

# AIMA Special Report N° 4

## January 2022

### AIMA and Friends' Congresses



Courtesy Museum of English Rural Life, University of Reading

**Agriculture \* Food \* Environment \* People**  
**agriculturalmuseums.org**

A collage of logos and images related to agricultural museums and organizations, set against a blue background with rounded corners. The collage includes:

- A Year On The Field Project**: A logo with a wheat stalk and the text 'A YEAR ON THE FIELD' above a photograph of a golden wheat field.
- AIMA**: The logo for the Association of International Museum of Agriculture, consisting of the letters 'AIMA' in a large, green, stylized font.
- AIMA 2021 Congress**: A photograph of a colorful, modern building with a large mural of a sun and trees, with the text 'AIMA 2021 Congress' overlaid.
- ALHFAM**: The logo for The Association for Living History, Farm and Agricultural Museums, featuring the text 'ALHFAM' in orange and a silhouette of a person plowing a field with a horse.
- EXARC.net**: The logo for the European Association of Rural Cultural Centres, featuring the text 'EXARC.net' in green.
- DRAFT ANIMALS**: A logo for a virtual conference, featuring the text 'DRAFT ANIMALS in the Past, Present and Future' and 'Virtual Conference: May 8-9, 2021' above a silhouette of a person plowing a field with a horse. The hashtag #draftanimals is visible.
- Society for Folk Life Studies**: The logo for the Society for Folk Life Studies, featuring the text 'Society for Folk Life Studies' in white on a dark blue background.

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## **AIMA Congress and General Assembly (July 2021)**

### **Friends’ Conferences:**

- ❖ **ALHFAM (June 2021)**
- ❖ **Draft Animals (May 2021)**
- ❖ **EXARC (March-April 2021)**
- ❖ **SFLS (September 2021)**



Courtesy Pete Watson

## **Editorial: digital congresses bridge past and future**

Digital conferences are now an everyday practice with meetings on highly diverse platforms that offer equally diverse opportunities, from internationally oriented scientific debates to public discussion forums in political parties and on to the kind of associations’ meetings and general assemblies that the AIMA and its allies have held over the last two years. This Special Report, of course, is devoted first and foremost to the **AIMA 2021 Congress** but it provides rich information on the many-splendored ways to hold such events online, how to encourage continued discussion and contact, in part by providing for particular specialty-group threads, then promoting the presentations effectively after the congress, when possible through the fruitful use of **social media**. Some of the meetings surveyed here aim at creating partner networks, while others’ goal is consolidating members’ links and underwriting resilience. Each report focuses on **AIMA members’ many interests** such as agriculture and stockraising on museum or living history sites, all the while including notes of contrast that bridge to other groups’ specialties such as popular and material culture – the songs of particular trades or skills groups, vernacular architecture, interpretation of particular historical or even pre-historic periods with their artefacts and techniques, but most of all, finding **bridges between traditional practices and sustainable futures**.

# Meet the Executive Committee 2022

## Continuity and renewal

During the AIMA Special General Assembly on 7 December 2021, the following Executive Committee Members were confirmed (see General Assembly below)

**Top, left to right:** President Claus Kropp, Secretary General/Webmaster Debra Reid (succeeding Kerry-Leigh Burchill), 1st Vice-President for Congress Organization Surajit Sarkar, assisted by Nerupama Modwel and Vijay Aditya

**Second row:** Treasurer Pierre Del Porto, 2nd Vice-President for Networking Barbara Sosič, 3rd Vice-President for Strategic Planning Isabel Hughes, Membership and Communications Officer Cozette Griffin-Kremer, Social Media Coordinator Lena Zoll

**Third row:** Ollie Douglas and Paul Starkey (England), Bob Powell (Scotland), Peter Moser (Switzerland), Yves Segers and Chantal Bisschop (Belgium), Peter Watson and Barbara Corson (USA)







## **A YEAR ON THE FIELD**

### **Presented by Claus Kropp, AIMA President**

Following the December General Assembly, Claus Kropp, Manager of the Lauresham Laboratory for Experimental Archaeology in the UNESCO World Heritage site of Kloster Lorsch (DE) introduced AIMA members to the “A Year on The Field” Project connecting museums, farmers and researchers worldwide over **wheat**. Common wheat (*Triticum aestivum*) is one of most important field crops in the world and has been for millennia. In an effort to bring together different museum sites, living history farms but also commercial farms (be it conventional or organic) the project seeks to exchange knowledge about common wheat cultivation through the centuries and in different parts of the world. Sites and farms participating in the project not only create a valuable **database** on different regional cultivation traditions, regional seed varieties and traction methods (be it animal- or tractor-powered), but also enable **deep networking on an international level** with joint participation by **AIMA, ALHFAM** and **EXARC**. Raising awareness and public interest in agriculture in general, its historical implications for the present, but also for food production today and tomorrow is another main objective of the project. In this lecture, Claus Kropp, “A Year on the Field” project-leader, introduces the project, its potential and its wider context. This was followed by a vibrant and wide-ranging live discussion on the global participation in the project, the excellent spread of contributors (from “**growers**” who are real farmers at all scales, to scientific experts and other contributors), the concrete recording of implements, energy sources, soil and weather conditions, and particular practices in order to make up a future **data set** enabling cross-continental comparison, as well as provide an oral, **living history** background to the project. This holistic approach will showcase both diachronic and synchronic experience and address specific associated **issues** such as gluten intolerance, the contrasts between small-scale and industrial agricultures, and construct effective networks involving the present participants (AIMA, ALHFAM and EXARC are affiliated supporters) as well as future partners, with special emphasis on **public engagement** through active use of social media. Funding has already enabled hosting an intern expert in cinematography to produce videos that will be utilized to record **skills** for preservation, transmission and training while addressing **future sustainable farming practices**. Later additions to the data set will include a map function opening onto all aspects and phases of the Year on the Field Project. A particular aspiration of the Project is to engage audiences more broadly over time and geographic zones, as well as to help smaller museums to enter international deep networking activities.

#### **Watch the presentation**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?reload=9&v=QJ3rWf0tL-o>

**Visit the website to see the mission statement, the video and blogs,**

<https://www.yearonthefield.net/>



**Networking**  
We are bringing together institutions, experts and individuals around the world who are passionate about agriculture.

**Sharing Experience**  
We are sharing our expertise, findings and professional knowledge to grow and learn together and from each other.

**Public Outreach**  
We are bringing public attention to national and sustainable cultivation methods using our blog, photos and videos.



## UN Sustainable Development Goals

Among the many subjects raised during the AIMA 2021 Congress in Reading, England, the November 2020 AIMA Digital Event and in all our networking partners' meetings in 2021, one is always highlighted – how institutions and associations can further the United Nations **Sustainable Development Goals**, for example, by taking into account initiatives such as the Agriculture Innovation Mission for Climate proposed during the COP26 meeting on climate change in Glasgow in November, 2021 -> <https://www.aimforclimate.org/>  
The **AIMA** already participates in many of the UN SDGs such as:

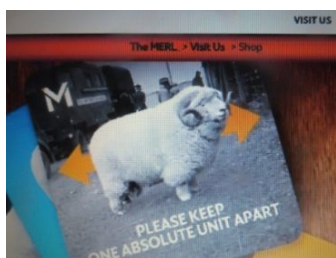
### How the AIMA Contributes to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals



# AIMA CONGRESS 2021 at the MERL (Museum of English Rural Life) / July 2021 Reading, England



Tom Woodhouse working on the MERL grounds in Reading



Let's begin with some English humour and the injunction here to **“please keep one absolute unit apart”**, in view of the on-going health crisis that has drastically changed working life, and normal sociability, as well as all the conviviality and stimulation that would have met us in Reading, a handsome town with a vibrant university life thrown in. (Teaser: the “Absolute Unit” is explained below 😊.....)

**Editor's Note:** this Congress Report will be updated in future to include further weblinks and each of the presentations will be promoted in our new **Social Media** actions.

## Welcome to the MERL (Museum of English Rural Life) in Reading



Kate Arnold Forster, Ollie Douglas, Isabel Hughes

Our hosts Ollie Douglas (AIMA President and Curator of MERL Collections), Isabel Hughes (AIMA Vice-President and Associate Director / Head of Curatorial and Public Engagement) and Kate Arnold-Forster (Director of the MERL and of University Museums and Special Collections Service) gave an overview of the many challenges lying ahead of agricultural museums in this era of conflict and re-examination of social priorities, from popular protests over recent years to the perspectives for engaging in debate about agricultures in the plural. The AIMA has a long connection with Reading, as the congress was held there 45 years ago and Ted (E.J.T.) Collins, Director at that time, attended eleven congresses. (Check out his



insightful – and humorous – comments on the AIMA’s earlier days in our History Section -> <https://usercontent.one/wp/www.agriculturalmuseums.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/ted-collinsaima-final2.pdf>.)

Today, with the **MERL celebrating its 70th anniversary** and seeking ways to be more inclusive to a highly diverse community, the Museum is committed to new models of interpretation, assisted by funding from the National Heritage Lottery, the Arts Council, and to keeping up close relations with the RMN (Rural Museums Network). They also especially thanked all the MERL and University of Reading staff who participated directly in the congress presentations or assured technical support, just a few of whom are here.



Guy Baxter, Maddie Ding, Caroline Gould, Tom Woodhouse, Claire Clough and Adam Lines

## Panel Session: New Approaches to Museums of Farming

**Pete Watson**, Director, Howell Living History Farm, chairing the session, spoke of how museums and their friends have come together during this time of crisis and of the joy at Howell of simply seeing the first busload of school children in sixteen months come back to continue Howell’s mission of both education *and* farming. Then he introduced our first speaker.

**Winani Thebele (Chief Curator and Head of Ethnology  
Botswana National Museum)**  
***The Bonnington Colonial Legacy: conserving and restoring  
farming heritage in Botswana***



Winani introduced us to a subject squarely in the perspectives of post-colonial community development, engaging actively with the history of a particular place. The farm’s location near the Cape to Cairo railway line brings the international right into local traditions in architecture and the entire built environment, material

culture, and local blending of cultures that should provide a major tourist attraction by finding local stakeholders and allowing them to reconstruct their own missing histories, highlight traditional skills and provide new jobs. Along with the collection of farm implements, live animals and the gardens that help understand local water history, much emphasis is placed on understanding food yesterday, today and tomorrow in the context of the urban development that now encompasses the farm.

YouTube link to Winani Thebele's presentation: <https://youtu.be/ZFaA-xEAO8E> (13'04")



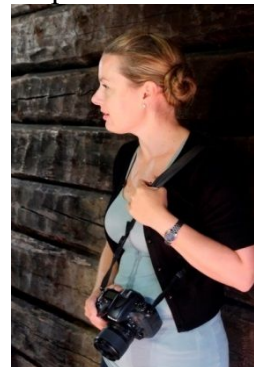
**Elsa Hietala (Curator)**  
**Sarka Finnish Museum of Agriculture**  
***Creating New Approaches at the Finnish Museum of Agriculture***



Sarka, the National Museum of Agriculture of Finland, is located on the best agricultural land in the country – remember it is the northernmost farming country in the world! The Museum was invented by the local community and possesses a photographic archive tracing rural history, three exhibit halls and outdoors facilities, as well as outreach programs to engage the public with current debates on agriculture. A special emphasis is on a culture of wooden artefacts, but Sarka also has an important collection of agricultural machinery, highlighting this in its digital attractions that have become

YouTube link to Elsa Hietala's presentation (part 1): <https://youtu.be/p-rVnoSilb8> (5'27")  
(and part 2): [https://youtu.be/7P0\\_P30p8jc](https://youtu.be/7P0_P30p8jc) (5'19")

highly popular during the health crisis. They are especially inspired by the “food museum” concept, cooperate with food and agriculture research centers and were rewarded for their innovativeness by the 2021 Finnish Museum of the Year Prize. Still, there are many challenges in the field in Finland, among them the small size of private museums’ collections whose owners are now aging, collections’ lack of accessibility to the public, so that effective networking is ever more important.



**Bob Clark (Director)**  
**Best practices in the Thorny Field: Recent Approaches at Auchindrain**

The placename Auchindrain means “thorny field” in Scottish Gaelic, evoking all the travails that characterize the history of Scotland from the 17th to the 19th centuries – the evictions and enclosures that impoverished every sort of farming community, until there was only one farm

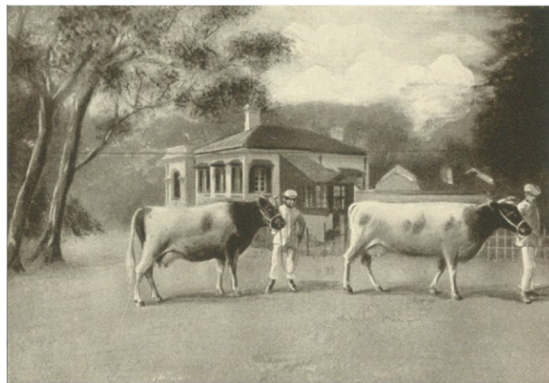


left, which inspired the museum to espouse the township's history right up to the 1960s as a community project focused on interpreting itself, deeply researched and focused on individual histories, not on a general Scottish community/agricultural history. Bob Clark shared photos of community members over time and across generations, but Auchindrain also documents migrants, such as the Gypsy travelers, who camped until their work was done and then moved on. Today, there is a reconstructed traveller summer camp with staff recreating traveller work, like making cloth flowers. Elevating sole survivor into the type example of townships and exploring personal histories creates the most memorable experience. Guests seem to agree!



YouTube link to Bob Clark's presentation: [https://youtu.be/\\_bqSfD1bTpc](https://youtu.be/_bqSfD1bTpc) (11'47'')

**Benjamin Chiu-hang Sin (Senior Social Work Supervisor, Caritas-Hong Kong)**  
**A Community-Driven Movement on Revitalizing the Old Hong Kong Dairy Farm Heritage Site**



The Hong Kong Dairy Farm Company, now a multinational corporation, was founded in 1886 to bring hygienic, nutritious and affordable milk to the community. The dairy farm closed in 1985 but was rediscovered by neighbouring villagers.

Supported by a local charity and the Dairy Farm Company, this work led to public tours and workshops, the listing of historic buildings, and formation of the largest built-heritage cluster in the City, eventually becoming the PokFuLam Farm Project – Creative Heritage for Social Good.

The area was sometimes deemed an urban slum, but residents have a 300 year history associated with the last surviving village on Hong Kong island. Population growth was the most significant after WW II and the Dairy Company claimed to have the highest density of cattle per acre in the world. The Hong Kong government put out a bid to preserve the structure and the project implemented public engagement, cultural activity and workshops that have engaged 50,000 people over 7 years, always stressing collective heritage. Now, a

private foundation has funded the project with 2.8 million Hong Kong dollars. The heritage conservation work has been completed and the official opening is planned for the first quarter of 2022

YouTube link to Benjamin Sin's presentation: <https://youtu.be/YhNwK-aMmfg> (10'05)

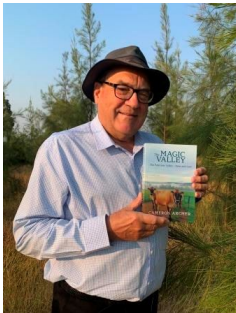
## Interlude: the MERL's Welcome Case with Ollie Douglas



YouTube link to Ollie Douglas - Introduction to The MERL: Welcome Case: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4xdIQufePk8> (2'50")

## Roundtable Climate, Environment and Sustainability

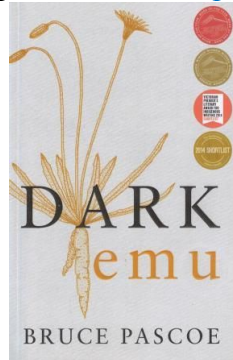
**Cameron Archer**, Agricultural and Environmental Historian, AIMA Scientific Committee Member, **Debra Reid**, Curator of Agriculture and the Environment, The Henry Ford, **David M. Simmons**, Executive Director, Billings Farm & Museum, **Surajit Sarkar**, Coordinatory, Centre for Community Knowledge, Ambedkar University,



**Cameron** spoke of the double heritage of a “settler society” overlaying the indigenous societies that had been in Australia for 40,000 to 60,000 years and had their own ways of managing the landscape, often a bushland very vulnerable to fires. This question of how far indigenous people went towards “farming” has been taken up – controversially – in the bestselling book *Dark Emu, Black Seeds*. There is no doubt that European farming and stockbreeding had terrific impact on the environment and raises the challenges of how to show this in

museums, although there are no specifically “agricultural” museums in the country, only local sites that are often more nostalgic than museums in the EU, UK or North America and do not tackle current agricultural issues, including the mistakes of monocultures, or the overuse of chemicals, which Cameron notes should be compensated by special emphasis on agricultural history in environmental history and can be the major role of museums.

YouTube link to Cameron Archer presentation: <https://youtu.be/0OCm0JnTAkg> (8'13'')



Interpretation as Sustainable Practice:  
Tangible Collections (basis of interpretation)  
Intangible Cultural Heritage (practice of...)

artifacts, landscapes, built environment,  
practices, living history, experimental archaeology

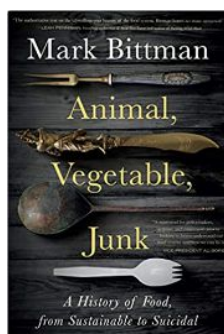
Human  
Actions:

Creating Working Environments  
Getting Water  
Generating/Harnessing Power  
Growing Food  
Traveling and Trading  
Building Things  
Preserving and Conserving Natural  
Landscapes

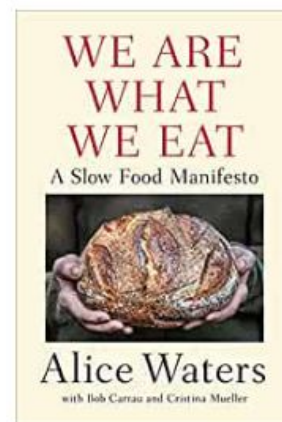
Starting the compost pile  
at Firestone Farm. Photo  
by Deb Reid, May 1, 2021



**Debra** spoke first about farmers going green and the EU movement for green museums, as outlined in Sarah Brophy and Elizabeth Wylie's *Green Museum*. She recalled that historic practices were not necessarily green or sustainable and the contrasting labor needs of historic agriculture, including fertilizer and pesticide application, adoption of technology, agricultural machines and the significance of all these to the Anthropocene, since ploughing also destroys soils. In fact, collections of artifacts provide us with evidence of climate change and encourage us to ask how they might fit into (or not) alternative or organic agriculture. Living history interpretation could be furthered as a sustainable practice that involves learning by doing organic farming, composting, using heritage varieties of vegetables and sustaining local livestock propagation).



*Animal, Vegetable, Junk and We Are What We Eat.*



The Henry Ford's present efforts at the Firestone Farm (The Henry Ford Museum). Whether their own concept is genuinely "green" is debatable, as it is also important to explain that historic practices were often not "sustainable". Deb especially emphasized the resources available to empower debate, such as

YouTube link to Debra Reid's presentation: <https://youtu.be/9NmWmlNqDgw> (6'08'')



**David** noted that the Billings Farm & Museum, now 150 years old, is in the Green Mountains near Woodstock, Vermont and cited George Perkins Marsh, the early environmentalist as well as Billings himself who was a conservationist coming into an area that had been overgrazed by sheep and impacted by too much logging. Billings proceeded to reforest the area, and imported a herd from Jersey. They now have some 60,000 visitors per year and the farm is a perfect “canvas” for demonstrations with their heirloom gardens, emphasis on waste avoidance, or the sunflower house that is a haven for pollinators. They even appeal to

YouTube link to David Simmond's presentation: <https://youtu.be/D-4fLqczvOk> (10'43”)

ballet performances to promote the site and have gone over to reusable water bottles, organize junior farmer camps in the summer and have college agriculture students as interns at the same time.



Awaiting upload of Surajit Sarkar’s participation in the AIMA Congress, you can read his contribution to the MERL’s **51 Voices Online Event** on the Indian Branch Office of Suttons Seeds, a world-renowned seed supplier here: <https://merl.reading.ac.uk/collections/suttons-seeds-ltd/suttons-seeds-sign/>

The discussion following these presentations was especially rich and touched on delightfully stimulating comments, such as importance of **unlearning** the idea that agriculture has no impact on the environment so that you can more effectively attempt to see what effects it does have, or pursuing this “new vision” even farther – debunking the common perception that agriculture is non-intrusive and bucolic. Some would even say that agriculture is an unnatural act that gives rise to civilization, another huge challenge for museums to take on. This can be coupled with understanding the great variation from one place to another and within a local community over the whole Please note that the weblink to the discussion will be added in an update.

spectrum, from considering agriculture as exploitation to seeing it as stewardship. In Australia, a big issue is which industries can be accepted socially by communities, for example, forestry is poorly accepted because of its impact on koalas. Likewise, few of us realize that dairy farming uses an immense amount of water, even a museum’s operations can require 50 gallons of water per day per animal. Is it possible to alleviate mainstream agriculture’s worst errors and even effectively interpret real-life complexity or engage with food systems as a whole (see the books *Animal-Vegetable-Junk* or *We Are What We Eat* cited above.

## Interlude: the MERL's Open Access Stores



Join Madeleine Ding, Collections Officer, The MERL, University of Reading + Reading Museum for a Short Tour of The MERL Open Access Stores:

<https://youtu.be/AII5Dx5SHV0> (3'50")

## Interlude: "Other Voices" – Creativity and Community

YouTube link to Other Voices - Creativity and Community:

<https://youtu.be/3bb0bXSuMR0> (1'08")



## Keynote Session

**Adam Sutherland (Director), Grizedale Arts  
Art and Agriculture**

**"Connecting Resources – Cultivating Communities"**



# GRIZEDALE ARTS

Chair Isabel Hughes, our co-host at the MERL, introduced this session. Grizedale Arts in the Lake District focuses on generating culture and reinvigorating traditional cultures. It began as land art, public art – with sculptures in a forest simply to make people curious to visit without needing to see it as “art”, and Grizedale eventually got the Prudential Prize for Arts in 1990s.

Later projects highlighted “being real about the rural”, which resulted in some confrontation with the Forestry Commission and more generally over their mission.

Today, the most important aspect of their work involves locally based invitations to artists to help reinvigorate communities culturally and heighten their self-esteem. Adam emphasized that rural creativity is more random and less linear than urban creativity. They have now extended activities to the international level in a collaboration with the Irish Institute of Arts on an operation growing courgettes, or involving four villages around the world in the same project or encouraging education and self-development through beekeeping in Japan. Beekeeping as a multi-functional activity included a Slovenian community where the most urgent issue is an aging population. Grizedale specializes at times in surprise actions that can combine many tools when a community invites them to invent a vision for a site, such as using an old pub, allied with a teaching garden and bread oven.

YouTube link to Adam Sutherland's keynote presentation: <https://youtu.be/9UC9YBWGcGo> (34'25”)

## **Anna Barlóg-Mitmanska** **Memoirs of Farm Workers 1900-1950** **Archives of the National Museum of Agriculture in** **Szreniawa, Poland**



Although peasants in Poland were enfranchised in the second half of the 19th century, landowners continued to treat them as semi-slave labor. Any account of their lives remained totally missing from the historical record, although they made up 75% of the population in 1921. In the 18th century, 90% of people were illiterate, although this varied during the 19th century over the various regions of partitioned Poland, and peasants’ lives were hardly represented until the founding of rural unions in 1904, which coincided with the first widespread strikes demanding regular working hours, pensions and the right to purchase small plots in the case of parcellation. Even then, most peasants were not paid in money and the Landlords’ Union remained powerful. By the time these memoirs were written, they helped give peasants voices and self-recognition as promoted by the Socialist governments. Anna stressed that the collection requires a critical approach, noting that some parts of the documents disappeared with no explanation.

YouTube link to Anna Barlog-Mitmanska’s presentation: [https://youtu.be/kaLpYDI\\_n1E](https://youtu.be/kaLpYDI_n1E) (15'27”)



# Panel: Working with Agricultural Films

**Caroline Gould, Principal Archivist, MERL**

## **Sustainable conservation of film, a case study**



Caroline provided a glimpse of the types of film in the MERL archive, including items from the Ministry of Agriculture Film Library and promotional films, for example, for the Milk Marketing Board. Their work at the MERL involves firstly, the collections as well as digital preservation and renovation. In addition, they have to prioritize about whether to do the safeguarding first or sorting out according to the academic interest of archives, which include 16mm films, then VHS, DVDs, and finally digital MP3. As in any film archive proposing online accessibility, copyright is always a big issue, although not in the case of the Ministry of Agriculture. The MERL receives funding from their internal budget plus from the “FIELD” Project. For the future, they plan to continue using their DAM (Digital Asset Management) system and keep everything on hard drive.

YouTube link to Caroline Gould’s presentation: <https://youtu.be/JcvOLiOBOrc> (5’59”)

## **Peter Moser, Director, Archives of Rural History, Bern Switzerland**

### **Introducing the European Rural History Film Archives (ERHFA)**



European films begin after WWI, with different approaches from country to country. In France, the government took charge, whereas in Switzerland, it was the agricultural sector itself that was responsible for making films, especially in the 1960s when they were usually commissioned by sector actors and made by small film companies for which income was bread-and-butter that enabled them to continue with movie theater films.

Television in the 1950s provided new outlets for the farming population, at first seen only as of economic, not cultural, interest until the 1970s when a new awareness of the peasantry and the creation of documentary films arose. It is important to note that these films were not lost,

but the problem was access and there was no record of context or history, hence the mission of the ERHFA is to make up for this, and continually update the database, based in Bern. The ERHFA does not archive films physically themselves. Rather, they indicate where the film is held, in what institutions, and are now encouraged to see researchers regularly consulting the database.

YouTube link to Peter Moser's presentation <https://youtu.be/cqHH40O5rw8> (7:26 minutes)

**Sven Lefèvre and Yves Segers, Centre for Agrarian History  
Katholieke Universiteit Leuven  
Making Film Digitally Available: how to deal with copyright issues  
A case study: the Cinema Rural Project**



Yves Segers



Sven Lefèvre

Sven recalls that the Cinema Rural Project has been going on for 25 years and the biggest issue has always been copyright. Luckily, there are five golden rules: 1) know the copyright legislation in your country, for example, in Belgium, there is a 70-year time limit. This information is available through the Europeana Copyright Community website at

<https://pro.europeana.eu/page/europeana-copyright>; 2) ask your local film archive to advise and help you contact copyright holders like directors, musicians or composers; 3) be careful to document your search for the copyright holder, so you can

Sven Lefèvre's and Yves Segers' presentation: <https://youtu.be/SCoxYqhNbsA> (6'25")

see how long it took you and update the effort. There is also the important point of EU legislation on "orphan work" which – after a "diligent search" – provides you protection and legitimacy; 4) indicate the rights status of films through Rights Statements (e.g. consult <https://rightsstatements.org/en/>) and 5) share and promote the use of agricultural films.



**Syds Wiersma, Archivist, Friesian Film Archives  
Henk Dijkstra, Director, Fries Lanbouwmuseum (Netherlands)  
Implementing Films in a Museum Context: advantages for public  
history and collaboration**



Left: Henk Dijkstra, centre Friesian Agrarian Museum, right, Syds Wiersma

The Friesian Agrarian Museum highlights Friesland's especially rich history in farming, cattle-breeding and dairy production with permanent exhibits on machines and agricultural tools, with an especially large collection of paintings and photos. They have been digitizing

films for years and have been in a new home for the last three years that has enabled them to entirely modernize the way their collections are exhibited. A cooperation with the Friesian Film and Audio Archives' enormous holdings has provided the footage to enliven the Museum's exhibits, including a long tradition of seasonal workers from Germany. This is a very hands-on use of film, for example – explaining in writing how a threshing roll works is a challenge, but a good-quality film shows you nearly everything of the skills involved and you can see the tools being used on display in front of you.

Syds Wiersma and Henk Dijkstra's presentation: <https://youtu.be/hshkXoTEry4> (3'30")

The **discussion** following the presentations was full of pertinent tips for all institutions or groups endeavouring to handle their own film archives or collaborate with other partners. Peculiarly “national” practices (at times somewhat unwieldy) are a stimulation in the learning curve. There are highly diverse official attitudes about making archives accessible, some are “protective” while others are deeply attached to public and research access. Above all, film archives provide a totally different impression of rural life that moves immediately beyond stereotypes. For example, agronomy students today find typical 1950s practices laughable, just as they see films have preserved tools and techniques that today are being rehabilitated. There are frequent requests for permission to use the Archives films from television and online media. All this comes with notes of caution, for instance about digital vulnerability, since quality is lost at each new “migration” involved.

The weblink to the discussion will be added in an update.

### **Interlude: Caroline Gould and Adam Lines Preview of the MAAF Film Collection at the MERL**



The Collection has over 460 films covering the 1930s to the 1980s, mainly made for farmers to show the latest in contemporary techniques and best practices of the time.

The weblink to the discussion will be added in an update.

Over 300 are now available digitally. Caroline and Adam gave many examples of change, such as how a saddler adapted to the loss of clientele, while a wheelwright goes over to repairs only, with some intriguing glimpses of the past, as in an extract from a 1962 film in which a farmer tells his neighbor he would be “spraying” the next day, because the year before it had killed all his neighbor's bees...



## Roundtable: Working with Agricultural Tools

**Hugh Cheape, Professor, National Centre for Gaelic Language and Culture**

**Lifting material culture into interdisciplinary research: the MSc in “Material Culture and Gàidhealteachd History”**



Hugh Cheape, AIMA Scientific Committee Member, spoke on the University of the Highlands & Islands, Skye, and its interdisciplinary course in Scottish Gaelic using Gaelic Material Culture to provide new views of conventional history, where there are so many stereotypes, linking language and ethnology, for example, the place name Kintale / Cinntaile nam Bo (of the Cow) indicates a shieling area. As you are driving by, be sure to look for the A9 highway on an older map and it shows there were other and far older axes of communication.

Older practices can be explored through objects or photographs, as of a man using a *cas dhireach* (straight spade) or a painting of a cattle drove. Hugh also cites the Song to a Highland Cow that perfectly describes the characteristics desired in the animals and notes that during Highland clearances, the earlier sheep breeds were displaced by more “capitalist” types. Other song sources “speak” of the shieling system, of sheep-milking, of various implements, or of night fishing with spear and light as lure. In a photograph of beating out (waulking) cloth, you can actually see that all the women were singing as they worked.

The UHI attempts to break the mold of conventional university courses and uses museum collections as an innovative educational tool.

Hugh Cheape’s presentation: <https://youtu.be/JQsRhceuiCM> (13:53 minutes)

**Kerry-Leigh Burchill, Director  
Spotlighting tools to spark curiosity at The Canada  
Agriculture and Food Museum**



The CAFM has a 400-hectare farm, 200,000 visitors a year, a great diversity of guests, and even includes a DNA synthesizer to create “aha” moments. Their handling of exhibits often involves putting a tool in an odd, unexpected spot, or using an activity like the Apple Cake project where people get a recipe and then can

actually see all that goes into it. The Museum's treadmill for a goat or dog really sparked curiosity and provides a demonstration of energy sources. Their exhibit "Soil Superheroes" used a pesticide sprayer alongside a photograph of people using them bare-skinned and represents an opportunity for dialogue on hazardous materials. They have over 150 animals and

a sheep-shearing festival where adults or children can try out their hands with VS electric shears. They also attempt to highlight all five senses in learning, for example with a honey extractor that children can handle themselves or even the ultra-sound visor used by their veterinarian.



Kerry-Leigh Burchill's presentation: [https://youtu.be/353IZOGev\\_4](https://youtu.be/353IZOGev_4) (8:05 minutes)

## **Bob Powell, formerly Highland Folk Life Museum Random thoughts or questions from a retired agricultural curator ("The Crusty Old Horseman")**



Photos courtesy of Bob Powell

Bob used his "random thoughts" to tell us first about who or what influenced him – he got his first horse brasses when he was two years old, then went on to working on a farm, ploughing, loved tractors but studied archaeology. For him, the big issue is future mentors and future curators, how to interest young people in more practical and less academic training (there is too much "glass case" in his opinion). In the early 1990s, he joined ALHFAM (Association for Living History, Agriculture and Farming Museums), because an agriculture keeper should know how to keep animals and the practical skills involved, and there is usually nothing in curatorial training on these.

Should you actually use historical machinery that you might damage, for example? The RMN (Rural Museums Network) surveys are now outdated on the subject and should be taken up anew. When they tried to invite tractors to the 2021 ALHFAM ploughing match, no one entered the category. Are museums truly stuck in the pre-industrial period? There is also an on-site issue: the creeping displacement of real land to work on, as at Am Fasgadh (The Highland Folk Museum) where expansion of the buildings reduced the farmland available, so they kept fewer animals and stopped doing any farming. Why not use modern tools like the *kassine* (a tool-carrier) and just explain the difference? Everyone needs more international

cooperation and comparison, as was done in Claus Kropp's "Draft Animals in the Past, Present and Future Project" (see report below).

YouTube link to Bob Powell's presentation: <https://youtu.be/YIeS7WCzlfU> (10:56 minutes)

The **discussion** chaired by host Ollie Douglas often turned around using live animals, either as residents or as working partners, always with a story to tell. At the CAFM (Canada Agriculture and Food Museum), staff used a back-scratcher on their older (and super-charged) Hereford bull, which visitors could really engage with. When he died of old age and was replaced, they had to get a much longer one for the higher new animal, so they could explain this to visitors in a whole dialogue on genetic changes. The simple fact of lambing time in a museum reconnects visitors with the seasons and the calendar of work. All the participants stressed extending the museum into the environment when engaging with the public and enlisting local communities to co-curate exhibits and activities.

The weblink to the discussion will be added in an update.

## **Visit to the Museum of East Anglia with Kate Knowlden and her colleagues**

The Museum of East Anglia has enlisted volunteers to transfer data and photograph the collections to put up online, all of which provided an enriching experience, self-esteem and a feeling of involvement.



Museum of East Anglian Life - Search for the Stars: The MEAL's Digitisation Project: <https://youtu.be/4-iGF0ONW7A> (4:05 minutes)

## **Keynote: Adam Koszary, former Digital Lead, MERL and University of Reading From Farm Museum to "Absolute Unit"**



Chaired by Guy Baster, MERL Associate Director and Head of Archive Services, this keynote let Adam mix humour and social media expertise in a grand cocktail, noting that viral success is not "normal" or

predictable. People like quirky stuff, they eventually even brought out Ram t-shirts to go with their "absolute unit", but you absolutely have to be ready to follow up on anything that shows a sign of taking off. For example, when a bat got into the MERL library (that included finding out how to sex a bat), this brought the MERL 155,000 Twitter followers. Social media is basically about having conversations and interaction.

Rural museums have to work harder, they need good stories and fun. It would be



great if you had someone to look over each visitor’s shoulder to ask what might interest them. Then, get into the “emotive core” of stories and the deeper context. We have to adapt to social media and ignore the temptation of fatalism in museums, thinking that your collections are too “niche” to interest, but people *are* interested in how their ancestors lived and where food comes from. Of course, you need a human voice, a relevant object in YouTube link to Adam Koszary’s keynote presentation: <https://youtu.be/sRPGzFKy1pc> (32:47 minutes)

the museum collection that is transposable to Internet. Try to tag artefacts as usable online, while being careful of copyright, and above all, you need a network to build on and stop thinking of social media as an “extra” – it is essential to your relevance and is here to stay. Go ahead, take some risks, but remember it is a bit like knitting – it takes a lot of practice to get to a high-performance level!

## And finally, the “Absolute Unit” explained!



Credit: Museum of English Rural Life, University of Reading: Photograph of an Exmoor Horn aged ram, owned by G.F. Thorne of Minehead, Somerset, 1962, aka the “Absolute Unit” of Twitter fame (P FS PH1/K90651), kindly provided by Guy Baxter 14-12-2021

Following an online search, it appears that the Absolute Unit goes back to December of 2017, when a Twitter user uploaded a photo of British hotelier David Morgan-Hewitt posing with the Queen of England. He captioned the photo: "In awe at the size of this lad. Absolute unit" referring to Morgan-Hewitt. "Absolute" is a British slang term used in so-called "lad culture" to mean "total" (as in “absolute madman”). The tweet harvested over 3,500 retweets and 13,000 likes.

## Keynote: Nerupama Modwel, Director of INTACH Intangible Cultural Heritage Division Indian Nation Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage “Agriculture Museums and the Intangible”



ICH encompasses oral traditions, social practices, performing arts, and craftsmanship including culinary traditions, so there are many intersections with agricultural practices. There is a vast diversity over India and it may be lost, since all is practice-based. The earliest testimony in writing is in the 4th to 2nd centuries BCE, for example, on the cultivation of two

harvests due to two monsoon seasons. Much knowledge has been passed on in proverbs or rhyme, for example, recommending shallow ploughing for rice paddy and much weather lore. Seasonal work has seasonal festivals, and farmers requested the permission of deities for every phase of their work. There is also a basis in practicalities: ritual food for cattle is a highly nutritional surplus at a time when fodder or grazing is low. Another highly important subject is the traditional seed that farmers kept and still do to fall back on, which is equally important for genetic diversity more generally. Farmers traditionally believe that seeds should be the property of all.

We have many examples of traditional practices such as *Rab* mulching in Maharashtra combining leaves, twigs and cow dung to burn over fields producing ash fertilizer or of inviting pastoralists to stay on the land after harvest to dung it. We must remember that even today, much food is produced on borders or between fields, so not noticed in official surveys. We also investigate such subjects as plough types, storage techniques, irrigation systems, or mixed practices such as farming/fishing, slash-and-burn (*jhum* in the northeast), which is an especially interesting example as it represents a whole keystone in an ecosystem.

Nerupama's colleague, Vijay Aditya joined in to comment that so many older practices can be aligned with today's organic movement or zero-budget farming to avoid topsoil degradation, overuse of water sources and he noted such experiments as seven Indian States now promoting millet-cropping, more suited to their climate and soils. Above all, the INTACH tries to bring together academics and all other stakeholders, especially farmers themselves.

A link to INTACH: <http://www.intach.org/>

Nerupama Modwel's keynote presentation: <https://youtu.be/EOdJQaMa9mk> (28'28")

## **Interlude: Claire Clough and Adam Lines Spotlight on History: MERL and the University of Reading Special Collections**

Claire and Adam gave a running tour of the many highlights of the collections, including historical photos, their oldest book (a Book of Hours), a 12th-century charter, a 20th-century unsolicited mail collection as social history, a diaporama from an 1851 exhibit, diaries, *Land Girls* magazines, testimony from the first woman MP, archives on WWII evacuees, the first drawing from a microscope view,

Claire Clough + Adam Lines: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S\\_Xt2ynYSDw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S_Xt2ynYSDw) (52")

*Farmers' Magazine* and much more.



## From chalk to cheese: discover the MERL's latest wall-hanging with Ollie Douglas



On the 1951 Festival of Britain wall-hangings that portrayed Kent (chalk) and Cheshire (cheese), their exhibition history, the Cheshire now having taken the place of the Kent, while they search for more information on the Yorkshire hanging.

From chalk to cheese:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lqETyasndZY> (5'59")

## Bringing the Past to Life Claus Kropp, Director, Lauresham Open-Air Laboratory Kloster Lorsch, Germany "Medieval Agriculture in Experiment"



Photo A.Keil, Lauresham

Chaired by Debra Reid, Curator of Agriculture at The Henry Ford in Dearborn, Michigan, this session explored links between present and past that enliven museums' activities. Claus Kropp first gave us a glimpse of the Lauresham site as a 1:1 model for a monastic farm around 800 CE, with their mission of both

education and as a "playground for research" on housing/buildings, even the buildings' indoor climate, as well as the Lauresham focus on agriculture. It is important to note that it took them four years of experience to come up to what they consider an effective level in working with draft animals and reconstituted implements, as well as trying to get into a medieval mindset. There are also thoroughly modern collaborations, such as participating in the 2018 World Ploughing Championship in Germany. The Lauresham team has a special interest in ridge-and-furrow as a risk minimization strategy and this has now been borne out by their own results, i.e. that furrows give a good spelt yield in dry years, while ridges do the same in overly wet years.



Verwaltung der Staatlichen  
Schlösser und Gärten Hessen






Organisation der  
Vereinten Nationen für  
Bildung, Wissenschaft,  
Kultur und Kommunikation

Kloster Lorsch  
Weiterbildungsstätte  
seit 1991

HESSEN



AIMA 2021

Medieval Agriculture in Experiment

Claus Kropp, Manager Lauresham Open-Air Laboratory

Claus Kropp's presentation: <https://youtu.be/1y6l5GQBIjw> (11'38")

## **Cozette Griffin-Kremer (CRBC Brest) Engaging with Living Heritage: rare breeds at work in museums**



Concentrating on examples from Europe and the United States with a focus on UN sustainable development goal N°17, “encouraging partnerships”, because museums’ activities are linked to so many other SDGs. Citing AIMA member museums’ use of animals to tell the stories of the places they belong to, be it with the Exmoor Short Horn ram (the “Absolute Unit”), the Lauresham ploughing team of Rhaetian Grey oxen (because they are a suitably “medieval” size, not because the breed is local), The SEM / Slovene Ethnographic Museum’s engagement with intangible cultural heritage and the preservation or promotion of the Slovene

Cozette Griffin-Kremer’s presentation: [https://youtu.be/\\_WHwM-qaWMA](https://youtu.be/_WHwM-qaWMA) (11'52")

Lippizaner horses or the Cika high-pasture cattle breed. Examples can be drawn of connecting animals to places across the world, from the Jackstock mules at Mount Vernon, George Washington’s estate, or the Vosges cattle that star in the Alsace Ecomuseum’s “Theatre of Agriculture”. Just as important as promoting a local breed is understanding that it is not possible to “re-invent” it, as for the Alsace’s once common Sundgau goats.



Photo André Kammerer

**Pierre Del Porto, President, AFMA (Fédération des Musées d'Agriculture et du Patrimoine Rural)**  
**"Journées du Patrimoine de Pays & des Moulins: An AFMA partnership project on mills and heritage"**



Since 2002, the Mills and Heritage Days annual event in France attempts to propose subjects that museum partners can develop as they wish with national-level promotion by a group of seven partners, thus enhancing each museum's summer programs and over one thousand events highlighted in a central website. This has greatly contributed to better knowledge of rural life and in the latest example attracted 180,000 visitors over the two-day event, with some 600 locations participating in the 2021 theme and special emphasis on school programs. This activity could easily be extended to an international level, perhaps through the AIMA. The 2022 theme is "Être et renaître" (Be and Be Reborn) -> <http://www.patrimoine-environnement.fr/>

Pierre Del Porto's presentation: <https://youtu.be/JbK6C1Pn9rg> (15'03")



to the publisher of her book: «La craquante et prestigieuse baguette».



À la boulangerie de La Tour d'Argent à Paris, Les Moulins Familiaux\* ont présenté le nouveau livre Points de boulangers de Mouette Barboff 15/01/2018



These presentations were followed by a homage to AIMA member **Mouette Barboff**, expert on bread cultures, who passed away in March of 2021. There will be a tribute to Mouette in the upcoming Newsletter, as well.

The first homage is by baker Jacques Mahou, gold medallist among the Best Craftsmen of France, Member of the French Institute of Taste, champion of a balanced return to traditions of bread-making. He recalls his 35-year friendship with Mouette and literally "makes" his tribute to her in a decorated loaf with her name on it in front of the camera, from first kneading of the dough, to final shaping of the loaf with the decoration, then bakes it. Jacques Mahou goes on to recall her affection for Lionel Poilâne, the famous French champion of fine bread-making who relaunched bread as a gastronomic phenomenon.

YouTube link Jacques Mahou (in French):

[https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCGg41RGdXQ\\_G3m-AOetsJSg](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCGg41RGdXQ_G3m-AOetsJSg) (9'44")

|  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
|  |  | <p>This is followed by a homage to Mouette from her friend Marie-Christine Aubin who cited her many publications, books and book awards, the association Europe Civilisation du Pain, the organization (with assistance from François Sigaut) of the Millstone Conference in La-Ferté-sous-Jouarre, and participation in the 2011, 2014 and 2017 AIMA congresses. Her latest book, <i>La craquante et prestigieuse baguette</i> (The Crisp and Prestigious Baguette) will be featured in AIMA Newsletter N°17. Marie-Christine Aubin<br/> <a href="https://youtu.be/Ofh7vrm9TXc">https://youtu.be/Ofh7vrm9TXc</a> (9'19")</p> |
|--|--|---|

## Roundtable: Using collections to inspire "Farming Futures"



Clockwise from top left: Pete Watson, Atenchong Talleh Nkobou, Paul Starkey,  
Dick Roosenberg and Winani Thebele.

Our guests for the roundtable were Atenchong Talleh Nkobou (PhD Candidate, University of Reading), Dick Roosenberg (Founder, Tillers International, Scotts, Michigan, United States), Paul Starkey (Consultant in Integrated Transport and Transport Services & Visiting Senior Research Fellow, MERL, England), Winani Thebele (Chief Curator and Head of Ethnology, Botswana National Museum, The Bonnington Colonial Legacy) and Pete Watson (Director, Howell Living History Farm, Titusville, New Jersey, United States)



The participants began with an introduction to themselves, their work and experiences over the years, coordinated by Paul Starkey through several zoom meetings. They discussed subjects as varied as creating a museum of practical history, the intricacies of political economy and land rights and the history of an organization like Tillers International devoted to cooperative development between the North and South of the world. The contributors discussed the personal professional lessons learned, from assuring relevance to the community through mixed crop and livestock management, to pre-colonial cattle-keeping for animals' deep social value (bride price and funeral offerings) among the many layers of functions from past to present. Above all, animal draft is truly sustainable, but must be set in a willingness to compromise between alternatives and admit much North-South technology transfer failure due to incomprehension of native knowledge and practices, all of which can be improved through effective networking and development policies that take into account poor outcomes and the sort of hegemonic hierarchies they create. In today's "smaller" world, it is possible to communicate the successes of non-high tech solutions, like Amish farmers' highly effective use of horsepower.

It is a world of contrasts: years of work in a living history site can be highly vulnerable to poor inter-generational transmission, just as traditional knowledge can provide solutions to current problems, with the example of re-cultivating steep terrain in Peru or Ecuador with oxen to provide fodder resources for dairy operations. The comparison of implements from many countries can propel innovation that is local instead of driven by Euro-centric, "top-down" development policies. Facing up to failures like the Grameen microfinance venture, or financially impractical tractorization is important. Identifying labor bottlenecks in a local economy or the fifteen busiest days of cropping in the year are simple, but effective strategies and agricultural museums can serve as public innovation hubs through North-South alliances as well as recall the once-fertile museum-agricultural technology schools connection. Above all, according to all the participants: network, network, network!

YouTube link forthcoming in an update.

## **Chantal Bisschop (Centre for Agrarian History, KU Leuven, Belgium)**

### **Draft Horse Techniques in the Picture: Audio-Visual Documentation of Intangible Cultural Heritage in a Participatory Way**



Chantal is responsible for Intangible Cultural Heritage at the CAG and their efforts to work with audiovisual resources on working horses in Belgium. These have produced films much like the ALHFAM Skills Clips Series that effectively show every stage from hitching up to log-hauling or tree-felling, especially fine-honed through feedback and consulting at every

stage with the local community of skillsholders. The program involved producing a trailer (teaser) film, a short dynamic film aimed at the public, then a real step-by-step technical film, all accompanied by technical manuals on how to produce these. The example films briefly shown included horse-logging.

The lessons they have learned from the project thus far are 1) take the time to find partners and explore their needs while you develop trust and do the research to prepare the process, 2) provide feedback at every stage, 3) use a tailor-made process, never a one-size-fits-all approach so that the outcome is very positive: the draft horse community is enthusiastic and even uses their video clips for their own work and promotion. Proof of the concept is that the films are great communicators on every level.

YouTube link to Chantal Bisschop: <https://youtu.be/VZt7juRJr7w> (10'55")

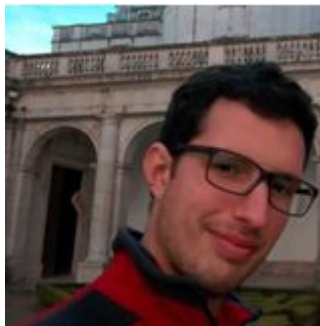
## **“The Commons: Re-enchanting the World” at the MERL: preview of the exhibit**

Ollie Douglas spoke with Amanda Couch, Catherine Morland and Sigrid Holmwood, from the group of artists including Sam Wallman, Kelechi Anucha and Carl Gent who collaborated on works as varied as basketry, recent folk song audio recordings or the multiple values and uses of plant life in “companioning with wheat”, a graphic “Commons” banner or experimental flower beds, in an indoor/outdoor exhibit to create renewed links between the MERL and its collections with visitors. Until 30 January 2022:

<https://merl.reading.ac.uk/event/the-commons-re-enchanting-the-world/>

## **Panel: Understanding Museums, Objects and Sites**

Chaired by Kerry-Leigh Burchill (Director General of the Canada Agriculture and Food Museum), the panel participants presented pre-recorded interventions followed by a live (and lively) discussion.



**João P.R. Joaquim** (University of Cambridge doctoral student) spoke on the **Collection to Cultivation Project** with a special focus on the AIMA’s work in the exchange of practical and especially theoretical work, which was much broader than museums’ work alone. He traced out agricultural museum origins from the late nineteenth century on in agriculture exhibits, then the striking first example in the establishment of Skansen, followed by

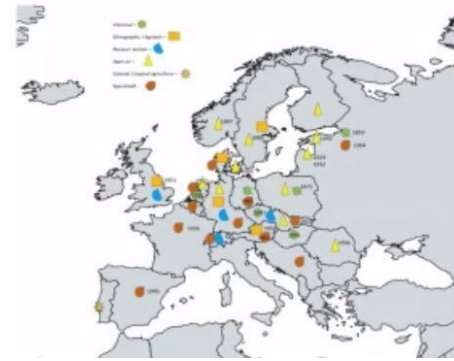
the Hungarian Agriculture Museum. By 1918, the Czechoslovak museum innovated with a present-oriented strategy, as a practical educational tool for agricultural development, for example, in animal and plant breeding, a concept with its roots as far back as the 1920s in support from the Czechoslovak agrarian party. Much of this groundbreaking inter-museum and international cooperation in 1930s Central Europe was destroyed by World War II, but the hopes were kept alive and by the time of E.J.T. Collins’ participation for the MERL,\* the AIMA was a working association, in spite of some, at times, surprising differences in practices and atmosphere. João noted that there was little Soviet participation, due to restrictions on foreign travel and the imbalance between the status of Soviet museum personnel and

government or party members. Of course, 1989 brought a real turning point, a change in perspectives and an increased interest in exchange and cooperation.

\*See Ted's article (with a personal touch) on the AIMA from the late 1960s through the end of the 1990s:

<https://usercontent.one/wp/www.agriculturalmuseums.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/ted-collinsaima-final2.pdf>

YouTube link to Joao Joaquim's presentation: <https://youtu.be/yuWHdqDfAEo> (10'34")

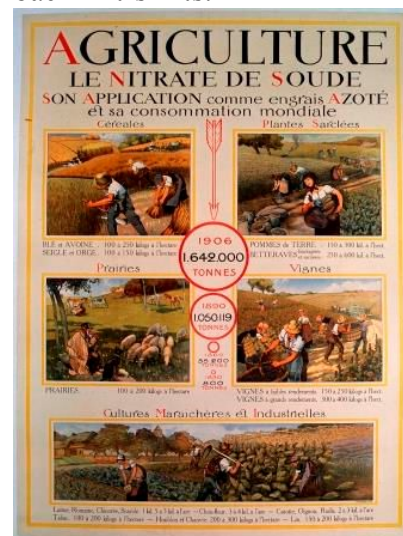


**Marie-Christine Aubin** (ethnologist, AIMA member) presented **The advertising arsenal of the Chilean "Salitre" (Saltpeter) Industry**, detailing the ferocious competition in the late nineteenth century over exports in real "fertilizer wars" over sodium nitrate or guano ("white gold"). The three main importers of Chilean saltpeter were the United States, France and Egypt from the 1830s through 1960. Sodium nitrate was the only natural fertilizer outside of guano to have global penetration and most of the advertisements were based on the promise of increasing yields. The Chilean National Archives hold more than 1,300,000 documents pertaining to the saltpeter industry such as advertising posters,\*

Chilean National Archives, advertising posters: <http://www.memoriachilena.gob.cl/602/w3-channel.html>

YouTube weblink to Marie-Christine's presentation will be added in an update.

although there are other sources in the New York bureau and in some 47 different countries, where sodium nitrate was sold. Both exporters and importers produced educational pamphlets, organized international expositions and fairs, provided kits for farmers to measure soil pH, and further promoted publicity through calendars, postcards, posters and other objects. Today, these images have made a come-back in t-shirts.







**Anne Jorunn Froyen** (Curator of History, Jaermuseet, Norway) on **Insects and Pesticides: a Norwegian case study** in the County of Rogaland, where they used iron sulfate for weed control, as well as sulfuric acid, neither easy to handle with often poor equipment that caused injuries. Agri-tech experts, among them, a prominent “weed apostle” with international connections, persuaded farmers to use pesticides for his “war against weeds”. Much pesticide use came from increasing monocultures which created the weed problems in the first place. These experts set up work sites on busy roads to be seen by passing farmers, used science as a warranty of truth, and presented themselves as “agents of miracles”. However, it was not easy to succeed in the tech transfer from laboratory to field and at times, the efforts produced the opposite effect with more weeds, so they shifted the blame from themselves and their products to farmers or the weather and... that worked! Likewise, they never showed the dangers involved in pesticide use such as persistence in foodstuffs.

Anne Jorunn Frøyen’s presentation: <https://youtu.be/RfAFmuPn6e0> (10’00”)



**Abel Vergneaux** (Deputy General Secretary, Museum of Agricultural Machinery and Rurality: <https://www.framaa.fr/>) spoke on **Conserving and Restoring Heritage and Agricultural Machinery** and showed the English version of their museum video, especially made for the AIMA. The museum is located in the Burgundy-Franche-Comté region some 200 km south of Paris, and this exemplary video traces the history of the museum, founded in 1993, now with some 150 machines on display, handled by a small staff and some 250 very active volunteers. The site facilities are explored in depth, including the orchard, and what is especially remarkable is the detail about the breakdown of expenses and financing, including partnerships with private companies (German, Chinese and Hispano-Japanese) for rooftop production of solar-panel electricity.

Special highlights involved the restoration of the Argentinian *espicadora* (a sort of modern *vallus* as regards “push” draft) and the stripper from Australia, both with fascinating stories

about how they were discovered and acquired through crowd-funding, with many hundreds of hours of restoration work by the FRAMAA's volunteers. The museum's largest yearly event is the *Rétromoisson* (Retro-Harvest) in mid-August, among a variety of activities, both indoor and outdoor, with special emphasis on the museum as being embedded in a network of collaborative partners, local and international tourism, in addition to a special focus on the environment and wine tourism.

YouTube link to Abel Vergneaux's presentation: <https://youtu.be/h7IRba9rEF8> (9'14")



All the presentations were pre-recorded with a live **discussion** piloted by Kerry-Leigh on the theme of "past and future agricultures" and how their museums or research cast light on this topic, as well as how to continue development into the future. The wide-ranging discussion addressed subjects of present debate from immigration to racism, food security, and environmental concerns such as pesticide persistence in soils or climate change. Participants also focused on museum challenges, such as how best to communicate on- or off-site research, how to form effective alliances among agricultural and other museums, such as science and technology, ethnography or folk life institutions, as well as involving business sponsors, mechanical or ag-tech engineers and animal science professionals.

YouTube link to panel discussion will be added in an update

## **Guest presentation: Chris Green** **An Historical Dictionary of Agricultural Handtools**



Chris, an independent researcher and retired museum expert, has compiled a historical dictionary on farm hand tools, because many sources concentrate on the

YouTube link to Chris Green (recorded on his behalf by Isabel Hughes):

<https://youtu.be/eoHjA6L3qSE> (10'03")

*owners' tools* – especially large machinery – and not on the workers' tools. He is following Raphael Salaman's example with his dictionary of woodworking tools. Chris is organizing this through the year of work on a farm, highlighting tools like a rounding plane used to produce handles and emphasizes that the idea that "grandfather made all his own tools" is usually false. Nearly all tools were bought from craftsmen or catalogs, even such light-weight equipment as hay creels, and cited the colorful example of yelves (muck-lifting forks).

## **AIMA General Assembly Minutes of the Virtual Meeting July 26, 2021**

The AIMA's legal address is at the COMPA (Conservatoire de l'Agriculture) in Chartres, France. In compliance with the ongoing pandemic conditions, the statutory General Assembly was held on 26 July 2021 during the AIMA Virtual Congress based at the MERL (Museum of English Rural Life) in Reading, England, by digital means and by correspondence, in application of the French Decree 2020/321 of 25-03-2020 extended by the Decree 2021/255 of 09-03-2021. Full minutes of the meeting in French and English are accessible at <https://usercontent.one/wp/www.agriculturalmuseums.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/MinutesGAM-French-English-26July2021-AIMA.pdf>

Due to unfinished business, including proposal and voting for the new Executive Committee, a Special General Assembly meeting was held on 7 December 2021, according to the same Decrees

## **AIMA Special General Assembly Minutes of the Virtual Meeting December 7, 2021**

Out-going President Ollie Douglas called the meeting to order at 13:02 GMT via Zoom hosted by the Canada Agriculture and Food Museum (CAFM), including the "Invitation to India 2023 CIMA" by Surajit Sarkar followed by a special presentation of "A Year on the Field" by Claus Kropp, incoming President. The quorum was met with electronic voting preceding the general assembly, all Resolutions were approved with the online audience, including the new AIMA EC Executive Committee (Board) for 2021- 2023.

The full minutes are available at

<https://usercontent.one/wp/www.agriculturalmuseums.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/2021-December-7-AIMA-GA-Minutes.pdf>

## **Surajit Sarkar Invitation to India for AIMA 2023**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VaebkM0qknQ>

Surajit Sarkar now has a long history with the AIMA. He was recommended by a distinguished friend of former President François Sigaut (†2012), Lotika Varadarajan, a *grande dame* of Indian ethnology, as detailed in Debra Reid's report on the 2018 AIMA Executive Committee meeting in Delhi, India, hosted by Surajit at the Centre for Community Knowledge (CCK) and Nerupama Modwel of the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH). A third co-host has now joined the India team:

Vijay Aditya of Ekgaon Technologies. See AIMA Newsletter N°13 Part 1, 5-8:

[https://usercontent.one/wp/www.agriculturalmuseums.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/AIMA\\_Newsletter\\_N13\\_January\\_2019\\_Part1-1.pdf](https://usercontent.one/wp/www.agriculturalmuseums.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/AIMA_Newsletter_N13_January_2019_Part1-1.pdf)



# AIMA Friends' Congresses in 2021

# ALHFAM



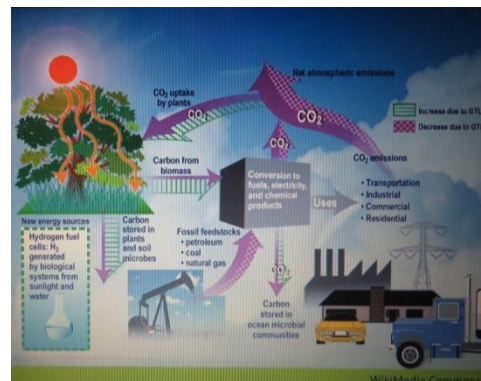
The Association for Living History, Farm and Agricultural Museums

## Looking Forward...the Next 50 Years 10-12 June 2021

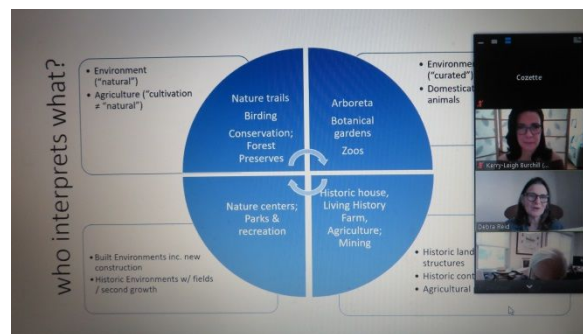
### The many dimensions of sustainability and why ALHFAM should care about it

ALHFAM 2021 kicked off with a bang in the opening panel discussion, where Douglas Worts began with a geologic perspective on the Anthropocene and delved into issues through analysis of systems thinking, then went on to participate actively in the chat thread with other presenters. Nearly all the papers engaged with sustainability in one way or another: from soil health to the challenges of interpretation in our day of highly conflicting opinion, how to engage visitors with the key issues in today's agricultures, making the UN **Sustainable Development Goals** more accessible to the public, taking simple steps like selling only local produce in museum shops or growing heritage crops, or mixing the use of tractors with draft animals. This inspired Doug Worts to comment and challenge:

*Great examples of museums thinking about, and acting on, the issues that are shaping our living culture! I'm wondering if any of our presenters have developed a "theory of change" in which the various exhibits, programs and processes will lead to changes in the living culture? The sites themselves clearly are important places for communities coming together, largely in leisure time. Are there points in the larger culture where the insights of these examples can be leveraged to create change beyond the museum and the individuals that visit?*



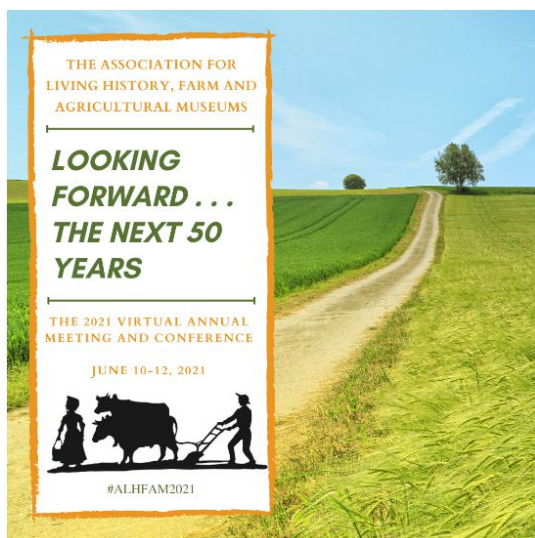
Courtesy Douglas Worts: where we stand today in the Anthropocene and interdependent complex systems. Nearly one hundred speakers took part over the intense Thursday through Saturday sessions, with several **AIMA members** participating, and **discerning fact from fiction** was a topic on many minds, since people working in farming museums or living history sites hear some of the most astounding clichés about the past. In the very present moment, there is much attention to social media, just as we saw in the AIMA congress, and a willingness to share experiences.



Left: EXARC explains how they bring the UN SDGs into their museums and right: how interpretation is distributed over multiple sites, including farming museums and living history sites

Throughout the ALHFAM presentations, nearly everything coincides with AIMA members' and friends' own concerns. If various and many aspects of sustainability were covered, there were also the distinct threads of common preoccupations: period clothing and textile skills, the traditional ploughing match (digitized this year), addressing communities of all kinds in deep respect and recognition, the quest for relevance and how best to make collections count for the public, and much focus on educational programs. There were also delightful nitty-gritty concerns like how to care for and sow seed, the welfare of working animals or communicating through theater, virtual walk-throughs and storytelling.

No one hesitated to tackle what the ICOM labeled the **"hard history"** that museums must be ready to embrace, but life was made easy for online attendees by having a thorough introduction on all the technicals for how to join the meeting, as well as the option for "watch-anytime" sessions, then the opportunity to participate in the live discussions with their presenters.



ALHFAM is proposing free online access to registered congress attendees through 10 November and then to all members afterwards, so the sessions will not be full-access to the public, but the solution to that is to join the ALHFAM or watch for regular reports on their activities from the AIMA.

# Draft Animals in the Past Present and Future



An international digital congress entitled “Draft Animals in the Past, Present and Future” that attracts over 400 registrants from over 30 countries? Yes, it happened on the 8th and 9th of May, organized by Claus Kropp, AIMA President and Director of the **Lauresham Open-Air Laboratory** in the UNESCO World Heritage site of **Kloster Lorsch** in Germany, where the experimental archaeology museum shows village life and work in the eighth and ninth centuries. This includes reconstructions of buildings, agricultural practices on the site’s extensive fields, logging in neighbouring woods, and replicas of tillage implements, all powered by the Lorsch horses and cattle. Of the 40+ speakers, seven were recruited from among **AIMA** members, typical of the AIMA’s efforts to engage broadly across all aspects of farming and stockraising with partners from other associations, since Claus is also a member of our long-time ally, **EXARC**, the experimental archaeology open-air museums group.

Some practices no longer fit into today’s concerns about animal welfare and comfort, so the Lorsch team displays the head yokes for oxen typical of the region to show visitors, but actually uses the “German” 3-pad collar, refined during the 1930s in the quest to enhance production by small-holder farmers – a peak in technical perfection rendered obsolete by the massive arrival of tractors in the Marshall Plan. But this apparent contradiction with a search for authenticity provides ample opportunities to explain to the public just what the differences are between the traditional and the “latest” yoking innovation.



Claus Kropp at Lauresham Open-air Museum, Kloster Lorsch, DE, with their working oxen Darius and David making hay

The congress was indeed a world tour, beginning with a joint keynote on the stakes involved in animal energy in the world’s “South”, especially Africa. There were presentations from experts from fourteen countries, from Kenya to Columbia, many concerned with the issues of working animals in developing countries, often citing the enormous challenges of at times quite uncooperative governments or the catastrophic illegal trade in donkey skins for Chinese traditional medicine which has devastated farmers’ lives across East Africa. Still, the modest donkey was often the keystone in presentations highlighting its multitude of impacts – aiding women in arduous water- and wood-carrying, providing transport to markets, or freeing children from field work to attend school.





Bob Powell's historical photo of Scottish Society of Horsemen, Archive Bob Powell

There was a panorama of contributions from Europe and North America, with a glimpse of historical research and museum collections or photo archives, as on the prestige, skills and secrecy of the old Scottish Horsemen's Societies. All sorts of collections can inform about the recent past of using animal energy, as do the films from the **ERHFA** (European Rural History Film Archives) that clearly show modernization was often slow and cautious, or from institutions like the **Slovene Ethnographic Museum** with its magnificent collection of photos and its key role today in piloting Slovene Intangible Cultural Heritage of all kinds, including Lippizaner horses and the Cika cattle at home in Alpine pastures. Museums like the **Polish National Museum of Agriculture and Food** at Szreniawa have cutting-edge accommodation for their working horses and oxen, as well as the photo and art archives to engage with their past. For the more remote past, an archaeologist introduced us to the revolution in transport brought about by invention of the revolte joint for cattle carts during the Neolithic, before our last leap forward to the here and now.



Photo Pete Watson for Howell History Farm, Mercer County, New Jersey, USA

The connections between European or North American small-farming and development in Latin America or Africa abounded and it was a pleasant surprise to hear that an American university gave courses in animal draft skills as part of its broader programme in agro-ecology. Many developers of light-weight equipment concentrate on fine-honed mechanization – not motorization based on fossil fuels – equally applicable to some situations in Europe such as market gardening and to developing economies anxious to avoid indebting

farmers. Animal draft has gained its laurels in many activity sectors where protection of the environment is prized, such as horse-logging throughout much of northern and eastern Europe, the growing investment in urban transport and services in countries like France and the linkage this has created with local or heritage animal breeds that were once neglected.



Photo courtesy Jean-Léo Dugast on fern-bashing

These activities, like the growing use of horses in vineyards to avoid soil compaction, in maintaining wetlands or in fern control, have gained much ground for the image of animal power as a viable alternative to motorized implements, though some governments, as in Romania, remain recalcitrant to the suggestion that their farmers' working animals represent an economic opportunity and might open a path towards greater sustainability in agriculture.

Above all, the contributors emphasized the need for global strategies to promote every pertinent utilization of animal energy and a part of this must come from better documentation of practices, skills and results, so Claus has already begun a virtual archive from animal handlers around the world of how they work, or... co-work with animals – “The World Tour”.

Full programme with weblinks to all presentations here: [https://kloster-lorsch.de/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/conference\\_schedule\\_2021-07-01.pdf](https://kloster-lorsch.de/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/conference_schedule_2021-07-01.pdf)





## EAC World Tour 29 March-1 April

EXARC congresses are wide-ranging in the most geographical sense of the term and digital also means inclusive, so the number of time zones across the world was impressive and surely stoked coffee consumption considerably among the attendees. Running from March 29th through April 1st, with full-day sessions, the variety of speakers and subjects touches on nearly all aspects of **experimental archaeology** and any museum director, educational officer or university teacher can recommend the conference as a full-scale short course in the subject. To facilitate participation, there was a clear explanation from one of EXARC's tech experts on how best to benefit from the many functionalities of the platform.

**EXARC Chair Pascale Barnes** gave a comprehensive introduction to the field, its history and present dynamism, to set off the varied formats of presentations – nearly 140 of them – a series of keynotes, others in the form of short lectures, video tours of museums or sites striving to become centres for public education and tourism, some “hotspots” to cover specific themes or people, and poster sessions to welcome students to present their work to their world. What is clear is EXARC's engagement with contributors of every vein, from university scholars to heritage experts to many freelance specialists in craft techniques. During the congress itself, there were 1700+ attendees from 72 countries and an average of 7500 views per day, as one would expect from a major academic and cultural field. Of special interest to any conference organizer was how fluidly the dozen or so special interest groups were able to carry on their conversations during the meeting, and all the communications had careful sub-titling to assure accessibility.



Left: Susan Verberg on Brewing Viking stone beer <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MdanIMyZdhQ> and Right: Closing Words especially recommended by Roeland Paardekooper to the AIMA <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dnH2tCkpl4I>

Presentations ran from the typically archaeological – what happens to buried bodies after a millennium or... after just a few months, so that we see the influence of cutting-edge forensics utilized in today's taphonomic explorations. There is also a plethora of subjects pertinent to **farming and stockraising** in general and museums in particular, such as oil-lamp lighting, all-weather clothing (important for shepherds, for example), vernacular architectures, the vagaries of keeping livestock in open-air museums in the face of such threats as swine fever, experimenting with medieval agricultural techniques to find solutions for farming resilience today, food and drink as well as broad food systems, weaving – always



a “hot” subject in EXARC congresses with so many followers in the chat threads – blacksmithing and metal-working, pottery in every known form. . .

Many of the subjects linked up easily with today’s preoccupations, such as recycling, diet and human health, or sustainable farming and building techniques. There was a clear focus on broader topics such as ethical methods in archaeology and experimental archaeology museums, as everyone knows they have at times been seriously instrumentalized for political ends, hence much emphasis also on collaboration with native peoples and an aspiration to see open-air museums’ potential as agents for social change today. This is especially well brought together in the final summing-up video at the end of the conference.

There is a playlist grouped chronologically here

<https://www.youtube.com/c/ExarcNetofficial> and the announcement for the **2022**

**congress at Butser Ancient Farm** that proposes the theme of “A Sustainable Revolution for Open-Air Museums” here:

<https://exarc.net/meetings/2022-sustainable-revolution> As a final note, we can congratulate EXARC on its 20th anniversary!



## Society for Folk Life Studies

### Society for Folk Life Studies

### Galway, Ireland, 10-12 September 2021

The 2021 SFLS Conference had a double header theme: **Music, dance, song, story and related artefacts** as well as **Vernacular buildings and interiors** and the venue was the University of Galway in the Republic of Ireland, a most attractive place to visit in person with all the pleasures of a university town. Determination was firm to make the digital conference a valued substitute, both in the quality of the presentations and the shoulder-rubbing so essential to the life of the group. As usual, attendance at the conference included diverse professional profiles: independent consultants, museum staff and trustees, university or independent scholars, members of other groups including the **AIMA, ALHFAM, the Folklore Society** and the **South London Botanical Institute**.

Participation from both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland was especially strong, since the conference was piloted by Prof. Lillis Ó Laoire, with attendees from England, the Isle of Man, Scotland, Wales and France. Conferences highlight place at each and every meeting, with in-depth papers on local history, current museum or social issues and plenty of opportunities to shoulder-rub, virtually, in pre- and post-“prandial” sessions. All the more because our organizer, Lillis, is among Ireland’s finest a capella singers, there was ample song and storytale to accompany the self-provided liquid refreshments and celebrate the **SFLS’s 60th anniversary**.

Paper themes ranged from Celtic-language publishing, storytelling experts and their testimony, autobiography of a specialist on seashore and seafaring life, an approach to memorializing traditional music through the visual culture of monuments, apotropaic functions of lullabies, traditional folk life and folklore collection by school children in Ireland, and how nineteenth-century Ordnance Survey enquirers survived some of their adventurous encounters while endeavouring to map the countryside.

If the Society and its journal are best-known for focusing on material culture with a human face, whether urban, rural or in-between, there have been many articles in *Folk Life* concerning **agriculture, stockraising, and fishing** as well as the associated expertise and crafts and the narratives that often accompany them. For **AIMA** members and friends, the easiest way to search for pertinent material is to check out the indexes for the field and farming section at the publisher's website:

<https://www.tandfonline.com/action/doSearch?AllField=farming&SeriesKey=yfo120>, where subjects run from farm transport vehicles on to gender division of labour, technical changes in farming, electrification, cattle-raising and the environment, farm buildings of all description, and practices such as “strewing” floors, seaweed manuring, how to use a flail (and why), hedging, food preparation and dishes, as well as a roster of contributions from countries quite outside the British Isles.

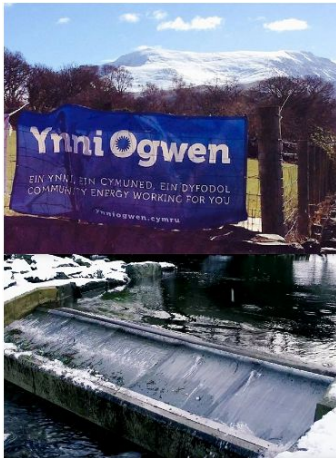


Left: Courtesy Dr. John Cunningham, NUI Galway, Right: Courtesy Máirtín Mac Con Iomaire, Technological University, Dublin

The Galway conference had six papers directly related to country life, stock-raising and vernacular architecture with its interiors. A theme you can trace over the decades of the journal's offerings is shielings or **upland pastoralism**, this year, “as social practice involving the commons, gendered labour and the landscape”, addressing northwest Europe, with a special emphasis on grazing rights, comparing Scotland, Iceland and Sweden. This was seconded by a glimpse into the daily lives of nineteenth-century **herdsmen** in Connacht, who were charged with preserving livestock from “hogs, dogs, bogs and thieves”, no easy task. The definition and hence identity of herdsmen varied greatly from one area to another and they were often expert at self-promotion and defending their trade against the vagaries of landlords and farm tenants, recalling the nuances of social distinctions: some could pay a dowry, some could not.... Back to the familiar issue of colonialism and its effect on historical sources, written by winners, but on the whole, still quite reliable when verified in this case, and revealing about rapid social change that propelled some “herdsmen” to higher status and took on a nationalist tinge at the same time.

In the paper dedicated to **food and drink** in traditional Gaelic song, there is a lesson to be learned for any scholar – never say some people (the Irish, for example) are underdeveloped in terms of foodways. You will get a resounding response with massive testimony to the contrary and, in this instance, through literature, poetry and song, with the remark “winners write history, the losers write songs”, which likewise addressed the Isles' internal traditions of colonialism. This was also treated with good humour, as were favoured dishes, noting that

oysters were long a form of **fast food**, before the term became a byword to us today. Much of the discussion pointed to equally current concerns, such as environmental impacts of farming, the few lakes still sheltering Irish whitefish and comparative comments, as on Perthshire today as the world's second-largest seed-potato producer.



The Society is a place of strong tradition, one of them being that the out-going president, in this case, Dr. Dafydd Roberts, give a talk before handing on her/his duties to a successor, and Dafydd chose a subject that ties land to water to “power to the people”, literally, the years-long **community-led campaign** that successfully mobilised all political parties in North Wales to create Ynni Ogwen (the **Ogwen Valley hydro-power project**, *ynni* being energy). The community itself successfully raised the funding of over half a million pounds and Dafydd’s paper highlighted the historical roots of the project in the technical advances for waterwheels meant to pump water out of mines from the late eighteenth century on, or the use of river-powered turbines to lift the slate wagons. Ogwen Energy is now so successful that it has gone on to invest in **solar energy**. Dafydd stressed that all this is no easy task: imaginative strategies to motivate participation, the technicals involved in linking into the national grid and there are some small-scale necessities, such as sweeping fallen leaves from the intake weirs, which everyone from the President to local children participate in.

For all of those dismayed by the recent interruption of human contact at the heart of research for museum collections and archives or scholarship, imagine a **vernacular architecture and furnishings** expert who had just launched a book – *Irish Country Furniture and Furnishings 1700-2000* – that sold out of its first edition in two weeks in late 2020 and went straight into the second, with corrections and additions through burning of much midnight oil. **AIMA Newsletter readers** know her, in fact. It is Claudia Kinmonth who has written about traditional wooden vessels for us. (See AIMA Newsletter N° 9):

[https://usercontent.one/wp/www.agriculturalmuseums.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/aima\\_newsletter-december2016-n9-specialissue.pdf](https://usercontent.one/wp/www.agriculturalmuseums.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/aima_newsletter-december2016-n9-specialissue.pdf) and the book announcement in N°16 [https://usercontent.one/wp/www.agriculturalmuseums.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/AIMA\\_Newsletter\\_N16\\_March2021.pdf](https://usercontent.one/wp/www.agriculturalmuseums.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/AIMA_Newsletter_N16_March2021.pdf)

So, how to keep up with the avalanche of comments and many offers of help from the book’s readers to pass on information, identify family heirloom objects or even add to her photographic collection, when you can no longer dare go farther than the local grocery shop? **Social media:** Instagram and Twitter, of course, among other sources through which contributors sent her at times perfectly awful photos, so... she asked them if they could “take it again”, and they did + providing all the testimony they could pull together, bringing a quantity and quality of information in that no one had dreamt of, from stillions to ladder steps to settle-bed-tables and proving once again that there is nothing like a heavy paint job, no matter how ugly, to preserve wooden objects. Adaptable and multi-purpose furniture and



furnishings as beautiful is a lesson worthy of the tiny house movement today, as of the current vogue for camping vans. Like the other papers, this brought on an avalanche of comment and dialogue, from “butterfly” champhering to light-bulb collections to god-in-bottles to foodways.



Peig Sayer’s light bulb collection on far right, by kind permission of Claudia Kinmonth

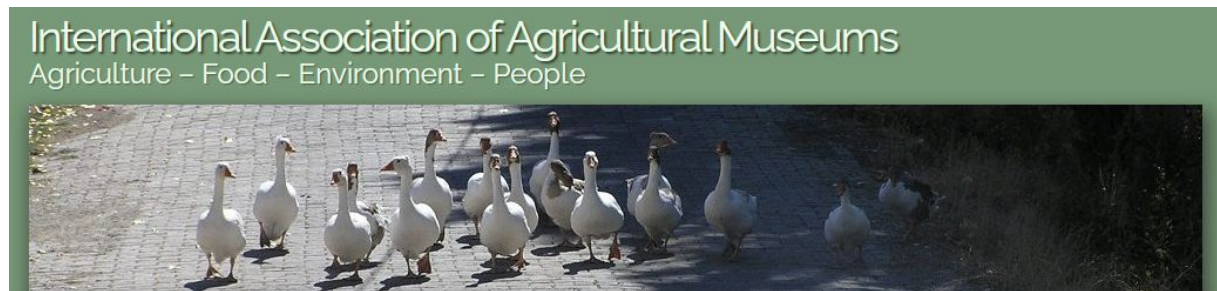
In another first, the Annual General Meeting broke all previous records for attendance, since the crowd assembled for the previous paper sessions simply stayed on for the **AGM**, explicitly as a sign of support for the Society and its future. There is careful attention to adapting to the times, investment in effective use of social media, and clear indication of resilience, so attendees bade farewell much encouraged about the 2022 and following conferences, whether all in-person or hybrid, as the Society traditionally has hosts lined up four to five years in advance. The venues are at times in university settings, though museum hosts have dominated over the years since the Society’s official founding in 1961, with the **journal** *Folk Life* emerging in 1963 from the originally Welsh 1950s publication *Gwerin*, dating back to the heyday of founding folk life museums and journals, nearly all inspired by Scandinavian examples in the 1930s and well before. See the SFLS at Oxford Reference (<https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803100515656>) and the Society’s own website: <http://www.folklifestudies.org.uk/>

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