Landscape Issues

An anthology of recent editorials (2015-2025)

Robert Moore (journal editor) June 2026

THE JOY OF BIRDSONG

I have been rereading the Rev. Gilbert White's *Natural History and Antiquities of Selborne*. First published in 1789, it has been continuously in print since then. It's essentially a collection of letters sent by White to two friends, the zoologist Thomas Pennant and explorer and naturalist Daines Barrington. The letters, written in a charming, accessible style, recount his observations and theories about the local Hampshire wildlife in the pre-industrial age, a time now irretrievably gone. What makes the book special, however, is that it is essentially a systematic field study of the flora and fauna of the parish of Selborne, of which White was curate. He can justifiably be regarded as the first ecologist, even before the term was invented. James Lovelock likes "… to think of him as one of the first to make us aware that we share the stunningly beautiful Earth with a multitude of other species".

As a clergyman it would be natural for him to feel gratitude for nature being part of divine creation, but it is also probable that he derived much secular pleasure from his connection with wildlife, what today we might describe as health and wellbeing benefits. Indeed he does mention inter alia the joy ("the wild sweetness") on hearing the song of a blackcap and fears an absence of rural sounds should he ever become deaf (Letters III and XXII to Barrington). It is well-known that a dose of birdsong lifts the spirits and a recent study in Germany sought to assess actual positive emotions by recording physiological changes. Reporting in *Landscape and Urban Planning*, a research team led by Christoph Randler measured blood pressure, heart rate and cortisol levels (a marker of stress) in groups of volunteers before and after taking half-hour random walks through a city park. Participants recorded significantly improved psychological and physiological outcomes: their cortisol levels and heart rates decreased confirming restorative benefits. Overall the team concluded that bird diversity affects human wellbeing by enhancing the acoustic imprint (soundscape) and that raising awareness of birdsong is conducive to a positive appreciation of the environment.
In the poem *The Naturalist's Summer Evening Walk* (Letter XXIV to Pennant), Gilbert White offers his personal view of Selborne's natural world at dusk, but it is more than simple description; it's a meditation celebrating the beauty and harmony of nature, ecologically in balance, with a soundscape animated by birds and insects. His theology emerges subtly, validating the Latin caption's sentiments, but arguably the poem is deferential to the primacy of scientific observation and, not forgetting birdsong, audition.

The black-cap by
Thomas Bewick
[Wikimedia:public domain]

THE NATURALIST'S SUMMER-EVENING WALK
…equidem credo, quia sit diviniyus illis ingenium [VIRGIL Georgics]

When day declining sheds a milder gleam,
What time the may-fly haunts the pool or stream;
When the still owl skims round the grassy mead,
What time the timorous hare limps forth to feed;

Then be the time to steal adown the vale,
And listen to the vagrant cuckoo's tale;
To hear the clamorous curlew call his mate,
Or the soft quail his tender pain relate;
To see the swallow sweep the dark'ning plain
Belated, to support her infant train;
To mark the swift in rapid giddy ring
Dash round the steeple, unsubdu'd of wing:
Amusive birds! – say where your hid retreat
When the frost rages and the tempests beat;
Whence your return, by such nice instinct led,
When spring, soft season, lifts her bloomy head?
Such baffled searches mock man's prying pride,
The God of Nature is your secret guide!
While deep'ning shades obscure the face of day
To yonder bench leaf-shelter'd let us stray,
Till blended objects fail the swimming sight,
And all the fading landscape sinks in night;
To hear the drowsy dor come brushing by
With buzzing wing, or the shrill cricket cry;
To see the feeding bat glance through the wood;
To catch the distant falling of the flood;
While o'er the cliff th'awakened churn-owl hung
Through the still gloom protracts his chattering song;
While high in air, and pois'd upon his wings,
Unseen, the soft, enamour'd woodlark sings:
These, Nature's works, the curious mind employ,
Inspire a soothing melancholy joy:
As fancy warms, a pleasing kind of pain
Steals o'er the cheek, and thrills the creeping vein!
Each rural sight, each sound, each smell, combine;
The tinkling sheep-bell, or the breath of kine;
The new-mown hay that scents the swelling breeze,
Or cottage-chimney smoking through the trees.
The chilling night-dews fall: away, retire;
For see, the glow-worm lights her amorous fire!
Thus, ere night's veil had half obscur'd the sky,
Th'impatient damsel hung her lamp on high:
True to the signal, by love's meteor led,
Leander hasten'd to his Hero's bed.

Gilbert White 1769

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Landscape Issues Editorial vol 23 September 2024

SPECIAL PLACES

This year's John Simpson Memorial Lecture, given by Eleanor Rawling, explored the landscapes of Gloucestershire seen through the poems of Ivor Gurney, particularly memorable, she claimed, for the "clarity and distinctiveness" of his images inspired by the streets of old Gloucester, the river banks and meadowlands of the Severn, and the high hills and scarp edges of the Cotswolds.

The talk was sprinkled with selections from various poems, complemented by identifiable locations with unique descriptions, but also with meaningful references to his feelings and emotional attachment to such places. Her recently published book, *Walking Gloucestershire with Ivor Gurney*, which I'd bought earlier in the year, had stirred me into visiting these places, some I'd never been to before despite having lived many years in Gloucester.

I started exploring the Minsterworth bank of the Severn, not long after a bore had passed (Figure 1, with Gloucester's Robinswood Hill appearing in the distance). Here was a serene landscape, green, damp and low, with willow at the water's edge. No traffic noise but a warm southerly wind forcing the apples to fall from riparian orchards. Old Gloucester varieties in abundance, reminiscent of Gurney's time, over 100 years ago. When I first started teaching on the landscape course in Cheltenham, a colleague Martin Spray took me to Ravensgate Hill overlooking that town, my first view of the amazing Cotswold edge and the Vale of Gloucester. I knew little of Gurney then, but I could well understand the powerful attraction of the landscape. Martin was an ecologist and that's what he taught, but he was much more: he brought culture, ethics, play and poetry into his landscape contemplations. It was here we first discussed Appleton's prospect-refuge theory. That viewpoint (Figure 2) was then, and still is, a very special place to me. What is it that makes it special? Can it be about first impressions of natural beauty in such a vista, or how you are feeling in the moment, maybe the anticipation of new surroundings. And nostalgia: Martin died a couple of years ago and this place inevitably evokes special memories for me.

Figure 1 Severnside orchards at Minsterworth, Grid Ref: SO778166

I have taken level one landscape architecture students along the Cotswold Way to Ravensgate Hill annually for more years I care to remember. It's a good place to orientate new recruits to the local geography. Here landscape science can be introduced: geology and landform, vegetation and landuse. But not just these sciences – trying to evoke the genius loci, I'll recite some poetry, sometimes Ivor Gurney's *Up There* which recalls times past: the many archaeo-logical finds of Roman Britain.

On Cotswold edge there is a field and that
Grows thick with corn and speedwell and the mat
Of thistles, of the tall kind; Rome lived there,
Some hurt centurion got his grant or tenure,
Built farm with fowls and pigsties and wood-piles,
Waited for service custom between whiles.
The farmer ploughs up coins in the wet-earth time,
He sees them on the topple of crests gleam,
Or run down furrow; and halts and does let them lie
Like a small black island in brown immensity,
Red pottery easy discovered, no searching needed…
One wonders what farms were like, no searching needed,
As now the single kite hovering still
By the coppice there, level with the flat of the hill.

It's a useful introduction to other ways of perceiving and appreciating landscape as in this extract he talks mainly of history, but also ecology and biodiversity. People develop a type of attachment to some places bringing a uniquely personal sense of place, involving meaningful

connections with and intense caring for these landscapes. Poets and artists have a singular kind of appreciation of 'being in place', but the experience is available to everyone. One visitor to this sublime site (the so-called 'walking Englishman') posted the following on his blog:

"As I climbed Ravensgate Hill I could sense a WOW moment. The more I climbed the more the views to the west, north and east revealed themselves and they were simply fantastic. With the sun now out from its milky cloud canopy the Vale of Evesham looked stunning, as did the mountains beyond. I sat on a bench, took lunch and enjoyed a brilliant refreshment break taking in the magnificence of it all. There is no better place than Britain in summer and I was looking at its beauty as I rested. A gentleman approached me and stopped to talk a while. We both revelled in the view we were enjoying and he told me the story of how JR Tolkein took inspiration from this view and used it for the structure of Middle Earth in his Lord of the Rings trilogy. After learning that I said farewell and resumed my walk, in the rich knowledge that I not only know more about wild flowers but also about British classical literature too. Walks have surprising revelations."

[from http://www.walkingenglish-man.com/cotswolds05.html]

It is a classic viewpoint, framed by the Cotswolds escarpment to the east, the Malverns in the west and Cheltenham sitting snugly in an embayment off the Vale of Gloucester. The Vale of Evesham mentioned in the piece is further north. In a world of Google imagery, virtual and augmented reality and artificially intelligent cloned images all available on our screens at a touch or a swipe, there is a case we can do without nature immersion. But a growing body of research points to the beneficial effects that exposure to the natural world has on health, reducing stress and promoting healing. Ivor Gurney had severe mental problems and, once admitted to Dartford hospital, London, he never returned to his beloved Gloucestershire landscapes. We can only speculate what effect a return visit to his 'special places' might have had. We all need our own special places to ground us both physically and psychologically. Discover them, visit them, cherish them, conserve them.

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Landscape Issues Editorial vol 22 September 2023

RETRACTION FROM A REVOLUTIONARY RESET

Three years on from introducing architecture and planning into our portfolio to accompany landscape architecture, we now find ourselves in a renamed School of Creative Arts, the result of a recent university administrative 'reset' to fix structural financial problems. The new courses also included construction project management and interior architecture and design, so along with urban planning and landscape architecture the vision was to offer a coherent set of vocationally-focused programmes for planning and design education in the built environment.

The documentation for these courses emphasised these aims: (1) to encourage student engagement with relevant 21st century issues through understanding the natural and designed environment, the social community and cultural history, design and planning theory, the promotion of health and wellbeing; (2) that students develop a passion for the subject, becoming creative, innovative, technically-competent, experimental but ethically-informed; and (3) that students in their co-located studios find design solutions for both people and planet by collaborating within their cohort and across disciplines, recognising the value of the roles of sister environmental professions.

But the pandemic, recent UK economic downturns and promotional difficulties (despite the buoyancy of the job market) have restricted recruitment so what we now offer as a coherent portfolio is more evolution than revolution. The synergy of a combined portfolio was first recognised more than sixty years ago when the then Faculty of Environmental Design in the Cheltenham College of Art fostered the co-delivery of cognate courses. In the 1960s architecture, planning and landscape were closely integrated sharing a common first year, a unified education with a concern for a unified environment. In subsequent years, students were to act as 'consultants' in their fields to projects undertaken in others, to reinforce such an approach.

Our new prospectus represents perhaps a step on the road back to the holistic underpinning of this former pedagogy. Simply put, we will teach efficiently inter and intra the disciplines, urging students to be mindful of future employment and empathetic team working. Further, we will ensure students take an informed position in the current climate, biodiversity and energy debates, and be cognisant of trends in artificial intelligence, CAD and GIS and appreciate the professional work implications. All this through research and active practice.

Our course archive includes a copy of the 1966-67 art college prospectus from which I have extracted verbatum below the description and principles of the landscape architecture course then being offered. Can we still take something from it to apply to our 2023-24 course and for the years ahead?

From the Gloucestershire College of Art Prospectus for full-time courses 1966-7

THE COURSE
The three full time courses, Architecture, Landscape Architecture and Town Planning are closely integrated and share a common first year. This first year is regarded as a probationary year for all students, at the end of which all work is carefully assessed. On the successful completion of the first year a student may, with the approval of his tutor, apply for transfer to either of the other two courses.
Minimum entry requirements for all three courses demand passes in five GCE subjects including two at Advanced level. (It should be noted that the following subjects are not acceptable: Engineering Drawing, Mechanical Drawing, Needlework, and Woodwork). All students are also required to possess 'O' level GCE passes in English Language and Mathematics and should be 17 years of age by 1 June of the year of entry.
Application forms and any further information relating to the Architecture, Landscape or Town Planning Courses may be obtained from the Secretary, School of Architecture and Landscape, Gloucestershire College of Art, Pittville, Cheltenham.

STAGE I First Year (Probationary)
The first year of the course in all three disciplines is devoted to the fundamental consideration of design criteria. Firstly a study is made of the functional influences of use, structure and human

perception on elemental design. This is followed by the consideration of time as an influence on design and involves the student in a concen-trated study of social and economic history as well as the histories of architecture, planning, landscape and art. Finally a study is made of the given factors influencing design when matters relating to the land are given consideration. Here the student is involved in the study of geology, climate, and economic geography. In each of these three main sections of the first two terms, students are expected to produce graphic, written, oral and three dimensional testimonies of their study, all of which is taken into account in the final assessment of the first year's work.
In addition, students study the qualities and limitations of basic building materials and visits are made to workshops converting these materials into usable elements.
Students are also given instruction in various communication techniques including graphic, three dimensional, written and oral delivery. Theoretical and practical training in land surveying is also given to first year students.
In the final term of the first year all students are jointly engaged on an environmental survey of a selected area near Cheltenham, resulting in both individual and joint treatises respectively dealing with a specific aspect and general conclusions, all of which is intended to offer the first year student the opportunity of applying the principles of his first year environmental studies and bringing him to the threshold of design.
Students of architecture who have not gained 'A' level physics may be required to attend supplementary lectures in physics during the first year whilst landscape students will be required to attend supplementary lectures in botany.
With the exception of surveying and levelling, no formal sessional examinations are held at the end of the first year, the measure of a student's capability being entirely assessed on the basis of his testimonies submitted during the course of the year.
Each student is interviewed following an examination of his portfolio and successful students then pass to Stage II of the Course. The opportunity exists at this point in the course for students to deflect to an alternative discipline, subject to the approval of his tutor and the agreement of the Board of Studies.

STAGE II (Years 2, 3 and 4)
In the second year each discipline undertakes a course of more specialised training specifically related to more detailed aspects of design criteria. Students of architecture embark on a concentrated study of the physical environment of man wherein they consider anthropometrics, light, heat and sound. Each section is preceded by a lecture series contributed to by various specialist lecturers including members from the Department of Ergonomics and Cybernetics, Loughborough College of Technology, also practical experiments under the direction of our own specialised staff at the laboratories of the North Gloucestershire Technical College, and finally specially directed design programmes intended to offer particular experience in the specific facets of environment under consideration. Students of landscape spend their second year in residence at the Pershore Institute of Horticulture (Principal: R. F. Martyr, BSc(Hort), with whom the School works in close co-operation) where again the emphasis is placed on the ecological principles of landscape design with special programmes being given to exercise the students on selected aspects of study. The opportunity is also given at Pershore for the students to develop a closer familiarity with the organic materials of Landscape.
Students of planning begin in their second year a series of planning studies which continues throughout the remainder of the course, the subjects increasing in complexity as the students' knowledge and ability increases. The main subject in the second year is the study of a small town. This is carried out within the context of a given set of regional factors, the work of survey and analysis leading to the formulation of proposals which are presented individually in reports, maps, diagrams and models.
Particular reference to the study of technology is applied from the third term of Stage II onwards, but it is the intention of the School that technology should not be considered in any way separate from design, the criteria forming the basic fundamentals for design development equally applying to technological considerations.
In the third year all three disciplines again combine at Cheltenham to carry out joint comprehensive schemes, the architects being engaged on specifically architectural problems but using the landscape and planning students as consultants, and similarly the landscape students being engaged on landscape problems but using the architects and planners as consultants and so on.
The joint scheme is one of redevelopment, consequently the planning students' work is in detail this year. The object here is to encourage conditions similar to those which are most likely to obtain in future practice.
At the end of the third year all students are required to pass a Comprehensive Design Examination and possess a complete and fully approved portfolio prior to entry into the final year of Stage II. During their fourth year students of architecture are required to complete two major and two subsidiary testimonies of study as well as continuing advanced instruction in

technical subjects.
Students of landscape spend their fourth year engaged on their thesis and research project.
Students of planning spend part of the fourth year engaged on their final testimonies of study, and tackle a regional scheme.

STAGE III Practical and professional training
All three disciplines spend their fifth year gaining practical experience in their respective professions.
Students of architecture return for one year's full time study in their sixth year in which they produce their final major thesis as well as receiving instruction in specific subjects related to office practice including cost planning, quantities and office management. A further twelve months practical experience is required before final professional qualification. (See professional requirements).
Students of landscape are eligible to apply to sit for their final examination in professional practice as soon as they have completed their fifth year.
Students of planning are required to continue for one further year of practical experience before becoming eligible for associate membership of the Town Planning Institute.
College diplomas in architecture, landscape, and planning are awarded to students successfully completing their respective total full time courses.

Pittville landscape studios in the 1960s

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Landscape Issues Editorial Vol 21 September 2022

TOO HOT, TOO DRY, TOO SUNNY. USING MICROCLIMATE TO TEMPER THE EXTREMES

Date: Thursday 11th August 2022. Late morning. The day is heating up. Yesterday it reached 36°C in my garden (Gloucester city). News headlines scream a probable drought crisis looming. No rain forecast for the UK south; just "sunny, dry, hot". Released Met Office satellite images contrast green Britain weeks ago with brown Britain now. The driest summer for 50 years. You get the picture. Still remember it? The doom scenario also embraced the announcement of wildfires and restriction on portable barbecues. South west France and the American west reported fires out of control. High temperatures and dry vegetation the culprits. It's a European, a global catastrophe. Warnings and conspiracy theories abound: what to do, why bother, whose fault?

Baroness Young on the radio blamed the ill-preparedness of governments not doing anything with issues until they became crises: "Never try to do anything between the flash and the bang" she warned. Sufficiently advanced planning is what is needed. We have got to take the long view. Not just building more reservoirs – that should be the last resort. Tony Juniper of Natural England asserts that our environment is degraded, dessicated, quoting the loss of 90% of our wetlands over 100 years. We need to rewet the floodplain, revive peatlands, fenlands and coastal marshes. There are triumphs in the cities: formerly buried rivers have been 'exposed' – taken out of culverts – and bringing multiple benefits climatically and socially to the citizens. In Seoul the restored Cheonggye-cheon river is cited as a landscape success. Can London's Fleet or even Cheltenham's river Chelt be similarly transformed?

But returning to the summer of '22 heatwave, what can be done to cool the climate? Reducing CO_2 emissions is fundamental. But at a local level, following the Notre Dame fire in Paris, landscape architect Bas Smets was appointed to turn the Ile de la Cité into a "verdant paradise" and thwart the heat island effect by drawing on microclimatic expertise. While global heating is global, he contends working at a smaller scale can make a big difference. You have to understand a site intimately in order to improve its resilience to extreme climate events by "using shade, humidity, wind and water to lower the temperature in the heart of Paris". The parvis in front of the cathedral is to be covered daily in a film of water which evaporates so cooling the air, just one feature unarguably drawing on Islamic tradition. Modern air-conditioning technology must be avoided. Such systems only generate more heat in other locations.

We need to learn from vernacular techniques that have been tried and tested for centuries. We need to understand the science of microclimatology. How to optimise the climatic potential of a site, modifying temperatures with attention to thermal properties of buildings, landscape materials and their surface reflectivities. Knowledge and consideration of the sun's seasonal and daily trajectory. (Tree) species selection that moderates high temperatures and humidity equably by transpiration. Reducing or promoting air movement (wind) for shelter or cooling. Learning about air quality and pollution. Yet more prerequisites for landscape architects. Get tooled up for the new normal.

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Landscape Issues Editorial vol 20, May 2021

A CASTLE IN THE AIR IN CHELTENHAM: THE REALISATION OF A LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE DREAM

1961. The year the Beatles first appeared in the Cavern Club in Liverpool. It was the year Spurs achieved the double: league title and FA cup. The farthing ceased to be legal tender in the UK. It was also the year that landscape architecture education began in makeshift studios in the Pump Room, Cheltenham, possibly the grandest of the town's Regency buildings.

But what were the beginnings of this course? Who were the major players in its creation? Why Cheltenham? What were the early years like? While over some time I have accumulated anecdotal evidence from former staff and students, notably John Simpson and Peter Boswell, it is really thanks to information revealed in Stuart Sutcliffe's letters that I am able to describe the context of the nascent course in landscape architecture in some detail.

Stuart Sutcliffe was, from September 1959, a member of staff at the Cheltenham College of Art, responsible with three others for the teaching of architecture there. Times were difficult for non-university-based courses and many, including Cheltenham, were threatened with closure, but the RIBA accreditation panel that year recommended a stay of execution if only the local authority (Gloucestershire) could guarantee a "great deal more in the way of resources". The buck got passed around between RIBA, the college and the authority – there was even a suggestion for a new university to be built at Staverton Airport, but that faded – until the architecture staff themselves decided to grasp the nettle and make a case for developing a course that "did not ape other better endowed schools, but that had a uniqueness that grew from our surroundings and local resources: the art college, the technical college and schools, local skills and offices, and most of all the local environment of the Cotswolds" (1).

The curriculum was to be restructured and design projects would be focused on the rural (farmland and villages) and urban environments (parks and towns). Previously Stuart Sutcliffe had worked for Crawley Development Corporation where many housing developments involved contributions from landscape architects, sometimes including Bodfan Gruffydd who had arrived at Crawley from Harlow to take over from Derek Lovejoy as chief landscape architect to the new town. "Whereas Derek had had an architectonic approach to landscape, Bodfan's was organic, building on landform and climate, creating place shelter and always providing something for the eye". This new insight into the relationship of architecture and its environment was to inspire Stuart to conclude "Who better to introduce this programme of relating building design to specific environments than Bodfan Gruffydd?"

So Bodfan was initially invited to give two introductory talks on the rural scene and urban landscapes. During his preparatory visits, evening discussions ranged widely and "expanded on the idea of architects learning through landscape to landscape architects sharing the same opportunities. Why not a full-time landscape course?" Realising that the landscape architecture course at Reading was winding down, Bodfan, as the then chairman of the education committee of the ILA under the presidency of Sylvia Crowe, was only too aware of the continuing need for official recognition of the profession through formal educational provision, certainly in a period of obvious expansion. (The employment of landscape architects in local authorities had trebled during the decade.)

Several meetings followed in November 1960, one in particular being held at Stuart's house in Charlton Kings. It was the first meeting of the key protagonists: Messrs Tolson (HMI), Reggie Dent (college principal), Ian Abbott (head of school), Bodfan Gruffydd and Stuart Sutcliffe. Bodfan recalls amusingly being greeted by the principal with "My God, a hooker in the scrum!" – an astonishing comment given that it was the one thing Bodfan excelled at at school. "How on earth did you know that?" "Oh I can pick 'em anywhere". With that the ice was broken, they chatted about rugby over coffee, the meeting progressed, the main agenda item expanded on their castle in the air and the "landscape school was born" (2) with Reggie Dent declaring that such a course "would go like a bomb in Cheltenham" (3).

With the decision confirmed to start a full-time course in landscape architecture in September 1961 ("only ten months away") and to integrate it with the architectural programme, the period that followed was a very active one in terms of further negotiations (with the local authority, the Institute of Landscape Architects and with the College of Horticulture at Pershore) which involved course planning, imperative publicity (there had to be a viable number of applicants, interviewed and places offered) and the appointment of qualified staff.

By good fortune, Bodfan's brother-in-law was director of education for Gloucestershire and it came to light that the local education authorities of Gloucestershire and Worcestershire had a reciprocal sharing arrangement which meant the horticultural facilities at Pershore came under discussion in a mutually advantageous way. "Thus it seemed possible to marry the art of Gloucestershire to the science of Worcestershire" (2). Regarding staffing, Gordon Patterson (ex Stevenage) was approached to see if he would take charge of the landscape course from the second year onwards and John Ingleby, a landscape architect in private practice near Bristol, was appointed part-time.

By September 1961 the idea of a 3-year course had been dropped, replaced with a 4-year diploma. The concept of an integrated first-year for all students (architects, landscape architects and planners) was educationally sound: as Peter Boswell remarks, this was an "exciting vision of cognate subjects being taught side-by-side so that they might carry this interactive experience into their professional lives and hopefully break down perceived barriers". For landscape architects, being educated in an art college also brought the benefits of an ambience of design and creativity (4).

The second year for the landscape students would be spent at Pershore, integrating horticultural aspects into design projects (plant knowledge, soil formation, ecological survey, drainage). The third year would comprise joint projects with the architects back in Pittville and the fourth year, the development of professional skills and a thesis. The upgrading of the architectural course was not forgotten and the equivalent technical input to that which the landscape architects got at Pershore was arranged with Loughborough and the local techical college.

In Stuart Sutcliffe's words, "We launched this fragile craft in September 1961 with three first year architectural and 14 landscape students" and when the RIBA visiting board returned they were "impressed with the developments [and] impressed enough to say there was a great deal of potential in what we were proposing, but not enough evidence to see how it would work

out in fact."

Well it did work out in fact as its longevity confirms, and while the course has undergone many changes over the years, subjected to the inevitable vicissitudes of local and national educational policies, landscape architecture at Cheltenham has more than survived; indeed it has flourished, continuing a passion for the subject and vocation which reflects on its origins at the start of the Swinging Sixties and clearly augurs well for another 60 years...

(1) private communication, Sutcliffe to Aylwin Sampson, 5th May 1982
(2) private communication, Gruffydd to John Simpson, undated
(3) private communication, Sutcliffe to Gruffydd, 11th November 1960
(4) private email, Peter Boswell 14th June 2021
Roger Gill & Ianto Evans (1964) *Architects' Journal* 15th April vol 139 p 841

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Landscape Issues Editorial vol 19 May 2020

FOR THE LOVE OF TREES

Rearranging my bookcase in anticipation of using it as a backdrop in my next Zoom staff meeting, I happened on a book I last read many years ago. Because *The Man Who Planted Trees* by Jean Giono is not a long book I decided I would dip into it again to satisfy my morning's self-isolation in the garden. The Covid-19 crisis seems to have coincided with a spell of pleasant weather, April 2020 having been (provisionally) registered as the sunniest and driest on record, and during enforced lockdown what better way I thought to catch up on holiday-style reading.

Elzéard Bouffier, the illiterate shepherd of Giono's story, sets out to replant the slopes of his Provençal homeland with oak, beech and birch, slopes which had been deforested and degraded by former charcoal burners leaving them vegetated only with degenerate garrigue scrub. The simple story of how he decides to reafforest the land by selecting 100 acorns to plant each day is captivating but the narrative goes much deeper: it's to "make people love the tree, or more precisely, to make them love planting trees", as Giono later revealed in an interview.

Scots Pine named European Tree 2020, Dam Vír, Czech Republic (treeoftheyear.org)

Trees have been very much in my mind this past year. I've always been very fond of trees. Many people are. But last year the headlines were screaming about the global loss of trees. We were used to hearing about the shrinking Amazon rainforest as land was turned over to cattle ranching, coffee and soya bean production or mining. Then there were the Brazilian and Australian forest fires in 2019 possibly started naturally, more probably deliberately through 'slash and burn' or picnicking activities respectively. Either way there is no escaping the

relationship between the continued destruction of the forest world-wide with the intensification of a global rise in temperature or what we might now call a climate crisis.

Extinction Rebellion, the environmental pressure group, came to prominence over a year ago with an aim to urge the adoption of a climate emergency strategy by prioritising global warming and biodiversity loss, since "the challenge of our civilisation and the extinction of much of the natural world is on the horizon", to quote David Attenborough. The media is awash with solutions, ranging from eating less meat, flying less frequently, walking and cycling more, to planting more trees. Even political parties in anticipation of the UK general election in December last year were pledging target plantings in millions. All very laudable but unfortunately now relegated to the back burner during the current pandemic, although arguably also being brought into focus because of it.

While Britain has had an enduring love affair with trees, compared with other countries in Europe the proportion of trees to the total land area is surprisingly small: 13% vs the EU average of 35%. There has been a long history of deforestation in this country. However there is no shortage of new initiatives to plant more trees to try to increase the percentage cover to 17%, most notably the proposed Northern Forest which would stretch from coast to coast. The year 2020 has been designated the Year of the Tree. Birmingham has been honoured with the title Tree City of the World. Exhibitions have focused on trees: the Hayward Gallery's Among the Trees opened in March only to be closed soon after owing to the coronavirus emergency public space ruling. (A virtual tour led by the curator is available online).

Then on a smaller scale there are local interventions which should not be undervalued, not only in the countryside but also the towns. Urban forestry (www.gov.uk/guidance/urban-forestry) brings many benefits in addition to carbon capture: economic, social and environmental, according to this government website. Trees are vital in producing O_2 and absorbing CO_2 from the atmosphere, a gas driving global heating. Since approximately half of all carbon that is extracted from the atmosphere is done through the process of photosynthesis it seems logical therefore that tree planting is a climate change solution that doesn't require President Trump to immediately start believing in climate change. President Bolsonaro of Brazil might need more convincing.

To engage the landscape architecture students with this plethora of tree publicity in the media, it was decided earlier in the academic year to target the sustainable technology module project on how a small town like Cheltenham could rise to the challenge. Cheltenham Borough Council being mindful of the current media focus on climate change and loss of biodiversity has been considering (hypothetically in the brief) how it could contribute more to offsetting the worst effects by offering its growing population of close on 120,000 a refreshing return to typical woodland nature and better air quality by extending the green infrastructure. Already Cheltenham is blessed with many big street trees, but the module project asked for a redesign of Pittville Park which would be imaginative, innovative and incorporating a significant number of new, carefully selected trees to cover at least half of the existing area (approximately 30 hectares).

The resultant submissions displayed an excellent spectrum of ideas: an arboretum, a woodland activity park, a productive woodland, an educational resource and a visual and mentally-therapeutic collection of trees. The illustrations accompanying this *Landscape Issues* Editorial offer a small selection of masterplans produced by the students. To reproduce the detail here of their individual rationales is unnecessary but it is refreshing to record that the submissions were both well researched and imbued with a clear love of trees. While they won't be expected to go out with their 100 acorns as Elzéard Bouffier did to implement their planting designs in the park in Cheltenham, it's worth noting that the creativity and foresight of our first year students is unabated and can only augur well for future planting design projects.


Key:
1 Edible Garden
2 Little Farm Land
3 Open Library
4 Lake / Swimming Lake
5 Wildflower Meadows
6 Lake / Meadow Side
7 Roman School
8 More Wildflowers
9 Sandy Beach
10 Bay Ground
11 Tennis + Basketball
12 Little "Forest"
Pittville Park
redesign
Therapy Garden

.


Heart of Cheltenham
Beech Forest
Roman Forest
Conifer Forest
The Heart
Ancient Briton Forest
Conifer Forest
Ancient Briton Forest
Beech Forest
Roman Forest
Metres
0 25 50 100 150 200


Pittville Park Urban Woodland
Open air amphitheatre/ events field
Hosts a variety of social events and
brings communities together
Oak Woodland and smaller
footpaths
Wildlife Educational
Centre with Cafe
Dry grassland
Hornbeam Woodland
Open
air art
gallery
Wet
Grassland
Orchard/grassland
(Edible Hedgerow)
Alder Carr (Wet Woodland) with
multiple and varying boardwalk
routes and a 30m watchtower in
the centre
N
0 25 50 100 150 200 250

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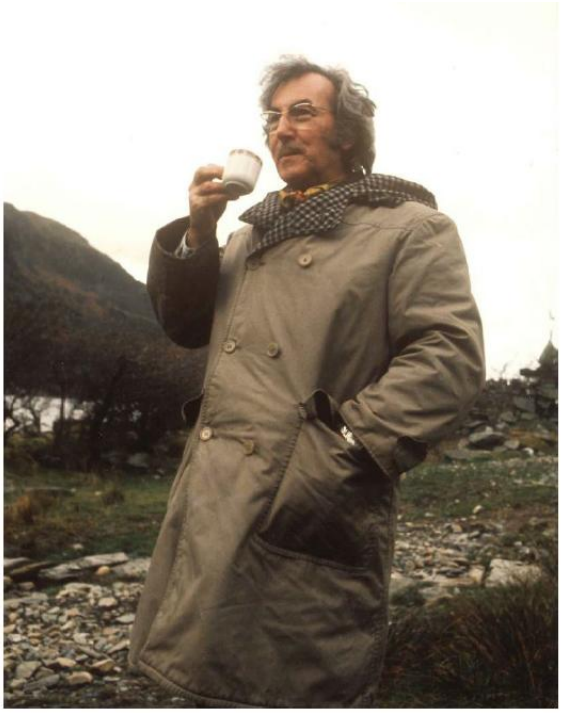
Landscape Issues Editorial vol 18 May 2019

BODFAN GRUFFYDD: A LIFE IN LANDSCAPE

We are publishing in this issue another extract of Bodfan Gruffydd's planned autobiography dating from c1995 but never appearing in print (for a transcript of his early years see *Landscape Issues* vol 17 2018 p55). The extract herewith (p31) describes his philosophy of landscape architecture and is essentially the result of his many years' experience in the profession. In it he has analysed the fundamental ideas which guided the broad concepts of his landscape teaching and practice. His was a pragmatic approach to landscape design, based on respect for the genius loci and the art of the possible; it postulates that landscape architecture is an all-embracing profession, whose principles apply to every kind of job, whether it be a national park, a city space, a town park or a small garden. Once those principles are mastered a landscape graduate, he argues, is competent to tackle and solve every type of associated problem, any one of which in itself becomes a matter of detailed application, so guided by fundamentals to assured success. Today's undergraduates may well be interested to read about the concepts underlying their curriculum first developed many decades ago by the founder of the Cheltenham course. Indeed, it may be salutary to speculate whether the same principles obtain in the 21st century.

Searching for Bodfan Gruffydd in Wikipedia takes you to a single page of limited information and in general there is not much written about him. Having at my disposal much material of Bodfan's writings and projects, a collection of letters, reports and drawings previously in the possession of John Simpson, a former partner to Bodfan's practice and on the landscape teaching staff at Cheltenham, it is my intention to catalogue and ultimately donate it to the Landscape Institute archive and library at the Museum of Rural Britain in Reading. But as an interim and somewhat abbreviated biography of his life and works I have assembled the following.

John St Bodfan Gruffydd was born on 5th April 1910 in Caernarfonshire, North Wales, and educated at Friars School, Bangor, Uppingham School, Rutland, and at the University College of North Wales in Bangor (where he undertook a three year course in agriculture).



Bodfan on site at Llanberis, Snowdonia, 1973

Training in landscape design was as an articled pupil with the firm of Thomas H Mawson & Sons in Lancaster, then in horticulture at the RHS Gardens at Wisley in 1928 and for one year at the Agricultural College of Sweden, Uppsala, doing soil research. For two years he was assistant to the Director of Town Planning for the Government of New Zealand in Wellington and during this time attended courses in economics, sociology and statistical method as well as in library cataloguing at the Library of the House of Representatives. Altogether he spent four years in the antipodes.

Visualisation studies for the Llanberis pump storage project.

Bodfan devised the ingenious technique of tethering meteorological balloons at surveyed points along the line of the proposed dam. Strategic photographs were taken then overlaid with drawn montages to show accurately and to scale the actual location of the dam when built.
[from notes accompanying the report, dated 3rd May 1973].

Experience in landscape design began in private practice in 1946 in Wales with a memorial garden to Dame Margaret Lloyd George at Coed Morg, Abersoch, and then later many other Welsh gardens, housing estates (with Colwyn Foulkes, which won bronze medals, and Clough Williams-Ellis) and industrial premises, including land reclamation.

Subsequently in 1953 Bodfan was employed as landscape architect to the development corporations in the new towns of Harlow and Crawley, for four years, before resuming private practice in the late 1950s. During his work in the new towns he recalled he had first to fight to establish an atmosphere in which the landscape architect's work could be useful and effective. This involved recognition by engineers, contractors and even architects of the value of expert landscape advice through all the stages of design and construction. This led to the formulation of a Code of Practice for the guidance of architects and engineers in the course of their own designs. Later, as living densities were increased, use and wear of the landscape by the public increased. This imposed problems peculiar to horticulture and arboriculture in towns and led to very relevant investigations into human behaviour and the allowance that must be made for it at the design stage if the resultant landscape scheme is to 'work' and last.

Following an invitation to teach 'landscape' to architectural students at the Gloucestershire College of Art in Cheltenham in 1960, he and the head of architecture, Stuart Sutcliffe, developed ideas for a full-time course in landscape architecture. Working with the architecture course (situated in the Pittville Park Pump Room) and the Pershore College of Horticulture, the four-year course started in 1961 and quickly gained exemption from the intermediate examination of the Institute of Landscape Architects (and later in 1972, the full written examination).

With an initial intake of 14 students, the first year consisted of joint studies with the architectural students. The second year was to be spent at Pershore integrating horticultural aspects into the design projects; the third year would be more projects collaborating with the architects and the final year would comprise the development of professional skills and a thesis. A course had been conceived that had a uniqueness that grew from Cheltenham's surroundings and local resources: the art college, the technical college, local skills and offices, and most of all the local environment of the Cotswolds.

While Bodfan was content to have a general overview of the new curriculum, he recommended Gordon Patterson then employed as landscape architect at Stevenage New Town to head the day-to-day running of the landscape course, but with Graham Powell managing an all-embracing faculty of environmental studies to which a town planning course would subsequently join. Later John Ingleby, a landscape architect in private practice near Bristol, was appointed to strengthen the design teaching.

In 1963 Bodfan was invited to and accepted Junior and Senior Harvard Fellowships in landscape design at Dumbarton Oaks, USA. When he took this sabbatical year, he gave lectures and travelled extensively across the continent studying in depth the American landscapes and the various institutions teaching landscape and urban design. This pioneering evidence reinforced his awareness of the need for a structured educational programme in landscape architecture back in Britain. His report on these experiences sadly was never published but it is clear he benefitted greatly from his voyage of discovery to most of the 50 states, an acquaintance which informed his nascent thinking of the importance of natural beauty, genius loci, wildernesses and national parks, subjects which continued to be at the forefront of his thinking for the rest of his life. Possibly because of his grand tour of America he saw the importance of travelling and first-hand observation in the education of landscape architects and quickly introduced foreign field trips to the Cheltenham course, the first being a visit to the Vienna International Garden Festival in 1964, led by Gordon Patterson, Tom Wright (ex Pershore and Wye Colleges) and Bodfan himself.

From the 1960s on, Bodfan maintained his private practice with an office in London and a 'practice office' attached to the college course (initially in Malvern Hill House, Cheltenham, later at the Oxstalls campus in Gloucester) to which students were directed for observation and experience of professional working conditions. (The office was later replaced by Cheltenham Landscape Design, part of FCH Consultants, a college business initiative using in-house expertise to better develop the new campus landscapes as well as other landscape commissions. It also figured in course publicity by inviting prospective students to "learn in a practice environment".)

From 1965 he undertook three years of research into landscape architecture for new hospitals sponsored by the King Edward's Hospital Fund for London; it embraced the problems of rural and urban landscape and also involved Cheltenham landscape students who helped with the baseline surveys of the hospital sites throughout the capital.

At the end of the decade Bodfan was honoured by becoming the president of the Institute of Landscape Architects (1969-71). His work commissions continued apace (see examples following) and additionally he was often called to public enquiries and the House of Lords to give evidence as an expert witness. Examples of the former include proposals concerning the Green Belt around Bristol and a visual impact assessment of the Llanberis pumped storage hydro-electric scheme (see accompanying photographs). Later Bodfan completed studies for a long term landscape development plan for the Esso Refinery on Southampton Water, and a Leverhulme Research Study on Protecting Historic Landscapes. His consultancy involved a variety of commissions including country park proposals at Sandringham, Beaulieu and Stratfield Saye among others, a new computer centre for the Department of the Environment at Swansea, a campus landscape at Robinson College, Cambridge, urban and out-of-town

shopping centres, biological corridors for London, flood relief schemes for the Rivers Mole and Wey and a number of housing and garden projects large and small.

For many years he served as independent member on the Secretary of State for Transport's Landscape Advisory Committee for Motorways and Trunk Roads and as the representative of the Landscape Institute on the Council of the International Federation of Landscape Architects (IFLA). He was the Institute representative on the Council of the National Trust. Then came the post of landscape consultant to the Ebbw Vale Council for the development of their Civic Centre (on top of a coal tip, he amusingly recalls) and for the Fort George development in Guernsey.

Regarding publications, he was responsible (over a number of years) for the Landscape Section of the Specification published annually by the Architectural Press, and the following research reports: *Landscape Architecture for New Hospitals*, 1967; *Dawley and Telford Landscape Reports*, 1965/66; *Esso, Fawley, Landscape Report*, 1970; there were also two books, *Protecting Historic Landscapes*, the Stanley Smith Horticultral Trust, 1977, and *Tree Form, Size and Colour – a design guide*, E & F N Spon, 1987. While he took on fewer projects in the 1990s he was still very active helping local groups fight what he believed as insensitive proposals often by developers and planners. Indeed I saw him speak learnedly and passionately at a public enquiry when well into his 80s. He continued to read the landscape and garden literature, particularly when confined to his house due to illness at the turn of the millennium, and when I visited him he invariably interrogated me about the 'design abilities' of the current students on the course. He clearly still felt a close affinity to what he had created some 40 years earlier, particularly regarding what he perceived as the centrality of art and design in the profession.

He died on 25th November 2004.

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Landscape Issues Editorial vol 17 May 2018

ROBOTS IN THE OFFICE: DEVOLVING LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE TO ALGORITHMS

Some time ago in the mid 1980s, I attended a conference at the University of Strathclyde in Glasgow, concerned with the application of the nascent computer technology to landscape architecture. Under the name Green Chips, it was purportedly the first conference of its kind to be held in Britain and it heralded a number of new developments and practices in what came to be known as computer-aided design. Up to then, few if any landscape offices had embraced computers except perhaps in general 'house-keeping' management roles: word processing, job specification and billing on spreadsheets and some early plant selection databases. Computing machines were getting cheaper, mostly IBM clones, the so-called 'personal' computers. Apple had yet to make a significant appearance. The 'old guard' of landscape architects were quite reluctant to submit their creativity to a machine, let alone abandon traditional drawing boards to an untested and expensive alternative, even on a wave of a perceived paperless office future.

Since those days, not only landscape architecture but most human activities have been affected to an unforeseen degree by what can now be called the digital technologies. In fact it is virtually impossible to escape them. Most visible are the ever-present mobile phones. Access to the internet is seen as a human right. Yet in the aftermath of the Cambridge Analytica revelations, where personal 'data' were harvested for subsequent commercial, even political, reuse, it is not difficult to appreciate the reluctance of those 'neo-luddites' who harbour an instinctive distrust of technological innovation. Celebrities such as Paul Merton have even announced they don't own a mobile phone and have come off Facebook and Twitter. Children are being encouraged to eschew screentime to reconnect with their real world.

On the other hand, technology has clearly brought a wealth of benefits to our private, social and work-related lives. In the field of landscape architecture, computer-aided design (CAD) software has replaced some of the most monotonous, soul-destroying drawing activities: accurate graphical constructions, repetitive placement of tree forms, general rendering and shading. In my own area of geographic information systems (GIS), I have seen the acquisition and application of location data in mobile devices, car satnavs and personal fitness trackers transforming the way we see the world and navigate through it. Landscape architects have been grateful beneficiaries of these global resources enabling them to investigate site conditions anywhere in the world, to superimpose thematic maps exploring relationships and modelling future landscape changes in two- and three-dimensions. Currently the excitement is with the use of immersive systems, virtual and augmented realities, cinematic animations and algorithmically managed parametric site analyses. Just study the cutting-edge exemplars in Amoroso's recent book Digital Landscape Architecture Now.

I once promoted the idea that landscape designers should willingly embrace computing technologies, not by merely being trained users of the programs but by being educated in the appropriate use of the technology. The practitioner I had in mind was one who was both fairly competent in CAD, GIS and image visualisation programs as well as informed enough to know their limitations and potential. Knowing when to use and when to discard them. But in today's commercially-pressured world, it is difficult to forgo the promotional advantages of automated systems, of customised programs that do the analyses for you, provide design solutions and generally save time. They seem to relegate your human creative input to a minimum. It is a rare office these days where you can still see drawing boards (actually being used). So too in our university course studios. Landscape architects in practice and in training all undertake their tasks and assignments in front of computer screens. And this is not necessarily a bad thing. Software packages offer consistent precision and quality little matched by traditional methods. As computers have become more sophisticated and complex, so too have they become, paradoxically, increasingly user-friendly and easier to use. Fewer commands, more automation, more time saving. But are we becoming deskilled in the process, from the very essence, the sine qua non, of landscape architecture?

The question posed in the title of this piece alludes to the current debate about all things robotic, smart systems and artificial intelligence (AI). What is a robot anyway but simply a computer-controlled machine designed for a certain task. Will the increasing use of robots result in the loss of jobs? Inevitably yes. As we have seen, first those involving repetitive procedures: supermarket checkouts, auto-baristas serving coffee, border passport checking using face-recognition algorithms, ordering and having delivered online shopping. Then the upper level jobs requiring knowledge and experience will probably go. Might these include designers of all professions?

The summer exhibition at the V&A in London, *The Future Starts Here*, is celebrating the power of design to change the world of tomorrow and it showcases a range of digital appliances and projects offering benefits to our lives. Robots are there performing centre-stage. They are capable of learning by experience, clearly a human trait. But how near are we to making a machine that can do all the things we can do? According to Rory Hyde, the exhibition curator, "The robots are coming, but not that quickly". In the field of landscape architecture, we have to be prepared for this change but I just wonder how we should strive to maintain the human touch in creative activities. In situations where we need to stop and think, to deliberate or even reflect on our decisions. Then there is the whole ethical dimension that needs careful consideration. Can we trust a robot to make the right decision? Is it consistent, honest and truthful? Can we trust an algorithm? AI is too important to be left in the hands of a machine.

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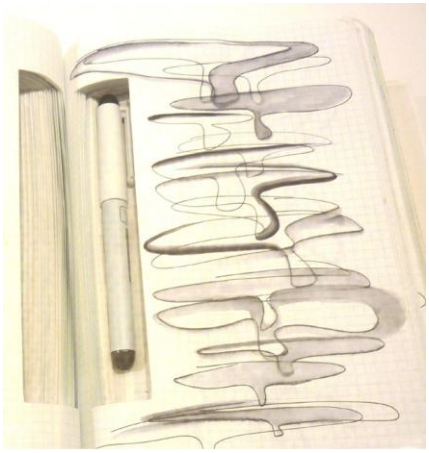
THE DAILY SKETCH

The memorable element in the Serpentine Gallery's recent exhibition of the early paintings and drawings of Zaha Hadid was, for me, the sample of her sketch books on display. Somewhat in contrast to the more angular architectural drawings of her early work, the sketches showed a more free-flowing, biomorphic even, series of abstract forms (see below). Although sketches are used to communicate ideas to others and sometimes how a design progresses, I felt what these showed was the intimately personal thought processes of the designer. They were done for her benefit. I feel the same about my own sketches. I take my sketchbook everywhere I go and, rather than photograph where I am or what I am looking at, I like to sit and sketch for half an hour. Looking back at any of my endeavours, typically a landscape sketch, I can recall vivid details about the scene, the sights and even sounds and smells, the weather, my sentiments. Zaha Hadid's sketches could be described as doodles – marks to facilitate her thoughts and feelings. Interviewed about their working methods, most architects would say they use rough freehand sketches to generate ideas. According to Jonathan Fish, "designers commonly speak of holding a conversation with a drawing". Thus ideas develop from first sketches. Tentative, exploratory marks, blots and smudges externalised on white paper clear the mind no end.



For landscape architects, anxious to discover or reveal the genius loci of a project site, I see the process of field sketching as a natural starting point. David Hockney has proclaimed that "Everything begins with sketchbooks" but a more apt quotation is from the photographer Henri Cartier-Bresson who declared "La photo est une action immédiate; le dessin une méditation". Field sketching is a valuable technique which encourages you to spend time observing, recording, contemplating and interpreting the landscape. For students of landscape architecture, there is no better way to experience and appraise the visual, tangible environment and the spirit of the place.

Plant study: Alex Habermehl/

In his classic book on field sketching, Geoffrey Hutchings claims that "drawing is something that can be learnt by anyone who cares to study its principles and undertake much practice". He goes on to catalogue the advantages that sketching has over photography in recording a view and its hidden meanings. This is not lost in standard texts on landscape character assessments where the published guidance suggests annotated drawings can record the visual dynamics of a place as well as illustrating typical associations of land elements (Tudor, 2014). Janet Swailes, an artist and landscape architect, contends that being physically in the landscape, preferably walking and sketching, heightens one's perceptive powers and "becoming more directly connected to what we observe" translates into a more empathetic albeit subjective appraisal.

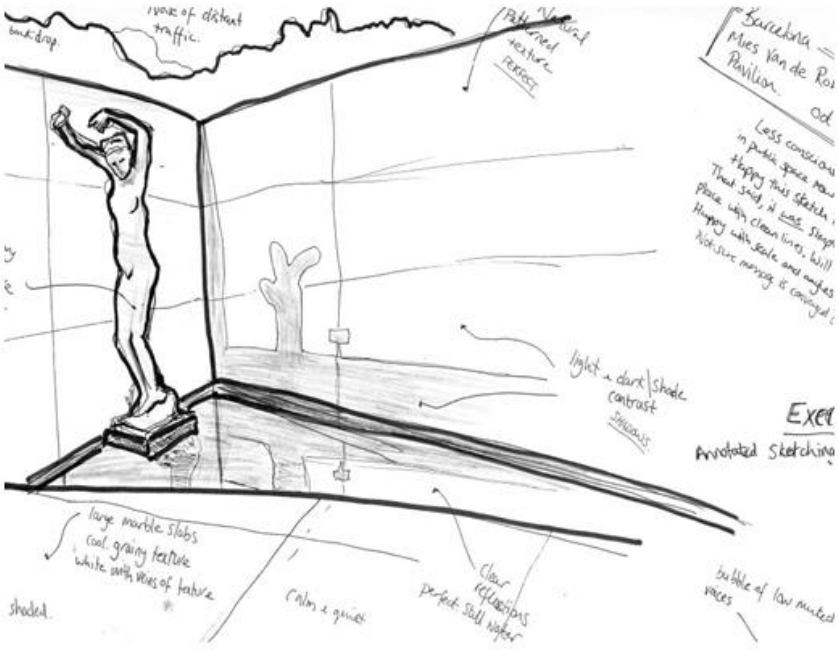
Digital images are ubiquitous. During the last decade, camera phones have enabled countless photographs to be instantly uploaded onto the internet. It is now easy to view scenes from anywhere in the world (including Antarctica) via Google Earth Panoramio and Street View, for example. How does this impact on landscape architecture? It means site visits are not always seen as necessary. Initial reconnaissance surveys can be performed at one's desk. It also implies a reinforcement of photography in the visualisation of landscapes. Indeed the photograph has become the baseline image in landscape assessment. I am not arguing against this as I believe recent technological advances have provided the environmental professions, particularly, with useful resources, such as high resolution aerial imagery and accurate 3D perspectives. And now we appreciate their practical applications in virtual and augmented reality systems (see p 67). But we must not abandon traditional sketching as it is a complementary medium: indeed each technique brings its unique perspective.

Humans have an innate visualising capacity, probably developed earlier in our evolution than verbal reasoning. In spatial problem-solving, the generation of ideas and the solutions often are derived through sketches – initial site records and fuzzy ideas on 'backs of envelopes' are the catalysts of successful design thinking. Landscape architecture education at the University of Gloucestershire embraces this methodology both in the taught modules on drawing and in the promotion of field sketching on site visits and foreign field trips. Even prior to the course beginning, prospective students are given a number of summer projects to undertake. One is 'a drawing a day' whereby they are asked to spend 30 minutes or so each day producing any drawing whose subject matter can be based on observation, imagination or even memory of buildings, people or landscapes. These daily sketches are exhibited during induction week and are a useful introduction to the formal Drawing module which follows in term time.

In this module the initial weeks are spent simply learning to observe our surroundings and draw what we see. Students begin by drawing very simple objects (a cardboard box or desk top perhaps) and then move on to more complex spatial observation (internal rooms and small spaces) and finally on to annotated landscape observation sketches. An important aspect of this process is recognising the difference between what we actually see and what we think we see. In this way students begin to experience the world more as it is and less as they expect it to be, and it is the observation-based sketching process that acts as the vehicle for this learning process.

So, in a way, David Hockney is right about sketching, but it is more than just the starting point in recording our world. It helps us observe what matters, it structures our thinking, it allows the testing of ideas, it inspires designs; but it must be practised. Constantly. Daily. Make a daily sketch your resolution and your mantra.

Jonathan Fish (1999) Cognitive catalysis: sketches for a time-lagged brain in Goldschmidt, G and Porter W [eds] Design Representation, Springer
Geoffrey Hutchings(1960) Landscape drawing, Methuen
Janet Swailes (2016) Field sketching and the experience of landscape, Routledge
Christine Tudor (2014) An approach to landscape character assessment, Natural England



Annotated sketch in Barcelona: Sarah Breton

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A WALK IN THE PARK ... AND BEYOND

There has been a long association of Pittville Park with the landscape architecture course in Cheltenham. The course was originally established in the Pump Room studios overlooking the park and was later moved to the Art College (now Pittville campus) just a few hundred metres east of the Pump Room. Currently housed in Francis Close Hall (FCH) campus, the course views the park from the St Paul's ward immediately to the south. Many students past and present will fondly remember strolling through the magnificent landscaped gardens of the grade 2 listed park, on their way to morning classes, perhaps lingering under a sizeable *Quercus ilex* making notes or attempting a sketch. To the west of the Evesham Road, the park is more natural in its layout with many small areas of woodland and large expanses of open ground now seeded with wildflower meadows drifting across Tommy Taylor's Lane and generally evoking positive reactions from the many park users.

When I come to work, I usually park my car in Hardwick campus and walk from there to FCH. Sadly, Pittville Park is not on my route and consequently I fail to get my 'green' fix, with no opportunity to experience the power of nature and raise my spirits before the day's work. The route I take along St Paul's Road is not the most picturesque or salubrious of itineraries, passing as it does lots of litter and dog waste, difficult road crossing points and hardly an abundance of ornate landscapes. Yet it is an interesting walk and I observe many features as I go: the ongoing building developments opposite the hospital site, the way the pigeons have managed to penetrate under the bridge despite the netting, the butterflies in late autumn fluttering on the old railway embankment by the corner to Tommy Taylor's Lane. And it's quite a populated route – mothers taking their children to school, students turning up for classes and last-minute shoppers using the open-all-hours shop on the corner opposite FCH. Most of you will have or have had similar walking experiences here or elsewhere. The trouble is that not many people walk these days. We like our cars too much. Many parents drop children off at school by car. We do the weekly shop at Tesco's by car. When we do walk, it's

often a quick march between A and B, keeping an eye on or listening out for fast cars where the footpaths are narrow; and we tend to ignore the interesting features along the way.

Perhaps I should park on the other side of Pittville Park and walk through a much more pleasant environment. It was in the 1960s that Geoffrey Jellicoe, former president of the Institute of Landscape Architects, designed part of the Pittville Park, just north of the main built-up area of the St Paul's ward. He took as his inspiration the classical world's notion that the well-rounded person is both an artist and an athlete (Jellicoe: *Studies in Landscape Architecture*, vol 3, 1970), which he saw as the product of an education in fine art and sport in the local colleges (now the university). His underlying purpose was to recognise the negative health impacts of urban living, to use sport and green space to facilitate recovery from mental fatigue and encourage more active use and exercise, to improve town-dwellers' wellbeing and quality of life. He didn't actually talk about walking but then, in the 1960s, cars and their pollution were not perceived as a nuisance.

So, does St Paul's today suffer from this extreme polarisation of landscape walking experiences? Visiting the park, one sees a substantial number of users: joggers, people exercising their dogs, cyclists, mothers with buggies, children playing pitch and putt; all enjoying the experiences and in a safe place. South of this park, however, the St Paul's ward has very little in the way of green open space, cars are parked tightly outside the properties leaving little room for children to play or feel secure. Cars, lorries and vans speed along both Tommy Taylor's Lane and St Paul's Road making pedestrian crossing difficult and dangerous. Many streets have little in the way of public open space. Front gardens are rare. At night, there's the worry of inadequate surveillance – is the lighting sufficient? Does one feel comfortable walking alone? What crimes are common here? Anti-social behaviour, theft, car crime, drug abuse have been recently recorded.

The St Paul's Residents' Association (SPRA) is keen to see their area as a desirable place to live in and visit. They have over the years been responsible for some successful interventions to regenerate the area, most notably the regular street-litter pickings, the implementation of a parking permit zone and the edible garden in FCH. Now they are turning their attention to improving the pedestrian mobility or 'walkability' of the area as there are many positives to be achieved: Jellicoe in his day recognised the health benefits from more physical activity; today the threat is the increasing prevalence of type 2 diabetes and concomitant obesity – regular exercise such as walking is recommended; research has shown that walking also aids psychological health and promotes more social interaction: a fulfilling experience for many people.

Collaborating with the Residents' Association, who gave us the initial impetus and motivation, we chose to use the Community and Landscape final year module as a vehicle to investigate the walkability of the local ward. This involved walking all the streets and open spaces, observing and taking notes. Initially this was unstructured in the style of a dérive: a process of exploration and serendipity. With a basic knowledge of the geography, character and street landscape of St Paul's, we devised a more thoughtful and structured means of collecting first-hand information: targeted street audits (three main student groups) and footfall and cycling censuses at key intersections. In addition, meetings were held with local residents and a visit to Dunalley Primary School was arranged, when students quizzed the pupils on their walking habits and environmental perceptions. An inspiring talk was also given by Bronwen Thornton of Walk21, the international organisation which encourages walking in urban areas for the benefits to health, the environment and the economy.

The initial phase of the student project concluded with a group poster presentation of findings which highlighted the general poor quality of that environment: the uneven paving, the large quantities of litter, the volume and noise of motor traffic and the lack of seating and lighting which all discouraged pedestrian activity. The final phase consisted of individual student

submissions each developing innovative ideas from one or more of the previously-identified issues and variously looked at improving traffic management, the creation of better quality spaces possibly involving street art and sculpture, the enhancement of the 'legibility' of routes and character areas, the provision of better facilities for the disabled and the general 'greening' of the environment: more trees and garden improvement; overall to create a sense of identity for St Paul's.

All this seems very timely as in the past year there have been a number of studies published and campaigns launched, all concerned with promoting a healthier lifestyle through better diet and, in particular, encouraging us the public to exercise more. In March 2016, the Walking and Cycling Investment Strategy appeared, part of the government Infrastructure Act, aimed at cutting congestion and improving health and air quality, reducing the number of cyclist deaths on roads and reversing the decline in walking in recent years. The Public Health England campaign called One You urges middle-aged people to take more exercise, not necessarily by joining a gym but by uploading their walking activities to track and compare their progress on a phone app, data from which will be used to reveal general behavioural change, hopefully, since it is widely quoted that 40% of deaths in England are related to poor lifestyle: smoking, excessive drinking and being sedentary.

Dr William Bird, GP and founder of Intelligent Health and Beat the Street Global Walking Programme, has long 'prescribed' gentle exercise done at a time and a rate to suit the individual. These 'green prescriptions' are also shown to be more effective than drugs. Being out and about in the open air, patients experience less tension, stress and depression, lower blood pressure, improved immune system responses, lower levels of obesity and milder Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Radio and TV programmes acclaim outdoor walking of any kind, both rural and urban: Clare Balding's Ramblings and Julia Bradbury's Best Walks are the best current examples. Furthermore, in the academic field of landscape design research, the conference held in September 2015 at the Hanover Leibniz University (Let's Walk Urban Landscapes) demonstrated practically the importance of walking as a tool to be used in all stages of the design process. Experiencing the landscape involves movement, says Saskia de Wit, and there is no better way to experience it than by walking, not tracking on some online device.

The mention of digital technology leads me to conclude on two current and amusing stories, yet with some relevance to this editorial. There was an outcry a few months back when some children's dictionary omitted words describing 'natural' features in favour of modern gadgets and computer terms. A group of authors were alarmed at A for acorn, B for buttercup and C for conker being replaced by attachment, blog and chatroom. This, they claimed, was associated with the increasingly interior, solitary childhoods of today. Even outdoors, it is common to witness pedestrians, both young and old, constantly texting, scrolling and checking their mobile phones and devices seemingly oblivious to the environment around them. A six-metre statue by Sophie Ryder outside Salisbury Cathedral was reportedly moved because these texting 'smombies' (smartphone zombies) kept bumping their heads on it! Some towns have painted lines on pavements to designate walking, cycling and texting lanes and even warning lights have been embedded in kerbstones to warn of impending tram danger (in Augsburg, Germany). Are we wedded to too many digital distractions, often needing to be 'elsewhere' (ie online)? Are we really bored too easily with our immediate environment? This is what John Stilgoe in What is landscape? says: Most people stare at their screens … they do not explore, do not see, do not recall, do not walk … and see and realise.

In the field of landscape architecture, it is vital we connect with the world. The real, not a virtual world. Go outside. Walk. Live in the moment. Put down your camera and smartphone, take off your headphones and, as Simon Calder succinctly puts it, let your senses download the surroundings.

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Landscape Issues Foreword and Editorial vol 14 May 2015

FOREWORD

In the mid 1980s the landscape architecture course, then housed in the Oxstalls campus of the Gloucestershire College of Arts and Technology, was seeking degree accreditation. To promote the research profile of the school *Landscape Issues* was launched setting out with limited objectives – to focus on design theory, computer use and rural matters – but from the first issue it stimulated research from students as much as from staff. In the first decade of *Landscape Issues* it is worth noting that close on 30 contributions from students were received and published. After an interval of 20 years and thanks to student encouragement, the journal is to be revived and republished both as hardcopy and in online format. It is axiomatic that research underpins all landscape architectural projects, and this is no less true of student projects but most of it goes unnoticed except within the educational institutions. A selection of imaginative material produced by the staff and students in the University of Gloucestershire is posted on the course blog at http://gloscape.com but it tends to be short pieces often with a pedagogic or vocational content. We intend to use the new *Landscape Issues* as a forum for disseminating staff and student research more freely to the landscape profession and with more discursive content. One model of research enquiry we are keen to foster is 'Practice as Research' involving collaborative projects with local as well as international partners, both academics and practitioners. But we will start in a modest way and see what develops. We hope that readers will find it relevant and rewarding, whether in education and training, whether in practice or even those in the wider community with just a general interest in landscape and landscape issues. If it stirs you to make a contribution then it will have succeeded.

RESPICE ASPICE PROSPICE*

Mindful of the history of the Cheltenham course, the 50th anniversary of its foundation having taken place in 2011, the editorial team has decided that the theme of this issue of *Landscape Issues*, the first since 1996, should reflect something of that history. Despite the vicissitudes of higher education over the past half-century, the changing government policies and directives, the restructuring of courses, the introduction of student fees and the metamorphosis from college to university, it is remarkable that the landscape architecture course in Gloucestershire has come through successfully, let alone survived, such a transformational period. Both the course and the students have shown great flexibility and resilience in a changing world and a changing profession.

To summarise the history, Bodfan Gruffydd, together with Stuart Sutcliffe and Reginald Dent, developed ideas for the first full-time landscape architecture course in England in 1961. Initially Bodfan, a landscape architect involved in Harlow New Town among others, had been

invited to contribute to the Cheltenham architecture course housed in Pittville Pump Room – specifically to offer a landscape perspective to architectural design. His view of landscape was organic, building on landform and climate, with a sound knowledge of plants and creating places of aesthetic quality. From this innovative approach, architects could learn through landscapes. Equally, they thought that landscape architects could share the same opportunities – so why not establish a full-time landscape architecture course? So the nascent course grew from an integration of architecture and horticulture with the second year students spending a residential year at the local Pershore College of Horticulture where planting design and soil analysis were taught. This dynamic symbiosis of art and ecology was central to Bodfan's view of what landscape architecture comprised and he can be credited with founding Britain's first undergraduate course in the subject.

Gordon Patterson (ex-Stevenage New Town) was appointed to take charge of the course and John Ingleby, a landscape architect in private practice, was appointed part-time and soon the originally-conceived three-year course had become a four-year diploma programme. With an initial intake of 14 landscape students, demand quickly expanded to 24 by 1970 at which time Bodfan had been made President of the Institute of Landscape Architects. Bodfan had many years of direct contact working with the course as advisor, practice consultant and visiting lecturer, an interest he maintained into the 21st century.

The landscape course's first decade was one largely characterised by the breaking of fairly new ground, pioneering efforts involving passions rather than theories, cross-disciplinary experimentation rather than narrow disciplines. The 70s were marked by consolidation and stabilisation, greater autonomy and a more rigorous curriculum, reflecting the Institute's directives. The next decade saw the course develop towards and achieve CNAA degree accreditation and it was then that the first incarnation of *Landscape Issues* appeared. The 90s were marked by a restructuring of the course into a modular format, not always an easy fit for a design course. The last decade or so has seen a drive for greater efficiency in teaching (through staff and budgetary cuts) while still maintaining high quality, indeed with some notable successes in student achievements.

Half-way through the second decade of the 21st century we find that the role of landscape architecture is expanding as we face the global challenges of climate change, environmental hazards, increasing population and the need for sustainable living. All these concerns are reflected in the course vision focusing on the creation of landscapes for the health and wellbeing of people and the planet. From the students' perspective, their own varying interests coupled with the extensive curriculum provide a dynamic atmosphere for study; their diverse backgrounds and cultures mean they respond differently to the variety of subjects on offer. Some lean towards one particular specialism, whilst some students position themselves firmly in the middle and develop a broad portfolio of skills. Either way they know that their education has enabled them to embark on the career path of their choice.

But it is not all work and no play. This current academic year (2014-5) has seen the start of the university's Landscape Architecture Society run by the students, for the students. Its initial reception was very encouraging, with 46 members signing up at the launch night, and, although still in its 'beta' phase, events run by the society have been a huge success. The launch of the society marks a turn in student attitude. They are now more able to take charge of their university experience, to meet like-minded students, to include those who may feel on the fringe, to take time off work together, to give feedback on academic issues and to make changes around the studios: their main working environment. The outcome from this can only be positive as it forms the glue that bonds the course together, whilst adding another element to the package we have on offer for future students.

Now based within the School of Art and Design, an affiliation which supports a very strong identity, the course aims to emphasise sustainable design principles allied to, and underpinned

by, the exploration and encouragement of artistic creativity. This approach to our teaching and learning is producing exciting and innovative work at all levels and collectively student outputs are proving to be appealing to prospective students and employers alike. We are beginning to see an upturn in student interest in the course, after a period of low recruitment over the last few years of economic austerity.

Our focus on sustainability will remain a key part of the course as environmental designers, planners and place-makers grapple with the future challenges of climate change, water, food, energy and waste issues plus the desire to create more attractive and liveable spaces. Concomitant with this approach will be the emergence of a much stronger research culture within the course and already we see a significant increase in students wishing to develop personal research beyond the post-graduate diploma via the Masters route and a substantial increase in landscape-based PhD registrations. While involvement with practitioners remains a cornerstone of the course we are also now collaborating with local community groups to further energise our teaching and the student experience.

Further afield and looking to the future, we will be seeking to promote opportunities in terms of international student and information exchange and joint research projects. The course leader's recent trip to China and Hong Kong has already generated a healthy level of interest in our pedagogy and course philosophy. Our desire as a course is to influence change and to create the next generation of creative thinkers who are able to inspire and deliver innovative design within every field of environmental development and thereby to strengthen the reputation of a course founded over 50 years ago.

* Remember the past; consider the present; look to the future