



Landscapes of agriculture: ghosts of war in Northern France



Picture credits — Panoramas: The vineyard and 11th century church at Bruley (near Toul) and the Moselle above a barrage at Villey-le-Sec by Rosemary Young; in the article by Paul Selman by the author; images of Renoir paintings courtesy of the National Gallery of Ottawa; other photos by the Editor.



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Renoir's Landscapes

We do not usually think of Renoir as a landscape painter: that is a position reserved for Monet. At the National Gallery, though, we saw Renoir confronting landscape as something made, inhabited and articulated by human action; even when his paintings are ostensibly empty of people, they are represented by the paths they have worn, the houses they have built and the crops they have planted.

The earliest works of the 1860s record Renoir's association with the Fontainebleau area, the Barbizon school and the example of Corot: the common currency of much pre-Impressionist painting. The exhibition ends in 1883 shortly before Renoir's famous expostulation: 'But I am a figure painter' and not long after the critic Théodore Duret had written: 'I take M. Claude Monet as the quintessential landscapist, and M. Renoir as the quintessential figure painter'. During his landscape years, though, Renoir took the opportunity to play, to experiment, to respond to landscape's infinite variety with the full range of the virtuosity of his painting. As John House remarks: 'He seems to have viewed landscape as the theme that allowed him the freest scope for technical experimentation'.

So what kind of landscapes did Renoir favour? He often worked with Monet; painting together in 1869 at La Grenouillère, the popular 'bathing and boating establishment' on the Seine, crowded with dogs and holiday crowds, Monet recorded a slightly sombre scene of water, boats and a jetty that supports indications of figures whereas Renoir presented a



delicious froth of frocks, flirtation and gaiety. Astonishingly, both artists considered these paintings to be no more than sketches. Exploiting a local resource, Renoir often painted the Seine as a place of summer leisure activity where the status of the river ranges from a mere prop, glimpsed through the trellis that shelters a restaurant to full-on star quality. At this time it was people who directed the artist's sense of place, if not always predictably: *Rowers at Argenteuil* is less about men exercising than the back view of a girl in a blue striped dress who sits gazing at them, embedded in a grassy bank (the painted marks of frock and grass dissolve into one another) which would not exist in its visible form without her presence.



Cliffs at Berneval is in some sense both the cause of the painting and the only means of relating the dizzy height of the cliffs and the immensity of sea and sky to human sensibility. In Normandy Renoir also painted the first of two canvases called *The Wave*, one all blues and purples, the second a yellow mass of churned up sand. Even these intimidating close-up views of a tumultuously stormy sea hold an unexpected human presence in the form of tiny boats high on a distant horizon.

In the early 1880s Renoir, who had never travelled beyond Normandy, visited Algeria twice, Italy, the Channel Isles and Mediterranean France. On these

travels, Colin Bailey notes, he 'worked primarily as a landscapist, seeking out the picturesque tourist sites already made familiar by lithographers, photographers and other painters'. Renoir seems to have been overcome by the fecundity of Algerian vegetation: the minuteness of the figures in *The Jardin d'Essai, Algiers* suggests that the palm trees beneath which they promenade were of gigantic height, but they remain more plausible and more individual than his postcard-like



paintings of Venice and Naples. As much as anything



these are reminders of the extent to which Italy was exotic, even dangerous territory for northern Europeans, its harbours packed with unfamiliar vessels parading before extraordinary architecture. What makes his foreign landscapes truly strange, though, is that they offer no hint of the embedded figures to which we have by now

become accustomed; these paintings of his travels are sights seen 'out there' by a man who seems suddenly to have mislaid his 'here'. Perhaps what Renoir's landscapes tell us most about is his sense of place and of belonging to a part of northern France; that and his delight in seeing, which

Renoir did not, it seems, share Monet's predilection for snow: landscape takes place mostly in summer, in or out of town. A grim laundry boat lying alongside an icy suburban quay is a rare reminder of winter that takes its place among a variety of working landscapes. If the figures that populate them are sketchy and anonymous they not only remind us that harvest is back-breaking labour but articulate landscape's *raison d'être* and provide a crucial scale. Figures on scarcely defined country paths do still more: their role is to reveal the steepness of a hillside or to plot the twisting course of a scarcely visible path. On other occasions, though, Renoir established distance, the lay of the land and its consequent changes in vegetation simply through colour and the astonishing range of his painted marks, in what his colleague Pissarro called *paysages purs*, that is, without figures.

Depending on one's point of view, a garden may be a site of labour or a joyous expression of personal space. In Renoir's gardens the figures – wearing dark clothing that offers no competition to the flowers – do little but articulate scale yet they are no less embedded in these places that they have made and which in turn respond to their being and dwelling than the girl on the river bank. Constantly experimenting with the figure/landscape symbiosis, in *La Promenade* Renoir promoted a tiny stream to prime causal and narrative significance in what is essentially a figure painting involving a flirtation. By the late 1870s the figure had come to play a more subtle role: the seated man in

he conveys so vividly through paint that we can feel the wind blow across the Seine and hear it rustle through the grass and watch the light change under the racing clouds.

Margaret Garlake

'Renoir Landscapes 1865-1883': National Gallery, London 21 Feb-20 May; National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, 8 June-9 September; Philadelphia Museum of Art, 4 October-6 January 2008. ([Acknowledgements to both galleries](#))

Paul Holberton ed., *Renoir Landscapes 1865-1883*, exh. cat., National Gallery, London, 2008, ISBN 9-781-85709-317-9, p/b £25.00.

SOLITUDE:

[A childhood landscape]

At Morston, Blakeney, Wiveton and Cley,

Between the Norfolk farmlands and the sea,

*The unfrequented coastal marshes lie,
And there a little boy of barely three,
Stunned by the sight of so much loneliness,*

Fixed in his mind a picture of the place

Saving the image in his consciousness,

A horizontal sheet of empty space.

That childhood vision from the marsh's edge,

That first encounter with infinity,

That tapestry of water, sand and sedge

In eighty years has not deserted me.

*The yardsticks solitude is measured by
Are Morston, Blakeney, Wiveton and Cley.*

Jay Appleton

Reader's Letter

Dear Bud,

I very much enjoyed your piece about landscape preferences in childhood in *Landscape Research Extra* 41, December 2006, pp.9-10. It also brought to my mind a book "**Children's Experience of Place**" by **Roger Hart** from the Environmental Psychology Program at City University of New York. It was published by Irvington Publishers, Inc. in 1979 in New York, ISBN 0-470-99190-9. I use this in my lectures and thought you might enjoy reading it. But perhaps I am carrying an owl to Athens.

Best wishes

Gert. Univ.Prof. Dr.rer.hort.habil. Gert Groening
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Germany.

Dear Gert — if you approved of my childish ramblings try this one ('Solitude') from Jay Appleton. Unlike mine it won first prize in a prestigious poetry competition. Thanks for the reference "Children's Experience of Place" by Roger Hart which our readers may wish to follow up.

ANTHOLOGY

'But the position of the church, in its sanctified yard, has very rarely changed. How long they stood there before 1066 is a more difficult question..... In terms of the basic pattern of settlements in Suffolk, those 417 churches provide the pegs from which most of the rest must hang. The rest, as we now see, is an infinitely varied composition, of farms and villages and market towns. But however urban the community, in Suffolk the fields are never far off, indeed they are rarely out of view. However increasingly town-moulded all the upbringing of Suffolk people may be, the fields spread round us throughout our lives. We cannot ride through them without being conscious, if only out of the corners of our eyes, of their daily response to the seasons, their extraordinary fertility, and their endless diversity of shape and pattern, particularly where they retain their old 'natural' enclosures, their framework of ditches, banks and well-timbered hedgerows. As we drive along the lanes, these tree-frames seem to revolve slowly, on either side of us, the elms in the foreground hedges moving at different speeds from those on the far sides of the fields, clockwise on our left, anti-clockwise on our right, like slow roundabouts at an old fair or like some long-remembered ritual courtship dance'.

From chapter 1 of *The Suffolk Landscape* by

Norman Scarfe . I have this in an uncorrected proof copy signed (so that it could be returned to its owner, not removed) by the General Editor of the series, WG Hoskins. Probable publication date, it says, December 4th 1972. Hodder and Stoughton. There were field elms in those days.

Immediately outside the gate of Fawsley Park (**Warwickshire/Northamptonshire**) there is the parish of Great Everdon, some 1900 acres. Great Everdon is an attractively set village, and little Everdon is a small hamlet near the Hall; the other part of the parish is empty. A lonely, unfenced and gated track leaves the Everdon-Farthingstone road near the mill and follows the south bank of the stream up a valley which steadily becomes more desolate. The map shows this road continuing for half a mile beyond Snorscomb Farm before dwindling into a footpath to Preston Capes, but in fact it ceases to be negotiable at the farmyard. Why should there be three continuous miles of low quality road? Why should a valley look so desolate, although only a mile or so from sunny intensively settled country? An examination of the fields behind Snorscomb Farm supplies the answer..... There is a great field of poor quality pasture pitted with hollows and laced with the banks of fishponds: this is the site of the small village for whose depopulation Sir Richard Knightley of Fawsley was summoned to answer in the Court of Exchequer in 1520.

From *“History on the Ground”* page 114 Chapter 4: *A journey among deserted villages by Maurice Beresford. 1957 Lutterworth Press, London. This book was republished in 1971 by Methuen and Co Ltd, London. Professor Beresford attended the same school as your editor some ten years earlier and refers to cross country runs in the medieval hunting wildscape, Sutton Park (Sutton Coldfield, West Midlands.). Tributes to his life and work are published in Landscapes Vol 7/2 (see learned paper section).*

THE CALVAIRE DES MARINS

Philip Pacey

One of my favourite places in the world is St Valery sur Somme, a large village or small town on the Baie de Somme in Picardy. And my favourite place in St Valery is the Calvaire des Marins.

St Valery, originally a fishing and trading port, became popular with holiday-makers during the 19th century, as did the nearby towns of Le Crotoy, on the other side of the bay, and Cayeux, on the coast outside

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the bay. All three places could be easily reached by train from Paris, Amiens, and Abbeville, and from the Channel ports of Boulogne and Calais; passengers could change at Noyelles-sur-Mer (a sleepy little village that had not actually been ‘sur Mer’ for hundreds of years) onto a standard gauge branch line to St Valery, and later, onto a metre gauge railway which served St Valery, Le Crotoy, and Cayeux. Today this railway survives as a ‘chemin de fer touristique’, the Chemin de Fer de la Baie de Somme, and is the reason for my visits (as a ‘benevole’); main line trains still stop at Noyelles, but are hardly used by holiday-makers. However, tourists still come, in greater numbers than ever; like so many places, St Valery is becoming a victim of its own success and of our love affair with the car. During summer weekends, the town is crowded and the roads congested. Camper vans have been banished to sites on the margin of the town. On certain occasions, notably the ‘Transbaie’, an annual guided mass walk across the bay, fields behind the town are used as temporary car parks, and the ‘little train’ operates a shuttle service between car park and quay. Interestingly, on summer Sundays the SNCF runs special trains from Paris and other



destinations for day trippers; the Chemin de Fer de

Dear Reader — at these wheels is the very place from which Philip Pacey was once surprised by the incoming tide. See LRE39 High Tide in Picardy. The highest tides come in to a point just beyond the yellow/white jacketed figure. I visited this site in a sense of pilgrimage.
Editor.

Baie de Somme runs its own special train to pick them up at Noyelles and bring them to St Valery; they return in the afternoon on one of the CFBS’s regular steam-hauled services. An infrequent bus also runs between Noyelles, St Valery, and Cayeux; it is so little used that each year I expect to find that it has ceased to operate. Thus, several forms of public transport contribute – and could contribute more – to solving the traffic and congestion problems of this popular destination. But having several times accepted offers of trips in friends’ cars to interesting places which I couldn’t otherwise have reached, I cannot fail to recognise the attractiveness of St Valery as a holiday centre for those with the added mobility that the

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private car provides — for tourists who want to tour.

Crowded as St Valery often is — though markedly less so on weekdays – I only occasionally encounter other people at the Calvaire des Marins; I often have it entirely to myself. This is probably partly because I usually visit it quite late in the evening, after a meal in one of the town’s many restaurants. But there is no doubt that, despite being well-signposted, it is easily missed; one approach is through a narrow gap between houses, then up steep steps; the other is scarcely more prominent. It is set on a natural shelf above St Valery, which is an elongated settlement alongside the bay and the outlet of the canalised river Somme; from the Calvaire one looks across the bay to Le Crotoy, over the roofs of the centre of St Valery immediately below and to the right, and up the main street to the old town on higher ground, to one’s left. On one July evening, I could see that the sheep which graze the salt marsh when the tide is out comprise at least two distinct flocks; a large flock of seagulls resembled a third flock of sheep, so that I wouldn’t have been surprised if, had they been disturbed, the sheep had taken to the air like the seagulls. And I found myself looking down on the screaming band of swifts who had so often made me look up to see them swooping among the roof-tops.

Although it stands above the town, the Calvaire is in no way dominant; indeed, it is all but invisible except to those who know where to look, and where to look from. For years I thought of it as a viewpoint. Having no belief myself, I thought too little of the significance of the iron crucifix in the centre and of the statue of the Virgin Mary in a separate shrine behind it; I stood with my back to them for the best view. But in fact the Calvaire is the opposite of a view point; it is where it is, not to look from, but to be looked at, by sailors and fishermen on boats leaving the tranquillity of the harbour and heading out into the bay and thence into the open sea; to be looked at, while saying a prayer for a safe return.

WHAT IF SUSTAINABLE LANDSCAPES AREN’T ALWAYS BEAUTIFUL?

Paul Selman

In the March Issue of LRE, I raised some questions about what we mean by a sustainable landscape. One of my concluding comments was that we may need to ‘learn to love’ new landscapes which are currently controversial, and learn to ‘let go of’ some familiar and favoured ones. I am grateful that the Editor has

given me the opportunity to follow through this idea a little further.

One of the key challenges that the landscape profession will face in the 21st century is, I believe, the need to embrace rapid change against a backcloth of conservative landscape tastes. Our preferences for landscape do, of course, evolve over time. For example, the official ‘Landscape Assessment of Argyll and the Firth of Clyde’ refers to the ‘stunning combination of landscape features’, and celebrates equally the ‘dramatic, scenic ridgeland areas’ and the ‘lush glens’. The Scottish Tourist Board entices motorists to tour the Argyll coast with a promise of spectacular scenery and picturesque towns and villages’.



By contrast, Robert Burns, visiting Inveraray in the late 18th century, wrote *There’s naething here but Highland pride, And Highland scab and hunger: If Providence has sent me here, ’Twas surely in his anger.* Despite this fluidity in what we deem polite and tasteful, however, I suspect the rapidity of technological innovation and climate change which we are about to experience will outstrip the gradual pace at which our tastes can adjust.

Key to understanding this dilemma and identifying solutions is the notion of the ‘acquired aesthetic’. On the one hand, we see beauty in things, people and places, in part, because of some innate and possibly universal aesthetic qualities. On the other hand, some preference is ‘acquired’, and so certain things seem pleasing to us partly because of what they signify as a consequence of our cultural development. Personally, I now find much of the Scottish Highlands visually less attractive than I used to, because I know too much about the hardship, violence and injustice that produced the landscape we now see. Dispossessed tenants and smallholders during England’s 18th century ‘improvements’ likewise probably saw nothing beautiful in the new patchwork of hedgerows and their accompanying habitats. In another context, when I took up my new appointment and was house-hunting in Sheffield, many of the districts looked

pretty much indistinguishable to me at first. Now, because I better understand their associated reputations, school catchments and other esteem factors, they actually look quite different to me, even though their external appearances have not changed. In other words, the landscape signifies something to us as a result of its various 'associative' qualities, and this modifies our perception and interpretation of its purely visual properties.

In *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, Bourdieu offers an explication of "taste" as it relates to art, dress, furniture and food, amongst other things. What we deem aesthetic, he argues, is acquired through a process of "acculturation". Others have looked through similar lenses. Carlson (*Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 1985), for example, explores how Carolina agricultural landscapes are now viewed very appreciatively, in contrast with William James' 19th century reaction to them as 'hideous, a sort of ulcer, without a single element of artificial grace to make up for the loss of Nature's beauty'. Kuipers (*Beauty: a road to the truth*, in *Synthese*, 2004) argued 'that we grow to find something beautiful after acceptance of it...', and marshalled evidence to support the ways in which perceived underlying values can make something acquire an aura of beauty.

A challenge facing landscape in the years ahead is how we can discover beauty in scenes that currently evoke protest. The list is considerable: windfarms, re-wilding of rural land and its associated bestiary, major new wetlands with elevated water tables and breached flood defences, sustainable drainage systems with some distinctly un-pretty and untidy water margins, for example. Even organic farming may not always produce win-win situations in relation to conservative landscape tastes - some research suggests that people can find it untidy, weedy and disorderly relative to conventional farming. In certain cases, of course, opposition to new landscapes, even allegedly sustainable ones, may be perfectly justified; but there are likely to be many instances where uncomfortable change must be embraced and our acculturation fast-tracked.

A key principle in understanding preference for certain landscapes is to explore what they 'signify' to viewers. Some landscape preferences may be relatively universal, and there may be cross-cultural similarities in enjoyment of 'sublime', physically dramatic landscapes, as well as more subtle cultural landscapes which display balance in terms of land cover and human scale. However, many landscapes are valued because of what people remember about



them and read into them – this applies in distinctive ways to 'ordinary' places where people with insider status have positive or negative feelings based on memories and local wisdom. As an aside, this creates particular difficulties for landscape planners in defending and investing in locally valued landscapes when they are under threat from regional and national interests, yet this concern for 'everyday' spaces is profoundly recognised by the European Landscape Convention.

Signification in landscapes implies that they have a story to tell and that we are able to read it. This is the essential starting point for understanding how we might more readily accept change, and how to gauge whether that change is intrinsically desirable even where it might evince short-term protest. After our 1990s post-modern 'wobble' of characteristic fin-de-siècle loss of confidence, society now seems to have

recovered its 'voice' through the new urgency attached to sustainable development. This is well reflected in housing design, where cringe-able neo-vernacular styles, clinging to some imagined past because we lacked a confident replacement story, are starting to give way to bolder alternatives. The research undertaken for the former Countryside Agency by Architype, *Towards a New Vernacular*, for example, showed some refreshing thinking in this regard. Uncompromisingly confident and modern building styles suddenly start to look attractive, welcome, landscape additions when we are sensitised to their storyline about our transition to a carbon-neutral society.

I suspect we are embarking on a substantial revision of what we find acceptable in both our 'special' and 'everyday' landscapes. Planners and landscape professionals will have to face the challenge of negotiating controversial futures, some of which may be widely perceived as hazardous, untidy, semi-industrial or discordant. Some changes, indeed, will be unacceptable. Others, though, may have a positive story to tell in terms of environmental service functions and social cohesion – and, through a process of 'reasoning together', we may learn to love them. The landscape may become an important medium for social learning, where particular communities-of-interest and people of all ages can comprehend the causes and consequences of alternative human actions.

I find this an exciting prospect, even though I know it will create real dilemmas where issues of familiarity, heritage and risk are concerned. One of the most acute challenges will be understanding what to make of the emerging landscape planning 'toolkit', notably Landscape Character Assessment. This seems, at least

in the minds of many practitioners, to advocate approaches based on reinforcement or retrieval of existing landscape character, even where it has become very residual. The subtext underlying the 'Countryside Quality Counts' programme, for example, appears to favour those landscape changes that are 'consistent with existing character area descriptions': the Defra commentary on 'CQC' states 'the underlying proposition was that change should take place in ways that strengthen character and value'. This assumption, however, was not necessarily the intention of those who championed the toolkit in the first case. Indeed, one could be provocative and argue that, whilst acknowledging the continuing importance of some cultural landscapes and the value of familiar scenery in people's lives, we should often be advocating changes which run counter to 'existing character' and allowing many residual features to meld into the landscape palimpsest.

If we are to believe the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, humanity is approaching crisis. Our new landscape will tell the story of how we are responding to this crisis. Perhaps we need to learn to love this new landscape more quickly than our gradual processes of acculturation normally permit?

Professor Paul Selman University of Sheffield



Dennis JB Shaw & Jonathan D Oldfield **Landscape Science: A Russian geographical tradition** *Annals of the Ass. Am Geographers* 97/1 2007 pp 111-126.

Cliff R Hupp & Massimo Rinaldi **Riparian vegetation patterns in relation to fluvial landforms and channel evolution along selected rivers of Tuscany (central Italy)** *Ann. of Assoc. Am Geogr* 97/1 2007 pp12-30.

Jon D Unruh **Land tenure and the 'Evidence landscape' in developing countries** *Ann of Assoc. Am Geographers* 96/4 2006 pp754-772.

Gregory Brown & Christopher Raymond **The relationship between place attachment and landscape values: towards mapping place attachment** *Applied Geography* 27/2 2007 pp 89-111.

John McKenna & Andrew Cooper **Sacred cows in coastal management: the need for a 'cheap and transitory' model** *Area* 38/4 2006 pp 421-431.

Tony Hernandez & Jim Simmons **Evolving retail landscapes: power retail in Canada (Big box and power retailing)** *The Canadian Geographer* 50/4 2006 pp 465-486 .

Joshua Comaroff **Ghostly topographies: landscape and biopower in modern Singapore** *Cultural Geographies* 14 2007 pp 56-73.

Katriina Soini, Jyrki Aakkula **Framing the biodiversity of agricultural landscapes: the essence of local conceptions and constructions** *Land Use Policy* 24/2 2007 pp 311-321.

Joseph P Hupy **The long term effects of explosive munitions of the WW1 battlefield surface of Verdun, France** *Scottish Geographical Journal* 122/3 2006 pp 167-184.

George Revill **William Jessop and the River Trent: mobility, engineering and the landscape of 18th century improvement** *Trans. Inst British Geographers New series* 32/2 2007 pp 201-2

'LANDSCAPES' contains the following papers:
Vol 7 No 2
David Austin and Paul Stamper discuss **landscape characterisation**.

Patriotic Views: Aristocratic ideology and eighteenth century landscape. George Sheeran shows how designed landscapes reflected paternalism, patriotism and politics.

Wombwell: The landscape history of a south Yorkshire coalfield township. David Hey and John Rodwell combine ecology, field archaeology and history to reconstruct a post-medieval farming landscape later transformed by coal mining.

Maurice Beresford an appreciation
Mick Aston, James Bond, John Chartres, Christopher Dyer, Brian Roberts, Terry Slater, Paul Stamper, Christopher Taylor and David Austin assess the achievements of the man who, with John Hurst at Wharram Percy, founded medieval settlement studies.

What landscape means to me Richard Purslow reflects on where history and nature meet, and argues for an environmental ethic in landscape studies.

CALIFORNIA DREAMING: Paul Sharman tramps his way from San Francisco to Chicago after a landscape conference

As a PhD candidate my paper on Creative Passion, in this case the creation and passion for landscape was accepted for presentation at the Association of American Geographers 2007 Meeting in San Francisco. As a self-funding student I am extremely grateful to the Landscape Research Group for the financial help which paid for my week's accommodation.

I have reported to the Group on my official recollections of the AAG 2007, but as a latter day 'Supertramp', my experience of American landscapes was not limited to the San Francisco Hilton. In fact had I stayed at that hotel I need not have ventured anywhere else. The hotel was a landscape in its own right, with large airy halls, shops, cafes, bedrooms, and security staff. Visually identifiable as an 'aging hippy' I felt entry would have been barred without an AAG badge hung round my neck. I thought of Relph's 'place' and 'placelessness' each time I stepped outside. San Francisco was by no means an unfriendly city but I was surprised by the number of homeless beggars and the way most San Franciscans walked around the sidewalk-sleepers as if they were not there.

I have two abiding memories of the geography of the streets of San Francisco. A group of sidewalk-sleepers huddled like puppies in a basket, one woman with long red hair flowing in rivulets of colour across the concrete. Pity it was such a sad scene. The second was the smell of the fennel growing on vacant building plots. As a Mediterranean immigrant its fragrance appears to take the place of nettles in the wastelands of San Francisco.

At the end of the conference I began my journey home. Crossing the Bay bridge by bus I took the train from Emeryville northwards through the night to Klamath Falls, Oregon. Listening to the elderly man playing blues harmonica was as memorable as the unfolding volcanic landscape and off-grid homesteads around Mount Shasta. Taking the bus from Klamath Falls to Pascoe, Oregon as one of only three passengers, I took in the semi-desert lands I hadn't expected to see. All-day bus travel led to the next night train through the Rockies and onto the prairies first thing in the morning. I have seen plenty of mountain landscapes but never the expanse of the American Prairies. From the train I really did see the deer and the antelope play and even a few Bison on a farm. The landscape reminded me of the gently undulating Salisbury Plain but stretching for ever. One small boy told me it reminded him of 'The Simpson's'

cartoon show. I asked why and he pointed to the clouds in the blue prairie sky. Those of you who switch on Channel 4 at 6.00pm will know what I mean.

Chatting with passengers I met an elderly share cropper travelling from Seattle to Kentucky on his annual pilgrimage to plant his two acre tobacco plot, complaining about anti-smoking regulations in the US; following logically, the smell of skunk on the train, by which I mean the animal though I thought otherwise initially. The ex-graffiti artist complaining about the poor standard of artwork on passing rail wagons and the singing Amtrak staff all made it a memorable ride.

I was surprised to see nodding donkeys marking small, almost back yard oil wells. Perhaps it was a long way to the gas station? Strange large rusty metal Tipis appeared from time to time and I was informed these were wigwam burners for disposal of local garbage.

Approaching Minnesota, the landscape looked more glacial with obvious moraine landscapes and tracts of hardwood forest, marshes and lakes. The engineer certainly made the lonesome whistle wail as we picked up Amish families before leaving the prairies to head into Minneapolis and the more built up Mississippi Valley. I still find it hard to comprehend such a wide river that far inland. As the song goes it certainly was wider than a mile between the Mississippi bluffs with Bald Eagles flying across the waters. Crossing Wisconsin, true to Aldo Leopold's *Sand County Almanac*, cranes waded through great marshes as the train approached Milwaukee and Chicago.

No time to take in Chicago as I had to get straight to the airport and fly away that evening, but the amiable drunks bumming a ride on the suburban train pointed me in the right direction at the airport perimeter station. All in all it had been a memorable ten days and was just the fillip I needed before getting back to Exeter and finishing my PhD write up. Thanks to Landscape Research Group for helping to make the memorable trip happen.

FIELD LANDSCAPES AND SHELTER Bud Young

There is a persistent wind blowing and the clouds are positively threatening. It is hard, riding into the wind, and the childhood idea comes to me of finding the lee of a hedge that will stop the cold wind — even better to cross to a clump of holly trees. As this is not my land I feel the need to conceal myself. All the fields are pasture and all are empty — bar those with beef

LRG'S FOUNDING FATHERS

In August 1968 Volume 1/1 of Landscape Research News appeared as a four page A4 document and contains the Group's intentions with the coming events and news, which are continued in the LRE that you see today. The Editor at that time was A.C. Murray. LRG Chairman was Leighton L. Irwin, Hon. Sec. was Alan Murray and Hon. Treasurer was Derek Poole. The Committee consisted of Monica Bingley, Keith Atkinson, Derek Rigby Childs, T.C. Coote, Alex Hardy and Lionel Smith.

Who were these founders? Career details or personal memories? Please send any notes or thoughts to brian.goodey@btopenworld.com with a view to putting together an account.

ART IN THE SPIRIT OF RAVILIOUS & BAWDEN Brian Goodey

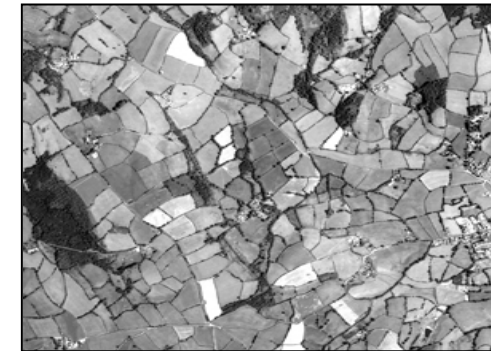
Exhibition to July 1 at Fry Art Gallery, Castle Street, Saffron Walden, Essex Phone 01799 513779 : www.fryartgallery.org
Open Tues., Fri., Sat & Sun. afternoons 2-5 pm.
{This note, I regret, comes to you a little too late for action Editor}

The Fry Gallery is a haven for lovers of Essex art, especially that associated with the Bardfield group, most notably the prolific and accessible Edward Bawden. This cramped but joyous exhibition is devoted to fourteen living artists who have acknowledged their creative debt to Bawden, and Ravilious whose watercolours and designs continue to amaze, though like Rex Whistler, he died in WW II. Well-known names include David Gentleman, Mark Hearld and Ronald Maddox but there are prints and landscape elements from the majority on show. The titular 'Spirit', strongly rooted in English popular art and its immediate post-war revival, is very much alive.

Drive through north Essex — Finchingfield and Thaxted — before you visit, or if by train to Audley End, then walk into Saffron Walden and let Essex seep in.

cattle which graze different fields in succession. At this point it occurs to me that some fields remain unvisited except for those twenty times a year by the farmer caring for or counting his animals. And of course for three days a year for topping, rolling or spreading muck. If I find the right place I may go unnoticed.

I am in the ancient stone banked field landscape of East Dartmoor. Each field has character: some are steep, some fall from a wooded edge, or go down to a



stream. Some offer extraordinarily good views. Many of these fields have intriguing interior landscapes, remains of old barn footings, a clump of unmoveable rock, an intriguing bank, an ash house a zone of seepage with rushes. There is one pasture that contains the whole of a first order stream network, a chaotic yet strictly ordered set of opposed slopes.

And this makes me think how we evaluate landscape officially, that is how we view it only from publicly available viewpoints and the lines of roads. How the five hundred fields of Moretonhampstead parish offer a thousand different rarely seen out-views and as many enclosing interiors. I think of resource richness and I think of scale and of extrinsic and intrinsic qualities. It makes me think of the sweeping immensity of Dartmoor itself, where no place is inaccessible. This leads my thinking to how we so often value open access land, ranking it higher than we ought and how we admire its vastness which does something special for us. How different it is from comforting enclosure, which does something else.

To act as a child and crouch on a waterproof in the lee of a hedge, even better to have a small campfire and make one small place home, to make a shelter of branches and spend one night and a day in a field, is to invest the unnoticed place with thin wisps of human response like sheep wool on the hedge. By inhabiting one point in the landscape we create a place and drink deep draughts of satisfaction. To carve a personal mark on a holly stem which says 'in 1949 I was here'. Cattle 'know' fields but have no sense of understanding, die mostly before they get to three, appreciate shelter but perhaps do not why, know nothing of landscape. How strange!

EUROPARC SEMINAR ON THE EUROPEAN LANDSCAPE CONVENTION

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Last December, I attended a seminar arranged by EUROPARC at Losehill Hall, Derbyshire to learn about the implications of the European Landscape Convention for protected areas (and landscapes more widely) and to consider how best to ensure its implementation. 70 delegates from protected areas in the UK, government departments and agencies, the voluntary sector and the landscape professions heard presentations on the origins of the Convention and the challenges for protected areas and discussed three themes: **engaging people, linking landscape to policy and putting policy into action.**

It was a timely event, in that only a few days earlier, **Barry Gardiner**, Minister for Biodiversity, Landscape and Rural Affairs, announced that the UK had ratified the Council of Europe's European Landscape Convention.

Adrian Philips, former Director General of the Countryside Commission, opened the morning session by reminding us that democratic principles underpin the Convention, that 'good landscape' is everybody's right and that everyone was encouraged to become involved in landscape issues! The Convention is inclusive and recognises the importance of *all* landscapes (not just protected ones), acknowledges that landscapes change and that all have the scope to be better planned and managed.

Although the UK has been slower than many European countries in signing and ratifying the Convention, **David Coleman** from Defra pointed out that the UK Government had, along with its sponsored agencies and associated NGOs, already declared a keen interest in fully implementing the provisions, namely to:

- * To recognise landscapes in law;
- * to establish and implement policies for landscape protection, management and planning;
- * to establish procedures for public participation in defining and implementing landscape policies, and
- * to integrate landscape into planning and other policies that impact on the landscape.

The task of delivering these provisions is less daunting than it might at first seem. Firstly, unlike with EU Directives, there are no financial penalties for non-

compliance, and secondly, many claim that the UK is already delivering much of this agenda anyway. Landscape assessment, setting landscape aims (such as the '**Landscape quality counts**' initiative), involving the public in the planning and land management have been characteristic features of our approach to landscape in the UK for many years. The new and greater challenge the ELC poses for us, and other like minded countries in Europe, is to share and learn from each others experiences and collectively '**raise our game**' in delivering the Convention's Articles to the full.

Michael Dower traced the history of the gestation of the Convention, and in doing so, made reference to LRGs role in organising the Blois Conference in 1992 where ideas about committing to planning, managing and protecting the diversity of European landscapes as a means unifying the nation states, were first mooted.

Other speakers in the morning session, focussed on key aspects of the Conventions requirements. **Alister Scott** (Aberdeen University) examined issues around capturing public preferences for landscape and the implications for policy. **Carys Swanick** (Sheffield University) looked at the link between landscape and policy and making judgments about development that has implications for the character, condition, value and sensitivity of landscapes.

In the afternoon, several short presentations were made on the practical implementation of the Convention including examples drawn from our experiences in Great Britain of the planning of new, management of existing and protection of historic/cultural landscapes by **Simon Evans** (National Forest) **Oliver Lucas** (Forestry Commission) and metalliferous mining in Cornwall.

Having been adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe in July 2000 and opened for signature in Florence, October 2000, the European Landscape Convention entered into force in March 2004 after ten member states had ratified it. By June 2007 the Convention had been ratified by 26 member states and signed by a further 8 — nearly three-quarters of the Council of Europe's members in total. Questions now being asked are what difference has it made? How consistently are the provisions being implemented? and perhaps most pointedly, why are some states yet to commit?

These and other related questions will be debated at an 'expert seminar' being convened by LRG at Sheffield University this November. For further information about the seminar email me — or Professor Paul Selman at p.selman@sheffield.ac.uk. For further information about the European Landscape Convention go to the website of the Council of Europe <http://www.coe.int/>

LANDSCAPES OF AGRICULTURE AND GHOSTS OF WAR IN NORTHERN FRANCE

Bud Young

Suppose you cross 1400 miles of north French landscape, a slightly irregular corridor of land between Calais and Toul near Nancy and back to the River Somme, what kind of impressions do you come away with? The fact that you are the driver may have smoothed out the detail. Then ask yourself how this reality matches the political statements of the ELC (see the account by Gareth Roberts in this issue).

First Northern France is a landscape region of agriculture, of large rivers, of wide canals and navigations and of major woodlands. From place to place it demonstrates a lofty height above broad valleys and may convey a feeling of high undulating plateau. Within the Paris basin one will mostly be travelling within the chalk or at least the Cretaceous, but when one leaves that in a strictly ordered basinal structure the landscape will change, become more wooded, more broken and more intimate in scale. At the centre you will then be in the Tertiary sands and clays as for example around the huge Forêt Domaniale de Compiègne or into the Jurassic limestones west of Toul. You can work your way from Toul north west to Verdun at the foot of the mid Jurassic escarpment.

You will find many of the important towns are sited alongside substantial rivers. Their townscapes will take advantage of this. Villages along the way will be single street and mostly workaday. Formidable vertical structures whether grain elevators or wind farms or water towers or church steeples will stand as bold statements of local pride and farming productivity even in the most open country. Near towns, the grain elevators will expand from standard six pack structures to 24 pack ones and there will be tall raw rather unexpected industrial plants and single chimney stacks. A celebration of verticals.

You will be acutely aware of the arable crops in full view of the road with no roadside hedges to hide them. Agriculture is on display here: it is a landscape of crops at various stages of ripening, head drooping yellow barley, erect blue green wheat, dark green potatoes, (those called Charlotte in full pink flower), matted oil seed rape — green-podded after flowering, peas and horse beans, flax sometimes — its flowers closing when the sun goes in, early growth maize frequently, asparagus unexpectedly, sunflowers rarely. In the east, the Champagne region, there will be vineyards on long slopes down to the Marne and, in the Toul area, vineyards and plum orchards on the east facing escarpment. There will be broadleaved

woodlands scattered here and there, often very large, and firewood (cleft oak), stacked everywhere in precise cordwood rows.

Throughout this traverse of France, you will be deeply aware that these landscapes provided the backdrop, the soil and the mud to two awful wars and millions of dead, and you will be deeply moved. You will suspect any wood of a violent assault; strategic river valleys house the dead in neatly ordered rows of crosses, a sign gives you the name and date of the battle. Battles sometimes went on for many months.

At the same time you will see that the landscape now belongs to the farmer and is committed to growing things. There is nothing fey about agriculture and it is beautiful in its own terms. And there is something eminently satisfying in a journey through rural productivity. Cropland and woods and rivers. The riches of the earth! As we made this journey I was reminded of those Contes des Fees by Perrault, in which the aspiring young village boy, sets out to seek his fortune, and on his way to falls in with a knowledgeable yeoman. They travel on by coach through fields and timber rich woods, past windmills and great rivers. The peasants acknowledge them for the yeoman is known to them. "To whom do these lands belong?" asks the young man. "Why to the King" replies his companion "and there beyond the river stands his fine castle to which I will deliver you shortly."

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