

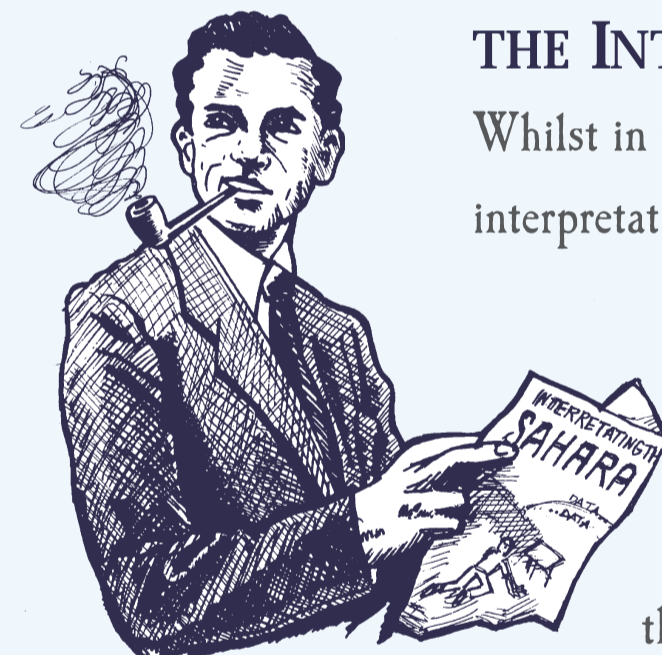
A History of the Interpretative Panel

Today we take our interpretative panels for granted, relying upon them for guidance and reassurance in a growingly uncertain world. Our ancestors, however, were not so lucky. In the days before interpretation, luckless travellers would wander around the countryside in an aimless and uninformed manner. Tourists lived in a constant state of confusion as to what they should

be looking at, and more importantly, what to think about it. Worse still, they were prone to engage with the countryside at a spiritual level, forming a sentimental impression of their landscape at the expense of an informed appreciation. Fortunately, such unruly behaviour is now rare, thanks to the high standards of intellectual comfort now provided by interpretative panels.

EARLY MISTAKES

Scott of the Antarctic perished only yards from an interpretative panel. Painted white to blend in with the local modality, its crucial directions to the nearest visitor centre, where the hapless explorer might have purchased plastic dinosaurs to burn as fuel, were completely missed. The disaster led Miss Melanine Perstorp-Wainwright to campaign for higher profile panels, heralding a new era in high-visibility amenity heritage.



THE INTERPRETATIVE WRITER

Whilst in reality any old text will do, a true interpretative panel will contain copy written by specialised interpretative writers. These highly intelligent beings combine erudition with brevity, ensuring maximal visitor orientation in the precious seconds between bus tours.



THE HIGHLAND QUANGO

Quangoes proliferate in the Scottish Highlands and have come to be regarded as a serious pest. Fiercely territorial, quangoes cause a great deal of unwanted interpretation. Attempts to check their growth have proven futile, and it is estimated that by the year 2010, most of Scotland will have been needlessly explained.



THE BIG GREY MAN OF BEN MACDUI

Originally employed by the Great White Brotherhood to guard the secret entrance to Hohlweltlehre, the Grey Man is a fine example of a third-generation Interpretative Guide. Diverted from scaring off intruders with unearthly apparitions, he now provides passing tourists with advice ranging from the history of progressive rock to fish farming.

Some Interpretative Panels

THE INTERPRETATIVE WALK AT DUBH LOCH

The fact that most visitors will have no idea what the word 'interpretative' means doesn't seem to have prevented it being routed in eight inch high letters into a huge plank of wood. This sign has caused much confusion, particularly amongst foreign visitors looking for an interpreter.



THE PSEUDO-CAIRN AT FORT WADE

Purporting to appear older than the monument it describes, this instructive cairn is both discreet and durable. Key information is etched on a steel escutcheon and rag-bolted into concrete mortar, a process perfected by the Arabic alchemist Jabir in around 750 a.d. Unfortunately, proximity to a nearby bird sanctuary necessitates regular cleaning.



THE MENHIR OF BADENOCH

Adopting the 'Standing Stone' vernacular, this panel is unique in that it lies at the nexus of two drove roads, three ley lines, a cycle path and a gas pipeline. Logo count: 7 (Pict format)

