

Contributions Of Open Air Museums In Preserving Heritage Buildings: Study Of Open-Air Museums In South East England

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Abstract

Most open air museums were established to preserve and present a threatened aspect of regional or national culture and to help forge a sense of identity and achievement. Britain's open air museums have aroused controversy among both museum professionals and building conservationists. They have been praised for spearheading innovative and vivacious approaches towards heritage interpretation and saving neglected buildings, while some have criticised them for inconsistent standards of conservation especially for taking buildings out of their original settings. Such architectural issues were strongly debated in the 1970s, while recent debates focus on popular approaches towards attracting the public to the past. This paper describes the evolution of open air museums in Britain, their contribution in conserving unloved buildings and how they have become an increasingly competitive tourist attraction. Observations and lessons learned from interviews and visit to two open air museums in South East England provides some insight about the importance of such museums. Operated as registered charity organisations, they have played significant roles not only in saving various buildings and structures from demolition but also in helping visitors to appreciate the rich heritage of these regions.

Keywords: *Open Air Museums, Heritage, Conservation, Tourist Attraction*

INTRODUCTION

Museums have played an important role in preserving and displaying heritage items. Started as an in-door activity, later expanded to the idea of out-door display areas commonly known as open air museums. As a phenomenon of the world's repertoire of heritage (Young 2006) a majority of open air museums concentrate on the collection and re-erection of old buildings on large out-door sites, usually in settings of re-created landscapes of the past. Even though buildings are generally considered as '*too big and complex to acquire in the same way as objects*' (Young 2006), the range of building-like objects that have been included within the limit of museum collections is enormous and the strength of the collecting impulse is greater, despite cost and other difficulties. In this sense, the collection, past and present, of buildings into museums of buildings, is almost unavoidable (Fitch 1990). Most of these concepts may therefore be justly described as building museums. Open air museums have been known by various names according to their specific focus: agricultural, folk, living history, heritage village (in Australia), museum village, living farm, living or out-door architectural (in America) and eco-museum (in France).

BRIEF HISTORY AND EVOLUTION IN EUROPE

Open air museums in Europe originated in the 18th century as a development of indoor type of museums. Precursors were the type of 'exotic' buildings found in its landscape parks (Hurt 1978). In 1799, Bonstetten in Denmark proposed the idea of creating such museum (Hurt 1978, Pottler 1985). But only in 1867 did this idea materialise when Heftye, moved an old farm with a stave church onto his land at Bygdoy, Oslo in Norway for their preservation and viewing (Hurt 1978). Later precursors were the real or constructed peasant cottages; Norway and Sweden showed examples of their national architecture at the Paris Exhibition (1867) and the Colonial Exhibition in Amsterdam (1873-1883) showed a display of historic farm houses (Pottler 1985). The reconstruction of folk buildings was located only in 1894 at Limborg, and later in 1896, a little Swiss village was erected. This action also inspired King Oscar II to add upon his collection by transferring several farm buildings onto his estate near Oslo in Norway in 1881 and later incorporated into the Norsk Folkemuseum (Hurt 1978).

The earliest open air museum appeared in Scandinavia in the late 19th century and focused mainly on its folk life which highlighted a change in interest to the everyday practicalities. Arthur Hazelius, started to study old folk architecture with scientific documentation (Hurt 1978; Stratton 1979). Dissatisfied with existing anthropological and ethnographic museum, Hazelius started on collecting buildings as a part of the Nordiska Museet in Stockholm since 1885 (Fitch 1990). The growing awareness and enthusiasm of folk life, many were convinced that industrialisation was destroying the cultural heritage of the pre-industrial age (Hurt 1978). Later, the first elaborate open air museum was established in 1891 at Skansen Hill, a branch of the Nordiska Museet. Hazelius emphasized the significance of preserving the rural tradition in the face of an increasingly industrialised society and helped to secure farm buildings from various parts of Sweden including other authentic interpretation of folk costumes, the keeping of live animals, the revival of folk music and demonstration of daily activity of peasant life and culture (Hurt 1978).



Figure 1: A view at the Skansen Open Air Museum (photo by Peter Blundell-Jones 2000)

The Skansen formula was highly successful and was taken up by other northern European countries anxious to reinforce their cultural identity (e.g. the Norwegian Folk Museum (1894), the Danish Frilandsmuseet (1897) and The Netherlands Open Air Museum at Arnhem (1912)). Europe has more than 450 open air museums of various types. Though small, these museums have been responsible for saving thousands of farm buildings from demolition (Hurt 1978; Stratton 1979; Fitch 1990), while stressing the peasant culture on the assumption that the preservation of the rural life provides important information for ethnological study (Hurt 1978). Skansen eventually became the prototype model to the rest of the world.

OPEN AIR MUSEUMS IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

In the United Kingdom, indoor museums have existed for more than two centuries with increasing number in the late 20th century (Yale 1991). As the interest in the past increased, open air museums became not simply a modern by-product of improved leisure time (Stratton 1979). Although not typical, some museums such as the Castle Museum in York, have a re-erection of a stone-built watermill, to complement their indoor display (Stratton 1979). In early 20th century several relocations of timber-framed buildings were undertaken, e.g. in Cadbury's garden suburb, Bournville, Birmingham, and in the Cotswold village of Stanton, Gloucestershire (Stratton 1979). The first in-situ open air museum was established on the Isle of Man in 1938, based round a series of buildings set within an original traditional village as a Cregneash Folk Museum. Later, the Welsh Folk Museum established at St Fagans near Cardiff was the first to draw more directly on Scandinavian precedent, in 1951 (Stratton 1979), opened to the public as a part of the National Museum of Wales (Armstrong 1975).

During the 1950s, British historians, who had initially dismissed industry for its destruction of rural England, turned to study the landscapes of the West Midlands and the northern textile regions. Public interest was heightened by concern at the loss of major monuments in London such as the demolition of the Euston Arch in 1962, followed by threats to St Pancras Station and to Albert Dock in Liverpool. The same combination of inventiveness and regional and national pride propelled the rapid development of other open air museums devoted primarily to industrial preservation (Stratton 1979). Their founders drew on the precedent of such museums, but also simulated strong working ties with teams of local volunteers (Armstrong 1975). The growth of interest in social history reveals consciousness of history from the bottom up, known as heritage, a development of a more professional form of historical commemoration throughout the world (Young 2006). In the 1960s, these new ventures reflected a growing interest in vernacular and in folk-life (Pottler 1985), and in particular traditional timber-framed architecture, at a time of major threats to their survival (Stratton 1979). Multi-phase buildings, with their early timber structure obscured by later brick or plaster, were rarely listed. If threatened, their only hope might be removal and re-erection in an open air museum. Early rebuilding projects gave architects and curators a much fuller understanding of timber-framed buildings. Ulster gained its folk museum was founded in 1961 also a part of the national museum. A clutch of regionally based museums were established in England during this decade as independent museums as listed in Table 1.

Table 1: List of Establishment of Open Air Museums in the United Kingdom

Year	Name	Location	Type of Buildings
1938	Cregneash Folk Museum	Isle of Man	Vernacular
1951	St Fagan Welsh Folk Museum	Cardiff, Wales	Vernacular
1958	Beamish Open Air Museum	County Durham,	Industrial
1961	Ulster Folk Museum	Cultra, Northern Ireland	Vernacular
1963	Ryedale Folk Museum	Hutton-le-Hole, North Yorkshire	Vernacular
1965	Museum of East Anglian (Rural Life)	Stowmarket, East Anglia	Vernacular
1967	Avoncraft Museum of Historic Buildings,	Boomgrove, Worcestershire	Vernacular
1968	The Ironbridge Gorge Museum	Blist Hills	Industrial
1969	The Weald and Downland Open Air Museum	Singleton, Chichester	Vernacular
1975	The Black Country Living Museum	Dudley,	Industrial
1979	The Chalk Pits Museum (Working Museum)	Amberly, South Sussex	Industrial

Later, this concept was adapted by industrial archaeologists as a means of saving and presenting artefacts and processes made redundant by the closure of canals, railways and traditional print-shops, foundries and blacksmiths. It has a nostalgic affection for the rural, most of the pioneers in industrial preservation had been too independent of mind and obsessed with wanderlust to be limited by the boundaries and pedantry of museums (Stratton 1979). Industrial museums were later established with their charitable status (as listed in Table 1), gave them a dynamic image a world apart from the dusty exhibitions and corridors of most contemporary national and local museums (Stratton 1979).

According to Harris(2007), there were many proposals for open air museums in England following the European models before the war; the threat to heritage that gave the final push. These buildings were abandoned or about to be demolished, but had been rescued by a group of individuals that had a strong belief that they needed to be saved. The open air museum became the last resort to save the buildings from demolition, a graveyard of unwanted buildings, but then it gradually developed into an attractive place for visitors to enjoy (Stratton 1979). In line with the development of the Tourism Act in 1969 that enabled the English Tourist Board to provide financial help to tourism ventures (Yale 1991), museums in general, open air museums specifically became tourist attractions as a part of heritage tourism especially in 1980s, when *'heritage was its touristic equivalent'* (Yale 1991) with the commercial world.

CASE STUDIES: INTRODUCTION

The growing interest in non-elite, vernacular and popular culture established a new rationale for preserving humble houses, rural outbuildings an industrial production sites (Young 2006). The Weald and

Downland Open Air Museum is a good reflection. Modern social history museums such as the Amberly Working Museum in England were created, reflecting the trend towards learning the history of everyday living, rather than politics, wars and monarchs (Stratton 1979). These examples of unique open air museums in South East England are discussed because they provide an interesting comparison between vernacular and industrial represented its regional collections.



Figure 2: Location map of both open air museums case studies at South East England (Singleton Visitor's brochure 2007)

CASE STUDY 1: WEALD AND DOWNLAND OPEN AIR MUSEUM AT SINGLETON, CHICHESTER

Singleton was launched by a small group of enthusiasts led by Dr. J.R. Armstrong. In early 1960s, during the survey of pre-19th century buildings in development of Crawley New Town, Armstrong discovered that one of the farm-houses still had a core that was a well preserved 14th century (Armstrong 1975). The initial effort to save them in-situ, through the Society for Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB) and the Ministry was disappointing as the order to preserve was later reversed and development of the site was more revealing. The Development Corporation offered them the timber, but it was impossible to do so without any organisation support for financial and storage areas. They watched these buildings being burnt on site. This had inspired Armstrong to find out other alternative way (Armstrong 1990). A promotion committee were organised in September 1966. Only in August 1967 that the Trustees of Edward James give a favourable site on the West Dean Estate. First site plan was prepared by architect and planner, J. Warren (Leslie 1990). As buildings gathered at West Dean, there was no financial in hand and planning permission granted, since no proper administrative organisation was set up. The site next to West Dean Village was a controversial site as the villagers insisted alternative. Then a site was at Singleton was recommenced with the Edwards James Foundation. But only in December 1968, that outline planning permission for a site granted by West Sussex County Council. In January 1969 Weald and Downland Open Air Museum Limited incorporated as a company with only seven founder-subscribers, officially established the museum, and later in February, the charitable status was granted by Charity Commissioners. In April 1968, that re-erection of 'Winkhurst' started at the museum, followed by another six buildings. The first director was J. Lowe. At last, only on 5th September 1970, the museum had its first public opening.

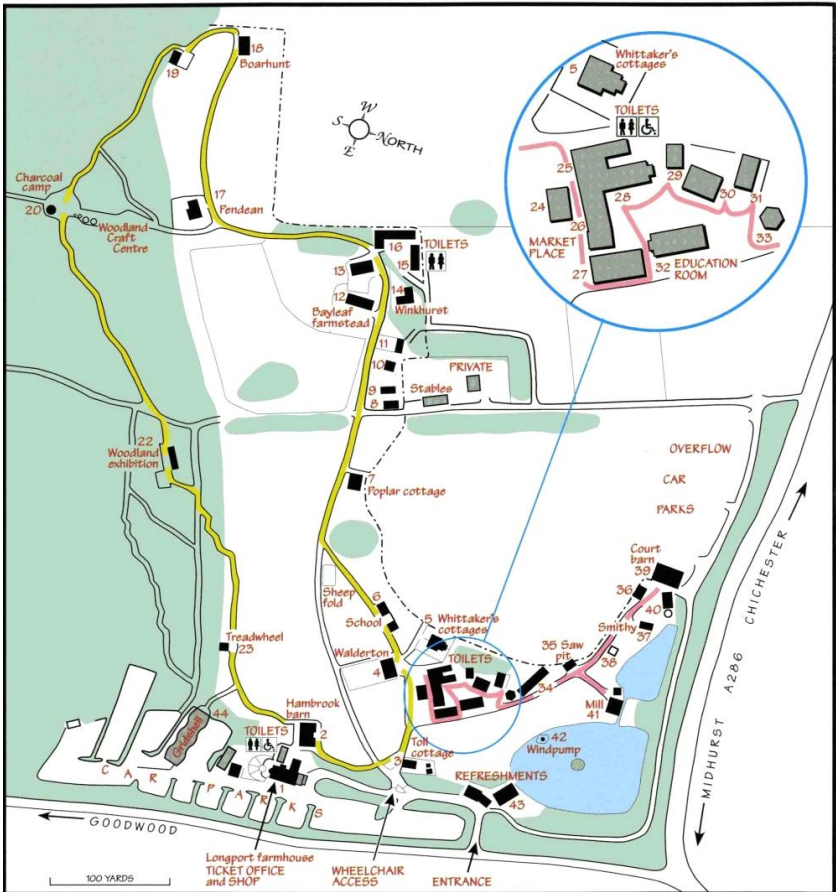


Figure 3: The lay out map of Singleton (Singleton Visitor's brochure 2007)

Started as a private initiative, the principle aim of the founding group was to establish a centre that could rescue representative examples of vernacular buildings from the region to generate an increased public awareness and interest in the built environment. Singleton's foundation coincided with a growing national interest in historic buildings and this general public interest has resulted in strong support for its establishment. Singleton promotes the retention of buildings on their original sites unless there is no alternative, and encourages an informed and sympathetic approach to their preservation and continuing use. There are 45 buildings currently located in the museum collection as a part of traditional village and a small town market square (Weald & Downland Open Air Museum 2003). Now, Singleton offers advice to people involved in the conservation of buildings and illustrating the history of original building styles and types where it has good collections representing country crafts and industries, building trades and agriculture. These collections continue to be developed. As a Registered Charity, Singleton receives no regular grants or subsidies. A large number of volunteers contribute to its daily running and many organisations have helped financially (Harris 2005).



Figure 4: A view of Singleton (www.wealddown.co.uk 2007)

CASE STUDY 2: THE AMBERLY WORKING MUSEUMS AT WEST SUSSEX

It is a 36 acre open-air museum dedicated to the industrial heritage of the region. The site was once a large and busy chalk quarry and lime works, and its buildings and kilns are now preserved alongside buildings. It was formerly owned by John Pepper and his son (known as Pepper and Son Limited), the sole producer as a working quarry and mining operation from the end of 19th century up till the late 1960s (Beard et al 2003). In 1968, when the site became derelict, a group of local people, headed by Mr. Roland Puttock initiated the idea by forming 'the Southern Industrial History Trust' (currently known as the Amberly Museum Trust) with the view of saving the existing buildings as an historic site. They negotiated with the county council who also supported this idea and bought the site in 1974. The existing original quarry buildings were scheduled as ancient monuments became the basis of the museum, had been conserved in its original and in its actual architectural context as no further development can take place. It was opened on 26th May 1979 to the public known as the Amberly Chalk Pits (Beard et al 2003). A 99-year lease from the county council to the Trust with a very minimum rent was set up for the benefit of the heritage that has been entrusted.



Figure 5: The lay out map of Singleton (Amberly Visitor's brochure 2007)

Specifically in this region, according to Seymour (2007), Amberly has shown how changes in technology have affected people's lives. Staffed largely by volunteers, it contains a wide range of exhibits, ranging from transport-based collections, such as the Southdown bus collection & the village garage, from radio to industry-based collections, such as the Print Workshop & Wheelwrights and home to a number of resident craftspeople, who work to traditional methods. Amberly is not set in a particular period of time, but contains exhibits buildings that had been untouched from about 150 years ago up to the present day. It is a registered charity and operated by a small number of paid staff, a team of highly skilled craftspeople, and a huge army of dedicated volunteers (The Amberly Working Museum 2007).



Figure 6: Views in Amberly (www.amberlymuseum.co.uk 2007)

Table 2: Comparative Summary

Element	The Singleton Museum	The Amberly Museum
Building Design and Typology	Pre-industrial Vernacular with farms house and its life style	Industrial Buildings with Working Industrial environment
Period / Time	Range from 13 th to 19 th Century	About the last 150 years
Founders	Effort of Individuals headed by Dr. Armstrong	Joint effort of the community headed by Mr. Roland Puttock
Reason of Establishment	Action taken to save the buildings from demolition.	Action taken to save its from derelict
Site	Relocated buildings to a new site	Mainly Preserve In situ, and few Relocated buildings
Materials and Design	Materials used were original parts of the actual house and design where repairs of the old materials are taken place	Materials used were original parts of the actual house and design where repairs of the old materials are taken place
Statutory Act	Not a listed building or scheduled Monuments, but in July 1998 awarded "Designated Status" of outstanding Collection	Scheduled as Ancient Monuments and Listed buildings
Managed by	Registered Charity with Trustees	Registered Charity with Trustees
Visitors' number: School Children	More than 5 and half million visitors up till now 2500 per annum	60, 000 per year

FINDINGS

Principle and Approach

One obvious criticism against the open air museum concept is the realisation that dismantling is destruction. Therefore, historic buildings should be moved only destruction is inevitable and if there is a sure prospect for immediate rebuilding. It should neither be an excuse for the mere convenience of a local authority to allow redevelopment of site. Dismantling a building should be approached as destructive archaeology whereby standards of investigations, recording, understanding, and publication should be comparable to the best in underground archaeology. Apart from this, there will be also criticism on several other aspects such as cost in recreating the physical condition of its former setting. On the other hand, there is the unquestionable intrinsic value and even tourist attraction of leaving and restoring a building in-situ.

According to Harris (2007), one can argue that moving buildings into a museum is always unsatisfactory. Although, a building is not always uniquely tied to its environment, nevertheless transferring it from one environment to another does lose some of its context and always considered as second best or the rescue homes of last resort (Earl 2003).

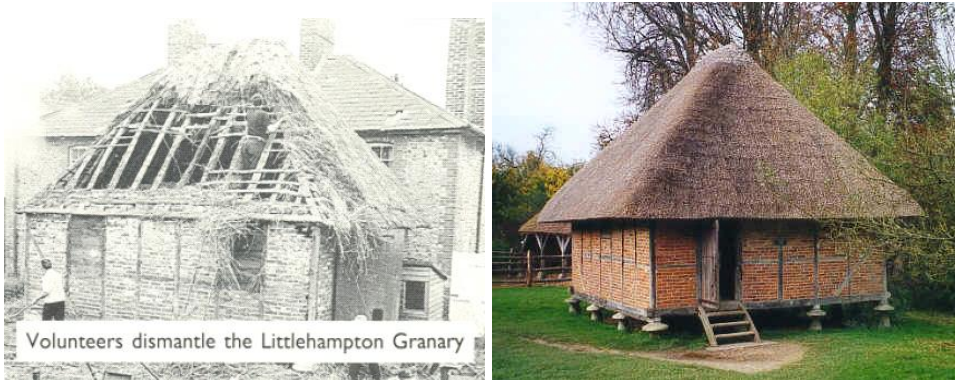


Figure 7: Before and after one of the buildings dismantled and relocated to current site at Singleton.

Harris (2007) explained that the process of taking a building apart is a way of finding out building's detail that has developed and changed over time. This is a new knowledge and experience in building conservation. An archaeological approach of discovering different layers of development enhances the understanding of material culture (physical aspect of the buildings) as well as social history (its builders and occupants). Inevitably, when a building is still standing, one can only know its history by observation or learned from any available documents that had been produced to erect it (which is hardly found in traditional building. Harris (2007) added that it also has an advantage of being able to create a new setting than preserving an individual building in-situ, when the actual environment has lost its real context. This preserves the 'sense of place' in its new site. On the other hand, museum out of a surviving settlement may be limited to what can be shown; based on the existing buildings that were available. Thus, relocating buildings does give flexibility to the museums' collection in terms of type, number and variation of collection as well as the layout of the site.

Seymour (2007) stated that the approach taken at Amberly in saving neglected and derelict historic buildings was through in-situ preservation.

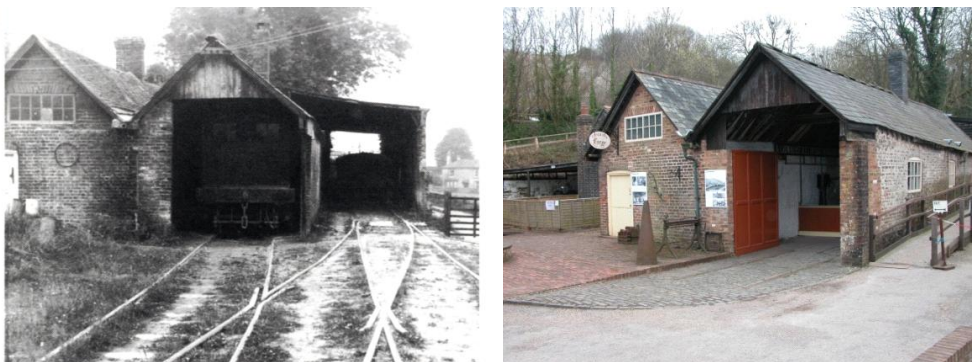


Figure 8: One of the main buildings at Amberly before and after it was conserved

Only 12 out of the total 43 buildings were existing buildings, but the rest were added later as either as rescued listed buildings. They were carefully dismantled and erected in their original form using the original materials as much as possible. The buildings are taken in only as a rescue mission from demolition. In fact the museum has been offered buildings that were not to be demolished. However, the museum has refused to do so, as in-situ preservation should always be the first priority. Due to the large area of the site, it has more to offer for the benefit of the community and the history of the quarry industry. By adding the omnibus trust and other collections enhanced the historical value of the region. Amberly is preserving historic buildings, ideally in their original settings, and making them available to the benefit of today and future generations.

Tourist attraction

Tourists are not only attracted to the physical aspects of the buildings but also to the life experience in addition to the forgotten traditional social experience as well as the enjoyment of being in the beautiful

park. In Britain and Europe as a whole, people do visit museums and do it as a part of their culture. This increases the rate of local tourism and local economy.

At the beginning of its establishment, according to Harris (2007), Singleton was perceived as a new way of exhibiting buildings, different and unusual to normal museums. Open air museums are able to offer the 'sense of place' that help people to have experience that have been denied to them. Domestic farm animals and garden are available where people can get close up to the animals and vegetation. This is very crucial where such places are no longer available or located remotely elsewhere. It combines the interest of indoor museums with the enjoyment of being in a public park due to beauty of the site and its high quality. It also relates to human desire (inherited psychology) for certain kinds of experience, such as senses of ritual, culture and belonging. These universal human needs can, to a certain extent, be satisfied in such museum. Many people want to have some kind of memorial in the museum after they die. They come regularly to some seasonal events which involve ritual processions as they enjoy the traditions and ritual events. For example, by watching a group fully dressed up in the 16th century preparing and cooking traditional meals at the 'Winkhurst, and by participating in the seasonal festival, visitors may recall a past traditional social life. These may satisfy people's needs and provide something that especially in the developed societies is very hard to find as explained by Harris (2007).

According to Seymour (2007), Amberly has 40 different types of exhibitions and ranges across those historic buildings which allow visitors to experience the 19th industrial working life. By riding the old train and buses, experiencing hand on craftsmanship of making crafts (pottery, bricks, walking sticks), watching the quarry's manual work and producing prints out of the old equipment, do give a true picture of what was the actual scenario in the past. Combination of both preservation of the existing buildings and appropriate relocation of other buildings has given the museum a much greater advantages in terms of being able to retain the site authenticity as well as the historic buildings.

Education and Training

From the beginning the role of open-air museums has also differed from that of organizations involved in the preservation of monuments, where the building itself comes first and foremost. The buildings are preferably provided with furniture and tools as originally marking the time of the building with local impressions of the social class of people that lived in or used the building. Parts of the contents of the museum can be explained through demonstration of old working procedures and manual works and performances on the lawn and the experience of the rides, to show the occasional festive and hard labour situations in old community, or social life. The open air museums have a far reaching obligation to share with everyone, experience to be gained from their vast material. It is an opportunity of making history come alive and to teach people the enjoyment of beautiful houses and functional working buildings. It also sheds light on a way of life under different economic and social conditions.

Both museums have contributed effort in educating visitors and providing awareness of heritage of regional values. According to Harris (2007), Singleton started with exhibition of the physical aspect of vernacular buildings. However, it later developed a deeper sense of understanding of material culture as well as social history. The social history interpretation has been popularly practised that for the last twenty years. Due to flexibility of relocating approaches, buildings were regrouped and presented as an evolution of buildings in 15th and 16th century in a closer range. The permanent collection of artefacts, books and documents also help the museum in educating the public. Singleton exhibits the value of its material culture to the public by sharing their experience about its social culture in an advanced and innovative way. It provides a better understanding of representation and interpretation of buildings, in social history and material history. Visitors can learn about materials that the buildings had been built of and the traditions that govern that, as well as social aspects of people life and working arrangement. Visitors can learn through informal ways (guidebooks and volunteer' explanation) and formal learning visits (class or guided tours including adult courses and activities for school children). Volunteers are local people and members of Friends of the Museum, a volunteer society that helps the museum.

Meanwhile, as mentioned by Seymour (2007), Amberly is not only preserving the history and heritage but also interpreting them for the benefit of school children and people who are interested. It is a reminder

that this type of industry did take place in the region. The focus is not only on the physical aspects of the buildings and equipments, but also the relationship of the material culture within the social context. Information about the building will include the date and its structural and material construction, but more important is the human story associated with the building that helps bring the building to life (e.g. oral history recording of people who used to work there). This social aspect does attract more visitors to come. According to Seymour (2007), in linking to the national education co-curriculum, school children are taught through experience about a number of aspects including the worker's life and manual works in the quarry and other different collections as well. Keeping the heritage alive and also passing it on to the youngsters in a way that the children will be inspired and added to their history knowledge of this particular region. Visitors are well informed about the buildings' history and its social aspects by reading its guide books and attending guided tours by the staff and volunteers. Amberly has about 400 volunteers from very supportive local communities. They are people retired, from working in the quarry industry, in the printing or at the wheel riding, who volunteer to teach their skill to the new generation and learn new skill as well. They become members of Friends of the Museum.

Link with higher education

Armstrong, the founder of Singleton, was an adult tutor at Southampton University and since then Singleton has continued connections with academic universities. According to Harris (2007), a formal link with the department of Archaeology at Bournemouth University, Singleton has developed a strong programme in improving its staff teaching ability as well as bringing people and students to the site. The University also validates a higher level course and does help the Singleton in adult formal programme. Singleton also helps and collaborates with the National Heritage Training Programme (NHTG) and the English Heritage in their training programme. Meanwhile, Amberly only has an informal link with the West Dean College for the last 5 years. As a part of the college's building conservation course, their students and tutors used this museum and related objects for their studies by looking at the buildings and activities while the museum staff provide information regarding building conservation. However, Seymour (2007) expressed her view that Amberly is looking forward to more formal links with other organisations in the near future since its educational facility has started organising talks for adult visitors. Thus, the link with higher education can help and useful to the organisation and improves their skilled in both respects. However, Seymour (2007) also emphasized that it does not mean that such link is necessary. There are many small museums without higher education, but still managed to be leading museums.

Building Conservation

Singleton has developed specialised physical techniques of conservation: a practical technique in documenting, repairing, transferring and erecting buildings. Since Singleton comprise mainly of the pre-industrial vernacular traditional buildings, the traditional craft skill, is very important. However, Harris (2007) emphasized that building conservation is not all about traditional skill but it also a matter of specialised conservation skill. Building which need conservation will not be given to repairer but to a conservator. This is what they are trained and specialist with.

Due to its statutory status as Grade 1 buildings, the Amberly's original quarry buildings were conserved in its original and actual architectural context of the quarry buildings in the late 19th century. Seymour (2007) explained that the office block roof used specialist concrete tiles that had been conserved as a part of its architectural history and conservation. It also shows history of the local building and its production. Similarly to the rescued listed buildings that had been re-erected onto the sites such as the Arundel Gin building is preserved for both its specific purpose and its architectural detailing.

ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

Orientation and communication

At Singleton, according to Harris (2007), the biggest challenge is visitors' 'orientation' where visitors arrive at the museum not really knowing what they coming to. To overcome this issue, Singleton has to intensify the use of digital resources without neglecting the written books and people communication at the site. By improving physical reception and technical resources; setting up a department of

interpretation, employing more interpreters and created training material and programmes for interpreters then our volunteers will help to accomplish its mission and improve quality in terms of better interpretation on site. Collaboration from all people to improve communication to the public is vital.

For the last 25 years, Amberly's expertise is gradually built up and the enthusiasm and skill of members (trustees and staff) help maintain the buildings. It is considered as a learning process at most of the time to look after the building and interpret them for the public as well as listen to the visitors' feedback. It is not just preserving this heritage but what have been done with them by interacting and communicating the values of experience and knowledge to the visitors added Seymour (2007).

Financial or other organisation support

As registered charity organisations, both museums are independent, which rely on the money coming through from the visitors and the business activities. They have a schedule of annual opening times with various activities according to the seasons and during holidays to attract more visitors for financial support. These museums are constantly sourcing financial support to look after the buildings within their exhibitions. Unlike Singleton, Amberly is legible to receive financial support from English Heritage Fund or Heritage Lottery Fund for its historic buildings upon approval of application. The English Heritage (EH) also provides maintenance support and advice. The day-to-day maintenance was carried out internally by the site manager while the specialist areas come from specialist contractors as approval by the EH or related organisations.

Theme park issue

In both museums, it could be a disadvantage by confusing visitors about the history of the actual site and its context. Both museums are very careful not to go down to the theme park route because in the sense that it might be devaluing the historic items and the artefacts in the museums. There is a crucial need to be very clear as to the type of experience that is been offered to the visitors. At Amberly, trains and buses are historic vehicles are exhibited in a right manner, and not similar to that in a theme park. The similar approach is also shown in Singleton, as horses are used for manual works such as pulling the timber or a cart as they were normally used in 500 years ago. Thus theme parks have their places, but need to be separated from museums (Harris 2007).

POSSIBILITY OF ADAPTING THE CONCEPT

Open air museums could have a role in developing societies in focusing people's attention and interest on the traditions that they inherit. Harris (2007) stated that in societies that are completely traditional such as a young undeveloped country, obviously an open air museum may not be appropriate because things inside the museum are similar to what is outside the museum. It also depends on time and circumstances. In such period of rapid development, it is important to gather information and to take full documentation, when the buildings are still available. Failure to do that, one will never be able to keep memories of the culture before the culture disappears. In times of prosperity when demolition abounds, it is definitely urgent to evaluate existing building-stock in general, to determine which structures are worthy of attention and require attention.

Research and documentation are practical support for conservation; accurate and thorough recording of present status is an essential tool (Mohamad Tajuddin Rasdi et al 2005). According to Harris (2007), in a country where the indigenous architecture has already declined in use and where records and survival of examples become a matter of urgency, a policy of preservation is much in need and meaningful. When the development has taken place and these heritage are becoming forgotten and destructed, and then decision of having an open air museum is viable. After nearly 4 decades of establishment, the Singleton has proven that its establishment did provide advantages to the society. Earl (2003:134) stated that *'But museums of buildings, like those at Singleton..., do raise issues of immediate relevance to the conservator. These places are rescue homes of last resort...Before adopting such a radical course of action, however, we must be satisfied that there is absolute no alternative to removal and that the*

receiving agency has the financial means, the scholarship and the craft skills to deal with the building in a proper manner'.

Particularly in England, most of the listed buildings are in private hands. Government protects most of its architectural history by having an agent like English Heritage and the local council as custodians of the heritage. As an open air museum (similarly as done by the English Heritage and National Trust), the public can benefit and learn the history as well as provide firsthand experience from the buildings collection, this is not available if the historic building belongs in private ownership. Being under statutory protection, it is also required approval from the right bodies before any action taken. The need to have the right environment and government that the country should have to protect heritage is vital in supporting the establishment of such museum. In very large or diverse countries, the concept of single comprehensive national museum of architecture is probably not appropriate instead the regional museum is more desirable (Fitch, 1990). A clear purpose of setting up a museum is very important if any concept to be adapted. It also depends on type of museum's collection (i.e. the Iron-bridge museum started with the beautiful iron-bridge as example of this industry). A vision is crucial by appropriate type of collection based upon regional or specific culture either mono or multi-cultures. It is vital especially in completing or conjecturing things because it needs to address this issue in both material culture and social history.

Location is another important factor to be considered. Both museums are located in beautiful areas at South East England, and do attract visitors. There are some museums, very worthy in this country, but are a little hidden by being off the track. In addition, a very good business plan (not only the enthusiasm but also the financial support and business reality) does contribute to the success of this museum. Both museums manage do promote information about the buildings and their history to be more accessible and widely available. It requires a good marketing and advertising strategy in attracting different people. It is effective as well by including several special activities for school children and special events over the weekend and throughout the year via internet and publications. Both museums have easily accessible on-line websites that give comprehensive overview of the museums. Singleton also published its own bi-annual in-house magazine since 1975. These magazines are very useful in providing the information regarding the museum development and related events and news, are also accessible on-line.

CONCLUSION

Open air museums are common in Europe at late 19th century which gave an invaluable picture of a great heritage. Manifestations of social history in heritage practice were a surge in open air museums either from vernacular (traditional folk culture) or demotic culture (industrial or later era values). There was a realization that valuable heritage of anonymous and traditional building has been decimated. The coming of destruction in the name of progress with often more through mere ignorance, where a large number of buildings of quality, but not satisfy historic interest to be scheduled for preservation, have rumbled to the ground and demolished. Several efforts either as a group or individual tried to recognise the significance and values of the disappearing traditional and industrial buildings. Encouragingly it is a process which has been accelerating in end of 1960s in the United Kingdom. Even so, Britain's open air museums have aroused disagreement among both museum professionals and building conservationists. They have been admired for fronting innovative and lively approaches towards heritage interpretation and saving neglected buildings while recent debates focus on popular approaches towards attracting the visitors to the past.

Looking briefly at the two approaches to the preservation of traditional buildings and industrial heritage in South East England may offer some useful examples of the range of solutions that are currently available. Singleton offers a rescuing approach that is carried out to save some buildings that are otherwise destined for demolition, by picking up the pieces that are left and displaying them in some meaningful manner. The Amberly's community effort that to make the existing buildings of the site as scheduled ancient monuments is a remarkable initiative, but to proceed with the open air museum is an additional advantage. After being protected, such industrial buildings will be a great educational and heritage to the generation ahead of having to witness the life of the workings society in the late 19th century. Amberly complements the existing historic buildings with other listed buildings and a display collection to narrate the local

history in an effective manner. Both attempts by taking difficult decision years ago, in resolving a problem of ensuring the future life, either in-situ or removed, for a derelict buildings which was almost at the brink of collapse, had been worthwhile as the museums become not only tourist attractions and but also educational references for younger generation. A graveyard of unwanted buildings is no longer considered as an isolated site of forgotten era but a place to visit reminding us the wonders of the past world. This would be an alternative solution that has been applied in various other parts of the world including Malaysia. However, questions such as how much such application was implemented in the appropriate manner by the founders of such museums and how it was appreciated and understood by visitors requires further studies.

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