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Beyond Abandonment

In May of this year I was approached by Julia Ellis Burnett with an attractive idea about the abandonment of old vehicles in Slovenia in particular that area called Primorska, which includes Nova Gorica and parts of the country towards Trieste and the Adriatic. It is a deeply scenic area which has been governed by no less than four jurisdictions in the last century. Her communication came with a website giving some enchanting but brief film sequences shot in winter of dead cars within a woodland, abandoned farmland,

melting snows and noisy little rills of water. The music accompanying it was extraordinary, unexpected, plangent and I was taken with what I saw. It was a clip, a taster. I was attracted.

Julia tells me that her inspiration came many years ago in Australia when she encountered '17 rusting cars abandoned in a coastal regrowth forest'; she wrote a poem — Trilogy in an Auto Graveyard —about this and simply stored it away. Much later having met a young, award winning filmmaker Aljaž from Slovenia, she resurrected the poem, gave it him to read and jointly, set out in winter for what she calls his playround (Primorska) to begin the complex process of making a film. I have been shown the scene-by-scene story board of this film — which scenes have been complete, the short interviews. From that point of view alone it is to me an education. But it is not simply a film about a landscape or Yugoslavian Zastana cars, rusting water bowsers and tractors abandoned in villages and woodland and on the edge of fields, for it attempts to set this in the perspective of modern industry and how vehicles are built to obsolesce and then be abandoned, ending their useful hard working lives like so many 'bag of bones' draft horses. It aims to portray a reporter's political overview of a changing landscape, the economics of abandoned vehicles together with the charm of images, sounds and people in a deeply rural environment; a landscape of abandonment, of the people who grew old alongside their tractors and their Ladas.

"As I learnt about Primorska, its various landscapes, people and history of foreign dominion, as I breathe the air and taste the earth, I begin to see the shape and form of the land. Following each scouting or filming day I have re-written the script because this landscape has captured me. There is always another waterfall, another secret canyon."

"I started this project being scientific – the old cars providing micro-habitats for a range of species but as I've been drawn into the landscape and the stories of its people I sometimes wonder how dare I, the foreigner, try to describe or capture an essence of place and identity that is so private, so European – it is, and remains, an open ended question."

"But I have dared. I am merely the word smith – Aljaž has captured the heart of the landscape and his environmental portraiture has made our "dead car" project move mysteriously from the scientific baseline to a point where the abandoned

vehicles have become both symbolic and metaphoric without diminishing their role in social ecology or environmental history."

In a brief abstract of the program she offers me the following: and it is in that final sentence '*somehow we seem to be morphing it into something magical'* that I locate such pleasure … the thrill of the filmic sequence with its extraordinary music that accompanied her first letter to me. The abstract read:

"Beyond Abandonment: The documentary investigates the place of abandoned vehicles in the rural landscape within the framework of social ecology, environmental history and graphic art. Old vehicles clutter many villages, field edges and forest areas indicating not only their essential role in rural transportation for landholders but also as an important indicator of rural poverty. In developing the visual beauty of the landscape the added richness of the personal dimension will invocate (sic) a sense of place and identity with the abandoned vehicles being both symbolic and metaphoric".

And now, more filming with the gifted Aljaž and his super fast car, more funding (how about European Hercules) and that essence of communication, gifted editing. Oh yes and a business manager to get the product to the viewer. I have to say I would have been happy to have seen this as a 'Pure Art Film' with no wider explanation, but as projected, it is a topic of very current interest to the HERCULES PROJECT.

I know this from that long questionnaire from Mónica Hernández HERCULES Project Manager monica.hernandez.morcillo.1@hu-berlin.de

BY based on text and Information from Julia Ellis Burnett.

Wildscapes: Letter Exchange with Professor Ken Taylor

Dear Bud,

Thanks for your message. I don't think as editor of LRE you are missing important world views etc if no-one has raised them in material for LRE. My understanding is that you use material sent to you and if it doesn't include the kind of critical reviews/literature that I'm thinking of, then it is not your fault.

I'm glad you found my comments and Kenneth Olwig's piece thought provoking. What made me think of it was reading in LRE 76 about the Sheffield rewilding meeting and elsewhere, Kenneth Olwig's excellent critical piece in Feb's LR Journal (VOL 41/2 pp253-264) on the Lake District and 'rewilding' which I gather was related to his keynote talk at the Sheffield meeting. Interesting that his paper was not mentioned by the person who did the piece for the newsletter. For me and colleagues who research or work on this Asian side of the world in the area of (cultural) landscapes the idea of going back to some romantic notion of nature-past raises questions of what is meant by that and which part of the past will be the chosen period and on what

"The chasing of the 'ideal natural landscape' (often allied to notions of beauty) by some people is mainly a western pursuit and to me is a chimaera in that it too often separates nature from culture."

criteria. For example there is considerable international literature on the greater biodiversity richness of managed landscapes over wild landscapes or the will-of- the-wisp notion 'Wilderness'. Also, as you will know from your experience overseas, traditional or indigenous communities worldwide do not separate nature from culture. The Ifuago Philippines Rice Terraces and the Bali Cultural Landscape Rice Terraces are both on the World Heritage (WH) list as cultural landscapes based on WH **cultural** criteria: western eyes may see them principally as 'awe inspiring' and indeed they support a thriving and locally valuable tourist industry.

In answer to your question, awe inspiring landscapes and cultural landscapes are not antithetical. Indeed what we see in the Ifuago and Bali examples is a total cultural landscape valued by its local communities for cultural reasons. In contrast a western view might be one where people think what they are seeing is nature or a natural landscape. In contrast locals see individual elements and pieces that have meaning and value to them.

The chasing of the 'ideal natural landscape' (often allied to notions of beauty) by some people is mainly a western pursuit and to me is a chimaera in that it too often separates nature from culture. The (il) logical extension of this mindset is the view by some natural heritage people that wilderness or so-called natural landscapes have, *ipso facto*, greater biodiversity than human altered landscapes. This is not so, as various studies and literature have established. You may have read Mauro Agnoletti's work on the invasion of scrub and woodland onto abandoned farmed lands in the Italian landscape.

At the World Heritage level much of what I have to say on culture/nature is one of the fundamental reasons why WH Cultural Landscape categories were introduced in 1992 as also, the idea of mixed WH sites (ie mixed cultural and natural values).

I am reminded here of the proposal many years ago to nominate the Lake District as a natural landscape. It didn't get anywhere and I understand there are now proposals to re-nominate it as cultural landscape (I may be wrong here). One of the daftest examples of a WH site listed for natural reasons is the Australian Blue Mountains. The green lobby here in Australia pushed it through, but how it ever got passed the WH approval committee I don't know. Another example here is Uluru/Katatjuta National Park included on the WH list in late 1980s as a natural site. It was nominated as mixed natural/ cultural because of Aboriginal values. 'The cultural reasons were questioned and then left out of the assessment process thereby marginalising Aboriginal values and attachment to country. Thankfully it was re-nominated and re-inscribed as cultural landscape in 1994, thereby

acknowledging Aboriginal meanings and values.

I like your reference to English Heritage: "do not strip back to the 15th Century, keep all increments". This comment encapsulates one of the significant aspects of cultural landscapes as representing layers through time and hence people's values.

I didn't intend writing so much in response to your comment that you would like to use an edited version of my letter and I realise I hope that I have not muddied the waters.

Best wishes, Ken

Notes: readers may wish to know about

Sacred Natural Sites. Conserving Nature and Culture eds Verschuuren B, Wild R, McNeely J A, Oviedo G,. 2010 London and Washington.

Earthscan; **Conserving Cultural and Biological Diversity. The Role of Sacred Natural Sites and Cultural Landscapes,** 2006 UNESCO/IUCN.

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Later this year there will be a new **Asian Sacred Natural Sites. Philosophy and practice in protected area and conservation is to be published**, *E*ds Verschuuren B et al (I am joint author of the chapter on the Lua people of N. Thailand and their shifting [swidden] agriculture.)

This culture/nature message is also central to many chapters in the **Conserving Cultural Landscapes. Challenges and New Directions** 2015 Routledge, eds K Taylor et al.

ANTHOLOGY

"It is as big and depthless as the sky itself. You can see the curve of the Earth on its surface as it stretches away for miles to the far shore. Sunset has turned the waters to the colour of unripe peaches. There's no wind. Sandbars and woody islands stand on their exact reflections. The only signs of movement on the water are the lightly stretched lines which run in parallel across it like the scores of a diamond on a windowpane. In the middle distance, the river smokes with toppling pillars are mist which soften the light so that one can almost reach out and taking handfuls of that thickened air."

"A fish jumps. The river shatters for a moment then glazes over. The forest which rims it is a long looping smudge of charcoal. You could make it by running your thumb along the top edge of the water, smearing in the black pines and bog oaks, breaking briefly to leave a pale little town of painted clapperboard houses tumbling from the side of a hill. Somewhere in the picture there is the scissored silhouette of a fisherman from the town, afloat between the islands in his wooden pirogue, a perfectly solitary figure casting into what is left of the sun.

It is called the Mississippi, but it is more an imaginary river than a real one."

*Extract from **Old Glory** page 11, by Jonathan Raban, first published by William Collins and Company 1981 then in a Picador edition 1981 by Pan Books.*
Editor's Comment: Jonathan Raban wrote this as part of an interesting account of a voyage down the Mississippi. In my opinion that was a good book. Others including *Arabia through the Looking Glass* published by William Collins, 1979) are rather more ordinary travelogues.

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"It is strange how little has been written about the upper Mississippi. The river below Saint Louis has been described time and again, and it is the least interesting part. One can sit on the pilothouse for a few hours and watch the low shores, the ungainly trees and the democratic buzzards, and then one might as well go to bed. One has seen everything there is to see. Along the upper Mississippi every hour brings something new. There are crowds of odd islands, bluffs, prairies, hills, woods and villages – everything one could desire to amuse the children. Few people ever think of going there however. Dickens, Corbett, Mother Trollope and other discriminating English people who wrote up the country before 1842 had hardly an idea that such a stretch of river scenery existed. Their successors have followed in their footsteps, and as we form our opinions of our country from what other people say of us, of course we ignore the finest part of the Mississippi."

Mark Twain: Interview in the Chicago Tribune July 9, 1886.

Editor's Comment: Even in this piece I feel that the quality of Mark Twain's writing shines through.

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"It has always been my experience – quite different from the writings of Mark Twain, who made this river into a kind of magic carpet – that the Mississippi is a thing shorn of all romance and is instead more generally a displeasing mess of foul water, mud, slime and desolation.

Charles Dickens saw 'nothing pleasant in its aspect'. Mrs Trollope wrote that 'she never beheld a scene so utterly desperate'. And I suspect most others who see the Mississippi, **at least in these reaches** feel about it as much the same. It is mighty. It is important. Some say it is perhaps the most important river in the world. But pretty it is not.

If driving, you become aware of its presence miles before you reach it. The landscape falls away. There are swamps on either side, dense hedgerows and copses, miles of small lakes of curious shape. There are the distant chimneys of power plants and factories, sited at the river's

edge because, presumably the owners are eager to take advantage of some neighbour state's tax benefit. And then finally there's a bridge ……. the road bridge then heaves itself up and over yet more swamp more trees then yards of soggy ooze, then an inlet and islet and a stranded barge or two, then a fuel depot and another inlet and yet more brown sludge before finally the river appears below, *eau de nil* in hue and filled with floating mysteries and perhaps a slow-moving barge or two, its waters rumbling past beneath the span – until a mile or half a mile on there is more ooze and low forest and the process repeats, a measure of what went before."

Extract from Simon Winchester ***T he Men Who United The States*** *published by William Collins London 2013 pp225 - 226.*

Editor's Comment: I have a close friend who reads every Simon Winchester book as it comes out and recommends them to her friends. If one were to judge from this extract (I do) he is not a writer so much as an assembler of researched facts: prolific entertaining but a word miller. Does this suppose that he has a team doing his footwork? Krakatoa: The day the World Exploded; William Smith the geologist—The Map that changed the World! The Atlantic — and many more.

ENCOUNTER WITH THE SUBLIME

by Claire Masters

I have just completed a research project exploring a number of themes all of which are concerned with the nature of landscape, wilderness, and the sublime. I approached this through landscape photography. From the beginning I felt it was important to investigate what is called The 'New Topographics Movement' as this helped my inquiry to question the placement of wilderness and the sublime, aiding me in challenging where the sublime might dwell. I didn't feel it was simply enough to just accept well established notions surrounding the idea, so in turn I set out to question and challenge why certain landscapes were deemed sublime or wild, and why much of the landscape between here and there fell into a void of obscurity with very little admiration paid to it. This treatment of the land was most evident in Iceland with spectators of the natural world, only admiring the beauty spots marked out on the map.

My visual language for this project started very strained, as my research spoke of epic landscapes and touched upon photographers such as Ansel Adams and Timothy O'Sullivan This line of inquiry did, I have to say, worry me. But I soon realised through reading other material on landscape studies, that the sublime was perhaps not an experience solely reserved for the peaks of mountains or vast deserts. But if all the sublime amounts to, is an experience from within, it could be found in an array of different places. My visual line of inquiry started off as I photographed old relics on Bodmin Moor and this helped to build up my understanding of the 'New Topographics' and enabled me to debate and question shifts in the cultural understandings of landscape. But it was in the early shoots of this project, that it started to occur to me that perhaps the sublime dwells in more places than we give it credit for.

Romanticism still takes the lead and dominates our understanding of the sublime, so I set out to question such old and well-established placements and to try and bring them into a more contemporary understanding. Based on my research to this point and so many questions still to investigate, I set off on a trip to Iceland, thinking rather naively that I would have to reach the high places in order to experience the sublime -- because no matter how much one reads, and argues for or against the placement of the sublime through one's research, the conditioning of well-established thought processes and cultural belief systems still dominate the mind: every spectator of the natural world, has been told for centuries that the sublime dwells in the highest places, where a human-being is shown very little mercy, from Nature's unforgiving character.

Within the first few days of arrival in Iceland I realised that it was the void between places that most intrigued me, the elusive land that lay in the space between here and there, was what sparked a journey into the centre of which I cannot name, for even now as I write this, the land was too elusive, too secretive and too powerful to grasp, although it always hinted at the presence of something more, something deeper and more connected than myself.

The photographs I had created in Iceland were very different from the photographs I thought I was going to make. It was not solely the high places that brought my soul to a perplexing standstill; but the void, that elusive emptiness to which I cannot give a name, nor explain very eloquently, for this space was almost without language; and yet it said everything all at once, and in the confusion of it all, I made photographs that I felt hinted not only at the presence of the land, but at the presence of the infinite, a place where knowledge gave way to divinity and the mind retreats as the soul steps forward to experience this profound unnameable otherness.

My time in Iceland was a search for the wild, to reach the high places where the

sublime might still be at its most powerful. I ventured off into the mountains, but Iceland's landscape is so large in contrast to any human presence I barely entered this harsh but beautiful terrain. Although I had penetrated it enough to feel slightly uncomfortable, I was surrounded by the majesty of the natural world; never before have I been so close to what seemed like a spiritual encounter. The obscurity of the landscape laid out before me filled me with anticipation, a silent dread as I moved into these elusive mountains. I had never felt so vulnerable whilst out walking in the land, as I did here. Edmund Burke suggested that for the powers of the sublime to suspend our minds in the feeling of dread or fear, one must experience a sort of infinity an obscurity that covers our level of perception. *'When we know the full extent of any danger, when we can accustom our eyes to it, a great deal of the apprehension vanishes.'* Whilst making this photographic series I was never afforded a clear view as to what lay beyond. Thus the small flutter of sublimity I had felt whilst walking this wild land came from a sense of the infinite.

Infinity for a mere mortal is too much to bear: it attacks the mind with the nature of uncertainty, forcing us to deal with something we are incapable of doing for we are limited in our very nature. The body of photographs I put together has no boundaries as I was unable to find the end of an elusive landscape. Furthermore I was afraid to try, as the presence of the unknown took its toll on my senses, my power stripped from me, it was as though I was laid bare before the land and at the mercy of it.

If I am honest, I am still finding my voice as an artist; of course I know I am a landscape photographer but for me photographing the landscape goes far beyond the superficial. I feel it has to point to something deeper, something that challenges our understanding of it. The final photographs produced from this project I feel would best be suited to a gallery setting, as they need to be viewed large for my audience to grasp the point. The images need to overwhelm in order for them perhaps to have a profound experience when viewing them. But I am under no illusion, that to try and photograph or paint the sublime is extremely difficult and very few succeed in doing so including me. But I feel that perhaps these photographs do have a place in contemporary culture for with an ever changing world, comes changing values, beliefs, understandings and ideologies. Thus the placement and visual language of the sublime will always be under siege from cultural movements. Might this work of mine encourage us to think about the placement of the sublime in a different way? Might the sublime have a new visual language?

CM

THE OLYMPIC PARK 4 YEARS ON.

By Bud Young

Is it now four years since the London Olympics. July the 9th 2016 and I eventually got there. Am I impressed? You bet. We got out of a taxi in an alarmingly empty road; where is everybody and where the Park? -- an industrial zone, and walked a mere group of 6 up a paved and

very broad mall built for thousands, bordered by the most amazing display of wild flowers so many species at their best -- more flowers than grass. We pass a Somali security guard who smiles nicely. Across the steep-set river stands the mighty stadium and this side 'The Great British Garden'. We have it to ourselves. I am with family and grandchildren who climb onto a huge sphere of polished stone. We sit in a swing seat. It is our place. Eight graceful silver birches in perfect low lawn grass not mown so much as designed to be low by seed selection; a walk into the sun dial. Perfection in such small compass. A group of 26 Scandinavians file in for an explanation by their cloth capped guide.We descend to the river bank and under polished metal mirror arches of a number of bridges. Visually weird illusion, breathtakingly fun. What gifted design! We went further nearly to the Velodrome, exciting structure like a flying saucer. Had a quiet picnic in a grassy valley. Bought 'cappuchinos to go!' from the café. Café toilets adequate to accommodate thousands, but now there are hundreds, tourists and locals. Ended up at one helluva challenging play area. Looked back south and all around at the part finished, fabric-clad and crane-attended urban development. Recalled Docklands. Thought of Kensington Gardens.

BY

The illusion is not a composite image but a series of bridges, plus the Olympic Arena at the top and those Mediterranean terrace lookalikes are reflections of gabions in the river bank to my right as I take this photo. I still don't understand it which is why it is so exciting.

CULTURAL LANDSCAPES AND COMMUNITY IDENTITY: A HERCULES PROJECT.

Authors: Geneviève Girod, Hannes Palang

The aim of this work was to test a valuation model that could include both stakeholders' engagement and landscape integrated management dynamics within HERCULES project. Innovative measures in cultural landscape were illustrated through a matrix, that was found to be a useful toolbox, of twelve issues: governance; education; innovation; health; culture; living together; sustainable production and consumption; working environment; safety; infrastructures; mobility; biodiversity. All of these help bring together six purposes: attractivity; social cohesion; well-being; preserving environment; resilience; responsible resource use.

The first step aimed to collect European landscape innovative initiatives, both from local and expert knowledge. The second step was to test the matrix relevance for SWOT type assessment on collected initiatives. Health and safety appear to be the more poorly addressed themes, for nature is still seen as a source of danger. By contrast, community identity was highly valued in our cultural landscape set of examples, and in particular on our five European study landscapes outlined below, in which 'cultural landscape days' were organized.

In 2015 there was an opportunity to publish an early reader children's book of the **Kodavere dialect of Estonia** to help the younger generation remember their cultural heritage. The district contains an area named Sibulatee (the Onion Route), named after onions and garlic, gardened as vegetables by 'Russian Old Believers', a distinctive group of people living near Lake Peipsi, Estonia, where grain cultivation is impossible.

In **Colmenar Viejo, Spain**, three main festive traditions from middle ages are organised by the municipality in close collaboration with the local community. The first one is the annual pilgrimage to a rural chapel, one of the main identity icons for the inhabitants (religous or not). The other two are linked to pagan traditions to welcome the spring session and to remember the rangeland stock farming past of the village. These three traditions have a very strong relation with the cultural landscapes of the area, and are very important in fostering the sense of place and community for the people living in the municipality.

In the Greek Island of Lesvos socio-cultural heritage reinforces social cohesion. The community has a rich 'human capital', based on actors bridged together in an NGO 'tis Allis Syn "and the social enterprise "MODOUSA", whose desire is to adopt new management systems, and a less centralized local government. They wish to be more open to change and innovation, while at the same time effecting strong integrated landscape conservation and aesthetics.

In South West Devon, a trail was organized to reconnect people to the land through a discovery of heritage trees. Modbury a small rural town, lies in a sector undergoing rapid urbanization on the outskirts of Plymouth. There are larger changes in the landscape than at any time since before the year 2000. To keep the memory of places, the heritage trail reinforces local recognition of landscape features created by man; these include dry stone walls, hedges, water sources such as ponds and notable trees.

A little to the North a project entitled **'One hut full'** explores the history of Dartmoor agriculture to provide inspiration, and innovation for the future of a sector threatened along its southern edges by increasing urbanization. The program supports bio-based materials, and new sustainable technologies.

In the **Grand Parc Miribel Jonage** (GPMJ), **near Lyon**, lakes are a major element of the landscape and infrastructure, and it is a source of drinking water.

While both lead to preservation of biodiversity, the land also includes also industrial activity with gravel extraction. This is now coming to an end and and will be replaced as a recreational resource for 'captive' eastern Lyon residents. The area faces multiple uses and functions. GPMJ is a peri-urban park whose job is to conserve landscape. It comprises 400 ha of farmland operated by 16 contracted farmers, plus 100 ha mainly cereals operated directly by GPMJ. A small part of this is the label "Les Saveurs du Grand Parc" which aims to encourage producers, distributors, processors and consumers to focus on organic and local products, and involve farmers through a land charter, and the signing of a convention.

The final aim includes discussion on how the use of the model can provide keys for compilation and prioritisation of policy options. It is essential to understand that there is no such thing as policy measures that could be recommended in every European cultural landscape. This has been illustrated on the five study landscapes with quite different issues and concerns. What could be proposed here is a common method to implement and prioritize such policy measures, each of them being very dependant on local context. We could thus figure that integrated landscape management policy relies on key success factors such as context, stakeholders' engagement, prioritization of issues, and accountability to local people. This could then allow continuous improvement through experimentation and feedback.

GG & HP

PILGRIMAGE ROUTES AS PURPOSEFUL WALKING

By Paul Selman

A little over five years ago I retired early from the increasingly frenetic life of academia (which included editing LRG's Journal) and moved to the village of **West Kilbride** on the Ayrshire coast. Although the Scottish landscape is peppered more and more with windfarms, westwards we look over the photogenic coastline of the Firth of Clyde. Those who look beyond this well composed scene, come across hidden glens and waterfalls as well as historical artefacts dating from the Neolithic to World War II. It was a wrench to leave my cherished landscape of the Peak District but this area has its compensations!

Retirement has brought with it the opportunity to explore landscape on foot, to effect my own 'Walking Geography[1]' and encounter Ayrshire's less obvious background through contact and conversation. The walking group to which I now belong is not unduly ambitious in the distances it covers but it draws together a wide variety of people who together have an encyclopaedic knowledge of the vicinity.

One 'Walking Geography' which has recently attracted my attention is the fledgling network of long-distance paths promulgated by the Scottish Pilgrim Routes Forum. I am not a member of this Forum but live close by one of their routes, and as a person of strong faith I am curious about the renascent interest in pilgrimage among people of all religions and none. I shall walk other routes as I have time.

The Whithorn Way. Under leaden skies in late June I tackled the first half of our most local route, which links Glasgow Cathedral to the cave at **Whithorn** where St Ninian established his base for bringing the Christian Gospel to mainland Britain. A renewed interest in these Celtic saints, with their contemplative and peaceful commitment to service and their 'intentional vulnerability' perhaps underpins much of the recent upsurge in pilgrimage.

I skipped the first stretch through the conurbation of Glasgow and my journey began at **Paisley Abbey**. The present Abbey is of relatively recent construction though the site has been in religious use since the sixth century, but there is a strong allusion to the first saints through its association with St Mirin (whose name continues in the local football team) and a thousand year old Celtic cross retrieved from nearby moors.

Unsportingly, I caught the train to **Howwood** to avoid a rather mundane stretch of suburban roads and dismantled

railway, the latter now forming part of National Cycle Route 7. Shortly after Howwood station I took a farm track and found myself in an attractive and tranquil riverside landscape. I have discovered that Renfrewshire is an undervalued corner of Glasgow's conurbation: it has a striking geology incised by unexpectedly scenic tributaries of the Clyde, largely unnoticed by those speeding along on its major highways.

Suddenly, a sense of pilgrimage begins. The surroundings are bucolic and rural though, to the trained eye, not of great antiquity. The land has clearly been improved and the river channel modified extensively since the Georgian era. A 'temple' on the brow of nearby **Kenmure Hill** might look like a pilgrim relic, but it is merely a folly, the final prominent reminder of a lost agricultural estate.

I deviate from the track to skirt a field of cows attended by an amorous bull and rejoin the path by **Castle Semple Loch**. This Loch, together with neighbouring **Barr and Kilbirnie Lochs** forms one of the largest expanses of freshwater in lowland Scotland. Now, within this landscape, I become genuinely aware of *time-depth*. The loch has been little unaffected by intensive agriculture. It retains marshy fringes and semi-native scrub, and is largely given over to conservation and quiet recreation. I sense the Celtic saints may have gazed on a similar scene, though it may well have seemed a landscape of fear and risk in those early days of precarious settlement.

I cross two farmsteads and pass under National Cycle Route 7 to a ruined chapel in the care of Historic Environment Scotland. This building, **Castle Semple Church** was established in the early 16th century, long after the Celtic influence. Though roofless, the remaining fabric is remarkably intact. Whilst the site has little to connect it with pilgrimage, it is intensely tranquil and evocative of a place trodden by the footsteps of history's faithful.

I leave sacred ground and an unexpected landscape feature lures me across the path. It is an old ice house which the Regional Park Authority recently opened up within the ruins of the **Semple Estate** – an ice house is a food refrigeration facility where water cooling was achieved by an ingenious system of ponds and sluices. The grounds of the defunct estate had become derelict, but the Regional Park has been recovering them little by little over the past couple of years. I follow the newly opened path into the woodlands as an alternative to the cycleway and find myself in a rhododendron maze. A grotto, signposted a few hundred metres to the south, will have to await another visit. Not exactly Celtic, all this estate stuff, nor penitential, but fascinating and escapist, allowing me space to wonder about the dreams, follies, momentary glories

and secular decline of previous occupants.

Passing a miniature ravine, I rejoin the cycleway before cutting along the lochside path. In the chill drizzle I see only a solitary angler, a youth whose commitment to quiet recreation seems admirable relative to some of his urban contemporaries. Otherwise, I have only swans, greylag geese and ubiquitous gulls for company – like myself, they are taking advantage of the midweek calm.

Pleasant but unexceptional cycle tracks and footpaths then take me through the former mining and steel towns of **Kilbirnie, Dalry** and **Kilwinning**. Many of the towns hereabouts start with 'Kil', reflecting the Cille, or cell church, of a Celtic saint. Fhinnein's Cille – modern Kilwinning – may lack charm but it does possess the ruins of an abbey with a well restored and climbable tower. The abbey itself probably dates from no earlier than the 12th century, but there is strong evidence that it was a missionary base from the 8th century; the Pilgrim theme once again.

The route then skirts **Irvine** before passing along its semi-regenerated harbour where, across the estuary, nature is gently reclaiming the former **Nobel Chemical Works**. The southward stretch of coast is rather uninteresting at this point so again I cheat with a train to **Prestwick**, where my day's journey ends. My guide book directs me to a place called **Bruce's Well**, which turns out to be a disappointing site though with a remarkable history: down a side road and largely ignored by visitors lurks an under-maintained and gated cleft in the rock; tradition – which appears for once to be based on documented evidence – tells that Robert the Bruce, when suffering from leprosy, was cured by spring water from this cleft rock. In return, he established a Lazar House here for the treatment of lepers; he required local residents, generously endowed, to care for sufferers of the disease.

On the return journey, I reflect on whether walking this trail has produced any sense of pilgrimage or connection to Celtic heritage. Whilst the area was loosely associated with the early saints, they have left precious few traces apart from place names. The route succeeds in connecting various historic sites interspersed with occasionally noteworthy landscape, but I felt little sense of continuity. Nor does it appear to possess that key feature of a successful pilgrim trail – the traditional traveller's inn. The only watering hole of any note was the café at Castle Semple loch, but apart from a couple of guest houses at Irvine harbour there was little accommodation.

However, many things about the walk did cause me to think afresh. Castle Semple church was a beautifully contemplative setting, whilst the relics of the adjacent estate provoked thoughts of redemption and recovery. Most of the walk, too, is across taken-for-granted drive-by countryside which in reality is intimate and atmospheric, and offers a lesson on the value of the ordinary. Also, I was provoked to learn more about the various Benedictine orders associated with the religious buildings and to imagine the challenges of living by faith in their medieval *habitus*. And I acknowledge that many of the apparent inadequacies are of my own making – pilgrimages are not intended to be made alone and my experience might have differed greatly had it been taken in the company of fellow sojourners. Perhaps in future I will rectify this shortcoming.

PS

Notes

1 "Walking geography" A note about a conference entitled THE 'WALK YOUR LANDSCAPE' CONFERENCE can be found at page 11 of LRE 76. In very brief the organisers said …. *"Walking is prominent in recent creative non-fiction in the UK and Ireland. It is hypothesised that this has happened because wayfaring offers unique opportunities for our times. Encounters on foot allow us to observe endangered non-human nature and to reassess undervalued landscapes or environments".*

LET ME TAKE YOU TO AN ISLAND…..

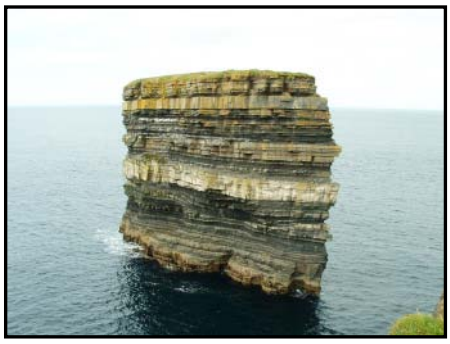
By Terry O'Regan

A recent email from a good friend enquiring if I could guide him in relation to a landscape assessment of a specific Irish island prompted a line of thought on which I would welcome shared reflection. In response to my friend I did not have instant inspiration so I decided to check the landscape assessment of the relevant local authority (even though I knew that he would have gone down that route already!). The county in question is blessed with at least 51 islands, but the landscape assessment for the county lumped the islands and coastal areas into one catchall landscape category. A red flag jumped up between me and the computer screen – I just knew this did not make sense.

I have been intrigued with islands since childhood; on beaches with rocky mar-

gins I had experienced that unique sense of island isolation standing briefly and nervously on rocks as the incoming tide swirled around to create mini-channels of separation. My favourite book of those years was 'Coral Island' by R M Ballantyne, followed by Swiss Family Robinson and Robinson Crusoe.

As I reflected on my friend's query I began to realise that islands may be the real McCoy as far getting to grips with the concept of landscape is concerned. As with all such possible 'flashes of inspiration' it was a slow-burner – it is over 10 years since I decided that getting to grips with landscape benefitted from using the containment of a 'landscape circle'. Then in 2014 I was on the island of Cres in Croatia as advisor to a local development



pilot project under the visionary Council of Europe LDPP project in Southeast Europe and I began to see that an island landscape had the great advantage in conceptual terms of having a defined landscape boundary. I realise that the sea carries the landscape beyond the solid limitation but it is a somewhat neutral landscape (in calm conditions of course).

So to return to my friend's query, I explored the internet a bit further visiting the landscape assessments of neighbouring coastal counties and again found that islands were again seen as part of a greater coastal landscape. I suggest that not alone is this indicative of a fundamental failure to comprehend landscape, it goes deeper; it suggests that we all may be failing to see the elephant in the room or the landscape in the island!

The fine Irish singer/songwriter Paul Brady penned a challenging anthem back in 1985 that reflected on the conflict-torn landscape of Ireland at that time, but his chorus offered to "take you to an island…." This reflection also offers to take you to an island of your choice where I suggest you might begin to find the answer to that question that is shoved in our face time and again "what is landscape?"

TO'R

Note

The author's article on **Landscape Circles** as a way of putting boundaries to landscape can be found in LRExtra 45 pp 8-9 available on the Group's website.

See also Bud Young's article **'The non esthetic analysis of landscape'** in LRExtra Issue 32 Mid January 2003. To be found on the Group's website. The airphoto based method employed allows for and defines landscape boundaries on the basis of a range of observables.

GEORGIA O'KEEFFE

A review by Brian Goodey

'Such a beautiful, untouched lonely-feeling place – part of what I call the Far Away' Georgia O'Keeffe — See notes.

The Promotional Image as Presented 'Jimson Weed/White Flower No.1' 1932 from Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville, Arkansas' the most expensive painting by a female artist ever sold at auction.' The art consumption come-on, modest by previous Tate Modern Thames-side statements, but from this view an icon neatly replacing the dome of St. Paul's. For each artist a USP (Unique Selling Proposition) and although there are only two or three big blooms in the current O'Keeffe exhibition, the most sensuous (and valuable) has been selected to promote this exhibition.

The Future? … which perhaps goes unnoticed? Well certainly by the young couple – who, from loud overheard conversation, are not a 'couple' but inhabit a world of sound bite emotion. Suddenly the mid 20's male leaps up – 'we've got to go … we've got to go' dashing across the City-view backdrop to a late appointment, an emergency, a chance event perhaps. Sadly no, but as shouted, it is a Pokémon Go

Opportunity – a game app. released on 6 July 2016, the same day as the O'Keefe exhibition opened. Think on that. As Florence Welch (of Florence and the Ma-

chine) had observed three days earlier at a Hyde Park Concert – 'Instead of looking where I was, I was looking at my phone …'

My First Impressions Late Monday morning and the exhibition is in the original Tate Modern, thus avoiding mixed messages that might emerge from exploring a new space. Modest footfall, easy flow, first impressions:

Not just (indeed hardly at all) big flowers with their enduring, sometimes sexual, interpretations; modest punctuation rather than a crescendo.

There is so much more to enjoy – a hang with traditional, chronological approach works well here.

Although viewers appear to be one male per nine females, this is not a feminist feast – if your dreams are tugged by landscape it is for you.

Quietly, and with no 'curatorial' pretension, it is a class in design and painting techniques where light and colour are orchestrated to communicate at least, and usually more, the enduring view.

A very traditional display – crisp labels, a regular pattern for each room, good juxtaposition, and your encounter with O'Keefe does the rest.

No puzzles, no neat tricks, and fewer meanings than have been latterly deduced from her work - just pleased faces, drifting and quietly gasping at the painter's skill.

Out from Room 13 and into inevitable retail, reproduced and emblazoned – the New Mexico tourist authorities missed a trick here.

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George Totto O'Keeffe was born on a farm in Wisconsin in 1887, she died in Santa Fe, New Mexico in 1986 aged 98. For a world in which popularised lives of artists are more easily marketed than their works, and works that can be interpreted through such lives achieve prominence, then a version of O'Keeffe may be well known. Alfred Stieglitz photographer and her husband, early 20th century New York, the South West, Taos … but especially the flower blooms. All feature and are contextualised in this collection, but it is the development of technique and the continuity of themes that dominate to me as I write this.

Landscapes, processes and their light-made forms and colours weave through the exhibition sequence. Even in the New York cityscapes of 1925-9 it is impact of skies and artificial lights that grab the attention. Her productive relationship with the photographer Stieglitz, who with Strand and Adams, feature as a photo commentary, is well illustrated by paintings from Lake George in upstate New York. There is a strand of greens and blues which runs, like a thread, through several rooms (starting with 'On the Lake' 1 1924).

By 1929 O'Keeffe was in New Mexico, at Taos, an established artist community with bold natural forms, Native American culture, sun and a primitive abstraction that were to dominate her work. Taos, itself, was focus of a new affluent tourist social whirl but for O'Keeffe a staging post. It was here that she joined in the artistic search for 'the Great American Thing' and found it, initially, in the juxtaposition of sun-bleached bones set in arid landscapes.

Think Westerns, rosy tourist brochures, Road Movies and the rest – outward evidence of a world, if explored, offering infinite landscape pleasure at every level. O'Keefe set up in an adobe house (on a Dude Ranch) in 1937, and some of her best landscapes were achieved at this 'Ghost Ranch'. From here, it's worth joining her as she explored and repeatedly painted and drew The Black Place and The White Place, two eroded cliff and valley sites in the 1940's. Previously unseen, and far from the red and burning light previously associated with her work, this was the room that held me (room No 10). Sensuous cleft abyss, bone strewn or white foothills – here is an artist driving to understand the meaning of form. From here a repertoire of interpretation is established.

It is unpopulated, save for the paintings of Native American 'kachinas' or spirit gods (12). Rooms 11 and 13 exhibit the, possibly market-oriented, realisation of her learning. In the 1940's and 1950's the development of bone, built places and tree themes and, as if it must happen, in the 1950's and 1960's responses to flying over and through clouds. Here new forms are invented, but colours and structures from way back re-appear. Landscapes from the air – I still remember the new creative dimension, the pastel colours and merges from my first flights over the central USA.

So much previously unseen, a leisurely pace, unforced insights and a chance to construct one's own new image of O'Keeffe as a landscape painter and observer whose tenacious grasp of what she observed instructs as well as pleases.

The Past In requesting that I visit this exhibition the Editor presented me with my review which I wrote some twenty years ago of a more limited O'Keeffe exhibition at the Hayward Gallery in London. I did not read it, but contradictions may emerge from my memories of a rather more flower-strewn and less informative hang in the unwelcoming concrete of the Hayward.

I have been fortunate to see some of O'Keeffe's New Mexico, and her work in various galleries over the past fifty years. 'Jimson Weed' sits well in the Wal-Mart financed collection in Bentonville. I have steered round the gender specific postcard racks that link the big blooms to images of Frida Kahlo et.al. and am enriched by this exhibition which puts the mind and skills of Georgia O'Keeffe to the fore. Go see it, and travel Far Away.

Notes

(1) Reflection by Georgia O'Keeffe on her frequently pictured 'Black Place' in New Mexico, from **Georgia O'Keeffe : A Studio Book,** NY : Viking Press,1976 and re-quoted in **'Georgia O'Keeffe : In Her Own Words'** Tate etc, Issue 37 Summer 2016 page 67.

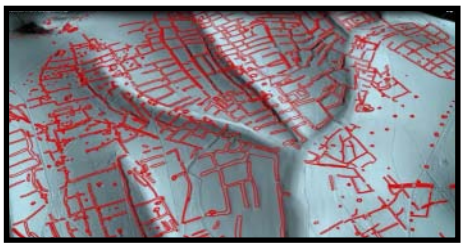
(2) ***Georgia O'Keeffe' a major retrospective exhibition at Tate Modern, London*** *until 30 October 2016. The web site includes a film survey of New Mexico landscapes. Whilst a weighty catalogue is available, I found Hannah Johnston's* ***Georgia O'Keeffe, London : Tate Introductions, 2016*** *a well-illustrated and articulate account.*

Professor Goodey is LRG's choice for their 5th annual lecture, December 8th.

ANCIENT FIELD SYSTEM IN THE SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK

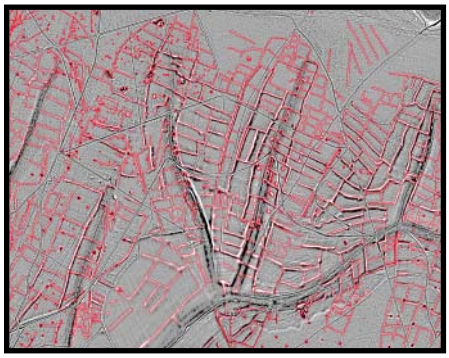
Decades of speculation on the route of a Roman road in southern England have ended but the research which confirmed its location has revealed the extent of prehistoric farming on the South Downs before the Romans arrived. The discoveries were made using airborne laser scanning (LiDAR) to map part of the South Downs National Park hidden under woodland for hundreds of years. The work is part of a three-year community archaeology project, supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund, led by the South Downs National Park Authority in partnership with Chichester District Council and Historic England.

Trevor Beattie, Chief Executive of the South Downs National Park Authority, offered the following "The LiDAR sur-



vey lets us see beneath the woodland cover from National Park to reveal an ancient landscape both hidden, and protected, by the trees. One of our biggest findings is the discovery of a vast area farmed by pre-historic people on an astonishing scale. Archaeologists are going to have to rethink the human story in this part of the country."

James Kenny, Archaeology Officer at Chichester District Council, has added: "It's exciting to see such extensive field-systems so well preserved which have probably lain untouched since the Romans left 1,600 years ago. But evidence suggests that they go back much further to before the Roman settled here. The find raises so many questions. Who was growing crops grown there and who was eating 'all of this' food? We haven't found signs of settlement so where were they living? The scale is so large that it must have been managed, suggesting that



this part of the country was being organised as a farming collective on a very large scale. The degree of civilisation this implies is completely unexpected in this part of the world at this time – something closer to the Greeks, Romans and Egyptians than current views of pre-historic Britain."

Modified from the official press release of July 2016

Note: The South Downs have a touring exhibition which tells more of the story of this project www.southdowns.gov.uk/highwoods

Editors are faced with the matter of filling spaces or leaving them white to enhance design. I chose to fill this page with a selection of landscapes.

You may wish — some people waste time with suduko and word games ! — to see if you can make links between any of these images. Is there an odd one out? Are there some cynical juxtapositions? Name the towns if you are able. They all represent some form of European culture.

Locations include Dol de Bretagne near St Malo, St Julien de Vauvantes (look it up on Google?) , Montmorillon of bentonite/ drilling mud and cat litter fame, Castelnaud la Chapelle on the Dordogne, St Cyprien (the orchard but what fruit?), Sarlat le Caneda not far from the latter.

Breezily I say: "Answers on a post card* and £10 could be yours!" — it never works so my wallet is safe! Or perhaps not!

* or nowadays by email.

landscape research group