

PAST AND FUTURE AGRICULTURES



**PROCEEDINGS OF THE 'AIMA 2021' CONGRESS,
HOSTED ONLINE BY THE MUSEUM OF ENGLISH
RURAL LIFE, UNIVERSITY OF READING**



AIMA 2021
19th CONGRESS
OF THE INTERNATIONAL
ASSOCIATION
OF AGRICULTURAL
MUSEUMS

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Proceedings prepared and edited by Ollie Douglas, and published online by the Museum of English Rural Life, University of Reading, and the International Association of Agricultural Museums (June 2023).

Cover image: Image adapted by Adam Koszary from a photograph of an Exmoor horn ram held in The MERL collection (MERL P FS PH1/K90651) (Courtesy and © The MERL).

Introduction and acknowledgements

Ollie Douglas and **Isabel Hughes**, Museum of English Rural Life, January 2023

Originally conceived as AIMA 2020, the nineteenth Congress of the International Association of Agricultural Museums (CIMA 19), was first planned as an in-person event to run in July 2020. Unfortunately, the events of the Covid-19 pandemic forced a combination of cancellation and postponement. The later online congress was eventually delivered one year later, under the revised title of **AIMA 2021**.

The online event would not have been possible without the support of many people, including the AIMA Executive Committee, the many speakers and participants, and staff based at the University of Reading, which is home to the Museum of English Rural Life (The MERL) and to the University Museums and Special Collections Service (UMASCS). The conference was delivered online using The MERL's institutional account with the online video conferencing application Zoom. Advice and support with Zoom was provided by UMASCS staff including Danielle Eade and Susanna Ivy.

Hosting duties were shared by Ollie Douglas and Isabel Hughes, who each took responsibility for particular days within the wider programme. Amanda Couch (University of the Creative Arts) shared hosting responsibilities for the session delivered in partnership with the 'The Commons' project. Our various hosts were, in turn, supported by a range of additional UMASCS colleagues who offered background technical support and assistance, including Tom Woodhouse, Mat Binks, Nic Minney, Caroline Gould, Rhi Smith, and Madeleine Ding. In particular these colleagues sought to ensure that questions from participants were answered and any troubleshooting issues were dealt with. Other colleagues involved in presenting included Kate Arnold-Forster, Guy Baxter, Claire Clough, and Adam Lines. We are grateful to the wider UMASCS team whose kind support enabled our technical team and hosts to be available.

These proceedings are, as always, a partial record of the event itself. They include a full listing of the original programme and running order, many elements of which can now be accessed online via the **[AIMA YouTube channel](#)**. It has only been possible to reproduce a small handful of specific papers from the conference itself. These are presented here in alphabetical order of author surname and have been cross-referenced to the relevant sessions in the programme listing. The formats vary slightly in keeping with author wishes and only a light editorial process has been undertaken. We would also like to draw your attention to the detailed congress report that appeared in **[AIMA Newsletter](#)** Special Report (No. 4: January 2022, pp.6-31). This offers a participant perspective on the event and serves as a useful summary of the diverse range of sessions and content contained within this vibrant congress.

We are enormously grateful to our agricultural museum colleagues worldwide for their generous contributions and support.

AIMA 2021: Online congress programme

With the exception of some elements of the programme, a full recording of each day of the congress can be viewed on the [AIMA YouTube channel](#). Most of the pre-recorded presentation content is also available either there or via [The MERL YouTube channel](#). If you are viewing this congress report in a digital format, you will find that hyperlinks have been embedded in the text below. Approximate running times (RT) for the relevant content can be found in brackets after the titles. Please note, these links were active at the time of publication but the weblinks provided may not be permanent URLs. We apologise for any inconvenience this may cause to future readers and users.

Additional bonus content can be found if watching the full daily recordings for days 2, 3, and 5 of the congress. These comprise short informal films recorded by Ollie Douglas during the period of the event and shared whilst waiting for delegates to join in the morning of each of these days.

Thursday 22 July – Day 1 (RT 3:11:00)

Welcome 12.45-13.00 **Ollie Douglas**, President of AIMA / Curator of MERL Collections, University of Reading, UK
Isabel Hughes, Vice-President of AIMA / Associate Director of The MERL and Head of Curatorial and Public Engagement, University of Reading, UK
Kate Arnold-Forster, Director of The MERL and UMASCS, University of Reading, UK

Session 1 13.00-14.00 **ORDINARY SESSION: New Approaches to Museums of Farming**
Chair: **Pete Watson**, Director, Howell Living History Farm, USA
This session comprised a series of short, pre-recorded papers, followed by livestream panel discussion, reflections, and Q&A. Our panel of experts shared insights and ideas relating to new museologies in our shared field of agricultural heritage.

Winani Thebele, Chief Curator and Head of Ethnology, Botswana National Museum, Botswana

The Bonnington Colonial Legacy: Conserving and Restoring Farming Heritage (RT 13:05)

This project depicts the history of early colonial farming in Botswana's capital, Gaborone. Key exhibits include the farmhouse, grain silos, ox wagons, feeding troughs, and farm implements. Artists were invited to paint murals of farm activities on the silo walls.

Botswana was a British Protectorate until 1966 when it gained independence. Exploring the traces of this colonial history, this paper offers critical analysis of colonial farming in Botswana, of its impact on local communities, of how it might have informed the current agricultural practices of the local populace, and of how sustainable this legacy has been.

Elsa Hietala, Curator, Sarka Finnish Museum of Agriculture, Finland

Creating New Approaches at the Finnish Museum of Agriculture: Part 1 (RT 5:28)

Creating New Approaches at the Finnish Museum of Agriculture: Part 2 (RT 5:20)

Sarka's latest displays present the salvaged eighteenth- and nineteenth-century collections of Helsinki University Agriculture Museum. These are designed to be accessible to all. The Museum is currently developing the national Food Museum, using events, exhibitions, tours, workshops, and online content to explore food from many perspectives. Current global challenges in climate, food production, and consumption increase the need for us to present the impact of the food choices we make. Sarka wants to bring historical perspective to this conversation.

Bob Clark, Director, Auchindrain Township, UK

Best Practice in the Thorny Field: Recent Approaches at Auchindrain (RT 11.48)

Director of a regional museum with a site-specific agricultural history and former Chair of the UK's Rural Museums Network, Bob Clark, introduces us to the approaches his institution favours and why they make sense there but perhaps not everywhere.

Benjamin Chiu-hang Sin, Senior Social Work Supervisor, Caritas, Hong Kong

A Community-Driven Movement on Revitalising the Old Hong Kong Dairy Farm Heritage Site (RT 10:05)

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. The team also turned the Old Farm Manager's House into a museum of sustainable rural development.

The following presentation was shared in the break.

Ollie Douglas, President of AIMA / Curator of MERL Collections

Introduction to The MERL: Welcome Case (RT 2:50)

Session 2 ROUNDTABLE SESSION: Climate, Environment, and Sustainability

14.15-15.00 Chair: **Surajit Sarkar**, Coordinator, Centre For Community Knowledge, Ambedkar University, India

This session comprised a series of short, pre-recorded papers, followed by livestream panel discussion, reflections, and Q&A. Together the panel explored and shared insights and ideas relating to the role and place of environmental history in museums of farming.

Cameron Archer, Agricultural and Environmental Historian, Independent Scholar, Australia

Agricultural Museums and History in Australia (RT 8:13)

Debra Reid, Curator of Agriculture and the Environment, The Henry Ford, USA

When Farm Museums Go Green: Objects as Evidence of Climate Change Interpretation as Sustainable Practice (RT 6:09) [SEE ALSO THIS VOLUME]

David M. Simmons, Executive Director, Billings Farm and Museum, USA

Sharing Our Story at Billings Farm and Museum at Woodstock, Vermont (RT 10.44)

The following presentations were shared in the break.

Madeleine Ding, Collections Officer, The MERL and Reading Museum, UK

Short Tour of The MERL Open Access Stores (RT 3:49)

Multiple contributors at The MERL

Other Voices: Creativity and Community (RT 1:08)

Session 3 KEYNOTE SESSION: Art and Agriculture

15.15-16.00 Chair: **Isabel Hughes**, Vice-President of AIMA / Associate Director of The MERL and Head of Curatorial and Public Engagement

This session comprised a 30-minute-long pre-recorded keynote paper, followed by livestream discussion, reflections, and Q&A.

Adam Sutherland, Director, Grizedale Arts, UK

Connecting Resources, Cultivating Communities (RT 34:26)

Adam Sutherland discusses the reinvention and evolution of Lawson Park, a long derelict Cumbrian hill farm that is now the hub of a complex programme of collaborations between farming communities from Yamaguchi to Southside Chicago.

Friday 23 July – Day 2 (RT 2:53:18)

Session 4 ORDINARY SESSION: Working With Agricultural Films

13.00-14.00 Chair: **Caroline Gould**, Principal Archivist, The MERL, UK

This session included a short introductory talk, followed by short, pre-recorded contributions, all followed by livestream panel discussion, reflections, and Q&A. Together the panel explored and shared insights and ideas relating to the role and importance of rural film collections.

Peter Moser, Director, Archives of Rural History, Switzerland

Introducing the European Rural History Film Association (RT 7:27)

A short introduction to this important project and its various member organisations, explaining why this timely scheme is relevant to the work of agricultural museums and other key partners.

Caroline Gould, Principal Archivist

Importance of sustainable conservation of film – Case-study: The MERL (RT 6:00)

Sven Lefevre + Yves Segers, Centre for Agrarian History, KU Leuven, Belgium

Making Films Digital Available: How to Deal with Copyright Issues – Case-study: The Cinema Rural project (RT 6:25)

Syds Wiersma, Archivist, Friesian Film Archive, The Netherlands / **Henk Dijkstra**, Director, Fries Landbouwmuseum

Implementing Films in a Museum Context: Advantages for Public History and Collaboration (RT 3:31)

The following presentation was shared in the break.

Adam Lines and **Caroline Gould** (compilers), UMASCS and The MERL, UK

Preview of The MAFF Film Collections at The MERL (RT 2:33)

Session 5 ROUNDTABLE SESSION: Working With Agricultural Tools

14.15-15.00 Chair: **Ollie Douglas**, President of AIMA / Curator of MERL Collections
[standing in for **Lisa Harris**, Museum of East Anglian Life, UK]

This session comprised a series of short, pre-recorded papers, followed by livestream panel discussion, reflections, and Q&A. Our panel of experts shared insights and ideas relating to agricultural tools and material culture in the museum setting and more broadly, centred on their own careers and material culture interests.

Hugh Cheape, Professor, National Centre for Gaelic Language and Culture, Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, University of the Highlands and Islands, UK

Lifting Material Culture into Interdisciplinary Research: The MSc in Material Culture and Gàidhealtachd History (RT 13:54) [SEE ALSO THIS VOLUME]

Kerry-Leigh Burchill, Director General, Canada Agriculture and Food Museum, Canada

Spotlighting tools to Spark Curiosity: Canada Agriculture and Food Museum (RT 8:06)

Bob Powell, Working Horse and Farming Historian, Independent Scholar, UK

Random Thoughts or Questions from a Retired Agricultural Curator (RT 10:56)

The following presentation was shared in the break.

Museum of East Anglian Life

Search for the Stars: The MEAL's Digitisation Project (4:05 minutes)

Session 6 **KEYNOTE SESSION: Agriculture and the Digital Museum**

15.15-16.00 Chair: **Guy Baxter**, Associate Director of The MERL and Head of Archive Services, University of Reading, UK

This session comprised a 30-minute-long pre-recorded keynote paper, followed by livestream discussion, reflections, and Q&A.

Adam Koszary, former Digital Lead at The MERL and former Social Media and Content Editor, Royal Academy of Arts, UK

From Farm Museum to Absolute Unit (RT 32:48)

In April 2018 the Museum of English Rural Life (The MERL) achieved viral internet fame when it tweeted a photograph of an Exmoor Horn Aged Ram, archived as part of holdings related to the journal Farmer and Stockbreeder. In this keynote Adam Koszary, former Programme Manager and Digital Lead at The MERL, explores how the event affected the Museum and the wider sector, the potential for agricultural museums for using social media in advancing their missions, and what is holding them back.

Saturday 24 July - Day 3 (RT 3:14:26)

Session 7 **KEYNOTE SESSION: Agriculture Museums and the Intangible**

13.00-13.45 Chair: **Ollie Douglas**, President of the AIMA / Curator of MERL Collections

This session comprised a short live introduction to Indian agriculture, followed by a 30-minute-long pre-recorded keynote paper, followed by livestream discussion, reflections, and Q&A.

Nerupama Y. Modwel, Director of Intangible Cultural Heritage Division, Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage, India

Agriculture is the Practice of Intangible Knowledge (RT 28:29)

Following a short live description of Indian agriculture and the rapid changes and complexities of that sector, this presentation introduces the work of the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage, with a particular focus on their conceptualisation of agricultural practices and traditions as forms of intangible heritage in need of safeguarding and recording.

The following presentations were shared in the break.

Claire Clough and **Adam Lines**, UMASCS and The MERL, University of Reading, UK

Spotlight on History: The MERL and University of Reading Special Collections (3:14 minutes)

Ollie Douglas, President of AIMA / Curator of MERL Collections

From chalk to cheese: Discover The MERL's latest wall-hanging (5:59 minutes)

Session 8 **ORDINARY SESSION: Bringing the Past to Life**

14.00-15.00 Chair: **Debra Reid**, Curator of Agriculture and the Environment

This session comprises a series of short, pre-recorded papers, followed by livestream panel discussion, reflections, and Q&A. Our panel of experts share insights and ideas relating to living history, live animals, and other relevant work.

Claus Kropp, Director, Lauresham Open-Air Laboratory, Germany

Medieval Agriculture In Experiment (RT 11:38)

The drought of 2018 caused massive problems in agriculture. This paper asks how medieval farmers might have coped with situations like this. Did medieval subsistence strategies result in advantages which could be of use for modern agriculture? The Lauresham Open Air Laboratory for Experimental Archaeology at the UNESCO World Heritage Site Lorsch Abbey delivers valuable insights into the value of medieval subsistence strategies for 21st century agriculture.

Cozette Griffin-Kremer, Associate Researcher, CRBC Brest, France

Engaging with Living Heritage: Local Breeds at Work in the Museum (RT 11:53) [SEE ALSO THIS VOLUME]

This paper explores museum presentation of small-scale alternative approaches to agricultural production. Taking the local breeds work of the Alsace Open Air Museum (Écomusée d'Alsace) as its case study, the talk will examine how such scales are an essential component of food production in today's world. They capture both the upstream

and downstream aspects of our food sources and reveal field to plate processes in a comprehensible sweep easily utilized by any museum with adequate land and facilities.

Pierre Del Porto, President, Fédération des Musées d'Agriculture et du Patrimoine Rural, France

Journees de Patrimoines de Pays et des Moulins: An AFMA Partnership Project on Mills and Rural Heritage (15:04) [SEE ALSO THIS VOLUME]

Seven national federations in France involved in cultural, rural, and agricultural heritage have since 2002 organised two specific open days. These are designed to connect with and inform urban audiences and families about aspects of rural, countryside, and village life. This light touch and simple model is shared as an example of how other countries or European neighbours might approach comparable programming activity.

The following presentation was shared in the break, concerning French anthropologist and worldwide expert in local breads in France and abroad, Mouette Barboff:

Jacques Mahou, French Master Baker (with thanks to Pierre del Porto, Marie-Christine Aubin, and Jacques Mahou's grandson for helping to organise this)

Tribute to Mouette Barboff from her friend (RT 9:44; in French)

The following tribute was also shared during the wider congress.

Marie-Christine Aubin, Independent Researcher, France

Tribute to Mouette Barboff (9:20)

Session 9 **ROUNDTABLE SESSION: Using Collections to Inspire 'Farming Futures'**
15.15-16.00

Chair: **Ollie Douglas**, President of AIMA / Curator of MERL Collections

This session comprised brief reflections from each panel member, followed by further livestream panel discussion, reflections, and Q&A. It explored how museums, agricultural heritage, and 'living history', might play a role in addressing food security, locally and globally, past and present. Tillers International have used collections to inspire animal-powered road-grading equipment in Nicaragua, farm equipment in Mozambique, Madagascar and Burkina Faso, and technology for community-supported agriculture schemes. Howell Farm's operations and public programming provide internships in sustainable agriculture. In other contexts, decolonial approaches to development and to the history of agricultural extension raise serious questions about the relationship between Global South and Global North, past and present.

Richard Roosenberg, Founder, Tillers International, USA

Paul Starkey, Consultant in Integrated Transport and Transport Services and Visiting Senior Research Fellow, The MERL, University of Reading, UK

Atenchong Talleh Nkobou, PhD Candidate, University of Reading, UK

Winani Thebele, Chief Curator and Head of Ethnology, Botswana National Museum

Pete Watson, Director, Howell Living History Farm

The following presentation was shared at the end of this day's business.

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 (RT 10:56)

In 2018-2019 several draft horse organizations, the province of Flemish Brabant and the Centre for Agrarian History (CAG) worked together on the project 'Belgian draft horse, together we give heritage a future'. After the loss of the economic and agricultural function of the draft horse, this rural development project was looking for new uses to safeguard this heritage in the long term. Several future-oriented techniques were defined, documented, communicated and educated to new users. The participatory documentary videos can be watched [here](#) and [here](#).

Sunday 25 July - Day 4 (RT 56:30)

17.30-18.15 **INFORMAL SOCIAL EVENT: Introducing 'The Commons'**

45 minutes Hosts: **Ollie Douglas**, President of the AIMA / Curator of MERL Collections, and **Amanda Couch**, Artist + Senior Lecturer, University of the Creative Arts, UK

This event included a livestream tour direct from Ollie in The MERL galleries, and a chance to experience virtually a series of newly installed art interventions developed by Amanda and her fellow 'Commons' artists. It also offered the chance for participants to meet and chat with other delegates and speaker-participants in informal break-out sessions.

Monday 26 July - Day 5 (RT 1:37:56)

Session 10 **ORDINARY SESSION: Understanding museums, objects, and sites**

13.00-14.00 Chair: **Kerry-Leigh Burchill**, Director General

This session comprised a series of short, pre-recorded papers, followed by livestream panel discussion, reflections, and Q&A. Our panel of

experts shared insights and ideas relating to living history, live animals, and other relevant work.

Joao P. R. Joaquim, Collection to Cultivation Project, University of Cambridge, UK

The Association Internationale de Musees d'Agriculture: A Transnational History of Agriculture and Museums in C20th Europe (RT 10:35) [SEE ALSO THIS VOLUME]

Marie-Christine Aubin, Independent Researcher

The Advertising Arsenal of the Chilean "Salitre" (Saltpeter) [SEE ALSO THIS VOLUME]

Anne Jorunn Froyen, Curator of History, Jærmuseet, Norway

Insects and Pesticides: A Norwegian Case Study (RT 10:01) [SEE ALSO THIS VOLUME]

Abel Vergneaux, Deputy General Secretary, Museum of Agricultural Machinery and Rurality, France

Conserving and Restoring Heritage and Agricultural Machinery (RT 9:14; also available in French – RT 6:47)

The following presentation was shared in the break.

Chris Green, Independent Researcher, UK (presentation recording made by Isabel Hughes)

An Historical Dictionary of Agricultural Handtools (RT 10:04) [SEE ALSO THIS VOLUME]

Session 11 The AIMA GENERAL ASSEMBLY.

14.15-15.00 Key questions were pre-circulated for consideration by the membership and for online voting.

The following presentation was too long to play during comfort breaks but a link to access this additional content was shared during the congress.

Anna Barłóg-Mitmańska, Curator, National Museum of Agriculture in Szreniawa, Poland

Memories of Polish Agricultural Workers From 1900 to 1945: A Topic From Rural Social History (RT 15:28) [SEE ALSO THIS VOLUME]

Friday 30 July (Day 6)

Public Event 'Launching the Commons': A Virtual Gathering with The MERL

18.00-19.45 Delegates and speaker-participants were welcome to register for this additional free event, which introduced the project themes and ideas of 'The Commons: Re-Enchanting the World' project through live talks,

pre-recorded videos, and performances. There were also live walk-throughs in the galleries by Ollie Douglas to showcase the work installed in the Museum. The event included opportunities to participate in a virtual Commons Feast. Participants were encouraged to prepare food and drink in advance of the event to eat and 'share'.

Moral report of the president (Sep 2017 to June 2021)

Ollie Douglas, President of AIMA / Curator of MERL Collections, Museum of English Rural Life, University of Reading, UK

Since 2017 and our most recent Congress in Estonia, it has been my pleasure and privilege to serve as President of AIMA. This has been an extremely complex time for many of us, not least because of the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic, the impact of which will be felt for many years to come. Setting this world event to one side for a moment, it has also been a time of extraordinary change in museums across the globe. It is a period that would prove hard to characterize, with the emergence of complex discussions concerning environmental responsibility, food security, migration and movement, colonial legacies, global trade, corporate responsibilities, far-reaching campaigns such as 'Hashtag Me Too' and 'Black Lives Matter', and debates concerning social justice and traditional museology. There has also been extensive discussion within our affiliate organization ICOM about the very role and definition of museums.

It would be hard for me to summarize in a few short paragraphs the diverse ways that these many challenges and conversations have been experienced by individual members or the ways in which they have influenced or impacted on the planning and activity of institutional members. It is not the place of AIMA to determine how you or your organization should respond to these debates. However, as we finally gather (albeit virtually) for our nineteenth international Congress, 'AIMA 2021', to consider questions pertinent to the theme of 'Past and Future Agricultures', it seems a useful moment to reflect on the fact that many of these issues may play a part in our ongoing work. They have helped shape conversations over the last four years and will no doubt continue to shape our work as we move forward.

Against this complex backdrop, your Executive Committee have shown great commitment to moving forward with the core aims of AIMA. They have sought to modernize and streamline our work, to grow our capacity to respond to change, and to develop and enhance our plans. As our Secretary General and esteemed colleague Kerry-Leigh Burchill neatly summarizes in her activity report, this work has included focused improvements to communications, digital presence, programmes, and content. The work has been guided, supported, and delivered for the membership, whose preferences were gathered and analysed through a survey conducted by our First Vice-President (and my colleague and manager) Isabel Hughes. Through the dedicated efforts of our Second Vice-President Debra Reid, and others, we have drawn together new Scientific and Advisory Committees that will cement opportunities and maintain the well-respected history of our Association. Isabel, Kerry-Leigh, and Debra are worthy of particular mention. Without their extensive experience and considerable support I would not have been able to serve as President. They have all balanced AIMA roles alongside complex responsibilities as senior museum professionals, and in doing so have shown great commitment to our organization.

The wider Executive Committee are also worthy of thanks. Treasurer Pierre Del Porto has kept the plough lines of our finances straight and steady. Cozette Griffin-Kremer has maintained the tramlines of our field, crafting and maintaining links with networks and stakeholders worldwide. Alongside other Committee members, Cozette has worked tirelessly to grow our community. Claus Kropp and others have invested enormous effort in developing a stronger online presence, improving our website, adding wonderful new blog posts, and delivering web-based video for the first time. Debra Reid has also worked hard in this area and invested a great deal of time in adding content and helping to shape and improve the website. Surajit Sarkar and Barbara Sosič have hosted in-person Executive Committee meetings in their respective countries. These were amazing experiences and we thank them for their hospitality and generosity. Pete Watson has worked fastidiously behind the scenes, bringing his wealth of experience, enthusiasm, and inspiring ideas to the table. Other Executive Committee members and museum representatives are worthy of consideration too, including Merli Sild, Hanna Ignatowicz, Julia Hanuliewicz, and Hisashi Horio, who have participated when their busy schedules have allowed or have given time and thought to AIMA matters.

It was with great sadness that we heard of the death of our longstanding colleague and Executive Committee member Hisashi and our thoughts go out to his family and friends. His was a lifetime committed to the study of Japanese agricultural heritage and we thank him for the amazing wealth of scholarship and knowledge that he shared with our organization over his years of service and involvement. More recently we also heard of the unexpected death of our friend and colleague Mouette Barboff, the esteemed French anthropologist. Many will recall her extensive and expert contributions to our Bread Working Group; we will miss opportunities to break bread with her in future. I am certain that this last year will have been difficult for many of our members and, as Covid-19 continues to impact on so many of our lives, I would like to take this opportunity to wish you, your organizations, your families, and your friends the very best.

As we make our final preparations for the forthcoming virtual Congress at the University of Reading's Museum of English Rural Life, we are extremely disappointed not to be able to welcome you in person. We also find ourselves unable to showcase our fellow agricultural heritage museums across the United Kingdom and I would urge you to look at the work and membership of the **Rural Museums Network**. We very much hope that our digital efforts will still prove worthy of your attention. AIMA last visited the University of Reading in 1976, a year characterized by devastating drought and terrible harvest, but also by amazingly fruitful AIMA discussions by a dedicated cohort of agricultural heritage peers. As we gather under the auspices of that same institution 45 years on, online rather than in person, we do so in the wake of disastrous periods of drought and flooding, which played havoc with UK farming throughout 2020. Let us hope that we follow this comparable period of agricultural challenge with a similar flourishing of debate within our brilliant community. Let us also hope that we find ways in the near future to meet in person, and to continue to share ideas, knowledge, skills, food, and the amazing experience of international partnership and friendship that AIMA represents.

Thank you all for your continued membership, participation, interest, and involvement.

Report prepared: June 25 2021

Chilean white gold and its advertising

Marie-Christine Aubin, Independent Researcher, France

Abstract

The exploitation of "caliche", the natural mineral which gives "salitre", that is to say sodium nitrate, a fertilizer that has become essential to agriculture, began in the Atacama Desert in Chile in 1818, thanks to the first industrialization of the process of transforming the mineral into fertilizer, followed by the very first export of 300 tonnes to Europe in 1830. Thanks to the importance of its deposits, Chile became the main world producer of this natural fertilizer for 100 years (1830 - 1930), producing up to 3 million tons per year in the years 1910 - 1920 in the 207 Oficinas which then existed, centers of life for miners and their families, gathered around the factory, the church, the store, near the quarries. This fertilizer constituted the main mineral wealth of the country, superior to that of copper, and it represented 70% of exports. The development of chemical fertilizers by Swedish and then German chemists between 1900 and 1909 led to strong competition which brought down the exploitation and marketing of Chilean natural fertilizer, much more expensive for European farmers, the main buyers, due to its shipment from Chile. The producers of salitre, supported by the Chilean government, then decided to strengthen their advertising campaigns that had existed since 1888 in a very offensive form in the 1920s, campaigns which bore fruit, before the 1929' crisis brought about the definitive fall of this economic activity which will remain in 2021 on a single deposit, managed by the state company, SOQUIMICH = Sociedad Química y Minera de Chile. These advertising campaigns have been developed in the direction of the 47 buyer countries, spread over the 4 continents where agriculture is possible, from the smallest of these countries to the largest, in the language of each of them, highlighting their main productions. The extremely varied advertising objects produced between 1888 and 1930, in addition to their aesthetic quality, especially that of the posters, give a very interesting picture of world agriculture of this period. A current global awareness of the cultural capital of advertising drives its preservation, restoration and reuse. This of course concerns advertising related to agriculture in all its aspects and it would be interesting to bring together all of these advertising objects kept in the museums that are part of AIMA, in order to establish a corpus to share.

Introduction

Exploitation of deposits of *caliche*—a natural mineral from which *salitre* (saltpetre) is extracted, *salitre* being the Chilean name for sodium nitrate—have allowed a strong increase in agricultural yields all over the world. Its use as a fertilizer created the main wealth of this country for 100 years, mainly between 1880 and 1930, hence the name 'white gold' given by the Chileans to this white-coloured substance. The exploitation of *salitre* has left deep traces

in the economy but also in society, as many Chilean families have been directly involved in this activity.

Instead of each creating their own advertising, like other fertilizer producers around the world, the sodium nitrate producers in Chile had the intelligence to come together to create—with the support of the Chilean government—an advertising office based in London, relayed by 17 national delegations, to develop intense and highly targeted communication towards each purchasing country. Publicists used new techniques invented between the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century in a variety of media.

Many of these promotional items are now found in our museums. Witnesses to the dynamics of producers of different nationalities, the hard life of the miners, and of the Pampina culture they created, the technicality of the industrial installations, all in the middle of the Atacama Desert, the strong increase in agricultural yields, *and* the development of advertising in the decorative arts, these materials arouse a certain interest in visitors.

1 Documentary sources

The main documentary source is the Archivo Nacional de Chile where 1,300,000 documents on the extraction, processing, and marketing of sodium nitrate between 1872 and 1981 are collected from the 35 operating companies, from Santiago, Valparaíso, and London. The National Library of Chile has published several files on this subject, available in Spanish and English, on its site.¹

Due to the vital importance of fertilizers, including sodium nitrate from Chile, there are documents about them in all the archives in each country. In France, they are distributed in the archives:

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- at the administrative level (state, region, department, canton, city); at the political level (Government, Ministries—e.g. Foreign Affairs, Trade, Industry, Agriculture, etc.—, Senate, National Assembly, préfetures, etc.);
- at the economic level (production, trade, transport, agriculture, National Institute of Industrial Property, etc.); and
- at the social level (unions, entrepreneurs, agricultural shows, Fête du Centenaire du Nitrate de soda in Paris on March 24-25, 1930, etc.).

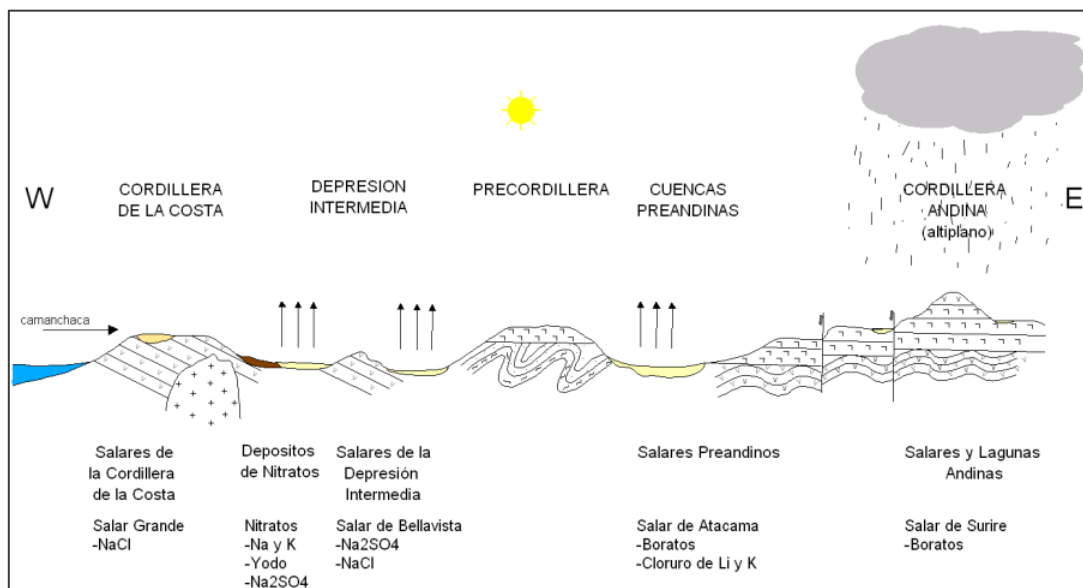
These are the most important places of conservation, but there are many others, public and private. Many researchers around the world, mainly Chileans, have used material from these sources in the form of theses, scientific articles, conferences, and films. Some of these works, old and recent, are available on the internet.

¹ See memoriachilena.gob.cl.

2 The exploitation and marketing of sodium nitrate

2.1 The Pacific War

The Pacific War took place between March 1 1879 and April 4 1884, between Chile, Bolivia, and Peru. They shared the Atacama Desert in which the caliche deposits were located within hardened sedimentary rock that lies one meter or more below the surface. This is composed of limestone, sand, clay (the waste rock), sodium nitrate, borax, iodine, potassium, and magnesium (elements extracted by leaching and marketed). The motive for this war was the increase in the tax on the export of nitrate mined in the maritime department of Bolivia, where most of the deposits being mined were located. In fact, at that time, the operators of the deposits were mainly Chilean. Peru, which had secretly signed the Defensive Alliance Treaty with Bolivia on February 6, 1873, immediately entered the war on April 5, 1879. Chile won the war. They obtained from Peru the present Chilean region of Tarapacá and from Bolivia the present Chilean region of Antofagasta. Chile, at the end of this war, recovered all the caliche deposits, which were the basis of its economic activity and its wealth between 1884 and 1930.



Geomorphological scheme of the saline deposits of northern Chile. It is observed that the nitrate deposits are found on the eastern edge of the Cordillera de la Côte and in the central depression (From Salares del norte de Chile: potenciales fuente de litio A. GAJARDO CUBILLOS & R. CARRASCO OLGUIN SERNAGEOMIN - CEPAL, 10-11 November 2010, Santiago, Chile, p.5).

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2.2 Progress in extraction systems, and increased production of sodium nitrate and its marketing

Extraction of sodium nitrate from caliche was done in small quantities during colonial times in the Viceroyalty of Peru for the manufacture of gunpowder. The property of sodium nitrate as a fertilizer was also known but was only used locally. It was in the context of work by

European agronomists on fertilizers, essential for increasing the yields of cultivated plants, at the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century, that sodium nitrate began to be used, along with Peruvian guano, predominant between 1820 and 1880, because the latter did not require an industrial transformation process to be usable in agriculture, only a simple grinding to pulverize it.

Tadeo Haenke (1761–1816), a Czech naturalist scientist, settled in Bolivia where he developed the *paradas* system in caliche deposits, the first step in the industrialization of the process of extracting sodium nitrate by the technique of heating the mineral in cauldrons over direct heat. Pedro Gamboni (1825–1895), a Chilean engineer, invented in 1853 the process of extraction using steam, producing a higher yield with an ore of lower nitrate content. It was necessary to construct buildings housing large boilers and important pipelines, which were the forerunners of *oficinas*.

During the 1870s, the English engineer James Humberstone (1850–1939) adapted the Shanks system, invented in England, for the extraction of sodium nitrate. This system allowed the *oficinas* (also called *salitreras*) to transform into real industrial centers accompanied by their small town, built near each isolated deposit in the desert. There were 207 at the height of activity, bringing together 353,200 inhabitants in 1930, a population which had more than doubled from that of 1885 (152,500 inhabitants).

In the 1920s, Elías Cappelen (1873–1949), a Norwegian engineer and naturalized American chemist, developed a system known as Guggenheim. It was named this because it was financed by the Guggenheim brothers, American owners of the *oficinas* Pedro de Valdivia and Maria Elena, where it was installed in 1926. The advanced mechanization of production made it possible to obtain a yield double that of the Shanks system with a low grade caliche. These are the only two *oficinas* that survived the bankruptcy of the nitrate of soda operation. After the closure of *oficina* Pedro de Valdivia in 1996, *oficina* Maria Elena remained the only sodium nitrate production center in Chile in 2021.

The statistics from 1830 to 1930, as published by the Association of Producers of Soda Nitrate in 1930, are sufficient to establish the parallel between the improvement of extraction techniques (Shanks system), the growth in tonnages produced, and the growth of exported tonnages. Starting from 860 tons in 1830 at the time of the *paradas* system, exports amounted to 117,000 tons with the Gamboni system, then up to 3,000,000 tons in 1918 with the Shanks system. They reached the same tonnage in 1929, combining the Shanks and Guggenheim systems, before plunging irreparably from 1930. In 2020, the tonnage produced amounts to 996,515 tons. Between 1890 and 1917, the sodium nitrate trade represented more than 50% of Chile's income, peaking twice at 78% in 1893 and 1898. By 1929, it represented only 24%.

2.3 The global context of the discovery and use of different fertilizers used in agriculture

Guano between 1820 and 1880, sodium nitrate between 1830 and 1930 were the flagship fertilizers of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century. But they were not the only ones. Between 1875 and 1930, fertilizers inventions flourish:

- Use of waste from agro-food industries and cities (animal black, fish guano, powder, etc.), and from other industries (ammonia from wastewater and coke oven gases, potassium slag, etc.);
- use of phosphates from 1870, with the first deposits exploited in France;
- use of potash from 1881, with the first deposits exploited in Germany;
- use of nitrogenous chemical fertilizers produced from nitrogen in the air using two different techniques, one invented by the Swedes Birkeland and Eye in 1900, and the other by the Germans Carl Bosch and Fritz Haber in 1909.

Fertilizer producers were multiplying all over the world and competition was fierce, especially with chemical fertilizers after 1920.

2.4 The creation and organization of advertising for sodium nitrate (HNO₃)

It is in this context of strong international competition that the Soda Nitrate Producers had the intelligence to join together from 1888 (4 years after the end of the Pacific War) to develop their advertising within the framework of various organisations that have succeeded each other over time. In addition, they were supported from the start by the Chilean State which mobilized its embassies and consulates, before taking full responsibility in 1930 and then assuming it until the period 1955 to 1965, the decade during from which they gradually removed this service. This is the great originality of their advertising.

This advertisement exploded after 1920, in order to counter the competition of nitrogenous chemical fertilizers. The Chilean Saltpeter Committee was founded in London to create and distribute advertising worldwide on all known types of media. This organization relied on the Chilean Soda Nitrate Delegations that it created in 17 countries among the 47 countries in which Chile sold its 'white gold'. These Delegations served several countries. For example, that of France also served North Africa and Switzerland. Their role has been essential in making farmers around the world aware of the decisive contribution of Chilean 'white gold' to increasing crop yields, whether food or industrial, regardless of the botanical class to which they belong, whatever the climate or the type of soil.

Their role had several facets, as indicated on the writing paper of Mr Trudel, a member of the French Delegation:

'Experimental research, Crop trials // Conferences, Agricultural Treaties // Advertising, Exhibitions, etc. // Agricultural and commercial information.'

2.5 The various forms of advertising organized by the London Office and applied by the Delegations

2.5.1 Publication of the results of the use of sodium nitrate

The Delegation published the reports of the experiments it carried out in its technical centers. It also financed the publication of experiments carried out by people from all walks of life interested in the use of sodium nitrate (agronomists, owners, teachers, school directors, etc).

2.5.2 Universal, national, regional, and local exhibitions, trade fairs, and agricultural shows

The Chilean Soda Nitrate Producers have not hesitated to invest large sums to have their own pavilion in numerous universal and international exhibitions, even going so far as to present in Ghent (Belgium), in 1913, a copy of one of the caravels which transported their 'white gold' at the beginning of the nineteenth century. They had also designed a stand intended for exhibitions of national or local scope, fairs, and agricultural competitions in which the delegates systematically participated.

2.5.3 Primary education and agricultural education

The Delegation intervened in a sustained manner both in agricultural schools and in primary schools. It offered the pupils: explanatory documents: leaflets, brochures, posters, and coloured wall charts; experimentation kits; school materials (such as pencils, blotters, notebook covers, etc). It also organized competitions among the students, rewarding the winners.

Its action with primary school students was particularly important, as few young boys entered agricultural schools. At the time, each school had its own vegetable garden and the teachers taught the students the basics of agriculture. Several school directors and teachers throughout France have published the results of the experiments carried out in these gardens, in booklets published by the Delegations.

2.5.4 Technical documents for farmers

Farmers received leaflets advising on the proper use of sodium nitrate, some focusing on specific crops. They received kits to measure the pH of the soils, and discs to mix fertilizers adapted to their cropping needs. They were invited to information meetings, but outreach technicians also visited them on their farms to give them individual advice.

2.5.5 Calendars and almanacs

Calendars and almanacs widely distributed in the countryside were another powerful way of daily reminding their users of the existence of sodium nitrate. The theme most often repeated is that of the abundance of the harvest, but sometimes it was the work of extracting the caliche that was highlighted.

2.5.6 The posters

The posters—all published by the London Office—like those of other competing fertilizer producers, tackle the theme of abundance due to the use of any fertilizer, which is described in the following way:

- the abundant harvest;
- the wellbeing of animals and men opposed to poverty if one does not use fertilizers;
- the harvest so abundant that it crushes either the farmer or the animal that carries it;
- the plant is represented as either very luxuriant in comparison with the one which did not receive fertilizer, or as having reached an inordinate size thanks to it.

But the posters of the producers of sodium nitrate in Chile have other specificities, which they extend to the whole world. They highlight the productions specific to each country (rice in Asia, cotton in Egypt, wheat in Europe, citrus fruits for countries with a Mediterranean climate, sugar beet in countries where it is highly cultivated, etc). They are published not only in the language of each country but also in all the languages spoken in a country such as, for example, in Czechoslovakia (Czech, Slovak, German, Hungarian, and Russian). They reflect the characteristics of the clothing, habitat, natural and cultivated landscape of the target country, in order to personally appeal to each farmer.

On the contrary, they put on the same footing of equality the peasant in full force of the age—who spreads the nitrate of soda by hand with the same ‘august gesture of the sower’ described by Victor Hugo, has the same he looks like he is French, Turkish, Anglo-Irish, Polish—, the strong foster father—who shows his son the land he will inherit, already enriched by the sodium nitrate he spilled there, looks the same whether he is French or Swedish. They show, with figures to back it up, the increase in yields of various plants worldwide over the years.

2.5.7 The disparate promotional items

Many other advertising items appear in the Nitrate of Soda Fund at the Archivo Nacional: commemorative medal, alarm clock, fan, pocket mirror, pennant, notebook for taking notes, playing cards, key rings, etc.

3 New techniques that have enabled the development of advertising

New inventions made it possible to manufacture attractive advertising materials, which could be produced in quantity and thus be widely distributed to a very diverse audience. They had their maximum development between 1890 and 1950. The publicists of the Chilean Saltpetre Committee in London attached great importance to tailoring their advertisements to the particularities of each of the target countries, so that, beyond farmers, the general population felt more directly concerned. They had boundless inventiveness in the production of objects of a very wide variety, in order to be sure to reach the widest possible public, from childhood to established professionals.

3.1 Lithography in 3 colors

The lithography in 3 colors was invented in 1837. It made it possible, whatever the political, social, economic, and artistic activity of each country, to publish superb posters, brochures, calendars, and wall maps, giving rise to a profusion of works that have entered the decorative arts around the world. It is certain that these documents were immediately more attractive than the black and white or two-color posters which preceded them. Obviously, the publicists in the London Office did not fail to use this new technique. 27 of their posters are visible on an online resource.² All advertising material was printed in London before being distributed to Delegations.

² See <http://www.memoriachilena.gob.cl/602/w3-article-92924.html>.

3.2 The postcard

The postcard was invented in 1871 by the Frenchman Léon Besnardeau (1829–1914). It was immediately adopted around the world. The sodium nitrate delegations used it a lot to illustrate 3 different themes:

- firstly, the presence of pavilions and sodium nitrate stands at universal, national, regional, and local exhibitions, agricultural fairs, and competitions;
- secondly, the complete set of 12 [maps] cards illustrating the entire process of the Shanks system, from the extraction to the marketing of sodium nitrate;
- thirdly, the series of comparisons of the results of crop yields with or without sodium nitrate. Each one shows the location of the experiment, the name and address of the farmers who carried out it, and the yields obtained.

Several identical series have been published in the different languages of the target countries of the advertisement, for example, in French, Spanish, Dutch, and English.

3.3 Blotters

From the invention of blotters between 1860 and 1870, advertisers immediately seized on this medium, which was aimed at all categories of audiences. Two Chilean sodium nitrate blotters have been produced in France, although there are a large number of competing French fertilizer producers.

3.4 Enamel signs

The sheet metal enameling technique was invented in 1840, but it was not used as an advertising medium until 1895. Enamel advertising signs have been particularly used outdoors because of their high resistance to bad weather. Fertilizer sellers have hung on their stores those for Chilean sodium nitrate among those of other producers. The enamel signs from the years 1910 to 1930 are particularly beautiful because they are real paintings. Those from the 1950s are limited to the name of the producer because in this period after the Second World War they were less expensive to produce.

3.5 'Los azulejos'

The London Office used the technique specific to Spain and Portugal, that of earthenware tiles, or *azulejos*. These ceramic advertising mosaics experienced their full development in the decade from 1920 to 1930. This famous image of the black rider on his black [cheval] horse standing out against a sunny yellow background of the sun which ripens crops, was created in 1929 by Adolfo Lopez-Duran Lozano (1902–1988) to promote Chilean sodium nitrate, and manufactured in Ramón Piñon Castello's workshop 'El Siglo' in Valencia, and has invaded all the rural areas of Spain and Portugal. The municipality of Santa Cruz de Palma in the Canaries completed in 2019 the renovation of an example composed of 270 tiles and measuring 10.80m², which was in the city centre.

This symbol of Art Nouveau, which the Chilean government wishes to declare as a cultural heritage, has also been used on other media such as enamel plaques, cast iron plaques, and murals. Almost a century has passed since its creation, which does not prevent it from being

still found on many buildings at the crossroads, both in Spanish and in Portuguese countryside, even if most often they are well degraded. .

This symbol of the Iberian world keeps such a force that young entrepreneurs, even if they should not know its relation with the sodium nitrate of Chile, use it to adorn T-shirts (Portugal) and sweatshirts (Spain).

3.6 Photography and Cinema

The Chilean Soda Nitrate Producers used photography (invented in 1839), when its techniques were improved to be mass-edited (albums, postcards). They produced sets of slides as soon as they were invented, which proved useful for teaching and professional meetings. They did not fail to use the cinema, soon after its invention (1895) to create promotional films, first silent, then with sound.

4 Advertising of sodium nitrate in the collections of museums affiliated with AIMA

It would be interesting to launch and publish an inventory of all the publications and of all the objects connected to salitre that are contained in museums affiliated to AIMA, or in those of national or local structures (such as museums affiliated to the Fédération des musées d'agriculture et du patrimoine rural).

With regard to Chile, a very large part of the promotional items produced by the Chilean Saltpetre Committee in London are collected in the Salitre Fund at the Archivo Nacional, but they have not yet been the subject of a publication by the archivists, with the exception of the posters.

There are several museums that deal with salitre in the extraction regions: Museo Regional de Iquique, Museo de Antofagasta, Museos de sitios Salitrera Uumberstone y Salitrera Santa Laura, both classified as World Heritage by UNESCO, and the Museo Pampino of the Salitrera Maria Elena. These museums and sites can be discovered on YouTube.³

Conclusion

To conclude this brief approach to this vast, multifaceted subject that is salitre, each of which has been the subject of in-depth research by researchers both Chileans and many other nationalities, it seems important to underline that in recent years, as far as advertising is concerned, there has been an awareness all over the world of its cultural and societal importance.

Our museums and collectors have long collected these objects, but the change is that they are becoming accessible to all audiences. In 2006, the National Library of Chile organized an exhibition at the Santa Lucia metro station which serves it, offering thousands of travelers the

³ Cápsula patrimonio María Elena (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jf3l2GSbVaY>); Las salitreras en la región de Tarapacá (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LTRuTxw5Y8s>); Pampa Reunión 'Identidad desde las Oficinas Salitreras del Norte de Chile' (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LosElotUIHc>). Salitrera Santa Laura (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zl4pBxrY50Q>). Salitreras de Humberstone y Santa Laura (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dHS_4eQU0A).

chance to see some of the magnificent posters on sodium nitrate that it holds, posters which young entrepreneurs have seized upon to adorn placemats, coasters, T-shirts, sweatshirts, and other everyday or promotional items.

So returns in everyday life this legacy of the miners of the Atacama Desert, who, by their exhausting work, gave fifty years of prosperity to their country and allowed farmers around the world to provide abundant and quality food thanks to Chilean 'white gold'.

Further Reading

There are many publications on Chilean saltpetre. I have voluntarily limited the references. For a first approach, almost all the points developed in my paper have an article on Wikipedia. I have therefore chosen to mention in-depth articles on each of the subjects I have covered. A more complete bibliography can be made available on request.

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Schmitz and Bukofzer. *Vistas de las Faenas y puertos salitreros* (Present from La Asociación Salitrera de propaganda, Iquique, 1913)

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Enslaved: Memoirs of farmworkers from 1900–1950, based on the materials collected in the Scientific Archives of the National Museum of Agriculture and Food Industry in Szreniawa

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Abstract

This text presents an analysis of the working and living conditions of agricultural workers. Many factors contributed to make this a group with the lowest social status. Rooting in old nobility customs meant that agricultural workers were often still treated as peasants in a feudal system. Employed for work on landed property, they received part of their salary in cash, with some benefits in kind. Despite these rights and benefits, they were often not respected or were implemented very slowly. The result of this was the bad working conditions and housing condition in which they lived. They didn't have any associations and legal regulations to govern their work, and so they were dependent on the goodwill of the lords. The harsh conditions of their existence was further evidenced by strikes undertaken by the employees and the extensive activity of the Agricultural Workers' Union, which was formed at the turn of 1918/1919. The materials presented here were collected in the Scientific Archive of the National Museum of Agriculture and Food Industry in Szreniawa. The author analysed two types of historical sources: memories of employees written from a personal needs and written on the competition 'From farmhand to co-host' organized by Robotnik Rolny magazine in 1968. There was also further analysis of reports and files linked to the activists of the Agricultural Workers' Union. These documents are rich sources of information on the situation of this social group and the actions it undertook to change this state of affairs.

From peasants to farm laborers

In Poland, the enfranchisement of peasants took place in the second half of the nineteenth century, but landowners were still used to the old customs and treated the workers working on their estates as feudal peasants. There was a conviction that peasants were destined to work hard for the benefit of their lords. Landlords used violence against them and their rights were not respected. As a result, they were the group with the lowest social position. The materials in the Scientific Archives of the Museum in Szreniawa allow us to look at this problem from the perspective of farmworkers. In their memoirs, we can observe how difficult a path they had to take to become aware of their own dignity and to fight for their rights. This evolution turned the passive peasants into conscious citizens.

Forgotten history

Memoirs and experiences of peasants are missing from literature and historiography. The historiography was created by privileged people. Today we do not think of the history of the peasantry as our own history, but it must be remembered that in the interwar period most Polish inhabitants lived and worked in the countryside. In 1921, peasants in Poland constituted about 75% of the total population. The unwritten history of peasants does not fit into our collective social memory either. Today we lack a relationship with our ancestors, and we do not know our roots.



Some examples of handwritten memoirs of agricultural workers, as drawn from the collection of the National Museum of Agriculture in Szreniawa (From a photograph by the author).

In their own voice

The acquisition of literacy was of great importance for this group. In the eighteenth century, the illiterate constituted over 90% of society. This percentage began to decrease in the nineteenth century so that by 1914, there were 57% illiterate people in the Russian partition, 40% in Galicia, and only 5% in the Prussian partition. The illiterate peasants did not leave journals or diaries, and they often did not have any other documents apart from their birth certificate. Finally, the ability to write allowed them to speak audibly for generations to come. Socialist agitators influenced the activation (also in writing) of this group. They strengthened peasants' faith in their value and the right to a decent life by encouraging them to rebel against the social order.

Already at the time of its establishment, the Agricultural Museum in Szreniawa was obligated to cooperate with the Agricultural Workers Union, therefore the Museum received documents related to activities of the Union. Resulting from the statutory activity of the Museum, family documents and souvenirs related with life in the countryside were also sent there. There are also in the Museum materials sent to the competition 'From a farmhand to a co-host' organized by the newspaper *Agricultural Worker*—they require a critical approach. This newspaper was a body of the Ministry of Agricultural Farms and the Union of Agricultural Workers, which were part of the socialist Land Reform of 1944. The internal motivation of the authors and the reasons why they decided to write down and send their memoirs are important to this history. What prompted them was certainly the desire to win awards, and the expectation that they would be published, but it was also the opportunity to participate in the construction of ideas about the past. For this reason, the criterion of the credibility and value of memoirs may be the desire to present the past times and an honest description of the author's subjective experiences. An interesting fact is that the archival documents from the editorial office of *Agricultural Worker* have been corrected. Sometimes these were stylistic notes, but sometimes a large section was removed. Were they considered 'not very interesting' or 'incompatible' with the policy of the socialist party?

These materials are an excellent source of information about how the peasants perceived their place in the world, and how they related to the role assigned to them; how they justified the necessity to acquire rights and their new position in the new reality; how they perceived their personal rights and how much they were able to endure before fighting for them.

Self-organization

The process of de-feudalization of village life began in Poland in the second half of the nineteenth century. Enfranchisement—granting the peasants ownership of their land—began in 1794. In the Austrian partition in 1848, in the Congress Kingdom in 1864, and in the Prussian partition in the years 1808–1872. Of course, the occupiers were guided not by the prosperity of the peasants, but by the fear of strikes and revolutions similar to the revolution in France or the rebellion of Galicia. Despite this, the elites continued to defend the old system. Despite the rights obtained, peasants working on land estates were often treated inhumanly.

The peasants had no legal means to enforce their rights. According to the Act of 1854, people working in agriculture were forbidden to make any 'collusion' aimed at forcing employers to raise wages. This was the case until November 13, 1904, when the Polish People's Union was established. The first political peasants' group in the Kingdom of Poland, its aim was to defend the economic interests of all agricultural workers. The manifesto of the Union is a strong testimony to the birth of the political and national consciousness of the peasants. During this period the Polish political scene was born, with a model of participating in political life through parties. Demonstrations, strikes, and protests testify to the difficult conditions in which agricultural workers existed. Ultimately, the strikes led to the fact that in 1918, after independence, it was unthinkable to bypass the demands of the working class. The creation of workers' associations made it possible to regulate working conditions and wages.

The dominant version of reality

The gentry considered themselves only as a state and a nation. Based on the poverty of the peasants, various characteristics were attributed to them, such as laziness, low living needs, and mental deficiencies. There was a conviction among the gentry that the peasants are only capable of manual labour, and even then they had to be forced to do so because they were accused of laziness and theft. Even the agrarian reformers saw the peasants as incapable of self-determination and self-organization of work. The gentry presented themselves as a defender who must decide for the peasants, carefully controlling them and fighting their inherent evil. Exploitation was presented as beneficial for both groups. Work relationships have been compared to family relationships in which each group, being dependent, cares for the other.

'It was a torment of young, beautiful years, not life. It was backbreaking slavery for poor people and there were a lot of such people in those nightmarish times.' (Franciszek Śnieg)

Work and pay

Peasants were employed in the so-called 'ordynaria'. For example, for their work, they received grain, a piece of land, wood, a flat, and the possibility of keeping a cow. Work was performed 5 days a week, from dawn to dusk. Overtime was not paid. If the peasant had a wife, she also had to work, otherwise they would not receive full payment. Sometimes he had to provide a journeyman—it could have been a child—but these people did not enter into an employment relationship with the landlord. Mothers did not have time to look after their children; instead, the older children did that. Very often the salary agreed with the employer was not received.

After the creation of professional organizations, the situation of agricultural workers changed. After the 1922/1923 strikes initiated by the Agricultural Workers' Union, it was agreed that the working day would last from 6 in the morning until 8 at night. There were agreed breaks for breakfast and afternoon tea of 30 minutes and a lunch break of 1.5 hours.

Enslaved workers

The landlords lacked empathy for the peasants, they often treated them like animals.

'The landlord was indifferent to the death of the labourer but was willing to officially express grief for the dead horse.' (Victoria Hetmańska)

'She [the landowner] had a female dog. She was crazy about this dog, my baby ate the egg if I found it somewhere. She ordered the maid to rub an egg with sugar every morning, various porridges [...] she even called a doctor in Warsaw [to the dog ...] it cost her a lot. When my child was dying, she did not even let me take my horses to the doctor in the city, it was already evening, it was autumn, so I took a handkerchief and walked 8 kilometres, walked through the forest at dark night because it was a shorter way.' (W. Wolska)

The criterion of value on the farm was productivity, which determined the value of both livestock and employees. As long as a man was fit for work, he was valuable; when he could not work, reasons were sought to remove him and his family from the estate. Efficiency was perhaps the only aspect that would have saved the worker from imprisonment or physical punishment that would exclude him from work, depriving the landlord of a cheap workforce. Violence was considered the norm, it was used as a punishment, but it was also a form of motivating employees.

Standard of living

The apartments offered by landlords were far from the basic sanitary standards known to us today. In an apartment for 15 to 18 people, there was often only one room, no floor, and often only one small window.

'The apartments were infested with worms, bedbugs, cockroaches, fleas, and other vermin. The worst was the wintertime because when these people were sleeping, all the worms would crawl over them and bite them mercilessly, also in the morning when they arose, everyone had marks that were created as a result of bites by vermin. During the summer season, the housing issues improved, because the young men built the so-called dog kennels of branches and straw, where some of the families slept from spring to late autumn. Such houses were a great housing luxury for the young boys and their family.' (Tołofil Łyś)

Every year there was a shortage of food in the pre-harvest season.

'In the spring of 1918, there was nothing to eat, we collected pigweeds and nettles and ate with my milk [...] When summer came, we cut the ears of rye and we ground them and ate, and after eating such things, there were diseases such as typhus, dysentery, Spanish flu, and many other diseases... children died.' (Stanisław Radoń)

'The children were weak. They went to school on foot, seven kilometres or more. They did not take breakfast to school. I only saw some of them unwrapping a rag with potatoes or a potato dumpling. They ate it on the break, but only some and not always. The others did not have that and did not eat anything at school.' (Stanisława Matelska)

'None of us asked for anything for bread because we did not even know if bread was eaten with something. Only when I started going to school, I saw how the daughters and sons of the richer had bread covered with lard, butter, and sausage.' (Franciszek Śnieg)

'There was a strange thing in all this, strange to us. Despite poverty, despite the shortcomings, no one dared to protest, to try to stand up for human living conditions. Everyone lived in silence what the day brought them.' (Bolesław Lewandowski)

Health

The law on health insurance for farmworkers and their families came into force on January 1 1914. But the gentry believed that it was too expensive for them and that it interfered too much with existing patriarchal relations. There was an obligation to insure the employee at

the Health Fund. It was also a type of retirement or disability insurance. The contributions were to be paid half by the landlord and half by the worker. However, the implementation of the agreement was unsuccessful for the employees.

'Our first child, 'a boy', was born during the haymaking period, so my employer did not like the fact that a child was born during that time. The boy was born healthy and we were satisfied, but after three days my wife had to get up to work. It was hard for her and this hardship was passed on to the child because he fell ill and died after nine days of life. Perhaps the child would be alive if the doctor had helped him immediately, but when I mentioned about the doctor, there was a misunderstanding. After all, the landlord told me that the doctor would not be able to help the child anymore, and for consolation said that it was supposedly God's will, against which there was no advice. However, my wife and I had a different opinion. We fell victim to the greed of an employer who did not want to waste a horse and time to bring a doctor. [...]

In the spring of 1935, my 5-year-old son fell ill with a throat affection. I immediately asked my employer to bring a doctor, but he took his time with it because, as he said 'now that you do not have the Health Insurance Fund, you cannot bring a doctor right away because it costs me.' Meanwhile, the boy was getting worse and when the doctor was finally brought in on the second day, it was too late and the boy died because he had a nose and throat diphtheria, where immediate medical attention is essential. So we were very concerned about this loss. I had an aversion to my employer that I had lost my child as a result of his greed. At that time, there were more incidents like ours. [...] a boy with a broken bone in his leg was lying in the neighbour's house, and the doctor did not show up.' (Stanisław Kozłowski)

Strikes

The first protests against employers took place as early as 1904. At that time, groups demanding better living conditions and shorter working time walked around the villages. Workers associated in the unions from the turn of 1918/1919 were guaranteed benefits—the conclusion of a collective agreement between the employers and the Union. Employers were not allowed to change tariffs, and members also acquired certain social rights. However, the gentry class tried to cancel these privileges. During the strikes, people fought for guaranteed collective agreements—specific working hours, appropriate rates, pensions, and the right to purchase plots in the event of a parcellation. Some of the strikes were bloody, as in 1922 when a strike broke out in the Szamotuły district during the harvest season. Similar events took place in many estates. The Union of Landlords, led by Edward Potworowski, ruthlessly rejected the demands of the workers.

Citizens

Peasants freed themselves from social and intellectual slavery in small steps, wresting from the hands of employers human and labour rights and privileges. The memoirs were written ex-post, and many details could have faded from memory. However, these people—authors—

were not lone individuals, they were members of a wider community. They built their knowledge about the world not only from on their own memories but also on the basis of collective and social memory. Memoirs reveal the social and historical reality—the meaning attributed to the events, and the perception of agricultural workers about their own past, often known only from their parents and grandparents. This period is specific because it was a time of social changes caused by the two world wars and the activity of socialists. Memoirs reflect what was considered important—life choices, the struggle for workers' rights, the emergence of a new social order. The memoirs and memories of the years of hardships and of unjustified sufferings and punishments were a tool for the farmworkers to legitimize their new place in the social hierarchy.

Note on the author

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Lifting material culture into interdisciplinary research: the MSc in Gàidhealtachd history

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Abstract

This paper offers a summary of the ideas and approaches behind a taught masters programme on material culture and Highland and Island—or 'Gàidhealtachd'—history. The course is one of the innovative pedagogical frameworks to emerge from the University of the Highlands and Islands, and is emblematic and representative of a 'material turn' across a range of relevant disciplines including history, archaeology, anthropology, folklife studies, ethnology, and the wider study of Gaelic language and culture. This paper identifies some of the main methodological driving forces and disciplinary histories behind the emergence of this specific course, showcases the role of material culture in these teaching contexts, and celebrates the formative and integral role of museums and collections in supporting such approaches. The piece finishes with a call to arms to museums regarding such diverse and contemporary issues as social justice and food security and the need for our collection institutions to rise to these interpretive challenges.

Introduction

The proposal for 'lifting material culture into interdisciplinary research' draws on an exemplar in recent higher education. It includes a brief view of a postgraduate degree course developed and validated for delivery in 2005–2007 with material culture and regional ethnology at its core. A number of images and messages had been selected for presentation to students as an introduction to their research course which is a taught masters programme on Highland and Island—or 'Gàidhealtachd'—history. The use and selection of such images and their 'meanings' and potential interpretation are arguably more or less entirely familiar to an international museum audience but less familiar to a conventional student audience in the UK. They are chosen to challenge stereotypes of Scottish history and a set-piece imagery of a homogeneous Highland environment. Simple examples suggest that the most basic of premises can be questioned: to 'call a spade a spade' is a proverb deeply embedded in the Anglocentric psyche but can be overturned by the material culture of tool types and in the naming of objects in Scottish Gaelic. A spade by name has been many other things in history but a 'spade'! Conventional history has themed 'improvement' as an inexorable process towards a modern perfectibility. Nowhere has this been so evident as in UK animal breeds with the standards set apparently in the foundation of the breed improvement societies in the late-nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Highland cattle, the hardiest of all British breeds, were defined in the first volume of the *Highland Cattle Herd Book* of 1885 although the ideals

of breed conformation had long been understood by Highlanders. A Gaelic 'song on the good points of a Highland cow' composed by a professional 'drover' had rehearsed these ideals in traditional terms about a hundred years earlier:

I bhi leathann os a cionn

.....

'She being broad in the brow,

Scant [a short measurement] from her eyes to her muzzle,

Coat long, black and close [dense],

And no taller below the knee than the span of my hand.

The platform offered by the relatively new entity of the University of the Highlands and Islands [UHI] has been the 'exercise yard' of 'Cultar Dùthchasach' and a Gaelic approach to material culture studies. The UHI is a confederation of thirteen colleges and research centres dispersed through the north and west of the British Isles and awarded full university status in 2011. They include the 'national centre for Gaelic language and culture' in *Sabhal Mòr Ostaig* in the Island of Skye. This grouping of higher education campuses occupies a region in which environmental issues of sustainability and climate change have been sharply focussed and widely debated in the current generation. These were the issues emerging in 'green politics' as we moved to the close of the twentieth century. Typically, these had been articulated outside the region by pundits and politicians on the UK national stage and, moving forward, it began to be suggested that the premises of debate might be expanded to include the voice of the communities inhabiting the region and with a better understanding of the 'heritage' and culture which suffuses the Highlands and Islands. This shift drew the language and culture of Scottish Gaelic from the margins to the centre of debate, with a ready recognition that this culture was powerfully a part of a Scottish 'national identity'.



*The National Centre for Gaelic Language and Culture in the Island of Skye
(Image courtesy of Sabhal Mòr Ostaig).*

A material culture approach

Exploring this culture has given museums in the region more prominence and financial support to improve the presentation of their collections. Expectations of today's visitors for interpretation of geology or natural and human history have given rise to renewed research into the region's heritage and material culture. Outside archaeology or art history courses, museums and their collections had played a minimal part in higher education until recently and with a distinct material turn in academic studies. Putting museum collections under scrutiny has been a natural desideratum of a widening of the academic palette and both undergraduate and postgraduate courses have been drawing on the resources of the region's museums.

'Material Culture' has been finding a place in the UK intellectual arena and is symptomatic of an expanding disciplinary network and new aspirations for interdisciplinary research. Changing academic horizons show, for example, that Gaelic and Celtic Studies are engaging with new disciplinary fields and tranches of evidence. My paper on 'The MSc in Gàidhealtachd history' is designed to demonstrate aspects of this engagement. The degree is aimed to serve the notion of a 'material culture' approach to Gaelic or Celtic Studies, and to open up 'material' references and dimensions in philology and lexicography. At the beginning, chiming with the emergence of Celtic Studies over the preceding century and with roots in German philology, the focus was on linguistics, literature and textual analysis, with archaeology and its material culture as the occasional additive. This light mix reflected a prevailing archaeology paradigm for early linguistics bound up with study of the Hallstatt and La Tène cultures of Iron Age Europe. Scholars then proffered tentative links between language and concepts of origins and diffusion of Continental Celts in tracing historical roots of the Celtic languages. This in turn was shaped by nineteenth-century ideas about race and the peopling of Britain and Ireland in antiquity. While these archaeology exercises in material culture explored concepts of 'Celt' or 'Celtic', arguably this had little or no impact on textual studies and the two streams remained essentially separate. With Iron Age 'Celtic' material culture, metalwork and so-called 'Celtic art' served up so sumptuously and beguilingly in the textbooks, this now had to come with the warning that language development could not be measured against it. This means too that the broad and straight arrow of the textbooks, leading from Hallstatt to the Hebrides and offering us a notion of language emergence and diffusion, is largely a fallacy and delusion.

A personal interest in the potential of material culture for a multidisciplinary discourse derives from long-term service in the National Museums Scotland and familiarity with museum collections and methodologies. Drawing on this, a 'Gaelic approach' to the subject of material culture studies is implicit in the term 'Cultar Dùthchasach' that denotes and connotes the current postgraduate MSc programme at Sabhal Mòr Ostaig. The course lays claim to innovation on two counts, in the first place, in adopting material culture as academic focus, and secondly, in teaching entirely through the medium of Scottish Gaelic. This is in line with the mission and purpose of the Gaelic College and is now the essential element in language progression from undergraduate to doctoral level and offering teaching at the highest levels and engagement at the deepest levels.

Cultar Dùthchasach or 'material culture studies'

A phrase such as 'Cultar Dùthchasach' in Scottish Gaelic requires a semantic twist because it is a 'modern' term and cannot be claimed to be idiomatic. However, it has been accepted by usage as a term to embrace the material or 'traditional' culture of the world of the Gàidhealtachd, whether of the society of the Highlands and Islands, the Gàidhealtachd society of the towns and cities or the Gàidhealtachd society of a diaspora, particularly those overseas communities that evolved as a direct result of the era of clearance and emigration. 'Cultar Dùthchasach' has been adopted also to translate 'material culture', insofar as the term might now be in common usage in a Gaelic context. The term 'Cultar Dùthchasach' might not be an entirely satisfactory equivalent for 'material culture', not conveying the same sense of 'tangible cultural heritage' (expected of the anglophone world) and even narrowing the inference of Scottish Gaelic in which 'intangible cultural heritage' would also certainly be implicit. This sort of linguistic dilemma is all too typical for the minority language and diglossia, with the cultural misfortune of Gaelic in Scotland moving over centuries from being a dominant to a minority language.

Being taught entirely through the medium of Scottish Gaelic, it is evident that the language and focus, and consequently identity of the MSc course demanded a different engagement with the scholarly material. Hitherto the potential had been little realised and one might go further and claim that the Highlands and Islands have been a 'landscape' of condescension with 'heritage' articulated from without. But here in Scottish Gaelic we have a living language, a rich literature, poetry, song and vivid narration in oral transmission, a vehicle for acute learning and powerful piety, a distinctive environment, and deeply embedded traditions of working the land and sea. It must be said that these values have been difficult to discern in the sources that purport to give an account of Scottish history and culture, whether in the past or present.

Towards a regional ethnology

Today interdisciplinary study through the medium of Gaelic draws on a blend of history, sociology, human geography, cultural anthropology and folk life studies, as well as taking full cognizance of material culture and its vocabulary, between landscape, the built environment and museum collections. The valorisation of MSc evolved a more confident strain of interdisciplinary research into the material culture of the Scottish Gàidhealtachd and is drawing more fully on the complexities and nuances of the language and on indigenous perspectives. This is ideal material for masters and higher-level research since students in the Scottish studies arena can learn to challenge existing ideological and academic landscapes within the humanities and social sciences.

The time was ripe for expanding our vision and for adding Gaelic to material culture studies and *vice versa*. This is no revolution since other developments in a multidisciplinary academic world are already live and active. Most pertinently we have the work of a twentieth-century international cohort of university and museum scholars whose field of research was designated 'European Ethnology' or 'Regional Ethnology', and the more recent innovation of 'material culture studies' influenced by cultural anthropology in London and Cambridge. The descriptor 'Ethnology' merits comment in a shifting world of academic domains and

disciplines; it describes a mix of social, economic and cultural history, drawing on language (for example, Gaelic and Scots) as well as conventional sources and giving identity to region and locality and drawing on European (and wider) comparanda. It can be said to derive a fresh integrity from material culture studies and sources in museums, making it a 'methodology' perhaps, rather than a discipline, while being interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary in its competences.

We still recognise that today's Ethnology is rooted in the work of European museums in the late-nineteenth century and the Swedish exemplars of Nordiska Museum (1873) and Skansen (1891). The study and interpretation of material remains from whole landscapes to the smallest moveable artefacts was part of the Scandinavian historian's trade and Chairs for comparative Folk Life research or 'Ethnology' were founded at the Universities of Stockholm, Lund and Uppsala.

Paradigms of cultural history have been shifting in our more conservative academies in recent decades and we are witnessing a material turn in methodology. Focus on artefacts predominated in archaeology and in anthropology but now we are getting used to the study of things and their relationship to human history, the study of the made and 'built' world of the 'cultural landscape', the study of 'materiality' as insight to currently popular concepts of memory and identity, and the assembling of 'cultural biographies' of objects and landscapes. The study of material culture in turn fits comfortably into the expansion of the historical discourse and the readiness of historians to venture over disciplinary boundaries and consider the 'meaning of things'.



Band of women waulking the cloth, Island of Eriskay, 1898. The waulking-board was always a locus for the composition and transmission of oral tradition. (Photo by Walter B. Blaikie, by courtesy of David R. Kilpatrick, Kilninver, Oban, UK).

With all the debate and intellectual muscle-flexing, there is a tendency to focus on 'material culture' theory and to shy away from substance. But if we adopt a Gaelic approach to material

culture studies, what can we learn that we cannot learn elsewhere and what difference might this knowledge make? On the simplest level we immediately have another dimension for the big topics of Highland and Hebridean history opened up since Malcolm Gray's *The Highland Economy 1750-1850* (1957), for example, food and diet, cultivation, animal husbandry and fishing, housing and how these responded to changing economic circumstances, and, tapping into the evidence, how people made or obtained supplies and materials such as clothing, tools and the bare necessities of life as the region slipped into crisis in the course of the nineteenth century.

We seem to know very little about self-reliance and survival skills when clearance and emigration became the order of the day, and how people coped with circumstances of dislocation and famine and how these were experienced outside the literature of economic determinism. We read copiously in the textbooks about the kelp industry, for example, with the occasional reference to distinctions between *Laminaria* and *Fucus*, but with little awareness, perhaps, of 'kelp' as fertiliser and food source, how harvested, how cooked and eaten, how composted, how laid on the land and with what expectations, and the whole picture illuminated by a huge glossary in Scottish Gaelic which far outstrips Linnaean botanical classifications.

Valorising oral tradition

To an extent the evidence is transmitted through oral tradition and survives in song and colloquial speech. Until more recently, Celtic Studies rarely engaged with the local voices of 'township poets' and with the so-called *bàrdachd bhaile* or 'township poetry' in which a wealth of evidence, particularly for material culture, is carried. The song quoted above, for example, gives a virtually unique view in his own words of how the Highland drover reared cattle and did business, showing *inter alia*, how people thought and communicated. The dictionaries tended to be poor recorders of material culture though this is now being rectified by *Faclair na Gàidhlig* ('The Historical Dictionary of Scottish Gaelic') and the *Digital Archive of Scottish Gaelic* or *DASG*, and the MSc in material culture contributes to these. A significant amount of 'material culture' has survived in the literature of Scottish Gaelic but has hitherto not been singled out. The schools of the SSPCK and Gaelic School Society (founded 1811) produced two or three generations of Gaels literate in their own language. Many of these began to write and publish in the newsprint that proliferated after the abolition of newspaper Stamp Duty in 1855. Clearance and emigration meant that many bright stars of this educated echelon used their skills to record their memories of childhood and growing up, for some of them a way of life lost but committed in detail to paper.

Looking at lifescapes

Using language to expand the material and social record can be very rewarding and draws museum collections more firmly into the scholarly discourse. Many examples have emerged in such a discourse and one example may be cited in the space available; a topic that can be immensely enriched by drawing on the testimonies of its Gaelic practitioners has been

shielings and transhumance. Summer transhumance has been extensively studied on the Continent and we have given less space to this essential form of land-use and colonisation while studies of clearance and depopulation have predominated. We can learn about settlement patterns, adaptation to the environment and basic rhythms of a sustainable economy over centuries but, at the same time, we learn about personal circumstances and responses since the shieling or *àirigh* bulked so large in popular culture. The evidence is abundant, between, perhaps, the lover's shopping-list and her Renaissance taste in the well-known song *Bothan Àirigh am Bràigh Raithneach* ('The shieling hut in the Braes of Rannoch') in which the shieling is characterised as the 'bothy of love-making'; or the sigh of the Glen Lyon woman with the happy memory of the escape to the shielings from sermons and catechising:

Fionna-ghleann mo chridhe, far nach bitheadh Didòmhnaich!

['Finglen of my heart, where there would be no Sunday!']

A Gaelic approach to material culture studies enables a better understanding of the social and domestic life, the work and physical environments, and indeed the popular mentalities and 'lifescapes' of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland. The relative success and impact of the MSc in Gàidhealtachd history might be measured by the invitation to be involved in National Museums' displays and exhibitions, for example, in the 2019 'milestone' exhibition, 'Wild and Majestic: Romantic Visions of Scotland', which showcased contested historical themes and explored them from a Gaelic perspective. Accompanying publicity included the comment: 'the relationship between objects and the Gaelic language is shown through a rich selection of material'.

Conclusion

History through objects identifies museums as places where one can go to learn and enjoy our own and other's heritage, to investigate meanings and identities, and to share ideas, knowledge and skills. Enlarging the competence of museums in a time of profound change raises awareness of their potential in global communications and global trade, and this is fortified by international partnerships and friendships as represented so ideally by AIMA. This is now a unique forum for discussion on the scope of material culture and agricultural museums, for debates on food and sustainability and for critical information for application to issues in climate change, food security and mass migration. In the process, museums' quieter challenge is about what to collect, document, preserve and interpret for an effective engagement in current debates on the widest spectrum from food security to social justice.

Further Reading

This paper is based on a number of key texts long available but still offering important premises for structured learning and research. I have relied heavily on Alexander Fenton, *Scottish Country Life*, Edinburgh: John Donald 1976 (and later editions) for the exploration of the regional ethnology of Scotland in a European setting. I have used Myles Dillon and Nora Chadwick, *The Celtic Realms*, London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson 1967, Nora K Chadwick, *The Celts*, London: Pelican Books 1971 for scholarship concerning the origins and extent of 'celtic

civilisation', and two more recent studies, John T Koch and Barry Cunliffe, *Celtic from the West. Alternative Perspectives from Archaeology, Genetics, Language and Literature*, Oxbow Books 2012, and the same authors' and editors', *Celtic from the West 2: Rethinking the Bronze Age and the Arrival of Indo-European in Atlantic Europe*, Oxbow Books 2013, for their dramatic re-ordering of the 'celtic civilisation' debate. For the 'material turn' in academic studies I have used Victor Buchli's *A Material Culture Reader*, Oxford: 2002 as shorthand to demonstrate to students what meanings we can draw from the term 'material culture' and how this might change and develop over time. The National Museums' website has been referenced for the 'Wild and Majestic' exhibition (<https://nms.iro.bl.uk/>).

Acknowledgements

I am deeply grateful for the support, leadership and input into the MSc of Dr Domhnall Uilleam Stiùbhart, my colleague in Sabhal Mòr Ostaig.

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Country and mills heritage open days: A positive opportunity for agricultural museums

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Abstract

The heritage of the country is the trace of the work and the taste for wellbeing on a daily basis, of those who preceded us, or of those who are still actors. Since 2002, the JMPP "Journées du Patrimoine de Pays et des Moulins" (Country and mills heritage open days), is organized every year in June, thanks to the action of the seven national federations for the protection and safeguarding of rural heritage including AFMA. Each year a central federative theme is chosen. Flexible and economical logistics disseminate it to all potential participants, rural municipalities, associations, tourism stakeholders, museums, collectors, schools, professional agricultural and craft organizations, private owners, and all media. The website gathers—free of charge—each animation and offers around May the complete program of about 700 to 900 places including thirty agricultural museums and more than a thousand animations. The interactive map allows everyone to organize their program and itineraries of visits. The June 2021 edition focused on "The tree, life and uses"; it allowed to welcome on 1,027 animations more than 120,000 visitors in two days. The edition of 25 and 26 June 2022 will focus on the theme "Being and revive" to revive certain ancient know-how, to remember that historical elements of the built or the world of living (animals or plants), have become topical again; and to deal with the re-use, recovery, or recycling of abandoned or used natural materials. Why not open it up internationally, to other countries, to other actors, to better communicate about our agricultural museums and rural heritage?

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Le patrimoine de pays est une représentation du travail et du goût de bien-être au quotidien de ceux qui nous ont précédés, ou de ceux qui en sont encore des acteurs. Depuis 2002, Les Journées du Patrimoine de Pays et des Moulins (JPPM) sont organisées en juin grâce à l'action des sept fédérations nationales de protection et de sauvegarde du patrimoine rural dont l'AFMA. Chaque année un thème central fédératif est choisi. La logistique souple et économique le diffuse à tous les participants potentiels : communes rurales, monde associatif, acteurs du tourisme, musées, collectionneurs, écoles, organisations professionnelles agricoles et artisanales, propriétaires privés, et tous médias. Le site internet regroupe - gratuitement - chaque animation et propose vers mai le programme complet soit environ 700 à 900 lieux dont une trentaine de musées d'agriculture et plus de mille animations. La carte géographique interactive permet à chacun d'organiser son programme et itinéraires de visites. L'édition de juin 2021 portait sur « l'Arbre, vie et usages » ; elle a permis d'accueillir sur 1027 animations plus de 120 000 visiteurs en deux jours. L'édition des 25 et 26 juin 2022 sera axée sur le thème « Être et renaître » pour

redonner vie à certains savoir-faire anciens, rappeler que des éléments historiques du bâti ou du vivant (animaux ou végétaux), sont redevenus d'actualité ; et pour mettre en valeur la réutilisation, la récupération ou le recyclage de matières naturelles abandonnées ou usagées. Pourquoi ne pas ouvrir les JPPM dès 2023 à d'autres pays pour mieux communiquer sur nos musées d'agriculture et sur le patrimoine rural ?

Introduction

The country's heritage is the trace of the work and taste for well-being on a daily basis of those who preceded us, also of those who are still actors: landscapes marked and worked by man, buildings marked by the life of men and their industry, know-how, maintenance of the living, nature, techniques related to it, so all the tangible and intangible rural heritage. It carries within it the memory of a society and that of a territory.

25
26
JUIN
2022

24^e édition

JOURNÉES
DU PATRIMOINE
DE PAYS
& DES MOULINS

être et
renaître

Programme sur :
www.patrimoinedepays-moulins.org

PATRIMOINE
Environnement

maisons
paysannes
de france

afma
Association
française
des
Mouliniers
et
Meuniers

MINISTÈRE
DE LA CULTURE
Culture
Patrimoine

FEM

REMPART

FONDATION
DU
PATRIMOINE

Fédération
des
Cultures
de
France

AMRF
Association des
Mouliniers
de France

Poster announcement of 2022 Country and mills heritage open days (Image courtesy and © JPPM).

Since 2002, the last week end of June, the JPPM (Journées du Patrimoine de Pays et des Moulins - *Country and mills heritage open days*) are organized in France and coordinated thanks to the action of seven national federations for the protection and safeguarding of rural heritage: the Federation Patrimoine-Environnement, Maisons Paysannes de France, AFMA

(the Federation of Museums of Agriculture and Rural Heritage), the Federation of Associations for the Safeguarding of Mills, the Architects of heritage, the Rempart association (restoration projects by young people), the national Heritage Foundation and the association Petites Cités de caractère (who are small cities with less than 6,000 inhabitants).

Each year a central federative theme is chosen to sharpen the eye and arouse the imagination in terms of discovering the small local heritage of the country. To determine the national theme, it is important to find a subject that can encourage activities and animations that are easy to organize everywhere, that is transversal and common to the objectives of the members of the seven federations but also open to all local institutions or private individuals, members or not. It is important nowadays to establish and maintain without misconceptions positive links between the rural environment, its usefulness, and the urban world. JPPM in June are also the right way to communicate and launch the summer exhibitions and events.

Let us mention some of the very federative themes implemented in recent years: "Cuisines, terroirs and know-how"; "Regions and local recipes"; "The round heritage"; "The Animal and the Man"; "Trades and know-how"; "Naturally sustainable"; "The Middle Ages still present"; "Let's celebrate rural heritage together"; "Light and colors" ; " Iron and glass, useful and decorative"; "Heritage at the water's edge"; "Roofs, towers, bell towers... heritage in height"; "Earth: raw earth, terracotta".

The June 2021 edition focused on "The Tree, its life and uses" with 1027 different animations and activities organized which welcomed more than 120,000 visitors in two days throughout France, including Guadeloupe. Many animations in the agricultural museums involved around the forest, the wood, the work of cabinetmakers and carpenters, the fruit trees and arboreal conservatories around some museums, concerts of wooden instruments and guided tours of the various trees of the villages.

The next edition of 25 and 26 June 2022 will focus on the theme "Being and revive" to revive certain ancient know-how, to recall that historical elements of the living world (animals or plants) have become relevant again by the revival of certain useful breeds or varieties, agricultural practices, technics, re use of materials or by-products, recovery or recycling of abandoned or used natural materials, rehabilitation of abandoned agricultural or rural buildings to new uses, natural energies. Driving sustainable development and a lever for the attractiveness of territories, this theme will reconsider the existing as a material for use(s).

Flexible and relatively economical logistics consist in first disseminating the chosen theme to potential participants, i.e. a file of more than 1,500 addresses, to press networks, accompanied by lists of ideas that encourage possible animations. Dissemination is also made to the entire national network of rural communes, the local associative world, local and rural tourism, museums, collectors, schools, professional agricultural and craft organizations, networks of private owners, very regional press and specialized press.

Each entity then designs - between January and April - its own activities often thanks to a lot of volunteering, to better discover its little-known or unopened places, its know-how, its history, its unknown riches, its festivities, its regional products, its conviviality. These include: guided tours adapted to the national theme; guided walks to discover the unknown landscape; exceptional opening of cultural places and reserves or storages usually closed to the public;

demonstrations by craftsmen; recipes for regional cuisine and tastings; fest meals; concerts; public catering of a place, a building; initiations to know-how; educational games for families; historical reenactments; etc. The registration of each of the animations thus designed and planned is done online via the internet, written and completed by its author with all the description intended to inform the future visitor and the modalities of visits, schedules, place and contact.

A website then gathers from January to April - free of charge - each animation and offers around May the complete program of about 600 to 800 places depending on the editions, including about thirty agricultural museums and more than a thousand animations, all different and sometimes very original. The interactive map then allows everyone, individuals, families, to organize around their home their own program of visits and itineraries:

<https://www.patrimoinedepays-moulins.org/>

A popular media personality and lover of small heritage sponsors the action. A press kit offers examples in each region some new animations. A presentation conference of the JPPM and the theme is organized during the International Cultural Heritage Fair, in October at the Louvre in Paris. Another is reserved for the press in April-May to announce the launch of this event. There are more than 400 spin-offs from local print, regional and national radio or TV and on new social networks that communicate on the know-how highlighted by the JPPM. Signage material is created in the form of leaflets and posters and widely distributed upstream to each "actor" participant already registered to ensure their own local communication.

The financing of this national event consists essentially in the realization and monitoring of communication tools and media with a participation of less than a thousand euros per partner federation, one or more subsidies from the Ministries of Culture, Rurality and a lot of time spent and exchanges of reciprocal services. It is recommended that each animation be free or at a large reduction of the normal rate and with access to new animations mounted or inaugurated on the occasion of the event.

In parallel with the JPPM, the Federation Patrimoine-Environment organizes for scholars a national competition for writing and producing a "School Class Newspaper" on the main theme, with local interviews, targeted educational contributions or illustrated reports of visits.

Since 2018, the President of AFMA has been appointed to coordinate the JPPM National Steering Committee where the seven partner federations sit, and whose secretariat and administrative and financial management is provided by the Patrimoine-Environnement federation, another partner of the event.

This national event in France, *Country and mills heritage open days* will celebrate in 2023 its 25th edition. Why not open it up internationally, to other countries, to other actors, to better communicate about our agricultural museums and rural heritage?

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Le patrimoine de pays est la trace du travail et du goût de bien faire au quotidien de ceux qui nous ont précédés. Certains en sont encore des acteurs : paysages marqués et travaillés par l'homme, bâtiments marqués de la vie des hommes et de leur travail, savoir-faire, entretien

du vivant, de la nature, des techniques qui y sont liées, donc tout le patrimoine rural, matériel et immatériel. Il porte en lui la mémoire d'une société et celle d'un territoire.

Depuis 2002, Les Journées du Patrimoine de Pays et des Moulins (JPPM) sont organisées en France, le dernier week-end de juin, et coordonnées grâce à l'action de sept fédérations nationales de protection et de sauvegarde du patrimoine rural: Patrimoine-Environnement, Maisons Paysannes de France, l'AFMA (Fédération des musées d'agriculture et du patrimoine rural), la Fédération Française des Associations de sauvegarde des Moulins, les Architectes du patrimoine, l'association Rempart (chantiers de restauration par des jeunes), la Fondation du Patrimoine et l'association Petites cités de caractère qui comptent moins de 6 000 habitants.

Chaque année un thème central fédératif est choisi pour aiguïser le regard et susciter l'imagination en matière de découverte du petit patrimoine local de pays. Il est important de nos jours de bien établir et de maintenir sans idées fausses des liens positifs entre le milieu rural, son utilité, l'environnement et le monde urbain.

Pour déterminer le thème national, il est important de trouver un sujet qui puisse inciter à des animations faciles à organiser partout, qui soit transversal et commun aux objectifs des adhérents des sept fédérations mais aussi ouvert à toutes les institutions locales ou aux privés, adhérents ou non.

Citons certains des thèmes très fédératifs mis en œuvre ces dernières années : « Cuisines, terroirs et savoir-faire » ; « Le patrimoine rond » ; « L'Animal et l'Homme » ; « Métiers et savoir-faire » ; « Naturellement durable » ; « Le Moyen Age encore présent » ; « Fêtons ensemble le patrimoine rural » ; « Lumières et couleurs » ; « Le fer et le verre, utiles et décoratifs » ; « Le patrimoine au bord de l'eau » ; « Toits, tours, clochers... patrimoine en hauteur » ; « La terre : terre crue, terre cuite ».

L'édition de juin 2021 portait sur « l'Arbre, vie et usages » et a permis d'accueillir sur 1 027 animations plus de 120 000 visiteurs en deux jours sur toute la France dont la Guadeloupe. Beaucoup d'animations dans les musées d'agriculture impliqués autour de la forêt, du bois, du travail d'ébénistes et de charpentiers, des arbres fruitiers et des conservatoires arboricoles de musées ; concerts d'instruments en bois ; visites commentées des arbres des villages.

L'édition des 25 et 26 juin 2022 sera axée autour du thème « Être et renaître » pour redonner vie à certains savoir-faire anciens, rappeler que des éléments historiques du vivant (animaux ou végétaux) sont redevenus d'actualité par la relance de certaines races ou variétés utiles, de techniques agricoles, de réutilisation de matériaux ou de sous-produits, par la récupération ou par le recyclage de matières naturelles abandonnées ou usagées, par la réhabilitation de bâtiments agricoles ou ruraux abandonnés vers de nouvelles utilisations, par le développement d'énergies naturelles. Moteur de développement durable et levier d'attractivité des territoires, ce thème va reconsidérer l'existant comme matière à usage(s).

La logistique souple et relativement économique consiste à d'abord diffuser le thème retenu aux participants potentiels, soit un fichier de plus de 1 500 adresses, aux réseaux de presse, accompagné de listes d'idées incitatrices d'animations possibles. Diffusion faite aussi à tout le réseau national des communes rurales, du monde associatif local ; du tourisme local et rural, musées, collectionneurs, écoles, organisations professionnelles agricoles et artisanales, réseaux de propriétaires privés, presse régionale et presse spécialisée.

Chaque entité conçoit alors - entre janvier et avril - ses propres animations grâce souvent à beaucoup de bénévolat, pour mieux faire découvrir ses lieux peu connus ou non ouverts au public, ses savoir-faire, son histoire, ses richesses méconnues, ses festivités, ses produits régionaux, sa convivialité.

Citons : des visites commentées adaptées au thème national, promenades guidées à la découvertes du paysage, ouverture exceptionnelle de lieux culturels, de réserves habituellement fermés au public, démonstrations par des artisans, recettes de cuisine régionale et dégustations, repas en commun, concerts, restauration en public d'un lieu, d'un bâtiment ; initiations à des savoir-faire, jeux éducatifs pour les familles, reconstitutions historiques, etc.

L'inscription de chacune des animations ainsi conçues et prévues se fait en ligne par internet, rédigée et complétée par son auteur avec tout le descriptif destiné à informer le futur visiteur, comprenant les modalités de visites, les horaires, le lieu, le contact.

Un site internet regroupe ensuite de janvier à avril - gratuitement - chaque animation et propose vers mai le programme complet soit environ 600 à 800 lieux suivant les éditions, dont une trentaine de musées d'agriculture et plus de mille animations, toutes différentes et parfois fort originales. La carte géographique interactive permet alors à chacun, individuels, familles, d'organiser autour de chez soi son propre programme de visites et itinéraires:

<https://www.patrimoinedepays-moulins.org>

Une personnalité très médiatique et amateur du petit patrimoine parraine l'action. Un dossier de presse propose en exemples dans chaque région quelques animations inédites. Une conférence de présentation des JPPM et du thème est organisée lors du Salon international du patrimoine culturel, en octobre au Louvre à Paris. Une autre est réservée à la presse en avril-mai pour annoncer le lancement de cette manifestation. On enregistre plus de 400 retombées de presse locale écrite, radio ou TV régionales et nationale et bien sûr sur les nouveaux réseaux sociaux qui communiquent sur les savoir-faire mis en valeur par les JPPM. Les JPPM sont une bonne formule pour annoncer dès fin juin, les expositions et les événements de la saison estivale. Du matériel signalétique est créé sous forme de dépliants et d'affichettes et il est largement diffusé en amont à chaque participant « acteur » déjà inscrit pour assurer sa propre communication locale.

Le financement de cet événement national consiste essentiellement à la réalisation et au suivi des outils et supports de communication avec une participation de moins de mille euros par fédération partenaire, une ou des subventions des ministères de la Culture, de la Ruralité et beaucoup de temps passé et d'échanges de prestations. Il est recommandé que chaque animation soit gratuite ou à forte réduction du tarif normal et avec accès à des animations inédites montées ou inaugurées à l'occasion de l'évènement.

En parallèle aux JPPM, la fédération Patrimoine Environnement organise pour les classes scolaires un concours national de rédaction et de réalisation d'un « Petit journal » portant sur le thème principal, avec des interviews locales, des apports pédagogiques ciblés ou des comptes rendus illustrés de visites.

Depuis 2018, le président de l'AFMA a été désigné pour coordonner le Comité national de pilotage des JPPM où siègent les sept fédérations partenaires, et dont le secrétariat et la gestion administrative et financière est assurée par la fédération Patrimoine-Environnement, autre partenaire de l'évènement.

Cet évènement national en France va fêter en 2023 sa 25ème édition. Pourquoi ne pas l'ouvrir à l'international, à d'autres pays, à d'autres acteurs, pour mieux communiquer sur nos musées d'agriculture et sur le patrimoine rural?

En savoir plus: <https://www.patrimoinedepays-moulins.org>

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Insects, weeds and pesticides, and sites of miracle

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Abstract

During the years between 1910 and 1920 chemicals to kill weed in cornfields were introduced to farmers in the southwest of Norway. The handling and use of such chemicals quickly became a yearly practice. This paper explores how outdoor laboratories became sites for persuading farmers to change practice and start using pesticides.

Introduction

At the beginning of the twentieth century, farmers at the southwest coast of Norway, in the county of Rogaland, were growing grain, mainly oat, potatoes, vegetables, fodder for their livestock, and some fruit and berries. In 1910, hardly any Norwegian farmer used herbicides. The first herbicide introduced was iron sulphate. Sulfuric acid and cyanamide was brought in a few years later, in 1916. Sulfuric acid was widely used in cornfields in 1920. In 1929 farmers in Rogaland used 1.2 litres of concentrated sulfuric acid per acre of cornfield, - several times more than other farmers in Norway.

In a few years farmers had become accustomed to a new practice. They had experienced how the spraying equipment worked, noticed that it often leaked, and that the acid could destroy clothes and cause painful wounds and serious injuries. They gained knowledge about how the acid interacted with their corn plants, and the plants the chemicals were targeted at. In these years, insecticides were also introduced as remedies against harmful insects in fields where farmers cultivated vegetables. However, farmers did not change practice and did not start using insecticides in fields or grasslands in this period. This paper explores how outdoor laboratories became sites for persuading farmers to change practice and start using herbicides. It will be shown how these "sites of miracles" were designed and established.

Experts and testing

The Norwegian state hired an entomologist in 1896, and a weed expert from 1913. They were supposed to help and advice agronomists in the counties. From 1919 a state mycologist was brought in as well. These experts were not isolated in a Norwegian context but stayed in contact with their peers abroad. The weed specialist collaborated with two agronomists in Rogaland County, and they got assistance from agronomists in some of the municipalities from 1917. To summarize: there was a network of agronomists working to solve a steadily growing weed problem. A problem caused by using more fertilizers, monocultures, and new farming methods in the nineteenth century. The entomologist was collaborating with a

horticulture specialist in Rogaland County, dealing with problems due to insects and fungi in fruit and berry production. These problems were also escalating.

At the same time, it existed a notion that scientific knowledge would make it possible to identify ideal plants to cultivate and to determine best agricultural practices. The argument was that it was necessary, due to Norwegian geography, to explore which plants and practices that gave best results under local conditions. When entering the twentieth century agricultural experts had initiated collaboration with local farmers to test different plants and seeds at outdoor laboratories. There was also an understanding amongst experts that by being able to demonstrate what was the correct and incorrect agricultural method, they also would be able to persuade farmers to change their practices.

At numerous and varied arenas, from school gardens to expert reports, from courses to exhibitions, expert knowledge was circulated and could be debated, negotiated, silenced, changed, or passed on and tried out. In 1915 an arena where knowledge about interactions between weeds, herbicides, and cultivated plants could circulate was established. I name such arenas "Sites of miracle".

"Sites of miracle" were established by the national weed expert and the agronomists in Rogaland and camouflaged as outdoor laboratories. The sites were designed to illustrate that the crop was improved both quantitatively and qualitatively when using herbicides or other methods to eradicate weeds. They also clarified which herbicide to be used and at what concentrations. In 1915 the first tests comparing different types of techniques for removing weed were performed in the county. They were designed in collaboration with the national weed expert and based on his knowledge from previous trials. The following year, five sites were chosen, scattered in the county, and all of them beside roads where farmers were passing by. Men were hired, got training, and given the responsibility to perform the spraying of chemicals. By this set up, knowledge on how chemicals and plants were interacting were moved to these sites, sites posing as outdoor laboratories.

Tensions and difficulties

While laboratories are designed to investigate, these sites were designed for dissemination of best solutions regarding weed control. Agricultural experts did this by setting up a theatre performance, furnishing the stage as a laboratory, and thus making use of science as a warranter of truth. However, a laboratory is typically set indoor where conditions are controlled, and the people working there are trained experts. This was only made as to be a laboratory. Things did also fail. At some sites there even were more weed growth *after* spraying than where chemicals had not been used. The explanation was obvious, the experts reported; the men responsible for doing the spraying had done something wrong, also the weather was not suitable.

By circulating this as truth, experts removed the cause of failure from the chemicals and handed it over to the weather and to the farmer. By arranging the dissemination like a laboratory, the leading experts were able to present their notions of interactions between cultivated plants, weeds, chemicals, visiting species and inorganic material as scientifically proven fact.

In the following years, more such “laboratories” were designed and established around the county. At these sites - where experts were stage directors—farmers could drive by, stop, and see with their own eyes what miracles the chemicals were able to perform. They could meet peers, discuss what they were seeing, conclude, and implement the methods at their own farm. The photo below, taken in 1964, shows such a laboratory.



Demonstration of herbicides to eradicate northern dock (Rumex Longifolius) at an outdoor laboratory, 1964 (Image courtesy and © Landbrukssekskapet in Rogaland/ Statsarkivet).

Fruit growers had been using chemicals against different insects and fungi in their orchards for several years in 1920. Still, insects and fungi did not disappear. Insects were unpredictable, and no miracles could be produced to entice farmers to change their practice and apply insecticides in their fields. The state entomologist was not able to design outdoor laboratories like his colleague, the weed expert. This might be one explanation to why farmers hadn't introduced insecticides to eradicate insects in their potato, vegetable, or corn fields.

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Note on the author

Anne Jorunn Froeyen has been employed at Jaermuseet in Norway since 2000, working mainly with topics regarding agricultural history of the Jaeren region. Froeyen has been project coordinator and project manager at the museum. Froeyen finished her PHD in 2022, studying the use of pesticides in Norwegian agricultural context in the years between 1875 and 1995.

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Farm Tools

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Abstract

The paper describes my efforts to create a Guide to Historic Farming tools, largely based on The MERL collection. This short introduction to my process is intended as a preview of the kinds of approaches to hand tools adopted in this project and of the subsequent work that is expected to emerge as a published output at a later date.

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L'article décrit mes efforts pour créer un guide des outils agricoles historiques, largement basé sur la collection de MERL.

Introduction

First, to declare interests: I'm Chris Green, and until 2011 I was Director of St Albans Museums and had direct oversight of the Salaman Collection of tools there. I then took early retirement, and since the end of 2013 have been working on a dictionary of farm tools, using The MERL collection (the biggest in the UK, I believe), and was the Gwyn E. Jones MERL Research Fellow for 2014. Since 2016 I have been writing, and hope to complete soon (publishers please note). The idea has generally been to follow the work of Raphael Salaman (1906–1993) who produced authoritative dictionaries of Woodworking tools (1975) and leatherworking tools (1986), but whose health failed before he could tackle engineering (his profession), or farming (his first love).

Discussion

Farm tools are by no means unimportant or beneath the notice of the historian. Before 1800, most people picked them up and used them each day; by 1871 1.7 million people in England and Wales did so, and by the time of the First World War the figure was still over 1 million. But historians have ignored daily bread, and if you want to read about farm tools you are likely to be referred to Roy Brigden's small Shire book (available at The MERL), or to G. A. Fussell's *The Farmer's Tools* (1950). The latter really does discuss the *Farmer's* tools, and so we follow ploughs and bean drills through the ages on their relentless advance to the present day, where ideally all land is accessible by 4X4 or quadbike, and the only hand tool required is a shovel to clear up the odd spillage. One person can now farm 1,000 acres in southeast England, and often does.

Rather than a simple dictionary in which 'hay rick' follows 'hay fork' but comes before 'hay stack' and 'truss', I have gone back to the time-honoured 'farming process' pattern, in which we start by breaking/winning land, and end with the harvest and its processing in the barn.

What have I learnt? I started off fairly well informed, but even so was surprised to find how widely wooden tools were used before 1700, and the corresponding scarcity of iron. Archaeologists are particularly likely to forget how expensive iron was, and the efficiency with which it was recycled through the smith. Very few old farm tools can be dated before 1800 as it was usual to use them as fuel at a time when the poor had to burn tree roots. The rotten handle made a welcome blaze, and relieved the user's feelings about his work; burning was also the simplest way to clean out the iron part for the blacksmith—and get more credit at the forge.

I have also had to deal with the *'techniques of the body'* as Marcel Mauss called them. No one can fail to be surprised that in northern Scandinavia it was once customary to spit turnip seeds into position. A more mundane example is in digging, where iron-shod English spades and Japanese hoes converged to a remarkable degree, but were handled in very different ways to give different tools that were far from interchangeable, although they did the same job.

'Witness marks' have proved an efficient way of telling how a tool was made and its likely date: A striking example in The MERL collection is one of its founding pieces: H. J. Massingham's donation of a barn sieve (MERL 51/168). This has a forked handle enabling it to be used quickly and easily by the threshers. Since a second example is depicted at use in the *Illustrated London News* in 1846, a centre of production seems likely, even for such a lowly adaptation. A raking light shows that the rough handle was dressed with a rounding-plane—a handle-maker's tool that could be used to smooth bent handles like the snaith of a scythe. At The MERL we can also see the results of this plane's use on rake handles (MERL 2006/50).

So the old *'grandfather made all his own tools'* myth is disproved yet again. And even tools which actually do appear within his capabilities tend to prove the rule: The Yorkshire hay creel (MERL 64/60) consists of two hazel rods (cut from a hedge), rough twine, and a piece of second-hand rope with which to carry the whole. Simple materials, knotted together vary simply, yet this tool is recorded to have been sold at market and there are actually photographs of their being made for sale, and used (they allow a small holder to carry a sufficiency of hay on his back, up or down slopes impassable to a horse).

I had not expected to find forgotten tool types in my studies, but the *yelve* (a usually wooden jointed muck fork with three prongs) appears to have been unnoticed since its obsolescence in the nineteenth century. The MERL has two examples (MERL 56/49 and MERL 57/352), but the earliest image of such an object is of a south German peasant dating to ca.1525. It is identified in Randle Holme's *Armoury* of 1688, and the name confirmed by the Oxford English Dictionary.

Mention of the south German peasantry indicates that I have been far more catholic in the use of sources than I expected, precisely so as not to miss the origin of the *yelve*, or its use in Kent around 1830, where Samuel Palmer painted one in a barn. One school of thought holds that English practice was driven to the 'Celtic fringe' when it was replaced by a new fad. If we wish to know about 'paring and burning' then Devon and Cornwall are the places to study, and not Sussex, though the technique was probably as much used there in the seventeenth century. And The MERL's *yelves* appear to have been collected from the 'fringe'—Scotland and Northumberland—before 1920.

An endpiece conclusion

As an endpiece we can use another source—an engraved Thomas Bewick ‘endpiece’ cut in Newcastle about 1800. A Northumberland farmhand shelters from the driving sleet in the lee of a haystack. If we look carefully (the haystack is drawn about one inch across) we can see that Bewick has also provided the first-known image of a hay spade (a sharpened spade for cutting pales, obsolete by 1870).



A Thomas Bewick endpiece depicting a farmhand sheltering from the weather beside a haystack (ca. 1800).

Further Reading

Brigden, Roy. *Agricultural Hand Tools* (Shire Books: Princes Risborough, 1983; reprinted 2011)

Salaman, R. A. *Dictionary of Woodworking Tools c. 1700-1970 and tools of allied trades* (George Allen & Unwin Ltd, London, 1975)

Salaman, R. A. *Dictionary of Leatherworking Tools c. 1700-1970 and tools of allied trades* (George Allen & Unwin Ltd, London, 1975)

Note on the author

Chris Green was born in London in 1950. He is a social historian and amateur archaeologist. He has worked in museums since 1983 and served as Director St Albans Museums, 2001–2011. He was awarded the MERL Research Fellowship in 2014.

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Engaging with the living heritage of local breeds

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Abstract

Engaging with local or heritage breeds in their environment can enable their preservation and promotion, can show us how animals collaborate with humans in work, and provides a rich source of relevance for agriculture-related museums and living history sites. Keywords: museums, living history sites, heritage breeds, local breeds, agriculture, environment

Introduction

The AIMA lives in a connected world, moving easily from rural to urban, as does our congress host, The MERL, with its wealth of collections in an urban university setting. This connectedness stretches well beyond museums and living history sites to the many outreach activities museums can further. Engaging with local or heritage breeds in their environment can enable their preservation and promotion, can show us how animals collaborate with humans in work, and promotes the relevance of agriculture-related institutions.

Examples of past and current work

The AIMA is also deeply concerned by the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals which so many members strive to contribute to. It is SDG N°17, “partnerships for the goals”, that is highlighted here, because activities involving local animal breeds connect such varied actors and lead to so many of the other SDGs. For urban-based museums like The MERL, they must effectively show animal breeds without having them on-site. The MERL’s “absolute unit” stems from a delightful photograph of a prize-winning Exmoor Horn ram, highlighting the history of stockbreeding and enabling the Museum to provide a connection with the Exmoor Horn sheep breeders’ association.⁴

An urban setting does not hinder long-time AIMA member, the Slovene Ethnographic Museum (SEM) in downtown Ljubljana, from promoting stockbreeding through their role as the hub of intangible cultural heritage in the country.⁵ This includes cultural treasures from passion plays to the breeding and keeping of domestic animals. Slovenia was the driver behind founding World Bee Day, celebrated on 20 May in honour of the pioneering beekeeper Anton Janša. Among its ICH programs, the SEM is also responsible for applications to recognize the breeding of Lipizzaner horses and the system of Alpine high mountain pastures, an essential landscape to keeping Cika cattle, considered the only indigenous breed.

⁴ See ram in the modified image on the cover of this volume. For more information see: Ollie Douglas, *The history behind an absolute unit* <https://merl.reading.ac.uk/news-and-views/2018/04/history-behind-absolute-unit/>

⁵ <https://www.etno-muzej.si/sl/slovene-ethnographic-museum>

It is a lucky museum indeed that can combine a wealth of historic archives with cutting-edge comfort for the living animals hosted on-site, as does the Polish National Museum of Agriculture and Food Industry in Szreniawa near Poznań.⁶ Szreniawa is the first European institution, as far as I know, to hold a series of international conferences on live animals in museums with the goal of promotion and public education on the subject of native breeds.⁷ To touch on a single species, swine in Poland derive from three primitive native threads with breeding efforts becoming more concentrated in the early-twentieth century through input from Westphalian and English big whites that gave the Polish Pulawska black-and-whites, also crossbred from English Berkshires. By the 1920s and 1930s, the national swine stock had reached over 14 million and in the late-50s and early-60s, the Zlotnicka breed was fine-honed by Prof. Aleksandrowicz, so that there were indeed major specialized strains bred for bacon, fat and meat, and multi-purpose, each concentrated in different regions. We shall come back to this question of deep specialization in stockbreeding and its effects. Meanwhile, the resident animals have a lively social life in the Szreniawa social media and educational programs, from cattle through horses, sheep and goats, rabbits and fowl, about half of them native Polish breeds.⁸

When the Polish museum wanted to send their zootechnician team on a study tour, it was easy enough to find two host museums in Germany and one in France to share their expertise as well as introduce the team to the president of the French Society of Ethnozootecnics, an example of how to enrich a museum or living history site's connections with scientific researchers. The SEZ is among the world's premier learned societies specializing in human-animal relations and has carried on a decades-long effort to promote recognition of genetic diversity. A sign of the progress made can be seen in the title of a recent article in their journal—*"Preserving domestic biodiversity: from threatened species to species of the future"*.⁹

Even smaller museums can do big things. The Ecomusée of the Perche¹⁰ region in France has specialized in a festive event every year in mid-August for the world-famous Percheron horse breed that attracts owners and enthusiasts from all over Europe and beyond. The event has often been covered by the photojournalist Jean-Léo Dugast, a significant individual link, as he is a major historian of the Percheron breed¹¹ and regular contributing author to the magazine *Sabots*, a communication hub for working animal users.¹²

There are also good reasons for a museum *not* to utilize local breeds, as in the case of experimental archaeology at Lauresham Open-Air Laboratory in the UNESCO World Heritage site of Kloster Lorsch in Germany.¹³ Their work centres on an eighth- to ninth-century farming community neighbouring the monastery and they chose working oxen of the Rhaetian Grey

⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Museum_of_Agriculture_in_Szreniawa and <http://www.muzeum-szreniawa.pl/imuzeum/web/app.php/vortal/?q=en/node/153>

⁷ Urszula Nowakowska (ed.) *Living Animals in Museums' Activity* Szreniawa: National Museum of Agriculture and Food Industry, Szreniawa, Poland, 2013.

⁸ Personal communications from Hanna Ignatowicz and Julia Hanuliewicz 13 June 2021.

⁹ Bernard Denis, Pierre Quéméré. "Préserver la biodiversité domestique: des races en péril aux races en devenir" in *Ethnozootecnie* N°109, 2021, pp. 71-84.

¹⁰ <https://www.ecomuseeduperche.fr/>

¹¹ Jean-Léo Dugast *Le siècle d'or du cheval percheron, 1800-1900 Du Perche à l'Amérique*, Editions l'Etrave, 2019, 495 pp.

¹² <https://sabots-magazine.com/>

¹³ <https://kloster-lorsch.de/freilichtlabor>

breed, whose withers size corresponds to iconographic documentation of the period.¹⁴ This means their oxen's size determines the "fit" with reconstructed tillage implements, thus enabling analysis of how those tools worked with the animals and in the soil. The Lorsch farming team uses horse power, too, but the decidedly cuddly looks of the Rhaetians have made them stars in the Museum shop as stuffed animals, a take-home interface, so to speak.



Rhaetian Grey cattle with Claus Kropp (Photo A. Keil, Courtesy and © Lauresham)

A definitely unstuffed link to the environment near Lorsch is the back-breeding of Aurochs cattle that were still abundant and prized hunting trophies in medieval times. The experiment includes detailed analysis of the impact of large, free-roaming herbivores on their environment. Hence, the Lorsch site is involved in manifold projects, from public education to archaeological reconstruction and reconstituting skills, on to long-term investigation of the environmental impacts of animals that once roamed the periphery of agricultures.¹⁵

Moving on to North America, the historic site of Mount Vernon,¹⁶ first President George Washington's home and farming estate, provides an example of further partnerships, in this case between the museum and The Livestock Conservancy (TLC), a major actor in heritage breed promotion,¹⁷ that consults widely with museums and historic sites in the search for representatives of breeds that are as near authentic as possible. Jeannette Beranger of TLC went to Mount Vernon for the launch of the US Postal Service "Heritage Breed" stamps. Several of these breeds are already residents of Mount Vernon, including Milking Devons and

¹⁴ See Luttrell Psalter: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Luttrell_Psalter.pdf and Rätisches Grauvieh https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/R%C3%A4tisches_Grauvieh

¹⁵ See "Aurrind Projekt": <https://auerrind.wordpress.com/>

¹⁶ George Washington's *Mount Vernon*: <https://www.mountvernon.org/>

¹⁷ The Livestock Conservancy <https://livestockconservancy.org/>

Mammoth Jackstock donkeys. Jeannette adds a personal note on the occasion: *'I managed to get a picture of "George" [Washington by an enactor] and a Jackstock donkey, because he actually helped create this breed right at Mount Vernon';* and adds: *'I also took a Narragansett turkey with me to represent that breed for the stamp event. The staff fell in love with the turkey so much that they asked if they could keep him.'* So now they will have a new breeding flock there.



"George Washington with Jackstock mule" (Photo courtesy and © Jeannette Beranger)

When Jeannette was searching for original photos of the Bordelaise cattle breed, Denis Richard, director of the Ecomusée de Marquèze in the Landes de Gascogne region in France,¹⁸ was able to send her a professional photographer's work, including fly masks for the cattle and covid masks for the handlers, a striking convergence between tradition and current events. The Marquèze museum is trying out some very hands-on activity with animals. Their market gardener is using his 17-year-old mule and has bought two Bearnaise oxen, only 8 months old, to train and present to museum visitors. He also keeps Gascon chickens, which should thrill Jeannette, who has a special place in her heart for fowl, and is now invited to visit the Ecomusée at the first opportunity. Networks, after all, are only made of people, and people have their own attachments, which can motivate ever more contacts.

Remaining in France for the moment, I would like to step out of the "box" a bit and introduce you to a festival that represents a "living history for the future site" – the Fête de la Vache Nantaise that pops up every four years as a massive event for stock-breeding and alternative agricultures, organized totally by volunteers, most of whom are farmers. As we know, they

¹⁸ Ecomusée de Marquèze <https://www.marqueze.fr/>

have other fish to fry, but they do it anyway, they are so proud of it. In 2018, 60,000 people dropped in to visit the eighth festival, and with good reason. The Nantaise breed numbers stood at over 150,000 in 1949 and had crashed to some 50 animals by 1985, near extinction with only 3 bulls and 20 breeding cows left, when the flame was taken up by some very obstinate farmers. To show the complexity of the breeds question, the Nantaise was one of the offshoots of the Greater Poitevin Vendean cattle, along with 4 other breeds, all but 2 out of the 5 now rare or totally gone.¹⁹

A book dedicated to the Nantaise breed²⁰ has a chapter entitled: “*Cattle-breeders in search of meaning*”, which sums up what the whole event is about: promoting local breeds, as well as solidarity among farmers and their friends. The fête regularly hosts a guest breed from another French region, as the Basque swine in 2018. Animals are not just on display, they work every single day of the festival, demonstrating the latest in lightweight implements and harness aimed at small farming and market-gardening. Breeders’ associations like the Loire Region CRAPAL, long associated with the Nantaise Cattle Festival, advise farmers on their choices, promote local breeds and likewise consult regularly with museums and parks at all levels from regional to national.²¹

Let’s go back to the postal service—stamps mark minds (and collectors’ albums), even if only fingertip-size, so it is no surprise to see local breeds highlighted in French stamps, along with local landscapes, just like local cuisine with local products,²² as promoted by SLOW FOOD. Quite logically, the inventor of SLOW FOOD, Carlo Petrini, was the human guest of honour at the 2018 Nantaise Cattle Festival, thus valorising the whole chain of food production, from mountain pasture or golden plains to fine cuisine or wines on the table. This link with the environment should be quite clear by now in the examples, large and small, urban and rural, of agriculture-related museums and living history sites networking with other partners.

An outstanding example of this is the mainly German Working Cattle Group.²³ The members are always deeply attached to local breeds, often on the German Red List of endangered and heritage animals. The Working Group has two kinds of meetings: at the home farms of individual members, often associated with local museums, and in some of the large open-air museums in Germany.

One of these museums is located in the heart of the German capital, in a totally urban site in Berlin. This is the Dahlem Domain,²⁴ where the farm manager Astrid Masson is also the author of the German manual on using animals in museums.²⁵ Astrid’s animal co-workers are drawn from various farm species, often on the national Red List, since she is an active member of the German Rare Breeds Promotion Group.²⁶ In Dahlem, they keep two cattle breeds, including the Red Upland Cattle from mid-Germany.²⁷

¹⁹ https://www.histoiresordinares.fr/Entre-Laurent-et-la-vache-nantaise-une-histoire-de-coeur_a2256.html

²⁰ *La Nantaise, histoire et reconnaissance*, Castor & Pollux and Pas Bête La Fête, 2010, 131-134.

²¹ Personal communication 04/06/2021 Julien Grayo, CRAPAL <https://www.crapal.fr/>

²² For a masterful exposition of this relationship: environment, breeds, working animals, human know-how and cuisine, see Olivier Courthiade *Histoires de mules*, Editions Le Pas d’oiseau, 2021.

²³ Arbeitsgruppe Rinderanspannung has an English language section <https://www.zugrinder.de/en/>

²⁴ <http://www.domaene-dahlem.de/home/>

²⁵ *Handbuch Rinderanspannung*, Starke Pferde Verlag, 2015.

²⁶ The GEH (<https://www.g-e-h.de/>)

²⁷ Personal communication Astrid Masson, 21 February 2016

The Dahlem site gave the Working Group an opportunity to undertake a monumental task, all with a scientific basis: archaeozoologist Eva Rosenstock proposes the thesis that many European pre-historic monuments were a by-product of field clearance of glacial retreat debris.²⁸ The star of this event was Emma, the Red breed cow, whose assignment was to move a one-ton monolith. Emma had calved just ten days before and Astrid checked with the farm veterinarian that the mother could provide the animal power for an ambitious task including reconstruction of an appropriate sledge and rail system, using a handy erratic boulder on the Dahlem grounds, and the appropriate measuring devices. Emma carried this all off with aplomb and added to evidence that the use of cattle draft totally changes the larger picture of labour and time involved in early European monument-building.



Philippe Kuhlmann with his pair of Vosges oxen (Photo © Cozette Griffin-Kremer)

The German Working Group members' major destination for information on real-life ox-driving is the Ecomusée d'Alsace (EMA), for several reasons—it is near the border, many of the museum personnel and volunteers speak German, and there is the extensive Theatre of Agriculture, an ever-evolving program of real field, garden and vineyard agriculture that is a showcase of public education.²⁹ The EMA is the yearly venue for the French ox-drivers' group with the Museum's consultant expert, Philippe Kuhlmann, and his Vosges cattle breed. Philippe is among the very few, if perhaps the only breeder in France, whose herd is raised to be triple-purpose, meat-milk-draft, and he farms with no motorized equipment, though with mechanized implements, often of his own invention. As he likes to say, never buy a tractor and you will instantly have *a lot* of very good ideas. The cattle pictured here have the typical Vosges markings, though the red patches are characteristic of only 5% of the breed. The Vosges cattle at the EMA have a whole host of company, from horses to rabbits, although only part of the animals represent local heritage breeds.³⁰

²⁸ Eva Rosenstock, Astrid Masson, Bernd Zich. "Moraines, megaliths and moo: Putting the prehistoric tractor to work" in *Megaliths, Societies, Landscapes / Early Monumentality and Social Differentiation in Neolithic Europe*, Johannes Müller, Martin Hinz, Maria Wunderlich (eds.) 2019, Vol. 3, 1099-1111.

²⁹ Griffin-Kremer, C. "Back to the Future. Squaring folk life and cultural diversity at the Alsace Ecomuseum" in *Folk Life* 2020, Vol. 58, No.1, 57-66.

³⁰ Personal communication François Kiesler 30 April 2021.

The EMA would like to have some Sundgau goats, once common in southern Alsace, so I put them in touch with Astrid Masson in Berlin, and the answer from her colleague Karola Stier is clear and crisp:

*'If you do not have the original herd books, you will not see what they were aiming at. The generational interval in goats is so short that there may not be much left of the originally targeted genetics.'*³¹

So, the Alsatians may not find their goats in any officially certified form. This brings us back to the vital role that linkage with outside experts and other institutions can play, so we can go back to Jeannette Beranger of The Livestock Conservancy to look at a question the public rarely thinks about—money! Is it possible to estimate the value of an animal you admire during a visit to a museum, living history site, or preserve?

Leave it to an American judge. A visitor to the North Carolina Outer Banks wildlife preserve in the United States shot one of the wild horses there and was taken to court. After an expert investigation, the judge in charge of the case decided that the horse's individual value over a lifetime of service to local tourism—with 2,500,000 visitors per year to the islands—was between \$15 and \$17 million (or €14 and €15 million).³²

Jeannette is a member of the Association for Living History, Farming and Agriculture Museums (ALHFAM),³³ AIMA's most vital working partner. During the ALHFAM conference in June 2021, veterinarian Barbara Corson discussed domestic breeds' conformation and the enormous genetic plasticity involved when animals are selected for specific traits without fore-knowledge of knock-on effects. For example, today's industrialized dairy milking operations have made cows' udders so heavy that they cannot walk properly and their teats face backwards, selected to make machine attachment instantaneous. Similarly, pigs bred solely for bacon can die from "porcine malignant hyperthermia" due to altered muscle metabolism.³⁴ These are just two of many points that museums or living history sites could bring up in education programmes or visitor engagement.

Brief conclusions

These people and places are valued nodes in the AIMA's web of connections that tell us so much about the importance of local breeds, seen as an integral part of their environment within broader sustainable development goals, or about the search for meaning among farmers and stockbreeders. Such subjects help inform the public attracted by agriculture-related museums or living history sites, where animals can truly be co-workers. Among many approaches to helping institutions thrive and promote their relevance, dealing with rare, local and heritage breeds is one of the most fruitful and the people, museums and networks you have just met, if briefly, help prove it.

³¹ Personal communication Karola Stier through Astrid Masson 26 May 2021.

³² Personal communication Jeannette Beranger, December 2015

³³ ALHFAM <https://alhfam.org/>

³⁴ Personal communication Barbara Corson, 14 June 2021

Acknowledgments

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Note on the author

Cozette Griffin-Kremer is an Associate Researcher at CRBC/Brest. As well as a longstanding officer and member of the Executive Committee of AIMA, she is also an active member of AFMA, ALHFAM, EXARC, FEMS, and SFLS.

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The AIMA: A transnational history of agriculture museums in twentieth-century Europe

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Abstract

This short paper is a summary of my attempt to map the emergence and development of agriculture museums in twentieth-century Europe. This is done by focusing on the history of the AIMA and contextualising its establishment and precedents within the changing circumstances of mid-twentieth-century Europe. This research is based on the analysis of academic and institutional publications created by different national and transnational actors within the agriculture museum milieu throughout the mid-twentieth century. Through these documentary sources, one can follow the main debates and trends that shaped museum theory and practice in the period under consideration. Particular attention is devoted to understanding how personal ambitions and political constraints shaped the creation of transnational networks of museum professionals across the geopolitical divides of Cold War Europe.

This contribution summarises some of the findings of my MA dissertation and it is there that one can find a more detailed analysis of the documentary sources mentioned here.³⁵ Moreover, it is worth adding that this is ongoing research that will eventually be published in an extended form elsewhere.

Even a preliminary approach to the historiography on agriculture museums is enough to confirm its dispersed and fragmentary character. Most works can be described as institutional histories of individual museums or, more rarely, as having a very clear national focus. Furthermore, in the European context, the exploration of this topic is further constrained by the many different national languages in which both documentary sources and historiographical works have been produced. The existence of this language barrier pushed me to adopt a transnational approach, focusing on the creation of an international non-governmental organisation, such as the *Association Internationale des Musées d'Agriculture* (AIMA), instead of delving into a comparative history of specific individuals or institutions. Consequently, the focus became the movement of museum professionals, ideas, and practices across borders; a particularly interesting phenomenon at a time of heightened tension between the Western and Eastern Blocs. This allowed for the study of a professional network stretching across the Iron Curtain, including constraints occasioned by its transnational status. The AIMA presents itself as an ideal case study for the examination of the transnational history of agriculture museums, with special attention to the establishment

³⁵ João P. R. Joaquim, 'Museums and Agriculture in Cold War Europe: The Establishment of the Association Internationale des Musées d'Agriculture' (MA, Charles University, 2020), <https://dspace.cuni.cz/handle/20.500.11956/118818>.

of knowledge networks, the role of experts, the transfer of theories and concepts and the emergence of common policy issues.

Founded in 1966 in Czechoslovakia, the AIMA started in that same year to organise international congresses, which were alternately held in Western and Eastern Bloc countries, every two or three years. These international congresses attracted a multitude of experts: ethnographers, historians, geographers, agricultural scientists, and museum professionals. Through the study of the proceedings of these congresses, the *Acta Museorum Agriculturae* (AMA), published between 1966 and 1989, one can access an important narrative source of the ideas, plans and ambitions of museum professionals and historians of agriculture throughout several decades. My research was also based on publications by international organisations concerned wholly or partially with these institutions, such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the International Council of Museums (ICOM).³⁶

As in other kinds of museums, the origins of agriculture museums can be partially found in late-nineteenth-century international exhibitions. Among the many institutions with origins in international exhibitions were two that were especially influential: the Skansen Open-Air Museum in Stockholm, a folklore museum, and the Hungarian Agricultural Museum in Budapest, a national museum with a markedly technical character, both founded in the 1890s. These were pioneer institutions, which acted as role-models for later initiatives around Europe and beyond. This bipolar ancestry foreshadows an interesting trend: in states where agricultural modernisation and urbanisation advanced at a faster pace agriculture museums were often retrospective in its content and closely associated with ethnographic and folklore collections, such was the case in Scandinavia and some other countries in Western Europe. Central European states, many of them newly independent after the First World War, saw things differently and modern rather than traditional agriculture was underscored.

Among the latter institutions was the Czechoslovak Museum of Agriculture, which took shape immediately after the independence of the state in 1918 and was partially based on the example of its Hungarian counterpart. The positivist spirit of its curators and directors meant that its exhibitions were not considered as ethnographic nostalgic displays of artefacts but as a practical educational tool to be used in the technical development of a newly independent state. Significantly, agrarianism was a leading political ideology in inter-war Czechoslovakia and it was there that, in 1927, was created the "Green International," a league of European agrarian parties. It is thus unsurprising that, also following a long tradition of expert conferences and societies dating back to the previous century, Czechoslovak museum professionals started in the 1930s flouting the idea of creating an international organisation of agricultural museums, promoting the first survey of this kind of institutions. Nevertheless, the project was postponed *sine die* by the Second World War, when several Central and Eastern European museums of agriculture were destroyed, damaged, or dispersed.

³⁶ While *AMA* volumes can be difficult to locate, their indexes have been compiled on AIMA's website <https://www.agriculturalmuseums.org/proceedings-of-the-aima-congress/> [accessed 30/11/2021]. Concerning ICOM publications see, for example, *Museum International* and *ICOM News*, both created in 1948.

Albeit occasionally interrupted by political vicissitudes, throughout the 1950s increasing contacts between agricultural museums allowed for the organisation of conferences, meetings and field visits involving the staff of different institutions around Central and Northern Europe. This was made possible by the common interest of museums of agricultural technology and open-air museums in the history and cataloguing of agricultural implements, a subject that united ethnologists, agricultural engineers, and historians. Not coincidentally, this surge of interest in farm equipment and tools arose at a time when modern agricultural implements definitively displaced traditional techniques throughout post-war Europe.³⁷

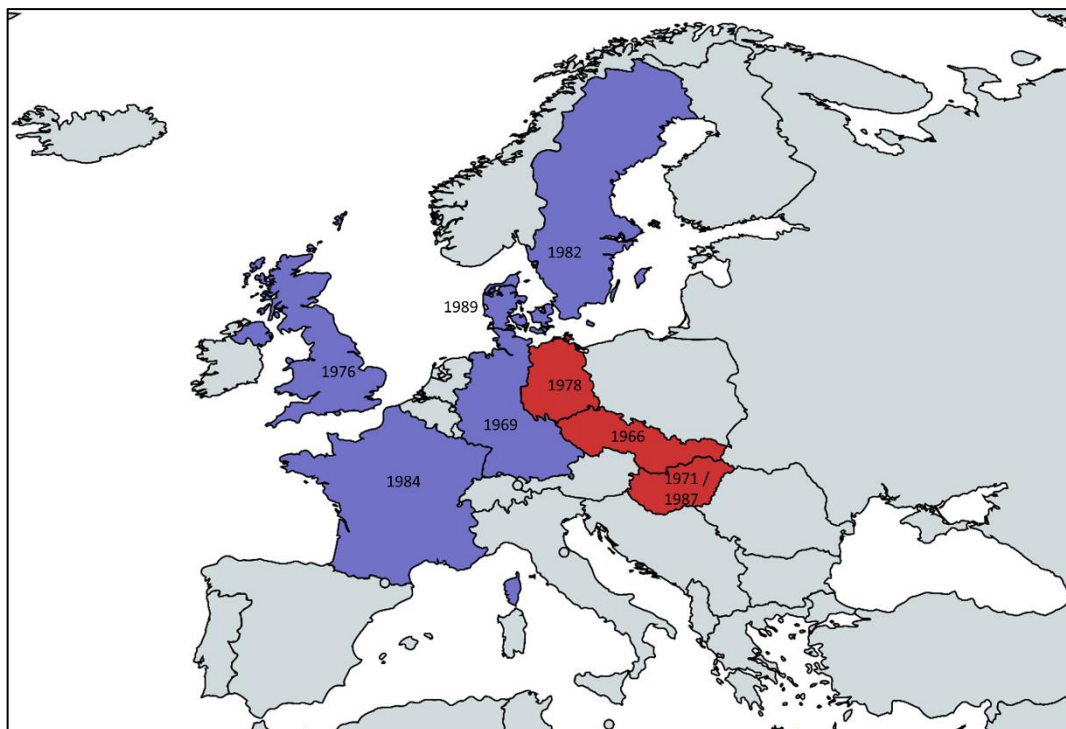
The creation of the AIMA resulted from the cooperation between the Czechoslovak and the Hungarian museums of agriculture, the latter, considered as one of the oldest and most comprehensive in the World, gave considerable credibility to the project. Zdenek Tempír, director of the Czechoslovak museum and one of the founders of the AIMA, chronicled its creation as a continuation of the museum's inter-war project and a triumph of international cooperation at a time of political division. However, Ted Collins, who attended many of the early congresses, as a representative of the Museum of English Rural Life, remarked that possible divisive topics, like socialist agriculture or farm collectivisation, were mostly absent from the congresses. Collins further noted that disagreements between Western and Eastern delegations sometimes occurred, particularly in what concerned the administration of the association.³⁸

The statutes of the AIMA were jointly written by the staff of the Czechoslovak museum, and Günther Franz, director of Hohenheim University's Institute of Agricultural History, in West Germany. A mix of political constraints and personal ambition appears to have led to the need for a strict balancing of the influence of Western and Eastern Bloc institutions inside of the association. This seems to have been an essential element, particularly in the case of Eastern Bloc institutions, in securing both authorisation and funding to the initiatives planned by the newly created AIMA. Interestingly enough, Soviet representations to the congresses were small and unremarkable and Russian, despite being jointly with English, French, and German one of the official languages of the organisation, was hardly ever used during the congresses. Based on coeval examples, this can be attributed to the reluctance of the Soviet state apparatus in allowing the access of its museum professionals to academic events taking place in the Western Bloc. This situation was something that distressed Tempír and other Eastern Bloc professionals who strove in the early years of the association to maintain a strict balance between both sides of the geopolitical divide.

³⁷ A product of this network was the creation in 1968 of the, now defunct, *Tools & Tillage: A Journal on the History of the Implements of Cultivation and Other Agricultural Processes*, which can be accessed at AIMA's website: <https://www.agriculturalmuseums.org/tools-tillage/> [accessed 30/11/2021].

³⁸ Zdeněk Tempír, 'Establishment and Initial Development of International Association of Agricultural Museums', *Acta Museorum Agricultrae* xxii (2001 1989): 111-14; E. J. T. Collins, 'The History of AIMA: A Personal Perspective by Ted (E.J.T.) Collins', *AIMA Occasional Paper*, May 2016, 1-6. Both articles can be found at <https://www.agriculturalmuseums.org/the-history-of-aima/> [accessed 30/11/2021].

An important way through which Tempír and his colleagues could legitimise AIMA's role as a transnational organisation was by establishing ties with the ICOM, which had been founded in 1946 under the aegis of UNESCO. This was the most important supranational network of museums of the period, promoting internationalist ideals and encouraging knowledge exchange within thematically specialised committees. It is in this context that AIMA's founders deliberately chose to structure the association as an independent organisation affiliated with ICOM but not as an ICOM committee. While the former allowed the AIMA to remain an organisation led by institutions, the latter would have forced its division into national groups. As an independent organisation, the AIMA maximised opportunities for Eastern Bloc museum professionals to take part in international meetings where they would have otherwise been replaced by government officials.



This map indicates the countries in which AIMA congresses were organised between 1966 and 1989.

Eastern Bloc museum professionals had thus successfully created a transnational network over which they kept a reasonable level of control, providing them access to publications, travel opportunities, and an international cache of respectability that could even be mobilised in the context of negotiations with state apparatuses. Knowing this, it is easily understandable why Eastern European national museums of agriculture with a strong technical emphasis remained one of the main components of the association up to the fall of the Berlin Wall. This did not discourage Scandinavian and Western European ethnology or open-air museums from taking part in the association, but conflicting perspectives on museum work, as well as occasional political constraints, led to the creation of Western Bloc-based competing organisations focused specifically on these kinds of institutions.³⁹

³⁹ On the history of one of these competing organisations see J. Carstensen and K. Frost, eds., *Creating Museums – 50 Years Association of European Open-Air Museums* (Münster / New York: Waxmann, 2016).

The 1970s and 1980s brought a widening of AIMA's membership base, attracting North American, African and Asian institutions, as well as changes to the thematic focuses of the congresses, with environmental concerns being increasingly more present. However, the political changes of the late 1980s and early 1990s in Central and Eastern Europe appear to have been the real turning point for the AIMA: the Czechoslovak Museum of Agriculture could no longer afford to have the *Acta Museorum Agriculturae* printed and, struggling financially, many of AIMA's founding institutions distanced themselves from the organisation. Thus, the AIMA, which had been imagined in a geopolitical context that was no more, was open to being reshaped by new institutional actors.

Note on the author

At the time of writing, João P. R. Joaquim was a PhD candidate in the Department of History and Philosophy of Science at the University of Cambridge (UK) focusing on the history of plant virus research in mid-twentieth-century Britain. Previously, he researched the history of agricultural science in the Portuguese context. Also with a focus on the mid-twentieth century, this work noted the conflicting influences that shaped the creation of the main national agricultural research centre of that period. On a slightly different note, he has also been interested in the transnational history of Cold War-era agriculture museums, which was the subject of his MA dissertation, completed at Charles University (Czech Republic) in 2020.

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Deeper furrows: agricultural history, practice, relevance

Debra A. Reid, Curator of Agriculture and the Environment, The Henry Ford, USA

Abstract

In this paper, Debra Reid asks the question ‘are living history farms and agricultural museums an obsolete model or the best approach to teaching sustainability?’ The original presentation formed part of a roundtable session, “Climate, Environment, Sustainability,” chaired by Surajit Sarkar (Coordinator, Centre for Community Knowledge, Ambedkar University, Delhi, India). Two further presenters shared their perspectives alongside Reid, including Cameron Archer (Agricultural and Environmental Historian, Australia), and David M. Simmons (Executive Director, Billings Farm Museum, Billings, Vermont, USA). Reid first presented on this topic during the June 2021 conference of the Association for Living History, Farms and Agricultural Museums (ALHFAM). The following work therefore appeared in a slightly different form in the ALHFAM 2021 Conference Proceedings.

What is sustainability?

Some say the term “sustainability” is overused and has no meaning, sort of like the term “efficiency.” What does it mean? The explanation needs the details to have meaning.

For those pursuing institutional sustainability, sustainability focuses on resources and practices needed to ensure the continuation of the institution and its ability to pivot as needed. For those pursuing environmental sustainability, sustainability focuses on resources and practices needed to stop degradation and ensure continuation.

Sustainability does not mean maintaining the status quo. Instead, institutional sustainability often involves growth—increasing endowments, increasing wages to retain talent, delivering new exhibitions and programs. Concomitantly, environmental sustainability involves innovation—benchmarking current practices, including energy consumption and waste quantity and greenhouse gas emissions [i.e., emissions from sources within our institutions and that we control (Scope 1), from energy, supplies, etc., produced outside but consumed within our institutions (Scope 2), and from consumption of our offerings (Scope 3)]. It involves reducing consumption and rethinking practices that move beyond reusing and recycling, and it requires taking proactive action and adopting regenerative practices that result in a Net Positive (not just Net Zero) environmental footprint.

This requires institutional dedication, financial investment, a knowledgeable and committed staff, and vision.

The title, “Deeper Furrows,” reminds me of the disconnect between what may seem like an improvement but is not. It is not good practice to plough deeper than needed. Instead, I link “deeper” to “rethinking” with the end goal of regenerative practice. Take, for example, the shift from the 3-Rs (reduce, reuse, recycle) to 5-Rs (refuse, reduce, reuse, repurpose, recycle). Instead of recycling as an end goal, it is more important to rethink all materials management: refuse single-use plastics, reduce consumption, reuse all materials (preservation is a green practice!), repurpose materials as often as possible, and recycle the few items that can be remade (aluminum, glass and simple plastics).

Agriculture: Past carbon footprint

Agricultural history remains essential as it documents human decisions and farming practices that resulted in environmental degradation and that were not necessarily organic. The formation of the Club of Rome in 1968 led to a global project to measure the “Predicament of Mankind.” Agricultural production was one of the five factors assessed and first explained in *The Limits to Growth* (1972). A 1987 symposium, that involved scholars from six continents and 20 disciplines, focused on measuring human-induced change on the planet. The book, *The Earth as Transformed by Human Action* (1990), compiled insights shared by scientists and humanists. It confirmed that human alterations rivaled or exceeded the magnitude of natural processes, that agriculture combined with industry degraded the environment, and that quantifying the magnitude of these past actions proved challenging. Quantifying humanities remains a daunting task, but researchers persevere because so much is at stake.

Agricultural museums, their collections, and their staff knowledge and skills become a basis for exploring past human action and beginning to quantify human action. When approached as experimental archaeology, the results increase our understanding of how things were done but also what it took to get things done on family farms (the type of operation most often preserved in living history farms). This evidence can be the basis for confirming past carbon footprints.

Was historic agriculture sustainable?

The combination of historic evidence and hands-on knowledge and skills can help us start to answer this question, but it requires more work and systematic data collection to answer at any site, and in any definitive way.

Is agriculture as practiced today sustainable?

Many argue that dependence on fossil fuels and synthetic chemicals since the Second World War make agriculture non-sustainable. The trend toward non-sustainability began before the Second World War. Agriculture is and always has been an extractive industry. Growing crops removes nutrients from the soil. Sustaining production requires “inputs.” Livestock manure replenished farm fields historically (and still does today). Other organic fertilizers in the form

of bat and bird guano became indispensable during the second half of the nineteenth century and international trade distributed that resource across the globe. Eradicating pests to protect plants and livestock motivated chemists to devise potent chemical compounds during the early twentieth century. Solving these challenges requires more than eliminating inorganic compounds and fossil fuels and confinement of livestock and poultry operations from agricultural operations. What will replace them?

What incentives might lure people back to the land and to the physically taxing and financially risky business of farming?

Those who call for regenerative agriculture often stress organic production and draught animals as power sources. Organic producers refuse fossil fuels and inorganic compounds. They reduce carbon emissions by doing so (even as debates about livestock as the source of greenhouse gas emissions escalate). They adopt integrated cultural practices to fertilize their fields (using animal manure), treat pests (integrated pest management), and maintain farmland (eliminating overgrazing and practicing companion planting). They commit to draught animals as renewable energy sources, and adopt specially-designed mechanical solutions to reduce fossil-fuel consumption. This represents one well-established response to regenerative, née sustainable, agricultural practices.

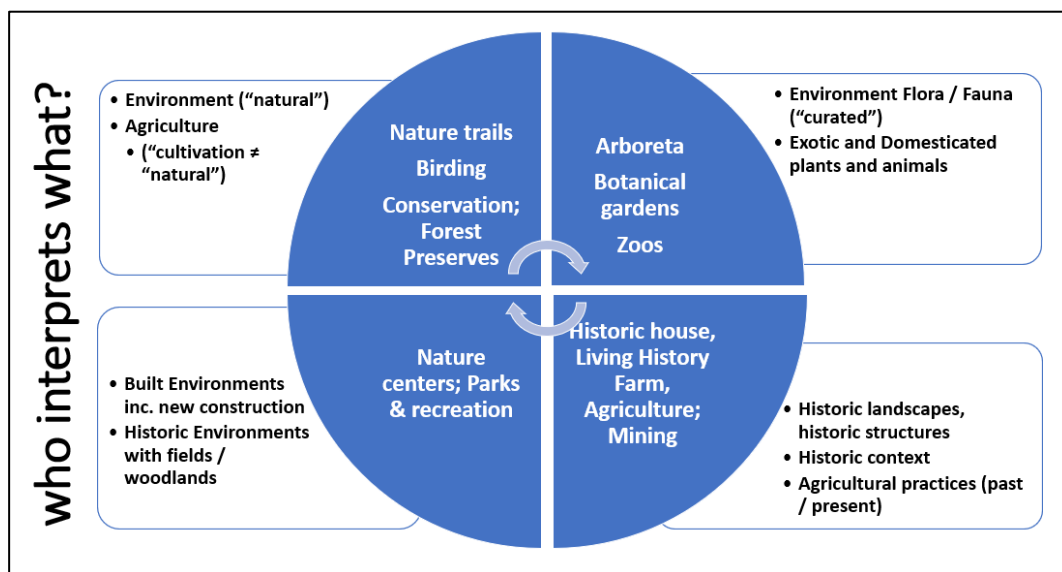


Table 1. Prepared by Debra A. Reid, 2019, revised 2021.

Living history farms and agricultural museums are one of many cultural institutions that can interpret this complexity (Table 1).

What role does material culture play in this process?

Every historic artefact becomes a resource to document human actions on the environment. This can open numerous lines of inquiry. For example, a 1916 Avery Company trade catalog featured tractors and steam engines at work (Fig. 1). Branch offices extended the company's reach from its headquarters in Peoria, Illinois, into other Midwestern tallgrass Prairie states.

Humans used these machines (and others like them) to turn the tall-grass prairie into arable land. Staple crops grown on these lands funneled into processing mills and came out as packaged foods that satisfied the need for inexpensive and homogenous foodstuffs and synthesized by-products. This combination of agriculture and industry exacerbated environmental degradation.



Fig. 1. Avery Company Trade Catalog, cover, 1916, "Avery Tractors, Plows, Separators and Steam Engines." From the Collections of The Henry Ford / [THF284059](#)

Each machine illustrated in the catalogue, each farm family that owned one, each acre transformed by them becomes part of the story of agriculture and environmental change. Each of those stories becomes the basis for discussing climate change and its consequences.

The systematic destruction of the environment during the late 1800s and early 1900s came at the highest cost to indigenous people and the *Bison bison* on which Plains cultures depended. Coal-burning steam engines facilitated this transformation. With destruction of the contiguous prairie and its indigenous occupants, then extractive agriculture took a heavy toll on land, topsoil, water flow, flora and fauna, and the entire biosphere. Climate degradation escalated at a pace that puts human survival at risk today, but indigenous cultures were all but obliterated over the centuries because of these historic actions.

The destruction of the plains often receives most attention given the consequence of that destruction to the catastrophe of the Dust Bowl during the 1930s. The obliteration of Midwestern wetlands and their transformation into the corn belt warrants comparable scrutiny for the cumulative effect relative to the current climate crisis.

Engagement with agricultural history as a regenerative act

Interpreting this complexity involves RETHINKING agricultural history, and engaging the public in the process.

Two publications can help with this—*Interpreting Agriculture in Museums and Historic Sites* and *Interpreting the Environment at Museums and Historic Sites*.⁴⁰ The second of these argues that artefacts can document human actions driven by seven goals (Creating Working Environments, Getting Water, Generating/Harnessing Power, Growing Food, Traveling and Trading, Building Things, and Preserving and Conserving Natural Landscapes) (Fig. 2).



Fig. 2. Screenshot from Reid's AIMA 2021 presentation emphasizing the connection between museum assets (artefacts, landscapes, etc.) and human actions with environmental impacts.

My attempts to rethink agricultural history as a participatory experience that engages environmental issues became more urgent when The Henry Ford (THF) became more mindful about sustainability, broadly defined. It started during 2019 with the formation of a committee responsible for two huge goals—diversity, equity, access, and inclusion (DEIA) as well as green museum practice. Administrators separated the institutional culture component (DEIA) from the environmental sustainability effort (the “Green Team”). The charge to the Green Team coincided with the onset of COVID-19 (March 2020). The shift in daily work routines, and adoption of virtual meetings as normal procedure made it possible for a core team of seven to draft a “Green” philosophy and justify institutional investment in the work. The THF’s president formally launched the Green Team and its responsibility for “green” strategic planning in May 2021.

As the Green Team fledged, THF’s Institutional Advancement director launched a new donor society in June 2020. Its immediate goal focused on fundraising needed to reconstruct a historic market shed in THF’s Greenfield Village. THF’s president expanded this work in January 2021, linking the new Carver-Carson Society and its support for deeper exploration of agriculture and environment topics with a new “Edible Education” initiative. The effort takes inspiration from Alice Waters, a slow-food advocate who coined the term, “edible education,” but historical resources at THF address all links in the food chain, past, present, and future.

⁴⁰ Debra A. Reid, *Interpreting Agriculture in Museums and Historic Sites* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017); and Debra A Reid and David D. Vail, *Interpreting the Environment at Museums and Historic Sites* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2019).

Furthermore, THF has incredible reach, with 1.8 million guests and millions of virtual users annually.

I co-chaired both the “Green Team” and the “Edible Education” initiatives during 2021. The teams thrived because four individuals (including me) were assigned to both of the two distinct but mutually dependent efforts. Both continue, and both relate directly to larger institutional goals associated with the “Journey to 100” strategic plan (The Henry Ford will be 100 years old in October 2029).

Agriculture: One example of rethinking

THF’s Greenfield Village includes a living history farm (Fig. 3).

Firestone Farm, the birthplace of tire magnate Harvey Firestone, interprets a three-generation family farm as it operated in northeastern Ohio during the mid-1880s. Peter Cousins, THF’s curator of agriculture (1969-1995), managed the Firestone Farm installation project between 1983 and 1985. He laid out the interpretive framework in his essay, “Tall Timber, Wheat, and Wrinkly Sheep.”⁴¹



Fig. 3. Kitchen garden, Firestone Farm, July 2020 (Image courtesy and © Debra A. Reid).

Firestone Farm’s “origin tale” goes like this:

This Ohio farm began when Nicholas Firestone and his wife, Elizabeth Shane, and their five children laid claim to Section 1 of Township 12 in Range Two of Columbiana County, Ohio, in November 1801. Nicholas received title to the 640 acres in September 1804. They built the farm into a sizeable operation and willed it in equal portions to their children. Peter Firestone married Elizabeth Bricker in 1818, daughter of the Firestones’ neighbor, Andrew

⁴¹ Peter Cousins, “Tall Timber, Wheat, and Wrinkly Sheep,” *Henry Ford Museum & Greenfield Village Herald* 14, no. 2 (1985): 3-27.

Brinker. She inherited her 215-acre share of her father's 1,500-acre estate in 1828. Peter and Elizabeth Brinker Firestone built a substantial new brick house and a large barn thereafter. This practice of dividing farm acreage equally between children, a practice known as partible inheritance, changed by the fourth generation because farms were too small to be divided.⁴² By 1868, the year of Harvey Firestone's birth, the family farm consisted of 118 acres, just a few acres more than the county average. Harvey described it as "no better and no worse than the surrounding farms."⁴³

Most land histories at living history farms start with a similar origin tale. Rethinking this approach, however, can introduce the topic of environmental justice by acknowledging those who occupied the land before arrival of the Firestones.

Columbiana County, Ohio: The land acquired by Nicholas and Elizabeth Shane Firestone was likely traversed by prehistoric Mound Builders.

Historic Indian nations in the area included the Wyandot, Mingoe, and Delaware. Iroquois ceded their lands at Ft. Stanwix in 1784, and the Wyandot, Delaware, Chippewa, and Ottawa ceded their claims in 1785.

Relocation of the structures from Ohio to Greenfield Village at The Henry Ford, Dearborn, Michigan, adds another layer of land acknowledgement.

In 1983, the structures were removed from Columbiana County, Ohio, and installed on land in Dearborn, Michigan, land originally occupied by Anishinabewaki (Ojibwe), Bodéwadmiakiwen (Potawatomi), Meškwahki-aša-hina (Fox), Myaamia (Miami), and Peoria people.

Environmental sustainability: Regenerative aspirations

Living history farms and agricultural museums can benefit from rethinking their operations in keeping with Green Museum practice. Two how-to books exist: *The Green Museum* and *Environmental Sustainability at Historic Sites and Museums*.⁴⁴ This is a multi-step and long-term process that benefits from a team assigned to the work, and with authority to implement and deadlines to accomplish short-term, intermediate, and long-term goals. Feedback loops ensure opportunities to review goals, refine them as work progresses, and engage with expanding communities throughout the process.

The authors of *The Green Museum: A Primer on Environmental Practice* (2008) explain that adopting environmentally responsible practices, aka going green, "is becoming mainstream because of its importance, not its fashion."⁴⁵ Going green supports the mission of all museums by ensuring a more stable environment for collections, and a healthier environment for staff and guests. It saves money by reducing energy consumption which affects the bottom line. Managing waste costs money, no doubt about it, but managing waste

⁴² Ibid., 13.

⁴³ Ibid., 20.

⁴⁴ Sarah S. Brophy and Elizabeth Wylie, *The Green Museum: A Primer on Environmental Practice*, 2nd ed. (Lanham, Maryland: AltaMira Press, 2008. Rowman & Littlefield, 2013); and Sarah Sutton, *Environmental Sustainability at Historic Sites and Museums* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015).

⁴⁵ Brophy and Wylie, *The Green Museum*, 2.

and other green practices can have many benefits in a triple-bottom-line business model. Going green increases value through public engagement, and it contributes to the collective required to reverse global warming and slow climate change.

Green museum work starts with establishment of a Green Team, affirmed by directors or the chief operating officer and confirmed by the board of directors. It requires investment at all levels as evidence of institutional commitment to the cause.

This Green Team may start with documenting waste loads and energy use. It then uses these statistics to benchmark past and current waste generation and energy use. With that, the Green Team can plan to reduce both and ultimately to return energy to the grid through renewable means (geo-thermal as well as solar and wind as possible). The latter is regenerative work.

The Henry Ford's Green Team (originally called the Environmental Focus Group) resulted from an effort to document the institution's responsibility for the environment. Specifically, the team addressed how to reduce THF's carbon footprint, reuse things when possible, and recycle both waste and energy. Committee members documented green actions in place as well as waste loads and energy use. This data helped establish a baseline against which THF's Green Team will measure the success of its efforts to reduce its waste load, energy consumption and carbon footprint. The Green Team communicates its work to staff regularly in the weekly employee newsletter (distributed electronically, which has its own carbon footprint, but a different footprint than the 90,000 pieces of paper that going digital saved in 2020).

This barely scratches the surface of work within The Henry Ford to implement regenerative action. It hopefully inspires more than overwhelms, but the need is great, and the urgency is real.

Conclusion

In conclusion, agricultural museums can contribute in unique ways to the ultimate goal of sustainable or regenerative work. That ultimate goal involves modeling new behavior that will inform guests in ways that lead to transformative and systemic change that can save the planet.

Specifically, agricultural museums and living history farms provide guests their only access to historic and current agricultural practices. This access can engage guests directly in learning about carbon footprints (greenhouse gas emissions and natural and superhuman efforts to reduce the negative consequences of those emissions). Guests can learn about many meanings of regenerative agriculture as well as criticisms of regenerative approaches. Guest can learn about carbon sinks, the role of plants, natural and cultivated, and the criticism of the trend toward agricultural landscapes as "offsetting" carbon emissions. Guests can learn much more about a hot history topic at the moment, animal history, through living collections in agricultural museums and living history farms. This can become a launchpad for increased engagement with historic animal husbandry practices, engagement that can help the public compare free-range and confinement operations relative to greenhouse gas emissions. This

will add perspective to current trends that favour synthetic protein as a meat substitute, i.e., Impossible Food, Inc. Ultimately, agricultural museums and living history farms seem to be the perfect think-tank for the public to envision a future sustainable agricultural system that can meet needs for food, fuel, clothing, and shelter.

All of this increases the public's futures literacy specific to agriculture.

This is important work that becomes more urgent with each second that passes.

Further Reading

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Note on the author

Professor Debra A. Reid is Curator of Agriculture and the Environment at The Henry Ford where she is dedicated to "rethinking" and "regenerative action."

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Postscript: Presentation to Prague conference

Ollie Douglas, President of AIMA / Curator of MERL Collections, Museum of English Rural Life, University of Reading, UK

It is a great pleasure to be here with you today, albeit only in digital form. It is especially nice to be joining you in Prague. As some of you may already know, the organization that I am here to represent, the International Association of Agricultural Museums, was formed in Prague in 1966, 55 years ago this year. This year also marks the seventieth anniversary of my own institution, the Museum of English Rural Life in Reading, UK. Of course, our topic here in this morning's session is not so much a question of the past but one of contemporary themes, trends, movements, and ideas. So, while I am introducing things here with reference to these key dates in our own institutional histories, we must see and think about the relevance of this heritage to the challenges and opportunities we face now.

Since 2017 and the eighteenth congress of the AIMA held in Estonia, it has been my pleasure and privilege to serve as President of this organisation. This has been an extremely complex time for many of us, not least because of the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic, the impact of which has reshaped all that we do and will be felt for many years to come. Setting this world changing event to one side for a moment, it has also been a time of extraordinary change in museums across the globe. It is a period that would prove hard to characterize, with the emergence of complex discussions concerning environmental responsibility, food security, migration and movement, colonial legacies, global trade, corporate responsibilities, far-reaching global campaigns such as 'Hashtag Me Too' and 'Black Lives Matter', and debates concerning social justice and traditional museology. There has also been extensive discussion within our affiliate organization ICOM about the very role and definition of museums.

It would be hard for me to summarize in a few short words the diverse ways that these many challenges and conversations have been experienced by individual members of the agricultural museums community, or the ways in which they have influenced or impacted on the planning and activity of institutional members. It is not the place of my organization, the AIMA, to determine how you or your organizations should respond to these debates. However, as we gathered (albeit virtually) for our nineteenth international Congress, 'AIMA 2021', which was hosted in July by the Museum of English Rural Life, we gave much thought to questions pertinent to the theme of 'Past and Future Agricultures'. This proved a timely and helpful moment to reflect on the fact that many of these issues will play a significant and expansive part in our ongoing work. They have helped shape conversations over the last four years and will no doubt continue to shape our work as we move forward.

Against this complex backdrop, AIMA has sought to modernize and streamline its work, to grow its capacity to respond to change, and to develop and enhance its future plans. This work has included focused improvements to communications, digital presence, programmes, and content. The preferences of our membership were gathered and analysed by survey. We have drawn together new Scientific and Advisory Committees to cement scholarly

opportunities and maintain the well-respected history of our Association. We have also worked tirelessly to grow our community, investing enormous effort in developing a stronger online presence, improving our website, adding rich new content, and delivering web-based membership events for the first time. If you are active on social media you might want to follow us on Twitter using the handle [@agrimuseums](https://twitter.com/agrimuseums).⁴⁶ If you are YouTube user you will find a growing bank of content from AIMA digital symposia and events on our YouTube site. The keynotes sessions from AIMA 2021 are already there and the wider content is set to follow.

As my immediate colleagues and planned and prepared our most recent virtual Congress, we were extremely disappointed not to be able to welcome our fellow members in person to the UK, just as I am disappointed to not be able to join you in person today. I have been lucky enough to travel and meet with many AIMA colleagues over the years, in Scotland, France, Slovenia, Estonia, and India. It is therefore with hope that I look forward to more interaction and contact with members of the world's agricultural heritage community, both online and in-person, at future events like your wonderful gathering this week. I am also very excited about the 20th Congress of the AIMA, which subject to the confirmation of a vote at our forthcoming Mixed General Assembly in December will hopefully be held in a blended form – both online and onsite – in New Delhi, India, in 2023.

In a final nod to our organizational past, AIMA last visited my own institution, the University of Reading, in 1976, a year that was characterized by devastating drought and terrible harvest, but also by amazingly fruitful AIMA discussions by a dedicated cohort of agricultural heritage peers. As we gathered in a digital way this July under the auspices of those same institutions some 45 years on, we did so in the wake of disastrous periods of drought and flooding, which had played havoc with UK farming throughout 2020. As you gather in Prague today and many of our contemporaries gather in Glasgow for COP26 to discuss the enormity of climate concerns now facing the world, I can only hope that we do what we can to rise collectively to meet the period of extraordinary agricultural and climate challenge we are facing with a similar flourishing of debate within our brilliant community. Let us also hope that we continue to share ideas, knowledge, skills, food, and the amazing experience of international partnership and friendship that your conference and our AIMA membership represents.

We're now going to play a short promotional video made in the run up to a virtual Symposium we ran in 2020, which offers some more information about the AIMA and what membership offers. If you are not yet an AIMA member and are keen to join do please visit our website or get in touch with us. This video was produced by our German colleague Claus Kropp, who is soon to take over as President of AIMA, so it seems only right that he should also be speaking to you today.

Note on the context of the presentation

This short presentation was delivered in a virtual format to delegates participating in the conference 'Museum as a Tool for Presentation of Rural Life, Agriculture and Forestry', which was held at The National Museum of Agriculture, Prague, Czech Republic, on 4 November 2021.

⁴⁶ At the time of delivery the AIMA Twitter handle was actually @MuseumsAIMA but this was subsequently changed.

Join the conversation [@agrimuseums](https://www.instagram.com/agrimuseums)
<https://www.agriculturalmuseums.org/>
#AIMA2021 #PastFutureAg



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