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Elizabeth Wright & Matt Law

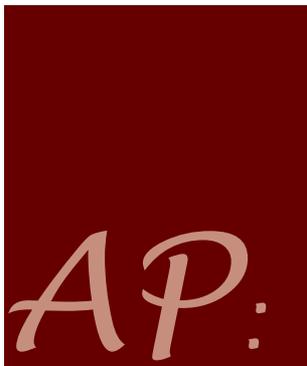
AP:

Online Journal in Public Archaeology

*The How and Why of
Archaeology Outreach*



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Back to the Future?

Presenting archaeology at the Green Man Festival

Matt LAW

Cardiff University and Bath Spa University

Ffion REYNOLDS

Jacqui MULVILLE

Cardiff University

Abstract

In the summer of 2011, Cardiff Osteoarchaeology Research Group was invited to present a number of archaeological engagement activities at the Green Man music festival as part of the Einstein's Garden science learning area. The project, called Back to the Future?: Animals and archaeology in Einstein's Garden comprised a number of activities, designed to cater for a wide range of ages as the festival audience typically includes young people and families. Over four days more than 2000 people visited the stall. This paper will briefly outline the activities presented, and will reflect on the challenges posed by outreach at a music festival, in particular how to hook the main festival demographic, and how to evaluate success.

Keywords

Outreach, Public Osteoarchaeology, Cardiff, Music Festivals

Introduction

Heritage public engagement often takes the form of living history events and re-enactment with costumed interpreters offering an immersive experience (e.g. Corbishley 2011, 29-37), or museum education programmes, although archaeologists themselves tend to shy away from participating in this kind of event. *Back to the Future?* used archaeologists with a scientific background and those with more

theoretical research interests as well as artists to create unexpected and provocative engagement in the context of a music festival.

This creative public engagement provides an opportunity to demonstrate how archaeology is relevant to modern lives, and how archaeological thought can bring clarity to modern issues. Much of our research work has been concerned with the past relationships between people and animals - as food, as sources of raw materials, and as visible components of the human environment. Exploring the ways in which people used and interacted with animals in the past provides a medium to discuss the ethics and sustainability of modern-day resource exploitation, without privileging the Western worldview over all others. Using this approach the engagement activities link science with art and religion, maximising their potential accessibility.

In the summer of 2011, Cardiff Osteoarchaeology Research Group (CORG) participated in the Einstein's Garden science learning area at the Green Man Festival, a medium-sized music festival held at Glanusk Park close to the town of Crickhowell in south-east Wales. CORG's participation was part of Art and Humanities Research Council (AHRC)-funded Student Led Initiative called PEACE (Postgraduate Environmental Archaeology and Community Engagement), and was preceded by a day of training and activity development at Cardiff University (see below). Some of these activities were then trialled at the festival, along with the *Future Animals* workshop, which was developed by JM and artist Paul Evans with funding from Beacons for Wales. This looked at how humans have changed animals for particular purposes through selective breeding, inviting participants to design future useful animals and debate the ethics of selective breeding.

Background

On December 1st, 2010 a workshop on community engagement for postgraduates studying environmental archaeology, called PEACE, was held at Cardiff University. The workshop was established using funding awarded to ML from the AHRC as part of the Student-Led Initiatives in public engagement scheme, and offered students a chance to learn about heritage science communication and an

opportunity to unpick some of their own research and present it in a style suitable for non-specialists. At the event, speakers from the National Museum of Wales, Techniquest, Cardiff University, and Bristol Young Archaeologists Club spoke about how they have taken their research outside of the academic realm, outlining key learning outcomes from the experience, and offering practical advice on identifying and engaging with new audiences. In the afternoon, and with help from the speakers, participants worked in groups to design outreach activities based on aspects of their research and targeted at specific age groups. These were subsequently compiled as a Creative Commons-licensed online resource (Mulville & Law 2013).

PEACE built on JM's experiences from a project called '*Future Animals: friend or food?*' which was supported by funding from Beacons for Wales and which ran from 2009 to 2010. This gave young people an insight into artificial selection - a key aspect of Charles Darwin's research into the origin of species by natural selection (a Charles Darwin exhibition was on display at National Museum of Wales at the same time as the project). Working with the artist Paul Evans and geneticist Professor Mike Bruford as well as the National Museum of Wales and Techniquest, workshops were held with local schools. At these, students learned about selective breeding before being invited to imagine (and draw) future improvements to animals. In addition to offering hands-on creative challenges and experience, the workshops provided a forum for ethical debate about our past, present and future relationship with animals, and the responsibilities that humans face as agents of biological change. Young people were also offered the chance to participate directly in the process of designing a museum exhibition, which was hosted at National Museum of Wales in Cardiff.

The Festival

The Green Man Festival took place in Glanusk Park near Crickhowell in Powys (south-east Wales) across 19th – 21st August 2011. It is an annual, independent festival which has run since 2003, with a capacity of 20 000, hosting music stages, a cinema, a literature tent, as well as a healing area and the Einstein's Garden science

learning area. The festival abounds with references to prehistoric ritual – it is opened with a ceremony by druids, and climaxes with the burning of the Green Man, a giant antlered wooden effigy. Although festival attendees tend to age from mid teens to early forties, with an anecdotal modal age around late twenties to mid thirties, it is a very family-friendly festival, with a quiet family camping area and childrens' activity area.

Einstein's Garden is a science exploration and learning area which uses art, entertainment and participation to explore science and nature in ways that are unexpected and fun. It is set within the walled garden of the Glanusk Park estate, adjacent to the main festival stage, the Mountain Stage. It is curated by Ellen Dowell, and in 2011 featured science-themed music and comedy on a small solar-powered stage, as well as science busking and 14 science-themed stalls, each managed independently, generally by universities. These included the Egg and Sperm Race (about reproductive biology) and a knitted Periodic Table. Einstein's Garden is open from 10am to 8pm on the Friday, Saturday and Sunday of the festival.

The Festival takes place in a scenic and archaeologically-rich landscape. Einstein's Garden itself is sited within the gardens of the former stately home at Glanusk Park, which was demolished following a fire in the 1950s. Elsewhere on the park, sadly inaccessible to festival visitors, stands the 4.5 m high Fish Stone, a Bronze Age standing stone dressed to look like a fish. To the north and east of Glanusk Park the view is dominated by hills carved by a cirque basin and the distinctive Crug Hywel hillfort. Within a few miles of the Park are the remains of Gwernvale Neolithic chambered tomb in front of the Manor Hotel on the A40 towards Crickhowell (Britnell 1984), as well as another, Garn Coch Cairn near Llangattock to the south-east of Glanusk park. There is a less visible hillfort called Penmyarth camp in the woods above the fish stone, and a Roman camp north of that at Pen y Gaer. There are also a number of round barrows and cairns in the local landscape, and remains of motte and bailey castles in Crickhowell and at Maes Celyn (Law & Lane 2011). This wealth of archaeological monuments visible in the landscape provided a context for broader discussion about life in the past.

The Activities

Einstein's Garden places a great deal of emphasis on sustainable practices, and so we decided to mirror this in our activities, especially in light of CORG's interests in relationships between humans and animals in the past. The case that archaeology can inform future sustainable practice is being increasingly developed (Cooper and Isandahl 2014; Guttman-Bond 2010), and we believe that public engagement events provide important opportunities to explore this. *Back to the Future?* was designed to give Green Man festival attendees an opportunity to learn about archaeology and the relationship between people, animals and their environment in the past.

The message of the *Back to the Future?* was that archaeology is both interesting and relevant to our lives; the way we lived in the past affects and informs how we live today and can stimulate thought about our potential futures. We presented a range of scripted archaeological themed science, art and nature based activities – which included '*Future Animals*'. Whereas all of our other activities ran as drop-in activities, *Future Animals* was only run at set times. This allowed a slightly more structured approach to be taken. JM began each session with a discussion of selective breeding, contrasting casts of the skulls of various dog breeds ranging from labradors and poodles to French bulldogs and Pekingese with those of their ancestor, a wolf, and a domestic cat (an animal whose skull is little changed by human selection). As the activity proceeded, discussion ensued about the ethics of this selective breeding, in particular how it might disadvantage the animal.

Another activity, 'How old are your teeth?', asked archaeologists to guess the age of visiting children using the eruption of their permanent teeth (e.g. Hillson 1996, Table 5.1), while 'Boys vs. Girls' demonstrated how archaeologists can tell whether a human skeleton is male or female (e.g. White & Folkens 2005, 385-98). For 'Who am I Wearing?', visitors and archaeologists were dressed in typical clothes of different periods, and the visitors were asked to guess which animals were used in the costumes (Best *et al.* 2013) (Fig 1). Pictures of Ötzi the ice man were also used to demonstrate how useful animal skins have been for clothing (Best 2013). Our emphasis through this activity was showing that past societies have tended to maximise their use of available resources, minimising waste.



Figure 1: 'Who am I wearing?' An example of the costumes.

Visitors also had the opportunity to practice excavating finds from a sandpit while stall staff explained how archaeologists work (Jones 2013). Over the four days our team of twelve, comprising postgraduate students and academic staff, archaeologists from the National Museum Wales and Cadw, and the artist Paul Evans, spoke to hundreds of people in depth each day.

People pegged key events, cultural ('when was the first music festival?') and technological (the first sword?), onto the 'Washing Line of Time' (Fig 2), and visitors discussed domestication, zooarchaeology and the ethics of animal breeding and numerous participants created 'future animals', which we then displayed (Fig 3). As part of our discussion of the use and reuse of animal materials over time, we led workshops recycling the festival waste Tetra Paks into attractive 'future' purses.



Figure 2. The 'Washing line of time'.



Figure 3. 'Future Animals' drawn by participants.

The archaeologically rich landscape setting of the site was explored in resources to help festival attendees learn about the archaeology of the festival site and local area, both in the form of posters at our stall and an online page (Law & Lane 2011) as well as an augmented reality resource for smartphone users created within the application Layar (<http://www.layar.com/layers/greenmanarchaeology/>). Finally, we established a Twitter account to support our work at the festival.

Challenges

One of the first challenges we faced was finding activities which would appeal to a wide range of potential visitors, from children through teenagers to adults. The Future Animals activity worked well with family groups, as it was a managed workshop led by Paul Evans and JM which was scheduled to run in nine hour-long sessions over three days. Our sandpit-based *What is an archaeologist?* activity was withdrawn after the first day, however, as it appeared to have become an unofficial crèche facility (it is also worth noting that sandpits are very heavy things to carry to and from an event!). The high number of visitors, and our decision not to assign evaluation and responsibilities to a dedicated individual meant that it was not possible to collect detailed visitor feedback.

Technology proved to be another issue. The lack of mains electricity meant that keeping phones charged to engage via social media was difficult (although another tent at Einstein's Garden offered the chance to charge phones using pedal power). More seriously, mobile phone signal was patchy at the festival site, with visitors reporting that they couldn't access the Layar app. In practice, the Twitter account was little used during the festival

Moving on – Guerilla Archaeology

Our experiences at Green Man inspired us to develop our festival engagement programme further, launching a larger collective called Guerilla Archaeology, which travelled to four music festivals in 2012 (Reynolds *et al.* in prep), as well as taking activities to the

Queen's Arcade shopping centre in Cardiff as part of the Made in Roath festival. The name Guerilla Archaeology was chosen to be more provocative, and to encourage more visitors to come to the tent. It was also intended to give an improved sense of identity to the collective. The group's festival work is now supported with enhanced social media in the form of linked posts to particular events, guest posts on thematic subjects, and weekly updates which do not directly relate to engagement events to keep audiences engaged digitally. Photographs from events are also posted to a flickr account and cards passed out at events to encourage digital engagement. A fresh theme is introduced on a yearly basis to encourage continued interest (for 2012 the theme of shamanism was explored under the heading *Shamanic Street Preachers*, and for 2013 archaeoastronomy under the heading *Lunatics and Sun Worshippers*).

Conclusions

Back to the Future? provided a means for creative archaeological engagement with an audience who were not anticipating learning about the past, and some of whom may not have been reached by traditional modes of engagement. A drawback is that the activities took place during a ticketed event – however, the same mode of engagement can be applied to free music festivals and other public arenas such as Queen's Arcade in Cardiff.

Merriman (2004, 85) described museums as "mass media of the long term", while they don't have the large simultaneous audience of television or radio, they do have large numbers of visitors over longer periods of time. Heritage engagement at events like music festivals could be described as mass media of the medium term. Over 2000 people visited the stall, and in the two successive years, the programme has been developed to travel to other festivals and events. By encouraging archaeologists to don costumes and engage in entertaining ways, the project provokes conversations not only about the past, but how the past can inform humanity's role in the modern world.

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Editors:

Jaime Almansa Sánchez
Elena Papagiannopoulou
Email: almansasanchez@gmail.com

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