

### 4.3 Case Study 2: Elden Pueblo, Flagstaff, Arizona



*Elden Pueblo Ruins, Arizona*

#### 4.3.1. Background

Elden Pueblo, located at the base of Mt Elden in Coconino National Forest, is just minutes from downtown Flagstaff, a township of approximately 63 000 in population. The site is owned and managed by the United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service.

It is the largest archaeological site in the Mt Elden region and its 60-70 rooms were home to perhaps 200 to 300 people during the period 1150 – 1275 AD. (Coconino National Forest 1999:3). The site makes a key contribution to local prehistory and the development of archaeology in the southwest.

Elden Pueblo was first excavated in 1926 by Dr Jesse Walter Fewkes, a famous archaeologist from the Smithsonian Institution in Washington D.C. Fewkes was one of the first

archaeologists who believed that when he finished excavating a site it ought to be made available for the public to see. Fewkes had plans to turn Elden Pueblo into a National Monument and with that view in mind, stabilised many of the ruins uncovered during the excavation program. After Fewkes's death in 1930, however, plans for the monument fell through and the site fell back into ruin. Stabilised walls collapsed and the site became overgrown (pers. com. Pilles 2002).

Future excavations were undertaken by Roger Kelly of Northern Arizona University in 1967–68. His main reason for excavating the site was to train archaeology students from the University in the practice of field excavation and investigation (Hovis 1992:50).

Only a few years later, in the early 1970s, the National Forest Service was looking for land to exchange. Elden Pueblo was situated on a piece of land that was difficult to manage, right next to a trailer park and fronting onto Highway 89. The Forest Service called together a group of experts to determine whether the site was significant enough to retain under its ownership. They suspected that the site contained little archaeological material as a result of the invasive archaeological programs over the years (Phagan and Pilles 1988:13).

Despite their suspicions, a test excavation program was undertaken using volunteers from the Youth Conservation Corps and the Young Adult Conservation Group, under the guidance of Forest Service archaeologist Peter Pilles. It was at this time that Pilles identified that a lot of intact archaeological deposits remained at the site (pers. com. Pilles:2002)

The experts employed by the Forest Service to determine the fate of the site recognised that the surviving archaeological remains were significant and had valuable interpretative potential for the public. Through watching the enthusiasm and interest of the young people grow as they excavated, Pilles developed the idea of using public volunteers to excavate and rebuild the site.

By providing volunteer opportunities at the site, the Forest Service could begin to emphasise archaeology and conservation in the local community, as well as educate people about the importance of archaeological resources. It was recommended that the Forest Service keep the site within its land portfolio (pers. com. Pilles 2002).

### 4.3.2 Facilities

The site at Elden Pueblo contains the ruins of numerous Native American Indian Kiva (homes). Volunteers, under the guidance of professional archaeologists, have stabilised the ruins excavated by Fewkes, and have constructed trails and pathways that weave in and out of the archaeological remains at the site. In recent years, running water and basic camping facilities have been constructed to allow people to stay on site during the field season.

The trails and pathways have been constructed in a manner that allows physically disabled and visually impaired people to gain easy access to the site. It is envisaged that these facilities will be enhanced in the future to accommodate people with a broader range of disabilities.



*Peter Pilles, Archaeologist Coconino National Forest at Elden Pueblo*

### 4.3.3 Public Programs

From the beginning Pilles set about developing a public archaeology program for Elden Pueblo that maximised the use of amateur archaeologists, students and non-paid volunteers. As a result, Elden Pueblo is now a highly successful example of what can be achieved with almost no organisational funding and the focused efforts of a local community (Pilles 1981:48). Everything that a visitor sees and experiences in a visit to Elden Pueblo, including the reconstructed walls, stabilised ruins, pathways and signage, has been carried out and completed by volunteers under the supervision of professional archaeologists.

Elden Pueblo's public archaeology programs are focused on teaching the public about the lives of the Sinagua people at Elden, field methods in archaeology and the facilitation of the ongoing research and protection of Elden Pueblo (*Arizona Archaeological Society Newsletter 2002:15*).

People of all ages, abilities and races are encouraged to become involved in one or more of Elden Pueblo's programs. Activities and programs are also open to local, interstate and international visitors. They include:

- **Certification and Training Courses** – *run by the Arizona Archaeological Society for amateurs to gain certification in a range of archaeological techniques, including excavation, stabilisation works and laboratory analysis;*
- **Public Dig Days** – *during summer and fall for locals and visitors interested in excavating with professional archaeologists;*
- **Prehistoric Cultures Courses** – *for college and university undergraduates, to gain subject credits;*
- **Summer Camps** – *hosted by the Museum of Northern Arizona for grade school and high school students interested in archaeology;*
- **Family Sessions** – *run weekly in summer for families to learn about excavation, artefact processing, note taking and stabilization;*
- **Passport in Time (PIT) Programs** – *projects developed, advertised and conducted by the U.S. Forest Service, where volunteers or paying participants do archaeological works, under the supervision of Forest Service archaeologists; and*
- **Special programs** – *tailor-made for interested or specialist groups such as the mentally-handicapped, Boy Scouts, Girl Guides, Travelling Education Groups.*

Since the Forest Service starting operating public programs at Elden Pueblo, there have only been three minor instances of vandalism. Pilles attributes this to the education of the community and the raising of public awareness and interaction with the site.

*What has happened is that the schoolchildren of Flagstaff know Elden Pueblo and it's a part of their school upbringing. They have ownership in it, 'I did that', type of attitude and as a result there has been no graffiti, no gang stuff, no partying, no campfires, nothing, and as you'll see, it's in a prime situation for all of these things that could otherwise be taking place*

(Pilles pers.com 2002)

#### **4.3.4 Costs**

Initially, when the program at Elden Pueblo started up, Peter Pilles ran all of the volunteer and public programs in his own time. These days, when Pilles runs the two-week field school for

the Arizona Archaeological Society, his salary is paid for by the Forest Service. The Forest Service also provides supplies and equipment (Hovis 1992:80).

Much of the co-ordination and administration work is now done by a University graduate student, who is hired by the Forest Service, using only the funds collected through grants, work agreements, program fees, sponsorships and the sale (by the Arizona Archaeological Society) of souvenir items such as t-shirts and caps. External grants have been provided by organisations such as the Arizona Archaeological Society, the Museum of Northern Arizona and the Northern Arizona Natural History Association (pers. com Pilles 2002; Hovis 1992:80). Unfortunately, as Elden Pueblo is located on federal land and is a federally-directed project, it is not eligible for federal government grants (Hovis 1992:79). Despite this, funding raised through alternative avenues generates enough money to provide the University graduate student with a job for approximately 9 months of the year (pers. com. Pilles:2000). Any additional monies are used to pay the salaries of other students and certified amateurs hired to run the programs for the public.

*One of the drums I beat is that when I work with other Federal archaeologists or State archaeologists about interpreting sites and doing stuff the first thing you hear is "We can't we don't have any money" and I say " Whoah none of us has any money. If you want to interpret you can do it. There is lots of ways to do it... a xerox about a site anybody can do that. It gives you the message.*

*Peter Pilles, Archaeologist Coconino National Forest (pers. com. 2002)*

#### **4.3.5 Achievements**

Elden Pueblo received the Governor's Commendation for *Achievement in Historic Preservation* in 1983. That same year, Governor Bruce Babbitt recognised the project for its community involvement in the excavation, stabilisation and development of the site for the benefit of the physically and visually handicapped. In 1984 Elden Pueblo received a *National Trust Historic Preservation Award*, the first archaeological project to ever receive a National Trust Award (Hovis 1992:76).

In 1985 Peter J. Pilles Jr. was awarded the *United States Department of Agriculture's Award* for integrating archaeology and public involvement. By 1991 Pilles was presented with the *Windows on the Past* National Award for Excellence granted by the United States Forest Service's Washington office. Both awards corresponded directly with his involvement in the Elden Pueblo project (Hovis 1992:78).

#### **4.3.6 Economic and Tourism Benefits**

As already stated, all of the actual 'hands-on' work being done at Elden Pueblo, including the stabilisation of the ruins, excavation, recording and construction of trails is carried out by volunteers, participating in annual programs. Over 1300 people, including more than 800 children participate in programs at Elden Pueblo each year (USDA Forest Service 1998:20).

This represents thousands of hours of free labour directed into significant research and on-going conservation works at Elden Pueblo that would otherwise remain unaccomplished, due to a lack of funding and resources. Most importantly however, Elden Pueblo, in exchange for 'free labour' is providing thousands of people with an opportunity to participate in archaeological fieldwork and to learn about the site's archaeological and community values.

The site is featured regularly in newspaper and magazine articles and is the focus of many site tours conducted by the Forest Service and Museum of Northern Arizona. These media features and publications serve to broaden the public's awareness of archaeology, and help to attract visitors to the Flagstaff region. In addition, the site is often a highlight during Arizona Archaeology Week.

*There's a tremendous amount of facts and figures for dollars spent on heritage tourism, the economic benefits. For people who don't believe it, then they just don't want to believe it because the facts are there.*

*Peter Pilles, Archaeologist Coconino National Forest (pers. com 2002)*

#### **4.3.7 Impact on Town Planning**

In developing the public education programs at Elden Pueblo, and at other sites under the Bureau of Agriculture and Land Management's control, Pilles has recognised that it is critical for any government agency responsible for heritage management - whether it's a Local, State or Federal agency - to be in a position to work proactively with professionals as well as with constituents, the public and indigenous people (pers. com Pilles:2002).

In areas such as Arizona, government agencies that let contracts for archaeological works use their statutory approval process to require consultant archaeologists to include a public component in their works programs. These compulsory programs have resulted in the establishment of successful co-operative relationships between big utility companies, land managers, native tribes and the public. (pers. com. Pilles 2002). Another positive result is that many of the larger development companies and consultant archaeologists in Arizona now realise that public archaeology is good business because it attracts positive media coverage and promotes community pride and unity.

#### **4.3.8 Conclusions**

From the very beginning, Pilles realised that the Elden Pueblo Project was an opportunity "to show all these other folks [in the Forest Service] that archaeology was a resource just as significant and important as timber, cattle and camp grounds and that it was one way of demonstrating the recreational opportunities that archaeology could provide" (pers. com. Pilles 2002).

Twenty-two years on, the Elden Pueblo project is stronger than ever, having won acclaim for educating thousands about the importance of cultural resources through 'hands-on' archaeological research and conservation programs. As stated by Pilles himself:

*Any time anybody questions or doubts the ability of public archaeology to change attitudes and things, I give them our Elden Pueblo statistics...it's the number of people who come through each year...it's the tourism aspect of it, the spin-off, the economic dollars, the public interest in it and the ability of that to change attitudes.*

*(Pilles pers. com 2002)*