

Reburying the past, re-enchanting the present: pagans, archaeological landscapes and reburying the dead

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Abstract:

Britain's wealth of prehistoric sites attracts visitors world-wide: for some, archaeological sites and artefacts consisting of burial mounds, stone circles and other human-made features, alongside such natural features as groves of trees, rivers and hills, comprise sacred sites in sacred landscapes. The *Sacred Sites, Contested Rites/Rights Project* (www.sacredsites.org.uk) examines contemporary pagan engagements with the past. Pagans look to ancient religions of northwest (and other parts of) Europe and indigenous religions in order to reconstruct spiritualities and so re-enchant the present. Spiritual tourists arrive from all over the world, mixing with more local new-indigenous 'visitors', and making pilgrimages to these places where spirits, gods and goddesses, ancestors and 'wights' can be engaged with, dialogue established, offerings made, and ritual conducted, all with implications for anthropologists, archaeologists, heritage managers and the tourist industry. Sacred sites become contested, heterotopic spaces.

In this paper we focus on tensions between sites as sacred places of ancestors and as locations for (often lucrative) heritage tourism, through examining the recent development of a British reburial issue. Pagans interested in site and ancestor welfare are increasingly campaigning for the reburial of pagan human remains held in museum and university collections, and express concern for welfare of remains found during, for instance, rescue archaeology. The founding of HAD (Honouring the Ancient Dead) and a 2006 conference at the Manchester Museum indicate this as a burgeoning issue. Our discussion attends to issues of identity formation and spirituality in relation to the concept of 'ancestors' in the landscape - increasingly central to heritage/spiritual tourism, differently mobilised in truth claims about the past made by some pagans, dismissed by some 'scientific' accounts yet employed in attempts to resist encroachments from road building or quarrying - and to the power relations surrounding these contested spaces.

Introduction: Contesting Sacred Sites

At a conference with a focus on tourism, there will be considerable discussion of space and place, and the ways in which these are engaged with by, and possibly themselves engage with the 'visitors' who arrive to see what can be seen, to be entertained, perhaps transformed. Here we look at a specific kind of 'visiting' and some of the contestations it engenders. Sites of prehistoric Britain are places of pilgrimage to increasing numbers of pagans, worldwide, who arrive to perform in various ways, including celebrating, subverting and constructing ideas of sacredness. This sacredness may be inherent in the landscape, or may be (spoken of as) the result of human activity, including the deposition of remains of 'ancestors' - or the activity of non-human people such as deities or other spirit beings (including *landwights*).

Looking at pagan engagement with landscape, therefore, raises issues of worldview, belief and spiritual practice, and demands an understanding of sacred sites as heterotopic spaces. The word 'sacred' itself is polysemic, with different implications for heritage management, varying groups of pagans, and, often, tourism promoters and tour guides.

For instance: recent signage at the Nine Ladies Stone Circle in Derbyshire focuses on the idea of a place sacred in times past. Rituals and ceremonies, we are told, 'took place concerned with living and working, life and death. Some may have been everyday; others would have been more special concerned perhaps with the seasons and fertility.' Visitors are requested to help look after the site by 'respecting these ancient sites and the beliefs of the people who built them' and 'avoiding any damage or disturbance'.

This signage points to many of the issues that we have been addressing through the Sacred Sites, Contested Rites/Rights project. The context of the new signage is not only that of increased interest in 'the past' and heritage, but of threat from old quarry permissions (here and elsewhere): it makes a claim, therefore, for the importance of place and landscape as heritage, and links these explicitly with old systems of belief and spiritual practice. This link between the archaeology in the present and the used archaeology of the past is new to heritage discourse, clearly animating a connection between past and present. Yet it does so in ways that link to the preservation ethos discourse which we have addressed elsewhere (Letcher, Blain and Wallis forthcoming; Blain and Wallis 2007 in press): the site is a 'special place' to be protected, with minimal human impact, for posterity. Further, its 'special'-ness derives from past human actions. There is no suggestion that the site may be still a focus for ritual activity – and yet it clearly is such, as attested by the number of groups who gather there (sometimes leaving traces including offerings of flowers, joss-sticks burnt during rituals, and even fire damage). Scattered human ashes within the Nine Ladies circle, in addition, attest to its significance today and its use as a 'sacred' place. And at least some of those who gather there will speak of the site as living, with its own power, a 'special'-ness that demands non-ordinary attention from celebrants today rather than that derived from archaeological study of the ancient past.

At Stanton Moor and Thornborough Henges, as at the better-known honeypot sites of Avebury and Stonehenge, spiritual tourists arrive from all over the world, mixing with more local new-indigenous 'visitors', and making pilgrimages to these places where spirits, gods and goddesses, ancestors and 'land wights' can be engaged with, dialogue established, offerings made, and ritual conducted, all with implications for anthropologists, archaeologists, heritage managers and the tourist industry. Sacred sites become contested, heterotopic spaces, and hence the focus of our study.

Paganisms and Sacred Sites

'Contemporary paganism', said to be one of the 'fastest growing religions' in the West today, is a term more properly covering an alliance of nature-orientated religions, often described as paths or traditions; that is, it is not a singular religion or centrally coherent belief system. It is difficult to discuss paganism without giving a sense of overall coherency, and so we stress diversity, but there are also some commonalities among practitioners. Several pagan paths or traditions are indicated by Harvey (1997) and discussed in detail by authors generating the

new area of Pagan Studies. These include Wicca (Hutton 1999) and various related paths which may be known as modern Witchcraft, and Wiccan practices are influential on many practitioners who may avoid the term 'witch' in preference of 'pagan' (see Greenwood 2005), Druidry (well-known for its interest in Stonehenge as well as the European Iron Age past: see e.g. Wallis 2003) and Heathenry (drawing on sources from Norse, Anglo-Saxon and Germanic literature and folklore: see Blain 2002; Wallis 2003), and a number of pagan paths may also be termed 'shamanistic' (see Blain 2002; Wallis 2000, 2001, 2003; Harvey & Wallis 2007) or specifically 'goddess'-aligned. Many pagan paths do not fit neatly into these labels, since pagans as bricoleurs adopt and adapt practices, folklores, mythologies and ways of relating to landscape and spirituality in creating understandings of self and sacredness that 'work' for them within today's world. Some pagans may be accused reliably of romanticising the past in order to 're-enchant' their lives in a predominantly secular society. But on closer inspection, it is clear that paganism is far more complex than the tabloid stereotypes imposed on it. We use the term *new-indigenes* to describe those pagans whose re-enchantment practices involve perceiving nature as animate – alive with spirits, 'wights', multiple deities and otherworldly beings, and who identify with pagan 'ancestors' from ancient Europe (particularly the Iron Ages), also finding resonance with prehistoric cultures of especially the Neolithic and Bronze ages) and who may look to accounts of indigenous 'tribal' societies elsewhere (particularly those whose 'religion' is presented as animic with 'shamans' as mediators between humans and non-humans)¹. The term *new-indigenes* therefore acts as an extension specific to paganisms of Maffesoli's (1996) 'neo-tribes'. Pagans are deeply committed to their religious practices and take their interest in prehistoric 'ancestors' very seriously. Indeed pagans are increasingly attracting the attentions and imaginations of people in today's Britain. At least some heritage personnel will acknowledge that pagan interests in the past are equally as valid as those of other interest groups (archaeologists, a wider public), and there are many reasons why their interests in the past must at least be engaged with and, we argue, taken seriously, by those whose professional interests lie with the past – not least of which is the possibility for collaboration against major threats to landscape or heritage.

Not all pagans 'visit' sacred sites (many Wiccans, for instance, tend to prefer more private spaces, indoors), but those that do (Druids being the most connected with archaeology in the public mind) do so in a way which goes beyond simply 'visiting': such places are perceived to be where the presence of ancestors, gods, goddesses, wights and other nature/spirit beings is felt most strongly, and where communication with these 'other-than-human persons' is particularly effective. Rituals and ceremonies are most often conducted at these sites during times of the year identified as 'pagan festivals' from folklore, including Beltane (1st May, the first day of summer), Summer Solstice (21st June, midsummer), Samhain (31st October, Hallowe'en) and Winter Solstice ('Yule', 21st December), which celebrate, for individuals and communities, the turning of the seasons and subtle changes in people (human and non-human). Such rites happen at hundreds of archaeological sites across the British Isles and Ireland, and indeed other parts of Europe, as well as Australia and the USA. Paganism is, in the twenty-first century, a global phenomenon, with implications for heritage and tourism, worldwide.

The Ancient Dead and the Reburial issue

The currency of a 'British reburial issue' among pagans and its impact on heritage management makes the urgency for discussion of these issues and dialogue with pagans all the more pressing. The politics of decolonising archaeology and anthropology, and the reburial of prehistoric human remains and associated artefacts, have been 'hot topics' in the 'new world' for some years (see, for example, Layton; 1989a, 1989b; Swidler et al 1997; Smith 1999; Mihesuah 2000; Watkins 2000; Kreps 2003; Peers & Brown 2003). In the USA, for instance, NAGPRA (Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act 1990), and in Australia the 1988 South Australian Aboriginal Heritage Act mark examples of policy which have enabled some indigenous communities to make legal claims on 'their' pasts. The example of Kennewick Man in the USA illustrates how the claims of contemporary Pagans – however controversial – have been included alongside those of archaeologists and indigenous groups (see e.g. Wallis 2003: 190; also Radford 1998; Thorpe 2000/2001). In this famous case, not only were claims made on prehistoric remains by both local Native American communities and a North American pagan organisation with a geographical base in the area, the *Asatru Folk Assembly* (unusually, among pagans, being right-wing), but also both groups were granted access to the remains to perform ceremonies which honoured the 'ancestor', while the scientific analyses of the physical anthropologists were halted by law (Chatters 2000). The complexities of this case, and the involvement of the *Asatru* group relate to dimensions of US politics and identities (for discussion of right-wing involvements in US paganism see Gardell 2003), but also evinces ways in which both indigenous groups and, now, contemporary pagans, are making claims to the past, including reburial – with ramifications for archaeologists in Britain.

Reburial is linked to the issue of 'repatriation', and claims for repatriation of both artefacts and human remains have resulted in fruitful negotiations involving British museums and archaeologists. For instance, a Ghost Dance shirt brought to the UK by Buffalo Bill was returned in 2000 to the Lakota (Sioux) by Glasgow's Kelvingrove Museum, to the accompaniment of considerable publicity (e.g. O'Neill 2006). Then, in 2001 the Royal College of Surgeons revised its policy on considering the return of human remains following requests from indigenous groups. The working group set up in 2002 to examine 'the current legal status of human remains within the collections of publicly funded Museums and Galleries in the United Kingdom' produced recommendations (DCMS Human Remains Report, November 2003) for dealing with requests for the return of human remains, notably the assessment of claims by an independent expert panel – greeted with approval by the World Archaeological Council, and resulting in further debate and the production of guidelines in museum treatment of human remains (DCMS 2005). This working group did not, however, make explicit recommendations with regard to British prehistoric material.

British pagans, drawing on such indigenous claims and, now, the response of the working group, have been calling for the 'return to the earth' or reburial of some (not all) prehistoric remains. They are not alone in this call, nor is their voice a 'fringe' one: on a British archaeology email list, archaeologists and museum curators discussed unease among members of the public when seeing prehistoric human remains, and some revealed considerable sympathy for the call for (at least) their removal from public view. Pagan calls, though, go further, regarding context and philosophy of reburial as well as a need to 'remove' the remains from public view, with reports in the national press and pagan

magazines (e.g. 'Pagans Angry at Christian Burial' in *The Times* [24.10.99], and articles by Davies and Shallcrass in *The Druid's Voice* in recent years, discussed below). The issue of treatment of pre-Christian 'pagan' remains has arisen within a context of discussion, of guidelines for treatment of remains, both internationally (as in the 1989 World Archaeological Congress guidelines known as the Vermillion Accord) and within Britain (see e.g. Historic Scotland [1997] dealing with remains in Scotland, with reference to respect and to the legal right of the dead to sepulchre) and, more recently, guidelines with regards to Christian burials in England (C. of E. and English Heritage, 2005).

Through their rituals and through their understandings of pre-Christian worldviews, pagans may identify themselves as spiritually allied with the prehistoric peoples who built the monuments. Rites at megalithic tombs and related sites – from Mesolithic pits (in the Stonehenge car park) to bronze age round barrows along parts of the Ridgeway or the Yorkshire monuments of Thornborough Henges – involving (perceived) direct communication with prehistoric 'ancestors' in particular, prompt these pagans to feel a responsibility to ancient peoples and the 'sacred sites' themselves. In turn, not only have contemporary pagans been collaborating with site managers in site welfare, such as picking up litter and removing chalk graffiti; they have also begun to address issues of 'ancestor' welfare; i.e. concerns over the archaeological excavation and storage and of human remains and artefacts, even challenging the excavation process itself. Archaeologists excavating at Avebury in recent field seasons, for example, have had to deal with interest – some of it negative with regard to the excavation, some of it positive – from local and other Druids. In turn, pagans find an interest in ancestor 'welfare' cause to campaign against the threats of quarrying or roadbuilding, as at Prittlewell in Essex (where road-building threatens a Saxon cemetery), Thornborough or Stanton Moor.

'New-indigenous' Voices

British Pagans have framed their approaches to British reburial in language similar to that of Native Americans and other indigenous communities. The words of British Druid Order member Davies are particularly striking in this regard:

Every day in Britain, sacred Druid sites are surveyed and excavated, with associated finds being catalogued and stored for the archaeological record. Many of these sites include the sacred burials of our ancestors. Their places of rest are opened during the excavation, their bones removed and placed in museums for the voyeur to gaze upon, or stored in cardboard boxes in archaeological archives...I believe that we, as Druids, should be saying "Stop this now. These actions are disrespectful to our ancestors"...When archaeologists desecrate a site through excavation and steal our ancestors and their guardians...It is a theft...We should assert our authority as the physical guardians of esoteric lore. We should reclaim our past (Davies 1997: 12-13)

Davies's view clearly has an indigenous-inspired tone to it. Given that many pagans, neo-shamans in particular, actively engage with indigenous spiritual practices (however contentious this may be, with instances of neo-colonial appropriation), such rhetoric is not surprising – in this sense, some pagans perceive themselves as 'new indigenes'. To Davies, the reburial of prehistoric human remains in Britain 'makes perfect sense; bones are living

people and should therefore be respected and ceremonially reburied' (Davies 1998/9:11), and he outlines how pagans can get directly involved in this issue:

I speak for the ancestors and guardians of the land, those spirits not currently represented in the archaeological record... The Druid or Pagan shaman can use their gifts as 'harmonic bridges' to communicate between the realities of archaeology, land developers and Pagan Druids... Druids should join together and encourage debate between archaeologists and museums in the reburial issue (Davies 1998/9:10-12).

At first glance, individual pagans and pagan groups do not have agreed core beliefs or practices, let alone centralised spiritual beliefs concerning disposal of the dead. Nor is their interpretation of relationships with 'ancestors', in a 'multicultural Britain', clear-cut (and, of course, nor should we expect it to be). The majority of pagans walk a liberal line of ethnic tolerance and intercultural dialogue. 'Ancestors', for many, indicate those people who lived within the same landscapes, who worked the land and raised the monuments, and who are, for pagans, still present within the earth and deserving of respect: a blood relationship is not here an issue. Yet some pagans will use the term to lend authenticity to their current practices ('we do as our ancestors did'), others draw on mitochondrial DNA analysis indicating that some local communities are directly related to prehistoric remains, and others still deploy the voices of apparently tribal 'ancestors' in making truth claims about 'their' past, drawing on older archaeological interpretations in talking about movement of people, invaders, and so forth, in making claims to be the physical as well as spiritual inheritors of 'Celtic' or 'Saxon' communities (see Gallagher 1999, Blain and Wallis 2006)ⁱⁱ. In the 'time of tribes', the reburial issue is gathering momentum and coherency. Stonehenge, within the context of the Management Plan and proposals for a tunnel to replace part of the A303, is a focus for the British reburial issue, an issue which has been raised at Stonehenge Project meetings (the liaison group established to discuss the future of the Stonehenge environs).

As a result of her involvement with the Stonehenge Project, Druid priestess Emma Restall Orr, formed the organisation Honouring the Ancient Dead (www.honour.org.uk, had@druidnetwork.org), which includes a range of professionals (academics, museum specialists, field archaeologists) as well as pagans (including pagans professionally involved in academia, museums and archaeology) and aims to 'ensure respect for ancient pagan remains' with 'clear interactions between archaeologists, historians, landowners, site caretakers, museums and collectors...and the pagan community':

The purpose of this interaction is clear and positive communication that will inspire a broader and deeper understanding of the sanctity of all artefacts (notably those connected with ritual, sacrifice, burial and human remains) sourced from the Pagan eras of the British Isles. HAD will be seeking assurances that there will be communication and consultation on matters relating to such artefacts and remains (pers.comm.)

Although Restall Orr now manages a pagan cemetery where remains could be reburied, indicating that some of the logistics of reburial could be managed effectively, HAD is not calling for mandatory reburial and is more concerned with furthering dialogue between the interest groups and in particular establish consultation between these groups during excavations as well as the opportunity for pagans to 'make ritual in appropriate ways,

honouring the spirits involved'. There are issues here of how 'appropriate ritual' is constituted, since we do not know what sorts of rituals, if any, were associated with these remains, and this is also something seen as problematic in some quarters of the pagan community, as discussed on the 'Association of Polytheist Traditions' (APT) and 'BritWitch' email lists. Clearly 'the pagan community' is not in its entirety represented by HAD – we might rather speak of diverse and often conflicting pagan communities. Restall Orr agrees: 'the Pagan community, considering its extremely diverse beliefs, *cannot* be entirely represented by HAD, and this HAD acknowledges. HAD does aim to represent a good proportion of Pagan perspectives, however' (Restall Orr pers.comm.). Towards this end, HAD is in collaboration with an organisation known as PEBBLE (Public Bodies Liaison Committee for British Paganism), set up to liaise between pagans and government in order to foster official recognition of pagan interests (there has been considerable challenge to PEBBLE's aims to represent all pagans, however, and as yet it is unclear how effective the organisation is or extends to which it will deal with Britain, rather than specifically English events or situations). The aims of HAD to promote dialogue and respect have resulted most recently in dialogue with The Manchester Museum (University of Manchester), with resultant comment in the *Museums Journal* (e.g. Bienkowski 2006; Restall Orr and Bienkowski 2006), and these organisations collaborated with the Museums Association in a conference entitled 'Respect for Ancient British Human Remains: Philosophy and Practice' (November 2006), which brought archaeological and museum professionals and pagans into dialogue. There was opposition, with the British Association for Biological Anthropology and Osteoarchaeology (BABAO) officially requesting that the museum cancel the conference. Yet, the dialogue at this successful event evinces the ways in which heritage managers and museum professionals are reflexively addressing this timely issue (the papers are available on the museum's website).

Other pagans are pushing for more than respect for 'ancestors', the possibility of ritual, and dialogue on reburial. In 2004, the *Western Daily Press* (Bristol) reported that 'Druid leaders' had 'called for the creation of a sacred site at Stonehenge for the re-burial of human remains unearthed during [the implementation of the Stonehenge Management Plan]. They want a parcel of land near the site to be set aside as a ceremonial shrine for the Pagan and Druid communities' (*Western Daily Press*, 2 March 2004). Furthermore, during discussions with English Heritage and the National Trust, Philip Shallcrass, a colleague of Restall Orr and Chief of the British Druid Order, asked a National Trust representative:

...if there was any possibility that priests used to working with the spirits of our ancestors could get access when such burials were uncovered and could make ritual for the spirits of the dead... He expressed his personal sympathy to the idea. Inspired by this initial contact, I wrote a letter to some appropriate folk in English Heritage and the National Trust. In it, I expressed my concern that any burials found might simply end up in boxes in a museum basement. I asked for access to burials on site when they were uncovered, for permission to make ritual before burials were removed, and also whether it would be possible to re-bury the ancestral remains after a suitable period of study... The National Trust are putting my letter forward to the next meeting of the Stonehenge Archaeology Group and I'm awaiting developments (pers.comm.)

After further meetings of the Stonehenge Project, Shallcrass had this to say:

I've come to focus on respect and reburial as my primary reasons for being involved in the talks. I don't like the idea of any remains that may be uncovered during the work ending up either in a museum display or filed away in a cardboard box in a storeroom. I have been, and will continue asking for any remains that are found to be treated with respect and then returned to the earth as near as possible to their original burial sites, preferably with any accompanying grave goods and with suitable ritual (pers.comm.)

He explicitly states that respect *and* reburial is his main reason for involvement with the Stonehenge Project. While some archaeologists, especially osteoarchaeologists, might react with outrage, and while private landowners may find themselves in a difficult position on this issue (perhaps erring on the side of being against reburial on their land), pagans are clearly proactive in negotiations on this issue and have had some success in their campaigns. In 'The Druid's Voice', Shallcrass (2003) reports on the reburial of an early Saxon woman in the Woodford Valley, near Stonehenge. Following excavations by Wessex Archaeology, and a period of scientific analysis, the Home Office agreed to a reburial. The District Council's Director of Housing and Health sanctioned the burial site in the near vicinity of the original excavations, after which Wessex Archaeology (who had legal and moral responsibility over what they had excavated) reburied the woman's remains. Clearly, calls for and negotiations over reburial are not only in evidence, but reburial itself, in this instance at least, though not instigated by pagans, is now in effect.

More challenging and more difficult to engage with, however, are pagan voices which make authoritative claims on remains, demanding the immediate reburial of high-profile remains. The Druid Paul Davies, cited earlier, has recently advanced his claims beyond stating his opinion in Druid magazines (pers.comm.). In the summer of 2006, Davies made direct contact with the National Trust at Avebury and Devizes Museum in Wiltshire which holds much of the excavated material from the site, calling for the reburial of 'our sister' (pers.comm.), whose skeletal remains were excavated by Harold Grey in the early twentieth century from the southern ditch of Avebury henge. More recently, the Council of British Druids Orders produced a document entitled 'Guidance and Request for the Reburial of Druid Ancestral Remains at Avebury'; interestingly, this was 'leaked' before public transmission to a pagan archaeologist who published an online counter-response:

I largely agree with the COBDO aims of reburial of human remains, and am not content with the current different treatment of Christian and non-Christian human remains that exists in the current laws. However, I encountered your "Guidance and Request" while at work and had to respond as it claimed to represent my views. I, unfortunately, had to say I found it embarrassing to be associated with as I am openly pagan at work. It is badly written, and poorly argued, which largely defeats its noble objectives... It was a great disappointment to see such an opportunity wasted. My reading and commenting on this document may break confidentiality, but I could not let the matter lie. I do not think such an important document, intending to set such a precedent, should be confidential (<http://obbyoss.livejournal.com/869.html>)

In this rebuttal, 'Obbyoss' is particularly concerned with the way in which COBDO did not consult with other Druids and Pagans in order to gauge wider opinion, before submitting their document to the heritage bodies. Some voices of druids and pagans elsewhere also make explicit calls for high-profile remains to be reburied. A Swansea Druid group naming

themselves 'Dead to Rights' have asked for the restoration of the 'Red Lady of Paviland' (actually a young man, who died approximately 26 thousand years ago) to the cave on the Gower peninsula where the remains were found, receiving publicity from regional BBC News (see http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/wales/south_west/5372598.stm). Pagan politics, and Druid politics particularly are complex, and this diversity of religions and worldviews has few overt 'leaders', though many who speak on behalf of their own groups or communities. Pagans speak with many voices: and often their concerns have immediate local relevance, with local spokespeople emerging. How these voices are negotiated, however, presents a challenging problem for heritage managers.

Tourism and the living landscape

To conclude, let us return to connections of tourism, pagan practices, and the landscapes which pagans adopt as their own. There are issues of how pagans use landscapes and how and why they return. With an ongoing process of filtration, archaeological interest in landscape in recent years has extended to pagans who we see increasingly thinking beyond the site, towards its landscape context. Pilgrimages from Woodhenge via the Old King Barrows ridge, along the Avenue, to the henge and stones of Stonehenge; and pilgrimages around the bank of the henge at Avebury, and from there to West Kennet long barrow via Silbury Hill, situate single monuments in a wider archaeological landscape. Engaging with sites and landscape re-enchant individuals and community, giving reason to return to the same places over and over again. Other features 'visited' on route have special meaning, such as the stand of beech trees hugging the bank of Avebury henge which attracts offerings of hair, ribbon and trinkets, and the oak nearby the Nine Ladies stone circle which is similarly festooned. Crossing the River Kennet on the path to West Kennet long barrow attracts offerings of its own, as do the many streams on Stanton Moor. The sighting of a kestrel hovering at Windmill Hill causewayed enclosure, the budding of a willow tree on the path near one of Thornborough's Henges or the finding of a 'scarce' Daphne in the northern henge's wooded area, or more prosaically the remains of a hedgehog by the roadside, mark significance in pagan experience of place and space. In a living landscape in which sacredness, variously conceived, interconnects these things, site welfare becomes situated within wider issues of landscape welfare. And where these perceived connections might be broken or damaged in some way, pagan interests soon visibly manifest. At Thornborough Henges, pagans have been active in campaigning against quarrying: yet few had heard of Thornborough until its plight was publicised in 2002 and 2003.

For many pagans, the archaeological landscape alive with ancestral spirits is inseparable from, is indeed intrinsically a part of, the wider living landscape of tree-spirits, river goddesses, stone-people, hedgehogs, and others. Human people are themselves inseparable from this landscape and so pagan connections with it are deeply felt, sensuous, erotic even. Disruption to any part of it, from tree to megalith, and spring to human remains, becomes a cause for concern. In asserting paganism's diversity, it is important to reiterate that not all pagans perform their paganism in the same way, and certainly there are instances of intentional and unintentional damage to sites. But in instances where pagan engagements with sacred sites lead to pagan action in favour of site conservation, it is clear that pagans can be allies to heritage management, and as such it is crucial that a climate of respect and dialogue that we see in such instances as the management of the Rollright Stones in

Oxfordshire and the negotiations over access to Stonehenge at the summer solstice, becomes embedded in all interfaces between pagans and heritage management. The sensitivity of the British reburial issue, perhaps most of all, demands such an approach.

Let us conclude, though, with the example of Thornborough and some of its complexity. In a nutshell: Thornborough is the centre of a dispute concerning Tarmac, who have quarried sand and gravel around part of the area and have applied to extend this to Ladybank, north-east of the henges. The NYCC have indicated favour for a revised application, although Tarmac still has an appeal before the courts regarding the previous application. The company seems to be hedging its bets and waiting to heard a definite decision on the second application before withdrawing its appeal on the first. The resulting 'hole' at Ladybank or elsewhere would later be redeveloped as part of the Swale and Ure Washlands Conservation Project, the area of Thornborough forming part of the remit of the Lower Ure Conservation Trust.

Some archaeologists – and pagans – see the non withdrawal of the appeal as 'bad faith'. However, Tarmac had earlier indicated plans to quarry very close to the henges, indeed to their banks (on one side, as the other side is already partly quarried), on the area known as Thornborough Moor: recently, the company has stated it has no immediate plans to quarry there. Once again, archaeologists – and pagans who now form part of the advisory group for the conservation area plan – do not trust this word.

Other players here are many. They include the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, for whom the promise of wetlands areas is all-important. In 2003 the Swale and Ure Washlands project became the first winners of the RSPB/CIWEM (Chartered Institution of Water and Environmental Management) *Living Wetlands Award*, giving recognition to the efforts to increase wildlife habitat and biodiversity (http://www.rspb.org.uk/policy/waterwetlands/livingwetlands/2003_award_winners.asp). So, here wetlands creation and wildlife tourism compete with archaeological heritage and the living landscape – already including some wetlands, restored rather than newly created. Quarrying will require rescue-excavation and, since Ladybank is known already to show evidence of bronze-age settlements and artefacts – there is every likelihood that artefacts and remains will be found. But archaeologists conducting initial exploratory excavations on behalf of the quarry company have indicated that finds so far are not of any importance – they are not deemed to add to the scientific knowledge of such artefacts or presumably the lifestyles of their people.

So, we seem to be heading towards a North Yorkshire Reburial Issue. For, is Thornborough constitutes a major sacred landscape (Harding 2003 etc.) as emphasised by theoretical archaeologists – and if remains and deliberate depositions of artefacts are found there, the destruction of context BOTH prevents further archaeological work on the landscape as a whole AND offends pagan sensibilities or understandings of relationships between ancestor-people and place.

As we see it, tourism and paganisms may both hold keys to resolution of his dilemma. Need it be heritage versus wildlife? Are there other possibility? We raise this issue and hope that it can be addressed on grounds other than the simple either/or. One of us (Jenny) will be at

Thornborough for the 'new tradition' of Beltane festivity there. And beyond that, we will wait and see.

ⁱ We are not making a direct comparison between the perspectives of pagans as new-indigenes with native struggles for self-determination and the repatriation of human remains and artefacts. There are of course huge differences, and we must stress that with neo-colonialism a significant issue in New Age appropriations of native culture, our use of the term new-indigenes is of a very different order: the territory of the 'common ground' between indigenous communities and pagan new-indigenes, alongside direct relations between some pagans and native peoples in some instances, points towards this interface as crucial to understanding pagan calls for reburial.

ⁱⁱ There are issues here about the appropriation of pagan discourses and concepts by right-wing groups or organisations, and discursive slippage between, for instance, an attachment to the gods and mythologies, and often to the cultural, social and linguistic heritage of specific cultures, and a claim that 'we' (today) *are* 'Celts', Saxons, etc. We have addressed some of these issues elsewhere, examining tensions involved in claiming ancestral knowledge while discounting historic constructions of nationhood – see Blain 2001, Wallis 2003.

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