PUBLICS, VOLUNTEERS AND COMMUNITIES: PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AT BODIAM, SCOTNEY, KNOLE AND IGHTHAM

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Abstract. This chapter discusses the public engagement that took place during the course of the project. The diversity of visitor background and experience, the two-way nature of the engagement, and the different experiences of both visitors and volunteer staff at all four sites are discussed.

This chapter discusses the public engagement work carried out as part of the University of Southampton and Northwestern University field survey, 2010-2013. Public engagement was conducted by myself throughout the project, although its practice changed slightly over the seasons. The first season (2010) took place solely at Bodiam Castle over a two-week period. The second season (2011) saw work being split between Bodiam and Scotney over a two-week period. The third season (2012) saw the team return to Bodiam concentrating on the wider landscape surrounding the castle, for example Dokes Field and the cricket field. The last field season (2013) saw a change in sites with teams of Southampton and Northwestern students being split between Knole and Ightham.

Public engagement in the UK heritage sector is a process by which heritage organisations aim to engage the general public in their history. Engagement means 'the power associated with 'being and feeling engaged' which is a whole person experience that envelops the senses' (Fear *et al.* 2002). The common purpose of engagement is to let people know about your work (National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement online, retrieved 8th December 2012). There are two major questions surrounding engagement: what is it to

feel engaged and what is it to engage? To be and feel engaged 'is a resonant experience, enabling participants to gain a deeper understanding about themselves, others and their work' (Fear *et al.* 2002: 59). To engage means to involve people in one's work. There are three methods of engaging people. The first is informing; this can take the form of many different actions from communicating engaging presentations to podcasting. Second, consulting, which is any action involving the meeting of outside groups from user groups to online consultation. Lastly, collaborating contains activities ranging from 'communities of practice' to 'participatory research partnerships' (National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement online, retrieved 8th February 2012). The most common forms of engagement within the UK are informing and consulting. However, over the last few years there has been more collaboration.

I have been part of this project from its start in 2010, originally collecting data for my Master's dissertation; *The Role of Bodiam Castle in Popular Memory* (Peacock 2010). The dissertation focused on collecting memories of visitors, staff and volunteers via interviews. The interviews were structured on a questionnaire that covered a set number of criteria. It seemed appropriate

to undertake public engagement at the same time as collecting data for my Masters, as I was already interacting with a variety of people around the site. Since early on in my studies I have been interested in how people interact with heritage and what these hidden aspects can add to our understanding of archaeology and heritage. This was a central theme within *The Role of Bodiam Castle in Popular Memory* and other statements collected became the focus for reflection and discussion within the project, adding to our understanding of the sites. At the end of each season, reports on the public engagement were written and a separate review of the public engagement at Bodiam from 2010-2012 was undertaken. The chapter is based on an amalgamation of these reports and sections of the Masters thesis (Peacock 2010). The chapter is also informed by my recent PhD research. The dissertation is entitled *The Future of Museum Communication: Strategies on Engaging Audiences on Archaeology*. It focuses on museum outreach practices in Hampshire, England and has had a marked impact on this chapter (Peacock 2015; available at https://www-lib.soton.ac.uk/uhtbin/cgisirsi/?ps=73TK1tqM8Y/HARTLEY/252980547/123, accessed 6th May 2016).

It has been a number of years since finishing the public engagement role for this project in 2013. Distance and wider knowledge of engagement practices within the heritage industry in the UK have meant that I have a developing understanding of the interactions and relationships occurring within these sites. The reports I made at the time documented the actions undertaken as part of the public engagement and highlighted a few themes around visitor engagement with the sites. However, there was little cross-comparison between sites and many themes were unexplored. A deeper understanding of engagement practices within the heritage industry has meant that the themes picked up in the previous reports are explored and a wider range of examples for these facets can now be included. Overall, this has meant that this summary of public engagement has become more in-depth.

It was important for the project to undertake public engagement as all the sites are 'public', under the stewardship of the National Trust. The Trust is a charity which was founded in 1895 by Octavia Hill, Hardwicke Rawnsley and Robert Hunter (Weideger 1994: 6). It is 'national in name and function, independent of the Government' (Benson *et al.* 1968: 13). It was established to 'promote the permanent preservation of lands and tenements of beauty or historic interest for the benefit of the nation' (Benson *et al.* 1968: 13; Weideger 1994: 8); at a time of industrial revolution

the Trust aimed 'to offer natural therapy to the benighted urban poor of Victorian Britain' (Weideger 1994: 9; Reynolds 1998). The National Trust came to be associated with elite culture through its developing 20th-century engagement with the management of 'stately homes' and it has been provocatively stated that it is an 'organisation run by toffs for the middle classes' (Hetherington 2006). However, there has been a conscious effort by the organisation to move away from this perception (arguably always unfair) through various initiatives (see Henley 2010; National Trust 2015; Furness 2013).

The open access to these properties (of different kinds at different sites) afforded a high level of interaction with the general public and therefore it was important for the project to answer any visitor questions that might arise from the team's presence. Public engagement provided the best solution to how questions would be answered and brought the project in line with best practice in archaeological research as a whole, as well as more specifically the principles and policies of the University of Southampton, Northwestern University and the National Trust. Public engagement was from the start seen as an essential aspect of the project, but as it developed, the insights gleaned from this engagement came to inform the changing research aims and priorities of the Southampton/Northwestern team.

The aims and objectives of the public engagement were determined by the author of this chapter and the project director, Matthew Johnson, at the start of the first season (in 2010). It was intended to inform visitors, staff, volunteers and interest groups at these sites about the field survey project and any further research being conducted in relation to these sites. However, public engagement is not a one-way process (Morgan & Welton 1994: 32; Cushman 2012; National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement online, retrieved 8th February 2012); and this process of information transfer was integral to furthering our understanding of the site in its modern and historical context. The memories collected for *The Role of Bodiam Castle in Popular Memory* served to increase our understanding of this site from the perspectives of staff, visitors and volunteers (Peacock 2010).

During my initial interactions with people, I employed a questionnaire to collect the data required for my Masters. I then moved on to using a (deliberately) informal and qualitative method that meant that the process of information transfer was in the form of a conversation. This meant that I found out aspects of people's experiences at the sites that would not be gleaned using more formal and quantitative methods such as questionnaires.

People were at ease as they were less focused on what they thought I wanted from the conversation and therefore, I was able to gather more meaningful information. Employing the technique of conversation meant that both parties involved gained information and mutual benefit. The public engagement being completed by the same person throughout the project has been beneficial as experience from previous years influenced the practice in subsequent seasons.

The public engagement was undertaken solely by myself up until 2013; between 2011 and 2013 there were no additional projects running in conjunction with the public engagement. This meant that the nature of the engagement changed slightly over the years. During 2010 interactions with volunteers, staff and visitors were actively sought to fulfil the data requirement for my Masters dissertation. In subsequent years, interactions with these groups were more complex to organise and not as many people were spoken to. In 2010 a set of interview questions were employed to gather information, and after this was completed conversations progressed onto the wider project. Without the use of interview questions, I engaged people in conversations about the activities of the students situated across the sites. This posed some problems as only people that were interested in the work of the team were open to conversing with me. However, it could be countered that the people whom were interviewed in 2010 were open to being interviewed because they were interested in my work and the project. Therefore, there need not be a discrepancy in the number of people interacted with as part of the public engagement.

I employed the same public engagement technique across all of the sites. All of the team were provided with distinctive project T-shirts each season which made them easy to identify in the landscape. While the rest of the team got on with the survey work I wandered around the landscape. At Bodiam this included walking around the interior of the castle as well as outside in the wider environment. It was important to cover all areas as people engaged with the sites in different ways (as will be discussed below). While wandering around the site, I would engage visitors in conversation around the topics of what the team were doing, any results from previous seasons and what the team were hoping to find. After this had been covered the conversation would progress to include any memories they had about the site, why they visited and any other information they wished to share with me.

It should be noted that in addition to my specific responsibilities, all other members of the team regardless their role were instructed to respond fully to visitor queries whatever they were doing at the time, even at the expense of the pace of the work. Further, Matthew Johnson and others gave public lectures to audiences including Trust volunteers, local amateur groups and the general public in a variety of contexts. Local amateur societies made a collective visit to Bodiam in 2010 to see the work and in particular learn about the geophysical techniques being used (Fig. 11.1). Early methods and experiences iteratively informed practices in later years.

Fig. 11.1: Members of local archaeology societies inspect the GPR equipment at Bodiam, April 2010. Professor David Hinton of the University of Southampton looks on (far right). Photo by Matthew Johnson.

Bodiam 2010-2012

Bodiam Castle has been owned and managed by the National Trust since 1926 (Dixon-Scott 1937: 12; Hinton 1990; Johnson 2002). During 2010, as previously stated, the public engagement was undertaken as part of my Masters research (Peacock 2010). Before 2015, the landscape around the castle was freely accessible, with visitors only needing to pay for parking during opening hours and for access to the interior of the castle. Consequently, visitors were free to move around the very large area managed by the Trust in different ways. Time was therefore split between the castle and its surrounding landscape.

Different types of visitors interacted with the site in a variety of ways. Local or return visitors tended to walk in a circuit around the outside of the property, while first time or long distance visitors would go straight into the castle (Peacock 2010). This was attributed to a number of factors. First, local or return visitors used the wider landscape as prior to 2015 it was free to access (parking was £2.00 if not a National Trust member). This made the site for these visitors in essence a park landscape, an area to walk and spend some time without large financial outlay. In particular, the car park and the landscape before the castle opening at 11:00 a.m. saw a large number of local dog walkers (Fig. 11.2).

This frequent use by locals prior to 2015 means that Bodiam is a notable exception to Lynch's statement that 'many symbolic and historic locations…are rarely visited by its inhabitants' (Lynch 1972: 40). The site's use as a 'park' by locals puts the castle within the definition of Lynch's 'historic location' (Lynch 1972: 40). First time or long distance visitors, on the other hand, go straight to the ticket office which at that time was on the northern side of the moat and thence to the castle, as their trip was specifically made to see the castle and therefore they were comfortable with paying for entry as well as parking. It was also more productive for me to split time around the site as the teams of students were dispersed across the surrounding landscape and the castle.

The stories and memories that were collected gave us a perspective on the values and priorities that visitors brought to the site, and a more layered and multivocal perspective, and in so doing added to our understanding of the site both in the present and in the past. Those stories that added to our understanding of the site in the past related mostly to the pillbox constructed as part of home defence in 1940. As discussed in Chapter Four, the Bodiam pillbox was constructed in World War II to guard the bridge at Bodiam. The pillbox is the focus of an annual World War II event at Bodiam Castle. There were a number of local visitors who stated that they knew the person who was tasked to

Fig. 11.2: Becky Peacock interviews a dog walker at Bodiam, April 2010. Photo by Matthew Johnson.

man the pillbox during World War II. Most people simply stated 'I know the person who manned the pillbox' or 'the person who manned the pillbox lives in my street/village'. This was interesting as everyone seemed to know this person, but over and over again when asked for a name they were unable to provide one. Therefore, it seems that many locals 'know' the person who manned the pillbox during World War II but this is more of a local legend than anyone actually knowing this individual. It appeared that being able to state 'I know the person who was stationed here' gave them a direct link to the past, a human connection; which has been seen to be an important sentiment within museum experiences in general (Bailey 1998: 92; DCMS 2001: 8; Little & Zimmerman 2010). It is a shared, empathetic history that is reiterated and affirmed by these statements.

Another aspect of history that was brought up frequently by visitors and locals was the Roman road and whether we found any remnants of Roman occupation of the area. The most memorable recollection I have about the Roman road revolves around the story of a local. They recounted a night they were making their way back from the pub through the field and they encountered the ghost of a Roman soldier. This piece of information was imparted when we were discussing the presence of a linear feature through one of the fields. I believe this was a way for them to suggest that it had to be the Roman road. The location of the Roman road and anything associated with the Romans was a particular focus for the local amateur societies that visited the site in 2010. It is not clear why these groups were so focused on 'the Romans' but it might be tied in part to issues of local identity.

A number of comments were made about the site in relation to the form and appearance of the castle. This ranged from 'it is a fairy tale castle' to 'it is what you imagine a castle to be'. These comments inform us about the way people view the site and castles in particular. The maintained landscape projects a sense of timelessness to the visitor; even as a ruin it appears to be untouched by time. There is a feeling of romanticism about the site which links to this fairy tale image that visitors have about the building and castles. Romanticism is a 'literary and critical movement' (Beiser 2006: 1) and has qualities of 'fantasy and sentimentality' (Beiser 2006: 12; Johnson 2007). Romanticism therefore has a particular relationship to nostalgia and memory. Another issue is the conflation of the real and imagined when visitors comment that the 'castle is real' (Peacock 2010). This can be linked to the image of the castle as presented in film, particularly those produced by the

Fig. 11.3: Cinderella Castle, Magic Kingdom, Tokyo Disneyland. Photo by Matt Wade, CC-BY-SA-3.0/Matt H. Wade at Wikipedia.

Disney Corporation, where 'Disneyfication' takes place with the trivialisation of structures of the past (Samuel 1994; Goodacre & Baldwin 2002: 20). This imitation can be seen in parks such as Disneyland (Fantasyland) and Legoland (Dragon Knights Castle), where the castle image is placed within the realms of fantasy and imagination (Samuel 1994: 242; Fig. 11.3).

Therefore, a real castle which is not completely ruined could be considered by most people to be within the realms of the imaginary. Many castles, apart from those still lived in, are 'ruins' whereas Bodiam has a largely complete external façade, has undergone limited renovations (by Lord Curzon and the National Trust) and has a wide, surviving moat. It has all the ingredients for the fantasy/imaginary castle that people come into contact with through literature and film. It is the romanticism of the site that places this castle within the world of both the imagined and the real (Beiser 2006: 8-9; Prager 2007).

It was interesting to see the strong connections/feelings to this site held by many people. In many cases the site was integral to visitors' memories of both childhood and

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family. Memories work on a scale ranging from individual and family, through group and institutional affiliations, to the national and global. Individual memories are personal, 'made not of disastrous events but rather a weaving together of humdrum but revealing details… with major events that are significant' (Connerton 1989; Conway 1990; Engel 1999: 97; Wrigglesworth 2009). Family memories, on the other hand, are created in a collective setting (Halbuachs 1992), and may be shared. In these memories the individuals may remember themselves to be more central to the past event than they really were (Engel 1999: 8). Frequent visitors use Bodiam to create memories with those they visit with, either consciously or unconsciously. Conscious construction of memories is seen when people choose to bring other people to Bodiam during visits, for example family members being brought during a family visit. Unconscious construction of memories happens at times such as a family day out.

These memories are used within identity construction and inform people where they come from (geographically) and the family they belong to. There were many cases of 'local' visitors bringing family members from other countries to the site (Peacock 2010, appendix 1 & appendix 2). During these visits the 'local' family members would recall previous visits to the site for those 'outside' family members. This process of recollection was part of a conscious construction of memory, where the 'local' family members chose this location to bring 'outside' family members as part of a process of inclusion. This site had significance to the 'local' family members and was the setting for many of their family memories. Including the 'outside' family members in these memories, the 'local' members are not just recalling memories but reconstructing them to include the 'new' members of the family. This ongoing process reaffirms the family group and ties between the members whether they were participants in the original remembered events or not.

There were also cases where older family members brought younger members to the site to share in their recollections. In one case a visitor recalled that their mother brought them to the site as a child. She had a number of her own memories of the site as she had been a hop picker in the area (Peacock 2010, appendix 1). These visits would include not only the new construction of memory but the sharing of older memories with younger generations.

Trust staff and volunteers feel a strong sense of ownership over the site. This is seen in a statement made by one member of Trust staff who stated: 'I live on the Marina

and people say to me, don't you miss a garden and I say no because look what I have got (Bodiam Castle) it's enough garden!'. In this case Bodiam Castle is a substitute for the lack of garden at home, and this staff member views it as their own. This shows the sense of ownership that volunteers and staff feel towards the site. All these different types of memory show the complex nature of people's relationship to the castle and their sense of ownership over the site.

In 2011, with the completion of my research in the previous year, I decided to utilise a number of activities already organised by the National Trust with an input from the team to increase public engagement. There were information boards displaying information about the Southampton/Northwestern project as well as Trust-organised children's activities revolving around the archaeology of the site (Fig. 11.4). A local archaeological group also displayed some objects that they had found relating to the medieval period. All these activities increased the visitors' awareness of the archaeology of the property and the project. Visual and hands-on aids such as these attract the public's attention, and therefore it seemed more appropriate to concentrate the engagement inside the castle where these were housed. Centring on these activities allowed for easier interaction with families as children were entertained while the parents were able to find out more about our survey work. In the previous year it had been noted how
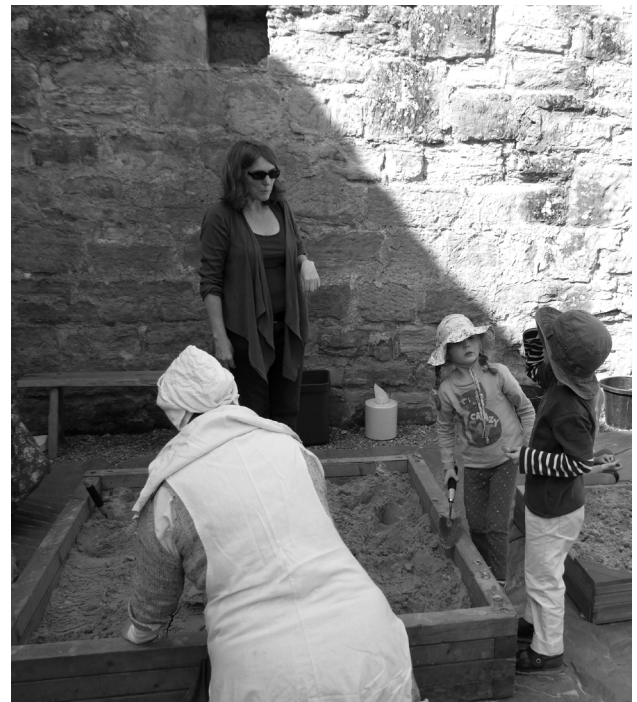

Fig. 11.4: Charlotte and Davy Allen dig for artefacts at Bodiam; operations directed by Sarah Johnson. Photo by Matthew Johnson.

difficult it was to engage with families. Children became bored quickly as the adults conversed and this ended interactions with families prematurely. Therefore, the activities drew in a group that were otherwise difficult to engage with in normal circumstances.

During all the field work seasons (2010-2012) the public engagement at Bodiam received positive feedback from visitors, staff and volunteers. Many people had some familiarity with the resistivity and magnetometry equipment being used from watching archaeological programmes on TV such as *Time Team*. Therefore, it was useful to work from this basis and explain why these methods were being used. The local amateur societies were also interested in the equipment that the team was employing. The public engagement throughout increased people's knowledge of the practices employed within archaeology. It also highlighted the importance of exploring the wider landscape around an existing historical building to understand what has happened before, during and after a property's construction. It served to highlight that landscapes are palimpsests (Hoskins 1955, Whyte 2009: 8); that they are forever changing and the pristine surroundings now apparent are not how they would have been in the past. The feedback from 2011 was even more positive as there were survey results from the previous year which we had printed out and laminated to show people rather than just discussing the project in the abstract. Viewing these results allowed visitors to see the evidence of previous occupation, other uses of the site and why the project is important to the broadening of our understanding of the property. In 2012 interaction with visitors was more difficult as students were not as visible as they had been previously. Student visibility was not a factor in engagement with staff and volunteers; however it was a factor in visitor engagement.

Scotney 2011

Scotney is an interesting site from the point of view of public engagement as it has two different buildings within the grounds; a 14th-century moated castle and a Victorian country house. The project focused on the surroundings of the 14th-century castle as seen across the surrounding parkland. This presented me with a similar working set up as seen at Bodiam where my time was split around the site in order to maximise public engagement. The level of engagement with visitors however was much lower than at Bodiam. First, at the time, the site was only open Wednesday to Sunday. Second, the very large extent of the surrounding parkland landscape of the site and the consequent very wide dispersal of the students around

the landscape also meant that interactions with visitors were limited as visitors were less immediately aware of any work being carried out. Therefore, as noted at Bodiam the visibility of the students affected the level of engagement with visitors. However, at this property it was the interactions with the volunteers that were most informative. When I first arrived at the site I believed the situation to be similar to the one that I had found at Bodiam. This turned out not to be the case. It quickly became clear that there was a more marked segregation between the volunteers who worked in the house and those that worked in the gardens/parkland. This was definitely not the case at Bodiam where everyone worked together whether maintaining the landscape or working in the castle. Through interacting with volunteers around the site it became clear that the house and the garden/parklands were much more distinct both in terms of the teams that worked in them and the way they were viewed.

This distinctiveness came to the fore when I went round the Victorian house with a number of students. I was stopped by a volunteer and asked what the project was about. When I said that we were surveying the 14th-century moated castle and surrounding landscape the volunteer stated 'why would you want to focus on that it isn't very interesting, it is just a ruin, and this house is much more interesting'. I found this perception surprising as I had never had anyone question why we had chosen a site, but then the castle of Bodiam had no other buildings to compete with it. The view articulated here was that the Victorian house was more interesting to people as it was complete, was lived in and they could look at things; whereas the 14th-century castle was 'just a ruin'. This perception that surveying the castle and the parklands would not provide us with any more knowledge on these buildings seemed to be related to perceptions of the importance of furnishing and occupation; the 14th-century castle is unoccupied and largely unfurnished compared to the Victorian house.

It would appear that some volunteers are drawn to Scotney for very different reasons; for some it is the furnished Victorian house, for others it is the landscape and gardens. According to one informant, the different groups of volunteers tended to work in one or other area. In general, those working within the gardens/parklands were more interested in our work and findings than those situated in the house. We had further confirmation of this impression when at the invitation of Trust staff, the project put on a guided tour for the volunteers; only the garden volunteers attended.

In summary, the site of Scotney is different to Bodiam because there are two different types of buildings (one medieval and one more recent). The furnishings and sense of occupation of the Victorian house adds a different level to the visitor experience compared to Bodiam. If the house was not occupied, then this dynamic would not be present.

Knole 2013

Knole is a very large English country house situated within a surviving medieval deer park, located adjacent to the town of Sevenoaks in West Kent (Figs 7.1 & 7.2). Knole occupies an important place in national culture; as the family home of the Sackvilles over more than four centuries, it is associated with figures such as the writer and garden designer Vita Sackville-West and her circle. In particular, Knole is famous as the setting for *Orlando*, a novel written by Virginia Woolf, one of Sackville-West's lovers. As a place, then, Knole has a rather different cultural profile from the other three sites.

Only a small part of the landscape between the entrance and the house itself is managed by the National Trust. The rest is owned/managed by Lord Sackville and there is even a golf course on the site (Fig. 7.4). The house itself is also divided between publicly accessible areas managed by the Trust and the private residence of the Sackvilles. The nature of visitor use is interesting as entrance to the park by walkers was possible at any time and was free. However, this has not always been the case; there is a long history at this site of battles over access (as access was restricted in the past and this did not go down well with the local visitors (as was discussed in Chapter Seven; Fig. 7.23). Cars could enter the property between the hours of 10.00 a.m. and 6.00 p.m.; parking cost £4 per car. The only other charge to visitors was to enter the house, which was not open all the time.

It was noted that visitors used the site in different ways, as previously discussed at Bodiam. Many visitors used the park rather than going into the house and these users were mainly families who brought toys and picnics, spending a proportion of the day within the landscape. This could be the case for a number of reasons. First, Knole is used more as a local 'park' for the people of Sevenoaks rather than as a 'normal' National Trust attraction. (The National Trust has identified this in its planning for the site which aims to address this with different 'kinds' of visits to the property available in the future). Second, for some families, Knole House is viewed by them as a 'typical National Trust' property that requires a certain behaviour within it and therefore they choose to use the surrounding parkland rather than

enter the house. It is unclear if either of these factors fully explains the visitor use of the site but each has been documented at other properties. Other visitors went into the property and then spent some time wandering around the park. These visitors could be seen to be long distance and were of a smaller number than those that visited just for the use of the park.

It has been observed in previous seasons that the process of engagement benefited from the visibility of the students, and from high visitor traffic. Knole was no different, at times when the students were not visible to the general public, engagement declined considerably. In some circumstances when the students were in full view of the public many people did not ask about the work, although I often observed that they were clearly intrigued by the activities of the students and would discuss amongst themselves. It is clear that in many cases people are curious about the work but will not actively seek the information they require and feel that they are hindering work if they do. This is where the public engagement came into play as I could interact with these people without them feeling they had interrupted work.

Interactions with volunteers were relatively few as most were located within the house and gardens rather than outside in the landscape. This was partly due to the divided nature of ownership of the site. Only a small proportion of the site is owned by the National Trust with the rest of it still owned by Knole Estates. The volunteers that were spoken to divulged knowledge about the house and its surrounding landscape. This mainly referred to the presence of a bowling green at the front of the property, and to other archaeological work ongoing both in the house and in the surrounding landscape. Other information included a World War II story referencing Knole's location within 'Bomb Alley', a corridor of land between London and the English Channel where German aircraft were liable to jettison bomb loads when under attack. The story was of a bomb being dropped outside the front of the house, smashing the windows and destroying a tree.

When the first results from the fieldwork were available and printed out, perhaps a week after fieldwork had started, interactions with volunteers became more focused. One example of this is when evidence for an original entrance to the house and possible gardens at the front of the property was printed out. This led volunteers to mention that there was a drawing in the house that showed formal gardens outside the property. Another transfer of information occurred when it was mentioned that Ground Penetrating

Radar (GPR) was being used within the Stone Court. This led the volunteer to state that there was a water cistern underneath the court and that there had been a diver sent down into it. Other pieces of information passed on were about the possible evidence of a glass production site on the property. Volunteers during these interactions liked to divulge information that we might not know about the site and, therefore aid in the interpretation of the results. It was their way of being actively involved in the fieldwork without actually being an active participant in the work.

Engagements with visitors had the same two-way transfer of information in some cases. One visitor referred to a supposed article about the Sackville family and the mention of a child stating 'why do people always visit my house?' This story foregrounds the perspective of the Sackville family, rather than the National Trust, its visitors and the site. It is interesting that this is what the visitor chose to pass on about the site and highlights the interest and identification the local population has with the Sackville family. Other people enquired about specifics on the fieldwork, such as availability of the results and specifics on the geophysical methods. Many questions revolved around whether there would be any excavation of the site if the survey brought up any interesting results. We responded that an excavation was not the aim of the project and that these non-intrusive techniques could inform us about the site. It is clear that many see archaeology as coterminous with excavation and many were surprised to find out that we can glean knowledge about a site through other methods. One visitor did enquire about what it was like to work with the National Trust. They related that they had been to many of the Trust's properties and found varying levels of friendliness of the volunteers from site to site (English Heritage 2014; Heritage Lottery Fund 2015). These different modes of engagement with visitors were also seen at Scotney between volunteers in the gardens and the house.

The public engagement at Knole met with varying degrees of success dependent on the visibility of the students during their fieldwork activities. The process of dissemination of information was more diffuse and widespread than at other sites; it could be either from one member of a group to others or from volunteers to visitors. Therefore, knowledge about the project was more widespread than just those that I spoke to directly. At Knole, there was a process of word-of-mouth dissemination which I have seen in other contexts; most notably in outreach projects frequented by families (see Peacock 2015).

Ightham Mote 2013

Ightham Mote is a 14th-century manor house surrounded by a garden (see Chapter Eight). The nature of the site is much more occluded, with visitor routes around the houses being quite narrow and the landscape as a whole being smaller in scale. It therefore presents more logistical problems for the Trust in terms of visitor movements than the wide landscapes of the other three sites. Therefore, visitors have only a few ways to move around the property. All visitors enter through the same entrance and move around the house in the same direction. Visitors can move through the gardens differently as there are a number of paths to take around the landscape. There were a number of talks and guided tours provided around the site for visitors and this showed a more structured information dispersal system. The public engagement was again dependent on the visibility of the students within the property. The project deployed a smaller team than at the other sites, and they were often less visible in the Ightham landscape given the greater number of walls, hedges and other divisions, combined with the greater tree cover, and also when they were engaged in survey work around the mill pond where there is no visitor access. However, the lack of visibility did not hinder interaction with volunteers who had been informed of the students' presence on the site, and were actively interested in the project.

The volunteers were very enthusiastic about the work of the students. Many of them enquired about the project and the techniques that the students were using. A number of the volunteers enquired about whether the techniques were similar to those used on archaeology TV programmes. One volunteer did state that there was little information about what we were doing passed on to them although this does not seem to be generally true of the relationship between staff and volunteers at this site.

Visitor interaction occurred more frequently during the times when students were more visible at the site. Many visitor enquiries related to what the students were doing and the equipment being used. Some visitors related the work to their own experience with archaeology and the archaeology display within the house. Also, as at Knole, a number of people enquired whether there would be any excavation after the survey work had been finished and asked why a survey would be completed if there was to be no excavation. It is apparent people associate excavation with archaeological investigation, but do not believe that non-invasive techniques can tell us as much about the history of the site. In other respects, the interactions at this site were very different

from those at the other National Trust properties involved in this project. There was little to no two-way information transfer as visitors, staff and volunteers appeared to be happy with just being informed about the project without any input. This is very different to the other sites where most if not all interactions included two-way information transfer. There are a few possible explanations as to why this occurred at this site but these are mainly based on the difference in the logistical issues and affordances of the management of the properties. Ightham, as stated earlier, controls the movement of visitors both around the landscape and house, as well as into the site. This control of visitors as well as the lack of access into the site without paying full entrance fee may have affected the level of interaction. The atmosphere at this site was less like the atmosphere of a public park as observed at other properties. Visitors may have not been as interested in the work being carried out as they had paid to enter the property and wanted to experience it without any distractions. Also there were guided walks at regular times around the garden and onto the roof which meant the visitors' experience was more organised than at the other properties. The lack of conversational anecdotes imparted by the volunteers is very interesting as within most National Trust properties volunteers have a sense of 'ownership' (English Heritage 2014; Heritage Lottery Fund 2015) and are very free to share information.

The volunteers were actively interested in the work of the students and the team had more contact with the volunteers on a daily basis as they used the staff/volunteer room for breaks. Visitors were interested in the work of the students but not to the same degree as we experienced at other sites. In certain locations in the landscape the work of the students affected the movement of the visitors. This happened most notably when work was carried out in the orchard, causing visitors to walk through areas of the orchard that they would not have done naturally in order to avoid being in the way. Therefore, the work in certain cases did have an impact on the visitor experience of the site. At this site the visitor's movement is more controlled and there is no access to the site without payment. Therefore, there is less variation in how a visitor engages with the site compared to the multiple ways documented at the other properties.

Discussion

Even though each of the sites is different there are a number of themes that have been highlighted by the public engagement. The most notable theme has been the different types of visitors and their differing uses of the sites. This is not surprising as heritage organisations have always had different visitors and they all use the services in different ways (Bailey 1998: 92; DCMS 2001: 8; Little & Zimmerman 2010). However, in the cases of Bodiam (until 2015), Scotney and Knole where there is access to the site by locals for free there is a considerable difference in use to paying visitors. Local visitors use these sites as 'parks', they are a place to walk the dog and go for picnics. Therefore, they do not arrive at the site with the intention of entering the properties but utilise the surrounding landscape. As such the site is a different kind of space for these visitors. The properties are at the centre of a landscape that is habitually used by this group, but its historic character is not foregrounded for them (Lynch 1972: 40). Other visitors pay to enter the properties but will not spend as much time exploring the wider landscape. For them the property itself is important rather than the surrounding environment because of their fleeting engagement with the site. However, this difference in visitor use is only applicable at sites where there is access to the landscape for free or a minimal charge for parking. Ightham has restricted visitor access to the site and this results in only one type of visitor and use. The fact that all visitors have to pay to enter the site means that it cannot be used as a 'park' by locals; therefore it is solely a visitor attraction. The site's control of visitor movement and the structured activities available means that the visitor experience is more controlled compared to the other sites.

A second theme has been the experiences of the volunteers on these sites. Volunteers as with most heritage organisations are an integral part to the maintenance and running of a site. However, it became clear at Scotney that volunteers can develop separate identities based on the area that they are involved in, for example house or garden. The separation between volunteer groups was not documented at any other sites. It could be safe to say that the reason for this separation at Scotney is based on the spatial separation between the house and the gardens/parklands. However, this separation could also be due to a sense of occupation. The house is an occupied site, whereas the central focus to the gardens, the 14th-century castle, is not. At Ightham, though volunteers were friendly and helpful, there was little information input which was different from the other sites where volunteers had been very forthcoming with ideas and information that they thought could aid in the project. It is still unclear why this is the case. The readiness of volunteers to impart their knowledge about these sites is linked to their view of ownership or stewardship over these properties. Volunteers put in a number of person hours

at these sites and are proud of the work that they do at them. This instils a level of ownership over the property as it becomes their site (English Heritage 2014; Heritage Lottery Fund 2015). There was relatively little interaction with volunteers at Knole and I attribute this to the nature of ownership over the site. The split ownership means that volunteers' activities focused on the house and courtyard. There was only one team of students surveying in the courtyard with the others surveying the wider landscape (see Figs 7.9 & A2.10). Therefore, my time spent within this area was limited compared to the time I spent within the inside of the other buildings in this project. I did engage with some volunteers but these were not as frequent as at other sites and in set locations, particularly the entrance and courtyard. Each site moulds its visitor experience through layout and structure but it also has the same effect on the volunteers of these sites.

A third theme is the information transfer process witnessed during this public engagement. The information transfer was very much a two-way process. I provided people with information about the project, while, in most cases they divulged something about the site or their relationship to it. The information provided helped us in understanding the site in terms of diverse viewpoints and perspectives, a theme that will be returned to in Chapter Thirteen. However, it also opened our eyes to the hidden world of each site. The memories and stories that only certain groups are privy to added another layer of understanding to the sites. It was not just about the history of each site in the past but the importance of the buildings to the modern population using them. These stories and memories informed us not just about how the site was viewed and used in the present day; but also about the historical narratives that people chose to associate with. All these aspects add another layer to each site that can be utilised in the interpretation and presentation of each of these sites.

Conclusion

Within this chapter I have tried to summarise the main findings from the public engagement. All these sites have produced interesting details about the properties, how visitors use them, the volunteers and staff, and the visitor's memories. The public engagements main aim was to increase visitor, staff, volunteer and interest group knowledge in the project and this central aim was achieved. Engagement was not a one-way process of information transfer and the knowledge that volunteers, staff and visitors imparted about these sites was integral to our understanding of the site both in the past and the present.

In my view the public engagement highlighted throughout all the sites the complex relationships that visitors, locals, staff and volunteers have with them. My understanding of these sites is heavily biased towards Bodiam but this is down to the number of seasons that the team spent at this location.

One critical lesson learned was the importance of time depth to successful public engagement. I tried within the time limitations to understand the other sites in as much depth as I could but this was difficult to do in the space of a single three-week field season. The first step I had to undertake at each site was a qualitative and patient exploration or 'excavation' of hidden meanings, meanings that are important and that vary between select groups; be they volunteers, locals, families or individuals. My role started off as one of public engagement, where I disseminated information and I tried to glean something from my recipients about their relationship to the site. However, my role and identity changed during the process of engagement; I ended up being a chameleon. In order to get people to open up to me about their memories and relationships with the sites I had to become one of the select group. In most cases this had to be done very quickly, I had what could be a 10-minute conversation in which to convince them to trust me with these hidden stories. In recalling these memories people were consciously constructing memories with me. I straddled the world of 'insider' and 'outsider'; able to understand the terms and references but simultaneously deconstructing them. The process is much harder to do when you have to undertake this learning within a period of two to three weeks. At Bodiam although I was there a short space of time each season, I could build on previous knowledge and reflect upon my experiences from the previous year to gain a deeper understanding.

Highlighting the relationship and memories of the staff/volunteers, visitors and locals to the sites not only helps our interpretation of the site. It can highlight areas of the site that have importance to these groups which may not be visually significant, for example the role of the wider landscape as a 'park'. It creates a map of hidden importance that only select people are privy to and people are introduced to through inclusion in the site and memories. The memories of visitors, locals and staff/volunteers can be used as another aspect of interpretation present at sites. At the time of writing, I am exploring the use of memories in relation to the Watercress Line (a heritage steam railway located in Hampshire, UK: www.watercressline.co.uk) to increase visitor experience. Many visitors have expressed a need to have a more human element to the interpretation

and memories are a good way to add this to the interpretation materials. It also introduces the visitor into the world of the locals, staff and volunteers, making them part of that group.

I hope that this chapter has demonstrated the importance of public engagement on these projects, and the struggles that can be faced trying to undertake engagement in changing circumstances over a number of sites. There is interesting information that can be gleaned from locals, visitors, staff and volunteers that can be hidden to outsiders. That information, and the different perspectives and world-views that go along with it, adds to our understanding of the site both in the past and at the current time. These insights should not just be confined to assisting the research process, but should also play a wider role and dimension within all aspects of on-site and public interpretation.