

News from the AHRC Landscape and Environment Research Programme

Landscape &
Environment

LIVING LANDSCAPES 2009



Clockwise from top left: Welcome to Aberystwyth; Contributors to Plenary 1; Mike Pearson performing 'Carrlands'; Dancing To All Languages; the main lecture theatre; helpers from Aberystwyth University; 'Descent of an Angel' (all images © Cara Brostrom)

The Programme's 2009 conference was held from 18 to 21 June in the wonderful Welsh seaside town of Aberystwyth. The event was a phenomenal success which can be attributed to the skilful planning of Heike Roms, Mike Pearson and their team. Mike is a member of the Landscape and Environment Steering Committee and both teach in the Department of Theatre, Film and Television Studies at Aberystwyth University. The trans-disciplinary conference explored the relationship between landscape and performance, an emerging theme of the Programme's research, by drawing together artists, practitioners and academics from such fields as geography, archaeology, anthropology, performance, music and dance studies, media studies, museology, cultural and environmental policy, folklore studies, art history. The extensive programme offered delegates the opportunity to attend a time tabled event from 7am to midnight or beyond each day, and packed in choices of parallel panels, plenaries, artists talks, films, drama, dance, installations and workshops. The conference was opened by the renowned environmental journalist

George Monbiot. He addressed the conference on the theme of climate change as a defining problem faced by humanity of any age and which began when man started to change the landscape to suit himself. He finished by urging conference delegates to help to fire up peoples imaginations by engaging fully in this issue within the context of their research. There were many highlights of the three days but a few special moments will certainly stand out in the minds of the delegates. Kate Lawrence (University of Surrey) dazzled with a breathtaking vertical performance of 'Descent of an Angel' from the roof of the National Library of Wales. Dressed in white and using abseiling equipment Kate began the vertical performance on the roof of the building before lowering herself down on the side of the building to dance like a feather blowing in the wind to evocative piano music. Equally as fascinating but based on the sense of hearing rather than sight was the talk by the BBC nature sound recordist Chris Watson. This was delivered in a pitch black studio with just his words and the enchanting sounds of the natural world which ranged from the dawn chorus

in Newcastle to laughing hippos in deepest Africa. Mike Pearson, a Landscape and Environment small grant holder and a member of the Programme Steering Committee, gave a live performance of the middle section of 'Carrlands', a work about the Ancholme valley in north Lincolnshire funded by the Programme. The haunting soundworks created with John Hardy and Hugh Fowler juxtaposed with Mike's poetic words and entrancing landscape images on screen created a mesmerising appreciation of this particular setting. A groundbreaking performance was created on Saturday evening when all delegates were invited to participate in a simultaneous dance with the 'Topographies: Sites, Bodies, Technologies Conference' at Stanford University, USA. Video footage will be available to watch on the Programme website.

For copies of the conference programme, abstracts, images and video footage go to www.landscape.ac.uk/2009conference.html

New Exhibition: An Archaeology of 'Race': Exploring the North East in Roman Britain



AG group at Housesteads Roman in July with Stephen Daniels © Claire Nesbitt

The Tales of the Frontier project is based at Durham University and is researching the significance of Hadrian's Wall and its landscape as a monument and icon from the 8th Century to today. The project has developed a public exhibition which opened on 4th July and runs until 15th September at Segedunum Roman Fort, Baths and Museum, Wallsend, Tyne and Wear. An Archaeology of 'Race' takes a multicultural context as its theme based on the fact that Roman rule brought a fascinating mix of races and cultures to the north of England – the soldiers who guarded the frontier came from all around the Empire. and explores the everyday life, citizenship and culture of the people living along Hadrian's Wall. The Landscape and Environment Programme Director, Stephen Daniels, opened the exhibition and spent time with the project team on a field trip along part of the wall.

EARTH - MOON - EARTH

Timed to coincide with the 40th anniversary of the Apollo 11 mission and the first landing of men on the moon a major summer exhibition has been launched at The University of Nottingham's Arts Centre. Earth-Moon-Earth is linked to a Programme research network on Land Art and the Culture of Landscape, 1967-77 and is curated by the PI Nicholas Alfrey along with Joy Sleeman of the Slade School of Fine Art, UCL. The exhibition runs until 9 August and brings together the work of two artists who have addressed the idea of the connection between earth and space. It sets up a dialogue between a key work made in 1969 by David Lamelas, a pioneering figure in conceptual art, and a piece by Katie Paterson, the extraordinary 'Earth-Moon-Earth (Moonlight Sonata Reflected from the Surface of the Moon)'.

Landscape, Enclosure and Rural Society in Post-Medieval Britain and Europe Conference

Co-sponsored by the Economic History Society, Historical Geography Research Group and Royal Historical Society and part of the *Changing Landscapes, Changing Environments* project based at the Universities of Sussex, Hertfordshire and Lincoln, this two-day interdisciplinary conference in June drew together a wide range of academics and practitioners in order to examine the enduring histories of enclosure episodes. The speakers variously explored how enclosure was experienced, resisted and represented over the longue durée in contexts as far apart as Scotland and France, Ireland and Estonia, as well as closer to home in Northamptonshire, Norfolk and north-west England. The fifteen papers all sparked fruitful discussions, perhaps particularly between the historians and literary historians present. Much the same was true of Prof. Tom Williamson's thought-provoking keynote on 'The Enclosure Experience: myths and realities', and the lively debate which followed Tom's paper was representative of the discussions which raged over coffee breaks and dinners throughout the conference.

BBC COVERAGE OF THE LOWER OMO VALLEY



© David Turton

Mursi boys from the Omo region of Ethiopia



© Marco Bassi

Omo River, Ethiopia

The Omo River in south-western Ethiopia, site of the research project 'Landscape, people and parks: environmental change in the Lower Omo Valley, Southwestern Ethiopia' featured in a number of BBC broadcasts in March and included interviews with the project Research Officer Dr Marco Bassi. The radio and television features have been made by BBC journalist Peter Greste who journeys down the Omo River from Ethiopia's central highlands to Northern Kenya where the lives of nearly half a million of the world's most remote tribes people are threatened by a massive hydro-electricity dam. The peoples of South Omo exploit the annual river floods to cultivate extensively along the banks of the Omo. The dam will alter the dynamic of the seasonal flood and this could plunge them into a struggle for survival.

“ They will not be able to... deal with this change. They will simply die
Marco Bassi, Oxford University ”

The Landscape and Environment project brings together historical, anthropological and ecological methods with the aim of answering questions about the changing landscape of the Lower Omo Valley. With the political sensitivity of the area growing considerably over the past year as controversy over the downstream impact of the dam heightens, the project is in a good position to make a significant contribution to policy debates on the future of the Lower Omo environment and its peoples.

For further information on the BBC broadcasts please visit the BBC website at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/7959444.stm>

Event title: The Beat Goes On
Date: Now until 1 November 2009
Venue: World Museum Liverpool

Event title: EARTH - MOON - EARTH
Date: Saturday 20 June - Sunday 9 August
Venue: Djanogly Art Gallery, Lakeside Art Centre, University Park, Nottingham

Event title: An Archaeology of 'Race': Exploring the North East in Roman Britain
Date: Saturday 4 July - 15 September
Venue: Segedunum Roman Fort, Baths and Museum, Wallsend, Tyne and Wear

Event title: Narrating Landscape Programme session at RGS conference
Date: 26 August 2009
Venue: Manchester University

Event title: Public lectures by The Early Modern Parish Church
Date: 2 - 23 September 2009
Venue: St Michael in the Northgate Church, Cornmarket Street, Oxford

Event title: Contested Common Land Project: Symposium 2
Date: 7-8 September 2009
Venue: Newcastle University

Event title: The Sublime in Crisis? New perspectives on the Sublime in British Visual Culture 1760 - 1900 conference
Date: 14-15 September 2009
Venue: Clore Auditorium, Tate Britain

Event title: 'Wrong from the Start' Modernism and the Sublime symposium
Date: 30 November 2009
Venue: Clore Auditorium, Tate Britain