

Landscape Research Extra 37



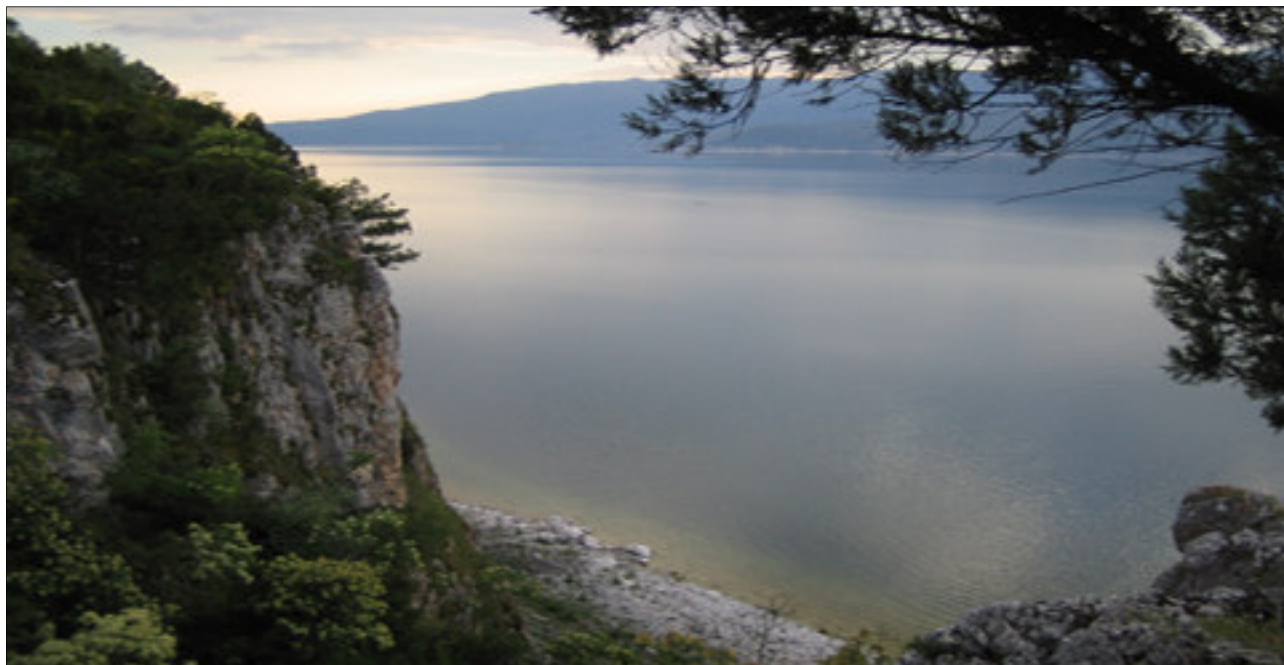
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Contributors

Thymio Papayannis
Jay Appleton
Adam Wilkinson
Philip Pacey
Martin Spray
Brian Goodey
Kenneth Grahame
(obit 1932)
Peter Howard
Bud Young

Viewing Prespa: from the Aesthetic to the Functional

People's perception of landscapes can be quite diverse. In the past, the prevalent approach focused on aesthetic aspects. Thus the 'beauty' of landscapes has been immortalised in painting, photography, cinema and literature (1). Such 'beauty' has also evolved diachronically, from the rural Arcadian approach of the 15th century, to depictions of the urban skyscraper milieu of the early 20th. Even in landscape painting, the subject matter has shifted constantly following changes in social preferences.



An issue that remained under the surface through all these changes in aesthetic trends was the degree of human intervention in landscapes. At periods there was a strong liking for 'wild' untouched landscapes, with no trace of human presence. In others, human works or their remains were incorporated harmoniously with nature, as shown in the engravings that graced the books of

the adventurous voyagers of the past millennium. During the 20th century, on the other hand, there has been strong interest in the depiction of urban or urbanised landscapes, where the anthropic elements prevailed.

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in turn will impoverish ecosystems and lead to the diminution or disappearance of species that depend on them (3). Conversely and acting for good, some traditional human activities have contributed repeatedly to biodiversity.

Prespa Lakes



The case of the Prespa Lakes, shared by Albania, Greece and the FYR of Macedonia, can provide some useful insights. Prespa, a wetland site of international importance (4), with a rich Byzantine and Ottoman cultural heritage and extremely high biodiversity, has retained to a high degree its landscapes of unique beauty, mainly due to isolation, lack of development and resources and the deadening impact of frontiers in a politically sensitive zone of the Balkans. In fact, it has been demonstrated that traditional human activities – such as extensive, small-scale agriculture and animal breeding – have resulted in the enrichment and diversification of landscapes and have contributed to the increase of biodiversity in the area.

Changes started in the 1960s with the intensification of agriculture and the construction of an irrigation system, which led to increase of the local income. Well-meaning activities by environmental organisations have made the area widely known, attracting visitors and creating a mini-tourism boom. Support from international donors, from the European Commission to UNDP, is providing new development opportunities. The establishment of the transborder Prespa Park is decreasing the isolation of the area and reducing the impact of national borders.

Combined with a lack of public planning and land use control, these initially positive factors are damaging the delicate Prespa landscapes, especially through intensifying construction for tourist facilities. Resort housing and various services no longer limited to the traditional villages, are spreading throughout the territory.

The situation however is not desperate. Already the involved parties are making an effort to use resources, especially space and water, sustainably. In this way they satisfy legitimate human needs for a better quality of life without degrading the environment. In this way, perhaps, they help re-establish the harmony between people and nature in Prespa.

Whether this is a realistic goal that can be achieved within a single generation has to be seen. Such efforts may indicate whether efforts to manage this and similar landscapes have a reasonable chance of success.

A different approach, which has matured during the past two to three decades, tends to consider landscapes in a more functional and objective manner, without denying the element of human perception, which is essential in the definition of landscapes (2). In this context, some of the questions to be considered are the following: What are the natural and anthropic functions that occur within landscapes? Who are the drivers of change at the level of landscape? What are the factors in play? What are the timescales involved?

From the point of view of nature, landscapes include a broad array of functions — or dynamic processes — as they may incorporate diverse ecosystems, each with its characteristic species of flora and fauna. The unimpeded performance of these functions and processes is a sign of the ecological health of a landscape, which can be hampered or enhanced by human activities. Thus, the clear-cutting of forests for timber or cultivation may result in soil erosion, which

Thus some landscapes include areas impacted by past or current human activities while maintaining ecological value, mild examples include grazing and fishing. Other landscapes lead to a partial transformation of the natural environment, mainly through agriculture. And there are those actions that radically transform the landscape through urbanisation and large scale works, building construction and major infrastructure projects, such as dams, harbours, airports and rail and road networks.

It should be remembered here that unsustainable management of human activities may lead to a gradual degradation of landscape functions and thus to a diminishment of their values for human beings. The unwise use of soil and water resources in intensive agriculture, for example, usually leads to a dramatic loss of fertility and productivity, and even to the abandonment of the areas affected.

Anthropogenic activities can exert pressures on landscapes, with visible results, which can be reversed once the pressure diminishes or is removed. Intensive cultivation or grazing, for example, can drastically



change the vegetation cover, but this can recover to a considerable degree once the activities are abandoned. Or the eutrophication of a lake (such as in Prespa) or lagoon can be reversed once the sources of pollution are controlled. There are, however, changes that are irreversible, such as soil erosion, desertification, urbanisation and public works construction.

Of course, it should be stressed here that not all changes are negative; there are those that can be considered highly positive as to their impact. But who is to judge and with what criteria? In a democratic society, ultimately it should be the public. But does the public have the necessary knowledge and the means to express its collective will in relation to decisions that will have long-term impacts? And how do the views of minorities – especially in multicultural societies — or of visitors and the international community, find an equitable hearing? The politically delicate question of ‘ownership’ of landscapes by indigenous peoples and local communities and the moral rights of interested and concerned outsiders may also be taken into account.

As to criteria, the principles of sustainable use of resources can provide useful guidance. Decision making is perhaps not so difficult if one focuses on functional aspects, as rational judgment can be applied. The situation aesthetically remains highly uncertain. In traditional societies, due mainly to the slow rate of change, a degree of common aesthetic values occurred, was cultivated and maintained. When

it changed, it was also gradually and at a slow pace. Today, globalisation and the rapid means of communication are mixing up cultures and creating an aesthetic confusion. Nowhere is this more evident than in the appreciation of landscapes. For example, there was considerable consensus on the cultural landscapes of the past, from the hill villages of Tuscany in Italy, to the Meteora sacred megaliths in Central Greece: consensus at least among educated people. Is there any such consensus on the cultural landscapes of our own era, and which of them merit continued existence.

Landscapes are depositories of collective memory, sometimes with strong spiritual implications. Are collective memories, however, still meaningful for most people? Are we in danger of losing interest in the past, and thus impoverishing our future?

The purpose of the arguments presented above is to fuel the debate on landscapes. The European Landscape Convention

Notes

1 As documented by Peter Howard; for example in his contribution to the European Landscape Convention meeting in Strasbourg, 27-28 November 2003, entitled ‘Spatial planning for landscapes: mapping the pitfalls or buttering the parsnips and avoiding the weeds’.

2 According to the definition of the European Landscape Convention, “‘landscape’ means an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors”.

3 Madagascar is a characteristic case of serious change, having lost 85% of its lush forest cover due to ‘slash and burn’ cultivation.

4 According to the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, 1971). Prespa includes perhaps the largest nesting colony of *Pelecanus crispus* in the world (approximately 1000 pairs), as well as large mammals and various endemic species.

maintains that it is concerned with all landscapes in the wider European territory. It is obvious that many of them are threatened on both the functional and the aesthetic level, and require management and care. Resources, however, are always inadequate and priorities have to be decided. These hard choices have to be made but what should be the criteria.



Thymio Papayannis
thymiop@med-ina.org

Director, Med-INA (Mediterranean Institute for Nature and Anthropros)

A Short Iambic History of the English Park

by Jay Appleton



The fashion-conscious landowner in Charles the Second’s reign strove to impress the visitors who entered his domain. By aiming at utopia and bringing into play every device dictated by the fashion of the day. Tyrannical geometry ruled in the ‘pleasure-ground’, imposing its authority on everything around. The stamp of regularity pervaded everywhere, based on the perfect circle or, if not, the perfect square. A monumental avenue now leads the curious eye

To where the park’s periphery engages with the sky,
And here and there, where avenues are seen to intersect,
A column or an obelisk enhances the effect.
The ornamental water’s no exception to the rule,
It must be regimented too to count as really cool.
The little ponds are circular, as round as round can be,
‘Canals’ are rectilinear in strict conformity.
When overcome by forces which they didn’t understand
Their ancestors had deified whatever came to hand.
As death and devastation took their agonising toll
They cherished the illusion they were really in control,
And what they really wanted from their gardens, by and large,
Was re-assuring evidence that Man was still in charge.
They’d re-constructed Nature in a geometric plan
To symbolise, absurdly, her subservience to Man.
This attitude to Nature as a domineering bane
Persisted from antiquity to good King George’s reign.
So, looking at the landscape from the windows of the Hall,
The Nature they encountered wasn’t natural at all!
And, dispossessed of contact with their proper habitat,
The New Environmentalists began to smell a rat.
They thirsted for that ambience their ancestors had prized,
From which their own society had long been ostracised.
A growing sense of confidence encouraged them to feel
The time had come to resurrect that primitive appeal,
And, taking the savannah as the basis of the plan,
They found their inspiration in the home of ancient Man.



So, with the Hanoverians securely on the throne,
The seeds of revolution were dramatically sown.
The cultured aristocracy fanatically hailed
The diametric opposite of rules which had prevailed.
Each client sought to make his park the jewel in the crown,
Testing the capabilities of famous Mr Brown.
A crafted informality had now become the rage;
A kind of groomed savannah was the hallmark of the age.
Out of the smooth and seamless sward arose sporadic trees
Whose branches, trunks and foliage were merely there to please.

The parks were filled with ungulates to make an English ‘veldt’

And every one was girdled by a dense arboreal belt.
The water-features, hitherto so rigidly confined,
Released from their restricting bonds, once more were free to wind.
Nature was re-instated as the undisputed queen

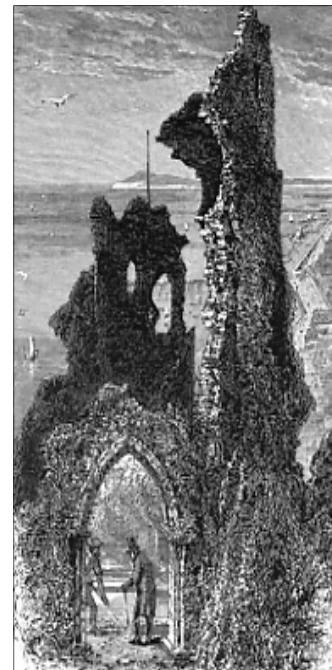
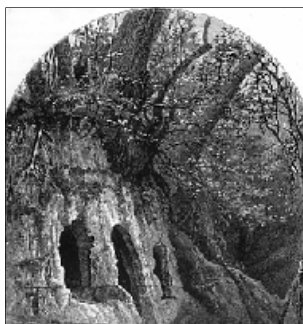


And freedom was in charge again where tyranny had been.
The confidence engendered by this bid to break the mould
Inspired the more adventurous to have a go for gold,
And there were some philosophers who liked their landscape rough,
And thought the change of policy did not go far enough.
They viewed the new 'improvers' with unmitigated scorn,
And as the century expired the 'Picturesque' was born.
They numbered intrepidity among their greater strengths,
And carried 'back-to-nature' to unprecedented lengths.
They vilified the efforts of the Brownian Brigade,
Dismissed as 'bland and vapid' the improvements they had made,
And, searching for a more dramatic scenery than theirs,
Discovered in the Wilderness the answer to their prayers.
The blinding flash of sunlight and the blackness of the cave,
The thunder of the cataract, the fury of the wave,
These filled the heart with terror as they filled the mind with awe;
Nature was in the driving-seat, and red in tooth and claw!
An enterprising owner with a promising estate
Would now review his assets in the light of the debate,
And, with a cave to hide in or a precipice to climb,
A ruin to remind him of the ravages of time,
Or just the opportunity to make a waterfall,

Though Nature might have furnished him with nothing else at all,
He'd radically alter the appearance of the site
According to the principles of Messrs Price and Knight.

So what are we to think about this ever-changing tale?
To argue for consistency would be of no avail.
The gardens and the pleasure-grounds which time has left behind
Are symptoms of a vacillating attitude of mind.
Successive generations of the arbiters of taste
Assented to the practices which fashion had embraced
With arrogant conviction, but pathetically soon
The pundits of posterity would come and change the tune.
More tolerant designers in the present century
Are turning back the pages of this chequered history,
And so the alternating styles of each successive age
Are lovingly enfolded in the nation's heritage.

First published in *The Picturesque*, No. 49, Winter 2004/5.



Anthology

The anthology in this summer issue comes from *The Wind in the Willows*, a book I had not read since

childhood. It fits well with Philip Pacey's article "Going feral" and the Landscape Research theme issue (30/2) on landscape and seasonality. As literature it is rich in niceness, close up landscape and the emotions of the author as expressed through his close to earth characters Ratty (the water rat), Mole and Toad. At the same time it all fits into a very agreeable tale of friendships and local adventures.



Kenneth Grahame's landscapes are in my opinion superb. They include flowers and colour and sound and smells and movement and change. They affect his characters' moods. His description of the winter landscape in Chapter 3, *The Wild Wood*, is to my mind an exceptional evocation of season, and light — the dense grey light before snow. His narrator, Mole in this case, expresses how he feels about the winter landscape. "He was glad that he liked the country undecorated, hard and stripped of its finery."

The book had its origins in bedtime stories and a series of letters to his son. President Theodore Roosevelt wrote a letter of praise to Grahame "I have read it and re-read it and have come to accept the characters as old friends". It was dramatised in 1929 by AA Milne the author of *Winnie the Pooh*. Kenneth Grahame died in 1932.

As I write these comments the summer is just as described in Rat and Mole's journey along the river bank. Quintessential England. Excuse me readers for being old fashioned and sentimental. I have put the following extracts in a year of seasons.

p91 In silence Mole rowed steadily, and soon they came to a point where the river divided, a long backwater branching off to one side.... The creeping tide of light gained and gained, and now they could see the colour of the flowers that gemmed the water's edge.....A bird piped suddenly. Breathless and transfixed, the Mole stopped rowing as the liquid run of that glad piping broke on him like a wave, caught him up, and possessed him utterly.For a space they hung there, brushed by the purple loosestrife that fringed the bank;

On either side of them, as they glided onwards, the rich meadow-grass seemed that morning of a freshness

and a greenness unsurpassable. Never had they noticed the roses so vivid, the willow-herb so riotous, the meadow-sweet so odorous and pervading. Then the murmur of the approaching weir began to hold the air, and they felt a consciousness that they were nearing the end, whatever it might be, that surely awaited their expedition.....

p129 He [Toad] had the world all to himself, that early summer morning. The dewy woodland, as he threaded it, was solitary and still; the green fields that succeeded the trees were his own to do as he liked with; the road itself, when he reached it, in that loneliness that was everywhere, seemed, like a stray dog, to be looking anxiously for company.
[The summer draws on, there are tiny landscape indicators]

p11 The water rat was restless, and he did not exactly know why. To all appearances the summer's pomp was still at fullest height, and although in the tilled acres green had given way to gold, though rowans were reddening, and the woods were dashed here and there with a tawny fierceness, yet light and warmth and colour were still present in undiminished measure, clean of any chilly premonitions of the passing year. But the constant chorus of the orchards and hedges had shrunk to a casual evensong from a few yet unwearied performers.

[And then we come to Winter.....exceptional]

p32 It was a cold still afternoon with a hard steely sky overhead, when he [Mole] slipped out of the warm parlour into the open air. The country lay bare and entirely leafless around him, and he thought that he had never seen so far and so intimately into the insides of things as on that winter day when Nature was deep in her annual slumber and seemed to have kicked the clothes off. Copses, dells, quarries and all hidden places, which had been mysterious mines for exploration in leafy summer, now exposed themselves and their secrets pathetically, and seemed to ask him to overlook their shabby poverty for a while, till they could riot in rich masquerade as before, and trick and entice him with the old deceptions. It was pitiful in a way, and yet cheering — even exhilarating. He was glad that he liked the country undecorated, hard, and stripped of its finery. He had got down to the bare bones of it, and they were fine and strong and simple. He did not want the warm clover and the play of seeding grasses; the screens of quickset, the billowy drapery of beech and elm seemed best away; and with great cheerfulness of spirit he pushed on towards the Wild Wood, which lay before him low and threatening, like a black reef in some still southern sea.

Kenneth Grahame
The Wind in the Willows. Publisher Methuen and Co Ltd 1908, republished 1951 with illustrations by Arthur Rackham.

Courses

The value of water in the landscape and in society

An integrative and multifunctional approach organised by LRG Board member Kenneth Olwig.

A "Ph.D. Level" Water Course..... not of course a watercourse. No of course not.

Background The E.U. Water Framework Directive embodies the principles of sustainable environmental, economic and social development. It provides a new integrative element in environmental and landscape planning which means that water can no longer be regarded as an element that is primarily of concern to water management specialists. This course follows up on the directive by taking an integrated and multifunctional approach to water in which economic, technical, biological, ecological, historical and aesthetic landscape values are taken into consideration on a global as well as on a local scale. It will be concerned with the demands for multifunctional approaches to water research, management and planning that take into account both rural production, urban requirements and effects on the water and the need for landscape amenities for an increasingly urbanized population. The concepts of green and blue structure and their interdependence will be addressed. Water will be seen as supplying the underlying "blue structure" of the landscape. It is, on the one hand, a resource serving functional purposes (e.g. as water for agriculture, industry and domestic users), and, on the other, a major amenity for recreation, health, ecology and aesthetic attractiveness. It can also present a major threat to the landscape, through e.g. soil erosion and flooding, if there is poor planning and deficient regulation.

Date October 5-9 2005 International course at the Swedish Life Science University: Alnarp, Southern Sweden,. Open to disciplines such as landscape planning and management, geography, agriculture, horticulture and water resource planning and management. Course language: English.

Application deadline August 1.

Guest lecturers include Anne Whiston Spirn, MIT, Department of Urban Studies & Planning, Malin Falkenmark and Håkan Tropp, from the Stockholm International Water Institute, and Dr. Henrik Vejre, from The Royal Veterinary and Agricultural University, Denmark.

Costs Students must cover the cost of transportation plus room and board. No tuition cost. For more information write to Prof. Kenneth Olwig: <Kenneth.Olwig@lpa.lsu.se>.

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It was the fact that Bluewater Centre was in Kent, south of the river and unknown territory to Essex man, rather than that it was an enclosed regional shopping centre, that had prevented my visiting until now. I had, after all, been to most such centres in the UK ... most recently charmed by Trafford near Manchester as well as the Daddies of them all in West Edmonton, Alberta (still the biggest) and the Twin Cities, Minnesota. But thus far I had avoided the biggest in Europe (though watch future Spanish space), believing that north of the Thames, at Lakeside, all my retail needs could be met.

Were they? Well I didn't manage the £120+ spend per person averaged over a four and a half hour visit, rather about £20 in an hour, between the guided tour and a meeting in the Community Room. Yes, I realise that if I'd shopped until I dropped I could have slotted into the statistics of the landscape.

In terms of landscape tradition, Bluewater is largely deposited into a Blue Circle cement quarry. (TQ58/73) In a North Kent zone which has seldom troubled the topographer or landscape enthusiast, this 350+ retail unit shed with functional and symbolic extrusion, hardly registers in view. In fact it shares with the Essex shore, or slowly emerging 'Thames Gateway' a seldom invited visitor delight. In short, this is a landscape fit only for moving, supplying and ... with suitable containers ... shopping. Indeed, there is a bus service which conveniently links the Bluewater visitor with Lakeside in Essex, an entente cordiale which extends the daily enjoyment of the shopoholic.

"Landscape is not just the natural, classified, ecologically-informed three-dimensional image of place. It is the manipulated, interior/exterior environment which provides orientation and comfort for the user".

To urban design critics, consultants and admirers, places such as Bluewater do not exist. With their careful array of High Street outlets, set in comfortable malls, with no traffic, no non-conforming pedestrians (more of which later), no cold and no rain, they offer the perfect environment to spend ...spend ... spend. This is what the vast number of visitors want to do and therefore what the site provides. No question. Retail availability is achieved through demand and clever management, security through support for a Kent Constabulary station on site, comfort through training and good staff morale.

Clear blue water and the inside and outside of urban landscapes

But most important is the one ownership, an overall retail philosophy ... and a really effective sequence of CCTV cameras.

In terms of 'landscape' new issues arise. First, this place was produced inside out. It is the interior landscape that matters, the exterior was, initially, thought to be the parking and ancillary facilities which provided add-ons to the shopping experience. Well, after a first 5+ years cycle, the exterior, the link between interior 24 hour retail space and the real world may become more significant.

The site is limited and immediate plans call for a revision of the interface between the Winter Garden food area and external lakes and boardwalks gradually one can envisage Bluewater creeping out into the real world and engaging with it. The Land Rover 4 wheel drive experience is changing (with JCB help) into a fast bus lane, things are moving.!

My enthusiasm for Trafford is that the exterior and links with shaping a new landscape seem to be rather more advanced. But all of these inward-looking centres are going to have to revise and upgrade their offer in the next decade. New retail environments will, of course, challenge them – the multiple auto, white goods and furniture parks when you can drive between 'displayed bedsteads' and 'kitchen layouts' are on the horizon. The challenge for each past innovation – downtown, out-of-town centre, character quarter and the rest is to re-invent and therefore retain 'retail-spend'.

There are a number of solutions ... all impacting on the landscape. The first is to revise within the footprint ... but Bluewater is a limited site and once new retail mixes are promoted, new interior attractions announced, it must be the nature of the interface between the centre and its surroundings which receives attention. Water, lights, events, symbolic structures ... who knows, but Bluewater must be thinking!

I suspect that for the average driver ... or even rail traveller such as me ... the 'landscape in transition' is the most depressing scene. From any number of surveys we know that what the British really like is 'tidy' - untidy really turns them off. The (promoted) rail journey from Waterloo East to Greenhithe (for Broadwater +£1) takes you through some of the saddest evidence of the Thames Gateway ... white frost, graffiti, interior wrenched outwards (the Peeke Frean Club, what a Betjemesque joy that must have been). Thames Gateway needs our attention, but also our realisation that landscape is in evolution.

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Using public transport and walking as I do ...I realise that I am in the minority ... there are swathes of view, of landscape, that do not really matter in the ODPM/Promotional World of the latest new Britain. We are increasingly pointed to landscape experiences which we are supposed to enjoy and the rest is noise - a view best lost in reading The Metro or deep in the Ipod.

"There are swathes of view, of landscape, that do not really matter in the ODPM/Promotional World of the latest new Britain. We are increasingly pointed to landscape experiences which we are supposed to enjoy and the rest is noise".

Interesting implications for placemaking here. No question that Bluewater, like all such centres, will keep hold of its image-making. Interior decoration is full of quotes which cannot be read in full, or rather naff sculptures which are intended as a

thematic orientation for the site. Outside they encounter 'Planning' and the real debate over placemaking begins.

'Landscape' is not just the natural, classified, ecologically-informed three-dimensional image of place. It is the manipulated, interior/exterior environment which provides orientation and comfort for the user. Keep an eye on Bluewater and its fellows, try to understand what many million of your compatriots accept and respond to!

For every Kent visitor seeking out 'the Hilder oast house', there are twenty zoning in on the ice-cream stall outside the multi-screen in Bluewater. Do we care?

Brian Goodey

Agony Letter

Dear Mary

I understand Bud has been having trouble with my indelible lines. I'd forgotten there were some with the 'sentient' piece. Actually - I have them in several bits of writing: I don't know why. I've occasionally noticed that a line I typed in gets 'emboldened' - and then just refuses to quit when I try to delete it. Sometimes, they appear to be a sort of spontaneous generation: I don't put them in, I don't want them there, and I've not discovered how to get rid of them, except by making gaps above and below, and copying the separate texts. The worst thing about them is that they follow me about. Occasionally, when I copy a piece of seemingly lineless text... a b''''y line appears and just sits [or lies] at the same position on the page, whatever happens to be on the page. They are like Poe's Raven, but silent.

Anyway - I'm sorry he can't get rid of them, either; but doesn't feel able to ask about them. I did notice, though, that he'd got rid of a superfluous [though interesting] bit of my article, including the final reference point, yet [curious] left in the endnote. Is it to undermine my point, or just to tease the readership? Still - he does a good job overall, and is kind enough to use most of the ramblings I send. Long may it be so. With my best wishes. *Martin Spray*

Going feral

by Philip Pacey

Feature articles in newspapers are ephemeral things, easily overlooked, not easily recovered, destined for oblivion. I want to call attention to an article, the first of a series about writers and landscapes, published in *The Guardian's* books supplement on 26th March 2005. Its author is Robert Macfarlane, a name unknown to me. You may have read it. If not, your local library should be able to help you gain access to it, if not in the form of a copy of the newspaper then from a computer database. Macfarlane begins with Henry Williamson. While he was writing *Tarka the Otter*, Henry Williamson 'went feral', spending days and nights outdoors between the Taw and the Torridge (rivers in North Devon), trying to experience the landscape as an otter would experience it:



He crawled on hands and knees, squinting out sightlines, peering at close-up textures, working out what an otter's-eye view of West Gully or Dark Hams Wood or Horsey Marsh would be. So it is that the landscape in Tarka is always seen from a few inches' height: water bubbles 'as large as apples', the spines of 'blackened thistles', reeds in ice like wire in clear flex.

The prose of the book has little interest in panoramas – in the sweeps and long horizons which are given to eyes carried at five feet.

Macfarlane has much else to say about Williamson and other writers; he acknowledges how Williamson's love of nature became 'corrupted into fascism', and how for others 'an infatuation with landscape has, at times, come at the cost of a proper sense of human community'; he identifies several 'enemies of good writing about landscape'. But for now I want to short cut to his concluding paragraphs, which commend 'attention', defined by Iris Murdoch (following Simone Weil) as an 'especially vigilant kind of "looking"'. Attention, wrote Murdoch, *teaches us how real things can be looked at and loved without being seized and used...*

And Macfarlane himself goes on to say that: [this] ideal of "attention", of a compelling particularity of vision, obtains to landscapes as well as to people, It is harder to dispose of

anything, or to act selfishly towards it, once one has paid attention to its details. This is an environmentalist's truth, as well as a humanist's.

What follows is too good to paraphrase, too long to quote in full... but in LRE how can I resist quoting Macfarlane on how the best landscape writers have... responded with gripping exactitude to certain forms of matter (ice, rock, light, sand, moor, land, water, air) and to certain arrangements of space (altitude, edges, valleys, ridges, plains, horizons, slopes). Comically, earnestly, lyrically, ecstatically, anecdotally, beautifully, these writers have approached their chosen landscapes with an eye to their uniqueness. In so doing, they have primed a space within which those landscapes can be respected – can come to seem less seizable and usable by the greedy human self.

Macfarlane's argument invokes for me the wisdom of others: conversations long ago with the poet Jeremy Hooker, who used the word 'attention' in exactly this way; Blake's 'To see a world in a grain of sand'; Ruskin's eye for detail; Buber's plea for humans to say 'Thou' to one another, to value each other – and his thought-provoking declaration that 'Nature... needs Man for its hallowing'. Not for the first time I find myself contrasting panoramas and prospects with seeing things close-to, the latter coming naturally to us as small children (I spent hours of my childhood *inside* a hedgerow), the former being the norm for adult humans, raised up on our two legs. If this is a point-of-view which tends to the god-like and proprietorial, encouraging us to think of ourselves as monarchs of all we survey, then, if only as a corrective, we will do well to cultivate a habit of 'going feral', but *as humans*, paying attention to and hallowing detail. I have no religious belief, but I can understand the appeal of a god who combines near- and far-seeing, who cares even for a sparrow and who assures each one of us that 'the very hairs of your head are all numbered'.

Philip Pacey

University of Central Lancashire.
Continued over.....

Editors note

Find Macfarlane's article on the web at <http://books.guardian.co.uk/review/story/0,,1445192,00.html>

Quite unknown to Philip Pacey, Rob Macfarlane and my son are friends. They have walked up a mountain in Nepal, climbed ice waterfalls in China and walked together in Scotland. In consequence I have to hand Macfarlane's book "Mountains of the Mind" and I quote over the page from pages 108-9 which is some evidence of the author's attention to a very small part of a large landscape.

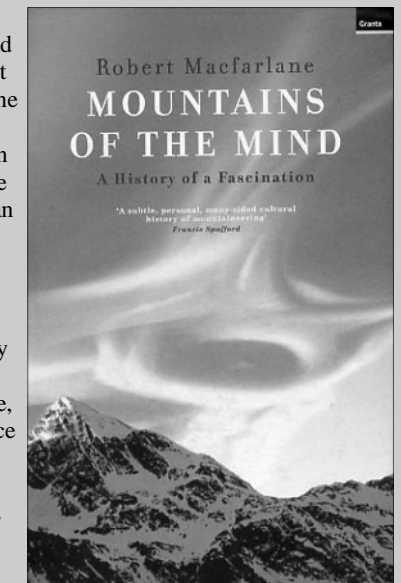
At first glance, glaciers appear destitute of life or interest; attractive only for their qualities of desolation and emptiness. They seem static, frozen like a photograph by the cold and the thin, transparent air. But like deserts, glaciers open themselves up to you when you look closely at them.

On the Inylchek glacier (in the Tien Shan mountains of Kyrgistan. Ed) - every time I stepped off the moraine and on to the ice, something would have changed. The glacier had a different character for each part of the day. In the cold mornings it was crisply white. At noon the sun carved the surface of the ice into groves of tiny, perishable ice trees, each one only a few inches high: a miniature silver and blue forest which stretched away for miles up and down the glacier. The late afternoon light – a rich, liquid light – turned the big dun rocks on the ice into tawny beasts, and made the pools of meltwater which gathered in the glacier's hollows glint like black lacquer. One night I was out on the glacier when it began to snow in big, heavy, wind-blown flakes. In the beam of my head-torch it looked as though I was moving at warp-speed through deep space.

Dusk was my favourite time on the glacier. The sun always fell fast, dropping suddenly behind a row of peaks, so it was a brief affair – forty minutes or so when shadows quickly densened beneath rocks, and the air temperature plunged. Down at the glacier's side, you could sense it battering down for the night. If you put a hand an inch or two above the ice, you could feel the cold pulsing off it, like marble. Out on the wide meltwater pools, the ice formed in zigzags just beneath the surface of the water, then thickened into heavy boiler-plates, locking in the deeper water. I once bent down to examine a shallow pool of water which had gathered in a dip, and watched for a few minutes as ice crept jaggedly inwards from its edges and knitted in the middle, like a fontanel closing, or a tiny ice age.

From Rob Macfarlane Mountains of the Mind

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Geotechnical landscape carve up.

Bud Young

Travel west from the Aeropuerto de Malaga and confront some of the most appalling violence ever done to the landscape in the name of development. I refer to land seen in the A7/ E15 corridor. It is high and all in full view of the sea, Gibraltar is on the far horizon. Down from the motorway the land descends steeply and is cut by many arroyos. The coastal strip is already developed. Perhaps — do not know — the coastal strip has settled down, cosseted by sprinklers imported palms and the postscript landscape architect. Along the shore it may even be an impressive array of maturing greenspace and lovely buildings (a kind of Monte Carlo Cap Ferrat 1930 scene). No? Is that not what it's like? I don't know.

But from A7/A15, the parallel motorway, inland, it is a picture of devastation, a picture of total greed allied with vulgarity of demand. Hillsides are carved away, stacked living modules rise - and have risen - in ugly terraces and futuristic hollow ziggurats. The landscaping one may imagine is more a matter of 'the geotechnics of the nearly stable'. I rarely allow myself such invective.

Will I get a rocket from the commercial attaché for this? From my friends who winter in Spain?

LRG links with Europe

Yves Luginbuhl of CNRS and Daniel Terrasson of CEMAGREF attended the May Board meeting with a view to establishing cooperation with researchers in France. They gave presentations concerning the history of landscape research in France and the current programme of MEDD. It was agreed that together with the NLN we should investigate the possibility of establishing a series of landscape seminars with partners across Europe and that we should look for EU funding to do this.

[For unexplained acronyms go to Google.](#)

CNRS Centre National de Recherches Sociales
CEMAGREF Too long to write

MEDD Ministère de l'écologie et du développement durable.

Should you read

[In connection with functional and aesthetic landscapes \(our first article\)](#)

Alcock, S.E. (1993), **Graecia Capta: The landscapes of Roman Greece**, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK.

Thomas, J. (2002), **'Archaeologies of place and landscape'**, in: Hodder, I., *Archaeological Theory Today*, Polity Press, Cambridge, UK, 165-187.

Van Mansvelt, J.F. and M.J. Van der Lubbe (1999), **Checklist for sustainable landscape management**, Elsevier, Amsterdam, The Netherlands, pp. 181.

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Zedeño, M.N. (2000), **'On what people make of places; a behavioural cartography'**, in: Schiffer, M.B., *Social Theory in Archaeology*, University of Utah Press, USA, 97-111.

[Some readings on Prespa](#)

Catsadorakis, G. (1999), **Prespa a story for man and nature**, The Society for the Protection of Prespa, Aghios Germanos, Greece.

Catsadorakis, G. and M. Malakou (1997), **'Conservation and management issues of Prespa National Park'** in: Crivelli, A.J. and G. Catsadorakis (eds.), *Lake Prespa, Northwestern Greece, A unique Balkan Wetland*, at *Hydrobiologia* 351, Kluwer Academic Publishers, Belgium, 175-196.

[Other writings](#)

Nathalie Pottier, Edmund Penning Rowsell, Sylvia Turnstall & Gilles Hubert **Land use and flood protection: contrasting approaches and outcomes in France and in England and Wales** *Applied Geography* 25/1 2005 pp1-27

Theodore Lasanta-Martinez, Sergio M Vicente-Serrano & Jose Ma Cuadrat-Prats **Mountain mediterranean landscape evolution caused by the abandonment of traditional primary activities: a study of the Spanish Central Pyrenees** *Applied Geography* 25/1 2005 pp47-65

Kristi MacDonald, Thomask Rudel **Sprawl and forest cover: what is the relationship?** *Applied Geography* 25/1 2005 pp67-79

R Evans **Curtailling grazing-induced erosion in a small catchment and its environs, the Peak District Central England** *Applied Geography* 25/1 2005 pp81-95

CY Jim **Outstanding remnants of nature in compact cities: patterns and preservation of heritage trees in Guanzhou city China** *Geoforum* 36 2005 pp371-385

Paul Waley **Parks and landmarks: planning the eastern capital along western lines [two cases from Tokyo parks]** *Journal of Historical Geography* 31 2005 pp1-16

Peter Merriman **'Operation motorway': landscapes of construction on England's motorway** *Journal of Historical Geography* 31 2005 pp113-133

Christopher De Sousa **Policy performance and brownfield redevelopment in Milwaukee, Wisconsin** *The Professional Geographer* 57(2) 2005 pp312-327

John Wylie **A single day's walking: narrating self and landscape on the South West coast path** *Trans Inst Br Geogr NS* 30 2005 pp234-247.

Justin Wood **'How green is my valley?' Desktop geographic information systems as a community based participatory mapping tool.** *Area* 2005 37/2 pp159-170

Stuart Downward & Kevin Steiner **Working river: the geomorphological legacy of English freshwater mills** *Area* 2005 37/2 pp138-147

David Matless, Paul Merchant & Charles Watkins **Animal landscapes: otters and wildfowl in England 1945-1970** pp191-205

Stephen Marshall **Street Patterns**. Spon Press 2005 ISBN 0 415 31750 9 Reviewed in *Urban Design* 95.

Ian Thompson **Ecology, Community and Delight: sources of values in landscape architecture**. Spon Press (Routledge) 2000. (This book though no longer a news item won a Landscape Institute award in 2001. The author — Editor of our journal, *Landscape Research* — is now preparing **'Gardens of Versailles: the Sun King's Garden'** which will be published by Bloomsbury in 2006).

Cork: Landscapes for urban, suburban and peri-urban areas.

The European landscape convention. reporter Peter Howard

*Third Workshop for Implementation
Cork, Ireland, 16 – 18 June, 2005*

Cork is this year's European Capital of Culture, and Ireland has ratified the Convention, so it was a natural choice for a Workshop meeting, though that does not denigrate the efforts made by Landscape Alliance Ireland to host the meeting and introduce the landscape of South West Ireland. Terry O'Regan was the inspiration and driving force.

The workshops are intended to find ways of implementing the intentions of the Convention, which clearly recognises the importance of the landscapes of the suburbs and of the peri-urban areas, the landscapes experienced by the majority of the European population on a daily basis. Every speaker made it clear just how important this was, and emphasised the element of change; landscapes on the urban fringe are continually changing, and no regulatory framework that does not recognise this fact can be successful. There were speakers who regarded most urban expansion as a threat, and others who felt some more positive values – by no means always visual, but perhaps most worrying was that there were so few critical debates about what should be done to enhance these landscapes.

One concern is that representatives of nation states do not often volunteer the problems they may have faced in the schemes they discuss at international meetings, and far too often there is insufficient time to analyse these in discussion. Some academics provide very useful frameworks, as did Peter Bibby from Sheffield, who showed how the rural / urban dichotomy simply does not represent modern demographic facts. That academics and policy makers should jointly address some of the issues is clearly fundamental to such meetings, but there are now many more members of the Council of Europe,



and national position papers take up more and more time.

That is an organisational problem, but more worrying is the lack of focus on the suburban landscape. While it is the urban fringe itself that is the focus of so much change, a very substantial part of the population lives in suburban areas that are now relatively stable, whether the 1930s estates of semi-detached houses so common in England, or the 1950s estates of concrete slab blocks by no means confined to eastern countries. These landscapes, many of which the Convention would surely describe as 'degraded' were given but scant attention. Dare one suggest that much improved suburban landscapes might reduce the demand on rural landscapes either for tourism or residential functions?

The field day took us to the magnificent and romantic landscapes of west Cork, to Bantry Bay and Skibbereen – where Michael Dower enlightened us about the problems of the Irish Famine, and the report written by his own ancestor. I for one was very

grateful that we did not spend the day examining the suburbs of Cork City, but perhaps thereby lies some of the problem. Landscape experts, like most others, prefer the rural green. Yves Luginbühl, in his summing up, stressed the vital element of Participation in the landscape decisions that will shape the future. We need to find out what landscapes people find attractive. But there is plenty of evidence of their wishes in west Cork, an area that has shared in recent Irish prosperity. Many people are making money, and then they build a 'Trophy' house (Terry O'Regan's useful phrase) in the countryside, just outside a village. Having just returned from the French southern shore of Lake Geneva, it is clear that this scatter of new detached

homes all over the countryside is not merely an Irish preference. Perhaps greater participation will make it quite clear that most people's landscape preference is for just that—their own substantial garden and house with applied local identity set in a magnificent rural landscape, close enough to neighbours when required. That may not be the answer landscape experts want to hear.

An urge to explore by Bud Young

It is Rosemary's really. Allow her a map and a few gallons of diesel and she takes us through some of the smallest roads available. On that basis anywhere becomes a project area, a journey punctuated by a hundred stops to look at vegetation, a particular flowering plant, an unfamiliar use of land, or some distinctive geology; alternatively to have a cup of tea, a hunk (lit.) of bread with dry sausage and to make one small place our own. This time we break with our tradition and fly from Exeter airport to Andalucia and in the spring too, when the flowers there are coming good and before they are scorched by straw and dry capsules by the summer sun.

I have spoken of the appalling geotechnical landscape of the coast road. My face changes to a smile of delight as I describe the glories of the interior. Commercial attaché and friends take note. First a drive up to Gaucin at 650m, such a compact white town wrapped around a high promontory looking both to east and west, wonderfully perched above its valleys. Salers in Cantal (Fr) strikes the same lofty note (see LRE 33): there is something about looking down into valley volumes of defined airiness. Views from Gaucin to Gibraltar and sharp mountains in Africa (Morocco actually). Past the heady narcissus-like smell of Spanish gorse (more *genista hispanica* than *ulex europaea*) which colours whole hillsides bright yellow. On beyond to a farm-like hamlet behind a soaring limestone stump which then dominates us where we stay, greets us in the morning and demands that we look up. It is a crag where vultures wheel and soar in high inaccessibility.

No one living there could fail to revere it. Few people ever climb it, it is tree covered, it has caves, so many mysteries. It is very big.



A series of personal private excursions then, as if we were at the outset of a new land resources mapping project. — those were the days, my friend! Each trip of one day, sometimes revising knowledge as we retrace a section of route before diverging, in general working the terrain as a fly explores a kitchen table. A landscape dominated by geology and its knock-on effects, softer and harder bedded Devonian greywackes and mudstones, feature formers and gully makers, hard crystalline Cretaceous limestones, talus

deposits. And a marvellously apparent fold structure. Not just rocks, for the resultant landscapes factors include slope and dissection and soils, surface water and vegetation types in fascinating array. And I do not forget the cultural and political in my landscapes, but first things first.

Woodlands of cork oak, light canopies underlain by French lavender (as we in England call it) heather, cistus (rock rose) and asphodel.... Soot dark trunks stripped of cork, but warm red on more recently harvested trees. Wild olives, pines — native and in plantations and an area of planted eucalyptus. Groves of oranges on alluvial land and frost killed avocado



orchards.

Out of the wooded lands to spacier limestones around Ubrique, huge views, great hogbacks, tumbled karst, sweet limestone grasses and little flowers.

So many delights and so many more to rely on in the mind's eye. Highly recommended.

Author's note

In a world where landscape has so many interpretations I have reverted to the first, to the original and to me the most powerful: "what you see and how you feel about it and understand it in its wholeness and in detail particularly as you travel through it, reacting to natural differences and sensing what it offers you as a sustaining resource."

Photo of the author/editor before dieting. And of a medieval road in karst near Ubrique.

Landscape of the terraced house

by Adam Wilkinson

A laudable attempt to improve housing in nine urban areas of England is shaping up as a heritage disaster. Not for the heritage of the elite, but the heritage of everyday people. The government's Pathfinder programme, also known as the Housing

Market Renewal Initiative [HMRI], embodies a series of policies aimed at preventing housing market collapse in these mainly northern areas which include East Lancashire, Merseyside and Oldham and Rochdale. It represents a huge investment of public money – up to £500m in each area – over 15 years.

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Up to 400,000 houses, mostly pre-1919 terraces, are threatened with clearance over next 10-15 years. So far 168,000 have been targeted for demolition, but there are calls from the academics behind the policy for the rates to be speeded up. The policy actually includes a degree of refurbishment but this in no way ameliorates the effects of mass demolitions on the urban landscape, heritage, society and sustainability.

These are not slum dwellings. In some of the areas there are serious social, health and education problems, but to blame this on the buildings is as mindless as blaming the frequently very low housing values in these areas on the quality of the historic building stock. These are potentially sustainable communities – they need state support, not state abandonment. Mass demolition is the easiest option for dealing with the perceived problem of market failure and the real social problems, yet the lessons of the past have proven that the 'quick wins' demolition provides are followed by long-term problems. Think back to the post war programmes of slum clearance.

A Note on Classification

Over the page I show some of the great variety of terraces, some very attractive, set against the archetypal 'Old Enemy of the North', an unremitting factory-centred and terribly grim layout from Preston. The Deputy Prime Minister (Mr Prescott) who is from Hull may have, deep in his mind, some such grim surroundings and rightly sees such intensive layouts as deprived. How then of the genteel terraces of Clapham, of Camden or the highly priced terraces of Islington. These are terraces which satisfied London's burgeoning office population rather than an industrial one.

Terraces like plants occupy a phylum and can be divided into genera. These genera will be in addition be stratified by age. Looked at in another way there is a continuous spectrum of terraces types and it is important to make clear distinctions.

Terraces can be one two three or more storeys high. They may be decorated or plain, well built or poorly with or without rear extensions, spaciouly laid out with good back gardens or tightly packed. They may be 'village-age rural' Georgian or modern built by development companies (good and bad) or by charitable foundations. When does a tall terrace become a Knightsbridge mansion? Is multi-occupation the kiss of death? How many linked units justifies the word terrace? Eight is a typical pre/post war council house layout. What of nearly touching Victorian semis, barely distinguishable from terraces. These are the distinctions I have to make as a photo-interpreter when I map all sorts of terraces including those in Bootle where I was asked by the local authority to distinguish those fronting direct onto the street and others more laid back.

Bud Young

While Save Britain's Heritage backs the basic premise – supporting the market and improving housing conditions – its execution earns our strongest condemnation. Alongside local protesters, SAVE recently gave evidence to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister [ODPM] Committee ~ more specifically to the group of parliamentarians that monitors the activities of John Prescott's mega-department ~ on the huge damage the policy will cause to our heritage and the communities that live among it. We eagerly await the committee's report this month (April 2005).

Loss to the heritage

Part of the justification for the demolition policy, as laid down in

The Northern Way' [www.thenorthernway.co.uk] is that the economic development of the North depends on variety in the housing stock. Terraced housing is the dominant form across the UK and so Pathfinder is targeting it (its lack of variety) for clearance. This is in spite of the fact that the terraced house is an excellent solution to the small house problem, takes a wide variety of forms and heights, decorative designs and levels of gentility. Anyone doubting this should



English Heritage, which helped fight off the threat of mass clearance in Nelson, Lancashire, has the necessary expertise and funding (at least it did before the recent cuts).

The variety and quality of the buildings and the areas threatened is astonishing. Entire areas of four-bedroom or five-bedroom houses in Liverpool are up for demolition. Others under threat are in Bootle, 10 minutes' walk from the lively town centre; there are solid stone built terraces in Darwen; and others in Northwood part of Stoke-on-Trent, a model sustainable community which summarises all that is best about these areas. We understand the reason for the possible demolition of Northwood in Stoke-on-Trent is 'bad ground conditions' ~ yet the buildings show no signs of active movement.



These should be conservation areas, but conservation areas are declared by the same local authorities that are working towards clearance. What is remarkable is that Stoke-on-Trent probably has more potential in terms of brownfield development sites than any other city in the UK, yet Pathfinder wants to create more. This is another objectionable aspect of the proposal's contorted logic ~ the creation of brownfield sites through demolition in order to meet government strictures about the percentage of new development on brownfield sites.

Government policy on heritage discusses at length the importance of the sense of place created by the historic environment, yet this sense of place and

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history, to which local people can relate, stands to be lost forever.

The Pathfinder focus, solely on houses, fails to take into account



the wider urban fabric. Terrace housing does not exist in isolation, but in relation to the industrial buildings and history of the area, and is supported by pubs and shops of similar dates. A broader approach is needed to understand the potential to provide spaces for living, recreation and employment without having to resort to demolition.

Adam Wilkinson.
SAVE



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Editorial enquiries:

Bud Young

Airphoto Interpretation,

26 Cross Street Moretonhampstead Devon

TQ13 8NL

or emails to

young @airphotointerpretation.com

Administrator's address is:

Pauline Graham

PO Box 53

Horspath

Oxford

OX33 1WX

Administrator's email is:

admin@landscapeperesearch.org.uk