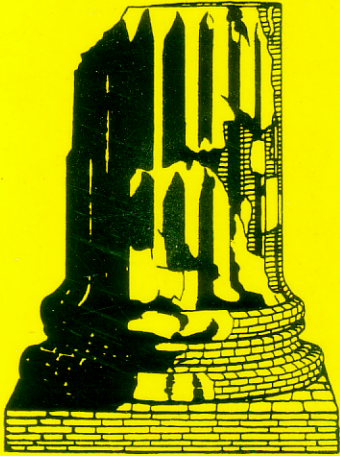


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The social context for archaeological reconstructions in England, Germany and Scandinavia

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The paper discusses historical, social and political contexts of reconstructions of archaeological monuments, as well as their relation to basic principles of conservation of cultural heritage. Various forms of reconstructions within archaeological parks are presented and criticised. As an alternative to material, static reconstructions, the concept of dynamic, active process of reconstruction with public participation, is proposed.

KEY-WORDS: archaeological reconstruction, archaeological park, heritage interpretation, authenticity, public participation

Archaeological reconstructions are an easy target for criticism by academics, but they are undoubtedly popular with the wider public for a number of reasons. Foremost of these is that they "fill in the gaps" or complete the conceptual jigsaw of "this is what it was like". There would appear to be five main forces behind the creation of reconstructions: interpretation; education; tourism development; experiment/research; local or cultural identity. However, detailed examination of individual case studies often indicates a lack of clarity of purpose or multiple and conflicting motives. Interestingly, these motivations can change during the lifespan of the more durable reconstructions in response to changes in the funding or political climate.

Even the terminology surrounding reconstruction is open to debate. Brian Hobley, the instigator of the Roman fort reconstruction at The Lunt, Coventry, favours the term "simulation". For him the terms "reconstruction", "restoration", "reconstitution", "re-creation" and "realisation" all imply a knowledge of what existed (Hobley 1982). Or perhaps in the case of the open air museums the relocation and restoration of existing buildings. Certainly these monumental creations at actual size are more impressive than artists impressions and therefore, appear more credible to the visitor. If large sums of money and effort have been

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invested in an interpretation which passes the test of durability and longevity it is more likely to be viewed as "authentic". The danger of course, is that the more massive and durable a reconstruction appears, the higher its credibility with the public. Further, reconstructions suffer from the fact that, as with all interpretation, they are a reflection of the time in which they were created (Fowler 1992: 5; Lowenthal 1985: 214-7; Stone and Molyneux 1994; Walsh 1992: 143).

The traditional basis of site interpretation orders sites in a sequence which may be temporal, functional or even aesthetic. This story is told through labels and panels. There is, however, a significant gap between the text and the site which cannot be translated (Silverstone 1988). Texts require deliberate engagement whereas "seeing history is a less self-conscious process than reading" (Lowenthal 1985: 245). Reconstructions are, therefore, particularly successful because of their visual impact. Objects cannot be fully understood through the glass of a showcase; they have to be touched, used and lived with (Hodder 1991; Merriman 1991). Reconstructions of archaeological sites can provide a unique opportunity for learning and interpretation through living history, workshops and placing objects in context.

The non-verbal abstract knowledge people possess is very important in how they gain meaning from an archaeological or historical site, related to peoples own experience, age and social group. Individuals learn knowledge through copying and imitation without recourse to linguistic knowledge. When this practical knowledge is translated into language it is changed. Professional jargon such as "timber-laced rampart", "multi-vallate hill fort", "Grubenhauser" or "petit-tranchet derivative" would have meant nothing to the people who built these structures or made the stone tools. They are simply categories to enable curators and professionals to order information and artefacts (Washburn 1990), whereas reconstruction overcomes the boundaries of language and has the potential to communicate more effectively. Reconstructions, which rely on their visual impact for success perhaps combined with smell, touch and sound, have a wide appeal, transcending age, education or class differences (Fowler 1992: 90-1).

Objects remain dull and meaningless if they are treated as signs to be looked at and read like words. Similarly static, consolidated archaeological sites can lose their sense of place, time and atmosphere. The mode or rhetoric of the site museum and site display is traditionally that of words and language. This fails to communicate the full potential of the place and it is important to release the meaning of site through bodily use, events and activities rather than passive observation of text based panels (Blockley 1998). Again the reconstructed site has tremendous potential for imaginative use through workshops and special events programmes, (see below; Blockley 1993).

There is considerable debate as to whether reconstructions should be created in-situ, as at West Stow, the site of an Anglo-Saxon settlement in East Anglia (Fig. 1) and Arbeia, the site of a Roman fort in the North-East of England (Bidwell 1987), or



Fig. 1. Reconstructed Anglo Saxon building at West Stow, Suffolk.

as off-site replicas to show how structures and buildings alter over time. It has been suggested that people perceive the past to be quite static between the various “ages” – man making the great leap from “stone”, to “bronze”, to “iron age” without any process of evolution or change. Thus the Saxon timber hut springs fully formed from the Roman villa. Contrary to this view is the importance of the sense of place, putting people and objects into their environmental context, something that museums can never achieve. One alarming consequence of in-situ reconstruction is the impact of visitor erosion of the site and damage to surviving deposits. It is quite incredible that Scheduled Monument Consent was granted by English Heritage for the development of the in-situ reconstruction at Stanstead Mountfitchet Castle (Blockley 1991 : 28–35 and below). Whilst the consent specified that the reconstructed timber palisades should be set on a framework placed on top of the surviving earthwork so as not to damage it, the insertion of concrete pathways, and wooden steps as well as uncontrolled visitor access, have led to significant erosion. In addition, a 2 metre deep flint-lined pit was dug into the bailey of the castle to create an “authentic dungeon”. This problem does not occur at sites like West Stow in Suffolk where the reconstruction has only taken place after total excavation and where no preserved earthworks survive in-situ to be damaged.

Over the last 10 years within museums there has been a fashion for more interaction and activity, influenced by the success of the science centres and discovery

centres in the USA (Borun *et al.* 1983; Freeman 1989; Kennedy 1990). Archaeologists have a keen sense of the concrete and awareness of texture through regular handling of artefacts. The visitor to museums and archaeological sites does not get this routinely but strongly desires it. Accordingly, over the last 10 years activity-based workshops and events have flourished at archaeological sites and reconstructions in response to a demand from visitors, particularly school parties (Blockley 1986; Rylatt 1986). These activities provide the stimulus for further discovery and as such are examples of good practice in interpretation, defined by Tilden as “not instruction, but provocation” (Tilden 1977: 9).

NATIONALISM AND ROMANTICISM

A powerful motivation for the creation of many archaeological reconstructions has been to give people a dramatised sense of being part of the state, “with a share in its future” (Horne 1984: 166). Kaiser Wilhelm II suggested that the Roman fort in Saalburg should be reconstructed. Accordingly, work was carried out from 1897–1907 to create this early open-air museum with a very specific political agenda (Ahrens 1988; Baatz 1991). The explicit aim in creating the open-air museum was to associate German imperial aspirations with those of the impressively tangible monuments of the Roman Empire. These ideas were developed further under Gustav Kossinna, who set up “The German Society for Prehistory”, renamed in 1913 “The Society for German Prehistory” to emphasise its nationalistic focus – *eine hervorragend nationale Wissenschaft* (Sklenář 1983: 135). The rise of national socialism in Germany during the 1930s and 1940s influenced a whole generation of German prehistorians who were encouraged to interpret European history as political legitimisation (Ahrens 1988; Baatz 1991; Bohm 1937; Bollmus 1970; Hahne 1934; Näbe 1918, Schuchard 1939). At this time open-air museums like the reconstructed Neolithic and bronze age site at Unteruhldingen on Lake Constanz were created to popularise the state view of pre-history (Arnold 1990). Griepentrog (1989) discusses the development of *Freilichtmuseen der deutschen Vorzeit* (open-air museums of the German past). The notorious museum at Derlinghausen was created by Hans Reinerth as a “Germanic farm from the beginning of our era”. (Schmidt, forthcoming). The aim of the reconstruction was not to show historical reality, but to emphasise German cultural superiority and the continuity of Germanic settlement. In 1945, the museum was burnt down, not as a result of the second world war, but as a conscious act of “de-nazification”. In 1961, the “Society for German prehistory” rebuilt the museum following the precepts of Kossinna, illustrating the continuity of “Germanic” settlement since the mesolithic. It may be argued that the early reconstruction of the timber rampart of the Lusatian Culture stronghold at Biskupin (Piotrowska 1998) had a similar role.

It has been suggested that traditions are often “invented” to establish or legitimise institutions or to imbue a system of beliefs or values (Hobsbawn 1987: 9). The leaders of the modern militarised society of Iraq have chosen to select and display those aspects of ancient Mesopotamian civilisation – power, cruelty, the ruler cult – which reinforce their own values and give status to them. In doing this the rulers of Iraq have ignored the qualities of learning and wisdom that underpinned the ancient cradle of civilisation. Vast piles of Iranian helmets from the recent Iran-Iraq war, have been heaped into huge mounds in imitation of the piles of skulls of vanquished enemies created in antiquity by Sennacherib the Assyrian King. Huge wall reliefs have been created depicting Sadaam Hussein as an all-conquering Assyrian King riding roughshod over his foes in a war chariot. The restoration of Babylon the Great, Mother of Harlots is seen as a potent symbol. Every fiftieth brick bears the stamp “restored in the era of Sadaam”, in imitation of Nebuchadnessar, who stamped bricks with his own name during his restoration of Babylon in 600 BC (Wood 1991). Sadaam fabricated these highly emotive symbols of the past to imply the re-emergence of the old Mesopotamia as a world force.

AUTHENTICITY, RESTORATION AND RECONSTRUCTION

Restorations of existing buildings can involve a substantial element of speculative reconstruction. According to Greek legend, Theseus’ galley was preserved by the Athenians for many years. Over time, as the old timber was gradually removed and replaced with new, the question of whether it was still the same ship arose. Was it the authentic ship? If not, when did it cease to be? This concern with authenticity is not a recent phenomenon, in fact Plutarch raised this problem in Antiquity (Jokilehto 1995: 18). Structures built of fragile materials – mud, brick or wood have a finite lifespan. If they are significantly restored or recreated, their “original” appearance can be completely changed. Are the cathedrals of Cologne and Paris, which have been extensively repaired, authentic Gothic creations? The Anglo Saxon tower of Earls Barton church was recently restored with its inauthentic but familiar “medieval” nineteenth century crenellations, retained, rather than removed. The medieval walled town of Carcassonne restored by Viollet le Duc (Auzas 1979: 66–9 and Bloch 1959: 184–90), the castle of the Teutonic Knights at Malbork in Poland, restored by German architects at the beginning of the twentieth century, and the Taj Mahal heavily restored by the British in the 1940s are very familiar and influential landmarks, which have been subject to considerable restoration and reconstruction and survive as reflections of knowledge or beliefs current at the time of their restoration. Interestingly, the Taj Mahal, Malbork and Carcassonne are inscribed on the UNESCO list of World Heritage Sites as of

“outstanding universal value”, despite the test of authenticity being one of the criteria for inclusion on the list (UNESCO 1997).

The debate surrounding authenticity, restoration and reconstruction has exercised the minds of conservation professionals for many years and is enshrined in international statutes and guidelines. The Venice Charter (ICOMOS, 1966) which led to the creation of ICOMOS has specific and prescriptive guidance on restoration and reconstruction: “Replacements of missing parts must integrate harmoniously with the whole, but at the same time must be distinguishable from the original so that restoration does not falsify the artistic or historic evidence” (Article 12). “All reconstruction work would, however, be ruled out *a priori*. Only anastylosis, that is to say, the reassembling of existing, but dismembered parts, can be permitted. The material used for integration should always be recognisable and its use should be the least that will ensure the conservation of a monument and the reinstatement of its form” (Article 15 – with reference to excavation).

The BURRA Charter, Australia ICOMOS’ supplement to the Venice Charter goes further. (Marquis-Kyle and Walker 1992). **Reconstruction** means returning a place as nearly as possible to a known state and is distinguished by the introduction of materials (new and old) into the fabric. This is not to be confused with either recreation or conjectural reconstruction, which are outside the scope of this Charter. “Reconstruction is appropriate only where a place is incomplete through damage or alteration and where it is necessary for its survival or where it reveals the cultural significance of the place as a whole” (Article 17). “Reconstruction is limited to the completion of a depleted entity and should not constitute the majority of the fabric of the place” (Article 18). “Reconstruction is limited to the reproduction of fabric, the form of which is known from physical and/or documentary evidence. It should be identifiable on close inspection as being new work” (Article 19).

Reconstruction is distinguished from restoration in that new material is introduced. Reconstruction is usually carried out in combination with preservation, restoration and adaptation. Reconstruction can sometimes achieve a major objective for a place, such as halting decay, providing security, providing new facilities or interpreting the significance of a place (Marquis-Kyle and Walker 1992: 52). These prescriptive statements regarding restoration and reconstruction reflect the views of western orthodoxy with regard to professional practice in the conservation of historic architecture. Archaeologists and conservation architects from parts of Asia adopt a somewhat different position with regard to authenticity and continuity of use. This debate was aired recently in the context of the World Heritage Convention at Nara in Japan (UNESCO 1994, 1997).

The recent reconstruction (1995) of Shakespeare’s Globe Theatre at Bankside, London was the culmination of a thirty year obsession by the American actor/

producer Sam Wanamaker (Jackson 1991). However, schemes to provide a tangible link with arguably the greatest period in English drama have been in existence for around a century. The first reconstruction was proposed in the 1890s by William Poel of the Elizabethan Stage Society which was dedicated to performing Shakespeare in its original conditions. The County of London redevelopment plan in 1943 envisaged a utopian vision of the future symbolised by the reinstatement of Elizabethan and Jacobean Bankside. In fact a reconstruction of the Globe Theatre was included in the original plan for the Festival of Britain (Samuel 1994: 247). Only eight outdoor playhouses were built in England during Shakespeare's time, and their size and shape have been subject to considerable speculation over the last two hundred years. Three of these theatres, the Rose (1587), the Swan (1596) and the Globe (1599) were built on the south bank of the Thames at Bankside.

In 1989 the sites of the Rose and the Globe were located and subjected to trial excavation in advance of development (Swain *et al.* 1991). At the time there was a powerfully orchestrated campaign for total excavation of the Globe to provide evidence for the nearby reconstruction, followed by conservation of the surviving evidence in-situ. However, as the site was granted statutory protection as a scheduled ancient monument, and further excavation would have required the demolition of a listed building it became something of a conservation cause celebre. Further, consolidation of the incomplete brick and chalk foundations in-situ would have been extremely difficult. Certainly the planning procedures developed to handle the sites of the Rose and the Globe were particularly significant for the development of English conservation policy (Brindle and Thomas 1990).

Interestingly, recent non-destructive research into the ground plan of the original Globe Theatre using ground penetrating radar has already led to a need to reduce the number of sides of the new theatre from 24 down to 20. There is even doubt as to whether the stage is facing the right direction. The theatre's Chief Executive, Michael Holden, says that the theatre may never be fully finished but will evolve as new evidence becomes available. Mr Holden has gone on record to say that "our business is to create an authentic reconstruction... I'll pick up the building and spin it round if necessary... Theatre is an organic process, so why shouldn't the Globe be?" (Ellison 1996). These are bold words but they neatly illustrate the dilemma of massive investment in "reconstruction" projects (Fig. 2). Certainly the Globe Theatre Trust are actively marketing the project on its claims to authenticity and academic integrity.

The debate continues regarding the "authenticity" of the late twentieth century reconstruction of the Globe, which had to comply with modern planning and building regulations. Further there is clearly an interesting tension between the desire to stage "authentic" Shakespearean drama with all the problems this implies

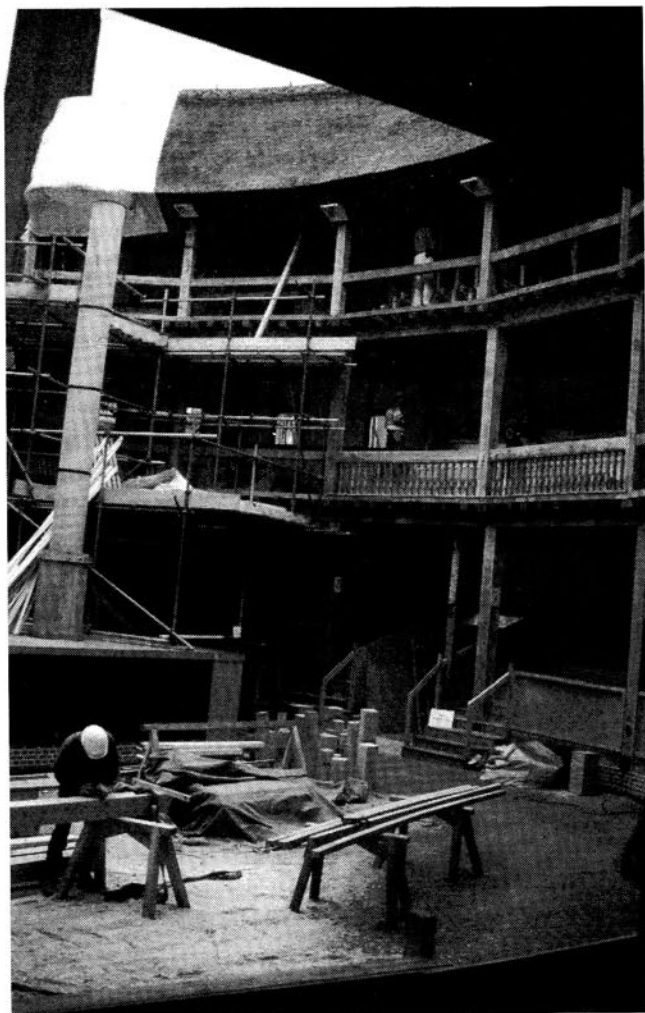


Fig. 2. Constructing the interior of the Globe Theatre, London.

and the need to make a commercial success of the new tourist attraction. The Globe itself is tightly wedged between the rising walls of the adjacent corporate hospitality and conference suites which are an essential part of the Globe project's year round business plan. Certainly, the recent granting of government funding to the Tate Gallery to build a new museum of modern art in the adjacent Bankside power station will ensure that this contentious reconstruction becomes a focus for cultural tourism in this newly created heritage quarter on London's south bank (Fig. 3).

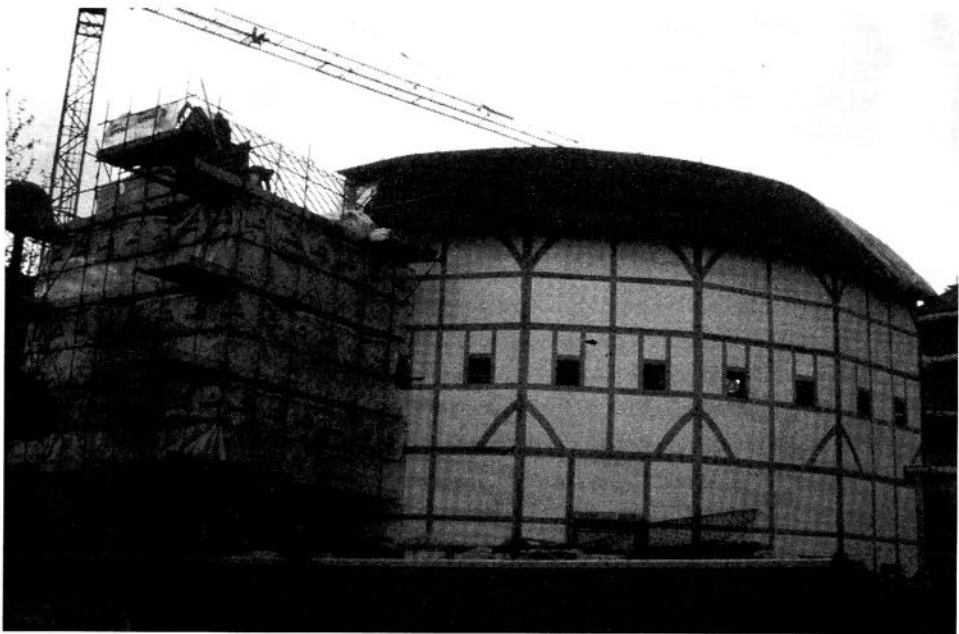


Fig. 3. "Shakespeare's Globe Theatre", Bankside, London.

THEME PARKS, TOURISM AND OPEN AIR MUSEUMS

Archaeological sites also have a potential economic value as a resource for cultural tourism. In France, the Archéodrome was established near Dijon as the *auto route du sud* by the Société des Autoroutes Paris-Rhin-Rhone. It was established specifically "in line with the policy of motorway entertainment and increased human interest" (Rickard 1983: 30). At Xanten in Germany, educational tours and costumed events have been developed for groups as an important aspect of the site visit. The amphitheatre at Xanten is even used as a venue for pop concerts (Dommers 1991). In Holland, the theme park "Archeon" was established in 1993, specifically for the tourist market. (Ijereef, forthcoming). However, its financial plan and visitor projections have proven somewhat optimistic and it has already run into financial difficulties. In the highland (Grampian) region of Scotland, significant sums of European regional development funding have recently been invested in an archaeological theme park "Archaeolink" in order to provide jobs in a rural area of high unemployment (Shepherd 1994). However, there are already concerns that the site which follows the theme park model is unlikely to meet its financial and visitor targets.

The independent open-air museums which flourished throughout Europe during the 1970's and early 1980's combined dismantled and relocated buildings and simulated structures based only on the evidence of archaeological excavations. These open-air museums were established specifically to engage with visitors in a way which traditional museum displays could not. Sommer and Schmidt (forthcoming) both draw attention to the dilemmas of authenticity posed by these museums, but concede that they are very successful in engaging with audiences.

One of the most successful rural life museums in England is the Weald and Downland Museum at Singleton, West Sussex. This Museum contains dismantled medieval timber framed buildings placed in a facsimile of a medieval market place as well as reconstructions of earlier buildings based on archaeological evidence. At Avoncroft Museum of Buildings the collections of relocated and restored buildings are displayed as if specimens in a showcase, clearly selected and collected with no attempt to recreate "authentic", historic environments as settings for the buildings. The collection is eclectic, so a medieval timber hall can be juxtaposed against a nineteenth century chain makers workshop and a 1940s pre-fabricated house. The open-air museums at Beamish (County Durham), The Black Country (Dudley) and Blists Hill (Ironbridge) purport to display British industrial life at the turn of the century in a relatively "convincing" environmental context (Trinder 1984, but see West 1988 for a critique). However, as independent museums they are all dependent on visitor income for their ensured survival. Consequently many bizarre compromises occur in a schizophrenic attempt to provide a popular visitor attraction and an authentic reconstruction of past society. At Blists Hill in the Ironbridge Gorge, an early 20th century fairground is tightly juxtaposed between an in-situ archaeological monument (a set of blast furnaces), a relocated wrought ironworks and a relocated Victorian school.

During the 1970s and 1980s the UK open-air museums were particularly successful in attracting paying visitors away from traditional museums (Johnson and Thomas, 1992). These open air museums have, however, been vulnerable to the criticism that they encouraged the wholesale demolition and removal of threatened buildings from their original location. Nowadays, they are all informed by stricter collecting policies with an underpinning ethical stance to try and preserve buildings in-situ wherever possible and only to record and dismantle in the last resort. This is closely paralleled by current legislation and codes of practice (Department of the Environment 1990), which favour the protection of archaeological deposits in-situ for future researchers (Biddle 1994) and others have criticised this policy for stifling archaeological research and causing a decline in standards of archaeological excavation. However, others draw attention to the potential for non-invasive techniques, such as geophysical survey and ground-penetrating radar as research tools (Clark 1996).

EXPERIMENTAL ARCHAEOLOGY

Speculative reconstructions for experiment or academic research were very fashionable during the 1960s and 1970s. John Coles (1979: 33) believes that experiment brings us closer to understanding past human behaviour. At Lejre in Denmark, Hansen established the highly influential centre for experimental archaeology in 1964 (Christensen 1991; Hansen 1982). The museum was established on a 40-acre site with a generous donation from the Carlsberg Foundation (Meldgaard and Rasmussen, forthcoming). The Iron Age village currently has a staff of around 50–60, who enable visiting schoolchildren and other groups to live for two weeks as an “Iron Age family”. Similarly, the original aim at Biskupin was to provide training in field technique and to provide public access to the results of archaeological research, experiment and conservation (Biskupin 1991: 13–5). However, many believe that we can never truly understand past behaviour because of our modern cultural baggage (Fowler 1992: 110–3; Lowenthal 1985: 212–24; Walsh 1992: 53–69). Collecting buildings in Sweden and Denmark was originally motivated by the appreciation of the buildings themselves and by a fear that the crafts and skills that went into their creation would be lost. The Ullandhaug Open Air Museum was funded by central government as a symbol of Norwegian nationhood looking back to the “Golden Age” of the migration period from which Viking society evolved (Kleppe 1987; Skjelstad 1980; Taylor 1990: 15–7). The Scandinavian approach has influenced a number of reconstructions in the United Kingdom. The underlying agenda may be to revitalise an area of agricultural decline, to preserve a landscape, to reconstruct history, to present an environmental message or to preserve traditional skills for the future. The motivation behind reconstructions has evolved over the last 20 years. What may have begun primarily as scientific or academic research, often evolves into education, “living history” and/or tourism in order to fund continued research as at Butser (Reynolds 1979: 7), Biskupin and Lejre. The experimental centre at Lejre has attracted over two million visitors over 30 years. Whilst the experiments on the survival of archaeological evidence, and early agriculture, were the focus of the site, it has had to evolve to secure funding for its primary aim. The “living history” activities it developed attracted a great deal of public interest (in 1966 alone there were 50,000 visitors). This led to official recognition of the importance of the educational value of the site as an open-air museum and a regular source of grant aid, which ensured its financial security. During the 1980s and 1990s, the site has continued to attract around 90,000 visitors per annum (Meldgaard and Rasmussen, forthcoming).

The furnishing of interiors and the use made of reconstructed buildings is fundamental to their continued survival and depends on the original motivation behind their creation. Again, drawing on the Danish tradition “live-ins” have

become a popular use of reconstructed structures (Wood 1995). However the quality and "authenticity" of this experience and the props used varies according to the underlying motivation whether it be educational or commercial. The buildings reconstructed on site at Stansted Mount Fitchet Castle in Essex are let down by poor standards in the props used to furnish the interiors. Whilst the buildings themselves are of tolerable standard, reflecting a degree of research and craftsmanship, the interiors are furnished with a tawdry mixture of ethnographic souvenirs, bric-a-brac, 19th century agricultural implements, shop mannequins from the 1950s and 1960s and reproduction armour ranging in style from the twelfth to sixteenth centuries. This would not matter, but for the fact that the reconstruction has pretensions to authenticity citing the use of geo-physical techniques, historical research and the meeting of conditions for scheduled monument consent as proof of the academic integrity of the project, which aims to present "a frozen moment in time" (Blockley 1991: 28-35).

The real challenge is how to combine objectivity, authenticity and the need to inspire the non-specialist audience (Ahrens 1991; Baudrillard 1978; Kristiansen 1993; Narr 1990 and Voss 1993). Martin Schmidt has drawn attention to the lack of visual imagery in the post-nazi objective interpretation of prehistory. Sommer has recently revised her views of the significance of visual imaging and the honesty of reconstruction drawings having taken responsibility for curating the Slavic open-air museum at Gross Raden (Schuldt 1976; Sommer 1993 and forthcoming). Recent reconstructions in German open-air museums do not have furnished interiors, as there is no archaeological evidence for furnishings. Further scientifically trained objective archaeologists/curators will not commit to speculative illustrations. Consequently, the general visitor and school groups are still making use of the emotive and dramatic illustrations of the Nazi period, in the absence of an alternative (Schmidt, forthcoming).

During the late 1980s, environmental awareness came to the fore. Archaeologists and curators questioned the authenticity of the environmental context for displaying reconstructions (and in-situ monuments). Ample archaeological evidence survives of flora, fauna and living conditions, but site managers are frequently concerned about presenting "authentic-squalor" to modern visitors.

Most archaeological reconstructions are in idyllic, carefully managed rural locations. Within a 20th century urban context reconstructed sites can have an air of unreality about them. The reconstructed Roman Fort Gateway at Arbeia, South Shields is a case in point, incongruously placed amongst nineteenth century terraced housing and late 20th century housing development. Similarly, Stansted Mountfitchet is approached through and overlooks a semi-derelict railway goods yard. Arbeia, South Shields is an interesting early example of the preservation and interpretation of roman military remains as an example of civic regard for the



Fig. 4. Reconstructed Roman gateway at Castlefield's urban Heritage Park, Manchester.

archaeological heritage. The site has been on continuous public display since 1875 in the "Roman remains park". The site has been subject to minimal academic approaches to presentation over the years. However, the construction of the gateway aroused considerable controversy and was subject to a public inquiry in 1985 (pers. comm P. Bidwell; Bidwell 1987). Academic concern hinged around the fact that no complete military gateway survives anywhere in the Roman empire, which could serve as a model for the reconstruction. Once built however, the gateway has assumed a validity which belies the lack of evidence, and has already been imitated in the unlikely setting of derelict urban land in the centre of Manchester at Castlefields Urban Heritage Park. Here the gateway sits incongruously against a nineteenth century gothic crenelated railway viaduct and close by the Bridgewater Canal Basin, the first in the world and a site of genuine heritage significance in its own right (Fig. 4).

At Cockley Cley, the "Iceni village" in Norfolk, The initial motivation behind this project was didactic and humanist – rather than purely for commercial gain – unfortunately it was based on unsound scholarship. It rather grandiosely claims to be an "Iceni village as it was in 60 AD", and also lays claim to a link with a specific historical figure, Boudicca, and her revolt. The site of the "village" (itself a medieval concept) is only 48 metres long which is far too small to be representative of a typical late Iron Age settlement. Whereas circular buildings are

more typical of the British Iron Age, rectilinear buildings are more common on the mainland of northern Europe coming from a continental tradition. It includes a reconstructed long house as the communal building. The gateway is adorned with plastic "blood-soaked" heads on posts whilst the interior contains the very popular "snake pit" where enemies were thrown. Further, the language of the site guide and information panels are heavily influenced by Scandinavian mythology of the early medieval period, popular accounts of Scandinavian Bronze Age excavations and the exploits of the heroes of schoolboy literature. This would not matter but for the sites' claims of authenticity and its regular use for school visits (Walsh 1992 : 105) and promotion in the "quality" press.

REPLICAS, VISITOR EXPERIENCES, AND VIRTUAL RECONSTRUCTIONS

One response to the impact of tourism on vulnerable archaeological sites, or sites which no longer exist, is the creation of the replica. At Lascaux in the Dordogne, Lascaux 2 was manufactured as a faithful replica. With its timed tickets and restricted access, it successfully fosters the illusion for visitors that they are seeing real prehistoric cave paintings. Richard Prentice has described this phenomenon "some people may wish to be fooled, for this is part of the tourist experience and enjoyable all the same" (Prentice 1993 : 43). The theatrically stage managed visitor experience on the site of the Coppergate excavations in York was a typical product of the Heritage Industry expansion in Britain during the 1980s (Addyman and Gaynor 1984). Undoubtedly, the Jorvik Centre was very successful and it spawned a number of less successful imitators of poor quality with less attention to detail. Jorvik was a successful market leader in the 1980s because of the quality of its research and development and its location on the site of the Coppergate excavations. However, it has been less successful of late and, as with all new products, it has a finite life cycle. The market for heritage visitor attractions has become saturated and the discerning visitor appears to be looking once more for authenticity and access to "real things", rather than simulated experiences.

For sites which no longer survive, or are particularly vulnerable to visitor pressure, virtual reality and multi-media provide a rich alternative (Blockley 1996). Recently, English Heritage joined forces with a multi-media company to produce a virtual reality tour of the Stonehenge World Heritage Site and its landscape setting (Bath 1996). The University of Birmingham has just completed an intensive study of the Roman town of Wroxeter and its hinterland and is preparing virtual reconstructions for local children and a world wide audience to be accessed via the Internet (Biswell 1996). A group of architecture students in Germany have

recently developed a project to reconstruct a group of significant synagogues destroyed during the Second World War and make them accessible via the Internet (Fairs 1998). Clearly, virtual reality will never be a substitute for access to "the real thing", but when the site is too fragile, or incomplete or no longer exists, the potential for virtual reality to allow us to explore a range of alternative views of the past is immense. Interactive multi-media have the potential to allow us to access the limitations of the primary evidence and explore or create our own alternative views of the past.

ECOMUSEUMS AND THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT APPROACH TO INTERPRETATION

In the tradition of European museums, a distinction is drawn between the ecomuseum (Riviere 1985) and the open air museum of buildings or folk life. The latter is firmly rooted in the Scandinavian tradition of museums discussed above, where archaeological reconstructions take their place beside buildings dismantled and redisplayed within a museum, in the same way that artefacts are displayed within a collection. The ecomuseum movement, which grew up in France during the late 1960s and 1970s, attempted to interpret the whole landscape and to enable the community to represent itself to visitors. The motivation behind the ecomuseum movement was to give the community a voice and a sense of pride in itself and its environment. Its aim was to interpret the social history, landscape and archaeology of the region and its community in-situ. The movement developed as a reaction against the centralised bureaucracy of the French museums hierarchy (Hubert 1985; Engström 1985). Above all, the movement attempted to breakdown the barriers between the professional curators and the community, celebrate the sense of place and empower local people with control over the representation of their cultural identity (Hudson 1992).

Within archaeological interpretation this approach has also been adopted for the presentation of sites and landscapes over the last 5–10 years. The community development approach aims to create or enhance a sense of place for individuals and to establish what is significant and valued in the environment or heritage of a community. Common Ground, the British environmental pressure group have been particularly active in promoting this approach (King and Clifford 1987). Common Ground has helped hundreds of local communities to create "maps" of their own localities focusing on those features of the built and natural environment which are important to them. Recently Common Ground has been raising awareness of "local distinctiveness", those elements of our environment and customs which distinguish our local identity, but which may not be protected in officially

designated conservation areas (Clifford and King 1993). Within museums a parallel tradition has been the creation of the "Peoples Shows". In the past few years, these have taken place at venues all over the UK where individuals had the opportunity to display their personal collections whether it be neck ties, beer mats or china frogs. Curators of social history within museums, have empowered individuals and sections of the community to present what is important for their identity to a wider audience – to validate their activity. Community arts groups throughout the UK have been particularly active over the last 5 years. Central to the community arts and community development approach is the involvement of people in the process of reconstruction rather than the importance of the finished product. This approach has great merit for reconstruction because it enables people to question the evidence, consider the alternatives and see the reconstruction not as an end in itself, but merely the product of a series of deliberations. Further, it also has the benefit of providing the local community with a sense of pride in their own skills and own achievements. The longevity of the reconstruction becomes less critical in this approach since it should not be viewed as permanent and static. The process of reconstruction should be enjoyable and thought provoking in itself and involve people whether school children or tourists. This approach also responds to Tilden's injunction to provoke and engage rather than instruct (Tilden 1977: 9), which is good practice in interpretation and archaeological theory. "This is our heritage, this is what we value in the environment, this is part of us, this is what we want to share and how we want you to know us" (King and Clifford 1987).

The framework for interpretation is generally a reflection of the professionals' initial academic training as archaeologist, geographer or historian. Whilst this framework might be appropriate for major national monuments and national collections in museums, this is not necessarily the case for the more common place and typical of the local heritage of an area. The objective, empirical scientific approach is a reflection of western academic training – this contrasts with the more personalised spiritual connection felt by aboriginal or local communities (Tamepo 1995). Their idea of a sense of place is based on cultural background, the oral tradition and experience, rather than a fixed physical location. The "outreach" approach to interpreting archaeological sites requires skills in working with local communities.

There are important philosophical, social, cultural and political justifications for adopting an outreach approach to archaeological reconstructions. Although it is easier for the archaeological heritage manager to build a single solid reconstruction or create a permanent exhibition which will need little maintenance and management, what the community really wants is changing activities, workshops and programmes of events to encourage them to repeat their visit. In terms of community involvement it is far more informative and engaging to exhibit reconstructions in progress and to provide involvement in processes such as daubing,

thatching and the manufacture of wattle hurdles rather than to exhibit a finished watertight structure. Iron Age round-houses, a popular subject for reconstructions, lend themselves well to this approach (Blockley 1991: 6-7).

A proposal for a reconstruction suggested within a programme of economic regeneration could suffer rejection by the local community if the project is deemed to be irrelevant to the community and its needs. The passions voiced at the public enquiry into the proposed Roman gatehouse at Arbeia, South Shields, are a case in point. Similarly, at Coalbrookdale a working replica historic locomotive was removed from the grounds of the Museum of Iron in response to local pressure. In this instance the replica steam engine was stopped because of complaints about noise. If, however, the project had involved the local community, particularly its children, they may well have felt a sense of ownership rather than resentment at an initiative imposed upon them. These problems can be overcome by involving local people in the processes of reconstruction and interpretation and hence raising their level of awareness and encouraging them to take an active role in protecting their archaeological heritage. Moreover the creative responses of the community can be tremendously stimulating and rewarding and provide an extra dimension to the intellectual approaches of the archaeologist. There are a number of different roles that archaeologists can adopt in a community action approach to the presentation of archaeological sites. Above all field archaeologists, site managers, custodians and museum curators need to adopt a more adventurous attitude as enabler or catalyst.

The author recently devised a new approach to the interpretation and reconstruction of archaeological sites for children in the new town of Milton Keynes (Blockley 1994). Within the newly created neighbourhoods the development corporation designated a number of spaces for recreational use as play areas. The author devised an archaeological theme for each of these play areas to reflect the adjacent archaeology and palaeontology and to provide amusing, educational and innovative landscape features. One play area was designed around a geological theme inspired by the Ophthalmosaur (a large, primitive fish) and other large fossils recovered from the blue lias clay during excavations for the lake. Subsequently labelled "Jurassic Park" the play area contains life-sized casts of fossil skeletons set into earthen banks. The second play area was built beside the earthworks of a deserted medieval village. The play area made extensive use of timber and stone and was designed around the theme of a ruined dovecote, timber hall and giant nine-mens morris board laid out in paving slabs. The third play area is based around Roman pottery kilns found in the area and incorporates designs based on kiln furniture and Roman ceramics. All the constructions have been designed to comply with stringent standards of health and safety for play equipment. The project design envisages information panels and "discovery-trails" to explain the rationale behind the themes. Whilst these constructions are a physical interpretation of the excavated archaeology, no-one would

mistake them for anything other than a reflection of that archaeology. At the same time they are also relevant to the fledgling community, provide a tangible link to the area's past communities and a stimulating play environment for its future.

On the northern edge of Milton Keynes, Bancroft Roman villa was excavated from 1973–1986 (Williams and Zeevat 1994). The site of the villa and its out-buildings was subsequently preserved within a public open space. Towards the end of the excavation plans were devised for the public presentation and reconstruction of the Villa. Various proposals were put forward including covering the surviving Villa foundations in a modern building and relaying the mosaics over a damp-proof course. However, it was considered “difficult for visitors to imagine life in a complete Roman building in regular daily use, when walking through a modern building looking at small sections of mosaic floor and under-floor heating ducts” (Bancroft Villa Advisory Committee 1983: 10). The favoured option was total reconstruction of the Villa set in a recreated “authentic” landscape. Also the interpretation was considered to be inadequate without the creation of the domestic interior as well. Consultants advised a concrete raft laid down to protect the surviving archaeology with the reconstruction built above it. The commissioned feasibility study predicted that 200,000 visitors were needed *per annum* to break even on costs. Since the park was surrounded by a residential area, the open-air museum concept was abandoned on the grounds of disruption to residents nearby.

During 1989 a less ambitious scheme was implemented to “commemorate” the site of the villa as a landscape feature. Replica foundations were laid out on a raised platform on the site of the original building. Where colourful mosaics had covered the floors, a carpet of grass was sown. This presentation is confusing for visitors because it incorporates the genuine Roman fabric of the original ornamental garden pond with pastiche wall foundations. The wall footings are, however, a too faithful replica of the original and according to the Park Rangers, are assumed to be genuine by most visitors. The floor mosaics were all lifted and remain in store awaiting an appropriate venue for public display. One of the small mosaics was mounted on a wall in the shopping centre in Central Milton Keynes.

A few months after the site was officially opened, rubbish began to fill the pond, graffiti appeared on the interpretation panels, and plants were uprooted from the “Roman Garden”. It was clear that there was a need for a more imaginative management and interpretation policy. It was not enough merely to reconstruct the walls, produce leaflets and interpretation panels and assume that communication had been achieved (Blockley 1998). There was a need to promote the site to the public and give it a focus within the community. Further, it was the only publicly accessible Roman site in Buckinghamshire.

The most direct way of reaching a community is through its children. Accordingly, a project was devised in consultation with five local schools and the local

community arts group "Interaction". It was a new departure for the archaeology unit using enquiry, art, drama and creativity to inspire children. The project was motivated by, and based on, primary evidence: potsherds, burnt tile fragments, burnt stone and animal bones from the site (Blockley 1993). The emphasis was on active learning, finding out, handling and questioning the evidence in an exciting and stimulating way. The 250 children from 5 local schools were encouraged to use and develop their skills through exploration, investigation, knowledge and understanding. In effect they became archaeologists, using all the deductive and recording skills used by the professionals. The guiding principle behind the project was that children should be enabled to understand processes rather than absorb facts by rote. Looking at things is good practice, but it is dangerous to think of observation as an end in itself, rather than as a vehicle to promote further enquiry. As a detective searches for clues to solve a crime, so the children searched for clues on site to solve the mystery of the villa.

The young archaeologists systematically plotted, collected and identified evidence from the site and started to question that evidence. Throughout the project the children learnt how to research, to collaborate, to reason and to question. They were encouraged not to think in terms of right or wrong answers, but always to be aware of alternatives. Gradually, they began to understand the limitations of the evidence and how subjective interpretation can be.

The children interpreted the original evidence they found through field walking across the site, shreds of pottery, bone, tile and mosaic tesserae strategically placed by the author in the rooms of the reconstructed villa. The evidence "planted" on the floors of the reconstructed rooms gave clues to their use. From all this evidence the children worked collaboratively on site and in their schools to produce their version of events on site. They became the interpreters of the sites, the adults acting as enablers. In contrast to the usual dry, academic report produced by archaeologists, the children interpreted the site by writing, designing and performing a play of their own, with adults acting as enablers (Fig. 5).



Fig. 5. Bancroft Roman Villa – Milton Keynes.
The Performance – The God
(based on a statuette found during the excavation).

Each school set to work creating reconstructions to illustrate their aspect of the site history and geography. One school researched and built a replica roman mausoleum. Interestingly, the post-modernist house built on the site of the mausoleum was adapted by the developers from one of their standard range to echo the presumed appearance of the mausoleum. The residents whilst aware that it was influenced by the archaeology beneath their feet, did not realise that they were living in a replica of a burial chamber. Children researching the native Britons helped to create a life size round house from willow, daub and thatch on the site of an excavated Romano-British settlement in South Milton Keynes.

Bushfield School set themselves the task of creating a full-size replica of the smallest mosaic on the site and manufacturing enough ceramic tesserae to produce it. The mosaic was incomplete so they worked as experimental archaeologists planning the layout and construction of the design. The level of co-operation was outstanding. Children negotiated modifications where necessary, to preserve symmetry with others working on similar sections, anticipated each others need for more tesserae of a particular colour and kept each other serviced with these to ensure maximum efficiency. As sections were completed they were positioned on the base board. The children were triumphant when the exquisite mosaic was fully assembled (Fig. 7).

For the six weeks leading up to the final public performance the children worked with community artists, teachers and the author to rehearse the play, produce costumes, props and scenery to present their story and bring the site to life. As well as the large constructions the children produced "green" artworks to enhance the site and evoke the lives of people who lived, worked, worshipped and died there. Thankfully the weather was fine for the performance and the dramatic fire show finale went off with the right balance of excitement and control to thrill the large audience.

The enthusiasm generated by the project was infectious. Did it have any long term value though? Would a more permanent reconstruction have been more appropriate? The intention behind the project was that it would have a greater benefit if it was produced by the children of the local community. By providing them with the skills of the archaeologist and interpreter they would be able to see their familiar park in a new light. Three years later I asked one of the teachers involved in the project to give me her impressions. "The project fired the children's imagination by straight away casting them into the role of archaeologists. The impact of the first visit to the site, where they made genuine discoveries for themselves was tremendous. From day one they were all hooked and enthralled by identifying and interpreting their own evidence. Importantly, they learnt straight away to constantly question the evidence and to seek alternative views... Three years on, in their last year of primary school, the group were asked to recall their impressions of their time at Bushfield. The consensus was that the year they did 'the Romans' was the best ever!" The mosaic survives as a testament to the skill, and

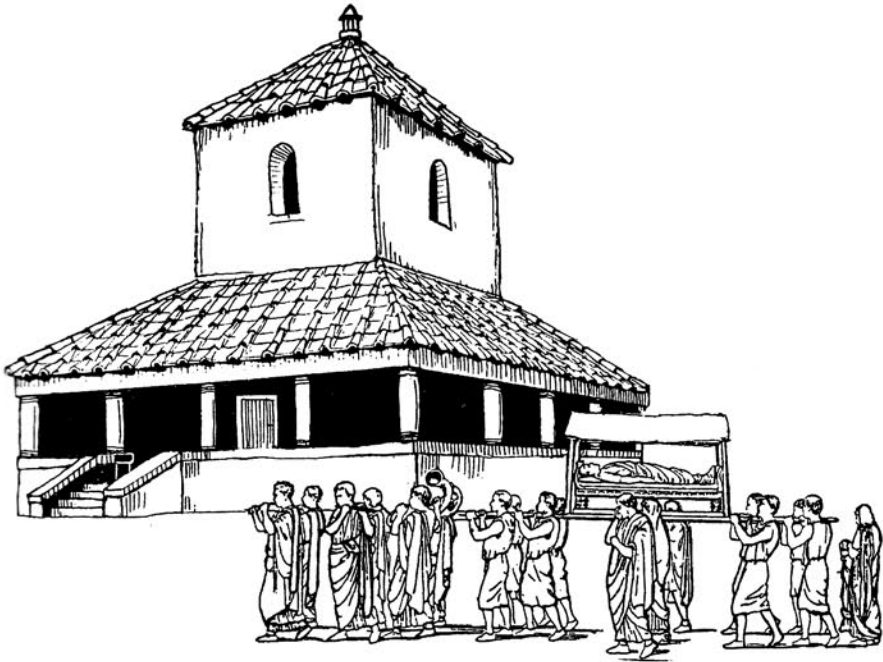


Fig. 6. House built on the site of the Roman Mausoleum at Bancroft designed to reflect the reconstruction drawing of the site.



Fig. 7. Bancroft Roman Villa – Milton Keynes. Children assembling their replica mosaic on site.

creativity of the year of 1990 and continues to inspire future classes. Interestingly the author observed children playing in the stream at the park two years after the event in role as Taranis (a Romano-Celtic god) perhaps some small indication that children can be gripped by enthusiasms other than for Jurassic Park or Fred Flintstone.

In conclusion, reconstructions are an invaluable way of reaching and inspiring different sections of the community – whether for commercial, political or didactic reasons. However, they are a powerful tool and need to be used with integrity and imagination. They certainly have the power to deceive particularly when signifi-

cant effort, technical skill and resources are used to recreate the massed effect of an "authentic" environment replicated in an open-air museum. The danger of this approach of course, as epitomised at Ironbridge, is that children may well engage with the replicated Victorian industrial environment manufactured at Blists Hill whilst ignoring the authentic environment they travel through to reach the museum. Today children are being taught how to read their historic environments and to collate and interrogate primary evidence for themselves. The process of reconstruction is a valid analytical tool, it is no less valid than our attempts to interpret and make sense of historical documents. Surely therefore, it is more appropriate to invest in opportunities to test ideas and create temporary reconstructions which may survive for less than a year, but which generate powerful memories and infectious enthusiasm that persists for life? In this way reconstructions need not become institutionalised, dated and vulnerable to changes in academic fashion, but act as a catalyst for community pride and that voguish concept sustainable tourism. At a time when large sums of public money are being generated by the National Lottery for investment in heritage capital projects, perhaps more thought should be given to the value of temporary events and processes rather than just bricks and mortar.¹

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¹ An earlier version of this paper was delivered at World Archaeological Congress 3, New Delhi 1994 (Blockley, forthcoming).

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