

# AIMA Special Report N°1 May 2020

## COPING WITH CRISIS



**Agriculture \* Food \* Environment \* People**

<http://agriculturalmuseums.org/>

A.I.M.A.

International Association of Agricultural Museums

Internationale Vereinigung der Agrarmuseen

Международная Ассоциация сельскохозяйственных музеев

Association internationale des musées d'agriculture

Asociación Internacional de Museos Agrícolas

(ICOM-Unesco Affiliated Organisation)



## **AIMA Congress at MERL (Museum of Rural Life) in Reading, UK postponed till next year**

- ❖ **BUT the AIMA is still working hard**
  - ❖ **through its blog posts,**
  - ❖ **in networking with members and friends**
  - ❖ **and in looking at how we are “coping with crisis”**



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## Keep up with our BLOG

with its many offerings

Why all the buzz about bees? AIMA bloggers encourage us to Bee Aware!

© March 26, 2020    Agricultural History, Bees, Related to AIMA Goals, Rural History, Uncategorized    Claus Kropp    One Comment



with a special thread on

# BEEKEEPING

<https://www.agriculturalmuseums.org/news-events/news/>

Already up online for you:

- ❖ Which came first, bees or crops? Why does it matter?
- ❖ What can law do for bees? A touch of history.
- ❖ How has beekeeping changed over time?

Soon to come:

- ❖ Medieval beekeeping, beehives and heritage in Poland, the sadly overlooked bumblebee, how museums can support bee preservation, how do bees inspire artists? and much more...



Left: Log hive according to Neolithic find (front), modified modern-type beehive (back)

Right: Beeyard at the Zeiteninsel. Log hive (left), wicker skep after early Germanic find (right) in an open shelter with base and roof. Modern-type beehive outside the shelter (back). Pictures: Sonja Guber



Baltic Amber with Fossil Inclusions. Size 5.5 cm. April 22, 2014. Wikipedia Commons.



Stereograph of an apiary at Shaker Village in Canterbury, New Hampshire, circa 1875, with elder Henry Clay Blinn holding a frame. The individual beehives appear to be made of stackable boxes with removable frames in the style patented by Lorenzo L. Langstroth in 1852. [From the Collections of The Henry Ford.](#)



A medley of bee skeps from Slovene Ethnographic Collection, Ljubljana, traditional and ultra-modern



And a hint at the art in the beehive panels at the SEM Slovene Ethnographic Museum, Ljubljana



## CRISIS?

**AIMA members and friends carry on  
– this is how**

# Share your experiences with us



## Canada Agriculture and Food Museum report from the front lines

by AIMA Secretary General Kerry-Leigh Burchill



CANADA AGRICULTURE  
AND FOOD MUSEUM

Cultural heritage site in Canada, N° 34690 in the Canadian Register of Historic Places, Author P199, released to public domain, Wikipedia

### **MUSEUMS LIVING HISTORY**

The Canada Agriculture and Food Museum (CAFM) closed to the public on Saturday, March 14... for an unprecedented long stretch. As luck would have it (ironically written) I was on a family holiday in the southern US when COVID-19 truly "hit" Canada and the closures happened — indeed, our working world went sideways between March 12 and 14. This was in the middle of our March Break programming which was showcasing “Nutrition Month” activities for families and was leading up to our busiest event of the year when we anticipated over 15,000 visitors during Easter weekend. Adding to the mayhem was the administrative challenge that our offices and doors closed at our business year end.

For those that did not know or remember, CAFM is a museum with exhibitions, classrooms AND a working farm which includes a full dairy operation and approximately 100 animals on site (beef cattle, sheep, goats, sows, rabbits, chickens, ducks, horses, donkeys, an alpaca and bees). A closure of mid-March to end of June could result in a loss of 100,000 visits for our museum. That is our absolute busiest "season" between the school breaks, spring programming and year-end school field trips. We are currently monitoring and debating one week to the next how far in advance we cancel birthday parties, summer camps, wedding rentals, and partner events. This **loss of admission revenue** coupled with the lost rentals and parking revenue means that we are out many hundreds of thousands of dollars.

So it was with a concerned eye on China and Europe in early March that we had started to order in additional cleaning products, extra weeks worth of animal feed and laptops for staff that may need to work from home. *It was not enough.*

#### **New chapter for emergency planning**

Like most of our AIMA members; the CAFM team had an emergency plan to fall back on. Feeding and care procedures for our 100 farm animals, exhibition and classroom shutdown chores, diagrams on how to use the dairy operation equipment, biosecurity protocols — even a printed emergency binder with everything we could think of needing if our farm operations

team was hit with a flu or massive power outage — but none of that planning could have prepared us for our communities and services to close up and shut down for months. There was no chapter in our binder for “what to do when work and home life is turned upside down indefinitely”.

So, we scrambled on March 13.

Staff had only a few hours to empty classroom fridges, cancel weekend clients, grab everything they would need to work from home for two weeks (wishful thinking) and our herdspeople put in a call to our veterinarian to discuss best bets to keep corona virus out of our barns. Our CAFM team was proactive and resilient, our management and communications colleagues were quick to support our audiences and staff — but it was tough. Our CEO sent out messages that it was okay to be feeling “not okay”. I set up daily calls with our herdspeople and we organized car safety kits and essential work letters as the provincial borders shut down travel. Many of us felt overwhelmed with the enormity of what was transpiring. We felt disconnected from our visitors and we grieved for cancelled special events that we had been working on for a year. We consoled colleagues that could not come in to work – and we consoled colleagues that were afraid to come in to work. We reached out to other national museums and peers around the world to develop new best practices for delivering our mandate and serving our audiences from behind closed doors. It was those communications that prompted this article. To share a frank account of running an agriculture museum during a global freefall.

### Maintaining momentum on museum projects and audience engagement

At the time of writing this article (end of April) most of our visitor experience staff is teleworking from home. Many of us continue to work on upcoming exhibitions (*Soil Superheroes* in 2021 and *Farming the waters: Aquaculture in Canada* in 2022), updating school programs and demonstration scripts and digitizing many of our popular programs for online distribution.



#### AGRICULTURE AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Grade 7 to 9 and Grades 11 and 12  
(Secondary Cycle 1 and up)



Agriculture is a necessary activity that allows us humans to meet our needs for food, fuel, fibre and even medicine. But what kind of impact does cultivating land and raising livestock have on the environment? Can potential negative impacts be reduced or mitigated?

This series of inquiry based activities helps students understand the less obvious connections between our everyday lives and farming, while developing critical thinking and research skills.

#### SKIM THE SURFACE

Waste and Pollution



Nature does not waste. Elements which make up living things move through the Earth system and are recycled at every turn. This recycling of elements is vital for the functioning of ecosystems.

In this activity, students will reflect on how our consumption of natural resources creates wastes and pollution, and explore the ways we try to re-use this waste.

##### Students will understand that

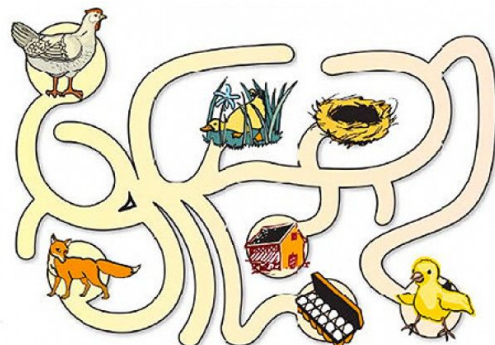
- Human activity has an impact on the environment.
- Humans create many types of wastes.
- Pollution happens when human-made wastes contaminate the environment.

##### Learning methods

- Look at and discuss photographs of human environmental impact
- Brainstorm the ways we create waste at home
- Reflect on 'pollution'

English and French learning modules are free for downloads on the Canada Agriculture and Food Museum's website

We have a **major social media campaign** going for Ingenium (this is the name for the family of national science and innovation museums: the Canada Agriculture and Food Museum, Canada Aviation and Space Museum and the Canada Science and Technology Museum) to encourage local, national and international audiences to visit our websites for home experiments, educational resources, citizen science projects, recipes and much more. We have also continued to offer some of our **video/distance learning programs** for remote North communities (Arctic) and beginning in May we are partnering with local food banks to include some of our printed learning pages in the deliveries to families with young



children that may not have access to the internet.

<https://www.ingeniumcanada.org/education/for-daycare-centers/fun-farm-activities>

We have kept in touch with our members (10,000 families) with **updates on what is happening at the farm** (for example, in the first 4 weeks of closure there were 41 births and over 26,000 litres of milk collected) and by asking them to work on Lego projects or cooking/baking recipes from our website and sending us pictures or comments on how they adapted the recipes. At a corporate level we have been using our **3D printers to make parts for face shields at local hospitals** and our staff have been encouraged to use a portion of their work-from-home week to volunteer in their communities.

Our **farm operations team** of 9 and a select group of our Education Officers (4) that have been cross trained for barn chores, continue to go in for their 10-hour shifts every day. I go in once a week for consults, barn tours and to help out wherever I can. I am sure that like many of the AIMA peers my work days have gotten longer. COVID-19 was our first true crisis during which we activated our **emergency protocols** -- and of course we have been adding or adapting measures as the weeks and challenges add up. To this end we instituted MANY new biosecurity measures and a new "three mini-team" schedule to ensure business continuity. If any of you would like to know what was added please let me know -- I am happy to share if it means helping peers at other museums, historic sites and open air centres. I would also appreciate lessons learned from organizations that have had proactive and successful means of coping with the COVID-19 crisis.



Credit-Canada-Agriculture-and-Food-Museum-Ottawa

On the farm operations side, like all **dairy farms** in our area, we have been given a warning that there will likely be rotating milk tank dumps because the demand has dropped due to school and restaurant closures. This is heartbreaking when we know that there are many hungry people in our area but the reserves through the milk cooperative are all full. Our bi-weekly herd health reviews have been impacted by the closure and we are waiting to hear what the Agriculture and Agri-Food Department research scientists are doing with the **400 hectares of fields** around us at the Central Experimental Farm -- to date we have only been able to frost seed 25 acres this spring. On this note, and adding insult to injury, it is still very cold here in Ottawa -- we have had snow the last two days! This means that the water is not being turned on in our night pastures so almost all of our animals are being turned out for fresh air and exercise on a daily rotation but have to be brought in every evening -- producing more work for our farm team.

To date in April we have made the decision to sell less than a dozen animals — although we may need to reduce our herds by much more if the closures extend through the summer months. We would like to keep as many of the breeds as possible for the re-opening which will not be happening until at least July 1. We have additional programming staff that are going in every second day to exercise and socialize the **livestock** so that they will not be stressed when we re-open to the public. We are obviously also aware that should there be a mass breakout of the virus in Ottawa and Gatineau we may not have enough healthy staff to keep all of these animals comfortable, which could force our hand in herd reduction. At this

point we have one more round of trained staff that is not currently allowed to go in to the farm to ensure that there is a fourth wave of animal caretakers. A major herd reduction could have long-term effects on our barn biosecurity and genetics so we are doing everything we can to keep a full range of biodiversity.

Finally, we are **monitoring news from Germany, Italy and China** where some museums have or are planning to welcome visitors again. To this end we have formed a "**Re-Opening**" **Task Force** which will be determining new occupancy limits, transaction and cleaning protocols, exhibition remediation to remove some hands-on interactives, promotion and public relations, etc. If any of you have a similar task force I would appreciate hearing about what your teams of experts have come up with. Closer to re-opening we will have additional working groups that will be tasked with logistics, new signage, site traffic control and more.

I am extremely proud to say that, so far, morale at CAFM has been relatively positive and staff have been diligent about supporting each other and turning in some excellent work. The fact that we have come up with a plan(s) to keep most of the animals and the farm operations going has made a big difference in the mental health and stress for our 30 employees. The **emotional and physical strain** on some of the staff has been immense and there have been some very tense moments. Almost at the same time it was heartwarming to have offers from our extended Ingenium family to do whatever it takes to keep the animals comfortable and the farm ready to reopen.

As one of the executives for Ingenium, we have **business continuity** and risk record calls three times a week (originally every day for the first month). I am very proud of my colleagues on the executive team and the entire staff as they have all rolled up their sleeves and, for many of them, are working long hours to support those staff being impacted with urgent family caregiving priorities at home.

I personally feel that this is a time for candour and wide open **transparency** as our agriculture museum struggles with the results of this global pandemic. My sincere hope is that this "sharing" helps AIMA members and your peers who may be living through similar challenges. **No one EVER said farming/agriculture was easy** -- but this has demonstrated a new level of perseverance and creativity at CAFM. As a museum community we have all excelled at bringing history to life. Now we are all museums LIVING history. Bon courage.

My sincere wishes that you and your museums stay healthy,

Kerry-Leigh Burchill, Director General, 25 April 2020





## Of aurochs and prestige... and bringing medieval wilderness to life again at Lauresham Open-Air Laboratory UNESCO World Heritage Site Kloster Lorsch



At the UNESCO World Heritage site Kloster Lorsch, Claus Kropp at the Lauresham Open-Air Laboratory and his team provide regular digital clip updates on their work, including the Aurochs Project to back-breed present-day cattle towards the aurochs which was hunted to extinction across Europe from the late Middle Ages on.



Here, Claus is showing how a replica of an aurochs drinking horn can explain techniques used in making such a luxury object to add to the status of a lord around 1100 C.E. The team has used fragments of metal fittings from archaeological finds as models to recreate this lordly object and record the process scientifically.



The Lauresham team is also using a large tract of land nearby for the back-breeding experiment which provides visitors with a look at how such large herbivores impacted the local environment at the time. You can follow all this in:

- ❖ an online **video clip** (“Of Aurochs and Prestige in the Early Middles Ages”), 6m13sec in German with English subtitles: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cZpheVOHsiQ>
- ❖ read about the **Aurochs Project** here (German and English): [www.auerrind.de](http://www.auerrind.de)



## First and foremost of our public CHILDREN The Polish National Agricultural Museum puts their animal stars online in their educational programme



The National Museum of Agriculture and Agricultural-Food Industry in Szreniawa, Poland (Muzeum Narodowe Rolnictwa i Przemysłu Rolno-Spożywczego w Szreniawie) is continuing their educational programme with a series of online video clips to accompany the children's "staying at home" workshop, in language they can understand by themselves.



Hektor, the Simmental ox, came to the museum when he was only a year and a half old, but is a great favourite with the public and works for his happy life there: first harnessed to a tractor tire, then to a treadmill, and now, he has gone on to field work. Unlike the regular human members of the museum staff, he does not have to sign in or commute, so he is pleased about that.



He weighs over a ton and is much larger than his grandparents, because of all the good food and loving care. Decorated with a wreath of flowers, he is one of the stars of the Pentecostal Festival (the *Poznań pyra*), and a special favourite of the children who visit the museum. Here, he is participating in the “work and fun at home” programme, then the following week, he will let Humana, a native Polish horse (the *konik polski*) take his place, so that one of the museum’s animals will be up online each week to meet the public.

Julia Hanulewicz, Educational Programmes.

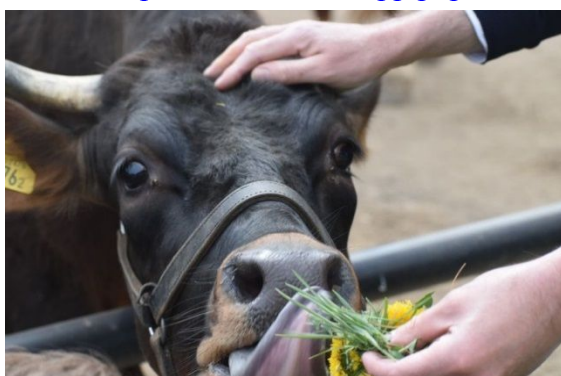
The series is available here: [http://www.muzeum-szreniawa.pl/imuzeum/web/app.php/vortal/menu/edukacja/aktualnosci\\_edukacyjne](http://www.muzeum-szreniawa.pl/imuzeum/web/app.php/vortal/menu/edukacja/aktualnosci_edukacyjne)

Meet Hektor here: <http://www.muzeum-szreniawa.pl/imuzeum/web/app.php/vortal/hektor.html>

Meet Humana (below and on the right, with Herezja) here: <http://www.muzeum-szreniawa.pl/imuzeum/web/app.php/vortal/humana.html>



Meet Mela of the Polish Red Cattle breed and her daughter Moli here: <http://www.muzeum-szreniawa.pl/imuzeum/web/app.php/vortal/mela.html>



This will be followed by a story, workshops and movie about the friendship between Kasia and Tosia (pony and donkey).



## Highland Folk Museum, Scotland “Covid-19 – impact and opportunities”



The Highland Folk Museum, situated in the north of Scotland, was scheduled to open to the public on the 1<sup>st</sup> of April and seasonal staff training and site preparation was in full swing, when, on the 27<sup>th</sup> of March, due to COVID-19, the site was closed. The permanent museum staff were moved to home-working and a wonderfully supportive WhatsApp group proved a life-saver in getting through the first few days, as well as keeping colleagues in touch as time has moved on.

With events and bookings being postponed, staff rose to the challenge of providing a service to researchers and visitors entirely in the digital realm. IT provision for the entire Highland Council and High Life Highland work-force was increased in a remarkably short time to allow access to email, back office systems and files, and the transition was both efficient and effective. Meetings have continued to take place, thanks to Skype and a very proactive attitude throughout the sector.

Our immediate thoughts went to increasing our presence online and, in addition to Facebook and Twitter posts, we put together a Mystery Object Quiz to run on a weekly basis for as long as necessary. We are also promoting the online learning support, exhibitions, talks, etc. provided by our sister organisations, Inverness Museum and Art Gallery and the Highland Archive Centre. “The Highland Folk Museum – An Aerial Tour” was made available from our website and on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qY1Jjr0FWaY>



We had planned to open a new building at the start of the season – a blacksmith’s workshop – the “Smiddy”. This was given a virtual introduction instead, with a new entry on our website <https://www.highlifehighland.com/highlandfolkmuseum/smiddy/>

Once it became apparent that the lock-down was going to continue for an extended period, the decision to take up the UK Government's Job Retention Scheme allowed High Life Highland – a charitable organisation – to furlough most of the workforce, maintaining a skeleton staff only. For the Museum, this transpired in the rapid development of training guides to enable one member of staff to carry out weekly maintenance checks, etc. and to keep in regular contact with furloughed colleagues on a health and well-being basis.



Care of our animals must continue as normal and our Stockmen have been continuing their normal daily shifts, with our sheep and ponies wondering where everyone has gone! The rabbits have taken full advantage of the peace and quiet and have been digging up the site without a care in the world.

A silver lining to the crisis has been the opportunity to work on our collections database. There is a large amount of data still to be input,

and various description glitches to iron out, and it has been great to have time to devote to this without any distractions.

The next hurdle will be planning changes to our site, in order to provide a safe yet accessible visitor experience once the lockdown ends and we can begin to get back to a new normal.



Liz English (moving the Stachle Stones! This was in preparation for building the Smiddy)



# MERL Museum of English Rural Life Reading



## Corona Virus- Museum Closed

Due to concerns about the spread of Corona Virus we have decided to close the museum completely for the foreseeable future.

We have had quite a busy time of it, despite being closed to the public. Some of this has been about swapping our meetings structure over to Microsoft Teams and making that effective. We have also been enhancing our digital presence.

The first area is already quite well known but our Digital Editor, Joe Vaughan has maintained our social media presence including getting worldwide interest by challenging followers to design a smock using a children's App called Animal Crossing (quite a few adults seem to enjoy that too). We passed 150,000 **Twitter** followers at the end of April.

<https://twitter.com/TheMERL>

### WHAT IS A SMOCK?

Smocks are worn over the wearer's clothes, as can be seen in this photograph of a young farm labourer in Norfolk. They are usually made from cotton, mostly twill weave, also known as 'drabbet', or linen. Most smocks are naturally coloured, ranging from creamy white to dark brown, although blue and green smocks are also found in the MERL's collections.

Smocks are largely recognisable by their smocking and embroidery. Although they vary in detail and skill, these elements provide decoration and comfort. Smocking provides stretch and ease of movement, allowing the smock to better fit the wearer.

MERL archive (ref. PDX1091/153)

**MORE INFO**



### SMOCKS AND THEIR USES

For centuries smocks were worn by rural agricultural labourers, protecting clothing from dirt, and providing additional protection against the weather.

Smocks were also worn for significant occasions, including funerals, weddings, and 'Sunday best'. 'Sunday best' smocks would usually be in addition to that used for working. They were often white, and dressed up with handkerchiefs and other decoration around the neck.

By the nineteenth century folk revival, smocks took on a romanticised role, featuring in cultural traditions such as folk dancing and literary representations of the rural idyll.

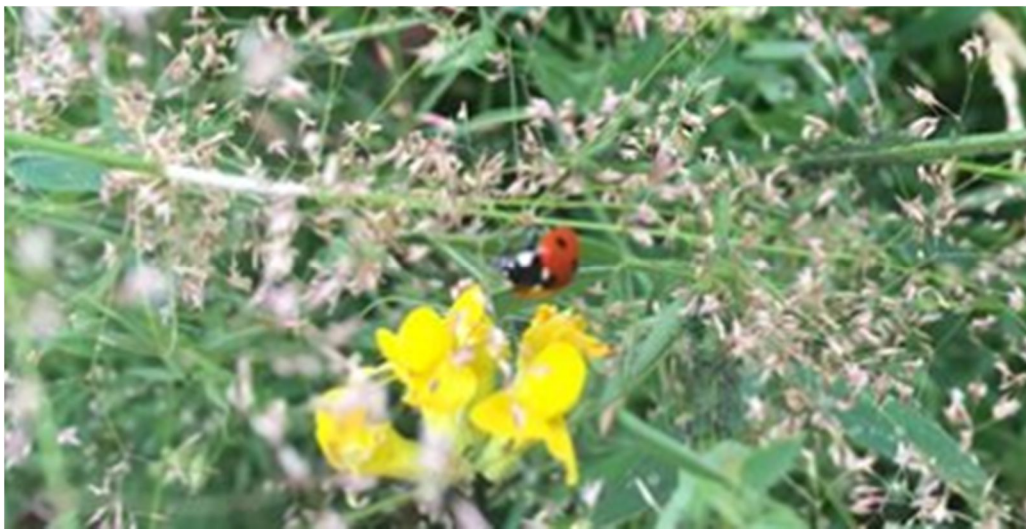
MERL Collections (object number: 64/21)



We have carried on enhancing the learning pages of our website. If we had been open, we would have been piloting a new learning offer for schools. We have carried on producing the online booking instructions and the resources to support visits <https://merl.reading.ac.uk/learn/schools-and-colleges/> and are now starting to work with teachers and some schools to trial some online learning sessions.



As you might expect, we had a full programme of activities for children and their families already planned. Some of this has been successfully moved over to something digital. For instance, our Forest School trained teacher, Charlotte Allchin, has started recording stories for little ones and her co-worker Fong Scott has created “making” activities that can be done remotely - this week on Ladybirds.



This activity is disseminated via **Facebook**

<https://www.facebook.com/MuseumofEnglishRuralLife/?eid=ARAdSirwIF8ZIZAYc64YgwVDTqFYCXiGxuI6RTUkznKGdJWpHFQY5MhdXZz0GXOaWl14KdieCnsJMfmZ>

Ollie has been working on content support activities like these. Here is something on object handling remotely, thinking about bee skeps <https://merl.reading.ac.uk/news-and-views/>

### **OBJECT-HANDLING AT HOME – THE BEE SKEP**



In this post our curator, Ollie Douglas, introduces us to bee skeps and helps us to explore their history, construction, and design. He describes some simple, hands-on ways for us to think and learn about how bee-keepers used to house their bees (all without having to leave our own homes). A bee skep is a [...]

These pages are blogposts. Ollie and his colleague, Collections Officer Maddie Ding, have been working on more online exhibitions <https://merl.reading.ac.uk/explore/online-exhibitions/>



THE COUNTRY SHOW: ARNHEL DE SERRA



#ANIMERLCROSSING: A GALLERY OF SMOCKS



LANDSCAPES OF STATE INDUSTRY

We are also just about to host an online seminar on landscape (it was originally going to be hosted at the Museum) <https://merl.reading.ac.uk/event/designing-landscapes-for-the-people-seminars-online/> We shall learn from the experience of exploring 20th-century city planning and civic design in this series of seminars organized by The MERL and the Friends of the Landscape Archive at Reading (FOLOR).



## DESIGNING LANDSCAPES FOR THE PEOPLE – FROM THE CLAPHAM OMNIBUS TO THE ROYAL PARKS

And you can follow Ollie Douglas, AIMA President, in two online films about the work and importance of the Rural Museums Network, a registered charity, aimed at promoting learning and encouraging a wider understanding of the UK's rural heritage. As a subject specialist network we provide access to collections development information and current research to support heritage sites working within related fields. There is a short version here <https://youtu.be/L7R7EUQcyok> and a longer one on their main website <http://www.ruralmuseums.org.uk/> Isabel M. Hughes, Curator of Collections & Engagement, MERL





## EXARC cancels and replaces its annual conference – going digital in a global crisis

# EXARC.net



Right: one of the reconstructed buildings at Museumsdorf (Museum Village) Düppel, Berlin, Germany, the congress host, introduced in the opening session by Director Julia Heeb

**#EXARCBerlin Cancelled, now going Live Online!**

The Covid-19 Pandemic makes a conference impossible. That is why we will not meet in Berlin but we will go digital! **#EXARCBerlin** will be an open access, free live event on March 26 & 27. The online conference is open to all, please spread the word and join us! The lectures will remain online after the conference.

AIMA has networked with EXARC for years and getting *Tools & Tillage* up online at HEIDI, Heidelberg University's online, free-access digital resource is a product of this alliance. Here are some highlights from the EXARC report on their innovative effort to hold the congress anyway, with nearly 75 people already registered to participate two weeks before the meeting at **Museumsdorf Düppel, Berlin**, was cancelled. The speakers stepped out of any known

comfort zone to pre-record their presentations, while some 15 volunteers stepped up to put in over 500 hours of work to enable posting the 20+ interventions on YouTube at <https://exarc.net/meetings/berlin>. Presenters came from or reported on work in Australia, Bulgaria, Denmark, France, Germany, Iran, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Romania, Saudi Arabia, the United Kingdom (Wales, England) and the United States. For the discussion interaction sessions, EXARC chose to use the platform DISCORD, which involved a steep learning curve for most of the EXARC folk, but it was able to accommodate around 200 participants and EXARC plans to move forward with this, for example, to put specialized workshops up online regularly, similar to the one on **Sustainable Development Goals** held during the digital congress.

AIMA member Leonore Scholze-Irrnitz (Humboldt University in Berlin) was to attend one of the two days of the congress to maintain AIMA's long association with EXARC through its Director, Roeland Paardekooper, and to meet EXARC Chair Pascale Barnes to sustain our contacts. Cozette Griffin-Kremer visited Düppel in 2017 and experienced the joys of the information centre, of the reconstructed buildings, their enthusiastic and expert demonstrators and the especially important **recreated environment** in and surrounding the site. Both of them "attended" the online congress and contributed to this report. The congress theme was

## Documentation Strategies in Open-air Museums

which would most particularly concern AIMA agricultural museums with any kind of historical or reconstructed buildings, demonstrations of period activities and skills, as well as museums with collections relating to these activities. This is the case in Düppel, which has demonstrations as diverse as pole-lathing, card-weaving or pitch-making, and the public can enjoy visits to the resident animals, local or endangered breeds, among them working oxen for the three-field system, attested there for the brief life of the settlement at the turn of the 12th to the 13th century.

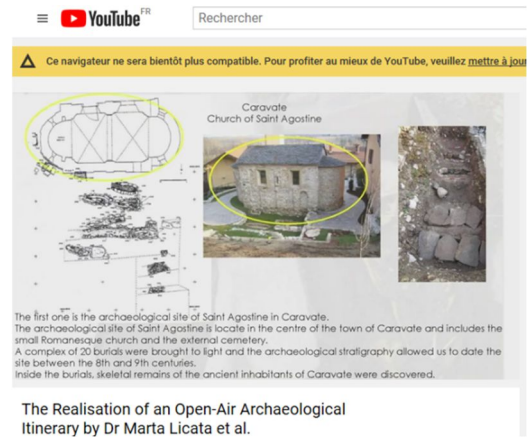
Playing now:



Left: EXARC Chair Pascale Barnes opening the EXARC 2020 digital congress; Right: Rüdiger Kelm's presentation highlights ICOM commitment to Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH)

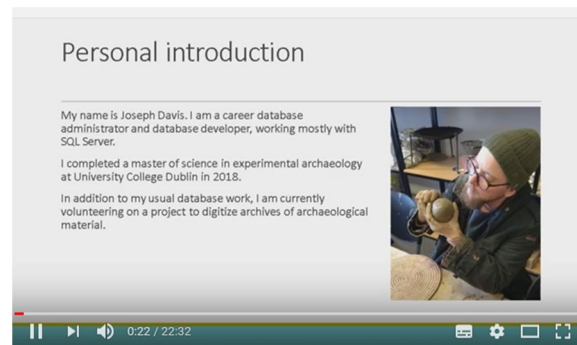
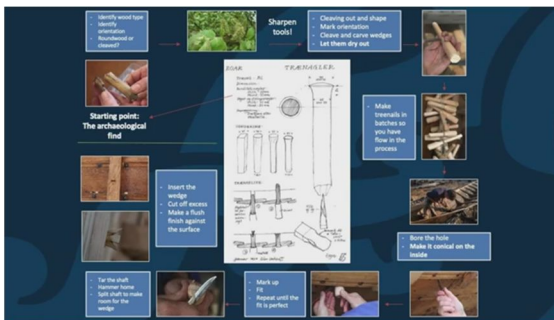
If you would like just a glance at the presentations, check out the WELCOME section with an introduction to the congress by Pascale Barnes, EXARC Chair, followed by Julia Heeb, Director of the Museum Village Düppel in Zehlendorf, just southwest of Berlin, and Rüdiger Kelm on **ICOM and Intangible Cultural Heritage** – all in just 20 minutes!

The fact that each presentation only debuted online at the precise time announced lent some real-life suspense to the digital congress. The presentations run in length from 5 minutes to a quarter of an hour and fell into various categories: video-captured on-site tours with the museum representative, virtual tours (with some spectacular technology), filmed interventions with the speaker and voice-over presentations. All of these worked very well and were complementary, lending an attractive change of rhythm to the two full afternoon programmes.



Left: touring Butser Farm with Trevor Creighton; Right: creating a whole regional tourism itinerary – NB many of these presentations linked to material already online for public access

Remember that **documenting processes and collections** is the central concern of the congress, so this was examined from various angles, for example, documenting a dwelling that was reconstructed and allowed to “decay” in order to set up guidelines and standardized protocol forms, or creating a documentation-sharing network to encourage best practices. As is the case for many AIMA member museums, the overall context in community service and tourism is emphasized in **innovative educational programming**, often online, or promoting an archaeological and historical site beside a living community anxious to welcome visitors and help them experience today’s regional culture, be it in Iran, Italy or Saudi Arabia. Some of the presentations are truly archaeology-oriented and fascinating, such as using taxonomy of ancient technologies to create a conceptual map enabling users to better understand the collection, or bridging between academic publication requirements and open-air museum practices, with special attention to experimentation that does not aim at publication, but is highly valuable to museum workers and volunteers. There was also emphasis on **education within museums**, how to insure transmission of skills and knowledge from one generation to another, as in ALHFAM’s development of its Skills Clips.



Reconstructing Skuldelev Ships: lessons learned

Left: ship reconstruction and sailing at Viking Ship Museum in Roskilde, Denmark; Right: how to build your very own relational archive database

There was a lot of very human testimony in these presentations, as from the independent museum woodworker deeply aware of the value of documenting lessons learned in a variety of museums, which should include workers who are both inside and outside the system. In another case of a museum specialized in **reconstructing and using** medieval sailing ships, experience has demonstrated that documenting at times funny, at times dangerous, failures is just as important as flagging up the successes.

We were both especially impressed with the emphasis on the museums that opt to **promote and employ craftspeople to insure the future of traditional skills** or fund in-depth skills training for their volunteers and demonstrators, even how to mourn the closing of an

appreciated museum and take on opening it up again under a new management scheme. And... there were several cutting-edge explorations of **digital technologies**, for example, how to set up a relational database or virtual tours of buildings that will never be reconstructed but that you can step into, through the virtual world.



Digital Saryazd, by Kristy-Lee Seaton (AU) and Miglena Raykovska (BG)



Of course, archaeological museums have to be taken into account a little differently than is the case, for example, in the agricultural-historical open-air museums. There was a particularly interesting emphasis on **environment** – the connection between natural foundations (geology, climate, tree and plant species) and the construction of buildings. In addition to the technological issues of construction, it is of particular interest to know what benefits this knowledge can also have for us in the present and to what extent it is **relevant** to today’s concerns about **sustainable development**. We may also ask what the unavailability of traditional materials and plant varieties has to say about the **changes in agriculture**.

In conclusion, we would like to highlight a particular case: the contribution from the Astra Open Air Museum in Romania and the question of how craftsmen can learn **traditional building techniques** again so that they can **also be used outside of museums**, a remarkable example of **outreach**. This was effectively linked to the invitation to debate how to deal with **cultural and social heritage** in a country shaped by so many different ethnic groups and their coexistence in past centuries. Communities were often broken up very recently by emigration that has left some villages literally crumbling, so that people have to re-organize their ideas about their origins, their heritage and their hopes for the future. These highly challenging subjects can be brought out by the most humble of examples, known in so many countries: straw from today’s grain crops no longer has the required stalk length to be used to do traditional thatching. This is an excellent way to start **debates on agriculture and the environment**. Why do you no longer need long stalks of grain, why are there fewer and fewer types of grain? What does the soil look like when a few varieties are grown regardless of the soil composition? Just some of the many questions the EXARC congress raised. Let’s join them in seeking answers.

Cozette Griffin-Kremer and Leonore Scholze-Irrlitz



# EXARC.net

## EXARC "call to arms": 5 great reasons to re-open your museum and networking on how to do it

### FIVE REASONS TO REOPEN MUSEUMS

				
<b>MUSEUMS ARE READY</b> (9 out of 10 museums report ready to open on May 10th)	<b>IT IS SAFE</b> (museums already have systems in place to regulate and handle public access)	<b>OUTDOOR AREAS</b> (many museums have large outdoor areas with enough space)	<b>SCHOOL PROGRAMS ARE ON DEMAND</b> (museums can offer learning activities for school children)	<b>EXPERIENCES</b> (it offers Danish people the possibility to leave home and get much needed experiences)

Source: Organisationen Danske Museer, 2020

An EXARC 'call to arms' to reevaluate and develop your Open-Air Museum's interpretation strategy

## Experience instead of Event: Changes in Open-Air Museums Post-Coronavirus

"The year 2020 started out for museums as usual, with plans for new exhibitions, new buildings even, and above all many events and visitors. Soon we saw how wrong we were. Open-air museums who had prepared to open up for the season found out that COVID-19 meant they were sitting ducks: no visitors, no income, no life in the museum area. The situation will not return to 'normal', we will have to think again about everything we were used to in our work. This article is an EXARC 'call to arms' to reevaluate and develop your Open-Air Museum's interpretation strategy."

### Editor's Note

Of course, EXARC is the association for experimental archaeology open-air museums, and it is a long-time networking partner for the AIMA and the ALHFAM. The EXARC team has already developed a deep-reaching series of proposals for thinking ahead to a potentially very different future for museums for which open-air activities are vital. Check out their detailed 2-part plan, including great emphasis on digital, here: <https://exarc.net/issue-2020-2/mm/experience-instead-event-Covid-19>





## Coronavirus may bring luck to bees and wildflowers

A quiet revolution may be underway in the United Kingdom, as coronavirus cuts into local councils manpower, funding and time – leaving many verges uncut in what conservations hope will be a long-term trend that will see rare wildflowers, declining pollinators, birds and bats recover. The verges are mini-meadows and among the last refuges for species devastated by conversion of natural meadows into farmland and housing estates. Verges are home to 700 species of wildflowers, nearly 45% of the UK's total flora, but this has usually been undermined by local councils mow-backs of roadside vegetation.

Obviously, there is no question of mowing back near junctions where good visibility is vital for road safety, but now, conservationists are hoping this “incident” in the pandemic could help shift opinion and public policies. The pandemic's unexpected effect will also be a considerable decline in road kill, which culls about 100,000 hedgehogs, 100,000 foxes, 50,000 badgers, 30,000 deer a year, as well as barn owls and many other species of bird and insect.

Jonathan Watts “Coronavirus may prove boost for UK's bees and rare wildflowers” in The Guardian online, 9 April 2020 <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/apr/09/coronavirus-may-prove-boost-for-uks-bees-and-rare-wildflowers>



## On the “verge” of a quiet revolution?



Sign indicating a protected area of verge in Northumberland UK, Author Er-nay, EN Wikipedia “Verge”, Creative Commons

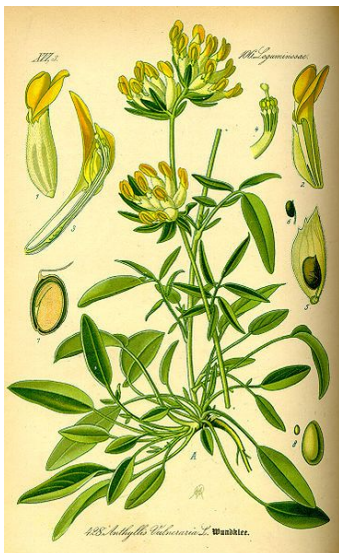
Worker buff-tailed bumblebee (*Bombus terrestris*), EN Wikipedia “Bumblebee” Author Alvesgaspar, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/User:Alvesgaspar>, Creative Commons

Wildflower meadows thrived for centuries with the help of traditional farming methods and livestock husbandry, but have largely vanished in the post-war era, and industrialised use of nitrogen fertilisers coupled with poor land management have diminished the crucial wildlife habitat by 97% since the 1930s.

This came to a head in the chaos of the 2014 summer when weather conditions caused a massive increase in vegetation for Dorset Council to fight, just when austerity measures made

the regular cut-back schedule nearly impossible, so the council just gave up.... and innovated, cutting two to three times a year instead of twelve and saving its taxpayers tens of thousands of pounds. The benefits are attracting attention from all over the country, from Europe and beyond. This mini-revolution underwriting a surge in biodiversity comes from applying the old principles of haymaking to verge management: cut twice a year in spring and late summer when plants have bloomed and seeded, remove the clippings to reduce the fertility of the soil and prevent a buildup of mulch.

Why? As fertility declines in a soil, biodiversity increases. At first this seems counterintuitive, but in more fertile systems, a few species dominate, so they swamp and smother everything else. The policy bears fruit in the council's accounting department as well - the annual budget for highway verge management dropped from nearly £1m to £650k in five years under the cut and collect, low fertility approach. Crucially, the plan to turn verges into wildlife corridors is also backed by the country's highways authorities and construction and services businesses and it is an unexpected boon to the conservation movement. For example, yellow clusters of kidney vetch, the only wildflower where the small blue, Britain's smallest butterfly, will lay its eggs, dominate the roadsides in the spring and summer, but the medicinal pea-like flowers' seeds can cost more than £2,000 a kilo from commercial providers. And this process is amazingly fast – half the species of butterfly in the UK can turn up on a road verge created less than 10 years ago.



Kidney vetch or woundwort (*Anthyllus vulneraria*) Thomé *Flora von Deutschland, Österreich und der Schweiz* 1885, Gera, Germany, public domain, EN Wikipedia “*Anthyllus vulneraria*”

Small blue (*Cupido minimus*) female, Cotley Hill, Wiltshire, Author Charles J. Sharp, Creative Commons, EN Wikipedia “Small blue” NB the small blue is not usually very blue...

There are technical innovations involved, as well. A company producing industry-standard machinery for vegetable washing, exported to every major agricultural economy, applied their expertise to designing machinery that would cut and collect the cuttings for delivery to an anaerobic digestion plant for conversion into biogas.

However, these innovations have hit a snag in technicalities: roadside verges are not being managed as a crop, so the cuttings are formally classified as waste. To continue the project, it may be necessary to purchase expensive new permits from the Environment Agency and invest thousands of pounds in upgrades to the anaerobic digestion plants. So... watch this page for coming developments.

Phoebe Weston and Patrick Greenfield “On the verge – a quiet roadside revolution” In The Guardian online 14 March 2020 <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/mar/14/on-the-verge-a-quiet-roadside-revolution-is-boosting-wildflowers-aoe>



## Share your experiences with us

Send your article for the Newsletter to Cozette Griffin-Kremer at [griffin.kremer@wanadoo.fr](mailto:griffin.kremer@wanadoo.fr)



*Convallaria majalis* L.

**Good Luck, Viel Glück, Buena Suerte,  
Bonne Chance, удачи**