washington Alcott.

SuAndi, Cultural Director of the BAA, says: 'The Black Arts Alliance believes that the history of ordinary people alongside those who achieve high profile in the history books is important to the growth and development of society. We hope that this website is continually upgraded as more and more of the past comes to light because from yesterday we learn how to go forward tomorrow.'

Patrick Burke

Outreach Officer North West

groundwell.org – setting up and managing a community website

The English Heritage Centre for Archaeology managed the excavation of a Roman site in Swindon in 2004, which was supported by an outreach and education programme that aimed to widen participation and interest in the seven-week-long excavation. Activities included local residents taking part as volunteer archaeologists, a mock excavation for schools and youth groups, workshops using computer technology to explore reconstruction of the site, a drama project with young people at the Swindon Foyer inspired by the archaeological process and training for local residents as guides for Heritage Open Days.

A key ingredient of the outreach and education programme was the development of a community website – www.groundwell.org.uk.

Street traders in Manchester 1940. An image from the Acts of Achievement: Black History Trail website.



© Manchester City Council



Groundwell Ridge, Swindon. Local residents watch the progress of the 2005 excavations, which were documented on the community website.

In order to generate real community engagement, all the groups involved made their contribution to the website: the after-school club wrote about reconstructing a Roman villa, Young Archaeologist Club members described their visits, volunteer archaeologists were interviewed about their experiences while professional archaeologists wrote about their daily work. Participants researched and wrote the content, which was added to the site by a consultant who also ran workshops for community and education groups to assist them in developing material for the web pages.

Visitors to the excavation during National Archaeology Week and the Living History Event made their own contributions. A link was included to the weekly archaeological diary of the project director on the English Heritage website. Information about other local sites was included, to encourage further learning and exploration of the local Roman landscape.

The website is filled with local voices, and demonstrates the real connection that the local community have developed with their historic environment. Many of the volunteer archaeologists had not taken part in an excavation before and their contributions show the excitement and pride they felt from involvement in 'history on their doorstep'.

Using the website as a tool for engaging people harnessed the familiarity of young people with computer technology while teaching new skills in web-page design and animation.

The website provides a lasting record of the activities undertaken as part of the education and outreach programme, especially since the actual site becomes a green field once again in between the yearly excavations.

Kath Graham
Outreach Officer South West

The Building Exploratory: using digital technologies to reach wider audiences

The Building Exploratory is widely recognised as a UK flagship for built environment education. Its work is based around an interactive exhibition that explores the built heritage of the London Borough of Hackney. Activities aimed at local schools, families, community groups and professionals have been augmented by an exciting series of community heritage projects. All activities aim at devising and testing innovative ways of engaging people to learn about and care for their local area. The Building Exploratory is funded as a national model by English Heritage via its National Capacity Building Programme.

The organisation uses a plethora of interactive resources to engage people with their local heritage. In a London borough where more than 70 languages are spoken and there is widespread economic disadvantage, there is a need to provide access to an extremely diverse audience. As a result, the resources are highly visual and immediate and many have been made through projects with the local community. On the whole, the resources are low-tech, but new technologies are used to extend access to greater audiences over the internet and because digital animations and digital mapping allow complex and detailed information to become easily usable. Digital technologies developed to date include CD-ROMs, which explore the heritage of specific areas such as Newington Green, on the borders with Islington, or Kingsland Road, which follows the path of Roman road Ermine Street.

Brickfields.org.uk is a website developed under the New Opportunities Fund digitisation programme. Designed for lifelong learners, the site explores the history of Hackney using animation, games and virtual-reality.

Of particular note is the organisation's bespoke Geographic Information System. Developed in partnership with the local authority, the system allows visitors to access information about their immediate neighbourhood right down to the level of the home. The information can be used by visitors to build up a picture of how their immediate area has changed over time. The layers of information currently available are historical, consisting of purchased data; OS county series and national grid maps from 1860 onwards; and present-day aerial photography, with 1950s military aerial shots from the National Monuments Record to be added. The Building Exploratory has also designed and built its own layers showing when



buildings were constructed, conservation status, listings information and housing tenure.

The most popular layer with both adults and children explores Second World War bomb damage. Using the bomb-damage maps from the London Metropolitan Archive and incidence reports from the Hackney Archive, a rich resource has been created exploring the impact of the bombing on Hackney's built environment. The resource, accessible both in the exhibition centre and as part of special outreach activities, allows people to survey the extent and location of bomb damage across the borough generally. They can then focus down on their street or their school, where shocking contemporary images of the actual damage can be examined. This brings to life the true horror of the experience of living through the war. It is useful for both stimulating conversations with older people who lived through the period and for introducing younger people to the terrors of living through the blitz. The resource is currently being extended to include the voices and memories of local people who lived through the war as part of the Big Lottery's Home Front Recall programme.

Moving forward, the Building Exploratory will continue to explore the educational potential of digital technology and its capacity to reach new audiences. It aims to create innovative interactive resources and particularly to expand its web presence and to further develop its GIS resource.

Dr Nicole Crockett
Director, the Building Exploratory



The Building Exploratory. Wartime photos (left) and maps (above) allow local people to survey the extent and location of bomb damage across the borough of Hackney.

© The Building Exploratory

Museums, Libraries and Archives Council: delivering online services for museums, libraries and archives

Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) is the lead strategic agency for the museums, libraries and archives sector in England and adviser to the UK government on the digitisation of cultural heritage material. MLA is working on a number of major national ICT initiatives to build on existing investment in the creation of digital content, and, for users, shorten the journey between their question and the answer.

The MLA has set up its own People's Network Service (PNS), which builds on the successful programme of the same name that established online centres in public libraries. The PNS aims to establish a digital channel for public libraries in England that brings together collaboratively developed online services and resources. Supporting digital citizenship in this way lies at the heart of the 10-year development plan for public libraries, Framework for the Future.

With a £500,000 grant from the Big Lottery Fund, MLA has developed the first phase of the PNS, which was launched in October 2005.

This is based on a metaphor of public library services in the digital environment offering:

- *Enquire*: a 24-hour, 7-days-a-week, real-time reference service, for people to seek answers to their information needs
- *Read*: access to services to support reading development
- *Discover*: a place for people to find resources of relevance to their particular needs.

The PNS provides access to a range of resources people would find if they visited a public library, such as cultural resources to promote a sense of place, community information resources that highlight local activities, reference resources to support knowledge and understanding, government resources that aid active citizenship and learning resources to assist informal and formal learning.

Use of open source software and adherence to data standards enables cross-searching of a wide variety of resources. For example, the 'Sense of Place' content that forms part of the *Discover* service cross-searches 18 databases chosen as a result of an open call (see box for a sample of partner sites). Other databases will be linked to the *Discover* service in the future.

MLA is establishing a national collection-level inventory to promote access to museum, library and archive collections. This will be a distributed information service and is based on three initiatives:

- Cornucopia, an inventory of the physical collections held in museums and other cultural institutions
- MICHAEL, an EU-funded project that is enabling MLA to develop an inventory of the UK's digital cultural collections alongside similar catalogues being developed in France, Italy and other European countries
- Institution Server, an MLA project to create a registry of museums, libraries, archives and cultural institutions in the UK.

The technology and data standards that MLA is using to create these services are enabling co-operation with other projects. For example, the Inspire and Diadem projects will be cataloguing library special collections using Cornucopia and MICHAEL. Importantly, the technology that is being used will support the creation of regional or subject specialist views. This means that projects like Inspire will be able to offer a filtered search of the Collection Description Service as a whole, or of MICHAEL, from within their own websites.

On the European level, interoperability between MICHAEL-UK and the equivalent services in France, Italy and soon the Czech Republic, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Malta, the Netherlands and Poland will enable the creation of a European portal. The European service will mean that, for the first time, users will be able to browse for content on a particular topic in collections created across Europe through a single point of access, while benefiting from the multilingual support built into the MICHAEL system. This means that the UK's museums, libraries and archives will be able to promote their digital collections and resources alongside other European cultural content to audiences worldwide. It is this potential that enabled the project to secure funding through the European Commission's eTen programme, which is dedicated to the deployment of new services in Europe.

MLA will continue building on these initiatives to open up access to digital cultural content. It will do this by developing partnerships and by working to build the network of interoperable systems capable of seamlessly offering interesting content for public enjoyment and research.

Kate Fernie and Phill Purdy
Museums, Libraries and Archives Council

Enquire, Read, Discover

People's Network Service: <http://www.peoplesnetwork.gov.uk>

Cornucopia – a database of museum collections: www.cornucopia.org.uk

MICHAEL-UK – an inventory of digital collections: www.michael-culture.org.uk

Portable Antiquities Scheme: www.finds.org.uk

British Library – Collect Britain: www.collectbritain.org.uk

Commanet – community archives network: www.commanet.org

Manchester City Art Galleries: www.manchestergalleries.org.uk

The Fitzwilliam Museum: www.fitz.cam.ac.uk

The MICHAEL project: www.michael-culture.org

News from English Heritage

European Heritage Summit

In April 2006 in London, English Heritage will host the first European Heritage Summit, which will bring together all the heads of the European state heritage authorities (built heritage and archaeology) to share ideas about the state of the historic environment in the 21st century. To be opened by the Culture Minister, David Lammy, this landmark meeting will discuss emerging trends, political engagement, European law and the scale of international heritage protection and how these affect various national properties from Bavarian castles to Italian palazzi. The summit will also encompass research, development, current challenges and the economic future of heritage throughout Europe. This will be the first time that the leaders in the field of heritage will have come together to discuss these areas of common concern.

Delegates are being invited from the EU member states and Norway, with UK representation from each of the home countries' heritage services (CADW, Historic Scotland, DOE-NI – Heritage Service, and English Heritage).

The summit will include plenary sessions with invited expert speakers from within the sector and outside. It will be launched by a drinks reception at Apsley House, hosted by the Rt Hon Tessa Jowell, Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport.

Shared Interest: Celebrating Investment in the Historic Environment

Few readers of *Conservation Bulletin* will need persuading of the benefits of a heritage-led approach to regeneration. Recently the wider world – developers, architects, planners, policy-makers – has responded to the heritage sector and done much to embrace this philosophy.

Shared Interest is a richly illustrated new English Heritage document, available free of charge. It is filled with exemplary cases of good contemporary design in a conservation setting. The examples range from an unlisted derelict mill in Lancashire to major additions to a Grade I Baroque country house; from small-scale local regeneration projects to major public works in historic city centres. Contemporary interventions vary from the deeply

respectful to the outlandishly bold.

English Heritage played a key role in many of these cases, alongside local authority and other partners. In some cases we provided funds that helped make the project possible. In others we permitted demolition of significant parts of a building. In all, we were involved from an early stage, helping shape a project long before any planning application had been made, and providing expert technical advice thereafter. *Shared Interest* will be launched at the MIPIM international property conference in Cannes, on 16 March. It will then be available from English Heritage Customer Services on 0870 333 1181.

Inspired!

Widespread concern for the sustainable future of England's historic places of worship has prompted English Heritage to lead a campaign, *Inspired!*, to be launched in May. It aims to raise public awareness of the issues, suggest strategies to denominations and congregations alike and to make the case for greater government support.

Currently, English Heritage is working with denominations to estimate their outstanding repair bills and to identify the areas of the country with places of worship most in need of external support. Easy and effective means of procuring maintenance are being piloted in three different areas and methods of identifying priority buildings for adaptation are being devised. To promote congregational understanding of the value of their building, in both local and national contexts, we are looking at how English Heritage can support the creation and use of statements of significance.

Professional training courses

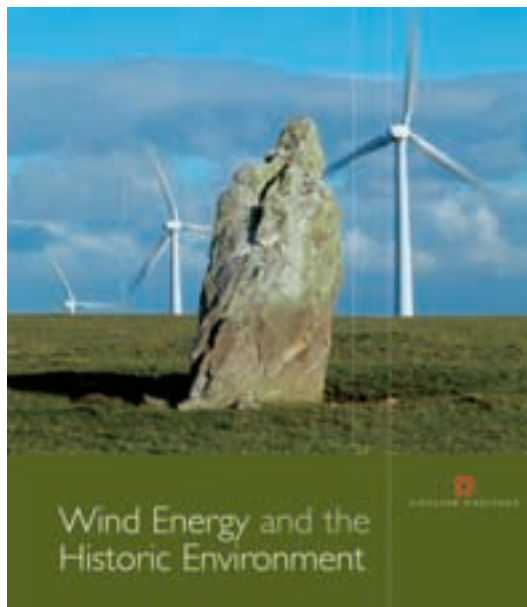
Building Conservation Masterclasses are a development of the English Heritage masterclass programme that was transferred to West Dean College in 1997. A programme of 13 masterclasses takes place throughout the year. New for 2006 is a professional development diploma, obtained by completing 10 masterclasses and a final essay. For more details, please contact Liz Campbell, West Dean College, West Dean, Chichester, PO18 0QZ; tel: 01243 818219; email: bcm@westdean.org.uk.

Heritage Works

English Heritage, the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors and the British Property Federation have published *Heritage Works: The Use of Historic Buildings in Regeneration – a Toolkit of Good Practice*. The study, which was carried out by leading property consultants Drivers Jonas, is a practical step-by-step guide on how to bring forward heritage-led regeneration projects, identifying common pitfalls and ways of avoiding them. The toolkit is designed to assist developers, owners, community groups and practitioners in bringing forward successful schemes. It is the first time that English Heritage, Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) and British Property Federation (BPF) have worked together on such a project. Copies of the guide can be obtained from the RICS, BPF or by contacting David Tomback FRICS, Development Economics Director, English Heritage, tel: 0207 973 3369; e-mail: david.tomback@english-heritage.org.uk

Policy update

Climate Change and the Historic Environment and *Wind Energy and the Historic Environment*. The first of this pair of English Heritage policy statements focuses on the implications of climate change on the historic environment.



The second sets out English Heritage's position on wind energy, including the planning context and evaluating impacts for onshore and offshore proposals, and is the first in a series on renewable energy technologies.

Retail Development in Historic Areas, produced jointly with English Historic Towns Forum, makes the case for the importance of retailing

in historic areas. It explains current and potential trends in retailing, sets out English Heritage's position on such developments and provides a checklist for successful retail development. It is illustrated by 10 case studies demonstrating elements of good practice.

Building Value: Public Benefits of Historic Farm Building Repair in the Lake District. A project commissioned by English Heritage and Defra and carried out by ADAS and the University of Gloucestershire looked at the impact of Defra historic building grant aid in the Lake District Environmentally Sensitive Area between 1998 and 2004. It showed that every £1 spent on repair work resulted in total direct, indirect and induced effects within the Environmentally Sensitive Area of £2.49. An executive summary and the full report *A Study of the Social and Economic Impacts and Benefits of Traditional Farm Building Repair and Re-use in the Lake District ESA* will be available.

An updated version of English Heritage's *Historic Environment Champions* leaflet is available. Nearly half of all local authorities now have Champions and the aim is to encourage the rest to follow suit. A national conference for the Champions will take place in London on 16 March 2006. Meanwhile, CABE and English Heritage are rolling out a second round of regional training for Historic Environment and Design Champions.

The suburbs of England's cities and larger towns are a vital source of local character but are facing huge pressures for change. *The Future of Historic Suburbs* explains how piecemeal incremental development can unwittingly damage this important but under-appreciated aspect of the historic environment. In parallel, English Heritage, CABE and the South East Regional Assembly are jointly launching 'The Great Suburban Debate' to promote the need for a new long-term vision for their future.

Port development can have a significant impact on the historic environment. With proposals for a major new port at Shellhaven in Essex likely to be given the go-ahead, English Heritage is developing a short policy statement on ports that will take account of its new responsibilities for the marine historic environment. The policy statement will aim to demonstrate the nature of the potential impacts and provide some clarity about the responsibilities of the different organisations involved.

These and other publications are available from English Heritage Customer Services, tel: 0870 333 1181; email: customers@english-heritage.org.uk. They can also be downloaded from the HELM website: www.helm.org.uk

The National Monuments Record

News and events

The National Monuments Record (NMR) is the public archive of English Heritage. It includes more than 7 million archive items (photographs, drawings, reports and digital data) relating to England's historic environment. Contact the NMR at: NMR Enquiry & Research Services, National Monuments Record, Kemble Drive, Swindon SN2 2GZ; tel: 01793 414600; fax: 01793 414606; email: nmrinfo@english-heritage.org.uk; web: www.english-heritage.org.uk/nmr

Online resources from the NMR

PastScape

PastScape is English Heritage's online catalogue of archaeological and architectural monuments. The application is refreshed regularly with new data from the NMR's main monuments database: new thematic additions from enhancement projects are signposted on the What's New page of *PastScape*. Recent updates include the completed dataset of Second World War military airfields and related features with more than 1,100 new records, prompted by public interest in these modern military landscapes; 5,000 edited and improved existing records of monumental crosses, with tighter monument-type indexing in line with improved thesaurus definitions; and 40 new maritime records relating to shipwrecks caused by the great storm of 1703, the main source for which is a compilation of contemporary accounts by Daniel Defoe, better known as the author of *Robinson Crusoe*.

As well as adding new monument data resulting from feedback from *PastScape* users, the search tips and FAQ sections are being amended and some search mechanisms have been improved to make the site more user-friendly. *PastScape* can be accessed at www.pastscape.org.uk

ViewFinder

ViewFinder is an online picture resource drawing on the NMR's national photographic

collections. It contains more than 30,000 images, with a programme to add more each year. The Alfred Newton & Son collection of 3,900 photographs was added recently. Alfred Newton was a professional photographer who set up in Leicester in 1882; his son Sydney Newton continued the business until about 1950. The bulk of the material covers Buckinghamshire, Northamptonshire, Warwickshire and the West Country, though other counties are also represented. The collection is best known for its unique coverage of the construction of the Great Central Railway and the surrounding villages between 1898 and 1907. (Much of the material relating to Leicestershire and to the railway itself is held by the Leicestershire, Leicester & Rutland Record Office.) A selection of historic images from this collection has recently been published under the title *Railways and Rural Life*, by S W A Newton and the Great Central Railway (English Heritage with the Leicestershire, Leicester & Rutland Record Office; price £17.99). *ViewFinder* can be accessed at www.english-heritage.org.uk/viewfinder

A signal box on the Great Central Railway at Grendon Underwood, Buckinghamshire, photographed by Sydney Newton. AA97/05277
Photographed: 1905.



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NMR cataloguing

Rupert Potter Collection

Research has proved that a recently catalogued collection of 295 prints was taken by Rupert Potter (1832–1914), a non-practising barrister, amateur photographer and father of Beatrix. Rupert Potter and his wife Helen shared a keen interest in the arts, and counted amongst their friends several politicians and authors as well as artists such as Sir John Everett Millais.

Several prints show scenes associated with Beatrix Potter's life. She was born on 28 July 1866 at 2 Bolton Gardens, Kensington, and one

Scaffolding erected around the church of St Martin in the Fields, Trafalgar Square, for the coronation of George V. The scene was photographed by Rupert Potter: OP03608 Photographed: 2 June 1911.



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photograph shows the view across the square from the window of this house. Others show views around the family's holiday home, Ees Wyke, at Near Sawrey in the Lake District. In later life, Beatrix purchased land in the village, including the house at Hill Top.

The majority of the photographs were taken in Greater London and show a wide variety of scenes, from construction work in progress at the Royal Automobile Club in Pall Mall to scaffolding being erected in Trafalgar Square in preparation for the coronation of King George V in 1911. Other prints show a number of parades around the capital, new housing developments in north London, and the construction of the city's tramway. Scenes of animals and visitors at the Regent's Park Zoo illustrate the elegance of Edwardian costume.

'London Past and Present' album

The 'London Past and Present' album contains 44 sepia photographs of London scenes, mainly in Westminster and the City of London, and probably taken in the 1870s to early 1880s.

Several of the photographs are of particular interest and importance. These include two

views of Covent Garden Market at work with stacked boxes, people, porters and horse-drawn carts. Other rare photographs show the Law Courts formerly attached to Westminster Hall, demolished after the new Royal Courts of Justice were opened in 1882; the old Madame Tussaud's building of 1884, which burnt down in 1925; and Buckingham House on Pall Mall, which housed the War Office from the later 19th century until its demolition in 1908 to make way for the Royal Automobile Club.

Ralph Whitlock Albums

This pair of albums contains 224 photographs of town and country scenes in Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire taken in about 1890 to 1910. The albums show street scenes, houses, farm buildings, mills, town and market halls and cottages. There is good coverage of building details such as chimneys, shop fronts, doorways, inn signs and cupolas.

Ralph Whitlock was not the photographer, but a respected author on rural matters, folklore and customs. It is thought that he was given the albums because of his reputation as a writer.

For further information about any of these catalogued collections please contact Michael Russell on 01793 414828.

NMR outreach

A varied programme of workshops, tours, lectures, weekly classes, and events is designed to help participants make the best use of NMR resources for work, research or personal interest. Short introductory tours to the NMR Centre are available, and for those wishing to explore the resources in more detail, study days are organised on a number of different themes.

For further information, please contact Elaine Davis, tel: 01793 414596; email: elaine.davis@english-heritage.org.uk

Right: *PastScape*: RAF Bicester, Oxfordshire, was first opened for use by the Royal Flying Corps in 1917. AA003353 Photographed: 2000.



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Legal Developments

Online heritage information and Human Rights

It is a key plank of the government's Modernising Programme that at least 50 per cent of public documents should be delivered electronically by the end of 2005. Yet there has been a small, but vocal, minority of owners who have criticised English Heritage's attempts to put information about the built heritage online.

Take Images of England – a Lottery-funded millennium project to develop a website with a photograph of each listed building as at the turn of the millennium together with its list description. A wholly worthwhile and laudable project you might think. If so you reckoned without the Human Rights Act!

Some listed-building owners have objected to photographs of their property being put on the web – most citing security concerns. Such concerns, for house owners at least, have been overcome by the introduction of an exemption scheme allowing owners to opt not to have a photograph of their property on the web for 10 years, at the end of which, hopefully, the photograph will be so historic that security should no longer be a concern.

A few owners have raised concerns under the Human Rights Act 1998, which imported the European Convention on Human Rights into UK domestic law. Of particular relevance are Article 8 of the Convention, which provides for respect for private and family life, and Article 1 of the First Protocol, which provides protection for property.

The Convention seeks to balance the rights of the individual with the legitimate interests of the wider community – in this case in being able to enjoy the built heritage. Thus in examining whether Human Rights are infringed we must ask ourselves three questions:

- Is the relevant Article engaged?
- If so, is there interference in the individual's rights?
- To the extent that there is interference, is it justifiable? – ie in accordance with the law, in pursuance of a legitimate objective and proportionate?

Let us take these in turn.

Is the Article engaged? The answer in relation

to both Articles is probably 'yes', given that we are dealing with information about people's homes. The fact that photographs are taken from a public place does not affect the engagement of Article 8. In *Peck v UK* the broadcasting of CCTV footage of an incident in a public place was held to infringe Article 8 rights. In *Von Hanover v Germany*, intrusive press photography was held to infringe Article 8 notwithstanding that the photographs were taken in a public place.

Is there interference? Again, in relation to both Articles, probably 'yes'. There is no requirement that the complainant has to show he has suffered actual tangible harm. In *R v (1) Wakefield Metropolitan Council (2) Secretary Of State For The Home Department*, Ex Parte Brian Reid Beetson Robertson [2002] QB 1052, the complaint concerned the selling of the electoral register to direct-marketing companies leading to the complainant receiving junk mail. The complainant had suffered no loss as such. He just did not want the junk mail. The problem is that the meaning of 'respect' is not clear.

Is the interference justifiable? English Heritage has Counsel's opinion that it is. The interference is in accord with the law. The National Heritage Act 1983 forms a sound basis for English Heritage's actions. **Is it in pursuance of a legitimate objective?** The aim of educating the public about the historic environment coupled with the public's right to such education falls within the category of legitimate objective.

Is the interference proportional? Yes. The degree of intrusion is limited and the purpose is educational, not simply to satisfy public curiosity.

Thus we conclude that online publication of heritage information such as the Images of England project is Human Rights compliant. We can look forward to completing the project and leaving a lasting legacy for future generations of the state of the built heritage at the turn of the millennium.

Nigel Hewitson

Legal Director

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New publications from English Heritage

A Glimpse of Heaven: The Catholic Churches of Britain

by *Christopher Martin*

The architecture and decoration of Catholic churches and their importance as part of our heritage has gone largely undiscovered and unappreciated. This book is a celebration of 100 Catholic churches in England and Wales, with lively and informative text and stunning photography. Each chapter is devoted to a milestone in the history of the Catholic Church since the Reformation, with a short, informative introduction followed by a description of each church complementing Alex Ramsay's photographs.

Varying enormously in their scale, date and location, the churches range from the unconsecrated 14th-century chapel at Rotherwas near Hereford to the breathtaking vastness of Manchester's Holy Name. All these are important, architecturally, decoratively, historically and socially, and each has an additional powerful and poignant dimension because of their remarkable stories.

PRICE £25.00 + P&P

ISBN: 1 85074 9701 / PRODUCT CODE 51083

Hardback, 96 pages



The Way We Were: England at Play



This is the second in a series of books whose aim is to bring the NMR's wonderful photographic archive of more than 10 million modern and historic photographs to a wider audience.

The introduction of shorter working hours and bank holidays in the late-Victorian era meant that for the first time many working people had time on their hands, away from the grind of daily life. The early 20th century also saw the rise of the two mass entertainments that would dominate English recreation for the next 100 years – cinema and football. At the other end of the social spectrum we see the River Thames at Henley crammed with boats for the Regatta, and hunters chasing a fox. Most of all we see a nation breaking free from the shackles of industrialisation and the horrors of two world wars, and beginning to enjoy itself.

PRICE £9.99 + P&P

ISBN: 1 85074 9868 / PRODUCT CODE 51160

Paperback with flaps, 116 pages

Mayday

This is the first book in an exciting new series that looks at the roots of English traditions. Future titles will include Halloween; Valentine's Day; and Christmas.

These days Mayday for many is associated with anti-capitalist demonstrations and actions against MacDonalD, but it originated as a Celtic pagan festive holy day to mark the first spring planting. These celebrations continued in Britain until the 1700s, when they were outlawed by the Church, although many rural communities carried on pre-Christian rites such as the election of a May Queen and Maypole dancing.

Fully illustrated, this book looks at the origins of Mayday and features a gazetteer of surviving Mayday traditions such as the Obby Oss at Padstow, the Sweeps Festival at Rochester and Well Dressing in Derbyshire.

PRICE £7.99 + P&P

ISBN: 1 85074 9833 / PRODUCT CODE 51181

Paperback, 126 pages



Paddington Station: Its History and Architecture

by Steven Brindle

The best way to approach Paddington is from its Underground station. You struggle through the anonymous, crowded, low-ceilinged subways, and through a ticket barrier; suddenly there is an arched roof high above and as you

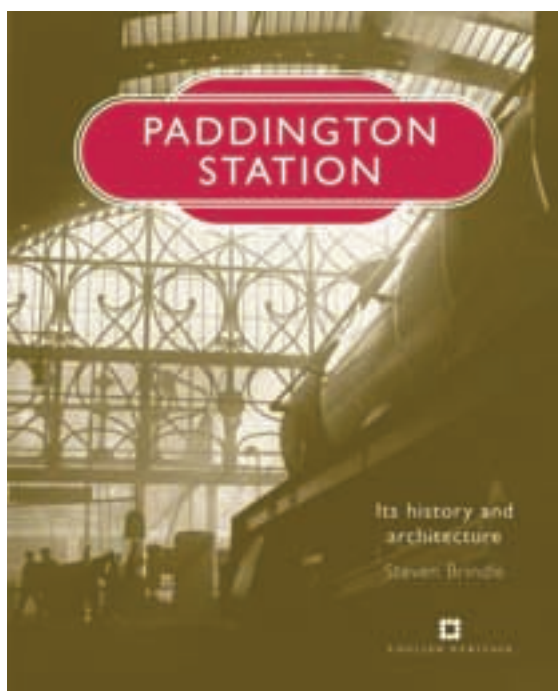
ascend the staircase the whole tremendous interior reveals itself.

Paddington, the Great Western Railway and their principal designer Isambard Kingdom Brunel are at the heart of railway history. This book is an account of the station that epitomises the GWR and its operations, but which is also an important work of architecture. The book is illustrated with more than 150 archive photographs, modern images, and plans and drawings from Brunel's sketch books.

PRICE £11.99 + P&P

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