

Landscape
Research
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Peeling back Lincolnshire's 'Layers of History'.

By Beverley Gormley

Most people have passed strange lumps and bumps in fields, walked down green lanes alongside ancient hedgerows, wondered what sort of ancient tree their children are clambering upon and spotted abandoned military buildings in unexpected places. But how would you go about identifying these features?

Heritage Lincolnshire, a charity based in Heckington, Lincolnshire, wants to give everyone the opportunity to discover, understand and investigate Lincolnshire's historic landscapes. Layers of History is a 3-year project, supported by the Heritage Lottery

Fund, that will enable people to explore the historic landscapes that hold so many clues to the unique history of Lincolnshire.

Between 2017 and 2020, volunteers will be central to the project. We'll be offering lots of opportunities for over 250 volunteers of all ages to develop skills to investigate their local landscapes and discover evidence of the past.

Layers of History is a volunteer project with a difference. Whilst there is a need for many of Lincolnshire's less well-known landscapes to be surveyed and researched, rather than giving the volunteers set tasks *they* are telling *us* what they want to do. From reconstructing the formal gardens of Revesby Abbey to uncovering stories of the crumbling World War 2 gun emplacements at Freiston Shore being camouflaged as Ice Cream shops, the volunteers

will guide the direction of their research and will decide which skills they want to develop along the way. Admittedly the project is all about Landscape Archaeology, but it won't include any excavations. Our aim is for our volunteers to get 'hands on', carrying out non-destructive archaeological surveys and undertaking research of selected historic sites in the county so that they can then form their own groups, train other volunteers and carry out their own community excavations in the future. Their research and findings will be used to produce a se-

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ries of innovative digital reconstructions and will also enrich our current knowledge about Lincolnshire's historic environment by being incorporated into the county's Historic Environment Record. We'll also be working with carers and the people they care for, particularly people living with dementia.



Drawing on feedback from our previous projects such as Down Your Wold and Heritage at Risk, we knew that there was an appetite for landscape archaeology but our expectations have been exceeded. 110 volunteers have signed up in the project's first five months! A fantastic response but a number as large as that brings problems with administration and the need to repeat training events so that everyone has a chance to learn.

In March and April over 80 people attended our 'Meet the Team' coffee mornings where they found out all about the project and how they could get involved. More than 60 attendees then came along to our volunteer induction days at Revesby (the estate formerly owned by naturalist and explorer Sir Jo-



seph Banks) where they got stuck in with taster activities at the privately owned Cistercian abbey earthworks.

May saw our official launch event at The Collection in Lincoln, featuring broadcaster and author Mary-Ann Ochota, our first courses and workshops took place, and our first online course went live. So far, volunteers have learned all about medieval settlements (and had a tour of Asgarby deserted medieval village), undertaking research online and using Lincolnshire Archives. We've also been privileged to have been allowed to take volunteers to Revesby Estate to survey the Cistercian abbey earthworks there. Sixteen volunteers were taught how to use a plane table and alidade in glorious sunshine!

If the next two years are anything like the last five months, we're in for an exciting ride!

www.heritagelincs.org/layers

BG

The author, Beverley Gormley is Senior Project Officer for this Heritage Lottery funded (Layers of History).

Markus Leibenath
<m.leibenath@ioer.de>

Dear Bud,

Maybe you are interested in publishing another announcement in LRE on the event that takes place in Germany in September. It could run as follows:

5th Workshop of LRG's German partner organisation

**Protected Areas between Conservation,
Economic
Development and Politics**

Odernheim, Rhineland-Palatinate, Germany,
20-22 September 2017

Registration now open

The programme features ten presentations on topics such as landscape theory and protected areas, people-nature relations, transboundary conservation in the Wadden Sea National Parks, wind power developments in protected areas and the neo-liberalisation of nature conservation. A field trip to a nearby large nature park offers opportunities to discuss synergies and conflicts with staff members and local stakeholders. Registration is open until 15 August 2017. LRG members pay a reduced fee of 35 €, otherwise 60 €, this includes two lunches and the field trip.

This is now the fifth in a series of annual seminars which have developed into a meeting place of German-speaking landscape researchers interested in social and political dimensions of landscapes. **The event is co-funded by the Landscape Research Group.**

More details [<http://www.landschaftsforschung.de/veranstaltungen.html>]

Bud, Thank you for your support. Regards,
Markus

At the May Board Meeting of the Group, Markus was confirmed as succeeding Steven Shuttleworth as Treasurer of LRG.

LANDSCAPE MEMORIES CAN BE PAINFUL.

By Owen Manning

Last year while cycling in Somerset I experienced moments of strangely disturbing emotion arising unexpectedly from memories of the landscape I was riding through. The Editor has asked for more on this, and the matter is too interesting to leave alone. What makes a landscape memorable – and what are we actually recalling?

“Those blue remembered hills.....” Haunting words, with their image of a lost land – though Shropshire for Housman was symbolic rather than actual; his verse is generalised beside, say, Matthew Arnold's loving evocations of Oxfordshire in *The Scholar Gypsy*, or John Clare's of one small corner of Northamptonshire. But memorability lies in more than physical truth. My local Malvern Hills are instantly memorable, their unique profile visible over forty miles, but their meaning for composer Edward Elgar, for example, as for others today, was not so simple. Nor are my own reactions as I stride their summits, aware in myself of parallel memories and a painful need for something else: the wider, tougher landscape of the Peak District, home territory for nearly forty years of married life in Sheffield until dementia stole my wife's mind. Trivial it may sound in comparison with the situation of so many in the world today, but I am still, in Malvern, an exile.

How hard it is to let go, was brought home recently when having taken advantage of a chance visit to Ilkley in North Yorkshire (that Ilkley, of the awful song) to venture up the hillside above the town, I found myself suddenly in tears. Why for heaven's sake, when I'd never been there before? Then I saw why. That tangled texture of grasses and sedges, those gritstone masses, that steep rise to a broken crest and windswept trees - that sense of miles of high moorland beyond, the feel of the entire scene: it was the Dark Peak once more, and I hadn't been prepared for it.

A near-identical association lay behind my experience in Somerset.

I had known this countryside from student days of happily cycling the 65 miles between Bristol and parents' home in Bridport. Now riding selected stages sixty years on (!) I was looking forward to reviving still-clear memories – and in fragments they came, yielding mostly a simple pleasure (and pride, let's be honest) in my ability to recognise them. To realise from one quick glance that a lane curving steeply out of wide Chew Valley was my old route up the great barrier of Mendip. Or further

south, to look across from a quiet Levels lane and recognise in a shapely wooded outlier of the Polden Hills an image never quite lost.

Finding my way (by car) through the tangled hills of northern Dorset brought no such connections, but on the final bike-run from high Pilsden Pen down towards distant Bridport they returned: first with the sense – in poor visibility no more than that -- that to my right now lay the great arc of hills enclosing Marshwood Vale; and then the certainty that beyond a familiar ridge-line lay the sea itself – for I was looking at the rising back of Golden Cap, highest cliff on the whole south coast of Britain and vividly remembered, with all its lesser brethren.

All this was pleasure enough to justify the effort, especially with churches discovered or found afresh, and detours to unknown corners – improbable Nempnet Thrubwell for example, perched on its tiny hill, and other such gifts from this amazing county: all now carrying a special meaning from my own discovery of them. However, the initial crossing of Mendip itself had brought more ambivalent sensations.

Down a certain lane from Priddy the feel of the high plateau changes magically as space seems to expand before the plunge into the immense panorama of the Somerset Levels. This I joyfully rediscovered – but not before another lane from Priddy had also drawn me: the link with my old adventurous route from the north. Clearly I recalled its line over the plateau, and a distinctive dog-leg in a hollow where the road swung to the right of a dark wood, then climbed before turning back and southwards. I wanted to re-live that again! But as I rode towards this remembered landmark exulting – for while the scale might be larger and the land more textured than in

memory, this was indeed the road of my student days – it suddenly became something else.

A surge of emotion hit me, so intense I was overwhelmed, brought to stop, utterly bewildered just as on that Ilkley hillside – until, just as then, I made the unwanted connection. Another high wide plateau; another lonely moorland road descending to a dog-leg; on the left a dark wood round which the road swung right, climbed and turned again a once favourite route for wife and I towards Chatsworth in the Peak District. Different geology and vegetation, but a precisely identical landscape form: two times and two memories suddenly and painfully colliding.

Memories bring meaning to landscapes, but they can hurt!

Note

The A. E. Housman (1859–1936) quote I began with is from Part 40 of *A Shropshire Lad*. 1896. Housman wrote:

*Into my heart an air that kills
From yon far country blows:
What are those blue remembered hills,
What spires, what farms are those?
That is the land of lost content,
I see it shining plain,
The happy highways where I went
And cannot come again.*

LANDSCAPE ARTISTS AS 'MOUTHPIECES FOR THE PEOPLE'

Dear Editor

There were two events that I regret missing last autumn - the 'Arts, farmers and philosophers' symposium in Bowes, and the debate around public art held in Machynlleth. So I was particularly interested in reading the accounts of both these in the last issue of LRExtra.

Had I been at the Machynlleth debate, I would have supported the motion: 'This house considers that public art and arts related installations should not be subjected to any further development control'. However, I find myself in disagreement with some of the points made by the supporters of the motion. We do indeed have a very sound planning system in place in the UK, which already places constraints on development, including art installations in the public realm. There is also scope for installing

The views and opinions in this publication are those of the contributing authors and the senior editor individually and do not necessarily agree with those of the Group.

It is prepared by Bud and Rosemary Young for the Landscape Research Group and distributed four times a year to members world wide. It is also to be found on the Group's website

www.landscaperesearch.org

under 'publications'.

It forms a companion to LRG's

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structures on a temporary basis, without planning permission. So I don't see the need for yet more layers of control.

However, there seems to be an attitude by those supporting the motion that artists somehow should be given freedom to pursue their own interests regardless of the perspectives of others. Artist Ewan Allinson is right in saying that 'These landscapes are our studio now, our place of work..' but just like any other 'user', this must bring with it a respect for, and accommodation of, others with an interest in the place, whether that is a water authority, farmer, walker, birdwatcher, whoever.... I don't agree that 'artists should not be constrained by landscape designations' - they should be as aware, as informed and as constrained as anyone else wanting to intervene in that landscape.

And here I speak not only as someone who has been a practising artist for over 25 years, but who also spent 15 years managing arts projects, including art in the public realm, and running seminars on public art. Artists can be very perceptive, but that does not mean granting them a right to say and do as they wish, and somehow we all have to respect that just because they are 'artists'.

Artists have their strengths and weaknesses just like the rest of us - a range of skills, sensitivities, capa-

bilities. They can be just as ignorant or informed; they can be geniuses or dullards, inspiring or irritating... Indeed, I have been taken aback at how lamentably ignorant of the many facets of landscape some artists are ...

Nor do artists necessarily act as 'mouthpieces for the people'; they speak for themselves, reflect their own perspectives. The best artists will create powerful work that moves and inspires, reveals meanings and enriches the lives of those who encounter it, but not all do. Generally it is only over time that the work of those artists who manage to combine their vision and skills to create works that resonate with audiences, and reflect their times, come to be appreciated and valued. And anyway, 'the people' will have a multitude of responses to encounters with art; there is rarely a widely held consensus.

The process of obtaining planning permission does at least open up the proposal to consideration by others before an artwork becomes a fixture, or not. Alternatively, much can be done on a temporary basis, which may effectively inspire or irritate, provoke thought and discussion, but then the experience becomes a thing of the past. Indeed its ephemeral existence may give it added impact.

I can conclude no better than by repeating the words of Eirini Saratsi. She has identified the key questions to ask: *'Why do people object or accept art installations, what difference do these works of art make to those using and experiencing these landscapes, and how can art add meaning to landscape in ways that both locals and visitors can relate to?'*

There is so much that we do not understand here, and so much scope for future research...

Nancy Stedman 14 May 2017 (photo as seen in discussion with Hannes Palang).

DARTMOOR SOILS EXCURSION INTO AN LRG SUPPORTED MAP

On May 20th Dr Tim Harrod who had spent no less than ten field work years compiling a soil map of the so called Moretonhampstead Sheet (a 200sq km exemplar of north Dartmoor) led a group of about 15 around the area's principal soils. He was assisted in this by Dr Rob Parkinson, onetime lecturer in soils at Plymouth University and the group was drawn both from the Devonshire Association (geology section) and the Ussher Society. The outing was a traverse of Dartmoor's granite soils, starting in the lower and drier eastern part around (Moretonhampstead) moving into progressively



harsher climatic conditions (Princetown) , ending on the blanket peat.

Soils are not just invisible substrate for they influence the natural vegetation and govern land use and are a principal component of landscape whether by reflecting morphology or affecting land cover. For that reason LRG had grant aided the production of the soil map to the tune of £2000 and our name appears on the sheet legend. The Memoir describing the work is now prepared and will shortly be printed. It is a work of great substance and includes (in the second sheet) a lot on morphology, slopes, rockiness and terrain with a specific chapter on its visual aspects. Landscape is not just about pastures, woods stone walls and pretty cottages and soil has much to do with cultural history.



A charitable foundation Langafor Farm Trust which hosts many activities (and is the main outdoor location for Scouting in Moretonhampstead) was the lunch venue following on from site visits at Mardon Down (deep Tertiary weathering but no peat at 375m) and a quarry exposure of soils and granitic substrate west of the golf course at Bovey Castle Hotel. The three soil pits at Langafor Farm showed strong variety, one of them waterlogged and gleyed. The group of 15 may well have revelled in the unspoiled nature of this small field farm, its stream, its grassed-over alluvial tin diggings and strange banks, the orchids in the grass and the yellow rattle. An entomology group were also there that day. Discussion at each site, stimulated by interventions from two geologists was very lively. The gently sloping pasture site identified as Moretonhampstead Series was an eye opener for the abundance of 'within soil' earthworm tubes. Perhaps 10 visible in a single soil pit face, millions over the whole area of the field. A great overturning! Much reference to Charles Darwin.

The after lunch sites took us up to increasingly wet environments at Bellever, an afforested area. There the soil is a podzol with a wet, peaty top, the whole profile being the product of the acidic environment affecting much of Dartmoor's moorland; in that location it produces soil profiles that are wet just in the top half, but freely draining below. We travelled on southwestward to the highest and the two wettest sites. Rainfall increases strongly as one rises to the High Moor – the Princetown area. After this an exposure of mineral soil in a cut face just off the main road. This was wet to depth, a stage further on from the Bellever profile. Amusingly it had been first a shallow 'gravel' digging then a rubbish tip for Dartmoor Prison. Cultural history?

A drive then a short walk on a military track; it ended abruptly. We then stumbled and squelched across several hundred metres of mossy land, no shrubs no trees, to reach a deep stream-cut exposure showing 4 foot plus of black structureless peat surmounted by a thin layer of fibrous peat. This kind of land (at 450m and in a wetter climatic zone) is that little bit hostile and leaves the inexperienced to consider their personal safety - not so much quaking morass, more ankle turning tussock. A week before it had been crossed by teams of younger people in the Ten Tors event. Admiration!

It was good to see that LRG's funding had born fruit at this event and other events out of Langafor Farm. The soil pits on the Farm remain open, accessible but safely fenced for what may be many more inspections. Both soil map and the 'Soil Record' or Memoir carry LRG's imprint.

RNY/TH

The Socio-Cultural Importance of 'The Island', an Abandoned Post-Industrial Landscape on the Outskirts of Nottingham.

Sam Stevenson.

Dissertation prize winner.

This dissertation collates for the first time a complex composite history spanning 406 years. It focuses primarily on the period from the mid-19th Century to the present day, centring on the biographical narratives drawn from an array of archival materials and extensive interviews. The study demonstrates that geography, and more specifically the landscape, are perhaps far more complex than is conventionally considered in post-industrial contexts. Rather, they comprise the aural, sonic and visual as much as they are the physical and actual, and this is reflected by the breadth of users who interact in various ways with *The Island* as a post-industrial space. Those who have left the site still attribute to it memorial significance, as demonstrated in both interviews and the deepest pages of the archive.



Beyond its aim as a restorative presentation of local history, I illustrate the disparities between formal and informal users in abandoned industrial spaces, ranging from the creative to the necessary. This tension elucidates an inconvenient truth for users and planners alike in the modern city and poses difficult questions with regards to how we value urban space more broadly. Pertinently, it focuses on the relationship between society, geography and culture, demonstrating how space's worth can be variously affected and interpreted by virtue of its perceived social contribution, geographical location and historical significance.

More broadly, I reflect upon a familiar process in post-industrial Britain, where demands for expansion in social housing and open spaces compete in development at city limits. This process and the issues raised within, are becoming increasingly significant in the face of such development; the rapid appropriation and reworking of former industrial land risks permanently erasing sites' rich histories.

Such history is deployed in this piece through the bringing together of seemingly disparate narratives,



whose confluence serves to highlight *The Island's* historical, social and cultural significance. Ultimately, this dissertation calls for the recognition of *The Island* as a site of great historical and cultural worth in relation to Nottingham's industrial identity. The archival material presented reflects a spatial history marred by fire, war and neglect, alongside more recent revaluations from the artistic, the homeless and prospective developers.

Irrespective of *The Island's* future, the author concludes that this site should be marked as the birth place of Ibuprofen and a significant plot for the rise of Boots Pharmaceuticals under Jesse Boots, a cultural figurehead for Nottingham of equivalent worth to Robin Hood. To discard the micro-narratives of those contained inside the archives and outside, as well as the meta-narrative of Nottingham's contemporary identity, risks setting an erasive precedent for post-industrial landscapes in the cities of today.

SAS

LOCAL IMPACTS OF A GLOBAL PROBLEM; A MULTI-METHOD APPROACH TO ASSESSING CLIMATE CHANGE IN RURAL FIJI. Dissertation prize winner.

Jennifer Dobson

Climate change is having negative impacts on human and natural environments globally, at rates continued to increase throughout the 21st Century and beyond. This study focuses on the village of Sawanivo in Fiji; a 'small island developing state' (SIDS).

Fiji emits only a tiny fraction of green-house gases, despite the fact it suffers disproportionate effects, making it a marginalised population often ignored by the western world, and neglected from academic study. Sawanivo sits high up in the central mountain belt at an intersection where many climatic factors are at play. The area has been undisturbed by modern influence and technology, and villagers farming livelihoods are heavily reliant on the natural environment; hence making it vulnerable to change. Climate change should therefore be studied as a 'socio-ecological system', constructed through the interplay of social, environmental and economic factors particular to an area, and not understood through science alone.

This 'non-purist' approach was adopted, combining qualitative and quantitative research method, allowing climate patterns to be identified which could be combined with indigenous knowledge to assess human impacts at a local scale. Data was collected for the last 49 years from the nearest weather station in Penang Mill, North East of the village. Monthly rainfall and temperature data were obtained to analyse annual and inter-annual patterns. The data proved the occurrence of climate change, showing increasing maximum temperatures and rainfall variability. The effects were found to be superimposed over natural climate cycles such as El Nino cycles, exacerbating the impacts. To assess these impacts, semi-structured interviews were conducted in the village; 90% being female due to availability sampling as men often travelled to find work. Results



revealed significant lack of knowledge surrounding climate change, but changes in weather patterns were acknowledged as this impacted farming patterns and daily routines. For example, more variable growing seasons reduce crop productivity causing food security threats and uncertain income from local markets where villagers sell surplus crops. The community showed lack of resilience to change due to poor access to financial support and resources. More positively, SIDS have a wealth of local knowledge, unique cultural practices and tight social structures, which often help retain community spirit in times of adversity. Social and cultural subjectivities are therefore important to consider as they will fuel how people react to climate change. Solutions will only be regarded as relevant if they are in line with the communities' values and beliefs. The voices of local communities therefore deserve to be listened to, as they can provide new perspectives that science cannot.

In conclusion, this study argued that we should listen to local voices, combining this knowledge with climate data as the best way to gain an all-encompassing understanding of climate changes within indigenous areas, and reduce the homogenisation of SIDS. By adopting a multi-method approach, we can bridge a gap between qualitative and quantitative research methods traditionally seen as incompatible, and target responses to climate change much more effectively.

JD

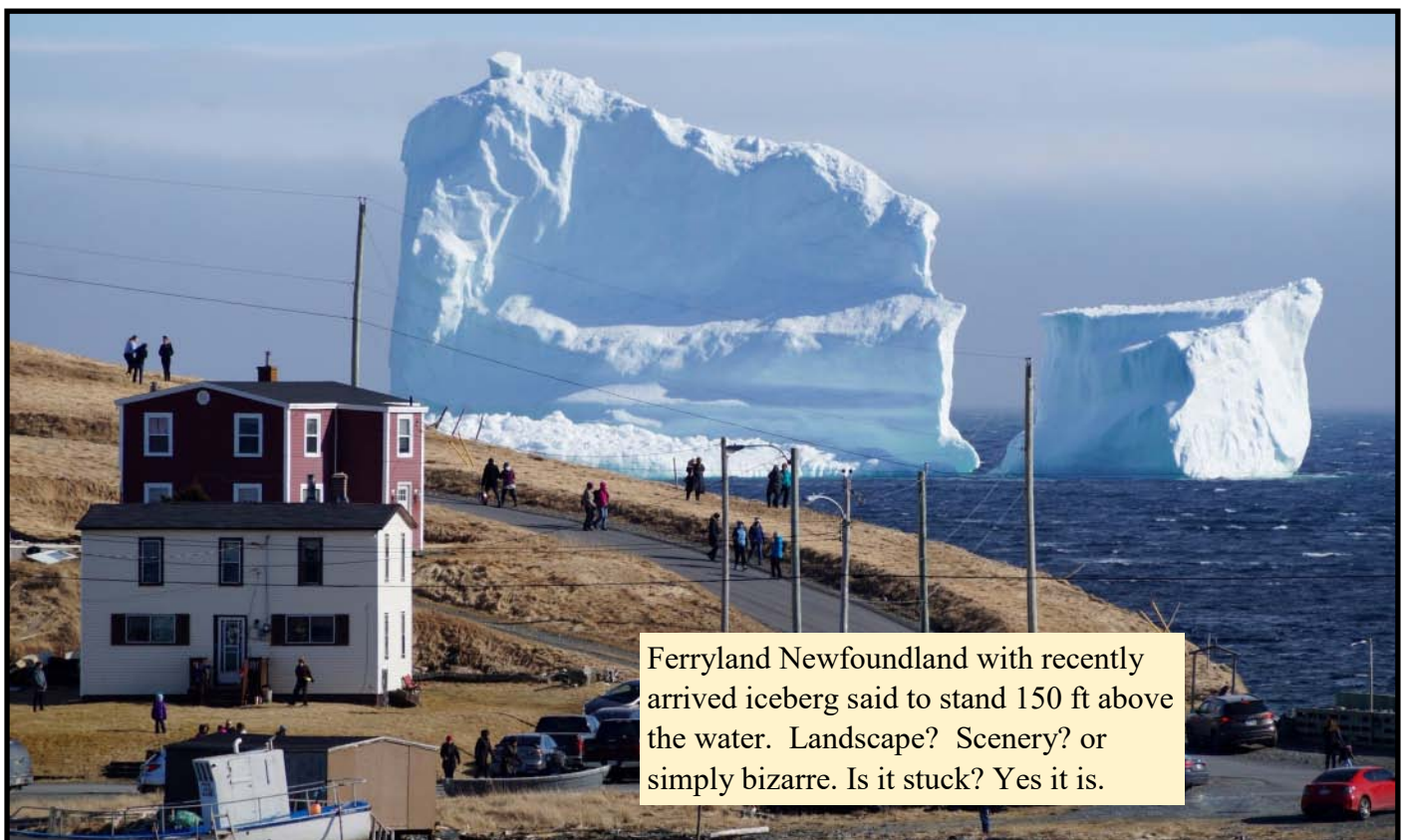
PATTERNS OF PLACE ATTACHMENT TO THE PHYSICAL PLACE OF LIFE. Dissertation prize winner.

Dawn Parke

The biological need to establish a connection with place manifests itself in the cultural processes and patterns found in landscape. Place attachment (PA) is the process through which the person-place bond is formed and the patterns that contribute to the physical fabric of place are created. The landscape architect has the ability to shape the physical components of place which control our spatial and temporal experience of place and ultimately enhance the person-place bond.

Place Attachment theories are founded on traditional ideologies of place as 'closed' and 'bounded' and are intrinsically linked to the preservation and change happening in place. New technologies contributing to globalisation and the increasingly high speed changes in our environment, particularly in our spatial and temporal experience of landscape, means that there is a requirement to reinterpret and redefine traditional PA theories. It is essential that the landscape architect has the ability to address this tension between continuity and change in place during the place-making process.

This research presents a new theoretical model for PA, 'The Life of Place', as seen in figure 1. It specifically addresses the biophysical components of place (the physical life of place), providing the place-maker with a practical and relevant under-



standing of place attachment in a contemporary context of place.

The model reflects the spatial-temporal changes in place which are subject to continuous reformation and adaptation. The tripartite arrangement presents bio-physical process, socio-cultural process and psychological processes as the primary processes contributing to place attachment. The interactions between these processes can be understood as indicators which are a means through which the designer can begin to understand and analyse the potential for PA in landscapes. They are defined as shared



meanings of place, visual fractal schema and collective memory. This model forms the theoretical basis of a practically applicable tool for the assessment of place attachment in designed landscapes. The tool can be used to analyse both existing and proposed landscape projects.

DP

Editor's note As editor I find some of Dawn's academic language somewhat beyond me but perhaps researchers are only able to express the precise essence of their work in the accepted jargon.

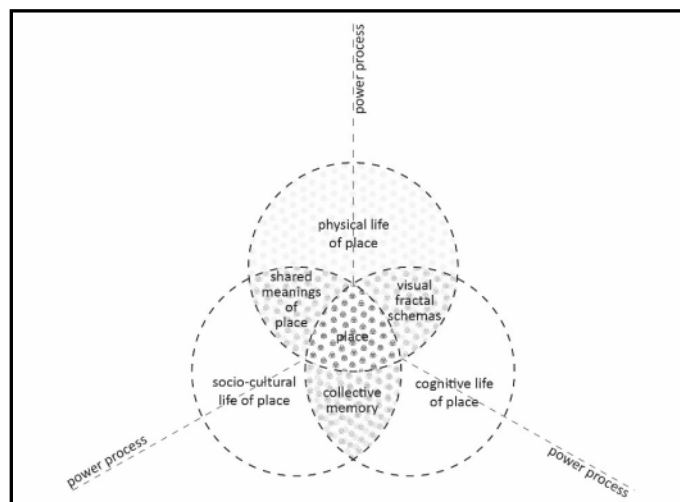


Figure 1 – A theoretical model of the interactive processes of PA - 'The Life of Place' (D.Parke, 2015)

Review of 'THE SCIENCE OF SCENERY' — AUTHOR ANDREW LOTHIAN.

by Jon Burley

There is a new book about landscape visual quality that is well worth obtaining and reading. Over time, an update was needed (the last broad comprehensive update was 1986) as the knowledge concerning how to measure and study visual quality has greatly expanded. *The Science of Scenery: How We See Scenic Beauty, What It Is, Why We Love It, and How To Measure and Map It* by Andrew Lothian (2017) is the type of update many people have been waiting for. This is an excellent book about visual quality, much better than edited anthologies.

Dr. Lothian's book is the effort of one person and thus is not as scattered in thought as edited books tend to become. The book flows nicely in content leading one from historic precedent to practical application. One of the best features of Andrew's book is that it is much longer than any journal article (which must be short and to the point) and in book form can thoughtfully and deliberately explain concepts and ideas in detail that are too quick, often veiled, implied, and fleeting in journal articles.

After the introduction, the book opens with thirteen chapters reviewing mostly Western perspectives addressing the evolution in thought concerning visual perception, values, and beliefs. The author then includes five chapters exploring more contemporary

issues around the science of landscape visual quality, ending with a well written summary of the current knowledge. Dr. Lothian presents compelling evidence that land cover type plus other features such as land form and specific land-uses are highly associated with visual quality. He also suggests how to utilize this information in planning and design.

Two important chapters are devoted to measuring and mapping scenic beauty. These chapters are followed by a look forward concerning the topic. The book is practical and useful in its application.

The book is presented in a large format with well illustrated color images of landscape from many parts of the world with over 800 photographs, figures, graphs, maps and tables spread across 23 chapters (almost 500 pages). The book is of great value for the price. The global view is facilitated by the author being Australian, as such individuals often have a more broad world view and extensive travel experiences.

Individuals with knowledge in this field will admire the extensive bibliography drawing from 1,300 citations. In addition, many visual quality investigators will have much to appreciate in the book. If one is new to the topic, the book will require reflective time to consider the ideas presented in the book as it takes time to digest, accept, and understand. There are many perspectives about visual quality, generating disagreements and some confusion. So it is not always easy to quickly and readily accept some well established ideas concerning scenic beauty. But Dr. Lothian makes the transition interesting and understandable. The key concept derived from the book is that aesthetics is a subjective quality that can be measured objectively through surveying respondents.

As an independent scholar in visual quality research with no previous contact with the author until the publishing of this book, I greatly appreciate the similar perspective that Dr. Lothian and I have converged upon concerning how to understand, map, and study visual quality. Other scholars may only wish to present broad general principles and not be so numerical, or defend numerical synthetic indexes based upon normative design theory but contain little statistical evidence to support the index. Meanwhile Dr. Lothian has pursued a logical science based line of inquiry that merits great approval. If one desires to understand that state-of-the-art in visual quality, this is the resource to purchase.

Jon Burley

Michigan State University Landscape Architecture

BATH AND LANSDOWN ROAD'S FOSSILISED FRONTAGE

By Bud Young

Get off the No 6 bus (No 7 shown on the rear — services are being combined for economy's sake). Alight in Camden Crescent, alongside lovely railings. On the uphill side a self important terrace of houses — not the famous Royal Terrace which is even grander — and below the railings a grass and tree covered lozenge of open space — not a park just space. Descend past Hedgemoad Park enjoying first a view down onto house roofs and internal courtyards. Into Lansdown Road, descending, taking the raised-above-street broad and stone slabbed pathway (on rhs. of photo) so that we might admire the Georgian frontages.



I become obsessed by undercroft structures and airy basements and I think about coalholes and coal shutes. Which leads to a critical view of chimney pots, four or six to a chimney stack one stack to each elegant house. We discuss the housemaids who lived on the top floor, carried the coal and kept the family warm. I know instinctively ... or do I surmise ... that each 4 storey house in these terraces will have been occupied by a family rather than divided into flats. A family in 1817, seven in number perhaps, with enough living in staff to keep them clean, comfortable and well fed. And all of this now fossilized, a Georgian relic, changed in function but not in form. Hermit crabs in whelk shells. A World Heritage site created for the wealthy by a soft gloved handful of industrious developers, many skilled masons and a horde of hod carriers. I hear on TV that Jane Austen lived nearby.

RNY

The writer acknowledges the Streetview image.



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