

Part II: Chapter I

Places and Traces: Their Meaning in Landscape

The meaning of things

The European Pathways to the Cultural Landscape (EPCL) network has explored landscapes from the Mediterranean to the Baltic, from the Alps to the Pennines, from North Sea salt marshes to Bohemian plains, and from flat Irish peat-lands to German forests. One of the most visible aspects of these landscapes has been archaeological sites and the historical buildings within them. These are usually perceived as single features but when linked together they can also be seen as part of the wider landscape. The burial mounds of Bjäre in their distribution and patterns hint at ancient landscape use; Iron Age hillforts in Bohemia sit among complicated settlement systems, while complex systems with castles, settlements and burials can be seen on the Danish island of Fyn.

In later chapters of this book we look at new ways of seeing and imagining landscape, and of making, describing and writing about it. When considering landscape we often give a lot of attention to perception in the way that people create mental understanding of the landscape, and social processes, religion, symbolism, or aesthetics are also given centre stage. But material remains in the landscape – things – are also still important. They can be one of the keys to unlocking the many stories that lie within the landscape. These things are the evidence that the past is still present today, and that the landscape is the sum of all its parts and of all its distinctive histories. We know that the landscape is not wholly natural because it is full of fields, roads, and farms. We know it is old because it contains medieval churches, prehistoric hillforts and old fields. These physical, material traces, part of the cultural landscape's historical depth, are of vital importance even for (perhaps especially for) our largely post-industrial and post-modern globalised society. They are signposts on the pathway, our roots to Place and History. Through these things, the presence of the past can be lightly traced in today's landscape. Our landscape perceptions – our landscape itself – would be incomplete



Cairn in the Pale di San Martino Plateau, Italian Alps



Funen burial mounds

without them. There must be a way to use these same monuments, even the smallest most commonplace, as part of the main story of landscape.

This chapter therefore looks at a few of the physical components that contribute to landscape. They are worth studying individually, but in this book our interest is in them as part of the wider landscape, and we will use the evidence of sites for our particular, landscape-oriented purposes. By looking at places and traces we want to explain that the historic time depth of the cultural landscape cannot be reduced to architectural set-pieces or to isolated archaeological sites, but neither can these be overlooked. Landscape is a monument in its own right, but it also contains and borrows from individual monuments. Although these individual sites can only provide us with a partial narrative they are important, both as sources of evidence about the past and as the building blocks for landscape. Here we will tell stories about them to introduce a larger story, weaving individual sites and monuments into the larger picture of landscape.

All the stories in this chapter, some of which will also touch on the theme of later chapters, illustrate a number of key ideas that encapsulate much of the historic character of landscape as built up in our minds from the evidence of sites and material remains. These ideas are:

- The passage of time – The length of time reflected in an area's development is central to landscape character, and this can be demonstrated by looking at the physical components of the landscape. We will demonstrate the passage of time with a story from Estonia that starts with the major event of a meteorite crashing to earth in Kaali, which has left its traces through more than 2000 years and continues to affect the landscape.
- Change – The importance of processes, and of the process of change itself, is also at the heart of landscape. We will illustrate this with a story from Denmark, based on the remains of prehistoric and medieval ploughing on the island of Fyn. This story shows in microcosm how layers of different dates co-exist within the present landscape.
- Multiple interpretations – Landscape is not a simple thing but is produced by the combination of many factors, and interpretation is not always straightforward. We will illustrate this by looking at an apparently simple type of monument, the Irish artificial islands known as crannogs.
- The construction of nature – Even deserted, ostensibly natural landscapes have strong cultural dimensions and are often more 'cultural' than they seem. The story of the Swedish island of Hallands Väderö in Scania is a story of a special place, apparently untouched and treated as a nature reserve, that can, however, be seen to be humanly-constructed.
- Answers but more questions – Our perceptions of the meaning of things can be rather complicated, and lead us into new questions. A story from the Czech Republic demonstrates this in relation to the 'hillforts' of Southern Bohemia.
- Scale and magnitude – Human actions in the past have frequently modified whole landscapes, but evidence for this often sits within individual sites. This is illustrated here by a German story about the physical remains of a farming landscape claimed from the sea in the coastal

marshes of Dithmarschen near Albersdorf, a whole world that is 'artificial'.

The passage of time

Everything in our landscape has historical roots, and even the most recent examples of landscape features are part of a long chain of events that stretches back across centuries or millennia. The past is always with us as cause and effect, reflecting change and continuity, and demonstrating the passage of time. Many links in the chain are no longer visible to us, but almost any patch of landscape has layer upon layer of history within it. They are rarely stacked neatly on top of each other and tend to survive as a patchwork of many dates and phases. Several different periods of the past will have contributed to the landscape features and patterns at any one place.

It is one of the goals of archaeologists to disentangle the remains of any single period – whether Bronze Age or the Middle Ages – from this long sequence of events. Within EPCL, however, we have been following a different path, just as challenging and perhaps more relevant to the present day and to landscape. Our goal has been to disentangle the time-depth of the present-day patchwork of landscape to find what has survived, what has been modified, and what has been replaced – in other words, to understand the effects of the passage of time.

We have chosen a story to illustrate this point that has a clear and very dramatic starting point – a meteorite hitting what is now Estonia. This episode set off a chain of events that can be said to still be continuing. If we look at the sky on a dark clear night, we see the moon and stars, and even with our modern scientific perspective we feel that our small planet is not alone in the cosmos. People in the distant past must have felt the same, but what would they think if parts of the sky fell to earth – especially when they saw it happen, destroying villages and farmland, and leaving craters in the ground. This is what happened in Kaali on the island of Saaremaa. Little surprise perhaps that it created pagan legends, and inspired ritual monuments at the site of the main crater. We will return to Kaali again in this book, but here let us focus on its physical traces and on the cultural evidence for peoples' reactions to it.

The craters at Kaali, are thought to have been created in the Bronze Age when an enormous meteorite made its way across the sky to the island of Saaremaa. Eight small craters made by fragments of the meteorite are still visible as well as the 110m diameter crater made by the largest piece. It is this main crater, with its strange, brooding lake, that has captured human imagination ever since. It has been the source of many legends, provoking its use as a special place. The most powerful of these legends, and perhaps the oldest and longest lasting, is that this marks the site where the sun fell to earth – that it is the sun's resting-place.

Only a few kilometres from Kaali stand the imposing medieval earthworks of Valjala, the last pagan stronghold to fight against the Livonian knights and the place of the final enforced conversions to the new Christian God. It is difficult not to imagine that at this date, even so recently, Kaali still remained a spiritual capital of Saaremaa and perhaps of a wider region, and that Valjala was its nearest stronghold, holding out to the last against the new religion. Close by, too, is the church of Karja with its mixed pagan and Christian symbols, showing the strength of pagan ideas in the accommodation of the new by the old.

What can we see of all this at Kaali in terms of contributions to our landscape? The big crater and its eight outliers are dramatic reminders, although they have only been known to be meteorite craters for a few decades, and were largely hidden from view during Soviet times in a sealed Frontier Zone. They are now starting to emerge as the focus of an expanding tourist site. An immediate effect of the meteorite crash was the destruction of several settlements in the region by fire or burial beneath ashes. After all, the total energy of the Kaali impact is equivalent to twenty kilotons of TNT, and is comparable to that of the Hiroshima atomic bomb. The effect must have been similar to that of the famous Tunguska meteorite explosion in Siberia in 1908. That impact started fires over a 20km area, and the Kaali meteorite caused wildfires right across Saaremaa. This destruction is not visible in the landscape, but it can be identified by

excavation and it certainly forms part of our mental landscape of the island.

The main crater itself became a prehistoric ritual site. Not enough archaeological survey or excavation has yet been carried out to tell us much about this sacred use, but we can say that in the late Bronze Age a fortified site was created around the edge of the main crater. This fortified site was the centre of a small social, political and economic region, based upon such activities as bronze making and trade. Also, there are settlements and seventeen 'stone graves' in the surrounding area of Kaali, dating mainly from the end of the Bronze Age to the Roman Iron Age period, the same period when the fortified site by the crater was in use. Kaali's religious and cult function, however, probably extended over a wider area. Beyond Estonia, the Finnish national epic Kalevala describes the Kaali event in its songs, telling how the Sun had fallen down and caused a terrible accident on a distant island across the sea. All this allows us to stand at the edge of the Kaali lake, and imagine the wide Baltic region of shared legend and religion that is reflected on its still surface.

We do not yet know when people started to treat the crater and the lake as sacred, but most likely it happened immediately after the explosion. We know from written sources that local people in historical times regarded the lake as holy, and there is a long series of traditions linked to it that continue to the modern day. Special wedding festivals still take place around the lake. We know from the evidence of cores taken from the lake

Valjala Fort, Kaali



Aerial view of craters, Kaali



Small crater, Kaali



deposits that when the late Bronze Age fortification was first built the crater was dry, with peat, bushes and trees covering its bottom. The lake we see today first came into being during the Roman-period Iron Age. At this stage, a strong stone wall was built around the crater, and the lake probably began to be used as a place for water sacrifices.

Kaali is an unfinished story. There are more unanswered questions than answers. The precise date of the meteorite impact is still under dispute between scientists, for example, and we know there is much more to find out about the Iron Age fortification and its spiritual significance. The difficulty of excavating in the lake has so far prevented detailed study of whatever was offered up to its waters. We can therefore look ahead and anticipate future findings, for example of rich collections of ritual metalwork. Our ability to predict what we will find is another aspect of our perception of this particular landscape. 'Landscape' is never completed; the passage of time moves forwards as well as being studied in the present. We continue to re-imagine landscapes and change our perceptions of them, and Kaali, on the brink of a new life as a fêted tourist site and a national monument of European significance, is a prime example of a landscape that will grow more universally visible in future. It already has many layers showing the long passage of time, and we still have to come to terms with the latest of all, the imposing but decaying remains of a soviet-times collective farm.

Evidence of change

The next story uses sites to demonstrate another key aspect of landscape: that it is the result of changes brought about by human actions. Landscape has always been dynamic, shifting and transient, and it remains so, both in terms of perception and of the physical environment. Seeing and understanding the surviving remains of this change is at the heart of any study of the past or of landscape. The landscape shows us the effect of both continuity and loss in the past, revealed by patterns of different periods within the present-day landscape. This is what is meant when archaeologists talk of 'time-depth' – any patch of landscape has layers beneath it, reaching down to the earliest days of human life. Change, the effect of humans over time, is one of the

primary attributes of the landscape.

It is this that gives landscape one of its strongest cultural dimensions. Human beings, and their longstanding communities and societies, have been the primary agents of environmental change for thousands of years. The natural world is not unchanging, and it would soon enough take its own direction again if human interaction ceased, as we will see several times in the stories in this book. But if one single aspect most defines landscape as cultural, then that aspect is probably the degree of change caused by people, by their habit of always wanting something different and of remoulding the land to fit their needs. To fully understand landscape, we have to take account of change in the past and be fully aware of the inevitability of continued change as long as there are people.

There are many stories that could be used to illustrate change in the landscape, and inevitably other chapters in this book will also touch on this theme. We have chosen one for this chapter that uses as its example perhaps the biggest cause of change to the landscape in the last few thousand years – farming, and specifically ploughing. At one level, ploughing is rather ephemeral, and is often thought of as rarely leaving major monuments in the same way that burial or settlement so often does. Yet it has changed the land totally, and at a smaller scale it leaves important material traces, often in several layers, that can be found if we look carefully. With our next story, from Denmark, we can look at what ploughing adds to landscape, and at what it can take away, both above and below ground. It is specifically local to our Danish project, but it has relevance elsewhere as a parable of the relationship between past and present.

Normally archaeologists blame the ploughman for some of the worst destruction of archaeological remains. They have all seen sites where modern ploughing has removed all but the barest traces of once-substantial settlements. Yet sometimes the opposite is true, and certain types of ploughing have protected earlier remains by covering them with deep ridges of soil. This story tells of one particular type – the so-called high-backed long-acres that are a very characteristic and visible feature of landscape on the Danish island of Fyn (or Funen as it is also called) – and of the multi-layered historical sequence of the landscape into which it fits.

'High-backed long-acre' is a term used to describe the system of ploughing and fields used from about 1000 AD to the first half of the 19th century. It is not identical to the 'ridge and furrow' that once covered the heavy claylands of the English midlands, but it is similar. It was created by heavy-wheeled ploughs that piled soil up into ridges, which then protected earlier remains from damage by more recent mechanised ploughing.

In the case of Fyn, we know that fields were ploughed as early as the Neolithic (c. 3500 BC). At that time farmers used a form of primitive plough that we call an ard, often no more than a strong crooked branch pulled by ox or man. The results are not visible in the landscape as such, but these simple and effective ploughs have left their marks deeper in the ground, where dark grooves criss-cross the subsoil. They often turn up as a bonus in archaeological excavations of dolmens or burial mounds under which they have lain protected from the subsequent millennia of tillage.

The ard stayed in use throughout prehistoric times, but by the late Iron Age – the centuries around the birth of Christ – field systems had begun to appear that would leave more substantial traces on the landscape, which remain visible. These are sometimes known as Celtic fields, a name given by early 20th century English archaeologists, but this is now a little-used term because such fields are not exclusively Celtic, but European: Germanic as much as Celtic. They can appear in the landscape as rectangular level platforms, or may be terraced into hillsides rising like stairs (called lynchets in England). The edges of these fields are sometimes still visible up to one metre high.

It is, however, the later high-backed long-acres that are the most commonly seen historic fields on Funen, often surviving as field systems that resemble a washboard or in field boundaries where modern ploughing has not removed them. These fields began to appear with the emergence of the wheeled plough in the transition from Viking times to the Middle Ages (c. 1000 AD). The wheeled plough was heavy and difficult to manoeuvre, and it was an advantage to turn it as infrequently as possible. It was therefore used to make long furrows – the 'long acres', turning the earth towards the middle to create ridges of deeper soil as seed beds – the 'high backs'. Furrows (ditches) between the ridges helped to drain the heavy, wet clays. The English systems called 'ridge and

furrow' were created by ploughs pulled by teams of up to six oxen, whose large turning circle gave a very distinctive reverse-S layout to the ridges.

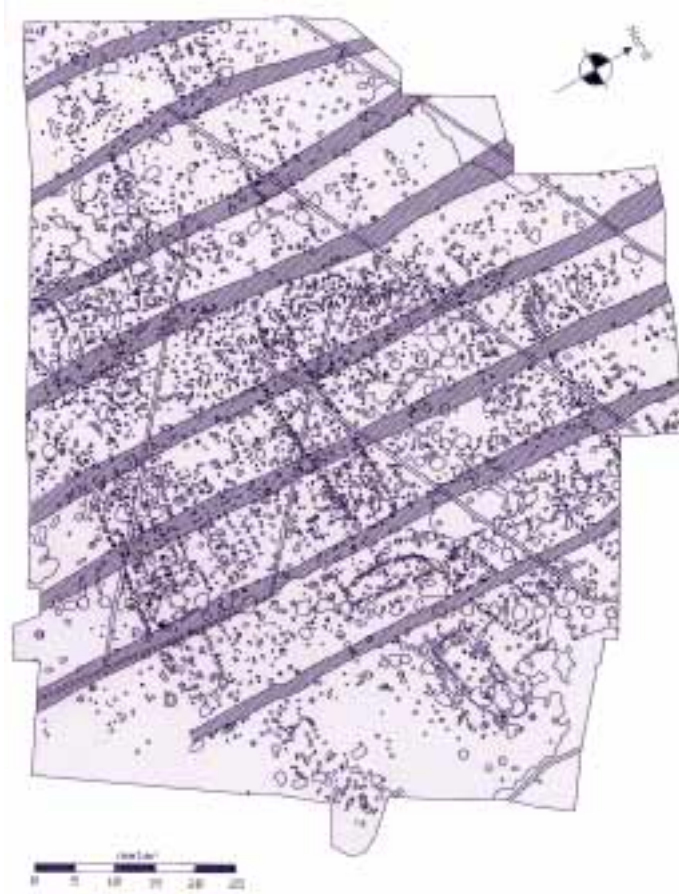
In some cases, these medieval ridges or high-backed fields have preserved traces of prehistoric dwellings that would otherwise have been removed by more recent ploughing. On Funen, for example, the furrows of this system were found as long parallel ditches in archaeological excavations of a large Iron Age settlement at Gudme. Only slight traces of the earlier prehistoric settlement survived between the furrows. The height of the ridges, however, had prevented even large modern ploughs from reaching deep enough to remove earlier traces and much better preservation of the Iron Age remains was found, giving a series of windows to an earlier landscape. In other words, medieval ploughing has protected Iron Age domestic sites from the destructive effects of the modern plough.

Long sequences of different farming landscapes like this can be seen in all of our network's areas. Traces of medieval land use (the shapes of fields, their boundaries, the way of cultivating the land in terrace or ridge), sit on top of the sometimes still-visible remains of earlier, prehistoric, farming patterns. More modern landscapes can be



The creation of high-backed long-acres through ploughing, Funen

Plan of the surviving Iron Age archaeology at Gudme, Funen





*The fossilised profile
of medieval ridges,
Funen*

seen overlying both. In this way, one period of the landscape's history has left visible traces in today's landscape, but has obscured earlier remains. Past societies can be studied through these superimposed remains and the processes of change that produced them.

It is not only the soil, and the seedbeds that can be made from it, that have been used exhaustively over the past few centuries. Other types of natural resources have also been ruthlessly exploited, such as minerals and their processing, and industrial remains that are often one of the most visible and dominating aspects of a landscape. This is particularly so with the remains of quarrying, which is often so harsh an intervention that several generations have to pass before people are able to come to terms with it as cultural landscape.

Industry reflects change and human interaction with nature just as much as any form of agriculture, but it is less easy to think of it as 'landscape'. Industrial archaeology is one of the newer branches of the subject, and coal and stone quarries were seen until quite recently as being too modern and consequently uninteresting historically. It is rather difficult to imagine how massive modern-scale opencast mining – e.g. of Brown Coal (lignite) – will ever come to be seen as anything other than destruction, but it may happen in the future, when people want to study and marvel at how we treated our world, and wonder why we acted like this. The bizarre 'lunar' white landscape of the China Clay (kaolin) industry in Cornwall (UK) is appreciated by some people as a valued cultural landscape. The same is true of modern 'industrial' intensive agriculture, such as the Soviet-times collective farms that we saw in Estonia at Kaali, and the western landscapes of agricultural subsidy. So far,

these are only small blips on the heritage 'radar', not yet widely regarded as big conservation or landscape issues.

The industrial remains within our projects, however, have become more widely accepted as part of landscape, because they have been sanitised a little by age, softened by disuse and smoothed over by nostalgia and memory. They are thus easier to accept as interesting landscape traces of lost ways of life. This, of course, is another example of change in landscape, the role of the passage of time affecting perception more directly.

During our project, for example, our network has seen the remains of Iron Age and early medieval gold panning in Bohemia. These survive as large areas of grassed over mounds, and associated diggings at Blatná, embedded in the landscape just as comfortably as any prehistoric burial mounds. In this case, the mounds also sit as a layer within a medieval hunting landscape, and there are still later layers revealed by suites of artificial fishponds, of several dates up to the present day. In north Wales, we have the remains of more modern industry – in this case the quarrying of slate – that completely re-fashioned the local communities in the 18th and 19th centuries. Despite having been abandoned for decades, quarrying still makes a big contribution to modern landscape character through its legacy of vast craters and mountainous spoil heaps that are impossible to ignore, not to mention the rows of worker's housing clustered around a variety of Nonconformist chapels.

We have also seen a very large number of smaller-scale quarries in our areas, and indeed they are a common feature of the landscape in most parts of Europe. Many of these produced stone for building construction, and the buildings themselves can stand as their testament. But the quarries themselves are often overlooked and forgotten, and not all quarries provided building stone. In the Forest of Bowland, England, for example, there are many limestone quarries and limekilns. They were used not for building stone but to make quicklime, which could then be used as lime mortar or as lime for spreading on heavy soils to increase fertility, like seaweed in other areas (e.g. Bjäre, as a later story will tell). These abandoned monuments to the age of agricultural improvement in 17th and 18th-century England, like most industry, are yet more evidence for the long history of change

Gold panning mounds at
Blatná, Prácheňsko

Limekiln, Bowland



and adaptation to which the European landscape stands witness.

Interpretations of landscape

We should not imagine that it will always be easy to understand the legacy of the past in our landscape. Or that the meanings we think we can attach to a site or structure are singular and straightforward. This whole book is about trying to make complexity simpler, about bringing together disparate views and perceptions which may not always agree but which will enhance our appreciation of the landscape if we lay them alongside each other. In Ireland, small islands known as 'crannogs', often cloaked in trees, are common sights in the middle of lakes. They look a little strange, but for centuries people thought they were natural if not supernatural. Archaeologists now demonstrate that they are artificial islands built over many generations.

People have been preoccupied with protecting their homes against a wide range of possible threats throughout history; finding refuge on islands is not uncommon. But crannogs are not naturally-occurring islands. They survive as storehouses of information about earlier ways of life, but they are also important because they are visible and evocative in the landscape. They may not

form the main aspects of their landscape, but they are important when landscape is looked at in detail. They are another way in which the stories that small sites tell us can be enriched and magnified when viewed through the lens of landscape. "No man is an island..." the English poet John Donne told us, and no island is separate from its landscape and from a wider meaning.

This story tells of people whose desire for security or isolation led them to build artificial islands on lakes throughout Ireland, and sometimes in Scotland. We call these islands 'crannogs', an English word borrowed from Gaelic. The name may refer to 'crann', the Gaelic for tree, perhaps because abandoned crannogs rapidly became overgrown. But, in truth, even their name is part of the mystery of these strange, separate places.

Crannogs are usually interpreted as small island-houses surrounded by jetties or a palisade. Some had causeways to dry land, but most were totally surrounded by water, and surely part of their purpose was that they formed a link with another, different, world beyond the water. These artificial islands were once thought to belong only to the early and later medieval periods, but newer archaeological evidence dates them also to prehistory, as far back as the Late Bronze Age. In recent centuries, crannogs were sometimes used by people living at the edges of society, such as outlaws, robbers or bandits, and they have also been secret places for making and hiding illegal alcohol, called 'poitín' in Ireland. These later uses were secondary to their original purposes, but they often dominate popular interpretations. Crannogs have thus been used at many different times through history, and we can be sure that they will not always have had the same meanings for the people who used them.

Prehistoric human skulls, for example, are commonly found on crannogs and 19th century

Artist's impression of a crannog,
Dowris

antiquarians were not sure whether to classify them as tombs or dwelling places. Modern researchers suggest that these skulls belonged to lake-side rituals, and that our modern separation of the secular from the spiritual may not be applicable to ancient people. We cannot easily reconstruct what landscape meant to our more distant ancestors.

We can, however, assume that these islands were special to the people who used them, and that the buildings on them probably had special meanings too. It is interesting to note that crannogs were physically very distant from earlier monumental burial grounds. Perhaps they reflected new beliefs, and the creation of islands was a way of separating the new landscape of ideas from the old, as well as separating this world from the supernatural. Prehistoric crannogs when excavated often produce evidence for fires connected with bronze metalworking, a craft in prehistory, which may be linked with religion, magic and ritual. We can easily imagine fires burning against the black lake-waters being regarded as a kind of 'membrane' between this world and the next.

In the Irish early medieval period the use of crannogs changed again, and we find everyday household items, personal jewellery and equipment such as needles, weaving tablets, sickles and ploughs. There is also clearer evidence at this date for dwelling houses and other buildings on crannogs, in fact the same type of buildings and artefacts as on sites on dry land. Perhaps the two landscapes, of this and of the other world, of earth and water but also of 'real' and 'supernatural', had become more distinct in people's minds?

Ballywillin Crannog,
Lough Kinale, Dowris



Yet, despite the 'everyday' nature of these sites, we still at this later period of their history find religious objects of early medieval – Christian – date in the waters around the crannogs. For example, extraordinary things have been found in the water at the edges of crannogs, such as a silver chalice at Ballywillin in Lough Kinale, and an ornate book-shrine likely to have held a religious manuscript from another crannog in the same lake at Tonymore. The book-shrine had been deliberately disassembled, as if it had been deposited as an offering rather than just being lost. It seems that the symbolism of lakes and crannogs was strongly enough embedded in peoples' perception of landscape to affect even the new Christian religion.

Today, crannogs, these old living-places or places of ritual and magic, appear as small tree-covered islands, and it is often difficult to distinguish the man-made islands from natural ones. Perhaps there is less of a distinction than we pretend. One explanation of crannogs is that they were intended to look like nature and to copy nature, indeed, to create 'nature' by putting islands where they didn't exist but where they were needed. The distance between what is natural and what is cultural in the landscape may be less than we like to think. This story has shown that crannogs have held many different meanings through time; for us, they are symbols of the interaction of people with nature that lies at the heart of our perception of landscape, and of the complexity and variety of interpretation that is required if landscape is to be fully appreciated.

Constructed nature

The physical environment is the raw material from which perception constructs landscape. After such a long history of human modification, however, the environment is not wholly natural. The extent of human modification is often unrecognised, and the degree to which nature has limited people's actions in the past can be exaggerated. It may be comforting and reassuring to feel that we are part of Nature, nurtured in our distinctive national identities by the immutables of soils, climate or topography, but sadly it is not very true. We live on the achievements and ruins of millennia of human actions; we live in an artificial human habitat. Our European landscape is as artificial as a piece of architecture. Even more to the point, we have invented the very idea of 'Nature' in order to define 'Culture' more sharply.

We have just told a story about artificial islands in Irish lakes. Real islands can be partly artificial too, when we make them even more separate from our normal world than they need to be. Hallands Väderö, for example, off the coast of the Bjäre peninsula in northern Scania, is a real island, but its human history and our present attitude to it amplify its 'island-ness'. It is formally uninhabited, and kept that way by policy, though it is visited by many people in search of its solitude and wildness. At first glance, it can seem to be an island with very few human material remains, and insignificant ones at that, and indeed it is treated as a nature reserve, almost as a wilderness. But it possesses many of the physical traces of peoples' activities that are the subject of this chapter. There are centuries-old grazing areas and carefully managed woodland out of which mysterious drystone walls emerge here and there. There are small beaching sites and anchoring points, and there is a lighthouse. Further, in one sense the island as a whole is an artefact. For centuries it has

been kept separate, not just because it is an island (it is actually fairly close to the mainland, and accessible in most weather), but by special uses: private royal hunting forest, jealously guarded church property, today a protected nature reserve – all of which have left (and will leave) their own distinctive physical traces. In short, it is a very special place of man-made nature, where the material remains that form the subject of this chapter shade into the natural.

... arriving at The Island you are far away – somewhere else. The pure existence of it today with its richness and beauty gives hope to mankind. In early summer you return home with your heart filled with a woven blanket of all the unbelievable richness of Thrift, Bulbous Buttercup, Meadow Saxifrage and birds singing, and after every visit you return home content with having had a divine service with yourself..

(Sven Hernborg, Bjäre Natur No. 1 - 97, translated by Jenny Nord).

During the latter part of the Middle Ages, the small island outside the old fishing village of Torekov - Hallands Väderö, or 'The Island' as it is called by the local people – was given by the Danish king to the Church in Torekov. One legend says that the king gave Hallands Väderö to Torekov Church in thanks for his queen and her baby surviving a difficult pregnancy, because the local saint of Torekov, St Thora, was the patron saint of sailors and pregnant women. Let's say for our story that until then the Danish kings had kept the island as a hunting forest. We haven't found any historical documents that record this, but legends point that way, and the majority of Swedish medieval deer parks seem to be on islands and other areas defined clearly by topography. Most of all, this earlier use is suggested by the evidence of the land itself, and through our eyes and intellect we create our own mental landscapes, based upon such features as the character of the woodland on the island.



Hallands Väderö,
'The Island', Bjäre



Statue of St Thora, Torekov, Bjäre

Since being given to the church, the island has been used as an outland for the people of Torekov. For small payments to the church they could use it for grazing or to collect firewood. The church itself made quite an income from horse-breeding, and the island was used as grazing-land for horses. Ships frequently used the island's natural harbours, and the fees charged for this added to the church's steady source of income, as well as making it jealously guard access to the island. All these activities conspired to place the island apart, and to make its landscape so culturally special. For example, wild animals once grazed the forest, and created a varied mixture of plants and herbs which is now maintained by grazing-stock managed by humans. Some trees in the forest show traces of being cut for gathering of leaf-fodder, which hints at the effect of culture in the forest that at first sight looks so 'wild' and original.

People have lived on Hallands Väderö only periodically during historical times, mainly in connection with fishing activities. Remnants of such activities are seen in the abundance of small huts along the coast as well as the pits still found in the ground, used for making fish-oil. There are some signs of settlement in prehistoric times as well – scatters of flint from the Stone Age found on the former shoreline probably tell us about fishing or seal-hunting visits, while Bronze Age and Early Iron Age graves on the island hint at some more continuous settlements.

We know for sure, however, that Hallands Väderö was continuously settled in the late 19th and early 20th centuries when shipping activities in the area intensified. A pilot's

house, a forester's house and a lighthouse were built and the island became populated throughout the year. For some decades there was even a small school for the children who lived there permanently. In 1965, however, the lighthouse was automated and the last residents left. Today the twelve houses on the island are mainly used as summer cottages, the pilot's house functions as a museum and there is a small café. In 1940, all new building on the island was prohibited and in 1958 it became a nature reserve. Old fishing boats take tourists there, but for day trips only, and this type of access, combined with the effect of regulations and environmental protection, reinforces the island's separateness, making it even more of an island.

Hallands Väderö is not large – only 3.1 square kilometres – but it has a hugely varied landscape of thickly wooded forests, wetlands, stony fields, heaths and beaches. In contrast to its small size it has an amazing richness of species, probably because of its special history, first protected as a hunting forest of the Danish kings, then jealously guarded by the local church so that it escaped the deforestation that affected other parts of Scania to provide wood for Copenhagen (when Scania was Danish) and later for Malmö. One of the oldest original beech-forests in Sweden is found here and the oldest oaks tell their stories about the widespread grazing-land that originates at least in the Middle Ages, and most probably long before that. Oaks prefer an open landscape where they may spread their branches widely, which also allows them to grow fairly old. A high proportion of threatened insects and lichens are found here, since they need this kind of forest with a great variation in age. Paradoxically a tree is most full of life at the time when it is old and dying, a generous host in its old age. The long periods of time necessary for this maturity to develop have been provided by The Island's distinctive history of human management as a special separate place – a cultural island.

Not all islands have been treated as such separate places, and this is one of the things that marks out Hallands Väderö as such a distinctive cultural landscape. This tradition of being treated differently is continuing, as landscape managers carry out a research and management programme on the cultural landscape of The Island and its history, mainly through the Swedish Agricultural University in Alnarp. This will provide yet another layer presenting human interaction with nature,

and a new landscape of the future. It too will leave material traces: when our network visited The Island, we saw experimental pollarding of trees, new areas of clearance, and a museum re-using the pilot's house. The motives may be different to those of the Danish king with his need for hunting forests, or the church with its varied and lucrative land-use, but it is in the same tradition of creating nature and in the process leaving traces for the future.

Uncertainties and interpretations

We have said that the physical remains of the past in the environment – monuments and hedges, buildings and settlements – are some of the building blocks of the mental landscapes that we construct. Landscape perception can start at the level of the individual site – or 'traces' as we have called them in this chapter. We need to admit, however, that the meaning of traces are themselves subject to perception. The meaning of things is not fixed, but changes according to our perspective, the information we have to hand, and how we interpret it. Our understanding of sites and traces can owe as much to perception as does landscape itself.

In Southern Bohemia, for example, Iron Age settlement patterns included a regular network of hillforts and hilltop settlements. This fitted into a wider pattern of settlement along watercourses, a pattern that seems to have outlasted the hillforts and survives almost to the present day. This raises questions about why hillforts were different, and indeed about what they actually were. So let us tell our next story: on the surface a conventional archaeological research problem, but also an illustration of the complexity of interpretation, and of how we construct landscape.

"O Landscape, full of mysterious signs that my soul is hungry to decipher" is what archaeologists wish to call out in unison with the Czech poet Ladislav Stehlík, when talking about the landscape of the Northern Prácheňsko district. Archaeological 'signs' stand on the summits of the hills here in the form of mysterious ramparts or ditches, the most striking prehistoric monuments of the region. Our forebears often referred to hillforts as 'forts' or 'castles', which is, amongst other things, reflected by many place names with the element 'Hrad' (castle). They have inspired research for more than 150 years,

but it is still not completely clear why they were built.

Northern Prácheňsko has an abundance of watercourses and marshes that attracted intensive exploitation by hunters and gatherers during the Mesolithic. This was less attractive for the earliest farmers, so that Neolithic (Late Stone Age) and Bronze Age settlements only appear sporadically along the main north-south routes through the region. Sometime during the 7th and 6th centuries BC, in the Early Iron Age, however, the balance between the area's environmental constraints and the value of its natural resources (notably, gold) shifted. Over a relatively short period of time the area became populated, with hamlets and farmsteads, and fields situated near the rivers and streams, in deforested enclaves that have remained in use until practically the present day.

Part of the settlement pattern that has not survived in use was a regular network of hill forts and highland settlements, which were established at the same time (in the Hallstatt period, c 600-480 BC) and are regularly distributed in the centre and at the edges of the region. The Northern Prácheňsko district holds nearly a third of the Early Iron Age hillforts of South Bohemia. They are all small in area, most around one hectare, usually not internally divided, and standing on rocky spurs, hills or on extended ridges. Their ramparts are their main features now, some of stone, in other places of wooden construction, or made from stones mixed with clay.

Boudy hillfort, Prácheňsko



Excavation of the ramparts of Boudy hillfort, Prácheňsko

Our EPCL network visited the hillfort at Boudy. This dominates a large region from a hill 574 metres above sea level between the valleys of the Skalice and Lomnice rivers. It is the best-preserved and structurally most complex hillfort in Northern Prácheňsko. Recent excavation revealed three lines of ramparts, the outermost having a circumference of 420m. Later stone quarrying to build some of the surrounding villages has destroyed a substantial part of the outer ramparts, but the inner rampart, constructed of boulders, survives as a monumental feature. The excavation in the eastern part of Boudy's small inner area found a subdividing wall and typical settlement finds, although so far no houses or residential structures. Most of the hillfort apparently was not used for living.

Boudy hillfort was surrounded by agricultural settlements in the Skalice and Lomnice valleys. To this pattern can be added several cemeteries of burial mounds and so-called 'Viklan', movable stones reminiscent of megalithic monuments and sometimes connected with ritual practices. According to what we know about Hallstatt Iron Age settlement patterns we could expect the occurrence of a fortified residence of the local nobility close to the hillfort, and a possible site for one could lie on the banks of the Skalice River near Smetanova Lhota village. If found, our perception of the Boudy regional landscape might change again.

Archaeologists almost everywhere in Europe tend to think of hilltop sites, whether they call them hillforts or something else, as key elements at the top of a past settlement hierarchy, but beyond that there are only questions. Perhaps they fulfilled the function of sanctuaries or ceremonial enclosures

*A former archipelago,
Untamala*



shared by wider communities? Or perhaps they were symbols of the ownership of a communal territory, or of an aristocratic elite? Perhaps they were more symbolic still, and represented the drawing into the cultural sphere of natural places that would otherwise have sat beyond the edges of the cultured, civilised world? If so, then they again bring us to a clearer understanding of landscape; in particular they introduce us to the next theme, which is simply the scale and ubiquity of human impact on the landscape.

Scale and magnitude

This section tells a story about sites and structures, showing how they are part of much larger patterns. We need to appreciate the scale and magnitude of human actions in the past if we are to have a rounded perception of our landscape. People in the past made an impact over very large distances, just as we do today: shared common lands, transhumance pastures, regional, national and international communications. While we often look closely at discrete sites, we should always bear in mind that they formed part of larger complexes (such as the farmstead in its fields) and that those complexes fit together into groups (the farmstead with its neighbours, building up to township, parish and regional groups). This is a question of pattern and distribution, but it also introduces more complex interrelationships. The 'whole' is more than just the parts brought together. Perceiving sites as part of a wider group changes the way we understand them and changes the meaning of things.

The Kaali meteorite with which this chapter began was an unusual example of people's interaction with nature, because it was based on an instantaneous event. In other areas of Europe people have reacted to less dramatic events, some that were spread out over periods of time so long, that it must sometimes have been difficult for human memory to notice the scale of the change. The prolonged process of sea level change is a good example of this. Our project has examples of both extremes of this – land lost to an encroaching sea, and in contrast, land given up by a withdrawing sea: with one hand nature gives and with the other it takes away. People's actions have speeded up or delayed these processes: what sites are left, what traces tell these two opposite stories?

A falling sea level is the more peaceful of the two processes, but it still leaves its mark. In western Finland, seven square kilometres of land are gained annually from the sea because the land is still rising after being freed thousands of years ago from the weight of the last ice-sheets and glaciers. Over the decades, a coastline becomes a ridge, an island joins the mainland, long inlets are formed, and inlets become lakes or peatlands. This is seen within our project in both Finland and Estonia. When the meteorite crashed to earth at Kaali, it fell close to the coast; now the crater is several kilometres inland and new land is still forming at the coast. In Finland, in Vakka-Suomi, the land has lifted itself several dozens of metres since the end of the Ice Age. Before the Stone Age, the sea level was 45 metres higher than today and much of today's land was then an archipelago. We find Bronze Age remains (burial mounds, rock carvings, settlements and landing stages) only on the higher ridges, ten to fifteen kilometres from the sea, which represent old islands. Sea level changes still continue: navigation channels become more difficult to use and harbours shift, leaving abandoned sites that form part of the landscape patchwork; houses once at the coast are now well inland.

Similar processes occur elsewhere in Europe. In western England (for example, at the estuary of the Lune at the edge of our Bowland project or in the Dee estuary further south) many river-mouth ports have declined or moved downstream since the Middle Ages as rivers silted and salt marsh encroached. Elsewhere, land was given less freely by the sea and the process needed to be hastened by drainage and dyke-building, as in the lowlands of the Fylde to the west of our Bowland study area. All this can be read in the distribution, pattern and type of archaeological sites and remains. The material impact of these changes on landscape lies in the geographical zoning of sites of different dates and types, and in their relationship to past coastline and subsequent land reclamation. When viewed at the largest landscape scales, it can be understood and incorporated as part of our mental landscapes.

The other side of the story can be seen in the North Sea salt marshes, where a quite different landscape and quite different human relationship with nature is illustrated by specialist types of sites and monuments.

Here, for more than 2000 years, farmers have had to protect their land and their homes against the sea by building artificial mounds for their houses, and sea-dykes and elaborate drainage systems for their farmland (known as wurten, or terpen in Frisia and Netherlands).

When the Roman traveller Pliny visited the North Sea salt marshes in about 50 AD, he described the landscape and lifestyle of the area as being hard and uncivilised. His text gives us a Roman view of the poor life of people in an area 'between land and sea', the German tribes that he called 'Chauken', perhaps the first people to occupy the salt marshes of Schleswig-Holstein. Pliny's story is perhaps not very realistic, but it was one of the earliest descriptions of this landscape and therefore a good start to our story.

In some ways, however, although we are more distant in time, we now know more about these people through archaeology than through travellers' tales. The rich cultural heritage of the salt marshes around the North Sea, especially of the Wadden Sea region, can be seen to have a common identity with a very specific history. This region cuts across the modern national boundaries of Denmark, Germany and the Netherlands, and these three countries have been participating in making an inventory of the cultural sites and traces in the region because of their prominence in the landscape. This work was co-financed by an EU Interreg programme, under the name of LANCEWAD (Landscape and Cultural Heritage in the Wadden Sea Region) as a step towards a stronger perception of the cultural as opposed to just the natural landscape.

For centuries, there has been a close and complex relationship in the region between people and nature, swinging back and forth with the pendulum of weather and sea level changes. This story is not about this battle itself (we will tell a story about that in the next chapter) but about how we can understand it in the present-day landscape through material remains. It is a landscape that is difficult to perceive except in terms of this long battle, because almost everything that can be seen there, from the sea-dykes and long straight roads to the flat expanse of reclaimed farmland, is artificial or very heavily modified. The land itself, let alone the landscape, would vanish into the sea again if the sea walls were not maintained.

Reconstruction of a wurt,
Dithmarschen



Excavation of
Süderbusenwurt,
Dithmarschen

Settlers in the first millennium AD colonised the area during storm-free periods, grazing cattle and sheep on the salt marshes and establishing settlements on higher land. In more stormy periods, such as the mid-1st century AD, it became necessary to build large mounds – wurten – to live on, as artificial high ground safe from the sea. One of the best-known examples of a settlement on a wurt is of Roman date at Süderbusenwurt in the south part of Dithmarschen. It was part excavated during EPCL-linked excavations between 1998 and 2002, revealing the remains of a thirty metres long farmhouse that had been erected on a small wurt on the high natural embankments of the salt marshes near a tidal creek in about 50 AD. The wurt was raised after 150 AD as sea levels rose, being built up with animal dung as is common. Süderbusenwurt continued to be occupied to c.300 AD and in the more modern period it was reoccupied – a farm still stands on it today.

The waterlogged natural preservation of these layers ensures that organic remains such as wood, leather, construction materials and plant remains have been excellently preserved, and wurten are one of the most informative of archaeological monument types. Their excavation tells us a great deal about life in the Roman Iron Age. At

Süderbusenwurt, thousands of finds gave a strong impression of rural life in the salt marshes 2000 years ago and of the surrounding salt marsh environment, grazed by the sheep and cattle whose bones were found during the excavation.

The mere existence of wurten – their visibility (they often still support large farms) and their tangibility (the traveller is immediately conscious of the road rising from the surrounding flat farmland to cross one) – is also a prime ingredient of the landscape. A wurt, indeed the whole set of wurten, abandoned or still occupied, early or more recent, small or large, is a prime example of how sites ‘make’ our landscape. Nor is it just the wurten. The real point of the story is that almost everything in the landscape tells the same story of people holding back the waves and leaving behind the evidence of their efforts. It is not a matter of a few sites reminding us of the past and slightly colouring our view of the natural world that we call landscape. Human impact has been on an altogether greater scale, and places like Dithmarschen show us the magnitude of people’s work.

The Dithmarschen landscape today stands as an example of how traces and sites from the past live on in the modern landscape. They tell us complicated stories about the past and explain the scale of our predecessors’ efforts. The ancient tidal channels, old field patterns, dykes and wurten of the first struggle against the sea, as with traces of the salt marshes, have lost their original function, but they are still very visible and characteristic aspects of the landscape. The sea-walls, sluices, ditches and farms of later stages of the battle (up to and including the 20th century, and many still necessarily functioning), repeat in even more monumental form the same message. The modern visitor is very much aware of this long struggle because of the material remains that have been left, and because of local and

other perceptions. It is what makes landscape and creates identity in these parts, and it belongs to the more recent as well as the distant past as a story in the next section shows.

Conclusion

The stories about material traces and sites chosen for this chapter alone, already show the wide diversity of the European landscape and its rich cultural heritage. The traces and sites which can be seen in today's landscape are a key to the historic depth of the landscape and to its detailed characterisation. Their archaeological, historical and geographical values differ between regions, but they show similarities in landscape and settlement development strongly linked to a single, highly diverse European common heritage. The cultural sites are also important in terms of local, personal and collective identity and quality of life.

The roots of our modern cultural landscapes can be traced back through the past few thousand years, notably the medieval period, but we should never underestimate the extent to which prehistory affects our landscape. During this time people changed their natural environment to a cultural one. Archaeological as well as palaeobotanical researches demonstrate that cultural landscapes do not always show a harmonious interaction between people and nature; for example during high and late medieval times, the woodland landscape of much of Europe was totally deforested. Conversely, long-established mixed farming systems in the EPCL areas, such as the Spessart, that had been established at great cost and effort, have been smothered in the 19th-20th centuries by single-purpose afforestation. Knowledge of places, sites and traces stands at the beginning of our search for the history of our cultural landscapes.

Anything constructed requires building materials, and it is undeniable that individual archaeological sites, features in the landscape and material remains from the past are among the foremost building blocks of landscape. We should remind ourselves of the range and extent of material traces that exist and of those that we tend to overlook. Prehistoric fields are often marked today mainly by the earth banks that are the remains of their boundaries, such as those our project has seen in Arfon, for example, or beneath woodland in Halland, and these

are always regarded as archaeological sites. But more modern boundaries such as planted hedgerows that are still growing, and have been managed sometimes over hundreds of years, are as much an archaeological site as the prehistoric banks. Also important is the pattern created by boundaries – hedges and walls, when viewed together – or the distribution of trees in woodland. The trees themselves are natural of course, although even they are often planted, thinned, coppiced or pollarded, and nearly always managed, up to the conservation-oriented management level of places like Hallands Väderö or the Hallandsåsen. Elsewhere they may exist because of human decisions to plant them or simply through allowing them to grow on land unwanted for other purposes. The Spessart woods are very unnatural, despite being embedded into popular consciousness and identity: an earlier cultural landscape of terraced fields and water meadows can still be seen in the darkness between the trunks, or in clearings.

The landscape is a wonderful story-book. It stores memories for us, and creates others. The rest of this book will go on to tell many other stories that can be learned from it. These include morality tales about how we must live with nature, political lessons about

An ancient oak tree on Hallands Väderö, Bjäre



ways to arrange society, and spiritual guidance couched in terms of the supernatural or the religious. We draw memories out of landscape, of how ancestors used the land, of past religions, of ways of life, and we also invest memories into it – personal, family and community ones. Very often these begin with real things that have survived from the past. Some of

the landscape's best stories are deeply rooted in the material and the physical, and traces, things, remains, sites and monuments are some of the starting points for our mental landscapes. This is what this chapter, a first step on the Pathway, has set out to show. It opens a gate for the rest of the book, where we take a wider and more innovative approach to landscape.

