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SWORDS INTO PLOUGHSHARES: DEFENCE HERITAGE TOURISM AS THE  
PEACEFUL USES OF THE ARTEFACTS OF WAR

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ABSTRACT

Historic heritage has proved to be one of international tourism's most important primary resources. Such heritage contains an inevitable ideological component. The artefacts and place associations of war are one set of such resources which exercise a growing fascination and attraction for tourist visits. This defence heritage tourism may in practice be a vehicle for a variety of ideological ideas, including, despite the seeming contradiction, international peace and understanding. The distinctive characteristics of the resource, the variety of visitor motives, and the dominant ideologies in presentation will be examined, using North-West European examples. This in turn may lead to the design of policies to use tourism as an instrument for the harnessing of the long history of human conflict as a force for international understanding.

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INTRODUCTION

If peace is more than the absence of war but is "a virtue, a state of mind, a disposition for benevolence" (6), shaped through definitions and images of "us" and "them", then the formation and reinforcement of such segregatory definitions and mental images assumes a crucial importance. No major human activity is so centrally concerned with the interaction between such large numbers of peoples of different cultural background on a world-wide scale as tourism and no industry is so dependent upon the creation, and promotion of popular place images. The responsibilities of tourism in the shaping of predispositions for peaceful understanding is therefore enormous and obvious.

The argument of this paper however is that the exercise of such a role by the tourism industry is neither inevitable nor indeed very likely. On the contrary a large and growing part of this industry is based on exploiting the experience and artefacts of war and is dependent upon the projection and maintenance of popular marketable images that are far from the "benevolence" from which understanding is supposed to emerge. The nature of such "defence tourism" must first be identified and its scale and importance within tourism appreciated. Then the various ideologies that, consciously or not, underlie such tourism, and are encouraged by it, need to be recognised. Only then can the possibilities of using the long history of human conflict in the service of peace be realised through tourism.

#### IMPORTANCE OF DEFENCE HERITAGE TOURISM

Tourism needs primary resources, i.e. facilities or attributes of an area that attract visitors to it.(1) Heritage as a tourist resource is the creation of a marketable product from a selected set of historical associations and relict artefacts as interpreted and promoted for a targeted consumer group. Defence heritage tourism is the specific use of past military works, equipment, and spaces where military events have occurred as a primary heritage resource in tourism.

The seemingly simple yet fundamental questions about the nature and size of defence heritage tourism cannot be directly answered from the mass of statistics available on tourism. The main difficulty is that heritage consumers can only be defined by motivation at the point of consumption and thus includes a wide variety of types of user, whether tourist or non-tourist, combining a wide variety of heritage or non-heritage experiences within the trip at any one time. Defence heritage tourism, like tourism as a whole, is therefore not a definable activity that can be isolated and measured in simple terms. It is however possible to make two assertions. First that heritage is the most important motive for foreign tourism and among the most important for domestic tourism and day excursionism. This can be supported by a number of national studies (such as 5, and 11) by comparative studies of the content of promoted place images in tourism (8, 12) and by studies of the behaviour patterns of visitors.(15) Secondly within such heritage tourism defence heritage plays a dominant role. This assertion is more difficult to quantify but a qualitative survey of the content of museums, the types of conserved buildings, the nature of the historical events and personalities, and the selection of historical narrative, used in the shaping of the heritage product, more often than not, reveals a more than proportionate presence of war.

A step further is to consider not merely the overall size of the defence heritage market but its nature, seeking answers to the question, "what sort of person is the defence heritage tourist?" The evidence is again piecemeal but the visitor to heritage sites can be generalised as being middle aged, child-free and above average income and education.(15) The relative importance of heritage as a motive appears to increase with distance and therefore the visitor is likely to be international and even

intercontinental. In addition tourists attracted to heritage resources have a distinctly higher pattern of daily spending than most other groups, are more likely to choose catered accommodation forms, and are less prone to seasonal variations in the timing of visits. Equally, however, the total length of the trip tends to be shorter than the average for all holidays and the length of stay in any one place is particularly short. The length of stay in an individual city is around two to three days and on any one heritage site, the same number of hours. Such a profile may account for a statistical average but there are many other identifiable categories ranging from school parties, unattached young people with "wanderlust", organised tours of pensioners and many "speciality groups", including in this context those of military veterans, and amateur historians and military equipment and battle-field "buffs".

Thus we arrive at the very general conclusion that the tourism market from which defence heritage draws its customers is large, growing, extremely varied in terms of motives and visitor characteristics and composed of distinct segments. Similarly whether viewed from the supply or the demand side it is part of a wider total package of resources or experiences that are combined to form the holiday. A few brief examples of different sorts of such packages at different scales may illustrate some of these general characteristics.

Figure 1 is of a single but major "heritage tourism" city, Norwich (UK) with around 500,000 staying visitors a year, a high proportion of which are intercontinental, and 2,500,000 day visitors. The visitors "heritage landscape" is composed of a few major "peaks" (a castle, a cathedral, a market square and a reconstructed sixteenth century street - "Elm Hill") surrounded by lesser "hills" (the supporting attractions of various museums, parts of the city wall) and linked by short ridges of interest (the tourist corridors of movement lined with various catering and tourist shopping facilities). The defence heritage buildings (castle, walls), museum exhibits, and place associations (ranging from "Kett's Rebellion in the sixteenth century to the U.S.A.A.F. between 1942 and 1945) play an important but integral part of a wider heritage product.

In contrast figure 2 shows a major Mediterranean seaside resort region within which the traditional sea, sun and sand package is supplemented by the excursion possibilities offered by the "heritage cities" of Carcassonne (the restored medieval fantasy walled town of Viollet-le-Duc), Aigues Mortes (a complete thirteenth century walled "crusader town") and a hinterland marketed through the long history of religious and political struggle symbolised by the "Cathar" strongholds and the Capetian conquest. Here defence heritage is incorporated functionally and spatially at the regional scale into a tourism package dominated by quite different resources.

On a still wider scale a glance through a selection of holiday brochures would reveal the use of clusters of heritage sites as part of regional, national and even international circuits of tourism attractions. The historic cities of Flanders ("the battleground of Europe for a thousand years"), Scotland's heritage (with Edinburgh castle, some Highland forts, a few battlefields from the '45 and the

Massacre of Glencoe) and countless others all use defence as a mainstay of general heritage packages quite apart from the specialised holidays that are quite explicitly defence oriented ("battlefield tours", "castles of the Rhine").

#### WHY IS DEFENCE HERITAGE SO IMPORTANT?

This may in part be explained as the result of the relative robustness of defence artefacts and thus their tendency to survive, better than most historic structures and objects, the ravages of time which in turn has resulted in a more than proportional presence of defence related objects among the visible relics of the past. However much defence heritage relies not only on such visible objects but upon a miasma of invisible associations with military events with which such objects are, or can be, endowed. Indeed there are many examples of places, such as the sites of battles, where there are no visible relics, yet such sites are indisputably part of the defence heritage. A more satisfactory explanation is quite simply that organised physical conflict between people exercises a distinctive, widespread and extremely powerful emotional appeal. The dominance of war in children's play, in the output of books, films and television programmes for popular or critical consumption, and in the membership of hobby associations, all testify to an obsessive and pervasive interest in this topic. "The popularity of military history is such that it has assumed the proportions of a minor industry".(14) If places are regarded as "the centre of individually felt values and meanings, or as a locality of emotional attachment and felt significance" (17) as the "humanist" geographers have maintained, then clearly places and objects associated with defence are likely to rouse special attention and feeling from individuals. Equally for the community as a whole it has long been argued that places are receptacles of cultural values and acquire a sacred quality as symbols of such values.(9) Surviving defence works therefore become the recipients of these individual and social attributes and are easily exploitable as a commercial resource.

#### HERITAGE AND CHOICE

The preservation of the built environment is necessarily selective and based upon a large element of randomness operating upon structures with different chances of survival. A result is an exaggerated emphasis upon urban defensive fortifications; upon static rather than mobile warfare in general; upon towns whose brief periods of historical importance to defence have been followed by long term economic stagnation or decline; upon defence works in peripheral rather than core areas. Distortion through selective survival already exists before the conservation process begins its own series of selection processes from among the relict forms.

Once the surviving artefacts of the past are packaged for consumption and interpreted as heritage, questions of deliberate choice arise. Neither history nor the conservation and interpretation of its

artefacts is the revelation of a fixed truth. It is a progressive series of actions, including protection, maintenance, repair, restoration and reconstruction, all of which involve deliberate choice exercised by the responsible agencies on the basis of acknowledged and unacknowledged biases in what is protected and in what quantity, and given that in most countries around 10% of the stock of conserved buildings are destroyed annually, what remains protected. It is likely that the spectacular, large, and unusual, in which are included many defence works, are preferred over the domestic, mundane, small and commonplace. The distribution of the resource thus reflects the will to conserve rather than the intrinsic importance of the artefacts themselves or even less any accurate reflection of the past.

Protection implies maintenance, repair, and restoration of what cannot be repaired. Two further choices arise here. First there is no clear boundary between repair and reconstruction. It is a short step from repairing an existing city wall, replacing missing stones and walkways, reconstructing stretches that have completely disappeared and the construction of facsimilies in the style of the past in compensation for the random results of preservation. Thus the many castles, city walls and other urban fortifications that are more reconstruction than relic survival result from dilemmas within the conservation process itself. A second difficulty stems from the implication that restoration is a process of returning a structure to an authentic condition. As most urban defence structures are the result of a long process of adaptive reuse which past state from among many is to be restored? Choice now becomes little more than preferred prevailing taste and fashion; the eighteenth century preferred the classical over the "gothic", which encouraged the discovery and conservation of much of Western Europe's Roman military heritage, but ignored and even removed much of the medieval. Nineteenth century romanticism reversed these priorities and even led to the restoration of a past that owed more to the poetic imagination, than historical reality.

The above arguments derive from conservation, in which the object is the central concern, but once such objects are used as heritage then the focus shifts to the consumer. Heritage not only implies a legatee but can only define the inheritance in terms of that market. The biases and subjectivity already considered are compounded by those of the market. A heritage attraction is in practice a combination of two elements, the "site" that is the intrinsic qualities of a place, and the "marker", which is the deliberate indication of such qualities to the consumer.(16) The necessary link between the conserved artefact and the user is provided through the intermediary of the "marker", which may be on-site or previously acquired information. The result is what MacCannell terms the "sacralisation" of places through a process of "enshrinement". This process is cumulative as such site marking is reinforced by use.

It is clear therefore that authenticity has little meaning divorced from its purposeful context. In terms of heritage, visitors "collect" the sites that have been marked rather than those defined by any intrinsic criteria. The selection of heritage from the stock of preserved possibilities and its interpretation is a contemporary process which has little to do with the accurate revelation of an authentic past through its relics. The purposes that motivate conservation as "the

necessary myth" (13) may be little more than vaguely articulated professional guide-lines justified in terms of conventional wisdom, or they may be sufficiently coherent and logical to be dignified with the term ideology.

#### HERITAGE AND IDEOLOGY

War arouses powerful emotions which are associated with defence heritage; it would not be surprising if the presentation of such heritage had important effects upon political ideas and could be used to form political opinion. Indeed education has always been a justification for the conservation and presentation of historic artefacts. It is therefore assumed that heritage interpretation has a socialisation function in the reproduction or legitimization of existing dominant ideologies.

The simplest explanation of the interest in defence heritage is curiosity about the origins of the present and of the struggles to arrive at it. Such an interest in the past can in turn be viewed as contributing the stability of continuity to an unstable and uncertain present.(10) The use of tradition to provide this sense of stability to the existing political or social order is so widespread as to form an almost universal function of the study of history and its relics. An extension of curiosity to an obsessive interest in a past which is seen as preferable to the present, results in "nostalgia", a word that means not just a romantic idealisation of a past but literally a painful longing to return to it. The marketing of nostalgia through heritage can then be seen as escapism from an unattractive present and an undesirable future into a previous golden age. This escapism, or the "cultural necrophilia" (7) of a unproductive society, can be used as an instrument of political policy by governments who reflect a desire to change present undesirable conditions into nostalgia for a past. However these uses of the survivals from the past as tradition or escapism, hardly amounts to ideology in any consistent sense.

Some of the more commonly encountered approaches, found in presentations of defence heritage are outlined below grouped according to their contribution to peace under the headings of "negative", "neutral" or "positive". Many of these "ideologies" will be presented in a partial, mixed and often quite unconscious manner by those claiming only motives of accuracy or even entertainment but that does not make them any the less insistent.

#### "NEGATIVE" APPROACHES

A clear and common ideological use of defence heritage, is its consistent use to support a particular state idea, which can be called nationalism where it is used to legitimate the nation state. Despite some attempts at finding a continental scale replacement to the nation state in Western Europe, nationalism remains the world's most widespread state-forming philosophy. Most such nationalisms require the mythology of a founding armed struggle against a repressive folk enemy, from which

crucible of fire emerges the national character and national values, which in turn must be defended "against the envy of less happier lands". The possible uses of defence heritage to support such national mythology are obvious. In the United States there are the relics and sites of the "revolutionary war" and Civil War for the maintenance of the Union, in Canada, to refer to the other side of the same events, the war of 1812-15. In Europe the Spanish have the "reconquista", the Dutch the 80 years war, the Belgians the 1830 war against the Dutch, the French the 100 years war, the Balkans the independence struggle against the Turks, and all can share in whatever national glory can be found in two World Wars fought out across the continent. Meanwhile there are few countries outside Europe which cannot find an independence struggle against a colonial oppressor upon which to base their self esteem, and those which cannot, having achieved sovereign statehood peacefully, search uncomfortably among strikes, riots and skirmishes for the nearest equivalent, such as Australia's "Eureka stockade" or romantic "bushrangers" and Canada's Meti "rebellion".

The national myth will determine not only which defence works and associations will be incorporated into heritage but how that heritage is presented so that the chosen central values of the state and qualities of its citizens are substantiated by the chosen historical episodes associated with the objects and places. The converse is of course equally true. Objects and sites that recall the "wrong" history will tend to be ignored. American revolutionary war "loyalists" for example are stock Tory villains in the United States but central heroes in Canadian heritage. The Dutch city where this is being written, Groningen, has suffered three important sieges in its long history, two of which are commemorated by memorials and public holidays, namely 1672 against a German invader, and 1944 when it was liberated from the Germans after siege by the Canadians. The third occasion is neither celebrated nor commemorated as it conflicts with the national idea. In 1598 the city which had declared for the Hapsburgs was besieged, taken and coerced into the Dutch Union.

An example of the use of heritage in this way is provided by Portsmouth (UK). The city council, in partnership with various private organisations, has initiated a major series of heritage projects, which now include three conserved ships, and a number of shore based museums under the overall marketing slogan of "Portsmouth--Flagship of Maritime England" which together with similar heritage projects in South Hampshire and the Isle of Wight forms a regional product entitled "Defence of the Realm". The ostensible justification for these developments is principally economic as the dockyard town searches for a replacement for its declining staple activity of servicing the fleet. Bradbeer and Moon (4) argue that the choice of exhibits and their method of presentation is clearly nationalist, in its account of the unremitting success of British arms, militarist, in its stress on the success of resorting to force, and imperialist, in its one sided view of the impacts of the role of British defence forces. They go further in suggesting that if heritage is seen as an instrument of the reproduction of the prevailing power structures in society then Portsmouth's traditional role, as they see it, of subservience to the military is continued in this new way. The philosophy of service to the fleet and wider national or imperial defence needs is continued by this particular philosophy of defence heritage.



More broadly an interpretation of military history that stresses the role of great men, and a very few women, doing great deeds in a great cause, is seen as providing historical legitimation for a prevailing ideology of the national government which itself wishes to emphasise the importance of the enterprising individual in shaping events.

A cultural separatist or local patriotic approach is a local variant of the nationalist approach, by using the defence heritage to support a separatist identity. The accent therefore is strongly upon the role of military architecture and place associations in defence against the centralising power. Urban military architecture is frequently less than ideal for this purpose as more often being representative of the conquests of the centralising power than the resistance of the locality. Most Welsh and many Scottish castles, and the North Welsh fortified towns are symbols of military conquest rather than resistance, although examples can be found such as the Cathar defences of Languedoc. Towns where military events have occurred can acquire the status of sacred space in a separatist cause, such as the symbolic importance of Guernica to the Basques because of the bombardment of 1937.

#### "NEUTRAL" APPROACHES

These can be regarded as non-ideological but nevertheless may contain political messages if only by omission. In the technological approach attention is directed to the form of the object itself and away from the ultimate purposes to which it was put. Defence works become a part of industrial archaeology or architectural history and are interpreted as a progression of technical solutions to scientific problems, with this striving for functional proficiency leading to perfection in physical form. Fortifications are frequently presented as "military architecture through the ages" and the weapons of war from swords to battleships, as studies in metallurgy, ballistics, engineering and the like.

Even the organisation and operations of the users of such objects can be approached in such scientific terms, with attention being concentrated on strategy and tactics as an abstract series of geometrical solutions. The purposes of the activities, the causes of the resort to arms, and the effects upon individuals is ignored. Conflict will be described in a neutral terminology which distances these activities from their impacts upon people and war is reduced to a chess game, played for its own sake according to a mutually accepted set of rules, whose outcome is determined by the professional skills of the commanders with little thought for the fate of the individual playing pieces. Although this approach can be found in the interpretation of defence heritage of all historical periods, it lends itself particularly to the period from the Thirty Years War to the Napoleonic Wars in Europe during which time war was largely seen and taught in the military academies as a "professional activity" based upon scientific principles, in contrast to the feudal obligation of a particular class as in previous centuries.

A variant on this especially relevant to the medieval period is the "romantic chivalry" approach, with attention paid to war as a mixture of

sport and the social duty of a specific class. It owes much to the nineteenth century romanticism of writers such as Scott or architects such as Pugin and is often presented in combination with participation in "medieval" jousts or banquets.

Although ostensibly non-ideological these sorts of presentation of defence heritage can result in two effects that have ideological consequences. First it encourages a loss of sensitivity to the fate of individuals as a consequence of the casual acceptance implied by the technology or aesthetics of war. Secondly it carries the implication that such conflict is not only an inevitable part of human history but has always been a normal activity of a rational profession rather than an irrational aberration. These results may have contemporary political consequences through their effect on public attitudes towards defence policies. For example the possession or use of nuclear weapons can be made more publically acceptable by reducing them to a set of technical specifications and couching the discussion of their operation in "scientific" acronyms and professional phraseology.

#### "POSITIVE" APPROACHES

A contrast with the use of defence heritage to illustrate the noble deeds of great men is an interpretation stressing the impacts of war on the everyday lives of the common people, whether military or civilian. Such an approach is not in itself socialist but could be harnessed to ideas of class repression, and its reaction in class solidarity. It might be expected that examples would proliferate in Eastern Europe and certainly there is a tendency in those countries to accentuate the defence heritage relating to selected periods in history when rebellion or revolution against the pre-communist established order occurred. However recent defence history tends to be interpreted in a nationalist rather than international socialist manner although with a strong accent upon the individual soldier or citizen rather than the influence of great leaders. In practice some of the clearest examples are found in the heritage presentations of left wing local authorities in Western Europe where castles and town walls are seen as symbols of social and political oppression and used to interpret the situation of the common people who built them, peopled them and lived in their shadow. Norwich castle carries the notable dedication to "the long struggle of the common people of England for just conditions".

The clear use of heritage to support pacifist ideologies is rare but it is occasionally used, consciously or not, in support of international understanding rather than competition and for the advancement of peace rather than war. The custom of British Commonwealth forces of burying their dead where they fall has scattered military cemeteries around the world as an impressive part of defence heritage that carries its own message. The currently fashionable thematic presentations at many military sites and museums include "everyday life" displays which inevitably show the similarity in experience between friend and enemy. West German cities face a particular problem in commemorating and interpreting the events of 1933-1945. The central areas of many of these cities were destroyed and the very redevelopment is a permanent visible

reminder of past suffering that demands interpretation. Silence frustrates the curiosity of new generations but a nationalist interpretation would be unacceptable. Different cities have adopted different solutions. One is to present the effects of air raids alongside the history of the rise of the National Socialist party, thus relating the two (as in Kassel), another, as in Lubeck, is to juxtapose the results of RAF raids with those of the Luftwaffe. In both cases the objects displayed are no different in themselves from those in hundreds of such commemorations but the arrangement is intended to encourage particular conclusions about the nature of responsibility for war.

## CONCLUSIONS

The attempt to use tourism as a vehicle of peace and international understanding must come to terms with the uncomfortable reality that although this desirable outcome is possible it is neither inevitable nor very likely. A large part of the contemporary tourism industry is based upon uses of the past that diametrically conflict with these aims.

However the argument above is that heritage is a contemporary created product which can serve as the medium of transmission of a large number of different ideologies. A programme designed to encourage peace through tourism needs to first recognise the nature and importance of heritage as an educational medium, to be aware of the political content of current heritage interpretation and finally encourage such interpretations as help to shape the "disposition for benevolence" referred to earlier as the goal.

To some the obsessive interest in the accoutrements of war is clear evidence of the unhealthy trend that can only contribute to a glorification of past conflicts and thereby make future conflicts more likely. A paradox with the study of military history, which applies with equal force to the incorporation of defence into heritage, is that an interpretation that stresses the technical side and distances itself from its effects will be inhuman, while one which concentrates upon individual suffering has at best an ultimate numbing effect and at worst encourages an element of voyeuristic sadism.

In support of a pacifist approach it can be weakly argued that given the existence of this prevailing curiosity about this aspect of our past, some attempt at least should be made to deflect its most undesirable ideological implications and substitute, if not the horror, at least the futility of war. More robustly it can be asserted that war will never be prevented by those who know nothing of it and thus it follows that defence heritage has an important educative task in ensuring that the past is not allowed to repeat itself.

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