

## News

### Obituary

#### How he brought the good news from Harper's Ferry to Battleby

Don Aldridge died on 12 February leaving a legacy that is synonymous with countryside interpretation in Scotland. In 1968, as Assistant Director of the Countryside Commission for Scotland, he continued an odyssey that began with visits to Harper's Ferry, the HQ of the US National Parks Service, gained direction in the Peak National Park, travelled far from his Battleby battle-station and ended only with his sudden death.

He inspired many interpreters with his messianic fervour, his intellect, his wit and his tireless advocacy of Tildenesque interpretation. If, latterly, he seemed disheartened by the twists and turns of the profession he helped instigate, it is because one man cannot be all men. He was special.

*Michael H Glen, February 2008.*

### Interpretation sparking with vitality

Three hundred interpreters from 20 countries gathered in Aviemore last October at The Vital Spark conference. "I came away buzzing", "it was a fantastic three days" and "I thought the conference was brilliant" were only three of the comments recorded. Nine keynote speakers and 70 other presenters filled a programme of talks, workshops and visits.

The event opened noisily with Pipes of Thunder which contrasted with a gentle story from Angus Peter Campbell and much thought-provocation from Alastair McIntosh. Jane James from Australia then asserted that interpretation needs passion! Parallel sessions preceded a buffet supper which was capped magnificently by a performance by the Puppet State Theatre Company.

A waulking song group on Tuesday was followed by keynote papers from Susan Strauss, the much-admired US storyteller, and Shonaig Macpherson, chair of NTS. Visits to Glenmore Forest Park / Cairngorm Mountain and Culloden Battlefield gave everyone an appetite for the conference banquet followed by country dancing.

Young fiddlers opened the last morning when a talk by Jette Sandahl of Te Papa Tongarewa Museum was followed by historian James Hunter's reflective address, both about interpretation's importance to communities. Sam Ham closed the proceedings with the verdict that "The Vital Spark was the most beneficial and professional gathering I've attended in the past decade".

## **Tell us what you think**

With an electronic version of the journal on the horizon, Interpret Scotland members would like to hear your views on this and other issues. To this end we have set up a brief readers' survey which can be accessed from [www.interpretscotland.org.uk](http://www.interpretscotland.org.uk)

Results of the survey will be published in the next issue of the journal, and will help guide design and content of future issues.

If you cannot access the survey electronically please contact Sue Atkinson, SNH, Battleby, Redgorton, Perth. PH1 3EW Tel: 01738 458538 and we'll send you a pre-paid paper copy.

## **National Treasures**

Scotland's museums contain a treasure trove of wonderful things in collections that have in some cases developed over the last 300 years. Nationally important collections can be found in local authority museums, independent and university museums all over Scotland. In 2006 the Scottish Government launched a scheme to formally recognise collections deemed to be of national significance, and to provide financial support to aid their preservation and use. Successful applicants can bid in to the National Recognition Fund which can award grants of 100% of the project costs. Collections from Dumfries to Stromness and Aberdeen to Irvine have successfully demonstrated their national importance, and the first funding awards have been made. Further details are on the Museums/Galleries Scotland website: [www.museumsgalleriesscotland.org.uk](http://www.museumsgalleriesscotland.org.uk)

## **Taking the chair**

Bob Jones, Interpret Scotland's stalwart Chair for the past three and a half years, has passed on the role to a successor. Julie Forrest, Strategy and Communications Manager for Scottish Natural Heritage, took over the job in December 2007 and is looking forward to building on the success of The Vital Spark. Many thanks to Bob for all his hard work! And good luck to Julie!

**I cannot teach anybody anything, I can only make them think.**  
*Socrates*