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'The History of Heritage'

For:

THE ASHGATE RESEARCH COMPANION TO HERITAGE AND IDENTITY

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Introduction

"It is so customary to think of the historical past in terms of narrative, sequences, dates and chronologies that we are apt to suppose these things attributes of the past itself. But they are not; we ourselves put them there".

(Lowenthal 1985, p. 219)

When writing histories of institutions, one would, ideally, like to start *at the beginning*. With heritage, however, although one can insert various developments such as the *Ancient Monuments Preservation Act* of 1882, or the publication of John Ruskin's *Seven Lamps of Architecture* into a meaningful narrative, the definition of a strict chronology, let alone the resolution of a 'beginning' appears to be arbitrary. Indeed, as I have argued elsewhere, even the frequently cited notion that heritage is somehow inexorably connected to 'modernity' is problematical (Harvey 2001). Heritage itself is not a *thing* and does not exist by itself – nor does it imply a *movement* or a *project*. Rather, heritage is about the *process* by which people use the past – a 'discursive construction' with material consequences (see Smith 2006, pp. 11-13). As a human condition therefore, it is omnipresent, interwoven within the power dynamics of any society and intimately bound up with identity construction at both communal and personal levels. It would, for instance, be impossible to 'date' such a popular mnemonic device relating to the weather as *red sky at night, shepherd's delight*. Yet the role of this saying as an item of heritage, the meaning of which is founded upon idealized representations of a collective past and which has purpose (or *use value*) in the present, together with a sense of projection into the future, is clear. Rather, what we can attempt to outline is a history of heritage in terms of a history of power relations that have been formed and operate via the deployment of the heritage process. This chapter, therefore, focuses upon the historical narrative of the changing forms of this process; its developing technologies, modes of representation and levels of access and control – in short, upon the history of the struggle to control the use of heritage within society.

The link between heritage and identity within such a project tends to focus upon the control and use of heritage by 'official' powers, and often concentrates on the *nation* as the primary vehicle for such a project. Indeed, Smith (2006, p. 11) sees a hegemonic 'authorized heritage discourse' that acts to validate a "set of practices and performances, which populates both popular and expert constructions of 'heritage' and undermines alternative and subaltern ideas about heritage". To paraphrase George Orwell's much-quoted comment: *who controls the present controls the past*. As well as underscoring the 'presentness' and political purpose of heritage, however, this phrase also pushes to the fore the way in which heritage is used with an eye to *the future* rather than allowing one-dimensional ideas of 'preservation' to obscure our task.

Although a 'history of heritage' will inevitably tend to focus upon the 'big' identity politics of 'heritage control' at an official (and often national) level, we

should not forget the importance of the personalised and localised heritage – *small heritages* if you like – about which it is impossible and largely meaningless to write such a general history. As well as ‘alternative’, ‘subaltern’ and actively resisting ‘authority’, these small heritages can also be everyday and even banal. Indeed, in a recent oral history project in Devon (UK) for instance, a farmer recalled the familial saying that was associated with his farm: *further from the farm, closer to the clay* (see Riley and Harvey 2007, forthcoming). The farmer went on to explain how the deeper topsoil of the land close to the holding still dictated the way in which he could plant crops around the farm, and left the research team mulling over exactly how long such a saying had been in use – how many generations of people residing in that valley had farmed according to this localised heritage of intimate and personal memory of the past, formed in the present, and set for use in the future? As will be discussed below, it is towards such small heritages that much attention, policy and practice is focussed at present: as confidence in meta-narratives of heritage purpose is being questioned, it is through such small heritages that an answer may be at hand.

Reflecting the experience of the author, the chapter focuses very much on the politics of, and struggles over, the control of heritage in Britain. By grounding the ‘British story’ in theories of heritage and history culture, processes of institutionalisation, democratisation, developing technology and themes of agency and social power, I hope to make this story of wider relevance.

Some Theoretical Terrain

For this chapter, I have taken heritage to refer to “a contemporary product shaped from history” (Tunbridge and Ashworth 1996, p. 20). This concise definition conveys that heritage is subjective and filtered with reference to the present, whenever that ‘present’ actually is. It is a value-laden concept, related to processes of economic and cultural commodification, but intrinsically reflective of a relationship with the past, however that ‘past’ is perceived and defined (Harvey 2001, p. 327). The definition of heritage not as the result of a movement or project (connected with modernity or otherwise), but as the product of a present-centred process would, on the face of it, seem to sidestep the whole issue of the need to delineate a ‘history’ of it. Heritage resides in the here and now – whenever and wherever that *here* and *now* happens to be.¹ In practice however, the proclamation of the human need for heritage, shared by all societies, provides scope for a much greater engagement in historical analysis than was previously the case (Harvey 2001; Dodgshon 1999). Most importantly, the extending temporal scope that is implied overturns the ‘traditional’ historical concern for imposing a supposedly objective chronology onto a linear past receding behind us, by foregrounding the importance of both contemporary context, and of concern for the future. “Every society has had a relationship with its past, even those which have chosen to ignore it” (Harvey 2001, p. 320). By extending the temporal scope of heritage both backwards and forwards, it becomes possible to conceive of a history of heritage – or ‘heritage of heritage’ – that has more power: heritage heroes such as William Morris, for instance, can be placed not as elements of an inevitable sequence of growing heritage concern, nor even in the context

¹ This implied truncation of temporal depth is discussed in Harvey (2001).

of their own time, but in the context of our needs and yearnings for a specific past and our desires for a particular future.

In order to provide a historical narrative of heritage as a process (and I should emphasise that this is 'a' historical narrative, rather than 'the history of...'), we need to define more clearly what is under review, and how it may be approached. As numerous authors have intimated, heritage is very difficult to define (Graham et al 2000; Tunbridge and Ashworth 1996; Larkham 1995; Schouten 1995; Harvey 2001). "Far from being fatally predetermined or God-given, [heritage] is in large measure our own marvellously malleable creation" (Lowenthal 1998, p. 226). Emphasising its lack of fixity and the presentness of its 'creation', Lowenthal implies an innate sense of dispute – or dissonance – within heritage that other authors have underlined (Tunbridge and Ashworth 1996). However, questions about agency (just *who* is doing the creating? Who is *us*?), together with questions about the means through which heritage is conveyed and 'knowledge' produced, are left somewhat hanging. Drawing on the theoretical work of Holtorf (2002, 2.6), one can portray heritage as a vehicle (often, but not only, a *site*) where *cultural memory* and various phenomena of *history culture* reside. Cultural memory is the collective understandings of the past as they are held by a people in any given social and historical context (Holtorf 2002, 2.0). Ideas of cultural memory are therefore laden with politics and power relationships as statements about the past become meaningful through becoming embedded within the cultural and material context of a particular time. Nora (1989, p. 7), talks of processes of crystallization, as memory 'secretes' itself around certain sites, objects, places, practices and concepts and is given value for particular ends. This *retrospective memory*, according to Holtorf (2002, 2.0) therefore, manifests itself through *history culture* – the ways that the past is 'presented' in everyday life, supporting, augmenting and guiding collective identities that reflect both a conscious and unconscious 'will to remember'. In addition, the sense of purpose with which people 'remember' the past serves to underline the importance of understanding how people situate themselves with respect to the future. In this respect, heritage may be understood in terms of a *prospective memory*, as tokens that represent a desired future – reflecting both future pasts and past futures. The act of conferring the label 'heritage' onto something – whether physical or otherwise – provides a sense of purpose. Resonant of Geary's (1994, p. 12) observation that "all memory is memory *for* something", this sense of purpose that heritage conveys must be recognised and its history understood, as purposes change with changing times (Holtorf 2002, 2.8).

This chapter therefore explores how cultural memory has developed over time – how collective understandings of the past have reflected changing social and historical contexts – and has been articulated through numerous places, objects, sites, sayings, concepts, traditions and practices that may be denoted as 'heritage'. In terms of these changing contexts, this is a story of institutional dynamism, technological development, and changing access to the production, consumption and performance of heritage.

The Heritage of Heritage: Adding some Temporal Depth

Heritage, as a present-centred phenomenon, has always been with us. In all ages people have used retrospective memories as resources of the past to

convey a fabricated sense of destiny for the future. Heritage, in this sense, can be 'found', interpreted, given meanings, classified, presented, conserved and lost again, and again, and again within any age (Harvey 2006). Taking a long historical view, one can find ancient Romans venerating and actively attempting to emulate the heritage of ancient Greece (Wardman 1976; Lowenthal 1985, p. 75), while the heritage of both cultures has formed a cornerstone of many social, aesthetic, cultural and political movements ever since. Most obviously, this can be seen through 'Renaissance' and 'neo-Classical' movements in early modern Europe. Even in the medieval period, however, invocation of Roman heritage helped to transform the city of Rome into Christendom's foremost metropolis (Boholm 1997), while more recently, its heritage enhanced the prestige and authority of Mussolini's brand of fascism (Atkinson and Cosgrove 1998). The heritage of Rome has obviously travelled far beyond its city walls and even the Italian peninsula, with its influence being felt around the entire world, even if only through the language and practices of the *senate* and the *forum*. A consideration of its heritage, therefore, cannot be tied down either in time or space. Rome's Pagan inheritance has been re-interpreted and used by the Catholic Church to enhance the authority of the Pope, while both democrats and fascists have sought Rome's succour and protection in the present, together with guidance for a desired future, through models of government and law.² A veneer of continuity, preservation and reverence for the past conceals a process of dynamic modification, as external demands hegemonically reconstruct 'traditions' in line with present authoritative desires (Boholm 1997, p. 267).

In medieval Europe, it was the Catholic Church that dominated the mediation of official heritage through its control over access to and interpretation of symbolic heritage resources, and the technology (especially through writing and monumental architecture) for conveying these resources to the population. As an enduring, immensely wealthy, hierarchical and extremely bureaucratic organisation, the church invoked a particular view of the world that drew heavily on carefully mediated heritage in order to pursue its largely abstract and supposedly non-material aims (Sack 1986). From St. Gregory's instruction to 'cleanse heathen shrines and use them as churches' (Blair 1988, p. 50), to the invocation of the Pope as a direct descendent of St. Peter, the Church used heritage to mould a picture of the world that reflected the needs of the present (Harvey 2001, p. 331). Some people may complain that in the early 21st century, great cathedrals are now treated as museums and heritage theme parks rather than sacred sites of personal faith and religious devotion. However, a visit to a cathedral has always been a highly mediated and controlled heritage-related event. Just like museums, their layout and architecture, fixtures and fittings, practices and ritual, are carefully choreographed, replicated and constructed in order to convey messages about the 'order of things' as represented through a specific notion of the past (see Frayling 1995, pp. 39-79 for instance). The history of this Catholic strand of heritage since the medieval period has, at least in an official capacity therefore, largely been one of dynamic power relationships. Over time there has been an increase in the level of what might be termed 'democracy' within the construction and consumption of heritage and a shift towards the nation

² Indeed, the word *fascist* derives from the *fascis* – the bundle of rods that, in ancient Rome, served as the symbol of authority for magistrates.

as the key axis through which heritage is replicated together with an increasing role of the State as arbiter.

The history of heritage is a history of the present – or rather – a historical narrative of an endless succession of presents – a heritage of heritage that can have no terminal point. The recognition of this view allows a much greater temporal depth, providing scope thereby to talk not only about a medieval heritage of Rome, nor a Roman heritage of Greece, but also a prehistoric sense of heritage (Holtorf 2002, 2.9). Although detailed specifics are necessarily sketchy, vague and often hotly disputed, Holtorf (2002, 6.6) cogently argues that all archaeologists' theories for understanding megalithic monuments can be read as theories about different 'prospective memories' – prospective memories for the future that draw upon a reservoir of symbolic capital (or heritage) from the past.

To add some flesh to the bones of these quite abstract ideas, it is necessary to focus on a case study – that of Avebury – and trace some elements of its life history, as its meanings, its interpretations and even its physical appearances have been recycled, manoeuvred and redeployed countless times over many generations.

Avebury: A Recent (Life) History of Heritage

Avebury is a world heritage site centred on a very large-scale megalithic complex in Wiltshire, southern England. Although only listed by UNESCO in 1986, it has been a site of special significance for at least 4,000 years (Chadburn and Pomeroy-Kellinger 2001, p. 1; Burl 2002). There has been much speculation about its purpose, with various accounts interpreting the site as a marker for the dead, a focal point for the living, an ideological statement, a ceremonial instrument, or a mnemonic marker. All such accounts interpret Avebury as being useful in the present, resonant of a past, and meaningful for a future time. In other words, Avebury can be viewed as an item of heritage that is expressive of prospective memories in whatever era one chooses to focus upon (Holtorf 2002, 6.6). Burl (2002, p. 225) notes that there is general agreement that Avebury was a religious centre for fertility cults linked with the earth, the sun, ritual objects and bones, but adds (p. 226) that the 'truths' of the matter surrounding the building of the site are necessarily always be a matter of speculation. The nature and number of versions of Avebury as an item of heritage that existed prior to the modern era can only be guessed at, but that it represented an item of *history culture*, where the past was made present, seems certain. Burl (2002, p. 257) notes that it took five centuries and upwards of 30 generations of men and women to build the original site; people whose collective cultural memories should be recognised as being embedded within the site, even if their meaning cannot be decoded. Instead, I now turn to Avebury's place in the more recent history of heritage: its heritage biography over the last 300 years.

UNESCO's description of Avebury being of 'outstanding universal value' (Chadburn and Pomeroy-Kellinger 2001, p. 1) underlines the present-centredness of its meaning as a vehicle of cultural memory in the late 20th century. Avebury is now a site with a management plan that seeks to co-ordinate various interested parties and a research agenda for assessing the heritage resource and for uncovering the history of the site "from the lower

Palaeolithic to the end of the medieval period” (AAHRG 2001, p. vi). This seems to have very little to say about Avebury as a purposeful ‘memory factory’ since the end of the medieval period.³

The amateur archaeologist and court gossip John Aubrey visited Avebury in 1648 and drew a sketch of the site in 1663 (Harvey 2003, p. 477). Schnapp (1993, p. 194) portrays Aubrey as a key figure in the early development of archaeological science, but if we place his work within the context of later 17th century cultural memory, we see the stirrings of a history culture that is based on the idea of the nation as the key vehicle of collective identity. By the invocation of a distinctly *British* druidry as the original builders of Avebury, John Aubrey sought to support the Restoration monarchy and undermine the position of Rome as the singular arbiter of historical narrative (Harvey 2003, p. 478). Whatever the ‘truth’ of Avebury’s past, Aubrey’s enthusiasm for using the site as evidence for a distinct imagined national community represented a novel development in the history of how heritage resources were articulated. Even the notion that there was a ‘history’ before the Roman occupation of Britain was a new idea (Schnapp 1993, pp. 191-2; Trigger 1989, p. 48). While not ‘anti-Biblical’ as such, this development does appear to represent a key moment in terms of the secularisation of cultural memory and the breaking of a religious monopoly over the official interpretation and use of what may be termed ‘heritage resources’. Although less interested in UNESCO’s notions of ‘universal value’ and preservation, John Aubrey’s work represents the beginnings of what might be termed a conscious fabrication of a national destiny that draws from a reservoir of heritage-related cultural capital (Harvey 2003, p. 478).

Although the process of deploying heritage in the service of nation building has been put forward for an earlier time (see Hastings 1997 and Bengtson 1997 for instance), the conscious articulation of the nation as a horizontally-imagined community of people with a distinct heritage and sense of destiny appears to gather pace from the 17th century (see Cressy 1994). At Avebury, the interpretation and articulation of the site became, in the 18th century, a vehicle for William Stukeley’s brand of siege-mentality anti-Catholicism:

“We have no reason to think but that the Druids, in this island of ours, generally kept up to the purity of their first and patriarchal institution. [...] On the Continent, idolatry crept on by degrees. [...] These temples [such as Avebury] used to be everywhere but only survived well in this island of ours”
Stukeley 1743, p. iii.

Interestingly, although Stukeley is at pains to deploy the ancient remains at Avebury as a token of Britain’s Protestant providence, this was not a time in which all of the island’s population could share in the celebration of this constructed heritage, and, despite the personal joy shown over the survival of the monuments, Stukeley is not a heritage conservator in the modern sense:

“My intent is (besides preserving the memory of these extraordinary monuments, so much to the honour of our country, now in great

³ The phrase ‘memory factory’ is from Dietler (1998).

danger of ruin) to promote as much as I am able to, the Knowledge and the practice of the ancient and true Religion”
Stukeley 1740, p. 1.

Stukeley chastises the local villagers for their ignorance and avarice in breaking up the stones (Stukeley 1743, p. 16), but what he ‘seeks to rescue before it is too late’ (Stukeley 1743, p. iii), is not the preserved stones and physical remains, but the retrospective memory of the site, to be deployed in present centred and future oriented interjections into the identity and religious politics of the nation. In terms of the history of heritage, therefore, we see here an appeal to a sense of nationhood founded upon a distinct ‘heritage’. However, this is not an appeal to the masses for verification and there is little sentiment to preserve any physical remains. The heritage resource, then, is a vehicle of expression, but not one that may be described as at all democratic in either its production or consumption, whether in pretension or reality; the ‘wretched villagers’ get a mention (Stukeley 1743, p. 16), but their understandings and uses of heritage remain of little importance.

The quasi-official heritage accounts of the intelligentsia in the 18th century were produced and consumed by a very narrow section of society. While the newspapers and intellectual societies represented new media through which such heritage concerns could be articulated, the cultural memory that was sanctioned remained a tiny (yet influential) proportion of the total representative *history culture*. When the British Museum opened in 1753 for instance, a sample of heritage that represented elite culture was displayed to a discerning upper echelon of society more as a means to support and nurture a supposed natural order of things than as a means to educate. The opening of the British Museum does, however, reflect a growing concern for ‘collection’, for inventorising and for public display that would evolve over the following 250 years to form one of the cornerstones of today’s heritage impulse.

At Avebury, the early 19th century witnessed a movement towards greater direct public participation in heritage through the production of what must be one of the first detailed heritage ‘guide books’ that was consciously produced for a mass audience. Henry Browne’s (1823) *Illustration of Stonehenge and Abury, in the County of Wiltshire* continues Stukeley’s concern with the site as being provided by God’s providence for the purpose of national celebration of Britain’s (Protestant) population (Harvey, 2007 forthcoming). Once again, a sense of destiny is prominent:

“[The preservation of Stonehenge and Avebury] gives an ascendancy in importance to this our country to all others – an ascendancy which we see paralleled at the present moment in its being alone selected to make known the revealed will of God throughout the earth. And is this little spot, an island, ...destined before all others to this great, this mighty, this most glorious of ends!”

Browne 1823, p. vii

Heritage, in this sense, tells us that it is not just Britain’s moral duty, but its *destiny* to bring its version of ‘civilization’ to all corners of the world. Browne’s *Guide* was republished many times throughout the 19th century, underscoring

the increasing reach of such heritage interpretation through cheaper printing technology and wider distribution to an expanding middle class.⁴ Rather than dwelling on the need to conserve the universal heritage of ancestors (as in the UNESCO ideal), Browne seems quite candid in his linking of heritage to the present-centred identity politics of the nation. In contrast to earlier notions of heritage, it is also up front in its call to preserve the physical remains:

“Do not then, my countrymen, let these testimonies to your unparalleled eminence, even from the beginning of time [i.e. Avebury and Stonehenge] stand unprotected. Oh! Let not the rude and ignorant demolish what is left of these venerable piles, these truly precious relics of antiquity, – acceptable I cannot but believe, even in the sight of God himself”

Browne 1823, p. 41.

Reading today almost as a ‘mission statement’ of an imaginary campaigning heritage organisation, Browne’s words reflected wider views that matched a great sense of certainty and faith in a sense of destiny, unease over the huge industrial, social, economic and political upheavals that were taking place in the present, and a nostalgia for a distant past that might act as a map to steer us to the Promised Land.

Placing Avebury into Context: Heritage Heroes and the Nationalisation of the Past in the 19th Century

Technological advances in printing and distribution allowed such figures as Walter Scott to populate the historical landscape, revolutionising the experience of the past for a newly heritage-literate popular audience (Chitty 1999, p. 95; Brooks 1998, pp. 2-3; Mandler 1997). The early 19th century also saw the increasing use of heritage not as a confirmation of supposed natural order/superiority, but as a comparison to prompt action and social change. Resonant of Browne’s ‘call to arms’ (above), this notion of heritage as a campaigning totem developed within quite different socio-political contexts. Augustus Pugin’s polemical *Contrasts* portrayed heritage as a reactionary answer to a supposed moral malaise, while John Ruskin sought a more progressive society through heritage – albeit one that sees social cohesion as part of an organically hierarchical society (Brooks 1998, pp. 8-10).

As the 19th century progressed, heritage became the vehicle for both ‘conservative’ and ‘radical/progressive’ movements searching for an answer to the perceived evils of modern society. Cultural elites, as represented by figures such as George Gilbert Scott and the Cambridge Camden Society (and, indeed, as witnessed at many a provincial museum and amateur intellectual society) sought to maintain ‘natural’ hierarchy and authority as a specific way of reading the world (Brooks 1998, pp. 13-14; Miele 1998, pp. 106-7). William Morris, in contrast, used heritage as a means to encourage social and economic revolution. It is from figures such as Morris and the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB) that a concern for preservation (as opposed to restoration or ‘reconstitution’) comes. This tacit regard for absolute ‘authenticity’ in one form or other has, in many respects,

⁴ This is resonant of Anderson’s (1983) arguments about the importance of print capitalism for the expanding notion of an imagined national community.

become one of the main touchstones (and some would say, red herrings) in heritage discussion ever since – and one which viewing heritage as a present-centred process in whatever age seeks to bypass (see Hewison 1987; and comments in Harvey 2001 for instance). It is perhaps ironic that many modern conservation lobbies and societies inherited William Morris's ideals of artefactual authenticity without his distinct dislike of many of the (Georgian and Victorian) artefacts and buildings that they now seek to conserve. Indeed, the invocation of absolute artefactual authenticity is more usually associated with conservative and reactionary social attitudes.

In the mid-19th century, the popularisation of the past through heritage was connected very strongly to the nation, and was reflected in the founding of the Department of British and Medieval Antiquities and Ethnography within the British Museum in 1866 (MacGregor 1998, p. 136). Following the Museums Act (1845) and the Great Exhibition (1851), provincial museums developed apace, with Britain having 90 museums in 1860, 180 in 1880 and 295 in 1914. However, MacGregor shows (1998) that this expansion of formalised and inventoried resources largely remained within the hands of the privileged and powerful. More provocative is Graham et al's comment (2000, p. 14) that the "will to conserve was the obsession of a passionate, educated and generally influential minority, and the social, educational and political characteristics of heritage producers have changed little since the nineteenth century". The Victorian museum, together with the expansion of archaeological and historical societies may have held ideals of democratising heritage through making more open the consumption of heritage resources, but access to and choices over the production and formal interpretation of this resource remained in the hands of the few.

We have already seen how Walter Scott (for instance) opened up the beginnings of what may be termed a 'mass market' for popular national heritage (Brooks 1998, Chitty 1999). Peter Mandler (1997, p. 33) identifies this strand of heritage as one that was less interested in 'real events' and instead keen to consume what he describes as 'olden-time'; a time between medieval rudeness and the over-refinement of the aristocracy in the early modern period. Such processes of mass consumption witnessed the first stirrings of popular heritage 'fashions'. Elizabethanism and the popularity of Shakespeare as the 'national bard' can be seen as expressions of a popular concern for the heritage of 'merrie England' (e.g. Howkins 1986), while a fashion for Saxonism was supported by a 'cult' of Alfred the Great together with the best-selling novel *Hereward the Wake* (1865) by Charles Kingsley for instance.

The institution that seems to bring all of these essentially 19th century facets together is the National Trust (see Weideger 1994; Newby 1995; Murphy 2002).⁵ Founded along campaigning lines in 1895 by Octavia Hill, Robert Hunter and Hardwicke Rawnsley, the Trust sought social change but was also wholly embedded within educated, privileged and influential circles. It had strong connections to a range of 'enlightened' aristocrats, a unique relationship with the State (the Trust is constituted through a series of National

⁵ Formed as The National Trust for Places of Historic Interest or Natural Beauty in 1895, the National Trust covers England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The National Trust for Scotland was established in 1931.

Trust Acts, 1907-71) and a concern for popularising a purposively 'national' heritage agenda. Although originally more interested with open landscapes and medieval buildings, the National Trust became increasingly involved in the maintenance and preservation of country houses and gardens largely through laws of inheritance tax and the opportunism of James Lees-Milne (the Secretary of the National Trust's Country House Committee 1936-1950). From its nadir in the 1930s and 1940's, the country house has transformed into being a public symbol of national pride (Mandler 1997), and The National Trust was very much at the forefront of this process. "The great houses of England were brought into 'public' ownership by confident delegation, by mild nepotism, ...this was the old boy network's finest hour; their noblest nationalisation" (*The Times*, quoted in Lowenthal 1998, p. 65).

In terms of our wider themes in the history of heritage, the work of the National Trust appears to extend the campaigning elements of Ruskin and Morris. However, it directs its efforts not at social revolution, but at meeting and manipulating a public appetite for the 'olden-time'. A carefully mediated past needs to be revered and conserved for the 'good of the nation', and an ideal (or veneer) of continuity – whether in physical presence or in terms of genetic lineage – should be adhered to.⁶ The achievement of this carefully mediated heritage product, however, has often meant that some bits have had to be left out of the narrative – elided, covered over or simply destroyed – while what exists appears to support a conservative and backward-looking agenda of nostalgia that is a long way from the ideals of its founders.

Placing Avebury into Context: Moving into the 20th Century

During the 20th century, Avebury underwent more large scale and rapid changes in its form and meaning than at almost any other phase of its existence. Mirroring some of the ideals of public exemplification and national pride that we saw in the later 19th century, during the first half of the 20th century there were efforts to transform Avebury into a 'public' and 'national' monument on a grand scale. Carried by the finance and vision of the amateur archaeologist and marmalade magnate Alexander Keiller, the site was physically transformed, stones moved and reconfigured, 'out of place' buildings pulled down and an entire landscape moulded. On the one hand, Keiller seemed uneasy about the "onslaught of [the] minions of modernity",⁷ yet he himself was at the forefront of thoroughly modern agendas and practices at Avebury, pioneering aerial photography, using bulldozers and dynamite for archaeological 'reconstruction', and pursuing a publicity-conscious programme of interpretation and display. Concrete posts marked the spots where stones once stood, roads were widened and car parks built to facilitate greater public access to the site. Keiller's self-confessed sense of 'public duty' was matched by a desire to engage the public that was perhaps ahead of his time:

"...the whole will be laid to grass, fences removed altogether (or transferred to more suitable situations). This part of the monument (which has hitherto been rigorously preserved as private property by Jenner) thrown freely open to the public, with appropriate notice

⁶ See Wright 1985 for comments on this genetic lineage.

⁷ Letter 15th September 1923, to OGS Crawford.

boards to explain its significance, as well as the layout of the site as a whole”

Letter to Cookie 6th April 1937 (Alexander Keiller Museum AKM, MS 20000639.3)

Keiller’s manufacture of a ‘Neolithic’ landscape, supposedly untainted by all other influences, yet fully accessible to a burgeoning 20th century leisure and heritage market, meant that buildings from later periods – even medieval cottages – had to go. In 1938, Keiller had placed one of his own men in a rented cottage owned by someone else, so that a “form of dysentery which has smitten his entire family” could be used as a threat to the building’s owner in order to force a sale for the purposes of demolition.⁸ Although not outwardly pursuing such underhanded techniques, the Ministry of Works and the National Trust continued these practices after Keiller’s death in October 1955.

“In June, following the demolition of the Old Baptist Chapel in High Street and farm buildings in the adjoining yard, the whole of the site was converted into a much needed car park. We have also completely cleared away the row of four cottages which extended right up to the Cove, the Red Lion garage which stood on the corner opposite Perry’s shop, and the old Turnpike Cottage. ...Several more buildings, including the Manse and the farm buildings behind it are ear-marked to come down as soon as they become vacant”

Letter from WEV Young [site manager], to Mr. Gray, 7th January 1957; AKM, MS. Files 88024572.

What we witness at Avebury during the mid 20th century, therefore, is in line with heritage agendas elsewhere, with new techniques of presentation underlining more democratic and public consumption practices, but with production and formal heritage mediation still firmly in the hands of privileged and educated experts. The social elite however, were now more commonly relegated to influencing agendas through their (quasi) official roles on such bodies as the National Trust or outlets of the formal State.

In the latter half of the 20th century, the standard description of heritage, no longer as a ‘social movement’, but an ‘industry’, became commonplace, as did its easy relation to both small and big ‘C’ conservatism (see Wright 1985; Hewison 1987, 1988). However, these commentaries, while grasping a sense of fear and decline-driven nostalgia that seemed to be apparent in some elite heritage circles, nonetheless failed to understand the full scope of the heritage process. Raphael Samuel’s (1994) sharp criticism of the Hewison agenda, for instance, drew particular attention to the growth of attractions and practices associated with industrial heritage, painting a far more democratic and open-ended view of a heritage that was ‘of the people’ rather than ‘for the people’. This focus on industrial heritage, which had been largely ignored by bodies such as the National Trust for many years, was linked to the past campaigns of figures such as William Morris and Octavia Hill, but through celebrating the ordinary, the everyday and the anonymous over the high culture of the proverbial ‘great and good’, eschewed the concerns of the traditional heritage expert. Resonant with Ruskin or Pugin, lessons could still be learnt from the

⁸ Letter 22nd January 1938; AKM MS. box 78510174 (88024128)

'heritage of our ancestors', but these lessons no longer preached fear of industrial modernity. Rather, these lessons forsook the need to 'go back' to a supposedly better place for a sense of progression to a new and better future in which the struggles of the past were celebrated rather than aped.

For much of this work, a general appeal to ideas of the nation, a certain reverence to particular artefacts, objects, sites and buildings, together with a simplified historical narrative – albeit one that was increasingly confident in an ideal of 'progress' – was commonplace, and all was set within a growing awareness that tourism and leisure time were the proper contexts for public consumption of heritage. However, the last two decades of the 20th century saw important changes in all of these assumptions.

A decreasing appeal to the nation as the foremost container of identity mirrored the wider political, social and economic transitions of the time, and the trajectory of heritage towards the local, and even personal became increasingly recognised. On an altogether different scale, the recognition of a common or global sense of heritage through such schemes as the UNESCO system for instance, particularly in relation to the 'natural' world, also became important. In practice, these processes often acted to turn attention away from revered objects and artefacts, and towards an emotional spectrum that had hitherto been largely unacknowledged. In some respects, the need to provoke in order to get a message across was a consequence of dealing with subject matter – such as the slave trade for instance – for which there were very few meaningful or aesthetically pleasing objects and for which an emotional appeal could garner most purchase. In other respects, the expansion of what has been labelled 'hot heritage' (Uzzell 1989) mirrored a wider transition within heritage practices and processes that may also be witnessed in the so called 'new museology' movement of the 1990s (Vergo 1989; McDonald and Fyfe 1996; Moore 1997; Hooper-Greenhill 1992, 2000). New subject matter, new techniques of display and curatorship, new technologies and a new sense of purpose characterises this movement. For possibly the first time since their inception, the worth and meaning of museums and their collections, interpretations and politics of display, has been critically examined.

The heritage sector as a whole has repositioned itself slightly, eschewing 'mere' entertainment and leisure and promoting its role in agendas of education and social cohesion.⁹ New heritage practices, such as live re-enactments, oral history projects and conservation volunteering have blurred the boundaries between producers and consumers.¹⁰ Meanwhile, a government agenda of social inclusion, supported by a funding system that is epitomised by the Heritage Lottery Fund's (HLF) mission to "encourage more people to be involved in and make decisions about their heritage", and in "widening participation among people of all ages and backgrounds - especially people from communities who have not been involved in heritage before",¹¹ has provided impetus for local communities and even individuals to

⁹ *Black History* month is a good example of this.

¹⁰ See Orr 2006 for instance.

¹¹ Heritage Lottery Fund website, accessed 26th October 2006.

<http://www.hlf.org.uk/English/AboutUs/OurBackground/Whatdowedo.htm>

become concerned with heritage.¹² Bodies such as the National Trust still exist, and despite a broadening of their community appeal in recent years, largely remain at the forefront of an agenda that foregrounds nostalgia at the specifically *national*, aesthetically pleasing and elite-centred scale.

The HLF has also hit some sticky patches over providing what some would argue are too much funds for what is seen as elite culture,¹³ but in their self-proclaimed mission to “listen carefully to the changing ways in which an evolving society values the past” (HLF 2002, p. 1), they reveal a refreshing attitude to heritage as something that is never inert, but is made and moulded according to the needs of the present.

Looking Backwards to the Future: Some Tentative Conclusions

Contrary to popular wisdom, the future does not lay out in front of you. The future is something that comes upon you from behind your back, with the past receding away before your eyes (Persig 1974, p. 417). The recognition of heritage as malleable, present-centred and future-oriented appears to bring us full circle. Rather than catalogue a seemingly inevitable chronology of a ‘heritage movement’, I have attempted to sketch a historical narrative of how the heritage process has been deployed, articulated and consumed through time. We have seen important transitions in how official heritage is carried, from obsessions over site, or over artefactual integrity, to viewing emotion and embodied practice as legitimate and valuable vehicles through which history cultures may be practised. We have seen how developments in technology – and the control of this technology – went hand in hand with developments over how heritage was produced and consumed. And we have seen huge changes in the politics of that production and consumption, with questions of access to the means to promote, display and enjoy heritage playing a crucial role. In all of this, a sense of *purpose* is critical. At present, this purpose is often found in educational benefits and community leadership, policies of social inclusion and even economic regeneration; goals which, on the face of it, seem a long way from the heritage agendas of the past. As Mason (2004) points out, however, the faith that heritage contains a power to transform is common to heritage in all periods.

Despite Orwell’s statement that history is produced by the ‘winners’ in society in order to support their moral, political and economic authority, heritage today appears to be far less strident in its claims. Indeed, some have noted that heritage today often appears to be led by the ‘losers’ in society.¹⁴ Certainly there appears to be greater cogency and value given to the heritage of those that have been deprived of agency in the past – the downtrodden, the exploited, and the defeated – even if this only scratches at the surface of the hegemonic power structures of authority. An extreme ‘relativism’ in the validity of heritage narratives can be witnessed at Avebury today, where one can find the ‘official’ heritage story of the National Trust, English Heritage, and the Alexander Keiller Museum competing with New Age interpretations of the site: the heritage of ley lines, mystical occurrences and spiritual healing. Narratives

¹² The increasing interest in genealogies is a good example of this.

¹³ For instance, the HLF courted controversy over its decision to provide funds to acquire the papers of Sir Winston Churchill

¹⁴ This theme is strong, for instance, in David Lowenthal’s lecture, entitled *Reparation, Restitution, Reparations*, at the British Academy, 8th December 2006.

of archaeological science and dioramas that outline the story of Alexander Keiller's plans are now joined by tea-rooms, nature walks and courses on water divining as means through which the past can be consumed. In many ways, however, it is the recognition that we all have agency in the production of cultural memory that is most important.

At the beginning of the chapter I highlighted the inevitable open-endedness of the everyday 'pieces' and 'performances' of heritage, about which it is impossible to date or categorise: the ordinary, conscious and unconscious elaboration and repetition of cultural memory that has both history and prehistory, but which has no 'beginning' or 'end'. These are the 'small heritages' that have always existed, but which are rarely celebrated. At one level, heritage today is about "the promotion of a consensus version of history by state-sanctioned cultural institutions and elites to regulate cultural and social tensions in the present. On the other hand, heritage may also be a resource that is used to challenge and redefine received values and identities by a range of subaltern groups" (Smith 2006, p. 4). While this chapter has necessarily concentrated on providing a narrative history of the 'big heritage', we must not forget the small heritages, which do not always have to take the form of overt resistance to officialdom. Indeed, with the present spread of blogs, podcasts and digital archives such as *myspace.com* and *youtube.com* on the internet, it is perhaps these small heritages that will form the basis of the material, the thoughts, practices and plans that we pass on to the next generation – our *prospective memory* if you like. What the next generation will do with this material, this effort and these memories, however – their *retrospective memories* – is up to them.

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