

AIREBOROUGH ESSENCE CATALOGUE

Exhibition by Darren Sanderson Photography

The Chevin's Backbone - Glacial Heritage

The last ice age peaked 20,000 years ago – with ice sheets advancing as far as South Bradford and Calderdale. Later, around 13,000 years ago, the sheets retreated leaving glaciers to grind out the Dales landscape. The Wharfedale glacier broke through millstone grit towards the Airedale Glacier, through what is known as the Guiseley Gap – as seen in this view. The Gap is fairly unique as the valley is filled with glacial moraine and thus has no river; only Mire Beck cuts through the landscape to drain towards The Wharfe, whilst Tran Mire Beck drains toward the Aire. Aireborough is therefore a borderland where the glacial landscape ends and the Yorkshire Coal Measures to the south, begin.

Unwind Open Land

Where does 'OUR AREA' start – many asked this, pause, think, and then say, when the land opens up at Horsforth Roundabout or approaching Hollins Hill, or the far side of Ilkley, or when the Chevin's rise is in view – or as one lady said "when I find myself sighing, relaxing, and thinking – I'm home, as the landscape changes". Essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence. (NPPF 79).

Watery, Wooded, Secrets

An essential characteristic of the glacial landscape are the numerous becks that flow from the layers of grit in the hills that act as rainfall sponges. Water made this land; allowing cultivation, and powering corn and textile mills before 'King Coal'. As the land dips to the Rivers, native woodland increases; in copses, woods and along the becks. Many becks flow secretly and quietly through our rural/urban landscape – sometimes visible sometimes not – but charm lies in their stilly wooded margins reclaiming times past.

The becks too, mark out the townships – Menston and Guiseley are separated by Mire Beck, Guiseley and Yeadon by Shaw/Nunroyd Beck, and Rawdon and Horsforth by Ghyll Beck. We should enhance our character Becks for wellbeing and ecology – it is an important green belt purpose to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another. (NPPF 80).

Turner Skies

J M W Turner is one of Great Britain's most inspirational artists: this doyen of the Romantic Era spent periods of time at Farnley Hall, searching for the sublime in the landscape. In 1812 he painted *Hannibal Crossing the Alps* – the idea stemming from a storm he had seen over the Chevin. The light in this picture of Aireborough with *Whale Jaws Hill* in the distance bears a lot of resemblance to Turner's painting. What inspires Turner, can inspire others too, and the NPPF says that Local Council's should enhance the landscape in the green belt as a visual amenity. (NPPF 81)

Tolkien Roots

Another British great, is J R R Tolkien – the writer of ‘high-fantasy’ fiction, rooted in ancient English history and landscape. Many Tolkien settings and stories were inspired by Yorkshire, particularly the East and North Ridings. Tolkien’s introduction to the county, however, was a visit to Otley, and he taught in Leeds. The picture of Nether Yeadon’s forgotten village green is especially reminiscent of a Shire setting. What inspired Tolkien, can inspire others too, and the NPPF says that Local Council’s should enhance the landscape in the green belt as a visual amenity. (NPPF 81)

Old Way Networks

The old ways, criss-cross our land; the ancient tracks, holloways, and snickets map out a network of routes that took weavers to the textile halls, and copyholder to ploughland. Ghosts and voices haunt our paths for tarmac and mud still cover paving, cobbles and well worn rut. But, 21st century congestion escape is destroying the beauty and fabric of these ‘ways’, whilst footways and cycleways sink into disrepair. It is difficult to sustain ‘the old ways’ in large urban environments – is this sustainability? Should the North West Leeds Country Park network take greater priority; and area-wide, (not just hot-spot), traffic monitoring recognize that enough really can be enough?

Rural Fringe

“ ‘Beyond the Wild Wood comes the Wide World’ said Rat ‘I’ve never been there, and I’m never going, nor you either, if you’ve got any sense at all’ ” (Wind in the Willows – Kenneth Graham)

Aireborough is borderland; an area of urban rural fringe: a district of its own; not Leeds, not Bradford, not City, not Dale: a lacework of haphazard settlements and green spaces for man and beast alike. Aireborough, should not be ‘rounded off’ like a nucleated settlement; fingers of green flow outside in, providing ecological corridors and animal routes; but cul de sacs are growing. Such land is precious, a delicate network where balance is needed, a role typically undertaken by farmers. But farms need to be viable, and green belt should safeguard the ‘countryside’ from encroachment.

Historic Grit

“We make our surroundings and then they make us” (Winston Churchill)

Grit is everywhere in Aireborough, on the hills, in the walls, in the houses; when Guiseley Infant School was built of ‘Horsforth’ rather than ‘Guiseley’ Grit there was outrage – for Guiseley is the better quality, we are told; good enough for Parliament and Cathedrals. Look carefully and you’ll find human endeavour is written in the grit in the built and rural environment; from building to enterprise and on to achievement. But, many say, Aireborough has not thrived since 1974

Man and Boy

“I used to love living here... now it’s a means to an end” (Aireborough Native 2014)

Aireborough is; Aireborough was, a human, life long place, where local people nurtured local relationships, at home, in work, in social-clubs; building a community, not a car park for daily dispersals through necessity. Live, work and play; from boy to man, from girl to woman, from terrace to Tranmere Park; when you have that, you have a place called home, not a suburban dormitory.

Character Trees

“I frequently tramped eight or ten miles through the deepest snow to keep an appointment with a beech-tree, or a yellow birch, or an old acquaintance among the pines.” (Walden – Life in the Woods, Henry David Thoreau)

The spread of a tree with room to grow and show is a magnificent sight, as is a natural copse – design features not lost on the great landscape creators aiming to evoke emotion with wood, and glade. The humble yeoman too, has played his part – planting trees in hedgerow boundaries to grow, mature, and stand on their own – oak, and beech, elm and thorn. Later, avenues of trees paid respect to royalty and native hero alike. Trees have a currency of wellbeing not to be squandered.

Towering Civic Care

When danger threatened, the church was protection; when civic responsibility took root, a great hall was needed; when the mind was uneasy, an architectural gem of tranquillity was provided. Aireborough, in common with its South Pennines Heritage area, is an important area for social developments; non-conformist religion, co-operative movements and philanthropy from a chain of self-made men who, from the nineteenth century, donated public buildings and facilities. Do we need more space for 'cultural enhancement' and civic society in the 21st century?

Pools of Fulfilment

"Believe me, my young friend; there is nothing -- absolutely nothing -- half so much worth doing as simply messing about in boats." (Wind in the Willows. Kenneth Graham)

On feasts and wakes, the area's pools were scenes of fun – Yeadon Dam was a holiday destination. Now the numerous pools, some natural, some man made, provide recreation from sailing to fishing, from walking to pondering. Could, should, more be done to create a 'visitor economy' again?

The Watcher on the Hills

"The People of the Hills have all left. I saw them come into Old England and I saw them go. Giants, trolls, kelpies, brownies, goblins, imps; wood, tree, mound, and water spirits; heath-people, hill-watchers, treasure-guards, good people, little people, pishogues, leprechauns, night-riders, pixies, nixies, gnomes, and the rest—gone, all gone! I came into England with Oak, Ash and Thorn, and when Oak, Ash and Thorn are gone I shall go too." (Puck, who refers to himself as "the oldest Old Thing in England"; Puck of Pook's Hill, by Rudyard Kipling)

Aireborough has prominent, exposed, high pastoral plateaus above its valleys covered in trees, rock and meadows; views in and views out give a distinctive 'countryside' connection, that should not be destroyed – when it's gone, it is gone for good.

Aireborough Neighbourhood Development Forum

Taken from research done by the Forum since 2012 with local people .

September 2015

The Exhibition was sponsored by:

Aireborough Neighbourhood Development Forum

Red Nose Community Care and Leeds Community Foundation

Ark Display Graphics, Leeds

Ode to Aireborough

"Home of Harry Ramsden's and delicious fish and chips,
Exquisite prams produced by Silver Cross,
Baths and loos and bidets manufactured down at Shires,
And lamps where Crompton'n Parkinson were boss.

Weaving sheds that sang as looms clacked out their rhythmic beat,
And spinners whirling floss to balls and cones,
Dyers dunking yarn in massive vats of different hues,
Some bound for distant places to be sewn.

Once, a couple of co-ops and two picture houses too,
A gas works for the cooking and the heat,
A depot up in Yeadon where Sam Ledgard's buses lived,
And don't forget young Sooty, Sue and Sweep.

They've all gone now; that's progress, so the bogs in charge would say,
The heart of Aireborough beats a different beat,
We have to be content with traffic jams and retail parks,
The thought of it is somewhat bittersweet.

Despite all this I'm happy, even though I've seen much change,
The folk of Aireborough make this place so good,
They're cheerful, and industrious and caring to a fault,
Without doubt its' the perfect neighbourhood.

Yeadon Writers – for Aireborough Festival 14 Feb 2015