

Landscape  
Research  
Extra 87

landscape  
research  
group

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Discover/display your  
talents; write something,  
offer ideas. You can do it!  
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## FOREST FELLED: LANDSCAPE REVEALED



For the last 8 weeks the minor road above Dunsford just inside Dartmoor National Park has seen frequent timber lorries taking out of the conifer plantation at the top of the hill. Always courteous, always huge as they set off in either direction along the narrow road the B3142. To a saw mill somewhere.

I check out the Dartmoor aerial photography of 1975 and see that the parcel of conifers was at that time less than 10 years old, hardly trees at all more like a dark moss on the surface of the hillside. The land is steep, very steep in places and at the edge of the Dartmoor





will get left behind. Then we stop the car for on the left side is a second cutover area and it is so different. My third photo show you this: a hillside again but this one littered with huge rocks. Lazily I do not push on into the chaotic area to confirm that this is edge granite — granite in the contact zone with rocks

granite. We visit on a Saturday afternoon avoiding the forest operations.

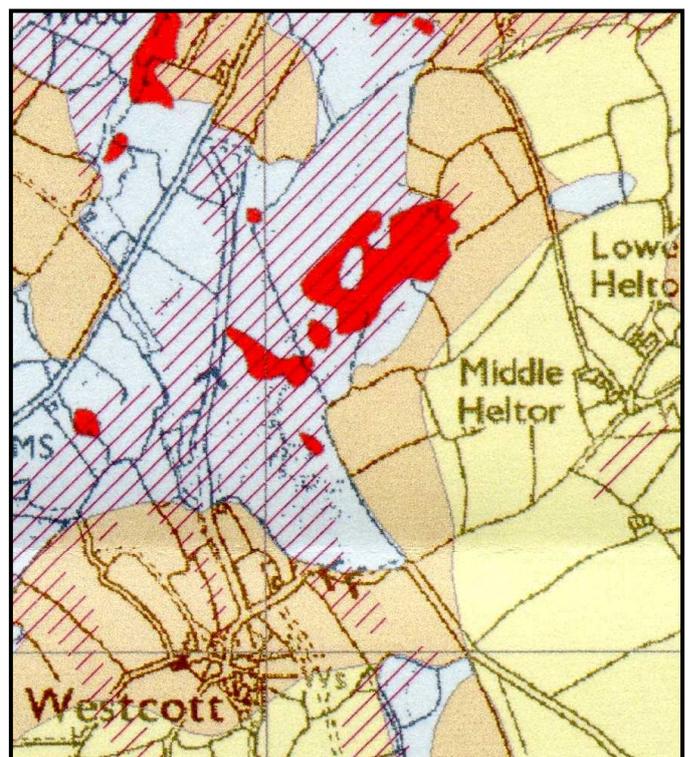
The idea that has occurred to me is that all of a sudden in our sideways glimpses from the road a different landscape was opening up. Where once one saw (or did not bother to look at) the edge of a conifer plantation now one saw a whole new landscape a view never imagined, never known. It rises to the hill top and a remnant of much older oak woodland. This is adjacent to the Teign Valley woodlands recently acquired jointly by The Woodland Trust and the National Trust.

As ever after timber extraction, the area looks an irredeemable mess. At a micro level a river of black wood ants are making an almighty exodus, displaced and looking for a new home. I check the age of the trees examining a broad basal log — left to one side — and count about 50 rings, those at the centre much broader than the older ones showing the tree's rapid early growth. I take some photos.

Intent then on revisiting Westcott a hamlet up the road I turn and start the hill. Other timber stands in stacks beside the roadside. It is very small diameter stuff, barely worth extracting. Perhaps it



that pre-exist the intrusion of the Dartmoor pluton. But is so dramatically different from view one. Harrod's soil map of NE Dartmoor (see a tiny extract below



— a project supported by LRG ) identifies in red these very steep slopes.

Upwards and onwards to Westcott, a hamlet 3 miles from home that I have not visited in 30 years, so tiny so inaccessible, so remote. Then on again towards Heltor along a lane bedecked with flowers. A gate: we stop to see where we are and it is a huge view northward. No conifers, no confining enclosures, an incredible openness. The contrast is stupendous.

**Nigel Young**

## HURRICANE DORIAN AND THE ABACO LANDSCAPE

By Nigel Young

For about a week around September 6<sup>th</sup> 2019, Marsh Harbour Abaco was in the news big time, then it vanished - as do all tragic events that hit the head-

lines. There will be less startling follow up news items. For me it was an amazing coincidence for shortly after the Moon Landings, I flew out of Marsh Harbour 50 years ago on 2<sup>nd</sup> September, got married on the 6<sup>th</sup> and returned on the 9<sup>th</sup> of that same month. I was living in Marsh Harbour with a small team of Resource Surveyors from the Directorate of Overseas Surveys. It was the first of 10 Islands within in the Bahamas that we surveyed.

I lived on the very waterfront and next to a jetty, (top centre of the modern but now historic photo below) that marked



the focus of what was then a small town. It is now, with surrounding areas, an apocalyptic confusion of cars, bits of roof, planks and everything that once offered home comforts to the people there. You may have seen it on many news-casts. I won't give you the image.

One particular area a cluster of working people's huts, shacks and buildings called the Mudd was there 50 years ago and housed poorer Bahamians and Haitian immigrant labouring families. It is now flattened. Buildings elsewhere have also suffered to varying levels reflecting (and here I guess) income. There are middle class islanders and well heeled incomers, proud boat owners, whether American, Canadian or English within the town. Videos show huge destruction within the settlement and the busy marinas and moorings are now empty of boats. Sunk or piled up inland in among the houses, carried there by a sea surge which may have overwhelmed more than the first floors of buildings. Even those richer people who built their houses to withstand a hurricane may have been devastated for this was a big one ... the strongest Atlantic Storm in living memory.

There then is a landscape, devastated and likely to remain so for years while little by little those who have the capacity, the insurance cover or the wealth may return. But there will be wholesale migration. Beresford's abandoned villages comes to mind. And there is the cadastral question *'how do I reclaim my house plot and in the absence of markers, how do I identify it'*.

### **Wider Landscape Damage**

Out of the settled area towards and around the airport the landscape is pine forest. Its all very flat. The pines are rooted into a mixture of soil and limestone but mostly into limestone with minimal surface soil. News clips north of High Rock on the south shore of Grand

Bahama, the second island to be hit, show that the pine trees have been stripped of the pine needles and the lesser branches that carry them. The video clip shows 'a forest of tufted telegraph poles.' This wider landscape extends over Great and Little Abaco, across Grand Bahama the second island hit and over Andros (though this last did not feel the force of Hurricane Dorian). These are the distinctive pine islands within the Bahamas ... others to the south have low broadleaved vegetation. What we may now be shown when reports move away from the disastrous urban landscapes is the effect of widespread defoliation throughout the pine areas.

In 1969 the southern part of Great Abaco had been logged out and its wonderful cover of pine (never before felled, red dense and resinous) had been shipped to the US for the production of cardboard. The company at that time responsible was Owens Illinois who went on to clear-fell Andros cutting 80 acres a day. I was there for that and took this photo (p4) of Haitian forest workers. Note the mature pine forest in the background. In Abaco a calibrated scatter of seed trees were left in place so that the forest might regenerate. But in 1960 Southern Abaco was hit by Hurricane Donna (another D name) and most of the seed trees were destroyed. The larger photo (p5 top) shows how this looked in 1969, when there were no pine trees and most areas were going to scrub. Google Earth 1989 shows the same unregenerated scrub landscape but by 2018 the pine trees are beginning to throw shadows and have measured crown sizes between 2 and 3 metres. At that size they may, this time, have escaped defoliation.

Moving from pine forest to the shoreline the huge storm surge and 185mph winds will have had a variety of effects on the shore landscape. I imagine heightened and or cut through coastal ridges where there were previously low ridged beach-



South Abaco devastated by the 1960 hurricane and seen here in 1969 .

cf . war painting of  
Battlefield devastation



the middle of Grand Bahama's southern shore), there will have been a different one. How the coast faces will have influenced the new morphology.

es. There may be dumps of coarse sediment in low energy creeks and sea marshes. Where Dorian came to land across shallow water, there will have been one effect but coming across deep ocean (for example at High Rock bang in

I mapped the coastal landscapes of all the southern Bahamas during my work there and in one or two places (see colour image, p4) I encountered jumbles of onshore blocks thrown up as a result of huge wave energy. Up till now I ascribed these to tsunami style waves ... But now?

This then is landscape in formation but for now and several years to come it is most notably a human settlement disaster. It deserves study. How goes Puerto Rico?

There will be restrained television follow ups.

**NY**



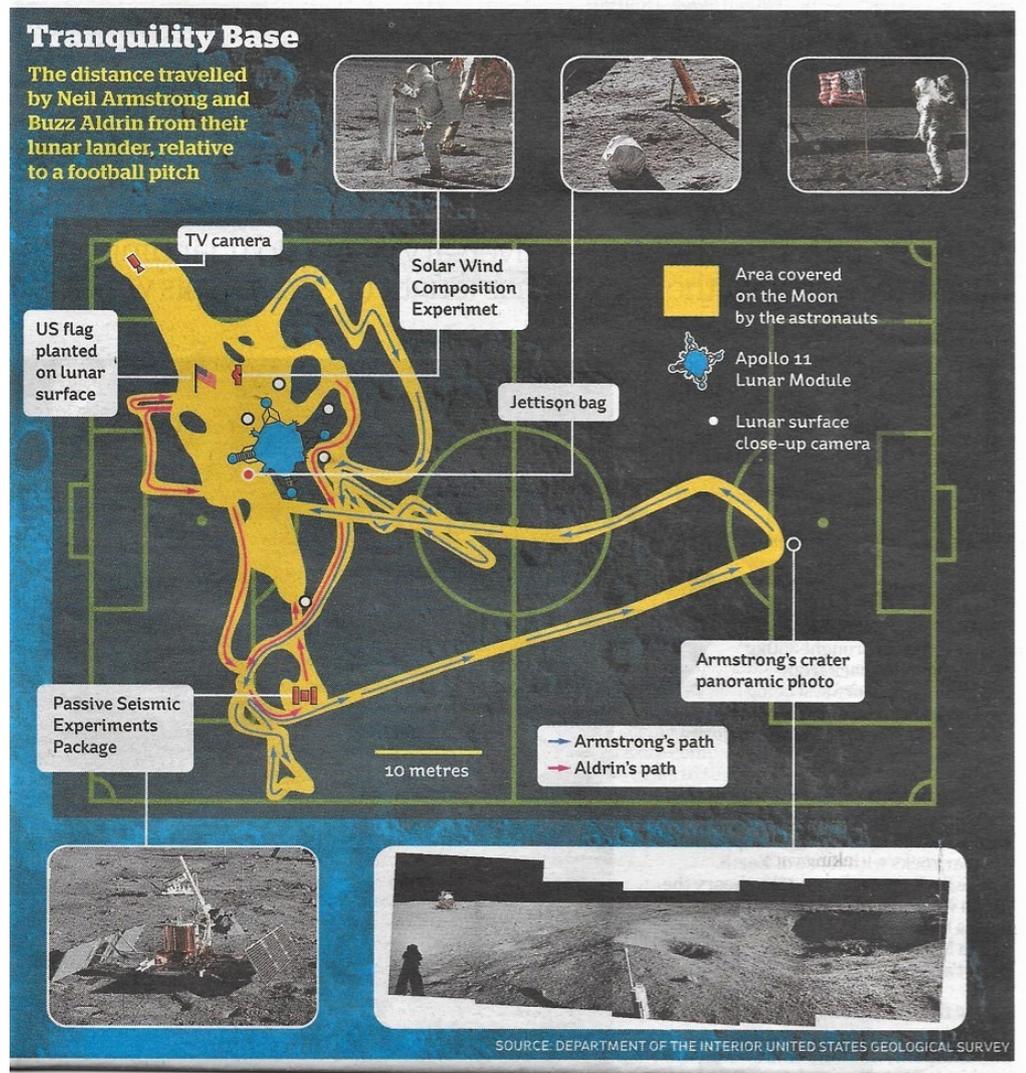
“BEAUTIFUL!  
BEAUTIFUL!  
MAGNIFICENT  
DESOLATION.”

By Ros Codling

In all the media reporting relating to the 50th anniversary of the Moon landing on the 20 July 1969, one newspaper graphic surprised me. It summarised the actions of the two who landed, Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin — the routes they took for their walkabouts and the location of their activities. Conveniently for both the graphic designer and reader of the paper, all occurred within the dimensions of an international-sized football pitch.

The longest straight path walked by Neil Armstrong was the equivalent of moving from the edge of one penalty area to the other - about 65m. In total, the two men were on the moon for about 2 hours 20 minutes, covering less than 1 km. I have to admit I had never thought about the distances covered, but simply accepted the “moon walk” as a description like “a stroll in the park”, albeit with more complexities than experienced during a typical Sunday afternoon.

A further surprise came on reading Buzz Aldrin’s words: “Beautiful! Beautiful! Magnificent desolation.” (Quoted in *The Times*, Saturday 20 July 2019.) Those words are not usually linked as a description of a landscape. I can understand the feeling that it was magnificent to be there, to have arrived and also in the end, to return safely to earth. But “desolation” has negative connotations,



an undercurrent of despair, so not usually associated with anything called “beautiful” or “magnificent”. There on the moon, “desolation” might be understandable. Seemingly barren craters and plains extended to their horizons — rock and dust, uniform in colour and unrelieved by anything as exotic as vegetation.

Another initially surprising, then sobering thought was consideration of a statement to be made by the American President, should the astronauts be unable to return to earth. The speech was prepared in advance and began: “*Fate has ordained that the men who went to the moon to explore in peace will stay on the moon to rest in peace.*” Putting aside a challenge I would wish to make to the concept of “Fate”, I was moved by the thought of them having to remain, seemingly abandoned by those who sent

them. Apparently at the end of earth communications with the men it was suggested that “A clergyman should adopt the same procedure as a burial at sea, commending their souls to ‘the deepest of the deep’, concluding with the Lord’s Prayer.

([www.archives.gov/files/presidential-libraries/events/centennials/nixon/images/exhibit/rn100-6-1-2.pdf](http://www.archives.gov/files/presidential-libraries/events/centennials/nixon/images/exhibit/rn100-6-1-2.pdf))

Our use of language, the phraseology we adopt, can sometimes be strange - “magnificent” joined with “desolation”, men who ascended higher into space than any other human being, being commended to the “deepest of the deep”. In beginning to write this, I had no concluding thought and expected it would be just a short note about two newspaper articles and a media report, but in the process of drafting I remembered a previous coupling of height and depth. The apostle Paul wrote to the Christians in Rome *“I am convinced that neither death nor life ... neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus.”* (Romans 8 verse 39). For me, that is another surprising, but in this instance, amazingly positive thought.

Whatever our personal beliefs, the moon landing generated wonder and for those interested in landscape, gave us a truly different scene. So far only a dozen people have walked on the moon, although, almost inevitably, moon tourism is being discussed so that more can see and experience the spectacle. Meanwhile, we have the increasingly detailed photographs to examine, with wonder and amazement but perhaps reserving the accolade of beauty.

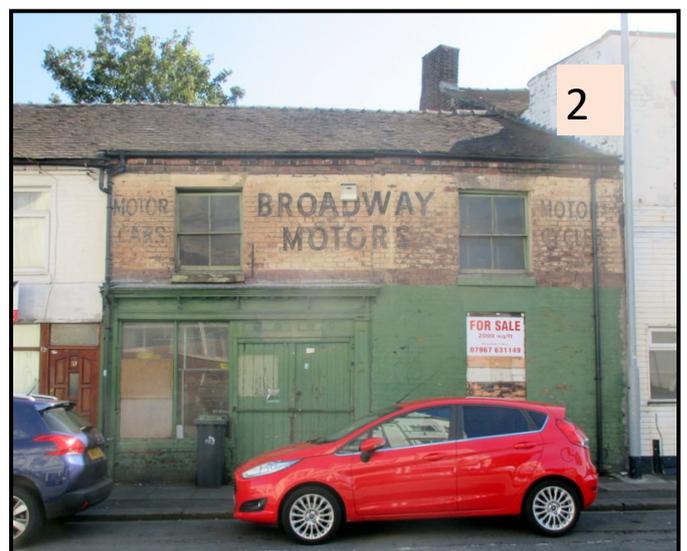
RC

## ‘HAIRITAGE’ TOWNSCAPE IN DECLINE

By Brian Goodey

In the late 1950’s I passed by rail through The Potteries – pot kilns, steel works, the then normal pollution, but fleeting hints of Wedgwood. In 1986 I left two late students behind after our second visit to the Second National Garden Festival (thanks MH) and in 1989 I revisited the Stoke Festival site with some concerns (see LRE that year). Later I was involved in a Heritage Lottery Townscape initiative to assess change in Burslem, ‘Mother’ of the five/six towns that formed the Potteries.

The past two weeks have been Heritage Open Days, and in a near-drive decision, I decided to visit the Etruria Industrial Museum. It proved to be a comfortable, green clad, canalside experience with old boats, locks, classic vehicles and the

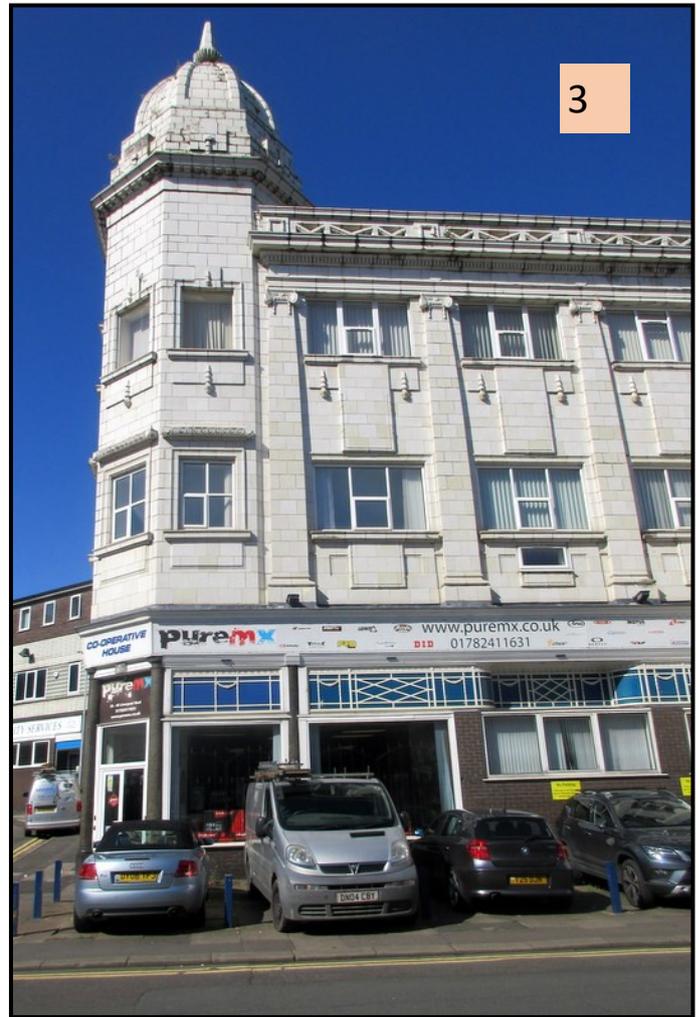


promise of industrial steam gently tended and admired. **(1)**

Too many sign systems, too many leisure invitations. Take the Trent & Mersey Canal footpath signed 'Stoke'. Two pot kilns embraced by residential development, a green cemetery, underpinning of planted landscape. Leisure signage vanishes into a tangle of fast roads and slow crossings baffling a hidden town centre. The ghost sign of a motor cycle shop, **(2)** the evacuated pride of a former Co-op **(3)**, and glimpses of the deserted Spode factory that once dominated the town, steer me towards the centre. Many shops vacant, a market building seemingly closed.

A Troika-like sign hints that 'Kingsway', a street leading to Spode's public face and the classical civic King's Hall received attention in 2000. Liz Lemon's stainless steel whorls were added as part of a public art initiative in 2005; a maze of black pen graffiti suggests adoption. But visually (and online — see Google maps) Kingsway is really a large car park.

In 2010 URBED with Danish Urban Designer Jan Gehl produced a Masterplan for Stoke and this year 'Stoke-on-Trent Ceramic' has received a Heritage Action Zone grant to realise part of the scheme. It will, inevitably, involve public interface



with the Spode site **(4)**, and should build on events like the British Ceramics Biennial which was camping out in the vast China Hall during my visit.

Will there be sufficient investment to re-cast Stoke as an event-filled contemporary experience for the next generation of visitors, or even a modestly serviced centre for local residents?

Pub conversation in the 'White Star Line' — serving local Titanic beer (Titanic's Captain Smith born in Hanley) — had not been convinced by 'Nikki somebody's' recent aspirations for the town, noting that all (bus) routes and investment led to Hanley. Hanley still has a Debenhams and an efficient newish bus station.

On to Burslem where we had monitored the impact of HLF Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) investment. A newly enrolled mature student told me more of his Potteries than I could see. On its

hilltop sits Burslem superficially dressed up with no one to go there and nowhere to go. Like several other Blairland museum experiences, Ceramica, a Millennium Commission initiative (celebratory postage stamp 2000, opened 2003, closed 2011 and largely demolished 2015 leaving a blank central footprint) (5) failed



to attract visitors or investment. The Art School where Clarice Cliff and Susie Cooper trained, holds on, but the Library Institute is boarded up; the central cov-



ered market is closed and the roof of a nearby corner block has fallen in. (6)  
The central and oldest town hall, once linked to Ceramica, is now a 6<sup>th</sup> Form



College. One later and grander, became the Queen's Hall and is also closed with roof problems. (7)

In the past twenty years there has been



effective investment in shopfronts, corner buildings and public spaces (an online report shows the effort in detail). One pottery producer hangs on (8) and there are factory shops and visitor centres (Middleport/Burleigh) nearby. Sufficient for the enthusiast's car trip but not for an informed wander through a deserted historic town, echoing with park drinkers' shouts.

Perhaps we've got it wrong, perhaps we've been misdirecting *townscape and heritage = conservation/preservation investment* for far too long. Earnest architectural history-based place retention may encourage business, but not everywhere. The Potteries were never 'a place', but rather a tight knit maze of small working communities which, after fifty

years of decline, have been unable to hang on to a little of their past.

Unless the heritage townscape consists of functional buildings and spaces embedded within a place worth visiting or living in — for this and other reasons — it is liable to become an increasingly costly remnant. For the Potteries, a well-connected and regionally planned vision for the future was required fifty years ago but localism and avoidance ruled. A great pity that Cedric Price's visionary *'Potteries Thinkbelt 'regional university on the move'* stayed in the 1966 pages of *New Society*.\* In such a mobile, open education system of movement and communication at least some local heritage townscapes would have found their contemporary place.

Instead we maintain the artificial competition between too many architecturally worthy town-centre backdrops whose value is much less appreciated than might be believed. The up-to-the-minute Ceramica was intended for 100,000 visitors a year and attracted less than a tenth of that.

By way of contrast, earlier this month (September) and after less than 8 weeks advertising, some 15,000 people were drawn to Heath Mill Lane near the Custard Factory in Birmingham's Digbeth to be part of 'The Legitimate Peaky Blinders Festival', an immersive theatre experience!\*\* Hardly a classic townscape con-



text, tenuous links with Birmingham's, violent, past, but lively stories and characters, conveniently conjured close to city facilities and transport and a media back story.

New thinking and reality observation clearly required. As a surviving Burslem shopfront proclaimed, 'Hairatage' may be more about the look and location than we might wish. A stray poster, derived from Banksy, suggests that we 'Keep it Real'. ..... oh, and **Keep on reading the Urban Landscape!**

**BG**

\* See Daryl Martin *The Thinkbelt : The University that Never Was* at <https://discoversociety.org/2014/07/01>

\*\* Reported by Emily Baker 'Playing a Blinder' *The I Paper* 17: IX: 2019, 34-5.

## FROM THE EXAMINATION HALL

By Owen Manning

Knowing that with retirement I might (thank God) see no more exam scripts related to landscape design or anything else, here is a compilation of extracts from student answers, scribbled down at the time to enliven twenty-five years of marking the damned things. Spelling and punctuation (or lack of same) are exactly as found. No disrespect to students was ever intended, and apparently daft answers not necessarily penalised. Good intentions and approximations to truth were all I ever looked for.

Examinations may not be a good test of anything, yet students may enrich our knowledge and means of expression -- once they have overcome the difficulty we all have in defining our subject to start with:

*The goals of landscape design has been and always has and for that matter probably will*

'be..... (though exactly what, never became clear)

What then emerges may transform our view of the world, as the following will show.

## Perspectives on history

Time and space become strangely distorted in the exam room:

*In Greece lots of classical designs were made which influenced preceding centuries.*

*The Roman Empire spread to all corners of the globe with a massive influence on landscapes we see today.*

*The Italian Renaissance influenced Europe for many thousands of years that followed.....*

One reason for the Renaissance may have been *the opening of the Plutonic Academy*. Such misspellings may be a wonderful source of quite new terms, such as *Lynchnuts* (terracing), or *The Gorbles* (Glasgow slums). An inability to spell may be *oquad* for sufferers, yet bring delight to an examiner's heart. Only a genius could invent *arasocrates* for "aristocrats". Unusual spelling is one of the charms of *the Brownian Period of the 18th century*, about which it is also pleasing to be told that:

*Brown's romantic landscapes were idilic where deer grazed they were no longer for hunting but for strolling and having afternoon tea.*

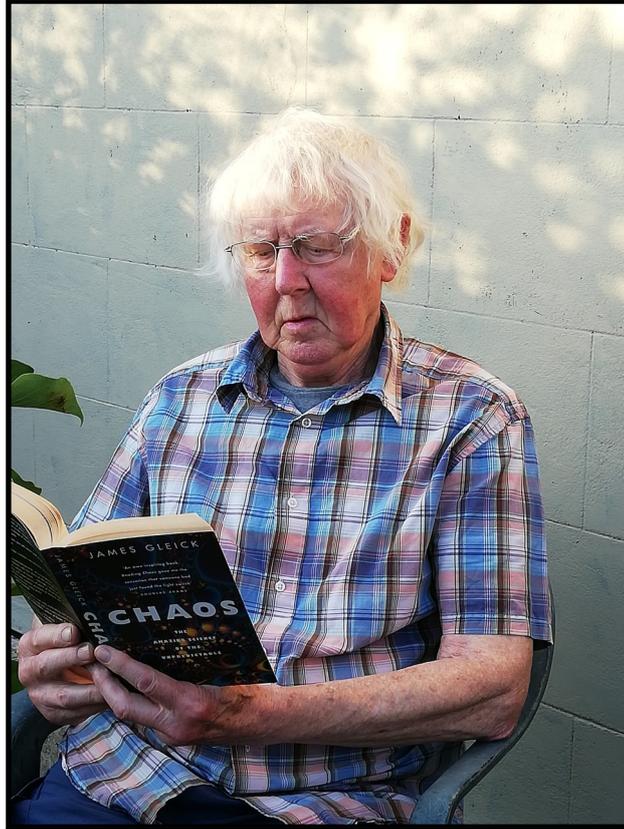
though that is not what I said in my lecture. Nor is the following:

*The Romantic Period was initiated in painting such as the collapsed landscape by Poussin; this was in the cubism period.....*

The following are not entirely wrong, but not quite right either:

*Since the amount of the workforce increased, there was an increase of food supply because the workforce now don't do any farming . . .*

*In the 18th c in Britain the country was covered with local peasant feugal systems..... Suddenly the country was split up into easily managed sizes. This started the geometric idea in Britain.*



Geometry was taken even further in North America, where:

*Land was divided up into small areas and each piece used for human consumption. Soils were exhausted by none-too-careful misuse and the Prairies became a complete grid of railway lines.*

Luckily for America help was at hand, thus:

*Paxton was involved in the design of many Royal parks including Central Park in New York.*

The start of our Special Relationship perhaps? I didn't know that -- nor this:

*Gothic started off by landscaping little bits of European countryside,*

Whereas (sad to say):

*Stripping declined in the 18th century.....The peasants now turned to other manufacturing methods or warfare.*

Those peasants obviously needed sensitive handling:

*Parks were provided to quell the masses -- indeed: Parks were all the rage!*

But parks could be more peaceful. *You could simply stroll or languish on the grass, encouraged perhaps by Britain's laid-back Protestant faith.* Not as in Europe though, where:

*Baroque religion presented a Grandesque approach, used to control and almost beat into submission the proletariat.*

Italian design has usually been more sophisticated: *Dynastic families expressed this confidence with gardens that followed through logical progressions up terraces trigonometrically honed to enlightened higher points.....*

Though Italy had its rougher side also, as in ancient Rome, when:

*All these factors created a slightly violent yet frightfully fruitful era.*

The English of course stay aloof from all this:

*The Grand Tour visited many regions of central Europe, ie within France and Spain....*

Perhaps we are haunted by folk memories of the time when:

*Barbarians from the continent invaded Britain and took over. This was the Norman Conquest.....* (and we've had trouble with the blighters ever since).

So much for history. Still more novel approaches are offered on the profession itself:

## **On landscape design**

Actually this is rather good:

*The word Landscape Architecture is deceiving, as landscape design is a completely different kettle of fish to Architecture. For a start, landscape is a process that is ongoing and continuously changing unlike architecture which becomes out of date before a tree has even reached maturity.*

Top marks to that -- but not to these:

*Landscapes are designed not just with Art in mind but also Aesthetics. For the Aesthetics to look good.....*

*Another component of landscape design is RHYME: after all "mat" and "rat" rhyme but they are not the same.*

Or these:

*Space is only meaningful within a schema of*

*familiar memorability. Aesthetic response must co-exist with that of the scape around it. Aesthetic human needs are for aesthetic experience which is comparable to delight and aesthetic enjoyment which is higher than aesthetic experience.....*

The social purpose of design is sometimes better understood:

*A landscape must challenge the intellect and always contain children.*

A nice thought -- though not for all of us, it seems, since:

*The creation of children causes a lot of problems to the landscape architect.*

Sociological concepts cause more uncertainty, maybe because society itself is something

*to which we have had nowhere near enough time to adapt entirely too.*

Take the concept of TERRITORY for example:

*A good example of a territory is a cemetery.*

Difficult to argue with that! But the following animalistic explanation is less convincing:

*The home range is where the Bear goes around, there will be a smaller area where no other Bears can go, this is where the Bear reproduces.*

Animals certainly do have territories of course, or habitats, *ie: Places for bats to hang out*, which is as neat a definition as any. PLANTS also have territories: *In these areas larger uncontrollable plants are left to do as they please.* Perhaps a solution to *the seriously unreformed vegetation along the avenues at Versailles,*

This now brings us to the inexhaustible subject of:

## **Hard and soft landscape**

To start with, such important concepts must be clearly defined:

*An example of a soft landscape could be the ground around Chatsworth House on the other side of the river its mostly natural but was designed by Capability Brown who I've talked*

*about earlier.*

*The awe of a Giant Oak is much different to the beauty of a primrose. In very hard landscaped areas vegetative lubrication can soften the whole aesthetic of the scene.*

To complete our understanding we have this account of Urban landscape:

*There are two forms of components : Hard are immobile and defined, such as paths, large trees, rock outcrops.....Soft elements, such as water features and undergrowth, are more innocuously ingrained into the urban fabric.....Structural aspects of hard forms usually override the soft forms eg a brick wall or raised outcrop bedded and flowered.*

Problems with shortcutting? Then try *Barbarus*, a spiny shrub for deterring pedestrians.

If you ever doubted the structural value of plants on their own however, be reassured:

*Single or double rows of perennials can be used to separate buildings from monotonous urban scenes. Historically plants have always been hugely important, as in Egypt where:*

*Such examples would later develop into the huge orchards and flower beds of monstries.*

Meaning Orchards presumably? We can be more subtle if we turn to:

*The self-effacing dominating role of Geometry, in which: Corners are a good form of separation as they cannot be seen around.*

Such unbeatably Zen abstraction may help to unravel the abstruse topic of Hard landscape, thus: *The brick is an important component of the basic horizontal and vertical form language of hard landscape. Brickwork offers considerable potential variability in the form of constructed structures; sheer vertical walls of linearly aligned bricks or intricate detailed structures constructed around the basic offsetting and overlapping of brick units..... Its message can be direct..... Walls twelve metres high do firmly say Keep Out..... Indeed they do at that height! However: A soft-hard option is a wall with planters on the top giving a softer look.*

Though sadly not 12 metres up. Happily a less dominating kind of structure altogether is offered by the attractive feature of a *Gnome wall*..... More usually known, I think, as a Dwarf wall – which only now do I realise is just as quaint. Was this student merely pulling my leg? Perhaps they all were, through all those twenty-five years, even in this final assessment of the fate of humanity in the hands of landscape design: *There is now the chance of creating a truly hellish environment, where the buildings are unforgivingly brutal and the soft landscape nothing but the dense impenetrable thickets which have scared men from the beginning of time.....*

A fearful vision, to be taken as a warning against the careless imposition of Nature in Cities: nature green in tooth and claw. But perhaps we worry too much, since:

*It would seem you could slap nature in some people's faces and they still wouldn't see it.*

So there!

**OM** one time lecturer, Sheffield University

## JULIAN GLOVER'S 'DESIGNATED LANDSCAPES' REVIEW

By Professor Paul Selman

With a spirited nudge in the right direction, landscape can become part of the national



conversation. The Designated Landscapes Review is a timely document which has the potential to mainstream landscape into political and social discourse.

LRG members, of course, fully appreciate landscape's nature and significance. The importance of a topic, however, rests on public understanding and concern. For much of the population, landscape may mean little more than a page orientation in a Word document.

Julian Glover's review (see below) stands a sporting chance of putting landscape into the public and political eye as a key topic of civic concern.

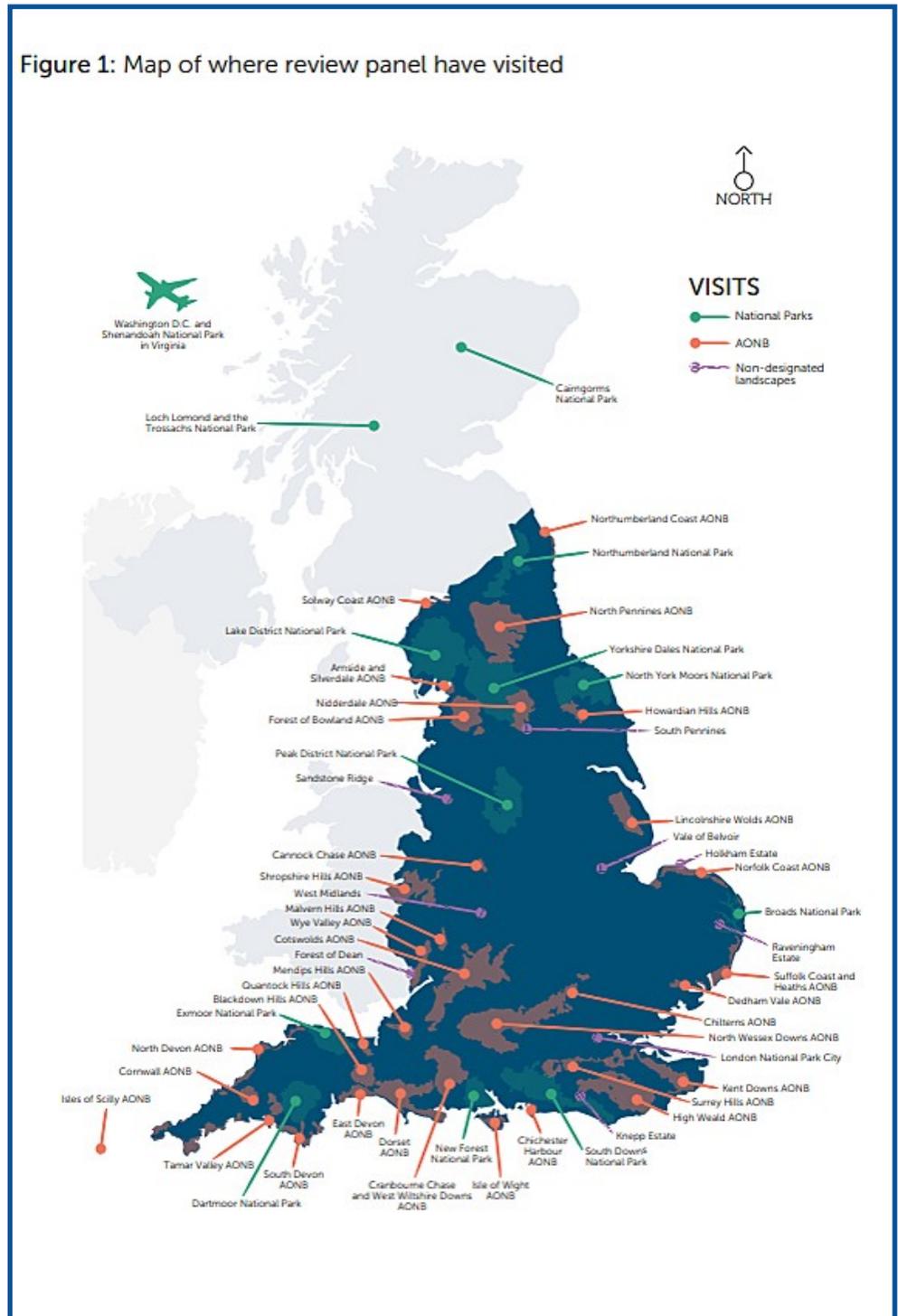
It is not quite there yet – perhaps because of an impossibly wide remit – but with some savvy advocacy the Review still has the potential to change mindsets.

The Review's key points range from wildlife recovery to affordable housing, from new designations to carbon capture, and include some eye-catching proposals such as recommending every child has a chance to “spend a night under the stars”. Hardly anything in Glover's review is new, but at least it reflects up-to-date landscape thinking, particularly in relation to multifunctionality and social inclusivity. Its principal virtue lies in praising the original ideas behind National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, whilst emphasising new agendas that could not initially have been foreseen. It makes no bones about the need for protected landscape policy to adapt radically to modern concerns if it is to re-

main fit-for-purpose.

From the landscape science perspective, the report emphasises the role of protected areas as hubs for habitat recovery, re-connection, resilience and carbon capture. In terms of landscape planning and management, there are numerous recommendations for streamlining procedures and modernising ranger services. There is also a long overdue recommendation to scrap the term AONB, an acronym which few people get in the right order and even fewer understand. Regarding the extent

Figure 1: Map of where review panel have visited



of designated landscapes, there are calls for new national parks and multifunctional forests. From the social standpoint, the Review re-appraises obligations towards social and economic wellbeing, and shows how more could be done to provide affordable housing, public transport and social inclusion.

Overall, the report will contain few surprises for members of LRG. However, this lack of surprise is possibly the Review's greatest strength, insofar as it integrates received wisdom with persuasive political rhetoric.

The Review has many virtues. We might question whether its proposed National Landscapes Service is the best administrative solution, but at least it demonstrates the need for joined-up thinking and delivery. Its proposals for promoting wildlife recovery are well-conceived, but remain speculative given the policy flux in which the UK currently finds itself. Some of the recommendations on social provision and inclusion are timely. The countryside is an iconic part of British national identity and it is a matter of concern if sections of society feel unwelcome there. Equally, topics such as housing and transport are generic rural issues, qualitatively different from the core landscape agenda, and the Review rightly touches on them no more than necessary.

Personally, I hope the Review is championed at the highest level and does not fall on deaf ears. There is a need for clarity, practicality and radical vision in landscape planning which, broadly speaking, Glover's Review achieves. One challenge will be to sell this agenda to the wider population. Few people will be familiar with its jargon – I doubt if even the proposed National Landscapes Service will pass into common parlance. Perhaps the only landscape concept, in addition to "national park" which has gained widespread public endorsement is "green belt", itself a concept in need of radical and imaginative re-invention. How about referring to nationally important landscapes as "national parks" and the remainder of our green infrastructure, from inner cities to the Solway Coast, as

"green belt"? Just a thought. I'm sure you will have your own suggestions if you read this timely document, to be found at [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/833163/landscapes-review-final-report.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/833163/landscapes-review-final-report.pdf)

## Notes

Writings by Paul Selman include the following:

**Environmental Planning:** The conservation and management of biophysical resources. Paul Chapman Publishing Ltd, 1992.

**Sustainable Landscape Planning:** the Reconnection Agenda. Published by Routledge, 2012

## TWO VIEWS OF HEAVEN

By Owen Manning

In Minehead this summer, walking the high hills above the town, I discovered Heaven – twice in a single day, each time stirring intense though quite different emotions.

I hadn't been looking for Heaven, merely for reminders of a spectacular area where Somerset meets the Bristol Channel along miles of high wooded coastline visited years before on foot and bike: conquering gradients, wandering the airy uplands amidst drifts of flowers, defying vertigo on great plunging slopes above hidden cliffs. Dorset's coast only last summer offered similar pleasures – yet with a hint of Something Wrong (why should my right leg need so much help?). Much happened in the months following, and in Minehead now the question was whether I could get myself up to the airy heights at all.

Well, I did, by way of a frustrating route offering promises never delivered; Heaven came as unexpected reward when I emerged from scruffy woodland – OK: rare maritime forest, but I'd had enough of it – into sunlight at last. Green pathways wound invitingly through banks of flowering broom and

heather, and a hint of things to come drew me down one of these till I was stopped in my tracks by an overgrown concrete bunker, relic of wartime. It was there for a reason: the entire Bristol Channel, it seemed, opened out beyond in a shimmering expanse of shifting light and colour: marvellous, exhilarating. Far to the west it ran, into a glittering haze; and northwards to the merest glimpse of another, distant coast: Wales of course.

I'd hoped for this, recalling an astounding long-ago view from the greater heights of Exmoor, of an entire country of towns, fields and woods suddenly appearing like a mirage on the open sea, seeming almost near enough to touch. Then I had shouted in amazement: I'd forgotten Wales! Now this fainter view of our neighbour across the Channel brought an intense satisfaction: good, I thought, it's still there. This was a good place to have found.

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But turning eastwards brought something else. Expecting to see the Channel narrowing inland between approaching shorelines, I was confronted instead by an infinity of space and colour. All land, all borders, seemed to have disappeared. I had a sense of unearthly beauty; I felt as though gazing over an ocean, unknowable, out of place and time. It was a moment of almost shattering emotion, hard to describe or explain, for no special memory lay here, just a connection with something vast and deep. Physical frailty might have contributed. Yet landscapes – and music often – have done this before, knocking me off my unsteady perch in moments of profound, bewildering joy (with grief never far behind). Wherever it came from, now at least it set me up for more to come.

And come it did as I explored further, wandering dreamily beyond the inevitable parked cars and picnic spots, to seek eventually, as tiredness grew, a better way down than the way I'd come up. A previously unnoticed path led me through woodland to another gate, and I stepped through into Paradise.

I was in a sunlit grove, on a hill-top. Dark pines stirred in a gentle breeze, high above; dark trunks rose one after another out of golden grasses; a soft green path wandered through. Gazing one way between the trees, over a meadow and beyond the woodland which had frustrated me earlier, blue sea reached towards distant Wales. Beyond the pines eastward, the path led out into further

sunlit meadows, on and down and over and down again to further, lower woodland. Further still, Minehead could be glimpsed below, and the curving Somerset coast beyond.

Intense emotion seized me again: no confrontation with Infinity now but a prolonged ecstatic recognition of almost every kind of landscape which had ever entranced me, from childhood. Sunlit glades, trees on hill-tops (but why *pin*es so especially?), magical woodland edges, golden grasses blowing in the wind, soft green paths through rolling meadows, endlessly spreading landscapes full of settled human life. I couldn't leave this enchanted place, till sheer sensory and emotional overload (sodden handkerchiefs!) impelled me to follow the path out – to find Paradise continuing, for these lovely rolling meadows were full of flowers in every direction, glowing in the late sunshine. Don't ask me what kinds (were some even known to science?) but as I looked back at last, over the flowery expanse and up towards the distant hilltop trees, with the sea a constant shimmering expanse to one side, I felt I was in Heaven, and said so, aloud – to make sure I was heard.

A final gate and steep plunge through woodland and I was suddenly back in Minehead, where I still couldn't stop walking, for hours. That path down might have been by far the best way up to North Hill, had I known, but it didn't matter now. Two versions of Heaven filled my mind: the one cosmic, unknowable; the other an inexhaustible garden of delights ..... I'll be happy with either, or both, when the Time comes.

## OM

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