

## **Bringing the Outside In**



**Enriching Student Learning in the Humanities  
through Environmental Engagement**

As part of our 2010 Education for Sustainable Development programme, the History and English Subject Centres launched two initiatives to encourage students and lecturers to engage with the environment beyond the classroom.

We wanted to motivate staff and students whose teaching and learning takes place primarily indoors to go out and experience the places that form the context for the subject of study in order to enrich both academic learning and environmental awareness.

To this end, we asked students and lecturers from throughout the UK to submit case studies describing how off-campus field-trips and visits enhanced their learning and increased their environmental awareness.

What follows is a collection of those case studies. We hope they will inspire others to explore learning opportunities beyond the university classroom.



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# Lecturer Case Studies

# CHILDREN IN SICKNESS AND HEALTH

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The module 'Children in Sickness and Health' is unusual within our wider curriculum for being driven by themes. We seek to develop an appreciation in our students of the ways that childhood has been framed and experienced over a period of 200 years, and to encourage them to develop personal interests in the topics they select to write about in their coursework. One of the overarching themes we have been developing this semester is that of confinement; in particular asking students to put together presentations on spaces, which are linked to weekly topics (for example, schools, asylums and workplaces). These presentations are assessed during the sessions and by way of a write-up based on primary sources. The focus of the module is closely allied with our departmental policy of research-led teaching for final-year students, which forms a further layer of engagement with the themes as topics of active investigation. This field trip was designed to promote this sense of active engagement, by showing the students two contrasting spaces connected to the history of childhood. We had already spent time in seminars discussing the fact that childhood is a subjective and social construction and, by taking the students out of the classroom and into the spaces used and inhabited by children in the past, we hoped to reinforce this. We were able to call upon Dr Levene's prior contacts with the archivists at Great Ormond Street and the Education Officer at the Museum of Childhood to arrange privileged access to historical artefacts and spaces which are not normally accessible to the general public.

The two spaces we visited on this field trip were deliberately chosen to contrast with each other in a number of ways. First, they connected to different topics within the module: the hospital with children's health, and the museum with children's leisure and child-rearing. Second, they are very different spaces: the hospital constructed on a cramped site in central London, and the museum occupying an original Victorian exhibition space where objects are displayed in large cases. Further, the Hospital's archive is housed in one of the original Victorian buildings which further reinforced the type of space inhabited by the children admitted there, while the museum was originally a place where children went with their families as part of their leisure time (a function which it fulfils to an even greater degree in its current form). Third, they are in different parts of London, giving the students a further impression of the variety of children's spaces in one city.

We began the day at Great Ormond Street, where the archivist, Mr Nick Baldwin, gave us a tour, which included the original nineteenth-century chapel. The tour illustrated the changing use of space for the care of sick children, and the specificity of care (for example, in the use of artwork, and the small scale of the chapel with its child-size pews and 'choir' of teddies in memorial to ex-patients). This was followed up with a visit to the archive's small exhibition on the history of the hospital, and the opportunity to see some original handwritten case notes. We then moved on to the Museum of Childhood at Bethnal Green, where we had a handling session with the Education Officer, looking at articles of children's clothing. The students then spent some time looking around the main exhibition area.

The field trip was planned carefully in relation to our wider pedagogy, but we were mindful to present it to the students in neutral terms. We did not discuss what themes we would develop in advance, and nor did we set any particular questions or reading for the students to do. This was because we wanted them form their own judgments of the spaces and artefacts they saw, and to take away their own conclusions which we would follow up in subsequent seminars and coursework activities. We did, however, deliberately select the spaces we visited to fit in with two of the themes we would go on to develop in coursework.

We thus developed our pedagogical aims in follow-up sessions after the field trip. In the subsequent week, we used the theme of child leisure to ask the students to reflect on the following questions in small groups:

- What did the museum's collections suggest to you about the principal characteristics of children's toys?
- What does this suggest to you about the way that children played in the past?
- Were you struck more by continuities or change?

This enabled them to think through the meanings of the objects they had seen at the Museum, and relate them to ideas about childhood. We also used the trip to prepare the students for one of their pieces of assessed coursework, which was a popular article or museum guide to an object or building connected with the history of childhood. Seeing such a variety of objects at the Bethnal Green Museum and having thought about their meanings, gave this workshop (and the subsequent pieces of work) greater meaning and depth.

We developed their experiences of the Hospital visit in a subsequent week on child health. Again, students were asked to reflect on their reactions to the hospital as a space in seminar discussion, and we built on this further by leading a workshop based on the online Historic Hospitals Admission Project which includes the records of Great Ormond Street Hospital. We asked students to select a group of patients based on period or disease type, and then discussed their experiences of disease and treatment via what we had seen of the objects and spaces at the Hospital.

The field trip had valuable outcomes and benefits for the students. We both felt that they had gained a real appreciation of how spaces and objects were used and experienced by children in the past, and how these could vary. The trip also gave the students much more confidence in approaching their assessed coursework, and they expressed a greater degree of empathy with their selected topics. It also helped the students to grapple with the key themes of the module; one student, for example, commented directly on the impact of the contrasting architecture of the two sites. Feedback indicated that they found the experience to have been valuable, interesting and enjoyable. Comments recorded anonymously after the trip included:

'It made what we had learned feel so much more real'

'It put childhood from the past into perspective and I was able to see how experiences of childhood have changed/stayed the same'

'It has helped in preparation for assessed work because we were able to explore a range of children's lives not just a specific group'

We both felt that the trip had been a great success in provoking individual reactions in our students which they were then able to relate to the wider themes of the module. We had planned the use of time carefully in advance, and our only improvement in this respect would be to request a longer handling session. This was also something requested in student feedback. However, there is a charge for this, and so this is dependent on funds being available. We would also request that the handling session be more directly based around children's toys, and the Education Officer has indicated that she would be very happy to do this another time. The day was enjoyable and instructive in itself, but it gained much greater weight by being followed up specifically in seminar discussions and assessed work. This was further enhanced by the fact that the student selected their own topics for their popular article/museum guide, which allowed them to develop their personal

reactions to objects and places they had seen during the trip. The non-assessed activity using the records of Great Ormond Street Hospital was also lent much greater weight and 'reality' by having seen the very small space where these children would have been treated. The process of sickness, confinement and treatment was thus brought to life considerably.

While this trip was built on the specific themes of this module, it is something which could easily be developed by other lecturers. Our principal aim was to identify key themes which could be developed in selected locations, and this is entirely transferable given the range of museums and historic places across the country. Our location in Oxford gave us ready access to London, but similar ideas could be developed by visiting historic houses or local museums, many of which contain objects connected with social and medical history.

*Bibliography:*

Great Ormond Street Hospital, [http://www.gosh.nhs.uk/about\\_gosh/gosh\\_history/](http://www.gosh.nhs.uk/about_gosh/gosh_history/)

Museum of Childhood, <http://www.vam.ac.uk/moc/>

Patricia Coughlin, 'Making field trips count: collaborating for meaningful experiences', *Social studies* 101:5 (2010), 200-20.

Noel McAdam, 'Troubled times', *Times Higher Education Supplement* 1222 (04/05/1996).

Martha Nabors, Linda Edwards and R. Kent Murray, 'Making the case for field trips: what research tells us and what site coordinators have to say', *Education* 129:4 (2009), 661-7.

*Selected Images:*



## CREATIVE WRITING IN CARDIFF MUSEUM

*Shelagh Weeks  
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As a part of the three modules of Creative Writing that I teach in the autumn semester at Cardiff University, I take individual groups out to Cardiff Museum and Art Gallery. Prior to this, I may send them outside briefly, to improve their powers of observation: of landscape, setting and character - but this outing is our first major trip beyond the classroom. I generally visit the galleries in advance and plan a worksheet based on the venue's temporary exhibitions, regular displays and featured paintings (Cardiff often themes contemporary painters with older works).

I take the students on the visit about halfway through their course, so they have already gained some confidence and the small group workshop has encouraged independent working. Earlier in the Creative Writing module we have explored the ways in which published writers find their voice and subject matter, looking at texts and the inter-connectivity between form and content. We also discuss how some student writers draw heavily on their own experience, while others respond better to the mysterious or to pictures and objects. The museum is a catalyst and liberator for all: for those who enjoy exploring the unknown, for those who find it difficult to escape memoir, for those who find the classroom constricting or stuffy, for those who feel the presence of everyone else a negative or competitive force. In class we consider many fine literature extracts, but sometimes the layered complexities and sophistication can be daunting to the new practitioner. Our visit to the museum encourages greater creative freedom and touches upon different, and complementary, explorations and cultural adventures.



The students meet in the museum lobby and the group is given a worksheet and museum map, then sent away to observe, reflect and write. Students generally have 15 minutes or so to explore and 40 minutes to make rough notes before we meet in the foyer café for a coffee and cake (one of the high-lights!) and then go to a work-shopping room where students edit, feedback in pairs, polish work and end by reading something out loud. The worksheet makes clear that everyone will have to read, even if it is just a sentence. I have discovered that some form of light pressure is necessary, otherwise the students are likely to wander for so long they never get down to fruitful composition. Paintings and sculpture seem to produce the more startling and unusual work (often encouraging diverse narrative voices or new points of view) and therefore I direct them to these areas. However, I do not preclude students from following strong interests that lie elsewhere (the natural world, archaeology, the basking shark, porcelain etc).

In my hand out, I make sufficient directed and open suggestions to nudge even the most recalcitrant student toward some form of imaginative or observational response: considering potential dialogues between characters in paintings, describing (in detail) situation or landscape, conjuring monologues, imagining the before or after of paintings, imagining the museum as a setting for invented characters who have a chance, or clandestine meeting. Because students are encouraged to use a stream of consciousness method and to write without constraint, the combination of the vividness of the paintings, the solidity or lightness of sculptures (Rodin, Degas, Hepworth) and the inspiring and liberating geographic space (airiness, good light, solitude) diminish inhibition and self-censorship, and nurture engagement. Many of the students, in the questionnaires mention the calm and peace of the place.

Some of my students have never been to Cardiff's beautiful Victorian museum (with particularly fine displays of paintings) that sits just a hundred yards from the University. Introducing students to history, art and archaeology is educational in the most general sense and the visit helps to broaden understanding and encourage connectivity. Our visit is fun, informal and allows me to sit and talk to students who, on university territory, can be shy and withdrawn; in the coffee break, they also engage more enthusiastically with one another. The visit feels like it isn't work; we're being subversive, escaping to secret corners, communing with disparate worlds, entering a dialogue with the past and also with a more keenly felt present. Each of us makes a choice about which art or object we will privilege with our attention. In turn, each of us is worked upon - often in surprising ways - by a complex and unpredictable paradigm of image, association, colour and atmosphere. Stimulated by the richness or enigma of scenes, characters and objects, our imaginations and understanding are pushed in new directions. One student stated, 'It broadened my perspective concerning art and how artists' styles can be formed into words', another that it was an 'inspiration', a 'chance to explore ideas that would not have come to my head in the classroom'. One of my students writes that, 'unusual situations are depicted' that they 'wouldn't have thought of otherwise'; another that 'I was able to imagine things I otherwise would not have.' and one that there were 'loads of ideas for plots and characters'. One student states that the museum gives a sense of 'a larger world' and another says, 'The close interaction with stimuli is so much more thought-provoking than looking at an image in a book or on the web.' Yet another says of the visit, 'I think paintings can be very inspiring, and the concepts behind them are helpful for story ideas. The relationship between image and text is fascinating.'



When I come to mark the students' portfolios, some of the most successful, poised, mature, original and fluent work has come from our sessions in the museum and Art Gallery. I have linked a [piece from one of our third year students](#) who is now undertaking an MA in Creative Writing. It would be a stretch to suggest that the museum trip opened up the possibility of such post-graduate study, but it certainly developed the student's confidence, and posited a different and more liberating approach to text and self, a powerful sense that the potential for stories lies all around. What is noticeable in all my students' work during the visit (and for some, this continues after) is a greater attention to detail and nuance, as if the layering of paint and intricacies of scene, combined with the quiet and space have slowed and intensified perception. They open their eyes; they really start to see what is and what might be. Later, in our museum workshop, students also, in their verbal delineation of what they choose to respond to, begin to 'own' culture and in the process take their personal choices and writing emphases more seriously.

Having a worksheet is in itself a solution to an earlier problem. The students trail in over a period of thirty minutes (despite my injunction to be on time). Standing in the foyer with a sheaf of papers allows the earliest to set off immediately and the stragglers to catch up. Another problem I needed to resolve was that the first year I ran the course, I put the session on Week 10. It was an enjoyable final social, but students complained they weren't able to make use of peer workshopping and properly polish the writing they'd so enjoyed starting. Now, the visit takes place just before reading week (Week 5 Of 10). In many of the questionnaires, the students state the remaining problem is lack of time ('the hour flew by' says one) but some students have lectures before or after, limiting timetable adjustments. Interestingly, individual students or small groups often return in their own time and continue to engage with this unique space. Our small peer workshopping groups in Cardiff encourage autonomy, self-motivation and independent learning; the trip to the museum builds on this and perhaps it is inevitable, that once offered the place as a cultural possibility, they will make use of it again.

In the spring semester I use the Museum a second time – also the covered market in the centre of town. I am planning to undertake a trip to the central library.

#### *Bibliographical References*

[National Museum, Cardiff](#)

[Frans Hals - Portrait of a Woman](#). A story by Megan King

[Capturing the Moment](#) - A student response to the Cardiff Museum visit by Sarah Wicks

## I-SPY ANYTOWN

A READY-MADE FIELD TRIP EXERCISE THAT YOU CAN RUN FROM ANY CAMPUS OR CLASSROOM

*Dr Toby Butler*

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This case study describes how a relatively simple mapping exercise can be used to actively engage students to think about local history, memory and how the past is revealed (and obliterated) in their own locality.

This exercise or mini-field trip, which can be conducted and discussed in as little as three hours, was recently used in a third year undergraduate history course in Memory and History. The course looks in some depth at oral history, memory, collective memory, memorialisation and the presentation of memory in museums.

I developed a three session strand on 'memory and place' which looks at how and why history and memory is recorded and memorialised in places, ranging from war memorials and monuments to the latest multimedia trails that can be downloaded on to location-aware mobile phones. In the first session we consider a number of controversial examples of memorialisation, ranging from the Holocaust memorial in Berlin to the informal and formal memorials at 'Ground Zero' in New York. This field trip/mapping exercise came next, designed to get the students thinking actively about how and why memory and history is – or isn't - reflected in their immediate surroundings. In this case it was the new Docklands campus of the University of East London, on the quayside of the Albert Dock and within sight of London City Airport and the Excel conference centre. The final session was back in the lecture theatre, where I covered some of the theory of place (see for example Creswell, 2004) and some artistic experiments in using oral history to interpret places, including my own 'memoryscale' trails (see links below).

My motivation for designing such a session was to provide a more active, experiential and explorative experience to give the students some variety in terms of learning style in what was otherwise a typically lecture and seminar dominated course. I was also keen to develop our student's curiosity and knowledge of local history – most of our students live in East London, come from a wide range of backgrounds and the docks were – and still are – a fascinating area in terms of local, national and international connections. I was also keen to design an experience which was relatively open and not expert led, so the students had the freedom to build their own experiences and reflections. The I-Spy exercise itself was something that I had developed with a colleague, Mark Hunter, for a fun workshop activity to provoke dialogue between academics from a variety of disciplines visiting the newly opened Terminal 5 at Heathrow Airport. Since then I have successfully used the exercise with undergraduate and postgraduate students at Concordia University in Montreal, Canada.

A coursework option, alongside more traditional essay assignments, asked the students to construct a short trail which incorporated local history research and oral history, and provide a fully referenced trail description complete with a justification of its design, drawing on the theoretical work and case studies they had encountered on the course. Another motivation for this session was to show the students how easy – and exciting - it can be construct such trails and hopefully motivate them to try a new type of applied coursework assignment.

## *The I-Spy exercise*

### Equipment

- 8 to 10 coloured tapes, insulation tape ideal
- sticky note pad
- several pairs of scissors
- Photocopies of local map for each student– campus location at centre
- Photocopies of ISpy question sheet
- Any historical maps you have of the area
- Digital cameras/student mobile phones (optional)

The session began in the classroom, where I had asked the students (about a dozen in total) to clear the furniture to the edge of the room. I had asked them to bring coats and walking shoes to the session, so they were aware that this was going to be a little unusual. I intended to begin by discussing some readings I had asked them to do in preparation (Butler 2005 and 2009), but as very few had done the work this was quickly jettisoned and I outlined how it was possible for anyone to create a memorial or history trail, drew attention to the fact that this was a possible coursework option and explained, referring to some examples in the readings, that there were some tricks used by intellectuals and artists that we can use to think creatively about places and their pasts.

I then explained that we were about to go on a small adventure exploring the local area. At that point I passed around three historical maps around the group, asking them to locate where they were on each map. This could have been done via powerpoint, but I wanted them to have the experience of handling real Ordnance Survey maps (the ones I had were from the Cassini Historical Map series which match Ordnance Survey Landranger). I pointed out a few important changes, like how recently the land were about to explore had been marshland. I then I explained the I-Spy concept and outlined their task.

I-Spy was a popular series of spotter's guides produced for children. Each book was based on a theme (I-Spy at the airport, I-Spy musical instruments etc) and contained an illustrated list of objects the reader had to find. The date and location of each sighting would be recorded in the book and when the book was complete it could be sent to 'Big Chief I-Spy' (an ex-headmaster who created the concept) who would send back a feather and an order of merit.

In this exercise I have the students the following 'I-spy' list and instructions, along with a local map to record their journey:

### *I-SPY Exercise*

- An object (that you can bring back)
- A line of power
- A memory (yours)
- A memory (from a third party)
- An absence
- An atmosphere
- An emotional moment
- A movement memory
- A possible future
- A layer
- A hidden history

Your I-SPY task is to find each of the above. Work in pairs (why not try it with someone you don't know so well?). Draw your journey path on the map and mark the location of each 'find'. Annotate or invent symbols for each, as you wish.

Don't worry about finding them all. Quality is more important than quantity.

Don't be overly concerned about the appearance of the map; it will simply be used as a tool for you to remember and convey elements of your adventure to others.

I explained that it was up to them to interpret what each thing meant and that the memory from a third party would require them to talk to a stranger. I then gave the students an hour to complete the task and return to the classroom.

When the students returned (inevitably some will be late) I explained that we were now going to create a large map of our collective experiences on the floor. Using lines of tape, I laid out and labelled a couple of major roads/features so the group could roughly locate their experiences. Using the coloured insulation tape, the pairs were given 10 minutes to mark on the floor the location of their two most interesting finds (one for larger groups), designing an appropriate symbol for each experience. The objects they have gathered can either be displayed on a desk at one end of the room or placed on the map itself.

I then said that I wanted them to imagine that I was a stranger to the area, and as I walked from location to location the appropriate pair should explain what I might experience at each place on the map.



*Students creating an 'I-Spy' map, Concordia University*

The joy of this exercise is that you will never know what the students will come back with. At Terminal 5, which had only been open for a week, one pair questioned a security guard and discovered that there was already a memorial – an inscription on the side of a raised flower bed to two people who had died in the construction work. In the docklands we discovered long-gone markets that used to be held on the site of the campus; concrete bollards that were leaning over because of the marshy foundations below, and traces – both physical and remembered – of the dock industries that had all but disappeared. It can be instructive to encourage the students to consider why there are ‘blank’ areas on the map – can history and memory dwell more easily in some areas than others? When you walk through a landscape, what traces of the past can be sensed? Now think about which elements of the past have been obliterated? Who’s past has been silenced? Why? How could it be put back? How do you think this area is going to look and feel in 50 years time? If you were going to design a trail or a map like this for the future inhabitants, what would you want to include? What would you symbolise? What would you leave out? Why?



*An I-Spy map*



*Students gathering some oral history on the I-Spy exercise in Montreal  
(Photo: Joyce Pillarella)*

I had a three hour session but it was tough to include all I wanted to several pairs were late coming back and the ‘sharing experiences’ part of the session was a little rushed, which could have potentially led to students feeling that their contributions were not being given the attention they deserved. I resolved to keep the introduction to the exercise much briefer to give more time for the discussion after the exercise –I included artistic/theoretical examples beforehand because I wanted the students to take the exercise seriously: on reflection I don’t think that was necessary. Overall the students responded very positively to this exercise. They seemed to particularly enjoy the excitement of making discoveries and ‘owning’ them in a way that is very difficult to engineer in the lecture/seminar scenario.

I received this comment from Joyce Pillarella, an MA student who had tried the exercise and was inspired to try the exercise with her Italian Canadian students in Montreal:

‘... their stories and their rationale blew me away. They are 14 - 17 years old and they were making links to the oral history to Italian immigration, Ville Emard stories, places, their generation vs the older ones — they sounded like MA students.’

It also gave some students who did not contribute much in seminars to really engage – it is almost impossible not to in an exercise like this. It was also wonderful to hear the results of the impromptu interviews they conducted – some of the memories they gathered were very moving – and I hope that it might give the students confidence to use oral history recording in their dissertation research. A few weeks later I asked if anyone was considering turning in a trail for their coursework – about 25 per cent of the class said they were, which I was pleased to hear as students at this level tend to be fairly risk-averse when it comes to assessments that count towards their final degree grade. The exercise has already successfully been used with students in the disciplines of history, geography and languages and I believe it could work well for any subject in the arts, humanities or social sciences with an interest in using place as a starting point for enquiry.

*Suggested reading:*

Cresswell, T. (2004). *Place: a short introduction*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Butler, T and Miller, G (2005) ‘Linked: A Landmark in Sound, a Public Walk of Art’, *Cultural Geographies*, 12.1, 2005, 77-88.

Butler, T (2007) ‘Memoryscape: How audio walks can deepen our sense of place by integrating art, oral history and cultural geography’, *Geography Compass* 1 (3): 350–372

Butler, T (2008) ‘Teaching and learning guide for Memoryscape: How audio walks can deepen our sense of place by integrating art, oral history and cultural geography’. *Geography Compass* 2 (5): 1750–1754 (2008)

Butler, T (2009) ‘Memoryscape : integrating oral history, memory and landscape on the river Thames’. In Paul Ashton and Hilda Kean (Eds): *People and their Pasts: Public History Today*, Palgrave Macmillan 223-239

*Useful websites:*

[www.memoryscape.org.uk](http://www.memoryscape.org.uk)

This is my project website, which features two online trails, *Dockers* which explores Greenwich and the memories of the London Docks that are archived in the Museum of London, and *Drifting* which is a rather strange experiment combining physical geography and oral history along the Thames at Hampton Court, but still makes for an interesting trail. Audio, maps and trails can be downloaded for free, so students with phones or ipods can try the trails if you are within reach of Surrey or London. The site features an online version, with sound accompanying photographs of the location.

[www.portsofcall.org.uk](http://www.portsofcall.org.uk)

More trails here, this time of the communities surrounding the Royal Docks in East London. The scenery here is very dramatic and anyone interested in the regeneration of East London and its impact on local communities will find these trails interesting. Like *Dockers*, the walks feature a lot of rare archive interviews. This project involved a great deal of community interaction and participation as I experimented with trying to get people involved with the trail making process. The site uses Google maps for online delivery.

[www.soundwalk.com](http://www.soundwalk.com)

This New York based firm creates exceptionally high quality soundwalks, and they are well worth the money. They started by producing trails for different districts of New York (I recommend the Bronx Graffiti trail) and have recently made trails for other cities, like Paris and Varanasi in India.

[www.visionofbritain.org.uk](http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk) and <http://www.british-history.ac.uk>

Wonderful for finding historical maps of your area.

# TREES IN REPRESENTATION AND REALITY

## AN INDUCTION ACTIVITY FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE STUDENTS

*Arran Stibbe*

*University of Gloucestershire*

As part of induction at the University of Gloucestershire, first-year English Language students conducted an outdoor exercise assessing the relationship between representations of trees and their physical presence. This case study was part of the English Subject Centre's 'Bringing the Outside In' case studies initiative.



In 2007 the Centre for Active Learning at the University of Gloucestershire launched an ambitious educational experiment: the induction project. In their first week of university, before classes even began, 370 new students would go on a field trip, engage in a collaborative research project, give group presentations and receive formative feedback. Some staff were sceptical, particularly those in areas where field trips were unheard of, but in the end it proved remarkably successful, as ([Swansborough 2007](#); [Centre for Active Learning 2009](#)). Students made friends, got to know their lecturers, and most importantly got the message that studying at university involves active engagement, enquiry, teamwork and self-direction rather than the memorising of facts.

The Humanities Department (which includes History, English Literature, English Language, RPE and Creative Writing courses) decided on an overall theme of trees, with each course designing its own specific activities related to the theme. For the English Language Course, the activity was an investigation of linguistic and visual representations of trees, and comparison of these representations with direct personal experience of trees. The aim was to engage students in critical analysis of representations while appreciating the more direct sensual reality, and gaining ecological awareness in the process. The induction project has now run four times. The first two times involved full day trips to the Forest of Dean where students spent hours outside in the woods, but financial constraints meant that the second two field trips were held in the tamer environment of Pittville Park in Cheltenham, which nonetheless has some magnificent trees.

The activity was described to students in the following terms:

“For many reasons, the future of humanity is intimately linked to the future of trees and forests. How we feel about trees, and ultimately, how we treat them, is influenced by the ways they are represented in the texts and images which surround us. For Heidegger, the ultimate symbol of humanity’s self-destructive disregard of the natural world was the representation of the forest as *bestand* – a standing reserve of resources, or standing timber. The aim of this project is to investigate the representation of trees, and beyond that, the nature of representation in general. You will accomplish this in an experiential exercise where you will be comparing your direct experience of trees with linguistic and visual representations in books, exhibitions, the internet, and your own representations through photography.

In your investigation you will be taking photographs of trees and through this will undoubtedly discover the paucity of representation. You will find that the frame of a photograph is not able to contain the whole tree, and that it is impossible to capture the way that leaves move in response to the same breeze that you feel on your cheek. You'll discover the failure of words such as 'ash' or 'oak' to convey the enormous variation and individuality of trees that happen to share the same label. You'll discover how, with words such as 'woods' and 'timber', you can't see the trees for the wood. And you'll discover authors who, through poetry and lyrical prose, try to bring trees to life on the page, representing them as living, growing, sexual beings worthy of protection for themselves and the future survival of humanity.

Working as a group you will collect representations of trees from sources in the library and from the internet. You will also go outside to experience the reality as directly as your senses allow, and attempt to capture this reality in photographs. Your research questions are: 'What different ways are there of representing trees?'; 'What implications might there be of particular representations?' and 'How is representation different from reality?' Using PowerPoint to display the representations that you discover, you will give a presentation/performance which conveys your findings to the group. This performance can be a straight academic description of what you find, or you can use creativity, humour or imagination to present your findings in any style you feel is suitable."

There are a number of pedagogical aims behind this activity, some explicit in the instructions above and some less overt.

**1)** The first aim is to allow students to develop their own grounded understanding of the difference between representation and reality, something which is essential since English Language is, at heart, an analysis of linguistic representation. This kind of understanding cannot be gained through sitting in the library reading books on social construction, since the books contain only representations of things rather than the things themselves. In comparing direct sensory experience of trees with mere words about them it is hoped that students can come to appreciate directly the paucity and partiality of representation.

**2)** The second aim is to frame the students as researchers, enquirers who are using their skills in English Language to explore representations of the world around them and critique the role of those representations in constructing the society and culture they are part of. This is, of course, in the context of the unsustainability of that society.

**3)** The third aim is to help students develop their own ecological consciousness, discovering for themselves the interconnections and interdependencies between humans and other species. This is not a well-meaning distraction from the English Language course intended to foster environmentally friendly behaviour, but something more fundamental. As is usual in the discipline of English Language, the course recognises that language is a social phenomenon, occurring within, influenced by, and influencing society. But it goes one step further, and considers the fact that societies are embedded in, influenced by, and influence larger ecological systems. In other words, the course does not treat humans as if they existed in a vacuum, interacting only with other humans, but instead considers people as embedded in a rich social, physical, biological and ecological world. With ecological consciousness, students will be able to examine language in its full social and ecological context.

Students worked in teams analysing linguistic and visual representations of trees on the internet; they walked among trees, stood beneath trees, photographed trees and in some cases even hugged trees. They gave group presentations on what they found and (importantly) enjoyed the entire process. The presentations themselves varied in their creativity, form of expression, and depth of insight, but in general were factual in describing a range of representations while skirting around the

deeper issues of the difference between representation and reality. It is unlikely that students gained a profound appreciation of the limitations of representation and began a lifelong search for authenticity because of this project. But their feedback (via questionnaires and informal discussion) reveals that they did gain something from this activity which would have been impossible without going outside.

Students were unanimous that the project as a whole was 'an excellent way to bond with classmates', and that being engaged in a practical task outside the classroom was central to this. Comments included:

- 'Being outside gave me a chance to bond with my group.'
- 'Going outside made our research less formal and made people more relaxed.'
- 'Being outside it was much easier to socialise as well as work and it really helped break down social barriers in our group.'

There were also numerous comments which indicated that, in terms of the subject matter itself, being outside gave essential new perspectives that could not be obtained from books. Students could see trees as individuals, understand them better, see them from a different perspective, and explore their own feelings when interacting with trees. In their own words, interacting directly with trees:

- 'means we can really see trees as individuals'
- 'was useful in seeing trees in real life rather than in pictures'
- 'was a bit of an eye-opener'
- 'gave me a closer understanding of and feeling for trees'
- 'was a very natural real-life experience so it helped me see the trees from another perspective'
- 'helped to give a 'real' view of how trees vary. Just like people, no two trees are alike'
- 'got us to open up about how standing under trees made us feel'
- '[meant] we were able to experience how the trees felt and how they made you feel standing next to them'
- 'gave us a deeper insight'
- 'made me look at trees in a different way'

All of this suggests that students did gain an understanding of the difference between representation and reality even if they could not, or chose not to, express it explicitly in their presentations.

Taking part in the project seems to have increased a number of students' ecological awareness, something which is best conveyed in their own words:

- 'Viewing trees helped me get more knowledge of them and my love for them has increased.'
- 'Since this project I feel a lot closer to nature and have an enhanced respect for trees in particular.'
- 'My view has become broader and I can see how trees play an integral role in life.'
- 'It made me aware of all the connections.'
- 'Before trees were just trees but after looking at them they all seem to have more character and seem somehow more human than before.'
- 'My perspective has changed a lot - before I never really appreciated trees but now I have found a new importance for them and a greater understanding of them.'
- 'I feel more aware and appreciative of trees and how important they are in life.'
- 'It has offered insight into climate change.'

- 'I used to take trees for granted, walk past them and not really take notice of them. However, now I see trees in many different ways and gained an appreciation for them.'
- 'My view of trees has changed as a result of this exercise as I now see the connection we have with them and how vital they are to our existence instead of just being a resource.'

There were, however, students who were more task orientated and saw being outside as less relevant to the practicalities of preparing their presentation. For these students being outside seemed of marginal significance

- 'useful but not essential to the activity'
- 'Working as a group and sharing our ideas and interpretations seemed more important/useful than going outside.'
- 'I don't think the outdoor activity was an important part of the project as I felt the content of the project was more important.'
- 'Useful but I felt it wasn't necessary.'

Interestingly, when describing what they gained from the project, these students focus entirely on what they have learned about the representation of trees rather than about the reality of the trees themselves:

- 'I have learned about the etymology of trees and that they can be represented in a variety of ways.'
- 'I have learned that trees are represented in a variety of ways in different forms, e.g., films, literature.'
- 'I have a better understanding of the representation of trees.'
- 'I didn't realise how important trees are when used in the media or literature. A description of a daunting tree in a novel plays an important part in creating a certain atmosphere.'

It is as if, for these students, the trees themselves remained in the background, obscured by their own representations.

The exercise 'works' (at least for many students) through the careful framing of experience. Students are given information about human ecological relations with trees and instructions on a particular way to approach and view trees, which they put into practice outside with real trees. (For an interesting alternative way of framing student interaction with trees see Bignell 2009.) This is all that is necessary - the very natural situation of human beings interacting with other beings that they co-evolved with does the rest. With some variations, the exercise is repeatable for a wide range of disciplines - literature students could look at representations of trees in books and compare them with real trees, creative writers could create their own stories about trees, film students could compare film representations with reality, and media students could make their own films of trees. It would also be a useful exercise for biology students to compare the often mechanistic and reductionist representations of trees in biology textbooks with the living reality.

There is one final point to make. The exercise clearly simplifies the difference between representation and reality. Encounters with a real tree are never completely direct because the way of approaching the tree is discursively framed - in this case framed by the instructions on the exercise sheet as well as the various discourses that have influenced students' perception of trees in the past. There are also cognitive filters on perception which pre-process and re-arrange sensory data. On the other side, representations are backed up by memories and sensory imagination which make them richer than the kind of pure symbols that appear in mathematical equations. There are philosophical questions about the degree to which the trees themselves are active agents, forcing their unique forms into the perceptual field of the viewer, and the degree to which trees are discursive constructs existing predominantly in the minds of the viewer. It is up to students

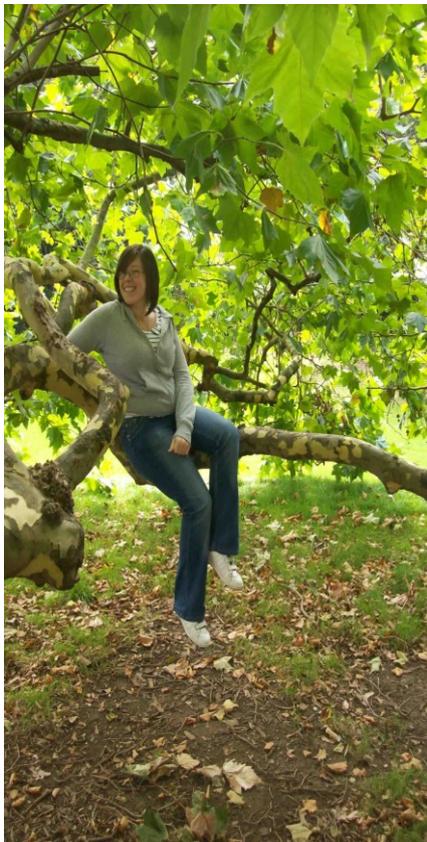
themselves to come to a sophisticated understanding of the relationship between discourse and reality through their reading but also, crucially, through direct experience as they do in this exercise.

*Suggested reading:*

Bignell, B. (2009). 'Beauty as a Way of Knowing'. In Arran Stibbe (ed.) *The Handbook of Sustainability Literacy*. Dartington: Green Books, pp. 191-198.

Centre for Active Learning (2009). 'The Introduction of an Active Learning Induction'. University of Gloucestershire.

Swansborough, Sue. (2007). 'Getting it Right from the Start: Active Learning and Induction in a Higher Education Setting'. Presentation at CLTR Conference, Edge Hill University, Ormskirk, May 10th 2007.



# POETRY AND SUSTAINABILITY

*Dr. Hugh Dunkerley*  
*University of Chichester*

Students went on a field trip to Kingley Vale nature reserve in West Sussex as part of a module on contemporary poetry and the environment. This case study was part of the English Subject Centre's 'Bringing the Outside In' case studies initiative.

The field trip is part of a level 3 undergraduate module entitled 'Reinventing Nature: Contemporary Poetry and the Environment'. The aim of the module is to develop students' awareness of the ways in which texts construct and deconstruct various attitudes to nature with particular reference to poetry and its ability to take us beyond instrumental and anthropocentric assumptions. The title, 'Reinventing Nature', stems from the fact that ideas about nature are reinvented all the time and that poets are also reinventors of these ideas themselves. Wordsworth, for example, changed our view of the Lake District forever. In exploring the variety of ways in which a number of contemporary poets engage with nature as a subject, students have to engage with and critique different social constructions of nature that are current at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

While English Studies has, over the last thirty years, engaged with issues of race, class and gender, until recently it has had little to say about environmental crisis. However, an increasing number of writers are dealing with the environment in their work. Living as we do in an age of unprecedented environmental change, it seems vital that we engage our students with writing which deals with issues such as pollution, global warming and population growth. A critical understanding of the ways such issues are negotiated in literature can help provide students with the tools necessary to understand the increasingly 'heated' debates surrounding, for example, global warming. Ultimately, students will carry such ideas with them when they graduate and will be able to engage more effectively in debates about what a socially and environmentally sustainable society might look like. The module also aims to make interdisciplinary connections, particularly with science. Our education system's tendency towards specialisation means that most English undergraduates have only a limited understanding of scientific concepts such as evolution and climate change. Students are required to engage with a variety of scientific ideas through the poetry studied.

My motivation for organising the field trip was to engage students with an actual environment. After I finished my first degree, I worked for the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers as a schools officer. My brief was to engage children with a hands-on experience of the natural world. During this time I became aware not only of environmental issues, but also of the effects of direct sensuous experiences of nature. One aim of the field trip was therefore to give students an embodied experience of a natural environment. In addition to this, the field trip was intended to inculcate an understanding of basic ecological concepts related to one specific environment as well as raising awareness of the interdependence of the human and the natural.

Before embarking on the field trip, the students engaged with the work of a number of contemporary poets writing about nature, as well as interrogating concepts such as 'Nature', 'Pastoral' 'Ecology' and 'Environmentalism'. The expectation was that by encountering and learning about a real environment, they would be able to begin to grasp how ecological concepts can inform our understanding of a nature, as well as seeing how we culturally construct many of our ideas about nature. [Kingley Vale Nature Reserve](#) is situated on the South Downs close to Chichester. The reserve is managed by Natural England and we were shown round by the local warden. The reserve contains a number of different habitats, including extensive yew woods as well as downland turf. However, Kingley Vale is not a natural landscape. It has been shaped by millennia of human activity. For example, there are three Bronze Age burial mounds on the summit of the hill. Remains of Neolithic field systems can also be seen in on the valley slopes. The areas of downland turf would quickly disappear under scrub if it were not for systematic grazing. The warden gave the students an

account of the human as well as the natural history of the reserve, emphasising the ways in which humans have a hand in managing the natural processes that we saw around us.

The field trip was rated by many students as a highlight of the module. Comments suggested that it gave them a deeper understanding of the interrelationships between the natural and the human in a local environment. This increased understanding fed through into the seminar room, where student discussions of the work of specific poets often reflected the experience of the field trip. For example, on a number of occasions students referred specifically to the field trip when looking at the work of a poet who wrote about a particular landscape. It is of course very hard to quantify the overall effect of the field trip, or the module as whole for that matter, on students' environmental awareness as such shifts in attitudes are often incremental and take may take place over long periods of time. However, I did ask students to fill in a questionnaire at the end of the module about whether their attitudes had changed because of the module. I began the questionnaire by asking students if they had had any experience of environmental issues at school and whether they thought this had affected their attitudes in any way. This interested me in particular because when I worked as a schools officer with the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers in the nineteen eighties, the environment was high on the agenda in primary schools. The answers to these questions suggested that about half of the students had had some teaching about environmental issues at school. Bearing in mind that a few of the students were quite mature, I was surprised that more of the younger ones didn't have some experience of the issues. Of those that did, most said it had made them more aware of their own impact on the planet. Asked about the impact of the current module, most students said that it had made them more aware of the issues. However, when asked whether their behaviour might change because of what they had learnt, the answers were more mixed. A number had clearly taken the module because they were already interested in environmental issues. Their answers tended to suggest they would carry on as before. A number did say they would consider issues such as driving and flying less and recycling more. However, a number gave answers that suggested that they saw the whole issue as so vast and removed from their own lives that any action would be futile.

This last response raises an important issue for Education for Sustainable Development. How do we raise students' awareness of environmental issues without making the whole issue seem so overwhelming that personal action seems pointless? In fact I am careful in the module not to present environmental issues as intractable, but this is a perception that many may already bring to the course. However, I do think it is vital that education gives students some sense of agency.

*Suggested reading:*

Garrard, G., 2004. *Ecocriticism* London: Routledge.

HEFCE, 2005. *Sustainable Development in Higher Education*.

Roberts, C and Roberts, R., 2007. *Greener by Degrees: Exploring Sustainability through Higher Education Curricula*. GDN, University of Gloucestershire.

Stibbe, A., 2008. Reading and Writing Society: the role of English Subjects in Education for Sustainability. *English Subject Newsletter*, Issue 14, April 2008, pp24-28.

Natural England, Kingley Vale website.

# FROM CLIMATE TO LANDSCAPE

## IMAGINING THE FUTURE (CLIF)

*Dr Kym Martindale*

*University College Falmouth (Tremough Campus)*



*Traces of change and intervention.*

Students used a field trip to Cornwall as the basis for creative projects imagining the future impact of climate change. This extra-curricular activity, part of the interdisciplinary CLIF project, led to presentations at a major academic conference. This case study was part of the English Subject Centre's 'Bringing the Outside In' case studies initiative.

The [CLIF project](#) as such is based in the Cultural Geography department of the University of Exeter, Cornwall, under the direction of Professor Catherine Leyshon (née Brace). I contributed to a previous project run jointly by Professor Leyshon and Dr Adeline Johns-Putra (English, University of Exeter, Cornwall) which culminated in an edited collection of essays ([Brace and Johns-Putra 2010](#)). In 2009, Professor Leyshon invited me to bring a group of creative writing students into the CLIF project, an interdisciplinary examination into 'understanding what climate change means to people, the potential desirability of these changes, as well as perceptions and imaginings of future climate change in relation to familiar habitats and landscapes that contribute to a sense of place' ([CLIF project website](#)). The landscape focused on here, is the Lizard, the most south-westerly point of Cornwall, and a place both remote and wild, yet much visited by tourists. The other disciplines involved are bioscience, geography, and English (Exeter). The project was made open to second year students on the English with Media Studies and English with Creative Writing degrees at University College Falmouth (UCF). Initially, 6 students volunteered, but only 3 have fully committed to the project, the group being augmented by a family member of one of the students. Further input came from a PhD student (English, University of Exeter, Cornwall) who also teaches part-time for English at UCF, and who has acted as a facilitator throughout.

I accepted the invitation for several reasons:

- My own research area is in place and writing, specifically poetry, but it has long felt important to extend the 'reach' of research (my own, and generally) and ensure it is visible to, and part of the student experience.
- The collaborative and interdisciplinary nature of the project would, I felt, broaden the students' academic experience.
- It felt important to offer the students a creative opportunity that was separate from the curriculum – thus enhancing their CV and employment profile – while reinforcing certain elements of the actual curriculum 'in the field'.
- We teach discourse and critical analysis primarily, and I felt it would be productive for the students to encounter different discourses and ideologies in terms of place and subjectivity.



*Local rock.*

Initially, the group was taken on a guided walk by Paul Simmons of [WalkitCornwall](#), who revealed the landscape's various histories: cultural, social, political, geological and botanical. This was followed by a discussion in the local tavern, during which students talked about how the guide's knowledge had opened up new readings of an otherwise deeply familiar landscape, or brought insights into their acquaintance with an alien environment (two of the group are local, two are from south east England). The group then went away to consider how they might begin to respond creatively to this landscape under imagined impacts of climate change. A month later, we held a workshop in which we explored draft pieces the group had done, and looked closely at the entrenched ideologies of Romanticism in (our own) constructs of place, nature and environment. The group expressed much interest too, in attending, and presenting their work at the [Environmental Change- Cultural Change conference](#), University of Bath, September 2010, so I answered the CFP with a proposal to do this. By July, the group had produced a literary essay piece, a short film, a range of photographs, and a painting. This was expanded later this year, by poetry from another member of the group, and all work was presented on the campus at Tremough, as part of the launch of a series of Geopoetic Lunches organised by the Poet-in-Residence in Cultural Geography, University of Exeter, Cornwall.



*Wind, rain and erosion.*

The benefits to the students were/are several, and are both pedagogical and personal. Pedagogically, they engaged with Romanticism as it was implicit in their expectations of the landscape and their responses to it; this deepened their understanding of a movement and ideology which they had previously only encountered in the lecture and seminar rooms, and on the page. In this sense, the experience specifically enhanced their reception of ideas they were encountering in their studies of 18th-19th century literature and culture, and of representations of utopia from More to Second Life. The short film in particular, which one student produced, clearly foregrounds the tension for her of the burden we place on landscape in our desire for it to protect the utopia of childhood – and not merely her own, but those of her children perhaps. The literary essay takes this further, revealing the author's confrontation of her desires and expectations, and arguing that the nostalgia such expectations are founded in prevent us from imagining a future at all. The experience of going out into the landscape and actually being in it, offered the students a heuristic approach to understanding the cultural constructedness of the term 'nature'.



*Picturesque and dangerous.*

*Copyright Kath Barnes (Plastic is Fantastic).*

On a personal level, their presentation and attendance at the conference has been a tremendous boost to their confidence, and will be useful on their CV: it cements certain transferable employability skills, and should they wish to apply for funding towards postgraduate study, the experience will be a bonus. The project has enriched present and future student experience in this sense. However, the benefit extends to us, the lecturers, as the students saw for the first time, academic research in action: not only were they involved in this research as 'respondents' but they were producing and presenting work to other academics. This was particularly revealing for them, and rounded out their understanding of the academy's cultural and social functions and roles. In addition, the conference lectures and seminars, and networking they were able to do, further enriched their learning, and was inspiring and fertile as they began to consider topics for their final year's dissertation.

The students said:

#### **Aimée**

'The CLIF project made me realise that I am a hopeless Romantic (with a capital R!). It made me question how and why I feel about things, instead of just wandering around ooing and aching at 'the nature' I have begun to read it differently and challenge my preconceptions.

The conference gave me an opportunity to see working practitioners in action, something I think as an undergraduate I would usually miss out on. It has given me confidence in presenting my work and I felt really proud of us. Aside from deadlines and assessments it was really rewarding to work on something personal and then present it in an academic forum, it wasn't about marks it was about doing our project justice, a completely different feeling! [...] I can't put my finger on it but it just feels really worthwhile.'

#### **Pip**

'This [presenting at the conference] has given me a more productive confidence in presenting my work in the future. It was interesting to hear and see how the more seasoned academics presented their work even if at times the content was a little lost on me.

It has been so much fun exploring new ideas both within my own thoughts and academic learning and listening to those of others. [...] Everything I have learnt so far can only be an asset to any future endeavours.'

The involvement in the CLIF project has been invaluable in several ways.

- It has widened the students' experience of the academy through collaboration across disciplines and institutions, and attendance as delegates at a major academic conference.
- It has given UCF staff further experience of interdisciplinary and inter-institutional collaboration, and consolidated working relationships between departments and other HEIs.
- It has enhanced the students' experience of the curriculum, and enriched their transferable skills set, and thus their employability.
- It has challenged the students' understanding of their own relationship to the environment and climate change as it might impact on a local landscape in ways that strengthen, expand and apply the curriculum.



*Industrial heritage?*

Future improvements: it has not been possible to assess some of the benefits formally, through assignments, as this was not part of the project's intention. To assess the students' work or responses would have required an embedded element, which was not possible, and would have gone against the principle of the research itself (to elicit creative responses that were the students' own). A more structured process would have made the experience quite different. Fortunately, a colleague at UCF has recently been awarded funding to explore the function of storytelling and narrative in popular understandings of climate change. We are taking the CLIF experience forward to work on the new project, involving new students both as respondents, and as apprentice researchers. The work they produce will feed into the major project, but we can also use some of the methods and tools (oral histories, digital media) within our creative writing programme. We feel it is important nevertheless, to retain the optional extra-curricular status of the project, since this is particularly useful to students in terms of their profile and future employability. In terms of enhancing their performance in the formal curriculum however, we will monitor this, and interview the students concerned with regard to what they feel influenced their performance.

The heuristic learning element of CLIF has also laid foundations for a learning and teaching initiative that will involve the design of a flexible research skill strand mapped into various creative and critical modules. The strand will focus on archives and their use, bringing archives into the seminar room, but also taking students into the archive. Their use of the material, databases and resources, and their understanding of the archive itself, will be formally assessed in short assignments such as research reports, and through applied criteria in longer assignments.

*Suggested reading:*

[CLIF project website](#)

[Walkit Cornwall website](#)

Catherine Brace and Adeline Johns-Putra (eds), *Process Landscape and Text* (Rodopi Press, 2010)

*Acknowledgements*

Thanks to: Professor Catherine Leyshon, Dr Hilary Geoghegan, Dept of Cultural Geography, University of Exeter, Cornwall; Niamh Downing, Dept of English, University of Exeter, Cornwall; Phillippa Carlton-Barnes, Aimée Wright, and Lara Smith, English with Media Studies/Creative Writing, University College Falmouth, and Kath Barnes, independent scholar and artist.

All images © Niamh Downing, except for Fig 2 © Kath Barnes from her sequence *Plastic is Fantastic* (created as part of CLIF project).

# Student Case Studies

# FROM THE CLASSROOM TO THE SIERRA:

## Studying Indigenous Politics in Highland Peru

Andrew Milner (University of Newcastle)<sup>1</sup>



By examining the changing face of indigenous political activity since the return of ‘democracy’ in 1980, my recent historical study attempted to come to terms with the continued weakness of indigenous politics in Peru’s sierra. Ostracised, underprivileged and adjudged backward and incompatible with modern society these highland indigenous peoples have laboured to dispel derogatory connotations of their ‘Indian-ness’, to gain recognition as citizens, and to establish new structures for political articulation in a ‘democratic’ country that appears unwilling to represent or acknowledge the ethnic and cultural diversities of its population in their pursuit of a modern national identity.

Like with many works, my study did not start out how it concluded. My initial intention was to follow in the footsteps of Peruvian journalist and novelist Mario Vargas Llosa whose 1983 newspaper article ‘Inquest in the Andes’ had taken him to rural, indigenous regions of the Peruvian Andes. Here Vargas Llosa aimed to uncover the reasons for the murder of eight journalists who themselves had journeyed many miles on foot to report the slaughter of guerrilla terrorists belonging to the Maoist group, the Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path) by local indigenous villagers. However, desiring a broader scope for my first visit, my travels soon formed into an exploration of wider Peru taking four weeks to journey with a friend from Lima, through the Andean Cuzco region where my main research took place, and finally on to Puno before crossing in to Bolivia. I believed such direct interaction with the environment I was studying would enable myself to get a true sense – and sense is as appropriate a word as any - for the atmosphere in which both mainstream Peruvian society and paradoxically, the indigenous appear to co-exist. Such an insight in to the customs, the cultures, the way of life, religions, and day-to-day existence of these peoples could not be derived from the classroom. It seems appropriate at this juncture to provide a brief extract from my work that exhibits the unique experiences received from direct engagement with the environment in question:

‘As I travelled by bus from Lima to Cuzco, I was confronted by a middle-aged man who was sitting near me and asked for some of my water. He spoke to me in Spanish and after nodding his thanks, resumed his conversation, with his companion, in Quechua.’<sup>2</sup>

Although to the unobservant reader, this situation appears relatively inconsequential, in fact this incident struck me with immense potency evoking questions in my mind as to the veracity of age-old conceptions of the backwardness of Peru’s ‘Indians’ and of the complexities of race and identity in Peru. Here was a man with indigenous features and travelling by modern public transport. He was bilingual and exposed from beneath a vibrant alpaca blanket I could see that he was wearing a

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<sup>1</sup> This is essay tied for first place in the *Bringing the Outside In* Student Essay Competition.

<sup>2</sup> Andrew Milner, Travel Diary, Peru, 21 June 2009.

Kappa sweatshirt and carrying a bottle of Coca Cola. This somewhat 'Arguedian'<sup>3</sup> vision of modernity and tradition entwined, in a succinct microcosm, contradicted long-standing colonial and caste-minded perceptions of the indigenous population as 'gente sin razón' and even some of my own preconceptions associated with the 'uneducated', 'un-westernised', 'rural' nature of these people. It was from this point that I realised the true direction of my studies; to examine the gaping crevasses that lay between Peru's indigenous and mainstream society, the crevasses to which the latter appear in no rush to bridge.

What is more, by actively inviting private companies to buy up rural land and gain access to resources, Peru's governments have provoked threats to the material livelihoods, land rights, and forms of autonomous self-governance in many highland and jungle-region indigenous communities. As such, the overwhelming disregard for Peru's indigenous provided focus for my study. A desire to know more of these peoples and their plight became the foundation of my work that sought to dispel preconceived notions of the tardiness of Peru's indigenous, adjudged 'inculto' (uneducated), 'desnudo' (naked) and 'pobre' (poor). Interviews I conducted and the travel journal I kept knitted a complex and colourful fabric of the true situation of modern Peruvian society that indicated how the demands of Peru's indigenous people are being treated as no more credible a voice than the apus mountain spirits of Inca tradition. For in highland Peru, the two worlds that find themselves simultaneously entwined and divided between indigenous and mainstream society reaffirm the government's unwillingness to resolve the 'Indian problem' (how to incorporate Peru's indigenous population into the nation).

Appropriately somehow, the two sociological worlds that exist in Peru reflect the existence of two worlds of historical study - one that limits itself to the confinements of the classroom; the other that reaches out beyond it, to the environment to which the study relates so that a clearer understanding, an increasingly equitable analysis and a more noteworthy study may be added to the literary storehouses of social science.

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<sup>3</sup> Compiling his most acclaimed works in the late 1950s and 1960s Peruvian novelist, poet and anthropologist, José María Arguedas, explicitly juxtaposed ideas of Peruvian modernity with Quechua tradition evoking notions of hybridity as an inclusive, not an exclusive, criterion. Raised by Quechua indigenous but educated and brought to wealth by westernised society, Arguedas' works accurately identify the continuing co-existence in many individual Peruvian minds of two conceptions of the world. See, José María Arguedas, 'Jetman/Haylli' (1965), in José María Arguedas, *Antología Didáctica* (Lima: Horizonte, 1981), 75; José María Arguedas (trans. Frances Horning Barraclough), *Deep Rivers* (Austin, London: University of Texas Press, 1978).

# HISTORY AND THE ENVIRONMENT

*Rachel Pistol (Royal Holloway, University of London)<sup>4</sup>*

Courtesy of the Friendly Hand Charitable Trust I found myself able to undertake a two week tour of California in order to visit some of the American sites and archives associated with the internment of those of Japanese ancestry living in America during the Second World War.

You can read about how disconnected the former internment camp sites were from civilization but you cannot fully grasp this fact unless you actually rent a car, buy a map, and drive into the Californian desert. Manzanar is over 200 miles northwest of Los Angeles and 250 miles south of Reno, in the Owens Valley, California. Formerly the site of an apple orchard, Manzanar was constructed on part of an Indian Reservation at the foot of the Sierra Nevada mountain range. The scenery is stunning, the isolation is complete – apart from the highway abutting the entrance there is no sign of civilization as far as the eye can see. One can only begin to imagine how the internees arriving from Los Angeles felt. Ninety per cent of the internees relocated to the middle of the desert had originated from Los Angeles,<sup>5</sup> one of the largest cities in the United States. The horror of being placed in the middle of nowhere, part of a poorly constructed tar paper barrack your only protection from the harsh desert winds that stirred up regular sand storms, can only be imagined. But it can be imagined that much better by actually standing in the dust and allowing yourself to feel the history surrounding you. No one has chosen to live on this barren site since the Second World War and so the concrete footings of the buildings and road system lie relatively untouched. National Park Service archaeologists have unearthed some of the garden constructions that the internees built in order to make their surroundings more palatable. Seeing the concrete remains of the gardens gives you a powerful example of the effort that those of Japanese ancestry went to in order to make the best of an appallingly bad situation. To walk up the steps in the hospital garden is to connect yourself in history to the internees who walked the same paths over sixty years ago. To see Manzanar you do not just visit the physical space the site inhabited, you also feel the space and understand how its vastness affected those interned within it. My visit to Manzanar has helped put my reading about the camp into a greater physical context. I have driven the roads the internees took when they were transported to Manzanar in 1942 and I have walked the paths they walked. I have also appreciated the longevity of some of their handiwork. Whilst it is impossible for anyone who has never had their freedom forcibly removed from them without due process of the law to fully comprehend the internment experience, it is possible to begin to comprehend the magnitude of the internment experience by visiting the sites with which it is associated.

All of the sites of former internment camps are united in the criteria used for deciding where to situate them, however each also has its own unique character. To visit one is to give the historian a greater understanding and contextualisation of the subject of Japanese American internment, but to have the opportunity to visit more than one illuminates so much more. Five hundred miles north of Manzanar lies the site of Tule Lake, 35 miles south of Klamath Falls and 10 miles south of the town Tulelake. Much of the town of Newell, built partly on the former internment camp site, is constructed from the barrack buildings that were left behind when the internment camp was closed in 1946. In some of the buildings the use of the barracks is immediately obvious whereas in others it is harder to tell. Newell's general store is the former Caucasian staff personnel recreation building and features an impressive rock fireplace constructed by the internees. On Castle Rock, across the highway from the former camp location, a cross is visible in the cleft of the rock, originally placed there by the internees and replaced when it blew down in 1977 by the local community.<sup>6</sup> An

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<sup>4</sup> This is essay tied for first place in the *Bringing the Outside In* Student Essay Competition.

<sup>5</sup> [http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online\\_books/anthropology74/ce8.htm](http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online_books/anthropology74/ce8.htm)

<sup>6</sup> Conversation with Angela Sutton, National Park Service Ranger for Tule Lake, September 25, 2010.

historian can only truly understand the significance of such things by seeing them with their own eyes.

The most significant building in its original position is arguably the reinforced concrete prison. Tule Lake was the most controversial of the ten 'relocation centers', formally becoming a 'segregation center' where all those deemed disloyal to America were detained under heightened security. The concrete walls bear inscriptions carved by the inmates trapped inside. This is not a history limited to the classroom, this is living history and has the power to captivate those who know little or much on the subject of internment. The jail building is a tangible piece of evidence that shouts to the fact that internment occurred in America during the Second World War and speaks as a reminder to those that visit that the subject should not be forgotten.

The physical evidence of Second World War internment in the Californian landscape has helped me to further visualise my field of research. The physical landscape of the internment camp sites had an immense effect on those who were interned, and by spending even just a few hours at both Manzanar and Tule Lake, I have gained a greater understanding of those effects. These physical locations are the sites of so many memories and can tell so many stories if people will only take the time to stop, walk around, and listen.

Selected Images:



*Landscaped garden remains, Manzanar*



*Manzanar auditorium with two reconstructed barracks as the site stands today*



*Internee cross, Tule Lake*



*Inside Tule Lake jail as it stands today*

## HOUSES OF 'DELIGHT' AND DISASTER:

### BOLSOVER CASTLE, QUEEN'S HOUSE AND THE LOST 'HALCYON DAYES' OF THE CAVALIERS

*Sarah Clark (University of York)*

A second year MPhil/PhD student in the History department at the University of York, my work explores memories of the Royals and Royalists of the English Civil Wars from 1660 to the present day. An important aspect of my research involves considering the presentation of the Cavaliers as tragic and/or romantic heroes at museums and heritage sites. After some extensive reading of all manner of political, biographical, material and Art histories, as well as fictional tales of the Civil Wars, in the second half of my first year of study I embarked upon a series of visits to locations significantly associated either with the Royalist cause, or with particular Royalist/Royal individuals. These visits were conducted financially and logistically independently from my institution, although some of them did take place during term time with the encouragement of my supervisor. This case study addresses two houses included in my trips which added a distinctly new perspective to my work, Bolsover Castle in Derbyshire, and Queen's House in Greenwich. Of all of the places I visited, over a six month period, these two inspired in me an appreciation of a coherent story of the romance and loss associated with the Royalist cause as it can be seen and remembered through experience of architectural and local environment.

In February, my visits began with a trip to Bolsover Castle near Worksop. This Castle was the home of William Cavendish, Duke of Newcastle. In the 1630s, Newcastle was Governor of the Prince of Wales and from the Civil War's outbreak until the Battle of Marston Moor in 1644 he was one of Charles I's Generals, leader of the Royalist Army in the north of England. Cavendish's chief estate was Welbeck Abbey in Nottinghamshire, but Bolsover, a few miles away across the Derbyshire border, was his grand architectural project. It was in the designing of his house that he expressed his personality, the palatial apartments of the Terrace Range befitting his status and wealth, the magnificent European-style Riding House where he practised his beloved Art of Horsemanship for which he was famed, and the 'Little Castle', a mock medieval folly in which he entertained Charles I and Henrietta Maria. I had read about the dramatic nature of the Castle's profile within the landscape, perched on hill overshadowing the Derbyshire/Nottinghamshire countryside, and it certainly did not disappoint. Visible for miles around, Bolsover looks enormous and even complete from some angles. From others at a closer range, where the ruins of the roofless Terrace Range are more obvious, its imposing position gives it a sense of tragic majesty. Wondering around the Range itself, the English Heritage boards depicting the grand chambers as they would have been in Newcastle's lifetime, combines with an outdoor feel, exacerbated by the exposed position and wind-tunnel effect of the ruined halls, adding to the romantic and poignant feeling that the era of the Cavendishs' pleasure and extravagance is lost. The centrepiece of a visit to Bolsover is the Little Castle, Newcastle's 'House of Delight' which he decorated exquisitely along themes of his own attributes and happiness, chivalry and romance, where he held his great events and entertained the King. A major English Heritage restoration project in the 1990s has recreated much of the former design of the Castle's décor and though it is not restored completely to the House which Newcastle knew, it certainly gives a taste of its former splendour. The contrast of the beauty, extravagance, peace and delight of the Little Castle as you imagine it touring the refurbished rooms, and the desolate ruined majesty of the terrace range, is palpable. A great sense of the lives of chivalric pleasure and romance of the 1620s and 1630s, which the Cavaliers lost forever during the 1640s, struck me more fully being there in the site of that halcyon 'delight' than it ever had done through archival and literary research. I left Bolsover with a greater appreciation of how interrelations between architecture and landscape could deeply ingrain a sense of long-gone personal and national history into a particular locality.

My appreciation of the poignancy of a cavalier House of (lost) Delight in a modern era which views the Caroline era with retrospective knowledge of the Civil Wars, was reinforced by a visit two months later to Queen's House, Greenwich. Queen's House is the sole survivor of the buildings of the pre-Civil War Greenwich Palace. Designed by Inigo Jones for Queen Anna of Denmark, it was later finished by her daughter-in-law, Henrietta Maria at the height of Caroline 'Peace' in the 1630s. Like Cavendish, Henrietta had her palace decorated in sumptuous style which reflected her personality and politics. It also celebrated and glorified the love which existed between King and Queen and was intended to be their own 'House of Delight', a private retreat from political cares, where they could enjoy their perfect domestic harmony in style. As at Bolsover, recent times have seen conservation attempts to return the layout and décor of the rooms to the original form which Charles and Henrietta had known. The restoration work at Queen's House is far less extensive however, but the juxtaposition of surviving decorative gems in Henrietta's own bedchamber, with the lack of furniture and the naval art collection now housed there do add a similar, and perhaps even greater sense of poignancy than the exquisite Little Castle and destroyed apartment-buildings of Bolsover. The rooms of this beautifully proportioned architectural masterpiece, small but striking seems to echo with the doomed peace and happiness of the Royal Couple which the modern visitor knows was to be brought to an abrupt end.

The designs of both Bolsover and Queen's House so heavily feature the characters of their Cavalier owners, that the air of a by-gone era of irretrievable happiness expressed by the post-Civil war poets and writers seems amply demonstrated here through atmospheric landscape and environment.

*Selected images:*



*Bolsover Castle*



*The Entrance to the Little Castle at Bolsover*



*The Terrace Range and 'Little Castle' at Bolsover taken from the main Courtyard*



*Inigo Jones's façade of the Queen's House at Greenwich, now part of the National Maritime Museum*



*The Front Side of the Terrace Range*

# The Tjapukai Aboriginal Cultural Park:

Kurunda Rainforest, Australia

*Elizabeth Roden (University of Liverpool)*

Whilst undertaking my Masters in History at The University Liverpool one of my tasks was to write a 3000 word critical review of a museum or exhibition. I chose to explore the use of museums as areas of cultural activity within local communities and their attempt to help interpret different societal groups' history and heritage. One of the places I chose to evaluate was The Tjapukai Aboriginal Cultural Park in the Kurunda Rainforest in Australia, which I had visited during an eight week long trip around Australia in the summer of 2007. Below I include my discussion on the Cultural Park.

Indigenous people are believed to have lived in Australia for at least 60,000 years; however by 1788 Europeans had been settling in Australia, resulting in the removal of the Indigenous people from their homeland. There was the belief held by European settlers at that time that they were superior to the Aborigines' in strength, intelligence and religious wellbeing. Thousands of Aborigines' were slaughtered and segregated into poor areas of land they were not allowed to leave. Aboriginal children were removed from their parents and taken away to be taught the correct way of the whites. Research carried out by the Australian Museum in 1997 had shown a lack of understanding by non-indigenous Australians about the historical and current issues surrounding the Aboriginal population. It is clear from previous discussion that museums can assist in reconciliation by providing access to information, objects, stories and the indigenous people themselves. This is what we need to consider when looking at the role and purpose of the Tjapukai Aboriginal Cultural Park in Australia.

The museum itself is situated in the Kurunda Rainforest in Cairns in Australia and can only be accessed by train which takes you through the Kurunda village via a freshwater station or by sky rail which takes you high above the vast picturesque area of rainforest (Appendices 1). The price for the all-inclusive museum experience with traditional aboriginal campfire lunch, skyrail and train journeys is around \$196 per person, which is normally aimed at the tourists that are in the Cairns region. However self-drive tickets are only \$33 making the museum more accessible to the local people. The experience of entering the rainforest by train allows people to feel comfortable with the environment they are to spend the day exploring, passing waterfalls, lakes and dense areas of rainforest. Arrival at the Tjapukai Aboriginal Cultural Park sees the visitor immediately become immersed in the Aboriginal natural environment. Visitors gain access into the Main Camp by crossing a wooden bridge over a creek, passing native tress, herbs and burning campfires. This introduction sets the precedent for the day ahead and it is clear the geographical location is important to help aid visitors understanding of the Aboriginal way of life.

David Hudson Manager of the Tjapukai Aboriginal Cultural Park explained how he wanted 'to show people there is more to Australia than blond-haired surf boys, kangaroos and vegemite'<sup>7</sup> and it is clear that the need to express both the history and living culture of the aborigines' to visitors from around the world is a responsibility that is taken seriously. Once you embark on your day at the Cultural Park you begin to understand the topics that are important to the Aborigines', there is the showcasing of cultural beliefs through various forms united with contemporary views and representations of the Aboriginal people. The Cultural Park is divided into an indoor museum experience and an outdoor interactive display (Appendices 2). The indoor museum exhibition displays murals from Tjapukai's most prominent artists, weapons, clothes, instruments of trade,

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<sup>7</sup> <http://www.tjapukai.com.au/svmanager/corporate/index.php> accessed on 14/12/09

household tools to name but a few. The exhibition explores themes of spirituality, cultural heritage, family, land and social justice through a variety of methods. One of the most effective ways the material in the indoor museum is presented is through a short twenty minute video presenting the last 120 years of Aboriginal history, looking mainly at the impact of modern day on the 40,000 year old culture. The video includes oral history accounts from Aboriginal people telling of their own experience and culture which is very enlightening, truthful and compelling, especially for those who know little about the aborigine experience in Australia.

Visitors after gaining an insight into the traditions and history of the Tjapukai aborigines' from the indoor museum exhibition can then experience the culture for themselves through interactive displays outside in various parts of the Kurunda Rainforest. The creation theatre sees the mixing of live performers representing the old aborigine culture with new technology such as live holograms to explain to visitors the story of creation as believed to be by the Tjapukai. Heading further into the natural rainforest visitors can watch traditional Tjapukai dances that are used to represent the meaning behind tribal totems, survival skills and song. It becomes clear to the visitor that unlike traditional museums who display historical objects, the traditional masks that are worn by the Aborigines' are a lot less important than the performance and ritual in which they are worn.

When thinking about how most people learn they are normally believed to be kinaesthetic, auditory or a visual learner, this is a belief pushed in schools to encourage teachers to make sure all material is accessible to all types of learners. The Cultural Park has managed to offer visitors experience in all of these areas, showing how important it is for all visitors to be able to access the material in some way. The indoor museum offered both visual and auditory displays as did the dances and theatre performances. However perhaps it is the outdoor demonstrations which allow visitors to gain access to a kinaesthetic practical insight into the aboriginal culture that really helps aid understanding of a society that is totally different to the one people experience every day in Australian and western society. It is clear from the indoor exhibition that war, hunting, food, medicine, music and religious beliefs were important in the Aborigine culture and this is something they try to unite with the outdoor activities. Visitors discover how to play a didgeridoo while learning how the aborigines believed it connected with their souls, through spear and boomerang throwing visitors are made aware of different techniques used in warfare and hunting. Visitors have the chance to touch, taste and feel food and medicines gathered from the rainforest and discover how it was used in everyday aborigine society. The Tjapukai Aboriginal cultural Park is a hands on experience that allows visitors to meet with real Aborigines who help explain the life their ancestors experienced, while being able to relate to problems still experienced by the aborigines today.

The Cultural Park is clearly an effective way to promote the culture and history of the Indigenous Australian people to a broader community and is a positive example of cultural tourism. The experience of this museum can be used to show visitors that cultural diversity can and should be seen as a strength that can be used to promote a culture based on freedom, rather than racial stereotype.

### *Selected Images*



# DIDCOT RAILWAY CENTRE

*Friedrich Rudolf Johannes Newman (University of Hertfordshire)*

Didcot Railway Centre occupies what was once Oxfordshire's principal 'motive power depot' for the Great Western Railway (GWR). Preserved by volunteers, the Centre is credited with being one of the most significant in Britain.

I have always studied under the logic that active participation adds a level of understanding that cannot be achieved solely through literary research; the reason for my visit. 1st May 2010 was the start of a special Gala celebrating the 175th Anniversary of the GWR, with numerous guest locomotives joining their fleet for nine days. This was a self-planned trip by car (using Didcot Station car park; jointly shared with the Centre). I visited independently of my institution on three separate days, each lasting from 10:00 to 16:00.

The Centre boasts the original 1932 locomotive shed, coaling tower, turntable, 'main' and 'branch' demonstration lines, signal boxes and a museum of small artefacts. They have twenty-four steam locomotives (some under restoration in their own workshops), many examples of carriage and freight stock and a recently built replica 1840s Broad Gauge locomotive and train.

Owing to the Gala, guest locomotives were also running, including City of Truro (the first locomotive to ever exceed 100mph), Nunney Castle and Autotank class 1450. With so many locomotives, the Centre was able to display the shed as it would have been in its heyday, with lines of engines in steam, and even 'double-head' some demonstration trains with multiple locomotives and vintage carriages. Finally, the visiting Autotank was fitted with autotrain gear, allowing it to run on the branch line in prototypical manner via duplicate controls in the carriage.

My current research is based on the social and economic impacts surrounding the development of mid-19th Century railways. Therefore I have studied sources including construction and maintenance accounts, shareholders reports outlining the latest extensions etc. However numerous sources directly refer to the technical and social development of travel and trains themselves; for example poor conditions for passengers on early 'Parliamentary trains', improvements in speed and reliability of locomotives and the danger and discomfort to staff.

Consequently my research placed the site within a greater context of technical, social and economic development. For example, it permitted greater understanding of why there was so much fear of the new technology as demonstrated by Broad-gauge locomotive Firefly compared with earlier equine transportation, along with the fierce inter-company arguments over the logistics of having more than one national track gauge – arguments so forceful they were known as the 'Battle of the Gauges'. It also helped explain why so many classes of locomotive were required; issues of prestige, technological advancement and changes in what was required of them.

The visit also broadened my understanding of what I had read, along with adding several key pieces of information that would otherwise have been extremely difficult to appreciate through documentation.

The most fundamental impact was seeing a steam-era shed in a period configuration, with numerous engines being tended – no longer a common occurrence. This visualisation of an active depot, further aided by demonstrations of turning and coaling showed the physical effort and planning involved to create a reliable service. Having rolling stock dating from approximately 1840 to 1940 showed how new technologies were applied (e.g. 'Firefly' having a hand pump for filling the boiler, as steam injectors had yet to be invented) and their restoration sheds allowed a view of the

technical intricacies of steam propulsion and the work involved in maintenance – enabling me to view construction methods in a way one could not visualize from the records.

In spite of reading of poor conditions on ‘Parliamentary trains’, riding one in pouring rain, wind and soot, with next to no suspension was an experience that defies description! It was noteworthy that even the roofed Second Class carriage was similarly uncomfortable (also having wooden seats and open windows), even if the suspension was a marked improvement. By comparison, the 1900 ‘clerestory’ carriages demonstrated how paying passengers had risen in importance, with plush seats, ventilation, dedication to detail superior to today and new technologies such as communication cords. I was able to see some continuations though, such as the lack of corridors and the primary use of wood for construction.

Having gained special permission to experience conditions for the crews on the footplate (the locomotive cab), the strength and dexterity required to undertake the Fireman’s duties became apparent very quickly. Furthermore, a footplate ride on City of Truro provided yet more appreciation for the conditions faced by locomotive crews - the sparse cab provided little shelter when reversing; catching wind and rain. The Driver also explained variables which affect engine controls and how the basic design principles are virtually unchanged from the 1830s – useful for when comparing railway developments.

The forward visibility (along the boiler barrel) was superior to other locomotives present due to Churchward’s tapered boiler design, but still required leaning out of the cab to see past the firebox. Most importantly, the ride demonstrated at its most basic the skill of the crew in safely operating such a complicated machine to a schedule and how atrocious conditions could be for them, even with later attempts to improve them.

To conclude, my studies resulted in being able to contextualise what I saw to the broader eras they originated from, but the day also graphically demonstrated how conditions drastically improved for passengers, while the early issues of visibility, physical exertion and crew conditions lingered right until the end of steam. While technology resulted in faster and more efficient engines, it was the skill of those operating them that led to their success, popularity and fame today. A picture may say a thousand words, but the experience of riding in the cab of a steam engine is easily worth a thousand pictures!

*Selected Images:*



*A view of the sheds and approach lines*



*Broad Gauge Firefly*



*Broad Gauge Second Class coach*



*City of Truro*



*The controls of City of Truro*



*Driver's view from City of Truro*

# 'TREADING CAREFULLY'

## IDENTITY AND THE ENVIRONMENT IN THE ANDES

*Steven Elliott (Newcastle University)*

Between June and September 2010 I travelled to Peru and Bolivia to study cultural identities under Newcastle University's vacation scholarship scheme. Traveling independently, and as such having numerous personal contacts with the people whom I had previously only studied from afar, I became increasingly aware of the sensitive and personal nature of the study of identity. Furthermore, due to the importance of environmental issues to Andean identities I learnt too how these must be dealt with sensitively.

Whilst speaking with Andeans regarding their identity, as I felt the sincerity in their voices, I realized the importance of this issue to many people and how respectful I would have to be when handling this in my research. Modern historiography argues for the 'the nation' as a construct and 'imagined communities'.<sup>8</sup> However, whilst I never felt compelled to criticize the works of Anderson et al, they can perhaps cause the historian studying from afar to forget that imagined communities are built on very real things. Max Weber's concerns for subjectivity encompass this requirement for 'empathetic understanding' of socio-cultural phenomenon, such as identity, and this project has brought my own views far more in line with this opinion.<sup>9</sup>

When interviewing Andean people to gain an insight into their personal interpretations of their identity I was surprised to find that many understood this concept, which I only became aware of at university. 'Identity' is a prominent issue in Latin America, as it is worldwide but perhaps more so in this region which has suffered a particularly troubled past. However, I was unaware until my visit of the extent that this debate had filtered down from 'the ivory towers.' In a number interviews I expressed my pleasure to discover how knowledgeable people were of Andean history and was given the reply that 'many people do not know the correct history.' Given these comments I became increasingly conscious of the extent to which history is a political act and, in turn, that the events upon which it is constructed upon are of great personal importance to people. Therefore, as I felt the passion in interviewees' voices I realized that, without compromising my objectivity, events such as the rebellion of Tupac Amaru II and the brutal executions that followed must be dealt with sensitively, with Weber's 'empathetic understanding.'

This understanding extended also to religious traditions, particularly those with environmental concerns, which I had also viewed previously with only the objectivity of a historian and not the empathetic understanding also required. The Andean religious tradition of reciprocity is known as 'Ayni' and it governs both social relations as well humanity's interaction with nature. Its premise is simple, nothing is received without giving something in return nor vice-versa. Whilst it is a simple notion, and one echoed by environmentalists towards issues such as foresting, to see it put into practice had a profound effect on me.<sup>10</sup> In the rural Andes, where pre-Columbian beliefs are most strongly held, I became aware of the practice of 'Ayni.' As we passed farmlands my friend, Ricardo, acting as an unofficial guide, explained that the 'waru-waru' system of raised agricultural terraces and water conscious irrigation, combined with crop rotation, would allow for sustainable farming.<sup>11</sup> In short nothing is exploited nor wasted, and everything replaced via natural irrigation or crop

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<sup>8</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2003)

<sup>9</sup> Sven Eliæson, *Max Weber's Methodologies: Interpretation and Critique* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 80.

<sup>10</sup> 'Fundacion Amazonica por la Reciprocidad', <http://faramazonia.blogspot.com>, (last visited 8 October 2010).

<sup>11</sup> Steven Elliott, 'Photograph of Tipon irrigation systems and agricultural terraces', Tipon, 26 June 2010

rotation, without use of artificial fertilizers or pesticides. As with many traditional processes of manufacturing or agriculture in Peru, Ricardo mentioned, with pride evident in the tone of his voice, that this was a pre-Columbian technique and its practice has continued into the present. Perhaps the influence of post-colonialism, in its Latin American guise of indigenismo, the perseverance of pre-Columbian ways of life was also stressed in many museums and appeared to form an important part of the contemporary Andean identity.

As already mentioned in this essay I felt the need to approach my research into Andean identity cautiously and with a degree of empathy. As environmental issues formed such an important part of this identity I took the same approach with these. The importance of the environment to the Andean religious identity is embodied in the deity, Pachamama, often translated to 'Mother Earth' although 'world' is a more accurate translation than 'earth.' In many homes and restaurants I saw shrines to Pachamama. This re-affirmed my feelings, that identities, although constructed, are constructed on very real and personal beliefs, including the Andean connection with the environment. As my empathy with this identity grew, in turn so did my empathy with the environmental causes which it influenced. Remembering that I was a guest in both the country, and in many cases peoples' homes, this empathy caused me to consider my impression on my hosts, the people of Peru and its environment. As such my decisions in choosing guides for hiking or other tours were influenced strongly by whom ensured a low environmental impact, something I had not previously considered.

I considered the environment as a host because of the Andean belief that Pachamama, and thus the earth, is a living being. As such this sentiment of interconnectivity meant the empathy I felt to environmental causes in Peru continued at home. Therefore, after a trip that intended to research a culture that I hope to study much further, I have returned not only with more questions about Andean culture but also my own lifestyle and academic approach. In short, I have developed an empathetic and subjective interest with not only Andean culture, but also the environment, that I feel allow me to adopt the correct approach in my research and lifestyle respectively. As mentioned at the start of this essay distance can possibly lead to the historian to not fully appreciate the sensitivities of his object of study, the same is true of the environment. I believe having, to an extent, bridged that gap I have a greater understanding of how respectful I must be of both my object of study and the environment and that in both cases I must, literally and metaphorically, 'tread carefully.'

*Selected Images:*



*Photograph of Tapon irrigation systems and agricultural terraces*



*Photograph of Cusco Cemetery, many of the graves contain offerings such as Coca leaves to Pachamama*

# 'UPON THE ROCK OF HARLECH'

## AN ASPECT ON THE SEA AND THE PAST

*Emily Winkler (University of Oxford)*

'And one afternoon King Bendigeid Vran was at Harlech in Ardudwy, at his Court, and he sat upon the rock of Harlech, looking over the sea ... "I see ships afar", said the king, "coming swiftly towards the land. Command the men of the Court that they equip themselves, and go and learn their intent."'

Thus begins the tale of Branwen, Daughter of Llyr, from the Welsh epic the Mabinogion, which I read in an undergraduate course on the early Middle Ages in the British Isles. I read these lines and felt myself plunge into the depths of epic-tinged history. The Odyssey begins with Odysseus traveling and suffering by the sea; the Aeneid with a storm-tossed Aeneas who ultimately founds Rome. Now here was Bendigeid Vran beholding Irish ships approaching on a northern sea. It must be some impressive sea, thought I, if it begins a legend of a king.

I came to Harlech by way of London (a good place for a beginning, so I thought, since according to the legend no sea-invasion came to the isle of Britain whilst the head of Bendigeid Vran was there interred). I was in London studying music, and there began to understand how music had entranced the men of Harlech for seven years. My course provided me with a week's vacation: what I wanted, more than anything, was to go to Wales. I wanted to understand why an ancient bard found that Sea so worthy of remark—and why I had responded to the lines with such thirsting curiosity.

My parents joined me for that week's vacation. We rented a car and designed our own driving tour through ancient and medieval Wales. Unencumbered by public transportation schedules, we designed our own timeline to explore the past. Often we would round a bend in the road and see Roman ruins and medieval edifices spring from the ground, like the army that sprang from the dragons' teeth Jason sowed in the earth of Colchis. Seeing the Welsh ruins, and walking around them, images and possibilities of the past in turn sprang up in my mind. Here, perhaps, a centurion squinted into the setting sun and wondered if he could catch a glimpse of the western sea. Or perhaps a wandering Cistercian, thinking always of finding the remote wilderness, came upon this valley and knew in a heartbeat that this was the place to build an abbey.

In ancient Greece, Jason seeded his army in the landscape: in my travels in Wales, the landscape—mountains, ruins, forests and seas—sowed in my mind new thoughts and musings about history. It is a harvest I could never have reaped had I not traveled to the places themselves. When I read an historic text, be it a primary or secondary source, the environment is the setting for the actions of humans. How could it be otherwise, when the printed word is the only interface between my mind and the past? The environment, as my travels have proven to me, is a participant in human affairs. It has charisma: it ignites the minds of men and kindles connections across time. Now, as I read for my doctorate in medieval history, environmental charisma compels me to go out and encounter it. Whether in William the Conqueror's New Forest, virtually unchanged for a thousand years, or at Warwick Castle, where tourist-ridden façades all but disguise the eleventh-century earthworks, something of the past is preserved, and needs to be rediscovered by those who want to know about the past. Written history reminds us of what the environment remembers.

We came to Harlech in the middle of our week in the landscape of Welsh history. It was a blustery day, and despite the cloud-cover the sunlight was bright. Historical strata revealed themselves to us as we wandered through. Cannon balls from the era of the English Civil War lay eternally ready, inches away from medieval walls several centuries their senior, and sunken slightly in mud several

centuries their junior. One could feel that this was a place where a marriage of landscape and legend produced history. But I was there with a more specific purpose. Before long, I sought out the highest point on the promontory, and looked westward.

From the vantage point of Bendigeid Vran could my imagination at last understand the lofty outlook, the anticipation one would feel on seeing ships approach. Harlech, on its rocky promontory, could be nothing other than the true and timeless destination of the region. To be at Harlech was to understand that it was a historic focal point. It is the crossroads of time and space, the single spatial vertex at which historic events and legends intersect, from the seven-year musical feast of the Mabinogion to the far more tangible castle-building projects of Edward I.

Like Bendigeid Vran, I stood upon the rock of Harlech and looked out over the sea. But I am no king: I am an historian. The ships I see on the horizon are the places where the stories and events of medieval history happened. I will equip myself to go out and meet them. I would learn their intent, for I think they have something to teach me.

*Selected Images:*



*Harlech: a historic focal point*



*Doorway to the landscape and the past*



*Cannon balls at a temporal corner*



*Looking over the sea*

# GRANADA:

## EUROPE'S ISLAMIC CITYSCAPE

*Alessandra McAllister (University of Liverpool)*

Granada nestles in the bosom of Andalucia's cardboard hills, the arid land of the Spaghetti Westerns that stretches out from the shadows of the snow-adorned peaks of the Sierra Nevada. Whilst snow crowns the mountain the year round, at its base even the flies cease to move in the afternoon heat of July. I arrived there by the bus from Madrid on one such afternoon. Having travelled the north of Spain by motorbike with my father, I decided, on a whim, to stay in the country longer to become further acquainted with the Spanish half of my studies. Granada had seemed a natural destination since I had promised my fifteen year-old self that I would return after a particularly good school trip. Five years later I arrived on that stifling afternoon during the city's siesta hour. The deserted streets simmered under the flame of Spain's midday sun and the air was breathless. I had been told that Granada's air was the freshest in all of Europe, but now it too slept in the weighty heat. The only sign of movement came from the glint of Christopher Columbus and Queen Isabella seated on their fountain where, frozen in the year of 1492, he forever offers up to her the keys to America.

In Granada those keys serve to remind that in 1492 it also fell to religious zeal and imperial expansion. From its defeat rose, for the first time, the geographically united country of today's Spain, leaving only small whitewashed pockets of the old Arabic kingdom patched disparately across Andalucia. And so, with this in mind, I ascended the cobbled passageways of Granada's own Moorish pocket, the Albaicin.

The Moorish architecture of Granada is amongst the few remaining testaments to Spain's significantly Arabic past, none more so than the Alhambra, standing proudly over the city's stone walls high above the Cathedral. Not even the Catholic kings dared destroy it, instead allowing it to remain on its rocky plinth, a lasting reminder of the grandeur of Moorish Spain; Granada its final stronghold. It is told that King Muhammad XI, after surrendering the kingdom to his Catholic counterparts, took his last look at the Alhambra and a trembling sigh fled his lips; *El Suspiro del Moro*<sup>12</sup> are the four words now used by Spaniards to portray Islamic Europe's painful retreat from the protagonist in one of the richest cultures Europe ever saw to a forgotten role behind the wings of a Christian stage.

Before immersing myself in Granada's urban environment, stacked with Moorish architecture and drugged by the fumes of church incense and hookah pipes, I had never been wholly aware of Arabic significance in Spanish history. Afterwards I realised that throughout the centuries that followed 1492 - the Inquisition, the Spanish Empire, Napoleon, the Republic, the Civil War, Franco's Spain - each force had buried Islam's influence beneath the ever-increasing importance of establishing its own Spanish national identity. In modern Andalucian towns, mention of *los Moros* in local historical re-enactments is confined to their imminent defeat at the hands of the true Spaniards, *los Christianos*.<sup>13</sup> Take one example of the Spanish tradition: Flamenco is internationally perceived to encompass the passion and romance of gypsy Spain. However, listening to its mournful key and guttural wail, it is far more comparable with the music of its Arabic neighbours in Morocco than that of the Celtic sound of the northern Spanish provinces.

My History course had placed particular emphasis on the significance of national identity in western European history and I suppose this is what led me to question Spain's own when I visited Granada.

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<sup>12</sup> The Moor's last sigh

<sup>13</sup> Ferro, M., *The Use and Abuse of History*, (Routledge, 2003), p. 137.

Amongst the key-holed archways, tessellated motifs and domed rooftops so characteristic of Islamic architecture it becomes obvious that this city, this entire southern region of Spain, was not built upon the same identity as the Classical simplicity and pillared walls of Madrilenian museums who proudly recall Spain's Roman ancestry. Nor does it share the jagged height of Galicia's Baroque cathedrals, a region whose characteristics affiliate more with Atlantic Portugal than with the Mediterranean provinces of its own Spanish nation.

Granada, with its quartered cityscape, each barrio dedicated to a different cultural or religious identity, offers a reflection of the entire country's fragmented national identity. Although I was already familiar with Spain and its history, the Moorish landscape of Granada, where to me the sigh of Muhammad XI still drifts nostalgically through the washing line canopies of the Albaicin, enhanced my awareness of the positive contribution Islamic culture has given to European history. At a time when tension between Islam and the West continues, Granada, as one journalist asserted, reminisces upon an age when Christian contemporaries associated Islam with luxury, sexual permissiveness and cultural richness;<sup>14</sup> History should teach to be a reminder that once upon a time the West had much to admire of Arabic culture and knowledge, and perhaps it still does. Granada lends its landscape as the inspiration to begin learning.

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<sup>14</sup> Bright, M., 2001. See Granada and Sigh, *Observer*, [online] 11 November. Accessed at: <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/travel/2001/nov/11/granada.spain.observerescapesection>> [Accessed on 27 September 2010].

# THANET EARTH ARCHAEOLOGICAL DIG, SUMMER 2008

*Bethany Jolliffe (University of Birmingham)*

Having often watched the TV programme “Time Team” and enjoyed studying the past, I volunteered at Canterbury archaeological trust for a week. As I decided to volunteer without help from school, I had to travel independently using the bus and train every day which meant I spent a long time travelling. I spent four days at the excavation site, three days at the Canterbury Archaeological trust centre, at Canterbury, cleaning and labelling the discoveries and handling artefacts such as roman tiles and mosaics. At the excavation site I worked from 9-4, with an hour lunch break, whilst at the Canterbury Archaeological trust Centre I worked for a few hours daily.

Working for Canterbury Archaeological Trust enhanced my learning in three ways. Primarily this experience made me appreciate the power of history first-hand. Although I have always enjoyed studying the past through books and research, experiencing it first-hand makes me relate far more to the past and perhaps understand it better. After this archaeological dig, nothing seems more inspiring than holding history in your hands. The most memorable example of this was when one of the team members discovered the bones of horse within a waste chute. Seeing this skeleton dating from the middle ages was quite astounding. Despite its location within a waste chute, the horse bones seemed incredibly beautiful and solemn. It almost seemed disrespectful to remove the horse’s carcass from its burial place due to its striking beauty. As a result of this I researched the background to this, discovering that waste disposal was a haphazard process, where anything was dumped in the nearest convenient place. Thus, when I next saw the skeleton of the horse I related to it far more and felt almost connected to the past because I realised that this discovery was not unusual as I initially thought, and also demonstrated the lack of hygiene medieval society had. In addition, I often found that when one of the team members told me about the discoveries at the site, I remembered their background and facts far more easily than other areas of history which I researched through books. In this way I suppose the discovery of the horse (and many other items) helped reinvigorate my interest and compound my historical knowledge far more successfully.



<http://www.canterburytrust.co.uk/thanearth46.html>

Moreover at Canterbury Archaeological Trust centre, the sheer quantity of discoveries found and stored also enhanced my learning by again demonstrating complexity of the past. Within the trust I cleaned and labelled many different things, from prehistoric pots to medieval beads, roman roof tiles to Victorian china ware. However, it seemed that some historians believed that certain eras and periods of history were far more interesting and merited more research than others. For example it was thought by some that the Victorian discoveries were not seen by some as so “important” to understanding history as the Roman roof tiles. In this way working at the Trust highlighted that history is complex because it demonstrated how history is a highly controversial and subject phenomenon. Thus, handling discoveries highlighted that history cannot easily be defined hence why historians often argue about the past and how to interpret it.

However, possibly the most important and significant lesson that I learnt from this historical experience was about posterity. All the time I was working for the Trust, I was very aware that a building project was running alongside the excavation. All the time that we were working there, the builders were waiting us to finish excavations so that they could continue with their construction work. The fact that the excavated land was to be reburied under one of Europe's largest greenhouses was educational in the way that it reminded that me that history was a continuous process, and that historians only peeled back layers temporarily before new layers were created, forming the next layer within history.



<http://www.ecofriend.org/entry/thanet-earth-produce-lets-you-choose-low-carbon-food>

# DISCOVERING THE SOUTHERN USA

## HOUSTON TO LOS ANGELES

*Ross Speer (Queen Mary, University of London)*

The United States of America formed a core component of my first year studies at Queen Mary. My history course was primarily focused on the 20th century. The USA rose from an inward-focused power in the late-19th century to the world's hegemon by the end of the 20th century. I became fascinated with the unique political dynamic found in the USA. Social forces in the USA, both historically and today, seem to operate with different rules than those found elsewhere in the world. During class discussions about the USA I found opinions about America to be both incredibly divided and laden with stereotypes. I decided to travel to the USA myself to try and understand what about this country's history had led it to follow such a different path than that of most nations.

I wanted to avoid traditional tourist centres such as New York and political centres such as Washington. I decided to take a less well trodden route that would pass through both sparsely populated regions and important cities. My travels took me from Houston, Texas to Los Angeles, California and back over the course of a month. Although I only covered a small part of the USA my journey was an incredible 3500 miles and covered 5 states. I endeavoured to meet Americans from all parts of this vast region; what I found was a far from homogenous group that both broke apart and reinforced various stereotypes often applied to these people. I gained a greater understanding of the American mentality and of the American spirit that has exported its culture and ideals across the globe. I found a people still clinging to the ideals of the 1776 Revolution, albeit in a haphazard and often misguided manner. There were a few major factors that I pinpointed as the key to understanding Americans, and therefore American history.

Legalised firearms are a key part of American culture and an ideal promoted as strongly today as it was in 1776. As a European I had always struggled to come to terms with this part of American culture. The mass ownership of firearms seemed to me to be a hangover of a bygone era, an idea clung to only by reactionaries and those longing for a past age. What I had previously failed to understand was the sheer vastness of the region. Travelling from the Atlantic to the Pacific ocean by car provided me with a much greater understanding of the true distances involved that I could ever get from travelling in densely populated Europe. While it is hard to find a place in Western Europe where your nearest neighbour is more than a couple of miles down the road in America I travelled through ranches that were hundreds of miles long and encompassed entire mountains. While American culture populates the larger cities much of the country remains a frontier region. The Wild West as a cultural symbol may be confined to history but geographically it still exists. Gun ownership remains one of the key divides between US political 'liberals' and 'conservatives'. Although we analysed the rise of these tendencies in my history courses I never gained such a good understanding of why they differed until this journey. I became aware of why those from rural areas were 'conservative' with strong support for gun ownership, being significantly cut off from outside contact, and why larger cities became hotbeds of liberalism where the police, always close by, could maintain a monopoly of gun ownership without leaving citizens in feeling unsafe.

Europeans have a tendency to view Americans as a homogenous mass. While geographical Europe is only marginally bigger than the USA it contains such a vast variety of culture and language and we remain very aware of this. We have a tendency to think the USA is a mono-linguistic country with a single culture and yet it is far from this. I was surprised to find Spanish encroaching as a second language, especially in Texas and New Mexico, with an increasing number of native speakers settling in this region. There are many ways we could divide the USA which had not been clear to me while studying in the classroom. There is a rural/city divide, a north/south divide, an east coast/west coast

divide and a rich/poor divide among others. There was a great contrast between rural Texas and Arizona and metropolitan Los Angeles. The cultural difference was as large as that of, for instance, Britons and Italians. Being able to look at this first hand gave me a much greater understanding of the warring social and political forces at play within the USA than I could ever attain in the classroom. There was no substitute to being able to talk to a wide variety of people first hand.

My journey was both geographically spectacular and historically enlightening. I had to re-evaluate the stereotypes I had held about the US population. There was a much more complex social makeup here than I had ever envisioned. Although it in hindsight seems naïve to reduce such a vast country and diverse people to a small selection of stereotypes it would've been impossible to even begin to understand this nation without having travelled there. Travelling in the USA is a daunting prospect. There is so much to see but it is spread across such a wide area. Although it is a country with a brief history it is a well preserved history marked by imperialism, diverse immigration and market capitalism. These things have combined to produce a unique nation with a history unlike any other. I am returning to history for my second year with a new enriched perspective on a country and people who will continue to be important in the development of world history for some time to come.

*Selected Images:*



*Large Ranch, CO, USA*



*Southwestern style architecture, Santa Fe, NM, USA*



*Downtown Los Angeles, CA, USA*



*The oldest house in the USA built by a European, Santa Fe, NM, USA*

# REMEMBERING THE HOLOCAUST

*Sophie Mathews (Oxford Brookes)*

My experience of environmental engagement was a five-day school trip for A-Level History students to Poland, staying in the centre of Krakow. During the trip we visited several culturally and historically significant sites in the city and experienced traditional Polish culture through food and entertainment, as well as being encouraged to speak Polish as much as possible. Predominantly, the purpose of the trip was to support our study of World War Two but personally, the experience had a much more profound impact.

I had always enjoyed studying history throughout school but had not considered taking it further to degree level – until our trip to Poland. The first few days of our trip were spent in the city, doing guided walking tours and learning about landmarks, such as St Mary’s Church and the bugle call from the tower. We also visited Wawel castle and the Wieliczka salt mine, but it was the tours of the Jewish quarters that reminded us of the purpose of the trip. Walking through the Kazimierz district was fascinating; some of the memorials and reminders of what the Jewish populations were subjected to were striking, like the bronze chairs on the Plac Bohaterow Getta. However, other haunting reminders were more discreet, like the last remaining stretch of wall built by the Nazis to enclose the ghetto, deliberately shaped like headstones.



*Memorial at the Plac Bohaterow Getta;  
Remaining structure of the walls built to enclose the Jewish ghettos*

The most prominent memories of my trip are from the excursion to Auschwitz-Birkenau towards the end of the stay. I had always been intrigued by visitors who could not explain their experience of seeing the camp, but now I understand. Upon arrival, the infamous “Arbeit Macht Frei” archway loomed over us and the feeling of seeing it first hand, previously having only seen it in pictures, caused a shiver.

During our guided tour of Auschwitz, I felt continually overwhelmed from being faced with the evidence of the Holocaust. That feeling cannot be evoked by textbooks or even the best teacher. To walk through the buildings and see piles upon piles of confiscated personal belongings like spectacles, shoes and family photos was more than harrowing. Standing next to the reconstructed wall where Nazis would line up to shoot prisoners was very uncomfortable and all the while we were surrounded by the barbed wire fences and watch towers, just like the prisoners would have been. Auschwitz explains the story of the concentration camp and exhibits the facts alongside the evidence, like the hallway lined with portraits of male inmates. The reality of the experience felt like stepping back in time.

Stepping off the coach at Birkenau enhanced this feeling even more; the entrance tower with the train tracks running straight in to the camp are perfectly preserved, as well as some of the sheds that would have housed hundreds of men and women. The state of disrepair of the brick Nazi buildings simply proves how desperate the fleeing Nazis were to destroy evidence of the catastrophic crimes

being committed. Once again, walking through a place that you have only previously seen in photos changes your perception and understanding completely.

For me, walking alongside those train tracks and towards the remains of the gas chambers was the closest I have ever felt to history. Ever since reading the Diary of Anne Frank in primary school, the Holocaust has always been an area of huge interest. I continued to enjoy learning about World War One and Two in Europe through GCSE and in to A-Level, particularly the events in Nazi Germany. To actually stand in the same place and walk the same tracks as those who were held at Birkenau made me become even more interested in this part of the past.

Since my visit to Poland in 2006, my interest has only grown and I now have a greater desire to visit more areas of historical importance – not just the museums but the actual landmarks. I feel that I was very fortunate to be able to engage with the environment I was only used to reading about in books as so many students do not have the same chance. Not only was my understanding of the Holocaust enhanced, but I was able to learn lots of other new things about Poland, its culture and its history before the Nazis firsthand which helped to put other things into perspective. By seeing it all for myself, I felt I was more informed to engage with debates or discussions in the classroom about how and why the Holocaust happened.

When choosing what I wanted to study at university, I knew that the best subject would be one that would challenge me, make me think about things in a different way and open my eyes to things that I had not been taught about before. After visiting Poland, I was surprised that one trip could secure so much space in my memory and still trigger emotion at the recollection of those memories. I had found my subject.

# WATER SHORTAGE IN KENDU BAY, KENYA

*Harriet Owens (University of Warwick)*

Having studied Kenyan history for one year at University, I was eager to visit the place I had read about for myself. Having knowledge of their struggle for independence from the British, I was surprised at the number of British customs which the Kenyan people had chosen to retain. However, one aspect which could not be imitated was the free available access to safe running water. This was highlighted to me upon my visit to Kendu Bay in Nyanza Province in Western Kenya.

I had decided to travel to Kenya alone but as part of an organised trip booked through GAP adventures. Studying the country had incited a desire to explore and experience the current politics and culture of a country which is currently undergoing massive political reforms. The new constitution was inaugurated whilst I was in Kenya, and all the people I encountered were eager to discuss the impact it will have on their everyday lives. The major theme which emerged was the increased number of human rights Kenyan citizens will be entitled to; one of which is the access to safe drinking water.

As part of my trip I stayed with a family of the Luo tribe near Kendu Bay. Being embraced into their community was an eye-opening opportunity for me to understand the lifestyle of those severely affected by environmental hardships. The family was comprised of five children, a mother and a father. In most ways they barely differed from an average British family. The teenage girls enjoyed painting their nails and talking about boyfriends, whilst the two youngest boys enjoyed playing with the football I gave them outside. They attended a Christian Church, helped with the cooking and cleaning, and generally behaved just as any family in England. However, the major difference was the lack of electricity or running water. Like all the other families in the community, these luxuries had yet to reach their home, yet unlike many other families, the one I was staying with was relatively wealthy. They could afford private education for all their children and placed a great emphasis on learning and innovation. Subsequently, this family had taken it upon themselves to install solar panels on their land to provide some electricity. This meant they had the luxury of a light bulb in their main family room, as well as a working DVD player. Both these devices were temperamental, however they were luxuries nonetheless.

The ability to use the environment to advance their circumstances greatly surprised and impressed me. The climate in and around Kisumu is hot and dry, meaning the land is far from ideal for even subsistence farming. However, the people take advantage of Lake Victoria and are able to make a living through fishing. They also own chickens, goats and cows which provide eggs, meat and milk, in addition to cultivating the land to successfully grow beans and cashew nuts. Rainfall was therefore cherished to aid subsistence for this purpose. To gain the greatest benefit possible from the rainfall which did occur, water tanks were being built to store the water. GAP Adventures advocates sustainable tourism, and while in the village we helped to install two of these tanks to two different houses. GAP funds these tanks and they make a noticeable difference to the community. Our family was one of the first to get access to one, and the mother told us what a difference it had made. They were now able to have water for washing and drinking without having to walk miles to the river. Another father told us how the tank would essentially save his life. His children were at school, meaning he had had to do the walks to the river himself. However, he was unable to carry the necessary amounts of water back with him, meaning they were constantly going short and were rarely washing or cleaning their clothes. Having lived for years in this way, the father had developed severe back injuries and was now too crippled to do the walk meaning his sons had stopped going to school so they could help. By setting up the water tank we were consequently providing his whole family with a better quality of life. However, the number of tanks in the village is still scarce, and the

ones which are installed are not sufficient to benefit all families. Furthermore, if there is no rain these tanks will not fill up. Therefore, despite the effort made, the environment is still the ultimate factor as to the survival of this entire community.

Living with the family, I experienced the long drop toilets and quick cold water washing they consider to be the norm. Whilst cooking outside in the dark was slow and inconvenient to oven or microwave cooking, it was the lack of fresh water which was the real problem. Without water they cannot farm livestock or crops. They are unable to wash or drink without walking for miles to the river, meaning disease is more likely to spread.

Before visiting Kenya I was aware of the severe water shortage and underdevelopment; yet I had not appreciated the attitude locals had to their situation. I was surprised at the high quality of life of the villagers in terms of happiness given their circumstances, and their innovative ways to manage such environmental problems. The people of Kendu Bay are alarmingly similar to families in Britain and seem adamant in emulating many British customs including dress, marriage and family. However, they are prevented from doing so by environmental restrictions. The new constitution accepts the need for accessible water sanitation; however, ultimately the environment seems to be the underlying issue hindering Kenyan post colonial development in Kendu Bay.

*Selected Images:*



*My family in Kendu Bay—including paternal grandmother and family friend*



*The water tank belonging to our family*



*Me and Muma Millicent (right)*



*Me with the two youngest children*



*The Family Home*

## BRADGATE PARK, LEICESTERSHIRE

*Carrie Walton (University of Northampton)*

Throughout my life I have visited Bradgate Park in Leicestershire recreationally, to enjoy its vast open space and to pursue outdoor activities there. In the last few years though, I began to feel curious about my own past experiences and the places I had often visited as a child. It was at this time that I began to fully appreciate the historical value that Bradgate Park held. I started to visit the park again during my A Levels with a view of learning about the place I had so often visited but never really looked or understood how it came to be. The park itself holds the ruins of Bradgate House, which was once home to the 'Nine Day Queen' of England, Lady Jane Grey. Acquiring a basic knowledge about her life from the minute display in the tiny museum on the grounds, and then fleshing it out with the fuller picture given by Alison Weir's interpretation of her life, enabled me to see the huge importance that Bradgate Park has within English's History, with being the childhood home of a person that had a part to play in the future of England, even if it was subtle compared to the influence of other monarchs. Being able to experience a place that a historical figure left behind helps you see the connection that Leicester has within the fabric of England's heritage.

I had never thought about studying History before this point as I always thought History to be merely about statistics and information that regarded places and things that were so far removed from my day to day life that I could not imagine how any of it affected me. Visiting Bradgate Park with a different frame of mind made me realise that History is all around us and that it, as a discipline, entails reviving or retelling people's stories, whether with facts and figures or by experiencing the physical remnants left behind by them. It enables you to learn about past lives and then see the ripples and consequences it has on the present society.

Prior to these enlightened visits to Bradgate Park I had been quite in the dark about the subject of History and had never pursued it academically. I feel really fortunate to have been able to visit such a place during the time that I was thinking about applying to University as it had strongly influenced my decision in regards to the course I took and therefore the path I have chosen to take in life.

I like how places like this encourage the public to visit them whether it is for a historical purpose or whether it is purely for a recreational purpose. Either way its historical importance will always be a back drop to its present day activities and will therefore perhaps inspire individuals to pursue history academically or at least help people appreciate that they are a part something large and unfathomable. They, and the area around them, are interwoven into the fabric of English History. Environmental places like this provide a fuller picture of the past and help you to relate to the things you learn academically. It gives you something to physically feel and look at and therefore gives you the ability to imagine how the past populations used these spaces. Bradgate Park has also made me realise that the present generation need to work in maintaining these environmental places in order that future generations can appreciate them too. The ruins in the grounds have been adapted to provide the public with the awareness that it is tenuous and they need to step around the walls and not on them as it will deteriorate ever so slowly, but the effects will be felt in the long term and the building may not exist for future generations.

# BELFAST

## PERCEPTIONS, OBSERVATIONS AND SOME CRACKING MEMORIES

*Samantha Crossland (University of West England)*

As part of the specialist subject linked to my dissertation module, Politics and Violence in Twentieth Century Ireland, it was essential to carry out primary source research. I decided to focus my study on Northern Ireland and the border counties in the aftermath of partition; examining the effect of 'boycotting' within communities. Although many resources can now be accessed online, my lecturer/dissertation tutor Dr. Philip Ollerenshaw recommended that to obtain the most valuable archive material and gain a sense of experience from the city, a trip to Belfast would be extremely beneficial.

As a result of the discussion, two fellow students and I began planning an independent research trip to Belfast to take place in December 2009 at the end of the University term. As a group we looked at different flight schedules and options for accommodation during our stay. In order to keep travel costs low we opted to use a budget airline and booked accommodation for three nights with Travelodge - due to its central location in the city. Prior to our visit we researched bus routes and locations for the various archives, in addition to a casual schedule of where we would visit each day.

Our early morning flight ensured that once settled in our accommodation we had the day to begin exploring the city. The Travelodge, located on Brunswick Street was just a short walk from the spectacular Belfast City Hall, which at the time of our visit was host to a festive Christmas market composing of delicious food stalls and live music. Easily accessible for our research in the city centre was Linen Hall Library, the University of Ulster, Belfast Central Reference Library and The Newspaper Archives. Around the corner from our accommodation the famous Crown Bar Liquor Saloon is situated on Victoria Street where outside we caught the bus to South Belfast in order to access the stunning Queen's University and the Public Records Office of Northern Ireland.

The atmosphere of the city initially felt like that of any other cosmopolitan centre in Europe; particularly with the new commercial centre in Victoria Quarter. However as we explored a little further the history of Belfast began to unfold in an emotive yet captivating journey. Additionally within my archival research, the darker secrets of the city were soon revealed in a story of violence and bitter dispute.

On the second day we opted to take an open-top bus city tour which took us around different areas of Belfast with an accompanying historical, yet typically Irish tongue-in-cheek- commentary.

Although below freezing in the bitter cold Northern Irish air, we braved the top deck to see some fascinating sights of the city. Having sat in lectures being educated on events and locations around Belfast it was an incredible experience to see first-hand where the history took place and how the conflict still affects the area. The notorious political Republican and Loyalist murals, displayed particularly in West Belfast, carry a graphic illustration of the strong divide evident within the communities. Travelling down Falls Road and Shankill Road I became acutely aware of the application of literature to the visual evidence of conflict.

Pausing in Titanic Quarter we were reminded of the industrial heritage of the city viewing the docks where the infamous White Star Line Titanic was launched. The striking Harland and Wolff Cranes, named Samson and Goliath, decorate the skyline of the old industrial quarter of Belfast in a ghostly shadow.

In spite of these poignant landmarks, returning back to the city centre it was pointed out that many of the modern sculptures, renovation projects and investments into the city, signify an overall wish for peace and hope. Stormont Parliament itself marks the progression made in politics between the Unionists and Sinn Fein in governing Northern Ireland under the Good Friday Agreement.

Visiting the city certainly challenged my perceptions of Northern Ireland where I discovered a vast proud and positive outlook was presented. By going to Northern Ireland and experiencing the sights shown in slides shows or on the web personally, I believe a greater enthusiasm was ignited towards my studies which could be demonstrated in my module and dissertation marks after the trip. I was able to engage in my surroundings and develop awareness in future lectures by setting a geographical context to historical events. In addition a greater understanding of the complex nature of community relations within this environment and the difficulties in progression were highlighted. In conclusion, regarding the subject of history I consider through experience, there to be enormous advantages academically in drawing a connection between environment and events.

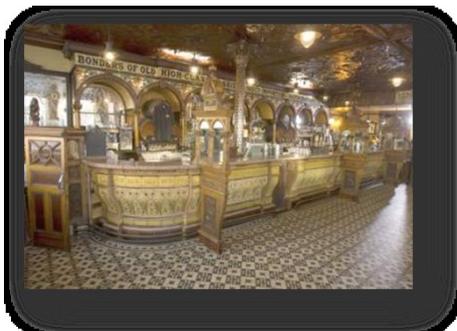
*Selected Images:*



*My friends and I flying from Bristol to George Best Belfast City Airport*



*Republican Murals*



*Crown Bar Liquor Saloon circa 1849 termed 'the world's most beautiful bar'.*



*Titanic Quarter, North-East Belfast*



*A Loyalist Mural*

## BRINGING THE OUTSIDE IN

*Chris Zacharia (University of Warwick)*

Although it is rarely discussed amongst the list of traits necessary to the historian, empathy is perhaps one of the most vital qualities when looking back at the past. All too often, it is easy with the benefit of hindsight to cast whole eras as ‘wrong’ or ‘backward’, comparing the civilizations of the past unfavourably with our own. Yet a lack of empathy also has a deeper and more debilitating effect. Without it, even the simple act of picturing the past is impossible; we struggle to understand the lifestyles and motives of our ancestors, often casting them simply as less developed versions of ourselves, rather than distinct peoples with different value systems and norms from our own. As a History student, empathy with the past is not something that necessarily comes easily. It can be frustrating to study particular trends in the past which to us may seem very immoral, and not to be able to wholly admonish those who propagated these terrible deeds. Experience is perhaps the best way to dispel this finger-wagging temptation, as I found out during my first year at university.

Forming an essay about late Victorian upper-class culture was not a simple task. Asked to examine the relationship between the aristocracy’s declining power and the concurrent rise of the middle class, and the subsequent impact on British culture, I was at first dismissive. The old, gentrified world seemed to distant and ossified that it hardly seemed to matter. It was much easier for me, at first, to focus only on the causes of the inexorable rise of the bourgeoisie. The fading world of the rich didn’t mean anything to me. I struggled to write a balanced account of this power struggle due to my lack of empathy.

As I travelled back to my hometown of Maidstone for the Easter holidays, the essay was still incomplete. I began taking walks to Mote Park, a 180-hectare public park not far from my home. As the weather improved I began to frequent it more often. At the centre of the park is Mote House, a former stately home belonging to the Marsham family, who became the Lords Romney. The estate was greatly improved at the turn of the 19th century, with the River Len dammed to form a lake complete with a boathouse, both of which still exist (see fig.1). At the height of its opulence in the late-19th century, the 180-hectare park was described as being full of the most exotic flowers and gardens, staffed by dozens of professional gardeners. Financial constraints meant that the estate was sold off by the Marsham family after over two hundred years of ownership to the 1st Viscount Bearsted. Eventually, it became too expensive even for the Viscount to uphold, and it was sold off to the local borough council, to which it still belongs today, serving as a popular public park.

Understanding the history of Mote Park, which I have visited regularly since childhood, helped me to empathise with the vanishing world of the upper classes. I had always thought that the lake was natural, since it’s very large and full of wildlife – I had never known that it had been created by the owners of Mote House. The planting of the various exotic trees and plants, the mapping of the streams, and the careful damming of the River Len made the beauty of the park possible. It was much easier to understand exactly what was beginning to fade with the aristocracy after exploring the park more fully, as well as the upper-class contribution to English culture by (in particular, the veneration of rural life). Inspired, I took the opportunity when back in Leamington Spa to visit Jephson Gardens, which also belonged to an upper-class family who shaped the land into what it is today, including the man-made lake enjoyed by local residents.

Exploring the spectacle of these carefully sculptured landscapes, one gains a deeper insight into the values, desires and aspirations of the declining English gentry of the 19th century. These idylls were, of course, designed to impress their peers with exorbitant splendour, but this was by no means the only motivation. Mote Park represents the desire of the upper classes to create a rural haven away from the vicissitudes and vices of urban society, a place for relaxation and contemplation. Attitudes

towards nature in the 19th century were changing, with an increasing number of intellectuals and artists considering it to be the true home of sublime divinity. The creation of these extravagant abodes of natural splendour was the triumphant declaration of earthly beauty by the aristocratic faithful.

Visiting Mote Park enabled me the vital insight into the mentality and desires of the upper classes. Without this vibrant evidence of upper class tastes and values, empathising with the decline of the aristocracy would have been impossible. Witnessing the beauty of these gardens helped to stoke an interest in the motives of those who constructed these beautiful places, and certainly helped me to write a balanced and insightful essay.

*Selected Images:*



*Me at Mote Park lake, standing watching the sunset*



*The lake at dusk*



*Mote House, completed in 1800.*

# REMNANTS OF WAR

## ENVIRONMENT, MEMORY AND THE GALLIPOLI CAMPAIGN

*Grace Huxford (University of Warwick)*

Warfare has left an indelible mark upon the environment since humankind first took up arms. The landscape of present-day south-west Turkey, where I travelled this summer, demonstrates the cumulative effect of these battle scars, from the ruins of Troy to the skeletons of castles at the Hellespont where Alexander the Great crossed on his march into Asia. Yet alongside these fabled relics lie the bodies of some 19 000 British and Allied soldiers who fell in the abortive nine-month Gallipoli Campaign (1915) during the First World War, as well as thousands more of their Turkish counterparts. Aside from building upon my historical study of this war, when visiting the area I was able to examine how the environment influenced the battle and vice versa and indeed to see the role battlefields themselves play in the national psyche of combatant nations, even today.

This trip was part of a family holiday to Turkey and I spent twelve days on the Peninsula with family and friends (22 August – 2 September 2010). We stayed in one of Gallipoli's few hotels in the small village of Kocadere, in the shadow of the ridge that Turkish forces held as they halted the advance of Australian and New Zealand (Anzac) Forces on 25 April, the first day of the land campaign.



*Kocadere, 22 August 2010.*

Our time was planned around a loose chronology of the campaign, beginning with the April landings at code-named S, W, X, Y and Z beaches, before working our way up to the north of the Peninsula to Suvla Bay where a second offensive was launched on 6 August. From there we went further afield to Kum Kale and Troy; we visited museums, cemeteries, walked the battlefields and occasionally relaxed by the water when the temperature went over 40 degrees!



*Map from Australian War Memorial website, Dawn of the Legend'.*

<http://www.awm.gov.au/exhibitions/dawn/plan/index.asp> (10 September 2010)

Traditional histories of the campaign begin with the impact of the environment upon combatants, rather than the other way round. When watching modern Russian fuel tankers coming down the Dardanelles from the top of the early modern Kilid Bahr Fort, one is hit by the unparalleled significance of this narrow stretch of water, today as much as ever. The geological formation of this channel influenced the course of war as Tsarist Russia, Britain's ally, needed to export its grain through these waters which were held by the German-backed Ottoman Empire. The subsequent Gallipoli Campaign, an innovation by a young Winston Churchill, failed to free up the Dardanelles or defeat the Ottomans. Thus being 'on the ground' truly impressed upon me, perhaps for the first time, how the world's varying geological features might fundamentally shape the economic, social and political behaviour of human society.



*Views from Kilid Bahr fort, modern shipping in the background. 24 August 2010*

This impact is notable elsewhere; at V beach the poor cover available is as evident to the visitor today as it was to men of the 29th Division who landed here on 25 April. Furthermore, after an adventurous and rough jeep trip, I perfectly understood how troops lost their way in the deres (gullies) on the 6 August attack.



*View of 'V' Beach, cemetery and Sed El Bahr village. 24 August 2010*



*Deres looking up to Walker's Ridge and 'the Nek' from the Suvla Plain, 28 August 2010*

Aside from these features of land and sea, I gained firsthand experience of the difficult climate. As fighting inched further inland, the appalling conditions of trench warfare were exacerbated by heat and water restrictions (the ration was one pint a day per man). Walking today, tired and thirsty even

with modern hydration pouches, truly makes one appreciate how gruelling fighting under these conditions would be.



*The author on 'Plugge's Plateau' with a modern hydration pouch, 25 August 2010*

Yet the inhospitable environment and landscape were not themselves unaffected by the battle upon the Dardanelles shores. Wartime detritus (as well as contemporary tourist refuse) litters W beach, where six VCs were famously won 'before breakfast.' Silent trenches wend their way through the landscape near Skew Bridge Cemetery, a bunker now used by local goatherds. Gallipoli is undoubtedly one of the world's most supremely beautiful locations and therefore, even more than well-trodden Flanders, a visit there demonstrates the impact of war can extend beyond people, to the land itself.



*Remains of small vessels on W Beach*



*Trenches and Bunker near Skew Bridge Cemetery, 26 August 2010*

The Peninsula also demonstrated much of the historical 'theory' I encountered in my final year, as the landscape occupies a unique place in the national memory of Australians and New Zealanders and thousands come on 'pilgrimages' to the area each year. Interestingly, Turkish memorialisation has itself made an impact of the environment; the Turkish oil company OPET is currently restoring old villages, as part of the 'Respect Our History Project', keen to preserve the Peninsula to mark its role in foundation of modern Turkey (Mustafa Kemal himself fought there).

My visit was thus both enjoyable and useful to my historical studies and I hope to learn more about the relationship between history and the environment as a result.

# CLIMATE AND LANDSCAPE IN THE FUTURE

*Pip Carlton-Barnes (Institution: University College Falmouth)*

CLIF- (Changing Landscape In the Future) is a project initiated by professionals and students from the University of Exeter, (Cornwall Campus). The project invited students studying on the English With Media/Creative Writing degrees at University College Falmouth, (who share the same campus), to engage with the Cornish landscape with climate change in mind. Only a handful of students including myself took.

We visited, 'The Lizard Peninsula' in Cornwall as part of an organised trip that was kindly hosted by the very knowledgeable tour guide, 'Paul' from, 'Walk-it-Cornwall'. We travelled lecturers and students together in a minibus provided by our guide and volunteered information about all the different literature both fiction and fact that had informed us of the surrounding landscapes over the years. On arrival Paul produced a very colourful geological map that was entirely lost on me but the information he gave us was fascinating some of it new and some we were already aware of. This then gave us a historical overview of how the landscape had been shaped up to the present day.

Before we had left we had been given a brief, 'to engage with the landscape in a way that explores how we personally feel the landscape has changed now and will in the future'.

Having lived in Cornwall for the majority of my life and certainly all of my memorable childhood I have spent many hours exploring the landscapes of the Cornish coasts. It is a cliché to say I have always taken these places for granted but it is true. I have to say I found it hard to engage with the Lizard in the context of climate change as now in adulthood nothing appears to have changed. Development is often the main headline for most local papers and the driving force for many campaigns across the county. But climate change? I really had to think. Perhaps it is the fresh air, largely clear sea and often lush green landscapes that have inhibited the concept of Climate Change frequenting the front of my brain. The weather is probably the biggest tell-tale sign but even then, this is Cornwall the weather has never been predictable has it?

So, when I was asked to approach The Lizard with the changing landscape in mind, now and in the future, and what it meant to me I had to rely heavily on our very knowledgeable tour guide. It was a wonderful opportunity to look into the landscape how man had shaped it, how moss was present because of clean air and how animals are still the most reliable form of natural lawn mowing! Falling cliffs and disappearing steps, well that was nothing new in fact as a child steps just got in the way and sudden disappearing cliff edges were part of the thrill! As an adult re-visiting these thrills and testing my nerve as a past-time is a valuable resource in preserving the mental pictures of my childhood. For as long as I can remember nature has been shaping the landscape. Don't we perceive everything to happen in haste as we get older anyway? So why should the speed of nature's course be any different?

So do I engage differently now? Yes my methods of calculation have changed. I thought the hills were shrinking but then I realised I take bigger strides. I appreciate that the shape of the landscape has often been shaped by man so I have a greater admiration for nature's determination and success in retaining such beauty after all these years. In short I enjoy the changes that nature has made and continues to make regardless of the speed they happen.

Having studied many of the canonical work of the 'Romantics', over the previous two years it was impossible not to view the landscape in a similar way. At the time I was approaching decisions about my literature dissertation. The environment and my reflections on the landscape kept drawing me closer to, 'Thomas Hardy' it was easy to see how his beautiful literary realist descriptions of

landscape had been inspired. So in this respect the field-trip and project certainly helped me form course related questions and answers.

Several weeks later the students who had taken part and produced work in response to the brief were invited to attend an academic conference at, 'Bath University'. Only two of us rose to the challenge and in hindsight it was certainly an opportunity I was grateful to have been offered.

I have spent many years standing in front of hundreds of people as a commentator, (my part-time occupation), so one would think the confidence was there. But, saying what you see at high speeds within my comfort zone and behind the disguise of, 'Pip at work' is enormously different to presenting self-crafted 'personal' work to a room full of high achieving academics. I thought it would have been impossible for our audience to ask questions about our work against some of the more academic pieces also presented. I had produced a slideshow of images taken on the field-trip with subtitles and sound effects that represented my personal response to the brief. But questions were asked and on reflection I am pleased our work sparked curiosity. This then has given me a more productive confidence in presenting my work in the future.

The project has been and continues to be so much fun, exploring new ideas both within my own thoughts and academic learning and listening to those of others. Creating work in an almost recreational manner has in some ways been far more rewarding than completing an essay with grades! Bringing a number of people together with different backgrounds, knowledge and skills is a fantastic chance to express individual thoughts and responses through a variety of mediums. Ultimately this creates a positive environment to contemplate alternative perspectives and experiment with new ideas and skills. Everything I have learnt so far can only be an asset to any future endeavours be it academic or professional.

*Selected Images:*



# HISTORY ON YOUR DOORSTEP

*Hannah Stacey (University of Exeter)*

It is often said that we all too easily overlook the things that are on our doorstep; that the routine of everyday life leaves us unable to appreciate the familiar and to turn a blind eye to the obvious. Indeed, it is only since studying history at university that I have become increasingly aware that I too have fallen prey to this unfortunate affliction.

Growing up in Rochester, Kent, I have lived within close proximity to an ample supply of historically significant and interesting sites for most of my life. With Roman origins, the town's skyline is dominated by the towering figure of the Norman keep and the striking spires of Rochester Cathedral, and in more contemporary times has been both a place of military strategic significance and also an inspiration to well-known literary figures such as Charles Dickens, who based many of his books on the area.

Yet this great wealth of remnants from the past became part of my daily routine; the customary annual primary school trips to the Norman castle meant its dramatic stories of battles and sieges became somewhat pedestrian and mundane, and the tedious protocol of school services and ceremonies blinded me to the astonishingly intricate architecture and history of the Cathedral. Moreover history, as I was taught at GCSE and A Level, was about great figures in distant times and places - a view of the subject rendering local narratives and stories peripheral and restricting the student's ability to encounter their subject matter first-hand.

Indeed, it has not been until my second year of study that I have realised that to interact with the past neither entails exploring far-flung places nor a miraculous feat of time-travel. This came about predominantly because of a module that I took in Anglo-Saxon history. A comparative newcomer to this area of history, I was surprised by the regular appearance of my hometown in my textbooks and lectures. From the establishment of one of the first sees in Kent within Rochester's walls to the town's storming by Aethelred of Mercia, it became increasingly clear that what I thought of as the somewhat uninteresting and insignificant town where I grew up had, in fact, a great deal more historical significance than I had ever appreciated.

More importantly, however, I became aware of the great synergy that exists between the academic history taught in the classroom and our modern-day environment. It is perhaps too easy to dismiss this connection, especially in the instance of the Anglo-Saxons, because of the changes to the landscape that have occurred with the passage of time - how can the contemporary landscape of Rochester with its coffee shops and fast food chains be relevant, or indeed useful, to students studying events such as the founding of great cathedrals that marked the beginnings of Christianity gaining a foothold in England?

To this, I would argue that the connection between history and the contemporary, particularly familiar, environment is that they mutually infuse each other with new meaning and interest. As a child, I found it difficult to grasp the significance of the local history that I encountered on school trips and quickly became distracted; growing up, the great historical remnants in my hometown simply blurred into the background. It was the awareness that came with studying Anglo-Saxon England - the stories and people attached to Rochester's historic past - that gave me a new appreciation of the town. For instance, I had previously dismissed the collection of stone statues near the alter in Rochester Cathedral simply as figures of characterless saints. Nonetheless on a recent visit, I realised that many of the effigies were in fact of the kings and churchmen who frequently made appearances in my studies - for example, King Aethelberht the powerful overlord

and king of Kent. Knowledge gained within the lecture theatre had, in my experience, heightened my appreciation of my local surroundings.

This appreciation worked in the other direction, too; the ability to draw upon personal experience of the environment and landscape brought a new tangible dimension to the words of textbooks and a (perhaps somewhat patriotic) sense of enthusiasm for learning more about the place I call home. Opening my eyes to the history on my doorstep allowed me to appreciate both my course and my local surroundings in a new way.

## CAPTURING THE MOMENT

*Sarah Wicks (Cardiff University)*

Practical details of the visit – Early in November 2010 my creative writing class and I went to the Cardiff Museum in the city centre. We went to gain insight into various situations and to view different scenes in the forms of paintings and artefacts within the museum. The trip was organised by the creative writing module leader and our teacher accompanied the group and set the writing tasks that we completed. We broadened our imaginations when thinking about describing setting and characterisation in our writing and trying to ‘capture the moment.’ There were about fifteen of us in my group but about four other groups went too at another time. We spent about an hour and a half in the museum and everyone walked there as it is close to the English department and student housing.

I feel my learning has actually been enhanced by this trip, as it has enabled me to focus on new settings in my creative writing work. Although I only wrote about four paintings, I viewed many more and so when it comes to work my imagination has been inspired and I am able to focus on certain images of places I have seen. I wrote descriptive pieces in the museum about scenes I had never considered writing about before based on paintings that I viewed. Here is one of the paintings that I wrote about:



*Painting by David Cox: The Road to the Mill (1849)*

Viewing a painting like this in the museum really made me get a sense for the location and the earlier time, period which inspired new imagery to my writing. I would have never have considered writing about this in a normal classroom environment. The visit to the museum definitely paid off in widening my sense of imagination and ability to write about different settings in a different time period. It allowed me to get a better perception of the time, which being Victorian, has helped me in other parts of my course. Here is a piece of creative writing that I wrote in the museum whilst looking at this painting:

A violent wind billows up from the sea; the windmill is encouraged and its jovial revolutions are speedy and frequent as a result. Seagulls overhead chirp with delight watching the mill's carnival. Bushes line the coastal path and their flapping leaves work hard to hold onto their branches. A hunchbacked figure in a red cloak struggles up the path towards the mill, aided by a crooked stick. She is accompanied by a loaded shire horse and a collie dog, whose tail wags incessantly. His black coat seems to dance, as the hairs on his back sway in the wind. Three hens pluck the ground at his paws hoping for some lost nourishment. In the background a chimney, belonging to a thatched cottage whistles, like a kettle on a stove, accompanying the party.

I also wrote about some other paintings and here is an extract from one of those pieces:

The mother's rosy skin matches her baby's; whether caused by the heat or genetics it cannot be told. Her curvaceous figure perches on the clay-coloured rock while her eyes survey the scene in

front of her. She seems to have robbed the countryside of its life and fertility. The blue smock that she wears hangs loosely over her body superfluous to her shape. The man-made cotton juxtaposes her natural surroundings as the vibrant blue penetrates dying the scene. Her bosoms form a pillow for her infant's delicate skull and her firm hands support its body. The fresh ears of the baby collect the noise of the hooves, the rushing water and tweets from the birds, familiarising the infant with one of its new senses.

Not only did the visit enable me to be more creative when writing about the paintings, it also helped for characterisation purposes. Not only from the artefacts and paintings in the museum did I learn but I also wrote about other people who were there. Being out and viewing people in a public environment really gets the creative juices flowing when it comes to writing about people and forming believable yet unique characters. The visit has shown me that I can use the Cardiff Museum and art gallery, and other similar places, in research for my work and I can study in places other than the classroom and the library. It has opened my eyes to a varied way of learning and so now I will be far more likely to go to an art gallery or a museum by myself for educational purposes as I know I will gain knowledge about various time periods in our history. The visit has furthered my insight on certain scenes and eras.

Another of the modules I am taking is The Victorian Novel and so viewing the paintings from that era has enabled me to develop my understanding through a means other than reading about it. I found this has really broadened my perspective when it comes to learning and obtaining information. I now know that for future study I can use Cardiff's museum and there are paintings there from various countries, time periods and of different people, so if I ever need to gain a better insight for topics, I will now head to the museum. I wait to see if we go on any other class trips and, if we do, I am eager to see whether they will be as valuable to my understanding and creative mind as this one has been.

# HELPSTON 2010

*Patrick Hodge (Oxford Brookes University)*

As a group of twelve, my Romantic Ecology classmates and I visited the home of Romantic poet John Clare Helpston, on “the brink of the Lincolnshire fens,” as he described it. Our aim was to take the classroom outside, to the very Roman quarry whereupon Clare feels the private sufferings of the land. We travelled up by bus – a mutually agreed (relatively) ecologically-friendly mode of transport – and spent a blustery November day re-tracing the proto-ecological poet’s footsteps through the village and the surrounding countryside. We visited his cottage, his grave, the now nature reserve at Swaddywell Pit (subject of his poem, ‘The Lament of Swordy Well’) and perhaps equally appropriately - the local pub.

A flock of dark-brown sheep looked on sullenly as sheep-skin Ugg boots were splashed as we trudged into the field. Heads bowed against the stiff wind, we skirted past the crash of the stone merchants and towards the Swaddywell Pit. We had read John Clare’s ‘Lament of Swordy Well’ both in class and back at Clare’s cottage-museum earlier on that day and the words of the prosopopoeic poem maintained a powerful effect on us all as we entered the nature reserve. Critic John Barrell has described the piece as “a dramatic monologue...spoken not by the genius of the place but by the place itself” (Barrell, p. 116) and reading the poem aloud as a group, perched on a cold chunk of limestone had an almost ritualistic feeling about it. Reading the land’s words nearly two hundred years later had a peculiar resonance, and despite our discussion of the anthropomorphising of the habitat, reading the final stanza as the yellow quarry trucks rolled by was extremely poignant. Capturing the destructive nature of the “stone pits’ delving holes” the persona of the poem, the land itself, speculates that in time its name alone will be “the whole that’s left of Swordy Well”—read today, these lines have an equally sobering impact as they would have had to Clare himself. Grasping at the meadow grasses, rushes and ferns transported us into Clare’s locality – the richness of detail was there for us to see, and ourselves celebrate. While the poet’s lamentations of “vile enclosure” may seem somewhat extraneous in today’s society, the deeply ecological core message is impelling when considered in relation to current environmental conditions.

*Selected Images:*



# CLIMATE AND LANDSCAPE IN THE FUTURE

*Aimee Wright (Falmouth University College)*

A small few of us signed up to take part in C.L.I.F (Climate and Landscape in the Future), a project run by Exeter University's geography department. Planning to span disciplines and engaging with local villages and towns, the projects aim is to explore and understand people's perspective on such matters. Our role was to come on board, creatively and produce some work within this vein. Little did I know the thoughts it would unleash and the experiences I would become involved in.

Part of the project was a guided walk to get the creative juices flowing. It was a crispy autumnal day, ice on the floor with spring threatening its presence through the sunshine. All of us wellie laden and padded with outdoor gear hopped in to the Walk It Cornwall mini bus. We were on the way to the Lizard in Cornwall, the most southern tip of the U.K. We walked the coastal path for a few hours stopping to ponder the footsteps of time gone by, the unique geology, botany, plant invasions, and the severed physical connection with Africa. I thought I knew this path but suddenly instead of just oohing and aaahing at a pretty view I started to see beneath the physical familiarity and began to think.

Following this walk we got together to workshop ideas and begin to explore how and why we view the landscape as we do. Looking at work by DH Lawrence, who famously lived in Cornwall, and other writers we began to unpick notions of landscape, nature and Romanticism. It was at this point I began to understand the influence and importance of the Romantic period. Since then it has permeated many of the ideas explored in my third year. I am coming to terms with my pre-set, sentimental, Romantic ideas and given myself up to the fact that I am indeed a Post-Romantic subject. It is everywhere! It started me thinking about Climate Change and where this sits in regards to the unavoidable infiltration of Romantic influence and I began to write a piece on this. Instead of just being passive in my views and opinions of Climate Change and seeing things in black and white I began to engage in the discourse and question all I assumed as given.

Kym Martindale my lecturer at UCF on the back of our discussions and writing workshops mentioned there was an opportunity to present at The Climate Change and Cultural Change conference in Bath. My initial reaction was of fear, this sounded incredibly daunting for a second year under graduate, but somewhere from my face came the words "Yes, sounds exciting, count me in!" besides it was a chance to take our part of the C.L.I.F project on the road. I am so pleased I said that yes.

The conference gave me an opportunity to see working practitioners in action, something I think as an undergraduate I would usually miss out on. It has given me confidence in presenting my work and I felt really proud of us. Aside from deadlines and assessments it was really rewarding to work on something personal and then present it in an academic forum, it wasn't about marks it was about doing out project justice, a completely different feeling!!I've loved meeting all the new people involved and knowing they're just as excited as you to talk about the issues and ideas involved, and more than happy to do so.

This project goes from strength to strength. I can't wait to see what we'll be involved with next (recently a rather pleasant geo-poetic lunch where we took our work to a new audience) and it is a relevant, challenging but welcome break from all those course deadlines. It has definitely affected the course my academic study has taken. There is a definite emphasis on eco-criticism and the place of literature in the climate change discourse. I have even chosen to base my dissertation on this, a subject I would never have thought I could tackle in my degree. It has also challenged and opened up my personal opinions and feelings about climate and landscape. The only thing that makes me sad is

that not everyone gets to experience this, so if anyone is reading this and is still unsure about extracurricular projects of this kind put simply, JUST GO FOR IT!

*Selected Images:*



*Us on the walk, freezing! Note to the right one of the very tame 'Lizard Lawnmowers'.*



*Me, practicing and petrified before our presentation at the conference (didn't realise I would be one of the only two undergraduates presenting!).*

# CHANGING LANDSCAPE IN THE FUTURE

*Pip Carlton-Barnes (University College Falmouth)*



*Pip Carlton-Barnes*

CLIF – (Changing Landscape In the Future) is a project initiated by professionals and students from the University of Exeter, (Cornwall Campus). The project invited students studying on the English With Media/Creative Writing degrees at University College Falmouth, (who share the same campus), to engage with the Cornish landscape with climate change in mind. Only a handful of students including myself took part.

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*Pip Carlton-Barnes*

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Several weeks later the students who had taken part and produced work in response to the brief were invited to attend an academic conference at Bath University. Only two of us rose to the challenge and in hindsight it was certainly an opportunity I was grateful to have been offered.

I have spent many years standing in front of hundreds of people as a commentator, (my part-time occupation), so one would think the confidence was there. But, saying what you see at high speeds within my comfort zone and behind the disguise 'Pip at work' is enormously different to presenting self-crafted 'personal' work to a room full of high achieving academics. I thought it would have been impossible for our audience to ask questions about our work against some of the more academic pieces also presented. I had produced a slideshow of images taken on the field-trip with subtitles and sound effects that represented my personal response to the brief. But questions were asked and on reflection I am pleased our work sparked curiosity. This then has given me a more productive confidence in presenting my work in the future.

The project has been and continues to be so much fun, exploring new ideas both within my own thoughts and academic learning and listening to those of others. Creating work in an almost recreational manner has in some ways been far more rewarding than completing an essay with grades! Bringing a number of people together with different backgrounds, knowledge and skills is a fantastic chance to express individual thoughts and responses through a variety of media. Ultimately this creates a positive environment to contemplate alternative perspectives and experiment with new ideas and skills. Everything I have learnt so far can only be an asset to any future endeavours be it academic or professional.