

What's in The Store Cupboard?

Taking stock is something wise warehouse keepers do every now and then. They need to check what they've got, think about what they might need to order up next, and make sure they haven't lost anything since the last time they looked.

So after ten issues of Interpret Scotland, that's what we've done with this edition. Pithy quotations about stocktaking for the top of each page weren't exactly thick on the shelves; instead you'll find meditations on change and development, which seemed close enough.

It's good to see evidence of real progress in the way interpretation is perceived and managed within the major organisations that commission it. Several articles point to a shift that has seen interpretation take centre stage, or at least be recognised as a discipline in its own right with its own set of professional standards.

But there are places where the stock in hand doesn't look so strong. The need for a cohesive and broadly based forum in which people interested in interpretation can meet and exchange ideas is as strong as ever. However, membership of groups that provide this, such as Interpret Scotland, the Association for Heritage Interpretation, and the Scottish Interpretation Network, is sporadic. The relationship between them is often unclear or uncertain, with a risk of wheels being invented several times over.

Perhaps we can live with this as a classic British fudge: not the most efficient way to organise things, but it works well enough for us. More worrying is the possibility discussed by Robyn Hartell on page eight, of a tendency for interpretation to present the same ideas wherever you go. Fully stocked on measurable messages, corporate identity, and generic content; fresh out of uniqueness and creativity? Sounds like something important went missing since the last stock taking ...

James Carter, editor of Interpret Scotland

Progress might have been all right once, but it has gone on too long.
Ogden Nash