LR Extra
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With LRE 90 this is a joint final issue

landscape research group

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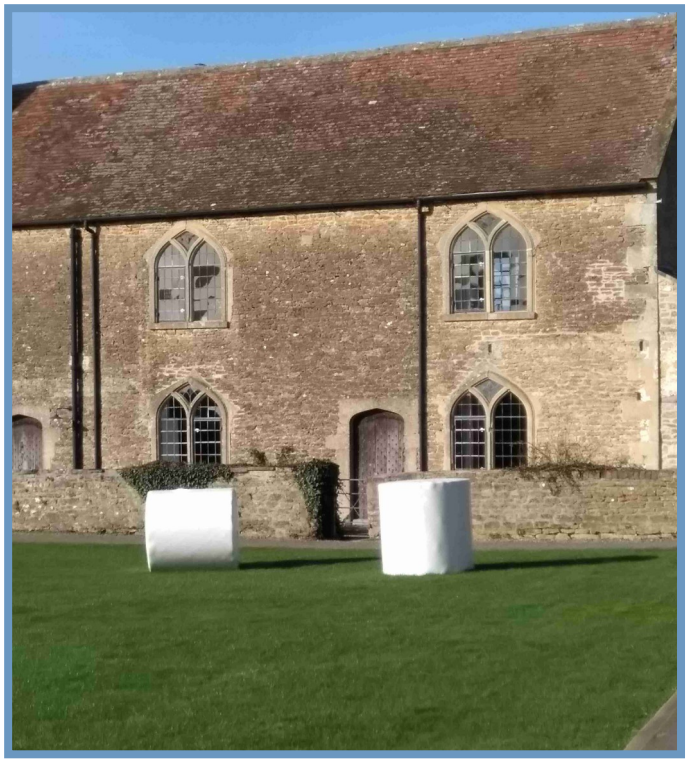


BALES REVISITED

Bales of straw and hay figured a lot in a number of the earlier issues of LRE. They appeared to give presence to fields otherwise empty; they collected and arranged themselves into streets and villages, they rolled mischievously down gentle slopes. They progressed from netted, barely wrapped to black wrapped to green wrapped then to white. They denoted a time of year. They travelled the A303 on trailer lorries down to the Southwest: straw from the eastern cornlands to bed the cattle of Devon and Cornwall. Fifteen such gigantic loads confronted me on a single journey.

But this time in celebration of youth, I am animating the bales with children (see *figures in the landscape*) and at the same time offering you, my readers, an alternative form of art (see over) recently spotted at the Hauser and Wirth Art Gallery, just west of Bruton. Edith Young who took the picture **on the next page** queried staff as to whether these were — you know what — yes toilet rolls. But no, this may have been what artists refer to as an installation. Any way I like it and am happy to accept it as Art. See over!

Editor



LETTER TO THE EDITOR OF LANDSCAPE RESEARCH EXTRA

From Steven Shuttleworth

Dear Bud

As this is the last issue of *Landscape Research Extra* (LRE) to be published, over 30 years since the first issue was published in 'Winter 1988/89', I think it only right to say "a very big thank you" to you as Editor, your wife Rosemary who has acted as unofficial 'Assistant Editor', and your many writers of articles and other correspondents over this long period. I don't suppose that when you first took on the role you ever thought you'd still be doing it so many years later!

When I wrote the review of LRG's history in the paper *Fifty Years of Landscape Research Group* [published in *Landscape Research* Vol 42] one section noted that LRE was conceived "as a newsletter for its individual members, to allow *Landscape Research* (LR) to further evolve as an international quality-assured academic journal. An implicit role from the start was that the newsletter would provide a means of 'networking', spreading knowledge about landscape and thereby act as a complement to events as well as the journal". I also noted that "one of the newsletter's important features is that has provided an important mechanism for the Group's members outside the Board to act as charity volunteers, since over the years many have been regular contributors".

Clearly, as LR evolved into a modern academic journal, its early role as an organ for member-related news and communications was bound to decline – indeed for many years now it has simply never had such a function. LRE's role in providing such 'internal news' has therefore been invaluable. This role has taken many forms, and changed over time, but has included information to members about the Group's administrative and financial affairs; announcements about conferences and short reports about them if they were not disseminated via LR special issues; reviews and short features; and articles by young researchers awarded LRG dissertation prizes. From time to time LRE also had digests of LR papers (an important bridge between the two publications) and wider pointers to other landscape research via a 'Should You Read?' section, although these gave way in the face of easy access on line searching.

Importantly, from its inception LRE aimed to present short but substantive articles written in a clear style for a varied audience including non-academics, on a wide range of landscape topics and issues. You realised a few years ago, looking back over nearly thirty years of such articles, that many were less ephemeral than was assumed at the time of writing, and were historically valuable in terms of landscape thinking and its evolution. Our publication of an anthology of these articles, with sections focused on different aspects of landscape, in *A Bedtime Landscape Reader* in 2019 shows well the variety of well-written and thought-provoking material that LRE has encouraged over the years. Thanks to you and Owen Manning for putting that together.

Looking to the future, an important issue for the Group will be ensuring continued communication with its members, since the needs for member-related 'networking' and 'internal news' and for information and spreading knowledge about wider landscape matters will remain. Clearly LRG's main publication LR as an academic journal will never fulfil this role, a fact which led to the Group's decision to start publishing LRE. Of course, since that decision the world of communication has changed fundamentally, particularly with modern e-communications and social media. In this context,

LRE's demise demonstrates the dictum that all good things must sometime come to an end.

However – speaking as a now ordinary member of the Group (rather than as a Director/Trustee and Treasurer, which I was for many years) — *I believe the needs which LRE sought to satisfy will remain. I therefore look forward to hearing of the Board's plans to take forward that original purpose (i.e. providing Group news and other updates to its members, ensuring there is an outlet for their involvement as charity volunteers in the Group's activities, and dissemination of information beyond the academic material of LR),* accepting that in future this will be better delivered by other media.

SS

A PATTERN OF PATHS

By Ros Codling

Four or five years ago I found a street map of Wymondham, a Norfolk market town with a population about 15,000, which had been my home for about 20 years. I began to make a simplified street and footpath map of the mediaeval core. My tracing soon became a complex pattern, seemingly a chaotic cobweb of points with multiple options springing in different directions. The road pattern was quite logical but when paths, courts, yards and lokes (a frequently used Norfolk word for a path, occasionally a dead end) were added, the intricacies developed. I planned to send the draft to a mathematically-inclined friend to ask him to calculate, or at least estimate, how many choices I had for my afternoon walk. I guess that answer is in the thousands, especially if it is remembered that any route can be walked in two directions.

Then various family events occurred, all good in their own way, part of the wide pattern of life and death. The actual physical happenings included moving house, so the map and the tracing paper draft were packed away and have not seen the light of day again.

But I was plotting routes in the landscape I am now seeing and experiencing - my immediate surroundings, the locality I happen to live in. Now I am obeying orders given by both the government and my daughter (the latter by far the most severe), staying at home, only going out to the wider world for one daily walk or cycle ride. Near neighbours have offered to shop for me, vulnerable as I am supposed to be because of my age, although I find that difficult to accept. I am barred from the wider landscapes of the British Isles, let alone Europe or further afield. I am allowed to be a spectator but only of images, whether seen online, on the television, or by photographs.

So it is inevitable that for actual experiences, I now concentrate on my present limited landscape. The permitted daily walk or cycle ride is greatly appreciated and I vary my route each day so as not to repeat any single pattern. The season of the year undoubtedly helps - there is change, even if I was on the same path or lane two days ago. Yesterday the flowers of the stitchworts seemed to have appeared from nowhere, carpeting the banks to Lady's Lane, once an important highway but now a quiet foot route.

Another landscape I can continue to experience is the scene from my study. As I sit here, I see the twin towers of Wymondham Abbey, a magnificent structure in stone and flint, not elegant, but visually firm and solid. The local story is that the townsfolk complained to the Benedictine monks that the bells that were supposed to remind them to pray could not be heard, so a second "town" tower was built. It happens to be further away from the town than the monks' tower, but perhaps the bells were bigger and louder. But between me and Wymondham Abbey lie three other gardens and the Abbey Meadow, which belongs to a charity. I have no right of access to these properties, so this landscape is limited to a visual experience, a viewing.

On occasions "views" are mocked, or considered to be second best. Some claim that to truly experience a landscape requires a far deeper or closer participation - walking, perhaps in torrential rain, or other weather patterns usually considered to be uncomfortable. Edward Thomas ended his book *The South Country* with a passage that many might find bleak, but he welcomed his subjugation by rain:

"At all times I love rain, the early momentous thunderdrops, the perpendicular cataract shining, or at night the little showers, the spongy mists, the tempestuous mountain rain. I like to see it possessing the whole earth at evening, smothering civilization, taking away from me myself everything except the power to walk under the dark trees and to enjoy as

humbly as the hissing grass … I like to see the rain making the streets, the railway station, a pure desert, whether bright with lamps or not. … It is about eternal business. In its noise and myriad aspect I feel the mortal beauty of immortal things."

The book was published when Thomas was in his early thirties, the young man who could stride over the landscape, scorning physical difficulties. It isn't easy to imagine him "enjoying the view". Yet for others, this might be their only experience of landscape. Older people are the most obvious group and for them the carefully positioned car park is welcomed. Yet there are others who are restricted.

Charles Villiers Stanford's atmospheric song "The Blue Bird" was broadcast recently, with words describing hills and a lake, and a melody that encapsulates the soaring of a bird. But for me, the image that immediately came to mind was of a seemingly infinite panorama of the Weald bathed in sunlight. There were no lakes, no birds, no immediate hills, although the South Downs were dimly visible on the far horizon. I learned the song one summer, at a school sited high on a ridge, looking south over a vast (at least to a teenager) landscape that continuously changed due to the weather, sometimes shrouded in early morning mist, or partly obliterated by gusts of rain. I was a spectator - I could not visit, or explore the numerous footpaths and lanes. I was restrained by a rigid discipline, imposed by school authorities. My eyes were my only means of exploration and in this sense I was one with the elderly, sitting in their car, looking at a panorama they cannot now probe.

So in our current situation, despite being classified as "elderly", I am still able to enjoy the physical experience given by the pattern of paths that evolved from mediaeval times, often surrounded by buildings many centuries old. I can also recall memories of landscapes, with music often being the stimulus to such thoughts. Perhaps in future days I shall be allowed to experience further landscapes, whether as places to walk and explore, or if mobility decreases, as wondrous, not-to-be-despised views.

RC

Notes

Thomas, Edward. [originally published 1909] 2009. *The South Country*. Wimborne Minster, Little Toller Books. Page 233-4.



FOOT BY FOOT from A to B
By Owen Manning

Readers may feel I've said enough about walking already, but no: as my long-ago students might warn, there's some weird stuff to come. In considering this ancient, essential act from which all human society derives, and all design imperatives for us now (which is why my teaching began with it), shouldn't we ask not just *why* we walk but *how* ?

'In a straight line' you might answer, but we ever voluntarily walked the straight line beloved of engineers and suspicious policemen? There's no such straightness in our *real* world, for we are animals, bundles of micro-sensitive reactions to everchanging real-world pressures; no animals follow dead-straight lines and neither can we, even on the artificial smoothness of a road (try it!).

Take the nearest equivalent in nature: a firm sand beach, and try to walk truly straight across it. Changing textures of sand underfoot, tiny variations in air temperature, direction, odours, sound; images briefly glimpsed –a shadow overhead, a distant rock – and the feet will react: straightness will be lost. Still more true is this of vegetated surfaces; even the merest patchy coloniser of bare ground will deflect our tread, while taller grasses or uneven surfaces will enforce a zigzag in search of the most energy-saving route. Crucially, those following will tend to adopt and reinforce the same zigzagging route. So it is that even within a potentially straight corridor of movement, mini-meanders will develop, enlarge as the scale of happening around us increases, and grow into the naturally winding pathways we happily follow through the land.

At this point you might well ask: what about geometric landscapes then, don't we happily follow their straight lines? Well, yes, and no.

Geometry expresses the desire to control: control old mysteries through knowledge (Newton), control nature (tree avenues), control people (sacred ritual, military processions, public ceremony). Observe what actually happens within the geometry: individual trees grow freely however fixed the line, people move freely in the parades – the only humans following straight lines are soldiers painfully trained to do so. Religious precincts impose a different kind of discipline through respect; but look as well at such as Versailles: people keep within straight lines while happily following their own natural route. Yet beside these *mindful* geometries, there are too many *mindless* layouts in public places where there is no good reason for it: every path is straight and joins every other at controlled angles which ignore natural lines, resulting in short-cutting and erosion.

The University of Massachusetts campus consists of blocks arbitrarily placed, each linked to the next by direct door-to-door paths: huge areas of erosion result where students follow their own preferences – revealed clearly by the next snowfall!| These and many similar examples at home and abroad reveal a basic line I came to term *Manning's Meander* (my students loved these and used to find further examples for my collection – not difficult as they are universal). Looking further at them reveals something which really completes the argument. It is especially shown by any enclosed space – courtyards, fields – which people need to cross from one entry to another. One might think they will enter at an angle, but no animal will do so willingly because angled approaches are unsafe.

Instead they, and we, will enter as close to ninety degrees as possible for maximum visibility to either side. When through they will see the line to the next exit and curve to follow it – but still not directly, for on approaching this further entry/exit the same problem nudges the line into a curve. The result is a long 'S' line, beautiful in its natural logic and one of the best examples I know of the architect Alexander's "Pattern Language" concept (never fully extended into the landscape and deserving of an article in itself): still more satisfying when seen with that similarly sweeping 'S' line the mediaeval plough has laid across the land. Such coincidental beauties seem almost more than we deserve.

More follows, for features within the space – and beyond – will cause the line to be further modulated. Trees in the way of that diagonal will cause people to swerve in advance and back again; even a slight uphill gradient will cause the line to deviate away from the slope for ease of movement. Distant attractors may draw eye, and feet, momentarily away from the line. More drastically, a possible threat sensed within the space will cause an instinctive immediate veering away, in every case towards the nearest source of safety: the boundary. Where-ever the exits and entries may be, the need for safety and escape will greatly exaggerate the curve; it is not unusual for the preferred line to hug boundaries throughout, 'in case'.

Any features within or beyond will affect our use of the space, and this fact is a wonderful tool for design. Given the task of moulding space into an attractive landscape for people, all you have to do is initially to sort routes into hierarchies of movement, the most important being the route one would might take if using the park as a pleasant way of getting somewhere else – as I was able in years past to do, happily racing through Regent's Park and Primrose Hill, or Glasgow's Kelvingrove, on my own commute – a memory which firmly established such

green routes in my mind as an essential of the well-made city.

For all reasons stated such main routes need only be straight enough to satisfy those in a hurry – and, for those, never so visibly un-straight as to provoke short-cuttiug itself. It's a subtle balance; for a hilarious caricature of what can go wrong, see the garden scenes in Tati's *Mon Oncle.* For those less in a hurry, ready to enjoy the landscape for its own sake, more humble, casual paths can wind freely to take them to focal areas and points of interest: seating areas, water, viewpoints etc, to explore as long as they like.

The possibilities for imaginative design within well-structured landscapes are infinite. A basic grasp of how people naturally move through their environment will solve half the problems of landscape planning and design at a stroke. That's it, folks!

NB The extract which follows, from Lyall Watson's *Gifts of Unknown Things,* describes how routes of absorbing beauty and interest can develop over years without any conscious planning at all! Provide the opportunity and they will appear.

. . . there was a fine network of paths round the island worn by thousands of feet before mine. I savoured the feel of the earth , sensing the soil directly with my bare feet. All the tracks were good, well chosen, much travelled and redolent of people, but there was one in particular which never failed to move me with its magic.

It started on the beach. For fifty yards it wandered uncertainly through mudflats and mangroves, then shrub gave way to open parkland and suddenly the path lost all hesitation and picked up a rhythm and life of its own.

It was a narrow path, and there were thousands of ways it could have travelled across the coastal plain to the foot of the hills. Any of the routes between the trees, across the flats, and round the rock outcrops would have served, but none would have felt so right.

The path was never more than a foot wide, but every foot was in the proper place. On the grassy flats it swayed gently from side to side, matching itself to the rhythm of a walker with eyes on the horizon. Nearing a grove of ebony trees, it made a swing round to take in the fragrance, and just enough of the shade to ease a traveller's passage back into the sun. Passing a wall of basalt, it leaned away from the pressure of the rock, but where a stone stood alone in a clearing the path made a point of touching it at a friendly tangent. It responded to every current in the landscape, flowing over the years into a final form so beautifully balanced that one could follow it blindfold.....

OM

MY NEW LANDSCAPE IN WHICH I TRADE QUALITY FOR QUANTITY.

By Peter Howard

My landscape at present is restricted during the 'lockdown'. I can see and visit my small garden, including my crabtree, now budding. I can walk up into my Devon village, Winkleigh, and its square, and I can walk along the lane towards Hatherleigh. In normal times this last walk has to be negotiated avoiding cars, and dogs. The latter are still abundant, each accompanied by a servant to carry its own excrement, but the cars are now few and far between so, for two of my senses, sound and smell, the landscape is more natural, as I am one of those who prefer bird song and the smell of blossom and manure, to the sound of engines and the smell of diesel and tarmac.

Some years ago I responded to a piece from the editor of Landscape Research Extra who had written about large landscapes. At that time also I was restricted in my movements, by medical inability rather than government decree, and the walk along Hatherleigh Road became a focus of my outdoor life……..not least as it was pretty level, as level as lanes get in mid Devon. Both articles, from LRE 62 and 63 in 2012 are also in *A Bedside Landscape Reader* (see footnote reference). I then noticed the extent to which my own perceptive faculties had improved dramatically, not only because I learned about the facts of the place — where the Whitethroats and Yellowhammers nested, why that crop was favoured in this field, but also because everyone I met also discussed their own perceptions. Many had been born there, a few were on holiday, and many more had recently arrived for retirement or work. Their destinations were varied and their mode of transport was not only on foot or car, but also by horse and by tractor.

The Road toward Hatherleigh: looking at detail.
The first 200m consists of a line of large detached houses hidden behind Devon hedges: gardens with large oak and ash trees. Opposite are fields where the hedgerow trees were felled immediately after the government announced that the use of wet wood

on wood-burning stoves was to be abolished. I surmise that landowners recognised that if they did not fell the hedgerow trees immediately they would be obliged to have the timber properly cured before sale.

After these large houses comes the cider works; it sits on the tiniest industrial estate, together with an engineering company, and another enterprise which makes small sheds and shelters from plastic. All these add depth to the olfactory landscape — the smell of the place — and the soundscape. Then you are free of 'development' and there is an orchard, somewhat crudely pruned annually by running a tractor along the lines with its cutter bar vertical; despite this it remains a habitat for Redwing and Fieldfare in the winter. Below the orchard one enterprising landowner has made a fishing lake and surrounded it with wooden chalets which, in theory if not in practice, are not to be used as permanent residences.

At last the 30 mph derestriction sign ends the village; there is a carefully maintained seat and the verge is neatly mowed. From the seat you look over the first field with its single dominant oak tree; it is perhaps the sole survivor of a previous hedgeline: a detail.

I have learned the places where one can get a view through a gate. The hedges are quite high, thrown up in the Devon tradition with two rows of quickthorn or blackthorn on top of a substantial 4-5foot bank. These days those hedges are beaten back severely every year by contractors, whose interest in arboriculture or ecology is rather less obvious than saving time and resources. The hedges certainly have birdlife, including occasional Whitethroat and Song Thrush, but the 'dawn chorus' of birdsong gets markedly louder nearer the village. The lanes in contrast are often silent. There are occasional standard trees here mostly ash or oak but with a substantial holly and, rather surprisingly, a horse-chestnut. The holly is home to the only Yellowhammers in the area, though they occasionally sit on the wires and sing to complain about the lack of cheese —- (a traditional reference!)

The crop is grass, liberally manured and rather too green. The stock is largely sheep, and this being a thoroughgoing deep clay which turns to mud after very little rain, the grazing season is relatively short and much land is badly poached. By regular standards of landscape quality, this is thoroughly ordinary rural landscape. All this is detail.

In my deepest self, my own understanding of landscape, and how I understand myself, was enhanced as much in those months of very local walking as in the many trips I had previously undertaken 'abroad'. Now my daily allowance of exercise is to walk this stretch of a Devon lane and back again. There is the possibility of a triangular walk using a local footpath, but after a very wet winter this will not be navigable for a month. There may now be very few cars, but I am not the only exercising walker and we pass each other with care, keeping to our sides of the road and our greetings are cautious.

PH

NEW BUILD HOUSING AND WATER MANAGEMENT

By Nigel Young

A quick look at recent developments of houses (homes as they are now called to include flats and multi ownership structures) suggests that not all are dull and repetitive. Four particular developmental clusters, neighbourhood units or quartiers that I have visited recently show some attractive variety. In the one, Forder Meadow, Moretonhampstead the roads surfaced with downward draining paviors are particularly wide. This gives a delightful sense of spa-



ciousness despite the cars. The stream a small first order one which cuts deep into the site is maintained



but within safety fences. Care is being taken to manage its banks.

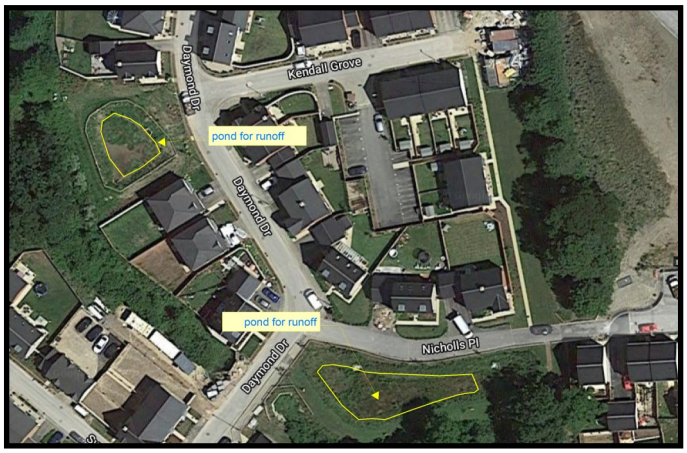
In a second quartier, just north of Newton Abbot I

am impressed by the village pond effect, similar to classic views of Finchingfield, Suffolk. The varia-



tion of housing height — two or three storeys — is also attractive. Clearly the pool is in some way necessary to deal with surface run off but it is singularly effective visually. Unlike historic ponds it carries a guard rail.

In the third example, on the southeast edge of Bovey Tracey I count at least three ponds, two out-



lined in yellow here, each with surrounding greenspace rim. It is a sloping site at the base of a considerable hillside. This may have been a water management necessity but in other decades surface water disposal might more likely have been hidden away piped below ground, a loss both visually and ecologically.

It is in the Topsham road example that I see no such



ponds and the redemptive feature is the random variations of housing style (though this planned randomness is a widely adopted feature of new build areas). The Topsham development is not yet complete and there may be greenspace land assigned for ponds to the north or the south where the land falls away into two shallow valleys. I was taking photographs there for this article when confronted by an angry 35 year old. I was photographing his house and garage. In the olden days he might have seized my camera and ripped out my film. Nowadays more likely he would have taken my picture on his mobile and imaged my car number plate. Ugh!

NY

Vertical image by Google Earth

THE PLURALISM OF NAMES

By Martin Spray

Some years ago a book I was given by one of my daughters reminded me how some aspects of landscape have been hidden in the Mists of Time. The land (scape) is littered with the deeds, possessions and shadows of the long-dead. Of some of these, we have vague, dim, or mistaken memories: Battle (for Hastings) for instance; and, indeed, Engla land, *"Land of the Angles"* (so named for coming from an area in an elbow of two waters in north Germany). Of many others, such as the British examples of Mucking, Farewell, Wham, or Dull[1], there is little or no memory. Maybe it doesn't matter; maybe we don't care.

Maybe we should – if only because they can often provide insights into the history and heritage of places, at all scales. Some names are descriptive and some aren't: I hope it is true that geology students who found three fault lines on the campus of University of California Santa Cruz in 1971 dubbed them My Fault, Your Fault, and McHenry's Fault (for the chancellor). Many names just hint to us: the Chinese Takla Makan Desert is telling us *'If you go in, you'll likely not come out!*. Not a few are (let's say) poetic: a traveller from east to west China in 1170 visited places with such enthusiastic names as *Sit Whistling Pavilion, Monastery of Recompensing Kindness and Glorifying Filial Piety, Compassionate Mother Promontory, Virtue-Transformed County, and Cloud-Dream Marsh*[2]. Others are (let's say) disrespectful: Wales, for instance, is the English label for *'Where the Foreigners live'*…. In my infancy, I wanted to climb Mt. Everest - because it was there. Years later I learnt more about Chomolungma – *'Goddess Mother of Earth'* as Tibetans refer (red) to her - and the thought of her be-

ing named for a transgressor's surveyor was saddening[3].

And of course names may be distinctly untrustworthy. A favourite case for me is the Pennines. This was said to derive from the *'Alpes Pennine'*, which appeared on maps in the mid eighteenth century – but their appearance seems to come from a remarkable literary forgery[4]. So far as is known, there was no name for the whole of this range of hills before the mid nineteenth century. Indeed, this is around the time Britain developed regional names, and the Cumbrian Mountains switched to the Lake District, following a change in fashion.

Both historic and contemporary names may be Open Sesames for information – but they may not be. If we look at a present-day landscape and know only a present-day label, can we understand why we see what we see? If it is labelled with misinformation, we may never. Often, a change of label must have broken a place's – a landscape's – links to its history. Just a nick-name may do: my home shares the vastly uninspired name *'Hillside'* with about six others in the area, yet when we moved here the locals distinguished it as *'The Doghouse'*, and they enthusiastically told us of the several dogs put down and buried here. This story explains several things about our house and garden. Thirty-odd years on, *The Doghouse* appears to have been forgotten.

Much of our land (scape) has old labels effectively meaningless to us. Interpreting them is a skilled art, which I don't have. It's disappointing that this loss of meaning seems true at large as well as small scales. The origin of 'London', for instance, is notoriously obscure: it may be from a personal or group name, though the present-day best guess is something like *'Place at the unfordable river[5]'*. Yet this obscurity might offer an opportunity to be more descriptive. We could try to formalise the designation *'The Wen'* that Wm. Cobbett, amongst others, found a useful and honest tag … except, of course, that few people know what a 'wen' is.

MS

Notes and references

1 Examples from *Far from Dull*, *Sort 0f Book*, (author/publisher not given). They are, roughly: 'Territory of the Muccingas clan'; 'By the pleasant stream'; 'Marshy hollow'; 'Meadow' (Old English; Old English; Old Norse; Gaelic). I mean there is little or no memory for Modern English speakers.

2 *Grand Canal, Great River. The travel diary of a twelfth-century Chinese poet,* trans. Philip Watson, Francis Lincoln, 2007.

3 George Everest was British surveyor general 1830 - 43. Before him, the mountain was known to the West as Peak XV. Its earlier Sanskrit name is Sagarmatha, "Peak of Heaven".

4 Derek Robbins, Britain's biggest con trick *Pennine magazine* 6 (5) pp 14-15, 1985.

5 For example, *The Times Atlas of Britain*, 2010, opts for this.

WALKING THE TALK

By Paul Selman

Nearly a decade ago, on retiring to rural Ayrshire from the buzz of Sheffield, I was afraid life might prove a little humdrum. Transplanting myself from a large civic university with all its benefits and academic community, for the routine of a distant village, was a step into the unknown. I did it for domestic reasons, but not without misgivings.

As it transpired my fears were entirely unfounded. Our adoptive community of West Kilbride is rich in social capital. Not only did the continuing loose ends of publications and research supervisions provide a soft landing from academia, but we quickly found ourselves involved in numerous musical and creative activities which thrived in the village.

We had previously lived on the edge of the Cotswolds and then on the edge of the Peak District: our new landscape was very different and presented facets that were not easily read by the incomer. For example, why were there so many grand villas, ranging from the mid-19th century to present-day, dotted around the village? They were the type of residences typically associated with affluent city suburbs, and seemed strange, so far from major centres of employment. (In Scotland, widespread commuting is relatively recent and is spatially much more confined than around English cities). Why was the 'feel' of the place so different from neighbouring settlements and, indeed, why did the string of communities along the coast possess such distinct identities?

After a couple of years here I discovered a local walking group, comprised mainly of retired people possessing a wealth of local lore, and joining this has helped me understand the back-story to the landscape and people's attachments to it.

West Kilbride's urban landscape initially puzzled me for two reasons: relative to many other nearby settlements, why did its centre have a more 'cottagey' feel and why did it appear so much better tended? I soon learned that its origins lay in weaving and farming, in contrast to towns east and south, where the local economy had relied heavily on coal and steel. Even now, although agriculture is a minor player in terms of local employment, it is still

known locally as “tattie town” and for my new friends, the surrounding fields evoke many childhood memories of pulling the renowned ‘Ayrshire earlies’.

The relatively well-maintained appearance of the centre is testimony to local volunteers who, from the 1990s, have raised funds to convert unoccupied shop units into artisan workshops, resulting in the village being recognised as ‘Craft Town Scotland’. This culminated in the old Barony church being magnificently converted into an exhibition centre and café/retail outlet in 2012. This has restored life, business and identity to a main street that would otherwise have become shabby and run down. There is still an air of fragility, as if the economic revival is hanging by an invisible thread, but for the moment the urban landscape retains a mildly prosperous ambience.



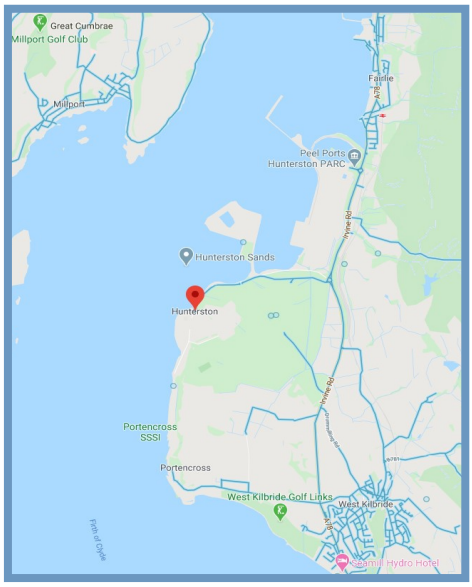
Of the dozen or so settlements that cling to the coastal ledge between Gourock and Irvine, West Kilbride is always thought of as the inland one, though it lies barely a ten minute walk from the splendid sandy coastline. Heading north from our beach, the eye is drawn to a small castle sited on a rocky promontory at the hamlet of Portencross. To the locals, this castle has two histories. One is its military and domestic history from the 14th century, including an interesting connection to the Spanish Armada. The other is its rescue from a dangerously ruinous state by local volunteers just over a decade ago after it was acquired from British Nuclear Fuels Ltd. To the locals, the Portencross landscape tells these two stories equally clearly.

Continuing the path northwards, the newcomer can start to unravel the area’s modern narrative. Passing through a rocky gap, the coast suddenly changes from wild to industrial; an intervening farm eases the transition. The looming nuclear stations of Hunterston herald a sequence of installations almost unnoticed from the main road, though far more visible from the neighbouring island of Great Cumbrae. Several members of our walking group have worked at these plants, which now show signs of obsolescence yet eke out a valuable contribution to the National Grid. Immediately beyond lies the recently decommissioned Hunterston coal terminal, with its huge fuel stocking areas and crane-topped pier. It is an amazing sight on Google Earth. With the recent demise of coal-fired electricity generation in Scotland the infrastructure is being dismantled and the conveyor that connected the handling facilities to the rail network has already disappeared. Further to the north, we had watched the demolition by controlled explosion of the chimney stack of Inverkip’s little used oil-fired power station, where one of our ramblers had previously worked. Decay, obsolescence, obliteration.

The gradually de-industrialising coastal landscape carries vivid memories for many of our members, whose economic livelihoods were bound up in it. The industrial remnants also provide a strong clue to the presence of those villas: this was clearly an area which had a vigorous employment base including a substantial managerial and professional echelon. Doubtless, in earlier times shipping magnates sat in their parlours watching clippers wend their way up the Firth of Clyde.

Turning inland to Fairlie Moor we pass the farm where one of our number grew up. He can still navigate us to secret places of childhood adventure. Located a few minutes from moorland roads are hidden treasures of waterfalls and ravines, grassy knolls, and shallows where burns can be crossed. There is also a site near here, one of several in the district, where lies the wreckage of an American WW2 plane that had misjudged the deceptive escarpment. This too was the subject of childhood adventures, and it is surprising how many shards of fuselage still remain.

Apart from new housing estates tucked into the few remaining enclaves of developable land in this heavily glaciated landscape, the main visual change has been from windfarms. There are more and more of these: in scale they are not overwhelming, and seem quite human in contrast with the truly industrial Whitelee Windfarm near Kilmarnock (which is also on our list of walking routes). Apart



from some adverse comments from the engineers in our group, who remark unfavourably on their output and reliability relative to centralised energy plants, people seem to accept these new upland occupants.

The walk southward across the moors needs familiar eyes to guide us across private estates, where we can gain access and cross without too much fear of challenge. Although there is no law of trespass in Scotland, the 'right to roam' is observed more in the breach than the observance, and traversing the moors can require knowledge, stealth and tact. In many parts, too, the open land is in poor condition and collective wisdom is needed to find a safe and dry passage across derelict drains and unmanaged heather. Occasionally there is evidence of real time-depth, and I now know where to find two fascinating examples of cup-and-ring marked stones as well as an old coffin path.

If we continue to the southern end of our compass we find Ardrossan, Saltcoats and Stevenston, invariably referred to as 'The three towns' as if they share some inseparable identity and destiny. One of the few remaining clues to Ardrossan's past is the strip of wasteland at its northern end: many of our members can enumerate the various hazardous contaminants from its days as an oil refinery, and these still delay its reclamation. It culminates in a harbour universally known as the 'Irish port', even though the Belfast service ceased in 1976. Now there is a marina alongside the Arran ferry terminal, testimony to the town's painful transition to post-industrial status.

The pièce de résistance however lies at the southern end of the three towns. Here lies the Ardeer peninsula, now guarded by security fencing and in the hands of secretive new owners. I described this at some length in LRE 78. This isolated neck of land was where, in 1871, Albert Nobel finally found a suitably remote place to construct his British Dynamite Factory. Later passing to ICI, the plant at its peak employed some 13,000 workers who arrived in fleets of buses or via its dedicated train station. Known invariably as *The Dinnamite* it met its final demise in 2007 when an explosion resulted in a devastating fire. The site is still penetrable by a determined group of walkers led by former site employees and an ex-fireman, but gaining access is increasingly difficult and on our rare forays we meet progressively fewer locals walking their dogs along the overgrown paths and dilapidated bridges.

Nowadays, I am struck by how many of West Kilbride's grander houses are occupied by retirees living off ICI pensions, and I wonder whether a new generation of incomers will succeed them. Large high maintenance houses distant from cities may not have a ready market in the future, and I wonder how many will be converted into apartments and what impact this will have on the townscape.

Tell me about this landscape give it to me in depth …..

So any visitor to the area would immediately be impressed by the scenery, most particularly the seascape. They might park in one of the numerous laybys on the A78 and wander a little way from their cars. **However, that would be to miss the many layers of cultural landscape, which are not immediately apparent. The area's narrative is only revealed gradually through the soles of one's boots and in the company of locals with vivid memories.**

PS

FROM POET SEAN HERON

Dear Editor

The three poems below for the final issue of were inspired by my personal experiences, my readings of Robert MacFarlane's *Landmarks,* and my engagement with the Landscape Research Group over the last couple of years.



The poem below ('un familiar beauty') was written on holiday with my partner in Tenerife. We were discussing the landscapes around us and we felt they lacked something aesthetically and this sparked me to consider the role that sense of place has in shaping our aesthetic tastes in landscapes. I note that William Young in the accompanying issue (LRE 90) travelled around Lanzarote also in Las Palmas island group. Not quite the same landscape.

(un)Familiar Beauty

A great dry expanse
Alien in its unfamiliarity
A gathering of rocks
Unidentified.
Poor
Uniform.
Fields of green
An occasional tree

Hedgerow, magpie, blue tit, robin, raven, oak and fern.
Identified
Diverse
Rich
Familiar
Home

The next two poems were inspired by my only experiences of walking in Scotland throughout my childhood. The two poems speak to my perspectives and goals, as opposed to the general views of a society obsessed with growth, increasing, greater ever heights. From my perspective these are replicated in our approach to landscapes, aiming for new heights and targets, rather than the journey and the need for constant reflection.

The Introspective Landscape

Valleys are subversive,
Looking into instead of out across,
Looking down rather than up,
Not godlike but introspective,
Parochial.
The heart not the brain.

And then this one

Trampled by the Hunt

Let me hunt the Munro
Peak after peak
Nothing to see
Except the world
In its entirety
But what of the *froach* forest
Sheltered by heather
A world ignored
Tramped over
A softening under foot
Merely the *fraoch* to cushion my fall
As I aim for the heavenly peak.

SH.



GEOGRAPH – WHAT IT'S ALL ABOUT

By David Saunders

Fifteen years is a long time in the history of the internet. In 2005, at a time when LRE had reached Issue 36, and the Editor was still coming to terms with Microsoft Publisher software, only half of UK households had internet access, and broadband was only slowly replacing tedious dial-up access to the online world.

In March of 2005 an initiative called Geograph was launched to tap into the growing interest in citizen-led research and this has resulted in an interactive website capturing landscape images of the whole of the UK. ***Geograph.org*** was established as a free and open online community, which aspired to get people to submit photographs from their individual perspective of landscape; this would add to a growing collage of tiles containing both views and searchable text.

These Geograph lodged images have been supplied without charge by photographers adhering to very specific set of rules to ensure, as far as possible, that the image should show at least one of the main geographical features of a specific OS grid square, accompanied by a text description of the view shown.

The idea of founding the project on the arbitrary overlay of the Ordnance Survey grid has reduced bias. The selected resolution of 1 square kilometre has offered a consistent perspective of landscape which, when assembled together by different contributors, generates a fascinating mosaic and a collective insight of the character of an area.

Each of the images submitted is moderated to meet the Geograph criteria: wide vistas, photographs which include 'selfies' or extraneous close detail are rejected. Since 2016, however, some good quality images have been included as "Supplemental" but they don't gain full Geograph status unless they meet the criteria.

From the outset the motivation to participate was stimulated by an element of competition to accumulate personal Geograph points and thereby rise up the league table. This element of rivalry drove some of us to seek out areas of the country that we would never otherwise visit – just to 'bag' a few Geograph points. My wife recalls one occasion

where she was convinced that a family walk turned into a race when another camera-wielding couple heading for the same remote area were suspected of being on the same mission to bag the first Geograph for that grid square!

Fifteen years on the Geograph project has perhaps been overshadowed by the ubiquitous Google Earth Vertical plus Street View roadview, but despite this the Geograph project has managed to reach into areas of the country that other collections of ground-based landscape images might struggle to access.

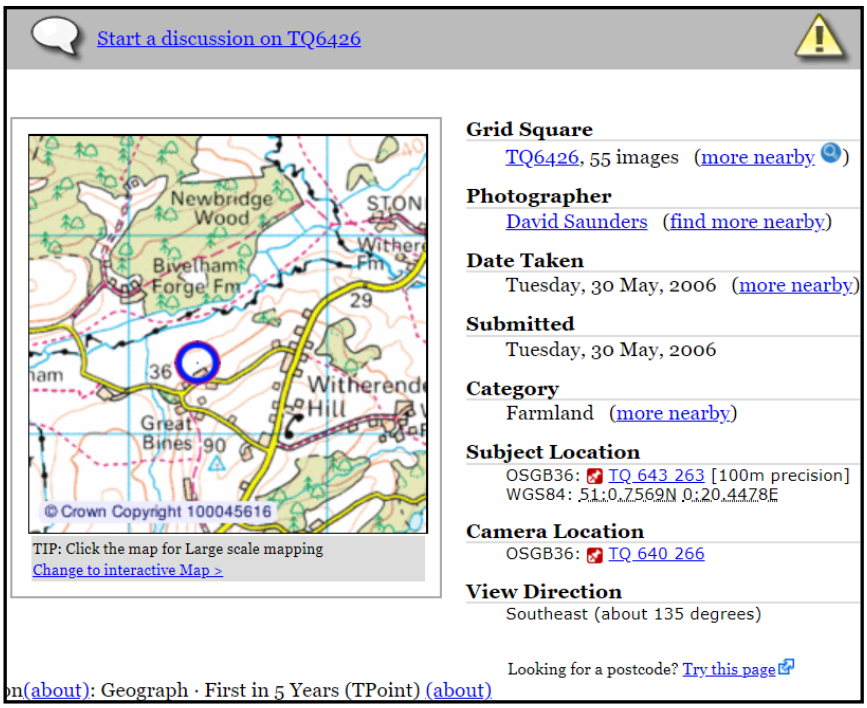
In March 2020 the UK coverage is approaching completion with over 280,000 (82%) of the UK grid squares having at least one image available to view. This database now extends to over 6 million images from more than 13,000 contributors.

Registered users have to agree that the submission of their image into the public domain is made freely available to others under a Creative Commons licence (cc-by-sa), albeit at a relatively low level of resolution. All images are credited; registered users can see links to the photographer. Prospective commercial users can purchase higher resolution images if they so wish.

So, what is the relevance of *Geograph* to landscape researchers? Can this extensive and freely-accessible resource become a tool for investigation and exploration? Already, applications include educational quizzes stimulating map reading and visual matching skills. Specialist sub-groups have sprung up seeking out particular landscape features; some offer virtual walks and shared 'geotrips'. With searchable and downloadable RDF meta-data, including image subject and tags, the Geograph resource can be accessed in many different ways. The website now integrates with Google Earth and some interesting mobile phone apps are being developed to help locate missing squares.

I recommend a tour, investigate areas you know, or explore those you have never manged to get to. During an extended Covid19 lockdown this is a perfect time to re-visit your own photo archive and perhaps upload a few special images that meet the Geograph criteria. A time to get involved with this fascinating and at times addictive pursuit! Grab yourself a Geograph!

Outside the UK the Geograph venture is well underway in Ireland, and a new project has been launched in Germany.



References and Links:

Geograph UK https://www.geograph.org.uk/

Geograph Ireland http://www.geograph.ie/

Geograph Deutschland https://geo-en.hlipp.de/



Geograph: A note about the author. David Saunders is a Chartered Forester based in Southern England. He has worked for local government, environmental charities and in private practice advising on, and managing, broadleaved woodlands. His specialist interest is the industrial history of ancient woodlands in the Weald of Kent and Sussex. In October 2018 he joined Landscape Research Group as Chief Executive and, along with Sarah, the Communication and Membership Manager, became the first ever employees of the charity. Cross reference p4-5 LRE 85.

An email (edited) from Prof Brian Goodey

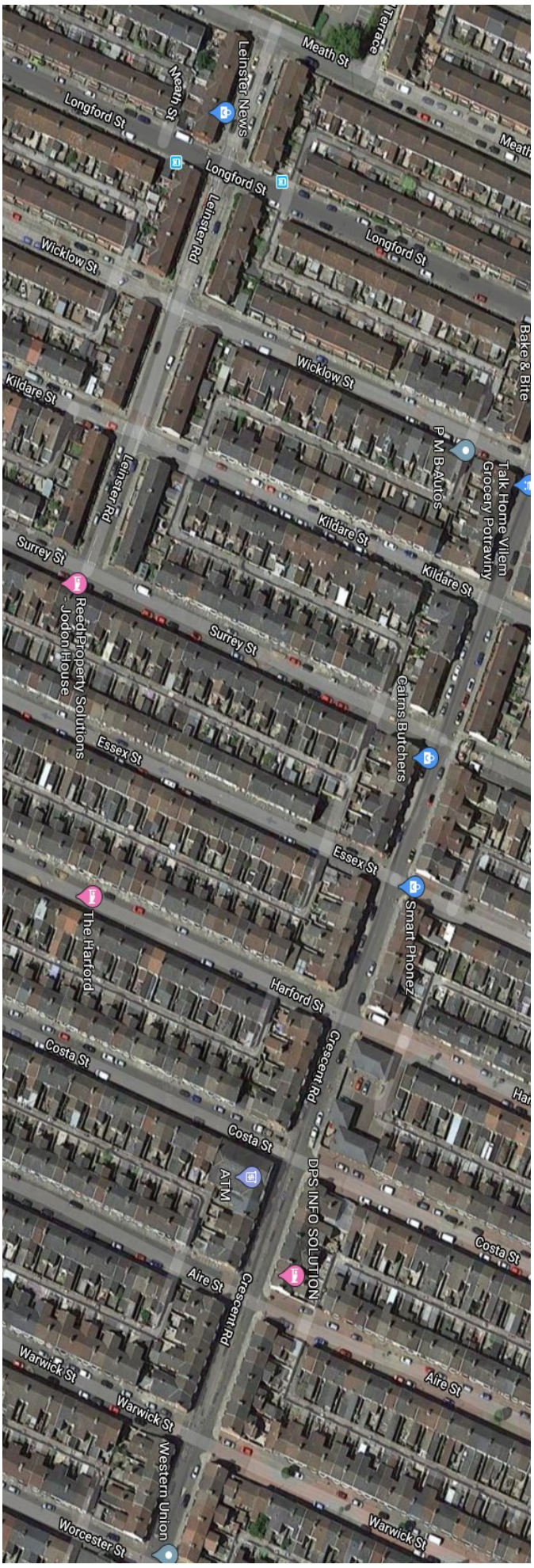
Fri 14/02/2020 17:01
Dear Bud :
Bitter regrets that you couldn't meet your milestone — (Getting to Issue 90) — and boo hoo for the absence of an eclectic outlet that I enjoyed. You gave so much, with so little thanks from the peer review academics. LRE served an excellent purpose which reflected LRG's origins in a variety of disciplines. 'Scape' writing becomes rarer and rarer, although climate change and despoliation by Boris's vanity projects should attract readers. Books that blast may be the thing …. but maybe we are getting beyond that. I will leave LRG at the next subscription opportunity and feel for your loss … but you may have other ideas?

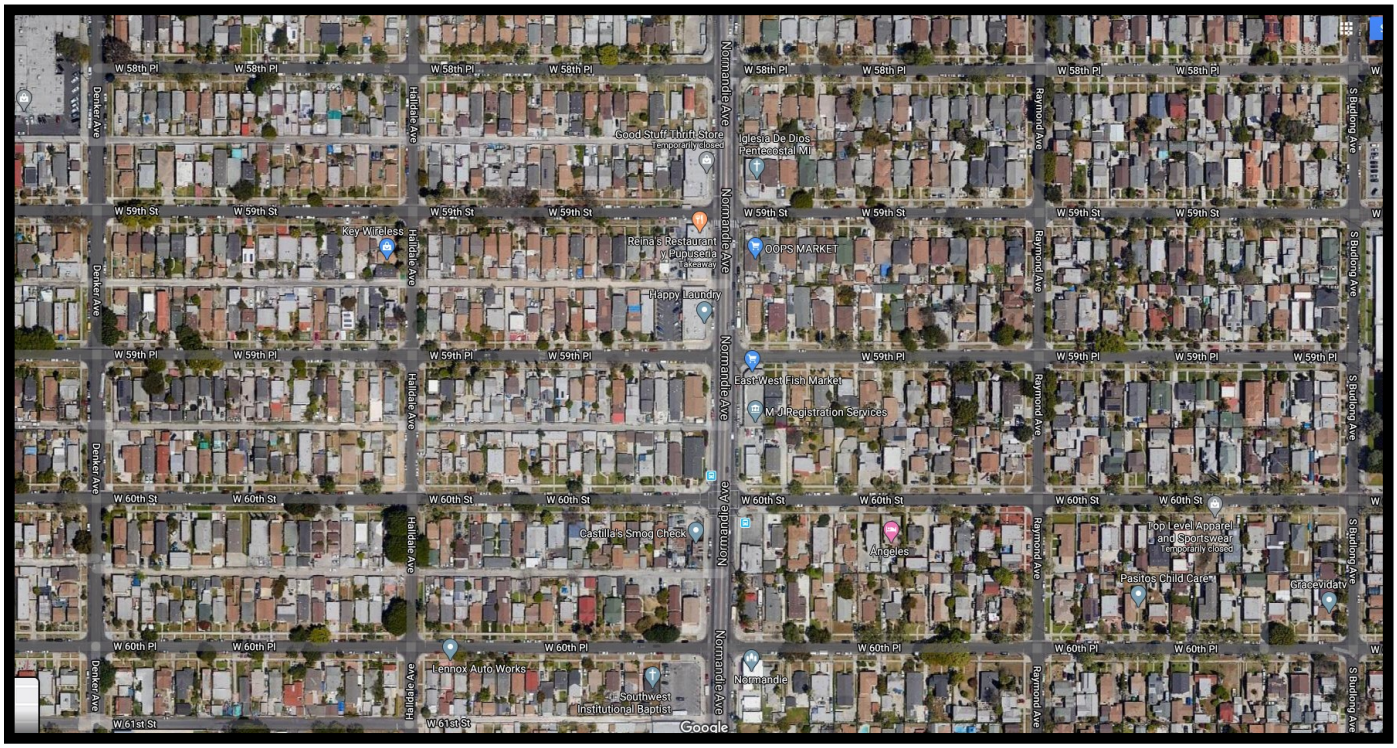
Signed: Brian.

Brian you may be pleased to see that the flood of responses from authors has allowed me to publish 2 issues of LRE, vide LRE89 and LRE 90. Yippee. It suggests that there is a need for this kind of publication.

LRG will launch an online multimedia space and publication later in 2020, to which members will be able to contribute written pieces, photo essays, audio, and video. This will act as a companion space to complement the academic rigour of our journal, *Landscape Research*.

The ideas and opinions expressed in this publication are those of the editor and individual authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Group







URBAN DENSITIES, URBAN LAYOUTS

By Bud Young

Anyone passing time peering at the Earth in Google Maps cannot help in these times of pandemic enquiring into the density of human housing and from that I offer here 3 highly contrasting areas one in Middlesborough UK, one in Los Angeles and one in Wuhan. In Wuhan the apartment blocks appear to be about 6 stories high. In Los Angeles mostly single storey. The Los Angeles example is the more astonishing for its awful repetitive quality and the unrelenting quality of the grid. Has any one ever explored the origins of the Los Angeles example. Could such exploration rate as landscape research? Is it a US standard layout over large residential areas. What are the planning rules?

As you are viewing this on screen please try zooming in for the detail. And surprise yourself viewing the quality of the gridded landscape in Streetview out of Google Maps. **BY**