O’Regan regrets the Celtic Tiger
By Terry O’Regan

The Connemara rain fell vertically on my August holiday - and diagonally, even horizontally: at times it seemed to go out with the tide only to come back in 12 hours later. But without that Atlantic-flavoured rain the Connemara light would not light up your life, its sharp clarity would not bring a catch to the throat and give that extra glow to each plant, flower, rock, seaweed and to each white bungalow. And landscapes without the clouds are hardly landscapes at all.
The sun was setting one evening as I made my way along the track over Derrygimlagh bog (centre), south of Clifden, to view the Aalcock & Brown landing site (front page image). The Twelve Bens (centre top) were misting down on my left, Maam Bay with Ardilinna (high island) shining up burnished silver on my right; by my side, dark bog holes, water lilies and rushes, patches of western gorse, heather and heath, turf sod stacks. Stress evaporated with the sweat from my brow as the bog bog landscape eased its way into the pink equally spongy landscape of my brain.

The mellow landscape slowly yielded up its colour to the cloak of night as the silver sun slipped away to New York and I reluctantly retraced my steps to the Celtic-tiger-mauled small town landscape of Clifden — a case study for landscape-in-the-round if ever there was one.

Players move through the encircling audience in a theatre-in-the-round. In the same way, landscape-in-the-round suggests itself as a useful descriptive term for the dynamic, interactive landscape envisaged by the ELC (and also by the LAI Landscape Circle Guide — the players and audience are interchangeable and the set is under continuous construction, deconstruction, and reconstruction — a wise, creative, set design always in the background.

Unplanned landscape change (where now the creative set designer?) amounts to little more than destruction. Clifden (centre lower) used to be wonderfully situated: a compact town, nestling in a wooded hilly landscape, overlooking a picturesque inner estuary, a very attractive small harbour with old stone warehouses: a town comfortable in its skin. The town hasn’t moved, but it is an uneasy place now, having ignored its harbour context and turned its naked backside on its finest asset. A recent ‘flagship’ redevelopment containing a large supermarket, plus apartments and a partially underground three storey car park (modelled on Alcatraz) screams out to all and sundry ‘Who gives a fig about landscape!’ — particularly to those who travel in from Ballyconneely and Roundstone. This cardinal sin was not committed innocently, for the frontage does try to show some deference to the relict integrity of Clifden’s streetscape — but they don’t really do irony in Clifden; the block features a large auctioneer’s poster displaying — you guessed it — a panoramic very selective view of the estuary and harbour. It all reminded me of the shabby leftover film set of a long dead western!

The world envied us the brief reign of economic growth, the so called Celtic Tiger in Ireland. Let us hope they will equally envy us our recovery from a few self-indulgent and very expensive years of gross irresponsibility.

West Connemara is blessed with a bounteous, glorious landscape: Clifden sits in the middle, the ideal holiday centre for visitors. Why was its simple landscape logic taken and smashed in a blind fit of building frenzy? Where were the planners? It gets worse, for the ‘flagship’ was part of a well-armed flotilla. The urban mish-mash along the main road into Clifden has neither shape nor meaning — a soul less landscape of a universal urban sprawl edge. The planning and development process failed Clifden abysmally, but it must go deeper — in Ireland the process danced to the tune of many masters. Clifden is no longer a town – it is a question mark! Maybe there will be a silver lining to the collapse of the construction industry — more time to ruminate on missed opportunities. To be fair, Clifden is not the only Irish town with a question mark hanging over it — in the 1970’s, 80’s and 90’s we published our cities and large towns. With the turning of the century we turned on our small towns and villages’ with a similar rampaging vengeance. Now we are left with Big Urban Sprawl and Little Urban Sprawl – a brutal ‘Tiger’ legacy!

Small wonder that the following day I went back to the bog.

“I live my best in the landscape, being at ease there; The only trouble I find I have brought in my hand. See, I let it fall with a rustle of stems in the nettles And never for a moment suppose that they understand.”

TO’R

Notes

1 The Landscape Circle Guide (a way of observing and recording landscape) was published by Landscape Alliance Ireland in October 2008 and is available from the author. tjoregan@eircom.net

2 The Ram’s Horn, John Hewitt

All photographs by the author who may be approached for permission to reproduce high quality images.

NUCLEATED URBAN BLOBS AND ECO TOWNS

Following the media comment about new eco-friendly towns, I have found it difficult to distinguish campaigning for the new eco-towns from clambering on the back of the bandwagon. The planning and development process failed Clifden abysmally, but it must go deeper — in Ireland the process danced to the tune of many masters. Clifden is no longer a town – it is a question mark! Maybe there will be a silver lining to the collapse of the construction industry — more time to ruminate on missed opportunities. To be fair, Clifden is not the only Irish town with a question mark hanging over it — in the 1970’s, 80’s and 90’s we published our cities and large towns. With the turning of the century we turned on our small towns and villages’ with a similar rampaging vengeance. Now we are left with Big Urban Sprawl and Little Urban Sprawl — a brutal ‘Tiger’ legacy!

Small wonder that the following day I went back to the bog.

“I live my best in the landscape, being at ease there; The only trouble I find I have brought in my hand. See, I let it fall with a rustle of stems in the nettles And never for a moment suppose that they understand.”

Of those not announced: Michael Fabrimant says: “I oppose the location of a large eco town in Curborough which will, in effect, join Doncaster and North-East England in one continuous urban sprawl.”

Meanwhile, Arun District Council was delighted with the news that the town of Ford would not be one of the chosen eco-towns. The council has campaigned against the town’s inclusion on the shortlist and the potential urbanisation of the nearby countryside.

My thanks to those whose words I take from Internet news sources.

BY
FROM INDUSTRIAL COMMUNITIES TO FACELESS PLACES
by Brian Goodey

My slide collection (not fully digitised as yet) contains a large number of green/blue/pink wooden huts that carry faded adverts for tobacco, newspapers and soft drinks but with no evidence of the betting and other opportunities that may have lain within. When the adjoining factory behind the gates and railings has closed, and been reduced to rubble, some still persisted as the popular gatehouse to the daily grind. Here I think, particularly, of Coventry where I carried out a street-by-street survey in the 1990’s and where all physical memories of the major industrial employers were being swept away.

Together with workingmen’s clubs, an array of redundant bus stops, and a few dedicated pubs, these little wooden huts remained the only popular evidence of clock-in daily lives that dominated our towns and cities until the post-industrial revolution. Nobody expects such huts to survive, their purpose gone, but the fragile urban landscape of workingmen’s lives, reference point for the retired or discarded to show their grandchildren.

That a town or city WORKS requires evidence in the landscape, the urban motivation for coming together needs daily, visibly, evidence that there are people behind the engraved nameplate to endorse the sense of an urban place. All too subtle or ephemeral for those responsible (who? you may ask) for the daily decisions that compose our urban spaces. Who cares how a new office occupier announces itself; who cares if the only public statement is a few lost souls grabbing a quick fag in a blustery cove? We all know, or should know, that corporate identity is a matter of web sites, enigmatic truck messages, and media advertising.

If we go this route, then the urban landscape is doomed. Towns and cities are merely places with security-conscious offices and headquarters: it’s all introverted, the place may look good on the web ‘Home’ page, but in reality it is a car-parked bastion on the edge of town.

Years ago I picked up a print by David Gentleman (he is the doyen of postage stamp designers) of Postman’s Park in the City of London. Why Postman’s Park?

Postman’s Park still exists in the centre of London, a memorial garden between King Edward Street, Little Britain and Angel Street in the shadow of St Paul’s. It was the focus of a range of postal buildings that once dominated this area of the City and it was where postmen – women, administrators, operators and others – might take their lunch break. It was a postal world, a mixture of fleeting figures from delivery and sorting, from administration, from what are now BT functions, gathering and distributing to a range of buildings that now betray the ownership of financial institutions. The Post Office departed, to faceless buildings further north at Old Street and Mount Pleasant leaving a hidden landscape of postal vitality.

Today, Postman’s Park remains concealed in several layers of London’s history. St Botolph’s church, with its links to John Wesley, survives by its former churchyard. Look closely and the postal connection is still there. But what now attracts visitors is the brainchild of Victorian artist G.F. Watts (1817-1904) who superimposed on this former graveyard a gallery to the popular heroes of Victorian London who are commemorated in tiled tributes to their heroes.

In a covered arcade are the carefully designed tributes to popular heroes who lost their lives saving lives – no postmen here, but public servants who merited a popular press headline and then might be forgotten. Great that the Watts Gallery has added an explanation and a contemporary Doulton tile. It is a peaceful park, with a ready supply of tourists dipping into a forgotten encounter between postal industry employees, past heroes, and an urban green space. Users cannot help but be stimulated by the chance of an hour’s freedom, a chance to chat, a backdrop of nature and those strange Victorian tiles.

Switch now to Royal Mail in London 2009. I spend some of my time at Mount Pleasant, the main London sorting office in Clerkenwell. Located almost over the Fleet River, it is a massive maze of a building with extensive yards behind, adjacent Royal Mail property and the inevitable secure bastion presentation of modern urban space. Pubs mark two corners, one taut up for office worker presentation, the other still retaining some Royal Mail employees. Exmouth Market to the east has lost its cheap and cheerful café, but retains a pub near a bureau shop, which, I am advised, has some Royal Mail clientele. Yes, there are strikes and fag breaks outside of one entrance to Mount Pleasant, but very few of the surrounding facilities suggest a postal clientele. Regardless of the very wide ethnic mix of the Mount Pleasant population, there is little that would tell the casual observer that here is a major employer whose role spreads beyond the defended building.

I am aware that community relations and group involvement are key to Royal Mail’s policies, but evidence in the landscape is slim. Mount Pleasant is the major London postal centre, but there is no evidence as to its role, to the presence, below ground, of the postal underground network, or of the site’s survival in war.

My great fear is that we are producing generations that no longer know how to read the urban landscape. Is this a problem? Yes, if future generations cannot understand how towns and cities have evolved, and how they might relate to the places in which we live.

The presence of postal structures — mail boxes, post offices records a time when the mail, prior to the e-mail, was king. We can discard this evidence, conserve or destroy, but at our peril. If urban places are severed from their history then the licence for placeless developments is open for all-informed planners and profit-taking developers.

I am not out for the conservation of everything or retreating to the past. But if sense of place is recognised as a key factor in the development of our environment — as most policy guidance suggests — then we must retain sufficient of the past that resonates with the population to ensure that historical history carries past places into the future.

Postman’s Park will be fine, it is City of London and on the tourist routes. But for most industrially related places there’s very little public consciousness of the worlds we have inhabited. Aged former workers moan at home, young planning staff has no link with their interests and concerns. Places represent a living history for people of 15 – 75, yet planning officers consider a time-span of 25 – 40 and members largely to the next election. A broader time perspective is desperately needed.

BG
A 1950s HARVEST LANDSCAPE

I come back endlessly to the subject of bales. They seem to me to inhabit otherwise empty fields. This year and indeed ... and my own when I get to one hundred years. It will by then be looking tatty and coming up for renewal ... and myself?

BY DISSERTATION PRIZES

Annually LRG offers awards and cash prizes for dissertations submitted by Masters and Doctoral students in a wide range of landscape related topics. I include a short write up of three of those awarded in this issue. Others will follow.

The morphological expression of rapid ‘paraglacial’ slope modification by Georgia Bennett

In addition the research aims to identify the paraglacial landform succession within the debris-mantled slope system and the wider glacier foreland. Paraglacial modification operates primarily through the development of gully systems, which have incised slope deposits and redeposited sediment downslope in debris cones, and affected slope gradient and form. The dominant agent of sediment reworking is debris flow activity, conditioned primarily by a large intermittent water supply from the overlying ice lobe. Gullies develop through a cycle of deepening, widening and collapse, at rates as high as 297mm per annum attaining their maximum dimensions within about 37 yr of deglaciation, implying an even shorter ‘paraglacial period’ related to gully incision than has been previously proposed.

Gully collapse and infilling represents the completion of paraglacial slope adjustment and a stage in the landform succession within the slope system that terminates in vegetated talus slopes. A time series of ‘paraglacial landform maps’ of the glacier of Sandfellsjökull illustrate the progressive and extensive increase in paraglacial landforms, notably debris cones, alluvial fans and glacifluvial landforms from 1945 to 2007, and the paraglacial landscape evolution of the marginal foreland.

GB

An investigation into the wind generation potential of the industrial areas of England by Hamish Reid Bsc.

Peaking fossil fuel production, and a consensus on the negative effects of their use has led to ... has guaranteed the price of renewably generated electricity for the foreseeable future; this has generated a wealth of wind farm planning applications. Research suggests that in the UK these meet with much local resistance, resulting in a large backlog of applications and appeals. Objections focus mainly on the visual impact of large grid-connected turbines, and on perceived adverse impacts. Some research and planning documents have hinted this opposition could be avoided by locating turbines in industrial rather than rural areas (TAN 2005). This dissertation investigates the potential of such a strategy.

A GIS was developed to assess overall prospects of industrial areas in England, before studying, in detail, application of the strategy at a case study site. The social theory underlying this strategy was tested via two surveys, first of a community living near turbines, and then of organisations opposed to wind developments. The project concluded by investigating whether previous similar developments support this strategy.

Results estimated the potential capacity of industrial sites at 1245MW, with expected annual output of 2850GWh. This threefold increase in current onshore capacity could contribute 70% to government wind generation targets for 2010. Industrial buildings did not affect wind quality due to shape and scale differences between them and turbines. With respect to noise, findings suggest modern turbines 300m from residential and 150m from industrial properties are without negative impacts. Visual impact is difficult to mitigate, however results indicate it is more socially acceptable in industrial surroundings. Experience shows speed of planning and development are accelerated for such sites, without compromising production output.

The study concludes that the wind potential in industrial rather than rural areas may be preferable for developers and communities and thus more quickly realised, providing the kick-start needed to meet renewable targets for 2010.

HR

Banksy in the City: Re-placing Street Art by Evelyn Owen

Living and studying in the East End of London during 2008, it was hard to avoid Banksy. The elusive street artist and his work were everywhere – on the walls of buildings, at market stalls and galleries, in the pages of newspapers, and on the Tee-shirts of passers-by. Who was he? What was his message? Where was he going to strike next? With my mind on matters both urban and artistic, and as part of my studies for my MA in Cities and Culture, I decided to investigate.

It quickly became clear that attempting to approach Banksy directly would be futile – his policy of anonymity combined with his growing fame means that he very rarely gives interviews. Equally, it was not up to me to interpret Banksy’s images – central to his philosophy is the idea that his work speaks for itself. Instead, as I began to think about street art and graffiti more generally, some more interesting issues emerged. Drawing on past and present geographical work on urban inscription, I found that although much current street art potentially gestures towards the idea of cities as spaces of emancipation, research has yet to fully investigate the ways in which this potential is negotiated. Ideas about graffiti being seen as ‘out of place’ in the city clearly needed to be updated in the light of the new street art’s popularity.

Banksy’s ubiquity and controversial status made him an ideal focus in addressing some of these issues, by considering the question: what might responses to Banksy’s work tell us about the politics of urban landscapes? Methodologically, I decided to approach the topic by analysing the media discourse surrounding Banksy and his activities. A simple glance at newspaper coverage of street art shows that Banksy has become a figure who is seen to embody the genre, and yet still inspires much heated debate. I examined material from a variety of national and London-based newspapers and magazines, looking for common theoretical devices, themes and opinions, and the ways in which they were expressed and defended.

My initial findings were rather unexpected: on the surface, it seemed that it was not the question of what Banksy does that grabs people, but rather, who he is. The media use a wide variety of well-known characters – from the Artful Dodger to the Scarlet Pimpernel – in order to pin Banksy down to a knowable personality. However, on closer inspection, it became apparent that such an approach, together with more direct references to the city itself, work together to offer a means of negotiating the contested meanings of urban spaces. Banksy acts as a kind of pressure point in discussions of the tensions produced by street art in the urban landscape, particularly with reference to the increasingly poorly defined line dividing the gallery from the street. The confusion about whether or not his practice is acceptable artistic and political expression, or simply...
A TALE TO TELL: TRAINING THE IMAGINATION
by Martin Spray

1 A recent conversation I enjoyed with Estrà’s editor briefly touched on the need to ‘loosen-up’ students’ thinking, before they could be expected to get to grips with such complicated matters as landscape design. It reminded me of an exercise I occasionally used when I taught landscape architecture students at the University of Gloucestershire.

“Places become meaningful when there is a story”, states Jules Pretty in *The earth only endures.* [1] This might be the motto of the Landscape Institute or R.T.P.I. — but that’s a different [er...] story. In *Ecologies of the heart*, E.N. Anderson [2] discusses the roles of myths and folktales in the transmission of environmental information. In both Australia and California, he notes that these “function as, among other things, devices to teach the young about the environment. [...] Children learnt myths that include the travels of culture heroes around the water-holes in the territory. For these desert people, [...], a list of water holes is a great deal easier to memorise if it is embedded in a racy story with lots of sex, violence, and religion.”

I suspect that interpreting landscape is, like much else humans do, a game of storytelling and making. Curiously, the example of landscape as story most familiar [i.e. still slightly so] to many in the West is the ‘songline’ of native Australians. Readers of the Welsh *Mabinogion* wonder tales [3] can still – as it were – follow some of the action on the ground, and such experience is probably widespread around the world. However, closer to what I’m thinking of here is more like the unsophisticated and un-literary storymaking of a child – or an adult – at play.

Professionals and academics tend not to tell stories. Such serious folk have put play aside: or, if you agree with Johan Huizinga [4] that we are *Homo ludens*, the ape that plays, think they have, but really haven’t: Studying landscape is a serious matter. So is planning and designing it. But could it be that [to use Donald Winnicott’s title] [5] playing and reality have become a bit too separated? Maybe landscape has been drawn too far into the scientific discourse that is much more suitable for the study of land as geographical, environmental, ecological, economic, etc., processes and events?

Chunks of eroded limestone and sandstone were fairly easy, once imaginary colour was added. The ‘easiest’ stone to tell a story about was a piece of North Wales slate, patterned by pale lines, some at right angles. This was field patterns, city blocks, road networks, Nazca lines [or Richard Long gone wild!]; it was a few metres or hundreds of kilometres long. A map-like pebble was variously a moss garden, patch of rainforest, exotic veg patch, or [once] a coral reef [living there was tricky]. Our conversation was especially effective when members of a pair saw very different landscapes, as in these lichens.

Of course it was mischievous. And I should have specified learning outcomes and made a risk assessment [stones+feet!], and the rest of the edgewise. But that is the main point: correct would probably have negated the purpose. Of course it was supposed to be fun even if it was also to be ‘real’. Isn’t education [both teaching and learning] supposed to be enjoyable?...

Any legacy of *The Stones* is unknown. Maybe some children had more interesting bedtime stories as a result.

2 I used to keep a box of stones handy for ice-breaking at the starts of some of the modules I taught, by an exercise in [possibly] interpretation, and in [certainly] fantasizing. Each pair of students was asked to examine a stone for a few minutes. They were then told it was not a stone, but a model of a piece of landscape somewhere on Earth i.e. in the universe. They were asked to re-examine their object, for a quarter hour or so, and then be ready to describe it: its topology, climate, vegetation [if any], landuse and settlement pattern [if any]. They were asked the scale of the model, and where in the world/universe such a landscape was to be found; and lastly, what it was like to live there and if they would take a holiday there. With a bit of prompting by ‘silly’ questions, the exercise worked well.

I’m not pretending this is an especially good way to break ice, but when I was later able to play the game [which I admit it was] with other types of student, feedback was encouraging. I think it helped some of them into the deep ends of their imaginations – waters often left unexplored. I asked for descriptions and rationales to be as ‘realistic’ as possible. They were usually very sensible. I sought, of course, a show of 21st century imagination, not [say] of the imagination of Anton van Leeuwenhoek, who looked down his microscope at a grain of sand, and drew ‘a ruined Temple […] and two images of human shape, kneeling and extending their arms to an Altar’. [6]

Vandalism, reflects wider uncertainties about the status of art and rights to public space. But in general, despite the wide variety of perspectives and the anxious tone of much of the coverage, I found that Banksy was generally seen as being ‘in his rightful place’ on the streets of London – and this surely offers an encouraging starting point for those interested in exploring positive, alternative visions of the urban landscape.

Notes
1 J.Pretty [2007] *The earth only endures*. On reconnecting with nature and our place in it. Earthscan.
3 The *Mabinogion*, e.g. the translation by G. & T. Jones in ‘Everyman’ edition.
7 I think the quotation is from French aesthetics philosopher Étienne Souriau [1892-1979], though it is commonly quoted as by Einstein. While trying to check that, I found this reassuring comment: “Le storytelling permet de penser ‹à côté›.... Quelle sont les histoires qui changent une vie?”

MR BLAKE’S GARDEN & TENNYSON ON EDUCATION FOR WOMEN
by Philip Pacey

Tennyson’s *The Princess* is a poem of seven sections sandwiched between the lengthy Prologue and a shorter Conclusion. The Prologue sets the scene: the owner of a great house, Sir Walter Vivian, opens his ‘broad lawns…to the people’ — his tenants and half the neighbouring borough with their Institute of which he was the patron.

The narrator is staying as a guest of Sir Walter’s son, also Walter; young Walter shows off the house to his guest in the… tale,’ to which each of the seven young men contributes one part. Before the story-telling begins, Lilia complains...
INTERESTING LAND AROUND VILLAGES

It is well known (isn't it?) that each generation has to rediscover the findings of its predecessors. Any work or mapping of an area has within 30 years become lost in some or other authority's archive as they moved office or were dissolved and reconstituted. restated

and down-sized. So it is with information in LRExtra. How many readers will remember (still less lay their hands on) issue 20 of summer 1996 in which the editor made a neat, even pleasing little discovery which his predecessors in the 60's had almost certainly also discovered. Here to remind you is the hode trodden slope terraces even anastomosing (as if planted) terraces, that immediately identify overstocking of horses. Widely seen on steepish fields at the edge of villages this kind of ground has a pleasing historic quality and in some places may reflect the keeping of unbridled drays and cobs. Since 1996, these little terraces have developed from line based contour terraces to strings of linear mounds (with a net of anastomosing horse tracks). Of course if this information appeared in an academic journal it would never be lost (though it might never be found).

BY

The views and opinions in this publication are those of the authors and the senior editor individually and do not necessarily agree with those of the Group. It is prepared by Rosemary and Bud Young for the Landscape Research Group and distributed periodically in the interests of members worldwide as companion to its refereed main journal Landscape Research.

Editorial enquiries:
Bud Young
Airphoto Interpretation, 26 Cross Street, Moretonhampstead, Devon TQ13 8NL
or email to young@airphotointerpretation.com

ASK THE RAVENS

David K Chester The effects of the 1755 Lisbon Earthquake and Tsunami on the Algarve region, Southern Portugal Geography 93/2 Summer 2008 pp78-90

Eleanor Rawling Spotlight on: Poetry and Place with Owen Sheers
Keith Hopper – on Lake Isle of Innisfree and WB Yeats
Hayden Lorimer The shape of words Geography 93/3 pp171-182 Autumn 2008

Land Use Policy 27/1 Jan 2010 Special Issue Soil and water conservation measure in Europe pp11-21 including:
Jose A Malinecz-Casanovas, M Concepcion Ramos Roser Cots – Folch

Influence of EU CAP on terrain morphology and vineyard cultivation in the Priorat region of NE Spain
Veerle van Eetvelde & Marc Antrop
Indicators for assessing changing landscape character of cultural landscapes in Flanders (Belgium) Land Use Policy 26/4 2009-10-01

PP

Olivia Aghenyea, Paul J Burgess, Matthew Cook and Joe Morris Application of an ecosystem function framework to perceptions of community woodlands Land Use Policy 26/3 2009 pp551-557

Reto Soliva and Marcel Hunziker Beyond the visual dimension: using ideal type narratives to analyse people’s assessments of landscape scenarios Land Use Policy 26/2 2009 pp284-294

Hans Antson Bridging the gap between research and planning practice concerning landscape in Swedish infrastructural planning Land Use Policy 26/2 2009 pp169-177

Veronica della Dora Travelling landscape objects Progress in Human Geography 33/3 2009 pp334-354

SJ Ramchunder, LE Brown and J Holden Environmental effects of drainage, drain blocking and prescribed vegetation burning in UK upland peatlands, Progress in Physical Geography 33/1 2009 pp49-79


Robert E Long, Thomas W Sanchez and Asl˚ Ceylan Oner Beyond Edge City: Office Geography in the New Metropolis Urban Geography 30/7 2009 pp726-755

Nice at Exeter University Library to come across copies (the last issue?) of the publication, The Landscape Journal, and there find Ken Taylor’s 1992 paper A Symbolic Australian Landscape: images in writing and painting. Who can tell me what happened to this pleasing journal?