

# ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE MATERIAL PAST IN THE PUBLIC REALM

Wednesday 23 November 2011  
King's Manor, University of York



[www.york.ac.uk/ipup](http://www.york.ac.uk/ipup)

# ABOUT IPUP

The Institute for the Public Understanding of the Past is an interdisciplinary research centre that was established by the University of York in 2006 to sit between the Departments of Archaeology, History, and History of Art. It is situated in The Humanities Research Centre at the University's Heslington campus.



Its research agenda encompasses any area in which where history, in the broadest sense, engages with the wider public. It is especially concerned with exploring those occasions when narratives about the past are used by the present as a means of understanding complex or difficult issues such as identity, community, or belongingness. Founded to promote co-operation and consultancy, IPUP also aims to reach outside of the academy, to build sustainable networks of partnerships with heritage institutes and practitioners in the York community and beyond.

Frameworks for investigating the past that encourage public participation are particularly central to the Institute's current research programme. Strategies for engagement and outreach are at their most effective when communities are incorporated into every stage of a research project. In this way Public History and Public Archaeology can provide something beyond just a means for academic knowledge to have wider social impact: they can help communities and individuals shape their identities, comprehend and relate to their landscapes, and better understand the present and their places in it.



*Professor Helen Weinstein*  
*Director of IPUP*

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# ABOUT THE CONFERENCE

The increasing visibility of ‘community archaeology’, in a wide variety of guises, over the course of the last decade or so is a phenomenon that is deservedly much remarked upon. Seemingly more people than ever before are becoming involved with archaeology in their local communities (and certainly more *different* people). Appeal has never been archaeology’s problem (in spite of the mud): it’s fun, it is both physically and mentally stimulating, it’s an enterprise forged through collaborative effort, and it has excellent outreach ambassadors on the large and small screen (either leather jacketed, or woolly jumpered). What the last fifteen years have seen is the establishment of a wide range of frameworks that have facilitated greater public involvement in archaeology. Sometimes these changes have been attitudinal, with outreach and engagement strategies being ever-more folded into a project’s design, rather than merely bolted on at the end. New streams of financial support have allowed the establishment of dedicated positions within archaeological organisations, so that community-based projects can be co-ordinated and encouraged. In many cases, this work is about connecting with long-established amateur groups already well-embedded in their local historical landscapes; in other cases, whole new sections of the community are being shown the power and value of exploring the past’s remains.

It is hoped that today’s discussions will allow us to reflect on community archaeology’s many successes: its desire to reprioritise and place the present’s communities at the heart of an exploration of their past counterparts; its ability to reach beyond the corrals of proprietary knowledge to democratise the investigation of shared histories; its capacity to create and refine the present’s sense of community and identity. Today will also allow us the opportunity of taking stock and to look towards the future, in order to consider what could be done better, and how economic challenges might be met. Widening participation is absolutely vital; archaeology, like all the humanities, can only survive through social engagement and community archaeology is one of the greatest illustrations possible of why the past is so very important to the present.

*Adam Gutteridge*

*Research Fellow, IPUP*

# PROGRAMME

- 1:30pm**      *Welcome & Introduction*  
Julian Richards (Department of Archaeology, University of York) &  
Helen Weinstein (Director of IPUP, University of York)
- 1:45pm**      *Reflections on Kibworth and 'The Story of England': Participation, Community, and Engagement*  
Michael Wood (Writer & Broadcaster)
- 3:00pm**      *Break for Refreshments*  
**Sponsored by York Archaeological Trust**
- 3:30pm**      *Community Archaeology: Setting the Agenda*  
Cath Neal (Department of Archaeology, University of York)
- 3:50pm**      *Endless Possibilities: Life as a Community Archaeologist*  
Jon Kenny (York Archaeological Trust)
- 4:10pm**      *A Participant's Perspective: Engaging with Community Archaeology*  
Anne Curtis
- 4:30pm**      *What About the First Wall? Looking In to Understand Why We Look Out*  
Peter Connelly (York Archaeological Trust)
- 4:50pm**      *Goodbye Big Spenders, Hello Big Society: what next for Community Archaeology?*  
Suzie Thomas (Council for British Archaeology)
- 5:10pm**      *Questions and Panel Discussion*
- 5:30pm**      *Concluding Remarks*  
Mike Nevell (Centre for Applied Archaeology, University of Salford)
- 5:45pm**      *Wine Reception*

# Michael Wood

## *Reflections on Kibworth and 'The Story of England': Participation, Community, and Engagement*

For thirty years now, historian and broadcaster Michael Wood has made compelling journeys into the past, which have brought history alive for more than one generation of readers and viewers. He is the author of several highly praised books on English history including *In Search of the Dark Ages*, *Domesday*, and *In Search of England*. His most recent series, *Story of England*, tells the story of one community through the whole of English history and with the help of the villagers themselves,



explores the lives of the ordinary people against the backdrop of national events across more than a thousand years. He is now working on '*Story of the Nation*', an 8-part series for the BBC, due to air in London's Olympic year. Michael was born in Manchester and educated at Manchester Grammar School and Oriel College Oxford, where he did post-graduate research in Anglo-Saxon history. He is a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society, the Royal Society of Arts and the Society of Antiquaries. He is a governor of the RSC and a Pro-Chancellor of the University of Staffordshire.

*Story of England* was an ambitious project for two reasons: firstly it sought to tell the unfolding narrative of England's history through the prism of a single settlement, Kibworth in Leicestershire, and secondly because its planning demanded the engagement and involvement of the village's present community, on a scale never before attempted by a BBC history programme. *Story of England* was an extraordinary success, not only in the things that it uncovered and the narratives it was able to relate, from the microcosm to the macrocosm, but it also succeeded in its outreach goals as well, allowing its participants the chance to explore the history and archaeology of their settlement, and in doing so, to forge a community identity in the present.

# Cath Neal

## *Community Archaeology: Setting the Agenda*

Dr. Cath Neal had a successful career working in critical care in the NHS prior to studying archaeology at the University of York. Her PhD explored the interplay between human and natural landscapes on the Yorkshire Wolds and she has an interest in landscapes, sediments, and settlement visibility. Since 2008 Cath has been the Field Officer for the Heslington East project at the University's Department of Archaeology, and has expanded her research portfolio to encompass participation agendas, policy, and heritage.



Her role has included the management of student training excavations, community excavations, and an Heritage Lottery Fund-supported school project.

Reflecting on the success of the archaeological research and participation at Heslington East, this paper will consider the role of public engagement within archaeology, higher education, and public policy in general. This paper will review the mechanisms by which community involvement has been sought, the barriers to participation, and the challenges presented by this type of approach. Ultimately the main intellectual and ethical issues to overcome involve the meaningful integration of the community participants within the interpretative and analytical phases of the archaeological project, the extent to which academic research outputs are influenced by this, and whether any shift in the control over archaeological knowledge will ultimately take place.

# Jon Kenny

## *Endless Possibilities: Life as a Community Archaeologist*

Dr. Jon Kenny began working with communities before he studied archaeology, moving from work in the social housing sector to study archaeology at York in 1992. After having completed a Masters at York in Archaeological Heritage Management and attained his PhD at Lancaster University, Jon settled in York once again to work as a project manager with the Archaeology Data Service. After continuing to support community archaeology groups in his spare time, it was a natural step to become York Archaeological Trust's Community Archaeologist in 2006.



York has a long history of what we would term today 'community archaeology'. It took a revival in interest to pick up this tradition and Jon's role as community archaeologist is part of that revival. Driven by history and archaeology groups around the City, the York Archaeological Forum, and York Archaeological Trust (YAT), a five year project was supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund and YAT in order to support community archaeology projects in Greater York. This five year period has allowed Jon, as the Community Archaeologist at YAT, to develop interest and participation in studying the local historic landscape in and around York. It has also allowed Jon to work with a very wide variety of communities showing that the possibilities for studying our past seem endless. These possibilities have impacts on both the understanding of York and its hinterland, as well as the sense of achievement and positive identity felt by the participants.

# Anne Curtis

## *A Participant's Perspective: Engaging with Community Archaeology*

The Community Archaeology Study Days funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and organised first by Eliza Gore and then Jon Kenny first gave Anne Curtis the opportunity to learn about a wide variety of topics from conservation to geo-physics. The opportunity to dig at Hungate added a practical and physical element which led to further excavation experience at Heslington East.



As a member of Strensall Local History Group, Anne has worked on several projects including a desk-top study of a purpose-built 19th century tannery, a topographical survey of a moated Manor House site, and a geophysical survey of crop marks identified by aerial photography. Anne holds an Honours Degree in Geography from the University of Leeds and, in 2009, began studying archaeology at evening class with the University of York Centre for Lifelong Learning. At the moment she is refining a research proposal for a Masters Degree.



# Peter Connelly

*What About the First Wall? Looking In to Understand Why We Look Out*

After studying archaeology at the University of Liverpool, and spending 15 years hanging on to a career in it, Peter Connelly became the Hungate Excavations Project Director with York Archaeological Trust in 2006. The Hungate project pivoted around the largest ever excavation in the city centre of York, a situation that was to provide the perfect opportunity for community and public engagement in a developer-funded excavation. The major excavation phase of the Hungate Project will be completed at the end of 2011, so don't be surprised if the image with this profile is quite different to how he looks on the day.



'Community Archaeology' is a performance where the audience are invited up onto the stage with archaeologists to engage with the Acts and Scenes of the past. Although a lot has been written about what the audience get out of this engagement and participation, there has been very little written about the motivation for us, the actors. Thus, with a little introspection, this paper will reflect on the results of a pilot survey undertaken by a group archaeologists involved with Community, Outreach, Training, and Public archaeology in order to try to attempt to understand what this motivation might be. By communicating these findings through the fourth wall the archaeologists, as actors, may be in a better position to define further strategies of engagement and participation through the material past.

# Suzie Thomas

## *Goodbye Big Spenders, Hello Big Society: what next for Community Archaeology?*

Dr. Suzie Thomas is the Community Archaeology Support Officer at the Council for British Archaeology. In this role she is responsible for liaising with voluntary groups across the UK that participate in archaeological activities. She is also regularly involved in researching related themes, and is currently analysing best practice in young person engagement for the CBA, and is part of a research team with colleagues at Newcastle and Loughborough Universities investigating the extent and nature of heritage crime in England. In 2009 she completed her PhD at the International Centre for Cultural and Heritage Studies, Newcastle University, on the relationships between archaeologists and metal-detector users in England and Wales.



The past few years have presented the archaeological sector with some of the most dramatic cuts in services and resources ever seen in recent times, with some entire local authority services facing closure and charitable organisations such as the Council for British Archaeology seeing unsettling reductions in their traditional funding streams. Alongside this new austere landscape, Government-supported initiatives such as the Localism Bill and the drive for greater community and voluntary action suggest that ‘community archaeology’ should be on the increase, supported by evidence of improved wellbeing and greater social cohesion brought about by engaging in cultural and heritage activities. However, without access to advice, training, specialist support, and potentially even Historic Environment Record information, can community archaeology initiatives continue to engage and inspire a diverse range of participants while still appropriately respecting and recording archaeological heritage?

# Mike Nevell

## *Concluding Remarks*

Dr. Michael Nevell is Head of Archaeology at the Centre for Applied Archaeology, University of Salford. He is editor of the international journal *Industrial Archaeology Review* and has just co-written a new handbook on industrial archaeology for the Council for British Archaeology. He is the author of many books on industrial and historical archaeology, including recent studies of Glasgow and Manchester. He has been involved in the study, teaching, and delivery of community archaeology projects for over a decade. These have included the high profile Dig Manchester Project which ran from 2003 to 2008, and its successor project Dig Greater Manchester, which started in autumn 2011 and is scheduled to run until 2016.



# PACKAGING THE PAST

Today's conference is the third of three linked symposia, the culmination of a research strand run by the Institute for the Public Understanding of the Past, entitled 'Packaging the Past'. As part of its exploration of the ways in which narratives about the past engage with wider audiences, this research has explored how knowledge about history and archaeology is disseminated to the public, and in turn, how they consume that information.



On 27 May 2009, in partnership with The Linbury Trust and York Museums Trust, at the Hospitium, IPUP held a one day conference entitled "After *Civilisation*: the Past, Present, and Future of Art on Television". The event gathered together academics, broadcasters, media producers, and cultural critics to consider the legacy of Kenneth Clark's landmark series *Civilisation* and its continued resonating impact. Contributors, including the artist and presenter Matthew Collings, also evaluated the presentation of art itself on television, and the possibilities and drawbacks of the medium.

On 19 May 2010 at The Berrick Saul Building at the University, the second conference took place, entitled "Packaging the Past for the Media: Communicating across Museums, Television, Radio and the Internet in a Multi-Platform Era". Speakers including Lucy Worsley and Martin Davidson, Commissioning Editor for History at the BBC, considered how heritage institutions such as museums and galleries are increasingly engaging in cross-partnerships with media organisations, in order to increase the audience for the stories they offer. Current leaps in technology were also considered, as speakers and delegates evaluated the use of the internet as a tool for heritage outreach.

Reports on both these conferences, and more material relating to IPUP's research, is available from the Institute's website: [www.york.ac.uk/ipup](http://www.york.ac.uk/ipup)