

landscapes of character and of industrial buildings built to last... and to celebrate the clarity of the old OS maps, pored over by ageing eccentrics overcome by misplaced nostalgia, blue-prints from which entire industrial landscapes can be re-imagined.

Notes

(1) For details contact G.L.Crowther at 224 South Meadow Lane, Preston PR1 8JP

Hauser, Kitty. Bloody Old Britain: O.G.S. Crawford and the Archaeology of Modern Life. 2008

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BOOKS: SHORT NOTICES

The following book lent to me by a friend as it was about landscape but it was also about Palestine in which I have a deep emotional interest having taught at the American University of Beirut in 1965/6. There I worked with and enjoyed the company of many Palestinians including the department head Professor Ziad Beydoun. One in particular remains always in my thoughts a student once from Tul Karm, where very early on in the occupation of their land by Jewish settlers, her family, a notable one, had lost home land and orange groves. So reading this book had for me a special significance. I write this at the time of the Gaza Incursion now being called the Gaza Massacre (660 hundred dead on one side 6 dead on the other) and am fiercely but ineffectively pro Palestinian.

“Palestinian Walks: Notes on a Vanishing Landscape” by Raja Shehadeh. Published in 2007 by Profile Books, London EC1R 0JH.

This book won the Orwell Prize 2008. The author takes a series of walks through landscapes that he knew as a child. They are not huge walks and they span year from the 1970's up to today. They cross

both land still in the ownership of Palestinian villagers and land taken by the Israeli Government. His drives to points where he can access these walks is often difficult in that many areas have been cut up by new roads, blocked off by restrictive notices or encircled by settlement. Where once he knew the small village and the fields of named farmers stretching out from them, he now passes urban expansions and lands expropriated. For him the old lands with their *qasrs* — little agricultural ‘castles’ — are beautiful fusions of work, land and love for place and a part of his childhood.

But Shehadeh is a human rights lawyer and spends his life representing Palestinians whose land is to be ‘legally expropriated’. He is fighting a long and losing battle and views the menacing urban sprawl of Israel’s settlements — with all the modern American style infrastructural engineering that accompanies it — with dismay. He and his people are alienated from their own places, their landscapes their way of life and their one time rights. As a walker with his English wife he goes in fear of being challenged by the soldiery and by armed vigilant settlers. He has been made an outsider in his own landscape.

I ask myself how different all this is from the urban sprawl that ruins many one time lonely rural places in England. There is a difference and a fundamental one. I cast my mind back to land expropriations by Normans or the English colonisation of the quality land in Ireland. How the dominated and abused are obliged to live as second class people with their new landed masters. The book takes a number of walks and comes to some reconciliation but only as one is reconciled to a sorely bruised head after years of smashing it against a wall. It is both a deeply moving and a frightening book. It portrays landscapes of fear. And should be on your reading list.

I give an extract of a purely descriptive part in ‘Anthology.’

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Contributors

Rosamunde Codling
Jim Denning
Hannah Macpherson
Terry O Regan
Philip Pacey
Gareth Roberts
Bud Young



An **Ammil** on Haytor Dartmoor. Ammil is the local name for ice which forms straight out of a freezing fog-driven by the East Wind. It produces intriguing crystal forms. Not a hoar frost which is more typical of still air frosts. Photos by William Young, 28th December 2008

Railways and gardens

Railway companies have at their disposal much marginal land, among the buildings which make up station complexes, and – literally 'marginal' – on both sides of the track. Their attitudes to this land has varied. Some saw it as a marketing opportunity. The Canadian Pacific Railway cultivated 'lush railway gardens' to demonstrate the fertility of the land, thereby attracting immigrants and persuading some of them to buy land from the CPR itself. Produce from the gardens 'went to the stationmaster's table, fed the railway men and sometimes even the passengers in dining cars'. Stations were supplied with plants from the CPR's own nurseries (following the formation of a CPR forestry department in 1907). In times of drought, steam locos discharged water for the gardens into barrels. One of the original gardens survives in Banff, although nowadays it grows only flowers. Others are being restored, and a new one has been created ('in the 1910-1912 style') at the Port Moody Station Museum, near Vancouver (1).

Other north American railroads exploited their marginal land as a means to enhance the image of the company and attract new trade, employing professional landscape designers to help them do

so. There was a 'railway gardening movement' involving railway companies and landscape designers (2). In the 1880s, the Baltimore and Albany Railroad employed H.H. Richardson and Frederick Law Olmsted to design its stations buildings and grounds respectively. In 1905, Frank A. Waugh of the Massachusetts Agricultural College gave his students as a Thanksgiving assignment the task of designing the grounds of a rural railway station:

'The railroad station, being the front door to the neighbourhood, should have the same artistic qualities as the front door of a public building or private residence.'

The Railway Gardening Association, founded in 1906, consisted almost exclusively of senior employees of railroad companies; the companies were becoming more confident about embellishing their stations without professional help, while landscape professionals were finding employment elsewhere. James Sturgis Pray, a Harvard University professor of landscape architecture, published a booklet advising on the design of *Railroad Grounds* (3) while also acknowledging that railways have their own aesthetic: *'The actual roadbeds, and the wonderful trains moving over them are all objects of the highest sort of organic beauty, the beauty which comes from the perfection of form to use'*.

Many railway companies, however, have cared little about the marketing potential of their marginal land, relying on the 'wonderful trains', complemented by the architecture of the facades (at least) of their public buildings, to convey an image of their purpose. Where this has been the case, companies have often been more than willing to allow employees to cultivate plots of land to grow flowers, fruit and vegetables and even to keep chickens, rabbits, a cow or a pig, to supplement their wages – after all, it was in the employees' interest to encourage its employees to live and spend their leisure time close to – or even at – the depot where they worked, or the stretch of line they were responsible for maintaining.

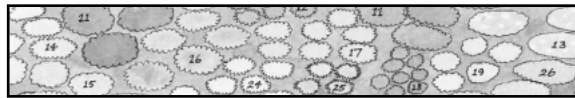
A fascinating document issued by the SE company, operator of several secondary lines in France, in 1936, demonstrates a dawning awareness of the marketing importance of 'corporate image' at a time when modern diesel railcars were being introduced in place of steam; stations were to be kept spick and span, and staff who reside in station buildings were reminded that permission was needed to erect edifices for their personal use, such as rabbit hutches and hen houses; permission would only be given if the structures were well made and hidden by foliage so they would not 'Nuire au bon aspect de la gare' (4).

In years of economic recession and of war the need to produce food intensified. In Britain, where railway

companies were once second only to local authorities in making land available for allotments, 4,321 acres of railway land provided 75,306 plots after the Second World War to 1948.

The Beeching closures substantially reduced the amount of land owned by the railways. The 1948 figures had been halved by 1963 and stood at 670 acres and 8,885 plots in 1978. In several countries (but not, it seems, in Britain) railway workers renting railway plots have formed associations, the better to secure their use of railway land as of right. In France, the *Association Nationale de jardins familiaux et collectifs, issue du personnel de la SNCF* (www.jardinot.fr), flourishes to this day, as does Die Bahn-Landwirtschaft (www.blw-aktuell.de) in Germany, and the OBBLandwirtschaft (www.obbl.at) in Austria (5). In Pakistan, employees of Pakistan Railways are continuing to use the force of law to bring about the implementation of a decision taken in 1986 to release land at Jumma Goth; it seems that plots were allocated and rent was paid, but the land has still not been handed over. In Britain the Railway Allotments Group (RAG) – not confined to railway employees – three times in the 1970s campaigned to defend railway allotments at Haringey which British Rail wanted to take back for other purposes.

Somewhere between the extremes of, on the one hand, employing the services of professional landscape designers, and on the other, neglecting the potential of railway marginal land, lies an approach which, at least



in its more picturesque manifestations, may be peculiarly British. Railway staff, particularly station staff and especially the station-master in the days when he and his family would have lived at the station, were sometimes encouraged to beautify stations with plants and gardens, including flowerbeds on or beside platforms and hanging baskets under station canopies and suspended from lamp posts. This did not preclude vegetable plots in less prominent positions – beyond the platform end, for instance. Indeed, allotment plots could almost be seen as contributing to a semi-domestic aesthetic, where passengers were welcomed into the home environment of the house-proud station-master. Such an aesthetic was profoundly amateur; if appropriate for a country branch line worked by friendly tank engines, it was in stark contrast to the 'machine aesthetic' of the express train. In his book *L'Art des jardins* (1897), Edouard André scoffed at English station gardens:

'I have often seen the names of stations spelled out in small, white stones or in flowers on an embankment and other childishnesses of the sort' (6)

He would have been especially horrified had he arrived at an English seaside station to find the name

spelled out in sea shells.

Britain has – if not invariably or consistently – encouraged eccentricity and taken pride in its popular arts (not least at the seaside) and station gardens have been part of this tradition. They have been much enjoyed. Competitions have been organised and awards distributed for the best stations, in some cases by railway companies to reward their own staff and encourage them to even greater efforts. Parties of judges sometimes travelled from station by station in locomotive-hauled track inspection carriages (known as 'glass coaches' – is it possible that in inclement conditions the judges didn't alight on the platform?). Stations have also entered local, regional and national 'Britain in Bloom'-type competitions not limited to railways. In the 1930s the London & North Eastern Railway ran special summer excursions on the Driffield to Malton line, stopping off at stations like Wharrah, North Grimston and Settington to allow passengers to admire the gardens. In the 1950s, special excursion trains ran from Newcastle on Saturdays in August, taking city-dwellers on a tour of country stations noted for their floral displays (7). The LNER (and possibly the NER before that) supported the gardening efforts of its station staff to the extent of providing plants from nurseries run by the company itself (at Poppleton, near York) served by its own narrow gauge railway.

The British tradition of station gardens experienced a glorious flowering in 1953, when many station gardens were revived or created for the Coronation. Since then many branch lines and stations have closed; station masters – if they exist at all – no longer reside in their stations, too many of which are unstaffed. In the age of the high speed train the machine aesthetic has triumphed. It is good, then, to see that some stations, including stations cared for by community initiatives and stations of preserved steam railways, are keeping up the tradition: I learned only recently that the flower displays at the Welsh Highland Railway's station at Porthmadog have won the first prize in the Wales in Bloom Awards, beating off stiff competition from old rivals Chirk station!

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[I am grateful to my friends Geoffrey Nickson and Ulrich Weiss for telling me of the existence of these associations, in a conversation at St Valery-sur-Somme which persuaded me to investigate further. I had spent that afternoon digging the vegetable garden at the depot of the Chemin de Fer de la Baie de Somme].

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FERROCARRIL DE SOLLER: AN EXEMPLAR OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM?

Gareth Roberts

While most trains in Spain run mainly on the plain one of the most interesting ones does not! I have just returned from a short trip to Mallorca which included an opportunity to experience one of Europe's great little railway journeys and an essential component of the public-transport network on this island. Established by fruit rich merchants to transport oranges and lemons this wooden train has been running on a metre-gauge line across the mountains from Palma to Soller since 1912. The train twists and turns for almost 30 kilometers through the spectacular Serra de Tramuntana mountains (see photo) before arriving in Söller.

The journey begins at Placa d'Espagne in the centre of Palma (photo) and for the first 10 minutes or so the train clanks its way through busy city streets and the peri-urban outskirts with its graffiti covered industrial units before emerging onto a plain dotted with olive trees and citrus groves and a smattering of riding schools, haciendas and billboards. A very forgettable landscape indeed were it not for the ever looming presence of the Tramuntana in the distance. The steep ascent into these pine clad mountains is via several cuttings and tunnels opening out to reveal small settlements in the valleys below. The journey ends with a dramatic descent into Soller, a small town that has successfully taken advantage of its tourist audience and where a co-operative of (Fet a Soller) businesses have come together to market themselves as 'a different Mallorca'.

I was very impressed by the way this community has used public transport to give itself a leading edge in tourism. Fet a Soller businesses sell 'uniquely local products' ranging from shoes to delicious orange-flavoured ice-cream. Many of these local food prod-

ucts including pates and boxes of delicious nania oranges can also be ordered directly on their web site www.fetasoller.com.

I travelled on this train in late October for 17 Euros return (10 Euros one way). Locals (and others) can travel much more cheaply by avoiding this mid morning 'Tulist' (sic) train which offers air conditioning and a brief photo-stop in the mountains but even on this journey the conductor seemed to turn a blind eye to charging locals the full price. I left Soller having bought an ice cream, a wedge of cheese and a pair of shoes wondering why my home area, Snowdonia, couldn't make better use of its 'great little trains' by integrating them into the local public transport service to the benefit of local and tourists alike.

GC

First photo the Art Nouveau entrance to the railway station at Palma

Web links: www.trendesoller.com; and www.illesbalears.es



STANTA IN SEPTEMBER
Rosamunde Codling

An observant traveller on the main road the A11 around Thetford in Norfolk might spot occasional road signs with a red border, rather than the usual blue. They simply say "Stanta" in standard lettering, but no clue is offered about the destination. Nearer to Norwich, the same road passes over Bridgham Heath and on the northern side is an area of fenced Breck-

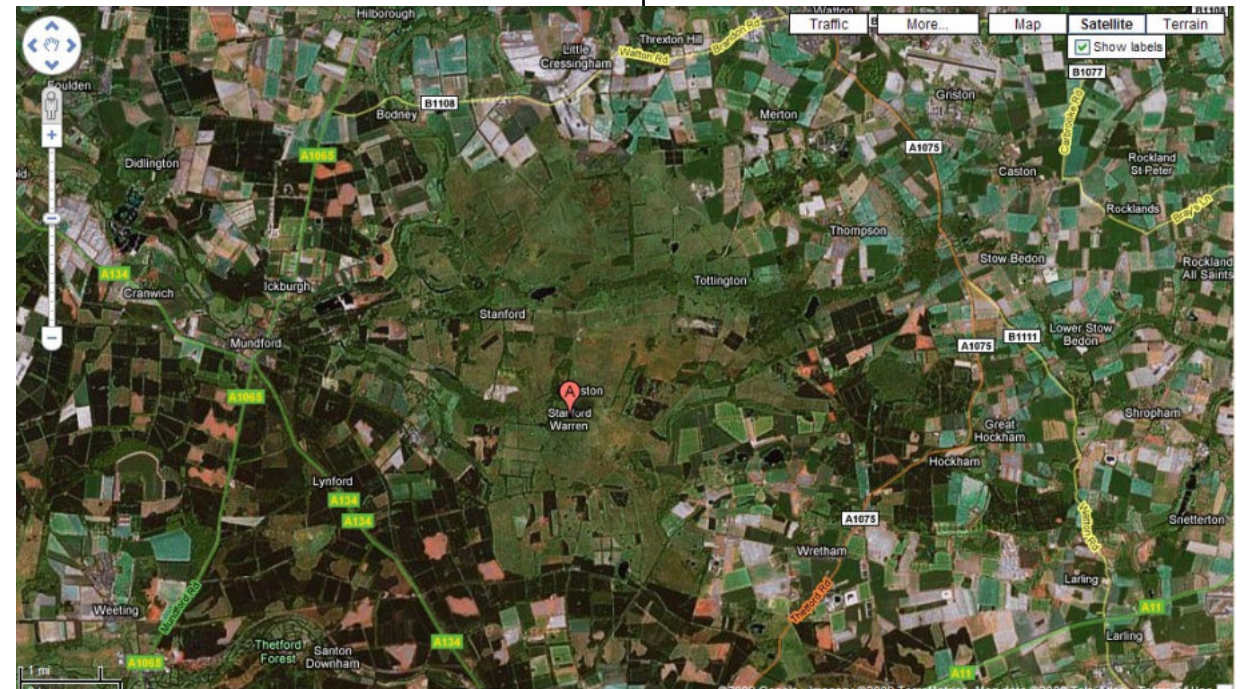
land — heath with birches and pine, grazed by sheep. Smaller notices warn of gunfire noise and restricted access. Again, not much is given away.

Stanta is the Stanford Army Training Area, over 12,000 hectares of land that is used for "low intensity conflict operational training" to quote from a MoD document. Public access is severely limited so the opportunity to visit promised to be interesting. Instructions were given — not to bring cameras or video recorders, so the visit was free of technical appliances — a surprisingly welcome restriction.

Our guide was a friendly Regimental Sergeant Major, who had no real need of a microphone or loud speaker system. He gave the background — land requisitioned in 1942 to train troops for the D-Day landings; the residents of four villages (Tottington, Sturston, Stanford and West Tofts) initially given 2 or 3 days to leave, although this was extended to two weeks; live firing throughout the year, with the exception of 6 weeks for lambing in the spring; the heathland to be maintained as it was a good surface for training; SSSIs and four churches to be respected; and later, the batman, the raptor-man and the Diocese to be consulted and kept happy and so on. The heath, woodlands, forest plantations, lakes, marshes and river are the setting for about 100,000 troops a year as they practise live firing, exploding demolition charges, vehicle and heli-

All this was interesting and helpful information to have as the background for the visit. It was gone 6pm by the time we began the coach tour of the southern half of the area. The day had been sunny, so the light was as good as could be expected for a mid-September evening. I knew roughly what I expected to see — I had done some homework by looking at current as well as older OS maps, Google Earth and various local history books including the updated Pevsner. I also remembered the setting of many episodes of "Dad's Army" — with Corporal Jones marching by scots pines, or various members of the platoon falling into lakes or rivers. Most of these were filmed on Stanta.

My expectations were fulfilled by seeing mature parklands surrounding what had been large country houses; large areas of Breck with birch, scots pine and thorn; forestry plantations, and cropped turf grazed by large flocks of sheep. The lakes were typical of Norfolk, the periglacial remnant pingos like the ones near Breckles. There were no opportunities to wander - when we left the coach we had to keep together in a group and bear in mind the warnings about unexploded ordnance. We visited West Tofts church and saw Pugin's work, extending a mediaeval building on "a remarkably ambitious scale" (Pevsner and Wilson). The ornate screen he designed still clearly showed the vibrant colours. The landscapes and churches seemed familiar, even though I had not seen them before, de-



copter training, parachute drops and numerous other manoeuvres. The mock-ups of streets and houses built for Northern Ireland have now been reclothed to simulate Iraq and Afghanistan, and a multimillion pound project has just been given the go-ahead to provide further Middle East training facilities.

spite living in Norfolk for 40 years. Yet there were aspects of the evening that were in some ways surprising, even unsettling, possibly because they were unexpected.

There was the defensiveness of the RSM - "the armed services need training areas and our priority has to be

that". No-one in our party had challenged him but he clearly felt it might be an issue. There was the nostalgia of the displays in the camp lecture room - the carefully notated black and white photographs of cricket teams, threshing machines, gamekeepers and beaters with their role call of Norfolk names - Spinks or Quantrill or Macro. The divisions of social class were clearly illustrated — the photo of the picnic party was not far from that of the timber shacks (looking remarkably like disorientated beach huts) that housed unemployed miners as they took part in a Ministry of Labour plan to retrain them as foresters.

We finished our tour at Frog Hill, a slightly raised point towards the south of Stanta. As the evening progressed it became clear that the RSM took pride and had great pleasure in his work and its setting. He said he could say to any one of his colleagues anywhere in the country "Meet you at Frog Hill" and no other geographical information would be necessary. Frog Hill could only mean from this vantage point, where despite its low elevation, the inner core of the training area stretched into the distance, a vast (for Norfolk) extent of heather and grass which looked calm and gentle in the setting sun. It was easy to think of Captain Mainwaring leading his men, because the actual slope used for the closing credits sequence was there in front of us, but less easy to imagine the camps in Iraq that would look like the enclosures we had seen.

The most unsettling thought was the realization that we were observers rather than participants in the landscape. It could be argued that unless we are farmers, we are always observers of the rural landscape, but there is usually a greater degree of involvement possible, as we walk along footpaths or use the opportunities given to us to roam. What we were seeing was a peaceful, almost idyllic scene, commented on by one visitor as "the landscape of a hundred years ago". We saw a sanitized and limited view, devoid of the activity that had been the prime factor in its moulding and development over the last sixty years. There were no machine guns firing live ammunition over our heads, no sandbags to fill to provide us with a limited degree of protection, no landing parachutes or artillery fire from the fenced enclosures on Bridgham Heath, now 4 miles away.

Nevertheless, this was the only way we would ever be likely to see Stanta, to experience the inner expanse of heath, parkland and woodland. The edges might be seen from Peddars Way, the long distance footpath that runs along the eastern edge of the area, but the core remains hidden from casual view. We have no photographs to record the visit, only memories of part of the Breckland landscape gradually darkening as the daylight diminished, but ending with a blazing sunset and slowly emerging moon.

Footnote

During the visit I remembered the occasion when the erudite contestants of a radio quiz were asked which organisation was based in St Aldhelm's Church Hall. After a discussion, they proffered "the Bloomsbury Group". The correct answer was the platoon from "Dad's Army". I found it particularly enjoyable that an imaginary, ramshackle crowd could take precedent over such a talented and influential group.

Checking it out on Google maps

Very approximately, Stanta is square shaped and about 4 miles by 4 miles. It can be identified on satellite photographs by simply comparing the obviously farmed areas that surround the training ground, with the less defined and more open land with far fewer enclosures. Finding tip: search Stanford Warren north of Thetford.

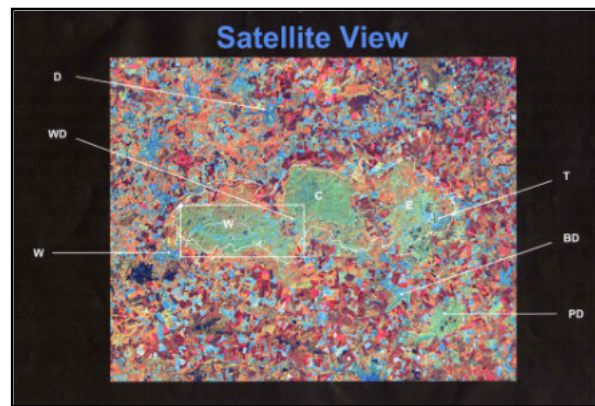
We venture to show the copyright google image within this article.

RC

SPTA TO SANTA are you receiving?

Dear Ros — from the Editor

I found myself in a similar party arranged by the Royal Geographical Society last year, visiting defence training lands on Salisbury Plain (see 'satellite view'). There was the same aggressive defensiveness and MOD self justification but to me all that was quite uncalled for inasmuch as the MOD acquisition had protected the largest areas of chalk grassland in the country. Okay so I think I am not allowed in to see it and that I deeply regret (though I see I can drive and walk through many parts, and in the next issue will give the map that shows where) but it has been con-



served against the beneficial/catastrophic land transformation of the last 70 years of plough and spray agriculture. Hence we were able to see chalk species and assemblages that we mostly only see in tiny patches and it is gorgeous. And the archaeology has escaped the plough. What surprised me is how I could have been unaware of this huge tract of landscape when I have crossed Salisbury Plain a hundred times in the last 40 years. A black hole in my awareness.

'LAND OF MY FATHERS?'

An exploration of a crisis in memory and identity in the South Wales Coalfield 1900-1939

By Leah Jones

Whilst studying for an MA in Landscape and Culture at Nottingham University, I often reminisced of home in South Wales. Deciding upon a research topic for my MA thesis was no hard choice therefore. The historical landscape of the south Wales coalfield had always interested me, from its industrial and cultural transformation in the nineteenth century to the post-industrial landscape of the present day.

Ideas of regulation and discipline within the landscape in south Wales had played a part in my research since writing an undergraduate dissertation. Successive waves of industrialisation in the nineteenth century saw an influx of people and cultures that disrupted the traditional order. Hence, throughout the nineteenth century, the south Wales mining valleys were gripped by waves of religious revivals that attempted to moralise and install order within a perceived landscape of immorality. The patriarchy of industrialists and religious leaders became society's elite and were looked upon to provide answers. However, their power and positions were increasingly challenged in the early twentieth century by repeated social traumas. The MA thesis set about exploring this bubble of industrial power and the moments before it burst.

From the beginning of the twentieth century, an agenda was set upon the landscape to ensure the survival of nineteenth century paternalism. The early twentieth century in south Wales was one characterised by strikes, riots, industrial and economic depression, war, religious disillusionment and the rise of socialism. A 'crisis in memory' ensued. The 'old', official culture and identity of the coalfield had to be cocooned and mapped onto the landscape as an unforgiving reminder. Monuments and memorials to powerful figures of the elite – such as industrialists, politicians, landowners and philanthropists – littered the landscapes of south Wales in the early twentieth century and inter-war years in order to temper a restless and dynamic society.

These monuments and memorials to men of power in a bygone age are still present in today's de-industrial landscape. Their haunting and austere presence among the parks, shops, traffic and busy pulse of everyday life led me to question when and why they were put there. I was to learn that it was not only through the erection of such monuments and memorials that legacies could be cemented, but, through the propaganda of unveiling ceremonies. These played an important part in not only providing social cohesion but, ex-

toll the virtues of the moral citizen thus stamping out the sympathies of perceived 'alien' ideologies. Analyses of photographs, speeches, programmes and newspaper reports suggested that the spectacle of peace was paraded in un-peaceful environments.

Indeed, the rash of monument and memorials has now become part of the furniture of the place I call home. Just like removing a family heirloom that has gathered dust for too long, their banal presence would be missed and memories reshaped if the landscape were to change. Ironically, in a century dominated by class-conflicts, a timeless landscape of 'fathers and sons' has been solidified.

[The above in thesis form won the LRG prize for best presented thesis of the year.]

LG

LANDSCAPE BLINDNESS AND VISUAL IMPAIRMENT

Hannah Macpherson

hannah.macpherson@rhul.ac.uk



A member of a specialist visually impaired walking group being guided in the countryside (Photo Hannah Macpherson)

How does landscape become present in the experiences of people with blindness and visual-impairment? How do the experiences of people with blindness and visual-impairment force us to reconsider what counts as landscape? In my doctoral thesis I explored some answers to these questions through the use of both auto-biographical sources and empirical research. Between 2004 and 2006 I acted as a sighted guide and conducted interviews with twenty-

five members of two specialist visually-impaired walking groups who visit areas of the Lake District and Peak District in Britain. This research went beyond the practical landscape research concerns of 'disabled access' to consider how landscape also functions as a term in people's minds and as a memory for those who have lost their sight. Four interesting conclusions which I think are worth drawing to the LRE readership came out of this work.

While many definitions of landscape are based on sight, sight cannot be assumed to be a constant or predictable source of information about landscape. We are all 'temporarily able' and likely to experience differing forms of sight from the hazy vision of infancy, to cataract blurred sight and other limitations of later years. Below is an illustration of what it might be like to see with a macular degeneration, the most common cause of visual-impairment in Britain for people over the age of sixty. Macular degeneration restricts image reception to the outer part of the retina.



How macular degeneration is likely to affect the field of vision (Images courtesy of the National Eye Institute, National Institute of Health, USA). From a photo editor's point of view this image needs sharpening!

While the present visual landscape maybe obscured through visual-impairment or blindness that does not mean that landscape does not exist in some imagined form (and as an image) in the minds of people with blindness. Many blind and visually impaired people have early memories of when they were sighted. Landscape also operates through forms of collective memory, actions and language that stretch beyond individual experience. As the famous deaf-blind author Helen Keller wrote a century ago '*...rather than be shut out, I take part in it by discussing it, imagining it, happy in the happiness of those near me who gaze at the lovely hues of the sunset or the rainbow*' (Keller 1908, 70). This is a sensitivity of the blind to the needs and understandings of the sighted and in my research I was particularly struck by the way in which partly sighted/blind walkers interacted with the visual landscape interests of their sighted guides. However, some of the walkers felt they experienced an

'overload of visual description' on the part of well meaning sighted guides who thought that otherwise their companions would be 'missing out'!

Other walkers echoed Keller's sentiments and took some joy and interest in the sight of others. For example one walker, Jenny, states how "*...somebody might just stand still and they will go 'wow' that's beautiful and it just makes you feel good because you know it is. So you do get a lot from other people's comments and their enjoyment of the situation*". Thus Jenny, no longer, herself, able to see, is involved in a form of 'empathetic seeing'. In this context the visual landscape becomes present as a lived reality for both visually-impaired walker and sighted guide. However in this relationship between guide and walker the reality of landscape becomes both a physical bond and a 'negotiation' shot through with tensions over what counts as landscape knowledge and who should be the 'grateful recipient' of such knowledge.

Walkers with visual-impairments and blindness find that landscape became present through senses other than sight. There is a material landscape which shows itself in the weather, the sounds and smells of the environment, the commentary and movements of companions, the jangle of the guide dog's bell (having a well earned rest off the lead) and surfaces touched by leki pole or white cane. People interviewed and out walking, demonstrated considerable attention to the touch of the feet and the footwork required to traverse the terrain safely and effectively. The rough terrain of the Lakes and Peaks requires a high step and a heel toe action to avoid tripping and slipping. One might tend to think of 'blind touch' as hand touching but here the foot contact with the ground is all important.

And quite apart from all the above, members of these specialist walking groups use laughter and humour to relieve nervousness, defy stereotypes and ease the embarrassments and frustrations of hiking in the countryside within a party of 'blind' people. Laughter like this adds an extra dimension to the landscape: a transient sonic element much as the gurgling of a stream or the sound of wind in bushes. Laughter and humour also help to liberate 'the blind' from any sense of pity. However at times their laughter and humour also betrays a certain pessimism and is used as a way of coping with, rather than actually challenging some of the attitudinal and physical barriers that they face in the countryside.

Summarised in formal academic language "*Landscape in the experiences of walkers with blindness and visual impairments is a constellation, a coming together of bodies, memories, materialities and language. Their experiences of the landscape encompass senses other than sight, but they are not divorced from the 'sighted world'. Rather, due to the collective*

nature of discourse on landscape and the collective nature of their experiences of being guided in the countryside by a sighted companion, landscape for them was a complex inter-corporeal experience".

Acknowledgements

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Macpherson, H.M. (Forthcoming b) 'Touch in the countryside: memory and visualization through the feet' *Senses and Society special issue on 'Remediating Touch'*, 2009.

Macpherson, H.M. (Forthcoming c) 'I don't know why they call it the Lake District they might as well call it the rock district!' *The workings of humour and laughter in research with members of visually impaired walking group*.

HMCP

Editor's note: I asked a friend who was born blind — and has what she calls in the old fashioned measure 3/60 sight — what were her experiences of experiencing landscape in the countryside. She differs from those studied (or here reported by Hannah Macpherson) in that she most often walks alone and on familiar routes that challenge even the fully sighted. She likes to take her rather soppy non guidedog which fortunately stays with her and doesn't run off.

She points out immediately that those born blind have no 'seen landscapes of reference' unlike those who become blind. However her three sixtieths allows her to see a tiny bit (eg I have arrived at a gate) and the

quality of the light. Most intriguing to me was that she can tell acoustically when she is at the bottom of a hill while to be at the top of a hill leaves her with no 'acoustic rebound edges' to refer to and a feeling of being 'at sea.' This acoustic thing is perhaps similar to the fully sighted person's experience getting echo feedback from walls, something we are more used to when in a car. So she is able to appreciate the difference between hill and vale. She can in the same way feel the presence of bushes and trees by the sound feedback, reinforced by light brushing against branches, varying shadow effects and by her footfall contact with leaves and twigs.

Her feet give her the most clues and the greatest pleasure and she is quick to point out that walking on paved streets is boring by comparison to the variety of surfaces found in the countryside. She employs a rough distance count — not accurate pacing but more elapsed time based. She does not use any form of stick. But does 'examine' the ground with her feet raising the toes somewhat.

MEETING A LANDSCAPE POET

You attend a lunch at your old college. Fifty years have flown — echoes of the Scholar Gypsy. You suspect the Development Officer of looking for legacies but she is delightful and an American. You recognise many of those you meet despite the passage of time (you covertly analyse the guest list). At the meal you are seated next to a trim looking well kept chap (no buffer he) you know is Denning. You actually recognise him and remember how he used to stride down the quad — but you never spoke to him then for there were friendship groups, quickly crystallised which left outsiders at the crystal rim. He read modern languages and you start there, it appears that he had success bringing important documents from sealed political archives. Now retired he intends to write poetry full time. He promises you sight of some. In return you claim an interest in words and landscape ("I am not a single facet geologist") and boast that you edit LRExtra (as some small validation of claimed interest). You begin to hit it off. You send him backcopies and he gives you poems. You wonder how it was that you never engaged with this gifted person fifty years ago. But we were all different then. To add to the intimacy of the dinner and the formal welcomings from the Principal, you make a little speech which reflects how many interesting people we might have met but never got to, in those confident undergraduate days. The loss of it all.

Jim Denning is the poet's name and his poems combine landscape with ghosts of the past, outlines, earth-works, relationships, people and in the poem below, a voluptuous sexual metaphor. They are perhaps the most evocative landscapes I have read since I discovered Edward Thomas.

CHILTERN DIARY

Jim Denning

Here is the private landscape of desire:
 abandoned bodies of the rounded hills,
 half-seen untravelled depths in distant woods,
 the velvet entrances, the unknown ends
 of old green lanes; while curling skylines lie
 upon the oblivious and alluring fields.
 This closest field to home, my favourite,
 begins from near the level of a man
 and swells to twice the level of the trees
 to make, as in this morning's morning mist,
 a breathless pale horizon to the west.
 I go, or in imagination go,
 to pace its plump imagined middle point
 and there the centre mark, to sit if dry,
 to lie if hot; or in the cold today
 to touch the presence of the strange domain.
 Across the slope to where the oak trees grow,
 now quickly scramble past the hedgerow, down
 the narrowing trail between the hazel wands
 and pause before the exquisite copse:
 the moist and scented chamber to the field
 where shadowed paths arrive and pheasants
 wait,
 where ancient earthwork banks lie low and part
 and let you pass, and rest, and be content;
 then slowly homeward through the flickering
 light.

A copy of the poem *Chiltern Diary* is given here with permission.

His book **"Pebbles, Debris and other poems"** 2003, Published by Arcade of Farnham Common, Slough can also be obtained through him, Jim Denning, The Tannery, The Frith, Ledbury HR8 1LW. Email correspondence to jim@dening.org

ANTHOLOGY

In late December 2008 the life of John Buchan was examined in an attractive TV documentary. The extract below is his last book which draws on both his childhood years in the hills and moors of the Scottish Borders and his experience as Governor General of Canada. His descriptions of landscape are detailed, knowledgeable and authentic and deal here with both the materials and form that he sees and the feelings that these generate. The book is crammed with landscapes of the far north of Canada: a veritable geographic primer. Here are two extracts. Note the Hare is an Indian tribe.

Mountains prematurely snow-covered had been visible from the Hares' settlement, and Leithen at Lone Tree Camp had seen one sharp white peak in a gap very far off. Ever since then they had been moving among wooded ridges at the most two thousand feet high. But now they suddenly came out on a stony plateau, the trees fell away, and they looked on a new world.

The sedimentary rocks had given place to some kind of igneous formation. In front were cliffs and towers as fantastic as the Dolomites, black and sinister against a background of great snowfields, sweeping upward to ice aretes and couloirs which reminded Leithen of Dauphine. In the foreground the land dropped steeply into gorges which seemed to converge in a deep central trough, but they were very unlike the mild glens through which they had been ascending. These were rifts in the black rock, their edges feathered with dwarf pines, and from their inky darkness in the sunlight they must be deep. The rock towers were not white and shining like the gracious pinnacles above Cortina, but as black as if they had been hewn out of coal by a savage Creator.

But it was not the foreground that held the eye, but the immense airy sweep of the snow-fields and ice

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Editorial enquiries:

Bud Young

Airphoto Interpretation,

26 Cross Street Moretonhampstead Devon

TQ13 8NL

or emails to

young@airphotointerpretation.com

pinnacles up to a central point, where a tall peak soared into the blue. Leithen had seen many snow mountains in his time, but this was something new to him—new to the world. The icefield was gigantic, the descending glaciers were on the grand scale, the central mountain must compete with the chief summits of the southern Rockies. But unlike the Rockies the scene was composed as if by a great artist — nothing untidy and shapeless, but everything harmonised into an exquisite unity of line and colour.

His eyes dropped from the skyline to the foreground and the middle distance. He shivered. Somewhere down in that labyrinth was Galliard. Somewhere down there he would leave his own bones.

From Pages 127 & 128 of Sick Heart River by John Buchan. Published by Hodder and Stoughton 1941.

When he woke, with rime on his blankets and sunlight in his eyes, he saw that the Hare had been retrieved and was now attending to the breakfast fire. For a little he lay motionless, puzzling over what had happened to him. As always now at the start of a day, he felt wretchedly ill, and this morning had been no exception. But his eyes were seeing things differently. . . . Hitherto the world had seemed to him an etching without colour, a flat two-dimensioned thing which stirred no feeling in his mind of either repulsion or liking. He had ceased to respond to life. A landscape was a map to him which his mind grasped, but which left his interest untouched. . . .

From page 184 of Sick Heart River by John Buchan.

And from

Palestinian Walks pages 9-10 by Raja Shehadeh:

Along the terrace wall was a rock rose bush with its thick leaves and muted pink flowers. It dimbed hesitantly over the stones, green against the grey as if someone had carefully chosen it to decorate this ancient wall. The stones with which the wall was built were carefully picked and piled together, and had held back the soil over many years without a single one of them falling, come rain or flood. Between these neatly arranged rocks more cyclamens grew. Their flowers stood at a thirty-degree angle, pink and red droplets, all across the wall. In an opening between the two terraces were three wide stone steps placed there to make it easier to move between the two gardens. By the side of the steps was a yellow broom with its spiky green leaves. Its sweet smell filled the air. Lower down were some tall white asphodels and lower still bunches of blue sage. Even the long grass that grew along some parts of the wall added colour and texture. And when I looked up at the next level, I saw another beautiful garden, graced by a fabulous olive tree many centuries old, whose shallow roots were like thick arteries clinging together, clasping the ground firmly, form-

ing a perfect wooden furrowed seat on which to sit and rest one's back against the trunk. Above this garden there was another. This terrace was large enough for two olive trees surrounded by a carpet of colour that spread all the way to the wall that led to yet another garden above, one garden hanging on top of another and another, going up as far up as the eye could see. I felt I could sit all day next to this *qasr* and feast my eyes on this wonderful creation. What fortunate people once lived in this veritable paradise. And how wide of the mark was Herman Melville, who described this area as barren when he visited it in the middle of the nineteenth century:

"Whitish mildew pervading whole tracts of landscape, bleached-leprosy-encrustations of curses/old cheese-bones of rocks, /-crunched, knawed, and mumbled, / mere refuse and rubbish of creation/ - like that laying outside of Jaffa Gate / all Judea seems to have been accumulations of this rubbish."

(Journals of a Visit to Europe and the Levant: October 11, 1856- May 6, 1857)

LANDSCAPE AND REGENERATION POST 1980

Report of a symposium at The Institute of Historical Research, 24/25 October 2008

Rapporteur and organiser Dr Janet Waymark FRGS

janetwaymark@yahoo.co.uk

In October, 2008, the History of Gardens and Landscapes Seminar of the Institute of Historical Research held a symposium to investigate how green ventures had made their mark in assisting the rejuvenation of exhausted industrial sites and their accompanying run-down urban areas over the last twenty-five years. As the remaining primary and secondary industries continued to migrate towards China and India in the 1980s, there were continuing demands for green landscapes in built-up areas. The creation of new parks and the regeneration of old ones, the rescuing of waterfronts and tired seaside resorts, the creation of a garden academy in Berlin, garden festivals and the fast developing big business of garden tourism provided evidence of recovery in urban areas combined with cultural development. The speakers put their cases and evaluated the success of schemes in the UK, Europe and North America, and questions and discussion followed. Who benefited from the schemes? What sort of project was developed? Where did the

money come from? Who was in charge?

Parks have emerged as key stimulants to regeneration over time, and **David Lambert**, of Parks Agency, presented an insightful background to the mixed history of UK park welfare from the 1930s LCC estates and postwar New Towns to the creation of Milton Keynes' 'forest city' of the 1970s, before assessing recent developments. Parks were neglected during the Thatcher government, but in 1996 the Heritage Lottery Fund decided 'to make park regeneration a key part of its funding programme'.

Dr Hazel Conway (architectural and landscape historian) set out the scale and extent of some post-industrial landscapes in the UK and exemplified some of the new parks created by city governments and others in Paris, Barcelona, and London. In Paris from 1981 President Mitterand and city mayor, Jacques Chirac, set about (amongst other projects) the replacement of a redundant slaughterhouse by the Parc de la Villette, an old car factory by the Parc André Citroën, and deserted wine vaults by the Parc de Bercy. Together with other *grands projets* these parks played their part in providing extensive and thought-provoking landscapes for leisure, improving property prices and in the provision of facilities such as museums, restaurants and shops. Of equal importance was the assertion of French leadership in the cultural landscape. Similar schemes were promoted in Barcelona from 1982, where mayor Pasqual Maragall aimed to decentralise the city and reclaim obsolete sites with attractive sites with leisure facilities such as the Joan Miró Parc and the Parc del Pegaso, whilst the staging of the Olympics in 1992 brought other, seafront parks to Barcelona.

The formation of London's Docklands Development Corporation in 1981 was the first move in Britain towards the regeneration of a site whose waterfront business had moved away downstream. This Enterprise Zone, as it became, offered financial inducements to developers, and from this emerged the Thames Barrier Park in 2000 with its highly individual planted green dock, whose introduction raised property prices nearby, as did the later addition of a station for the Docklands Light Railway. By contrast the development of Mile End's linear park came to a halt in 1986 when the Greater London Council was abolished, and the park waited another twelve years until community groups and local authorities worked together, with a grant from the Millennium Commission, to create Ecology and Arts Pavilions, play areas and green spaces which have succeeded in raising property prices and creating new retail outlets near the park.

Community co-operation featured strongly in **Allison Wainman's** (Kent Gardens' Trust) account of the

transformation of an old gravel pit which had been used as a landfill tip. The 45 acre (18.5 hectare) Sturry Road Community (SRC) Garden and Park, with its skateboard and play areas, woodland and bog gardens arose on this site on the eastern fringes of Canterbury as a result of local efforts to help the lives of people living with a very high level of deprivation. As the SRC Trust has no local authority funding or endowment fund, ways have to be found to raise money from private and public donors for the continued maintenance and development of the Garden and Park.

By contrast, **Elizabeth Goodfellow Zagaroff** (Vice-Chair, London Parks and Gardens Trust) discussed some American approaches to park provision. New York City and State used money from their development of parts of run-down lower Manhattan to fund Battery Park, 36 acres (14.6 ha) of public gardens and walks along the Hudson River. Better known is the Millennium Park on a brownfield railway yard site in Chicago. Encouraged by its Mayor, Richard Daley, from 2004 this was to become the setting for an eye-catching collection of art and architectural works by great names such as Amish Kapoor, Jaume Plensa and Frank Gehry, and a garden between Gehry's music pavilion and Art Institute, designed by Kathryn Gustafson and Piet Oudolf. Money was raised from benefactors; but in the USA such gifts earn tax breaks, and therefore are easier to find.

Papers by **Professor Ken Worpole** (London Metropolitan University) and **John Hopkins**, the project Sponsor for the Olympic Parklands and Public Realm at the Olympic Delivery Authority, exposed the difficulties of pinning down what exactly is meant by today's open space projects, especially in view of the current economic downturn. Worpole spoke on the East London Green Grid 'as a model for green space provision and connectivity'. The Grid is not a park system but a way of joining up separate green spaces in built-up urban areas by a network of cycle-ways, canal side paths, and other straight lines. Hopkins' paper set out the development plans for the Lea Valley Park and the Thames Gateway projects, and sought to explain what public uses these would have in post-Olympic time. But this appeared to pose more problems than its upfront images suggested, and careful questioning by Lambert failed to produce any firm responses from the speaker.

Less dramatic, but no less important for the economy of rural areas is the regeneration of coastal resorts. **Simon Ward**, a landscape architect from Atkins' Manchester office, traced the development of Hornsea's promenade regeneration in Lincolnshire. Restoration attracted new visitors, with a 'Beach Hub' of huts and a café, a splash pool, viewing points to look out to sea, and new lighting to wake up a tired land-

scape. Modern but simple materials such as honey-coloured gravel and rough granite walls, and reference to the seaside in the shaping of waves in the grass banks has subtly but surely changed the feeling of the resort.

Public and private gardens have risen to the fore in recent years as providers of revenue for those who live round them, as well as the gardeners themselves. **Dominic Cole**, of Land Use Consultants, contributed some remarkable figures to show that the economies of rural areas such as those near Heligan had benefited by the creation of jobs, the increase in bed-and-breakfast establishments, local restaurants, ferries, and art galleries. Flower shows such as Tatton Park generated £1.2 million a year, whilst the garden visiting market was worth over £200m annually.

Patricia White (Institute of Education) followed the unsatisfactory fortunes of the 1980s garden festivals as promoters of regeneration in the UK, comparing them with the more successful development of biennial German garden festivals. She took as an example the Bundesgartenschau of 2007 (BUGA07), with its two sites in Gera and Ronnenburg in Thuringia. Gera's aim was to renew a city park, but Ronnenburg's was a mighty task of creating a new landscape in an abandoned opencast uranium mine which was vacated as recently as 1990. Germany has developed some remarkable, original and sensitive landscapes from its abandoned industrial past. Architect **Axel Griesinger**, from the International American School in London, set the 1972 Munich Olympics site in the context of the 'technological sublime', and moved on to German landscape architects' contrasting efforts to create parks which blended with their natural surroundings. The outstanding example was of course that developed in the defunct buildings of the coal and steel industries of the Ruhr- Peter Latz's Landschaftspark Duisberg Nord (the Emscher Park). Here the industrial buildings, coal bunkers, slag heaps and colliery towers are lit up at night, and have been turned into viewing platforms, diving tanks, rock-climbing walls and shutes for people to whizz down to the ground. Trees grow around the site, water runs clear in the river, and there are cycle tracks through the landscape. The uses were decided by the users, and the transformation cost half of what it would have been if the buildings had been demolished.

By contrast **Isabelle Van Groeningen** sought to give gardeners in Berlin some training in how to create a satisfying garden out of their own space, be it a windowbox, or gardens to the front or back of their home. Garden shows can dazzle, but do not always cater for the amateur or flat-dweller. To do this, she took on the buildings, glasshouses and nursery of Peter Lenné's 1826 Royal Gardeners' Training Institute in Berlin-Dahlem, and with Gabriella Pape has transformed it

into a lecture and plant centre – the Royal Garden Academy which opened in 2008, and which will enable city dwellers to create gardens in areas which were previously bleak and uncultivated.

The symposium raised many issues. Was it developers who benefited most by making their buildings accessible only to the pockets of the middle classes? And did they restrict their activities to single uses, instead of appealing to the wide range of the population? Were the aesthetics of landscape improvement cut back when funding ran out? Were projects like the Chicago Millennium Park aimed at gentrification? Who pays for the continuing upkeep of the sites? And in Britain, what would be the outcome of the 2012 Olympics on the provision of public space?

LANDSCAPE — MAKING A MEAL OF IT

By **Terry O'Regan**

On my one trip to the USA, I was taken aback at the large food portions. It explained though, the high proportion of Americans who were (as I saw it) as broad as they were long. Put rather crudely it was a 'fat arse landscape' a serious description that I will examine later. It might be termed a 'carbohydrate footprint' - the obesity equivalent of a carbon footprint. Ireland has just (the Crash is upon us) had its brief spell in the capitalist sun emulating its American cousins (it has many), with trophy mansions, the odd trophy wife, trophy SUV's and trophy guts hanging over trophy trouser belts (locally called bullock buckles!).

The USA, Ireland ...and then by way of contrast: on a recent study tour in the White Carpathians we were generously welcomed with neat local fruit brandy that turned the central heating on in rooms of my body that had been closed down and cold for years. Sitting in the bus waiting for my internal temperature to subside, I watched a family work the land in an adjoining garden. The man of the house, a great broad-shouldered hunk of a man bent low, picked up a rope attached to each end of a two metre long heavy timber implement not unlike a massive rake/harrow, placed the rope around his neck and slowly walking backwards pulling the rake/harrow to cultivate the soil. His wife and daughter followed on, planting or sowing. This was no fat arse landscape – the food produced is eaten locally and the calories were burned up in the process of food production. The relationship between landscape, food and people works best where they are closely integrated.

At many a controversy-inspired meeting in Ireland where landscape quality is at stake, I have heard the

call “you can’t eat landscape”, suggesting landscape has no economic contribution to make to society. This knee-jerk and uninformed reaction demonstrates a lack of understanding of our long-standing dependence on food-producing landscapes and landscapes that produce food. Some landscape books are misleading, giving the impression that important world landscapes are made up of great palaces, gardens and demesnes. That interesting tome of Geoffrey and Susan Jellicoe – ‘The Landscape of Man’ springs to mind.



We must turn to other books to understand food need has shaped our landscape more than any other human instinct or ambition. Dr. John Feehan, a giant on my shoulder, recently brought his deep knowledge and wisdom together in a particularly fine book, ‘Farming in Ireland, History, Heritage and Environment’, 2003,

[Faculty of Agriculture, UCD]. As a book it is almost biblical – you can dip into it again and again and come away with treasure every time. It might as well have been titled ‘Farming in Ireland, shaping our cultural landscape’.

The fine photographic books of Yann Arthus-Bertrand illustrate this point ever so well. The majority of the images show cultural ‘Food Landscapes’ from around the globe. Food is the main landscape driver in the fielded landscapes as you approach airports around the world.

In Ireland we have our own wonderful patchwork of bushy hedgerow enclosed pasture fields, interspersed with silage stripes and the yellow silage aftermath. In the more eastern part of the island there are the larger grain producing fields with their more manicured, machinery-friendly hedges. I recently travelled the wonderful landscape along the Waterford to Clonmel road and admired once again the landscape richness provided by the few apple orchards that we possess. Or, at a more intimate scale I fondly remember the well tended vegetable fields known as gardens or ‘garraí’ of the Maharees outside Castlegregory on the Dingle peninsula in Kerry with their fresh straight green lines of carrots and onions. And then there were the potato ridges in the tiny stonewall-warmed fields of the Aran Islands. What is striking about all of these images is the amount of work invested in tending the crops and animals and how these activities shape and define the landscape.

In recent years with all the talk of global warming there has been a suggestion that the eastern part of Ireland will become a vast ranch of grain, whilst the west will lose its symbolic patchwork of hawthorn-rich hedgerow-enclosed fields to forestry and scrub. But already that prospective scenario has changed. The galloping linked increase in the cost of food and oil over the past twelve months favours a different prediction. As the price of food rises will it not become more attractive for farming to be engaged in on a relatively small scale once again? organic or not. And before long we may again see the blossoming of very well tended gardens and hedgerow enclosed fields with a wide range of crops and fruit, while the high cost of fuel may even presage the return of genuine horse power with draught horses enriching our rural landscape. Perhaps a visionary government today would set some of the land it owns aside for allotment gardening — a highly productive land use commonly seen around most European cities but infrequent in Ireland.

The Irish ‘fat arse landscape’ has already had its day! Discuss.

TO’R

DARK SATANIC MILLS

by Philip Pacey

Lately I’ve spent a good deal of time scrutinising old large scale Ordnance Survey maps, as well as hand-drawn sheets from G.L. Crowther’s ongoing labour of love, *National atlas showing canals, navigable rivers, mineral tramroads, railways, and street tramways* (1), covering the county of Lancashire where we live. The OS maps show the industrial landscape in great detail; it is impossible to study them without picturing the scene – the several buildings comprising a mill complex; brickworks, here, there, and everywhere; wagonways, the wagons hauled by horses or cable, laid across the moors; pithead gear, kinetic sculptures in pastoral countryside, denoting activity below. But then to look at the same locations on modern OS maps or the Lancashire A-Z is to realise with a shock that virtually everything has gone. All of it. Towering chimneys have been felled; massive buildings have been demolished, their stone or bricks chewed up and spat out. Mines have been infilled with spoil from new motorways. Vast sites have been entirely redeveloped in ways which do not necessarily represent improvement (imitation-Post-Modern retail parks; badly built, energy burning houses, the slums of tomorrow; ever widening roads and more and more car parks; sterile open space where grass struggles to grow). Even names have been erased, or in some cases gentrified, Clifton Colliery becoming Clifton Heights. There are no foundations, precious few fragments, no treasures for future archaeologists to unearth. It may be true that ‘Neither does anything quite disappear’ (2), but much of 19th century Britain has been reduced to rubble. As for what we are dumping on top of that - of our times there will be too much evidence.

The maps I’ve been studying are not of landscapes I once knew, but they have reminded me of scenes from the other side of the Pennines where, a teenager on holiday from boarding school, I would go out on my bicycle from our home in Elland, often setting off by coasting down a hill between a cliff face (above) and a mill (below) to West Vale. Here I sometimes saw the daily goods train of no more than half-a-dozen trucks hauled by a steam locomotive crossing a viaduct – yes, a viaduct! comprising a significant proportion of the total length of this briefest of branch lines. How could it ever have been thought viable? Climbing up to the moors by way of narrow valleys, I came upon the strange, sooty, rather gloomy Heathcliff-ish 17th century stone houses characteristic of the district (homes of early entrepreneurs, proto-industrialists), and here and there happened on isolated mills concealed among trees in secret valleys; dark, but by no means Satanic. And now, even as I write, I suddenly recall the drama of our arrival at Elland. From Hud-

dersfield railway station by trolley-bus; a long haul towards a distant skyline; through a gap under a bridge to an immense prospect - Elland below, hills and Halifax beyond; coming to a halt on the descent (which I would later love free-wheeling down) because a brickworks was on fire (how can a brickworks catch fire?) and the firemen had laid hosepipes across the road. No, it wasn’t a scene from some industrial hell painted by a De Louthembourg or Wright of Derby. Nor was it a scene that one would describe as picturesque, but it was a scene which – omitting the fire – my mother chose to paint some years later; a scene where the underlying structure of the landscape was strong enough to restrict urban sprawl and keep industry in its place.

Here and there something survives. A former cotton mill, built relatively recently of Accrington bricks, now a call centre, illumined by the evening sunshine within sight of our home. The Crossley carpet mill at Halifax, converted to offices and art gallery. Sir Titus Salt’s mill and workers’ village at Saltaire, the mill perched above the river; trees smothering the far side of the valley. A stone merchants’ yard – still working – which we had occasion to visit recently, on a long, thin site pressed up against the side of a steep valley in Rossendale, great slabs of rock lurking in encroaching undergrowth.

Of course, such survivals, scattered, tidied up, sterilised by Clean Air, cannot tell the whole story and instead gather to themselves a kind of quaintness which almost is picturesque. Not least, they are safe; it was an industrial landscape which smothered the school at Aberfan, but accidents don’t happen in mining museums. There is a repulsiveness about slag-banks’ wrote Norman Nicholson; around new workings ‘tips and rubble heaps are a raw, arterial red, as if the earth has been coughing up its lungs’. No one in their right mind would wish to recreate industrial landscapes wholesale or revive ways of life comprising hard labour, relentless poverty, relentless toil. And yet, we will always need manufactured goods; is there any virtue in buying them from producers in distant parts of the world beyond our ken? And where was the sense in closing down British mines with an abundance of coal still to be brought to the surface, thus necessitating the import of coal from goodness knows where, at what cost, mined by whom, in what conditions? Shouldn’t every country be prepared to do its own making and mining, and to find creative ways to respond to the challenge of devising places – buildings – landscapes - like David Mellor’s workshop outside Sheffield - where it is good to live and work? Work should not have to be banished from the land for landscape to be habitable.

This was not intended to be a political tract. I simply wanted to lament the nearly total loss of industrial