Conserving and Managing Ancient Monuments

Heritage, Democracy, and Inclusion
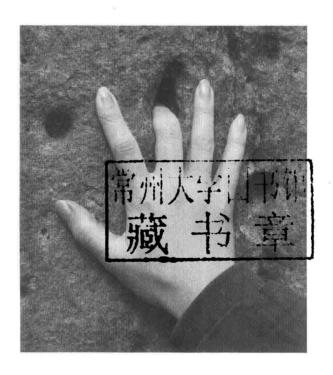
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CONSERVING AND MANAGING
ANCIENT MONUMENTS

HERITAGE, DEMOCRACY, AND INCLUSION

HERITAGE MATTERS

Series Editors
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Heritage Matters is a series of edited and single-authored volumes which addresses the whole range of issues that confront the cultural heritage sector as we face the global challenges of the twenty-first century. The series follows the ethos of the International Centre for Cultural and Heritage Studies (ICCHS) at Newcastle University, where these issues are seen as part of an integrated whole, including both cultural and natural agendas, and thus encompasses challenges faced by all types of museums, art galleries, heritage sites and the organisations and individuals that work with, and are affected by them.

Previously published titles are listed at the back of this book

Illustrations

Acknowledgments

Abbreviations

AHD	Authorized Heritage Discourse
AMAC	Ancient Monuments Advisory Committee
AMCAA	*Ancient Monuments Consolidation and Amendment Act*
ANZAC	Australian and New Zealand Army Corps
CHM	Cultural Heritage Management
CMAS	Conservation and Management of Archaeological Sites
CRM	Cultural Resource Management
CRT	Coalfields Regeneration Trust
DAC	Diocesan Advisory Council
DEFRA	Department of the Environment, Farming and Rural Affairs
DoE	Department of the Environment
DCLG	Department for Communities and Local Government
DCMS	Department for Culture, Media and Sport
DETR	Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions
DWP	Department for Work and Pensions
HLCA	Historic Landscape Character Assessment
HLF	Heritage Lottery Fund
ICOMOS UK	International Council on Monuments and Sites, United Kingdom
IJHS	*International Journal of Heritage Studies*
JSRAI	*Journal of the Society of the Royal Antiquaries of Ireland*
KAS	Kilkenny Archaeological Society
MoW	Ministry of Works
NHLE	National Heritage List for England
NHPP	National Heritage Protection Plan
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
NRHP	National Register of Historic Places
NT	National Trust
NYMNPA	North York Moors National Park Authority
OS	Ordnance Survey
PoP	Power of Place
PPG	Planning Policy Guidance
PPS	Planning Policy Statement
Proc SoA	*Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries*
RAI	Royal Antiquaries of Ireland
RCHME	Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments (England)
RIBA	Royal Institute of British Architects
SoA	Society of Antiquaries
Trans KAS	Transactions of the Kilkenny Archaeological Society
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization

Contents

Introduction

What can the burial of a number of modern concrete slabs at Fountains Abbey World Heritage Site tell us about the manner in which cultural heritage management practice operates in England?

Fountains Abbey is a ruined medieval monastic site near Ripon in North Yorkshire, England. The abbey complex is also part of a much larger designed landscape of the mid- and late 18th century. The designed landscape was initially created beyond the abbey grounds by John Aislabie, although the abbey ruins were later incorporated into the gardens by his son William, who extended the designed landscape. In the 19th century a Gothic Revival church was added to the large deer park which formed one part of the extensive garden. This designed landscape is referred to both as a 'Water Garden' and a 'Pleasure Garden'. The entirety of the estate, abbey, water garden and deer park is known as Studley Royal and Fountains Abbey and was designated as a World Heritage Site in 1986. The ruined abbey complex is designated a nationally important archaeological site, while the garden contains numerous nationally important buildings and the designed landscape as a whole is a nationally important Historic Park and Garden.

Designation means that a place has been recognised by heritage experts as attaining a level of national or international importance against a set of agreed criteria and is deserving of particular consideration through the various planning and regulatory systems that exist nationally and internationally. Designation can exist at international level (as with World Heritage) but it also exists at national and local levels; most nations have their own list of those places considered to be 'nationally important' and which are designated as such. National importance is usually defined against criteria that recognise specific values or qualities, primarily: historical, architectural, aesthetic. The implication of this can be that certain qualities are privileged over others: the older something is the more important it is thought to be, whilst attribution (whether the place was conceived and designed by a famous person and is related to other comparable places) and aesthetics (the place as art history, its beauty and relationship to 'high culture') make major contributions to that sense of importance. Nationally important places are presented as places that reveal or fit into a proposed national story; but whose story? Quite often there is an assumption that designation equals protection and that designation is management: to place something on a list is to 'name' it and therefore 'manage' it. At international level the *Lausanne Charter for the Protection and Management of the Architectural Heritage* (ICOMOS 1990) equates management with protection, whilst attainment of World Heritage designation means that places are selected on the basis of their Outstanding Universal Value. This is defined by reference to a limited number of criteria: the place should represent a unique artistic achievement, have exerted great cultural influence, be an exceptional testimony to a civilisation, be an outstanding example of a type of place or traditional human settlement, be directly and tangibly associated with events and traditions and meet a test of authenticity (ICCROM 1993, 3). It can be seen that the national and international attributes for inter/national importance all lean in a particular direction – towards the historical, architectural and aesthetic and to a set of Eurocentric ideals.

However, the criteria can and should be subject to reinterpretation, whilst designation can and ought to be responsive to changing social, political and professional demands (Bowdler 2007). In Chapter 7 we will see examples of the way in which designation in England has responded to changing professional and social contexts and embraced the idea of diversity, but a number of questions start to emerge: what are the reasons why a place might be liked, or become significant to people; are the designated places those that people really value; is the projected national or international story exclusive or inclusive, and is importance the same as significance?

When Studley Royal and Fountains was designated as a World Heritage Site (primarily under the 'representing a unique artistic achievement' criteria) in 1986, a number of heritage and conservation organisations, most notably ICOMOS UK (the UK section of an international, non-governmental organisation of heritage professionals who advise on the conservation of national and international heritage sites), were represented at site meetings and presented strategies for its conservation and management. At the same time discussion was being held on site about a number of large concrete foundation slabs located on the hilltop above the abbey ruins. The estate owners (National Trust) felt that the concrete slabs were intrusive and detracted from the Outstanding Universal Value of the site because they were ugly, modern and utilitarian. It was further pointed out that they were not referred to in either the national designation descriptions or the UNESCO world heritage designation documentation. The story of the concrete slabs was not in the guidebooks or other site interpretation. The representatives of ICOMOS UK and English Heritage agreed with the National Trust and suggested that the slabs should be broken up. However, instead of being broken up they were buried, along with their associated story. But what were they and what was the story?

In the 1930s the estate was owned by the Vyner family, who also owned estates in the North East of England. They were devout Roman Catholics who were moved by the mass unemployment and social inequality of the Depression era in Tyneside and felt that they as individuals and as part of an elite should do more to alleviate the suffering of the industrial poor. The Vyners created two settlements; one in Swarland near Morpeth in the North East and the other at Fountains ('the Fountains Settlers Society'). The Swarland settlement housed destitute families, while the Fountains settlement provided homes and work for boys aged 16 to 18, in addition to a small number of families. By December 1936, 160 boys had moved to the Fountains settlement. They were then trained by the estate staff to be foresters, masons, joiners and gardeners before being found employment at a variety of locations across the country. The concrete slabs above the abbey were the foundations of the temporary buildings of the settlement. But what does this tell us about importance and significance and the edifice of cultural heritage management practice?

Most heritage managers and conservationists come from similar educational backgrounds and a narrow range of disciplines, principally archaeology, art history, architectural history and history. Their professional training and work tends to be limited to the conservation, designation and management of nationally and internationally important places, working for governmental or non-governmental institutions and charities. They are policymakers, designators, interpreters and caseworkers: they select which sites/places and which stories are identified and validated through professional practice and the aim of their practice is to ensure the survival of the remains of the past. Their expertise is based on a narrow range of values that have become intellectualised over years of academic definition and they invariably think of themselves as members of an individual discipline – such as archaeology or architectural history – rather than as cultural heritage managers. As a consequence these values and the associated practice are seen as objective,

scientific and rational. The consequence has been that the combination of expertise and specific values has favoured a particular form of knowledge, while the concept of heritage generated through this intellectualisation has become the 'norm', privileging a limited range of attributes: age, antiquity, aesthetics, scientific progress, attribution and connoisseurship.

If you were asked to list the themes and stories which summarise Fountains Abbey and Studley Royal you might include patronage, charity, belief, dedication, devotion and vision. The story of the Settlement fits all of those themes. It could be argued that the story of the Fountains Settlement provides a direct link from modern belief and philanthropy to the devotion and alms-giving of the medieval monks. Similarly, a link to ideas of patronage and ownership joins the Vyners to the Aislabies. The unemployed youths who moved to Fountains could be presented as latter day 'monastic lay brothers' (the monks who carried out the physical labour). Therefore, if you wanted to make the more distant story of medieval monasticism accessible to present day visitors it might be productive to use the story of the Vyners as the bridge to that more distant past. However, even though elements of the story of the Settlement might be attractive to a heritage manager, it does raise problems for the prevailing view: concrete is perceived as ugly and difficult to conserve, and the story raises issues of social justice, the uses of historic places and political ideology which may run counter to the projected idea of a national story, although the image of the altruistic patriarch is a popular conceit. The outcome, therefore, is that the story of the Settlement and its physical remains do not fit with the demands of national/international importance and Outstanding Universal Value and the prevailing direction of cultural heritage management. Even though it could be argued that the Outstanding Universal Value has only survived into the present because unemployed teenagers were set to work on its conservation and maintenance, concrete in an 18th century landscape does not 'represent a unique artistic achievement'. In this way the preference for fabric and aesthetics in cultural heritage management practice has, at best, relegated people, story and social concerns to second place, and at worst has excised that story from history. However, the interesting thing to note is that validation of international and national importance through practice, heritage legislation and professional guidance does not actually address the issues of how a place is to be managed. 'Designation' is not of itself 'management': it is a management tool.

On one level management is perceived to be about conservation; once the sites have been selected and designated they are then to be conserved and protected and the overriding concern with conservation practice is perceived to be to sustain the authenticity of the place, whether it is a standing ruin, buried site, landscape or historic building. If conservation can be understood as how we intervene in fabric, it has also to be responsive to the meanings given to places in order to inform the management choices to be made when a site changes through increased visitor numbers, climate change, or the changing demands made by visitors that have to be addressed if the place is to retain economic sustainability. As for 'authenticity', that is an intellectual dead-end. These and numerous other issues are at the core of management. But where does significance fit in, what does it mean and why is it different to importance?

'Significance' is the short form of 'cultural significance' and cultural significance is about who values a place and why a place has meaning to us now, in the present. Cultural significance was given its first real airing through the *Burra Charter* (Australia ICOMOS 1979) and again through *The Conservation Plan* by James Semple Kerr (Kerr 1996), both documents introducing the idea that conservation was about managing change. As a term, significance is now in extensive use, forming the basis of the English Heritage *Conservation Principles* (English Heritage 2008) and the

English *National Planning Policy Framework* (DCLG 2012). Essentially, significance is the sum of the values attached to a place. We have seen that a limited range of values is used to define national and international importance (see p. 1), but establishing significance relies on a wider range of values and meanings, defined in the *Conservation Principles* as evidential (what the place can tell us), historical (the associations a place has), aesthetic (its design or fortuitous development) and communal (its social value). The *Burra Charter* lists historical, scientific, aesthetic and social as its principal value groups, but states that there are other value groups that could be attached to a place. If we were to take the example of the Fountains Settlement we could say that the remains had evidential value (there is material culture left by the Settlers); historical value (they were associated with a person and a wider movement in the 1930s which used conservation work as a form of social welfare); limited aesthetic value, although it could be argued that the concrete provided a counterpoint to the sublime 18th century landscape and revealed a deeper reality about the labour involved in the reconstruction of the gardens in the early modern period; and, finally, considerable social value. So, when all the values are taken together, the concrete foundations and the story associated with them have some degree of cultural significance: they are not valueless. And they were important to people. Several of the teenagers (now men) still lived locally; on my first day at Fountains the man who met me in the works yard was the stonemason works supervisor and when I asked him where he had come from in the North East (because of his accent) he told me that his family had been one of the Settler families, and then told me the whole story. So, having established that the remains had cultural significance, how then should or could they be managed? Is the implication that all things which are significant have to be conserved forever?

The answer is no, but significance should be 'used'. What does this mean? The concrete foundations could be kept *in situ* and interpreted; similarly, they could be buried or broken up but have the story told through the various interpretative media on site. Visitor questionnaires indicated that a play area would be desirable on site (one now exists), so the concrete foundations could be incorporated into a play area, or be broken up and removed and a play area inserted on that space. However, what was added could continue the themes of the Settlement; the play areas could be arranged on the same alignment or be of the same number as the foundation slabs. Similarly, should the National Trust create a craft skills course, it could be called 'the Fountains Settler skills course', and so on. The beauty of significance is that it requires creativity and imagination to enhance or sustain it, not an automatic conservation response. Although the distinction between importance and significance is simple, it is consistently misunderstood by heritage practitioners who frequently use the two terms interchangeably when discussing or analysing national or international importance. National and international importance are thresholds for designation, but when managing a place people should be managing 'cultural significance'. This means that practitioners have to think of themselves as cultural heritage managers. If we manage importance we manage only a narrow range of values and meanings. The implications of this confusion will be referred to throughout this book, but the outcome for cultural heritage management internationally is a preponderance of heritage places that validates a narrow range of values, is non-contentious, deals in a superficial way with management, fails to reflect the diversity of society both now and in the past and does not address how the past can be used in the present. The uncritical application of practice can therefore result in under-representation and disenfranchisement, whether on the grounds of ethnicity, class or gender: designated places have untold stories while many places are not designated because they are not

valued by heritage professionals. As a consequence their stories are not recognised as part of a nation's story – and this has implications for both society and the heritage sector. The cultural heritage can be thought of as a mirror in which everyone ought to be able to see themselves (Dicks 2000; Littler and Naidoo 2004; S Hall 2005), but many people cannot. So, is it all about 'power' and who has it?

This book is about the difference between two principal ideas of 'heritage'. There is the edifice of cultural heritage management practice (made up of practice, guidance and legislation) which has been constructed around the pre-eminence of fabric, authenticity and expertise (referred to by Smith in 2006 as 'the Authorized Heritage Discourse'). But there also exists an evolving approach that acknowledges difference, diversity, community and significance but accepts heritage as a practice that is constructed in the present. The aim of this book is to propose a different way of practising cultural heritage management, adopting this latter approach and basing it on 'using' the past in the present, understanding the difference between importance and significance, actively thinking of yourself as a cultural heritage manager, and privileging social value over other values. In order to reach this point it will be necessary to set out in the following chapters how the current and prevailing cultural heritage management practice was created, understand its products and see what the emerging field of critical heritage studies can offer as alternative ways of 'doing' heritage. The examples used in the book are largely focused on England, but are drawn primarily from the perspective of the practitioner. I do not make claims that this book will contribute to the growing field of heritage management theory, but I hope that it will illustrate how the use of theoretical approaches can be converted into a more relevant and nuanced practice.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide some introduction to, and contextualisation of, the book in relation to those issues that I believe dominate cultural heritage management practice today. 'Heritage' is a word that is now so ubiquitous that it can be added as a prefix to just about anything: vegetables, fruit, roses, clothes, breeds of pig and so on. It is a notoriously difficult word, however (Lowenthal 1985; Hewison 1987; Samuel 1994; Dicks 2000; S Hall 2005; Lumley 2005; Holtorf 2006; Smith 2006). Is heritage about nostalgia for the past, the remains from the past, or is it about the present and future? Is it about past, present and future mixed together? Is it about a place, a thing or building, or is it about imagination, ideas, identity, memory, discussion and use? Might a historic place be merely a prompt for ideas, argument and imagination – and does it need to be 'historic'? Is heritage a resource, something which is pre-defined, inherited from the past, handed over to the future unchanged, finite and diminishing over time? Or is heritage a 'process' rather than a 'product', as Smith would have it (2006), something that we can create in the present and is infinitely renewable? If one were to draw a distinction between these suggested approaches to heritage, might it be possible to generalise and suggest that heritage could be about 'fabric', the bricks and mortar or soil of a place and its aesthetics, or about the ideas and meanings that we individually and collectively attach to places? Heritage agencies (another use of the term), primarily those state bodies that manage the heritage of a nation on behalf of a population, tend to take the former view. However, when discussing heritage with people (whether they are individuals or communities), I have found that they think of heritage as following the latter form.

In this book I will attempt to present definitions of the various words and terms mentioned above and illustrate how they are used in practice in England. But there will be frequent reference to 'text', 'dialogue' and 'performance'. These distinctions mirror changing ideas about conserva-

tion and cultural heritage practice generally and the conservation of ancient monuments in England in particular. From the definition of a preservation 'ethic' in the 19th century to more recent years (and it is an idea that has not entirely gone away), historic places were thought of as a 'text', with the fabric telling a particular story. This text was something fixed and unwavering that had to be interrogated and conserved to uncover truths by those who had the expertise and could reveal those truths to the rest of the community. In some senses, the text could be better understood as 'foreign' and in need of a translator. Repair was to be carried out in such a way that it did not falsify the text or narrative or substitute a new narrative. Related to the idea of text was the conceit that a particular style of conservation repair or approach to a ruin (referred to as 'repair' or 'preserve as found') would allow the place (usually a building) to speak for itself. However, as we shall see in Chapter 3, the reality was quite different and the text/ruins were heavily doctored to reveal very specific lines of text. In more recent years the notion of dialogue has become more prevalent in critical heritage studies (Jones 2006; 2009), reflecting the idea that there is an increasing acceptance of subjectivity and the personal in the manner in which we relate, in the present, to the past and historic places. Allied to this was a feeling that 'story', as opposed to 'text', was an essential quality or element that we attach to places and objects (Spector 1996; Ashworth 1998; Bender 1998; Deetz 1998; Praetzellis 1998; Jones 2006; 2010). A place might have a single *history*, in the sense that Fountains Abbey, North Yorkshire, was founded in AD 1132, but it has numerous and often contradictory *stories* attached to it by people. The idea of 'performance' in cultural heritage management brings us up to date (Dicks 2000; Bagnall 2003; Macdonald 2003; Joy 2004; Smith 2006; Jackson and Kidd 2011). A performance does not have to have a written, defined text; it can be impromptu and experimental and it can be about how we/visitors behave or emotionally engage when visiting heritage sites or engaging in commemoration. Similarly, as heritage managers, we can think of ourselves as actors in a drama not yet complete. An English Heritage or National Trust historic property, for example, can be understood as a piece of theatre, a creation that presents ideas and a particular story, at which the visitor/participant is both audience and performer. One of the key issues here is that although the presented story may take one form, the response of the visitor might be completely different from that desired by the creator of the piece (Bagnall 2003; Smith 2006; Jackson and Kidd 2011).

In this sense heritage is also related to power, expertise and the products of that expertise. Why is an 18th century country house with a collection of porcelain described as a 'heritage site', 'our heritage' or 'national heritage', while the concrete slabs at Fountains might be considered ugly and irrelevant? Who defines what is heritage and to be conserved, and what is not? We may be familiar with heritage agencies, the heritage sector and heritage institutions, and these words can mean the groups and their professional staff who define what heritage is, 'designate' it and manage it on behalf of the public. In England, for example, English Heritage[1] compile

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[1]   English Heritage is the quasi-independent body that advises government on all aspects of the national heritage, manages the designation system, manages a large number of historic places (sites, known as 'guardianship sites', where the state has a duty of care although the freehold still resides with the owners) and the national archive and provides heritage advice to local authorities. EH's formal name is the 'Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England', signifying that its legal and statutory 'powers' are 'held' by a Commission of external experts who provide advice to the Chief Executive (responsible for the day-to-day management of English Heritage) and staff. In 2013 the Coalition government proposed that English Heritage would be divided into two organisations.