

2019

# Landscape of Legislation: A Photographic Investigation of the Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

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<http://hdl.handle.net/10026.1/14307>

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<http://dx.doi.org/10.24382/929>

University of Plymouth

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UNIVERSITY OF  
PLYMOUTH

# LANDSCAPE OF LEGISLATION

A Photographic investigation of the Mendip Hills

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

by

DAVID ANTHONY WYATT

A thesis submitted to the University of Plymouth  
in partial fulfilment for the degree of

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

School of Art, Design and Architecture

**March 2019**



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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the following individuals and organisations without whom this research would not have been possible: Professor Liz Wells, Professor Jem Southam and Dr Simon Standing for their invaluable guidance and support; members of the Land/Water and the Visual Arts research group at the University of Plymouth for their continued and valuable feedback; the volunteers at the Mendip Cave Registry and Archive for their continued assistance; Mendip Outdoor Pursuits for allowing me access onto Sandford Hill; and finally, special thanks to my parents, Rita and Tony Wyatt, for their continued support and encouragement and to Daisy for always being there.

David Wyatt 2018

## AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

At no time during the registration for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy has the author been registered for any other University award without prior agreement of the Doctoral College Quality Sub-Committee.

Work submitted for this research degree at the University of Plymouth has not formed part of any other degree either at the University of Plymouth or at another establishment.

### Presentations of research output

9 January 2013. 'An Investigation into the photographic interpretation of boundaries and designations as applied to the rural landscape, with reference to the Mendip Hills'. Land/Water and the Visual Arts research seminar; University of Plymouth.

11 July 2013. 'A Landscape of Legislation'. Land/Water and the Visual Arts research symposium; University of Plymouth.

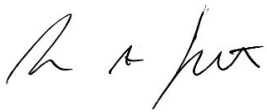
26 August 2015. 'Landscape of Legislation'. Tutor seminar. Open College of the Arts.

9 December 2015. 'Landscape of Legislation'. Research Student Event – Photography and Related Practices. Organised by Jem Southam and Liz Wells. University of Plymouth.

14 April 2016. 'Landscape of Legislation'. LAND2 and Land/Water and the  
Visual Arts Conference; University of Plymouth and Plymouth College of Art.  
PhD pin up show, talks and critique organised David Wyatt and Filippa Dobson.

Word count of the main body of the thesis: 45,738

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. J. P.' or similar, written in a cursive style.

Date: 20<sup>th</sup> March 2019

# Photographic Practice Elements

This thesis is presented in part through a series of practice case studies. These are presented as a slip-cased, hard bound, series of books. Pdf copies are provided for readers viewing library copies of this research.

## Book 2: *Site 1: Sandford Hill*

Photographs of disused mine workings on a hill within the Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

## Book 3: *Site 2: Banwell Wood*

Photographs made around the boundaries of two scheduled monuments within the Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

## Book 4: *Site 3: Black Down*

A series of photographs that create a landscape inspired by a scheduled monument

## Book 5: *Site 4: Dolebury Warren*

A series of photographs that examine the position of the boundary of a scheduled monument

## ABSTRACT - David Wyatt - A Landscape of Legislation

This study used the researcher's own photographic practice to interrogate the judgements of value explicit in the creation and maintenance of the Mendip Hills 'area of outstanding natural beauty' (AONB). The objective was to investigate what photography could say about the aesthetic judgements associated with such a designation. This was examined through identifying four case studies, all geographically located within the AONB, in order to explore the potential and limitations of diverse photographic methods. At each site, maps were created as part of the research thereby allowing site-specific conservation information to lead the practice. These locations were then photographed as part of their wider surroundings with a pictorial strategy that was aimed at identifying this as a place associated with an idea of 'Natural Beauty'. In the first case study, Sandford Hill, this involved following an archive of sites of interest to cavers to identify the positions of abandoned mine workings using a handheld Global Navigation Satellite System receiver. The remaining three case studies were the sites of scheduled monuments within the Mendip Hills AONB. At each of these sites the boundary of the designation was used to lead a critical photographic practice. It is argued that, although photography cannot reveal the causes of visual changes to the Mendip Hills, it can be used to examine how the appearance of the land reflects the concerns that led to the conservation legislation. This study also found that digital mapping offers potential to lead future photographic studies.

## PROLOGUE

It was early 2006 and I was sitting in a hotel in Durres, Albania, working on a picture story about a community living within and around an abandoned industrial site. The land was heavily polluted with industrial chemicals. Following the conflict in Kosovo, Albanians from the north of the country had moved down to the port city of Durres to find work. Lacking money and resources, they built houses in and around the crumbling factories. Little regard was paid to the toxicity levels of the soil and grants for clean-up provided by the World Bank never seemed to make it past government level. My photographs were about how a community was built in this wasteland. Up until this point I had spent five years developing a career in international photojournalism. But I suffered a recurring feeling that something was missing. Two years later I was in China, studying for a Master's degree when I identified the problem. I was performing the role of the white middle-class Englishman touring the world to look at other people's problems. The photographs I made were effective enough - they were published and exhibited around the world. But I was still little more than a tourist. Nine months in the city of Dalian, a city where few speak English, with hardly any Mandarin skills, reinforced my belief that my photographs weren't really about these people. The work I made in China was about my own, temporary, relationship with the land there. I began to see photography as autobiographical. In late 2008 I moved back to the UK. It was clear that it was time for me to make a serious, critical, body of work looking at the place I think of as home - the Mendip Hills.



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## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Throughout this study abbreviations are used where appropriate for technical terms and titles to aid the readability of the document. These terms are all defined when first introduced within the main text but for ease of access for the reader, a glossary of terms is included here for reference.

### *Government Acts*

AMPA 1882 - Ancient Monuments Protection Act 1882

NPACA 1949 - National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949

CRoW Act 2000 - Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000

### *Designations*

AONB - Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

SSSI - Site of Special Scientific Interest

### *Geo-Locative Technology*

GPS – Global Positioning System

GNSS – Global Navigation Satellite System



# INTRODUCTION

The Mendip Hills are located in south-west England, south of the city of Bristol. Like many places in the UK, the region is subject to multiple layers of conservation legislation positioned for cultural and ecological preservation. The western side of the hill range is designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and operates as the geographical boundary for the practice elements of this study. Within the AONB there are additional designations aimed at preserving smaller areas for site specific reasons, either for cultural heritage<sup>1</sup> or for scientific and ecological purposes<sup>2</sup>. This division between conservation motives is reflected in the introductory text from the home page of the Mendip Hills AONB unit's website:

This is one of England's most special places - the limestone Mendip Hills with the lakes of the Chew Valley is a stunning landscape of steep slopes and undulating plateau punctuated by spectacular gorges and rocky outcrops. On the hilltops there are hundreds of ancient monuments, whilst on steeper slopes flower rich grasslands and wooded combs offer varied habitats for a wide variety of wildlife. In recognition of its special qualities the area has been designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> The designations aimed at cultural preservation include scheduled monuments, listed buildings, and a registered park.

<sup>2</sup> The scientific and ecological designations in the area include local and national nature reserves, sites of special scientific interest, special areas of conservation, special protection areas, and nitrate vulnerable zones.

<sup>3</sup> Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, 2018



The role of the organisation is to, 'provide a strategic, independent unit dedicated to the conservation and enhancement of the Mendip Hills AONB'<sup>4</sup>. They function as key advisors behind the implementation of local and national policy within the Mendip Hills. The language used illustrates the dominant perception of the AONB. The landscape is identified as 'stunning', with 'spectacular' gorges and 'hundreds of ancient monuments'. That these attributes are listed ahead of the 'habitats for a wide variety of wildlife' situates the primary concerns of the marketing of the AONB as based in the Picturesque<sup>5</sup>. The description is speaking to the aesthetic experience of visiting this place. In this practice-based study, I interrogate the aesthetically driven understanding of the Mendip Hills through making a series of landscape photographs that critically examine the visual consequences of conservation legislation aimed at preserving cultural heritage. I argue that the designations that frame this research are all based within an aesthetic appreciation of the land. In order to fully investigate this supposition, I adopt a survey model of photography that draws upon 'geo-locative' facilities.

## i 'Photographic Beauty' and 'Natural Beauty'

This study examines ways in which photography can offer insight into the visual consequences of the creation of a conservation landscape. It is argued that the specific conservation landscapes that form the basis of this study stem from a series of cultural decisions led by an aesthetic appreciation of the land. This

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<sup>4</sup> ibid

<sup>5</sup> When I use the term Picturesque here, I am tying the language used by the AONB Unit to the artistic movement that began in the 18<sup>th</sup> century that makes judgements of the positive traits of the environment based on aesthetic features (See Gilpin, 1782 and Price, 1796)

starts with the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty but is maintained within the smaller, site specific designations used to lead elements of the practice. This aesthetic judgement is tied up in ideas of statutory 'Natural Beauty'. As I will examine in Chapter 1, 'Natural Beauty' is a challenging concept which has little academic or regulatory consensus. In *Aesthetics and the Environment*, philosopher Allen Carlson argues that:

the natural environment itself only appears to have formal qualities when, in one way or another, a person imposes a frame upon it and thus formally composes the resultant view. And in such a case it is the framed view that has the qualities'<sup>6</sup>.

For Carlson, it is our positioning of the physical or conceptual frame on the natural environment that is the subject of aesthetic judgements. Carlson argues that the natural environment should instead be judged using a scientific model that rejects formal qualities<sup>7</sup>. Despite Carlson's rejection of the formal, his statement lends weight to my position that photography is an appropriate medium for examining conservation areas. As I will discuss, the conservation legislation at the centre of this research is tied up within debates surrounding visual relationships with the land (see Chapter 1). The motivations behind the conservation are, at least in part, formal. As such, the camera becomes a valuable tool that can be used to create a 'landscape' that emphasises formal qualities in the natural environment. Professor in Photographic Culture Liz Wells interrogates the pictorial framing of the land within the photograph in her 2011 book, *Land Matters*:

a rectilinear scene is abstracted and presented as if it represents the actual experience of looking at - or being within - an environment [...] The edges of the image constitute a 'slice'

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<sup>6</sup> Carlson, 2002, p.36

<sup>7</sup> Carlson, 1979, 1981, 1993 & 2002

of the environment as a 'landscape', using the geometry of perspective to determine focal emphasis (usually central)<sup>8</sup>.

The frame is the device that lends formal qualities to the natural environment, whether it is in terms of art, language, or map. This argument can be analysed through looking at one of my own photographs, 'Section 23, Dolebury Camp scheduled monument, Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. 2015' (see figure 1). For me, this photograph is one of the most successful in this study in terms of my creation of a 'landscape' that reflects my ideas surrounding 'Beauty' in photography. The photographer Robert Adams wrote that, 'if the proper goal of art is, as I now believe, Beauty, the Beauty that concerns me is that of form. Beauty is, in my view, a synonym for the coherence and structure underlying life'<sup>9</sup>. In my photography, the spatial and colour relationships across the frame signify this coherence and structure. The flat lighting in 'Section 23, Dolebury Camp scheduled monument, Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. 2015' allows the viewer of the photograph to see the graduation of greens across the frame, punctuated by the featureless sky and occasional brown leaves. The singular set of brown branches rising from the ground in the middle-right of the frame act as a focal point. The framing of the photograph makes viewers look at this section of trees and ferns from a slightly elevated position. If one walked here at the time I made the picture, the view would not be the same as the ferns reached just below head height. The trees to either side of the frame would continue the immersive feeling of being *within* this place. Instead, the camera allowed me to frame a specific section of the view. Careful placement of a step ladder and tripod allowed me to locate a vantage point where the final photograph reflects what I *wanted* to see at this position as

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<sup>8</sup> Wells, 2011, p.43

<sup>9</sup> Adams, 1996, p.24

much as what I *did* see. Unlike painting, I could only respond to what was in front of the lens, but this still gave me ample room to position the camera to create a composition that satisfied my own preconceptions of what 'Beauty' might look like within a photograph. Through the act of making the photograph, I am making a claim that this 'landscape' represents 'Natural Beauty'. But the final photograph is an abstracted slice of the natural environment created by my positioning of a frame over a small section of woodland. The final work is a representation of 'Photographic Beauty'. It is this photograph that has the formal qualities I associate with 'Beauty'.



Figure 1: Section 23, Dolebury Camp scheduled monument, Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, 2015.

Critically, this photograph and the others in this study are concerned with *my* sense of 'Beauty', both within photography and in relation to the land. In Adams' essay, 'Beauty in Photography', he identified specific photographs that, for him, represent the pinnacle of aesthetic achievement<sup>10</sup>. I look at his selection and, whilst some such as Moriyama's 'Stray Dog, 1971' and Stieglitz's 'Evening, New York, from the Shelton, 1931', are, to me, undeniably beautiful photographs, others, such as Ben Shahn's 'Talking Politics before Dinner at Wheat-harvest Time: Central Ohio, 1938' leave me cold. Shahn's is an interesting and informative picture, but I lack the social history of Adams growing up in America that would add the spark of vitality to the photograph needed for me to see it as an object of 'Beauty'. Perhaps if the original print was in front of me I would judge it differently than the reproduction in Adams' book. Similarly, whilst I am undoubtably influenced by Timothy O'Sullivan's photographs of the American West, Adams' selection of 'Soda Lake, Carson Desert, 1867' strikes me as a missed opportunity when compared with O'Sullivan's other works such as 'Comstock Mines, Virginia City, Nevada, 1868', made all the more urgent following Mark Klett's repeat photographs of the same scene in 1979 and 1998<sup>11</sup>. Neither Adams nor myself are necessarily wrong here in our differing identifications of 'Beauty'. Instead, the divergence illustrates the way in which 'Beauty' is subjective, the result of physical, social, and cultural influences that we may or may not be able to readily identify. As a result, this research has been undertaken with the acknowledgement that 'Beauty' (in whatever form or subject) is a challenging concept but the final practice is a reflection of my own

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<sup>10</sup> Adams, 1996, pp.37-48

<sup>11</sup> Klett et al, 2004, pp.96-99. Klett also 'rephotographed' Soda Lake in *Third View, Second Sights* (pp.88-91) but, for reasons I am unable to identify, the Comstock Mines photograph is the one that stays with me.

ideas and thoughts of how it can be represented within photographs, which in turn are the result of a myriad of external forces.

## ii Landscape

Landscape is defined in this thesis following the argument of geographers Denis Cosgrove and Stephen Daniels as:

a cultural image, a pictorial way of representing, structuring, or symbolising surroundings. This is not to say that landscapes are immaterial. They may be represented in a variety of materials and on many surfaces - in paint on canvas, in writing on paper, in earth, stone, water, and vegetation on the ground. A landscape park is more palpable but no more real, nor less imaginary, than a landscape painting or poem<sup>12</sup>.

This research stems from the position that the landscape created by the camera is as much a landscape as the landscape created by the conservation designation. Both create landscapes influenced by specific physical and conceptual vantage points. The landscape photograph, therefore, is used to critically comment on and investigate the visual consequences of the positioning of conservation legislation.

The photographic methodology employed draws on a rich history of landscape and survey photography. All the photographs produced as part of this research share a core pictorial model that centres on recording an experiential view either of or from pre-identified geographic positions. The pictorial strategy was kept consistent and used a moderately wide-angle lens (either a 28mm or a

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<sup>12</sup> Cosgrove and Daniels, 1988, p.1

35mm), a depth of field that allowed everything within the frame to be equally in focus, and a tripod-mounted camera position at or slightly above my eyeline and looking towards the horizon. This method was employed to reduce artifice as much as possible in the field. This is not to say that the work is about an absence of style. Instead, the pictures are about a cultural construction of landscape. For these photographs to be an accurate critique, they must have the 'illusion' of truth. I achieve this in the practice through acknowledging the trust still placed in documentary-style photography to act as a record. The final photographs are reflections of the land viewed through the cultural lenses of both myself and the viewer. In this regard, the final landscapes are multi-layered documents informed by cultural and social forces over which I have only partial influence.

### iii Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

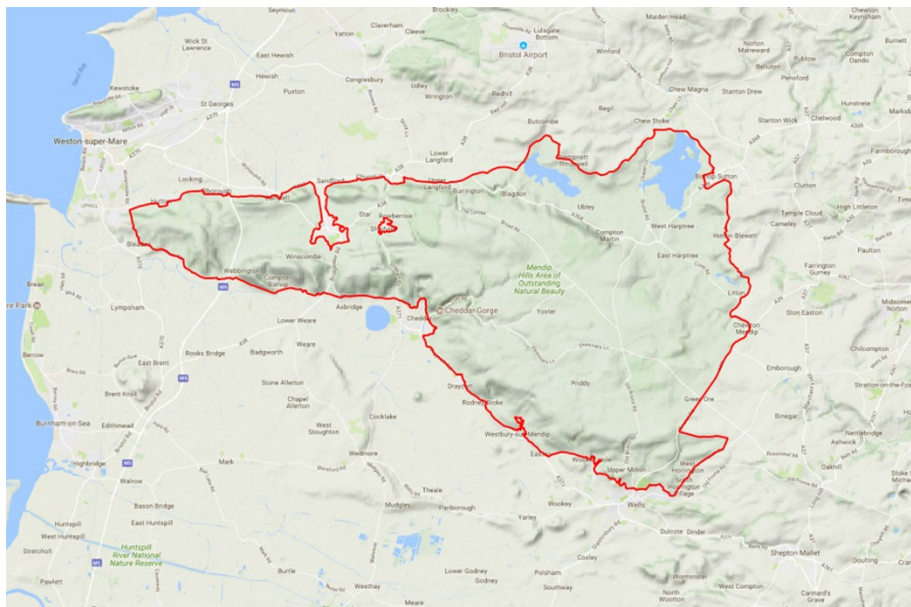


Figure 2: Source: QGIS 2.18. 2017. Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. 51°24'31.06"N 02°42'9.42"W. Google Physical and Mendip Hills AONB boundary data layers. Viewed 25<sup>th</sup> August 2017. Contains data © Natural England copyright. Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2017.

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty are currently legislated under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. This Act sets out a framework for the designation in the following terms:

Where it appears to Natural England that an area which is in England but not in a National Park is of such outstanding natural beauty that it is desirable that the provisions of this Part relating to areas designated under this section should apply to it, Natural England may, *for the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area*, by order designate the area for the purposes of this Part as an area of outstanding natural beauty<sup>13</sup>.

<sup>13</sup> Great Britain, 2000, Part IV, 82(1). Emphasis added. Section 82 (2) provides the same authority within Wales for the Countryside Council of Wales.



The Act makes no attempt to define 'Natural Beauty' but, as I will argue in Chapter 1, its wording makes clear the presence of an anthropocentric<sup>14</sup> drive behind the legislation. As such 'Natural Beauty' within a legislative framework is a cultural formation. Areas designated under the Act become conservation landscapes through Natural England's remit of, 'conserving and enhancing' 'Natural Beauty', which must therefore be something that can, at least in part, be constructed and maintained in line with the viewpoints of those responsible for its identification. This study is an interrogation of the visual consequences of the resulting cultural shaping of the land.

#### iv Scheduled Monuments

In addition to the AONB designation, this research examines a smaller, site-specific designation aimed at preserving historic monuments. The UK government has maintained a schedule of heritage assets, or monuments, since the passing into law of the Ancient Monuments Protection Act 1882. This Act recorded three separate lists of ancient monuments to which it applies, one each respectively for England & Wales, Scotland, and Ireland. The sites listed were almost exclusively prehistoric<sup>15</sup>. This legislation was updated and amended during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century<sup>16</sup> and marked the beginning of the UK government becoming actively involved in the preservation and formation of

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<sup>14</sup> Within this study I am drawing upon the term anthropocentric to identify that the legislation is specifically concerned with a human relationship with the land. In this context, anthropocentric suggests a human way of looking at the world that we are unable to see beyond. As such, the term encapsulates all of the many intellectual viewpoints that are part of the human experience, created through social and cultural influences that shape who we are both as individuals and within wider societies.

<sup>15</sup> The singular exception in the list for England and Wales being the early Medieval Danes Camp in Northamptonshire (Great Britain, 1882, p.7).

<sup>16</sup> The 1882 Act was amended in 1900, 1910, 1913 and 1931.

heritage on a domestic level. The early history of conservation legislation within the UK is examined in more detail in Appendix 1.



Figure 3: Section 8, World War Two bombing decoy complex on Black Down scheduled monument, Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. 2015.

The schedule of monuments is currently legislated through the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979, which allows the Secretary of State to use the legislation to preserve any monument that they believe to be of national importance<sup>17</sup>. Within this Act, monuments currently included in the schedule are defined as:

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<sup>17</sup> Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979, section 1(3)

(a) any building, structure or work whether above or below the surface of the land and any cave or excavation; (b) any site comprising the remains of any such building, structure or work or any cave or excavation; and (c) any site comprising, or comprising the remains of, any vehicle, vessel, aircraft or other movable structure or part thereof which neither constitutes nor forms part of any work which is a monument within paragraph(a) above<sup>18</sup>.

The scheduled monument designation allows for the preservation of places that are judged by those in positions of authority to reflect a sense of national history and identity. The legislation promotes the creation of cultural landscapes that reflect socially constructed positions in the same way as the AONB designation. Both are about physically and aesthetically preserving specific sections of the land. They create landscapes that can appear 'natural' to the casual visitor. This study used scheduled monuments as site-specific designations for interrogation in three of the four practice case studies in order to examine the concerns of this research within geographically compact conservation areas. The selected scheduled monuments were appropriate because, first, their geographic positioning aligned with the criteria I used for practice site selection (see p.37-38), and, second, they provided a consistency in the designations investigated in these three case studies - each was both within the AONB and contained a scheduled monument. Other designations, as outlined previously (see p.23), were present within the AONB and could offer the potential for future research.

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<sup>18</sup> Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979, Section 61(7)

## v Research Questions

This project follows a practice-based research methodology that makes use of a photographic survey model to answer the following research questions:

1. How can a critical photographic practice be used to interrogate the visual consequences of the conservation designations in place on the Mendip Hills?
2. What can photography show about the creation of this conservation landscape as a cultural act?
3. In what ways can geo-locative systems assist photographic strategies designed to fulfil these objectives?

## vi Geo-Locative Technologies

This thesis employed current mapping technology to guide the photographic practice. This was based around the use of QGIS, an open source Geographical Information System (GIS). This program allows users to view, edit and create maps on a computer in the studio and has enabled the photographic strategies employed throughout this thesis. A handheld GPS receiver<sup>19</sup> was used alongside QGIS to guide the identification of locations in the field<sup>20</sup>.

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<sup>19</sup> A GPS receiver is more correctly termed a Global Navigation Satellite System (GNSS) receiver. However, GPS (short for Global Positioning System, the American system) is the more commonly used term in the UK, and is the title adopted within this study. The receiver used in this study reads signals from both GPS and the Russian GLONASS networks of satellites.

<sup>20</sup> The current level of accuracy amongst consumer units in the UK utilising GPS and GLONASS satellites is between 5m and 10m in open areas on a clear day (Ordnance Survey, n.d.). The combination of the two systems allows access to more satellites, improving the chances of a signal in forested areas. More precision might be attainable once the European Galileo satellite navigation system is in full deployment.

Finally, in some cases that are identified in the thesis, a compass was used to determine the direction in which to face the camera lens. I have adopted the catch-all term of ‘geo-locative technologies’ throughout the thesis to collectively refer to these systems and tools.



Figure 4: East point looking west, A Roman Camp in Banwell Woods scheduled monument, Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. 2015.

In 2010, the UK government announced their policy of Open Data, part of which enabled the release of digital boundary data relating to conservation areas across the UK. These digital datasets include the AONB and scheduled monument information that led this study. Additionally, this research made use of non-governmental geo-locative information provided by the Mendip Cave Registry and Archive (MCRA)<sup>21</sup>. This formed the basis of the Sandford Hill case study (see Chapter 3 and Book 2). The increasing availability of geo-locative information has both enabled this project and presents exciting opportunities for future research.

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<sup>21</sup> The MCRA archive is accessible online (Mendip Cave Registry & Archive, 2014)

## vii Core focus

This practice-based study is an examination of the ways in which I can use my photography to interrogate the visual consequences of conservation legislation within the Mendip Hills. The thesis takes the form of five books, this first one containing my written analysis and books 2-5 the results of the practice. At appropriate points in this text I invite the reader to look at each of these books of practice. Examples of my works are included and analysed within the writing to help clarify points made within the project and for the purpose of critically evaluating the results of this study. The practice revolves around four distinct case studies that I produced at different sites within the Mendip Hills AONB. I selected these sites based on a combination of my own familiarity with each place and their identification and categorisation within the 1978 *Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty District Plan: Report of Survey*<sup>22</sup>. This document identifies sites that the Somerset County Planning Officer judged appropriate for inclusion within the AONB designation<sup>23</sup>. The planning officer divided places across the Mendip Hills into two lists, 'areas of significant natural beauty' and 'areas of lesser, but still considerable, scenic value'<sup>24</sup>. Two places from each category were selected for this research. Black Down (see Chapter 6 and Book 4) and Dolebury Warren (see Chapter 7 and Book 5) were categorised as 'areas of significant natural beauty'. Sandford Hill (see Chapter 3 and Book 2) and Banwell Wood (see Chapter 5 and Book 3) were both

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<sup>22</sup> The Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty District Plan: Report of Survey was published in 1978 by Avon and Somerset County Councils and reviews the survey process that was followed in officially designating a section of the Mendip Hills an AONB. As such it operates as the official record of the creation of the Mendip Hills AONB.

<sup>23</sup> Avon & Somerset County Councils, 1978, pp.8-9

<sup>24</sup> *ibid*, pp.7-8



categorised as 'areas of lesser, but still considerable, scenic value'.. Three of the sites, Banwell Wood, Black Down, and Dolebury Warren are also subject to scheduled monument designations. The practice from each site explored the potential and limitations of different methodological approaches to examine the visual consequences of conservation legislation.



Figure 5: Coffee Pot, ST 42757 59148, Length: 0m, Depth: 0m. August 2015.

Each case study relied on mapped information to lead the practice. At Sandford, I visited and photographed locations that corresponded with co-ordinates of sites of interest to cavers provided by the MCRA. At Banwell Wood, Black Down and Dolebury Warren I designed site-specific strategies based on the positioning of the boundaries of scheduled monuments. When these pieces of

archive information were overlaid onto a map they made statements about the claims of cultural importance of different sections of the land. Cartographers Denis Wood and John Fels argue:

To claim that this is there is to make a powerful claim precisely because it implies the ability to perform an existence test: you can go there and check it out. Having done so in the past, you know the outcome (besides, who would fake such a challenge?)<sup>25</sup>.

This research is about testing the claims made by the archive information. The case studies document my performance of a series of these ‘existence tests’ that draw upon the experiential faculties of the photograph. The practice interrogates the ways in which conservation legislation constructs a way of seeing the Mendip Hills. Key to this strategy are the relationships between conservation legislation and the map, and the map and the photograph. It is argued that the boundary line representing the area of a conservation designation on a map creates a landscape that can be reflected on through the rectilinear ‘slice’ that is the landscape created by the camera. Maps and photographs are not the same, but both make powerful claims about what is valued as a landscape. This study uses a methodology that embraces the power of the photograph to confront and challenge the power of the map in signifying how the land is culturally shaped within the Mendip Hills AONB.

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<sup>25</sup> Wood and Fels, 2008, p. xvi



## viii Thesis Overview

The written element of the thesis is divided into chapters that locate and expand the critical concerns of the practice. It is important to note that the practice case studies were all worked on during the same time period, but there was a general theme of working through the methodological concerns at consecutive sites in the same order as that of the final books. This has resulted in there being some overlap between the concerns and practice responses at each site. The division of chapters in this text is designed to unpick this process.

In Chapter 1, I expand on the contextual basis of the study through an analysis of the term 'Natural Beauty' as used in official legislation in order to locate the principal motivations behind the 'Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty' designation. I argue that 'Natural Beauty' is a cultural drive that informs and shapes an approach to land conservation that is based on perceived aesthetic value.

This guided me to examine key bodies of photographic work in Chapter 2 that interrogate what I refer to as 'conservation landscapes' - those places subject to official legislation, such as the UK Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, that directs people to value land in an idealised way. I critically review works by three artists, or in one case a group of artists. This analysis begins with the practice of Fay Godwin, who I argue worked from the position of 'photographer as campaigner' through an interrogation of the context in which her photographs were distributed. Following this I examine the work of Keith Arnatt, focusing on

his two series 'A.O.N.B., 1982-85' and 'The Forest, 1986'. I argue that Arnatt used his photographs to comment on the act of conservation from the perspective of a conceptual artist. This chapter concludes with my interrogation of the repeat photography method employed by Mark Klett and Byron Wolfe in *Yosemite in Time* (2005). I identify Klett's history of involvement with repeat photography to locate the work as a development in the strategy to permit comment on the similarities in viewpoints selected by different photographers, highlighting the links between their encounters with the land and attempts to photograph it. In addition, the repeat photography projects alerted me to the value of an archive in leading photography and this guided my practice at the first case study site, Sandford Hill.



Figure 6: Pearl Mine, ST 4283 5917, Length: 215m, Depth: 31m. November 2015

In Chapter 3, I introduce and critically examine the research practice from the first case study, Sandford Hill (see Book 2). At this site I produced a series of photographs of abandoned mine workings recorded by cavers at one hill within the Mendip Hills AONB, in order to investigate how I could make pictures about 'Natural Beauty' at post-industrial sites. The practice allowed me to examine how 'Natural Beauty' is a social construct - the pictures I made were my personal interpretations of 'Natural Beauty' that may, or may not, conform to another person's vision. Additionally, I situate these pictures as a key transition point in my practice where I first adopt the use of a geographical archive and GPS to lead to where I make photographs.

My utilisation of geo-locative technologies at Sandford Hill guided this study in a slightly different direction. In acknowledgement of this, in Chapter 4 I present an additional review of existing practice. This analysis is divided into two parts. In the first, I examine works in which photographic artists use the map as the conceptual framework to link their practice in order to understand how other artists have challenged and co-opted the authority of the map. These include Joe Deal's *West and West: Reimagining the Great Plains* (2009); Kate Mellor's *The Island* (1995); and Mark Power's *The Shipping Forecast* (1996) and *26 Different Endings* (2007). In the second, I interrogate practices led by GPS, including Bruce Myren's *The Fortieth Parallel* (1998-2012) and Christiana Caro's *10 Mile Points* (2001-02), to further investigate questions regarding geographic accuracy that arose both in the first part of this chapter and in my own practice at Sandford Hill. My examination of these works centres on how

the use of geo-locative processes by photographers makes a bold claim that *this* is the view of or from *that* place, and viewers can go there and confirm. The ease of verification of such claims through 21<sup>st</sup> century systems places an additional call for attention to detail on artists who wish to harness or subvert this power. I conclude that the method of presentation of such works is vital to maintain the artist's desired connection between the map and the pictorial strategy.



Figure 7: South point looking north, A Roman Camp in Banwell Woods scheduled monument, Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. 2015.

In Chapter 5, I interrogate the practice from the second case study, Banwell Wood (see Book 3). These pictures are a direct response to what I learned reviewing the works in Chapter 4. The practice comprises of a series of panoramic triptych photographs made at precise points around the boundaries of two scheduled monuments. In my analysis, I trace the development of the site-specific pictorial strategy from one based in the Picturesque to the final map-led, conformist, strategy reproduced in the book. This process was invaluable in attempting to answer questions regarding geographic precision that arose in Chapters 3 and 4. My examination of the work concludes that, through my use of a panoramic triptych that creates a distorted representation



of the land, I am referencing how a designation can create a landscape on a map that is a distortion of how the land might appear.



Figure 8: Section 47, World War Two bombing decoy complex on Black Down scheduled monument, Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. 2015.

In Chapter 6, I examine the practice made at the third case study site, Black Down (see Book 4). At this site I drew a map grid of the site influenced by both the boundary line and the physical attributes of a scheduled monument. I then undertook a series of field trips during which I made photographs in each section using a strict pictorial strategy in an attempt to create a landscape that contained only the terrain within the designation. This allowed me to visually construct a landscape based predominantly on information relating to the

scheduled monument, both confronting the existence of the designation and challenging the local geographical imagination of the site as a place visited for its far-reaching views. These pictures and my resulting analysis are based on my restriction of the 'scenic view', identified in Chapter 1 as crucial in an understanding of 'Natural Beauty' (see p.57).



Figure 9: Section 7, Dolebury Camp scheduled monument, Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. 2015.

In Chapter 7 I introduce and analyse the practice from Dolebury Warren, the fourth and final case study in this research (see Book 5). In my analysis I trace my early tests at the site before examining my final strategy in detail. This is based on a custom map I designed linking the scheduled monument boundary

with the commonly recognised Ordnance Survey National Grid. I learnt that this method offers a scalable solution that can be used to assess the visual consequences of the designation through encouraging viewers to identify which sections of the land are inside or outside of a designation. As such, it has potential for further use at additional sites by both other artists and myself in the future.

Finally, in Chapter 8 I lay out the overall conclusions for this study. I found that photography alone struggles to interrogate the visual consequences of conservation legislation because it does not show the causes behind them. However, as I shall demonstrate, taken as part of a wider practice that involves maps and text, photography can offer valuable insight. In addition, teamed with recently introduced geo-locative methodologies, such an approach offers exciting possibilities for further development in future research.

## LOCATING 'NATURAL BEAUTY'

### 1.1 Introduction

This chapter sets out the conceptual basis for the study. The Mendip Hills are designated as an 'Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty', but what does this title mean and what can photography say about it? The central thread of this research seeks to answer the latter half of this question. First, however, it is important to locate what is meant by 'Natural Beauty', both in terms of the legislation and in the context of a 21<sup>st</sup> century understanding of landscape<sup>26</sup>.

'Natural Beauty', it can be argued, comes out of a historic way of thinking about our relationship with the land. This study is a critical and visual investigation into how this way of thinking shapes an understanding of an 'Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty' in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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<sup>26</sup> I am using the term landscape rather than land here to include all the cultural and social constructions that form human perceptions of the land (see p.29)



## 1.2 The Conservation Landscape as a Cultural Construct

‘Natural Beauty’ as a concept within official conservation policy grew out of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The term was first used in a legislative capacity in the UK in the National Trust Act 1907<sup>27</sup> and later given full statutory support in the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 (NPACA 1949). The 1949 Act set out the remit of a National Parks Commission<sup>28</sup> which included the authority to designate places as an ‘Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty’ (AONB):

The Commission may, by order made as respects any area in England and Wales, not being in a National Park, which appear to them to be of such outstanding natural beauty that it is desirable that the provisions of this Act relating to such areas should apply thereto, designate the area for the purposes of this Act as an area of outstanding natural beauty<sup>29</sup>.

The Act makes no further effort to define who the commission should be or the criteria on which they should base their use of the AONB designation. The decision is expected to be made by the few for the many. The Mendip Hills AONB was first proposed jointly by The Mendip Society and The Somerset Trust for Nature Conservation, two organisations that were formed with the goal of preserving specific visions of the ‘countryside’ centred around human relationships with nature<sup>30</sup>. Natural England, the current incarnation of the

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<sup>27</sup> The 1907 National Trust Act confirmed the transformation of the ‘National Trust for Places of Historic Interest and Natural Beauty’, a non-governmental association, into the National Trust as it is known today.

<sup>28</sup> The National Parks Commission was later replaced by the Countryside Commission for England and Wales (1968), and then the Countryside Commission for England (1991) and the Countryside Council for Wales (1991) before becoming known as the Countryside Commission. In 1999 the Countryside Commission merged with the Rural Development Commission to form the Countryside Agency. This organisation is currently known as Natural England.

<sup>29</sup> National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, Section 87(1)

<sup>30</sup> The Mendip Society sets out its remit as ‘conserving and enhancing the Mendip Hills and the surrounding area, for everyone to enjoy’ (The Mendip Society, 2017). The Somerset Wildlife Trust, formerly The Somerset Trust for Nature Conservation, was formed in 1964 by members

original National Parks Commission, is a non-departmental government body tasked with ensuring, 'that the natural environment is conserved, enhanced and managed for the benefit of present and future generations, thereby contributing to sustainable development'. Natural England specify five distinct strategic objectives stemming from this remit:

- Promoting nature conservation and protecting biodiversity;
- Conserving and enhancing the landscape;
- Securing the provision and improvement of facilities for the study, understanding and enjoyment of the natural environment;
- Promoting access to the 'countryside' and open spaces and encouraging open-air recreation;
- Contributing in other ways to social and economic well-being through management of the natural environment<sup>31</sup>.

These outcomes are anthropocentric by design - they are about preserving and conserving a human control over Nature. The designation of an AONB creates a conservation landscape. These landscapes are not neutral. They transform how places are understood based on the values of those who make the legislation. Cosgrove argues that, 'landscape denotes the external world mediated through subjective human experience in a way that neither region nor area immediately suggest'<sup>32</sup>. An AONB may be titled as an 'area' but it creates a specific type of landscape that fosters a set of expectations about what it will look like. It is not the land, the external world, that makes the claim of Beauty, but the subjective human experience. An AONB is a cultural landscape. In their

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of the public who believed there to be a 'desperate need to take action to secure the future of wildlife' within Somerset (Somerset Wildlife Trust, 2017).

<sup>31</sup> Natural England, 2012, p.6

<sup>32</sup> Cosgrove, 1998, p.13

1994 paper *Landscapes: The Social Construction of Nature and the Environment*, sociologists Thomas Greider and Lorraine Garkovich offered a framework for interpreting the landscape as a cultural construct. Their central argument was that: 'our understanding of nature and of human relationships with the environment are really cultural expressions used to define who we were, who we are, and who we hope to be at this place and in this space'<sup>33</sup>. Within the context of an AONB, the designation reflects a wider cultural view that represents the conflicting and competing concerns of modern society as laid out in Natural England's strategic outcomes.

Within cultural geography, much has been written about this geographical perception, most notably regarding the colonial and post-colonial gaze<sup>34</sup>. In 1961, historian and geographer David Lowenthal identified that we both see and communicate based on an anthropocentric point of view<sup>35</sup>, but that this view is inconsistent between different social and cultural groups<sup>36</sup>. Cultural critic Edward Said politicised these geographical perceptions in his critique of the Western gaze on the Orient in his 1978 book *Orientalism*. Said used 'imaginative geographies' as a title for the perception of space and time and for the myths and histories created through certain titles, images and texts<sup>37</sup>. Whilst Halford Mackinder Professor of Geography at the University of Oxford, David Harvey argued for an understanding of spatial and temporal geography that embraces all aspects of the cultural, social, and physical forces that may be

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<sup>33</sup> Greider and Garkovich, 1994, p.2

<sup>34</sup> Lowenthal, 1961; Harvey, 1990; Gregory, 1995a; Gregory, 1995b; Driver, 1999 and Harley, 2001

<sup>35</sup> Lowenthal, 1961, p.246

<sup>36</sup> *ibid*, p.253

<sup>37</sup> Said, 1979, p.55

invisible but still influence how a geographer reads space and time. He termed this understanding 'the geographical imagination'<sup>38</sup>. A principle tool in the construction of these imaginative geographies is the map. Geographer John Brian Harley focused on the power of the map in reinforcing imperial control, arguing that:

Maps are never value-free images; except in the narrowest Euclidean sense they are not in themselves either true or false. Both in the selectivity of their content and in their signs and styles of representation maps are a way of conceiving, articulating, and structuring the human world which is biased towards, promoted by, and exerts influence upon particular sets of social relations<sup>39</sup>.

In their 2003 book, *Picturing Place*, photographic historian Joan Schwartz and historical and cultural geographer James Ryan expanded upon earlier interrogations of what they term the geographical imagination, defining it as:

The mechanism by which people come to know the world and situate themselves in space and time. It consists, in essence, of a chain of practices and processes by which geographical information is gathered, geographical facts are ordered and imaginative geographies are constructed. Photography is one of those practices<sup>40</sup>.

These arguments reflect the position that the geographical imagination is a cultural and social construct, shaped through representations of space and time in different media. Photography is one such media and is central to the methodology I employ in this thesis.

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<sup>38</sup> Harvey, 1990

<sup>39</sup> Harley, 2001, p.53

<sup>40</sup> Schwartz and Ryan, 2003, p.6

Conservation motivations have been widely discussed in texts on conservation and the natural environment<sup>41</sup>. In his 1981 book, *Countryside Conservation*, Professor Emeritus of Countryside Management Bryn Green argued that most calls for conservation are more about human utility of the land rather than a moral obligation towards stewardship of the 'countryside'. Green argued against the traditional dividing of conservation positions between those calling for aesthetic, scientific or historic preservation and those calling for greater access and amenity of the 'countryside'. Instead, Green suggested that the binary should be between ethical and utilitarian considerations. Within this division, Green argued that most calls for nature conservation, 'are anthropocentric and utilitarian in the sense that they are concerned with maintaining something because it is of service to man'<sup>42</sup>. Green divided these calls into five individual categories of conservation motivation:

1. Ethical values suggesting humans have some moral obligation towards stewardship of the countryside environment;
2. Aesthetic values relating to our enjoyment of the land, wildlife and amenity of the countryside;
3. Cultural and scientific desires linked to the intellectual and material development of society;
4. Material benefits relating aspects of the countryside that can be exploited for human consumption;
5. A holistic idea of ecological balance between different living organisms<sup>43</sup>.

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<sup>41</sup> Green, 1981; Adams, 2004

<sup>42</sup> Green, 1981, p.8

<sup>43</sup> *ibid*, pp.8-25

Each of these motivations except the suggestion of our 'moral obligation for stewardship of the countryside' are utilitarian in nature - they are about conserving our place and relationship with the land rather than conserving it for its own sake. Of the five categories, Green suggested that aesthetic and moral arguments are the most compelling when forming a modern conservationist philosophy, 'because they seem to be the real motivation of most conservationists and because the other arguments, although valid, are essentially rationalisations of them'<sup>44</sup>. Green was writing nearly 40 years ago but the concerns he voices are as valid today as they were in 1981.

### 1.3 Legislating 'Natural Beauty'

In the context of the designation of an AONB, landscapes are culturally constructed based on perceptions of 'Natural Beauty'. This term links together two areas of critical concern, 'Nature' and 'Beauty', that I examine within the following sections. Crucially, the legislation itself makes no attempt at a definition. Raymond Williams argued that there are three meanings to Nature, '(i) the essential quality and character of something; (ii) the inherent force which directs either the world or human beings or both; (iii) the material world itself, taken as including or not including human beings'<sup>45</sup>. The AONB designation reflects all three of these meanings, but most significantly the latter. Firstly, it is concerned primarily with the visual character of a place; secondly, the labelling of Beauty in these places as Natural implies a belief in a universal grand design; and thirdly it is directly concerned with the aesthetics of the material world.

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<sup>44</sup> *ibid*, 1981, p.25

<sup>45</sup> Williams, 2014, p.217

Williams argued that this third meaning came to the fore during the 18<sup>th</sup> century, since which time:

Nature has meant the 'countryside', the 'unspoiled places', plants and creatures other than man. The use is especially current in contrasts between town and country: nature is what man has not made, though if he made it long enough ago - a hedgerow or a desert - it will usually be included as natural<sup>46</sup>.

This is important because those areas identified as AONBs in England and Wales are inhabited. They are not synonymous with wildness or wilderness. The Nature the designation seeks to preserve is both historical and aesthetic. The designation is about both creating and preserving a cultural landscape.

AONBs are not simply about Nature. On top of this there is placed a qualifier that they must also reflect an idea of Beauty, that I take to be concerned with form (see section 1.4). A 1978 study commissioned on the Kent Downs AONB compared the paintings of Samuel Palmer with the landscape of the Darent Valley, in north west Kent, arguing that the, 'link with painting is not without significance in an explanation of the Kent Downs' beauty because of the way in which the history of the visual arts has had such a profound effect on the way in which we see things'<sup>47</sup>. The report draws parallels between painting, 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century landscape parks and the landscape of the Kent Downs, shaped by farmers, ramblers, botanists, and residents. It highlights the way in which painters' frame and isolate landscapes from their immediate surroundings. Rather than illustrate this point with paintings the report reproduces a series of photographs (figure 10).

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<sup>46</sup> *ibid*, pp.221-222

<sup>47</sup> Land Use Consultants, 1984, p.18

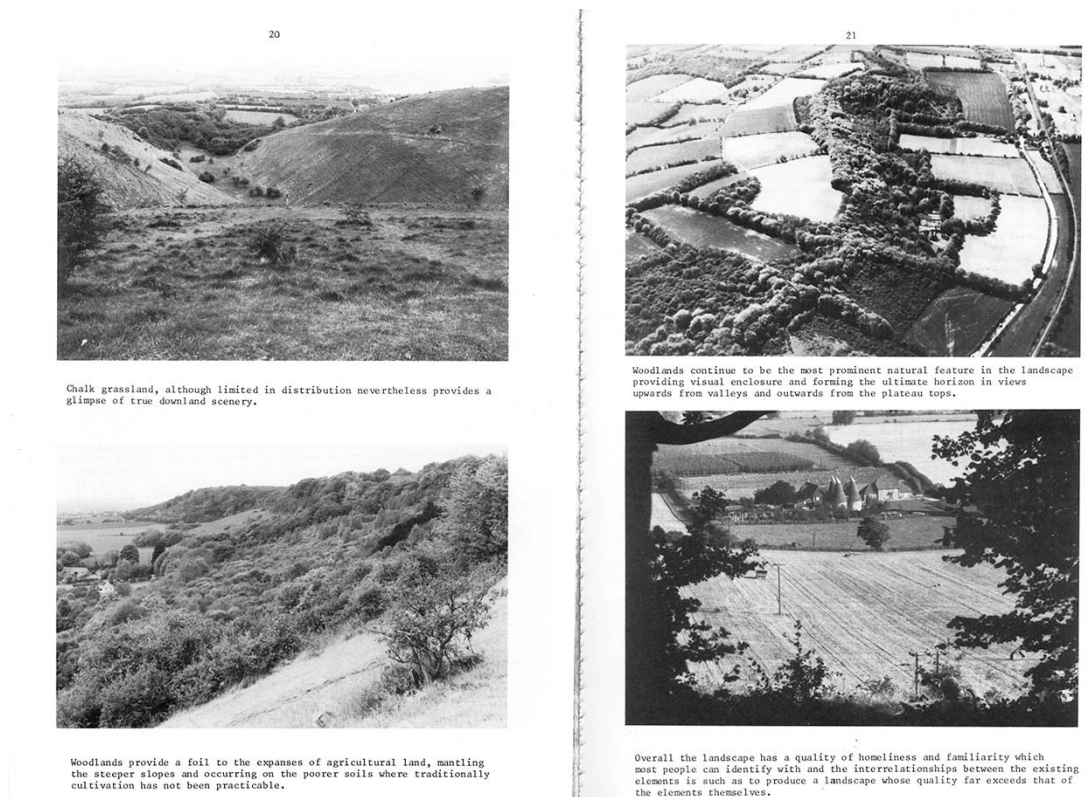


Figure 10: Double page spread showing photographs used in support of the Kent Downs AONB. Source: Land Use Consultants, 1984, pp.20-21

The boundaries of the frame are equally vital in an analysis of how photography operates. At its most basic, photographs are records of what was in front of the camera at the time of exposure. Painters can reorganise objects within the frame but photographers, leaving aside digital manipulation, are limited by what can be seen from their vantage point with the field of view offered by their lens choice. In both media, the frame is the device by which landscapes are created. But neither a photograph nor a painting is synonymous with land. They are material objects that reflect what Victor Burgin calls an ideology of landscape<sup>48</sup>. The AONB designation reflects an anthropocentric ideology of 'Natural Beauty'.

<sup>48</sup> Burgin, 1982, pp.45-47



This ideology is at its core aesthetic and this research is about testing different methods in which I can use photography to expose and confront it.

In 2004 the Countryside Council for Wales commissioned landscape ecologists Paul Selman and Carys Swanwick to research and produce a statement on the full scope of 'Natural Beauty'<sup>49</sup>. When they published their results in 2010, they proposed that:

Natural Beauty relates, first and foremost, to unspoiled rural areas, relatively free from the effects of urbanisation and industrialisation. It does not only apply to landscape where nature may appear to dominate but includes rural landscapes which have been shaped by human activities, including, for example, farmland, fields and field boundaries, designed parkland, small settlements, larger villages and small towns, provided that they are integral to, and in keeping with, the character of the 'landscape'<sup>50</sup>.

This definition relies on an assessment of the 'character' of the landscape.

Selman and Swanwick argue that 'character', in this context, is concerned with the uniqueness and special qualities of a specific place, that I interpret as a 'sense of place'. This is then combined with an assessment of Beauty, which in this context is a judgement of landscape quality, to construct 'Natural Beauty'.

The proposal offered by Selman and Swanwick is specifically about an aesthetic understanding of the land. They interviewed a series of stakeholders to try to identify a broad consensus for 'Natural Beauty'. Of eight areas identified as 'criteria that can be taken into account in defining landscape value/natural beauty', seven are aesthetic or cultural factors and only one, listed at the end, includes reference to scientific conservation alongside archaeological, historical

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<sup>49</sup> Selman and Swanwick, 2010, p.3

<sup>50</sup> *ibid*, p.23

and cultural interest<sup>51</sup>. Their ultimate definition does not reflect the scientific argument for conservation, but the aesthetic argument. Their description of the farmland, fields, hedgerows, villages and parks focuses on the visual. Within this definition of 'Natural Beauty', conservation is about protecting the land so that it conforms to expectations of the 'scenic view'.

The single attempt to bring clarity to the definition of 'Natural Beauty' within legislation supports Selman and Swanwick's position. The Natural Environments and Rural Communities Act 2006 included the following:

The fact that an area in England or Wales consists of or includes -

(a) land used for agriculture or woodlands,

(b) land used as a park, or

(c) any other area whose flora, fauna or physiographical features are partly the product of human intervention in the landscape,

does not prevent it from being treated, for the purposes of any enactment (whenever passed), as being an area of natural beauty (or of outstanding natural beauty)<sup>52</sup>.

This addition positions an AONB as a cultural landscape that may include signs of human habitation, so long as they are judged to be within the 'character' of the landscape. The Act is specific in the types of modifications it permits: agriculture, woodland, parks, flora, and fauna - all things we might expect to find in a 'scenic view'.

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<sup>51</sup> *ibid*, p.21

<sup>52</sup> Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, Section 99

## 1.4 Beauty and the Land

In his 1757 book, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, Edmund Burke divided the aesthetic into the Beautiful, or that which inspired love<sup>53</sup>, and the Sublime, or that which inspired fear and awe. In 1764, Kant published his *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime*<sup>54</sup>. Kant defined the sublime as that which inspires awe and beauty, as that which charms us; and saw the sublime in tall mountains and majestic oaks with the beautiful in flowers and meadows; the sublime in night and the beautiful in day; the sublime in man's darkness with the beautiful in gaiety; the sublime as great whereas the beautiful could be small; the sublime as simple, the beautiful as multiple and finally that the sublime was noble and righteous whereas the beautiful was good-hearted and compassionate. Burke and Kant were writing about a wide experience of aesthetic appreciation that included, but was not confined to, landscape. Their rigid categories, and the mindset they encouraged in readers who might follow them, are largely seen as outdated in contrast to a more recent understanding of aesthetics. Their contributions are included here because they laid the foundations for further thinking that helped develop an approach to conservation that operates through an idea of 'Natural Beauty'.

In 1782, William Gilpin proposed his theory of the Picturesque in *Observations on the River Wye*, which laid out a third way of looking at aesthetics. Gilpin argued that the landscape should be assessed using a method of comparison

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<sup>53</sup> Burke, 1990, p.39

<sup>54</sup> Kant, 1960, pp.46-49, 60, 78, 93, 97

to works of art. The landscape was judged as if it were a picture<sup>55</sup>. This approach to understanding the land can be seen in the NPACA 1949, where the newly created National Parks Commission had the remit to identify any landscapes, 'which *appear* to them to be of such outstanding natural beauty that it is desirable that the provisions of this Act relating to such areas should apply'<sup>56</sup>. The implication is that it is the 'scenic view' that is of central importance, in so much as it supports and maintains imaginative geographies developed from looking at landscape pictures.

## 1.5 Environmental Aesthetics

The philosophical field of environmental aesthetics arose in the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in part due to the growing environmental movement. Prior to this, analysis of the aesthetics of natural environments was generally incorporated within discussions of the aesthetic characteristics of art. In 1966, Professor of Philosophy Ronald Hepburn wrote a paper that set out the argument for the separation of art and nature within aesthetic discourse. Hepburn argued that art objects, usually but not always set within frames or on pedestals, were 'set apart from their environment', whereas natural objects were 'frameless'<sup>57</sup>. Hepburn's paper sparked a new interest in the field now known as environmental aesthetics which accordingly has led to a range of opinions on the appropriate methods for the aesthetic appreciation of nature, or, as it is referenced in statutory legislation, 'Natural Beauty'. The overall discussions can

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<sup>55</sup> Gilpin, 2005, p.17

<sup>56</sup> National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 - my emphasis

<sup>57</sup> Hepburn, 1966, p.290

broadly be divided into two camps. First, there are those who argue that cognitive views are the correct mode of appreciation. These include the position that nature must be appreciated 'on its own terms'<sup>58</sup>. Within this area of debate, Carlson has been the dominant voice since the 1970s, publishing an array of books and journal articles proposing a 'natural environment model' that holds that the aesthetic appreciation of nature requires knowledge of natural history - geology, biology and ecology<sup>59</sup>. This model is pursued and adapted by a range of other theorists who defend the value of the natural sciences ahead of other considerations<sup>60</sup>. Alongside these theories of scientific cognitivism, there are positions that give weight to other cognitive information - cultural and historical traditions, regional narrative and folklore alongside scientific knowledge<sup>61</sup>. Finally, there is at least one quasi-cognitive approach that supports the appreciation of nature as nature but rejects the idea that scientific knowledge can guide observers in the same manner as a knowledge of art history can inform opinions on works of art<sup>62</sup>.

Second, there is a field of thought that calls for something other than a cognitive component to lead aesthetic appreciation. The most important of these theories is that of the 'aesthetics of engagement', which draws on a phenomenological and analytical approach to aesthetics. Set out by philosopher Arnold Berleant, this position rejects traditional binaries between subject and object, instead calling for observers to immerse themselves within natural environments<sup>63</sup>.

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<sup>58</sup> Saito, 1998

<sup>59</sup> Carlson, 1979, 1981, 1993 & 2002

<sup>60</sup> Rolston, 1995; Eaton 1998, Matthews, 2002; and Parsons, 2002

<sup>61</sup> Sepänmaa, 1993; Saito, 1998; & Heyd, 2001

<sup>62</sup> Budd, 2002

<sup>63</sup> Berleant, 1985, 1988, 1992 & 2013.

Other non-cognitive positions include: the 'arousal model' in which observers simply have to embrace nature and be emotionally aroused by it with no other knowledge<sup>64</sup>; the 'mystery model' that positions nature as so apart from any possible human experience that it is essentially unknowable, and therefore any appreciation of nature incorporates a sense of being separate from nature rather than within it<sup>65</sup>; and finally an 'imaginary model' that argues that aspects of the imagination, when guided by the object of appreciation, bring together several features thought to be relevant to nature appreciation<sup>66</sup>.

What these competing theories point to is that the aesthetic appreciation of nature, or a judgement of 'Natural Beauty', is a challenging and unresolved, potentially unresolvable, concept. Each of these theories highlights the concerns of their respective authors. As such, I believe Natural Beauty to be a socially constructed experience in which individuals' desires are strongly influenced by a lifetime of knowledge and experience. A fuller theory, which is beyond the scope of this research, must therefore allow for the cultural and social experiences of individuals.

## 1.6 Conclusion

'Natural Beauty' is a social and cultural construct. An area of land designated as an AONB becomes a cultural image. This designation is both spatial and temporal - it is used to preserve a sense of place at a particular time. The

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<sup>64</sup> Carroll, 1993

<sup>65</sup> Godlovitch, 1994

<sup>66</sup> Brady, 1998 & 2003

concept of 'Natural Beauty' draws upon two broader concepts - Nature, primarily in a physical sense, and Beauty, as a judgement of the form of a place as a 'scenic view'. 'Natural Beauty' is about an anthropogenic relationship to the land. As used within the legislation, it is about preserving a specific relationship with the land based upon the imaginative geographies of key stakeholders.

In the next chapter, I examine work by photographers who have responded, embraced, or challenged the concept of 'Natural Beauty' through their photographs. This analysis leads into the first case study where I use my own photography to examine the ways in which the label of 'Natural Beauty' influences how I photograph an AONB, and in what ways I can use my practice to question how the designation fosters physical landscape change through shifting social perceptions of place.

## PHOTOGRAPHING CONSERVATION LANDSCAPES

### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the practice of three photographers, or group of photographers as is the case in one review, who approached conservation places in different ways. In section 2.2.1, I examine the work of British photographer Fay Godwin, who I position as a key figure within this review because of her links within the wider conservation movement of the 1990s. Godwin combined her interest in photography with her interest in walking. My analysis interrogates the development of Godwin's photography and its use within the range of books she authored or collaborated on. These books were published over the course of a photographic career in which Godwin became increasingly politically active, campaigning for an end to restrictive land access policies that continued despite the NPACA 1949. My investigation positions Godwin's practice as voicing the same concerns as those of the access lobby, and as such a link between critical photographic practice and the conservationist concerns around 'Natural Beauty' (see Chapter 1). Godwin's approach is contrasted against the conceptual artist and photographer Keith Arnatt in section 2.2.2. In 'A.O.N.B., 1982-85', Arnatt examined the 'area of outstanding natural beauty' around his home in the Wye Valley. Unlike Godwin,



Arnatt's position was to highlight the absurdity of an official directive telling citizens where they should look to experience 'Natural Beauty', whilst also responding to the work of other artists. The review in this section examines the motivations behind Arnatt's work and how they contrast with those of Godwin. Arnatt's work is positioned as the work of an artist responding to concepts explored by previous artists. Following this, in section 2.2.3, I evaluate the repeat photography method employed by Mark Klett and others across three specific projects - the original *Rephotographic Survey Project (1985)*, the revisit to the project in *Third View, Second Sights (2004)* and finally a site-specific use of repeat photography by Klett and Byron Wolfe working with writer Rebecca Solnit in *Yosemite in Time (2005)*. In this project, Klett and Wolfe used repeat photography to examine the representation of a conservation landscape created by a National Park.

## 2.2 Photographers and the Conservation Landscape

### 2.2.1 Fay Godwin



Figure 11: Duke of Westminster's Estate. © Fay Godwin 1989

Photographs made by Fay Godwin between the 1970s and the 1990s reveal a specific understanding of the British countryside in the period leading up to the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 that introduced a 'right to roam' in England and Wales<sup>67</sup>. During the 1970s and 1980s, Godwin had established herself as an influential figure within British landscape photography before going on to serve as the President of the Ramblers' Association (RA) from 1987 to 1990. This coincided with the RA's 'Forbidden Britain' Project, in which they

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<sup>67</sup> The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 is the current legislation that provides the legal framework for National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. This was also the first legislation that actively opened access to large areas of high country for the public.

actively researched areas where the public were prevented from 'reasonable access to the countryside'<sup>68</sup>. There was an identifiable link between this relationship and Godwin's 1990 book, *Our Forbidden Land*. The book operates as a record of the position of the president of a powerful lobbying group through the 1980s and 1990s, a time when social attitudes towards the environment were shifting. Land and property law academic, Ben Mayfield, argues that rather than being the result of the calls from the access lobby or a compromise between conflicting interests, the enabling of a 'right to roam' in law was the direct result of this emerging political consensus. This consensus recognised, 'the importance of the countryside and [...] brought environmental, wildlife and conservation issues to the forefront of political debate'<sup>69</sup>. Godwin and the RA did not bring about the change themselves, instead they were responding to, embracing, and adding to the same broader societal and political forces that enabled the change in legislation. Godwin's photography fits into a wider library of material that influenced imaginative geographies of the British countryside. This literature may have helped to enable the change in political consensus but there is no concrete data to support that hypothesis at this time. I view Godwin's photographs as a valuable record of the British countryside as seen from the perspective of the access lobby from the 1970s to the 1990s, whilst not assigning to them the weight of responsibility of directly causing the change in legislation.

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<sup>68</sup> Ramblers, n.d; Shoard, 1999, p.4; Sidaway, 2013, p.15

<sup>69</sup> Mayfield, 2010, p.64



Figure 12: Path and Reservoir above Lumbutts, Yorkshire. © Fay Godwin, 1977

Between 1975 and 1986, Godwin produced photobooks that were direct responses to the specific places she encountered through extended walks in the countryside. Godwin also produced her influential book *Land* in 1985 that offered a review of her overarching concerns through curating a selection of her previous photographs into one photobook. In the introductory essay to her 1990 book, *Our Forbidden Land*, Godwin identified her first book of landscape photography, *The Oldest Road: An Exploration of the Ridgeway* (1975) as an attempt to create her version of a walker's guide - inspired by the guides written by A. Wainwright she used to navigate her many walks<sup>70</sup>. The book was a collaboration between Godwin and the journalist turned author J.R.L. Anderson.

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<sup>70</sup> Godwin, 1990, p.10

In a testament to the success of the project, one Amazon.co.uk review from 2015, 40 years after the publication of the book, claims that it is still an effective guide and includes a picture of the book being taken along the ridgeway itself (figure 13). Godwin continued this strategy in *The Drover's Roads of Wales* (1977); *Romney Marsh and the Royal Military Canal* (1980); *The Whiskey Roads of Scotland* (1982); and *The Saxon Shore Way from Gravesend to Rye* (1983), each of which was co-authored with a different writer.

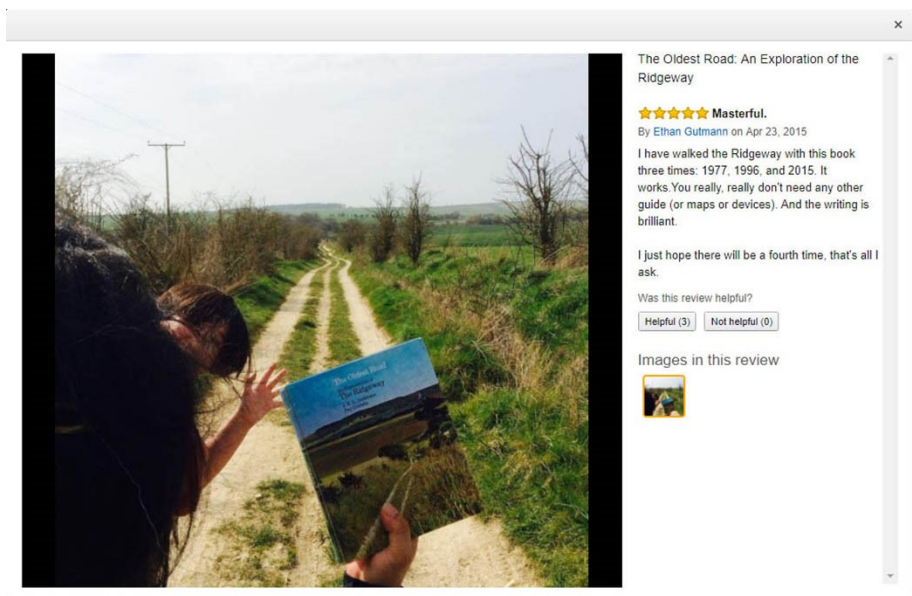


Figure 13: Review by Ethan Gutmann of Godwin's *The Oldest Road: An Exploration of the Ridgeway* on Amazon.co.uk © Ethan Guttman/Amazon 2015

The pictorial and conceptual strategy used by Godwin remains consistent through these photo guidebooks. Godwin's photographs are mostly of the view from a vantage point that looks out at approximately head height to survey a scene with lenses that did not cause extreme distortions of the view from the

camera's vantage point<sup>71</sup>. In each photograph, Godwin maintains a depth of focus that extends across the whole frame. Brett Rogers, former exhibitions officer at the British Council and now Director of The Photographer's Gallery, London, identifies that in Godwin's photographs, 'there is no stretching for outlandish effects, no mawkish sentimentalising of her subjects, only an attempt to synthesise fact and metaphor'<sup>72</sup>. This combination of 'fact and metaphor' moves Godwin's pictures beyond record photographs that document and illustrate walks. Godwin's use of light and shadow within the frame, combined with her accomplished printing technique seen in the gallery prints of her photographs, enable the photographs to allude to the histories of each place. Photography critic Francis Hodgson refers to this process of revealing layers of history in the countryside as a type of archaeology<sup>73</sup>. Photographic historian Ian Jeffrey argues that Godwin's photographs are, 'conspicuously the work of a surveyor, engrossed in the gauging and assessing of distance'<sup>74</sup>. It is within this regard that Godwin is most useful within my own practice. My photographs are about these layers of understanding the land. By adopting a similar vantage point and maintaining the same depth of focus through the frame, I can construct landscapes that reference a lived landscape of multiple histories. Following Godwin, I become an artist-surveyor, creating landscapes that reflect the cultural formation of the conservation landscape.

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<sup>71</sup> In the 2010 exhibition of Godwin's work at the National Media Museum two of her cameras were loaned from the British Library, a Hasselblad with a 50mm lens and a Leica with a 35mm lens. (James, 2010).

<sup>72</sup> Rogers, 1983, p.3

<sup>73</sup> Hodgson, 2013

<sup>74</sup> Jeffrey, 1983, p.6





Figure 14: Stones of Stennes. © Fay Godwin, 1979

Godwin's early photographic surveys show only a very slim cross-section of contemporary life in the countryside. As part of my research, I analysed each of Godwin's photo guidebooks to determine the balance between views of historic and contemporary land use. In *The Oldest Road: An Exploration of the Ridgeway*, Godwin includes field boundaries, country houses, lanes, and even a power station in the photographs<sup>75</sup>. The obvious signs of contemporary life such as modern roads and pylons are not excluded but are not given the same weight as the historic views. The book includes thirty-three pictures of standing stones and stone circles compared to two pictures in which you can identify pylons somewhere within the frame. Where the Ridgeway crosses the M4

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<sup>75</sup> Anderson and Godwin, 1975, p.171

motorway a picture is included, but it measures just 40mm x 49mm on the 164mm x 194mm page<sup>76</sup>. A large reproduction of the view from Segsbury ramparts towards Didcot Power Station is included, but the printing is such that the power station is barely visible (figure 15).



Figure 15: Reproduction of p.171, 'Didcot Power Station from Segsbury Ramparts', from 'The Oldest Road, An exploration of the Ridgeway', 1975 © Fay Godwin

Godwin may not be avoiding the signs of modernity in these early guidebooks but neither is she drawing as much focus to them as she does in the full bleed

<sup>76</sup> *ibid*, p.120



and double page spread pictures of the hills, coombes, and standing stones. These pictorial guidebooks are designed to be marketed to people who wish to walk, either physically or metaphorically, through this landscape. For that to succeed (i.e. for the book to sell), the photographs must conform in some way to the expectations of the walker-reader. If Godwin focused more predominantly on the problems of land access that are the subject of her later book, *Our Forbidden Land*, these books would no longer have functioned in the role of a guidebook. The restricted access to the 'forbidden' sites would have failed to instil a desire in an audience to 'go there and check it out'. My research operates in a different conceptual area to this. My photographs are about what the land looks like over forty years after being officially designated as within an AONB. To be effective, my practice must confront my own expectations of both 'Photographic Beauty' and Natural Beauty.

In a move that validated Godwin's status within landscape photography, The South Bank Show commissioned their first feature-length special on Godwin in 1986. The programme included footage of Godwin working in the field and back in the studio whilst adding context through interviews with art historians Marcia Pointon and Ian Jeffrey. Pointon identifies Godwin's interest in how, 'antiquity is experienced today', with Jeffrey elaborating further, identifying how romanticism in Godwin's work is, 'always offset against something which is practical, analytical, commonplace'; that, 'there is in her work both a sense of distance and vastness and then in the foreground of what is portable, things which might be picked up or things which might be used'<sup>77</sup>. Both Pointon and Jeffrey are

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<sup>77</sup> 'Fay Godwin', 1986

referencing Godwin's repeated pictorial strategy of framing the land using a wide-angle lens with motifs such as stones or paths in the foreground and the wider rural landscape in the background. In the broadcasted interviews, they appear to ignore Godwin's legacy of promoting walking in the landscape through her guidebooks and focus instead on the intellectual and cultural value of Godwin's pictures as seen in the gallery<sup>78</sup>.

Interviewed in this documentary, Godwin argues that the more conventional, Picturesque books with postcard style views of the whole of the British countryside idealise it, 'in a very unreal way'<sup>79</sup>. Godwin illustrates her position using a selection of postcards that she reviews whilst sitting on a wall somewhere in the Scottish countryside. I understand her critique as a criticism of the representation of the British Isles as a homogenously scenic land of sunsets and silhouettes. The Picturesque photography in these postcards is positioning the countryside in a wider imaginative geography of Britain as a quaint, pastoral place where time has stopped somewhere before the industrial revolution. Godwin's concerns about this type of approach to the countryside are not new. During the debates leading up to the NPACA 1949, Lord Rochdale argued that any National Parks created should not become museum specimens that are then 'liable to decay'<sup>80</sup>. Within Godwin's books this idea of a museum-like countryside is avoided through careful picture sequencing. The weakness in this strategy, exposed unintentionally by Pointon and Jeffrey's reviews, is that Godwin did not only distribute her work in book form. Part of her practice

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<sup>78</sup> Whilst the walker's guides are ignored in the broadcast, Ian Jeffrey's 1983 essay 'Topography and metaphor: The Photography of Fay Godwin' indicates that he at least was familiar with Godwin's background.

<sup>79</sup> 'Fay Godwin', 1986

<sup>80</sup> HL Deb 8 April 1948

involved the selling of fine art prints. Once removed from their wider context, Godwin's photographs of standing stones such as 'Marker Stone, Harlech to London Road, Wales, 1986' (figure 16) become detached from their relationship with the contemporary countryside. When these pictures are not framed within Godwin's wider narrative about a place, they begin to represent the countryside in the same 'very unreal way' that she identifies within the postcards.



Figure 16: Marker Stone, Harlech to London Road, Wales, 1976. © Fay Godwin

In 1990, Godwin published *Our Forbidden Land*, a photobook which examined the issue of the erosion of land access for walkers within Britain. Rather than walking and photographing one specific place for the series, Godwin instead made photographs across the British Isles looking at specific places where land

access was denied or restricted. All the previous books of Godwin's landscape photographs, except for *Landscape Photographs* (1983) and *Land* (1985) which were collections of previous work, were examinations of one place. Godwin's editing strategy within *Our Forbidden Land* continues that used in previous books. Godwin combines romantic elements with practical elements. The change Godwin makes though is that she includes more obvious signs of the contemporary control and fencing in of the land. Godwin edited *Our Forbidden Land* in such a way that the motifs I argue that she kept secondary in her photo guidebooks could now dominate.



Figure 17: Nightguard, Stonehenge. Included in *Our Forbidden Land* (1990, p.183). © Fay Godwin 1988

Godwin locates the pictures in *Our Forbidden Land* within her extended introductory essay as being a direct response to her presidency of the Rambler's Association (RA) during their 'Forbidden Britain' Campaign<sup>81</sup>. My

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<sup>81</sup> Godwin, 1990, p.27

interpretation is that *Our Forbidden Land* sits within the following wider set of literature from the access lobby published in the 1980s. Countryside conservationist and author Maria Shoard's *This Land is Our Land* (1987), cited by Godwin as a 'remarkable book'<sup>82</sup>, lays out the problem as Shoard sees it of land organisation in Britain being divided along lines of the landowners and the landless, and proposes potential strategies for reform that could reconcile conflicts in the future. Environmental author Charlie Pye-Smith and chairman of the Rambler's Association Chris Hall, edited *The Countryside We Want* (1987), the manifesto of the 1999 committee<sup>83</sup>. This manifesto was an attempt to produce a coherent set of policies relating to a, 'countryside of the future with people concerned about social and economic issues, and the welfare of wild and farm animals'<sup>84</sup>. Journalist, author, secretary of the Ramblers' Association and member of the Commons, Open Spaces and Footpaths Preservation Society Tom Stephenson's *Forbidden Land: The Struggle for Access to Mountain and Moorland* (1989) serves as an autobiography both of Stephenson and the wider access lobby. Godwin's photography is intrinsically interwoven with each of these positions. Her essay in the introduction to *Our Forbidden Land* identifies Shoard<sup>85</sup> and Stephenson's<sup>86</sup> writing as critical in her understanding of the issues and Pye-Smith & Hall include a section of twenty-four of Godwin's photographs within their book<sup>87</sup>. When positioned in the

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<sup>82</sup> *ibid*, p.11

<sup>83</sup> The 1999 Committee was a group set up in 1984 by Peter Melchett to produce a manifesto for what the countryside should be in the new millennium. The committee included academics and other professionals with a distinct experience and interest in conservation (Pye-Smith and Hall, 1987, p.i).

<sup>84</sup> Pye-Smith and Hall, 1987, p.iii

<sup>85</sup> Godwin, 1990, p.11, 18

<sup>86</sup> *ibid*, p.27

<sup>87</sup> Pye-Smith and Hall, 1987

context of these other titles, I conclude that Godwin's *Our Forbidden Land* visualises the concerns being voiced by the access lobby.

In *Our Forbidden Land*, Godwin includes photographs from previous projects. This presents a challenge to the way in which the photographs were read in their initial context and supports my identification of the tension within Godwin's strategy. Godwin's 'Fence, Russell's Enclosure' is a picture made as part of her 1985 commission for the Arnolfini Gallery in Bristol and the Forestry Commission (figure 18). In *The Secret Forest of Dean* (1986), the picture is the first in the book, positioned opposite the dedication, 'for the Foresters and other inhabitants of the Dean with great appreciation'<sup>88</sup>. Three more pictures from Russell's Enclosure appear on the following pages along with a short poem, 'The Gossamers', by Charles Tomlinson. Along with the fence in 'Fence, Russell's Enclosure', there is what looks like the edge of a path in the bottom left corner of, 'Mist and Hanging Branch, Russell's Enclosure' and protection for young saplings in, 'Gossamers, Russell's Enclosure'. All the pictures are black and white and similar in their use of mist and light. The presentation of the pictures is hard to read as anything other than Godwin's support for this section of forest. The lighting and tonal qualities of the photographs prompt a viewer to find the scenes visually appealing. 'Fence, Russell's Enclosure' is also included within *Our Forbidden Land*. This time the photograph is set opposite a poem by Frances Horovitz that describes the forest as a foreign place that, 'is not yet our land', a reference, as Godwin explains, to the problem that whilst the Forest of Dean was legally considered open land whilst owned by the Forestry

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<sup>88</sup> Godwin, 1986, p.12



Commission, if they were to sell off the forest there was no guarantee that access would continue<sup>89</sup>. Rather than the Picturesque reading that Godwin's edit suggests in *The Secret Forest of Dean*, the photograph now takes on a more sinister note - the fence becoming a symbol of the restriction of access. Godwin's placing of this photograph within this new, politicised, context suggests that her thinking about her own photography had changed. The aesthetic pictorial is subverted through the placement of the photograph.



Figure 18: Fence, Russell's Enclosure. 1985. © Fay Godwin

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<sup>89</sup> Godwin, 1990, p.36

Godwin's approach to the countryside within her photographs demonstrated the ways in which she successfully articulated the standpoint of the access lobby. As I identified in the introduction to this section, my stance regarding the political positioning of Godwin's landscape photography is that she represented the concerns of a specific period and can be situated amongst a wider body of conservation literature. The key problem in Godwin's pictorial strategy was the distribution of individual photographs beyond the book. I conclude that Godwin's reliance on a Picturesque and Romantic method of pictorial construction allowed her photographs to lose their political meaning when removed from their wider context.



## 2.2.2 Keith Arnatt



Figure 19: From the Series 'A.O.N.B., 1982-85', © Keith Arnatt Estate

Between 1982 and 1985, photographer and conceptual artist Keith Arnatt made photographs around his home in the Wye Valley AONB. In the series, 'A.O.N.B. 1982-85', Arnatt created a landscape in which contemporary life is integral to a region traditionally tied up in ideas of the Picturesque, reflecting Selman and Swanwick's definition of 'Natural Beauty' as allowing for the signs of human habitation (see pp.56-57). Arnatt challenged the traditional photographic and artistic representations of key features of the valley, and how they were repeated in photographs that met with our expectations of a landscape photograph. Rather than depicting Tintern and the Wye Valley as 'other', Arnatt's aim was to photograph as a 'native'<sup>90</sup>, as someone who lived within this

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<sup>90</sup> ibid

landscape. Arnatt was following a conceptual approach that functioned in what he referred to as a *seemingly* documentary way, but that, 'made reference to certain strands of romantic landscape painting'<sup>91</sup>. Arnatt claimed his interest was in the absurdity that beauty could be designated<sup>92</sup>. The Wye Valley was the location explored in Gilpin's 1782 treatise on the Picturesque<sup>93</sup>, and the valley and its historic monuments were common subjects for romantic landscape painters including Thomas Gainsborough and J.M.W. Turner (figure 20).



Figure 20: Etching and mezzotint by Turner and W. Annis, 'River Wye', published Turner, 23 May 1812

Arnatt photographed everyday signs of habitation within this valley, framed within the wider context of the idyllic landscape. Importantly, Arnatt drew specific attention to these signs of contemporary life. In his introduction to *Rubbish and Recollections*, the catalogue for a 1989 exhibition of Arnatt's work,

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<sup>91</sup> Arnatt, 1993b

<sup>92</sup> Arnatt, 1993a

<sup>93</sup> Gilpin, 2005

Richard Cork argues that Arnatt maintains, 'a stubborn determination to include the least palatable aspects of a district usually depicted as a rural paradise'<sup>94</sup>. Cork's comment reflects his own position that the Wye Valley is a distinct place visited and consumed for its Beauty, away from the 'least palatable aspects' of modern life that Arnatt's photographs show as a normal part of the inhabited landscape. This is precisely the imaginative geography that Arnatt's photographs challenge through their reference to romantic representations of this place. In Arnatt's photographs, contemporary human use (and misuse) of the land is central within each of his landscapes. Where Godwin used standing stones as dominant motifs within her compositions, Arnatt placed signs of contemporary life. For both, human use of the land was both central to and inextricably interwoven within any attempt to photograph it.



Figure 21: From the series 'A.O.N.B., 1982-85' © Keith Arnatt Estate

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<sup>94</sup> Cork, 1989, p.8

In 1993, Susan Butler, the former editor of *Creative Camera*, interviewed Arnatt for the Oral History of British Photography project at the British Library. During the interview, Butler and Arnatt discussed the motivations for the project, part of which Arnatt identified as the rooting of his own practice as a response to pictures that he likes, making photographs that are a, 'comment which shows the difference between the world they depict and the world as it is now', whilst actively avoiding 'pastiche'<sup>95</sup>. Arnatt embraced a photographic language that involved the use of a large format camera, black and white film, a large depth of field, and a viewpoint that recalled a method of topographic photography that Arnatt saw in the pictures made by Eugène Atget and Walker Evans<sup>96</sup>. He then used the camera to frame scenes that might be avoided in both traditional and contemporary landscape pictures - the rubbish bags outside a shop or a pile of burnt rubbish lying within what might otherwise be framed as a Picturesque landscape. The methodology reinforced Arnatt's goal of photographing the Wye Valley as an inhabited place.

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<sup>95</sup> Arnatt, 1993a

<sup>96</sup> Arnatt, 1993b



Figure 22: From the series 'A.O.N.B., 1982-85'. © Keith Arnatt Estate

Arnatt appears to have understood the conflicting nature of the photograph when read as a document. His identification of the *seemingly* documentary way in which his photographs function references the supposed record function of the documentary-style photograph. Arnatt produced photographs that may appear as documents i.e. as objects which exist as apparently neutral records, but that are specific points of view seen through the filter of a black and white photograph. Photography is not neutral and neither are photographers. The camera is a box with a lens that records what is in front of it, but the vantage point, exposure, choice of black and white or colour, printing decisions and method by which to show the final photographs are all subjective decisions made initially by the photographer, and possibly altered later by editors, curators, or other interested parties. Arnatt was making pictures following a pictorial strategy that appears topographical but reveals his point of view about an anthropocentric relationship with the land.

Butler argued that the series is about the coming together of myth and documentary accuracy, and that Arnatt's skill was in, 'making those two ways of seeing rub up against each other'<sup>97</sup>. This repeats an earlier assertion by photography historian Ian Walker who argued that the balance in Arnatt's photography practice was between, 'the documentary impulse, an intense visual interrogation of the landscape', and, 'a series of references, contexts, conventions - in effect, pre-existing forms of knowledge - within which these apparently straightforward pictures have to be understood'<sup>98</sup>. Arnatt is referencing not only the history of documentary-style photography with this series but also the romantic representations of place. His photographs are about how the history of a place is entwined with the history of representation of place. Understanding how photography functions is key to understanding Arnatt's work as he is explicitly challenging and referencing what is traditionally included within the frame. This is what separates Arnatt's practice from Godwin's. Arnatt was as interested in investigating how the medium worked as he was about the specific place where he made his photographs. Godwin was interested primarily in the place itself.

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<sup>97</sup> Arnatt, 1993a

<sup>98</sup> Walker, 1989, p.18





Figure 23: From the series 'The Forest, 1986'. © Keith Arnatt Estate

In 1986, Arnatt exhibited his photographs of the Forest of Dean alongside those made by Godwin<sup>99</sup>. He presented a series of black and white photographs made with a large format camera of commercial forestry that he then compared to the war paintings of Paul Nash<sup>100</sup>. The photographs were a continuation of his ideas from 'A.O.N.B, 1982-85', and repeated what Butler saw as the friction between myth and documentary accuracy - in this case juxtaposing the representational myth of the forest alongside the commercialisation of the trees. According to Arnatt, these photographs, 'went down like a lead brick'<sup>101</sup>. They were a challenge to how the foresters defined themselves in terms of Greider

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<sup>99</sup> Arnatt and Godwin appear to make no direct mention of each other. Arnatt's exhibition biography lists the Arnolfini show as a solo show (Keith Arnatt Estate, no date), and Godwin's misses it out entirely (Godwin, 2005). Arnatt does mention that he showed 'with another photographer' (Arnatt, 1993a). The Arnolfini website records that the exhibition opening on the 18<sup>th</sup> June 1986 was a show of, 'Photographs by Fay Godwin and Keith Arnatt' (Arnolfini, no date).

<sup>100</sup> Haworth-Booth, 1992, p.8

<sup>101</sup> Arnatt, 1991, as cited by Haworth-Booth, 1992, p.8

and Garkovich's framework (see p.50). They saw it as a challenge to who they were, who they are and who they wanted to be within the forest. In Godwin's pictures, the myth of the countryside was always central - even when shown to be on the brink of loss in *Our Forbidden Land*.. In Arnatt's pictures the myth of the art work is central. His photographs challenge orthodox representations of the land. He used traditional romantic motifs including trees and fog but interwove them with the signs of contemporary life. Writing in 1989, photographer and writer John Stathatos argues that for Arnatt, 'these signs are not seen as intrusions, nor are they introduced with subversive intent; they are simply remarked upon'<sup>102</sup>. These pictures not only discomforted a traditional view of what the Wye Valley should look like in works of art, but also Arnatt's audience as a conceptual artist during a time when the British Art establishment did not take photography seriously. Unlike Godwin, Arnatt was engaged with discussions of what photography is, and whether it belonged as a distinct genre of the arts rather than as a mere tool to document. His photographs promote and support a mythology and history of new topographic and post-new topographic photography that has risen to prominence within a certain strand of landscape photography in the past fifty years and challenges the mythology of Picturesque photography and painting. Arnatt's interest was primarily within how art operates, and that includes how photography functions. His position in challenging how landscape may be represented within photography underpins this thesis.

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<sup>102</sup> Stathatos, 1989



### 2.2.3 Repeat Photography and the American West



Figure 24: Panorama showing Carleton Watkin's camera position for Yosemite Falls and Merced River. INSERT: Carleton Watkins, Yosemite Falls (From the Upper House), 2477 FL, 1861 BACK PANELS: Mark Klett and Byron Wolfe, 2003

In 2005, photographers Mark Klett and Byron Wolfe, and writer, Rebecca Solnit, published *Yosemite in Time: Ice Ages, Tree Clocks, Ghost Rivers*. This project was an examination of Yosemite National Park in the United States of America that linked together specific historical photographs of the park and placed them within a contemporary visual context using repeat photography. The team were all experienced with the process of repeat photography but this was the first time it had been used to specifically examine the representation of a National Park. The method used by the group in Yosemite had been developed, in particular by Klett, over almost thirty years of surveys. Before interrogating their results, it is appropriate to examine the history of the repeat photography movement within American landscape photography.

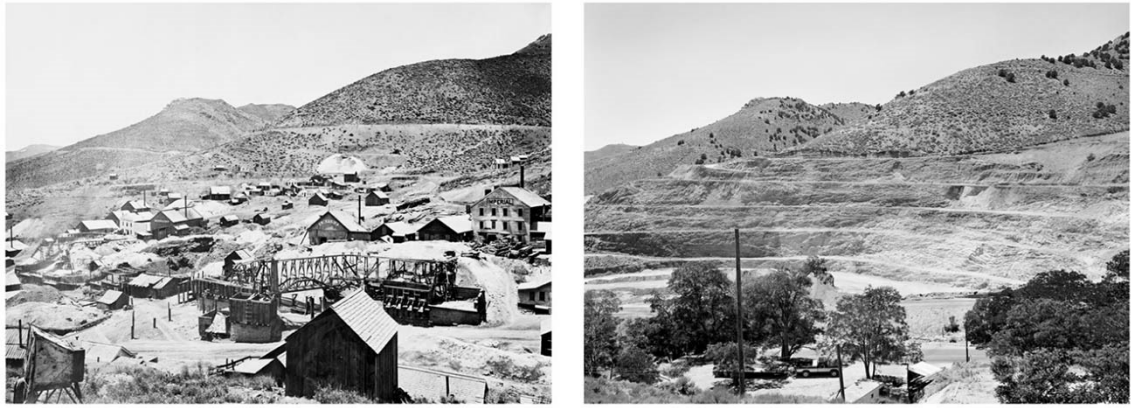


Figure 25: LEFT: Timothy O'Sullivan, Comstock Mines Virginia City, 1868 RIGHT: Mark Klett for the Rephotographic Survey Project, Strip mines, Virginia City, NV, 1979

In 1984, a collaborative group of critically engaged photography professionals published *Second View: The Rephotographic Survey Project* (RSP). The team consisted of geologist and photographer Mark Klett, photographic historian Ellen Manchester, photographic curator JoAnn Verburg, and later included photographer Rick Dingus and mathematician and photographer Gordon Bushaw. Between 1977 and 1979, they revisited the vantage points of specific historical photographs of the American West with the goal of 'rephotographing' each photograph from the same position and in the same lighting conditions. In 1977, the team focused on the photographs of central Colorado by W.H. Jackson made in 1873 and made twenty-seven repeat photographs. In 1978, Klett was joined by Dingus and Bushaw to form the photography team. They each worked separately to cover a larger area, this time creating fifty-eight repeat photographs of the work of Jackson, Timothy O'Sullivan, John Hillers, A.J. Russell and Alexander Gardner. Finally, in 1979, Klett partnered with Bushaw and photographed thirty-eight additional sites originally photographed by O'Sullivan during the King and Wheeler surveys<sup>103</sup>.

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<sup>103</sup> Klett et al, 1984, p.2

The method used in the RSP relied on matching the conditions and vantage point of the original photograph as closely as possible, measuring distances between key points on prints of the historical photographs and comparing them to measurements made on Polaroid prints made in the field<sup>104</sup>. Dingus describes an allowance of some margin of error in his 1982 book, *The Photographic Artifacts of Timothy O'Sullivan*. Recalling the making of his *Big Cottonwood Canyon (#2)* (1978), Dingus identifies that he needed to be at least 10 feet in front of the vantage point used in O'Sullivan's *Big Cottonwood Canyon [Cottonwood #2]* (1869) to avoid a tree that had grown just in front of O'Sullivan's vantage point<sup>105</sup>. Dingus' margin of error demonstrates that relatively minor shifts in vantage point may have only minimal impact on the final picture if all other variables are kept as consistent as possible. The print contrast of the two pictures is different, but the season, time of day and weather conditions appear to be well matched (figure 26).

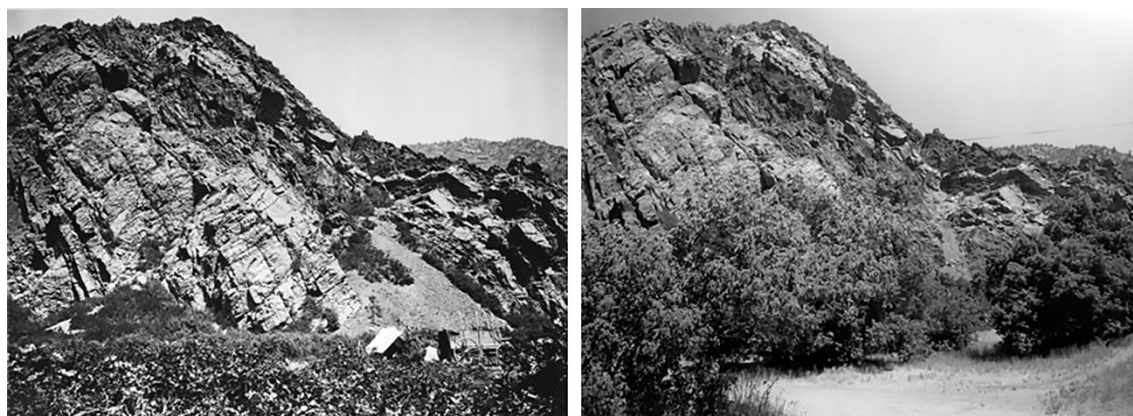


Figure 26: Left: Big Cottonwood Cañon [Cottonwood #2], O'Sullivan, 1869. USGS, Denver. Right: Cottonwood #2, Rick Dingus, for the Rephotographic Survey Project, 1978

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<sup>104</sup> *ibid*, p.42

<sup>105</sup> Dingus, 1982, p.40

The RSP photographs might appear neutral to the casual observer but there are a host of important decisions that have been made to lead Klett, Bushaw and Dingus to these vantage points. The original photographer chose these positions, camera settings and compositions. He (the historic photographs that were the basis for the RSP were all credited to men) made the photograph to reflect concerns and desires relating to the place photographed. The photograph was added to a collection above others because it was thought to reflect these concerns accurately<sup>106</sup>. In the case of the historic images, these concerns were primarily those of exploration - surveying the land for political and propaganda purposes<sup>107</sup>. Over time, some of these concerns shifted when the photographs were displayed in a different context. O'Sullivan's photographs were initially held only in government archives until Ansel Adams showed them to Beaumont Newhall of the Museum of Modern Art<sup>108</sup>. This positioned the photographs in a new context in front of a new audience - in the gallery rather than in the geographic archive. This change in interpretation of O'Sullivan's photographs was not met with universal praise. Critic Rosalind Krauss argued that the museum was distorting the context and meaning of O'Sullivan's original Stereoscopes. Krauss' criticism was based upon her analysis of the word 'view' as the noun used by O'Sullivan instead of 'landscape', where 'the one composes an image of geographic order, the other represents the space of an autonomous Art and its idealised, specialised History, which is constituted by aesthetic discourse'<sup>109</sup>. For Krauss, O'Sullivan's use of 'view' denotes an

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<sup>106</sup> There were multiple different avenues for the resulting pictures made in each survey that reflected a multitude of concerns leading the surveys. The King Survey photographs were originally distributed primarily as lithographic reproductions in King's *Systematic Geology* (1878) and Emmons and Hague's *Descriptive Geology* (1877) and only a limited number of mounted photographic were distributed (Davis & Aspinwall, 2011, pp.62-63, 84; Jurovics, 2010, p.25)

<sup>107</sup> Dingus, 1982, p.10; Trachtenberg, 1982, p.20; Jurovics, 2010, pp.25, 29-30

<sup>108</sup> Bell, 2012

<sup>109</sup> Krauss, 1982, p.315

experience apart from the gallery. In *Photography's Discursive Spaces*, Krauss argues that 'view':

- speaks to the dramatic insistence of perspectively organised depth within a stereoscope;
- positions a point of interest as confronting the viewer, seemingly without the mediation of the artist;
- registers this singularity, or focal point, as one moment in a complex representation of the world (for instance within a geographical system of record that resides in a filing cabinet)<sup>110</sup>.

Under this definition, 'view' can be used as a noun to signify a practice that is a response to a geographic system outside of traditional ideas of the Picturesque landscape. (In later chapters I return to this definition as a method to signify the importance of the geographic archive within my own practice). Finally, each photograph was selected for the basis of a repeat photograph. Klett identifies that there was a potential for bias within site choice - that it would have been easy to select, 'only our favourite nineteenth century photographs, or sites where we knew startling changes had occurred'<sup>111</sup>, and that selecting W.H.Jackson's photographs for the first year of the survey was an attempt to limit unconscious bias. Even within these parameters, there was still a necessary element of decision-making within the team that inevitably shapes the narrative of the RSP in line with the concerns of the participants.

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<sup>110</sup> Ibid, 1982, pp.314-315

<sup>111</sup> Klett et al, 1984, p.2



Figure 27: LEFT: Timothy O'Sullivan, 1869. Tertiary Conglomerates, Weber Valley, Utah. (United States Geological Survey). CENTRE: Rick Dingus for the Rephotographic Survey Project, 1978. Witches Rocks, Weber Valley, Utah. RIGHT: Mark Klett, Toshi Ueshina and Kyle Bajakian for the Third View Project, 1997. Witches Rocks, Weber Valley, Utah

In 1997, Klett assembled a new team to revisit the photographs from *Second View* and update them on the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the RSP. The resulting project, *Third View, Second Sights*, was published as a book, DVD and website. The team began by making photographs from the same vantage points as used in *Second View*. This resulted in three views for each original site - the historic photograph, the repeat photograph from the RSP, and the new repeat photograph. In his essay, *Three Methods of Repeat Photographs* (2010), Klett argues that having three views presented a new complication in terms of method. In *Second View*, it was sufficient to have pictures on opposing pages of a double page spread. In *Third View, Second Sights*, this approach was more troublesome as there were now three pictures to present together. Even a three-page fold out spread leaves it difficult to compare the original historic photograph and the *Third View, Second Sights* directly. Klett and his team adopted a solution that relied on multiple methods of presenting the work, relying heavily on new (at that time) digital presentation methods. Along with the book of the project, the team produced an interactive website and DVD of the project. These digital presentations included a slideshow view that allows a viewer to overlay different photographs from the same vantage point and switch between views to understand more about the changes. A particularly useful new

tool was a 'loupe' viewer, which allowed the user to set a background layer of one image and move a virtual magnifying glass over the picture revealing a different selected photograph wherever the mouse was positioned. Despite moving beyond the standard diptych view seen in the RSP, the *Third View*, *Second Sights* photographs were still subject to the same, crucial, limitation. Whilst the photographs and repeat photographs could display change in the land in increasingly elaborate ways, they revealed little to nothing about the causes for that change, or what had occurred beyond the edges of the frame<sup>112</sup>. The digital presentations of *Third View*, *Second Sights* allowed the team to begin to challenge these limitations. When in the field, the team gathered additional information that helped locate the views within a wider narrative about each place. They produced the following new material:

- additional photographs of the area surrounding the original vantage point;
- video footage of areas around, near, or on journey to/from the site;
- sound recordings and oral history interviews were recorded with people connected to the sites;
- made-for-computer images such as panoramas to create context and show what is behind the camera;
- artefacts (contemporary, not antique, or archaeologically interesting at the time) were collected.

These materials, when viewed in addition to the main project photographs, help direct the viewer's perception of these places. The additional media provided by the team influences how a viewer comes to learn about the place shown within

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<sup>112</sup> Klett identifies these limitations himself regarding the original RSP (Klett, 2010, p.33)

each photograph beyond what the photographs alone can show. This strategy confronts the concern that the photographs do not show what is beyond the frame. This is addressed throughout my own practice through the incorporation of map and text information to locate the key concerns of the practice.



Figure 28: LEFT: Timothy O'Sullivan, 1868. Quartz Mill near Virginia City, (United States Geological Survey). CENTRE: Mark Klett for the Rephotographic Survey Project, 1979. Site of the Gould and Curry Mine, Virginia City, NV. RIGHT: Mark Klett and Byron Wolfe for the Third View Project. c1998. Site of the Gould and Curry Mine, Virginia City, NV.

A triptych from *Third View, Second Sights* offers a useful example of this issue (figure 28). O'Sullivan made the original picture, captioned 'A Quartz Mine near Virginia City', in 1868. Then in 1979, Klett made a repeat photograph from the same vantage point. The pictures highlight one of the difficulties of the 'rephotographic' process. In Klett's own words:

In O'Sullivan's Quartz Mill near Virginia City, there is no horizon in the picture. This, along with a virtual lack of evidence that the once-huge structure ever existed at this site, made it a most difficult place to find and rephotograph. The old and new photographs evoke confusion. What has happened to so large an ore plant? Nearby in Virginia City I questioned a local couple who had grown up in the area during the first decade of this century. Neither could recall the distinctive square brick smokestacks of the mill, which in some captions has been referred to as the famous Gould and Curry Mine. Only small rocks in the corners of the rephotograph betrayed the location as the same recorded by O'Sullivan in 1868. In fact, I doubt that I would have stumbled upon the site without the aid of good luck and another of O'Sullivan's photographs, which shows the same mill, but with the outline of nearby hills. Apparently the entire mill had been moved when the end of the ore deposit



was reached. O'Sullivan's vantage point remains, but the photograph is the only record of the mill's existence<sup>113</sup>.

This raises several key concerns that are tackled in this research project. First, how can photographs be made of a history that is no longer visible. Unlike most of the repeat photographs that show human development increasing, the Quartz Mill/Gould and Curry mine photographs show a disappearing human element. This is a repeated theme within my own research. At each practice site I made photographs that relate to the conservation of specific histories that are not always physically visible. Klett solves this through presenting old and contemporary photographs together, showing the change of the landscape over time. This is not an option available within this research as no photographic archive exists of the case study sites. Instead, the information used is a series of maps. The information shown in these maps, outlined in the introduction to this thesis, all relate to a desire to conserve and preserve specific histories of the land that reflect the cultural positions of those who make them. This study draws on archive information to make the link between the contemporary landscape created within my photographs and the specific histories that are being promoted by the legislation.

The second concern this triptych raises is how O'Sullivan included limited information within the frame regarding the subject's location. O'Sullivan made a photograph that was framed around a building that was no longer there. Klett's description above suggests this history of the place is forgotten. In the photograph, there is no horizon line and no prominent physical features that locate this place within the wider area. Now that the mine architecture has been

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<sup>113</sup> Klett et al, 1984, p.16

removed, what links this photograph to this place? I have purposefully used a similar method at Black Down (see Chapter 6 and Book 4) where my photographs show nothing of the area beyond the boundary of the scheduled monument.

In 2005, Klett, along with photographer Byron Wolfe and writer Rebecca Solnit, published the repeat photographic project, *Yosemite in Time: Ice Ages, Tree Clocks, Ghost Rivers*. This project marked a departure in several key ways from the previous surveys. The team were looking at one area - Yosemite National Park. This conservation landscape has achieved an almost mythical status within histories of American landscape photography. As a National Park, Yosemite is a landscape that is shaped by human ideologies. The appearance of wilderness within the park, or rather the western European idea of wilderness as promoted in historical photographs and paintings of the American West, is maintained for human pleasure. The original impetus of this project was to produce repeat photographs of Eadweard Muybridge's mammoth plate Yosemite photographs that Solnit had encountered at George Eastman House in Rochester, New York, using the location research of Muybridge's vantage points made during the 1950s by Mary and William Hood<sup>114</sup>. When the team began work in the field they discovered, 'that two Muybridge photographs showing very different views of Yosemite Valley's south wall had been taken from two spots very close to each other. It was clear from the site - but not the photographs - that he had taken one and then picked up the camera and made the other'<sup>115</sup>. This inspired Klett and Wolfe to test out a new way of working -

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<sup>114</sup> Klett et al, 2005, pp.x-xi

<sup>115</sup> *ibid*, p.xii

linking two (or more) previously unlinked photographs through creating a panorama that included the historic images. The Yosemite project relied on this and other methods of moving beyond the traditional repeat photographic method, placing the original vantage points in a wider visual context. Where it is at its most insightful is when the team link together the views of multiple photographers working at different times.



Figure 29: Mark Klett and Byron Wolfe, Four views from four times and one shoreline, Lake Tenaya, 2002. Left to right: Eadweard Muybridge, 1872; Ansel Adams, c. 1942; Edward Weston, 1937. Back panels: Swatting high-country mosquitoes, 2002

Klett and Wolfe's panorama, 'Four Views from four times and one shoreline, Lake Tenaya, 2002' (figure 29), is constructed of four 'views', or vantage points. They use the panorama to link together Eadweard Muybridge's 'Mount Hoffman, Sierra Nevada Mountains. From Lake Tenaya. No.48, 1872', Ansel Adams', 'Tenaya Lake, Mount Conness, Yosemite National Park, c.1942' and Edward Weston's 1937, 'Lake Tenaya, 1937'. Making the panorama showed the team how Muybridge and Weston stood only a couple of feet away from each other, sixty-five years apart, and Adams stood about 20 feet away from them both five years after Weston. The picture captions show viewers that these pictures were made within what is now Yosemite National Park and when

they were made, but it is only when placed together in this panorama that the closeness of the vantage points is clear. In Klett's earlier studies he, along with the different teams, had used repeat photography to show change in the land and how the camera could be used to construct a landscape. In *Yosemite in Time* the team re-purposed repeat photography as a method to link together the work of different photographers.

In *Yosemite in Time*, Klett, Wolfe and Solnit have taken the repeat photography method and applied it to a conservation landscape. Their project speaks of how a conservation landscape is photographed. Their results show just how consistent the vantage points are in many historical representations of this place. However, within this research, a repeat photography approach was not able to be tested because there is no existing organised photographic archive of the Mendip Hills. What I can take from the method, though, is to allow an archive to lead my practice. The practice at Sandford Hill (see Chapter 3 and Book 2) begins this process by identifying precise points within the wider AONB boundary that are recorded within a cartographic archive. This is then continued through the remaining research sites with the objective of examining how photography can show more than the traditional depictions of conservation places.

## 2.3 Conclusions

In this chapter I have deconstructed multiple practices that look at conservation landscapes to intellectually map out the specific photographic history in which

my research sits. Each body of work reviewed introduces a new dimension to this examination of photographing conservation places. In Godwin's photographs I have traced a narrative that forms part of the wider conservation movement in Britain during the 1980s and 1990s, reinforced by her position as President of the RA, a key lobby group ahead of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. Godwin's photographs struggled to maintain their tough criticism of government policy when taken out of their original context within the book and placed in the gallery, but this is not reason enough to dismiss Godwin's photographic contribution.

Keith Arnatt, working at the same time and, in at least one instance, in the same place as Godwin, is viewed in this research in almost the opposite way. For Arnatt, as a photographer and conceptual artist, photography afforded the opportunity to make pictures that were as much about the work of other artists as they were about his subjects. Arnatt was, first and foremost, an artist and his work is positioned here within a specific history of Art. He made photographs that were about how people make pictures and what they judged to be suitable artistic subjects. It was in this way that he made photographs about the Wye Valley AONB, a landscape, people are told through legislation, is where they should go to see and experience 'Natural Beauty'. Godwin was a conservationist whose work is positioned here within a specific history of conservation. Neither approach is more valid than the other, but the difference in their methodologies highlights how photographic practice can fit into Greider and Garkovich's framework (see p.50). For both artists, their pictures were reflections of their own well-established critical concerns when they made photographs.

Klett and the various artists he collaborated with throughout his decades of involvement in repeat photography projects offer a model of how photography can be used to respond to an archive. In this chapter I have deliberately positioned my discussion of repeat photography after my analysis of Keith Arnatt's work as it can be understood as an extension of the same thinking that led to Arnatt's objective of responding to the work of other photographers. In the Butler interview, Arnatt identified his goal of showing a difference between the world shown in pictures he likes and the world as it is now, whilst avoiding pastiche. Repeat photography could be read as falling into this trap of imitation but, used as part of the rigorous methodology employed by Klett and associates, becomes a way of seeing how the land has changed over time. In this chapter I examined the history of Klett's repeat photography in detail to better understand the process used in *Yosemite in Time*. Klett's work is not about the conservation landscape but about photography. Klett's repeat photographs represent a model of how an archive of photographs can lead subsequent photographic practice. My practice throughout this research is not about existing photographic archives but instead, both consciously and subconsciously, is about my framing of photographs as a response to how other photographers have photographed the land. Additionally, my practice is a direct response to differing forms of archive information that led to the creation of conservation landscapes. Klett's methodology and the precision involved form an important starting point for my development of photographic strategies within this methodology.



## CASE STUDY 1: SANDFORD HILL

*Before reading this chapter, I would like to invite readers to familiarise themselves with Book 2 of this thesis. Here they will find the resolved outcome of my practice at my first case study site, Sandford Hill. In this body of work, I am using my photographic practice to examine and interrogate the inclusion of a post-industrial site within the Mendip Hills AONB. Once this initial body of work has been viewed, the reader should return to this chapter where I analyse my practice and its implications for the overall project.*



### 3.1 Introduction



Figure 30: Fern Mine, ST 4292 5919, Length: 6m; Depth: 4m. January 2013.

Sandford Hill is the first practice case study site within this research. In this field work, I produced a series of photographs with the aim of examining the visual consequences of the inclusion of the hill within the Mendip Hills AONB. The pictorial strategy draws directly from my earlier discussion of ‘Photographic Beauty’ and ‘Natural Beauty’ (see pp.24-29), using the photographic frame to construct a series of responses to archival information that conform to my understanding of ‘Photographic Beauty’. The photographs reflect how I understand ‘Beauty’ in a visual way at the start of the project, informed by a lifetime of experiences and cultural influences. In this chapter I present an

overview of the strategy that led my photography here, before analysing the resulting photographs to assess the ways in which they both respond to and expand upon the research objectives (see p.35).



Figure 31: Aerial image of Sandford Hill. Source: QGIS 2.18.16. 2018. Sandford Hill. 51°19'40.8" N 02°49'23.52" W. Bing aerial data layer. Viewed 4<sup>th</sup> April 2018.

Sandford Hill was an obvious starting point for the practice. The initial drive to undertake this research came from a desire to photograph the landscape I consider as 'home' (see Prologue). I grew up on the side of Sandford Hill and spent much of my childhood playing in either the quarry or the surrounding woodland. For me, this place encapsulated ideas of what 'Natural Beauty' looked like when I began the research, tied up as it was in ideas of memory and identity. Approaching the site again I set out to use a critical photographic process to begin to understand how the hill functions within a wider cultural framework, and in so doing assess how 'Photographic Beauty' may or may not correlate with 'Natural Beauty'.

Sandford Hill is an anomaly within the Mendip Hills AONB. Approximately 30 acres of the site has been subjected to blasting to form the quarry<sup>116</sup>. In the *Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty District Plan: Report of Survey*, the Somerset County Planning Officer is quoted as identifying the quarried side of the hill as unsuitable for inclusion within the AONB<sup>117</sup>. This advice was ignored without official explanation and the AONB boundary lies instead along the edge of a road outside the quarry. The local villages of Winscombe and Shipham were both excluded due to the extent of housing development<sup>118</sup>. This contrast leads to the conclusion that the quarry, which at the time of designation was still active<sup>119</sup>, was officially seen as a more legitimate landscape of 'Natural Beauty' than the built landscape of the villages.

In addition to the quarry, the hill has seen mining activity dating back to at least the Roman occupation of Britain<sup>120</sup>. The ground is covered with the pock-marked signs of small-scale mining. The majority of this work was carried out during the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, when a local landowner employed a small team to work their way around the hill looking for ore<sup>121</sup>. The resulting terrain is covered in both deep and shallow pits, forming what is locally known as, 'gruffy ground'. In recent years the site has been variously employed for farming, forestry and outdoor activities. The signs of human use of this land are abundant but the shift away from industrial use has resulted in Nature 'reclaiming' aspects of the site.

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<sup>116</sup> The area here is approximate because the precise boundaries of the quarry are not clearly delineated on a map, an aerial photograph or on the land itself.

<sup>117</sup> Avon and Somerset County Councils, 1978, pp.8-9

<sup>118</sup> *ibid*, pp.7-8

<sup>119</sup> Blasting officially ceased at Sandford Hill in 1993 (Priest and Dickson, 2009, p.60)

<sup>120</sup> Hall, 1971, pp.5-8; Gough, 1967, p.1-2, 32;

<sup>121</sup> Gough, 1967, p.173



### 3.2 Designing a Research Strategy

The changing land use and resulting shifts in appearance of Sandford Hill offered me a new way to approach the site. When I was young I was aware of five or six unstable and dangerous mine shafts within the woodland. In the context of this research they offered specific places that referenced a previous, industrial, land use that I could photograph within a setting associated with 'Natural Beauty' through its inclusion within the AONB. The camera offered me a tool by which I could explore the dichotomy of the site's industrial history and its identification as a place of 'Natural Beauty'.



Figure 32: Spar Shaft, ST 4235 5910. Length: 17m, Depth: 14m. January 2013.

I began work at the site by making photographs in the quarry and of the mine workings that were still visible within the woodland covering part of the hill. These were the places I was most familiar with, and I was making photographs with the purpose of examining and challenging my geographical imagination of the place. In order to deepen my inquiry, I began to read more about the background of mining on the Mendip Hills and found the Mendip Cave Registry and Archive (MCRA), a volunteer organisation that maintains a record of sites of interest to cavers across the region. At that time (Winter 2012/3), the archive contained twenty-five locations of identifiable mine workings and caves for Sandford Hill (figure 33). These were more sites than I was familiar with so I started to carry a printed aerial map in the field to help locate additional sites. This strategy was initially successful when I investigated those sites I was already familiar with, such as Fern Mine (figure 30).



Figure 33: Aerial image of Sandford Hill with the twenty-five original sites marked in white. Source: QGIS 2.18.16. 2018. Sandford Hill. 51°19'40.8" N 02°49'23.52" W. MCRA search results for Sandford Hill, and Bing aerial data layers. Viewed 4<sup>th</sup> April 2018.

However, I quickly ran into my first challenge. At sites that were obscured by woodland in the aerial photograph, that I had no clear memory of, or that had been obliterated since the record was made, I struggled to locate the mine workings with any degree of certainty. The strategy was not working. The solution came from a discussion on site with a forestry worker during one of these early field trips. He suggested the use of a handheld GPS receiver. Using this I could load a digital map of the site locations onto the receiver and use it to locate them in the field. This allowed a much greater degree of accuracy in locating the sites as marked within the archive.

The pictorial strategy employed during these trips laid the groundwork for the rest of the photographs at Sandford Hill. The method involved following the co-ordinates from the MCRA and making photographs that reflected a 'scenic view' based on my existing understanding of 'Natural Beauty' within a post-industrial conservation landscape. I was not interested in using camera trickery or dramatic light to produce an aesthetically stylised landscape. Instead, I set out to use the camera as a frame to examine how I might look at the place in a new way. Building on my reading of the work made by Godwin, Arnatt, Klett and Wolfe, I wanted the final pictures to *appear* as though they were neutral landscapes of a series of locations described in an archive. To enable this, I set myself a series of rules that formed the basis of my working method throughout this research project:

- I began by identifying where I would make the photographs using a Geographic Information System (GIS). This allowed me to determine



subjects or vantage points whilst not in the field, based on archival information;

- Co-ordinate data from the GIS was loaded onto a handheld GPS receiver that allowed me to locate the position in the field that related to the point in the archive;
- Once I located the site, I set up the camera so that the point referenced in the archive was somewhere within the frame;
- In many of the photographs I used a step ladder to raise the vantage point of the camera. The pictures were often looking at small sections of land where the ground showed signs of mining activity. The raised camera position allowed the final photographs to show more of the details of this than a photograph made from a tripod set at my eye level;
- Many of the photographs were made within woodland where the space was limited. I used a 28mm lens offering a 60° angle of view<sup>122</sup> to allow myself room to compose a photograph without trees obstructing the lens;
- Each picture was composed with the goal of creating a reflection of an idea of 'Natural Beauty'. I was specifically looking for what I saw to be a harmonious relationship within the form of the trees and between different colours within the frame. Where there were obvious signs of human use of the land within the frame, I accepted these as part of the site;
- Each picture included caption data that referenced elements of the archive entry for that site.

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<sup>122</sup> A 28mm lens on a full-frame digital or 35mm camera provides a 75° angle of view. I utilise an in-camera crop for all the photographs in this research of 4:5, rather than the default 3:2, and this results in the 28mm lens having an effective angle of view of 60°.

The caption data is vital within the series as an attempt to confront the problem of shifting context identified within Godwin's practice (see section 2.2.1). My captions are direct references to the unseen within the frame. Each caption includes four distinct pieces of information that are intended to influence how the viewer understands the photograph. The name or reference code of the site lets the viewer know that there is a system of cataloguing at work but says nothing about what this is or where it comes from. This name or reference number relates back to the specific log books the MCRA used to document location. In some instances, the sites are named (for example Fern Mine, Scum Hole or Triple Hole), whereas in others there is only a reference identifying the caving group who logged the site and a sequence number<sup>123</sup>. The location data is provided using the OS National grid reference system and is included to reference the influence of the archive in my choices concerning where the pictures were made. The underground dimensions of the site inform the viewer that there is something in each picture that is unseen, which I intend as a link with the industrial history of the site. The final work utilises these details from the MCRA record to preserve the link between my work and the geo-locative archive. Finally, I include the month and year that I made the photograph as an acknowledgement that I am making my own archive with these pictures that might form the basis of further research. The editing of the final book reinforces this message. The pictures were selected based on how well they match my goal of creating landscapes that imply 'Natural Beauty', and then presented in a semi-chronological order, grouped by month. This grouping ensures the work

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<sup>123</sup> In the final locations photographed the following acronyms feature for different caving groups: ACG - Axbridge Caving Group; MCRA - Mendip Cave Registry and Archive (who also adopt the additional notification of SH denoting Sandford Hill); SMCC - Shepton Mallet Caving Club; and SSSS - Sidcot School Speleological Society.



maintains a visual coherence whilst still implying the importance of the archive in leading the practice.

### 3.3 Mutability of the Archive

I discovered when rechecking the archive after the first trips that the location for one site, Sandford Ochre Cave, appeared to change. At first, I thought I must have made an error in the field but over time it became clear that the archive was being updated at infrequent intervals. Further research showed that the initial source for many of the locations recorded in the database was a series of log books made by children from the local Sidcot School Speleological Society. These had been made between 1929 and 1978, with a detailed survey being conducted between 1959 and 1963<sup>124</sup>, when the quarrying was removing large sections of the hillside. The archive had then been updated through the records of other caving clubs and finally field trips by members of the MCRA volunteer team who tried to link the sites recorded with locations on the hill. This was not always a straightforward process because the Sidcot School Speleological Society logbooks contained detailed maps of the cave systems explored underground but little reference to where the entrance was located. This has resulted in the MCRA team updating the co-ordinates in the archive on an ad-hoc basis when their research allows for a better estimate of precise locations<sup>125</sup>. This problem is compounded where mine workings have been obliterated by subsequent activity, either through the expansion of the quarry,

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<sup>124</sup> Scans of the Sidcot School Speleological Society logbooks are all available to view online on the MCRA website (Mendip Cave Registry & Archive, 2017).

<sup>125</sup> Tavinor, 2015

the changing land use of sections of the hill to arable, or simply where the entrance to the mine or cave has been filled over the years since last exploration. The changes in the archive are especially apparent when the Winter 2013/4 entries are compared with Summer 2017 on a map (see figure 34). Twenty of the original locations can still be seen on the map, indicating that those locations were no longer considered accurate as of the 2017 dataset<sup>126</sup>.



Figure 34: Aerial image of Sandford Hill with the seventy-five 2017 locations marked in white and the original twenty-five now marked in blue. Source: QGIS 2.18.16. 2018. Sandford Hill. 51°19'40.8" N 02°49'23.52" W. MCRA search results for Sandford Hill from 2012 and 2017, and Bing aerial data layers. Viewed 4<sup>th</sup> April 2018.

The advent of digital geo-locative technologies including GPS has affected the method and purpose for the recording of archive locations. There is a difference between a school archive from the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century and a modern digital geo-locative archive. The school children recorded the locations on crude pencil

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<sup>126</sup> QGIS presents datasets in layers. This results in the top most layers masking any data at the same point for layers lower in the viewing order. In figure 34 I have presented the 2017 data as the top-level data. Any data from the 2012 dataset still visible on the map can be interpreted as having not been carried forward to the 2017 dataset.

drawn maps with no grid references. Modern satellite navigation allows users to identify, record and locate positions even under tree cover with an ease and accuracy previously impossible, but despite this there is still room for improvements. The MCRA team acknowledged this when they documented their problems in first adopting handheld GPS devices for research on the northern side of Sandford Hill<sup>127</sup>. My own field work correlates with theirs - without a strong signal sites that are close together in deep, tree covered valleys are difficult to accurately log. There is a strong possibility that as technology improves in the future the archive will be further updated, possibly raising questions about the locations of some of my photographs. The changing archive exemplifies how history is fluid - the precise sites that are deemed in some way important enough to be recorded on Sandford Hill may become 'unimportant' within the archive at any time. This has important implications for my photographs and what they represent. Rather than photographing, as I had set out to do, the locations of mine workings, I was photographing locations suggested by an archive to be in some way of value, and this judgement was fluid. My excursions into the field were my performances of a series of existence tests of the places held within the archive. As a result, I can only claim my photographs to be representations of locations held in an archive at a specific time. These existence tests had ramifications for how I approached my field work at Banwell Wood, Black Down and Dolebury Warren.

An important addendum to this discussion is that my research at Sandford Hill is about how post-industrial sites can be examined through their relationship to

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<sup>127</sup> Gray, 2005, p.25

‘Natural Beauty’. There was scope to take my research in a different direction here, using my photographs to compare the shifting locations referenced at different times for each archive entry, but this would have moved too far from my research objectives. This does however offer a valuable possibility for further research at this or other locations. This understanding of the relationship between an archive and the land impacted on how I approached the later case study sites through which I examine how mapped conservation boundaries can be used to lead photographic practice (see Chapters 5-7, and Book 3-5).

### 3.4 Analysis

In the final series of photographs, I concentrated as far as was possible on locating the points the archive *intended* to reference. My research at this point was about how the signs of an industrial history at Sandford Hill could be interpreted within an idea of ‘Natural Beauty’. But the process of realisation I went through in understanding how the archive was malleable led to a shift in methodology. The systems that shape and control the Mendip Hills AONB are of human design and reflect culturally constructed positions regarding what the Mendip Hills ‘should’ look like.

The pictures in the final edit are the result of my interpretation of ‘Natural Beauty’. The method restricted me to creating a series of landscapes at specific grid references, but I allowed myself the ability to make decisions in the field about the composition and lighting. The final photographs are how I, as a photographic artist, interpret ‘Natural Beauty’ through utilising ‘Photographic

Beauty'. The work is not and cannot be neutral. It is informed by the myriad of cultural and social forces that influenced me to stand at that point at that time. This strategy was successful on a limited basis. The site has a variety of signs of land use, both historic and contemporary. It was much more straightforward to create landscapes that reflected an idea of 'Natural Beauty' within the forested areas than it was within the disused quarry. The detailed pictorial strategy is thoroughly analysed through the test pictures made at Dolebury Warren that I shall discuss later in this thesis (see pp.215-218).

Some locations were visited and photographed on multiple occasions. One example, the photograph of SSSS-22-O (figure 35), shows how my pictures can conform to Selman and Swanwick's calls for Nature to dominate within a definition of 'Natural Beauty' (see pp.56-57). In this photograph, the flora has completely overtaken the site, with no traces of the surface texture of the ground visible within the frame.





Figure 35: SSSS-22-O, ST 42649 58994, Length: 7m, Depth: 7m. August 2015.

The only clues a non-specialist viewer has that there is something else going on in this picture are the caption and the inclusion of the photograph within this thesis. The decisions made behind the camera, the framing, time of day, and time of year, create a landscape where Nature appears to dominate. I only acknowledge within the caption that all is not quite as simple as it seems.





Figure 36: SSSS-22-O, ST 42649 58994, Length: 7m, Depth: 7m. March 2015.

I had previously photographed the same location in early spring 2015 (figure 36). The undulation of the ground because of the mining work is more visible here, and, whilst the same flora is present, it is less dominant than in the August picture. This suggests that other variables such as season are crucially important in terms of how aesthetics are interpreted. Both pictures represent Beauty, but in different ways. The August photograph shows a 'wild' patch of flora where the visual interest comes from the relationship between the shades of green across the frame. I framed the scene tightly in the photograph in order to provide viewers with no context outside of what I show in the picture or include in the caption. There are no obvious signs of human land use - the photograph appears to show, if not wilderness, then at least a wild place. The

lighting is soft enough to avoid shadows obscuring the flora but I have maintained sufficient contrast to help draw the eye across the frame, despite there being no central, singular subject. In the March photograph, the scene looks quite different. The overall shape of the scenery - the way the trees frame the area and the sweep of the higher land to the right to the lower ground on the left, informs the viewer that this is the same place. But the final picture is no longer about the lush greens of summer. The picture is about the layers of vegetation alternately coloured green and brown, sweeping across the frame. The shape and texture of the ground is visible and shows a mining rake running from the bottom right corner to the left of the frame. The Beauty here lies in form - the tree branches create lines echoed by the lines of the bracken stems. This scene is still wild but the camera frame is allowing the chaotic shapes to sit within an idea of Beauty. These pictures suggest a potential future development of this research as a repeat photographic project using my photographs as the existing archive.

The final photographs show a layering of concerns about the land. My pictorial framing is deliberate with the purpose of reflecting upon an idea of 'Natural Beauty'. Where visible, the evidence of mining within the frame suggests a history that contrasts with any false associations viewers might have between 'Natural Beauty' and wilderness. I include captions in order to inform the viewer of the archival information that led me to make the photograph of this place, often hinting at something unseen within the frame of the photographic landscape. Photography can, in the end, only show what can be seen from the vantage point of the camera. Within this series of pictures, I use this attribute of the photograph to challenge the authority of the conservation designation. The



pictures exist as evidence of my tests of a series of archive entries that suggest an industrial past.



Figure 37: Sandford Quarry Cave, ST 422 591, Length: 21m, Depth: 8m. January 2013.

Not all the locations photographed were within woodland. Some, including Sandford Quarry Cave, were in the disused quarry (figure 37). This site may not immediately suggest ideas of 'Natural Beauty'. As I have previously identified, 'Photographic Beauty' is not necessarily the same as 'Natural Beauty' (see pp.24-29). The frame includes but it also excludes, and in Sandford Quarry Cave the signs of human use of the land dominate. The photograph sits early in the edit of the book to remind the viewer that the labelling of this place as an AONB is a cultural act that has impact upon how it is encountered. The

positioning of the tape and can within the frame, whilst untouched by the artist, are not by accident. Whilst in the field, my composition and framing of photographs feels intuitive but it is the result of two decades of making and looking at critical photographic practice. I am deliberately framing each scene in a way that conforms to my own, internal, idea of what a photographic landscape is and how it operates. Within this research my pre-occupation has been with 'Natural Beauty' but how I see and understand Beauty is still the product of all the external influences that have brought me to the place and time where I make the exposure.

In order to test the reaction of audiences to the work, I exhibited a selection of prints of the final pictures during the Land/Water and the Visual Arts and Land<sup>2</sup> research groups joint symposium 'Traffic' in 2016. I have also shown the work on digital projectors at multiple sizes during talks throughout the research period. Audience feedback in each case reinforced the importance of scale to my critical photographic practice. Printed at 16x20, the prints felt lost on a large white wall. Viewers expressed the desire to see more detail in the prints, especially when trying to locate the entrance to a mine working might be within each photograph. However, in order to fully tie my prints to the underlying research objectives a large number of the photographs need be shown and this limits potential exhibition spaces, especially as this is only the first of four practice case studies. Instead of compromising the practice and, following what I learnt in my review of other photographic works (see Chapters 2 and 4), I determined that the photobook was the ideal outcome for the practice. The photobook enables me to use a larger edit across the four case studies than

would be feasible on the wall at a scale where viewers can fully engage with not only single images but how the practice forms an integrated body of work.

### 3.5 Conclusions

I made the photographs at Sandford Hill with a strategy that aimed to create landscapes within a post-industrial site that reflected my understanding of 'Natural Beauty'. Following Godwin, I made pictures of historic land use, but following Arnatt I gave equal weight to the traces of modern life within this landscape. Where I diverged from their practices is through my utilisation of a geo-locative technology-based method that bore more parallels with the method used in Klett and Wolfe's repeat photography of Yosemite National Park. Unlike Klett and Wolfe, I did not have a previous archive of photographs to follow so instead used a database of the co-ordinates of mine workings. I used geo-locative technologies to identify precise points where mine workings of interest to cavers were located in order to show what the places linked to the archive co-ordinates looked like. Neither Godwin nor Arnatt had used GPS in their projects but both utilised map-inspired strategies. Godwin had followed the routes of walks in her early books and made photographs along those routes. Arnatt had confined himself to specific geographic areas, the Wye Valley AONB and the Forest of Dean. My photographs were made at precise positions led by archival information. Each photograph represents an attempt I made to create a photographic landscape that represents my understanding of 'Natural Beauty', but I make no claims as to why the land looked the way it did when I made the pictures. Whilst I used a pictorial method that linked the photographs to an idea

of 'Natural Beauty', there is nothing that specifically links the images visually to the AONB designation. The pictures instead show my interpretation of what 'Natural Beauty' looks like within a post-industrial landscape. Someone with different concerns and interests relating to the land, a geologist or ecologist for example, would be unlikely to interpret this place in the same way. Moreover, there is no evidence that another artist would interpret this place in the same way if they did not have the same history with the site, or conversely that they would not.

The photographs address each of the three research questions directly. First, in relation to how I can use critical photographic practice to interrogate the visual consequences of a conservation designation, I made the photographs at post-industrial sites within the Mendip Hills AONB. These pictures show a series of landscapes where the signs of the mining and quarrying industry are interwoven within a narrative of 'Natural Beauty'. The caption information is key in informing the viewer that there is potentially something unseen within the frame, referencing the remnant of each site's industrial use. Second, my photographs suggest the inclusion of Sandford Hill, especially the quarried, western section, within the AONB confirms that the positioning of conservation legislation is a cultural act. The photographs made inside the quarry show a series of landscapes where Nature does not appear to dominate, and the signs of human habitation and land use are not 'in keeping' with the surrounding environment - the quarrying broke down and removed parts of the terrain. Yet this place is labelled as an AONB. The photographs I made in the fields to the east of the site show an arable landscape that might better conform to imaginative geographies of 'Natural Beauty'. But these are not 'natural'. The land here was

flattened and repurposed after the designation for a change of use from mining to farming.

Geo-locative technologies were invaluable in the strategy at Sandford Hill. As I discovered early in the research, these technologies provided me with tools the use of which completely redefined how I make pictures. An unexpected result from my research has been the realisation that the archive is fluid. This has reinforced my argument that these places are cultural landscapes open to interpretation. Importantly, my use of geo-locative technology with the archive expanded upon the original goals for the project. When starting out in this research, I had no idea that the archive and geo-locative technology would become so important within my practice. Following the early results at Sandford Hill, I decided to place more focus on official datasets and on how geo-locative technology could lead a critical photographic investigation into conservation landscapes. Before expanding on this practice, I will present a further literary review that investigates how geo-locative technologies can lead photographic practice in Chapter 4.

## PHOTOGRAPHIC PRACTICE LED BY GEO-LOCATIVE TECHNOLOGIES

### 4.1 Introduction

The results at Sandford Hill introduced the importance of geo-locative technologies within my practice. At the start of this project, I set out to examine how a critical photographic practice could critique a conservation landscape. I quickly identified that one of the key systems used to construct these landscapes was the map, and that if I were to rigorously interrogate the visual consequences of the legislation then mapping had to become integral to my research methodology. The works by other photographers that I previously evaluated can be linked to the use of maps - Godwin's long-distance walks, Arnatt's work inside a defined area and Klett and Wolfe's return to precise vantage points all rely to varying degrees on the existence of a map, even if unseen within their final projects (see Chapter 2). The practice at Sandford Hill taught me the importance of maps to this project and the ways in which geo-locative technologies allow a deeper interaction with their content. My selection of further research sites involved an assessment of the mapped legislative conservation information available for different sites within the Mendip Hills AONB. Before I introduce these case studies, the following chapter expands

upon the literary review in Chapter 2. In this chapter I introduce and review the work of six projects made by five photographers who have embraced geolocate technologies within their working methods.

## 4.2 Photographing within a Grid

In this section I interrogate photographic strategies that respond to the primary tool of enacting and legitimising conservation areas - the map. The case studies selected are not an exhaustive record of the genre but do allow me to unpick some of the principal concerns and existing methods employed by artists utilising a map-led method of landscape photography. In section 4.2.1, I examine Joe Deal's attempt to challenge a specific imaginative geography in *West and West: Reimagining the Great Plains* (2009). My argument focuses on Deal's use of one specific system of knowledge to reveal and challenge a second system of knowledge. In section 4.2.2, I interrogate the first of two projects by the photographer Mark Power. In this section I review Power's methodology for the book, *The Shipping Forecast* (1998). Power drew upon the regions used in the weather broadcast of the same name as a basis for a photographic investigation. In section 4.2.3, I investigate Kate Mellor's survey of the coast line of the British Isles in her 1997 book, *Island*. Here my examination focuses primarily on the system of mapping that Mellor used to identify the precise points from which she made the photographs. Finally, I return to Power in section 4.2.4 and examine his book *26 different endings* (2007), in which he again used a grid to lead his photography, but this time to look beyond the

boundaries of a map of London. Each of these bodies of work is evaluated in terms of their contribution to a map-led system of photography.

#### 4.2.1 Joe Deal - *West and West: Reimagining the Great Plains*

In 2009, the photographer Joe Deal published his last major photographic project, *West and West: Reimagining the Great Plains*, a series of photographs exploring the Great Plains in the USA. The Great Plains is a broad expanse of flat land, mostly covered in prairie and grassland that runs between the Mississippi River in the East and the Rocky Mountains in the West, covering the length of the United States and some of Canada (figure 38). In this section I will deconstruct the impact of Deal's photographic methodology that he based on the grid system used to divide the Great Plains into manageable plots of agricultural land. I will also offer analysis on how Deal's photographs can contribute to a new imaginative geography of the Great Plains.





Figure 38: The Great Plains, © Center for Great Plain Studies, University of Nebraska-Lincoln

The Kansas-Nebraska Act 1854 created the territories of Kansas and Nebraska<sup>128</sup>, and in so doing made available new territory for survey and settlement by the principally European inhabitants and their descendants of the East coast. In June 1855, the surveyors Charles A. Manners and Joseph Ledlie set out west from the Missouri River along the 40<sup>th</sup> parallel to set the baseline for the Sixth Principal Meridian<sup>129</sup>. The method used for this survey was the Public Land Survey System originally introduced by Thomas Jefferson in the Land Ordinance of 1785. It involved the use of a Gunter's chain - a 66ft (1/10<sup>th</sup> of a furlong) chain that 2 surveyors would stretch out between them for precise measurement as they crossed the land<sup>130</sup>. This allowed the landscape of the Great Plains to be mapped and divided into plots of land be sold off (figure 39).

<sup>128</sup> Kansas-Nebraska Act, 1854, 10 Stat 277

<sup>129</sup> Penry, 2006

<sup>130</sup> Suchy, 2002; White, 1983, pp.11-12

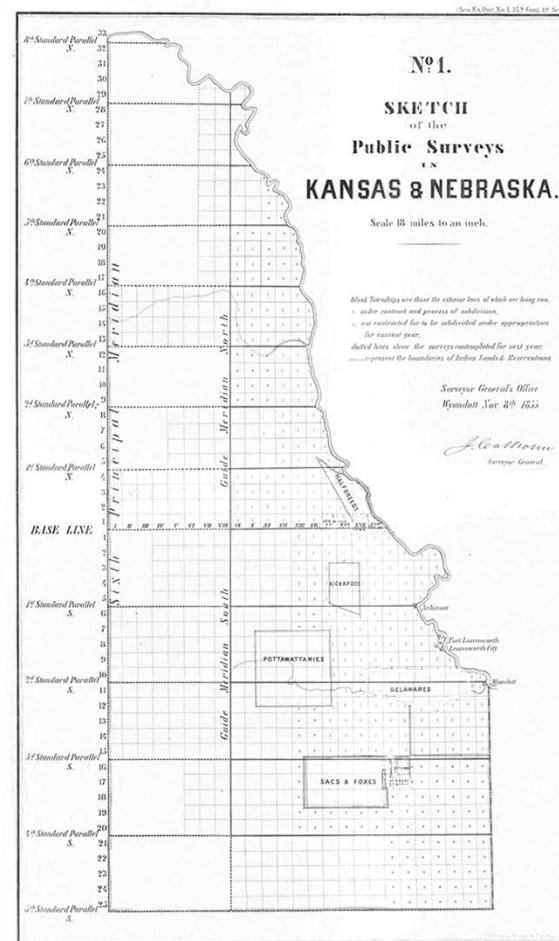


Figure 39: No. 1 Sketch of the Public Surveys in Kansas and Nebraska, Surveyor Generals Office/A.O.P. Nicholson, Calhoun, J. 1855

Deal provides an overview of the resulting grid system in his introduction to

*West and West:*

The basic unit of the grid was the six-mile square, approximately the distance one can see, looking in opposite directions, from horizon to horizon. The squares, or 'townships', in each north-south column of the grid were numbered, starting from the baseline, moving outwardly in both directions. The squares, or 'ranges', in each east-west row of the grid were numbered from the principal meridian. Each east-west and north-south numbered square was comprised of thirty-six sections, also numbered, each measuring one square mile. A section (640 acres) could be further subdivided into quarter sections, and each quarter section could also be subdivided

into quarters of forty acres each, leaving no leftovers or uncounted parcels, down to the last acre<sup>131</sup>.

The lasting effect of this system of land division can be seen today in satellite pictures. A satellite image of a small section of Kansas, south-west of the city of Wichita, shows how the land has been divided into saleable pockets, each being shaped through the agriculture of the past 160 years (figure 40).

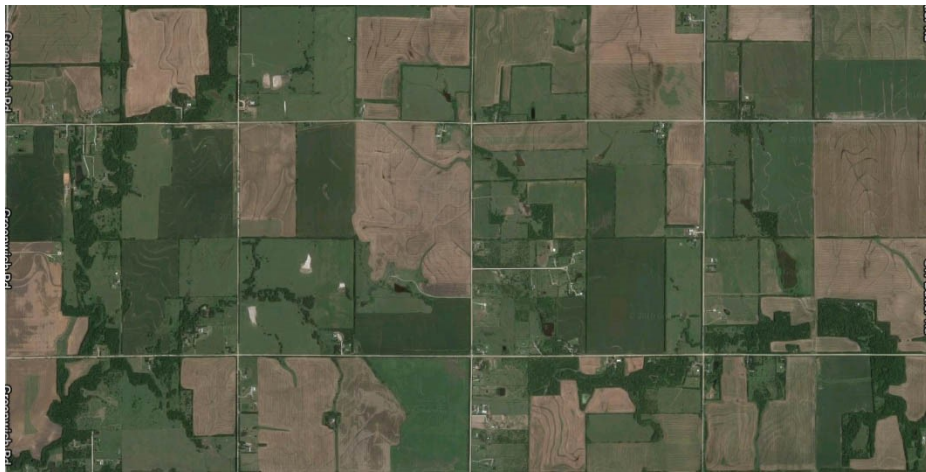


Figure 40: Screen capture of Google Maps view of the land south-west of the city of Wichita, KS. Source: Google Earth Pro 7.1.5. 2016. South-west of Wichita, KS. 37°29'50.82" N 97°10'16.74" W. Viewed 26<sup>th</sup> July 2016.

In his introduction to the project, Deal argued that he wanted to overcome this grid - to re-establish the Great Plains as a vast space within the imagination with his photographs<sup>132</sup>. Deal was attempting to challenge the perception of the Great Plains as a contained, managed space. If the grid system had been used to tame, control, and sell the Great Plains, then Deal's photographs are an attempt to remind the viewer that this system of control is only one way of seeing and understanding them. My analysis of the book reveals that Deal is

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<sup>131</sup> Deal, 2009, pp.6-7

<sup>132</sup> *ibid*, p.14

not only attempting to remove the grid from a viewer's perception of the Great Plains but also to encourage other methods of understanding this place through his photographs. Curator Britt Salvesen argues in an essay accompanying the project that Deal has become predominantly concerned with those, 'more profound, geologic aspects of the land' that had begun to appear in his photography during the previous project, *Topos* (1984-1997)<sup>133</sup>. This analysis overlooks the importance of the grid to lead Deal's methodology. In addition to those geologic aspects of the land, Deal's photographs are about the act of framing. The square negative produced by Deal's camera reflects the square framing of the land by the grid<sup>134</sup>. The cover image for Deal's book of the project is captioned, 'Flint Hills, 2006, Negative #W7\_3\_06' (figure 41).

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<sup>133</sup> Salvesen, 2009, p.101

<sup>134</sup> Deal, 2009, pp.14-15



Figure 41: Flint Hills, 2006, Negative #W7\_3\_06 from 'West and West' © Joe Deal

In the framing of the picture, the 'geologic aspects of the land' cited by Salvesen are present - the stones in the foreground, the shape and texture of the ground and the grasses that cover this piece of land. The square format black and white pictorial strategy used here is replicated throughout the project. The photographs are divided horizontally through the centre of the frame by the horizon. In this photograph the sky appears as a flat, cloudless grey but this is not kept consistent throughout the work. The horizon is never interrupted with any signs of modern activity although trees and hillocks are allowed within the frame. There are no cities, towns or any contemporary signs of human habitation or land management in the pictures. Deal is also careful to avoid any

obvious signs of the land being worked by man. In these photographs by Deal, the Great Plains are a deserted place.

Deal includes captions for each of the photographs in the book that reflect three different systems of cataloguing. The first system is the recording of the name of the place. As Liz Wells has argued, the act of naming is one of taming<sup>135</sup>. There might appear to be little conceptual difference between identifying a precise section of the land with a grid number or with a place name. But this name is recorded in English, reflecting a very specific, Anglo-American idea of ownership of this land, in effect overwriting previous native American histories. In his effort to bypass one culturally biased system of cataloguing the land, Deal is simply shifting the emphasis to another. Deal's second system is the recording of the year when he made the picture. In an echo of my identification of the English language used in the place name, Deal's identification of the year fits within a specific, western, understanding of the recording of time within the Gregorian calendar. Deal's third system of cataloguing is the most individual to him - his system of cataloguing his negatives. I understand this to be a reference to the assumed documentary attribution of the photograph. The inclusion of the negative number allows Deal to make the claim that this is a document that represents a wider system, just like the grid references of the map reference their system. Viewed in this way, I argue that Deal is referencing the ability of the photograph to pretend to be an authentic record. Deal is standing at a location at a specific time and making a photograph that appears to represent this place. My analysis of the project reveals that, when compared

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<sup>135</sup> Wells, 2011, p.3

to the data of the grid, Deal's approach is a challenge. Where Deal attempts to portray an endless scene of wild land, the grid portrays a seemingly endless array of farmed and controlled land. By referencing how he catalogues his photographs, Deal is directing viewers to the fact that these photographs exist as documents apart from other systems, as part of his system of cataloguing the land with his camera.

I conclude that Deal's method is as much about revealing a system used to perceive the Great Plains as it is about the Great Plains themselves. Deal's pictures are simply another interpretation, an attempt to see beyond one system of classification and perceive how the land might be catalogued and understood in another through the camera. The key problem with this strategy is that Deal does not appear to identify his reliance on other systems that are inherent in his approach to this place. He writes extensively about the system he is attempting to overcome so it is my interpretation that he did not identify all the other systems on which he based his own working method. This is a significant issue when the systems implicit in his work that Deal appears to be ignoring signify the same broader act of colonisation of America that his strategy appears to be attempting to question.

#### 4.2.2 Mark Power - *The Shipping Forecast*

The photographer and academic Mark Power has published two extended bodies of work based on systems of mapping familiar to those living in the United Kingdom. The first of these was his 1996 *The Shipping Forecast* and the

second his 2007 *26 Different Endings*. In each of these projects, Power uses a system of mapping to lead a photographic narrative. Neither series is about conservation landscapes, so my analysis of both focuses on the precise methods that Power used to allow maps to lead his photographic investigations.

In *The Shipping Forecast*, Power examines the land (and sea) divided by the system used in the daily maritime weather alert of the same name broadcast four times a day on BBC Radio Four. This system divides areas of land and sea around the coast of the British Isles into thirty-one individual sections. Power visited each of these sections to make photographs and has presented them in three different ways - an exhibition, a book, and an online multimedia presentation. The book of the project contains sixty-six photographs, indicating that Power allowed himself to include more than one picture per section in the final edit. To fully understand Power's approach, I analysed the distribution of locations represented in his photographs (figure 42).



**Shipping Forecast Region    Number of Pictures**

<i>Viking</i>	1
<i>North Utsire</i>	1
<i>South Utsire</i>	2
<i>Forties</i>	1
<i>Cromarty</i>	3
<i>Forth</i>	1
<i>Tyne</i>	3
<i>Dogger</i>	1
<i>Fisher</i>	1
<i>German Bight</i>	5
<i>Humber</i>	4
<i>Thames</i>	3
<i>Dover</i>	3
<i>Wight</i>	4
<i>Portland</i>	2
<i>Plymouth</i>	2
<i>Biscay</i>	3
<i>Trafalgar</i>	3
<i>Finisterre</i> <sup>136</sup>	3
<i>Sole</i>	1
<i>Lundy</i>	3
<i>Fastnet</i>	1
<i>Irish Sea</i>	2
<i>Shannon</i>	1
<i>Rockall</i>	1
<i>Malin</i>	2
<i>Hebrides</i>	2
<i>Bailey</i>	1
<i>Fair Isle</i>	2
<i>Faeroes</i>	1
<i>Southeast Iceland</i>	3

Figure 42: Number of photographs in Mark Power's 'The Shipping Forecast' book edit per Shipping Forecast region.

This confirms that Power appears to have visited every one of the areas, but that they are not represented evenly within the final edit. Under each photograph in the book, Power includes a caption that states the place name according to the shipping forecast, the date the photograph was made, and the

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<sup>136</sup> The area referred to as Finisterre has been renamed to FitzRoy since Power published the project. The name Finisterre has been used within this thesis as I am specifically referencing Power's project.

shipping forecast for that area on that day. More precise locations of each photograph are given in the captions as place names in the index at the rear of the book, but not specific co-ordinates. The project is not about locating precise points. As I shall argue, this is significant relative to the work of Mellor, Myren and Caro (see sections 4.2.3, 4.3.1 and 4.3.2 respectively). Power is using a methodology that allows him to make a photograph anywhere he chooses within an area defined by a map. The project is about those areas that are given obscure names that are heard daily over the radio and described in a way that few understand<sup>137</sup>. It is about a system of mapping that is commonly encountered but seldom understood. Power states that his aim is to, 'challenge our assumptions of these far-flung places'<sup>138</sup>, which suggests that his motive is, like Deal's, to contribute towards new imaginative geographies of these places.

The *Shipping Forecast* is one of the final projects Power published in black and white using a square negative. He shifted to working with colour large format negatives between 1999 and 2000<sup>139</sup>. The pictorial strategy he uses across the series varies. There are pictures of families playing on the beach that allude to a rich history of British reportage photography (figure 43)<sup>140</sup>. Beside these pictures are landscape photographs that are more familiar from Power's later,

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<sup>137</sup> The daily Shipping Forecast is presented in a strict format with a limit of 370 words that includes gale warnings, a general synopsis (giving position, pressure, and the track of pressure areas) along with each area's forecast in the format: wind direction and strength followed by precipitation and lastly visibility (Met Office, no date, p.14)

<sup>138</sup> Power, no date c

<sup>139</sup> This is personal knowledge from when I worked in the production department at Magnum Photos when Power first joined in 2002 but is supported by the shift in medium shown in the galleries on his website.

<sup>140</sup> The beach has been referred to as 'the place British Photographers have instead of the street' ('Paper Movies', 2007)

more considered pictorial strategies<sup>141</sup>. The project was made shortly after he began teaching and focusing his personal work on long term, self-initiated projects<sup>142</sup>. It is my interpretation that Power was undergoing a transition in artistic vision; that is why we see remnants of his older pictorial style in the pictures of people *doing* things alongside those quieter pictures that reflect on the presence of people rather than depicting the people themselves.



Figure 43: HUMBER. Saturday 13 July 1996. Southwesterley veering northwesterly 4 or 5. Occasional drizzle. Moderate with fog patches. © Mark Power

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<sup>141</sup> In Power's recent projects 'Postcards from America VI:OK/IE' and 'The City of Six Towns' he still includes people, but they are posed portraits rather than reportage style action photographs of people *doing* things that are a familiar subject within street photography.

<sup>142</sup> See Power, no date b

*The Shipping Forecast* is a useful example of how a book, exhibition and multimedia web presentation might offer three different insights into the same body of work. The exhibition used a sound track set to play random excerpts from episodes of 'The Shipping Forecast' as the viewer walked around the exhibition<sup>143</sup>. There is no way to control how a viewer interacts with photographs on a wall - they can start at whichever photograph they wish and move around in whatever pattern they desire. With the book, Power regains some control over the viewing experience - the book is intended to be viewed from start to finish, but by nature of the medium you begin to lose the relationship between the photographs and the audio of the 'The Shipping Forecast'. In the book, Power is relying on the reader being intimately familiar with the BBC Radio Four programme to understand his strategy. The multimedia allows Power to control the viewing experience to a much greater extent. The timeline of the video presents information as Power wishes, and correspondingly with pictures appropriate to the precise audio being played<sup>144</sup>. The downside of the multimedia presentation is that each picture, whilst it can be meticulously studied in the exhibition or the book, is only in front of the viewer for a few seconds. The timing of the multimedia subverts the power of the still image to invite prolonged study of a framed scene.

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<sup>143</sup> Power, 2005, p.12 where he notes that on its first showing, in Brighton Museum, Messrs Miller and Porter recorded over one hundred forecasts and split them into segments. These were then played at random intervals as visitors wondered around the gallery.

<sup>144</sup> Power & Workman, 2010

#### 4.2.3 Kate Mellor - *Island*

In 1997, the photographic artist-researcher Kate Mellor published her book *Island*. The project, originally called *Island: The Sea Front*<sup>145</sup> features a series of panoramic photographs made around Britain looking at the coastline and out to sea. Mellor intended the work as, 'a pilgrimage around the physical perimeter of mainland Britain in order to see more clearly the body of the motherland out of which our society had sprung'<sup>146</sup>. My focus within the following analysis is not on Mellor's success or otherwise of revealing the 'body of the motherland'. Instead, I will examine the 'quasi-scientific'<sup>147</sup> strategy by which Mellor set out to encounter the coastline.

Mellor's strategy for the project was to identify precise points where lines of latitude or longitude crossed the coast line of mainland Britain, and then going there and making a photograph. These lines of latitude and longitude were drawn as a reference to the map projection used on Ordnance Survey Great Britain maps - the National Grid. Mellor identified her starting point as Shakespeare Cliff in Dover, grid reference TR 300395. From here, the artist laid out lines of longitude and latitude every 50km. Mellor then visited and photographed each point of convergence between the coast and lines of longitude for the north and south coastlines and between the coast and lines of latitude for the east and west coasts (figure 44).

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<sup>145</sup> Mellor identifies the change of title as being made by publisher Dewi Lewis to increase sales of the book (Mellor, 2016)

<sup>146</sup> Mellor, 1997, p.59

<sup>147</sup> This is the descriptive term Mellor has used herself about the method employed (Mellor, 2016)

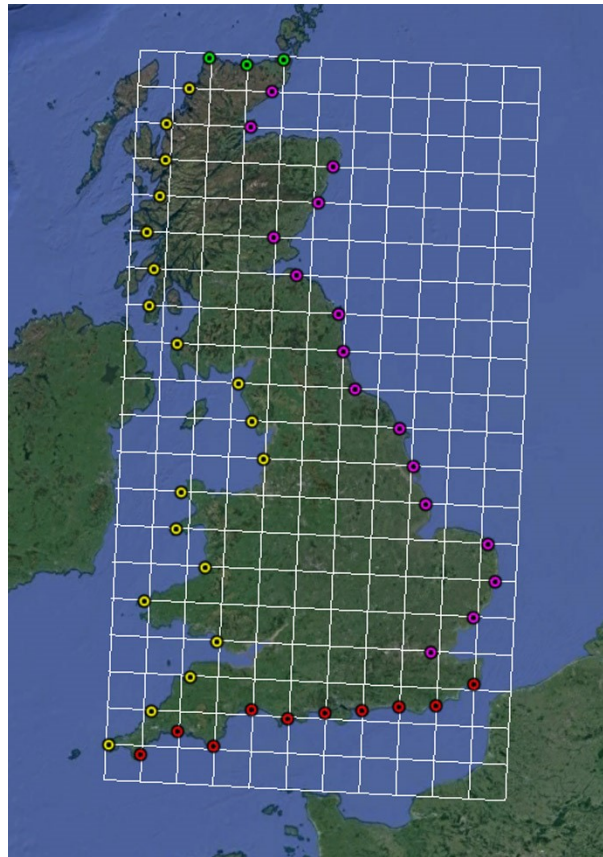


Figure 44: Mellor's grid system and final points plotted onto a satellite image of the UK. Source: Google Earth Pro 7.1.7. 2017. 53°47'2.63" N 01°37'31.28" W. Custom grid based on Ordnance Survey National Grid; locations of Mellor's vantage points; and Google Satellite image data layers. Viewed 9<sup>th</sup> September 2016.

Mellor made no claim that these are the precise co-ordinates of the vantage points in her photographs. Instead, the system underpinned her wider survey of the British coastline. Within the context of this research though it is useful for me to determine the accuracy of the method, so that I can establish how useful it might be if adapted to my case study sites. I checked Mellor's grid references against views in Google Street View. Immediately, I identified that seven of Mellor's Grid references were a kilometre or more away from both the viewpoint of the photograph and the convergence point of the mapped line and coastline. An additional ten were more than two hundred metres but less than one

kilometre away from the viewpoint or the coastline/map convergence point.

Picture #37 from Mellor's final edit, composed from the western side of the Tay Bridge in Dundee (figure 45), shows a significant variation from the stated co-ordinates.



Figure 45: Mellor point #37 - Dundee. Marked inaccurately in the book of the project as made from point NO298300. © Kate Mellor 1989-97

In the locations index in the book, Mellor claims that the picture was made at NO 298300, but this point is 10.9km inland. Google Street View shows the view from the nearest road, looking directly at the position of grid reference NO 298300, which is located within the field just beyond the foreground fence (figure 46).



Figure 46: Google Street View screen capture looking at the position of grid reference NO 298300. Source: Google Earth Pro 7.1.5. 2009. 56°27'24.74" N 03°08'26.66" W. Elevation 0m. Google Street View, viewed 24<sup>th</sup> July 2016. <<http://www.google.com/earth/index.html>>

The actual grid reference for Mellor's picture is NO407300 (figure 47).



Figure 47: Google Street View screen capture from grid reference NO 407300. Source: Google Earth Pro 7.1.5. 2015. 56°27'32.49" N 02°57'44.40" W. Elevation 0m. Google Street View, viewed 24<sup>th</sup> July 2016. <<http://www.google.com/earth/index.html>>

I contacted Mellor about the discrepancy and she confirmed it was an error within the printing of the book. It is my position that, whilst this is troublesome, it does not negate the relevance of Mellor's method for artists interested in map-based strategies. Mellor made the photographs at the points of convergence between the grid lines and the coast. The mismatch was in Mellor's



identification of the grid references of these points. Describing her working method, Mellor states that if she, 'found, on arriving, that the site was contained in some kind of natural or man-made structure such as a small cove or park and I would work in this area'<sup>148</sup>. Mellor was not precise in terms of her identification of how much room to manoeuvre she allowed herself. It is my position that as she is working with either an Ordnance Survey Landranger (1:50000 scale) or Explorer (1:25000 scale) map, a degree of accuracy of 100m is a realistic target. Mellor was working in the late 1980s and early 1990s and relied on a map and compass to identify these points on the land. If the study was repeated today, Mellor might choose to utilise modern GPS technology to precisely identify the points of convergence. However, this was not the point of Mellor's work at the time. The project was about producing an artistic exploration of the British psyche. Mellor made a series of photographs where the camera looked out to sea from equally spaced points along the coastline as the hook with which to draw together a pictorial survey of Britain. The geographic precision of method, whilst critically important within my own practice and in how I interrogate broader trends in critical photographic practice within this literature review, was not of central importance within Mellor's work.

Mellor adopted the pictorial strategy of survey photography for the series. She used a Widelux camera to make panoramic photographs that looked out to sea from a position on the map. Mellor's intent when making the work was to exhibit the prints around a gallery so that visitors would be, 'always looking out towards the horizon'<sup>149</sup>. This relies on Mellor maintaining a consistent viewpoint with a

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<sup>148</sup> Mellor, 2016

<sup>149</sup> Mellor 2016

similar distance to the subjects within each photograph. The choice of a camera primarily designed for surveying pipelines was important to Mellor as, 'the seeming detachment of its original usage suited my purposes'<sup>150</sup>. Mellor maintained this apparent detachment by adopting the style of a survey within the photographs. However, as Liz Wells argues, Mellor's strategy was a ruse, 'there is no conceptual reason for photographing every 50 kilometres'<sup>151</sup>. Wells goes on to identify that, 'cartography is not neutral; it involves the power to define, interpret and encode information (and, as a discipline, implicates issues of territoriality)'<sup>152</sup>. Mellor's 'quasi-scientific' survey used her own system to divide an existing and well-known system of mapping the British Isles, using it to hint at the long history of human involvement with this coastline. However, her work is not a direct critique of the system of mapping, or even the power of the map. Mellor's series is about how identity is both reflected and created by the coast, and her seemingly straightforward survey style allowed her to draw attention to the complicated relationship the British have with their island's boundary.

#### 4.2.4 Mark Power - *26 Different Endings*

In *26 Different Endings* (2007), Power used a 2003<sup>153</sup> copy of the *A to Z Map of London* to trace the boundary of London. Power visited each page along the boundary and followed the map off the page into the 'unknown'. Describing his

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<sup>150</sup> Mellor, 1997, p.55

<sup>151</sup> Wells, 2011, p.273

<sup>152</sup> Wells, 2011, p.273

<sup>153</sup> Whilst Power claims he used a 2003 edition, there doesn't appear to have been one. Edition 5A was published in 2002 and edition 5B was published in 2004. The latter of these is labelled Crown copyright 2003 so I have interpreted this as the version Power used.

method, Power states that he, 'tried, as best I could, to be on the very edge of the map'<sup>154</sup>. The captions reference the page Power worked from to find this point, alongside the cardinal direction followed by Power off the map. The result is a series of pictures of areas one would consider to be London if you were walking in the city, but the map suggests is elsewhere, beyond the city.

Power alludes to the system that underpins the project through the inclusion of a facsimile of the grid covering the whole of London that functions as a contents page in the A-Z atlas. In the London A-Z this serves to tell readers the coverage of each page at a glance. In Power's version, he has removed the underlying map of London but kept the page numbers from the atlas. On his website Power claims that the, 'coverage of the map changes with each new edition. Someone somewhere decides, year by year, where it should end; which parts of the periphery of London should be included, and which should not. This project is about the unfortunate places that fall just off the edge'<sup>155</sup>. In some areas this boundary remains unchanged for long periods and in others it is more fluid. A 1995 edition shows the northwest boundary at Bushey Heath to be the same as in the 2004 edition used by Power<sup>156</sup>. In the 2012 edition the boundary is the width of a road further south, leaving the houses on one side of a road that were, a decade ago, inside the boundary on the outside<sup>157</sup>. The greatest expansion is along the western boundary where in 1995 London Heathrow Airport was not included within the boundary, instead lying almost 3 miles further to the west. This fluidity of the boundary of the map reinforces the idea

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<sup>154</sup> Power, 2016

<sup>155</sup> Power, no date a

<sup>156</sup> Geographers' A-Z Map Co. Ltd (1995) and Geographers' A-Z Map Company Ltd (2004)

<sup>157</sup> Geographers' A-Z Map Company Ltd (2012) A-Z

that the map is a human construct and can be changed - that someone, somewhere makes a decision about where a boundary should lie. This mutability has been interrogated at length within my analysis of the practice at Sandford Hill (see Chapter 3).

Power's pictorial strategy is based upon using his large format camera to record an experiential view of the land. The camera is positioned at approximately head height and sufficient depth of field is employed to render the whole scene in focus. The photographs show the viewer a place claimed to be just beyond the edge of the map. The only sign the viewer has that this is a boundary is because Power makes that claim. In the book of the project, captions are printed in a small font directly opposite each picture and include a letter representing the position of the image within the sequence, a page number from the A-Z that situates the starting point for Power finding this vantage point, and the cardinal direction in which he ventured from that page. Most of the pictures are single images but there are two diptychs, 'E 10 West' and 'U 152 South'. Power includes no conceptual reason for the inclusion of these diptychs. Liz Wells examines Power's photographs in her exploration of photography that confronts our sense of location in her 2011 book, *Land Matters*, and notes that, '(o)ften there is little sense that this location is peripheral, which leads us to wonder why this was determined as boundary'<sup>158</sup>. This sense of wondering about the positioning of the boundary permeates the series and led me to conduct a short experiment where I set out to identify the locations of as many

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<sup>158</sup> Wells, 2011, p.273

of the pictures as possible via Google Street View<sup>159</sup>. Of the twenty-six different photographs included in the book I could identify the eight locations that correspond to the following photographs (figure 48).

<i>Power's Picture</i>	<i>Latitude</i>	<i>Longitude</i>
<i>Reference</i>		
<i>A 148 South</i>	51°20'54.54"N	0°13'35.08"W
<i>E 10 West</i>	51°36'33.71"N	0°22'12.65"W
<i>F 76 West</i>	51°29'43.85"N	0°29'13.51"W
<i>H 75 East</i>	51°30'49.61"N	0°10'54.48"E
<i>K 13 North</i>	51°38'33.84"N	0°15'6.06"W
<i>L 6 North</i>	51°39'51.81"N	0° 6'14.83"W
<i>S 10 North</i>	51°38'20.77"N	0°20'50.52"W
<i>T 128 South</i>	51°24'33.81"N	0° 7'35.20"E

Figure 48: Locations of the vantage points used by Mark Power in 26 Different Endings (2007). Co-ordinates are expressed in WGS 84 (EPSG:4326)

Comparing the positions of the photographs to the grid map of the A to Z presents a challenge to Power’s account of his method. The photograph L 6 North (figure 49) shows a section of property attached to Chase Farm Hospital in Enfield.

<sup>159</sup> Google Street View primarily displays views from roads and as such is only a useful tool in identifying the viewpoints in situations where the photographer was close to or on a road.



Figure 49: L 6 North. From the series 26 different endings. © Mark Power 2006

Almost the same vantage point can be viewed in Google Street View (figure 50).



Figure 50: Google Street View screen capture from close to the vantage point used by Power in L 6 North. Source: Google Earth Pro 7.1.5. 2015. 51°39'51.85" N 0°06'14.82" W. Elevation 0m. Google Street View, viewed 11<sup>th</sup> August 2016. <<http://www.google.com/earth/index.html>>

Identifying the location where the photograph was made provided me with two useful pieces of information about Power's working method. Firstly, the picture was made looking south. This means that Power's strategy did not include him looking away from the city edge. Secondly, the position where Power made the photograph was just to the east of page 6 in the A-Z, not to the north as claimed. The point is beyond the boundary of page 6 but is represented on page 7, in square F1. The point is approximately 320m south of the northern boundary, and 160m east of the eastern boundary of page 6 into page 7. In this case I interpret the margin of error as not enough to dismiss the work altogether. The series is still about the edgelands of London. Power did not need to include the page numbers and cardinal directions for the work to be effective. I argue that their inclusion is an attempt to reference the power of the map. The place shown in picture L 6 North is close to the boundary, just not beyond it. If one was to walk the boundary of page 6 of the London A-Z, this scene would be identifiable (subject to the houses not being demolished). It is my interpretation that as Power has only provided an approximate idea of where the picture was made, we can only interpret it as approximately accurate. The series is not about identifying precise points but to use the edge of the map as a guide.

In the above sections I surveyed three bodies of work that utilised maps to lead a critical photographic practice. All rely on a mode of photography familiar within photographic surveys and tied up in similar concerns to the work reviewed earlier in this study (see Chapter 2). These pictorial strategies are predominantly about an examination of the 'view'. Each of these projects uses a map to guide where photographs will be made and in this context they operate

as useful exemplars for the remaining practice case studies in this research. Where they hold the most significance, however, lies in their presentation. The three projects were all presented as books alongside exhibitions and, in the case of Power's *The Shipping Forecast*, a multimedia production. In reviewing each of these methods of presentation I conclude that the inclusion of map and caption information is vital to maintain an intrinsic link between the final photographs and the system of mapping underpinning their creation. In the following sections I examine specific bodies of work where the artist's method of using the map to lead a pictorial strategy is of the most critical relevance to this study.

#### 4.3 Photographing Specific Points

In this section, I begin with a brief overview of the exhibition *Locating Landscapes: New Strategies, New Technologies* that linked together contemporary geo-locative technologies and critical photographic practice. This summary of the work included in the show helps situate it within the broader trends within landscape photography that have influenced my critical practice. Following this, I examine two bodies of work where artists have used geo-locative technology to lead their photography. These artists are presented as distinct from the work reviewed above (see section 4.2) because of their use of GPS receivers to locate vantage points based solely on mapped information. I begin with an examination of Bruce Myren's *The Fortieth Parallel* in section 4.3.1. This was a long-term project in which Myren traversed the width of the United States, making photographs at every whole degree of longitude along



the 40<sup>th</sup> parallel in the US. I then investigate the series *10 mile points* by the artist Christiana Caro in section 4.3.2. Caro made a series of panoramic images at points claimed to be 10 miles away from her then apartment in Boston, Massachusetts, in the directions of each of the cardinal (N, S, W, E) and inter-cardinal (NW, NE, SW, SE) bearings. These artists were chosen for review here because of their reliance on GPS and a map to dictate precisely where they should position their cameras. Neither artist claimed to allow themselves more room to reinterpret their viewpoint than the margin of error of the GPS device used. This is of specific relevance within my own research where I address issues relating to geographic accuracy both in my practice and the works reviewed earlier in this chapter.

In 2009, the Sam Lee Gallery in LA exhibited *Locating Landscape: New Strategies, New Technologies*, organised to take place concurrently with LACMA's showing of the New Topographics show, recreated by George Eastman House and the Center for Creative Photography in Tucson, Arizona. *Locating Landscape: New Strategies, New Technologies* travelled to Tucson in 2010 and was shown alongside Deal's *West and West: Reimagining the Great Plains* at the Center for Creative Photography. The exhibition was guest-curated by photo historian Kate Palmer-Albers and included work by Lewis Baltz, Christiana Caro, Andrew Freeman, Frank Gohlke, Margot Anne Kelley, Mark Klett and Byron Wolfe, Paho Mann, and Adam Thorman. Each of the projects shown made use of geo-locative technologies in different ways. Images from Baltz's 1977 Nevada series were included to help define the historical position of the exhibition as coming out of the new ways of photographing the land that

had gained traction after the 1975 New Topographics exhibition<sup>160</sup>. Caro identified points a set distance from her home in Boston and then used GPS to find and photograph from those points. Freeman used archival records to locate and 'rephotograph' the barracks that had once been used at the Manzanar internment camp and since had been sold off, moved, and repurposed around California. Gohlke worked in collaboration with poet Herbert Gottfried to produce a body of work exploring a specific line of latitude (42°30" North) where they responded to what they encountered. Kelley paired landscape photographs with first-person accounts of her adventures in geo-caching - the implication being that somewhere within the frame there is an invisible geo-cache waiting to be found. Klett and Wolfe found the sites of canonical imagery of the Grand Canyon and developed upon the method they used in Yosemite National Park to produce panoramic digital colour prints that incorporate historic imagery. Mann identified and photographed vacated Circle-K convenience stores that had been re-inhabited, using a repeated pictorial strategy throughout the series. Thorman followed a river as a literal line, tracing its path across the land from east to west. The link with Deal's work is explicit in these artists. Deal's influence came from his inclusion (along with Frank Gohlke's) in the 1975 New Topographics exhibition. Palmer-Albers was attempting to identify the work that had been developed from the same ideas as expressed in the New Topographics show but demonstrated a development in method of engagement with the land<sup>161</sup>. Palmer-Albers was effectively declaring that the newer works were post-new topographic in nature.

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<sup>160</sup> Here I am not suggesting that the New Topographics exhibition created the new way of seeing, but instead was a sign of a shift in perception amongst artists about how the land might be photographed.

<sup>161</sup> Sam Lee Gallery, 2009

#### 4.3.1 Bruce Myren - *The Fortieth Parallel*

Although not included in 'Locating Landscapes', a significant part of US photographer Bruce Myren's practice is focused on using geo-locative technologies to guide where he makes photographs. In 2012, Myren completed *The Fortieth Parallel*, a project that saw him spend 14 years navigating and making pictures along the 40<sup>th</sup> parallel north line of latitude across the width of the United States. Myren made a series of 10x8" panoramic triptychs that showed an angle of view of 180° from vantage points located where the map showed the 40<sup>th</sup> parallel north crossed each whole degree of longitude. He made one triptych at each of the fifty points of longitude/latitude intersection, plus an additional two triptychs showing where the line of latitude intersects with the coastline. The result is a series of fifty-two panoramic triptychs made at positions identified on a map. Myren used a handheld GPS unit to identify each location and enforced the strict method on himself of making the exposure within a 20ft radius of the GPS point. The reason for using the 20ft radius is to allow for inaccuracy in the reading due to the inherent limitations of handheld GPS units. By factoring a margin of error into his method, Myren is acknowledging that the system is not perfect whilst still confining his practice to a strict, external, limitation. The geographical information is included in the caption for each picture, and they are presented on Myren's website in geographical order from West to East. The only exceptions to the geo-locative rules followed within the method are the inclusion of additional pictures on the western and eastern edges of the US. The western picture, the initial image in the series, is located at N 40° 01' 11.38" W 124° 02' 48.59". The eastern, final

picture in the series is located at N 40° 00' 01" W 74° 03' 32". The assumption that comes from reading the work is that they are included to frame the series between the two coast lines, but Myren does not mention it either within published interviews or his press release for the project.

Myren's strategy is based within a mode of photographic survey. His choice of camera, a large wooden 10x8" field camera, speaks to the surveys of the American West during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Myren identifies the influence of his civil engineer and surveyor father, who introduced him to the division of the planet with lines of latitude and longitude through an analogy based on Star Trek<sup>162</sup>. Myren argues that his work is a '21<sup>st</sup> century look at a survey'<sup>163</sup>. Unlike the 19<sup>th</sup> century surveys of the 40<sup>th</sup> parallel that included aspects of the land around where the map positioned the line of latitude<sup>164</sup>, Myren is interested in the exactness of the modern experience. GPS allows him to reference, 'how things are timed and things are placed precisely', and how this speaks to, 'how we are and how we live in the world now'<sup>165</sup>. Unlike in Deal's work, Myren is not avoiding the traces of people. In Myren's pictures, the America of the 21<sup>st</sup> century has become like the UK where most of the land is farmland, or has at least been touched or altered in some way. Myren's survey is not just about what the land looks like but how it is understood and mapped.

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<sup>162</sup> Godfrey & Elkinton, 2013

<sup>163</sup> *ibid*

<sup>164</sup> Davis & Aspinwall, 2012, p.58-62

<sup>165</sup> Godfrey & Elkinton, 2013

Myren's pictorial strategy relies on the production of three frames at each location to form a panoramic triptych. This allows the traditional frame of the camera to be expanded, with Myren arguing that this 'emulates a person's entire field of vision'<sup>166</sup>. The key problem with this approach is that photography is not the same as seeing with the eye, even when presented in this way. Our vision, whilst encompassing 180°, does not represent everything equally within that frame. The photographs show a flat plane covering 180° but the viewer loses the sense that the pictures to the left and right are compositions angled slightly to the left and right of the photographer. Myren is creating a series of 'views' that can be considered in the same context as Krauss' examination of the O'Sullivan's stereoscopes (see pp.91-92). In this context and going forward, my use of the noun 'view' rather than or beside 'landscape' is intended to imply a link to a geographical system of record. In the practice element of this thesis I test this pictorial method at Banwell Wood and the results are fully analysed within Chapter 5 of this thesis.

Myren goes further than the previous case studies in reinforcing the link between his photographs and a map. He includes the precise co-ordinates where each triptych is made within the caption data as well as an embedded Google Map on his website that identifies his vantage points. Rather than just referencing the map through a grid reference or a page number and cardinal direction, I interpret this as Myren inviting viewers to virtually, 'go there and

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<sup>166</sup> Myren, 2012

check it out'<sup>167</sup>. Myren is reinforcing the crucial link between the map and his photographs.

In response to Myren's rhetorical challenge, as in previous sections of this thesis, I repeated the analytical process of testing out the photographer's claim. In Myren's series, the only triptych made in a position accessible via Google Street View is 'N 40° 00' 00" W 80° 00' 00" Fredericktown Hill, Pennsylvania, 2006' (figure 51).



Figure 51: N 40° 00' 00" W 80° 00' 00" Fredericktown Hill, Pennsylvania, 2006 © Bruce Myren 2012

When I entered those co-ordinates into Google Earth, the view in Street View matched (figure 52).

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<sup>167</sup> Here I am referencing Wood and Fels identification of the challenge of the map, expanded upon earlier in this thesis (see p.39)



Figure 52: Google Street View screen capture at N 40° 00' 00" W 80° 00' 00". Source: Google Earth Pro 7.1.5. 2012. 40°00'00" N 80°00'00" W. Elevation 0m. Google Street View, viewed 26<sup>th</sup> July 2016. <<http://www.google.com/earth/index.html>>

Myren's *The Fortieth Parallel* operates as a model for how a 21<sup>st</sup> century photographer can use a data driven practice. Difficulties arise however in his assertion that a panoramic triptych reflects the human field of vision. These are fully analysed later in this thesis through my interrogation of my own results using the same pictorial strategy (see Chapter 5). However, these difficulties are not large enough to discount the geo-locative aspects of Myren's method and I position 'The Fortieth Parallel' as an invaluable model for how photographers can respond to mapped data using digital geo-locative technologies.

#### 4.3.2 Christiana Caro -10 Mile Points

The series shown in 'Locating Landscapes' by the artist Christiana Caro is particularly important within the terms of this project. Caro produced a series of

pictures between 2001 and 2002 originally called ‘10 miles North, South, East, West and Points in Between’, but more recently abbreviated this to ‘10 mile points’<sup>168</sup>. Caro drew a 10-mile radius circle from her apartment in Boston, Massachusetts, on a map and then marked out points at each cardinal and inter-cardinal direction. Caro used a GPS receiver to locate each point in turn and made a series of photographic panoramas comprised of square format photographs. At each position, Caro stood in place and turned through 360° whilst making the exposures. The resulting pictures were presented as photographic panoramas, one for each of the positions identified. Press releases for the exhibition describe the method as being based on creating a frame of view of 365°, although it is my interpretation viewing the work that this is most likely a miscommunication and the description should have been 360°. Looking at the panoramas themselves, there is some inconsistency between how each was produced. ‘10 Miles Points Southwest’, the panorama that was shown in ‘Locating Landscape’, is constructed of nine square photographs that cover 360° (figure 53). Caro appears to have varied the focus as she rotated, as the third and fourth pictures in the series have a different depth of field than the others.



Figure 53: 10 Mile Points Southwest © Christiana Caro 2001/2

<sup>168</sup> The original name appears in the press release for the Locating Landscape: New Strategies, New Technologies exhibition at the Sam Lee Gallery in LA. The later name is the one in current use on Caro’s website.



In a review of the piece when it was shown in 'Locating Landscapes', critic Wendy Cheng identified how this shallow depth of field and close focus emphasised, 'the limitations of the imposed arbitrariness of her exercise'<sup>169</sup>. Cheng seems to have overlooked that the depth of field varies across the panorama<sup>170</sup>. In '10 Mile Points North' (figure 54), Caro has changed the method slightly.



Figure 54: 10 Mile Points North © Christiana Caro 2001/2

In this panorama there are eight square pictures and the depth of field is sufficient to render everything in focus. The inconsistencies continue in other panoramas from the project. Caro's study might have been more critically rigorous if she had remained consistent in her method throughout the series. Alongside the problems already mentioned, Caro missed out the two panoramas for Northeast and East. These would have both been within the Massachusetts Bay (figure 55), but that does not mean that Caro could not have used a boat to access those points. Difficulties arise when these inconsistencies are placed alongside Caro's claim that she, 'designed my 10 Mile Points within this framework of being directed not by intuition or visual cues, but rather by seeing what would happen within the confines of a mapped

<sup>169</sup> Cheng, 2011, p.160

<sup>170</sup> A larger size reproduction of '10 Mile Points Southwest' can be viewed on the Sam Lee Gallery website for the Locating Landscape exhibition (Sam Lee Gallery, 2009)

boundary'<sup>171</sup>. If Caro was attempting to adopt a survey method of photography that removed intuition, then there is a serious weakness in her method. Caro's use of the panorama indicates a desire to reveal an experiential view from each point - the view you would see if you stood at that point and looked around. When this work is presented as a flat object on the wall, as '10 mile points Southwest' was in 'Locating Landscapes'<sup>172</sup>, the experiential aspects of the panorama are disrupted. The experience of viewing the prints is not the same as the experience of standing at the same vantage point and turning through 360°. Where Mellor invited the viewer to encounter the gallery space as the island, the individual photographs were in line with viewers' expectations of a photograph as a rectilinear view from a specific vantage point. In Caro's panoramas the sense of positioning the viewer within this place is broken. This is an extension of the issue identified in Myren's use of the panoramic triptych and, as will be seen, is further interrogated within my own practice at Banwell Wood (see Chapter 5). The landscape panoramas are, like the single photograph, objects that are separate from the land itself. They are as much an interpretation as a representation. If audiences are accustomed to believing that a photograph is in some way 'true', then a 360° multi-image panorama challenges this as it is not a rectilinear representation of the view as we might experience it. Neither offers the same experience as standing at that vantage point, but the standard 3:2, 4:5, square or even panoramic photograph has the weight of an extended cultural history of mass adoption such that viewers are less likely to question its veracity. We are used to seeing pictures in the form of Mellor's, but not of Caro's, but this does not make one more 'true' than the

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<sup>171</sup> Caro, 2016

<sup>172</sup> Installation shots of the exhibition can be viewed both on Caro's website (Caro, 2010) and on the Sam Lee Gallery Website (Sam Lee Gallery, 2009)

other, both are photographic representations and to assume one is more true than the other is to *incorrectly* assign the photograph the responsibility of being an accurate reflection of what we see.



Figure 55: Original Map, 10 Mile Points, 2000-1/2009' © Christiana Caro

This separation between what the pictures show and what might be experienced at the site is compounded by the included map on Caro's website (figure 55). Using Google Street View, it is theoretically possible to virtually visit three of the points on the map as they correspond to the viewpoint from roads. None of these points on Caro's map tally with the pictures she has shown. The general topography of the area for each point is correct. The west and southwest point photographs show areas of woodland that match the general topography 10 miles away from central Boston; the north and northwest suburbs appear well off socio-economically which matches the satellite pictures, the east and northeast points are missing (as noted above) and the south point

shows a more industrial wooded area. These all indicate that the photographs were made around Boston, but are not easily verifiable on close inspection. When contacted, Caro revealed the centre of the map to in fact be 80 Hillside St<sup>173</sup>, 0.92 miles away from the approximate point on the map, but the viewpoints were still not accurately identifiable. The challenge of attempting to identify Caro's points was only possible due to the inclusion of the map. If Caro had omitted the map then the question would not be raised. The viewer would be forced to accept Caro's claim that this was the view she experienced at her points. By including the map, Caro is issuing a bold statement that this is the view at these specific points. The map invites the viewer to go there and verify for themselves, and when they do, a serious weakness in Caro's work is exposed. Despite the inconsistencies within the project Caro's method remains an important strategy for using geo-locative practice to lead photography. Combining cardinal and inter-cardinal directions along with specific points is a strategy I adopt in the Banwell Wood case study (see Chapter 5).

#### 4.4 Conclusions

Critical engagement through photography can raise questions about how we, as societies, value and appropriate the land. Each of the practices reviewed speaks about different systems through which the land can be approached. Joe Deal reframes the Great Plains as a wild place in a direct challenge to the use of a map to contain and divide. Mark Power's projects confront imagined geographies created by the well-known maps of the Shipping Forecast and the

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<sup>173</sup> Caro, 2016

A-Z of London and uses his photography to create a new narrative for each place. Kate Mellor uses the OS National Grid as an underlying system on which to construct a wider social survey through photographs of the edge of the land. Bruce Myren constructs a 21<sup>st</sup> century survey model out of the core system of geographic meridians that are the basis for modern mapping techniques. Finally, Christiana Caro uses her camera to document arbitrary points defined by a geo-locative practice of her own design. These practices are linked by the underlying principle that each artist is confronting how systems of mapping influence how the land is approached, experienced and, ultimately, how it might be photographed. Each has informed how I approach my remaining case studies through their influence on my methodology - both how and why I am making pictures at each site. In all the work reviewed, the camera is a tool used to reimagine how a place is perceived as a direct challenge to how it is represented on a map. The map is a tool that frames sections of the land and presents selective information about it to the viewer. The camera is a tool that isolates and bestows importance on rectilinear 'slices' of the land. Photographs represent only a small part of the overall human experience of being at that vantage point when the exposure is made, but everything visible to the lens during the exposure is included within the final photograph. This difference is key to how the camera can be used to challenge the authority of the map.

A critical point that arose in several of my reviews was the issue of geo-locative accuracy. This accuracy is crucial if readers are expected to trust a map. As Wood and Fels argue, the map operates within a position of power because we believe from experience that we can trust it, despite the selective representation it offers (see p.39). Within the projects reviewed where I question the accuracy

of the locations this did not lead me to reject those projects outright. The relative importance given to geo-locative accuracy within each series depends on the aims of the artist. My analysis focuses on geo-locative accuracy as it is important within my first case study at Sandford Hill. If another artist is not concerned with the same level of accuracy this does not necessarily mean that their concerns and my own diverge. Their wider methodologies are still important within this study.



## CASE STUDY 2: BANWELL WOOD

*At this point I invite the reader to view the practice contained within Book 3.*

*After familiarising themselves with the photographs, the reader should then return to this chapter to read the analysis.*



## 5.1 Introduction



Figure 56: West point looking East, 'A Roman Camp in Banwell Woods', Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. 2015.

The photographs in Book 3 are the result of an extended period of testing different pictorial and geo-locative strategies. This chapter reviews these different strategies in relation to the finished work and the conceptual framework of the research. This is the first case study in the project that investigates a scheduled monument. This heritage designation offers areas smaller in geographic scale than the AONB and is argued to represent similar concerns (see pp.32-34 and Appendix 1). As such, scheduled monuments are utilised in the remaining case studies to confront the official identification of certain places as in some way more culturally valued than others. Both designations are about preserving culturally informed ideas of how the land might reflect who we were, who we are and who we want to be at these places (see p.50).

Book 3 shows the practice at the two scheduled monuments, 'A Roman Camp in Banwell Woods' and 'Banwell Camp'. This work is presented in the order in which the final practice was made. However, the early site research was undertaken at the second of these sites, Banwell Camp. For reasons of clarity,

this site is introduced first within the analysis to set the scene for the extended background research.

## 5.2 Banwell Camp



Figure 57: Aerial image of Banwell Wood with the boundary of the Banwell Camp scheduled monument designation marked in white. Source: QGIS 2.18.16. 2018. Banwell Wood. 51°19'38.28" N 02°51'11.16" W. Banwell Camp scheduled monument boundary, and Bing aerial data layers. Scheduled monument data: © Historic England 2016. Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2016. Viewed 4<sup>th</sup> April 2018.

Banwell Camp covers 9.32 hectares of Banwell Wood. The site consists of a large meadow surrounded by woodland and has been officially scheduled since 1931 to preserve an iron age multivallate hill fort<sup>174</sup>. The boundary of the scheduled monument lies just beyond the boundary of the fort, which itself is still visible as a mound of stones running around the site beyond the treeline. The meadow has its own boundary fence, running just inside the treeline.

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<sup>174</sup> Historic England, 2017a



Effectively, therefore, there are four concentric boundaries of the meadow - the fence, the treeline, the fort boundary, and the scheduled monument boundary.



Figure 58: Banwell Wood, Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. November 2012.

Fieldwork began in the woodland surrounding Banwell Camp at the very beginning of the project. The earliest pictures, made in late 2012, were specifically about the AONB and the construction of 'Natural Beauty'. It was not until I had made tests at a variety of potential case study sites that I began to see the scheduled monuments as expressions of similar motivations as the AONB, and therefore their potential to lead practice. These pictures, whilst not about the conservation boundaries that concern the rest of this case study, were useful at the time in helping to finalise the pictorial strategy at Sandford.



Despite familiarity with the site, this was the first time I had made pictures here and these field trips helped me begin to think about the options for further research at the site.



Figure 59: Banwell Camp scheduled monument, Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. 17<sup>th</sup> April 2014.

In April 2014 I made a series of photographs along the physical barrier formed by the boundary fence with the purpose of examining those places where trees appeared to break through the barrier of the fence. The goal was to interrogate

the physical separation of the fence and treeline and I saw that there was not always a distinct division (figure 59). These pictures held conceptual similarities with the Sandford work. The concern was still with the aesthetic qualities within, and enabled by, the frame. The pictorial strategy was based around trying to identify 'Natural Beauty' and translating this to the photograph through a consideration of form. I included sections of the fence within the frame to reference the allowance of signs of human habitation within Selman and Swanwick's definition of 'Natural Beauty' (see pp.56-57). The development lay in how I identified the sites. These photographs were made whilst walking a boundary, rather than visiting specific points. In order to set these pictures apart from the practice at Sandford, each picture was framed vertically rather than horizontally. The landscape photograph is commonly a horizontal view of a scene - a concept so embedded into photographic culture that horizontally oriented photographs are referred to as being in 'landscape' format, whereas vertically orientated pictures are in 'portrait' format. In this series I experimented with challenging this conformity. When editing the pictures, I realised I had created a series of portraits of trees crossing the fence boundary and that, rather than confronting this pictorial stereotype, my portraits of trees compounded it.

I made a second series of photographs along the field edge, this time of Hawthorn trees in blossom in May (figure 60). These pictures were about pictorial Beauty. I deliberately chose to emphasise the 'Natural Beauty' of the blossom through careful framing and lighting. Each picture was composed horizontally following the concerns of the previous series, but to frame the tree blossom meant moving further away from the boundary. This had the



unintended effect of reducing the visual impact of the boundary, especially as the surrounding vegetation was beginning to mask the fence. Viewed in 2018, the photographs are valuable examinations of a potential photographic approach to what has been defined as 'Natural Beauty', but that did not adequately resolve my concerns around the boundary at the time they were made.



Figure 60: Hawthorn #1, Banwell Camp scheduled monument, Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. 17<sup>th</sup> May 2014.

Up until this point, all my photographs were made inside the scheduled monument, looking out towards the woodland. In the next series of photographs, I followed a similar strategy of following the boundary but this time



from the outside looking in towards the meadow. In these photographs the vantage point is within the woodland. The photographs continue to be about the form and colour of flora lining the fence. In the resulting series, the boundary and field beyond was signified through a bright, featureless space in the frame beyond the line of trees (figure 61). These photographs had a different aesthetic structure than the Hawthorn pictures. Where the former photographs were open and invited the viewer into the landscape these new pictures positioned the viewer inside the woodland within a much more confined space.



Figure 61: Outside looking in, Banwell Camp scheduled monument, Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. 19<sup>th</sup> November 2014.

The Hawthorn pictures were made from an elevated viewpoint, prompting the viewer to imaginatively possess the scene. The new pictures placed the viewer within the forest, amidst the thick vines and trees. In the former, there was an invisible divide between the woodland and the viewer, reflecting a human dominance over Nature. In the latter, Nature was positioned as the dominant element. When presented together, the pictures confront how these two ideas can co-exist at the same point and at the same time, but how they are photographed can inspire very different understandings of the place. This dichotomy between representations of the same boundary acutely directs viewers to understand the role of the photographer. Neither of the pictures reproduced here are neutral representations of a boundary line, and neither claims to be. But the use of geographic information to lead practice carries with it an implied neutrality through what Mellor termed a 'quasi-scientific' method (see p.140). The geographic boundary allows certain claims to be made about the pictures in a similar way to those made with a map - that this is what this place looks like and you can go there and check it out. These pictures were beginning to scratch the surface of this line of thought but, at this stage of the research, they were not going far enough.

In Autumn 2015, I revisited the site to make a new series of photographs. Taking Caro's, '10 mile points' as inspiration, the objective was to deepen my inquiry into the role the boundary could play in my practice. I was clear that the pictures would be centred around the designation boundary, rather than the boundary fence. I had been unhappy with the earlier pictures as, whilst they reflected some of my concerns surrounding 'Natural Beauty', they lacked criticality in terms of my response to the conservation boundary. For this new



method, I calculated the centre point of the designation in QGIS and used that as the start point for a set of lines drawn along the cardinal and inter-cardinal bearings. I then identified the precise intersect points between these lines and the boundary of the designation. This resulted in eight unique points (figure 62).

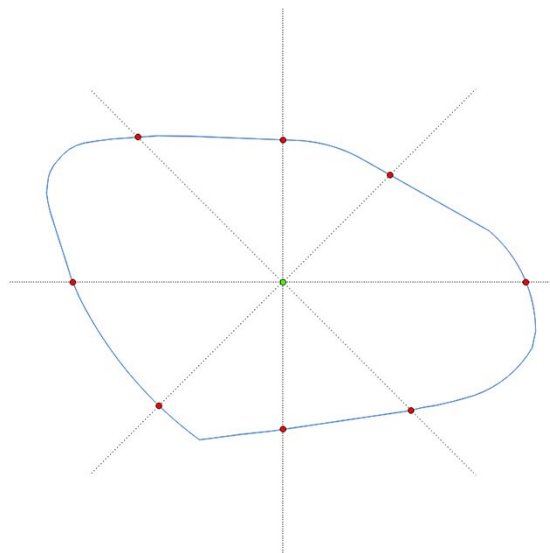


Figure 62: Screen capture of the map used to determine the points at Banwell Camp scheduled monument. The monument boundary is illustrated as a blue line, with the centroid as the green marker point. The cardinal and inter-cardinal lines are represented by black dotted lines. The points of intersection between the boundary and these lines that became my final points are marked in red. Boundary Data: © Historic England 2016. Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2016.

I visited each of these eight points using a handheld GPS receiver to locate the position referenced by the map. Due to the limitations in the accuracy of the GPS unit used under tree cover I allowed myself an 8m circle around a suggested point in which to safely set up the step-ladders and tripod<sup>175</sup>. At each point, I made a photograph following a specific set of rules.

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<sup>175</sup> This allowance is based on the earlier acknowledgement of the restrictions of consumer GPS units made in footnote 9

- The camera was positioned on a tripod at a height of 2.8m above the ground;
- I used a 28mm lens;
- I used a compass to align the centre of the photographic frame with the centre point of the designation<sup>176</sup> and the camera was levelled horizontally;
- The exposure was set so that everything within the frame would be equally in focus (between f11 and f22 depending on how close foliage and tree branches were to the lens).

I created these points on the map and then performed an existence test in response to the challenge of the map (see p.39). The aim was to make these photographs appear as if they were dispassionate records of the view from specific vantage points. The rules helped remove as much of my decision making in the field as possible. Rather than the traditional idea of the photographer seeking out the best light and the decisive moment, and then basing a composition on formal relationships within the viewfinder, I was shifting my role in the field to that of a pseudo-surveyor. There was no conceptual reason to be standing at those points, at that time, to make those pictures outside of the map that I had drawn.

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<sup>176</sup> When using the compass magnetic north was assumed to be essentially zero at this point in time. This was due in part to the 2014 crossing of magnetic north to the east of grid north (MacMillan, 2014) but primarily because the method of visually aligning the centre of the photograph with the compass bearing was not precise enough to require an allowance for magnetic north. The margin of error present in the GPS signal meant that a pursuit of greater precision was futile (see p.35). Furthermore, this study is an artistic survey not a geographic survey, so broader questions of scientific precision are outside the scope of this research.

The resulting photographs were successful in that they challenged my ideas around the importance of the formal within pictorial framing. I had made eight photographic landscapes that existed only because of my map-making intervention. These were not pictures that I would have made if walking the boundary looking for formal compositions. In 'Southwest point, looking northeast, Banwell Camp scheduled monument, Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. 2015', the side of an agricultural barn is included behind the intricate web of vines and branches seen in many other of the photographs within this project (figure 63). This was the first photograph I made within the project of an obviously manufactured structure. The strictness of the method meant I could not avoid including the side of the barn within the picture, whereas in earlier explorations of the boundary it was not shown.



Figure 63: Southwest point looking northeast, Banwell Camp scheduled monument, Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. 2015.

The photographs show a cropped, 4:5 ratio rectangular view of this place. They are not, and do not pretend to be, a thorough representation of what this place was, is and might be to all visitors. Instead they are a series of 'views' from vantage points around the boundary of the scheduled monument, looking towards the centre of the designation. The photographs were all made on cloudy, overcast days as this partly solved a basic technical issue - photographing from a dark woodland area looking towards a lighter, open field presents technical difficulties with photographic exposure. Even using this lighting, the trees towards the boundary start to disappear due to lens flare. For



me, these elements are a reminder that the photograph is always a manipulation rather than a perfect record of what sits in front of the lens.

### 5.3 A Roman Camp in Banwell Woods



Figure 64: Aerial image of Banwell Wood with the boundary of the A Roman Camp in Banwell Woods scheduled monument designation marked in white. Source: QGIS 2.18.16. 2018. Banwell Wood. 51°19'38.28" N 02°51'11.16" W. A Roman Camp in Banwell Woods scheduled monument boundary, and Bing aerial data layers. Scheduled monument data: © Historic England 2016. Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2016. Viewed 4<sup>th</sup> April 2018.

At this point in the practice I began to make work at the second scheduled monument in Banwell Woods as well as at Banwell Camp. 'A Roman Camp in Banwell Woods' is an earthwork defined by a rectangular mound approximately 0.8m high and 5m wide and surrounded by an external ditch. The official schedule records these as the remnants of a Roman Camp, but there are competing histories as to the provenance of the site. The structure is approximately 100m x 110m internally, in which lies a cruciform earthwork

approximately 35m x 30m<sup>177</sup>. Excavation in 1961 suggests that this structure is a pillow mound or rabbit warren of post-medieval date<sup>178</sup>. Local folklore says villagers erected wooden crosses on the site and the Devil kept blowing them down but was left powerless against the earthwork<sup>179</sup>. Other theories include that this was the work of agrimensores (Roman land surveyors) or an inclined sighting table for the Roman camp at Caerleon<sup>180</sup>; the substructure of a larger tumulus<sup>181</sup>; a moothill<sup>182</sup>; a shelter for cattle<sup>183</sup>; or a religious icon to demark a possible birth place of St Patrick<sup>184</sup>. That the official designation preserves the site for a Roman Camp that may or may not have existed generations ago for as little as one day reinforces that this and other sites featured in this project are cultural landscapes. They are designated to preserve a specific idea of history over and above other events that may have taken place at each site. My practice examines the conservation system that supports these histories rather than the histories themselves.

#### 5.4 A series of panoramic triptychs

The final practice in this case study comprises two sets of photographs, one made at each of the scheduled monuments within Banwell Wood. The geo-locative element of the practice follows the final method described above. I calculated the centroid of each monument and drew lines out along the cardinal

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<sup>177</sup> Historic England 2017c

<sup>178</sup> Hunt, 1963, pp.7-14

<sup>179</sup> Tongue, 1965, p.123

<sup>180</sup> Burrow, 1924, p.48

<sup>181</sup> Allcroft, 1908, p.555

<sup>182</sup> Bailey, 2010

<sup>183</sup> *ibid*

<sup>184</sup> Jelley, 1998

and inter-cardinal bearings, marking points where these lines intersected with the monument boundary line. I then loaded the eight points of intersection from each site onto a handheld GPS receiver and performed field trips to make photographs using these markers to determine my vantage points. Led by the bodies of work by Myren and Caro reviewed in Chapter 4, and unlike the previous pictorial methods in this study, I used a panoramic triptych photographic method at both sites. The aim was to challenge how the frame of the 4:5 ratio photograph represented the 'view'. The panoramic triptychs show a 180° 'view' from each vantage point. The method used at each site was the same except for one critical difference - the direction the camera was aimed. At 'A Roman Camp in Banwell Woods', the camera was aimed towards the centre of the designation from each point. At 'Banwell Camp', the camera was aimed along a bearing I measured to be perpendicular to the boundary at that point. This difference came after initial tests at 'Banwell Camp'. The photographs at 'A Roman Camp in Banwell Woods' were made first, and because of the shape of the designation, the size of the area, and the lack of a visible change in the terrain type around the boundary, the method initially appeared successful (figure 65).

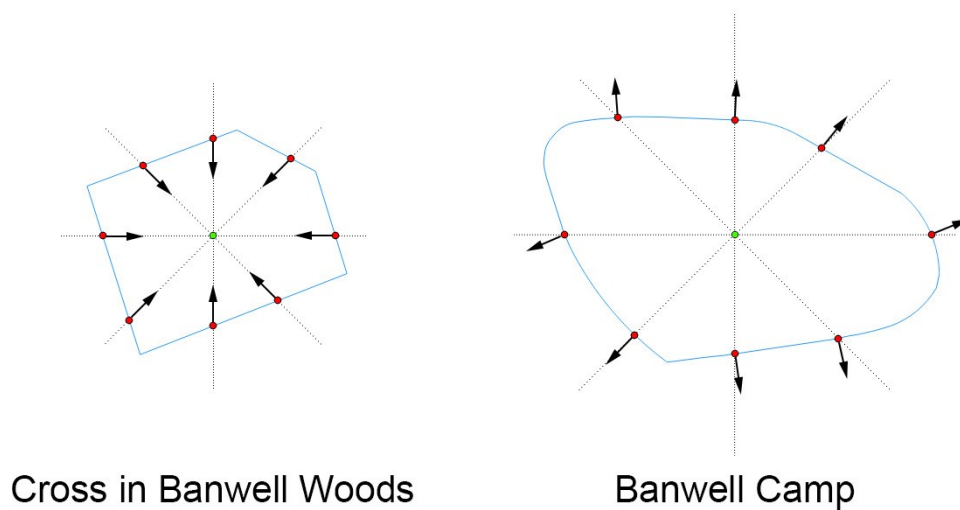


Figure 65: Diagrams showing the scheduled monument boundaries (blue lines), centroid markers (green points), bearing lines (black dotted lines), vantage points (red points) and direction of view for the centre frame (black arrows) for each panoramic triptych the in Banwell Wood. Boundary Data: © Historic England 2016. Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2016.

At Banwell Camp, it became clear that each 180° triptych did not show just an area outside of the designation. Because of the shape of the designated area, the boundary was not always close to perpendicular to my angle of view when looking along the cardinal and inter-cardinal bearings. This resulted in one side of the triptych showing a small section of land that was within the designation. This was particularly visible due to the change in scenery from forest to meadow along the fence just inside the designation. To solve the problem, I recalculated the angle of view from each point so that I would be looking perpendicular to the boundary from each vantage point (figure 66).



<i>Point</i>	Target bearing <sup>185</sup> from centre of triptych
<i>North</i>	3°
<i>Northwest</i>	356°
<i>West</i>	247°
<i>Southwest</i>	224°
<i>South</i>	172°
<i>Southeast</i>	168°
<i>East</i>	68°
<i>Northeast</i>	30°

Figure 66: Direction of view for the centre frame of the panoramic triptychs made at the Banwell Camp scheduled monument

Beyond this variation, I used the following method, developed from my previous results:

- In the field, each point was located and the camera set up on a tripod at my eye height (approximately 160cm);
- A compass was used to align the centre of the camera frame with the direction determined for that point, and a spirit level used to ensure the camera was level;
- A 28mm lens was used and set so that everything within the frame was rendered equally in focus. The 28mm focal length was selected, as with the 4:5 crop I used in camera, the angle of view is 60°. This allowed the final triptychs to have an angle of view of 180°;

<sup>185</sup> The bearings here followed grid north for the same reasons outlined in footnote 176 (see p.177).

- Three exposures were made: the first looking along the bearing calculated; the second looking directly to the left of the frame; and a third looking to the right;
- The photographs from each point are presented side by side as a panoramic triptych. A slight border is maintained between each picture to signify that these are three separate photographs placed together, and to reinforce the importance of the frame in a construction of a landscape.

## 5.5 Review of Outcome

The panoramic triptychs create a series of 'views' set apart from the previous methods in this study. The extended rectilinear multi-frame pictures reference the line that divides the land on the map. These 'views' are a representation of an idea of the land, they are landscapes I have created. They do not present a 'true' likeness of what can be seen from each vantage point. Instead, they are manipulations. The panoramic triptychs were made by rotating the camera around a fixed point. The left frame shows the scene to the left, the middle towards the centre and the right to the right. Presented as a flat, two-dimensional object within the book or on the wall is a manipulation, but reinforces that these are landscapes I create despite the 'pseudo-geographic' context within which they were made. Both series of photographic triptychs represent my attempt to reference the existence of the boundary.

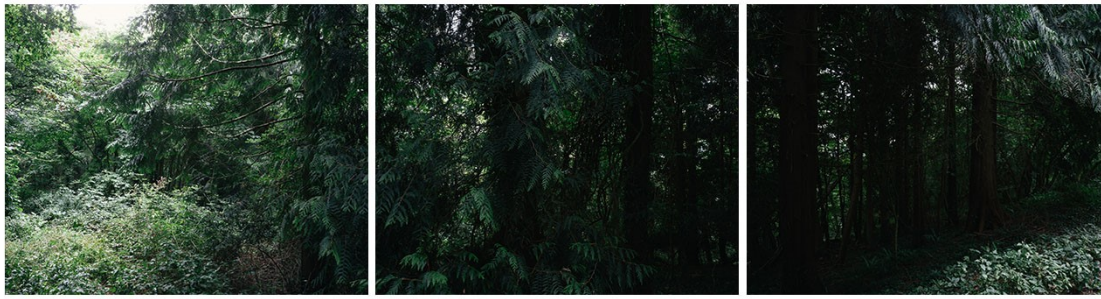


Figure 67: South point looking along a bearing of 172°, Banwell Camp scheduled monument, Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. 2016.

The triptychs succeed in expanding the limits of the 4:5 ratio frame. In ‘South point looking along a bearing of 172°, Banwell Camp scheduled monument, Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. 2016’, the central frame is largely rendered in dark shadow (figure 67). The additional frames to the left and right allow this darker area to become part of an expanded landscape. An area that may have been ignored using a more traditional approach has become an integral part of this ‘view’. The letterbox format of the triptychs change how each picture is looked at. With the more compact, 4:5 aspect ratio of the earlier works the viewer can statically engage with the landscape. With the triptych, the letterbox format forces the viewer, regardless of the reproduction size, to scan across the landscape. This encourages viewers to interpret the pictures as a series of ‘views’ that represent a landscape along a mapped line.

## 5.6 Comparing the Results

The final pictures are unique within this research. The presentation comprises two bodies of work made at separate scheduled monuments within the same

site. This allowed me the opportunity to use slightly different approaches and then compare and contrast the results. In the first pictures, made at 'A Roman Camp in Banwell Woods', I composed each triptych with the central frame facing towards the centre of the designation. In the second set, made at the larger 'Banwell Camp', I used the same method but aligned the centre frame with a bearing perpendicular to and facing away from the designation boundary. Neither approach offers an accurate representation of the land at the time and place when I released the shutter. The method I used to produce the triptychs creates a distortion.



Figure 68: Northeast point looking southwest, A Roman Camp in Banwell Woods scheduled monument, Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. 2015.

In 'Northeast point looking southwest, A Roman Camp in Banwell Woods scheduled monument, Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. 2015', the triptych appears to show a slight hill (figure 68). The camera is positioned facing along a horizontally level plane looking side on to a long mound forming one section of the earthen monument. When I turned the camera to the left or the right, I was looking along the length of the mound, almost parallel to it. This results in those pictures recording the mound as a slope falling from the centre of the triptych towards each edge. When the three photographs are placed

together, the impression of a small hill is created. If a viewer were to visit this vantage point themselves, they would see that this 'hill' was instead a mound running the length of the sixty-five-metre-long northern edge of the scheduled monument. The hill seen in the frame is a visual manipulation created through the juxtaposition of the photographs as a triptych.



Figure 69: North point looking along a bearing of 3°, Banwell Camp scheduled monument, Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. 2016.

In 'North point looking along a bearing of 3°, Banwell Camp scheduled monument, Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. 2016', the reverse happens (figure 69). Because I was looking away from the designation that sat on the summit of a hill, the left and right images appear to show the ground sloping up, away from the central image. Within both series, I use these distortions to challenge how a viewer might expect a photographic survey to look. A landscape photograph is not the same as the land itself. It is a separate landscape. In the book of the work I maintain a small 3mm divide between each component frame of a triptych and reproduce each triptych on a single page, with the caption indicating the point and the direction of the central frame opposite. The intention here is to keep the three frames permanently linked together but use the thin white dividing line to remind the viewer that these are

three separate photographs made at a shared vantage point. They are only linked as a panoramic view because I choose to mount them that way. The caption information references the underlying method and suggests a claim that these 'views' are in some way authentic and can be verified by viewers themselves. The pictorial distortions are at odds with the claims made by the captions.

## 5.7 Conclusion

The final practice at Banwell Wood shows a series of 'views' made at the two scheduled monuments in direct response to the designation information. Each set of tests leading up to this point had demonstrated ways in which geo-locative data could lead photographic strategies. In the earlier tests, the information was used as a general guide. As the research evolved it became increasingly important with each method. The final triptychs at each scheduled monument create a landscape directly influenced by the positioning of the mapped boundary. There is no physical line in the landscape that differentiates the judgements of cultural value that are voiced through the legislation. The relationship between the data and my method is signposted for the viewer through the captions that inform them that this work is a form of survey. The traditional language of the survey is then challenged through the distortion of the land across the three frames. It is my intent that this combination of factors challenges not only how a site might be photographed, but also an imaginative geography of this conservation landscape.



This case study provided me with the opportunity to evaluate different approaches to photographing the conservation landscape. The research approach involved the testing of a variety of methods that ranged from the formally-led photographs of the Hawthorn trees in bloom, to the map-led final series. As the practice progressed, each method reduced the decisions I allowed myself to make in the field a little more. In the final series of triptychs, I was performing the role of the dispassionate observer. But this was a pretence. The supposedly neutral geographic decisions that led the work were all made by me with no rationality beyond testing out new methods.

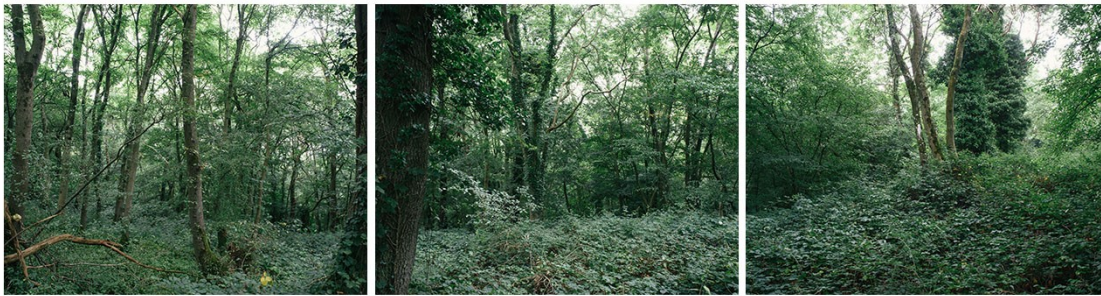


Figure 70: East point looking along a bearing of 68°, Banwell Camp scheduled monument, Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. 2016.

The panoramic triptych was a model through which I could allude to the practice being artistic in design rather than solely geographic. The positioning of the three frames side by side on a two-dimensional page, screen or wall constructs a new landscape that is no longer a reflection of what may be observed when looking in a single direction from each vantage point. These final triptychs each represent a landscape created because of my intervention with the mapped boundary data. They contain aspects of, but do not accurately depict the land. The triptychs create an artistically and geographically constructed 'view' that

considers and challenges an ideology of landscape (see pp.55-56). This is furthered in the Banwell Camp series where the triptychs each look at views *away* from the scheduled monument conservation area.

The final panoramic triptychs at Banwell demonstrate how I can respond to a fixed vantage point determined by a mapped boundary. They address my concerns surrounding accuracy in geo-locative technology-led practice. At the start, I intended these triptychs to be about what happens when I make pictures from precise vantage points. Due to the limitations of the technology, they became about restricting my choices of where to set up the tripod within an 8m circle. Whilst this allowed me room to manoeuvre around hazards and obstructions in the field, it means the work is not about 'precise' points relative to the precision of the points viewed within the GIS<sup>186</sup>. In the next chapter I extend these conclusions to test a pictorial strategy that maintains elements of the restrictive mode of looking at the land examined here but permits greater freedom to select vantage points when in the field to challenge links between 'Natural Beauty' and the 'scenic view'.

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<sup>186</sup> The precision of the points between the GIS and the GPS unit is accurate to 14 decimal places when the coordinates are expressed in WGS84 decimal degrees as used for the GPX files. However, the accuracy of the initial point taken from the hilltop marker on the OS map is inherently less precise when using a map scale of 1:25000. There is no call within this research project to calculate how accurate the 2011 OS map is in terms of identifying the exact highest point of the hill. This research is about responding to how the legislative map might lead a photographic approach, not a judgement on its geographic accuracy. When I refer to the precision of points, I am referencing the consistency between the GIS and the GPS unit, not their accuracy to the related positions on the ground.





### CASE STUDY 3: BLACK DOWN

*Following the strategy of previous chapters, I now ask readers to review the practice in Book 4 before returning to this chapter for my analysis.*

# 6.1 Introduction



Figure 71: Section 22, World War Two bombing decoy complex on Black Down scheduled monument, Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. 2016.

The following chapter examines the practice undertaken at a scheduled monument situated on Black Down, the highest ridge of the Mendip Hills. The site is known locally for providing panoramic views of the surrounding area. On a clear day you can see from the top of the ridge across Somerset to the south, towards the city of Bristol in the north and across the Severn Estuary to Wales in the west. The scheduled monument covering the top of the hill primarily preserves the first of the ‘Operation Starfish’ sites, a World War Two bombing decoy built to protect Bristol. When in operation, the site would have been

covered with a series of signal lights meant to recreate the look of the city from the air, thereby fooling bombing raids<sup>187</sup>. Before the construction of the decoy a smaller section of the hill had been included on the schedule of ancient monuments to preserve historic burial mounds, now incorporated as part of the current designation<sup>188</sup>.



Figure 72: World War Two bombing decoy complex, anti-aircraft obstructions and Beacon Batch round barrow cemetery on Black Down (boundary marked with a dashed white line). Source: QGIS 2.18.16. 2018. Black Down. 51°18'38.88" N 02°44'54.6" W. World War Two bombing decoy complex, anti-aircraft obstructions and Beacon Batch round barrow cemetery on Black Down scheduled monument boundary and Bing aerial data layers. Scheduled monument data: © Historic England 2016. Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2016. Viewed 4<sup>th</sup> April 2018.

## 6.2 Testing New Strategies

The approach to this site is a development of the practice at Sandford Hill and Banwell Wood. At those sites, I identified geographical points that determined

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<sup>187</sup> Brown, 1999, pp.165-177; Dobinson, 2000, p.146

<sup>188</sup> Historic England, 2017d

my vantage points using a map. In this case study, I expand upon that to work within predefined geographical areas rather than around specific points. The objective was to permit myself more flexibility when creating an experiential response with the camera that would allow me to create a photographic response to the conservation designation. The work reproduced in the final book is about interpreting the scheduled monument as creating an isolated landscape. This strategy was the result of testing different pictorial methods to understand the ways in which legislation shaped the site. The fieldwork began with my performance of a boundary walk, using a GPS receiver to guide my route (figure 73).



Figure 73: One picture from each of the north, east, south and west sides of the boundary of the Black Down scheduled monument made during a walk around the perimeter of the boundary on 5<sup>th</sup> June 2013.

I made these pictures with no expectations other than to begin to understand how the map of the scheduled monument designation correlates with the territory. I found the east, south and west boundaries were as one might expect and followed paths, fences, and dry-stone walls. The boundary to the north however, led across the hill approximately half way down, with no discernible physical feature determining the mapmaker's line. The positioning of the boundary appeared to be an arbitrary decision. This reinforced what I discovered at Sandford Hill at a similarly early period in the research. The archival geographic information leading the study did not always correlate with what was physically verifiable in the field.

In 2014, I revisited the site and made test pictures on days with low cloud or fog. The objective was to see if it was possible to restrict the view around scheduled monument with atmospheric conditions (figures 74 and 75).





Figure 74: Looking from western edge of boundary into the scheduled monument, World War Two bombing decoy complex on Black Down scheduled monument, Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. 2014.



Figure 75: Looking out from the northern boundary of the scheduled monument, World War Two bombing decoy complex on Black Down scheduled monument, Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. 2014.

These photographs were presented as part of a paper I delivered on the research at 'Mapping', the Land/Water and the Visual Arts Summer Symposium in 2014. In the photographs, I used the atmospheric conditions to isolate the view from the site to reference the way in which the designation can isolate the site from the surrounding area. The pictures were aesthetically successful - they depict an idea of 'Natural Beauty' from vantage points led by the scheduled monument boundary. However, within the context of this research, they introduced new problems. The first was the reliance on the perfect weather conditions to make the work within the period of the project. The fog had to be the right density to restrict the view at the positions I could use as vantage points. It quickly became apparent that this method would require a lot of luck to be successful but this alone did not disqualify the strategy. The second, more significant, problem was what the pictures did not say about how the designation helps to construct a cultural landscape. The first (figure 74) was made from a position looking into the designation from just beyond the western edge whilst the second (figure 75), a position looking out from the boundary along the northern edge. The link between the two pictures comes from their use of vantage points along the boundary line during conditions of low visibility. The variation in strategy means they say little about how the boundary shapes an understanding of this place. The objective was to allow myself more freedom in selecting vantage points than at Sandford or Banwell but the pictures still had to be about how the designation could be used to construct specific landscapes. These early pictures were not achieving that goal.



### 6.3 Designing a map-led strategy

The solution was to construct a site-specific methodology based both on the designation and what I had learnt up to this point at the previous sites. The physical signs of the bombing decoy are still visible across Black Down. The terrain is covered with a series of 1-1.5m high lumps of soil, laid out in alternating pairs to form a grid that covers the top of the ridge. The mounds have eroded since the 1940s to approximately half their original size, but the patterns they form are still visible on the ground and in aerial photographs.



Figure 76: Woman posing at the Operation Starfish site on Black Down, Mendip Hills. c1941. Courtesy of the Addicott Archive.

The new strategy began with my drawing of a map in the studio that traced the pattern formed by the mounds, and then extended each of the lines drawn to meet the boundary of the scheduled monument. The result was a grid consisting of fifty-three irregularly shaped sections that covered the surface of

the designated area, ranging in size from 18m<sup>2</sup> (section 29) to 87974m<sup>2</sup> (section 2) (figure 77).



Figure 77: Grid of quadrants traced from the mounds on Black Down. Source: Google Earth Pro 7.3. 2017. 51°18'38.14" N 02°44'53.20" W. Historical Imagery 31<sup>st</sup> December 2009 data layer. Viewed 17th August 2017. Boundary Data: ©Historic England 2016. Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right.

It is important that I made the map to lead the practice. The lines may have been traced from an aerial view of the physical monument, but where I extended them to meet the designation boundary I effectively created my own areas of interest. The mounds used to form the grid lines are present and visible in the pictures made close to the ridge of the hill, but in many of the positions, the closer the quadrant is to the boundary then the more the photographs are about the grid I created. The pictures in this case study are an interpretation of this place that directly depends on my own interventions, both physically and conceptually when drawing the map.

Taking this map and my previous practice as a starting point, I then devised the following strategy through which I could photographically 'survey' this landscape, with specific reference to how the designation might influence how I encounter this place:

- I visited each quadrant of the grid and made one or more photographs (and later selected one from each area for the final edit);
- Each photograph was made by following a strict pictorial method designed to reference the presence of the conservation boundary;
- I used a step ladder with a tripod to provide a consistent height from the ground in each picture of 2.8m. This provided me with a vantage point where the photographs could show more of the texture of the ground;
- The camera lens aperture was set to ensure that in each exposure everything within the frame would be in focus. No single element within the frame was to be given any prominence over any other;
- The lighting was kept as consistent as possible when working with natural light. I made the photographs on overcast days as the antithesis of the type of weather conditions typically sought for the 'scenic view'. This strategy was chosen to remind the viewer of photographic surveys. Used here, the objective is to encourage viewers to consider how a pictorial landscape can be constructed across a series of photographs;
- No landscape features, other than the sky, that lay beyond the boundary of the designation were permitted to be visible within the photographs. This was a deliberate attempt to confront how the site is often visited to experience the 'scenic view' I identify as linked to identifications of 'Natural Beauty' (see Chapter 1);

- The horizon line for each photograph was positioned through the centre of the frame, resulting in half the frame containing a representation of the land, and the other half a section of sky. This was a deliberate attempt to reference the unseen nature of the designation - that the decoy was built to defend from air bombing raids.



Figure 78: Section 34, World War Two bombing decoy complex on Black Down scheduled monument, Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. 2015.

As long as the final composition met with these criteria, I could include whatever section of terrain and sky caught my eye. I was also free to photograph whichever grid sections I wished on any given fieldtrip. This meant that the photographs were reflections of my daily concerns each time I visited the site.

On some fieldtrips, I was interested in looking at paths, either designed for human use or smaller animal tracks invisible until I climbed the step ladder. On others, seemingly random patterns of colours within the vegetation captured my attention, contrasted with the mounds from the bombing decoy (figure 78). I made these decisions whilst in the field and they depended on what I encountered and how it led my thinking on that day. This flexibility was directly at odds with the final method employed at Banwell Wood and was intended to allow me to take more inspiration from what I encountered in the field.

## 6.4 Analysis

Black Down offered me a space in which I could experiment with more freedom in the field than I had at previous sites. I still had a strict method to follow, but this operated in such a way as to remove some of the technical decisions allowing me to focus my thinking on framing a 'view' of the scene across the multiple grid sections. As a visual artist, when composing a picture, I have historically been primarily concerned with examining critical concepts through the formal qualities of the subject: the texture, colours, and patterns. This presents a problem when I set strict demands on myself about *where* I have to set up the camera. In the smallest of the grid sections there was so little room to set up that, if I was following a purely formal method of composition, I would have struggled to compose a photograph. The conformist strategy removed some of those decisions and freed me to produce photographs where the texture, colour and patterns formed by the foliage dominated. My concerns were still formal, but they were based on creating a landscape that exists across



multiple photographs. The repeated framing helped overcome the restrictions on the selection of vantage points.



Figure 79: Section 30, World War Two bombing decoy complex on Black Down scheduled monument, Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. 2016.

This case study is an attempt to create a new landscape that only includes the terrain designated as of higher cultural value. The strategy focused my attention on the textures of the land within the scheduled monument. The small details became increasingly important in a way that only sustained and determined concentration will allow. The strict method employed deliberately references how photographs are not neutral representations of a subject. The photograph may include what is in front of the lens but it excludes everything else. This

allowed me to create a new landscape of Black Down in which only the land within the designation is visible. The inclusion of equal amounts of land and sky takes this a step further. The scheduled monument is primarily about preserving a bombing decoy that can be traced on the land, but the mythology this creates is tied into a relationship between land and sky.



Figure 80: Section 32, World War Two bombing decoy complex on Black Down scheduled monument, Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. 2016.

The final pictures were made in the winter and spring months of 2015, 2016 and 2017. I tested making pictures at other times of year but was confronted with additional challenges, primarily that the pictures began to lose the pictorial conformity that I position at odds with a traditional idea of the ‘scenic view’



visitors come here to experience. The objective when making this work was to create a landscape that extended beyond the single frame to examine how photography could create a landscape based on the designation. The method used to achieve this relied on a consistent pictorial strategy. The shift in the seasons introduced different contrast and colours within the pictures that disrupted this aim. The summer pictures presented a landscape at odds with that seen in the final work. The colour palette of the late winter and spring pictures helped situate the practice as apart from the picturesque photographs of the 'scenic view' made at sites like Black Down. In the summer pictures the landscape appeared more inviting, inducing ideas of the Romantic pictorial popularly associated with 'Natural Beauty'. This case study is about denying that aesthetic so the work had to be made when the light and the colour palette could challenge it. In the summer pictures, the fern grew high and was green, and the contrast was more difficult to keep in line with the spring pictures (figure 80). If I had made the entire series in the summer months the mounds that were the signs of the bombing decoy would have been indistinguishable from their surroundings in the photographs. Autumn and early winter presented their own problems of access to the site due to flooding, and on the few occasions I did make it to the top of the ridge I discovered that the foliage was slow to lose the greens of summer. In the end, late winter and early spring were the most appropriate times to make the work in line with the objectives of this research.

This case study is an attempt to create a photographic landscape through multiple pictures that, when viewed together within the final book of the work, reference the confinement of the land through the positioning of the boundary frame. The primary way in which I have achieved this is through a consistent

pictorial strategy. This approach has enabled me to create a distinct landscape based on the way legislation can shape an understanding of place. The method results in formal qualities of the grass and small undulations and patterns left in the soil increasing in their visual significance when included in the photograph. The work is about embracing a function of photography to reference the way the map of the conservation designation can influence how a place is seen. When standing at these places the influence of the map can appear incidental. At times there is a lack of correlation between the lines on the map I have drawn and the features of the terrain. When looking at the photograph, however, a viewer can only see what is in the photograph. The wider view of the land and the multi-sensory experience of standing at that place at that time are absent. This allows me to use the series of photographs to create a landscape based on the conservation information. I further direct the viewer's interpretation of what the work is about through the included map and caption text. Following Power's *26 Different Endings* (see Chapter 4), I include a map of the numbered grid with the base layer removed. Whereas in Power's work, this serves to remind the viewer that the boundary is fluid, in this case study I am alerting the viewer of the role of the grid in leading the practice. The grid section numbers are included on the map and as picture captions in both the edit of larger photographs and the index at the back of the book. The three sets of information - photographs, map and text, tie together to create a landscape where only the land within the designation exists.

## 6.5 Conclusions

These photographs are the result of a response to a mapped designation that builds upon my examination of the boundary at Banwell Wood. The objective was to use photography to reimagine what this place would look like if only the land within the designation could be seen. The final photographs show a place that appears at once both confined and endless. This apparent dichotomy is achieved through using a strict, conformist, pictorial strategy that limits what can be seen within each individual frame to equal parts of the terrain within the scheduled monument and sections of the sky. The edge of the photographic frame becomes a hard boundary for each individual photographic landscape. When viewed together, this repeated 'view' emphasises the landscape photograph as a 'rectilinear slice' (see pp.25-26). The viewer is denied the panoramic 'scenic view' and is instead presented with an extended series of photographs all framed in a consistent way. These photographs, when viewed together, create a new landscape which only includes the land shown within the photographs. There are no visual clues of the views beyond the boundary for which the site is known. The landscape I have created exists only because of the map of the designation.

The photographs are intended to build an impression of an endless landscape, but my experience of the site and making the pictures forever impacts on any conclusions I make about the work. Likewise, viewers of the pictures will bring their own experiences to any reading of the work. Those familiar with Black Down will form conclusions based on a combination of their experiences of the

place and of the photographs. I am, I hope, impacting upon and influencing their imaginative geographies of this place. For those not familiar with Black Down, these pictures might become representative. The landscape for them may only exist in these fifty-three pictures and in how they relate these images to the experiences they have of other, aesthetically similar, landscapes. A limitation of this research is that this is not investigated further. This project is specifically about my response through practice. The ways in which different cultural and social groups respond to photographs of conservation landscapes is a potential area for future development.

## CASE STUDY 4: DOLEBURY WARREN

*I ask the reader to now look at the practice within Book Five to view the Dolebury Warren photographs. Once finished, I invite readers to return to this chapter for my analysis before Chapter 8 examines my overall thesis conclusions.*

## 7.1 Introduction



Figure 81: Section 12, Dolebury Fort scheduled monument, Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. 2017.

This is the final case study within the research. The objective in this part of the practice was to further examine how conservation legislation could inform a pictorial response. Dolebury Warren is formed of a large ridge running to the east of Sandford Hill. The site was included on the Somerset County Planning Officer's list of, 'more significant features in terms of Natural Beauty' and as such is taken to be representative of the wider aesthetic character the designation sought to preserve. In addition, a large proportion of the site is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest and the western end of the

ridge is home to the remains of an Iron Age fort that is recorded on the national schedule of ancient monuments<sup>189</sup>.



Figure 82: Aerial image of Dolebury Warren with the boundaries of the Dolebury Fort scheduled monument designation marked in white and the 'Dolebury Warren' SSSI in orange. Source: QGIS 2.18.16. 2018. Dolebury Warren. 51°19'37.2" N 02°47'21.48" W. Dolebury Fort Scheduled monument boundary, Dolebury Warren SSSI boundary and Bing aerial data layers. Scheduled monument data: © Historic England 2016. Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2016. SSSI boundary data: © Natural England copyright. Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown Copyright and database right 2018. Viewed 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2018.

The practice began with an examination of the boundary of the fort at the same time as the Sandford Hill work began. The first photographs were made in 2013 and featured views of the sections of the fort ramparts where the aggregate of rock can be seen beneath the modern-day grass surface layer (see figure 83).

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<sup>189</sup> Historic England, 2017b





Figure 83: Exposed aggregate on rampart at Dolebury Fort scheduled monument, Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. 8<sup>th</sup> April 2013.

These photographs show a physical boundary but there were two significant issues with the approach. First, I was responding to the boundary without reference to a map. This was at odds with the direction the research began to take at the same time during the Sandford Hill case study. Second, the uncovered sections of rampart were prominent only on the northern boundary of the fort. This meant that the pictures were of one section of the fort and were not addressing the whole boundary. During this time the initial results from the Sandford Hill case study were directing the research to look more closely into how maps could form a core part of the research methodology. With this in mind, I paused the practice at Dolebury Fort until methods tested at other sites might provide insight into appropriate approaches here.

## 7.2 Site of Special Scientific Interest

Following the initial research at Banwell Wood and Black Down, the emphasis at Dolebury Warren shifted to look at the Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). This is a conservation designation that acknowledges and aims to preserve the biological, geological and/or physiographic attributes of a site. SSSIs are currently provided a legal framework through the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (amended in 1985) and the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. The Dolebury Warren SSSI was notified for the mix of heath, shrub and grassland on the site that is rarely found in limestone habitats<sup>190</sup>. The designation did not fit within the original parameters for site selection within this study (see pp.37-38), but instead offered a distinct boundary around Dolebury Warren that was useful for testing a different strategy. The fieldwork began with walking the boundary of the SSSI to make photographs along its length to determine potential approaches. This process led to my identification of a stream running outside of the SSSI. The stream lies a few metres outside of the boundary, which follows a dry-stone wall on the edge of the hill. Between the wall and the stream is a bridleway which acts as a major point of access into the surrounding hills. I became interested in a short section of about fifty metres of this track where the view of the stream, from the slightly elevated bridleway, offered the opportunity to make pictures that conform to my ideas around 'Natural Beauty' and the picturesque investigated within this research (see Chapter 1). It is argued in this thesis that these aesthetic stereotypes are borne from a range of conscious and subconscious experiences of which I can never be fully aware, but include the photography made by other artists. At the

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<sup>190</sup> Natural England, 2014

stream, I made a series of pictures between 2013 and 2015 that conformed to my socially constructed idea of what 'Natural Beauty' looks like within a photograph (figures 84 & 85). These pictures were made at the time of the research tests made at Banwell Wood and Black Down and served as a catalyst for the ideas examined in those case studies (see Chapters 5 and 6).



Figure 84: Looking away from the boundary, 'Dolebury Warren' SSSI, Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. 4<sup>th</sup> July 2013.





Figure 85: Looking away from the boundary, 'Dolebury Warren' SSSI, Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2015.

These pictures were a conscious effort to conform as closely as possible to my pre-existing ideas of how a photograph can successfully represent 'Natural Beauty'. This process involved an acknowledgement of both what 'Natural Beauty' might be, and how my own understanding of it within pictorial terms is based upon twenty years of studying and making photographs. It is impossible to completely divorce this experience from the sum of invisible social and cultural forces that impact upon my own 'intuition' when making a photograph. Where I place the camera, the settings used, the lighting and the framing are all decisions that influence the outcome of the final picture. These variables are the basis of a visual style developed through many years of both making and looking at photography. These images provided the insight into my working

practice needed to be able to identify and construct the methods used at Banwell and Black Down. The final practice at those sites was a direct attempt to confront this pictorial 'intuition' through limiting choices made in the field.

The area photographed was determined through the following of a conservation boundary but, in contrast to the work at the other case study sites, this strategy allowed the freedom to photograph whatever I wished once in the field. The boundary controlled only where I walked, and therefore the area encountered. The short section of stream selected was identified through walking the boundary but selected based on aesthetic concerns. Making these pictures clarified the role of the boundary as a guide within this study. The critical value came from the experience of standing at the boundary line and making photographs looking away from a designated area. In this case, the photographs made along the stream struggle to confront the presence of the designation. They are a reflection on the picturesque qualities of the forested valley, not the conservation of a specific type of grassland along the top of the hill that led to the SSSI designation. Crucially, this designation is based on a biological assessment of value that, whilst still subject to wider cultural forces, does not trace the same aesthetically based social motivations discussed in this study (see Chapter 1). As a result, these pictures do not form part of the final book presentation for Dolebury Warren. Instead, the book pictures were made using a new strategy at the scheduled monument.

### 7.3 Dolebury Camp scheduled monument

The series of photographs in Book 5 examine the mapped boundary of the Dolebury Camp scheduled monument. These pictures were made over two years between April 2015 and March 2017, directly in response to the ongoing research at the other case study sites. The objective was to combine what was learnt from the conformist strategies used at Banwell and Black Down, where the geo-locative and strict pictorial strategies dictated the repetitive approach, with the aesthetic concerns voiced at the beginning of the project at Sandford Hill and in the stream pictures discussed above. Following the grid-based strategy designed and employed by Kate Mellor in *Island* (see Chapter 4), the practice began with my drawing of a new map using a grid based on the widely recognised Ordnance Survey National Grid. Due to the small area covered by the site, I divided the familiar 1km x 1km squares into 100m x 100m squares, and then overlaid this grid onto the map of the scheduled monument in QGIS. Finally, I made note of each grid square that was crossed by the scheduled monument boundary line. This resulted in the twenty-four, 100m x 100m mapped squares that I exported onto my GPS receiver as a series of unique tracks. These tracks form the geographical framework of the final practice (figure 86).





Figure 86: Aerial photograph of Dolebury Warren showing the Dolebury Camp Scheduled monument boundary (red line) and my numbered selection grid (white lines). Source: QGIS 2.18.16. 2018. Dolebury Warren. 51°19'37.2" N 02°47'21.48" W. Scheduled monument boundary, Bing aerial and custom grid data layers. Boundary Data: ©Historic England 2016. Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2016. Viewed 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2018.

This map was the guide for the vantage points used in the book, with the objective of presenting one picture from each grid square within the final series. The pictorial strategy was based on the methods used at the previous case study sites. At Sandford Hill, I made photographs *of* points in a landscape. At Banwell Wood, I made photographs looking *from* points on the edge of an area (facing both inwards and outwards). At Black Down, I made photographs *within* specific sub-sections of an area, ensuring that the viewer could not see outside the wider designation. To continue this approach, in this case study I made photographs within sub-sections of an area but allowing the viewer to see beyond the designation. The caveat was that I made no acknowledgements as to the position of the boundary - this was left for the viewer to determine. The only stipulations placed on the practice were that:



- I had to make each photograph from a position within the appropriate grid section;
- I could only use a 28mm lens;
- I had to use an aperture that would allow everything in the photograph to be in focus;
- I had to compose each picture in a horizontal, landscape format, and each image had to be a composition of a view looking approximately parallel to the ground (as opposed to a close-up of the ground, for example).

These conditions were put in place to allow the work to be readily comparable to the results from the previous case studies. When presenting the work, I give no indication to the viewer about whether the view in the photograph is inside the boundary, outside the boundary, or a combination of the two. I maintain a connection to the grid through the sequencing of the pictures, which follows the order of the grid squares. The grid squares are in turn numbered based on their position in relation to the start point of the boundary line when it was digitised<sup>191</sup>. This allows the work to appear as if a geographical survey, although the conditions set are wholly reflections of my own, artistically driven, concerns. I did not make the photographs in this order, and there was no conscious attempt to link specific grids to specific ideas about the wider designation. My goal in the field was simply to visit each grid square and make one or more photographs that reflected what was encountered on that fieldtrip.

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<sup>191</sup> The scheduled monument data used in this study was downloaded from Historic England as a Polygon within an ESRI shp file. Polygons and lines are constructed within a GIS by linking together vertices. These vertices are numbered sequentially. The boundary line track for the scheduled monument at Dolebury Camp was formed of 757 points, numbered 0 to 756. The grid numbering was based on following this sequence so segment 1 refers to the square containing vertices 0.

## 7.4 Outcome

In the final series of photographs, I include pictures that reference my interpretation of 'Natural Beauty' at the site, its historical significance, and signs of how this is still a landscape shaped by human intervention. These photographs are my attempt to unpick the visual consequences of designating this as a conservation landscape. This cultural designation shows itself within the pictures as a human desire to shape the land in support of maintaining and recording specific place-based histories. The photographs show a landscape where within the visible and physical barrier of the ramparts the land is rigorously controlled but once the camera's gaze moves beyond these walls nature again *appears* to dominate. This control is visible in some of the pictures, especially 'Section 19, Dolebury Camp scheduled monument, Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. 2017' where there are signs of the divide between the woodland and the exterior mound of the fort being maintained through the felling of trees that venture 'too close' to the fort (figure 87).



Figure 87: Section 19, Dolebury Camp scheduled monument, Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. 2017.

The strategy for the series was experiential; I allowed what I found on each fieldtrip to determine which grid squares I would make photographs within, and what I would include in each frame. On some trips, such as that which resulted in the photograph, 'Section 13, Dolebury Camp scheduled monument, Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. 2016', my focus was on the colour and formal qualities of the land (figure 88).





Figure 88: Section 13, Dolebury Camp scheduled monument, Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. 2016.

On other visits, my attention was on the small signs of human use of the land. In, 'Section 14, Dolebury Camp scheduled monument, Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. 2015', evidence of recent logging is implied through the inclusion of the tree stumps in the foreground and the log pile seen in the distance to the right of the picture, with the rampart in front and then evidence of a fire (figure 89). I included the track at the bottom of the frame heading to the left edge deliberately to reference the boundary beyond the rampart, even though this is not a boundary line. The photograph is the closest of my pictures to the work of Arnatt - showing this as a lived-in landscape. Arnatt framed human use of the land as part of an area of outstanding natural

beauty (see Chapter 2). I frame human use of the land as *creating* an area of outstanding natural beauty.



Figure 89: Section 14, Dolebury Camp scheduled monument, Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. 2015.

A repeated motif within the series is the line on the ground - be it a ridge or a path. The line, despite not necessarily correlating with the precise boundary, alludes to the liminal nature of these photographs. Each picture might be looking inside, outside, or even at the boundary but I make no effort to reveal its position to the viewer. The pictures are existence tests of my visits to the proximity of the boundary, and it is up to the viewer to determine if they can see a change in the land where a boundary might lie. This is a conscious decision

and one I maintain throughout the work. The boundary line itself is not loaded onto the GPS receiver, only the associated squares. When I located a square in the field, all I knew was that the boundary line lay somewhere within the frame, along with a general sense of which directions were inside or outside of the boundary. 'Section 23, Dolebury Camp scheduled monument, Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. 2015', shows an area of bracken surrounded by trees (figure 90). There are no visible traces of the historical artefacts seen in some of the pictures made around the ramparts of the fort. When positioned within the wider series of pictures about the boundary, the impenetrable forest becomes a metaphor for the boundary of the designation. The map of squares provided the freedom to locate visual motifs that could stand in for the boundary, regardless of whether they were physically along the boundary line.





Figure 90: Section 23, Dolebury Camp scheduled monument, Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. 2015.

In April 2016, I presented a work in progress edit from this series both on the wall and as a talk during the Traffic symposium, a joint event run by the Land/Water and the Visual Arts and Land<sup>2</sup> research groups<sup>192</sup>. I showed twelve of the twenty-four pictures in two rows of six (figure 91).

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<sup>192</sup> My presentation was part of a companion PhD student event run alongside the Traffic symposium that I organised in conjunction with Filippa Dobson, who is associated with Land<sup>2</sup>. I am associated with Land/Water and the Visual Arts.





Figure 91: Installation view of work in progress exhibition of the practice from Dolebury Camp scheduled monument, April 2016.

The objective was to test how the series functioned when shown in a grid. At this stage of making the work, my intention was to create a type of photographic map that reinforced the importance of geo-locative technologies in leading the practice. The final series would then be shown in a five by five grid of pictures, where each frame was as integral to the series as any other. No single picture would be more important than the series from which it came. What became clear when viewing the work on the wall and in front of a critical audience was that my practice relies on scale. These photographs are precisely framed and rely on layers of intricate detail being visible. When reproduced at a relatively small size, 12in x 16in in this case, these features are lost. This issue was compounded through my placement of the images together as a tight knit grid where no single image stood out. The solution was to present the work as a book. As an object, the book has the advantages of maintaining the link between pictures through their sequencing whilst prompting the viewer to take each individual image both on its own terms and as part of the wider series.

The book of practice is presented in the same way as in the previous case studies (see Book 5). The page dimensions of 374mm x 297mm have been

kept consistent across the practice to maintain a visual cohesion within the project. This size allows the reproduction of individual pictures at a scale close to that when displayed on the wall in the April 2016 exhibition. Whereas on the wall this size appeared too small, the way we view books means the images now appear sufficiently large to take in the small details. The book is edited to include one picture from each grid section, presented in sequence. The grid section number is included as a caption to the far left of each double page spread. Following the method used at Black Down, I have only included the number for each section within the book. When the same images are shown outside of this context, as in this written element of this thesis, additional caption information is needed to identify to the viewer that there is a system in place which leads the creation of these pictures. This is unnecessary in the book because the introductory text and map serve the same function. The book concludes with the index of all twenty-four photographs. This was included despite all photographs being reproduced in the book to reinforce the message that this work functions as an artistic survey that follows a specific sequence. The index thumbnails are each captioned with the relevant grid section number to maintain the link back to the map shown at the beginning of the book. As with previous case studies, the map is shown as including only the information used within the study - in this case a group of numbered squares presented with a dashed line representing the position of the boundary line, and a distance scale to indicate that this is a map, not an illustration.

## 7.5 Conclusions

The final book brings the research back to the initial objective of the project - to confront the visual consequences of the framing of the land around an idea of 'Natural Beauty'. Following the results at Sandford, this research investigated a conformist pictorial study at Banwell Wood and Black Down that showed potential methods of creating landscape photographs informed by conservation legislation. This case study re-orientates the practice to confront those initial ideas around the Picturesque examined at Sandford within a rigid geo-locative framework. The photographs build on what I had identified about the conservation landscape at Sandford, Banwell Wood and Black Down.

The geo-locative strategy relied on the use of an additional source of data - the Ordnance Survey National Grid (OSNG). Its use references a national system of mapping the British Isles. I created a site-specific geo-locative method through combining this system with the scheduled monument boundary. In this respect, my research co-opts widely used and understood mapping methods into the 21<sup>st</sup> century survey model I create. The maps I designed at Banwell Wood and Black Down were based on smaller, site-specific information.

Correlating the OSNG with a conservation boundary offers a strategy that is straightforward to apply to any conservation designation area within the British Isles. The system is scalable through the number and area of the grid sections employed, and as such offers a potential system for the examination of other conservation boundaries in the future.

An unexpected result of the final strategy was the impact of the visual motif - be it a track, horizon or line of trees, in helping the viewer to understand this as a boundary place. The statement accompanying the work identifies that a boundary may or may not be present somewhere within each photograph. This repeats the strategy used at Sandford Hill where the acknowledgement of the existence of an archive location somewhere within the frame promotes deeper engagement by viewers as they hunt to identify signs of it within each picture. This was lost at Banwell Wood and Black Down because the boundary itself was never visible within the photographs. Here, the lines present in the frame hint at the boundary nature of the place.

The final pictures examine the concept of 'Natural Beauty' alongside the designation of the site as a scheduled monument using a method I have argued is applicable to other conservation areas. The photographs speak to the multitude of conflicting factors that form my understanding of the conservation landscape where human activity is present, but in which Nature appears to dominate. As these photographs imply, Nature in this context is shaped to maintain an appearance of the Natural.



## CONCLUSIONS

### 8.1 Research Questions

This practice-based research interrogated the visual consequences of conservation legislation in place on the Mendip Hills. The examination involved the creation of a photographic survey to answer the following research questions:

1. How can a critical photographic practice be used to interrogate the visual consequences of the conservation designations in place on the Mendip Hills?
2. What can photography show about the creation of this conservation landscape as a cultural act?
3. In what ways can geo-locative systems assist photographic strategies designed to fulfil these objectives?

These questions were addressed across four case study sites, with this written analysis providing supporting context and analysis including critical reflection on methodology and methods. In this chapter I knit together the conclusions formed in each case study and present the overall research findings.

## 8.2 Conclusions

I found early in the practice that, taken alone, photographs struggle to interrogate the visual consequences of conservation legislation. The key obstacle is that whilst the photographs show the land as it appears at the moment the shutter is released, nothing within the pictures explicitly signifies that these are conservation landscapes, how they came to be designated as such, or how the legislation influences what they look like. To tackle the issue, this research utilised maps and captions in the final books of practice to link the photographs with the systems underpinning their making. The combination of these three types of information enables this study to highlight the existence of, if not the reasons behind, the conservation legislation in force at the case study sites.

The practice is divided between four case studies in which I performed a series of existence tests (see p.35) of mapped information relating directly to the conservation of the Mendip Hills. This research methodology allowed me to construct, reflect upon, refine, and use photography to interrogate the conservation of each place. In the first case study, Sandford Hill, I made a series of photographs at locations recorded in a caving archive in order to examine how I could create a series of photographic landscapes that appear to represent Natural Beauty within a post-industrial site. This guided me to utilise GPS for the practice and this, in turn, had a major impact on the overall direction of the research. Critically, this influence lay in my identification of the role of the map in the process of constructing a conservation landscape. My



examination concluded that there was a mutability in the value placed on specific places. If contemporary understanding of historical information changed, then the value attributed to specific places could change with it. This led me to consider how official historical information underpinning statutory legislation might also be challenged. I determined to focus the remaining case studies on scheduled monuments within the AONB and to use my photography to investigate the ways in which the designation can shape an approach to the land. The practice at Sandford Hill taught me that the specific values an archive of information places on a section of the land can be temporary. Finally, at Sandford Hill, I made use of a Picturesque pictorial strategy. This enabled me to create photographs that reference an idea of Natural Beauty through embracing 'Photographic Beauty'. I argue in the Introduction to this thesis that 'Photographic Beauty' is a subjective judgement based on a lifetime of experiences and influences, not all of which are identifiable. As such, the final photographs are a reflection of my own understanding of both Photographic and Natural Beauty during the period when I was making the work.

The identification of the importance of the value of accuracy in the archive influenced my research strategy in case study 2, Banwell Wood. In order to test methods of photographic inquiry led by geo-locative facilities, I utilised a series of approaches that visually interrogated the boundaries of two scheduled monuments. This was an important development from the practice at Sandford Hill because, first, I was now using official conservation information published by the UK government and, second, the type of geographic data was now an area, not a series of points. The case study practice was based on the

boundary of this area, taken as a line, and involved a series of attempts at using photography to interrogate the visual consequences of the designation.

The strategies employed involved a gradual reduction in my creative input whilst in the field. I was, as the practice progressed, attempting to pose as a dispassionate observer surveying the land. But this was a ruse. The final triptychs may appear to be neutral images that depict the view along specific bearings from precise points on a line, but those points were only judged important because I made that claim. There was no reason for me to stand at each of them and make these photographs other than for the purposes of this artistic research. The final pictorial method used panoramic triptychs in order to distort the land and create a landscape that viewers could begin to understand as a construction. The manipulation of placing three pictures made looking along three separate bearings together to construct each triptych on a two-dimensional plane is intended to inform viewers that the ideology of the landscape, as Burgin terms it, is being challenged (see pp.55-56). These are not traditional landscape photographs but landscapes that I have created to directly confront the cultural division of the land that comes from a conservation designation.

Case study 3 develops the approach used at Banwell Wood. The site, Black Down, includes a scheduled monument preserving ancient burial mounds and a World War 2 bombing decoy. In order to examine how this designation could be understood to frame the site, I developed a photographic method based on a customised map that I created. The final approach involved a conformist

approach in which I made a series of pictures in fifty-three distinct sections of a grid I drew across a digital map of the scheduled monument. The challenge was to create a photographic landscape that visually interrogated this place, rather than the long-distance views for which the site is locally known. To solve this, I made use of a consistent pictorial strategy in which each frame was divided through the middle by the horizon, and no land from beyond the scheduled monument boundary was recorded in the frame. The final photographs operate as my attempt to create a new landscape based on the way the site is recorded in the official schedule of monuments in order to reference the way in which the legislation can be interpreted as shaping the place. The final series acts as a landscape apart from the physical place and one that references precisely how the legislation can shape an approach that is at odds with how the site is marketed. The consistent framing, lighting and colour palette led me to understand how a grid with areas in which I could make photographs was a viable photographic and geographic model. This was key for the next and final case study as it allowed me to overcome the issues identified in photographing precise points in the previous case studies.

The fourth practice case study was undertaken at Dolebury Warren. Following my identification of the value of a grid to lead the practice at Black Down, this case study provided me with the opportunity to further examine the potential for a related approach that could work at any conservation site. The challenge was to design a method that could be of value in future research, beyond the remit of this study. To tackle the problem, I decided to use the commonly understood and available Ordnance Survey National Grid as opposed to one I drew myself. This enabled me to combine aspects of what I learnt through designing each of

the methods used at the other case study sites to produce a new method. For the final work, I followed a set of self-initiated guidelines that only stipulated that I must include one landscape picture made in each grid section. Unlike previous case studies, I allowed myself to incorporate the view inside or outside the section, depending on what I encountered during the field trip. The resulting series bridges the gap between the photographs made at Sandford Hill following a Picturesque pictorial strategy and those following a more conformist strategy at Banwell Wood and Black Down. An unexpected result of this work was how I learnt that paths and other lines within the frame began to visually signify the presence of a boundary, despite the precise location referenced by the mapped line remaining hidden.

I have presented the final works in this study as a series of books in a single slip-case. This strategy has been utilised following the results of my analysis of presentation methods both in reference to my own photographs and within my examination of existing practice. I determined that books were the most appropriate final outcome for the project because they allowed me to keep each case study self-contained whilst maintaining a small degree of control over how the works are read. The case studies and written element are presented in a slip-case to maintain the conceptual link between each of the five books as part of this one body of research. Each case study book contains a minimal introduction, included for the purpose of setting the scene for the reader without trying to rigidly tell them how to interpret the works. In addition, each contains a reproduction of the map used to lead the corresponding practice. These maps inform the reader of the presence of the underlying geographic model in use. In order to reinforce the link between the practice and the map, I included captions

with the photographs that reference elements of the mapped information. In the Sandford Hill book, these captions include information relating to the mine working that may or may not be visible in the photograph. The captions inform the reader that there is something potentially unexpected happening in each landscape. In the Banwell Wood book, the caption informs the reader of the position I was standing when I made each picture, and the direction in which I was looking. At Black Down and Dolebury Warren, I include only the grid section number for the location where I made each photograph, and readers can cross reference this with the map. These inclusions provide just enough information for readers to be able to piece together the ways in which information leads the practice without distracting them from their own reading of the photographs.

The scale of the books is important. Following my tests with the Sandford and Dolebury Warren pictures on the wall in 2016, I concluded that it was important for the pictures to be reproduced at a relatively large size in whatever medium I eventually used. The books are printed to be 374mm x 297mm as my tests showed this to be the largest size that was physically manageable. This allowed the largest works to be shown at 347mm x 277mm, sufficient for readers to see details within individual images. Books 2, 4 and 5 include index galleries at the rear. These indexes are included to signify the depth of the research. At Sandford, all seventy-five final sites are shown in the index, and twenty-four are enlarged for the main edit. At Black Down, I repeat this approach with twenty-four of the final fifty-three photographs reproduced at the full size. At Dolebury, all twenty-four images are reproduced both in full size and in the index with the purpose of maintaining the link to the custom map. At these sites, it appeared

that the less control I had over the positioning of the camera and subsequent framing of the photograph, the more leeway I had to give myself in editing the final work in order to meet the aesthetic objectives of the project. The image index allowed me to include those pictures that form part of the research but were less successful in terms of creating a response based on my pre-existing ideas concerning 'Photographic Beauty'.

The sole exception to this strategy was Book 3, Banwell Wood. I printed the final pictures as triptychs on single pages at a reduced scale compared to the other case study books. I tested larger reproductions with fold outs containing one triptych section per page but these became so unwieldy that the goal of creating new landscapes was lost in translation. With this in mind, I determined that the index was too similar to the main section reproduction of the images and so became redundant. The panoramic triptychs are read in a different way to the single images in the other books and it follows that the presentation has been adjusted accordingly. I have kept the overall book dimensions for the Banwell Wood book consistent with the other practice books to maintain the link between each series as functioning within the same body of research.

This study used a research practice informed by geographic archive information. Geo-locative technologies enabled this process. I have identified four different methods of using these technologies to respond to designations within the Mendip Hills. This is not an exhaustive list of all possible methods, as evidenced by my review of other artists that have used similar methodologies (see Chapter 4). They are, however, approaches I consider appropriate for the

sites I have investigated. Geo-locative technologies offer an additional variable that can help to lead a critically driven creative practice. The use of geo-locative information to support a photographic survey allows an artist to claim what Kate Mellor labelled as a 'quasi-scientific' legitimacy within their work (see p.140). Contemporary systems such as Google Street View offer the researcher the chance to perform their own existence tests of the claims made by the artist. They can, 'go there and check it out'<sup>193</sup>, without leaving their computer. When tested, this strategy raised the significant questions regarding geographic accuracy in existing works that informed my practice. When embraced by the artist, these existence tests offer a powerful claim of authenticity to geo-locative based art practice, including the potential for the artist to subvert existing knowledge.

In conclusion, this study finds that photography, when encompassed within a wider research method that presents images alongside additional media including maps and text, can operate as part of a strategy that examines the visual consequences of a conservation designation. The photographic studies that form this research each interrogate how legislation identifies and promotes specific culturally inspired attributes of a place. In so doing, this thesis identifies an underrepresented area within current research-led photographic practice. Recent advances in technology and data availability have allowed this research to adapt existing methods to answer new questions. My original contribution to knowledge lies within my deployment of geo-locative technologies to lead a critical photographic practice to examine conservation legislation in place on the

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<sup>193</sup> See Wood and Fels claim of the power of the map examined on p.37



Mendip Hills. I have constructed site-specific methods of photographic practice that investigate how an archive can shape an understanding of the Mendip Hills. The results demonstrate that archival maps linked to the Mendip Hills offer a method of approaching this site. There was no logical reason to stand at these places at these times and make these photographs. There were often no physical or aesthetic properties of the land that might be the subject of traditional photographic representations. The only reason these photographs exist is as a direct response to the archival mapped data. Using the maps made available through the UK Government's policy of Open Data, this thesis and my associated research have enabled me to create new photographs that relate to the creation of imaginative geographies through revealing the non-aesthetic logic informing the mapping that is central to their designation as sites of conservation. If, as I argue in the Introduction, the landscape is a social and cultural construction then these sets of photographs contribute to the critical understanding of the imaginative geography of the Mendip Hills.

The act of intensive introspection in which I look at and photograph each case study site through a conceptual frame, informed by the theoretical concerns of this research, has influenced both my concept of 'Natural Beauty', and the work that I am making. In my early work at Sandford Hill, I was primarily concerned with creating picturesque photographs of sites with an industrial history that conflicted with my initial ideas of what constitutes 'Natural Beauty'. These photographs were made as part of an analytical process to resolve my understanding of the conceptual divide between the history of the place and its aesthetically-led preservation. I introduce new dimensions to the debate about what is understood as representative of 'Natural Beauty' through my harnessing

of geo-locative technologies to enable my practice across all four case study sites to reference the systems through which the cultural and social drives of the legislation are positioned. The resulting photographs embrace the precision of the modern experience to decipher how the legislation can be seen to add cultural value to specific sections of land over their surroundings in what I identify as an aesthetically-led system of cultural conservation (see Appendix 1). This apparent isolation of areas within a wider landscape of the Mendip Hills is at the centre of my interventions at Banwell, Black Down and Dolebury Camp.

During the course of my investigation, I have come to interpret 'Natural Beauty' as a perceived aesthetic judgement of the land that, when cited within conservation legislation, influences the creation and preservation of landscapes as cultural images (see Chapter 1). Understood in this way, 'Natural Beauty' is a cultural construct. The practice in this study adds new dimensions to this concept - the pictures are my photographic interpretation of 'Natural Beauty' at the time and place of making each image. They are culturally and socially constructed because they are my response to the influence of the legislation seen through the filter of my lifetime of experiences so far. I began each case study using the legislation to guide the selection of vantage points, but the final selection of photographs is a reflection of my understanding of both 'Natural Beauty' and 'Photographic Beauty', and as such is the product of the range of experiences that have led me to make those choices. These pictures function as new landscapes that explore, examine, and interrogate my own concept of 'Natural Beauty' as a cultural construct as it has developed through the process of this research.

Central to this study is the relationship between 'Photographic Beauty' and 'Natural Beauty'. Both are artifice - they position a frame around the land and conceptually create place-based expectations that I argue are aesthetically driven. Each of the final books of practice in this study proposes a new landscape that uses 'Photographic Beauty' to reference my expectations of 'Natural Beauty'. These expectations, when translated to a pictorial medium, are formally driven. The photographs are about how I can use 'Photographic Beauty' to reference an idea of 'Natural Beauty' that is in part informed by the legislation. In this way, these two aspects of Beauty are entwined within my practice. The photographs are representations of what I wish to find when encountering 'Natural Beauty'. The experience of looking at the books creates a landscape that is apart from the physical place, but is intrinsically linked to it through my role as the artist. It is only through my immersion in each place and my thoughts around 'Natural Beauty' that the objects of 'Photographic Beauty' can exist.

During and after the process of making the photographs for this study I define myself as an 'artist-surveyor' in reference to the wider methodology I employed whilst making the work. Throughout the study, the key focus has been on the ways in which I can respond to the legislative shaping of the Mendip Hills. I have used the tools of the geographer to lead my practice as an acknowledgement of the ways in which the Mendip Hills are framed by this governance. This strategy has allowed my photography to reference a system through which the conservation landscapes investigated are delineated. My adoption of processes historically tied to scientific and military use promotes a way of seeing that references a system underpinning how the Mendip Hills are

shaped as a conservation landscape. In this respect, each fieldtrip was a survey - I followed a predefined method devised in the studio using archival datasets. The technologies used within this process lend a 'quasi-scientific' legitimacy (see p.140), because they provide the appearance of a scientific reason for my making the photographs. However, this is in large part a ruse. My work has become performative during this study. There is no historic, scientific, or geographic purpose behind the picture making. Instead, I am using and editing information I select as important to lead a critical photographic practice. My value judgements during this process were based on my experiences as a photographer who has a lifelong history with the places photographed. In this respect, whilst the work functions as a survey in which the scientific, historic and geographically-led cultural identity of the Mendip Hills is examined through photography, it is at core driven by my own artistic intentions. As such, I use the term 'artist-surveyor' to reference the multi-faceted methodology that drives this study and my future interventions.

The landscapes interrogated and created in this study are shaped by the dominance of particular cultural and social groups at particular times and places. I have argued that an AONB designation reflects a set of concerns that were legislatively voiced through the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 (see Chapter 1 and Appendix 1). These motivations largely represent a shift in power of lobbying groups from the upper to the middle classes in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (see Appendix 1). My practice engages with these voices through the methodology underpinning this research. The maps I used as my starting point delineate the areas judged by key stakeholders at the time of designation to be of sufficient aesthetic and heritage

value as to warrant preservation. Through my utilisation of these maps, along with the pictorial strategy that embraces 'Photographic Beauty', my photographs both reference and add new dimensions to the continued influence of these historic and imaginative geographies. 'Natural Beauty', as designated within an AONB, is about preserving a specific anthropocentric and cultural relationship between humans and the land. This unavoidably impacts on my thinking and the work that I make. The same cultural forces that shape the land into the landscape of an AONB, shape how I understand it conceptually and interpret it photographically. As a result, my practice is part of a way of seeing the land that develops and maintains this relationship. My photographs are made through a cultural filter inspired and influenced by the motivations of the key stakeholders, and this has resulted in a body of work that both comments on their existence whilst also reinforcing the same anthropocentric relationship between humans and the land as voiced through the legislation.

If, as I argue, I am to some extent reinforcing the positions of key stakeholders then it is important to understand who they are. Historically, the dominant voice in debate around the existence of conservation legislation has been the powerful middle-class lobby that grew out of early 20<sup>th</sup> century Britain (see Appendix 1). However, looking towards the future, in late 2018 a committee was formed for a 'Designated Landscapes' review, with instruction from the Government, 'to consider the next steps for National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty sites (AONBs) in England'<sup>194</sup>. Due in 2019, the report of the committee will shed light on the current national mood regarding

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<sup>194</sup> Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (2018)

conservation landscapes and allow further research into where the lobbying power lies in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. The committee is chaired by journalist and former special advisor to the government Julian Glover and includes members from political, farming and academic institutions<sup>195</sup>. Whilst the panel appears dominated by key establishment figures, potentially favouring a division of power similar to that which I identified in the reports leading up to the NPACA 1949 (see Appendix 1), until the report is published it is unclear how their positions will influence any final conclusions. The panel selection reinforces the recently stated ‘environmentally friendly’ position of the Environment Secretary Michael Gove to reward farmers who are actively, ‘planting woodland, providing new habitats for wildlife, increasing biodiversity, contributing to improved water quality and returning cultivated land to wildflower meadows or other more natural states’<sup>196</sup>. This proposed policy suggests a development of sustainable approaches to conservation in which nature is allowed to appear to dominate, but is still centrally concerned with a human relationship to what might be perceived as natural. The extent of the impact this political posturing will have on conservation landscapes as they are experienced around the Mendip Hills and throughout the rest of the United Kingdom remains to be seen.

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<sup>195</sup> The panel chaired by Glover comprises Lord Cameron of Dillington, a cross bench peer, farmer and landowner; Jim Dixon, journalist and the former Chief Executive of the Peak District National Park; Sarah Mukherjee, former BBC environment and rural affairs correspondent; Dame Fiona Reynolds, former Director General of the National Trust; and Jake Fiennes, General Manager for Conservation for the 25000-acre Holkham Estate (ibid)

<sup>196</sup> Buchan (2018)

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## Appendix 1: The Acts and Reports leading up to the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949

### Introduction

This appendix maps out the position followed in the study which argues that UK legislation conserving 'Natural Beauty' is borne out of the same social and cultural concerns as that which preserves Ancient Monuments. The thesis argues that the legislation covering both voices similar aesthetic concerns. The argument in this appendix follows a broadly chronological timeline so begins with an analysis of the Ancient Monuments Protection Act 1882 (AMPA 1882) that first introduced a national schedule of monuments, before investigating the motivations behind the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) designation within the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 (NPACA 1949). Between these Acts there is a chronology of amendments, new Acts, Governmental, and non-Governmental reports that represents the official record of how conservation legislation was developed in the UK (figure 92). There have been many more amendments, reports and Acts between 1949 and the present, but this appendix focuses on the campaigns for the AMPA 1882 and the NPACA 1949 to identify the links between the motivations of the resulting legislation.

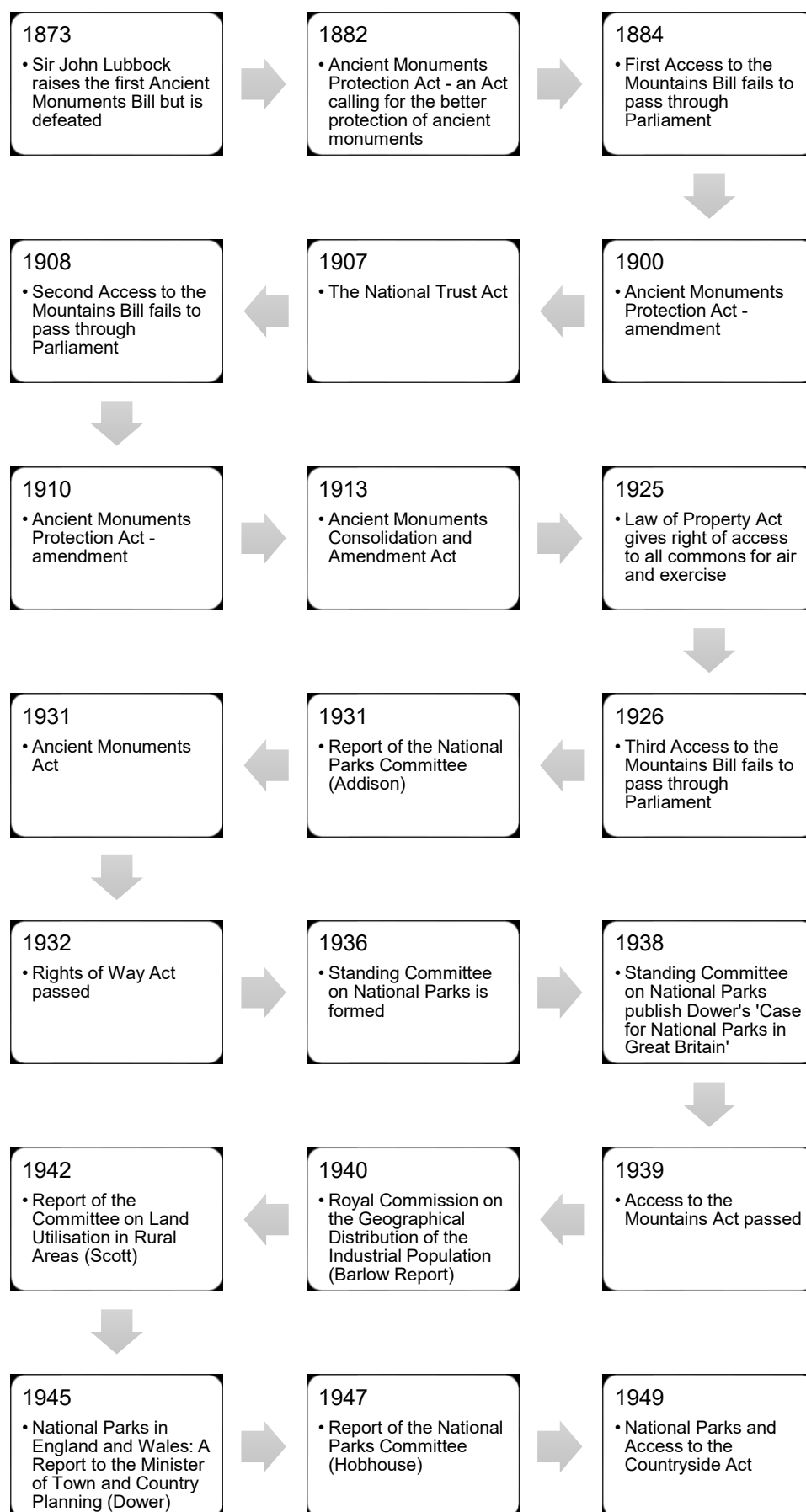


Figure 92: Timeline showing the key Parliamentary Acts, Government, and non-Government Reports into UK conservation legislation between 1882 and 1949

This project is specifically located in an investigation of the visual consequences of conservation designations that are argued to be aesthetic in motivation. As such, the core focus in this appendix is on the legislation promoting a view of the land based on Beauty rather than amenity and those statutes and related reports are the subject of the analysis below.

### Ancient Monuments Protection Act 1882

The first legislation passed in the UK aimed at preserving or conserving areas of land was the Ancient Monuments Protection Act 1882. This Act allowed for the inspection, maintenance and/or purchase of any monument included on the national schedule for the purposes of protection or repair. The schedule of monuments was written into the Act and included twenty-nine sites in England and Wales, twenty-one sites in Scotland and eighteen sites in Ireland. The list for England and Wales illustrates the focus on prehistorical monuments (figure 93).

# The SCHEDULE.

A.D. 1882.

## LIST OF ANCIENT MONUMENTS TO WHICH ACT APPLIES.

### ENGLAND AND WALES.

	County.	Parish.
<i>The tumulus and dolmen, Plas Newydd, Anglesea.</i>	<i>Anglesea</i> - -	<i>Llandedwen.</i>
<i>The tumulus known as Wayland Smith's Forge.</i>	<i>Berkshire</i> - -	<i>Ashbury.</i>
<i>Uffington Castle - - -</i>	<i>"</i> - -	<i>Uffington.</i>
<i>The stone circle known as Long Meg and her Daughters, near Penrith.</i>	<i>Cumberland</i> - -	<i>Addingham.</i>
<i>The stone circle on Castle Rigg, near Keswick.</i>	<i>"</i> - -	<i>Crosthwaite.</i>
<i>The stone circles on Burn Moor - -</i>	<i>"</i> - -	<i>St. Bees.</i>
<i>The stone circle known as The Nine Ladies, Stanton Moor.</i>	<i>Derbyshire</i> - -	<i>Bakewell.</i>
<i>The tumulus known as Arborlow - -</i>	<i>"</i> - -	<i>"</i>
<i>Hob Hurst's House and Hut, Bastow Moor.</i>	<i>"</i> - -	<i>"</i>
<i>Mimming Low - - -</i>	<i>"</i> - -	<i>Brassington.</i>
<i>Arthur's Quoit, Gower - - -</i>	<i>Glamorganshire</i> -	<i>Llanridian.</i>
<i>The tumulus at Uley - - -</i>	<i>Gloucestershire</i> -	<i>Uley.</i>
<i>Kits Coty House - - -</i>	<i>Kent</i> - -	<i>Aylesford.</i>
<i>Danes Camp - - -</i>	<i>Northamptonshire</i>	<i>Hardingstone.</i>
<i>Castle Dykes - - -</i>	<i>"</i> - -	<i>Farthingston.</i>
<i>The Rollrich Stones - - -</i>	<i>Oxfordshire</i> -	<i>Little Rollright.</i>
<i>The Pentre Evan Cromlech - - -</i>	<i>Pembrokeshire</i> -	<i>Nevern.</i>
<i>The ancient stones at Stanton Drew -</i>	<i>Somersetshire</i> -	<i>Stanton Drew.</i>
<i>The chambered tumulus at Stoney Littleton, Wellow.</i>	<i>"</i> - -	<i>Wellow.</i>
<i>Cadbury Castle - - -</i>	<i>"</i> - -	<i>South Cadbury.</i>
<i>Mayborough, near Penrith - - -</i>	<i>Westmoreland</i> -	<i>Barton.</i>
<i>Arthur's Round Table, Penrith - -</i>	<i>"</i> - -	<i>"</i>
<i>The group of stones known as Stonehenge Old Sarum - - -</i>	<i>Wiltshire</i> - -	<i>Amesbury.</i>
<i>The vallum at Abury, the Sarcen stones within the same, those along the Kennet Road, and the group between Abury and Beckhampton.</i>	<i>"</i> - -	<i>Abury.</i>
<i>The long barrow at West Kennet, near Marlborough.</i>	<i>"</i> - -	<i>West Kennet.</i>
<i>Silbury Hill - - -</i>	<i>"</i> - -	<i>Abury.</i>
<i>The Dolmen (Devil's Den), near Marlborough.</i>	<i>"</i> - -	<i>Fyfield.</i>
<i>Barbury Castle - - -</i>	<i>"</i> - -	<i>Ogbourne, St. Andrews, and Swindon.</i>
[Public.-73.]	B	7

Figure 93: The original national schedule of monuments. Source: Ancient Monuments Protection Act 1882

Records of the development of the AMPA 1882 argue that the legislation was largely the result of the struggle of Sir John Lubbock, later to become Lord Avebury, who at the time was the Liberal Member of Parliament for

Maidstone<sup>197</sup>. Lubbock had an extensive background in finance, biology and archaeology, having published *Prehistoric Times, as Illustrated by Ancient Remains, and the Manners and Customs of Modern Savages* in 1865 in which he defined the terms 'Palaeolithic' and 'Neolithic'<sup>198</sup>. He first introduced the Ancient Monuments Protection Bill (AMPB) as a Private Member's Bill in 1873 and had to reintroduce it eight times before the Government finally tabled their own Bill in 1882. In the second reading of the 1873 Bill, Lubbock argued that ancient monuments in Britain were disappearing, citing the remains of Con O'Neill's Castle at Castlereagh. A local nobleman had commissioned a wall around the field to protect the remains of the castle but the agent had promptly pulled the castle down to use the stones to build the wall<sup>199</sup>. Lubbock himself had purchased land at Avebury in 1871, photographed over a hundred years later by Fay Godwin, to prevent the imminent construction of cottages across the site despite public consternation<sup>200</sup>. At that time, there was no Government mandate for the public purchase and preservation of such sites. Lubbock's primary interest was in the history that these sites represented and what they could tell historians and archaeologists about the history of Britain. His position was borne out of his interest in the sciences and his archaeologically-led desire to preserve landscapes for their cultural value.

The histories of the AMPA 1882 situate the debates over the decade following Lubbock's first attempt as coming out of a rising preservationist movement of

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<sup>197</sup> The history of the campaign for the Ancient Monuments Protection Act 1882 can be read in detail in Hunter, 1907; Lowenthal & Binney, 1981; and Murray, 2008.

<sup>198</sup> Lubbock, 1913, p.73

<sup>199</sup> HC Deb 15 April 1874 vol 218 cc.574-95

<sup>200</sup> *ibid*; Hutchinson, 1914, p.132;

the time linked to Romantic Nationalism and Historicism<sup>201</sup>. This movement was as much about the preservation of old buildings as it was the land. Geographer Hugh Prince set out differences between revival (making new buildings appear old); restoration (making old buildings serve a new purpose or improving their appearance); and preservation (protecting and maintaining old buildings in a good state of repair), a separation of terms critical to his position that the calls for the legislation were preservationist in tone<sup>202</sup>. Prince specifically identified the attempts of John Ruskin and William Morris to affect public opinion in the years leading up to Lubbock's Bill. Ruskin's 1849, *Seven Lamps of Architecture* denounced restoration of buildings as a, 'Lie from beginning to end', going on to argue that, '*We have no right whatever to touch them. They are not ours. They belong partly to those who built them, and partly to all the generations of mankind who follow us*'<sup>203</sup>. This call was taken up by the Society of Antiquaries who claimed that:

No restoration should ever be attempted otherwise than ... in the sense of preservation from further injuries... Anything beyond this is untrue to Art, unjustifiable in taste, destructive in practice and wholly opposed to the judgement of the best Archaeologists<sup>204</sup>.

The founder of the Arts and Crafts movement William Morris repeated a similar position in a letter to the *Athenaeum* journal in 1877 when he called for an association:

To keep a watch on old monuments, to protest against all 'restoration' that means more than keeping out wind and weather, and, by all means, literary and other, to awaken a

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<sup>201</sup> Fawcett, 1976; Hunter, 1981; Nipperdey, 1983; and Prince, 1981.

<sup>202</sup> Prince, 1981, p.33

<sup>203</sup> Ruskin, 1849, pp.162-3. Emphasis maintained from original.

<sup>204</sup> Evans, 1956, p.309

feeling that our ancient buildings are not merely ecclesiastical toys, but sacred monuments of the nation's growth and hope<sup>205</sup>.

Professor of Archaeology Tim Murray places the AMPA 1882 as based in an ideology of preservation dating back across Europe to at least the Romans, arguing that romantic nationalism was important in shaping, 'meanings and values of prehistoric remains'<sup>206</sup>. Murray draws from historian Thomas Nipperdey's definition of Romantic Nationalism as, 'first of all a particular kind of nationalism moulded by romanticism, namely a cultural nationalism. Its central characteristics are a) the nationalism of culture and b) the founding of the nation on the basis of a common culture'<sup>207</sup>. Historian Michael Hunter argues that commentators such as Ruskin and Morris were part of much larger trends stretching across Europe<sup>208</sup>. These histories all tie the preservationist drives identifiable in the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to a predominantly aesthetic form of cultural appreciation. Each argument was based in ensuring that something was preserved to appear as it had done throughout their lifetimes in support of how they understood the nation's culture.

The opposition to the AMPB centred around the government's involvement in potential invasion on the rights of land owners, not the relative merits of ancient monuments being protected. Sir George Jenkinson, in the second reading of the Bill, stressed that, 'of course they all accepted the principle that the ancient monuments in the Kingdom should be preserved', but supported the position that caution should be taken when placing more public rights and tax payer

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<sup>205</sup> Morris, 1877, p.326

<sup>206</sup> Murray, 2008, p.160

<sup>207</sup> Nipperdey, 1983, p.1

<sup>208</sup> Hunter, 1981, p.22



expense on privately held land<sup>209</sup>. A year later, Jenkinson updated his position to argue that, contrary to the evidence presented previously by Lubbock, ‘those who possessed *really interesting* ancient monuments would be anxious to preserve them, independent of other’s interference’<sup>210</sup>. No qualification was offered of ‘really interesting’, but it is taken to relate to both a site’s historic associations and an aesthetic appreciation of the land.

The final AMPA 1882 as passed bore little in relation to Lubbock’s initial objective but it formed a starting point for conservation legislation in the UK. The motivations were complex and often conflicting - a theme that I shall trace through the debates around conservation legislation all the way up until the NPACA 1949 (and, based on the review of Fay Godwin’s practice, one that I suspect continues to this day). The myriad of different interests in the land mean that any legislation must be a compromise. The AMPA 1882 began the process of creating the conservation landscapes that are the focus of this research.

## The Reports leading up to the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949

Following the AMPA 1882, calls for conservation continued into the next century. Changes in the wider social landscape of Britain meant that the Government was increasingly called upon to not only provide greater

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<sup>209</sup> HC Deb 15 April 1874

<sup>210</sup> HC Deb 14 April 1875. Emphasis added.

protections for heritage sites but also for Nature and to provide amenity access for a population with increasing leisure time. The last decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century saw debates revolve around amenity access to certain types of land through the multiple attempts to pass the Access to the Mountains Bill (see figure 92). Alongside this, greater protection was provided to the preservation of old buildings through the National Trust Act 1907. This Act made the National Trust for Places of Historic Interest or Natural Beauty, first formed in 1895, into a statutory corporation<sup>211</sup>. The early objections of governmental involvement in the preservation of specific landscapes were largely being put to one side amidst the wider social changes of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The rising number of conservation groups to come out of the 19<sup>th</sup> century were of influence during this period and in later debates leading up to the NPACA 1949. A series of Government and non-government Reports were commissioned into the requirements of any potential new conservation legislation and frequently called for statements from these wide ranging interest groups. The reports provide a valuable archive of information about the motivations behind this major piece of conservation legislation. These reports are examined below in sections that follow the common naming convention of using the surname of the chair of the committee to identify each report.

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<sup>211</sup> Great Britain, National Trust Act 1907

## The Addison Report

In 1929 Prime Minister Ramsey MacDonald established the National Park Committee following representations made behind the scenes<sup>212</sup>. The committee was chaired by Dr Christopher Addison with the objective:

To consider and report if it is desirable and feasible to establish one or more National Parks in Great Britain with a view to the preservation of the natural characteristics, including flora and fauna, and to the improvement of recreational facilities for the people; and to advise generally, and in particular as to the areas, if any, that are most suitable for the purpose<sup>213</sup>

This aim articulates for the first time the two central themes of the calls for conservation legislation in the inter war years - the conservation and protection of the natural habitat of the British Isles and greater access to the land by the wider population. This dichotomy is repeated throughout the debate over National Parks and continues today. In his *A History of Nature Conservation in Britain*, David Evans argues these twin motivations can be divided between two characteristics that have effectively protected the conservation movement and yet have no scientific or economic base. The first is, 'the aesthetic appeal of the

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<sup>212</sup> Mair and Delafons (2001, p.293) argue that this behind the scenes lobbying was largely the work of one man, Lord Bledisloe. This position is supported in: Sheail (1976, p.42; 2010, pp.246-247), who argues that Lord Bledisloe offered part of his forestry estate in the Forest of Dean as a potential vote winner following his experiences of National Parks in the USA and Canada; and Cherry (1975, p.13), who cites representations concerning the National Parks in the USA and Canada as a major influence in the founding of the 1931 National Park Committee. Blunden and Curry (1990, pp.37-38) and Adams (2004, p.86) both argue that it was the lobbying of the CPRE that was the real instigator for the National Park Committee. The importance given to Lord Bledisloe by the Committee can also be inferred through his position as the first recorded witness in the National Park Committee's 1931 *Report of the National Parks Committee* (National Park Committee, 1931, p.51).

<sup>213</sup> National Park Committee, 1931, p.4

natural world', and the second, 'the peripheral importance of 'nature' to so many other interests'<sup>214</sup>. These characteristics are both anthropocentric in their positioning of Nature as something for the benefit of humans. This could be either in terms of aesthetic appreciation, or as the basis for other interests such as the protection and development of nature reserves for animal welfare, which can be argued to be for the enjoyment of visitors and the sense of accomplishment of those creating such areas.

When the committee published its *Report of the National Parks Committee* in 1931, they defined their general objectives to be served by a system of National Reserves and Nature Sanctuaries thus:

- I. To safeguard areas of exceptional natural interest against (a) disorderly development, and (b) spoliation.
- II. To improve the means of access for pedestrians to areas of natural beauty.
- III. To promote measures for the protection of flora and fauna.<sup>215</sup>

These objectives are concerned with what Green defined as the 'aesthetic values relating to our enjoyment of the land, wildlife and amenity of the countryside' (see pp.52-53). The objectives are protectionist in their stated desire to maintain a specific landscape. Sir Clough Williams-Ellis, who presented testimony to the committee on behalf of the Council for the Protection of Rural Wales, presented his argument against the encroachment of suburbia on the countryside in *England and the Octopus*. He described the new housing

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<sup>214</sup> Evans, 1997, p.1

<sup>215</sup> National Park Committee, 1931, p.12

developments as, 'mean and perky little houses that surely none but mean and perky little souls should inhabit with satisfaction'<sup>216</sup>. His primary concern was with the aesthetics of the countryside, presenting a call to arms, 'from which order and beauty may set out to overcome and reclaim the wilderness'<sup>217</sup>. Only the committee's third objective attempts any pretence of scientific or moral desires for the protection of flora and fauna.

In their 1990 book *A People's Charter?* geographer John Blunden and agricultural economist Nigel Curry situate the debate around conservation in the 1930s as a class issue. The upper-class land owners wished to protect 'their' land for private sporting use; the middle class wished to preserve the aesthetic and scientific value of the land shown to them in Romantic art and literature; and the working class called for greater access to the land they had fought for in the First World War<sup>218</sup>. Others have attempted to make the divide along ethical-utilitarian lines<sup>219</sup>. The variety of concerns behind the conservation lobbies is revealed by the thirty-eight witness statements made to the committee. The Addison Report divides the evidence presented into nine distinct sections based on the principle concerns expressed<sup>220</sup>:

- The Significance of National Parks for Great Britain;
- Procedure;
- Planning and Alternative Methods;
- Regulation of Use;

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<sup>216</sup> Williams-Ellis, 1928, p.15

<sup>217</sup> *ibid*, p.13

<sup>218</sup> Blunden and Curry, 1990, pp.24-25

<sup>219</sup> Green, 1981, p.8

<sup>220</sup> National Park Committee, 1931, p.51

- Accommodation;
- Flora and Fauna;
- Principles of Selection;
- Scottish Evidence;
- Commons.

This research is interested in the motivations behind the legislation, so the following review focuses on those witnesses whose testimony is concerned with either the motivation for National Parks or for their selection. The testimonies concerned with the 'Significance for National Parks for Great Britain' were centred on a romantic idea of how the countryside should appear whilst maximising human enjoyment of nature. Only two statements were categorised this way, that of Lord Bledisloe, who argued for National Parks, 'as a means of preserving natural beauty, as sanctuaries for human beings as well as for wildlife, and as buttresses against vandalism'<sup>221</sup>, and the statement made by the National Trust that centred on the importance of the preservation of sites above any calls for wider public access<sup>222</sup>. Lord Bledisloe was making the case for a conservation landscape as it is hoped to be experienced today - one in which often conflicting concerns are balanced. The National Trust on the other hand were primarily upholding their statutory duty to preserve places without necessarily accommodating wider public access.

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<sup>221</sup> Ibid, p.52

<sup>222</sup> Ibid, pp.52-55

The subject of flora and fauna was represented by The British Correlating Committee for the Protection of Nature - a committee consisting of representatives of interested groups (figure 94).



Figure 94: Groups and individuals represented on or consulted by The British Correlating Committee for the protection of Nature<sup>223</sup>

Their combined witness statement described at length how the provision of wide access to the countryside was at odds with the preservation of wildlife<sup>224</sup>. This was the first time that preservation of nature for its own sake was voiced within official language. There was no discussion in the report though of how these organisations, all of whom were concerned with the promotion of specific interactions between their human membership and nature, would seek to promote their interests alongside a wider agenda for the preservation of wildlife.

<sup>223</sup> *ibid*, pp.66-67

<sup>224</sup> *ibid*, p.67



I have interpreted their calls for the restriction of access to mean a restriction against the wider population (by which I mean members of the public not affiliate with their memberships) gaining access. The countryside as conserved under the auspices of the British Correlating Committee would have been an exclusionary landscape, where only insiders were permitted entry. Their argument was about shifting the membership of groups allowed access to the countryside from the upper-class landowners to the middle-class intellectuals.

The heading 'Principles of Selection' contained the largest number of witness statements. Trends can be traced between these pieces of evidence with nationally interested groups calling for a network of National Parks<sup>225</sup> and local groups making the case for why their area merited designation<sup>226</sup>. The statements are insightful in their consistency. There were repeated calls for the conservation of flora and fauna and historical interests to sit alongside a more permissive culture of granting amenity access for outdoor leisure. In my interpretation these witness statements demonstrate the competing and contrasting concerns amongst those lobbying for conservation legislation, and that the dichotomy of concerns existed even within individual witness statements. As Green argued, most concerns are anthropocentric and utilitarian in nature - they are concerned primarily with enhancing our relationship with nature for our own purposes (see pp.52-53). The witness calls for specific

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<sup>225</sup> Witnesses calling for a network of National Parks included geographer Dr Vaughan Cornish, The Rambler's Federations of Great Britain, The National Union of Teachers, and The Art Workers Guild (National Park Committee, 1931, pp.71-74, 85)

<sup>226</sup> Witnesses making the case for specific National Parks included The Lake District National Reserve Committee, the Council for the Preservation of Rural Wales, Mr O.G.S. Crawford (South Downs), the Forest of Dean National Committee, The Derbyshire Rural Community Council, The Manchester and District Joint Town Planning Advisor Committee and the Cannock Chase National Park Committee (National Park Committee, 1931, pp.74-86)

National Parks were about 'protecting' the areas the witnesses were most concerned about, their local landscapes.

The Addison Report's objectives were about preserving the view. When the calls for reports and lobbyists discuss conserving the countryside I am interpreting this as calls to preserve the view - to protect a very specific, socially constructed, idea of the countryside. Even the supposedly ethical-holistic calls for the protection of flora and fauna are really calls for how this might be protected for further human enjoyment and enrichment.

#### The Standing Committee on National Parks

In the official history, *Environmental Planning Vol II: National Parks and Recreation in the Countryside*, Gordon Cherry identifies the continual lobby of the Standing Committee on National Parks as the most important lobby after the 1931 Addison Report<sup>227</sup>. On 5<sup>th</sup> May 1936, following the Government's inaction on the recommendations of the Addison Report, the Councils for the Protection of Rural England and Rural Wales set up the Standing Committee on National Parks<sup>228</sup>. The aim of the committee was to maintain the momentum of the national parks movement and continue the campaign for increased access to the 'countryside'<sup>229</sup>. The committee maintained that National Parks that were under the control of a national body were needed, as local authorities were often too poor to meet the compensation demands of land owners affected by

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<sup>227</sup> Cherry, 1975, p.27

<sup>228</sup> *ibid*, p.27; Evans, 1997, p.59;

<sup>229</sup> Cherry, 1975, p.15; Blunden and Curry, 1990, p.39; Evans, 1997, p.59.

National Park status<sup>230</sup>. In July 1938, the Standing Committee published *The Case for National Parks in Great Britain* authored by John Dower, the Standing Committee's Secretary, who would later be commissioned to produce the *Report on National Parks in England and Wales* (the Dower Report). In this document, Dower made his first public attempt at defining what a National Park should be:

[A]n extensive district of wilder landscape, strictly preserved in its natural aspect and kept or made widely accessible for public enjoyment and open-air recreation, including particularly cross-country-walking, while continued in its traditional farming use<sup>231</sup>.

This definition reflected the wide range of concerns of the members of the Standing Committee (figure 95) and echoed the general objectives of the Addison Report<sup>232</sup>.

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<sup>230</sup> Following the Town and Country Planning Act 1932, landowners affected by the refusal of planning permission could dispute the decision and claim compensation from local authorities. As National Park legislation would specifically affect such planning permission, local authorities who did not have the money to meet such claims were less able to refuse planning applications (Chapter 48 (18)).

<sup>231</sup> Cited in Evans, 1997, pp.62-63

<sup>232</sup> National Park Committee, 1931, p.5

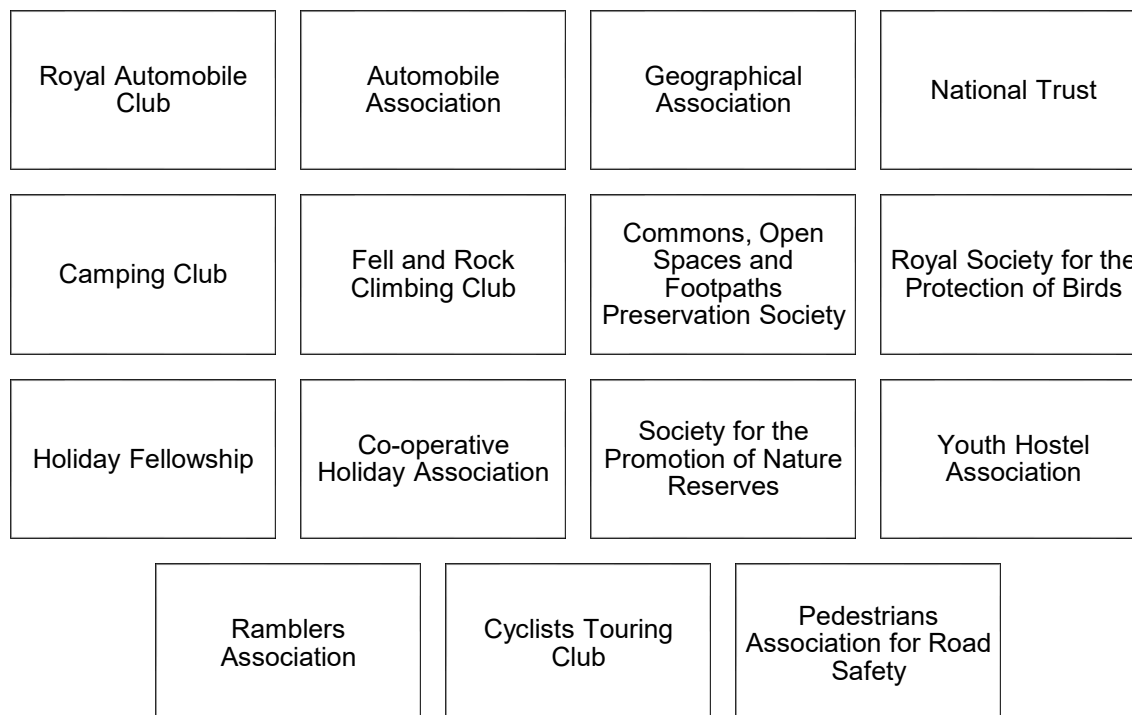


Figure 95: Organisational members of the Standing Committee on National Parks (Source: Bassett, 1980, p.ii)

The organisational members of the committee reflected the growing tourism industry that was developing in rural areas. This tourism industry needed not only access to the ‘countryside’ but needed to conserve a particular vision of the landscape for visitors.

### The Barlow and Scott Reports

Following the economic depression of the 1930s and the onset of the Second World War, there was increased focus within government of the need to plan for post-war reconstruction. The Royal Commission on the Distribution of the Industrial Population produced its report (the Barlow Report) in 1940, and this was the basis for much of the newly appointed Minister of Works Lord Reith’s

national plan for a comprehensive new planning system<sup>233</sup>. Blunden and Curry argue that the Barlow Report still influences the planning system that we have today, that 'essentially town and country should be seen as opposites - the former a place for development and the latter a place to be conserved'<sup>234</sup>. This view is supported by the inclusion on the Barlow Committee of Patrick Abercrombie, the town planner and founding member of the Council for the Protection of Rural England.

The opposition between town and country was reinforced in 1942 with the publication of the Report of the Committee on Land Utilisation in Rural Areas (the Scott Report). The report, whilst primarily about agriculture and attempting to narrow the economic divide between town and country, also resumed the Addison Report's call for the creation of National Parks and National Nature Reserves. The committee argued for greater clarity of footpaths across Britain to facilitate access to the 'countryside' as long as such access did not, 'interfere with the proper use of the land in the national interest'<sup>235</sup>. In areas set out as National Parks however, the Scott Report argued that,

In so far as the character of the country it is desired to include within a national park is determined by the type of farming (e.g. mountain sheep farming) it is essential for that form of utilisation to be continued with the proviso that in the case of a national park it becomes secondary to the main purpose which is public recreation<sup>236</sup>.

The committee is voicing a sentimentally driven protectionist desire here. The implication is for a 'countryside' preserved in pre-industrial times. In their

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<sup>233</sup> Blunden and Curry, 1990, p.41

<sup>234</sup> *ibid*

<sup>235</sup> Committee on Land Utilisation in Rural Areas, 1942, p.57

<sup>236</sup> *ibid*, p.59

evaluation of the effects of urban growth on the 'countryside' they echoed the much earlier concerns of William Wordsworth. In his 1810 *Guide to the Lakes*, Wordsworth wrote at length about the aesthetic attributes of the Lake District. For Wordsworth, the enjoyment of such landscapes was exclusive in nature, open only to persons of pure taste<sup>237</sup>. Wordsworth described cottages and their inhabitants as reminiscent of nature - as if rather than the product of a specific type of mercantile capitalism<sup>238</sup>, the conditions of the cottages and their inhabitants were there for the exclusive enjoyment of the spectator<sup>239</sup>. In their report, the Committee on Land Utilisation in Rural Areas argued that, 'it is not only the scattered nature of so much building development which has disfigured the countryside. In many cases houses or buildings which are suitably sited are equally destructive of the beauty of the landscape through their external appearance'<sup>240</sup>. For the Committee on Land Utilisation in Rural Areas, housing was considered essential within a National Park only when it reinforced the pastoral desires of the tourism industry. They also held preservationist views of farming within National Parks. Whilst the report supported farming to 'retain those features which give it distinctive charm and character'<sup>241</sup>, this was only as far as it supported the view, 'that the land of Britain should be both useful and beautiful and that the two aims are in no sense incompatible'<sup>242</sup>. The National Parks advocated by the Committee on Land Utilisation in Rural Areas were at risk of becoming Baudrillard's *hyperreal*<sup>243</sup> - a simulation of an imagined 'countryside' that bore little relation to the reality of rural life.

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<sup>237</sup> Sélincourt, 1977, pp.91-92

<sup>238</sup> Raymond Williams' 1975 book, *The Country and the City*, offers in depth analysis of the social conditions of rural England that is the basis of my interpretation of Wordsworth here.

<sup>239</sup> Sélincourt, 1977, p.62

<sup>240</sup> Committee on Land Utilisation in Rural Areas, 1942, p.30

<sup>241</sup> *ibid*, p.47

<sup>242</sup> *ibid*, p.47

<sup>243</sup> Baudrillard, 1994, p.1

The Committee on Land Utilisation in Rural Areas also considered the conservation of flora and fauna as important, advocating National Nature Reserves where, 'prohibition of access shall be a first consideration'<sup>244</sup>. This again reinforced the dichotomy of concerns, those of amenity and the conservation of nature, behind the lobbying for conservation legislation on a national level. The separating of National Parks and National Nature Reserves within the report supported the ongoing assertion that the two concerns were irreconcilable within the same geographical area.

### The Dower Report

The Scott Report was followed in 1945 by the publication of *National Parks in England and Wales: A Report to the Minister of Town and Country Planning* (the Dower Report). The report was chaired by the architect and member of the Rambler's Association John Dower<sup>245</sup>. Dower was the first to consolidate the calls for conservation into a concrete definition of what a National Park in Britain should look like. The Report divided land access and the conservation of nature into distinct categories within the same system, defining a National Park in Britain:

as an extensive area of beautiful and relatively wild country in which for the nation's benefit and by appropriate national decision and action, (a) the characteristic landscape beauty is strictly preserved, (b) access and facilities for public open-air enjoyment, including particularly cross-country and footpath walking, are amply provided, and (c) wildlife and places and buildings of historic, architectural or scientific interest are

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<sup>244</sup> Committee on Land Utilisation in Rural Areas, 1942, p.59

<sup>245</sup> Blunden and Curry, 1990, p.45



suitably protected, while (d) established farming use is effectively maintained<sup>246</sup>.

Within these concerns, Dower states that an area established as a National Park should be governed by two principal purposes: '(a) that the characteristic beauty of the landscape shall be preserved, and (b) that the visiting public shall have ample access and facilities within it for open-air recreation and for the enjoyment of its beauty'<sup>247</sup>. Dower's definition follows the general objectives of National Park legislation asserted by the Addison Report and in so doing continues the primarily utilitarian thread of the calls for conservation.

Dower proposed a list of specific sites for conservation in the report following the categories: 'Suggested National Parks'; 'Reserves for potential future National Parks'; and 'Other Amenity Areas NOT suggested as National Parks'. The Mendip Hills featured within the last of these categories<sup>248</sup>. In Dower's terms, the 'Other Amenity Areas NOT suggested as National Parks' were,

Areas which it will probably be necessary to pass under review when the decisive selections of National Parks are undertaken, but which, in my opinion, are unlikely to be found suitable, although otherwise deserving and requiring the special concern of local and central planning authorities, supported as may be by the National Trust and other voluntary agencies, in order to safeguard their landscape beauty, farming use and wild life, and to increase appropriately their facilities for open-air recreation<sup>249</sup>.

This was the first time a definition had been published for what have now become known as 'Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty'. This definition follows the line of thinking displayed in the Addison Report, and it can be understood in

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<sup>246</sup> See Dower, 1945, p.6

<sup>247</sup> *ibid*, p.15

<sup>248</sup> *ibid*, pp.8-13

<sup>249</sup> *ibid*, p.8

both that the conservation of the 'countryside' at this time was about protecting and enhancing human interaction with Nature.

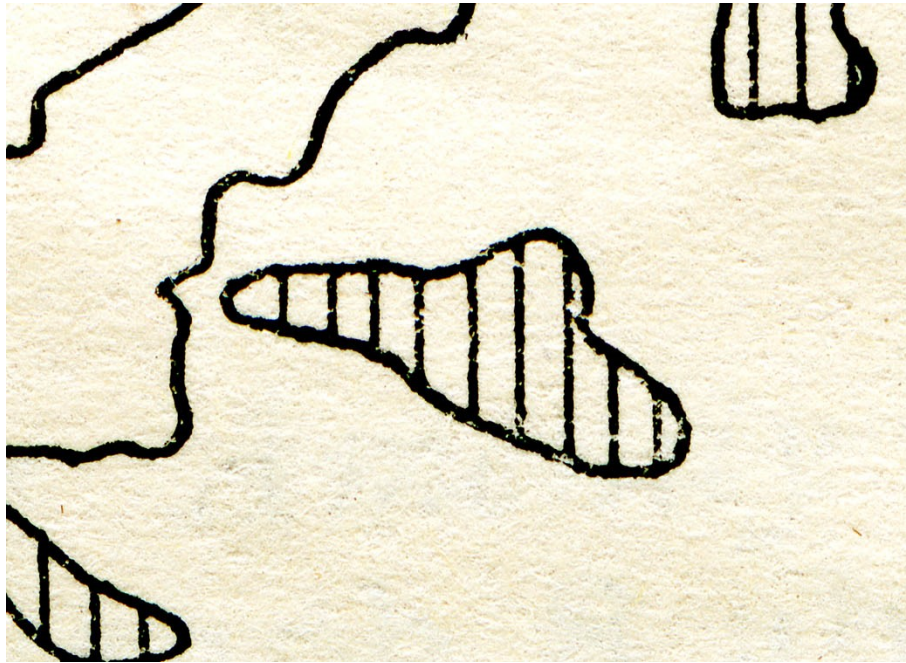


Figure 96: Cropped section of Dower's 'Map II' showing the proposed Mendip Hills 'Other Amenity Area'  
Source: Dower, 1945, p.12

Within the Report, Dower included maps showing where each of his proposed National Parks, reserves and amenity areas were situated. One map displays the area that Dower thought appropriate for designation within the Mendip Hills (figure 96). The map is a rough sketch and Dower identifies that his list of sites for conservation were only preliminary lists given on purely personal judgement<sup>250</sup>. Despite this defence, the closeness in shape to the boundary suggested in the Hobhouse report (figure 97) and the final boundary adopted (figure 98) suggest Dower's opinion was either in line with or of direct influence to later legislators.

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<sup>250</sup> *ibid*

## The Hobhouse Report

In July 1945 the Minister of Town and Country Planning, Lewis Silkin, appointed Sir Arthur Hobhouse to lead a National Parks Committee with the following terms of reference:

- a) To consider the proposals in the Report of National Parks on England and Wales (Cmd. 6628) of May 1945, as to the areas which should be selected as National Parks; and to make recommendations in regard to the special requirements and appropriate boundaries of those areas which, in the view of the Committee, should be first selected.
- b) To consider and report on the proposals made in the Report as to the measures necessary to secure the objects of the National Parks, and on any additional measures which in the view of the Committee are necessary to secure those objects; and
- c) To consider and make recommendations on such other matters affecting the establishment of National Parks and the Conservation of Wild Life as may be referred by the Minister to the Committee<sup>251</sup>.

The language used here shows that by this point the case for National Parks had been accepted. Rather than a remit of discussing the need and definition of a National Park, the National Parks Committee was tasked with confirming the locations of and the setting out of the legal framework for the parks. Their report (the Hobhouse Report) does not add specific new contextualisation of what is being conserved by the legislation. The committee accepted the conclusions of the Dower Report and presented a series of potential 'National Parks' and 'Conservation Areas', including a potential Conservation Area within the Mendip Hills. It is within the positioning of the boundary proposed by the National Parks

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<sup>251</sup> National Parks Committee, 1947, p.1

Committee (1947) vs the boundary of the AONB currently in place that this study can begin to question what is really being conserved by the legislation. The committee defined Conservation Areas as those that, 'possess outstanding landscape beauty, are often of great scientific interest and, in many cases, include important holiday areas'<sup>252</sup>. This definition, taken from Dower's earlier definition of 'Other Amenity Areas'<sup>253</sup>, focuses on the utilitarian aspects of the land, divided between issues of amenity and protection.

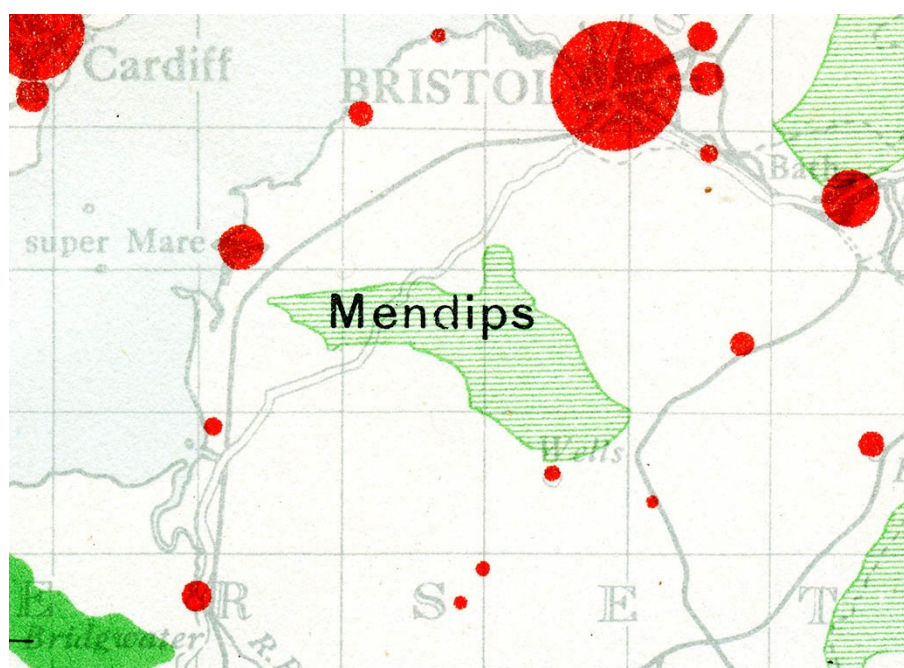


Figure 97: Area for proposed Mendip Hills Conservation Area in the Hobhouse Report © National Parks Committee, 1947

Included in the Hobhouse Report is a map that shows the section of land considered appropriate for the Mendip Hills Conservation Area (figure 97). When this is compared to a map of the current boundary (figure 98), there is an obvious difference in the north western section. The final boundary covers the

<sup>252</sup> *ibid*, p.51

<sup>253</sup> Dower, 1945, p.10

area of Chew Valley Lake, a man-made reservoir constructed in the 1950s to provide water for the nearby city of Bristol.

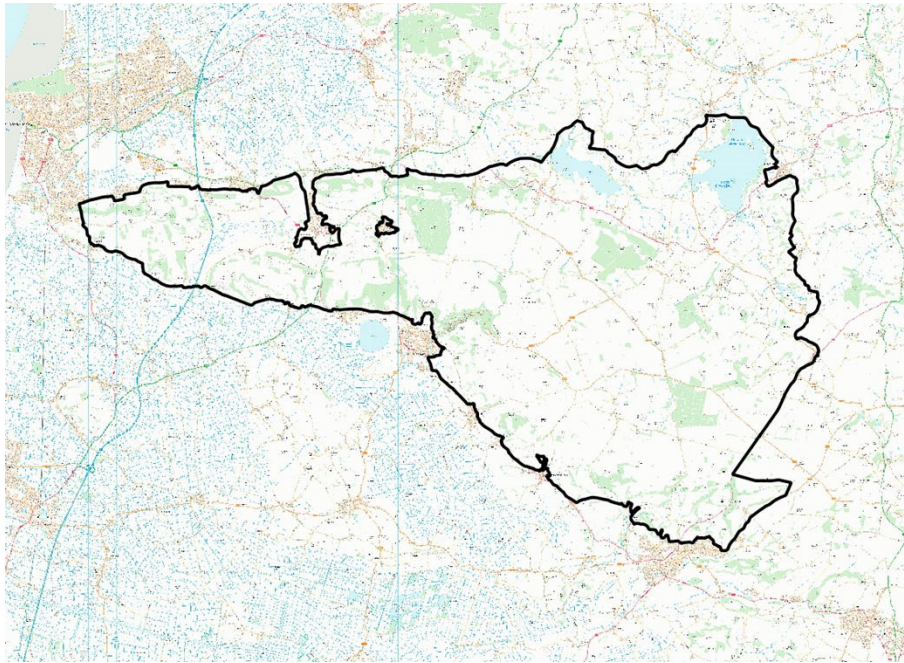


Figure 98: Mendip Hills AONB boundary Map Natural England copyright. Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2016

Although this reservoir has been carefully constructed to form a nature reserve, it cannot be thought of as maintaining the characteristic landscape beauty of the valley that now lies beneath the reservoir. However, the reservoir is a permanent construction, and as such by the time of the 1972 creation of the Mendip Hills AONB would have fallen within the remit of the conservationist principles of the legislation. The site is a nature reserve, and as such helps to provide a safe habitat for flora and fauna as well as fulfilling a utilitarian need for humans to enjoy nature. Our use of and relationship to the land is in constant flux. As Raymond Williams argued in *The Country and the City*, there is a

problem of perspective when viewing change in the land<sup>254</sup> and it is often difficult to position ourselves within this constantly changing landscape. The considerable change in the ecosystem in the Chew Valley does not automatically prevent it from being part of an 'Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty', but it does invite the question of what is meant by 'Natural Beauty' within the designation. The definition of 'Natural Beauty' followed within this research is that argued by Selman and Swanwick (see pp.56-57). They suggest that 'Natural Beauty', 'does not apply only to landscape where nature may appear to dominate but includes rural landscapes which have been shaped by human activities [...] provided that they are integral to, and in keeping with, the character of the 'landscape'"<sup>255</sup>. As argued, Selman and Swanwick have clarified the definition of 'Natural Beauty' but introduced a new variable, one of 'landscape character'. An individual's judgement of the character of a landscape is really an expression of their own position. It is a social construct.

#### The National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949

The final National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act received Royal Assent in 1949. I have demonstrated above that the concerns reflected in the Act were based upon those of the conservation lobbies that acted as witnesses to the National Park Committee 1931. The subsequent reports all served to clarify the arguments and provide the guidance on the legal framework on which the legislation was based. Their value in terms of this research is in how they

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<sup>254</sup> Williams, 1975, pp.18-22

<sup>255</sup> Selman and Swanwick, 2010, p.31



expose the intentions of the legislation through providing context that clarifies the competing ideas of what the lobbyists sought to preserve.

The final Act contained some significant differences from the framework laid out in the reports. The name 'Conservation Area' was changed to 'Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty', and all references to scientific or recreational value for these places had been removed from the text of the Act. AONBs as originally designated were about preserving a very specific idea of landscape constructed around an idea of 'Natural Beauty'. Greater access to open wild country was not universally addressed until the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, 51 years after the NPACA 1949. The extended delay supports the conclusion that the working-class lobbyists were only of limited influence. The real influence in the 1930s and 1940s leading to the NPACA 1949 was the powerful middle-class lobby and it was their concerns that are most reflected in the conservation landscape we have today.

## Conclusion

This appendix has reviewed the motivations behind conservation legislation leading up to the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949. The argument sets out the calls for conservation in its various forms as coming from a 19<sup>th</sup> century concern with Romantic Nationalism. The late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries were periods of enormous social reform in the UK and this can be traced through the shifting support of legislators from protecting and promoting the interest of a land-owning minority of the population to representing the

interests of a wider range of the population. This appendix presents the argument that conservation legislation during this period of British history was tied up in anthropocentric ideas of the value of the 'countryside'. It is argued that calls for conservation were based in preserving an idea of Nature for human recreation and enjoyment. The various social groups making these calls, whilst frequently in opposition to one another, almost universally sought an aesthetic preservation of the land that reflected their own interests. The calls for conservation legislation were, therefore, ultimately expressions of how social groups saw themselves in relation to the land.

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