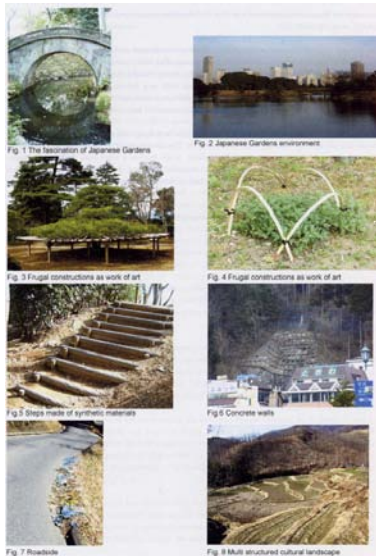


Yoji Aoki EXPERIENCES OF JAPANESE LANDSCAPES

Yoji Aoki is an LRG member twice a contributor to LRExtra on early perceptions of Japan's landscape by travellers. This report is his edited compendium of writings by outsiders (who were invited by him to the National Institute for Environmental Studies Japan) regarding their very different views of landscape there. It continues his interest in how others see His Land. There is perhaps something unusual about this: recast this invitation and for Japan write England (or your own country) and you may notice that we are perhaps less interested in what others see in our landscape than in how we view and understand it ourselves. Be that as it may.



His contributors are from Scotland, Flanders, Austria, China (2), Germany (2), Switzerland, the Czech Republic (LRG members), Korea (2), and Taiwan and there is an introduction by Professor Jay Appleton, one time Chair of LRG. It is abundantly illustrated with slide show style photographs one page for each set of observations totalling 18 pages

with about 140 landscape images.

For those like me who have only the vaguest idea of Japanese landscapes there is a wealth of observations, many of them demanding our attention and requiring our judgement, because they are authored by people whose national landscape cultures we have not yet considered. These observations will be equally intriguing for those who have spent time there.

While the report contains quite a lot about Japanese national parks (visitors seem drawn to or be sent to these), designed landscapes and the urban experience also receive a strong share of the text. I was pleased to see that ordinary landscapes - the flat lands, the farmed land and villages were covered in at least two of the articles, notably by Werner Nohl, Munich with forestry covered by Simon Bell (Edinburgh). Eckhart Langer (Switzerland) makes interesting cross comparisons with Swiss landscapes and planning, and

takes a wider geographical perspective noting that at 2,400kms in length Japan extends from the 24 to 45 degrees north. At least one author touches on landscape ecology and there are several who deal with landscape as art and the literary context. Each visitor arrived with a particular landscape baggage and this imbues the collection with special value.

In his foreword Jay Appleton writes:
Whenever we begin to draw distinctions between the landscapes of different areas we tend to be impressed by the differences between them, but it invariably becomes apparent that the similarities are no less important. If, as a species, our physical features evolved over a long period of time, so also did the instincts which prompt us how to use them to ensure our survival. Not least among these was the imperative to acquire information about our environment so that we could exploit its potentialities whilst avoiding its hazards. We are, in short, 'programmed to explore'. Over time, particular groups of our ancestors may have become attuned to the environments in which they took up residence and their attitudes to landscape may therefore have developed differently, but it is evident that at such a basic level such concepts as 'voids and masses,' landscapes of exposure and seclusion, views looking up and views looking down, induce something like a common response. Cultural differences may then appear as idiomatic variations on the same common themes.

Bud Young

Reference

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High Tide in Picardy

It was a bright morning in late August, the sunshine only occasionally interrupted by passing clouds. A visiting volunteer at the St Valery depot of the Chemin de Fer de la Baie de Somme, I was patiently wire-brushing rust from the chassis of an old railway carriage. The chassis had been set up on supports out of doors, on what was once the platform of the original St Valery station and later became the St Valery Canal halt. At this point, the railway runs beside the salt marshes where the bay has silted up; the depot, comprising engine shed and workshop, stands on the very edge of *terra firma*.

Having spent much of the morning squatting or kneeling beneath the chassis, I stood up, turned around... and gasped. Behind my back, the tide had come in, much higher than the previous few days, and one landscape had been replaced by another. Although the salt marsh was largely submerged, here and there land projected above the surface of the water; notably, in the not so distant foreground, the hump of a grass-covered hide, constructed by a *huttier* beside what at low tide was a pond on which he moored a flock of decoy ducks. (Once during my visit, he and his wife parked their car close to the depot in the late afternoon and spent the night in the hide; with what success I don't know).

The water shimmered and sparkled in the sunshine; clouds sailed by overhead. It was a lovely sight, and I ran around urging bemused colleagues to look and taking lots of photos from different vantage points (including the roof of one of the railway's vans) – photos which, although by no means failures, demonstrated, after the event, the ordinariness of the scene and the absurdity of my excitement. Probably I was the only person present to have been *surprised* by the sight. Unusually that morning I had not had the opportunity of glancing at the tide tables in the local newspaper, the *Courrier Picard*, and of all of us I was probably the only one who had spent the entire morning looking the other way.

An ordinary miracle, then, but one which led me to think about how landscapes can be so suddenly ~ and *silently* ~ transformed. The silence of the rising tide was part of the magic; it contributed to the surprise, ensuring that no sound called my attention and caused me to turn round. Of course, landscape can be silently and *instantly* transformed by the sun, coming from behind a cloud, suddenly and brilliantly illuminating the scene, making its colours sing. That is one of the wonders of the world ~ but it is only a 'trick of the light', flickering, ephemeral, without substance. By contrast, the rising tide changes the landscape utterly, albeit briefly; in its suddenness, its silence, and its *substance* it can only be compared to the miracle of snow.

Philip Pacey

Landscape
Research
Extra 39
June 2006



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Michael Davis
Mick Atha
Suzi Richer
Emma Waterton
Martin Spray
Peter Howard
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LANDSCAPE OR HUMAN CHARACTER ASSESSMENT: NEW APPROACHES TO LANDSCAPE PLANNING

“Landscape is different from environment: a characterisation of landscape is a matter of interpretation not record, perception not facts; “landscape” is an idea not a thing, constructed in our minds and emotions from the combination and inter-relationship of physical objects”.
EU Culture 2000 Network

There is a huge amount of interest in landscape character assessment (LCA) from government bodies, local authorities and NGO's, and they have become a vital part of the planning system, stimulated by recent changes in planning legislation and guidance.

I have been looking at landscapes for as long as I could walk (over 55 years) and can say in all honesty that the more I see the less I know. I look harder now, I have experience, memory and imagination to guide me - the wonder and beauty remains – yet the mystery deepens, and long may this remain so. Why do we have to explain everything?

We live in a world that has become increasingly complex and here in the UK our society is increasingly governed by legislation, order, hierarchy, bureaucracy, rational logic, and spin. We have a Western Society instinct to manage such complexity by devising a reductionist approach

“Landscape is a seamless, ubiquitous and composite entity capable of being classified or justified against as many classifications or criteria as may be devised for it”.
Richard Kelly – Countryside Council for Wales

which creates a plethora of compartments, departments and control systems. We are terrified of chaos and losing control of a world that many still consider to be alien to them in their increasingly urban environment.

Hence our way of looking at issues and solving prob-



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lems is *reductionist* and analytical rather than *holistic*. In other words, we are conditioned to break things down into parts and try to put them back to see the greater whole. The problem with this is that *the whole is more than the sum of the parts*, and this is especially true of landscape and landscape character assessment (LCA).

As a landscape professional with working experience of the Welsh Landmap project (Conwy, Flintshire, Monmouthshire and Radnor) it seems to me that the landscape profession has been obsessed with devising LCA methodologies and *systems* without thinking enough about who will use them or how they will be used.

Early LCA's such as the national Countryside Character Areas were so broad and generalised as to be of little use to end users such as local authority planners, whilst more recent methods including LANDMAP (LM) are complex and unwieldy with the result that

end users have difficulty putting the findings into practice. Current studies have now moved on to consider Landscape Sensitivity and Landscape Capacity – concepts and these are even more difficult to unravel.

Much government funding has been put into LCA studies without sufficient knowledge of how effective they are in practice, and I suggest that such feedback is now urgently needed. It is my profoundly held belief that our whole approach to landscape character assessment is off-track, for reasons I list below.

- the landscape is so complex and has so many facets that we do not really know where to start.
- the second has to do with the subjectivity of our sensory perception of the landscape.
- the problems do not lie with the landscape but

rather within ourselves and our attitudes to, and our use of landscape.

- the character assessment approach is top heavy and lacks the full involvement and trust of local communities, farmers especially *and*

the planning decision-making process becomes factually driven, and landscape can never be effectively evaluated on a factual basis: it is value driven.

In Britain, landscape is the manifestation of our activities upon nature, and there is still no consensus on the scope of character assessment. Should it be scenery/ visual amenity, the land resource; and does it include or exclude biodiversity, cultural heritage, rural economy and the built environment? If we are to take the holistic approach then assessment must embrace all these aspects, and then becomes so complex that it may be unworkable in practice.

Most LCA approaches treat landscape as scenery to be gazed upon, as visual amenity, rather than focus on landscape as a natural resource sustaining us and all other life on earth. There is a huge gap between landscape as *scenery* to be viewed by *observers from the outside* and landscape as a *land resource* to be used and valued by *those who live there on the inside*. This is expressed admirably by *Phil Macnaghten & John Urry* in their book *Contested Natures*, extracts of which are quoted below.

“The doctrine of environmental idealism... holds that the way to analyse nature and the environment is through identifying, critiquing and realising various values which underpin or relate to the character, sense and quality of nature. Such values held by people about nature and the environment are treated as underlying, stable and consistent”.

“Yet how people value nature (or landscape) is often highly ambiguous and contradictory. In many contexts people's attitudes to nature, science, the countryside and various spatial practices are ambivalent and there is no clear and unambiguous sense of what values can be said to inhere within nature. Values are thus not free-floating but intertwined with senses of insecurity, globalisation, anxiety, individualisation, mounting mistrust with politics and scientific expertise, the enhanced role of the media, and so on”.

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I do not believe that the *sensory* aspects of LCA can be recorded in a rational, rigorous and standardised way. Every one of us responds differently to landscape; aesthetic aspects depend on our innate, primeval and sensory responses. These cannot be predicted, defined, compartmentalised or justified.

In practise, assessments are often carried out by consultants, outsiders, who when they have made their report, are free to walk away. This top down approach does not really involve those people who live in and work the landscape, thus local knowledge inputs are often sadly lacking. Landscape is dynamic and has a



time dimension, past, present and future, it is also seasonal and is continually evolving and changing; LCA's rarely pick this up (without long stays and local knowledge).

Is it a weakness of the planning system that it relies on consultants for the basis of informed decisions? Perhaps local authorities are too busy but more likely

that, as a society today, we are afraid to use our common sense and intuition; we are indeed conditioned to bottle up our emotions, and be ruled by the mind rather than the heart. Deep down we must know that the heart should always win! Confused and frustrated by emotional conditioning we seek relief by devising yet more control systems. **Where has our sense of awe, wonder and mystery of landscape gone?**

The essence and spirit of landscape can never be dis-

“Ecology, indeed science in all its forms, cannot measure the importance we place on things; facts cannot explain values. We must create a popular culture of wanting to care, and allow ethics to start dictating to economics. Our relationship with nature needs to be re-enfranchised”.
Sue Clifford - *Common Ground*

titled by objective facts, however much analysis and information is provided.

I suggest we should stop analysing *landscape* and start analysing *ourselves*. Throw off cowardice and face the realities of our true nature. Establish what we can do to stop negative change and enable positive change.

We should ask and answer the following questions:

- What is harming the landscape?
 - Who is harming the landscape?
 - Why are they harming the landscape?
- What can we do about it?

To quote Aldo Leopold, A Sand County Almanac 1949:

We abuse land because we see it as a commodity which belongs to us. When we see it as a community to which we belong; we may begin to use it with love and respect.

We need environmentally sensitive *people* rather than environmentally sensitive *areas*. Instead of *landscape* assessment we need to reassess ourselves. It is time for a more mature relationship where instead of fighting to control landscape because we are afraid of its complexity, we learn to understand and appreciate how it controls us so that we can live more closely with the natural world.

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ASKING THE CROW:

“What should I read dear crow?”

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Conference report

RECOVERING LANDSCAPE AS A CULTURAL PRACTICE: A DISTANT PROSPECT



The three co-organisers of this workshop are pictured here. It is very pleasing to see that



like minded individuals (in this case all PhD candidates) are involved in such worthwhile

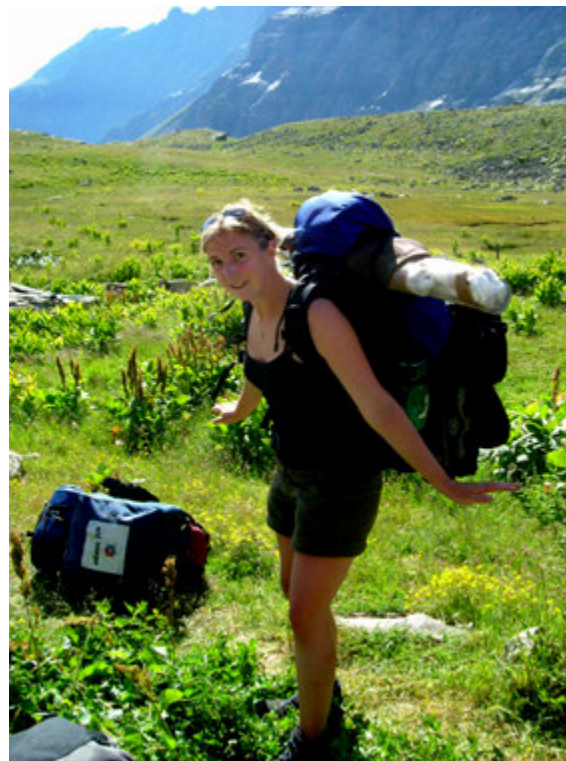
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initiatives. They are Mick Atha, Emma Waterton above and Suzi Richer (right).

On Saturday 4th March a one-day workshop was held at the Department of Archaeology, University of York. The aim of the workshop was to bring together a multidisciplinary group of speakers to begin to re-theorise landscape as cultural practice through a series of case study-driven presentations. Despite the snowy start to the day, 60 people attended the workshop from approximately 20 academic departments in nearly as many universities and representing 8 different disciplines. As well as academics, the audience also included professionals in practice, curators and interested members of the public.

The day began with three papers reflecting the breadth of landscape research in the Department of Archaeology at the University of York. The first being **Geoff Bailey**'s paper, which discussed geologically unstable landscapes, focusing particularly on Greece and Africa. He challenged the commonly held view that geological instability equals social and economic instability. Ethnographic work has, instead, revealed that the 'instability' identified by 'outside' researchers is often not recognised or acknowledged by people inhabiting such landscapes.

Continuing with the geoarchaeological theme, the second speaker **Kevin Walsh**, presented case studies



from the Alps and Provence, France. His paper wove together archaeological and geoarchaeological case study evidence within current theoretical per-

spectives to discuss themes of power and actor network theory, and, in the process, created a novel approach to landscape archaeology.

Jon Finch's paper, the last from the York trio, took the workshop in a different direction. By combining an archaeological and historical approach to the study of Harewood House, Yorkshire and its rich Caribbean sugar plantation history, the paper demonstrated how it was possible to show that the historic landscape is imbued with meaning and played an active role in past social processes, rather than being merely a reflective medium.

In a similar historical vein, **Mark Riley**'s paper considered how oral history methodologies can engage with landscape archaeology, heritage studies and landscape conservation. Using case studies from the Peak District and Devon, the paper demonstrated the role that oral history can play in challenging and destabilising the received wisdom regarding the recent history of agricultural activity in the British landscape.

The notion of meaning-laden and socially active 'landscapes' was complemented and further explored in the following two papers, which brought the discussion back to the present. **John Barry** began his paper on the premise that the concepts of 'land' and 'landscape' are politically, intellectually and ethically contested. His wide-ranging discussion examined the ways in which land and landscape have been conceptualised within green political theory and environmental ethics.

Landscape Architect **Ian Simkin**'s paper used interview evidence and GIS mapping to reinforce the idea that the perception, significance and meaning of landscapes and landscape components is socio-culturally dependent. By recording children's' experiences of landscape on their journeys to school, he was able to create innovative GIS 'cognitive maps', which will be used to guide future landscape design in urban settings..

Peter Howard presented an interdisciplinary review, from the geographer's perspective, of the development of cultural landscape studies and their changing trajectories in recent decades. The paper was constructed around an examination of the constitution and role of the European Landscape Convention, in particular focusing upon the diversity of viewpoints and disciplines that it embodies.

The day's presentations were rounded off by **Lesley Head**'s keynote paper, which drew together several key strands introduced during earlier presentations and provided yet more food for thought. Using contrasting case studies examining the modern Australian suburban backyard and the present landscapes and prehistoric past of the East Kimberleys, she highlighted is-

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sues attached to the social construction of scale and its relationship to notions of space and time, both for modern researchers and past communities.

The concluding discussion was eclectic, challenging and lively and raised a series of questions including: 'is a landscape' necessarily a 'cultural landscape'? Are landscapes only abstract perceptual entities or do they have a materiality with which human agents also interact? Therefore is it possible to discuss landscapes from within an enclosed building or do we have to be 'out there' experiencing them? Some cultural geographers were perhaps politely questioning: is archaeology taking the term landscape and using it without fully appreciating its meaning? All of which returned us to the question set at the very beginning: is 'Recovering landscape as a cultural practice: really a distant prospect?'

After such a dynamic and thought-provoking day of presentations, discussion and ideas, two things were evident: firstly, that landscape research could only benefit from such interdisciplinary workshops and, secondly, that there was a real interest and demand for further events in similar vein. Next year's workshop is therefore already being planned, and the proceedings from this year's event are currently being collated.

Mick Atha
Suzi Richer
Emma Waterton

Review

LANDSCAPE INTO LITERATURE.

A Writers' Anthology

Edited by Kay Dunbar

Totnes: Green Books, 2005, pbk., 160pp., £10, ISBN 1-903998-55-7

"I am drawn back to many landscapes", writes Alan Peacock, "... but am no longer part of any of them."

On land, there is always landscape, both in its sense of 'the view to the eye' and in its sense of 'environment as lived in'. It is no surprise, then, that landscape (an ever-expanding concept) is present in most writers' work, sometimes realistically, sometimes fantastically, often both at once. The eighteen contributors to this anthology display some of the ways (a small part of a wide spectrum) in which landscape influences writers' lives, thoughts and attitudes, and seeps into their work.

These eighteen between them, cover the range from journalism to poetry, children's books to guidebooks, novels to songs. Their homes and histories include Liverpoolian back-alleys and Lakeland fells – though most landscapes they tell us about are rural. These are British, mostly English; and several are Cumbrian scenes.

It would be interesting to see the brief the authors worked to. Several tell much more about themselves than about their settings. Few of the essays are focused on landscape in the sense of the large view, and the 'lived environments' are sometimes drawn sketchily. One does, however, get some intriguing glimpses into interesting lives. Beginning the sequence, Roger Deakin enthuses about train journeys, his 'dens', and swimming. Kathleen Jones sketches her Cumbrian childhood and home, and their legacies in her books. The alleyways in which Brian Patten played sealed (he says) "my fate as an urban poet." Most essays are 1st person singular; but some look at others' relationships with landscape. Ronald Blythe, for instance, writes warmly about John Clare and his poetry.

This is easy reading. Largely a mix of autobiographical cameos and anecdotes, there are windows for us to look through on to events and influences, but no deep analysis of personal histories – the nearest to that is probably Blythe on Clare. Deep-delving, however, isn't the intention. The book serves as an appetizer: a first sortie, perhaps, into a big field. It allows characters as diverse as Hunter Davies and Penelope Lively to explain a little about themselves; and several take the opportunity to present some of their work (poems) in context.

The book's compiler, Kay Dunbar, is organiser of the Ways with Words Literature Festivals (which are, as much as the eighteen essays, the subject of the introduction). The idea for the anthology grew from seeing a "rich fermentation between landscape and literature" at her festivals, so she asked writers to "analyze how the alchemy worked for them". Quite what the fermentation and the alchemy were, and how one was aware of them, is unsaid. This is frustrating. The book would be better with a more detailed scene-setting introduction, to explain (briefly) *why* this selection of writers, and to review (briefly) such questions as: how different would a selection including a few Asian or African, Continental European, or North American names be? An afterword, could be especially valuable, allowing for threads to be identified and tied off, and general points to surface.

This could have been done without losing the book's liveliness, and it might have helped show the 'greenness' of a publication that sits in the catalogue between *Secret nature of Devon* and *Allotment gardening*. The 'Green Mission' (of which Green Books is a useful part) needs the imagination-grabbing skills of novelists, songsmiths and poets, and books such as *Landscape into literature* can help get them enrolled.

Of course, it isn't to be expected that all writers interested in exploring and explaining their relationships with landscape are 'green' – though many are, and that shows clearly here. Richard Mabey, of course: he suggests that, "in a time of severance from nature, walking has become the new rite of communion." For him, "walking makes bonds with the earth." James Crowden (who begins with a pedigree of the word 'landscape') has "a hunch that landscape poetry ... is due for a revival to counteract the industrial farming practices of today." "You look out to look in. / Landscape is a mirror and in it we see ourselves."

Songwriter Rosalind Brady's piece is encouraging. Seeking "the feeling of sanctuary in that place you love", she found her special place, where "many ideas have been seeded" under the ash trees. She has found, too, "what really matters – a feeling of belonging to a particular landscape...." Rosalind uses two crucial words in what she says about her – our! – relationship with landscape. One – the more familiar – is 'belonging'. The other – and one we neglect – is 'love'.

Alan Peacock takes his readers on a journey that impressed him: we go by Crawshawbooth, Clowbridge, Boulsworth, and Catlow, and glimpse Pen-y-ghent and Ingleborough. Familiar; but one December afternoon he saw this part of the Pennines "as landscape, for the first time; brutal, cold, painful, dark, yet beautiful." Years after this revelation, he wrote of how, in that winter landscape under a "watering eye / of sky, rubbed bloodshot at the edge of dark / by cold thumbs of wind",

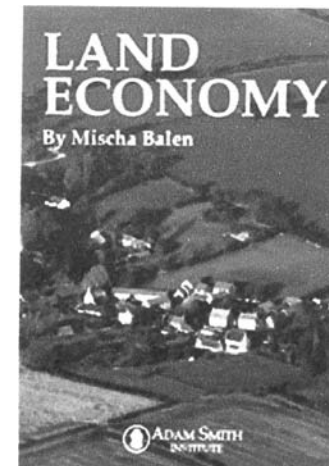
*You scan this crumbled flesh; catch
a stale stink in the pitted joints; feel
the immense majority of death
and call it beautiful.*

He feels, he says, no longer part of many landscapes. They surely remain parts of him.

Martin Spray
Forest of Dean

MISCHA BALEN: A NEW VIEW OF RESIDENTIAL EXPANSION

Land Economy, by Mischa Balen available to download for free at www.adamsmith.org



The following press release accompanies a paper (May 2006) from the Adam Smith Institute. As this institute is said to be a think tank respected by the government one has to take it seriously. But should we? Judge for yourselves.

Press release
[Balen's] proposal is for 3 percent of farm-

land to be sympathetically developed in this way over a ten year period, yielding about 950,000 new houses and, importantly, almost 130,000 hectares of new woodland, roughly an 11 percent increase in the wooded cover of England and Wales. Not only would this break the logjam that denies home ownership to so many young couples, it would represent a net gain in environmental quality.

"None of these new homes would be overlooked by existing houses. Rather they would be nestled in among new woodland. Current homeowners would not face a view altered by new buildings. On the contrary, they would see the ugly monoculture fields replaced by natural woods, carefully planted to provide a mixture of different types of trees and undergrowth. The fields so barren of insect, bird and animal life, would be replaced by woods rich in biodiversity, and providing a habitat for birds and small mammals."

There has been recognition recently that more needs to be done for would-be homeowners. For the government, John Prescott has made the case for affordable new housing to be built where it is needed, while for the opposition David Cameron has foreshadowed a new approach to planning policy, acknowledging the need to bridge the widening gulf between those who benefit from being on the property ladder and those who are kept off. The kind of sympathetic development proposed here is very much in tune with this new thinking. Mischa Balen points out that the laws relating to nuisance protect people from having inappropriate development nearby, whereas the present restrictive planning rules effectively stifle the rural economy by making it difficult to undertake any development at all. The case for sympathetic development is overwhelming, he says, on both economic and environmental grounds.

"Such development wins on every count: less chemical pollution, more pleasant to look at, more conducive to bird and animal life, more houses for first time buyers, and a big increase in tree cover to help the nation meet its carbon targets." "It is vital that we protect our environment and ensure that people can afford houses. Our proposal manages to achieve both."



RESIDENTIAL EXPANSION: A HOT RESPONSE

I part-heard Mr Balen's interview on Radio 4 and went to the Adam Smith Institute website to read his policy paper. I regret I did not hear who opposed Mr Balen on the programme but I will guess that they were called in to oppose for that's how it is with BBC interviews. I am not yet into podcasts.

Mr Balen is advocating *laissez faire*, market-driven low density sprawl as an antidote to planning. He is a man of strong metropolitan tendencies (code for 'has he ever been out round the country?') and one sniffs for the possibility (only the faintest whiff) that he has an interest in a small agricultural holding in the Green Belt. But let me draw back from such unsupported slurs and get some perspective on what seems to me to be a looney idea. Let me also tell you that I have often felt the same as him about awful farmland and cramped urbs, suburbs and extra-urbs. Why, Mr Balen I even proposed once (after mapping urban land use throughout Surrey and in a huge area of south Yorkshire) that people should be given a little bit of extra farmland to extend their gardens, to increase the habitat and soften the urban edge. A silly thought!

Of course you are right, the line between farmed land and built land is badly drawn and some farm land is poor and ugly, but you don't explain how your scheme would work and how planning authorities who are already involved in land release (too little you would argue) should release more. Your explanations at page 38 'How might an intensive farm be developed' tells me nothing more than is contained in your general thesis.

Reflect for a moment: one of the distinctive varieties of sprawl in England is rich residential sprawl; it occurs in the Home Counties on large lots (we would say in big gardens) embedded in old poorly managed woodlands, alternatively in carefully generated tree/shrub gardens. It occurs within striking distance of railway stations in the Surrey Hills (and even in the unregulated Dartmoor village of Lustleigh developed

1860 in the era of *laissez faire*. Prettily of course at Lustleigh! all over two hillsides - a true Riviera). In flatter land you will recognise such sprawl if you drive through it for you see gates, house names on well worked name boards and privately maintained verges but little of the house, for the secret is to create exactly what Mr Balen advocates, that no one need look into another's garden or feel overlooked. Such housing is usually on agricultural marginal land.

This is the kind of sprawl that makes me want to get into the real country, and yet it is landscape of its own, but in that difficult-to-comprehend style of an uneven wood with hidden clearings, a set of interior landscapes. Is it woodland, well yes, but a sham woodland with fine exterior. And just as a worm burrowed potato is a sham potato so these are sham woodlands. Lovely places to live in though if you have money, want trees, woodland birds, deer, lawns and privacy (which is the antithesis of community) and a heavy dependence on one of your several cars.

Mischa Balen's idea is that 3% of the UK's farmland should be released for such development. He does not



Residential woodlands (high density living!) north of Southampton (BKS/Hants CC 1995)

say how it should be selected or at what valuation, except that he casts a greedy eye on London's Greenbelt. Are these new land releases to attach to existing town edges? To be randomly distributed or next to

existing infrastructure? In a few strategically sited blocks? or in hundreds of small ones? To sit like village jewels (forest blobs) in the less toxic farmland which I persist in valuing as landscape?

Of the 3% overall, the greater part (90%) of this new residential land would be devoted to woodland. The impression is that it would be the instant variety of woodland, visually impenetrable, in which new houses would cause no alarm or offence, woodland which blocks unsightly views either in or out. The woodland, he goes on, would also have an economic benefit and help us reach our carbon emissions target. It would afford privacy, create needed habitat and replace what he refers to as toxic farmland acreage of low ecological value. It might of course produce timber - does he mention this? Kind of. He does list valuable industrial wood based products, bark, paper and sawdust? He seems to have it in for farmland particularly cereal and oil seed rape, and proposes that we get more of our food from elsewhere. He has it in even more for farmland that is not worth protecting in which he includes grassland and rough grass. He accepts that the government could disallow the use for building on conservation value land. No change there then.

He rehearses a variety of statistics some as graphs, to demonstrate how much we need the land for housing, how toxic Green Belt land is, the particular locations of need, the plight of the Londoner, the need to lessen commuting time, the potential to make provincial (rural) places more attractive. He refers to the National Forest efforts in the Midlands, the Forest of Marston Vale (enthusiastically) and in the same breath (how does he do it!) statistics about private forest increase in New Zealand.

On release of these farms, market forces would then act and everything would fall into place, houses grouping with houses, cinemas and shopping centres near to housing, industry with industry, petrol stations in the right place, heavy industry now so far declined as not to present a threat and overall the legal instruments of nuisance laws and restrictive covenants which he claims have served the unplanned giant sprawl, which is Houston, so well, would safeguard those rights usually guarded by planning. The lawyers (we would call then solicitors) will be there to guard the rights of all and sundry, poor or intimidated and everyone is a winner. I don't quite see it myself. I don't see the space implications, nor the social housing. I do not see the community clustering and how it solves the commuting problem. I do see it as sprawl.

The problem with all this is that it carries the authority stamp of the Adam Smith Institute "of Infallible Economic Reasoning" and was attractive enough to commentators to get him an interview on the BBC R4, the politicians' favourite listening. I profoundly hope that they understand land better than Mr Balen. The Insti-

tute's president, Madsen Pirie, has said "We propose things which people regard as being on the edge of lunacy. The next thing you know, they're on the edge of policy." I was right then in calling Balen's idea looney. But don't you have to understand land and land use and people and the corrupt motives of the few before you write out your visions on bluesky?

Before you go, ponder his sentence at page 5: "For an economic power like the UK businesses and houses are more important to ordinary citizens than the countryside and our planning policies should reflect this". Sounds like the view of a blinkered metropolitan economist to me. In Mr Balen's defence and so that I am not mistaken for a rabid landscape enthusiast, I should admit that I thought Marion Shoard's polemic (The Theft of the Countryside, 1980) dangerously radical when she was briefly chair of the Landscape Research Group in 1979. So perhaps I should thank Mr Balen for stirring the pot.

Bud Young

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IS LANDSCAPE HISTORY CAPTURING THE LANDSCAPE HIGH GROUND?

Landscape colleagues have remarked how the term "landscape" in its holistic sense is increasingly taken over by the landscape historian. Test this by asking the shop assistant, an intellectual, your office colleague, or the pensioner in his allotment. Television schedules would suggest that the historic and archaeological dimension offers the 'intrigue factor' that any analysis of landscape

on geographical or esthetic basis lacks. It is easier to capture an audience by celebrating the mythic origins of the White Horse Hill figures than to try to entertain with ideas of chalk escarpments, their relationship with the Upper Greensand, interglacial slope sculpting, chalk debris fans and Coombe series soils and still less with the sense of tranquillity and form, line space and colour that is the unfortunate task of the landscape esthetician. [Blue butterflies (nature in countryside) score higher with the public than soil and geology or visual form. And barn owls win hands down!] And what of archaeology (the unseen made manifest) ex-



cept that it merges tantalisingly with landscape history (visual) and seems to me to be the people's favourite. In this vein of inclusiveness I bring to you the index, newly compiled, of the journal "Landscapes" a wholly historical landscape-based journal, published by Windgather Press.

Articles such as one on the evolution of the Rockingham Forest landscape, profusely illustrated by readable well printed colour maps (seventeen maps in this article alone) or Christopher Taylor's enquiry into the influence of W. G. Hoskins classic 'The Making of the English Landscape' make this reader feel that here is where landscape resides. Read or buy Volume 6 (2) Autumn 2005 page 109-119 for an excellent index analysed by contributor, by title, by books reviewed and as general index. I apologise that for print cost reasons the map included here is in greyscale! But on the web it is in colour.

Bud Young

News and info

A new member of the Board

Tim Collins who has newly joined the Board of LRG is senior co-author of the report Ecology and Recovery Allegheny County. Meaning that he has spent some time in the United States. An artist and interdisciplinary academic interested in the relationships between people, art, environment and planning, Tim's experiences include extensive teaching, research, writing, fundraising and administrative duties. In his current role he is charged with enterprise, graduate programs and research in the School of Art and Design at the University of Wolverhampton. He may well write a personal profile of himself in the next issue.

A new LRG group in Germany?

Peter Howard, LRG's wide ranging international officer (so wide ranging it is difficult to find him) is currently in Florence, has just come back from Holland and has left me with the tantalising headline above about which more when he returns. It is true — journalists should always

double check their sources.
But LRG is growing.

Finding *Landscape Research* abstracts

If you do not have a journal to hand you can read the abstracts back to volume 31/1 by going to the LRG website (see green text box page 12) and under 'journal' go to 'Carfax' our publisher. From there investigate journal details and under online contents you will find the abstracts. You can also see the paper titles back to 1996.