PUBLIC ARCHAEOLOGY (2005) VOLUME 0 PAGES 000–000

Narrating landscape: The potential of oral history for landscape archaeology

Mark Riley, David C. Harvey, Tony Brown and Sara Mills

ABSTRACT

The potential of an oral history approach to the study of landscape archaeology is considered. The paper presents the findings from an AHRB-funded[auquery1]project 'Landscape archaeology and the community in Devon: an oral history approach', which aims to transgress some of the epistemological boundaries of archaeology by drawing on the discursive genre of oral history in order to augment, challenge and destabilize existing landscape narratives. We suggest that oral histories can offer both consensual as well as alternative narratives of landscape and have the ability to engage the public, not just in terms of the popular consumption of archaeological knowledge, but also in the actual construction of archaeological knowledge.

INTRODUCTION: BREAKING DOWN THE 'THEM AND US'

Recent years have seen a burgeoning interest in 'public participation' in archaeology in Britain and America (Council for British Archaeology (CBA), 2003). This interest, however, has been far from unproblematic, particularly as it is represented through the present profusion of neatly packaged television 'pop-archaeology'. As David et al. (2004: 158) have recently noted, '[w]hen archaeology, an elite tool of Western Science, is engaged in the construction of regional histories, it is rarely *community* research … but rather questions of academic interest that may have little relevance to those whose past is being investigated'. These concerns over the lack of 'real' public engagement have also been aired by Brown et al. (forthcoming) who are alarmed at what they see as a dichotomy between expanding public interest in archaeology (witnessed in high television audiences for archaeology-related programmes), but a static (or even diminishing) level of hands-on public participation.[1] Brown et al.'s (forthcoming) answer to this problem of public engagement has been to seek to extend the concept of 'public participation' through their Community Landscapes Project (CLP). Through this project, members of the public are encouraged to participate, not only in the (armchair) consumption of archaeology, but also in the production of archaeological data through participation in tasks such as mapping, surveying, digitizing and archival work. The CLP has even assigned technical roles to 'ordinary' members of the public, allowing them to become directly involved in scientific techniques such as palaeoenvironmental investigation, pollen analysis and stratigraphical survey – roles that are more usually reserved for the scientific 'experts'.[2] This paper documents a significant new phase in the development of this agenda of public participation. Through an oral history approach, we aim to re-centre members of the public, not simply as armchair consumers of archaeological knowledge, nor even as participants in the practice of scientific archaeological data collection, but as knowing agents in the construction, mediation and development of archaeological knowledge.[3]

This paper is based on empirical oral histories, and considers the potential of this material to

ISSN 1465-5187

contribute to archaeological enquiry and knowledge generation. Entitled 'Landscape Archaeology and the Community in Devon: An Oral History Approach',[4] the project has its genesis in the initial phases of the CLP. Conceptually the project had two main stimuli. Firstly, it was seen as a logical extension of the ideas of public participation at the heart of the CLP, with the project seen as a community-led activity within the wider remit of encouraging greater participation and ensuring wider access to heritage within the UK (Heritage Lottery Fund, 2002). Secondly, the project was seen as part of a more fundamental review of the practice of scientific archaeology within academia, where positivist traditions have framed how and what sort of data are collected.

The CLP had established a number of relationships with farmers, mostly in connection with negotiating access to known archaeological features. Anecdotal evidence, however, suggested that many of these farmers had information that both complemented and challenged the scientific datasets known to the CLP research team. Building initially from these contacts with local farmers, the oral history project principally sought to further excavate this reservoir of 'anecdotal' evidence and treat it as a significant stream of knowledge in its own right. From a positivist standpoint, therefore, the project utilizes oral history as a field archaeological technique, adding a unique and culturally informed layer to the existing scientific database. Drawing on recent feminist geographical work (Rose, 1997), together with feminist linguistic ethnography (Eckert, 2000), the use of oral testimony also provides an authoritative alternative for the construction of knowledge and allows for the terms and categories that individuals use to inform and shape research. Through giving credence to previously unheard voices, an oral history approach seeks to bring the creation of knowledge back into the realms of the local community.

The recognition of social contingency in landscape construction allows for a myriad of landscapes to be recognized (see Tilley, 1994, for instance). Traditional methods of archaeology have proved very useful in uncovering factors associated with the physical production of landscapes. However, we believe that the *meaning* of landscape is not determined simply by the factors of landscape production, but rather by the *readers* of that landscape. Here we follow Berger's (1972[aq3]) definition of landscape as 'a way of seeing', recognizing the social contingency involved in landscape construction at various scales. Such ideas are aligned to the conceptual and practical insights of the European Landscape Convention, which considers how different landscapes are constructed and reconstructed by different groups, and how these landscapes may be more democratically safeguarded in the future (see Antrop, 2005). As well as providing information that might augment the traditional range of positivist techniques, an oral history approach will allow us to explore the numerous meanings of a newly created landscape.

At the heart of this project, therefore, is the question of what an oral history approach is able to contribute to a study of landscape. This can be seen both in terms of supplying material that is unavailable through traditional archaeological or geographical techniques, and also through bringing a deeper understanding of the process of how places become meaningful. In this sense, the project not only tests the validity of traditional approaches, but builds from these approaches by providing a focus of landscape knowledge that is culturally embedded.

ORAL HISTORY AND INNOVATION WITHIN LANDSCAPE ARCHAEOLOGY

Recent years have seen a number of somewhat disparate studies that have considered and linked oral history and archaeology (see, for example, Echo-Hawk, 2000; Mason, 2000; Whiteley, 2002; Hegmon, 2003; Scott, 2003). Such studies have largely been stimulated by the call for more ethnographic techniques in an 'applied archaeology' that is informed by post-processual (or *processual-plus*) trends, which have called for closer consideration of issues of agency/practice, symbols and meaning, material culture, gender and native perspectives within archaeological enquiry (see Tilley, 1993; Downum and Price, 1999; Hegmon, 2003). This impetus has largely come through the engagement of social scientists, in particular anthropologists, who have turned their attention to archaeology and heritage, wishing to move the

discipline to one that considers knowledge generation beyond archaeological 'sites' to address people in social contexts, considering the way that they structure their lives and use their resources (see, for example, Herzfeld, 1991; Bender, 1998).

Arguably, the development and deployment of oral history has been limited by the epistemological boundaries within archaeology, where researchers have commonly sought a single historical 'truth', without accepting that there are a number of ways in which the past may be interpreted and presented and many alternative streams of data that can help inform these understandings (see, for example, Lawrence, 2003). While there are clear epistemological differences between oral history and positivist approaches to archaeological enquiry, these two strands need not be mutually exclusive, as Mack (2004: 54[aq4]) has recently suggested, incorporating 'various lenses through which landscapes were viewed historically allows for a more complete picture of the past. To extrapolate and understand the complex perceptions of a shared environment, multiple data sets must be employed'.

The study focuses on the county of Devon, UK – an area that has been the focus of a number of landscape studies (Hoskins, 1954; Timms, 1980; Austin and Walker, 1985). The common perception of the county, and particularly its upland fringes, is one of pasture-dominated areas of ubiquitous and unchanging farming practices and traditions (Turner, 2004).[5] Recent data from pollen analysis however, have suggested a much less static narrative of landscape change, with both long periods of stability (e.g. Iron Age to the Roman period) along with abrupt transformations in land use and form, often associated with periods of stress, such as the later medieval period or Napoleonic campaign (Parry, 1978). Another such period of 'landscape stress' is referred to within this oral history project that focuses on landscape changes during World War II, during which official records show that much of this upland fringe area was subjected to change as part of the 'plough-up' campaign of the period (Short et al., 2000). Accordingly, the aim of this project was to utilize an oral history approach to critically consider land use and landscape change during World War II, and to provide valuable information by situating historic farming in relation to social, cultural as well as environmental factors from the diminishing number of people who have first-hand experience of the period. Following Symonds (2004: 37) therefore, 'one of the most important aspects of this work is that it enables archaeologists to move beyond their traditional stereotyped image of detached scientists, who hurriedly rescue material facts by excavation and present their findings in dry, and often inaccessible, technical reports, and to be seen instead as cultural animators, with the capacity to shape the debate, and thereby engender social change'.

The study involved a total of 22 in-depth interviews, reaching an overall total of 33 interviewees (see Fig. 1). The period of World War II was specifically targeted, with interviews sought with those working the land during this time, including farmers, farm labourers and those employed by the War Agricultural Executive Committees (WAECs). Some interviews were on a one-to-one basis, while others were conducted with two or three respondents present. On average, the interviews lasted between two and four hours, and all of them were recorded and transcribed. The interviews were semi-structured rather than the interviewer asking a predetermined list of questions. This was to ensure that respondents were free to recall periods and information that they felt were important, and to allow the interviewer to pursue new areas of questioning as new themes emerged from the responses. In particular it was important during the interviews that respondents were allowed to reach their own construction of the landscape and how they felt the landscape had changed.

Four broad themes were always covered in the interviews, these being *family history*, *World War II*, *landscape change* and *landscape conservation*. The themes, however, were often considered interchangeably as interviews progressed, with respondents speaking in great detail, often about two or more of the themes at the same time, thus creating a number of sub-themes for each of these areas. Family history was normally used as an introductory theme in the interview, thus allowing the respondents to discuss their family biographies – giving an appreciation of timescale and, in particular, an idea of the collective memory on which respondents drew during the rest of the

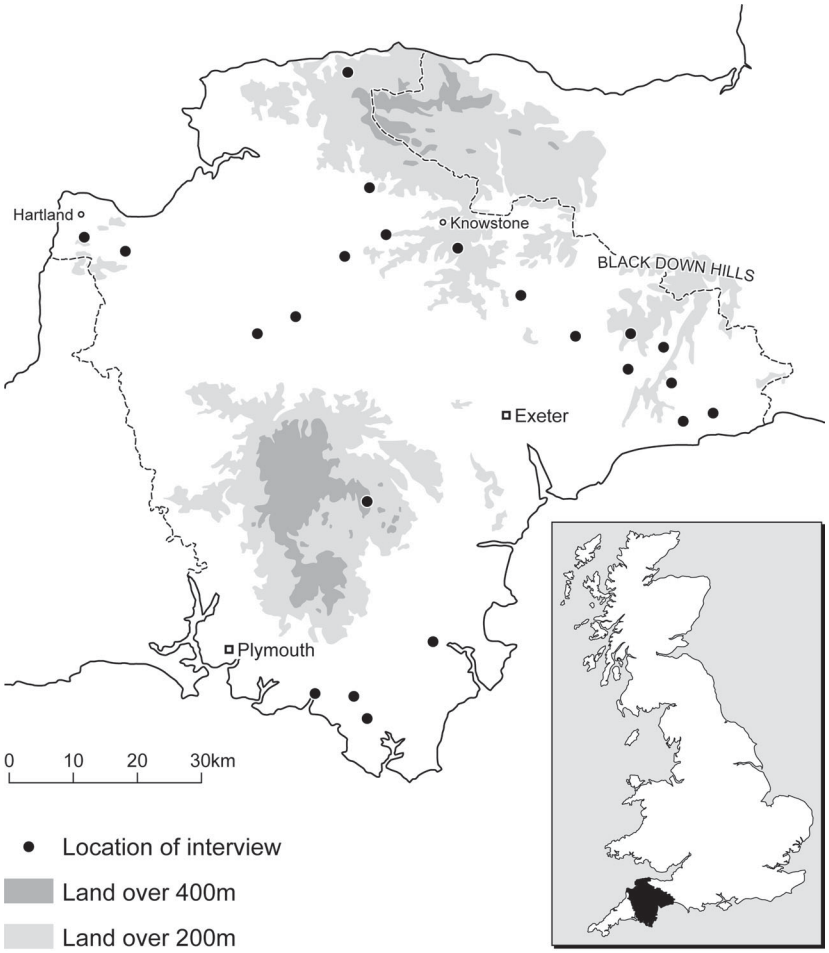

Figure 1. Map of the study area, showing approximate location of interviews.

interview. World War II was considered firstly in the general terms of the respondents' recollections of the period, and then focusing more specifically on discussion of the plough-up campaign in detail, outlining what land was ploughed, how this land was designated and what crops were planted.[6] The third theme of landscape change ran throughout the interviews and was commonly entwined with the specific discussions of World War II. Respondents were asked to comment on how they felt the landscape had changed, and their own feelings about the reasons for, and nature of, this change. Within this theme, respondents were asked about specific features of historic interest on their land – both those already known to official bodies and those which were not previously recorded. The fourth theme considered respondents' opinions and reactions to current efforts at landscape and archaeological conservation.

It is worth considering the semantic differences between the various styles of oral historiography to which we refer within this paper, and which we will distil into two types of 'knowledge'. 'Oral history', as we refer to it, is the study of the recent past through the lived experience of the speaker, where the speaker recounts information from their own, first-hand, experience (Perks and Thompson, 1998). 'Oral tradition' refers to the material passed down the generations through word of mouth and which is common to a particular culture or social group (Finnegan, 1992). That which is common to only a limited group is what we refer to as 'oral testimony'

(Bornat, 1994). In this research, we draw on all three of these styles to consider their possible contribution to archaeological investigation. In doing so we consider these sources as an alternative stream of 'knowledge' on landscape archaeology and landscape histories. We consider the knowledge from these oral sources in two main ways that are broadly related to the classifications above, and which draw particularly on insights from anthropology (for a fuller discussion see Ellen et al., 2000). Firstly, 'genealogical' knowledge, in which collective memories of past practices, events, landscapes and changes are used to augment, challenge and destabilize pre-existing narratives of landscape change. Secondly, we refer to 'analogous' knowledge, which is born primarily out of oral histories where respondents refer to past practices, landscapes and change from their own life history, which can be used as analogous material for a better understanding of the past in explaining the importance, usage and symbolism of features that have undergone other forms of investigation.

AUGMENTING ARCHAEOLOGY: ORAL HISTORY AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY

By its very nature, landscape archaeology often proceeds at fairly broad spatial and temporal scales, commonly dealing with long time periods, and painting broad brushstrokes over wide areas of ground. By contrast, oral history pays attention to the micro-scale, with individual persons' narratives of landscape often bound up with a short timescale at a particular locale, reflecting an intimate knowledge of a particular place. Taken separately, therefore, these two approaches do not appear to have much common ground. However, we would argue that an oral history approach has the ability to inform more traditional archaeological approaches, augmenting them with information that is otherwise unavailable, and even correcting inaccuracies and misunderstandings.

The first example considers the use of aerial photographs in locating and identification of archaeological features. Pioneered by such figures as Alexander Keiller and O.G.S. Crawford (Bowden, 2001), aerial photography has become an increasingly important tool for landscape archaeologists, with a valuable site-monitoring function recently emerging from a more established role within the reconnaissance and discovery of new sites (see Featherstone et al., 1999; Crutchley, 2001; Horne and MacLeod, 2001; Barnes, 2002; Bewley, 2003). Alongside the wider development of remote sensing, however, aerial photography has often been characterized merely as a technical undertaking, that is scientifically founded and which has a fixation with equipment. Indeed, Bewley (2003: 277) suggests that: 'it has always been the case that flying and the photography [sic.] have taken centre stage, whilst the next stages in the process, the interpretation and the mapping although requiring the majority of the resources (in terms of manpower and equipment) until recently have been less prominent'.[7] We argue that it is within this process that an oral history approach may make a contribution. Aerial photographs were used within oral history interviews, both as a prompt for discussion of the wartime more generally and also in order to elicit further information on certain landscape features.[8] Using aerial photographs in this way not only facilitated these oral histories, but also gave space for some critical reflection on the way in which we interpret and give meaning to the features located from aerial photographs.

The first features discussed during an interview with a retired (75-year-old) farmer from mid-Devon were those visible from an aerial photograph (see Fig. 2). Taking the features at face value, their ordering and uniform appearance suggests a high degree of planning, perhaps reflecting a feature of some significance.[9] The farmer, however, was able to identify the features without hesitation as dung heaps – a feature related largely to pre-mechanized agriculture, where farmyard manure was taken from the yard into the fields by horses, where it was left in piles until it was spread over the fields in late winter or early spring. Through his own life history the farmer was able to give a full account of how and why this system was used, calling on his first-hand experience of laying out these dung heaps as an explanation of their uniform nature. The following extract is taken from the recorded oral history interview with the farmer:

> The cow dung from the farm yard, you brought it out on the cart, and you dug it out in heaps eight paces apart.

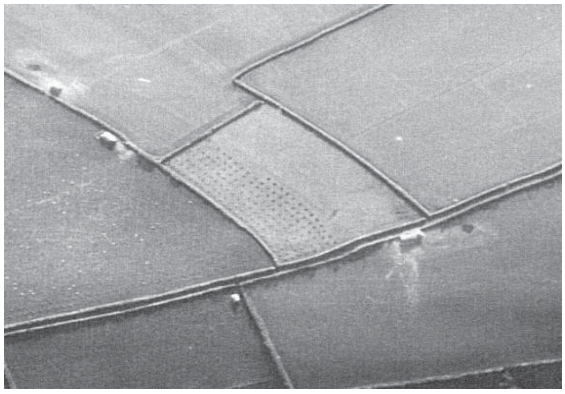

Figure 2. Aerial photograph – muck heaps.

> Those eight paces meant that when you stood up with a heave-ho or a dung fork you could fling it four yards away from you so you covered a four yard square from each heap. You threw some towards the heaps each side of you, and that was the way you dunged your fields. So the first row of dung heaps were four paces from the hedge and so you could throw it North, East, South and West and then next heap did likewise you see [...] you'd just say 'move on' to the horse and he'd start to walk, then you'd count your eight paces and say 'woah' and dig out the next.

The farmer's explanation and description of these features, while not a major contribution to landscape archaeology in terms of naming the feature, does both illuminate and question the way in which we interpret the landscape within archaeology. It is here that oral history can make a contribution to the interpretation and understanding of features in the landscape – providing important 'contextual' information that aerial photographs are unable to provide. As Stevenson (2001) suggests: 'the ethnographic task in preservation is to reveal the cultural context of tangible heritage'. The farmer's oral history gives a contextualized account of why these features were used and ordered in a particular way. In this case, such a history is crucial, since the technical, social and cultural context in which the features existed has changed dramatically, with this practice ceasing in most of the country over 50 years ago, and very few analogous practices are carried out today that would give the archaeologist a comparable case on which to base their assumptions. This oral history also highlights the potential shortcomings of a processual approach in which 'order' and 'planning' are indicative of 'significance' and 'permanence'. The dung heaps are ephemeral features that, while displaying obvious 'order', are neither significant or permanent. They warn us, therefore, to act cautiously in our interpretations of a variety of 'ordered' features that aerial photography has revealed. In addition, they also bring to the fore the dynamic and transitory nature of the landscape. As with other traditional techniques of landscape archaeology, aerial photography typically centres upon features and material culture that, by definition, have *survived* in some form or other. Oral histories, on the other hand, allow space for nuance, ephemerality and temporal dynamism.

The issue of temporal scale was also encountered in the discussion of land use with a farmer (88 years old) in North Devon. The following extract is taken from an oral history interview where the farmer discussed the deliberate planting of gorse or 'furze' (*Ulex europaeus*) in the 1930s:

> Farming was in a terrible state you see. Landlords couldn't get people to farm the land ... they simply couldn't give it away. I remember a field next to our farm being planted with furze.[10] I don't know how ever they got the seeds or whatever to do it, but they did. They planted it and after the first year they clipped the shoots to make it grow out, more bushy like. [Why was that?] For fox cover. Cover to attract the foxes in for shooting. That shows what the land was worth, they preferred to plant furze because the sport was more important. It didn't last long, but they definitely did it.

In reflecting on agricultural change within the 20th century, the farmer's oral history raised interesting questions surrounding archaeological methodologies. Pollen analysis, for example, a technique that has been widely employed by environmental and landscape archaeologists (see Brown, 1999), takes broad temporal scales with which to construct the palaeoenvironmental history of a particular area. While pollen analysis is useful in recognizing broad scale changes over long time periods, some practices are palynologically invisible (such as furze management, because of the poor representation of gorse/*Ulex* in pollen diagrams) and it is unable to account for these rapid and anomalous changes in the landscape. In particular,

such a scientific technique would not reveal the process of decision-making that resulted in the land being *deliberately* planted with gorse. In the absence of any other source of information, pollen analysis of such a site may, therefore, logically argue that such gorse 'encroachment' reflected a period of abandonment and reversion of once 'productive' land. The oral history disrupts such narratives, highlighting the very temporary, and arguably 'illogical' and culturally determined, nature of this action. The oral history tells a story of desperation, whereby the farmers' actions adapted to suit the immediacy of changing circumstances, thus enlightening and providing a context for this temporary change. Oral history, therefore, does not necessarily refute the data provided by such scientific techniques as pollen analysis. Rather, it provides an account that has more detail and nuance: a construction of knowledge that is responsive to particular, seemingly 'illogical' and even temporary conditions, and that is deeply embedded within cultural circumstance.

RECONSIDERING THE KNOWN

While oral histories can offer insights into features that are unknown or that are masked within scientific datasets, they may also serve an important function in problematizing what are previously 'known' features. Such augmenting and enlightening is particularly fruitful in relation to the issue of archaeological artefacts and, in particular, the reconstruction of history through these finds. As part of the CLP project, oxen shoes were found on a farm in mid-Devon. On one level, this artefact generates a particular history about the area from which it is located: that the area was ploughed by oxen – with a subsequent dating of this activity likely to be between the medieval and early modern period based on extrapolation from the histories of the use of oxen (see, for example, Langdon, 1986; Kitsikopoulos, 2000). The narratives subsequently deduced from this artefact would outline a period of less technologically developed agriculture, prior to the use of horsepower. The farmer's oral history, however, questioned the veracity of this narrative, as the farmer recalled from his own life history the use of oxen on the farm for ploughing during World War I:

> [Farmer]: There are things I wish I'd written down but I didn't. Like the last six oxen on the farm. I used to know the names of them, but I don't know if I've got it right now [...] we had oxen in the 20s, we used to pick up oxen shoes regularly, you can get the remains of them now.
> [Interviewer]: They still had oxen in the 20s?
> [Farmer]: Yes, but you've got to remember, in the 14–18 war, most of the horses went in the army [...] If they wanted a horse they came and took it [...] one neighbour got in terrible trouble, he had a good horse and they told on him.

This extract highlights the dangers inherent in the 'scientific' dating of artefacts. Logic suggests that this artefact dates from a period before horses were generally used in agriculture, or perhaps where the use of oxen endured as an anachronism. The oral history collected highlighted that that the ox shoe was not evidence of local inertia or backwardness but reminds us of small changes and complexity that may be glossed over in our broad-brush landscape narratives. While this is a particular and localized example, it ably demonstrates the benefit that oral histories may have in augmenting and destabilizing the narratives that we presently generate from positivist archaeology.

The utilization of people's oral history from living memory is also useful within archaeology in considering the ways in which landscapes and archaeological features are reinterpreted. As Stevenson (2001: 3) suggests, 'even minor structures become replete with meaning once ethnography reveals their traditional value'. As the following example highlights, even where archaeological definitions and narratives are known, features may be re-interpreted in light of their own specific context. The following extract is taken from an interview in South Devon:

> [Interviewer]: Are there any historical features on your land?
> [Farmer]: They [members of English Heritage who had visited the site] tell me we've got burial mounds. They've been to look at it ... and it's been mapped out. We used to use it to load the cows for market. It's sloped up you see, so we used to back the lorry up to it and run the cows into the lorry.

The reference highlights the dichotomy between archaeological 'science' and the 'lay' knowledge of the wider community, and brings into question issues of ownership and democracy within archaeology. Here, the farmer refers to how 'they' (the archaeologists) 'tell him' about the feature, illustrating how he considers the feature as something that belongs to, and is of primary interest to, the archaeologists. The farmer in this case gave his own, entirely new, interpretation of the feature – something that is valued not in terms of its archaeological or heritage value, but through its functional value relative to his contemporary economic, social and political position.

This example is resonant of Parker and King's (1990) concept of 'cultural property' and Jones' (2003) notion of 'social value', whereby local cultural values are considered in valuing a site's significance. Here the farmer viewed 'value' in terms of its functional use, rather than in the specific histories associated with its archaeological value. More generally, the issue of value came up in a number of interviews. Often farmers referred to features having 'no use', or noted that they 'were not used anymore' – with their value measured in terms of their narrow and presently centred agricultural usefulness. This opens up the issues of how Western archaeology places value on, and prioritizes particular sites and landscapes. Many farmers defined importance through their very immediate concern of making a living from the land. Understanding, appreciating and listening to these alternative and lived histories is important in directing archaeological attention towards other accounts of importance and value, and allows us to question whose version of value we should prioritize. In addition it allows us to see that *value* is a temporally and spatially specific term rather than a stable certainty.

PASSING ON THE LANDSCAPE: GENEALOGICAL AND ANALOGOUS KNOWLEDGE

So far in this paper we have considered the use of oral histories from living memory – that is, oral histories that relate to specific features which the respondent can recall from their first-hand experience, or a feature which they have reinterpreted within their own life course. Obviously such information is primarily of use to those with an interest in 20th century archaeology. However, the interviews also brought forward another line of information that may contribute to archaeological discussion. For purposes of explanation this can be divided into two main forms: genealogical and analogical knowledge. As stated earlier, what we refer to as *genealogical knowledge*[11] is that which has been passed in oral form from one generation to the next, and has perhaps been the most important form of oral history to date within archaeology (Mack, 2004). This has been more common in areas with a shorter history of literacy (e.g. Australia and in the Americas), both because of a tendency for Western archaeologists to favour written historical accounts where they are available, and also because the advancement of literacy has tended to erode the oral tradition. Archaeologists focusing on Britain, therefore, have tended to engage less with oral tradition than those working, for example, in America, Africa and Australia.

The first example of this type of oral history, which was common in interviews, was that of field names. Other research has referred to the importance of field names in helping to recreate a picture of past landscapes (see Gelling, 1978; Gelling and Cole, 2000) while there have been a number of local history groups that have recorded field names in different counties (see Cox, 1881; Field, 1995). A number of respondents discussed the field names on their farms and in the local area. In very few cases was there any written documentation of these field names, with the majority of respondents suggesting that they had learned the names of their fields verbally from previous generations. In terms of how oral history and the practice of archaeology may come together through the exploration of field names, the following example from mid-Devon is illustrative. Here the farmer had in the past invited archaeologists, as part of an application to the Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA) scheme, to inspect the land for features of archaeological interest. The farmer was informed that the land held no obvious features of archaeological value to be entered into the scheme, but argued that:

> Even we knew there was something out there, we wouldn't have called it Garden Plot otherwise.

Subsequent investigation by the CLP team found that the field did indeed contain a former settlement and garden. As Echo-Hawk (2000: 268) has recently suggested, the study of oral history and oral traditions 'has only recently begun to reveal the degree to which verbal messages can preserve first hand information over long spaces of time'. Here, without knowing directly about the settlement and garden, the farmer alerted the CLP team to the site on the basis of the name, which had passed through at least three generations of his family. The more widespread use of an oral history approach thus holds exciting potential in the locating and mapping of previously unknown and, in this case, difficult to identify, archaeological sites and features.

Although archaeologists have often shunned the qualitative, discursive and arguably less 'precise' nature of verbal information that passed from one generation to another, oral history is an entirely appropriate method of 'unlayering' and understanding past landscapes. Indeed, it is apparent that oral histories are sometimes more durable than material remains, with much useful information being passed down through generations on subjects where visible traces of archaeology had disappeared. Arguably, the cumulative and layered nature of genealogical knowledge mirrors the viewing of the landscape as a 'palimpsest'. Several respondents whose families had worked the same area of land for several generations often drew on a background of experiential knowledge from not only their own, but also their predecessors' experiences. This knowledge and these histories were found to be bound up with, and particular to, the local. This information is useful to archaeology, not only in supplying information on the particular – 'this field was ploughed in 1893 when my grandparents got married' noted one respondent – but also through informing an understanding of why the landscape is viewed and used in a particular way. For example, respondents often offered examples of how their current use and appreciation of the landscape was impacted upon by their family history and the cumulative knowledge of particular areas of land. This often related to particular events – 'I have never used that field for corn because my father said that his father had disasters with crops in there' – or to those which had little explanation other than they had been passed on from an earlier generation: 'We always till the fields in that order … I don't know any logic for doing it this way, other than that's how my father did … and his father before him'.

Finally in this paper, we would like to point to the idea of 'analogous knowledge'. The use of this term here is akin to Dongoske et al.'s (1997) idea of 'cultural affiliation', which suggests that the shared relationship and identity of a present-day group can be traced back to that of earlier groups. While the more usual application of this idea is largely related to particular tribes within distinct geographical regions, we would argue that this can also be applied in principle to the study of landscape archaeology in the UK. Indeed, oral histories that provide a version of landscape change and rationale for action are one of the few ways in which we can start to understand the behaviour of past generations in situations where few material records survive. With this in mind therefore, it is perhaps possible that some oral histories, particularly those that recall a period of animal-powered mechanization, can provide a level of tacit and experiential knowledge that may be useful in attempting to understand a much more remote past. Even in just the last 50 years, technological and economic changes have been so considerable, that oral histories may provide an almost unique line of enquiry for the exploration of certain aspects of landscape experience and meaning. For instance, a farmer in north Devon was asked why he felt his farmstead, known to be over 600 years old, had been built in that particular location. He offered a response from his own experiential knowledge of the farmstead's surroundings:

> Well it's sheltered for a start. Because it's under the hillside it misses the bracing wind that you get, and in winter we don't tend to get snowed in too much … then it's on good soil … the house is in the middle of about 30 acres of good growing soil, which would have been enough to support a big family years ago. Then there's a spring for the water, a natural spring down the field, we still have the water from that today … and there's the river running past, which the stock would be able to drink

> … Although we think it's a bit isolated today, it would have everything you needed … water, shelter, and land to grow food on.

This recourse to personal reflection was also common in relation to field patterns. In walking around his farm during an interview, one farmer illustrated how hedgerows ran along what he felt were changes in soil quality, with wetter and poorer quality land divided from better quality soils. Another farmer related the size of fields on his farm to how they had been ploughed in his youth: 'they were set out in two and three acre plots, which was as much as you could plough with a horse in one session'. While this relationship between horse plough capabilities and field size has been recognized on a general level by other scholars (for instance, see Thompson, 1983), this farmer's response derived from a particular experiential knowledge and understanding of the land on his farm: it is not seeking to establish generalizations but rather draws our attention towards focusing on the individuality of specific circumstances in particular locations.

Parallels may be drawn between this analogous knowledge from oral history and the aims of experimental archaeology, which has become an important part of the discipline (see Coles, 1979). As with much experimental practice, the cases presented here are localized and illustrative in their nature. They highlight how an understanding of the knowledge and patterns of land use and agricultural practice can offer valuable insight, augmenting existing understandings of past landscapes. In Britain, the 20th century, with its increasingly mechanized system of agricultural production, has witnessed one of the greatest modifications of the rural landscape that has ever occurred. The oral histories of those people who recall an agricultural era before the tractor, offer a crucial link to the past. Through careful collection and analysis these oral histories may provide a fruitful alternative source of knowledge to the archaeologist.

CONCLUSIONS

This paper has highlighted the potential value of an oral history approach to a more nuanced and democratic practice and application of landscape archaeology. While we have witnessed laudable attempts at wider public participation within archaeology in recent years, an oral history approach may allow a further extension of public participation through the incorporation of non-experts in the actual generation of knowledge. Despite Mason's (2000) claim that epistemological boundaries have grown up between natural scientific and humanities-driven approaches within archaeology, we argue that there is a place within the spectrum of archaeological practice for a more 'co-constructed narrative' of the landscape. While broadly 'scientific' and 'cultural' lines of enquiry often do offer different versions, we would argue that one should not be prioritized at the expense of the other: rather that they should combine to give us a clearer understanding of the past.

In re-centring the public as knowing agents, this paper has opened up space for dialogue between the differing accounts of the landscape, and illustrated the value of the grounded narrative presented within oral history to both augment and challenge positivist archaeological techniques. In paying attention to the local and micro-scale, oral history can help to destabilize and illuminate the meta-narratives that often proceed from commonly used techniques such as pollen analysis or aerial photography. In addition, such attention to personal experience allows a contextual layer to be added to the data from other sources – which extends not only to that which falls within the living memory of respondents, but also the analogous material that they provide for earlier periods. This application of oral history thereby affords archaeology a greater ability to move beyond questions involving the shape and form of the landscape, and to extend our analysis of what the landscape meant, for whom and why. With this in mind, we would argue that the issue of 'public participation' in landscape archaeology should be raised from a level of one-way communication of scientific 'facts' between 'initiated experts' and an 'armchair audience', to a situation where the process of 'understanding a landscape' is seen as a more holistic endeavour, that incorporates the practices of knowledge production by both the community that dwells in the landscape as well as those that study it.

ENDNOTES

1 In 2002 television viewing figures suggested that the most popular archaeology-based programmes, such as Channel 4's *Time Team*, attracted almost 3 million viewers (CBA, 2003).
2 See Brown et al. (forthcoming) and also http://www.ex.ac.uk/projects/devonclp/ [aq2]
3 While we contend that archaeological practice remains dominated by scientific method, there is a growing body of research that questions the objectivity of this 'scientific' archaeology (see, for example, Marciniak, 1999; Wood, 2002).
4 AHRB 'Innovation Award', number AR15611.
5 Turner (2004) even takes such landscape luminaries as W.G. Hoskins and Oliver Rackham to task in the level of landscape continuity that he argues they imply in Devon.
6 The primary returns and holding maps of the National Farm Survey (1941–1943) (PRO MAF32) were used as a prompt to these discussions.
7 This point is highlighted in the title to Crutchley's (2001) paper, where it is suggested that the landscape is 'revealed' by aerial photography, rather than in the interpretation of such photography.
8 Aerial photographs were used from the RAF wartime reconnaissance survey, dating between 1941 and 1947.
9 Indeed, this photograph has, to date, been shown at three archaeology seminars. Hay or corn ricks have been the most popular interpretations, followed by that of orchards. No-one has yet got the right answer. The context for these interpretations is, of course, artificial. But the exercise does demonstrate the difficulty of aerial photographic interpretation – particularly of ephemeral features.
10 Furze is the local vernacular term for *Ulex Europaeus* (see Mabey, 1996).
11 Other studies have referred to this as 'collective memory' (see Thomas, 1996).

Mark Riley, **David C. Harvey** and **Tony Brown** are in the School of Geography, Archaeology and Earth Resources, University of Exeter.

Contact address: David Harvey, Department of Geography, University of Exeter, Amory Building, Rennes Drive, Exeter EX4 4RJ, UK. Tel: +44 1392 263330; fax: +44 1392 263342.

Sara Mills is in the School of English, Sheffield Hallam University.

REFERENCES

Antrop, M. Why landscapes of the past are important for the future. *Landscape and Urban Planning* **70** (2005) 21–34.
Austin, D. and Walker, M.J.C. A new landscape context for Houndtor, Devon. *Medieval Archaeology* **29** (1985) 147–152.
Barnes, I. Aerial remote-sensing techniques used in the management of archaeological monuments on the British Army's Salisbury Plain Training Area, Wiltshire, UK. *Archaeological Prospection* **10** (2002) 83–90.
Bender, B. *Stonehenge: Making Space*. Oxford, Berg (1998).
Berger, J. *Ways of Seeing*. London, Penguin (1992).
Bewley, R.H. Aerial survey for archaeology. *Photogrammetric Record* **18** (2003) 273–290.
Bornat, J. *Reminiscence Reviewed: Perspectives, Evaluations, Achievements*. Buckingham, Open University Press (1994).
Bowden, M. Mapping the past: O.G.S. Crawford and the development of landscape studies. *Landscapes* **2** (2001) 29–45.
Brown, A.G. Characterising prehistoric lowland environments using local pollen assemblages. *Journal of Quaternary Science* **14** (1999) 585–594.
Brown, T., Hawken, S., Griffith, F., Franklin, L. and Hawkins, C. Science, landscape archaeology and public participation: the Community Landscape Project, Devon, UK. *Public Archaeology* (forthcoming).
Coles, J. *Experimental Archaeology*. London, Academic Press (1979).
Council for British Archaeology. *Participating in the Past: The Results of an Investigation by a Council for British Archaeology Working Party*. http://www.britarch.ac.uk/participation/report.html (2003) (last accessed 3 April 2004).
Cox, J.C. Place and field names of Derbyshire which indicate vegetable productions. *Derbyshire Archaeological and Natural History Society* **3** (1881) 3.
Crutchley, S. The landscape of Salisbury Plain, as revealed by aerial photography. *Landscapes* **2** (2001) 46–64.
David, B., McNiven, I., Manas, L., Manas, J., Savage, S., Crouch, J., Neliman, G. and Brady, L. Goba of Mua: archaeology working with oral tradition. *Antiquity* **78** (299) (2004) 158–172.
Dongoske, K.E., Yeatts, M., Anyon, R. and Ferguson, T.J. Archaeological cultures and cultural affiliation: Hopi and Zuni perspectives in the American Southwest. *American Antiquity* **62** (1997) 600–608.
Downum, C.E. and Price, L.J. Applied archaeology. *Human Organization* **58** (1999) 226–239.
Echo-Hawk, R.C. Ancient history in the New World: integrating oral traditions and the archaeological record in deep time. *American Antiquity* **65** (2000) 267–290.
Eckert, P. *Linguistic Variation and Social Practice: The Linguistic Construction of Social Identity in Belten High*. Oxford, Blackwell (2000).
Ellen, R., Parkes, P. and Bicker, A. (eds) *Indigenous Environmental Knowledge and its Transformations*. Amsterdam, Harwood (2000).
Featherstone, R., Horne, P., Macleod, D. and Bewley, R. Aerial reconnaissance over England in summer 1996. *Archaeological Prospection* **6** (1999) 47–62.
Field, J. *English Field Names*. London, Sutton (1995).

Finnegan, R. *Oral Traditions and the Verbal Arts: A Guide to Research Practices*. London, Routledge (1992).
Gelling, M. The effect of man on the landscape: the place-name evidence in Berkshire. In Limbrey, S. and Evans, J.G. (eds) *The Effect of Man on the Landscape: the Lowland Zone*. London, CBA (1978) 123–125.
Gelling, M. and Cole, A. *The Landscape of Place Names*. London, Paul Watkins Publishers (2000).
Hegmon, M. Setting theoretical egos aside: issues and theory in North American archaeology. *American Antiquity* **68** (2003) 213–243.
Heritage Lottery Fund. *The Heritage Lottery Fund Strategic Plan, 2002–2007*. London, Heritage Lottery Fund (2002).
Herzfeld, M. *A Place in History: Social and Monumental Time in a Cretan Town*. Princeton NJ, Princeton University Press (1991).
Horne, P. and MacLeod, D. Unravelling a Wharfedale landscape: a case study in field enhanced aerial survey. *Landscapes* **2** (2001) 65–82.
Hoskins, W.G. *Devon*. London, Collins (1954).
Jones, S. *Early Medieval Sculpture and the Production of Meaning, Value and Place: The Case of Hilton of Cadboll*. Edinburgh, Historic Scotland (2003).
Kitsikopoulos, H. Technological change in medieval England: a critique of the Neo-Malthusian argument. *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* **144** (2000) 397–449.
Langdon, J. *Horses, Oxen, and Technological Innovation: The Use of Draught Animals in English Farming from 1066 to 1500*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press (1986).
Lawrence, S. (ed.) *Archaeologies of the British: Explorations of Identity in Great Britain and its Colonies, 1600–1945*. London, Routledge (2003).
Mabey, R. *Flora Britannica*. London, Edbury (1996).
Mack, A. One landscape, many experiences: differing perspectives of the temple districts of Vijayanagara. *Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory* **11** (2004) 59–81.
Marciniak, A. Faunal materials and interpretive archaeology – epistemology reconsidered. *Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory* 6 (1999) 293–320.
Mason, R.J. Archaeology and native North American oral traditions. *American Antiquity* **65** (2000) 239–266.
Parker, P.L. and King, T.F. *Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting Traditional Cultural Properties – National Register Bulletin 38*. Washington DC, National Park Service (1990).
Parry, M.L. *Climate Change, Agriculture and Settlement*. Folkestone, Dawson (1978).
Perks, R. and Thompson, A. *The Oral History Reader*. London, Routledge (1998).
Rose, G. Situating knowledges: positionality, reflectives and other tactics. *Progress in Human Geography* **21** (1997) 305–320.
Scott, D.D. Oral tradition and archaeology: conflict and concordance examples from two Indian War sites. *Historical Archaeology* **37** (2003) 55–65.
Short, B., Watkins, C., Foot, W. and Kinsman, P. *The National Farm Survey 1941–1943: State Surveillance and the Countryside in England and Wales in the Second World War*. Oxford, CAB International (2000).
Stevenson, K.H. Heritage under the ethnographic lens. *Cultural Resource Management* **24** (2001) 3.
Symonds, M. Historical archaeology and the recent urban past. *International Journal of Heritage Studies* **10** (2004) 33–48.
Thomas, J. *Time, Culture and Identity. An Interpretive Archaeology*. London, Routledge (1996).
Thompson, F.M.L. (ed.) *Horses in European Economic History: A Preliminary Canter*. Reading, British Agricultural History Society (1983).
Tilley, C. *Interpretative Archaeology*. Oxford, Berg (1993).
Tilley, C. *A Phenomenology of Landscape: Places, Paths and Monuments*. Oxford, Berg (1994).
Timms, S. (ed.) *Archaeology of the Devon Landscape: Essays on Devon's Archaeological Heritage*. Exeter, Exeter University Press (1980).
Turner, S. The changing ancient landscape: South-West England. *Landscapes* **5** (2004) 18–34.
Whiteley, P.M. Archaeology and oral tradition: the scientific importance of dialogue. *American Antiquity* **67** (2002) 405–415.
Wood, M.C. Moving towards transformative democratic action through archaeology. *International Journal of Historical Archaeology* **6** (2002) 187–198.

Author Queries (aq)

1. Please define AHRB
2. I could not access this website. Please check the URL
3. No Berger 72 in refs. Do you mean the 92 ref here?
4. Please check page reference. Does not match stated page span
5. Please provide biogaphies for all authors

Please note that there is a paper in the reference list of 123 that is in press in PA. Could you please add publication details for it, both in the reference list and in the text where it is currently cited as forthcoming.