Valuing archaeology; exploring the reality of the heritage management of England’s wetlands

Submitted by William Fletcher, to the University of Exeter as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Archaeology on 31\textsuperscript{st} March 2011

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(Signature) …………………………….
For Kate and Amy
Abstract

This work primarily examines the management of wet-preserved archaeological sites in England, through an exploration of value and analysis of current management approaches. The aim is to explore whether the current policy frameworks, in particular the role of preservation in situ, can provide a sustainable future for wet-preserved archaeological sites. This work further seeks to conceptualise the modelling of sustainability, preservation and management decision making in wetland archaeological sites.

Looking at the last 40 year of wetland research through the work of the large-scale wetland survey projects, this work initially considers the current understanding of wet archaeological sites in England. It also examines aspects of heritage management through the legislative and policy frameworks and their legacy. This work considers the implications that legislative and policy positions have for the management of wetland archaeological sites and examines the theoretical concepts that underpin them. This includes exploring reflective management, the development of research frameworks, and scoring mechanisms for the designation of sites. It also looks at broader constructs of value through the concepts of cultural and economic values.

Three existing archaeological sites, a ringwork at Borough Fen near Peterborough, a marsh fort at Sutton Common near Doncaster and a triple post-alignment near Beccles, will be presented as case studies. These sites serve as examples of how the management of sites has been approached. The results of the case study analysis are used to develop a series of conceptual models looking firstly at sustainability and preservation in situ, and, secondly at preservation, value and decision making.

The study concludes that the presumption in favour of preservation in situ can be challenging for wet preserved archaeological sites. Deterioration of the preservation environment can in some cases produce a similar decline in significance. Preservation in situ may therefore not be the most appropriate option for archaeological sites in wetlands.
Acknowledgements

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<td>ALSF</td>
<td>Aggregates Levies Sustainability Fund</td>
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<tr>
<td>AOD</td>
<td>Above Ordnance Datum</td>
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<td>AHM</td>
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WARP  Wetland Archaeological Research Project