Reflections on Historic Preservation Practices in the United Kingdom and the United States

Ian George
Inspector of Ancient Monuments
English Heritage, United Kingdom

As an Inspector of Ancient Monuments for English Heritage, the government agency for historic properties in England, I provide advice on conserving sites as different as medieval castles and 19th century canal bridges. In 2010, having the opportunity to take some personal development leave, I decided to make my first visit to the United States and investigate the ways in which archaeological sites here are conserved and presented. After a week in Washington D.C., I traveled throughout Arizona, New Mexico, and Colorado, meeting historic preservation professionals and visiting a number of key sites. I hoped that my visit would provide an opportunity to study both similarities and differences in historic preservation practices between the US and the United Kingdom (UK).

A Legal Framework

It is difficult to understand our respective national approaches to heritage management without first understanding the underlying legal framework.

The first legislation to protect historic properties in the UK was passed in 1882 with the Ancient Monuments Protection Act. This law applied to a very limited number of sites listed on a ‘schedule’ at the back of the Act. All the scheduled monuments were prehistoric and among them were Stonehenge and Silbury Hill. The scheduled monuments were to be kept as they were, preserved as found. The key to protection was the threat of conviction of anyone who “injures or defaces any ancient monument.” To ensure compliance the law
The extremes of the climatic conditions of southern Arizona mean that drastic measures have been required to preserve this adobe structure. The ‘Great House’ is one of the last vestiges of a once considerable Hohokam settlement that was abandoned in the mid-15\textsuperscript{th} century. The present debate about setting in the UK would challenge the notion of erecting such a structure as the Olmsted shelter, which now covers this prehistoric building.

In the US, the first federally protected archaeological site was Casa Grande Ruins in Coolidge, Arizona, which was set aside as an archaeological reserve by President Benjamin Harrison in 1892. There was, however, no law protecting archaeological sites in the US until June 1906, when the Antiquities Act (officially \textit{An Act for the Preservation of American Antiquities}) was signed into law by President Theodore Roosevelt. The 1906 Antiquities Act provided the President with the power to designate National Monuments. It also provided for archaeological permits to be issued “for the examination of ruins, the excavation of archaeological sites and the gathering of objects” on federal land, and for the first time it stipulated that excavation without a permit was illegal. Additionally, unlike the UK law, the 1906 Antiquities Act recognized the value of the heritage to the public by requiring artifacts recovered from public land to be placed in a museum.

UK heritage laws reinforce the distinction between historic buildings and archaeological sites, and separate management regimes have resulted. Although a UK law to protect buildings was not introduced until after World War II, in the years shortly before the war’s outbreak there was an attempt to record buildings in historic towns and cities that might be at risk of damage due to bombing. The legislation placed a duty on the Secretary of State to compile a list of buildings of “special architectural or historic interest” as a guide to the planning authorities when carrying out their planning functions. Listed buildings are graded according to their importance. In England there are now some 374,801 list entries (although a list entry may include more than one building). A law designed to protect ‘conservation areas’ was also introduced in 1967. These are normally areas of a settlement with a particular character. Generally the buildings are not of national importance and do not warrant listing in their own right. There are now over 8,000 conservation areas in England.

A significant turning point in US preservation efforts came in 1966 with the passage of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). An outgrowth over concerns about the loss of historic buildings and archaeological sites in many areas due to rapid economic growth in the post-war years, the NHPA achieved four main objectives:

1. The creation of a National Register of Historic Places;
2. The placing of responsibility to protect historic places with the states;
3. The process of protecting historic places in the states would be done to standards set by federal government; and,
4. The establishment of a funding system for historic places through grants (later supplemented with tax credits for the rehabilitation of buildings).
The NHPA stipulated that policy relating to historic preservation should be implemented by all levels of government. Provision was made for federal funding of state and tribal services through the Historic Preservation Fund. In 1980 it was stipulated that the appropriation, as it is known, should be $150 million and it would be maintained at that level until 2015. However, the appropriation has never reached this level.

The NHPA also introduced the new Section 106 procedure by which those working for or under license to the federal government must demonstrate the ways in which they have complied with the NHPA. As required by the Act, each state now has a State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO). Powers were also given to self-governing Native American ‘Tribes’ and 87 tribes now have a Tribal Historic Preservation Officer (THPO). The SHPOs and THPOs have day-to-day responsibility for ensuring Section 106 compliance and for local implementation of all the national historic preservation programs including nomination of sites and buildings to the National Register. In fulfilling these responsibilities, the SHPO/THPO has a statutory responsibility to reflect “the interests of the State and its citizens in the preservation of their cultural heritage.”

By way of contrast, in the UK the four nations (England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland) each have their own government agency responsible for advice on the historic environment. For England this is English Heritage. This contrasts with the US where federal bodies such as the US Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management and the US Army Corps of Engineers all employ archaeologists to assist in discharging their Section 106 obligations as well as presenting sites to the public.

Another area of difference between the US and UK systems is in land-use planning. In the UK the Town and Country Planning Act was passed in 1947. This legislation created the statutory list of historic buildings, mentioned above, but just as importantly established a national system for managing changes in land use by giving local governments authority in determining planning permission for new development. This applies to all sorts of development from small house extensions to the creation of a new airport. In England each local authority is required to produce a plan, known as the Local Development Framework, and decisions about the use of land are made against this overall plan.

The UK government provides guidance on how the planning system should function. In 2010 it published Planning Policy Statement 5, Planning for the Historic Environment (PPS 5). This document sets out what businesses and individuals must do to ensure that development does not have a detrimental impact upon historic places. PPS 5 states, “The Government’s overarching aim is that the historic environment and its heritage assets should be conserved and enjoyed for the quality of life they bring to this and future generations.” Every application for planning permission should be accompanied by a consideration of its impact on the historic value of the site.
In the US, limits to what a private landowner can do with his or her own land are far fewer. Individuals are protected from overbearing governance by the Constitution. County and city authorities produce a plan for the way in which they seek to encourage development. This exercise of zoning regulation will produce a plan of the types of development appropriate for particular areas. Permits to build largely regulate the structural qualities of the building rather than test its compliance with a development control framework as in the UK.

**Heritage Management in Practice**

On both sides of the Atlantic, managing our archaeological heritage faces many challenges.

In 2008, English Heritage published a document called *Conservation Principles*, setting out a philosophy to guide decision making within the historic environment. It says decisions about the management of historic places can only be made when we properly understand the values attached to them. Four main groups of values have been identified: 1) *evidential*, which refers to the potential of a site or place to provide evidence of the past; 2) *historical*, by which we mean a site or place that is either typical of a particular time period or associated with an important event or person in the past; 3) *aesthetic*, which refers to the ability of site or place to capture and inspire artistic and historical qualities, such as an Art Deco cinema; and, 4) *communal*, which refers to the social or spiritual qualities of a site or place, such as Nelson’s Column or the Cenotaph (an “empty tomb”) in Whitehall, London. By determining these values we hope to understand the significance of the site or place and therefore be able to make more informed decisions about its management.

In the UK, archaeological sites are generally seen as a source of evidential value for the history of our island. Of course, many sites are beautiful and consequently have a high amenity value. In the US, the value of a site to reveal evidence of the human past can conflict with the value of a place to the Native People. Local tribes may value a place for its association with events which took place there in the past. This does not necessarily translate into a value being ascribed to the fabric of the place. In the UK the value of the site is in the integrity and authenticity of its physical appearance. This affects how we can ‘read’ the site and, therefore, whether we can understand it fully. For Native Americans it is often what ancestral stories or oral traditions say about a place that is more important than the physical condition of the site. The sites are merely footprints showing where their people have sojourned; their past lives on in the present.

One of the inspirations for the US Antiquities Act of 1906 was the threat to ancient sites from vandals (‘pot hunters’). Looting of archaeological sites remains a problem today. The trade in cultural property in the US was a factor which led to the passing of the Archeological Resources Protection Act in 1979. With the voice of Native Peoples increasingly being heard we know many of these sites have a value beyond the purely archaeological. Many sites are sacred and increasing

---

**Homol'ovi State Park, Arizona**

This state park near Winslow, Arizona was established in 1986 in response to public concerns about vandalism and looting. The word “Ruins” was recently removed from the name of the park in response to a request by the Hopi tribe, which considers the sites in the park to be Traditional Cultural Places.
Staffordshire Hoard
In the summer of 2009 the county archaeologist for Staffordshire received a call from a man saying he had been metal detecting a field and suggested what he was finding, by this stage some 500 items, might be of interest. What turned up was one of the finest collections of Anglo-Saxon metalwork ever discovered. It consists of over 1,500 pieces of 7th or 8th century date and many of which are of a military nature.

Three Turkeys Ruin, Arizona
Despite the interest shown to the archaeological sites of the US Southwest there are still some that are still rarely visited by either archaeologists or looters. How should these sites be protected? What management tools are in place to ensure sites like these are both respected for their value to Native Americans and to archaeologists?

Archaeological resources in the UK continue to be at risk from illicit metal detecting. The overturning of the ancient law of Treasure Trove with the Treasure Act 1996 and the introduction of the Portable Antiquities Scheme have greatly increased the reporting of finds. Such discoveries as the Staffordshire Hoard in the summer of 2009 inevitably lead to greater sales of metal detectors, no doubt encouraged by the nationally funded reward scheme which paid over £3.285 million (about $5.3 million) to the finder and land owner in this case.

During my US visit I was fortunate to spend several days with the Historic Preservation Office of the Navajo Nation. On one day we went out to investigate, from afar, a rarely seen site known as Three Turkeys Ruin. I heard how Navajo oral traditions told of this site and we stood at a chant site across the canyon and considered the past of this enigmatic site and its people. In Chaco Canyon, by way of contrast, I was particularly pleased to meet men from the local tribe using their considerable craft skills to repair monuments in the care of the National Park Service.

One of the great things in the USA is the strong tradition of public archaeology. The Pecos Conference, first held in 1927, is an annual gathering of archaeologists from the Greater Southwest who meet (and many of whom camp) to learn from each other about developments in the field. In Arizona the SHPO has a program of public archaeology funded by a corporate partner. March in Arizona is Archaeology and Heritage Awareness Month and each year there is an Archaeology Expo. This event alone regularly attracts more than 1,500 people. Arizona also has developed a volunteer workforce through its site stewardship program. Much of this work is overseen by the Governor’s Archaeology Advisory Commission, a panel of people established in the 1980s to counter some of the threats caused by the looting of sites.

I was particularly impressed by the enthusiasm of volunteers, or docents, I met at many sites. At Palatki, Arizona I met docents working for the US Forest Service to present the site to visitors. I found...
An example of how volunteers can help to bring to life a part of our heritage. The new UK government wants to encourage a new era of volunteering under the banner of the “Big Society.” The staffing of visitor attractions with unpaid staff is something already done by the National Trust and will become increasingly widespread in the UK. The US experience will teach the British a great deal. Their passion for the site, its landscape and history very refreshing. They were not behaving as custodians preventing people from transgressing the rules of the site but rather were interpreters welcoming people to the site to share their passion for it.

Another way in which the US system varies from that in the UK is the use of the taxation system. In the UK the regulations discriminate against the repair of historic buildings. VAT (sales tax) is payable on materials and services procured in repairing a building whereas new-build projects are not subject to VAT. This can be a considerable saving as the present rate is 20 percent. Conversions of buildings into dwellings are also able to reclaim VAT as they are “approved alterations.” Therefore, converting an historic building into a dwelling is more advantageous than repairing it to serve its present use. To a certain extent these deficiencies in the tax system are overcome by a series of grants made available by English Heritage and other bodies for the repair of historic sites.

In contrast, the US system of tax incentives is very sophisticated. There are preservation-focused tax incentive programs at the federal, state, and local government levels. These incentives seek to overcome the burden that some landowners might feel from owning an historic building or site. It is anticipated that such is the incentive that owners will be encouraged to maintain an historic building rather than allow it to deteriorate or resort to demolishing it. The federal historic rehabilitation tax credit offers an incentive to promote urban and rural regeneration through private investment in the re-use of historic buildings. More than half the states in the US have enacted laws that afford tax relief to owners of historic buildings, often modeled after the federal rehabilitation tax credit. These incentives may be available for both income and non-income generating properties. Some of the various state tax laws include income tax deductions, a credit or abatement for rehabilitation, a special assessment for property tax, sales tax relief, tax levies, and property tax exemption. For larger projects local county and city councils can generate income through bonds which citizens vote upon. Just such a bond approved by voters in Pima County, Arizona raised $26.3 million for cultural resources projects.

Conclusions

In the UK both legislation and the underlying philosophical approach to managing historic properties and places have developed in such a way that archaeological remains and buildings (in particular) are managed very differently by almost mutually exclusive groups of professionals. In the US from its earliest days the concept of historic preservation has been interpreted as being applicable across the environment. Indeed, the first National Monument declared after the passing of the 1906 Antiquities Act was a natural phenomenon, the Devil’s Tower (Bear Butte to the Lakota people), Wyoming. The NHPA applies equally to buildings, landscapes, and archaeological sites. The US benefits from this more holistic approach to landscape and historic environment management. The publication of PPS 5 in England is a big step in this direction, but additional steps are clearly needed.
Like the UK the practice of archaeological resource management in the US is largely based on a perspective founded on scientific interpretations of the past. The archaeological resource is seen as a physical entity which must be passed on to future generations and therefore must be subjected to appropriate stewardship to ensure this happens. We tend to say that this is an objective deserving of public investment because these remains contain educational, historical, and scientific values. Management decisions are made to ensure these values are transmitted down the generations. However, unlike the UK where the challenges are very different, in the US the views of the Native People are increasingly a factor in managing the archaeological heritage. The value these sites have in the traditional culture is much a factor in their good management as is their value to provide evidence for the human past of North America. The communal value of such sites is an important consideration.

My journey through the US Southwest led me to some truly remarkable places. Two contrasting places neatly summarize my visit. I was often struck by how recent the heritage can be. A visit to the Titan Missile Museum south of Tucson shows that. However, I also stood on the corner of Route 66 in the center of Winslow, Arizona. This corner has been given heritage value due to its appearance in the rock song *Take it Easy*, made famous by The Eagles. Compare this scene to the truly awe inspiring beauty of Mesa Verde, Colorado, justifiably a World Heritage Site. The range and complexity of historic assets in this region is a joy and wonder to behold.

The road trip I made in the summer of 2010 has opened my eyes to so much that is new and exciting about our shared archaeological heritage. I am grateful to all those who made it possible particularly my many new friends in the US Southwest.

Mr. Ian George

Ian began his archaeology career while still at school, digging with a local society. During his degree in prehistory and archaeology and geography at Sheffield University he specialized in early human origins. A year spent digging in the UK and Peru persuaded him that archaeology could be a career so he undertook an MA in Archaeological Sciences at the University of Bradford. He then began a long interest in geophysical remote sensing, a discipline he applied over six years on the Rieti Survey of central Italy for the British School at Rome. He began working in local government in Kingston-upon-Thames and then in Lincolnshire. His passion for public archaeology persuaded him to found the popular Lincolnshire Archaeology Day. After three years as the Archaeology Officer in the historic city of Lincoln he began work as an Inspector of Ancient Monuments for English Heritage in the West Midlands. He has now been doing this for ten years. He has lectured on a cruise in South America, spoken at the European Association of Archaeologists’ annual conference in St Petersburg, and coordinates the work of the English Heritage Advisory Committee.
On June 21, 1987, the day of that year’s summer solstice, a few other people and I were fortunate enough to take an after-hours excursion to the Casa Grande Ruins National Monument in Coolidge, Arizona, arranged and led by the late John Andresen, a National Park Service archaeologist and ranger. During this visit, our small group stepped inside the monument’s Great House (Casa Grande is Spanish for “Great House”) and mounted a scaffold that had been set up in its north room to view the sunset through an upper-story aperture. As suggested by images in this photo essay, this circular opening appears to have been intentionally built into the Great house wall to allow observation of the summer solstice sunset.

Since my 1987 visit, Casa Grande Ruins staff members have provided me with illustrations and other records documenting some of the Great House’s architectural attributes that coincide with alignments of solstices, equinoxes, and the major lunar standstill event that occurs only every 18.61 years. In 2009, Monument administrators allowed me to enter the Great House again to take photographs and record observations during the summer solstice sunset with Monument archaeologist Sheldon Baker.
Openings in the Great House’s outer west wall direct sunlight or moonlight during recurring solstice, equinox, and lunar events.

This floor plan of the Great House shows directions of sunlight and moonlight during recurring solstice, equinox, and lunar events.
Summer solstice alignment opening in interior west wall of the Great House’s north room
National Park Service image courtesy of David Winchester, Casa Grande Ruins National Monument

This circular spot of sunlight (above) shone through the summer solstice alignment opening onto the south interior wall of the Great House’s north room, and moved gradually upward and leftward as the sun went down on June 21, 2009.
Photo by Allen Dart

Right: Sunset viewed through the summer solstice alignment opening sequentially on June 21, 2009 (photos 1-3) and on June 21, 1987 (photo 4)
Photos by Allen Dart
As the sun sets on the summer solstice day, one gets a perfect view of the sunset from inside the Great House by looking through the summer solstice alignment opening, from its inner south side to its outer north side (see page 9 diagram and page 10 sequential photos 1-3). Typically the sun sets in that position on the horizon for four days in a row, then starts setting farther south on the horizon each day as summer lengthens into autumn. Therefore, one only sees this precise view of the setting sun through the summer solstice alignment opening for four consecutive days out of each year; during the rest of the year the sunset is barely or not in view through that opening. I have not personally witnessed the equinox sunrise or major lunar standstill alignments indicated in the other National Park Service images included here, so I don’t know if either of them are as precise and dramatic as the summer solstice sunset view.

The earliest record I have found noting that the Great House’s architectural features may be aligned with solstice, equinox, or lunar orientations is a 1970 manuscript by archaeologist John P. Molloy titled “The Casa Grande Archaeological Zone: Pre-Colombian Astronomical Observation,” on file at the Monument and at the National Park Service’s Western Archeological and Conservation Center in Tucson. In this paper (which he revised and published in the journal *Archaeoastronomy* in 1979), Molloy credits David W. Kayser, who was working at the Monument in 1966, with being the first archaeologist to propose that upper-story openings in the Great House might exhibit solar alignments. Molloy also cited turn-of-the-twentieth century ethnographies saying that Pima (Akimel O’odham) Indians historically ascribed upper room openings in the “Big House” walls to astronomical observation.

I thank current and former Monument employees John Andresen, Carol West, Dave Winchester, Sheldon Baker, Rebecca Carr, and Alan Stanz for allowing me entry to the Great House and for providing the National Park Service images included in this essay.

---

**Whichever Old Pueblo Archaeology Center membership level you choose, your membership fees support our educational programs.**

Name (Mr., Ms. Mrs.) ___________________________
Address ______________________________________
City, State, Zip ________________________________
Area Code & Phone (______) _____________________
Email address _________________________________

I am submitting the following payment for:

- **Archaeology Opportunities** membership $ _____
- **Category* _____________________________
- Old Pueblo Archaeology subscription only $ _____
- Donation to Old Pueblo Archaeology Center $ _____

**TOTAL ENCLOSED** $ _____

* **Membership categories and rates** (left) include an annual subscription to the Old Pueblo Archaeology electronic bulletin (4 issues), provide discounts on publications and classes, and provide opportunities to participate in Old Pueblo Archaeology Center’s member-assisted field research programs such as archaeological excavations and surveys.

**Individual** $40
**Household** $80
**Sustaining** $100
**Contributing** $200
**Supporting** $500
**Sponsoring** $1,000
**Corporation** $1,000
**Friend** $25 Provides 1-year subscription to the Old Pueblo Archaeology electronic bulletin (4 issues) and discounts on publications and classes but does not provide free participation in member-assisted field research programs.
**Subscriber** $10 Provides 1-year subscription to the Old Pueblo Archaeology electronic bulletin (4 issues) but no discounts and no free participation in member-assisted field research programs.

To pay fees with credit card please call Old Pueblo at Tucson telephone no. 520-798-1201.
Old Pueblo Archaeology Center
PO Box 40577
Tucson AZ 85717-0577

Old Pueblo Archaeology Center’s Archaeology Opportunities Membership and Discounts Program

Archaeology Opportunities is a membership program for persons who wish to support Old Pueblo Archaeology Center’s education efforts and perhaps even to experience for themselves the thrill of discovery by participating in research. Membership is also a means of getting discounts on the fees Old Pueblo normally charges for publications, education programs, and tours. Members of Archaeology Opportunities at the Individual membership level and above are allowed to participate in certain of Old Pueblo’s archaeological excavation, survey, and other field research projects, and can assist with studies and reconstruction of pottery and other artifacts in the archaeology laboratory. Membership benefits include a 1-year subscription to the Old Pueblo Archaeology electronic quarterly bulletin, opportunities to participate in Old Pueblo’s member-assisted field research programs, discounts on publications and archaeology-related items, and invitations and discounts for field trips and other events.

Old Pueblo Archaeology is the quarterly bulletin of Old Pueblo Archaeology Center, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation. Questions, comments, and news items can be addressed to editor Douglas B. Craig at info@oldpueblo.org or 520-798-1201, or by mail to Old Pueblo Archaeology Center, PO Box 40577, Tucson AZ 85717-0577.

For more information about Old Pueblo Archaeology Center please visit our web site: www.oldpueblo.org

Your membership helps support Old Pueblo’s children’s education programs.