

Archaeology, Heritage, and Wellbeing: Authentic, Powerful, and Therapeutic Engagement with the Past. Edited By Paul Everill and Karen Burnell, Abingdon, Routledge, 2022, xvii and 283 pp., Illus. 32, £120.00 (Hardback), ISBN 9781032021652

Review by Harriet Sams

This book offers an important and timely overview of the subject of Cultural Heritage Therapy, or CHT. This compendium of international, interdisciplinary projects and research from various situations, describes a variety of service user groups, using various non-medical methods and processes. This is one of the first books available that offers such an overview and may be of interest to academics from the disciplines of archaeology, psychology, and heritage, archaeotherapeutic and ecotherapeutic practitioners, and broader wellbeing service user groups.

The book's chapters open with Part One, a discussion about how wellbeing is defined by different health bodies, exploring how UK social prescribing is shaped. It looks at lay definitions that the authors suggest should guide interventions and programme theory. In Part Two, accounts are of projects in excavation and museum settings that emphasize wellbeing improvement project design. Part Three describes indigenous concepts of land connection, self-therapy and military veteran experiences, putting a focus upon the land itself as the therapeutic container.

Part Four looks at the therapeutic nature of archaeology and field excavation, rather than the broader concept of connection to heritage that are found in parts One to Three. It explores how archaeological projects assist with mental health challenges faced by military veterans, and looks at the impact that COVID-19 has had on the delivery of these kinds of projects.

Part Five offers suggestions for CHT management, engagement, and interventions to various service user groups, such as military veterans, mental health patients, disadvantaged young people, and those who experienced negative impacts from COVID-19. This section looks critically to a future where CHT becomes a significant aspect of social prescribing by evaluating public bodies' responsibilities and suggesting UK policy intervention.

The authors' aims were to bring together interdisciplinary delivery methods that utilize CHT. The book highlights what is already known about the therapeutic aspect of heritage and archaeology, giving ideas about future deliverability. As archaeologist and psychologist, the editors' combined insights have included projects that can guide future deliverability outcomes; the accounts highlight successful project models, while also asking critical questions about such pressing issues as diversity, equality, and the heritage sector's approach to mental health.

From a sound foundation that explores how wellbeing can be definitively defined, various project methodologies are offered, evaluated, compared and critiqued, in a way that brings a robustness to CHT as an emergent discipline. An outstanding contribution in the book is, for me, the chapter which describes archaeology within indigenous social, emotional and economic wellbeing: chapter 7. It reflects upon how heritage and ancestral belonging in Aborigine Australian, New Zealand Māori and First Nation American cultures are inherent, intrinsic aspects of individual and cultural wellbeing, throwing the intervention-led nature of wellbeing projects in Westernized countries into sharp focus; when delivering such

interventions, what cultural, social and spiritual factors need addressing that are inherent in diverse worldviews?

The book is well written and well presented with many contributors, who have in most cases written for academic or professional audiences. The various delivery formats offered will in many ways also satisfy non-medical professionals with an interest in delivering CHT. Good use of graphs and charts offer succinct information that help the reader to compare projects, data and theories, ethics, methods and conclusions. Photographs give texture and meaning to project experiences that can at times seem abstract and objective, giving the subject a necessary humanity.

Many new and ancient ideas are suggested in this book. The authors conclude by reminding readers that CHT interventions need to be bottom-up, community led and person-centred. If personal and community wellbeing is at the core of what is to become a meaningful shift in heritage management, then practitioners, policy writers, and project leaders need to build an authentic, rooted sense of belonging to site, land and community.