Heritage Jam: Conserving the Past
Howard Williams

Overview
This is the first ever Heritage Jam project about jam! I shot a vlog (video-blog) over 3 days of exploring jam at heritage sites and monuments during annual leave with my family in North and South-West Wales. I have supported this endeavour with posts on my *Archaeodeath* blog. The result is a light-hearted attempt to create a 'jam Heritage Jam' vlog that reflects on different dimensions of the relationship between heritage and conserves.

Background: *Archaeodeath*
Over the last decade, I have sought to promote and research archaeology's public and community engagements in my research and writing as well as my teaching. In doing so, I have focused on public dimensions of archaeologies of death, burial and commemoration of the medieval, post-medieval and contemporary pasts (e.g. Williams and Williams 2007; Williams 2007; 2009; 2010; Williams and Giles forthcoming). Building on this interest, from June 2013, I have written a Wordpress blog entitled *Archaeodeath* exploring archaeology, mortality and material culture. This has, in turn, inspired me to start reflecting on mortuary archaeology's digital engagements, including blogging and vlogging, in publications (Meyers and Williams 2014; Tong et al. 2015; Williams and Atkin forthcoming). Both blog and vlogs occasionally attempt to use humour to convey archaeological concepts and issues (see comments by Marwick 2015).

Aims and Objectives
Building from this conserve-free work, the aim was to create a vlog on the theme: *Heritage Jam: Conserving the Past*. Inspired by the Heritage Jam, I posed a challenge to myself to create a potted history of heritage conserves today. Could I make a vlog that reflected on a range of ways that conserves shed light on the metaphors and experiences of heritage sites and monuments? A related objective was to experiment in using humour to convey arguments about the heritage jam.

Sites and Methods
The choice of sites reflects proximity to my home and work (Wrexham, North Wales and Chester, Cheshire) and a day en route through Mid Wales to my choice of holiday destination (Pembrokeshire) during the jamming period. On the whole, I selected sites that I have previously discussed on my *Archaeodeath* blog with the exception of the final site:

- Ty Mawr Country Park, Wrexham
- Valle Crucis Abbey, Denbighshire (Cadw)
- The Piller of Eliseg, Denbighshire (Cadw)
- Minera Lead Mines, Wrexham
- Chirk Castle, Wrexham (National Trust)
- Cymer Abbey, Gwynedd (Cadw)
- Castell y Bere, Gwynedd (Cadw)
- Cilgerran Castle, Ceredigion (Cadw and National Trust)

An EE Kestrel mobile phone was used to capture short videos as MP4 files during visits over 3 days: 20–22 September 2015.

Results
My preliminary impressions are that the vlog exceed all jam expectations, lifting the lid on many themes related to 'conserving the past'. For further details, see my *Archaeodeath* blog posts (Williams 2015a–c):

- Jam consumption (in sandwiches especially but not necessarily) at heritage sites is a form of intangible (in-jam-gible) heritage practice in itself; a practice linking generations of heritage tourists;
- Heritage sites might be great places to collect berries to make one's own heritage jam and thus participate in 'conserving' one's own pasts;
- The challenges of finding jam to purchase at heritage sites can lead to many obsessive conversations about conserves;
- Absence of jam can reveal the importance of not flocking to pay-to-enter sites only. Free-to-access heritage sites can be less jammy but still amazing! We should tackle the risk of heritage tourists being flies around the jam pot!
- Closed heritage sites reveal that jam-less sites still need conserving – jam zombie heritage can be forlorn and melancholic. Zombies can't eat jam!
- The materiality of jam creates the heritage experience through its:
    o Range of recipes of 'traditional' conserves;
    o Packaging and labelling alluding to the past or commemorating heritage institutions themselves;
    o Displaying jams in gift shops can create auras of authentic pastness to encourage purchases and create a sense of the past of shops themselves.
- Jam sheds light on the links between consumerism and heritage; jam reveals the *habitus* of heritage tourism; acquiring consumable souvenirs for gifting and experiencing in one's own home;
- Archaeologists and other heritage tourists need to beware of jam-oholic tendencies, including the financial impact of over-acquisition of jam, and the health dangers of over-consumption of jam and other conserves and preserves;
- Jam heritage has yet to acquire a digital dimension: to engage with heritage through the senses one needs to go out into the real world and engage with the jam-gible past. Alternatively, is in-jamgible heritage really heritage?
- Jam can be a useful metaphor for how the heritage industry treats material traces of the past: conserving ancient sites: sealing the past within heritage 'jars';
- Jam can be a metaphor for the 'stickiness' of heritage locales for social memories as they accrue down the decades and centuries.

In these ways, we can consider heritage today as like jam, potted like jam, and operating *as* jam. For instance, heritage is branded and sold like jam, and ancient monuments and sites are conserved and potted like jam: sticky, sweet and sealed.

Appraisal and the Future

I doubt this project has any wider appeal beyond a niche audience of heritage jammers and conserve obsessives. Still, it has been useful for me as an experiment in creating a short reflective self-filmed vlog. I had hoped to do the editing and stitching together of the videos myself, perhaps with a soundtrack and so on. However, I conceded my lack of expertise here and begged my colleague Dr Patrica Murrieta-Flores and Javier Pereda for help. In the future, I hope to learn these skills myself.

In addition, having come up with the idea, I have found it personally very useful in thinking through my own engagement with heritage in a critical fashion during family days out. This includes my own patterns of jam acquisition and consumption as well as acquiring postcards and other items from gift shops at heritage sites.

I might consider extending my *Archaeodeath* blog into creating more vlogs during field visits and about my desk-based research in the future. Furthermore, I might consider this a useful tool to develop in my undergraduate and postgraduate teaching.

I have been considering making a display of my acquired and collated heritage jam; perhaps a prehistoric monument of some kind: JAM-HENGE...

There is considerable potential for 'spreading out' beyond jam... future vlogs and blogs on 'heritage chutney' and 'heritage honey' might have their own insights to complement those of this heritage jam project.

Acknowledgements

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Biography

Howard Williams is Professor of Archaeology at the University of Chester and researches mortuary archaeology, archaeologies of memory, public archaeology and the history of archaeology. He is Honorary Editor of the Royal Archaeological Institute's *Archaeological Journal* and he consumes jam.