

YOUR PLACE OR MINE? Landscapes of Contestation



Plate 7: Megaliths at the rear of the Great Barn.

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YOUR PLACE OR MINE? Landscapes of Contestation

Avebury and its various adherents lay claim to an eclectic heritage. Between them they create a multi-faceted Avebury landscape, a tapestry of rich and interwoven pasts and presents. Although variable in nature and degree of priority, it is clear that the residents of Avebury, whether newcomers or oldtimers, place value on the stones, henge and the surrounding monumental features. These elements are variably conceived, contextualised, and contested in a multi-vocal and deeply storied landscape. Within this conceptual framework, places and landscapes act as loci of articulated social relations and discourses (Schein 1997: 675). What emerges, however, is a power struggle in which certain narratives are given precedence and ideas of ‘local culture’ become contested in more global debates.

For many the major Avebury narrative is found in the telling of the Neolithic story, with an attempt to understand how the people of that time related to their ritual landscape. Emerging from this story is the significance of the monuments as a sacred landscape to a more contemporary community. For others, the landscape is read as more recent and lived history. The stories are not themselves conflicting – in fact they are complementary. The contestation arrives in the attribution of ‘significance’ and the privileging of one set of value judgments over another, resulting in a conflict between Avebury as a lived and remembered environment, Avebury as a collection of Neolithic (archaeological) monuments, and Avebury as a sacred site. The last two find common ground in their ideological rejection of the village and its community as distractions that prevent an authentic appreciation of either the sacredness or ‘Neolithic-ness’ of the landscape.

The preceding chapter has explored the heritage ‘re-creation’ of Avebury and its transformation over time into an internationally significant archaeological site. The following discussion is concerned with how the different attributions of significance

by archaeologists and the Avebury villagers have created conflictual landscapes. It is hence only peripherally involved with Avebury as a contemporary sacred site and the meanings that are given to it by various New-Age spiritual communities, including Druids, and others who come to the henge for either individual or communal ritual purposes.⁶⁴ However, many of the emotions and attachments that are revealed in the villagers' expressions of place and belonging can be considered to be of a spiritual nature.

'Our' Avebury – Oldtimers and Newcomers

Although the Avebury community is socially diverse, one of the main distinctions is that between 'old families', who have lived in the village for several generations (some much longer), and the more recent arrivals. It is not uncommon to hear the former refer to the latter as 'blow-ins'. This distinction has also been identified by J. Edwards (1998: 148, 156) in her discussion of 'Alltown' in north-west England. A similar distinction between oldtimers and newcomers is found at Magnetic Island (Chapter 6). There is commonality with the way both newcomers and established residents enact similar idioms of belonging and community, in describing the village and their place in it. They value different forms of sociability, display different modes of attachment to 'the community' and differentiate themselves from each other, but the raw materials of belonging and not belonging, and the process of constructing them, are similar (see Strathern 1982: 248).

At Avebury, a distinction is also made within the 'old' families: residents of Big Avebury consider their part of the village to be 'Avebury' while Little Avebury is simply referred to as 'Trusloe', that is, it is not 'Avebury'. One Little Avebury resident, a woman who retired there some 30 years ago, suggests that this is one of the 'interesting' features of the village and part of the ongoing struggle to keep Avebury

⁶⁴ Many of the issues have been taken up in the debates surrounding Stonehenge as a site of contemporary religious attachment, particularly those that relate to the conflict between these meanings and the management of Stonehenge as a significant heritage place. Archaeologists as members of the academic establishment have become the 'official' voice, and through their discourse often repudiate the alternative histories and theories presented by New Agers or other 'undesirable' groups, creating a socially devoid view of the past that panders to 'modern conservative sensibilities' (Bender 1995b: 270–271, 276; O'Regan 1994: 99; see also Caftanzoglou 2001: 25; Rowlands 1994: 140–141).

together as one village and not two separate settlements. Her belief is that this is compounded by the comings and goings of new residents, and that there is a need to 'persuade the "immigrants" to settle-in and Old Avebury to accept the "blow-ins"'.

... the New Arrivals

The 'newcomers', those who perhaps are best identified as arriving in their adulthood, can and do share similar feelings and concerns for the community as a source of identity and belonging. However, this group is extremely variable in terms of length of residence, some arriving over 20 years ago, and others as recently as the last 5 years. My preliminary explorations of village life suggest that at these two extremes, the longer term residents more closely share a set of concerns and interests in the village with the old families than with the more recent arrivals. Due to time constraints, I therefore chose to work more closely with the long-term residents, whether or not they were born in Avebury. Hence, those I spoke with were commonly residents of 20 years or more, or came from families who had been resident in Avebury for multiple generations. For the purposes of this discussion I consider 'oldtimer' villagers to include both these groups, but where relevant I have distinguished those who were born in the village as being from multi-generational or 'old' families. I acknowledge, however, that some members of old families still consider many long-term residents to be 'newcomers', and would not necessarily be comfortable with my choice of grouping.

By focussing on the long-term residents, I am not able to comprehensively discuss the formation of attachments and sense of place of recent arrivals to the village community. However, an analysis of conversations and interviews with other villagers and individuals involved in various ways with Avebury, and of material available in assorted media, allows some broad comment. In particular, there is a sense that the more recently arrived residents are far more focussed and active than the older villagers on matters concerning the conservation of Avebury's Neolithic heritage. That is, the significance they place on the Avebury landscape engages more closely with the primary heritage discourse: Avebury as an iconic archaeological site and

Neolithic landscape.⁶⁵ This is perhaps not surprising in consideration of the simple difference between choosing to move to a place that is World Heritage listed and living in a place that subsequently attracts World Heritage status. Although there are multiple factors, one result is that newer residents do not necessarily place the same priorities on more recent aspects of Avebury's past as do the longer-term residents, leading to sometimes conflicting views and opinions between the two groups.

However, it is important to not conflate a concern for Avebury's Neolithic heritage with a desire to move to Avebury – either as home owner or tenant. As I discussed in the previous chapter, the principal motive appears to be that Avebury is an attractive rural village, located in a visually appealing landscape, and geographically well placed in terms of accessing larger centres. And when the village is not overrun with tourists, it is a very peaceful place to live. In this sense, those who profess an attraction to Avebury as a place of calm that promotes a sense of wellbeing, ground such feelings in the village and its greater environment as 'home', not in expressions of the 'stones' as a centre of Neolithic experience or spiritual bonding. Aesthetics and rurality are expressed as pre-eminent factors in the decision to live in Avebury, not some sort of accrued kudos or attraction to living in a World Heritage site. In short, for the most part people move to Avebury to 'live' in a pleasant place, not because they attach sacredness to the stone circle, or want to participate in a heritage experience or because they want to protect its heritage values. The latter appears to become a greater imperative upon moving to the village and to arise out of a sense of 'being in place' and newly established assertions of ownership.

One Little Avebury resident of 30 years, a woman now in her eighties, chose to retire to Avebury because it was close to a family member, she had friends living in the village, and she found a cottage she really liked: '...not because of Avebury's heritage ... if I knew then what I know now about the heritage issues I may not have even bought here'. Another 'newcomer', who retired to Avebury with his wife 20 years ago, recounted a story of a recurring dream of a truck lay-by: when they drove to

⁶⁵ It is not possible within the scope of the current discussion to investigate the extremely interesting connection between engagement with prevailing heritage discourses (both global and domestic) and socio-economic status that could be suggested in this instance.

Avebury in response to a sale notice, they pulled into a lay-by that he 'knew' from his dream landscape. He recognised it then as one he had stopped at many years before. They came back several times to visit the Avebury house before they finally bought it, but he feels that there was a sense of knowing this was the 'right place'. Both he and his wife assert that the final decision had nothing to do with the henge or stones.

It is therefore of interest to note the interpretation of the attraction of Avebury for more recent arrivals. There is a belief expressed by some 'old' villagers that newcomers are indeed 'drawn by the stones', not in a spiritual sense but in one redolent of status aspirations. A woman from Little Avebury, whose family has lived in the village for generations, is convinced that the attraction lies in an 'elitist' view of the heritage attributes of the village:

The majority of children in the village school don't come from the village or even around ... because of changes in education restrictions to catchment areas ... [because] newcomers too, see Avebury has having some kudos because it is in spitting distance of a heritage place and it's got a bit of snob value.

The same resident suggests: 'It's the elitists who are interested in the archaeology ... the locals are interested in the folk history, but we are very proud of the stones [and] many like to go walking and collect things [coins etc.] and know lots about them'.⁶⁶ Similar although less strong views are expressed by other villagers, but there is certainly an underlying bemusement with expressions of visitor resentment by those who have recently moved to the village. In the words of a resident of some 20 years: 'Many have moved here recently and then complain about their privacy being compromised ... so why move here in the first place?' The villagers are not the only

⁶⁶ A woman who does not live in the village but has worked at both the Avebury museums and the shop agreed that the villagers were less likely to participate in any archaeological investigations: 'short of a bit of a look, the villagers didn't get involved ... the villagers would visit and chat but locals from other villages did work as volunteers'. This is reiterated by a member of the executive of the Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Society, who noted that the keen volunteers mostly came from residents of surrounding villages. National Trust officers also confirm that the Trust volunteers were rarely Avebury village residents. However, this should not be construed as a rejection of archaeological work: in December 2002 a village meeting to discuss a proposed excavation project was well attended and although several abstained from voting, the rest were unanimously in favour (B. Edwards pers. comm. 16/12/02).

ones to ask this question: an archaeologist who works with the National Trust at Avebury expresses a similar perplexity.

In her discussion of a London-based location, Jacobs (1996: 72–73) suggests that heritage designations can give material form and precedence to certain notions of place-based character. As a consequence, ideas of the Self and Other are variously interpreted in the public domain and the material landscape through the making of heritage. Further, the struggles that emerge can create conflictual identity politics, which in a place such as Avebury can result in various interest groups mobilising often contradictory interpretations of ‘villagehood’ and what constitutes the ‘rightful’ village community. A. Cohen (1985: 13) argues that people become conscious of community through a perceptual encapsulation of its boundary, and that those boundaries, although flexible, are pre-eminently constituted by the interaction of individuals and groups. The result can be an antagonistic discursive terrain in which recalcitrant ideas of ‘true’ villager are expressed, and new values and prioritisations emerge. The antagonism is manifest in comments such as those that assert that 20 or 30 years ago (before the arrival of the ‘newcomers’) Avebury was a ‘nice’ village, where everyone knew each other. Moore (1997:3) points out that such ‘claims to authentic voice and the appeals to demarcated identities linked to distinctive narratives of experience’ can be essential political strategies (and see Oclave 2004).

... the Oldtimers

By indicating that more recent residents give greater priority to the protection of the Avebury Neolithic heritage, I do not imply that the long-term residents do not value the stones and other features that characterise their physical landscape. The incident in 1998 when two of the megaliths were daubed with red paint is noted by many as a cause for outrage: ‘even some of the not so vocal villagers were saying “how could they do this to OUR stones”’. The concern was compounded by fears that the techniques used to remove the paint were intrinsically unsafe and that the National Trust was not showing ‘due care’.

A more recent outpouring of indignation was precipitated by the screening in late 2002 on BBC2 of the episode of 'Time Flyers: the Lost Avenue'.⁶⁷ The on-screen endeavours of a group of archaeologists to burn a sarsen stone in a field near Avebury (on land owned by a well-known local archaeologist) has engendered an emotional response. The intent of a controlled 'archaeological' experiment to show how sarsens may have been broken up in the past for removal and/or re-use is judged by some to be little more than archaeological vandalism. The response from the community reinforces the dissonance between different knowledge systems and discourses, in this case that of archaeology and the local community. In the face of community outrage, the archaeologists involved with the program defend their actions as 'a way of seriously supporting archaeology and making it accessible to the public', noting that the sarsen that was destroyed had no archaeological significance and had 'nothing to do with the prehistoric monuments', and 'it was just a stone of no archaeological, historical, geological or environmental significance'. There is little ground given in this list to acknowledge that contemporary community significance has a place in the debate.

A more spiritual understanding of the stones is found in the following comments from a long-term resident in the Avebury High Street:

The stones are lovely and have a life of their own. Most of the visitors to our B&B come because of the stones and because they find it a peaceful and special place. It is a special place and it is suffering, and the community is very concerned that it is suffering ... much concern is about the lack of care of the monument – the guardian stone is still surrounded by ugly fencing and there is lots of erosion.

The attribution of Neolithic and archaeological significance is but one layer of meaning in a broader experience of landscape and place. Belonging is reinforced through a shared history, for many through the stories and experiences of growing up in Avebury. The Neolithic elements are important, not necessarily because they are

⁶⁷ 'Time Flyers' is a series based on archaeology that takes an active approach to 'reconstructing' various aspects of the past to explicate, for example, various techniques and practices. The discussion on the BBC interactive website, which solicits comment from the public and allows for on-line responses, is volatile to say the least (see www.bbc.co.uk/print/pressoffice/stories/2002/10_october/10/timeflyers, accessed 18/12/02).

5000 years old, but because they are entangled with the villagers' personal lived history.⁶⁸ The story of the stones as sacred features in an ancient landscape is secondary to narratives that reinvent them as a playground where children clambered, slid and played hide-and-seek, and in winter tobogganed into the ditches of the henge. In this way the past and present can be imagined as sensed, tactile places that remember and haunt, where 'the past just comes to people out roaming' (Stewart 1996: 148). The emotional responses engendered by damage to the stones, as discussed above, are hence reactions to threats to places of personal and community attachment and ownership: their 'value' is enhanced by their contribution to a broader landscape of lived experience and shared histories.⁶⁹

Us vs Them: the Creation of Distinctions

Distinctions variously appear and disappear along the divisions of Avebury resident versus outsider, oldtimer versus new residents, or Little Avebury residents versus Big Avebury. de Certeau (1984: 58) suggests that 'habitus' as an assumed reality that allows an interpretation of observed facts is achieved through contrast with a foreign element (the other) to reinforce ideas of coherence, stability, unconsciousness and territoriality. The appearance of reality arises through the dwelling 'as a silent and determining memory'. Avebury is subject to the influences of strategically constructed versions of both 'the other' and of reality that depend on time and context and on variously legitimated assertions of authenticity and ownership. Depending on the context, the villagers create alliances that can be either inclusive or exclusive, relying as much on a sense of sameness as on one of opposition. The villagers, while united in a shared sense of dwelling, are separated by disparate memories that variously interpret aspects of past experience. It is not surprising that the resultant realities, attachments and 'territories' are equally dissonant.

⁶⁸ The general attitude of the 'locals' in giving greater significance to landscape qualities than 'icon' values is echoed in Okely's (1997) work in 'Constable Country' in northern East Anglia. As well as finding that that the rural landscape reality was far less 'traditional' than certain public representations would suggest, she noted that 'the icon of rural England is no more respected by the farmers than some piece of scrubland elsewhere' (1997: 198).

⁶⁹ This is not to presuppose that more 'recent' images of the landscape are themselves authentic, non-mythologised renditions of the historical countryside. The impact of the 18th and 19th century enclosures, for example, changed the landscape considerably from its earlier forms (see Frake 1996a).

One way of delineating identities is through decisions of difference, and using this difference to form and maintain group boundaries. Consequently, thinking about identity must also entail thinking about 'sameness', although recognising that identity and sameness are different things. The processes of identification and differentiation are variously engaged through the desire to belong and be part of some community, even if this is no more than provisional (Moore 1994: 1–2). Moore suggests that the experiences of situations that recognise difference are dependent on 'a variety of locations and positions that are constructed socially, that is, intersubjectively' where that intersubjectivity is inseparable from identifications and recognitions (ibid: 3). One indicator of 'sameness' is that of being an 'Avebury villager': that is, of simply being a resident of the village. Friedman (1997: 286) describes a village as a unit bounded from the rest of the world by the social practice of 'villagehood'. Villagehood creates a practised and reproduced place, defined against the rest of the world yet inseparable from the flow of various categories of outsiders in and out of the village and of political, economic and social contacts. However, at Avebury, the bonds of villagehood are readily strained by conflicting assertions of how the village is valued and hence created as a place of belonging.

Tuan (1979: 166–167) describes the relationship between village, landscape, place and community:

To the casual visitor the limits of the village domain are not evident in the landscape. The villages themselves are evident, each surrounded by an apron of fields. To the local people, sense of place is promoted not only by their settlement's physical circumscription in space; an awareness of other settlements and rivalry with them significantly enhance the feeling of uniqueness and identity ... the casual observer may conclude that the village is one place, a unified community conscious of its identity vis-à-vis neighbouring communities. This is true, yet the village itself is divided. Egoism and contentious pride exist within each settlement, as well as between settlements ... however, they promote a conscious sense of self and of the things associated with self, including home and locality.

Strathern (1982: 249) asserts that it is this 'sense of belonging', and not the practices, local customs, ways of speaking and so on, that primarily serves to create community consciousness of distinctiveness, and hence conceptualise a 'village' as a discrete

entity from other villages around. The following section looks more closely at the way in which the longer-term villagers assert their sense of distinctiveness and create Avebury as 'their place' in the face of the encroachment of both heritage managers and 'newcomers'.

Let's go A'wassailing: up on the Ridgeway and down at the Manor

The last 25 or so years have seen several contentious issues arise in Avebury: some have engendered a divided response from the villagers that variously conflict with or support the interests of the heritage managers of the Avebury WHS. In so doing, they illustrate the diverging priorities of place that broadly separate the attachments and values of the oldtime villagers from those of the newcomers. For the most part these have been development related and revolved around the propriety of introducing commercial ventures (and physical interventions) into the WHS.

During my fieldwork, three particular issues were identified by various villagers as causing a degree of concern. In each case there remains the perception by some that the interests of the villagers were considered as secondary to dominant heritage interests. Two relate to commercial developments: a restaurant on the Ridgeway and the transformation of Avebury Manor into a tourist attraction. Both were tourist related, and on one hand deemed to threaten the archaeological and landscape values of the WHS. Lord Kennet, commenting in the House of Lords, expressed his opinion that if either proposal had been allowed to go ahead, it would have altered the character of Avebury to such an extent that its World Heritage Status would have been compromised so that Avebury could have been struck off the World Heritage List (Ucko et al. 1991: 256). On the other hand there were perceived advantages in improved services for visitors, increased tourist income and job opportunities in the village. The third issue related to the use of the Great Barn as a museum facility, and its 'appropriation' by the National Trust to reinforce the Neolithic and archaeological message of Avebury. It should not, however, be concluded that all proposals had the same set of detractors and supporters.

The Ridgeway

In the late 1980s a development proposal was put forward to construct the New Ridgeway Restaurant and Hostel. Although a design brief that sought to adhere to 'stone age' styles could not possibly avoid differing responses to its aesthetic, its mere presence in the WHS was deemed unsympathetic to the heritage values of the site. One group of locals convened a protest group 'SOS' (Save our Skyline) reinforcing one objection that the development location would visually disrupt the landscape. As reported in the *Wiltshire Gazette and Herald* (19/11/87) a Kennet District Councillor 'described the proposed "stone age" buildings ... as an extremely novel and new concept'. Avebury villagers, quoted in the same article, were split on the matter:

I think the idea excellent and the facilities are needed in this area. It will not be as much of an eyesore as some other things in the district ... it will also bring employment to the village. (Jane Lees, Avebury Parish Councillor, second generation resident)

I can see the merits of the scheme but we cannot sell out heritage for the sake of a few jobs. (John Cronk, Avebury Parish Councillor, resident of 20 years)

Although the Parish Council agreed to object to the plans, there is mixed feeling among the Avebury villagers. (Betty Hunter, Avebury Parish Council Chair, resident of 30 years)

The downs have been like they are for hundreds and hundreds of years. This proposal might be superb in the middle of the West Swindon expansion area but people come to Avebury *to see the past and not the present*. (Richard Fry, Avebury Parish Councillor, newcomer resident, italics added)

In a later article in the *Marlborough Times* (27/11/87), Fry is quoted again:

If these buildings are allowed, our grandchildren are going to say 'who on earth allowed this to happen on our untouched Downs?' I have been approached by many villagers and they all object.

The letters to the Editor of the *Marlborough Times* that followed indicate a mixed reaction of local support and objection to the project. These range from assertions that the project 'would be an act of desecration' to the heritage and visual landscape values of the place (26/11/87) to seeing 'great advantage in such a proposal' (19/11/87). There are various reports of numbers of villagers for and against the proposal. The

controversy was heightened when the Kennet District Council planning committee voted against the project, the *Wiltshire Times* (22/1/88) reporting that the list of objectors 'read like a Who's Who of archaeological organisations'. Three days later a full meeting of the Kennet District Council overturned the planners' recommendation, only to have the application called in by the Secretary of the Environment. Following a public enquiry later in 1988, the application was finally refused.⁷⁰

Following in the footsteps of Lord Avebury and Keiller, the National Trust stepped in to avert a similar future threat and bought the Ridgeway site. This followed a purchase the previous year of 480 acres between the Ridgeway, the Sanctuary and Avebury. This made it 'a real possibility to implement Keiller's original concept of continuity with prehistory by means of present-day walks and control of the archaeological landscape' (Ucko et al. 1991: 256).⁷¹

Avebury Manor

Meanwhile, in April 1988, Avebury Manor (plate 8) had been bought by Mr Ken King, a builder from Hertfordshire, for close to £1 million. The *Marlborough Times* (22/4/88) was unaware of the irony of their report that he 'has plans to restore the house to its former glory as a private residence. It will be continued to be opened to the public, as has been traditional since 1957'. King's intent was to develop the Manor as a tourist attraction, which he referred to as a 'period presentation' but came to be referred to by its detractors as a 'Tudor Theme Park'. His project created a major division within the village, became the subject of a lengthy series of planning appeals, and received media coverage not only in the newspapers (regional and national) but also through a dedicated television documentary. His subsequent bankruptcy and the failure of the Manor project was heralded as a victory for heritage campaigners, and mourned by a number of Avebury villagers. Avebury Manor has subsequently been

⁷⁰ Another 'threat' loomed at the same time as the Ridgeway was being saved: a multi-purpose development, including a luxury hotel, at the West Kennet Farm, a Grade 2 listed building. Apart from impacts on more recent cultural material, the new complex would partially overlie a recently discovered palisaded enclosure site, dated to around 2000 BC. The development did not receive planning approval.

⁷¹ Following these acquisitions and that of Avebury Manor, the Trusts landholding had increased from 912 to 1546 acres by 1994 (Gingell 1996: 2).

bought by the National Trust, and in the words of one villager has been subject to a 'Trustification' makeover.⁷²

The community dissonance was evident in the opposition between a loud local group (which included some residents) and residents 'born and bred' in the village who supported the proposal (see also Wheatley 1997: 30). 'Ownership' was clearly one of the issues raised in the debate, as were charges of elitism and the power differences implicated in a perceived class struggle.⁷³ The issues involved are multifaceted, and include frustration with bureaucratic processes and the inadequacy of enforcement mechanisms, and the privileging of one period of history over another. There were debates regarding variations in 'taste': for example, a High Street Resident was reported in the *Wiltshire Gazette* (3/11/88) as saying 'I can't see that it will help Avebury to have Elizabethan wenchers and an adventure playground which will attract the beef-burger brigade'. Other concerns revolved around the 'right' way to present history. Frake (1996a: 105), in a discussion of the Norfolk countryside makes the valid point that there are considerable differences of interest among visitors to the countryside: while some are attracted by the appeal of the 'natural' and cultivated landscapes, others are attracted by available amusement arcades or venues 'for continuous beer-guzzling'. Although visitor 'satisfaction' is not a topic that can be covered in this thesis, it should be anticipated that a proportion of visitors to Avebury would have been interested in medieval frolics and ancillary diversions. However, at the heart of the debate was the determination of what was an appropriate 'approach' to heritage.

⁷² The heritage significance of Avebury Manor, a Grade 1 listed building, is identified in the National Trust report (1997: 17): 'The manor is important both for its landscape links with the henge monument and village and for its historical connection with past management and, in this century, restoration of the monument. In its own right it is also a microcosm of the historical development of Avebury and contains fine architectural detail and garden design of some importance. Both park and garden contain important mediaeval features from sites of former fishponds and village to standing walls. The house itself, now dated largely to pre-1548, has good but much restored interior detail, with both C18 and C20 remodelling leaving some important earlier work in situ. It was acquired without furnishings largely because of its importance to Avebury.'

⁷³ See Bender (1992, 1995b). Bender (1995b: 245) discusses the way the perceived historical rootedness of the English landscape has otherwise hidden a 'proprietary palimpsest' created by a history of class relationships.

Various reports and comments on the Manor House development proposal are available (for example see Ucko et al. 1991: 256) but the general intent was to create a 'unique Elizabethan experience' that would include strategically placed wax figures, a torture chamber and falconry, and a rose and herb centre. There were plans to provide armour for children's dress-ups, jousting tournaments, strolling minstrels and bards. To service the clientele, it was also planned to build a licensed restaurant, tea rooms, gift shop and car park. King spent something in the order of £1 million in a program of works that were mostly undertaken without gaining the appropriate local government permits. Despite unfinished work, and stop-work orders hanging over certain aspects of the project, he opened the Manor over Easter in 1989.

As with the Ridgeway development, the local press recorded varying levels of local support:

Tourist War Rocks Village to its Stones: The 100 inhabitants of a Wiltshire hamlet, besieged in a circle of prehistoric stones, yesterday moved deeper into civil war brought on by an excess of history ... an invasion [of visitors] that will shake the 4000 year old stones to their very foundation ... objectors claimed that [Ken King's] plans are incompatible with Avebury's tranquil image ... meanwhile, the villagers of Avebury are bitterly split. The 'antis' say that the extra 70,000 visitors a year to the manor would be intolerable ... the 'pros' talked of 'snooty blow-ins' who wanted the village to themselves. (*Sunday Times* 20/11/88)

This week saw the foundation of a new pressure group 'Avebury in Danger' with the express aim of preserving a unique combination of living village and World Heritage Site from the acute threat of commercial exploitation ... 'the standard of visitors to Avebury will drop'. (*Wiltshire Gazette* 2/11/88; quote attributed to Sir Hugh Jones, a then recent arrival to the village)

Manor Proposal Splits Village: ... retired jack-of-all-trades Frank Fishlock who has lived in Avebury for 13 years says it is time to accept change ... 'I started a petition to support the proposals and have collected 157 signatures'. He says that most opposition comes from those who have only recently come to Avebury. (*Wiltshire Gazette* 22/12/88)

Just a Stone's Throw Away: There is something of a civil war in Avebury ... the two sides have barely reconcilable visions of heritage. (*The Times*, 6/1/89)

Some critics have only recently become associated with Avebury; they are comfortably retired, find it a prestigious place to live or just sleep here ... Sadly the cottages were pulled down [and after the war] the destruction went

on (even in the time of a new approach to antiquities). Three parts of the village have been destroyed for the restoration of the monuments ... the Knowles family was the first to open the Manor to visitors (no-one complained, but then, Sir Francis was a baronet). The current plans for the Manor will save it – strong feelings favour a little enterprise to revitalise the village ... many have lived here for generations and are likely to remain. (Letter to the Editor, *Wiltshire Gazette* 12/1/89, Jane Lees, second generation resident)

The controversy was extensively covered in both the local and national press, and was the subject of a BBC-TV program within the Enterprise Culture series (screened on 16 May 1989). The program highlighted the difference in views between many oldtimer villagers, and others with a 'protect the monuments' agenda. One of the concerns expressed by the villagers was that Avebury was being prevented from moving into the modern world by a combination of archaeologists and 'snooty blow-ins who've hardly been in the village more than a couple of years [as distinct from] the real old villagers [who] are all very much in favour'. Such assertions were validated in terms of their 'authenticity' in originating from 'true' Avebury villagers.

However unpalatable Ken King's renovations, they were certainly not the first major renovation of the manor and its grounds in its long history. There is archival evidence for significant works in both the 16th and 17th centuries, the latter including the levelling of a considerable amount of the henge and ditch, its subsequent infill and replanting, and extensive restyling and redecorating of the house to suit the tastes of the then owner, Sir Richard Holford (see Ucko 1991: 161, 171, 259; Pitts 1999: 54). This is not to excuse the scale and intent of the 20th century works, or the damage to archaeological and historical material, but rather to refute any allegation that such renovations were without precedent. In addition, it is clear that the Manor has been promoted within Avebury as a tourist attraction for over 50 years, being first opened to fee-paying visitors by the then owners, Sir Francis and Lady Knowles in 1955. The ensuing years saw the introduction of ticket kiosks, mobile food caravans, driveway modifications, temporary car park allocation, and the establishment of a small zoo, none of it with any considerable comment (B. Edwards 2000: 75).



Plate 8: Avebury Manor House. The building in the right foreground is the Alexander Keiller Museum (formerly the Manor stables)



Plate 9: The Great Barn (left). The building to the right is Stones Restaurant.

One explanation put forward, particularly by the villagers who supported him, is that Ken King was simply not of the right 'class', and that unlike previous owners of the Manor, he was a tradesman, even if a financially successful one, and considered to be no more than an 'entrepreneur'. On the other hand, his proposals were welcomed by a number of Avebury residents who saw it as an opportunity to provide much needed employment. An added attraction was that for the first time in most of their lives, they would be able to visit the Manor House for free and to easily walk in and out of a place that is a significant physical feature in their village landscape.

An interesting juxtaposition is found with the Tudor theme park activities and those of the Avebury education program a few years earlier. Late 1983, for example, saw the re-enactment of a Victorian Christmas, with the children's role-playing incorporating costume making, preliminary baking, and, on the day itself

... the children arrived on the outskirts of the village already dressed in character and bearing appropriate items such as chimney sweep brushes or a shepherd's crook. As they walked through the High Street they took on their new role before meeting up with all the other villagers. Soon there were wealthy farmers, parsons, beggars, laundrymaids, recruiting officers, poachers, robbers, fortune tellers, pedlars and even a nineteenth century dog mingling in the village centre. (Lawrie 1988: 20)

The day included the arrival of mummers, wassailing, feasting and drinking, and even a 're-enactment' of a church service, heralded by the church bells and led by the local rector in 19th-century guise. This, however, was seen as an authorised activity, and a 'proper' re-invention of history supported by the National Trust and English Heritage. Unfortunately, as discussed below, even such sanctioned displays of Avebury's heritage were to be later curtailed, foundering in the wake of the grander and more powerful narratives of Avebury's Neolithic past.

In today's official literature, King has been reduced to anonymity and the event is only obliquely referred to. The National Trust Avebury Management Plan (1997: 17) notes that one of the two eventful periods of the Manor House in the 20th century was a 'major development without benefit of planning consent ... removed by the National Trust on acquisition in 1991-92'. The project is elsewhere described as one of the

controversial development proposals affecting Avebury which had been 'killed off' (see ICOMOS UK 1995: 114). Fowler (1995: 5) suggests that the public enquiries that accompanied both this and the Ridgeway proposals, although focussing on the particular, were concerned with a more general question: 'What sort of Avebury do we want?'. He proposes that the answer lies in the fact that property development has lost out on all fronts, and that the National Trust subsequently emerged as the 'local lead-player'. He identifies one of the consequential responsibilities and challenges facing the Trust, as being 'to sustain the genius of the place' and to deepen the relationship between the 'community and monument, people and past'. What and whose past, however, remains the ultimate question.

The Great Barn Museum: '... my granny had one of those!'

When the National Trust prepared its 1997 Avebury Management Plan, it recognised that the Alexander Keiller Museum was not able to meet the needs imposed by World Heritage listing in terms of collection and archive storage, display standard and extent, and more general interpretative aims. The 1997 report mooted the 'Great Barn' building at Avebury as an accommodation option for a new facility (plates 7 & 9). The barn building dates to the late 17th century and has historically been part of the farmyard of Avebury Manor Farm.⁷⁴ The building had been identified for demolition by the Trust (as owners) in the 1960s, but was rescued by the intervention of a vocal protest lobby. In the late 1970s a campaign by the (then) Wiltshire Folklife Society, funded the renovation of the building and established the Wiltshire Rural Life Museum in 1979.⁷⁵ The barn building was under lease from the National Trust.

In the late 1990s the National Trust, recognising that the barn building was the sole contender for its own expanded museum facility, justified its mooted appropriation by

⁷⁴ In 1847 Stukely recorded that the bank of the henge, where the barn now stands, had been levelled during the time of Lord Stowell's ownership: Ralph Stowell was made a baron in 1693. The 'New Barne' is included on a 1695 sketch map (Edmunds 2000; and see Ucko et al. 1991: 170).

⁷⁵ The Wiltshire Folklife Society was formed in 1975, and later renamed the Wiltshire Rural Life Society. Its aim is to promote a wider understanding of the agricultural practices and rural life of Wiltshire. In 2000 it combined with the Friends of Lackham Museum to become the Lackham Museum of Agriculture and Rural Life Trust.

pointing out that 'in recent years little more than 10,000 visitors each year have been prepared to pay to see the rural life displays' and this suggested that only a minority interest was being served. I was told by a village 'outsider', who has long been interested in heritage issues at Avebury, that at the first meeting of the National Trust to discuss the use of the Great Barn, he pointed out that the Alexander Keiller museum received even less visitor numbers. The response from the Trust was that this was not relevant as the building was smaller.⁷⁶

Despite assertions of the value of the Rural Life museum, and of education programs that centred around the museum and the village community, the Wiltshire Rural Life Society surrendered its lease. The Great Barn was subsequently redeveloped to become The Barn Gallery, managed by the National Trust and housing the interpretative display: 'Avebury – 6000 Years of Mystery'. Although restricted in its coverage, it is a modern and interesting display (but see Stone & Mackenzie 1989). In line with the Neolithic primacy of the new interpretation centre, most material directed at teachers and students now concentrates on Avebury's prehistoric history. The primary reference to more modern history is found at the rear of the display and pays homage to Alexander Keiller. At a small stand nearby one can read a number of interesting personal comments on Avebury, including contributions from the Parish Chair and the Druid Keeper of the Avebury Stones: a humble but valuable vignette of views of contemporary Avebury.

Today, a small information sheet on the display and its setting is provided to visitors. It includes a short history of the building, noting its origins as a threshing barn in 1695. Mention is made that the National Trust recently carried out extensive conservation works on the building, but there is no comment on the Wiltshire Folklife Society's previous renovation program or of the barn's previous incarnation as a Rural Life museum.

⁷⁶ For an alternative narrative on a 'battle for the barn', in this case in North Norfolk, see Frake (1996b: 253–254).

Where has OUR Museum gone?

One of the concerns still expressed by some villagers relates to the disposal of the artefacts displayed in the original museum as part of the area's rural history. These include archival and photographic resource material that had been donated by village families. The upset expressed by a number of villagers is summarised by the feelings of one woman I spoke with: 'When the barn was taken over by the National Trust there was considerable local dismay as many of the artefacts had been gifted by the locals and they were sent to the museum at Lackham' (Little Avebury resident, multi-generational).

The curatorship of the contents of the folklife museum was delegated to Lackham Agricultural College, with the explanation that the National Trust decided it was not relevant to Avebury (outlined in a letter from the National Trust to the Great Barn Curator, dated 11/10/95 – cited in B. Edwards 2000: 74). As many of the Avebury residents had donated items that had been in their family ownership, and as the display included machinery and equipment that had been used in Avebury within the previous century (for example, rope making equipment and a fire wagon), this seems at odds with the basis on which the National Trust justified its decision. However, 'relevance' to Avebury from the National Trust perspective is presumably limited to material that supports the archaeological story of the Avebury landscape, and not the recent history of the village and the rural landscape.

The dismissal of what represented the main attempt to formally provide Avebury with a more extensive history than that of the Neolithic, and more particularly to tell the story of the Avebury community as a small rural village in its broader historical context, remains a matter of contention for a number of villagers. Although the decision may well be one that enhances the primary management aims of the National Trust mission at Avebury, it has done little to restore faith in the Trust's intentions to consider contemporary villager concerns and interests.

However, it is evident that various concerns are felt more widely, and are not merely idiosyncrasies of the Avebury village community. A 1988 report 'Children at

Avebury: a Blueprint for Interpretation' (Lawrie 1988), produced by the Society for the Interpretation of Britain's Heritage, provides a valuable comment on interpreting Avebury as more than a place of Neolithic activity. The report reviews the Avebury Education Service, which was set up under the auspices of the Wiltshire Life Society in 1979, in co-operation with a number of bodies including the National Trust and English Heritage (formerly the Department of Environment) and with the support of the residents of Avebury.⁷⁷ The report notes that

... the educational needs of Avebury as a whole were assessed, including the whole prehistoric complex, the Alexander Keiller Museum, Avebury Church, the Manor and dovecot, the village farming community, the Great Barn Rural Life Museum and other farming and domestic buildings. (Lawrie 1988: 11)

The main aim of the program was to explore and recreate village life over the last 300 years, although it addressed earlier aspects as well. Activities associated with the program were eclectic and included the re-creation of life at Avebury Manor in the 17th century; craft workshops in leather, spinning, weaving and pottery; celebrating Midsummer's Eve in the stone circle, or May Day celebrations; investigating the cemetery and domestic buildings in the village; and visits to the Great Barn Rural Life Museum to gain an overview of life in a traditional farming community. The village in the 19th century became a focal point, simply because resource material was more readily available (census returns, trade directories, newspapers, old photographs and personal reminiscences). A highlight was the 1983 re-enactment of a Victorian Christmas (as discussed above), which involved nine schools (including the Avebury and East Kennet schools) and 450 children. The project included preliminary activities such as visiting Avebury at harvest time or illustrated talks that revolved around old photographs of the village and artefacts from the folk life museum collection (Lawrie 1988: 20).

⁷⁷ For the first two years the educational work was funded by the Manpower Services Commission (a government employment scheme). The following year's funding was provided privately by the Wiltshire Folk Life Society but the Education Officer Position was terminated at the end of that year due to lack of funds. In 1982–83 English Heritage and the Wiltshire Education Authority jointly funded a position for a further 2 years. The new project had a different brief: whereas the earlier position looked at Wiltshire rural life generally (i.e. not archaeology or the stones), the latter related more specifically to Avebury and was linked to the archaeological museum. At the end of the 2 year period the position was once again closed down for lack of funding (J. Lawrie, pers. comm. 21/01/03).

The success of the program, with hundreds of children visiting Avebury and participating in the various activities, led to English Heritage and the Wiltshire Education Department seconding a teacher to continue developing the program. In co-operation with the Wiltshire Folk Life Society, a purpose-designed study centre was set up in the Great Barn Museum (Lawrie 1988: 19). Lawrie also reported that the program showed the full potential of Avebury as an educational resource, and the appreciation that the stone circles were just one part of the Avebury story. The teaching topics offered were based on the Great Barn and the village and included 'The study of a rural community', which looked at the effects of mechanisation, transport modernisation and tourism on a close-knit community. Through the presentation of such themes in combination with activities, the rural-life museum at Avebury could be seen as a place where more national narratives were actually represented by and passed on through community and family narratives.

Lawrie's report (1988: 23) reproduces an article by Mara Uzzell (1983) commenting on a regional meeting of the Society for the Interpretation of Britain's Heritage held in Avebury. Uzzell writes

Walking around the village, it became apparent very quickly that the bulk of the interpretation of Avebury is carried by Jo Lawrie's program for children. By contrast, the Alexander Keiller Museum (Department of Environment) is in the traditional mode, displaying the prehistoric artefacts bequeathed to it by the marmalade manufacturer, who in the 1930s pulled down a number of seventeenth century houses in the village in order to resurrect the stone circles – a fine example of conflicting conservation interests! ...

Clearly there are very particular problems for a site like Avebury whose buildings and monuments are in multiple ownership and where the site is not only a national heritage attraction but also a home and living community for the present day inhabitants. Jo Lawrie's work with children for the Wiltshire Folk Life Society highlighted many of the missed opportunities for the rest of us to experience the Avebury story in all its full richness.

These comments identify a much wider interest in maintaining a holistic approach to Avebury's heritage. This includes the more recent history of the village and the significance of this broader understanding to both the public and the contemporary villagers. The Rural Folklife display in the Great Barn Museum was an integral

component of this interpretation. As J. Kapferer notes, the contents of local history museums may be 'valueless' as antiques, but as antiquities they are priceless. Their values lie in their capacity to allow us to access a past made meaningful through its commonality with other 'ordinary folk': 'it serves the purpose of the maintenance of tradition and the attachment of a people to their place in time, drawing sustenance from the past, preserving it and passing it on from one generation to the next' (J. Kapferer 1996: 216–217).

In a general comment about museum displays of 20th-century history, Johnstone (1998: 67) makes the point that many visitors to such displays will 'have a much more immediate, personal and emotional engagement than that experienced by most curators ...[such visitors] can always be recognised by their cries of "Your Granny had one of those"'. Recent history is a part of most people's lives, and for many their personal memories are enhanced by a familiarity with material objects of the last 200 to 250 years. The result is that museum displays will be interpreted through a set of meanings that engage with the emotional and commemorative values of objects as they become appropriated and adapted within the context of personal experience. One consequence is that 'everyday', commonplace objects engender a greater emotional response as they are recognisable from the viewer's own life.

Artefacts and their appropriation and positioning in the local museum serve as markers of a particular history, instrumental in the enhancement of specific local identities which are constantly (re-)enacted in present constellations between various groups living [there] today. Origins of, and in, place evoke particular histories, particular sets of relationships, and particular rights of access to legitimacy and belonging to the town. (Lovell 1998: 16)

The museum itself becomes a collective asset that distinguishes and reflects the identity of the community – and the museum curators are charged with the responsibility of reinforcing this identity (Chappé 2000: 117). In this sense, the Wiltshire Rural Life Society must stand equally charged of dereliction of duty, as it was their action in surrendering the lease that facilitated the National Trust's subsequent marginalisation of Avebury's local and rural narratives.

Chase and Shaw (1989: 4, 11) emphasise the nostalgic value that objects and places accrue when the present is in some sense deficient or threatened: objects, buildings and images from the past become 'talismans that link us concretely with the past'. Through such linkages, where tradition acts as a kind of substitute for history, 'the past can be articulated and mobilised to provide easy and comfortable answers in the present'. At the same time, community identity and belonging are reinforced and recreated through shared memories, where the objects embody mnemonic codes. The search for identity is a basic impetus for people's interest in the past and the desire to remember. As Blowen et. al (2000: 3) are concerned to show, current modes of belonging are imagined and activated at the local level, making this the basic unit for understanding social processes. As societies become more increasingly fragmented, stable identities have been replaced by more transient collections of values. Culture, in the terms of everyday social practices, that take place in familiar locations within a framework of familiar institutions and result in a specific albeit complex identity, is becoming equally fragmented. Debates over local history and culture 'often appear parochial, trivial and idiosyncratic' but may be indicative of broader patterns and processes. Arguments about the past often revolve around struggles for identity, where local assertions of being in place can be subsumed in the expression of more national identity and entitlements (Bond and Gilliam 1995: 5). One result is the erosion of traditional community values and a concomitant weakening of the sense of community identity and place.

In the context of Avebury, the Rural Life Museum can be considered an arena of social memory with long historical and community associations, and a resource through which identity could be stabilised. Such references to the past symbolically express the continuity of past and present, and thereby reassert the cultural integrity of the community, particularly when faced with 'apparent subversion' by external change (A. Cohen 1985: 103). The Rural Life display can be interpreted as a buffer to such erosion: its removal has potentially exacerbated the impacts of change on village understandings of community belonging and emplacement. The appropriation by the National Trust of the Great Barn for an alternative narrative, which subsumed the local community within a dominant archaeological discourse, is inseparable from a

struggle for power in which the archaeological display represents the broader notions of 'progressive ideas' and the inalienable historical and political rights of the national community (Silberman 1995: 258). As a representation, the 'Avebury – 6000 Years of Mystery' display is influenced by the ideological and hegemonic properties of particular sectional interests that allow knowledge to be expressed in various forms of appropriation, interpretation and exclusion. In Bourdieu's terms, it is a representation of the way in which a particular cultural field acts to determine various values and 'cultural capital'. The result is a collusion that reinforces a particular version of the Avebury past, creating a 'cultural screen' through which the landscape can be ordered, interpreted and understood (see Bond & Gilliam 1994: 1, 16).

What is the result when dominant histories and narratives subjugate other traditions? The appropriation of the Great Barn exemplifies the dissonance between archaeology and community interests, reinforcing Ucko's (1994: xv) assertion that 'however concerned people are with the interests of their own and their children's generations, they may still not be interested in the practice of archaeology, as defined, organised and practised nationally' or even more locally. Ucko further notes in the discussion of the development of local museums and cultural centres that 'it is in the context of such local ... concerns with the past that conflict with archaeologists often emerges, and in this context archaeology often appears to be an uncaring discipline, typical of a dominant elitist society' (Ucko 1994: xv; see also Layton 1989a & 1989b). At Avebury, it is hard to dispel this characterisation when faced with the history of archaeological intervention and management to date.

Protecting Avebury ... but Whose Avebury?

The National Trust is attempting to be inclusive in its management processes. However, it lists the four objectives of management as: monument and landscape conservation; access and visitor dispersal; effective archaeological recording; and improved visitor information. It is difficult to envision how these priorities can be balanced with the necessary regard for additional values:

In pursuing these aims the National Trust recognises that there are no simple solutions to the muddle of interests which have to be reconciled. Some planning has to be pragmatic and many things remain imperfect. (In a place which was never a managed estate and whose inhabitants do not wish to be managed at all, who is to say that imperfection is undesirable?) The single-minded purism of Keiller is no longer acceptable: archaeological concerns cannot be addressed with disregard for other values. (Gingell 1996: 509)

The obvious dilemma is managing – and giving authority to – these other values. Ucko et al. (1991: 258) suggest that as ‘significance’ of places varies then so too should the steps that are essential to protect those places: ‘what needs to be decided, therefore, are the criteria by which what *is* acceptable should be fairly and disinterestedly adjudicated’. One cannot argue against a need for an objective assessment process, or argue that the villagers’ interests should be paramount. However, I suggest that the current heritage management regime at Avebury is one where ostensibly objective assessments are undertaken primarily by archaeologists who represent the voice of the prevailing heritage discourse, which focuses on the ‘scientific’ values accruing from the Neolithic landscape.

I follow the assertion by Bond & Gilliam (1995: 8) that ‘dominant intellectual elites have claimed authority and objectivity for their cultural productions for a long time’, and that power relations and the politics of knowledge are interlocked. These power relations are in turn inseparable from the influences of broader national cultural worldviews and values that influence site management processes (see Price 1990). The capacity for the villagers to substantially influence this regime is limited, as is the likelihood that the residents of Avebury would be allowed to determine a future policy for Avebury that directed heritage management priorities elsewhere. The point is, perhaps, to not so much recognise that there is likely to be a conflict of interest, but to allow for the existence – and legitimacy – of values and meanings that are voiced outside of the prevailing archaeological and heritage discourse. The question remains how to accord authority (or authorities) to competing voices within the public cultural arena and to give weight to competing national and folk histories and knowledge

systems (see Bond and Gilliam 1995).⁷⁸ I suggest that the first step to a solution is acknowledging the validity of such representations.

The alternative is to disenfranchise multiple sets of actions, voices, values and meaning, both past and present. This exclusivity is contradictory to the notion of places and landscapes as perpetually created and recreated by human interaction and interpretation. The need is to give greater heed to the assertion that 'Avebury was not exclusively created by the Neolithic inhabitants who built the monuments in the first place' (Ucko et al. 1991: 259) and it is in this context that attempts to preserve the Avebury landscape should be founded. The landscape is a palimpsest of changes wrought over its entire history, including post-Neolithic rural activity and modern land-use patterns, features and developments. Silberman (1995: 250) poses the question that has universal application for places with multiple histories: 'When it comes to modern beliefs and behaviour, "ancientness" may lie in the eye of the beholder. How ancient, after all, is the historical mythmaker's "once upon a time"?' The issue remains, however, of recognising the ongoing nature of change but also the necessity to take steps to control its impact in certain situations.

On the one hand we can acknowledge that heritage, as with any other discourse, includes ideals, guiding principles, and explicit institutionally mandated instructions that will direct its adherents' actions. However, on the other hand, 'discourses are not unified but subject to negotiation, challenge, and to transformation ... power relations within a social formation are communicated, and sometimes resisted, precisely through the medium of a particular discourse' (Schein 1997: 674). Those immersed within the paradigms of a particular discourse must be open to shifts in those

⁷⁸ For an interesting comparison see the discussion in Perera & Pugliese (1998: 80–96) of the dichotomy between local and 'authorised' versions of heritage in the context of visitor centres at Kakadu in Australia. The Warradjan Aboriginal Cultural Centre has been designed by the indigenous owners to provide visitors with an understanding of local Aboriginal peoples' history and beliefs. Architectural features, displays, signs and exhibits combine to allow traditional owners to address visitors in their own terms. The narratives at the Cultural Centre challenge the authoritative and universalist claims of the 'expert' or 'scientist' and assert counter-truths and other knowledges. The Bowali Centre on the other hand has a dominant mode of address of scientific authority. The exhibits, maps and displays here reproduce the colonial tropes of accumulation, enumeration and inventory by listing and cataloguing the various features of Kakadu and by 'scientifically' dating and classifying them. In doing so, the Centre focuses on the importance of the Expert's presence in the Park.

paradigms. I have discussed this in Chapter 2, but reiterate that theoretical initiatives and rhetorical debates must be accompanied by changes in policies and practices 'on the ground' for true advances to be made. Attempts to move forward in heritage understandings at Avebury can only be hindered by ideological adherence to protocols based on interpretations and values arising from multiple generations of those who have championed Avebury's archaeological heritage.

The challenge is not one that seeks to diminish the significance of Avebury's Neolithic heritage, but to balance this with an understanding of the importance of Avebury's more recent past, and with the legitimate needs and desires of today's villagers and other 'communities of interest' (see also Caftanzoglou 2001). As Rodman (2003: 208) notes: 'It is time to recognise that places, like voices, are local and multiple. For each inhabitant, a place has a unique reality, one in which meaning is shared with other people and places. The links in these chains of experienced places are forged of culture and history.' The current approach at Avebury is one that will destroy the chain that reaches back across both space and time, effectively sundering contemporary attachments with the past of all periods, and unmooring the Neolithic as a floating temporal island. At the same time it acts to subjugate knowledge by brushing-aside and marginalising the recent history of the villagers and their understanding of place. However, criticism and empowerment can occur in 'the reappearance of ... these local popular knowledges' (Foucault 1980: 82), which also serves to reinforce notions of belonging, identity and place.

Conclusion

The Avebury villagers, faced with a fractured past and an uncertain future, seek to provide stability to their lifeworld through re-assertions of their relationship with locality and place, grounded in the maintenance of the continuity between the past and present. The proliferation of 'other' histories has exposed 'the politics by which one particular viewpoint is established as pre-eminent. In particular conflicts between archaeologists as local experts and the voices of 'local knowledge' have been fought on the terrain of 'who can speak with authority versus who can speak with authenticity' (Rowlands 1994: 134, 136). For oldtimer Avebury villagers, faced with

the assertions by newcomer villagers of solidarity with state-espoused heritage values, there is a further need to reinforce authenticity on the grounds of who is a 'real' villager. Through what is effectively a fluid construction of difference and sameness, attempts to resolve the paradox of authenticity and villagehood have implicated the village as a field of contestation in which identity construction and the meaning of place is inseparable from broader historical, social and political interests.

At Avebury, where conflict revolves around attempts to (re)create a heritage landscape in the face of persistent local memories and construction of place, the challenge is to establish a dialogue that allows for reconciliation of debates and identity, rather than simply a recital and definition of such aspects. Incumbent in this is the acknowledgment that there is more than one 'real' landscape. Places and landscapes can be variously conceptualised; in the process they are attributed not only with different pasts, but also with different futures. As Bender (1992) notes, people engage and re-engage with landscapes. They appropriate and contest them, and use landscapes to create and dispute identity – whether of self, group or nation. As a consequence, landscapes are tensioned by the contradictory claims and counterclaims imposed on them.

Knowing Avebury and its community entails knowing all Avebury's pasts, although those aspects that will become important at any particular time may more selectively call on the various narratives. It would be disappointing if the more recent past were 'screened out' in a meta-narrative of the Neolithic, which would serve to override the present and muffle the future of the Avebury villagers.

