

## JAMES CARTER - curriculum vitae and example projects

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**Higher Education** BA(Hons) English and Related Literature  
University of York, 1976

MSc Environmental Resources  
University of Salford, 1982.

### Professional qualifications and activity

I am a Fellow of the Association for Heritage Interpretation, the United Kingdom's professional body for interpreters. In 2015 I received the Association's inaugural Lifetime Achievement Award for contributions to the interpretation profession.

### Summary

I work on interpretation and visitor experience projects for cultural and natural heritage sites. I develop visitor experience and interpretation plans; write and edit copy for exhibitions, publications and websites; and run popular training events that give participants confidence and enthusiasm as well as new skills.

I have a particular interest in creative ways of engaging people with places and collections. My project work has included innovative site-based sculpture commissions as well as original, evocative writing. I have made a special study of the role of text in interpretation and have helped to establish standards of good practice in this field.

### Example projects

- **A new exhibition for the Tomintoul Museum, Cairngorms National Park.**  
The Tomintoul Museum re-opened in April 2018 as a community-run centre presenting the Tomintoul and Glenlivet area in the Cairngorms National Park. I researched and wrote the content for the exhibition, which covers the history of the area from its geological origins to the present day. I made extensive use of material from local people's experiences and memories, so that the display feels as much as possible like the 'voice' of the area.
- **Interpretation and visitor experience planning for the Gorges du Verdon, France.**  
For Europe's most spectacular gorge, a major tourism destination in a Natural Regional Park, I worked with my French colleague Catherine Cayre to develop proposals for visitor management that would improve the quality of the visitor experience and help to reduced peak-time overcrowding. We also planned a suite of interpretation proposals that will build on local expertise. All work was conducted in French, which I speak fluently.
- **Visitor Centre, area-wide trail and website for the Flows to the Future project, Caithness and Sutherland.**  
This major project is part of a wider scheme to restore and conserve the Flow Country, the vast expanse of blanket bog in the far north of Scotland. I planned and developed content for a new visitor centre display at Forsinard, for a series of

installations at roadside sites around the area that encourage tourists to explore, and for the project's website.

- **Visitor centres at Glen Tanar and the Muir of Dinnet National Nature Reserve, Cairngorms National Park.**  
These two visitor centres engage people in the unique stories of two very different sites. Glen Tanar is privately owned and has a long history of enlightened forest management; Muir of Dinnet, managed by Scottish Natural Heritage, is the site of one of Deeside's most popular landmarks. Both visitor centre exhibitions are written in a lively, engaging style and make creative use of language: at Glen Tanar I worked with a Doric writer to develop content in north-east Scots while at Muir of Dinnet I incorporated poetry by Sylvia Plath into a display about fungi.
- **Interpretation strategy development for the Cairngorms National Park.**  
Working closely with staff from the National Park Authority, I developed a series of key themes that can be used as a foundation for interpretation throughout the park. The themes are designed to allow the park's many different organisations and attractions to tell their own story while linking it to the park's unique identity and distinctive character. The themes built on findings from a series of consultative workshops, and I ran a further series of workshops to explore how different organisations might use them.
- **Interpretation planning and attraction development for the Argyll Mausoleum, Kilmun.**  
A community-based group has renovated the mausoleum of the Dukes of Argyll, which is next to the parish church at Kilmun on the Holy Loch. I planned and developed interpretation that includes outdoor panels, haiku-like texts engraved into paving around the church, and an exhibition within the lobby of the church itself. The exhibition tells Kilmun's story from prehistoric times to the present day, emphasising the church's continuing role at the centre of the community, and showcases artefacts found in the mausoleum. Research involved close liaison with members of the community group.
- **Overall text editor, Shetland Museum and McManus Art Gallery and Museum.**  
For these major museum re-development projects, I worked as overall editor for the main gallery texts. Staff from the museums' team sent me draft text, which I adapted to fit the required house style and ensure a consistent quality. I was also keen to ensure that individual stories had distinct identities. Both projects involved completing work in phases to a demanding timetable.
- **Interpretation planning, research, copy writing and photography for a smartphone app to interpret the Loch Leven Heritage Trail.**  
This app helps visitors explore a popular trail around Scotland's largest lowland loch. I researched and wrote all the app's content, covering over 35 features that range from the place where Mary Queen of Scots' escaped from prison to a bumblebee reserve, and contributed numerous photographs to be used in the descriptions.
- **New website content for Forestry Commission Scotland.**  
I managed a complete review of how all the Commission's recreation forests are described, ensuring a high standard of pre-visit information and a lively introduction to the key features of each destination.
- **Narrative based interpretation for trails around archaeological sites in Glentress Forest, Peebles.**  
These trails used an imaginative approach to evoke the lives of prehistoric people as a way to interpret sites that are hard for non-specialists to recognise or appreciate.

- **On-site panels and a micro-website for Glen Affric.**  
Celebrated as Scotland's most beautiful glen, Glen Affric is also an important area of Caledonian pine forest. I developed welcome and orientation panels for the major access points and trailside interpretation, all of which included innovative use of Gaelic text to reflect the area's heritage. I also developed a website that told the glen's stories in more detail.

### **Training and facilitation experience**

I am an experienced group facilitator and trainer, and often run participative workshops as part of my work on interpretation planning and development projects. I have worked with groups from tourism destinations, national parks, museums, nature reserves, and community heritage projects in the United Kingdom, Canada, Norway, France, Poland, Lithuania, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Italy and Uganda.

Examples of specific training events include:

- Developing the UK's first course on Writing Interpretation in 1993, which ran as an 'open' event for many years at a number of venues. I have since developed bespoke, in-house events on writing for many organisations, including:
  - Colchester and Ipswich Museums
  - English Heritage
  - Fife Museums
  - Forestry Commission Scotland
  - Highland Museums
  - National Library of Scotland
  - Newfoundland Heritage Service
  - Małopolsky Cultural Institute, Kraków, Poland
  - Museums Galleries Scotland
  - Stoke on Trent Museums
  - Swedish National Heritage Board
- Running a module on Interpretation for a group of 19 people from 19 different countries as part of the Conservation of the Built Heritage course at ICCROM, UNESCO's International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property.
- Running a workshop for the international Summer School on Cultural Landscapes at the Nida Art Colony, Lithuania, for participants from a wide range of heritage organisations.
- During the major re-development of Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum, and of the Riverside Museum in Glasgow, I ran a series of workshops for curatorial and interpretation staff. The workshops introduced the organisation's radical approach to interpretation and give staff confidence in working with it. The events included a substantial practical exercise with peer review.