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Heritage in Trust: sustainable stewardship in transition?

Richard Clarke

Abstract

Frequently identified with 'establishment' values the National Trust has as often been a focus of critique as of celebration. This essay examines the Trust's changing relation to contested values of heritage as manifest in its acquisitions and management policies, in its engagement with environmental and social issues and an emerging politicisation which transcends a narrow, purely property-based interpretation of its statutory purpose. Recent acquisitions challenge conventional perceptions of 'natural beauty' and 'historic interest'. Organisational greening has precipitated a review of the implications of stewardship 'in perpetuity'. Recognition of the needs of local communities and awareness of equal opportunities issues have prompted a reinterpretation of its founders' concerns with access and enjoyment 'for the nation'. These developments manifest an inchoate shift in the Trust's emphasis from the preservation of the status quo to engagement with change, both within the context of its own properties and in its relations to the wider society and environment. The Trust is unlikely ever to lead changes in public perceptions of heritage but neither is its role necessarily or irredeemably a wholly reactionary one. Inertial and cautious, the Trust reflects and articulates the shifting resolution of contested cultural values.

The National Trust for Places of Historic Interest or Natural Beauty was formally established in 1895 as a 'Corporation for the holding of lands of natural beauty and sites and houses of historic interest to be preserved intact for the nation's use and enjoyment'.[1] The impetus for its formation combined concern about the impact of industrialisation and urban expansion on Britain's historic and natural heritage with anxiety about a changing social order, including the decline of 'traditional values' and a philanthropic reforming zeal for social improvement, especially for the urban poor.

The National Trust is now Britain's largest private landowner, its holdings currently totalling 242,811 ha, equal to 1.5% of the land surface and exceeded only by the State.[2] Although sometimes popularly identified with architectural preservation and the English country house the Trust is also a major steward of the natural heritage as well as of the built, with a portfolio of property – ancient and modern, rural and urban – unique in its variety and quality. Table 1 provides a summary of the Trust's resource, principally as measured by its landholding, particularly of statutorily protected areas and buildings. To this must be added the Trust's chattels, including over ten thousand art works (including paintings), a million books, furniture, and innumerable other items ranging from tractors to children's toys.

1. Despite its name, the National Trust is not national, since its geographical remit conforms to the boundaries of none of the United Kingdom's constituent countries nor to those of Britain nor of the UK. The National Trust covers the 'nations' of England and Wales as well as the province of Northern Ireland. There is a separate (and more appropriately named) National Trust for Scotland (NTS) formed in 1931 and established by Act of Parliament in 1935.

2. In this paper unless otherwise specified, all data are given and comparisons (for example, as regards land areas) made with respect to England, Wales and Northern Ireland (i.e. the UK less Scotland).

Keywords:
Heritage
National Trust
Values
Stewardship
Sustainability

Table 1: The Heritage Portfolio of the National Trust

Landscape

- 124,393 ha of land designated as National Park (8.9% of the total excluding the Norfolk Broads) is held by the Trust, together with a similar proportion of land designated as Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The Trust owns over 880 km of coastline, some 15 - 17% of the total.

Nature

- 68,370 ha (28% of the total Trust landholding) in 484 properties is designated as Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI, in England and Wales) or Area of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI, in Northern Ireland), an area equal to 10.5% by number and 6.5% by area of the total SSSI/ ASSI inventory.
- 25 National Nature Reserves (over 10% of the total) are wholly or partially owned by Trust: a further 48 Trust properties are private nature reserves, leased to County Wildlife Trusts or to other conservation bodies such as the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds.
- 15 Ramsar sites (of a total of 73 such sites notified under the 1971 international Wetlands Convention) include land owned by Trust, as do 22 Special Protection Areas (of the total of 87 such sites notified under the 1979 EC Birds Directive 79/409/EEC) .

The built; architectural, archaeological and historic interest

- Over 250 Trust properties contain a total of more than 1,000 Scheduled Ancient Monuments (= 7.6% of the total); over 4000 individual features are listed on the Sites and Monuments Register.
- A total of 106 Trust sites are listed on the Register of Historic Parks
- 230 great houses and 20,000 smaller buildings are owned by the Trust. The majority in both categories have statutory protection through listing.

Community

- The Trust's total landholding of 242,811 ha (= 1.5% of the land surface) includes more than sixty villages and hamlets (including 37 pubs) and 1,200 tenanted farms.
- A total of 520,000 children visited Trust properties on organised educational visits during 1994.

The Trust is also, with 2.5 million members, the world's largest voluntary heritage/conservation membership organisation. Its public support and its income depend on the way that its holdings are managed and presented. The majority of its properties are open to the public and surveys indicate that free entrance to properties is the major single motive for joining. The Trust has excellent international links and considerable prestige, within the UK and elsewhere; its influence extends well beyond its own properties.

Heritage, reaction and change

The popular image of the National Trust is dominated by the (English) country house and its estate,[3] reflecting the central role of both in popular perceptions of national landscape heritage.[4] It has been suggested, 'That the country house has

3. The Trust's first buildings were vernacular structures. Until the mid 1930s the Trust owned only two mansion houses; it now owns almost 250. This growth was the consequence of a very particular set of socio-political circumstances. The inter-war agricultural recession and rising death duties faced many landed estates with collapse. The Trust perceived a real conservation need; many estate owners saw no other alternative to the disintegration of their estate. In addition a relaxation of tax penalties on properties passed to Trust meant that the number of such properties grew rapidly, particularly in the first decades following the 1939-45 War.

4. D. Lowenthal, 'European and English Landscapes as National Symbols' in D. Hooson, (ed) *Geography and National Identity*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1994, pp.15-38.

survived is largely due to... the National Trust'.[5] One critical view is that the Trust, its name synonymous with castles, mansions and gardens, has become the guardian of a phony national heritage, its role inward-looking, stultifying, ignorant of cultural difference, resistant to change and a vehicle for false (national) consciousness, ultimately negative and reactionary.

An alternate view sees even partial and unrepresentative presentations of heritage as a source not only of active enjoyment but as a route, ultimately, to understanding and engagement, affording millions of people the opportunity for active interest in their past and for commitment to conserving what is left of it in the present.[6] Interestingly, what might a few years ago have surfaced only as a rarefied academic debate (Table 2) has been conducted in public in the national press, the protagonists both being from the intellectual left.[7]

False consciousness and commodification	Access, enjoyment enablement and engagement
Heritage and its interpretation as elitist aestheticism or commercialised pastiche; disabling, a vehicle for exploitation, reactionary nostalgia and false consciousness.	Heritage and its interpretation as local character, popular culture and 'people's history', accessible to all and enabling; a vehicle for enjoyment, education and engagement.

Table 2 Two views of 'heritage' and site interpretation.

Despite its 'establishment' credentials, the Trust has also on occasion been seen by that very establishment as subversive both of its values and of its landed base, 'the dispossessing and nationalising state in action'. That was particularly the case in 1982, when Michael Heseltine, then Environment Secretary, refused to countenance the transfer of Land's End, (a notable coastal landscape at the extreme south-west tip of England) to the National Trust in favour of 'private' ownership. Land's End is now a commercial theme park, having changed hands more than once. Heseltine's more zealous successor, Nicholas Ridley, is said even to have advocated the Trust's privatisation.[8] More secure in its centenary, the occasion has seen a crop of publications, ranging from the celebratory[9] 'o the critically supportive[10] to the frankly hostile.[11]

Celebration of past achievement and condemnation of past failings are important, but neither should be at the expense of analysis of significant changes underway in the Trust's own definitions of heritage and its management. Three interconnected currents of renewal may be identified.

The first is a redefinition of heritage characterised by an emerging eclecticism and a proclaimed emphasis on local distinctiveness. Second, organisational greening is manifest in efforts not only to minimise external environmental impacts but to assist the preservation of natural beauty and historic interest outside Trust properties as well as within them. Third, a new interpretation of preservation 'for the Nation' is reflected in a growing commitment to social responsibility which has expanded notions of equality of opportunity from the Trust's early concern for the needs of disabled people to a new (though still

5. R. Hewison, *The Heritage Industry: Britain in a climate of decline*, London: Methuen, 1987, p.54.

6. R. Samuel, *Theatres of Memory*, London: Verso, 1995.

7. See, for example, R. Samuel, 'Theme Parks - why not?' *Independent on Sunday* 12 February 1995, p. 23 and P. Wright, 'Heritage clubs slug it out' *Guardian* 4 February 1995, p.29.

8. P. Wright, 'Faulty Towers' *Guardian* 12 January 1995, Suppl. pp.2-3.

9. D.J. Jenkins & P James, *From Acorn to Oak Tree: The Growth of the National Trust 1895-1994*, London: Macmillan, 1994. Also M. Waterson, *The National Trust: The First Hundred Years*, London: BBC and The National Trust, 1994.

10. H. Newby, (ed), *The National Trust: The Next Hundred Years*, London: National Trust, 1995.

11. P. Weideger, *Gilding the Acorn - behind the facade of the National Trust*, London: Simon & Schuster, 1995.

embryonic) engagement with the problems of local economies and involvement of local communities, including minority groups. These developments, which arise not from considered policy changes but rather as incremental responses to pressures from inside and outside the Trust, mark the beginning of moves within the Trust to argue from its principles rather than merely for its properties.[12]

12. The National Trust. *Linking People and Place.* London: The National Trust. 1995.

Natural beauty and historic interest; eclecticism and local character

Acquisition policy (applied to gifts and purchases) within the Trust is guided by a series of criteria (Table 3) which reflect and inform institutional priorities. Some of the criteria (such as rarity) are susceptible to formal evaluation, others involve explicitly subjective judgments. For example, 'cultural and aesthetic factors' is 'defined only vaguely, providing an opportunity to take account of the indefinable which is often the most important and difficult element.'[13]

13. The National Trust. *Assessing Acquisitions: guidance notes and acquisition tables.* London: The National Trust. 1994.

That last criterion is now increasingly invoked to legitimise judgments involving a newly elastic interpretation of the other (supposedly objective) criteria. A la Ronde, Mr Straw's House, No. 2 Willow Road and No. 20 Forthlin Road (figure 1) are all recent acquisitions which would have been highly unlikely a decade ago. Perhaps the most significant is Orford Ness (figure 2), the purchase of which has been argued – by senior officers of the Trust as well as outside commentators – to signify an ongoing redefinition of the meaning of heritage within the organisation.

TABLE 3; National Trust Criteria for acquisitions (Source: The National Trust Assessing Acquisitions [13])

Table 3 National Trust Criteria for acquisitions.

1. Historic Interest and Natural Beauty ○ History ○ Archaeology ○ Architecture ○ Contents ○ Designed landscape ○ Landscape ○ Nature conservation ○ Environmental considerations ○ Cultural and aesthetic factors	2. Benefit to the nation ○ Rarity ○ Threat ○ Social and education ○ Access 3. Difficulty of preservation ○ Relevance ○ Experience ○ Inherent problems ○ Consequences

Such acquisitions have been attacked by traditionalist critics as betraying a loss of direction. They are hailed by their supporters as symbolising a new populism and an awareness of the importance of local (as opposed to national) character and significance. Either way they manifest a growing eclecticism in the Trust's definition of heritage which parallels that in society at large.

Figure 1: Forthlin Road: a blue plaque for the Beatles?

Many of the Trust's recent acquisitions, particularly of buildings would have been highly unlikely a decade ago. These include A la Ronde (the shell house built in 1796 in Exmouth, S Devon by two cousins, Jane and Mary Parminter and of value principally for its unique shape and obsessively whimsical internal decoration), Mr Straw's House (built approximately 1900 in Blyth Grove in a suburb of Worksop, Nottinghamshire, typical of thousands of houses of its period and outstanding only in the state of preservation of its contents) and no 2, Willow Road, Hampstead (a modernistic house built in 1938 which contains some valuable surrealist and kinetic art but whose only architectural merit is that it prefigures some of the worst features of 1950s and 1960s British architecture). The most recent built acquisition of the Trust is a mid-terrace council house built in the 1950s in Forthlin Road, Allerton, Liverpool.

The only remarkable feature of this otherwise unremarkable property is its cultural association with The Beatles. The home of Paul McCartney from the age of 13, many of the group's earliest songs (including their first single, Love Me Do) were written there. Like Orford Ness (figure 2) it is heralded by the Trust as a purchase symbolic of its new role at the start of the twenty first century. [The National Trust.

Figure 2: Landscape of war in peace: Orford Ness

Orford Ness consists of five miles of shingle spit on the Suffolk Coast bought by the Trust from the Ministry of Defence. It is of nature conservation significance not only for its rich bird and plant life but also for its geophysical characteristics. However it is highly unlikely that acquisition on these grounds alone would have been considered by the Trust, even after nature conservation became re- recognised by the Trust in the late 1980s (as it had been in its early history) as a legitimate interpretation of the conservation of natural beauty. Indeed, Orford Ness falls within the one-third of the coast identified by the National Trust in its Project Neptune (launched in 1965 and re-launched in 1985) as unworthy of preservation. The site of the first radar experiments in the 1930s and of ballistic trials including dam buster bombs during the 1939-45 War, Orford Ness was subsequently used to test the trigger mechanisms of Britain's nuclear weapons, and to site the enormous aerials of Britain's 'over the horizon' nuclear early warning system. Once made safe (it will not be tidied) it will be managed – and presented to the public – as such, an abandoned landscape of military science and modern warfare, its buildings allowed to decay. The principal significance of Orford Ness is not the heritagisation of the Second World War (nor even of the Cold War, nor that the National Trust should be doing it) but rather that the area is to be managed explicitly as a post-modern derelict cultural landscape.

Ironically, had the political complexion of the UK government at the time of purchase been different the whole site would almost certainly have been bought by the state and made a National Nature Reserve under the guardianship of English Nature. However, the government was, and remains, sufficiently determined to resist anything that can be conceived as state ownership that it endowed purchase by the National Trust through a Countryside Commission grant, the largest in the Commission's history. Happily, though incidentally, Trust ownership is probably a better guarantor than further statutory designation (the site already has SSSI and SAM status; several of its military structures are Listed Buildings and its southernmost tip has been a National Nature Reserve for a number of years) that the complex cultural as well as natural aspects of the site will be reflected in its management and interpretation. Interestingly, the decision to acquire the property seems to have been finely balanced. The Trust's Properties Committee, meeting in January 1992, seems only to have been persuaded to commit itself by aesthetic connections made between the site and the bleak and locally focused poetry of George Crabbe and music of Benjamin Britten which, it was argued, were of equal value to the more stereotyped landscapes hallowed by Wordsworth and the Romantic movement. [Angus Wainwright/ The National Trust.

Artifice and authenticity

This eclecticism is reflected in debates on management policy. Conservation has been defined as 'negotiating the transition from past to future in such a way as to secure the transfer of maximum significance'.[14] In management as in acquisition, questions of value are inescapable, particularly in relation to restoration or repair and to public presentation and interpretation. In archaeological conservation the consensus of opinion has for many years been in favour of preservation in situ. Restoration is often considered an option of last resort and interpretation is best designed in such a way as to be minimally intrusive to the resource itself.

14. A. Holland & K Rawles, 'Values in Conservation', *Ecos* vol.14, no.1, 1993.

However decisions as to what is to be preserved always involve attributions of value. The gradual acclimatisation of the Trust to the notion of industrial archaeology was, arguably, a necessary preliminary to its acquisition of twentieth- century heritage properties. It has, however, been suggested that the Trust 'still has a bit of difficulty in accepting the concept of post-Roman or mediaeval archaeology'[15] possibly because, as a feature of the British landscape, it is so ubiquitous.

15. P. Fowler, 'Archaeology in Trust' in Newby, 1995, *op cit* p.106.

In the Trust's mansion properties choices between restoration or repair present an ongoing and unresolved tension. Sensitive repair is not always cheaper than restoration: however it is the option which most fulfils the basic objective of conservation practice, namely the maintenance of integrity, diversity and choice for succeeding generations. It also avoids the danger of pastiche and the dilemma of selecting the period to which a property should be restored. Ultimately every case must be decided on its merits. At Uppark (Sussex), gutted by fire in 1989, the decision to go for full reconstruction of the fabric and decoration of the building (covered by insurance payments that could not be used for any other purpose) was made within days. Apparently more routine decisions about the replacement of worn furnishings or of 'inappropriate' fittings or structures may have less significant financial implications but raise equally important issues of principle.

There are analogous problems in the biological sphere. Living matter cannot be frozen in time and does not only decay, it also grows, multiplies, colonises and, unmanaged, will transform. Ecological management, in some ways even more than any other curatorship involves an 'arbitrary exercise in cultural memory, is always a question of what to save, what to put back, what to take apart. What moment in the history of human – natural relations becomes the model?'.[16] The most visited elements of the Trust's portfolio, its gardens, present issues of authenticity as complex as any. Any particular garden is likely to have a history of major refits: elements of each can often be found in any existing structure. With the estate, as with its house, management frequently presents a choice between major restoration to a single period in the past and sensitive maintenance of a balance of features from different periods. The Trust has in general tended to favour classic 17th and 18th century designed landscapes (sometimes missing the significance of older relics).

16. A. Wilson, *The Culture of Nature: North American Landscape from Disney to the Exxon Valdez*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1992, p.235.

Questions of 'what' 'why' and 'how' are often inseparable and problematic. In the wider countryside arguments for the preservation of lowland hedgerows and coppice woodland, upland moors and dry stone walls are often accompanied by

the assertion that vernacular landscapes and traditional management techniques encourage diversity in wildlife and favour species that cannot survive elsewhere. Coppice management of mixed broadleaved woodland is one example. This is often assumed to be the most appropriate prescription, combining historical restoration with ecological benefits, despite the lack of local evidence for either. Although coppice was undoubtedly a very widespread practice in lowland woods the evidence is that it was as often ad hoc and sporadic as regular, rotational and controlled. Moreover, recent studies have undermined assumptions about the supposed benefits of coppice to wildlife by demonstrating that floristic and faunal diversity may be more effectively achieved by alternative practices such as good ride and glade management.[17] A better option for many woods may be to work towards mixed high forest (in lowland Britain, a woodland type in much shorter supply than coppice) with wide rides and glades, an option that has significant landscape and amenity advantages over coppice despite its lack of heritage appeal.

Rather different issues arise in the management of the Trust's farmed estate. Choices amongst management options forced by changes in the Common Agricultural Food Policy may have politically and socially far-reaching consequences. New funding mechanisms such as Countryside Stewardship and Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA) payments have helped the Trust to promote innovative landscape management in its lowland estate. In the uplands the problems are less tractable. Sheep grazing on upland estates only survives in much of Britain due to past EC hill farming subsidies. The Trust will soon have to decide whether some areas should (as in some US National Parks) be left to scrub over, abandoned to nature to form a new wilderness heritage very different from the valued cultural landscape which they replace.

The issues are not restricted to aesthetics and ecology: they are political and social. On the one hand it is argued that the Trust should not intervene to prop up marginal farming where the taxpayer is no longer willing to do so: neither subsidies to its tenants nor direct management by contractors (or volunteers) will in any case sustain the traditional way of life which the Trust has hitherto valued so highly. Landscapes and cultures are dynamic entities and cannot be frozen in time. The contrary argument is that major landscape changes are inevitable outside the Trust's estate: 'museum farming' within it is therefore legitimate and necessary in order to preserve analogues of valued landscapes (of the nineteenth century and of mid-twentieth century subsidised agriculture) which, once gone, will be impossible to replace.

In coastal wetlands, global warming may have even more inexorable consequences than the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy. The maintenance of sea walls merely to secure inland grazing is inordinately expensive. One alternative is managed retreat. Northey Island in Essex (a Trust-owned National Nature Reserve) is one site where the sea wall has been breached and the sea admitted. The consequence is a new landscape which bears little relation to any past historic interest (though the area would have been salt-marsh and mud-flat in Roman times) and which (according to some views) possesses little natural beauty. It is, nevertheless, a de facto aspect of heritage which has to be managed. A problematic but little explored issue is that although past natural landscapes are valued elements of heritage we have little idea of

17. G.F. Peterken, 'Ecological Issues in the Management of Woodland Nature Reserves' in I F Spellerberg, F B Goldsmith & M G Morris, (eds) *The Scientific Management of Temperate Communities for Conservation*, 31st Symposium of the British Ecological Society, Southampton, 1989, Oxford: Blackwell Scientific, for the British Ecological Society, 1991, pp.245-272.

what future natural landscapes might be like but such landscapes are continually being created, if not by design then by default.

Preservation; beyond heritage islands.

Reappraisal of its responsibilities is not limited to the Trust's upland and coastal estate. A new ecological and social consciousness has prompted suggestions that the Trust has only 'recently begun to understand the full meaning of the responsibility to "permanently preserve"'.[18] Heritage does not exist in a vacuum, shielded from external influences; it has meaning only in a particular social context and can only be as secure as the external context permits. Heritage islands cannot be protected 'in perpetuity' in splendid isolation.

18. R. Jarman, 'Sustainable Rural Life', *Rural Voice*, January 1994, p.7.

There is a growing acceptance within the Trust of the need to minimise the environmental impact of its own activities. Sewage has been one focus of an environmental audit of practices at all Trust properties and practices. As a consequence 'tertiary treatment' systems exist or are being installed at Dudmaston (Shropshire), Killerton (Devon), Trerice (Cornwall), Holnicote (W Somerset) and Mottisfont (Hampshire), the last named resulting in discharges to the River Test well below the limits prescribed by the National Rivers Authority. A pioneering Dry Compost toilet system has been installed at the Old Ebworth Centre, near Stroud.

Energy is another focus. Conservation measures have been introduced at most properties. New 'soft' energy installations range from a small-scale wind, battery and diesel generator package for a farm on Exmoor to proposals to introduce hydroelectric generation to the River Wandle at Morden Hall Park in the London Borough of Merton, where there were once 100 water wheels in operation. The Trust's Wessex Region has a pilot energy management project run in conjunction with the Bristol Energy Centre. At Aberdulais Falls (West Glamorgan) water power has been used for at least four centuries, initially for copper smelting. A new water wheel is part of a generating system which not only makes the property self-sufficient in energy but provides income through electricity sales to the National Grid. At Styal near Manchester, effluent and energy problems have been tackled together by the installation of the Trust's first anaerobic digester to treat slurry and silage wastes. The products are methane gas which heats the farmhouse and dairy, a liquid fertiliser which is sprayed directly on adjacent agricultural land, and a fibre which is further composted as a horticultural mulch and growing medium.

A particular problem for the Trust in effecting environmental reforms is that most of its farmland, in over 1,200 farms, is tenanted. As tenancies are renegotiated the Trust now generally insists on conservation clauses requiring environmentally friendly farming practices. These are often encouraged by positive incentives including reduced rents. Agreements cover such areas as the avoidance of fertilisers and pesticides and reduced stocking densities, the maintenance of landscape and wildlife features such as hedgerows, copses, ponds and archaeological features, and ecologically sound cultivation techniques such as crop-free field margins and conservation headlands. To date only 12% of Trust farmland is covered by such 'conservation clauses', involving some 250 tenant farmers; only five of these farm organically. However the Trust has made considerable investment in improving standards of property management,

including energy conservation, sewage treatment, control of farm effluent and water conservation.

Environmental consciousness also implies action beyond the property confines. Restrictive covenants, whereby an owner conveys to the Trust not the title to the land but rather a legal interest which prevents major alteration of a structure or landscape, are a familiar means whereby the Trust is able to secure protection of areas surrounding its own properties. Landscape agreements, by contrast, are a more recent device whereby the Trust can exercise some influence on land to which it has neither title nor legal interest. These have been used to good effect, at Stowe in Buckinghamshire where the Trust has been able to protect the extensive eighteenth-century designed landscape of which its own 230 ha holding is a part. Water catchment planning and catchment management plans are another area in which the Trust has been able to emulate other conservation bodies in pioneering management agreements with local landowners. Examples are Bransdale, an 800 ha estate on the North York Moors and Sherbourne, a 1,700 ha estate in the valley of the River Windrush in Gloucestershire. In both areas management agreements with tenant farmers are in place to manage the whole catchment with integrated conservation objectives very much to the fore.

Local economies and communities

An integrated approach to heritage management must include the social as well as the physical and biological environment. The nature of the Trust's rural estate is such that much of it lies in precisely those areas that have been hardest hit by gentrification of the countryside and where whole villages may consist of second homes and holiday cottages. The great majority of the Trust's smaller houses are let, most as permanent dwellings. At Holnicote, in Somerset, the Trust has attempted at least to abate the pace of rural decline by making housing stock available at low cost to local people. In its Ysbyty Estate in North Wales in addition to low rents on farm cottages the Trust has gone further, to provide grants for farm diversification and aid for small local industries.[19]

19. Proclaimed concern may prove contentious however. One of the major arguments advanced by the Trust executive for its refusal to implement a majority vote at its 1994 Annual General Meeting in favour of a ban on stag hunting was the declared significance of stag hunting in the local economy of the Quantocks

Much property maintenance work is already routinely contracted out: major restoration projects have done a great deal to revive disappearing skills in the building and allied trades. The re-establishment of traditional management practices such as reed cutting is often the best way of managing an ecosystem for wildlife. It may also produce a saleable product (although there are technical problems with the suitability of much British reed for thatch) and in addition help to revive traditional skills and vernacular crafts which have their own intrinsic appeal to visitors. The Trust could doubtless do more, however. One of the problems of managing conservation woodlands – using coppice or other techniques – is the lack of markets or processing facilities for small section timber. The Trust's influence could enable it to assist the development and marketing of wood products, perhaps on a cooperative basis with other conservation bodies.

The Trust's retail outlets now include a number of town centre shops as well as the ubiquitous tea room and souvenir shops at heritage sites. A recent *Which* magazine survey found that whilst 92% of the Trust's membership thought it did 'a good job' and 86% felt it 'offers value for money',there was disappointment that 'the shops all sold the same things'. The report concluded: 'the well

organised commercial arm of National Trust Enterprises brings a professional gloss to the shops and restaurants ... [but] NT should be aware of the dangers of uniformity and sameness'.[20] A more vigorous policy of stocking locally produced goods including craft and art works where these are relevant to the local area could both diversify and increase the appeal of merchandise and help to generate employment in the local community, not merely for those crafts and craftspeople that were traditionally maintained by the big estates but in new service occupations and small-scale manufacturing.

All these possibilities put heritage at the centre of important questions concerning the relation between products, processes and people, both as consumers and producers. The Trust is also beginning to accept that it needs to do more to involve local people in the management of sites. Volunteer action is a strong and established feature of British heritage conservation and is particularly so within the National Trust where volunteers work both in built properties (for example as room stewards, in tea rooms and retail outlets) and also on estate management and wardening of countryside and wildlife sites. This currently involves some 30,000 people, amounting to over 1.7m hours per annum, equivalent to a thousand full-time staff working a 35 hour week.[21] However, volunteer labour is not the same as full participation in site management which includes the formation of management policy as well as its implementation. The Trust has a long tradition of (often uncomfortable) arrangements with local management committees, 'the Trust's earliest system of management'.[22] Sometimes they have proved an embarrassment, seeming more concerned to protect their local amenities against the intrusions of the outside world than to facilitate access. In other cases however they could provide the basis for genuine community involvement.

Sutton House provides one example where this has already happened. Built in the 1500s but with substantial additions and acquired by the Trust in 1938, Sutton House is a Grade II* listed building of considerable architectural merit, equal to some of the best in the Trust's possession. Unlike most of them, however, it lies in one of the busiest working class areas of inner East London. After being vacated by a series of tenants it was neglected and was effectively abandoned by the Trust. In the mid 1980s it became the target of a vigorous – and successful – local campaign to save the property: the Trust was criticised for betraying the principles of its founders by ignoring the needs of urban dwellers (and neglecting its urban properties) in favour of the countryside and the country house. Sutton House has now been repaired and restored to a high standard and is managed by an elected local management committee as a community resource, providing a home for adult educational classes and for youth activities including the National Trust Youth Theatre. One of several recent urban initiatives, Sutton House is now frequently cited by the Trust as evidence of its renewed sense of social purpose.

That social purpose or, at least, awareness, is also beginning to be manifest in the Trust's interpretive practice. The Roman fort of Aballava on Hadrian's Wall near Carlisle was garrisoned in the third century AD by a black Roman division from North Africa. Black faces now feature amongst the faces of Roman soldiers portrayed in the displays at Housteads, attesting to the fact that 'there were Africans in Britain before the English came here'.[23]

20. The National Trust and English Heritage. Which, September 1994. pp.31-36.

21. The National Trust. *Annual Report and Accounts 1994/5*. London: The National Trust, 1995.

22. Waterson, op. cit. p.244.

23. P. Fryer, *Staying Power: the history of black people in Britain*. London: Pluto Press, 1989, p.220.

Social analysis is an even more contentious element of interpretation than historical accuracy or presentational authenticity, but the historic production of heritage, economic and social, is at least as important and accessible a subject for analysis as its contemporary cultural consumption. Stately homes, in particular, are deserving vehicles for an economic as well as a social history which goes beyond the confines of the estate and the daily lives of 'upstairs and downstairs'. Surplus value and sewage are economic and ecological links between heritage and the environment, past and present which enrich interpretation: at some properties plantation slavery now receives more explicit acknowledgement as the economic foundation for the source of wealth than grudging euphemisms such as 'enterprises in the Caribbean' which can still be found in some property guidebooks.[24] At Penrhyn Castle in North Wales the video at least describes the ghastly conditions (and famous strike) of workers in the quarries whence the wealth to build the castle was derived. At Erddig in North Wales (a property where long before the Trust's acquisition a special relationship existed not just with the servants but also with the local community) the waste tips of the National Coal Board provide a landscape complement to the mining subsidence and structural damage to the house. Both tips and subsidence are testaments to the changing social and economic circumstances which led to the Trust's acquisition.

24. See J. Agyeman, 'Environment, heritage and multiculturalism', *Interpretation* vol.1, no.1, May 1995, pp.336-8.

There are great opportunities here. Interpretive honesty based on a more inclusive social and historic compass may provide links between different cultures and classes and help to generate a greater sense of ownership amongst groups who are considerably under-represented amongst the Trust's visiting public. The Young National Trust Theatre (figure 4) represents one such initiative. Of all heritage organisations the Trust is potentially in one of the best positions to engage in narratives, whether historical or ecological that are not exclusive but rather sufficiently broad in their heritage potential to enable much wider and disparate constituencies to 'selectively possess some of it as "theirs"'.[25]

25. P. Fowler, 'The Nature of the Times Deceas'd', *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, vol.1, no.1, 1994, pp.6-17.

Partnership and politics

Related to the above is the degree to which the Trust is beginning to work in partnership with others to pursue changes in social and political policy beyond the confines of its properties. The Trust's own first leaflet declared its preparedness to work '... in conjunction with kindred societies ...' and '... to stimulate and promote legislation on matters cognate to its aims and intentions'.[26] It was at that time quite clear that its remit allowed it to campaign on issues affecting landscape and heritage which it did not (then, at least) own, and it did so, on issues which included the state of Stonehenge, advertising in the countryside and the designation of the Lake District as a national park. Subsequently, as the Trust grew in size and influence it became more aloof; political campaigning and coordination with other bodies was perceived as a matter for individual lobbying on the part of the Trust's senior officers. The role of its membership was largely a passive one. Only rarely has the Trust's executive been challenged. This too is slowly changing, however; road building and hunting are issues which have brought the Trust out of its narrow focus on property management and site- based interpretation into the wider political arena.

26. P. Lowe & J. Goyder, *Environmental Groups in Politics*, London: Allen & Unwin, 1983, p.138.

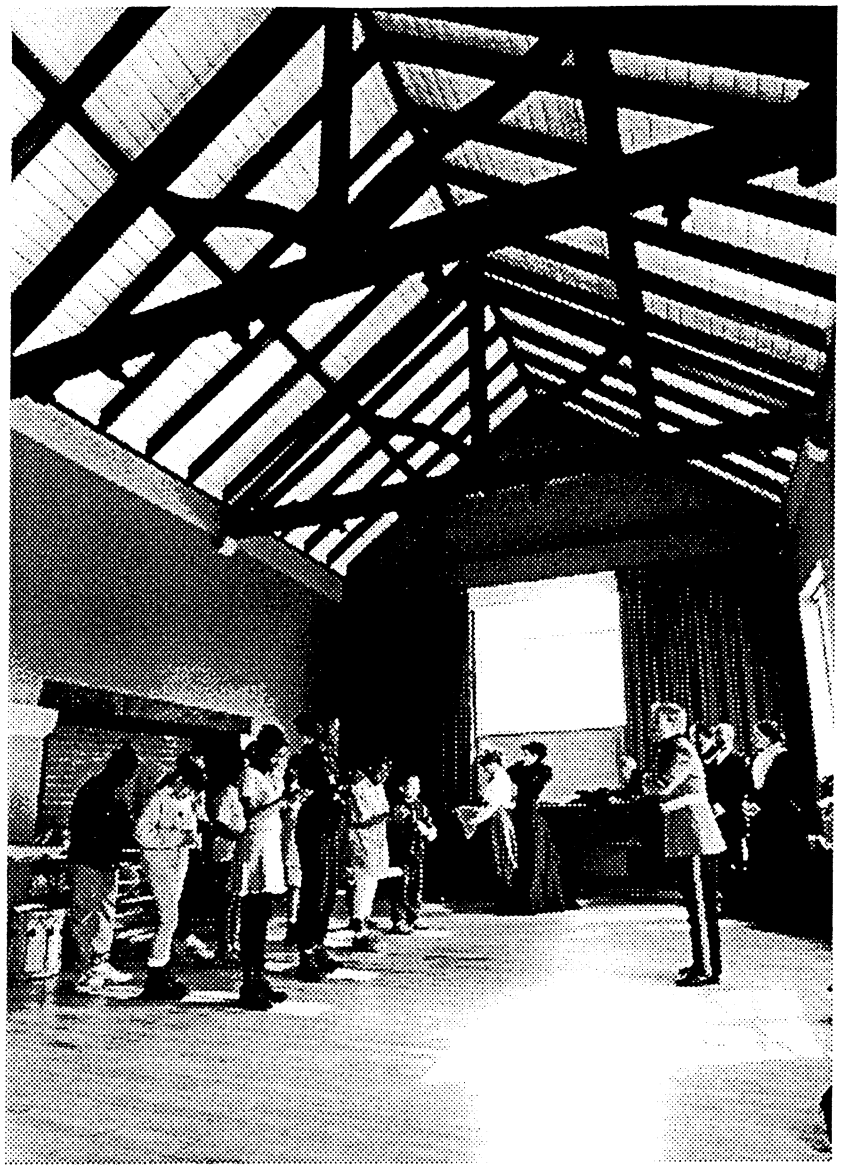

Figure 3: A Candleford on slavery? The Young National Trust Theatre.

The Young National Trust Youth Theatre in rehearsal. The YNTT was established in 1977 as a touring theatre-in-education group. Its history-based productions involve school children in interactive drama within Trust properties. Its centenary production in 1995, For Any Field, a dramatisation of the formation of the Trust in 1895, asked "Is the price of protecting the landscape – the disappearance of jobs that new industry would bring – too high to pay? Is country life worth preserving for the few, while the many continue to live in rural slums? Do landowners have the right to enclose common land, and do local people have the right to prevent them?" Its 1996 production, Flowers and Slaves examines the way that the public euphoria surrounding the wedding of Queen Victoria to Prince Albert in 1840 masks 'some deep and widening divisions in British society.'

Albert may have agreed to play consort to Victoria's Queen, but the vast majority of women gave up everything to their husbands when they said "I do". And while ordinary working men had the upper hand in an unequal partnership at home, they had few legal rights outside it - no vote, no representation, a legal and constitutional system which favoured the wealthy at the expense of the poor. As the Victorian age dawned on Great Britain, the most powerful imperial nation on earth, there was a growing realisation that the industrial revolution which introduced factories, railways and the penny post, had not brought about a better world for the men, women and children who worked in those factories and built those railways ...' [Bill Cooper/ The Young National Trust Youth Theatre.

At Hindhead Common (the Trust's first 'countryside' property) the Trust has succeeded in pressuring the Department of Transport to put its widened A3 road in a tunnel. A higher profile site is Stonehenge, where together with English Heritage, the Trust has challenged the Department of Transport's plans for upgrading the A303 main road and proposed instead a tunnel which would be less intrusive to the site and less damaging to Trust property. Another is Golden Cap, a 900 ha estate along 14 km of coast in West Dorset, a rich historic landscape with much archaeology and great natural (and geological) interest) where the Trust has declared it may seek to annul the Department of Transport's compulsory purchase order for a new A35 Morecombelake bypass road. In both cases the Trust has threatened to invoke its statutory right to refer the issue to Parliament.

A more local vignette of transport conflicts is Prior Park Gardens, Bath. Prior Park is a recent gift to the Trust which has opened it to the public using a strategy (initially resisted by the Bath City Council and then grudgingly permitted on a two-year trial) of access by public transport. No car park is provided (there is no available flat ground, on site or close by), indeed, additional parking restrictions have been implemented in nearby (non-Trust owned) roads. Instead, on production of a bus or train ticket every visitor will receive £1 (off the site entrance fee, or off souvenirs or a cream tea purchased in Bath). As part of the deal with the Council, the Trust is also to pay for a Sunday bus service from the city centre when there is no commercial service, and partly to fund the costs of a traffic warden.[27]

27. For a perspective on the changing relationship between the Trust and the motor car, see M. Liniado, *Car Culture and Countryside Change*, Cirencester: National Trust, 1996. Also *The National Trust Magazine*, no.78 Summer 1996

Conclusion: stewardship, sustainability and society

This essay has sought to take The National Trust as a case study of changing definitions and management of heritage within a specific organisational context. None of the issues addressed are peculiar to the Trust. They are, ultimately, elements of a wider debate about the relations between past and present, preservation and change, sustainable stewardship and social responsibility. Heritage does not just exist as a passive assemblage of artefacts, nature or landscapes lacking in wider environmental and social connections or political content for which stewardship equates merely with preservation. Heritage is a dynamic category whose definition and boundaries manifest the moving resolution of often conflicting social and cultural forces.

Heritage is about process as well as product. Sustainable stewardship means that ecologically sound disposal of sewage is as important a focus of management as the preservation of the fabric of the mansion from which it comes. Interpreting the origins of the wealth that financed the building of a stately home is as important as interpreting its structure and the chattels it houses. Preservation of historic interest and natural beauty in perpetuity cannot be achieved solely though ownership for the Nation; it also requires commitment by people.

The Trust may be conservative, establishment, a vehicle for the celebration of national landscape, history, heritage, values. Its curatorship, at least of country houses, may be still indicted for its perpetuation of 'timeless time'. It would be wrong to see developments summarised in this essay as the outcome of considered debate and conscious policy decisions, as representing the Trust in transformation. Acquisitions have been due as much to chance as to design (Mr

Straw's House was a legacy; the government funded the purchase of Orford Ness to prevent it being public land). Management decisions are often driven by expediency (the initial omission of a car park from the Trust's plans for Prior Park was because there was no place for one; renewal at Sutton House was the Trust's reaction to local outcry at its abandonment). Some of the most exciting initiatives are the consequence of the far-sighted single-mindedness of individuals.

At the same time it would be equally wrong to characterise the National Trust as irredeemably unconnected with wider environmental and social issues or with the needs of local communities and disadvantaged groups. The Trust's Centenary has stimulated a timely exploration of the Trust's roots and future purpose. Organisationally this has begun to create a new and challenging (though still constrained) intellectual space and institutional freedom. This brings dangers as well as opportunities. The very size of the Trust means that change is likely to be incremental, as new properties are acquired or new management objectives defined; increased devolution of responsibility and policy-making mean that innovation is likely to be regional and sectoral. The Trust's governing structure is itself a check against rapid changes in politics and policy which complements the inevitable conservatism of conservation based on inalienable ownership 'in perpetuity'. Low participation rates, however, mean that the dangers of being moved too rapidly on single issues may prove to be as great as those of over-caution in responding to new needs and opportunities.

The Trust's future will inevitably demonstrate a tension between conservatism and change. That the Trust has survived so long is an achievement. That it has become so strong is remarkable. The Trust enters its second century with a major portfolio of heritage property and enormous popular support and potential influence. In technical terms its management, both of built and natural properties, is of high quality. If the first century of the Trust's history may be characterised, crudely, as preserving the status quo, the developments outlined in this essay mark the beginning of a second that will increasingly require engagement with change. Tomorrow's challenge for the Trust is its management of the relation between heritage and the wider world.

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