

# Northumbria Research Link

Citation: Harrington, Barbara (2016) Walking, landscape and visual culture: how walkers engage with and conceive of the landscapes in which they walk. Doctoral thesis, Northumbria University.

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**Walking, landscape and visual culture:  
how walkers engage with and conceive of  
the landscapes in which they walk.**

Barbara Elaine Harrington

PhD

June 2016

## **ABSTRACT**

### **Walking, landscape and visual culture: how walkers engage with and conceive of the landscapes in which they walk.**

Walking in the countryside is an increasingly popular pursuit in Britain. Much previous research within the social sciences has tended to concentrate on the physiological benefits, barriers or facilitators to walking. This thesis explores particular walkers' complex motivations for and modes of walking, their individual engagements with certain types of (northern) landscapes and the significance of specific kinds of visual images, traditions and wider practices of looking. Constructions and discourses of landscape are considered in relation to the persistence of certain ideas and aesthetic traditions as well as and in relation to current concerns about individual health and social well-being. The research is multi-disciplinary and engages with studies of art history and visual culture, cultural geography, anthropology and sociology. Visual studies research methods are used to explore individual interpretations and experiences of landscapes, and how the circulation and consumption of particular kinds of images might inform attitudes to walks and walking. Walkers' views and attitudes have been investigated using an ethnographic approach. In-depth qualitative interviews (including photo elicitation) have been undertaken with walkers who regularly walked five or more miles in the countryside either in organised groups, on their own or with friends and family, in order to capture how walking is perceived, felt, and made sense of. A grounded theory approach has been used for the interviews, building on theories that emerged from systematic comparative analysis, and were grounded in the fieldwork. Overall the thesis observes a marked persistence of and some striking similarities between particular ideas, cultural traditions and interpretations of walking in and ways of looking at types of countryside from the Romantic period to the present day.

## **Acknowledgements**

Firstly, I thank all my supervisors. A big thank you to Professor Roy Boyne of Durham University who first had faith in the research as an interesting idea and encouraged me to go with it. Thanks to Professor Ian Greener, second supervisor at Durham University, whose sole but useful contribution was to bark Hammersley at me one day in the corridor. Thanks to Professor Ysanne Holt and Mark Cieslik of Northumbria University for taking me on and seeing the research through to the end. Their comments and suggestions have been very useful. Many thanks to Professor Al Roulstone of Leeds University (who was at Northumbria for a time) who helped enormously with the shaping of the social science part of the research, provided many useful insights and gave me lots of encouragement. Thanks are also due to Dr John Warren who first asked me what I wanted to do a PhD on and when I said walking and visual culture, suggested not only would this be possible but that Roy Boyne would be a good person to talk to.

Many thanks to friends especially Paul Braidford, Caron Walker, Elsie Allnut, Katherine Scott, Robbie Barker, Arthur Harris, Helen Wilding, Beatrice Turner and Nick Chapman, Peter and Angela Kellet who have stuck with me through thick and thin, at times when I wondered whether I would have any friends left by the end of this, distracting me with fun things to do and good company, and giving me lots of advice and support.

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Many thanks to all the interviewees who gave so generously of their time. The time they gave and their many expressions of interest on how I was doing on the "course" not only provided data but also a much needed incentive to complete the PhD. The second time I very nearly walked away from the PhD, the only thing that made me stick

with it was the realisation that you had given your time and effort and that you were owed something for this. Thank you to the Ramblers for allowing me to contact members and supporting the research.

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Last but certainly not least I want to thank Sam, the cat, for the part he has played in this. There was the ever present need to put food in our bellies and have a roof over our head that meant I kept applying for jobs and getting employment throughout this long process, and continued with the PhD in the hope it might lead to a better job. He also played a big part in deciding to continue at a very difficult time. My brother was facing major heart surgery in a week's time (thanks for staying alive, Steve!), I had just had a very bad supervision where all I had been working on for the previous 2 months was rubbish – and Sam had gone missing. Sam had just recovered from being knocked down by a car and breaking his pelvis needing 8 weeks nursing back to health. Fearing the worst, life seemed very grim. Spending any more time on the PhD especially seemed utterly pointless. Fortunately, Sam at that point decided to walk back in and I thought I might as well try to carry on.

## **Declaration**

I declare that the work contained in this thesis has not been submitted for any other award and that it is all my own work, I also confirm that this work fully acknowledges opinions, ideas and contributions from the work of others.

Any ethical clearance for the research presented in this thesis has been approved. Approval has been sought and granted by the Northumbria Faculty Ethics Committee on 20th October 2011.

**I declare that the word count of this thesis is 82,617 words.**

Name: Barbara Elaine Harrington

Date: 02.06.2015

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## Chapter 1 – Introduction

The research for this thesis arose out of a desire to find out what motivates people to walk in the countryside in the UK and in particular the relationships between forms and practices of visual culture, broadly defined, and the popular desire to go walking. The research concerns walkers' relationship with landscape, not landscape simply as backdrop or scenery but, as several of the writers significant for this thesis observe, as 'produced' through practices.

Walking remains a very popular leisure activity for many people in the UK. In England, most recent figures show that 9.1 million adults walk recreationally for at least 30 minutes every four weeks representing 22% of the population; in Wales and Scotland over 30% of the population walk recreationally for 2 miles every 4 weeks<sup>1</sup>. Walking for recreation is more popular than swimming or cycling. The Ramblers have a current membership of over 110,000 members based in 500 groups<sup>2</sup>. In addition to this national body, there are other specialised walking groups such as those for the partially sighted and blind, walking for health groups, women only walking groups. There are guided walks run by the National Trust and in National Parks or provided by private companies. Other walkers prefer going on their own or with a small group of close friends or family. Finding out about local walks is relatively simple with guides available from the internet or information centres. There are then a wide range of different groups now concerned with diverse practices of walking in the countryside. From being a pursuit primarily indulged by the upper classes in the nineteenth century (many of the poorer classes walked simply because they had no other means of transport or had very little leisure time), it is now a leisure pursuit for a significant proportion of the population. Popular TV programmes such as *Coast* (BBC2 and BBC4) and *Wainwright's Walks* have both benefited from and contributed to the appeal of walking, and a whole popular literature reflecting on walking by writers such as Robert Macfarlane, Rebecca Solnit and Simon Armitage (Macfarlane 2012; Solnit 2006; Armitage 2012) has grown up in the last 10 years.

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<sup>1</sup> Data from the **Sport England 2009a Active People Survey 2007/08: Individual sports participation quoted on Ramblers' website** <http://www.ramblers.org.uk/what-we-do/making-the-case-for-walking/participation-in-walking.aspx> accessed in June 2014

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.ramblers.org.uk/about-us/our-history.aspx> - accessed on March 14<sup>th</sup> 2015

Present day motivations for going walking might well appear to be different from those of the Romantic poets such as Wordsworth and Coleridge who sought inspiration and contemplation whilst out walking. Today's walkers may find they are walking in a context that emphasises environmental interests, concerns about physical health and fitness, or mental health through social aspects of walking. Whilst academic research (notably health and social science research) has sought to look at some of the barriers to walking, usually in relation to increasing physical health and fitness, there has, however, been little investigation of what actually motivates people who go walking in the countryside in the UK as a chosen leisure time activity and the place of visual culture within this.

This research was in part a reaction to and against the growing discourse linking health to walking (sometimes to the exclusion of other motivations and experiences), where walking becomes subsumed under a health policy agenda focussed on reducing levels of obesity. There has been a growth in organised walks for health, and organisations like the Ramblers have been keen to emphasise the health benefits of walking. The focus has been encouraged through articles in specialist walking magazines and popular women's magazines. However, such ideas seemed to be at odds with some of the reasons people gave when I walked with them as a member of the Ramblers organisation. Some, it appears, walk to "bag" a number of peaks or number of miles. Others go walking for companionship, or to see wildlife, or to get fitter, or for a mixture of these reasons. What also struck me was how often when reaching a summit or vantage point people would exclaim about a "beautiful view". So part of the enjoyment of walking lay in what could be seen. It is important though to stress that the research was not only concerned with the visual in the sense of beautiful views, or what constituted a beautiful view. This idea that the visual experience was an important part of walking was a starting point for the research which then expanded to consider social and visual culture in broader and more complex terms.

The research in this thesis strives to go beyond a discussion and presentation of barriers and facilitators to walking. It attempts more subtlety in exploring walkers' complex relationship with the landscapes through which they walk, and in relation to social and particularly visual-cultural contexts. The research has adopted an interdisciplinary approach to landscape and developed analysis that refers to visual culture studies and

disciplines of cultural geography, anthropology and sociology to properly attend to that complexity.

Visual culture is both a broad field and an interdisciplinary method. Visual culture embraces a broad field of cultural production, for example, photographs, paintings, posters, TV programmes, and webpages. The material artefacts from this broad field of cultural production play a crucial part in the “visual articulation of cultural values and identity” (Rampley 2005 p.2). Such images or artefacts are produced not in isolation but are embedded in social and cultural systems. Observers too have a role to play in how they engage with and experience visual artefacts. Thus the study of visual culture is not solely concerned with observation but about the shifting interpretation of socio-cultural theory and the construction of worlds.

The importance of historical forms of visual representation and aesthetic tendencies in relation to the landscape is part of a strong tradition in Britain (Wylie 2007) in painting, sculpture, land art, poetry, literature and more latterly television and film. Aesthetic approaches such as the picturesque and sublime have influenced the way people look at and engage with landscape and the countryside since the mid 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Romanticism, particularly in Britain the work of the romantic poets like Wordsworth and Coleridge, contributed to a new way of thinking about the landscape. Romantic ideals were a reaction against the enlightenment and placed importance on the individual human imagination and emotions. Nature became of central concern as a manifestation of the divine and “the creative mind, being profoundly solitary, would yearn for harmony between man and nature.” (Wolf and Walther 2007 p.6) Landscapes which from a picturesque viewpoint would have seemed rough, wild, and unproductive, became under the romantic gaze dramatic and beautiful with views capable of inspiring awe. Walking in such landscapes gave aesthetic and contemplative pleasure and was made more popular and fashionable for those with leisure through works of the Romantic writers, Shelley, Wordsworth and Coleridge (Solnit 2006 pp.82-86). The current favour that the Lake District enjoys owes much to such ideas.

In more recent times, television as a visual medium has engaged with walking in the landscape through programmes such as Julia Bradbury’s *Wainwright Walks* and *Canal Walks*, Tony Robinson’s *Walking through History*, and *Coast*. The internet now provides large amounts of information on walking. Alfred Wainwright’s printed guides

remain popular, and walking guides draw visually on Wainwright's series or further back to the Shell Guides to Britain produced in the interwar/post war years. There is then a wealth of visual culture, cultural practices and a legacy of types of engagement that those who walk for pleasure in the countryside might have experienced and might inform their relationship with the countryside. How far walkers engage with this material and the way material is presented in these different media formed part of the research. Ultimately, this thesis is interested in the underlying impulses and instincts around these forms of art and various aesthetic discourses. Thus, it is the embodied practices, as much as the resulting visual, or scenic representations in painting and in other popular forms of representation that are of interest.

The reasons for doing the research lay not only in documenting visual culture and cultural practices and a legacy of types of engagement with landscape but also in exploring the persistence (or not) of cultural traditions and ideas, and investigating how such ideas are related to current concerns. The intention was not just investigating the circulation of visual images and who may or may not have seen them, but to explore walkers' relationships with those images as well as cultural and individual constructions of landscape. Although the links between art and landscape are well known, this research is new in investigating the links between the experience of walking in landscape to visual culture in attempting to see what relevance (if any) traditions of presenting the landscape still have, and how visual culture might still contribute to people's experience of walking. It is then in this wider sense that visual culture is explored.

The term 'landscape' is itself complex, contested and fluid. Part of the research has been to explore how the term landscape is used at various times in different contexts and to chart the movement from conceptualising the landscape as an objective presence external to the observer, to something that observers or walkers create and shape through their own perceptions and physical engagement with the landscape. Shifting notions of landscape, that have emerged from theorists from both visual culture and cultural geography over the last twenty years, are explored more fully in the literature review but it is useful here to present some key theories and ways of thinking about the landscape that have informed the research.

William JT Mitchell has been a valuable theorist on how vision becomes a cultural construction, something that is learned and cultivated. This is important for thinking about how walkers have come to construct landscapes in the way that they do. For Mitchell visual culture embraces history and politics, and the “aesthetics and epistemology of seeing and being seen”(Mitchell 2002 p. 91). Visual culture is “the visual construction of the social, not just the social construction of vision”. So this thesis explores landscape in terms of history and politics, how landscape is presented visually, and how that has contributed to constructions of landscapes for walkers. The sense of “landscape” that emerges from this thesis is of landscape as performance and that certain images, objects and discourses work together to produce landscape. In Mitchell’s words, landscape is a verb rather than a noun (Muir 1999 p. 174).

Debates arising from the disciplines of cultural geography have been very useful, such as work by Rob Shields and, John Wylie, and the history of theorising space such as work by Phil Hubbard et al. (Hubbard 2002). In particular, the work of Rob Shields (Shields 1992, p. 18), who writes of space not being merely topographical but defined through society and culture. If our relationship to landscape is not objective but changes according to cultural perceptions at the time, “Sites are never simply locations.” This builds on the classical idea of “genius loci” (the spirit of a place) which relates to the physical environment to add “a socially constructed level of meaning” (Shields 1992, p.6) . Shield’s reference that “culture is contested, temporal and emergent” (Shields 1992, p. 18) is fundamental in understanding how the landscape as experienced by walkers exists differently in different times for different audiences.

John Wylie has usefully summarised the move away from the "field science" model of the discipline of geography to emphasising the qualities of landscape (Wylie 2007). This is an understanding of the different ways people relate to landscape e.g. look at, use, inhabit, and pass through. There has been a movement away from landscape defined as "an external, physical object"(Wylie 2007, p.13). In the discipline of Art History such an approach to landscape was developed in the 1970s and 1980s after John Berger’s *Ways of Seeing* (Berger 2008; Berger 1972) challenged traditional views of art, exploring social and cultural constructions of works of art. In the 1980s and 1990s such ideas began to be adopted by cultural geographers exploring the visual qualities of landscape and focussing on visual representation. Cultural geographers adopted landscape as a way of seeing.

Also important is the work of Tim Ingold, a social anthropologist, on how different people, or different groups of people experience landscape. Some of his work is a phenomenological approach to landscape not just as image or gaze but as embodied practices of dwelling (Wylie 2007, pp.166-169). Such a hermeneutic approach has helped to understand how walking is socially constructed. Not only is the body grounded in movement but different cultures (and subcultures) relate to walking in the landscape in different ways (Ingold and Vergunst 2008).

Bourdieu's habitus was a key concept for Ingold (Ingold 2000), where the body's engagement with its surroundings was seen as pertinent since walking was a way of engaging in a particular way with landscape. Habitus describes the skills and ways of acting that people acquire in daily life, and has reference to past history and ways of behaving that inform and sometimes condition present behaviour. Ingold's ethnographic studies support the understanding of how walking is a social act and a product of the social world. Habitus is moreover "predicated on a bodily hexis" (Fowler 2000 p. 4). That is, the world is understood by the body as well as the mind, and capable of being changed by experience or impressed by the outside world. The body is exposed to the regularities of the world, anticipates such regularities, and engages in practical behaviours. The body therefore engages in behaviours that are different from those that arise from decoding the world through thought and comprehension. Thus, although the broad field of visual culture and ways of seeing are important, they are not the sole concern, as the rest of the thesis demonstrates. The notion of habitus has shaped the way this research is concerned with ways not just of seeing but engaging with landscapes, and particular practices in relation to walking.

A central concern of the study was how people acquire and are socialised into ways of seeing and engaging with the landscape. Whilst people might be surrounded by images, cultural artefacts, ways of thinking in popular media that produce a certain discourse of how landscape is engaged with at a macro level, at an individual level they may have their own interpretations. Some walkers may reproduce those traditions and reconstruct landscapes in terms of those traditions. Others may have more personal constructs of landscapes. The thesis takes the approach that people have a creative relationship with cultural practices – i.e. people do not just accept what they are shown but have an active relationship with it. This follows Bourdieu's notion of habitus that captures the

internalisation of social order (Eriksen and Nielsen 2001 p. 130) but his recognition too of individual agency (Bourdieu 1990 p. 13). So there is likely to be variability based on biography, experiences, values, and the groups to which the walkers belong.

Thus on the one hand there are a series of cultural traditions, and on the other hand individual variability. These will be explored in the thesis. Firstly, by investigating cultural traditions relating to walking and landscape, including how such cultural traditions are spread in practice. Then an ethnographic approach is used in the research, looking at individuals and groups with the intention of showing how (and indeed, if) culturally accepted ways of seeing and engaging with the landscape are adopted at an individual level, and what balance has been struck between structure and agency. So the walkers' habitus, how they act in life as walkers, their "embedded, internalized mental structures and references to past history" (Giddens and Sutton 2014 p. 23) will be reflected on.

Theories of identity are therefore important. Walkers nowadays are far removed from the Manchester Rambler in the 1930s who sang "I may be a wage slave on Monday But I am a free man on Sunday"<sup>3</sup>, whose identity was rooted in working class communities, and in urban industrial work. Today's walkers are not part of that world of more fixed identities of class, work or community, when for example teachers would remain in that role throughout their working life and the job would define their class and status in the community. Social theorists such as Bauman and Giddens have documented and discussed the increasing fragmentation of personal identities. Bauman writes of the "liquefaction" of social frameworks and institutions where belonging and identity have become fluid (Bauman 2004). Giddens writes of the way changing identity is determined by consumption, and how traditional identities have been eroded. The research seeks to capture such changes by exploring previous and current social and cultural contexts of walking, and in researching the views of current walkers.

This chapter has outlined some of the underlying ways of thinking about landscape, visual culture, structure and agency that inform the thesis. These ideas are explored in greater detail in the literature review in chapter 2. The literature review reflects on the work of visual culture theorists and cultural geographers, and charts how theories and

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<sup>3</sup> <http://kindertrespas.com/index.asp?ID=127> Full text of the song written by Ewan McColl after the Kinder Scout Trespass – accessed on July 25<sup>th</sup> 2014

ideas about landscape have changed over recent years, bringing new ideas of how people engage with landscape. In addition to these ideas, the review also discusses new writing on landscape which engage with other ideas such as walking as quest or pilgrimage, links to the Romantic imagination and personal responses to particular places, including ideas concerning therapeutic landscapes. Ideas of northern landscapes were also important since these were the areas where the interviewees habitually walked. These are all ideas which might be expected to have a bearing on the way walking and landscape are experienced.

Chapter 3 reviews the methodology and methods used which draw upon visual culture analysis, social sciences and ethnography. There are two main strands to the research. The first concerns the possible significance of visual and social culture (visual culture of particular types and practices of looking) in shaping perceptions of and attitudes towards particular walks and types of walking. The study considers how relationships between past and present forms of visual culture and views and responses to walking in the countryside, and visual studies research methods support an exploration of how people consume and use visual images. For example, the way in which ideas and practices underpinning representations of landscape including the picturesque have continued in present day ideas and practices in relation to landscape. The thesis explores the extent to which certain ideas and impulses, certain experiences and forms of representation of walking and being in rural spaces persist but are also significantly reshaped according to different historical circumstances.

A key period in relation to these ideas was the time between the First and Second World Wars. The interwar years were a crucial time for the burgeoning of outdoor exercise movements, the growth of National Parks and access by walkers to the great outdoors. It was also a crucial period in visual culture with a flourishing of landscape art and artists. During the Depression in the 1930s many artists worked on a number of popular visual guides and posters, thus contributing to the way landscape was appreciated and seen in popular culture. Many of the current ideas and ways of seeing and relating to the landscape by walkers have their roots in this time. An important part of understanding the social and visual context of present day walkers involved looking at the visual context of the inter-war years. This is discussed in chapter 4.

The following chapter takes the discussion further, looking at the current social and visual culture context in relation to walking. This involved investigating how landscape is constructed or, following Matless (Matless 1998), how landscape is ‘produced’ through discourse and circulated in magazines, newspapers, books, television and film; and exploring current social policies in relation to walking. These were investigated to provide a current context that walkers might be aware of, and could be seen as part of their field of practice as walkers.

This part of the research involved textual and visual analysis, relating the visual to historical and cultural context. It explored how landscape was constructed in visual media, and explored how much current presentations of landscape owe to the tradition of landscape art. The aim was to generate theories from the findings about the construction of landscape. The research then sought to explore in interviews how far these constructions and discourses play a part in walkers’ enjoyment and conceptions of landscape.

The second part of the research was a study of selected walker’s views and attitudes to landscapes and walking and for this an ethnographic approach was chosen using qualitative interviews and observation. Research interviews took place over two phases – May 2011 to November 2011, and October 2013 to March 2014. Twelve walkers took part in the first phase. Ten of these were interviewed again in the second phase plus five additional interviewees. The research followed a grounded theory approach, enabling the researcher to build on findings and analysis from the initial interviews to inform the next phase of interviews. It allowed for a period of reflection on the themes which arose in the initial interviews, and for those which arose in the research into visual-cultural contexts.

Interviewees were selected to obtain a range of ages, gender, people who walked in organised groups, people who walked alone, people who went on long (“hard”) walks, and those who went on shorter walks. The various types of walker enabled the research to show whether those who go on longer walks have different motivations, such as preferring a challenge of doing a hard physical walk to spending time looking at and thinking about landscapes and countryside.

People go walking in the countryside for different reasons, from serious hikers to those who will take a short walk to a place of interest, or need to walk in the countryside because they live there or their job demands it. This research investigated those who go for long distance walks for pleasure. That is, it concentrated on those who walk for pleasure, and who spend a few hours (either a full day or half day) most weeks walking in the countryside. Such a focus made the research manageable but also it was important to interview those who walked voluntarily (rather than out of necessity) and to see what role visual culture played in their relationship to landscape. The interviewees habitually walked in the northern UK. This was partly a pragmatic way of limiting the scope of the research but at the same time it enabled an in-depth exploration of walker's relationships with northern landscapes. It enabled the research to focus on those landscapes and aspects of landscape and walking that were important to the walkers.

The ethnographical approach enabled understanding about how walkers relate to the landscape, without imposing the views of researchers, and to build on what participants said, or how they thought about and engaged with landscape. Following Fielding (Gilbert 2001, p.148) the study aimed to study behaviour in 'natural settings' (rather than experimental settings) and to understand the 'symbolic world' in which the participants exist. The interviews provided information about how far individuals engaged with walking as presented in current visual media. For part of the interviews, interviewees were asked to take photos of what they liked about walking and to discuss these. This provided further data on what walkers responded to whilst out walking.

Chapter 6 presents a more detailed picture of the interviewees, introducing the walking group that many belonged to, presenting some short biographical details about the interviewees, and the general reasons they gave for going out walking. It then explores the walkers' awareness of the current visual-cultural context and what role that played in their engagement with landscape and walking. This was in order to gauge to what extent walkers' immersion in this material might contribute to the way they responded to the countryside and different landscapes in the interviews and in the images they produced. The intention here was to find out whether this particular group already had distinctive aesthetic biases in relation to different landscapes and the countryside.

Findings concerning how landscape still culturally determined and whether there are certain visual prejudices that persist are discussed in chapter 7. Chief among the forms and practices explored in the thesis and themes emerging from the interviews were traditions from Romanticism and the inter-war years. There was continuation of such visual prejudices and ideas but also such ways of experiencing landscapes whilst walking are still deeply felt and personal. This investigation of forms and practices related to Romanticism and the inter-war years shows that interviewees were not in fact concerned solely with the visual or even privileging the visual. Although some of the images produced are redolent of other images from earlier times, the feelings evoked by such landscapes reflected an engagement with the landscape that went beyond a purely visual or a purely aesthetic appreciation.

Chapter 8 moves on to consider the way people engage with landscape, not as scenery or signs that can be read, but in a more active way in constructing landscape. The research findings are discussed in relation to themes concerning the physical nature of walking, space and empty landscapes, walking and health, the sociability of walking, and individual responses to landscape. Constructions and discourses of landscape are considered in relation to the persistence of certain ideas and aesthetic traditions as well as and in relation to current concerns. This thesis explores particular walkers' complex motivations for and modes of walking, their individual engagements with certain types of (northern) landscapes and the significance of specific kinds of visual images, traditions and wider practices of looking. This chapter enables the contextualisation of cultural and visual prejudices in relation to other aspects of walking and engagement with landscapes that also emerged from the interviews. This is often a complex relationship since the themes in this chapter have connections to and link back to visual and socio-cultural traditions but not in an obvious way. The chapter enables a broader view of the present day concerns around walking in the countryside to be determined.

This research began with the idea that there was more to walking in the countryside than just taking exercise in a green gym or a desire to be physically fit, and a wish to explore how walkers related to the landscape in other ways. As the following chapters demonstrate, reasons and motivations for walking in the countryside were very far from being just about exercise: social and visual culture made an important contribution to the way walkers responded to and conceived of the landscapes in which they walked.

## Chapter 2 - Literature Review

### 2.1 Introduction

The research topic draws upon methods and approaches from a variety of disciplines, so this literature review is necessarily wide ranging and engages with texts of relevance to the issue of walking from such subject areas as art history and visual studies, anthropology, cultural geography, sociology and social policy, and with such themes as the representation and interpretation of place.

What follows is a discussion of particular writings on concepts and experiences of landscape and environment. The focus is on relevant accounts of what actually constitutes landscape, of engaging with and being in landscapes, with notions of travel and tourism; including such concepts as the tourist gaze; and with varieties of aesthetic experience. Some of the key literature is drawn from art history and visual culture studies. Other areas of great importance are social anthropology and cultural geography, in particular the writings of Tim Ingold and John Wylie on the relationship of human beings to landscape, and how the physical relationship of walkers to the landscape can be understood. Concepts and ideas from different disciplines have often developed in tandem and often across discipline boundaries. Debates within cultural geography or ethnography/anthropology have influenced art historians and visual culture specialists and vice versa. This review seeks to approach the overall topic as multi- and inter-disciplinary, not only in addressing important literature from different disciplines but in tracing key developments and synergies across disciplines over previous decades.

The review ends with a discussion of three additional areas of literature which are important to the thesis. The first is that typified by new writers engaged with the subject such as MacFarlane and Armitage. These are partly cultural explorations of walking with reference to the history of walking and writers such as Wordsworth, Coleridge, Thoreau and Baudelaire, and 19<sup>th</sup> century Flaneurism, and partly descriptions of the actual experience of walking. These are a mixture of ethnographic description, and often very personalised accounts, reflecting on the place of walking in culture. These will be returned to later in this chapter. There then follows a section on therapeutic landscapes, looking at places deemed significant for health and spiritual

renewal and the growing literature on health policy in relation to walking. The final area investigates writing about the assumed specificities and experience of northern landscapes. These areas have provided further useful ways of thinking about landscape in relation to walking.

## 2.2 Visualising the landscape

It is a starting point for this research, almost a hypothesis, that visual imagery of various types informs the way people think about, imagine and remember landscape. Malcolm Andrews has written of the relationship between the observer and the observed in western landscape in relation to the history of art (Andrews 1999). For Andrews landscape art “breeds visual prejudices” that inform the way people view landscapes. This is a simple but crucial point. Andrews argues that the familiarity of images can influence the way people view landscape and react to it. He calls these “culturally prefabricated templates” (Andrews 1999 p. 4). Landscape in this regard is distinct from land (i.e. something objective and separate from the person looking at or inhabiting it) because landscape consists of “complex visual facts and imaginative construction” (ibid. p. 3). Each viewer will experience landscape differently depending on his/or her status, identity and experience of culture. The value of landscape for Andrews is constructed by the perceiver. Landscape is land that has been “aesthetically processed” (ibid. p.7) rather than something that people respond to naturally. Landscape here is constructed through the mediating role of the artist or photographer.

Ideas that landscape and representations of landscape are socially constructed were developed in academic writing in the 1980s and 1990s. I will return to this later but wanted to start briefly with two crucial traditions that in various forms continue to inform ideas about the way people engage with landscape – the picturesque and Romantic traditions.

Certain cultural representations are founded in traditions from the 18<sup>th</sup> century of a picturesque landscape as popularised by the influential writer William Gilpin (1724-1804) whose work formulated the picturesque and what would constitute a picturesque view. Landscape was an object to be constructed with the aid of a Claude glass (named after the French painter who composed tranquil classical landscapes) into picturesque scenes to delight the viewer. Such a way of engaging with landscape as an external

object, is perhaps encapsulated by the example of the early eighteenth century picturesque tourists going to the Lake District with their Claude glasses to seek views composed as if for a painting. Andrews describes Gilpin looking into a Claude glass that produces a mirrored image of the scene outside a carriage so the viewer explores the landscape whilst in this case being physically separate from it (Andrews 1999 p. 112).

The picturesque can be identified too in the context of the Romantic movement at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century where, by contrast, highly dramatic and awe inspiring 'sublime' landscapes became popular within a form of cultural tourism. Indeed the work of Coleridge and Wordsworth and the walking they did, helped to popularise the landscape of Cumbria as a place for walking, to be a fit subject for painting, and to be celebrated in poetry. The Romantics, including here artists such as Constable and Turner, made landscape paintings popular. Places that had once seemed barren land, beyond the pale, became awe inspiring and beautiful.

Romanticism (the picturesque and the Sublime are both forms of (or proto-) Romanticism) privileged an emotional, subjective and imaginative response to nature. The picturesque had become increasingly familiar and commodified the landscape, with the wild becoming tamed (Andrews 1999 p. 129). The picturesque edited out nonconformity. The sublime bypassed the rational to let loose the emotional, evoking feelings of terror and awe. Edmund Burke, the eighteenth century philosopher, refers to "Vacuity, Darkness, Solitude and Silence" in his 1757 *Treatise on the Sublime*. This was not only in terms of the wilderness, the wild landscapes of the Alps or the Lake District now subjects of painting and poetry, but also a delight in the obscure and dark, what cannot be seen. For Burke experiencing the sublime was a way of apprehending the divine or spiritual (Andrews 1999 p. 133). Andrews gives the example of views of *Niagara Falls* painted by William Henry Bartlett (1809-54) where the human figures are tiny in relation the falls and precarious on a rock in the foreground. This is very far removed from the comfort of Claude Lorraine's pictures where foreground figures often sit peacefully with an unthreatening landscape spread out before them. Such ideas are very important in understanding later on in this thesis the ways in which the walkers in this study still identify with those seeking the picturesque or sublime in landscapes.

The high point in terms of public recognition and academic recognition of the importance of landscape painting is often seen as the 19<sup>th</sup> century often referred to as the “golden age” of landscape painting. Thus Peter Smith writes of how “Constable came to epitomise the genius of English landscape” (Smith 1981 p. 90); Ronald Paulson describes Constable and Turner as “by all the odds the two greatest painters England has produced” (Paulson 1982 p xi); and Finch when writing of nineteenth century landscape describes it as “the apotheosis of English Landscape” (Finch 1991 p. 60). The landscape below by Turner shows a characteristic romantic view of the Lake District. The mountains seem huge, threatening and foreboding, partially hidden in the mist, while an arc of sunlight adds more drama to the picture.



**JMW Turner, Buttermere Lake, with Part of Crummock Water, Cumberland, a Shower 1798, - Tate Britain – source/photographer: The Athenaeum**

Turner and Constable continue to be held in high esteem with Constable in particular in the 19<sup>th</sup> century being upheld as a painter of landscapes that contributed to an ideal construction of national identity. However, the views of Leslie, writing in the second half of the nineteenth century, were already tinged with nostalgia for a countryside not ravaged by the industrial revolution. Several art historians in the 1980s and 1990s drew from social history and, to a degree, following Berger (Berger 1972) explored how landscape art performed certain ideological functions such as veiling class and power relations.

Subsequent writers concurred with the view that landscape and reproductions of landscape assume different meaning according to different times and cultures. Landscape art was seen in many contexts as functioning to hide and distort reality, as for example, the painting by Stubbs of haymakers (Barrell 1980), or paintings by Miles Birkett Foster that ignore rural poverty, or the way in which Constable's paintings are often seen as depicting a typical and ideal English landscape, as seen in *The Cornfield* below.



**John Constable, *The Cornfield*, 1826 – National Gallery**

John Barrell in his influential study *The dark side of the landscape* underlined the point that the figures working in Constable paintings are often in the middle or far distance and so do not play a significant part in his landscape paintings (Barrell 1980). The real plight of the rural worker is disregarded leading to a very partial and censored depiction of the reality of conditions in the countryside at the time.

Cultural geographer Stephen Daniels has considered how the painters Turner and Constable helped to construct national identity and how “Particular landscapes achieve the status of national icons”(Daniels 1993) (p5). For Daniels, landscape was not just a

reflection of topography, or pleasant scenes to distract from social, economic or political issues but socially constructed. However, for Daniels this image of Constable country as quintessentially English landscape was manufactured and maintained as an anti-modernist English Pastoral. The English landscape had changed considerably with the industrial revolution, but for Daniels too the myth of Constable country as embodying the essence of Englishness and the English landscape persists. The longing for a prelapsarian rural arcadia (such as presented in Constable's paintings) is as much a longing for a myth as for historical reality (Andrews 1999).

For Daniels it was important to combine aesthetic with social perspectives. He and cultural geographer, Denis Cosgrove, wrote in the late 1980s of how studying landscape reveals different meaning and different layers of cultural representation (Cosgrove and Daniels 1988). So that:

“A landscape is a cultural image, a pictorial way of representing, structuring or symbolising surroundings.” (ibid. p.1)

This goes beyond the idea of landscape as scenery to landscape as image and symbol.

Such symbols and images were to be understood in terms of how different times and cultures gave meaning to and constructed landscapes.

William J.T. Mitchell, Professor of English and Art History, addressed the relationship between landscape and power. He argued landscape is a cultural medium and therefore one needs to pay attention to the way landscape is depicted in art not only in terms of history but in the way such depictions reflect cultural and economic practices (Mitchell 1994 p. 2). For Mitchell landscape is already an artifice before it is painted, or filmed or photographed, where cultural meanings and values are encoded (Mitchell 1994 p.14).

Perspectives from writers on cultures of travel and tourism were of value for the thesis. John Buzard described how even from the early days of the 19<sup>th</sup> century tourists were effectively outsiders, no longer dwelling in the place but viewers of it (Buzard 1993). He cites Wordsworth's poem on “The Brothers” which describes how one brother who had left the Lake District returns for his brother's funeral, having become a visitor, a viewer a person passing through and no longer belonging to the landscape. This is interesting in terms of evoking questions about how far walkers relate to a landscape they walk as, essentially, tourists rather than those who belong in a landscape because they live there.

From the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries the Grand Tour of Europe was an essential part of an upper class education, and the 19<sup>th</sup> century saw the growth of managed, mass tourism through Thomas Cook tours. These involved different classes of tourists but the managed tours and Baedeker guides were on hand to explain what tourists should look at and visit, and how they should respond to the experience. The management of land in this way is interesting, and the notion of what one should or should not spend time looking at is important for the research because those who go walking in the countryside are often tourists, raising questions of how far people who now go walking are guided by others and how far this informs where people walk and what they see today. Another interesting discussion in Buzard is that of anti-tourism where tourist practices as they become more common are denigrated as superficial, unthinking. Thus anti-tourists do not take part in modern day rituals of tourism such as visiting a museum or church. Although walkers in the study engaged with landscapes as tourists, ticking off the various sites or viewpoints visited, they often had a deep relationship with certain places.

John Taylor's *A Dream of England- Landscape, Photography and the Tourist's Imagination* contends that landscape is an attribute of sight. For example, the 18<sup>th</sup> century traveller on the Grand Tour was exercising his learning whilst taking in the view (Taylor 1994 p. 12). The landscape was to be read and connections made with the classical Romans and Greeks. Rather than relating to the landscape as a new exploration, tourism promoted dissociation because by the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century travellers had recourse to poems, pictures, accounts, and photographs of places. Landscapes were experienced at one remove and tourists had guides to what was worth looking at. Following on from Gilpin and the picturesque (turning landscapes into pictures and valuing landscapes that could be seen as pictures) this harmonisation of landscape continues for Taylor in "ritually peaceful landscape photography".

The writers I am examining have demonstrated how certain landscape typologies were adopted and helped form a national identity. Taylor discusses the appeal of England as a 'Reliable Make'; a safe, consoling and conservative countryside (Taylor 1994 p. 120-151). As he demonstrates through a famous edition of the magazine *Picture Post* during the second world war (July 1940) which published photographs of peaceful country scenes entitled 'What we are fighting for' (Taylor 1994 p. 204). Taylor contends that

such nostalgia for a safe, comfortable countryside remains, although critics are now more likely to question whether such a countryside ever existed. The 'authentic' past can be queried because often what is presented is a sanitised, uncomplicated version of the countryside (Taylor 1994 p. 247). The heritage industry is seen by Taylor as replacing the present with an authentic past but a past that has very little bearing on the present. The sanitisation excludes ethnic minorities from this version of the English landscape (Taylor 1994 p. 272-3). The concept of heritage will be important in later chapters when considering some of the landscapes the interviewees walk through because these include National Parks such as the Lake District and the Northumbria National Park. These are managed landscapes that preserve landscapes in certain ways.

Is there, nevertheless, something about a natural beauty that observers respond to instinctively in the landscape? For Andrews, the cultural geographer Denis Cosgrove is right in thinking that landscape is determined by specific forces of culture and history (Cosgrove 1998). He sets this against the once influential writing of art historian Kenneth Clark who contended that people know instinctively what makes a beautiful view or an ideal landscape that embodies perfect beauty (Clark 1956). For Andrews there is an argument that there may be instinctive or uncultured response by children to landscape that is then overlaid with later cultural experience, in the way Wordsworth's *Prelude* describes the development from a childhood delight in landscape to a mature, spiritualized concept of Nature.

### **2.3 Practices of dwelling in the landscape**

Debates arising from the area of cultural geography are especially relevant to the research. These ideas parallel some of the shifts in art history outlined in the previous section with ideas of how landscapes had been socially constructed. For example, the work of Rob Shields who describes space as not being merely topographical but defined through society and culture (Shields 1992). Anthropologists such as Ingold, and cultural geographers such as Wylie have taken this further, thinking about how embodied engagement with landscape could change ideas about how landscapes are conceptualised and engaged with. John Wylie has been instrumental in the understanding of the different ways people relate to, look at, use, inhabit, and pass through landscape.

The work of Tim Ingold is especially important for the understanding of how different people, or different groups experience landscape. His work is part of an anthropological and phenomenological approach to landscape not just as image or gaze but as embodied practices of dwelling (Ingold 2000). Ingold has written of how in the 1980s-1990s different ways of seeing the landscape emerged with the new cultural geography emphasising the visual qualities of landscape and focussed on visual representation. Landscape could be explored as veil, text and gaze, and "as visual representation of cultural meaning and power" particularly in relation to travel and colonialism (Ingold 2000 p. 14).

Wylie expands on Ingold's adoption of Merleau-Ponty's view that the Cartesian idea that the mind and body are distinct and separate does not reflect the living experience (Wylie 2007). For Ingold, following Merleau-Ponty as considered in 2000, individuals dwell and live in the world, and do not act as mere observers. Ingold is anti-Cartesian and the body is seen as the basis of knowledge (in this case knowing the landscape through the body), not inseparable from the mind. Ingold redefines vision in corporeal terms as lived experience rather than landscape as something to be gazed at and thought about (Wylie 2007). Merleau-Ponty wrote of the reversibility of vision where the observer is also the observed. Being in the landscape involves an ongoing process of intertwining of mind and body, leading to the sense of self as observing subject, and Ingold moves "from a Cartesian spectatorial epistemology to a phenomenological ontology" (Wylie 2007 p. 152). That is, rather than the study of knowledge through looking at something with the viewer as separate from the landscape, this is a study about the nature of being in relation to the experience of and interaction with a phenomenon.

Bourdieu's habitus was a key concept for Ingold, where the body's engagement with its surroundings was seen as pertinent since walking was a way of engaging in a particular way with landscape (Ingold 2000). Habitus describes the skills and ways of acting that people acquire in daily life, and has reference to past history and ways of behaving that inform and sometimes condition present behaviour. Ethnographic studies support the understanding of how walking is a social act and a product of the social world. For Ingold the body is grounded in movement and landscape is experienced whilst walking through movement. He gives examples of different practices of walking, and what these mean to individuals within different cultures. So for example, the Dogrib people

of North West Canada when walking tell stories about landmarks that they pass. The walk then becomes a way of maintaining and developing histories through story telling related to a particular landscape and particular sites within that landscape. This particular relationship to the landscape is embodied in the way these indigenous people move through the landscape, stopping at various points to retell stories pertinent to that place. This is very different to moving through a landscape to get from A to B.

Ingold is concerned with the idea of temporality of the landscape (Ingold 1993). This is an attempt to explore landscape as other than a dichotomy, or a “sterile opposition” in his terms, between the naturalistic view of landscape as something external and a neutral backdrop to human activities and the view of landscape as something derived from culture as an objective cognitive ordering of space. Instead of this dichotomy, he argues for the concept of a “dwelling perspective” where landscape “is constituted as an enduring record of – and testimony to – the lives and work of past generations who have dwelt within it, and in so doing, have left there something of themselves.” (ibid. p 152)

There is an overlaying of meaning from past generations who have lived in and worked the land that is now experienced by new generations. Ingold writes from the perspective of archaeology which has resonance for this research, in particular the idea of landscape as a story embodying the people who have worked on the land, shaped the land, but also the current view of the land by people who walk there now. Those who walk in the countryside may not live or work there but they are nevertheless not separate from the landscape and some of them have a deep relationship to the landscape. They are visitors who come back again and again and have a relationship, sometimes going back several years with the same landscape. Visitors may develop and rekindle personal histories and memories associated with particular landscape types. Places have memories of previous arrivals and departures and one may reach or use that place as a starting point to reach other places or use landmarks to navigate. Finding ones’ way is not then purely computational (i.e. a matter of reading and following a map) but involves how the landscape has been used/traversed previously (Ingold 2000 p. 237). In addition, Ingold argues that the landscape is not space, or not experienced as space unless one is a cartographer. Journeys are made through landscape. Place embodies the whole at a particular nexus within it and “place owes its character to the experiences it affords to those who spend time there”. Meanings are then gathered from the landscape and people’s relation to it.

Ingold regards perception as not the achievement of a mind in a body but as an organism as a whole in relation to its environment. The mind is outside the world but there is a whole way in which the body relates to the world through different sorts of sensory perceptions. He does not argue that humans can be separated into the biophysical versus the socio-cultural but that it is important to understand the “interdependence of organisms and their environment” (Ingold 2000 p. 5). This is the “dwelling perspective”. In this way perception cannot be divorced from movement. Instead movement is “the essence of perception” (ibid. p. 203). So for example, the physical act of walking along a muddy track or a grassy path is part of the experience of the landscape.

Vision and hearing are other important senses whilst walking. Ingold dismisses the way vision has been considered as purely objective, and suggests instead that vision changes as one walks and occurs over time. The same view might change according to what time of day it is seen or the seasons. He stresses that one cannot separate vision from the other senses, so smells and the physical terrain will contribute to the experience. Vision is temporal and spatial in the same way as sound is. This returns us to Merleau-Ponty and a phenomenological approach to walking so that the observer sees landscape so that seeing is part of being out in the world (Edie 1964).

Ingold wants to differentiate landscape from land and nature (Ingold 2000). Land is here defined as space as something quantitative and homogenous but landscape is qualitative and heterogeneous. Nor does Ingold see landscape as nature, if nature is something separated from the observer. In this Ingold rejects Daniels and Cosgrove’s idea from the 1980s of landscape as a cultural image, separate from the observer and a “pictorial way of representing, structuring or symbolising surroundings” (Cosgrove and Daniels 1988 p. 1) – an especially valuable idea given that to consider landscape purely pictorially is to separate the landscape from the walker/observer as a cultural object. Ingold rejects the division between inner and outer worlds – an important consideration for the interviews carried out in this thesis, not only to enquire how people view the landscape but how they “dwell” in it, and what are the boundaries of this dwelling?

Ingold differentiates temporality from history (events in time) and chronology (dates in time) (Ingold 2000 p. 194). Historicity and temporality merge in the experience of

those who take forward social life. Temporality is concerned with tasks “taskscape” carried out as related activities related to the landscape. In this paper he argues that archaeologists are not just observers but also participants in the landscape. Individuals are not in hermetic isolation and again this idea is useful when thinking of how individuals relate to each other and relate to the landscape. Ingold writes of the harvesters in Breughel’s picture of the same name. Although these are individuals, the people relate to each other in what they are engaged in, and relate to the landscape. Landscape is not an object but (Ingold follows Merleau-Ponty here) “the homeland of our thoughts.” So that a group of archaeologists, or in this case a group of walkers will relate to the landscape and others within that landscape.

Landscape is the result of what people have done to it, how they have related to it, sometimes for hundreds of years. For Ingold this is “a process of incorporation, not of inscription” (Ingold 2000 p. 198). That is, people do not just inflict things on the landscape but landscape is part of their experience. Landscape is “perpetually under construction” (ibid.). Such a viewpoint contributes to our understanding of the way that walkers have appropriated, and sometimes jealously guard access to land and footpaths, thus altering the way land has been viewed in the past. It also means that walking is a form of dwelling. Every footpath is an accumulation of people who have walked, the journeys they have made. In terms of temporality it also needs to be noted that such journeys are the journey are also important.

Ingold’s latest work develops the theory of dwelling into meshwork:

“Here, surely, lies the essence of what it means to dwell. It is, literally to be embarked upon a movement along a way of life. The perceiver-producer is thus a wayfarer, and the mode of production is itself a trail blazed or a path followed. Along such paths, lives are lived, skills developed, observations made and understandings grown.” (Ingold 2007 p. 13)

This acknowledges the temporal and spatial movement of dwelling in landscape.

Humans move through time and space and points of space and time will provide connections between people and places on the journey. These are not to be thought of as a network but “what I call the meshwork of entangled lines of life, growth and movement. This is the world we inhabit. My contention, throughout, is that what is commonly known as the web of life; is precisely that: not a network of connected points, but a meshwork of interwoven lines.” (ibid. p. 64) This is a much more fluid model of dwelling.

For Wylie, to think of landscape in terms of cultural values can be helpful but this necessarily perpetuates dualities between subject and object, mind and body, culture and nature which he regards as sterile oppositions (Wylie 2007 p. 154). Ingold has moved away from perceiving a landscape as a cultural artefact. Wylie points out such views are at odds with Geertz for whom cultural meaning was present in the realm of texts, images, signs, symbols and discourses. Landscape is not just a text to be read, for example to understand that the spoil heaps running beside a stream show that this land was once mined for lead, or that the presence of u-shaped valleys and mountain tarns is an indication that this landscape was covered in ice, or that abandoned ruins in Scotland are evidence of the Highland Clearances and power struggles that took place in a landscape, although these things can be read from the landscape. For Ingold people are not passive onlookers of the world, they become active, engaged, and emotionally invested. This is not cartographic perception of landscape but “anchored in human embodied perception”. (Wylie 2007 p. 160)

Ingold’s and Wylie’s work therefore marks a shift from that of Daniels and Cosgrove (Cosgrove 1998) where landscape became a text (following Barthes) that needed to be understood and “read”. Although this is still important as a way of understanding what people see, for example, people reading the landscape of the Lake District as an exemplar of the sublime. Wylie and Ingold engage with landscape not outside of people and as a thing to be looked at and read but something that people are actively engaged with.

Hence Wylie’s ethnographic study of ascending Glastonbury Tor (Wylie 2002). This explores how a Cartesian model might see getting to the summit as achieving mastery and control of the visible world. However, the walk uncovers different folds in the landscape as one approaches the tor, different ways of looking at the tor depending on where one is in the journey, and the tor because of its position in the landscape becomes the centre of the landscape. Wylie is aware of the myth and mysticism associated with the tor and this is part of understanding the landscape. However, walking to and up the tor as an embodied practice also reveals some of the meanings attached to it:

“Symbolism and cultural meanings of Glastonbury are not though seen as separate from the lived practice and experience of that landscape.” (Wylie 2002 p. 443)

It is the “embodied context of ascending the Tor” that gives it symbolism and cultural meanings (ibid. p. 443). Thus ascending the tor is an act of focusing on ideal and rarefied modes of subjectivity and knowledge. Because the tor is steep there are times when the walkers only focus on the physical exertion, but there are also places for rest to take in the views. These views expand as the walkers climb upwards and gaining the top of the tor and sitting down, the walkers experience feelings of security. Wylie concludes that the walk was not an analytic process but an ontological process. “So it is through being embodied that we can see the Tor, climb it, see from it.” (ibid. p. 543)

## 2.4 Non-representational literature on landscape theory

Wylie and Ingold are writing within the current non-representational literature on landscape theory and it is important to understand how the turn to non-representational theory has both complicated and enriched theories of landscape. As has been shown there was a shift away from understanding and treating landscape as a text to be read to something that is actively engaged with and emotionally invested.

Non-representational theories have been reflected upon and engaged with and now form a key strand within cultural geography. Hannah MacPherson states that the term was coined by British geographer, Nigel Thrift in the 1990s who developed ideas around “how space and time emerge through embodied practice” (Macpherson 2010 p. 1). This was a further shift from a focus on representation and purely social constructionist accounts of relationships of human beings to places and space. Ben Anderson and Paul Harrison, cultural geographers, describe how non-representational theories also developed from theories about practice. They argue that social constructionism reflects the values of a society and an epoch which is essentially a signifying system (Anderson and Harrison 2010 pp 4-5). Landscape within theories of social constructionism is understood and approached as text and external entities. However, as has been shown, cultural geographers such as Wylie and anthropologists such as Ingold have questioned and developed theories moving away from the Cartesian divide of object and the self that treats with landscape as a representative object. Anderson and Harrison also cite Merleau-Ponty and the way in which humans are already caught up in the fabric of the world through practices and performances (ibid. p 7). In this way non-representational theory is not only concerned with attitudes of mind but also with the body and the world and the context within which humans operate. Phillip Vannini, a cultural sociologist and anthropologist, provides a useful definition, stating that non-representational ethnography “emphasizes the fleeting, viscous, lively, embodied, material, more-than-human, pre-cognitive, non-discursive dimensions of spatially and temporally complex life-worlds” (Vannini 2015 p. 313).

Theories of geography and landscape have shifted, from landscape as two dimensional and inert to landscape as co-created by human interaction. Non-representational approaches to landscape attempt to capture all the various ways that creation or knowledge of phenomena takes place as people and relationships change, or knowledge changes through embodied practices, and embrace the more than human affective relationships and changing dimensions of space and time.

Anderson and Harrison detail how non-representational theories sought to think about the body and its milieu. The world was not an extant object but part of a context (Anderson and Harrison 2010 p. 8). For them the notion of Bourdieu's habitus is "curiously inert" because understanding should embrace the flow of humans and sometimes other living creatures living and passing through landscapes, whilst being geographically and historically specific (ibid. p. 10). Non-representational theory allows for the accommodation of forces and beings other than humans in the world. This then allows a further acknowledgement of spiritual or otherworldly beliefs and relationships that humans can have in relation to landscape.

Nevertheless Anderson and Harrison argue that non-representational ideas are "thoroughly materialistic". Therefore non-representational theory embraces the physical, the social, performative, and understands life in action (ibid. p.14). Such ideas mean that landscape is to be understood not as something waiting to be unveiled but understood as a relationship that changes with people, and times. Hayden Lorimer, cultural geographer and academic writer about walking, has written though that non-representational theory is not in a state of settled resolution (Lorimer 2007 p. 89). He references Wylie as an example of how research about walking can address changing faculties and feelings as new elements on a walk come into play.. Merriman also writes of the materialities of landscape: "landscape isn't simply something seen, nor a way of seeing: landscape is rather the materialities and sensibility with which we see." (Merriman et al. 2008 p. 203)

Gillian Rose and Divya Tolia-Kelly, writers on both visual culture and cultural geography, explore the relationships between the visual and the material (Rose and Tolia-Kelly 2012). Visual culture research has moved on to include ideas about technologies and practices. They too are interested in the material turn or "return" to cultural materialism. They argue that objects are not too ephemeral or too changing, and that the objects therefore have a relationship or are part of what constitutes society, politics and ideology. There is a need, they argue, for an understanding of the co-constitution of visibility and materiality. However, they also acknowledge Lorimer's idea of "more than representational" where cultures of the visual have exceeded the narrow, pedestrian promises of matter.

In this way senses, memory, body and history are part of the process and it is necessary to consider all senses to do justice to material reality. Humans engage in practices and sometimes the effects of these become visible or not. What emerges from non-representational theories is a mix of practice and process that sits beyond disciplinary boundaries (Rose and Tolia-Kelly 2012).

Mitch Rose (cultural geographer) and Wylie have referenced the significance of Lorimer's work on reindeer in Scotland and his account of how landscape is composed of walking, working and engaging with non-human elements. Dwelling in this case becomes a complex web of personal intimacy, academic curiosity, landscape and reindeer. Lorimer tracks and articulates the different lived practices that led to a reindeer herd being established in part of Scotland. Landscape and engagement with landscape is then a mix of perception and materialities, and, a favourite word of Wylie's, a tension between self and the world:

“The term landscape is rather better defined as *the materialities and sensibilities with which we see*. Here, landscape names a perception-with, the creative tension of self and world.” (Rose and Wylie 2006 p. 478)

For Wylie non-representational theory allows the embracing of perceptions and materiality, the inner thoughts and feelings of human beings in relation to what is happening, or exist outside:

“to dapple between interiority and exteriority, perception and materiality” (Wylie 2005b p. 521)

MacPherson also discusses Lorimer's idea of “more-than-representational” (Lorimer 2005). For Lorimer, non-representational theory is an umbrella term to ‘the more-than-human’, ‘more-than-textual’, ‘multi-sensual worlds’. The term and way of thinking, particularly in relation to landscape, removes our perception of the outside world from something fixed and framed to something that is not inert. Lorimer argues that the idea of landscape as text was limiting because it could not embrace the intimacies and subjectivities between humans, plants and animals, or affective relations between humans and landscape. Lorimer's ideas of the ‘more-than-representational’ and “more-than-human, more-than-textual, multi-sensual worlds” of engagement with landscape are a reaction against representationalism which framed, and fixed what should have been “more lively” (Lorimer 2005 p. 83). These ideas move away from the idea of landscape and people situated physically in relation to landscape to ideas of thinking about landscape that embrace different times through memories, making sense of places, and acknowledging affective and more-than-human relationships such as in therapeutic landscapes (ibid. p. 87).

Hannah Macpherson acknowledges the complexity of non-representational theory which extends to post-structuralism, actor-network theories, and practice theories (Macpherson 2010

p. 2). Non-representational theory has been expanded on by geographers and those interested in performance. There have been a range of uses for non-representational approaches to explore race, music, gardening, dance therapy and (importantly for this thesis) walking in the work of Wylie (Wylie 2002) and Tolia-Kelly (Tolia-Kelly 2006; Tolia-Kelly 2007) on race in relation to landscape and Englishness. Non-representational theory has been criticised, however, in some instances for risking a de-politicized agenda and pandering to the new. However, Macpherson argues convincingly that the political needs to embrace emotion, affect and automatism (actions performed unconsciously or involuntarily) to reach deeper understanding. She also argues that non-representational theory has been particularly useful for research into landscape and the body in that it perceives both to be “dynamic and dependent entities that can be usefully thought through together” (Macpherson 2010 p. 3).

Harriet Hawkins, a cultural geographer, has contributed further to the debate about art and landscape arguing that just as understanding of landscape has moved beyond a “detached seeing” so visiting and understanding art should be understood and concerned with embodied practices (Hawkins 2010 p. 323). This is of particular importance in the findings in this thesis relating to images and artefacts in interviewees’ homes, and those images taken whilst out walking.

In her own work Macpherson has explored bodily, discursive and material landscape to show how landscape becomes present between the tactile relationship between visually impaired walkers and sighted guides (Macpherson 2010 p. 9). This was a deliberate move away from what she terms the “ocular-centric” understanding of landscape (Macpherson 2008). Her work is explored in greater detail in the following section. However, it is important in considering the multi-sensual experience of landscape. The visually impaired walkers used some of their own vision, sometimes remembered vision, but also imaginative images created by sighted guides and tactile experiences of clambering over rocks. What comes through her work as well is the importance of walking as a sociable activity with lots of shared jokes and laughter. This was an important way of knowing and apprehending the landscape.

Wylie too in his paper on walking the South West Path draws attention to the multi-sensual experience of walking as he describes encounters with humans and animals, sounds and smells, thoughts that are sometimes remembrances, sometimes cogitations, and sometimes fancifulness (Wylie 2005a). These are all part of the experience of walking, what Wylie terms “walking corporealities and sensibilities: moments, movements, events.” (ibid. p. 236) When he stops at Damehole Point though which is to him an archetypal view, he is “all eyes” and so suddenly seeing and vision is a central part of the experience (ibid. p. 242). In this work the “entwined

materialities and sensibilities” of the walk or, in his words, “being within landscape” are revealed (ibid. p. 245).

## 2.5 Recent academic treatments of walking

Recent academic discussion has moved to an appreciation of the complexities of walking and exploring walking in the light of non-representational theory. In 2006 Mimi Sheller and John Urry introduced the concept of a new mobilities paradigm for work in relation to travel (Sheller and Urry 2006), arguing that much of the literature about travel concerned the use of space or the physical environment and transport that focussed on the quickest route to get from A to B. They argued that there needed to be awareness and attention paid to the new sensual geographies, rather than just focussing on documenting travel and how space is traversed by how many numbers. So rather than geographers being concerned with the most efficient transport systems or means of moving through spaces, they should explore space and movement in relation to bodily movement, the experience of familial spaces, neighbourhoods, regions, national cultures, and leisure spaces. Sheller and Urry have been criticised for their assertion that the world seems to be increasingly on the move however. Binnie argues that this has always been the case. Nevertheless he does think it important to consider spatial belonging through movement.

Similarly Jennie Middleton (Middleton 2009 p. 1944) a key writer on walking stresses that much writing on transport policy has focused on the speed of getting to an end point, whereas she is concerned to explore the multiple forms of temporality and spatiality that arise out of pedestrianism. She points out that transport schemes prioritise speed but under the new mobilities paradigm time taken to travel not always by the direct route could be seen as productive in ways other than just saving time or energy. In a study of walking in the city (Middleton 2009, 2010) she found that people experience time and travel differently whilst walking. Walking provided time to think without the stresses of driving or negotiating public transport. Walkers ignored the “rational” i.e. quicker choices in favour of enjoying parks or taking different routes. Walking policies from local or central government relating to cities were often at odds with this way of considering commuting, concentrating more on quantified data. Although she found walking did provide time to think, this was not always the case.

Quite often the sights and sounds of the city disrupted that contemplation (Middleton 2010 p 584). What Middleton also writes about is the different physical and sensual engagements with walking e.g. how the type of clothing worn can facilitate or constrict walking movements, or the way some people engaged with mobile technologies whilst walking. What she presents are the many different aspects that contribute to walking on the daily commute, a richer, deeper understanding of what occurs whilst walking.

Anderson writes of how bodily walking can “create a flow of the imagination” (Anderson 2004 p. 258). He underlines the important consideration for this research of the “constitutive co-ingredience” of place and human identity, in that talking whilst walking can use place to create knowledge and to help to produce new layers of understanding to social science research (ibid. p. 254). The idea of walking and in the context of carrying out research is a way of engaging with space not as an inert background but something that through movement can create important knowledge about the relationship between people, place and time (ibid. p. 259).

Hannah Macpherson’s work has been developed from non-representational theory, taking on board Hayden Lorimer’s views about how life takes shape and gains expression in shared experience. As she states “landscape is an idea and a material space which has also required considerable re-thinking in the light of non-representational theory” (Macpherson 2010 p. 6). So landscape is understood as constituted by a number of different elements and is concerned with practice. This was particularly important for her work which was about visually impaired walkers. Her research explored how particular countryside spaces were co-produced by visually impaired visitors, how experiences and understandings emerged from particular countryside spaces, and social scenarios. This is a key idea for this thesis, in that while my research did not investigate visually impaired in relation to landscape, ideas about co-production of landscape and the multi-sensory experience were very important to the research. Macpherson follows Lorimer in seeking to understand the unfolding and dynamic qualities of body-landscape encounters, such as in his work looking at how landscape can be made known through human and animal movements across it (Lorimer 2006).

Macpherson's own research attempts to show how landscape is constituted in a tactile relationship between sighted guides and walkers, as well as in relationship to the walkers' embodied pasts and socio-cultural understandings. Engagement with landscape by the visually impaired is a complex mix of collective dimensions (relating to the walking group and to the relationship between guide and walker), corporeal experience, history and remembrances of visual images, and the socio-cultural context. Thus for example sighted guides would describe sights to the visually impaired walkers who would sometimes imagine what could be seen, sometimes draw on past memories. At the same time there was a collective experience that walking was fun. Thus Macpherson notes the amount of laughter as a response to the visually impaired walkers' relationships with guides and the walking.(Macpherson 2008). This was a way of negotiating relationships. The guides could convey enthusiasm which was then communicated to the walkers. Macpherson also sees in this a harking back to traditions of working class walking practice, where walking was an opportunity for escape and pleasure within a community (Macpherson 2008 p. 1085 ). In addition, she explored the bodily experiences of having to walk over or around rocks, hearing sounds and being alert to smells and touch. The socio-cultural context was found to be instrumental in the formation of guides' relationship to landscape in that they would seek out classic scenic routes so they were still guided by sighted norms (Macpherson 2009 p. 1048). Also interesting in relation to this thesis is the acknowledgement of the continuation of concepts of the romantic and picturesque to articulate what landscape was. The way landscape becomes present is due to this complexity of "tangible tactile relationships between sighted guide and walker, as a historical relationship with one's own embodied past; and as a sociocultural relationship with what is popularly understood to constitute the landscape" (Macpherson 2009 p. 1052 ). The traditional understandings of rural landscape can be disrupted by the visually impaired because those understandings are often "ocular-centric" (Macpherson 2008 p. 1080 ). Although walkers experienced different senses, the most noticeable aspect of the walk was the sound of laughter and jokes. These were used to break up the walk and as a way of lightening the mood or coping with stereotyping.

For Lorimer academic writing about walking can encompass walks as product of places, the material and physical aspects of place, walking as part of ordinary life, walking as a therapeutic practice, and as an art form (with reference to the work of the artists Richard Long and Hamish Fulton) (Lorimer 2011). For example, in his paper with Lund

(Lorimer and Lund 2003) Lorimer argues that Scotland's mountains are about improvisation and strategies of resistance. Mountains are not inert objects but are animated by the intentions of those who look at them, climb them, live with them and their engagement with the environment.

Lorimer references Wylie's account of walking the long-distance coastal path where walker and terrain merge into a range of "feelings, emerging amid elemental phenomena." (Lorimer 2007) So walking is sometimes subjective, or intersubjective, sometimes non-subjective: a relation of moods, tones, postures and topographies. There is an affectiveness to walking which is about seeing but also becoming. (Wylie 2005b) For Lorimer non-representational theory is still developing but is attempting to deal with the complexities of feelings in relation to walking and landscape; with how these can shift over time or become embedded, and attempting to capture that complexity of knowledge and understanding of the world (Lorimer 2007). The reference to Wylie is important and it was shown in the previous section how Wylie's research about walking to Glastonbury Tor uncovered new insights and knowledge beyond a static view.

As with Wylie, when one reads Lorimer's work, the detail of the writing and experience is revelatory, producing a deep understanding. For example, his work on way-finding (Lorimer and Lund 2003), treating it as a practical rather than purely theoretical experience. Way-finding is not just a cerebral exercise. The map is consulted but the way finder must also read the landscape and is in practice constantly switching between looking at the map and the landscape. The consequence of this is that the walk is split up, disrupted, but these disruptions are also part of the experience. Similarly his work on the reindeer herd is an elaborate exposition of how two people with often different motives and very different cultural backgrounds brought a reindeer herd to Scotland. However, this is not the whole or even the most important part of the study because he also takes into account how the reindeer were suited to and became part of that landscape, and how relations between the two grew together over the years (Lorimer 2006). The detail is important as is taking time to appreciate the complexities of inter-relations (that can also change over time) between humans and animals and landscape.

Finally, in terms of embodied practices of walking, Tim Edensor's and Jo Vergunst's work has also been important. The physical restrictions of hill walking have been

described by Jo Vergunst, in terms of how walkers need to take care to avoid trips and slips and the constant adjustment of the body to the terrain (Ingold and Vergunst 2008 p. 115). Similarly Edensor has pointed out in his study of walking in industrial ruins, how that landscape which demands changes in walking to negotiate it carefully (Ingold and Vergunst 2008p. 134), shows how walking can be disruptive and in this way alerts us to the other senses involved in walking like smells and sounds.

Although walking is thought of as a natural activity that frees the mind in the way that the Romantics conceived of walking, in practice there are many conventions about conduct, bodily practices and experience (Edensor 2000 p. 83). Romanticism has left us with an “aestheticized rural space” (Edensor 2000 p. 84) which is an important consideration for this research in terms of the way that walkers relate to landscape and the countryside. Urban and rural continue to be contrasted, with the rural walker expected to have more freedom and to embody the heroic contemplative Romantic sensibility. However, much walking is a collective practice, taken up with monitoring direction and safety. There is also the discipline of wearing appropriate clothing. Guidebooks or walks’ leaders will point walkers to sites of specific interest, and even walking along paths is a way of directing and restricting movement. Rather than the expected freedom of walking, Edensor argues that there are imposed “normative codes and controls upon walkers and their bodies” (Edensor 2000 p. 100).

Such ideas are important for this thesis in understanding the complexities of walking in relation to landscape and co-production. Although the research does not focus on one particular walk, there is, through the interviews and photo-elicitation, a great deal of detail about the relations of walkers to landscape. The research has much in common with the work of Macpherson where landscape is understood as constituted by different elements and through practices. The research does use photo-elicitation but the findings reveal that the relationships, knowledge and understandings of the landscapes people co-construct are very far from being just “ocular-centric”. The research is informed by an understanding of walking and landscape not as a traversing of ground or being wholly concerned with what can be seen, to a broader ,multi-sensory view of walking, taking into account relationships between people, animals and places, affective relationships, materialities and sociability.

## 2.6 New writing on walking

There has been a wave of recent writing about walking which has been hard to categorise. Wylie has commented on the burgeoning of landscape writing, including what some of what is termed ‘new nature writing’ that are part memoirs or autobiography, part reflections on the nature of walking, and part travelogues (Wylie 2007 p. 20). Rebecca Solnit (Solnit 2006), Sara Maitland (Maitland 2008), Geoff Nicholson (Nicholson 2010) and Linda Cracknell (Cracknell 2009) have written or compiled writings from others which are essentially reflections of personal experiences of landscape and walking. There are often references to other literary and philosophical figures who wrote about walking or formulated their thoughts whilst walking. These are post-modernist and fragmented and depict landscape as variously historically and culturally constituted. They largely follow WG Sebald’s innovative literary form of part memoir, autobiography, travelogue and cultural history (Wylie 2007 p. 207-8). They could almost constitute a kind of primary data showing how people think about and relate to landscape. Thus Maitland writes of the “landscape of her silence” as being wide open spaces and peat bogs rather than mountains (Maitland 2008 p. 269). However, there is little expectation that other readers might share her ways of relating to landscape, and indeed often a conscious sense of her views as different from those of many people. These are popular writers but often referenced in the work of cultural geographers (for example, Wylie (Wylie 2007 p. 207).

A writer in a similar vein is the poet Simon Armitage who has written about his attempt to walk the Pennine Way whilst giving poetry readings (Armitage 2012). His journey was an attempt to see whether giving poetry readings and asking for contributions along the way would provide subsistence, like a modern day troubadour. The descriptions of walking, as one might expect, use words to evoke a real feeling of what it is like to walk through different landscapes. Take for example this description of walking through a pine forest:

“so down here it’s dry and cushioned, every footfall received and relaunched by a thick mattress of spongy, brown needles. A form of twilight gathers under the canopy, a cloistered stillness..” (ibid. p. 63)

Where Armitage is useful for this thesis is in his descriptions of what it is like to walk in a northern landscape, and of how the walking is both a mental and physical effort, and the sociable nature of walking in the people that he meets, stays with and who walk with him on his journey. He is also important in terms of thinking about journeys as quests.

Armitage refers for example to *Sir Gawain and the Greene Knight* (ibid. p. 225) as one of the great journey poems showing how Gawain “has to overcome many obstacles and endure much hardship along the route”. During the course of the research the importance of walking as a journey and for some walkers a kind of challenge emerged from the interviews.

Robert MacFarlane’s books are meditations on landscape and walking, a kind of personal ethnography, providing a way of understanding landscape in broader concepts, which are not completely personal. MacFarlane is both a best-selling author winning many prizes<sup>4</sup> and critical acclaim for his books, and an academic specialising in post World War 2 English literature. MacFarlane calls his first three books (Macfarlane 2012, 2008, 2007) “a loose trilogy about landscape and the human heart” (Macfarlane 2012, p.xiii). Like Wylie and Ingold, landscape for MacFarlane is not an object experienced as something outside the self, something simply seen. It is very much linked to the imagination, and feelings invoked by the landscape are the result of a complex layering of history and imagination. So, for example, the impetus to climb mountains for pleasure is fuelled by how the Romantics wrote of mountains in their poetry, how subsequent explorers like Mallory have almost an addiction to exploration, going back time and again to climb new and higher mountains (Macfarlane 2008).

Macfarlane explores in great detail the continuation of Romantic ideas, and how these ideas have come to be important for those who habitually enjoy mountainous landscapes for leisure. However, in this case, the focus is on mountaineers rather than walkers. One study by the Geographers and writers on tourism Richard Prentice and Sinead Guerin which investigated users of “iconic Scottish landscapes” found an absence of romantic associations with such landscapes (Prentice and Guerin 1998 p. 183). This was a mainly quantitative study getting visitors to rate walking by Loch Lomond on a series of restricted dimensions using closed questions. They found there was a great deal of emphasis by walkers on physical achievement, which was supplemented by “elements of romanticism” (ibid. p. 180), However, this was a very narrow view of what Romantic meant. In their study the Romantic was reduced to the terms “peaceful” and “beautiful”, rather than the more complex associations of Romanticism presented earlier in this chapter or in the work of Macfarlane.

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<sup>4</sup> For example winning the Guardian First Book award and the 2003 Somerset Maugham Award for "Mountains of the Mind" in 2003

Macfarlane gives a very good sense of the physical nature of walking (the embodied practice of walking). For example, when walking barefoot along the Broomway, an offshore footpath, feeling the ribs of sand beneath his feet and feeling nervous because one false step off the path would mean he and his companion sinking into quicksand (Macfarlane 2012, p. 68-75). Such visceral descriptions are mixed with history, stories and sometimes poetry to create a comprehensive experience of the walk. Such a way of experiencing landscape embodied the sense of Ingold's dwelling in the landscape, and provided a model of how walkers might engage with landscape.

As well as the importance of an imaginative response to landscape influenced by history and various thinkers, and the physical response, Macfarlane is also good at expressing a response to landscape that is more difficult to pin down, a spiritual or other-worldly aspect. He writes of the importance of walking as pilgrimage:

“it seemed that every month I had been walking the old ways, I had met or heard tell of someone else setting out on a walk whose purposes exceeded the purely transportational or the simply recreational, and whose destination was in some sense sacred.”(Macfarlane 2012, p.235)

Indeed it would be odd to think about walking without reference to pilgrimage, that being on a journey itself can be important for walkers. He also describes a more supernatural or irrational experience whilst sleeping overnight at Chanctonbury Ring (Macfarlane 2012, p. 317-20). This is a personal response to a particular place and the next section moves on to discuss the emotional attachments that are made to certain places.

## **2.7 Therapeutic Landscapes**

A further important area of literature explored by geographers and social scientists is that concerned with phenomenology and felt experience in relation to particular places, such as Julian Holloway's work on Glastonbury 2003 and Wilbert Gesler (Gesler 1992, 2005) and Robin Kearns' work on therapeutic landscapes (Wylie 2007). More recently Kevin Thwaites writes of how places can be restorative by providing space and “extending the scope of what is normally experienced” (Thwaites 2010b p. 248). These can be spaces within an urban landscape, but are spaces where people can “retreat from stimulation”. Marselle et al. also found associations between walking in nature with

improved mental health (Marselle, Irvine, and Warber 2014). Nevertheless exactly how certain places provide a therapeutic dimension is still uncertain, although Cameron Duff suggests this may be created through activity and practice: through encounters, networks and associations (Duff 2011).

Karolina Doughty, a social scientist, argues that movement is an inseparable element of therapeutic spaces and practices. She found that people often joined walking groups to combat loneliness, sometimes from traumatic experiences – death divorce, moving, general depression (Doughty 2013 p. 141). Walking could relax social norms and increase emotional closeness, and walking through landscapes offered pauses which could then reshape the group and provided natural pauses for those who found interaction difficult. Once again embodied physical movement was valued, this time because it provided a breathing space from thinking about problems.

Wylie notes, however, that there have been critiques particularly from Marxist writers seeing such perceptions as individualistic and people centred. The danger here is that issues of culture and power such as access to the landscape or ownership of the landscape become of minor importance. Nevertheless, understanding of landscapes as therapeutic places is important for this research because interviewees may feel places have various therapeutic properties or even spiritual associations for them.

The concept of “genius loci” or spirit of place is one that emerges in the work of several writers. That is, that people relate to particular and defined places and spaces as special. It dates back to the Roman period but continues to have resonance. We have seen above how certain places are important because they provide healing or retreat. Attachment to place is still important, as Clare Rishbeth and Mark Powell have argued (Rishbeth and Powell 2012). They researched the significance of places for immigrants in their new homes in Sheffield. For the immigrants, attachment to place was a complex mix involving mapping the area which enabled newcomers to understand relationships between different areas, but being able as well to relate to places that evoked memories or provoked recognition of other places they had left behind. There was an imaginative response to places within the city that enabled immigrants to feel more settled in the area (Rishbeth and Powell 2012 p. 17).

When thinking of spaces as therapeutic it is hard to ignore literature about health and exercise but it is important to draw a distinction between the two. Much of the academic literature on health and walking has tended to concentrate on exploring what factors might motivate people to take up exercise in order to improve health (Zheng, Orsini, Amin, Wolk, Nguyen, et al. 2009; Forsyth et al. 2009) or evaluating walking for health programmes (Pringle et al. 2009). For example, papers by Emi Morita, a health researcher, found that forest walking was beneficial to mental and physical health but remained firmly in a biomedical model postulating that secretions from the trees might have a physiological effect (Morita et al. 2007; Morita et al. 2011). NICE, the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence<sup>5</sup>, advises walking but with the emphasis firmly on the physiological benefits such as weight loss, lower blood pressure, and improved body shape. There has been little research though on what actually motivates people who go walking in the countryside as a chosen leisure time activity not linked primarily to health.

Recent research has drawn attention to the way in which the natural environment is being promoted by government, and in particular in public health policy, as a space for health, becoming a “transactional zone” for public health to promote physical activity and mental wellbeing (Brown and Bell 2007). The idea of wellbeing embraces a more positive state of feeling well that goes beyond absence of illness or infirmity<sup>6</sup>. The value of nature and the natural world is conceived of in almost medical terms as “an antidote” to ill health or de-stressor. This is not the same as a therapeutic landscapes but regards the countryside (as a whole and not particular places) as providing a dose of medicine. The Faculty of Public Health has produced a briefing statement, with advice on how to work in partnership to achieve improvements in health and wellbeing through use of green space, called *Great Outdoors: How our natural health service uses green space to improve wellbeing*<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ph41/chapter/1-recommendations> - accessed October 2014

<sup>6</sup> “The Constitution of WHO (1946) states that good health is a state of complete physical, social and mental well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. Health is a resource for everyday life, not the object of living, and is a positive concept emphasizing social and personal resources as well as physical capabilities.” <http://www.who.int/trade/glossary/story046/en/> Accessed April 2014.

<sup>7</sup> Faculty of Public Health 2010, [http://www.fph.org.uk/uploads/bs\\_great\\_outdoors.pdf](http://www.fph.org.uk/uploads/bs_great_outdoors.pdf) -accessed March 2015

Tim Brown and Morag Bell, both geographers, write of the increased medicalization of the natural environment (Brown and Bell 2007). The countryside has now become an important ‘transactional zone’ for health where the governmental imperative for the production of fit and active bodies coalesces with the individual desire to be healthy. Physical activity discourse is increasingly used throughout the world but Brown and Bell contend there is less evidence of equivalent discourse that promotes the health-related benefits of nature. Wilbert Gesler, a geographer, identified ways in which health and wellbeing came to be associated with the natural environment (Gesler 1992). The medicalization of nature dates back to Hippocratic treatise on *Airs, Waters and Places* to link between nature and human health. However, nature could also be pathologised, for example in some of the 19<sup>th</sup> century writings on the geography of the Tropics, or in contrasting ideas about therapeutic qualities of nature of particular places such as the seaside as providing good air. The medicalization of the countryside has emerged in contemporary discourse as a micro-locale where authorities of all types exercise their powers over the conduct of others (Rose 2001b).

Other writers such as Judith Green, public health and social policy researcher, have questioned the effectiveness of current public health policy initiatives because they do not address the social organization of walking (Green 2009). She gives the example of Slavin’s ethnographic study of walkers on the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela (Slavin 2003). For Sean Slavin, health and social researcher, the aim of the pilgrims is to exist on the way, rather than just achieving the end of the pilgrimage. However, neither is the pilgrimage experienced just as an inner journey: walking becomes meditative as walkers develop a rhythm (ibid. p. 9). This is the learned experience of being a body walking the pilgrim’s route. The pilgrimage is a “significant and social experience” (ibid. p. 16) felt and experienced through the senses. Green thinks that rambling will also produce such feelings in providing a specified moment of time and space away from normal flow of everyday life (Green 2009). For these writers there is a slightly more mental and almost spiritual or otherworldly emphasis on therapeutic advantages of spaces, often linked to a particular place rather than a general landscapes.

## 2.8 Northern Landscapes

The final area of literature important for this thesis concerns northern landscapes, the area where the interviewees walk. A key writer is Peter Davidson (literary historian) whose study *The Idea of North* examined how the North has been conceived and represented in cultural form through time. North has become through art and literature a place of distinct characteristics. These are not only characteristics of the physical landscape but also of how north and the character of ‘northernness’ is imagined and conceptualised. Davidson traces ideas of North in poetry, prose, descriptions of journeys from Ancient Greece and Rome and Anglo-Saxon literature.



**B. Harrington Cheviots 2010 ©**

Conceptions of northern England are often linked to the industrial north. From the classic nineteenth century novels such as Charles Dickens’ *Hard Times*, or Elizabeth Gaskell’s *North and South*, to the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Mass Observation Movement which documented the industry, dirt and poverty of cities like Manchester, Sheffield, Leeds and Newcastle. The Mass Observation Movement presented images of men in flat caps in pubs, or children running barefoot and playing games in the terraced streets of grimy, industrial cities. This is an enduring image of the north and Davidson detects a nostalgia that perpetuates such images. So that the industrial north is often conceived of in terms of “stagnation, nostalgia, but also endurance and pastness” (Davidson 2005 p. 199).

North is often presented in opposition to the south which was characterised as having gently rolling hills and pretty villages. Concepts of Englishness throughout the Edwardian era and into the inter-war period implied a connection between land, countryside and nation. The importance of rural land and a traditional way of life where due deference was played to the distinctions of class were asserted over the growing urbanisation. National identity and national virtues (Holt 2003 p. 5) were those epitomised by the middle classes living in the Home Counties like Surrey and Sussex.

Davidson (Davidson 2005) too looks at the particular different types of rural landscape. For example, the way in which rural Lancashire is forgotten in most mental maps. Most people when thinking of Lancashire tend to think more of the industrial north or the seaside towns of Blackpool and Morecombe. In the valleys running across the Pennines from Yorkshire to Lancashire the urban and rural often bleed into each other and Armitage has written of the interpenetration of countryside and town (Davidson 2005 p. 211). Armitage also maintains the importance of a specific place, the north Pennines, so that "Place is central to his poetic" (Davidson 2005 p. 213). Heavy industry has now gone, but in Teesdale and Weardale there are the remains of old abandoned lead mines but these are remnants of the past, sites of interest which are comfortably removed from current concerns for the visitor.

The landscape of Cumbria is far better known but this is for Davidson "ambiguous" territory. It marks the end of the industrial north but has a distinctly northern landscape of bare summits, shelving valleys, cultivation only in the bottoms of the valleys, stone walls (Davidson 2005 p. 224). The Lake District and parts of the Yorkshire dales, in contrast to the industrial towns and the remoter Northern Pennines, have been celebrated for their scenery and frequented by tourists since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (Russell 2004 p.55).

The far North in particular for Davidson is conceptualised as an alien and forbidding landscape. Thus in the middle ages poets like Dante equated the frozen landscapes with realms of Hell. North was difficult, and life-sucking. However, it was also from early writing a place of interest and excitement, as when mediaeval writers described the wonders of Iceland with volcanoes, ice floes and the Northern lights. For mediaeval writers there was too a mythical, other land, "Ultima Thule" which was so far North and distant from the known world that it is completely beyond the pale. Such an idea not

only speaks to the mix of the real and the imagined in conceptions of northerness but also the notion of northern landscapes being places on the margins.

North also became a place of quest and adventure. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century there is John Buchan's hero in the 39 Steps who escapes to Scotland and is chased over the wild moorland, or earlier still Sir Gawain who follows his quest to some unspecified land North of the Wirral. Sir Gawain journeys into the unknown encountering physical hardships, fantastical monsters, and a strange castle in the wilds whose hosts present a whole new set of social mores. This winter journey becomes "a touchstone for all solitary journeys northwards" (Davidson 2005 p. 218). It became so for the poet Simon Armitage in walking the Pennine Way in 2010. The North has associations with winter, and testing people in a grim reality. The challenge that some of the walkers set themselves may resonate with these ideas, if not about death, then about testing oneself against physical harshness.

## 2.9 Conclusion

This review has considered literature from different disciplines, a process aided by the fact that many writers operate across disciplinary boundaries drawing on concepts and approaches from history, sociology, visual studies and literature. There is moreover a great deal of cross fertilization or common thinking in investigating ways of looking at landscape and interacting with landscape from different disciplines. The literature has provided many useful concepts in thinking about how landscape can be conceptualized, and a background for thinking about this research.

The review has discussed the traditions of the Picturesque and Romanticism, exploring how sought after sublime landscapes became. This reflected a change from the landscape as an object where the observer could create pleasing pictures, to a more emotional and personal response to landscape. The paintings of Constable and Turner were part of this Romantic tradition but were also important in the construction of national identity. The bucolic landscapes of Constable contribute in particular to the ideal construction of English landscapes. However, later writers from John Berger in the 1970s through to the 1990s questioned these received ideas of idyllic landscapes and drew attention to the ideological functions of landscape paintings in obscuring class and power relations. Writing on tourism has further underlined the often sanitised and

idealistic understanding of landscapes is produced through careful management of what visitors should look at.

The thesis investigates how far landscape is still culturally determined and how far does familiarity with landscapes breed visual prejudices and prefabricated templates. One of the questions arising from the literature is how far notions of the sublime or the picturesque are still important ways of responding to landscape by present day walkers. Other questions that current literature has not addressed is whether walkers continue to engage with the countryside as a rural arcadia, and are rural poverty and the way “wild” landscapes are managed glossed over, or ignored. The research for this thesis seeks to address these questions.

The literature review has charted the developments in thinking about landscape from art history, cultural geography, and ethnography, moving from landscape as an object separate from the observer (the Cartesian dichotomy of mind and body) to notions of embodied practices of dwelling in the landscape. This is a central idea for this thesis, in understanding how walkers might engage with landscape. In particular, for this research which has investigated differences between types of walkers, it was useful to reflect on into embodied practices that might be producing normative ways of responding to landscape. The research investigates how walkers engage physically with the landscape, and whether the way the body relates to landscape alters perceptions of and engagement with landscape. Recent academic literature about walking has drawn attention to the multi-sensual and affective nature of walking and engagement with landscapes, moving away from an understanding of walking as a purely or predominantly visual experience with instrumental benefits.

This literature provides a framework for considering findings. It also presents thinking about the privileging of visual culture in relation to walking. Although there has been a great deal of useful work on theorising the relationship of walkers to landscape, this thesis adds to that literature by providing findings about how and which aesthetic traditions are privileged by present day walkers, and the role of such considerations in relation to their embodied practices.

Much of the work of the new, popular writers about walking tends to be discursive and personal. These provide some interesting ideas or points of commonality with the

findings from this thesis but do not consider walkers as a group. However, the link between landscape and the Romantic imagination in the way mountaineers respond and engage with landscape is of great interest. This research adds to those findings by demonstrating the importance of Romantic ideas and ways of looking to present day walkers, and looks at the development of such. In addition, the research considers the ways in which present day walkers engage with walking and landscape in spiritual or otherworldly ways.

The notion of therapeutic spaces evokes a broader idea of engagement of place with health, and ideas around the social aspects of walking. However, much of the literature on health and walking seeks to medicalise walking as physical exercise. There is a focus on barriers to joining or continuing with walking groups focused on health benefits. The literature here rarely deals with the wider motivations for walking, or links to wider aesthetic and cultural practices which this thesis addresses.

Finally, it was useful to reflect on how walkers might respond to or engage with Northern landscapes. There are certain ways of thinking about Northern landscapes, for example, as harsh and alien, with the exceptions of the Lake District and the Yorkshire Dales. Since the walkers in this study walk in such landscapes this provided important background about cultural assumptions that may inform the way the interviewees conceived of the landscape. This research examines how far such ideas are shared by present day Northern walkers.

The next Chapter presents the methods used in the thesis to attempt to investigate these issues in further detail.

## Chapter 3 – Methods

### 3.1 Introduction

The aim of the research was to explore walkers' complex relationship with the landscapes through which they walk, and in relation to social and visual-cultural contexts. To do this the study drew on insights and evidence from visual culture studies, and the disciplines of cultural geography, anthropology and sociology. These approaches are discussed and reflected on below, looking at the way they relate to the research question, theoretical underpinnings, and suitability for the research. Since the approach to the research was multi-disciplinary, this chapter also reflects on the way different methods are brought together in this research.

The thesis takes the approach that people have a creative relationship with cultural practices – i.e. people do not just accept what they are shown but have an active relationship with it. The thesis draws on Bourdieu's notion of habitus, that people are socialised into certain practices, but also his recognition of individual agency (Bourdieu 1990 p. 13). Whilst people might be surrounded by culturally accepted ways of landscape at a macro level, at an individual level they may have their own interpretations. Since there was likely to be variability based on biography, experiences, and values, it was important to design research that would investigate individual engagement with and constructions of walking and landscape, as well as cultural traditions.

There are two main strands to the research methods. The first part of the research concerned the visual-cultural contexts. This part of the thesis explores the cultural constructions and representations of landscapes, and how the circulation and consumption of particular kinds of images might inform attitudes to walks and walking. It looked at cultural traditions relating to walking and landscape, including how such cultural traditions are spread in practice. Such aesthetic and cultural traditions of visualising and interpreting certain landscapes (and the way they take on associated meanings) were relevant to understanding walkers' views and attitudes relating to walking and landscape in the second strand of the research methods. The second strand involved a series of in-depth interviews in order to understand how walkers have come to see and engage with landscapes. For this part of the research an ethnographic

approach was chosen using qualitative interviews (including photo elicitation in the second round of interviews) and observation. Such an ethnographic approach allowed for investigation into individual biographies, experiences and values which demonstrated how differently walkers assimilate aesthetic and cultural traditions depending on their own histories.

These two strands should not, however, be thought of as operating completely separately. So this chapter also reflects on how the different methodologies were integrated to make a coherent piece of research rather than producing fragments of comprehension.

The interviewees were drawn from different types of walkers. Some belonged to an established walking group (Tyneside Ramblers) in Newcastle upon Tyne. Others were not members of a regular walking group but went for walks on their own, or with one or two close friends or family members. The ethnographic approach of using interviews and observation used social science methodology to generate data which was analysed using comparative thematic analysis.

For the analysis of visual-cultural contexts, visual studies research methods were more appropriate. However, there were considerable overlaps between social science and visual studies research methods. For example, using photographs to stimulate recollections and narratives in interviews, or drawing on findings about how visual images are used and consumed to inform further question areas within interviews.

Reviewing non-visual influences such as literature and written guidebooks was not a major concern of the research, largely because of the danger of making the research project too large. However, analysis of images presented in illustrated guidebooks (such as those written by Alfred Wainwright (Wainwright 2009)), posters, magazines, the internet and television were useful for the research. In practice there were some references to literature because literature and visual culture are often intertwined particularly when it comes to walking. The work of Coleridge, Wordsworth and the other romantic poets, for example, was instrumental in forming ideas about the Romantic and sublime in relation to the landscape, popularising the Lake District and walking, and thinking about ways of seeing the landscape.

The chapter begins with an outline of the methodology. In the following section on methods, issues of sampling and access are discussed and an outline of the different methods used presented. A section on ethics follows outlining the ethical stance and implementation of the research. The final section looks at the main challenges for the research methodologically and how these were addressed.

## **3.2 Methodology**

### **3.2.1 Exploring the Visual Context**

The previous chapter showed the developments in thinking about landscape, moving from landscape as an object separate from the observer to notions of embodied practices in relation to the landscape. The research investigates how walkers engage physically with the landscape, and whether the way the body relates to landscape alters perceptions of and engagement with landscape. The literature review also presented thinking about the privileging of visual culture in relation to walking. The research adds to such ideas by exploring how and what aesthetic ideas and traditions are privileged by present day walkers, and role of such considerations in relation to their embodied practices. Such aesthetic and cultural traditions of visualising and interpreting certain landscapes (and the way they take on associated meanings) were relevant to understanding walkers' views and attitudes relating to walking and landscape.

This is a very visual age where there is easy access to television and other visual media which might be expected (and this was part of the research to see how far this was true) to have an impact on the way walkers engage with landscape. It was also a contention of this research that such images and ways of thinking about landscape and the countryside were likely to have been mediated through developments of taste in relation to landscape and depictions of landscape which date back in some instances to the 18<sup>th</sup> century and could be usefully explored by reference to interpretation of social and visual materials. In order to do this, the first part of the research used visual cultural methods to explore mediated ways of looking, constructions and representations of landscape, visibility, the production and consumption of the visual in relation to landscape, taste and institutions.

In addition to current visual-cultural contexts, the visual-cultural context from the interwar years was investigated. This particular time was chosen because it was an

important time for understanding cultural constructions and representations of landscapes and the countryside that continue to resonate today. There was a resurgence in interest in landscape in circulating forms of visual culture, an emphasis on the benefits of being outdoors and doing physical exercise, and increasing access to the countryside for the working and middle classes. It was also a period landscape and particular landscapes became associated with and seen as embodiments of particular notions of national identity following the Great War. Many of the ideas and ways of thinking about landscape and the countryside in the present, and embodied in philosophy and attitudes of organisations like the Ramblers and the National Trust, originated at that time. In order, then to understand current constructions and representations of landscape, it was important to understand how these might have arisen and what changes had occurred.

### **3.2.2 Interviewing walkers**

The second part of the research involved interviewing people who go walking in the countryside to find out about their views and engagement with the landscape in the sense of their constructions and connections to the landscape, and what motivates them. This fieldwork took an ethnographical approach. Such an approach enabled understanding about how walkers relate to the landscape, without imposing the views of researchers, and to build on what participants said, or how they engaged with the landscape. Following Nigel Fielding (Fielding 2001) the research aimed to study behaviour in ‘natural settings’ (rather than experimental settings) and to understand the ‘symbolic world’ in which the participants exist. In-depth, semi-structured interviews were undertaken with walkers. In addition, there was observation of walkers and the context in which they walk. This part of the research was qualitative which is appropriate when the research was to inquire into the meanings people make of their experiences, where the intention was to study a person in the context of his/her social environment, and where research was into a new and relatively unexplored area (following Michael Quinn Patton (Patton 2002 p. 33)).

A phenomenological approach was chosen since the aim of the research was to capture how people experience a phenomenon, in this case walking in relation to visual-cultural contexts, through researching how walking and landscapes are perceived, felt, and made sense of. The research concerned lived experience and the interplay between constructions of landscape and experiences. This was an iterative process, investigating

how constructions of landscape relate to experiences, and how experiences influence constructions of landscapes. Thus the research explored how walkers related to the landscape in looking at, using and passing through landscape, rather than conceiving of landscape as an external, physical object (Ingold 2000).

The research used a grounded theory approach to interviews, building on theories that emerged from systematic comparative analysis and were grounded in the fieldwork (Patton 2002 p. 125). Grounded theory was developed in the 1960s by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss who were part of the Chicago School of Social Sciences. In part it was a reaction to positivistic approaches to social science which were concerned with measurement, quantitative evaluations of what was being researched, and with generalizability (being able to generalize from a sample to a wider population), testing pre-determined hypotheses. Quantitative methods were recognized scientific methods but had drawbacks in that research rested on hypotheses that could reflect the concerns of the researcher and might not therefore be truly objective; and that measurement was not useful when one was trying to understand why people did things and the links people made between different categories. For example, important reasons why people behaved in a certain way might depend on a number of factors acting together rather than a single variable. Statistical analysis can of course show which variables can act together to produce an effect (e.g. through logistic regression which will show which variables contribute most strongly to a relationship) but cannot show in depth why that relationship is happening. Glaser and Strauss wanted to explore theories that could emerge from the data, rather than having preconceived theories that needed to be tested.

In the 1930s and 1940s the experimental and research survey were promoted as high status research (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995 p.4). Using experiments stressed the importance of universal laws that would apply across different circumstances, derived from the relationship between variables. What could be observed and measured was important. It encouraged standardisation of data collection. Naturalism in contrast (and grounded theory as part of this) took its model from 19<sup>th</sup> century biology where the emphasis was on being true to the “nature of the phenomenon under study” (Birmingham 1994; Hammersley and Atkinson 1995 p.6) and to look at social phenomena rather than physical phenomena. Understanding social phenomena, that is the context and way people interacted with phenomena (symbolic interactionism) was regarded as more important than having a model of stimulus and response as in

experiments. Naturalism encouraged understanding social phenomena (verstehen), and looking at culture as an object for study. Meanings and understandings of landscapes by walkers reflect a complex psychological, emotional and social engagement with landscape. Because there has been little research in this area, it was difficult to form hypotheses about how walkers relate to and conceive of different landscapes where they walk and about how this links to or is connected with visual and social culture. Thus a more inductive, qualitative approach was appropriate.

The people who were interviewed in the study habitually walked in the countryside. This could be once a week, or once a month or less frequently but people who identified themselves as habitual walkers. The research could have explored other groups like those who go on health walks, but this would have taken the research down a specifically health orientated route and limited the research.

The aim was to understand a social phenomenon – walking in the countryside – and the way people engaged with it. There is an underlying theoretical position (following from the literature review) that assumes people experience walking as a social phenomenon. It is the contention of this research that people do not traverse landscape as purely mechanical, physical beings viewing the landscape as an outside object but engage with landscape as performance and that certain images, objects and discourses work together to produce landscape

### **3.3 Methods**

#### **3.3.1 Analysis of contextual visual culture**

The analysis of relevant forms of visual culture was ongoing: looking at how particular walks and landscapes were depicted in magazines, newspapers, books, television; and exploration of social policies in relation to walking. This part of the research involved textual and visual analysis, relating the visual to historical and cultural context. That is, analysing images to investigate links with previous depictions of landscape, and locating images within social contexts. In a similar way to the analysis of the photographs outlined above, images were explored as sites of meaning and as signs connected to broader structures of meaning (Rose 2001a), with regard taken of the compositional, technological and social modalities.

The sampling of the current visual-cultural context was investigated from 2005. Visual culture in this period was expected to have had some influence on participants' current ways of engaging with and relating to walking and landscape. For example, issues of Walk Magazine for the last 5 years were reviewed to look at topics relating to the research, but also the way landscapes are reproduced in photographs within magazines. Similarly TV programmes which might be expected to be of interest to walkers were reviewed, for example, programmes like Wainwright's Walks, Julia Bradbury's Canal Walks, Coast, or programmes about Munro bagging. The intention was not to count up numbers of TV programmes watched but to ascertain from interviews the role of such programmes might have on influencing how walkers engage with the countryside. This part of the research tracked how landscape and walking were engaged with now, whether some of the ideas and discourses had continued or been changed over time.

James Elkins' (Elkins 2003) work was useful in reflecting on using Visual Studies. Elkins writes of a tendency for Visual Culture and Visual Studies to be concerned with the modern (since 1950s), and to be interested in all visual objects. The latter might not be a problem were it not that Elkins detects a superficiality of thinking about such objects. For example, the tendency to look at underlying messages of advertising (which he contends are not really hidden) in relation to consumption of images. The problem for Elkin is that the consumption of images is rarely linked to theoretical thinking about power. Elkins asks for a deeper understanding of images in relation to cultural and sociological theory.

It is hoped that this research avoided such pitfalls in addressing the cultural and social context. The research has not just examined contemporary visual-cultural contexts but looked at those ways of engaging with and discourses around walking and landscape in relation to cultural and social traditions. Analysis of the visual-cultural context from the inter-war years involved reviewing changes in social policies affecting access to land, social changes that had resulted in more exploration and use of the countryside by lower and middle classes, how landscape and walking were depicted or treated in posters and the new motoring guides, as well as the revival of interest in landscape painting.

### 3.3.2 Interviews

Research interviews took place over two phases – May 2011 to November 2011, and October 2013 to March 2014. This part of the research followed a grounded theory approach, enabling the researcher to build on findings and analysis from the initial interviews to inform the next phase of interviews. It allowed for a period of reflection on the themes which arose in the initial interviews, and for reflection on the themes which arose in the research into visual-cultural context. Many of those interviewed in the second phase, had been interviewed in the first phase. There were some additional interviewees in the second phase to enable certain aspects of the research findings to be followed up.

#### *Sampling*

Purposeful sampling was used for the interviews in order to select cases for study in depth. The intention was to obtain a range of ages, gender, people who walked in organised groups, people who did not walk with organised groups, people who went on long (“hard”) walks, and those who went on shorter walks. The various types of walker enabled the research to show whether those who go on longer walks have different motivations, such as preferring a challenge of doing a hard physical walk to spending time looking at and appreciating scenery. There are a variety of walking practices described by Tim Edensor (following Kay and Moxham) (Edensor 2000) from those who go for an afternoon stroll to those who go peak-bagging which is more strenuous and requires planning. This research focuses on what Edensor identifies as the people in-between such as Ramblers, and included some of the more rigorous and challenging walkers.

Interviewees included those who walk in a Ramblers walking group, as well as people who walked on their own or with friends and/or family. The research used inductive strategies of theory development, in that theories were generated through data rather than testing out prior hypotheses (Silverman 2006 p. 96). Theories emerged that were grounded in the real world. Systematic comparative analysis was used to explain what had been observed. However, the research did not start from a complete tabula rasa and drew on ideas from the literature about the social and cultural construction of landscape.

The rationale for using a purposeful sample was to learn in detail from the sample rather than to make statistical empirical generalizations from the data (where a more

quantitative and random sample would be more appropriate (Patton 2002 p.230). The purpose of the study was to explore in an area little researched, rather than to explore the prevalence of people within a population holding similar views. In this it follows David Silverman and Alan Bryman (Bryman 1988 p.68). The intention was to gain an understanding of what and the way participants saw through their own eyes, and what norms and values were attached to ideas and opinions. Using a purposive sample was also useful for a flexible research design, without imposing the ideas and views of the researcher. Since this was new research, such an approach allowed flexibility.

In the first phase, interviews with 12 people were carried out between May to November 2011. Interviewees included four people who walked on their own or with a small number of friends and family (one of these interviews was with two people); and eight with members of a walking group. There was a mix of male and female interviewees (4 male, and 9 female) with an average age of above 50 years old. The sampling was intended to reflect a range of people who went on different lengths of walk (ranging from 5 to 17 miles); different physical difficulty of walks (with reference to height ascended and routes); those who habitually walk alone or with one or two close friends and/or family; and those who were members of a walking group. Four of the people interviewed regularly led organised walks and this was a deliberate choice by the researcher, to see if differences emerged from these types of walkers. In the rambler's group, walks' leaders have responsibility for ensuring the safety and successful completion of walks (i.e. within time, safely and not getting lost) for groups of anything between three and thirty people.

The sampling enabled the researcher to reflect on where respondents fitted for example on an individual/social axis. It was a way of understanding how different people engage with landscape including ideas of beauty, physical sense of walking, political ways of thinking about the land, and associations or identifications with specifically northern landscapes. What draws people to landscapes is personal and depended on what associations they made with, for example, wild and sublime landscapes, or gentle rolling hills, or to what extent they held important felt associations or connections to particular places or types of landscape.

The research explored whether there were different types of engagement with the landscape depending on whether walkers habitually undertook long and arduous walks,

or easier and shorter walks. It might well have been that those with more miles to cover, or where the walk was physically challenging were less engaged with the landscapes through which they walked and more focused on physical exercise. So within the initial sample there was a range of distances that people habitually walked (from about 6 miles to 17 miles). The researcher also recruited an interviewee who was a “Munro bagger” (i.e. a walker who seeks to climb all the Munros – the 283 mountains over 3000 feet in Scotland). These represented people who do strenuous walking and enabled comparison of attitudes and relationships to the landscape and walking, to those walkers who did less strenuous walks.

One of the people included in the sample was walking from Land’s End to John O’Groats during the time period of the study. This was an opportunistic recruitment to the study since this participant had heard about the research and was keen to be involved. In spite of it being opportunistic, the researcher was keen to include the walker because this represented a good opportunity to explore the views of someone doing a very challenging walk. The research therefore had a spread from those who do short walks, to those who do longer and more challenging walks (such as the Munro bagger) through to someone doing a very long distance walk. The long distance walker was using a series of long distance footpaths and was camping most of the time. The walker was interviewed before starting the walk and part way through. It had been hoped that there would be an opportunity for the researcher to accompany and interview the walker when he reached the North Pennines (about midway on the whole walk). Unfortunately, the walker was unable to finish the long distance walk at John O’Groats due to ill health. The walker had managed to walk as far as the North Pennines, and so the follow up interview took place after this.

There is a tension here between following a purely inductive methodology, building on findings from interviews and seeking further cases from findings arising from those interviews, and deliberately choosing a certain type of walker. However, this did represent an example of the extreme end of the original sample and was a useful “deviant case” for comparison. It also formed a useful comparison with those walkers who walk habitually in the North.

Interviewees were drawn from people who lived in the North East of England and did much of their walking in that area. This means the sample did not reflect the views of

people living and walking in different parts of the UK. However, it did enable the research to focus on the nature of northern landscapes and how walkers from the area responded to them. Some of the interviewees had experience of walking in the South of the UK and were able to compare those experiences. This is then a partial exploration of walker's responses, based on those living in the North East but nevertheless useful in providing a northern perspective.

In the second phase of the study, interviews were carried out between November 2013 to April 2014 with 10 of the original sample plus an additional 5 interviewees who were purposively sampled. Two of the original sample did not wish to continue with the study because of personal circumstances. Interviewees were asked for this interview to take photographs of landscapes they walked through which were then discussed as part of the interview. Introducing new interviewees provided a broader sample which enabled comparison between those who had been through the first interview (and might have developed certain responses to the landscape because the study had made them think about visual aspects of the landscape) and those coming fresh to the study. This second group included five people who walked on their own or with a small number of friends and family; and nine who were members of the walking group. There was a mix of male and female interviewees (3 male, and 12 female) with an average age of above 50 years old (ranging from walkers aged in their 30s to 80s). The sampling again had a range of people who went on different lengths of walk (ranging from 5 to 17 miles), different physical difficulty of walks (with reference to height ascended and routes), people who habitually walk alone or with one or two close friends and/or family, and people who were members of a walking group.

The intention of adopting a spread of sampling was one of maximum variation sampling (Patton 2002) which aims at capturing and describing themes that might cut across various different types of walkers. Common patterns that emerged might then be deemed to be of particular importance. The design also followed the process of looking at confirming and disconfirming cases with the intention of testing ideas, and checking out emergent data with new cases (Patton 2002 p. 239). The sampling had already included some extreme or deviant cases, by interviewing people who habitually went on long, strenuous walks. The findings did, however, show a more complex picture with members from these groups quite often having similarities in their engagement with

landscapes. The categories were retained though to illustrate these similarities (this is elaborated further in Section 6.2).

It was decided not to focus on people who go walking who have visual impairments. Ways of seeing for people who are visually impaired are different. People with visual disabilities can have rich imaginary landscapes, so that there can be a big disjuncture between the experience of a person with good eyesight and what is imagined by a person with visual disability. Similarly, it was decided not to research those who go on health walks, since health might have been their primary focus. Although these could have been other avenues to explore and related to experiencing the landscape, in practice this would have opened up whole new areas of research.

This did not exclude from the research the notion of healing landscapes i.e. landscapes that are important to people because they are regarded as healing or places people feel at peace. Healing or therapeutic landscapes have more in common with a spiritual or mystical narrative. This is different to walking specifically for health in that walking for health focuses much more on physical health. Some issues about the physical nature of walking and the body did emerge from the research and were part of the findings of the research but were not a main focus for the research. In order to hold to the original objectives, the research explored the person in relation to the landscape not solely as a physical body but as a person acting in a cultural and social context.

### ***The interview phases***

Interviews were conducted in two phases. The initial phase consisted of very open ended interviews exploring motivations for walking in the countryside, what walkers particularly liked (or disliked) about walking, and the place of visual culture within that. A narrative approach was useful to see how people structured a story of a walk, as a way of finding out what was important to them. Questions were broad-based to begin with because the research was taking a grounded theory approach. The full interview schedule appears in Appendix A.

Within this broad framework interviewees were asked to clarify answers where necessary, or develop ideas. For example, where interviewees talked of something as being important they were asked to expand on what made it important for them.

Respondents were also questioned when they mentioned a beautiful landscape or beautiful scenery, what made it beautiful to them.

Although the initial interviews generated some important findings, it was very difficult in practice to get interviewees to describe what they particularly liked about a landscape. There was often an assumption that the interviewer would know what was meant by “beautiful scenery” or “the views were wonderful”. Moreover, there remained questions about the importance (or not) to walkers of different types of landscapes, which particular landscapes were liked or disliked, and whether walkers had aesthetic and/or felt relationships with landscapes. As a way of better understanding this, the second phase of interviews made use of photographs taken by the interviewees. The photographs were an aid to talking about the visual experience. Photographs, of course, may have not captured what people wanted them to capture or may have reproduced certain conventions of the way landscape is viewed. So discussion of the significance of the images to the respondents was important.

The second phase of interviews followed a year later, drawing on findings from these interviews to further explore certain themes that had emerged from the initial interviews. As part of this second phase, respondents were given disposable cameras for 1-2 months prior to the interview and asked to take photographs of landscapes or scenery that they particularly liked, and that these would be discussed at the interview. The wording was deliberately broad, to enable the research to focus on what interviewees liked in the landscape. Interviewees were asked to choose between 8-10 photographs and to use their own photographs (not taken with the digital camera), if they preferred. Most opted to use a digital camera and many chose to talk about all the photographs they had taken (up to 27 photographs) rather than restricting themselves to 8-10. Questions about the photographs were sandwiched in between other questions. The written guidance for this is in Appendix B.

Single use disposable cameras were chosen because not all interviewees had camera phones. Many of the walkers did not have Smart phones or would have necessarily taken them walking. Walks leaders' had phones in case of accidents but it was well known that some areas for walking were without signals and therefore taking a phone on a walk was not usual. In addition, having cameras for the research meant that the participants focussed on the research and what was important about their relation to

landscapes. It provided a focus on what they liked in the landscape. In addition, the research did not particularly want to produce “good” or “high quality” photos. Some interviewees expressed concern that they were not good photographers but the single use disposable cameras were another signal that the artistic or photographic quality of the photos was not that important, and that the subject matter of the photos or what the interviewees tried to capture in the photos was more important.

In the second phase interview there were questions designed to find out about the impact of current visual-cultural context, such as asking about familiarity with walking programmes on TV, guide books, landscape pictures. Finally, there were questions about Northern Landscapes, looking at how interviewees characterised Northern Landscapes and their response to them. Questions about Northern Landscapes were felt to be important in exploring further whether interviewees shared some of the ideas Peter Davidson (Davidson 2005) had suggested in regards to North, and how this might influence the way they responded to landscapes they habitually walked through.

The question areas for the second phase of interviews included:

- Why people were drawn to particular landscapes - what they enjoyed, what moved them about particular landscapes?
- The role of Northern landscapes - whether people were drawn to them, what were the perceived characteristics of Northern landscapes?
- Photographs and landscapes – why respondents had chosen particular landscapes, what they were trying to capture in the photograph, why they had chosen to photograph landscapes in a particular way (e.g. framing the landscape or trying to capture a certain atmosphere)?
- The role of visual images of landscapes in respondents’ lives – to what extent did people watch TV programmes about walking and what did they think of them, what images did people have at home of landscapes, to what extent did people look at images from guidebooks and walking magazines and what did they think of them?

The full interview schedule is produced in Appendix A.

### ***Analysis of interviews***

Interviews in both phases were recorded and transcribed. Using a grounded theory approach the text of the interviews from both phases were analysed for emerging themes. Using an iterative process of analysis, findings from the initial interviews

informed the second phase of interviews. The grounded theory approach allowed for the development of a systematic understanding which was understandable to participants but went beyond their words, ideas and methods of expression (Fielding 2001).

Transcripts of all interviews used an open coding strategy, identifying key themes for each participant. These were coded, attaching meaning to sections of textual data. The themes were then reviewed to look for emerging patterns of responses: differences and commonalities between individuals and groups of individuals, overarching or linking themes. A selection of the interviews was looked at and discussed with supervisors to provide an external review of the analysis. The discussions about photographs in the second interviews were part of this analysis.

### ***Using photographs in the research***

One issue that emerged from the initial analysis of the first set of interviews was the difficulty respondents had of articulating types of construction or meaning relating to landscapes they walk through. For example, although respondents talked of beautiful scenery and views and the importance of these to them, when prompted to say why they thought a view was beautiful, they were unable to do so. This suggested that there might be an accepted tacit value system of what constitutes beauty in the landscape, perhaps linked to other ideas about space and wildness. Beauty is a culturally mediated term with different meanings for different cultures and at different times in history. In order to look at the visual and cultural experience of landscape, the research also needed to widen visual appreciation from concepts like beauty to what respondents found interesting or important in a landscape and to explore why that was.

There have been changes in approaches to visual ethnography from the 1960s – 1980s in relation to concerns about the role of visual images and recordings in research, in that the use of such images and recordings might be subjective, unrepresentative and unsystematic (Pink 2001). There were moves in the 1980s in particular to provide more systematic use of visual artefacts in a research context. In the 1990s much of the use of visual ethnography was in representing or illustrating what was in the text. Operating within a realist framework, research used such artefacts to provide further interpretation or validity to research texts. Pink gives the example of Prosser and Schwartz considering how to incorporate photography into a traditional qualitative research methodology rather than adopting a postmodernist approach (Prosser and

Schwartz 1998 p. 24; Pink 2001). However, at this time writers such as David McDougall advocated a different approach, one concerned more with how visual representations could of themselves provide additional input, making information, learning and understanding accessible by non-verbal means (Pink 2001 p. 21). This created a link between the visual and sensory turn in cultural geography (ibid. p. 25). Academic writers provided different ways of thinking about visual media that went beyond cultural studies and using images as text and representation (Lorimer 2005; Anderson et al. 2003). Visual methodology therefore was seen as supporting connections between anthropology, geography, art history and visual culture studies and reflecting the interdependency of these disciplines.

Although there had been a large emphasis on vision and sight, particularly in relation to landscape, the move to non-representational geography argued for a position of vision and sight in relation to other senses and not automatically assuming the pre-eminence of vision. Ingold for example, had pointed out that the world was not divided into different 'sense-scapes' (e.g. 'smell-scapes', or 'touch-scapes'). Senses combine to create experience. So visual ethnography should not be, Pink argues, just about collecting data but should be a process of producing knowledge, a way of knowing and learning (Pink 2001 p. 31). Images are not only observable, they are part of constitute our imaginations and internal worlds.

Rose argues that it is necessary to understand images as embedded in the social world so that in critical visual methodology images should be taken seriously and related to the social conditions and effects of visual objects (Rose 2011 p. Xviii). This applies not only to the images themselves and what they may contain or the semiotics of the images but also the site of production and how the producers of the images think about them, and their social context.. There are a number of things to consider within images themselves such as colour, spatial organisation, light, mood, and expressive content which can all be important. Rose mentions content analysis – counting what is seen – but acknowledges this can be limited. Semiology too has a role in “laying bare the prejudices beneath the smooth surface of the beautiful” (Rose 2011p. 105) but again such a way of approaching the data ignores why people may have chosen certain images (ibid. pp. 121-2). Rose writes of the importance of Barthes and the concepts of 'studium' (the culturally informed reading of the image) and 'punctum' (the unintentional and ungeneralizable). The idea of 'punctum', the feel of an image, speaks

to the expressive content which is the importance to the producer of the image and sometimes the beholder. Semiotics examines what meanings can be made and produced but perhaps ignores how different people interpret images differently. Gregory Stanczak in his book on visual research methods also asserted that images should be regarded not as adjuncts to research but ways of learning about the social world (Stanczak 2007 p. 3).

Using photographs in research does not emerge from a single theoretical position but can be employed in many different ways. Rose has outlined the benefits of photo-elicitation, including the wealth of information and the provision of different insights into social phenomena (Rose 2011). Photo-elicitation can be particularly useful for exploring the “taken for granted” (ibid. p. 306). Analysis of photos can begin with some form of content analysis and coding but Rose advocates analysing photos and interviews as one body of data, which then acknowledges the complexities of the research (ibid. p. 315).

Such considerations have been important for this research in that it was not enough to ask people to photograph anything, or to look at photographs without considering how they might inform the research as a whole. The photographs that the interviewees took for this research were not treated as a decorative adjunct but as part of the research that enabling them to reflect on their engagement with landscape whilst walking in the countryside.

Pink points out that there have been many uses of photography in research – for example, by participants, by researchers, stylised or non-stylised. Photographs have been found to be useful in prompting narratives, bringing to the fore what may have been unspoken and sometimes sparking multiple perceptions and interpretations (Pink 2001 p. 93). Some researchers such as Gilroy, Jackson and Kellett explored (Gilroy, Jackson, and Kellett 2005) the domestic material culture in people’s homes and noted the importance of photographic display for remembering people but also creating and displaying identity. Tolia-Kelly similarly has explored the meanings and interpretations of (Tolia-Kelly 2004a) material culture in British Asian homes.

Using photographs can open up deeper reflection and discussion (Stanczak 2007). For example, Jeffrey Samuels asked a Sri Lankan community of monks to take photos of

something that “attracted their heart” and the photos came up with things that the fieldworker would not have thought of (in Stanczak, 2007). Taking the photographs was a useful way of finding out what is meaningful to participants. However, there were some drawbacks because getting the participants to talk about what made something meaningful, resulted in interviews that were much longer (usually at least an hour). He also asserted the need to use photographic elicitation methods with other methods such as interviews and detailed observation. (Stanczak 2007 p. 220)

The way they have been used in this research equates with Douglas Harper’s definition of using photographs to portray the “intimate dimensions of the social”, as a way of grounding interviewees’ responses to the landscape and to lead to a reflective stance from the interviewees (Harper 2002 p. 13). Harper argued that photo elicitation yields not only more information, but a different sort of information that engages responses to visual and verbal information.

Pink argues that visual methodology is not simply about categorising the material or interpreting the content. Instead the researcher needs to focus on what meanings are given to images and their “situation, content and form”. This is an argument for a more sophisticated interpretation. Images do not often appear on their own and often the accompanying text is important. Simply categorising images into exclusive categories ignores the way images can be dynamic and may cut across categories, or relate to a number of different categories. There are multiple ways in which one image can be significant (ibid. p. 156).

The photographs taken by interviewees in this study provided a basis for discussion and explication, which then enabled the researcher to derive categories or themes from this part of the interview, looking at commonalities and differences between the interviewees, such as used by Norman Dandy and René Van Der Wal in a study on appreciation of woodland landscapes (Dandy and Van Der Wal 2011).

In addition to the analysis of the photographs and meanings the interviewees attached to these photographs, the photographs themselves were objects that could be read as examples of types of landscape. That is, in addition to what interviewees said about the photographs and why they had taken them, the researcher was able to recognise, for example, a romantic landscape, or images of security. The photographs could be read

and understood in this way as visual artefacts. There were then layers of meaning attached to the photographs: what the interviewees thought about the photographs and what they were attempting to capture in the photographs; and the meanings attached to the image that the photographer may not have been aware of. This part of the research drew on visual analysis methods, exploring content analysis and visual meanings of images (Rose 2001a, p. 7-20) , with particular engagement with compositional (the way images are composed), social (the way images are seen through and relate to social constructs) and technological modalities (the way technology contributes to the way images are seen and understood) (Rose, 2001, p. 7-20). The photographs were not only a site of meaning for the person who took the photograph but also for the researcher and could be analysed as signifiers in their own right (Rose 2001a, p. 69-70).

In addition to the photo-elicitation, this research also explored what images and artefacts of landscape interviewees had in their own homes. Here again it was important to draw on Gillian Rose's work for the analysis (Rose 2000). Firstly in the way in which meanings of photographs are established through their uses. Thus in her work on photographs in an archive Rose discusses how meanings shift in relation to the needs of the archivists and the researcher, and those who took the photos. There is always a question of interpretation. For example, the photos in the archive depict workers and members of a well-to-do family and it is unknown what drew the photographer to photograph these subjects. For an archivist they give an indication of history, the position of people in society, or what clothes people wore in those times. For the researcher with an interest in space, the photographs highlight different uses of and relations to space in the lives of the family members and the workers. It is noticeable for instance to the researcher that the family members are framed in the photographs surrounded by more physical space, and bodies are situated in ownership of those spaces, whilst the close-ups of workers objectifies them. Thus the "social difference is inscribed in the visibility and spatiality of these photos" (Rose 2000 p. 568). Overall she argues that the relationship to photographs is complex and depends on their use, and context.

Rose argues that domestic space should be considered as the product of relations that extend beyond the home (Rose 2003). That is, although photographs in a home are obviously part of that home and décor they actually refer to events and relations outside.. Photographs can thus involve the concept of stretched time and stretched

spaces in that photographs are of previous times, sometimes going back many years. Similarly photographs may evoke memories or connections with people who live at a distance. In this way, photographs act both as a presence of a person in the home and a reminder of their absence. Photographs of children in domestic settings embody therefore a form of stretched time and stretched relations. What Rose also outlined was the ways in which a photo is not merely an object but needs its surroundings and meanings created by the people who view and display it to understand its role (Rose 2003 p. 9). Rose refers to Barthes and the way family photographs that are personally touching, perhaps because they evoke a particular felt memory or feelings about for example a child when younger are an example of Barthes' idea of punctum which is unique to the viewer.

Tolia-Kelly in her study of artefacts in the British Asian home found that domestic possessions were souvenirs of other landscapes but also incorporated other oral histories and social histories that were part of diasporic communities' re-memories (Tolia-Kelly 2004a). In other words they provided links to previous social and oral histories but there was also a creative process of situating those memories within the present. The domestic sphere therefore became "an active site for the cultural identification and political positioning of British Asians" (ibid. p. 327). Similarly she writes of curios not just being souvenirs, to remind of trips but very present and infused with the "biography and cultural markers of the owners" (Tolia-Kelly 2006 p. 352). Memories of past environments are mobile and transportable through photographs, pictures, postcards, artefacts and paintings which have meaning and value beyond their textual content (Tolia-Kelly 2004b).

Such ideas are important for this part of the research which looks at images and artefacts in domestic spaces and were reflected on in the analysis.

### ***Ethical considerations and negotiating access***

Although the research involved observation and interviews of something that was unlikely to be sensitive information, it was still decided, because the research was going to begin by taking place with members of an established walking group and because there was no necessity or desire for this to be covert research, to gain informed, written,

consent in line with the University's ethical guidance. This involved obtaining permission to do the research in the walking group from the committee that runs the group. The researcher presented the research project at the committee meeting where she is a member, leaving the room while the matter was discussed in case there was a conflict of interest. The group agreed unanimously that the research could take place and that the researcher could approach members to ask whether they wished to take part.

In addition, and following the principle of informed consent, individual potential participants (both those within the aforementioned walking group and individuals who were not members of that group) were given a letter explaining about the research, an information sheet, and a sheet showing question areas inviting them to take part. Potential participants were given 7 days to think about whether they wanted to participate. Potential participants were informed that they did not have to take part, could stop taking part at any point in the research, did not have to answer any questions they did not wish to, and did not have to give any reasons to the researcher for any of these decisions. One person declined to be interviewed. At the time of the interviews, participants were asked whether they wanted the interview to go ahead and to give permission for the interview to be recorded.

Potential participants were informed that any data from the interview would be considered as confidential by the researcher, and that names or anything that could identify individual participants would not be used in any publications (including reports, articles or thesis) arising from the research. During some of the research interviews, participants sometimes requested that some of the information should not be used for the research ("off the record") or requested that the recorder be turned off whilst they spoke to the interviewer in private. These requests for privacy have been strictly observed and complied with, and this information will not appear in transcriptions or be a part of subsequent analysis and presentation of findings.

Participants were given the option of taking part in an interview whilst going on a walk. This has of course meant under the principle of non-maleficence, taking steps to ensure the safety of the participant. For example, ensuring that questions were not asked whilst traversing terrain that might be dangerous were the interviewee to be thinking about the question rather than being safe. It has meant the interviewer needed to have knowledge

of and the right safety equipment on walks. The researcher completed the requisite Fieldwork Risk Assessment form outlining what measures would be taken. In practice, the location for one walking interview was altered because of adverse weather conditions (gale force winds). So this took place on a more gentle terrain. On a second walking interview, this took place on a group walk, so the interviewer checked that the participant was agreeable to perhaps having some of her answers overheard but in practice the interviewer and interviewee were able to walk a bit behind the main group and could not be overheard.

When interviews have taken place at the researcher's or interviewee's home, the interviewer took normal safety precautions when needed such as ensuring someone knew where I was and checking back after the interview was done.

### **3.4 Choice of data used and the selection of different forms of empirical material**

The interviews, field notes and photographs yielded a large amount of data not all of which could be presented in this thesis. As the above section has shown the aim of the research was inclusive analysis whereby emergent themes, concepts and categories were derived from the data but in addition deviant cases or outliers that did not easily fit into the themes, concepts and categories were also included as part of the analysis. Data is presented in this thesis which is illustrative of the main themes, concepts and categories that arose from the analysis.

The data presented is illustrative in that it provides examples of evidence, rather than presenting the evidence in totality. Quotations and photographs were chosen for inclusion in the thesis because they provided an example of a particular theme, concept or category. For example, the theme of the importance of the group and the sociability of the group (section 8.3) is illustrated by a number of quotations, some field notes and photographs. In practice there were actually a number of photographs of different groups which could have been chosen to illustrate the points made by the quotations but one photograph of a group sufficed to illustrate the point. Similarly, there were other quotations about groups. However, the quotations and photographs chosen accurately

reflected the totality of the themes, concepts and categories that were identified in analysis.

The photos were initially sorted into categories but these were also categories that emerged from the interviews as a whole. Some photographs were grouped because they had similar subjects. However, these were not exclusive categories. In the same way that interview texts were analysed for themes, so were the photos. This was because the photos, although talked about and referred to explicitly in the interviews also acted as artefacts that could be read. Categories emerged from interview transcripts and photos, sometimes separately and sometimes together. There was though a further layer in the process of analysis in that the photos also acted as and could be read by the researcher as signs. Thus for example the researcher noted the recurrence of photos taken through ruined windows which provided another category and focus for questions.

Some photographs were not chosen for the final thesis because the thesis will eventually be on electronic form where they might be easily copied. For example, some of Stephen's photos which showed stunning views of sunrises over mountains and were good quality photographs had to be excluded because he did not want them to be accessible on electronic form. Similarly, although there were many photos of groups, those included of people, either have the consent of those in the photos, or are indistinct enough that they cannot be easily identified.

Field notes are referred to sparingly. This was because the main data sources were the interviews and photographs. However, field notes were useful for example in describing the walking group (in Chapter 6), finding out about grouse moorlands (section 5.2) and Munro baggers (section 8.3). Field notes were used as background material. Thus the walking group could have been presented as a list of rules and regulations, the bare bones of when the committee meetings were and how many attended. Walking with the group and taking notes however, allowed other factors to come to the fore such as the fact that the walking group was long-standing with personal friendships going back a number of years. Similarly, the field notes about Munro baggers helped to make explicit what was implicit in the interviews where a person would name different peaks as if the interviewer would immediately know what these peaks were, an assumption of a shared understanding of the Munros. The quotation from the field notes therefore served to point out the disjuncture between the

Munro baggers and the observer who did not share these attitudes. Field notes were, however, not collected in a systematic way. Notes were taken during interviews as well, in case the recording did not work, or to note interesting facts, such as describing the art work in respondents' homes, or noting the physical barriers encountered on one of the interviews whilst walking. Other field notes were not produced systematically but gathered at meetings or walking festivals. Although not gathered systematically, they were used in such a way to provide additional background or illumination of the main sources of data i.e. the interviews and the photographs.

### **3.5 Particular challenges in conducting the research**

#### **3.5.1 Using qualitative research methods**

With qualitative research there were challenges as outlined in Silverman (Silverman 2006) relating to the reliability of the research and what he refers to as the problem of anecdotalism. Bryman 1988 also mentions accusations of anecdotalism in relation to grounded theory, for example when research is based on brief conversations or snippets from unstructured interviews, there is a danger of qualitative research becoming no more than the biased views of the researcher (Bryman 1988). To bring the researcher beyond the status of a person who gives a history or diary to something that is social science research needs reliable methods and valid conclusions (Silverman 2006 p. 310).

Quantitative and positivistic approaches to research have been criticised for imposing researchers' assumptions, not addressing questions of why behaviours are happening or views are held, assuming that quantitative data is in many cases superior to qualitative (the assumption for example in medical research that randomised controlled trials are the "gold standard" for research). However, to assume that qualitative approaches to research do not have their pitfalls and are a universal panacea for the shortcomings of quantitative research would be equally misguided. Silverman points out how the assumption that reliability is only something needed by positivists, rules out systematic research in qualitative studies. He argues convincingly that research needs to assume some stable properties in the social world, if it is to have something useful to say about the social world. If everything is in a state of flux or completely individualistic then it does beg the question of what is the point of trying to research the social world and make inferences and recommendations that relate to the social world. So having

qualitative research that is systematic and reliable is as important as in quantitative research.

Hence the use of grounded theory in this research: as an attempt to provide a systematic structure for the research. In order to improve the reliability of the research I have attempted to present clearly how the research was done, and, with the interviews, to follow a grounded theory approach, drawing out themes from the initial interviews to inform further interview questions, and to use the interview process to test out theories. Thus although the questions for interviews were broad to allow respondents to express and structure their own views without imposing the views of the researcher, interviews were semi-structured which facilitated comparative analysis. Once the initial interviews were analysed and theories emerged, a new set of question areas and new interviews, were decided on.

There have been criticisms of grounded theory in that it can fail to acknowledge implicit theories that guide the research, it lends itself to theory production rather than testing, and can lead to an empty building of strategies, particularly when using computer software (Silverman 2006). In order to address these concerns, this research does have some underlying theories predicated by the questions it seeks to answer. It has built on findings from the literature review. The research also embodied the idea that social contexts have influences on people in a complex way. In this, the research followed ideas of social interactionism rather than constructionism i.e. a belief that individuals have some freedom to influence and interact with the world, rather than being completely constrained by society and social institutions. This was not purely naturalistic research intended to describe what happens but (following Clifford Geertz (Geertz 1973)) moved from the assumption that the subjects' meanings are part of a wider system of signs. It did not just represent what people say (naturalism) because there was an underlying assumption that connections might be made and theories developed from what was said and from reviewing what has been said in light of the wider contextual material.

Martyn Hammersley and Paul Atkinson have written of the danger of the researcher's views intruding into the research and argued that others should be able to check findings (Hammersley 1990; Hammersley and Atkinson 1995). They take issue with Geertz's belief that the way qualitative and ethnographic research can produce "thick

description” is a justification for doing this sort of research. They argue that producing a great volume of in-depth material will provide “thick description” but may not produce valid knowledge and devalues some qualitative research findings. Silverman offers some means of judging the value of qualitative data such as the importance of topics and the contribution to existing research and theoretical debates, and also conceptual rigour, methodological rigour and clarity of writing and argumentation. Silverman suggests improving reliability through making the research process transparent and having a theoretical stance that will produce particular interpretations and exclude others (Silverman 2006 p. 310). This research provided this by having systematic data collection and accepted procedures for analysis. Through systematising field notes, tape-recording and transcribing interviews the researcher has sought to bring reliability and make the process transparent. Presenting quotations and the questions that gave rise to responses is a way of showing this. Later chapters will present the findings, showing how themes, concepts and categories were derived from the data. This will go some way towards the reader being able to decide whether the data extracts are representative of the data as a whole and how far deviant cases are followed up. A sample of interviews and photographs during the research was discussed with supervisors to confirm emerging themes.

Hammersley took issue with validity in relation to qualitative research, and argued that validity is about confidence in knowledge but that one cannot have certainty of the truth (Hammersley 1990 p. 281). Reality is always viewed through certain perspectives so that researchers can only ever be said to represent reality and not reproduce it. However, analytic induction does not mean that researchers cannot generate some hypotheses and test them out. Hammersley advocates the use of the constant comparative method to test out a provisional hypotheses (Hammersley 1990 p. 296). In addition, the seeking out of deviant cases and addressing what information they bring is a way of testing the validity of the research (Hammersley 1990 p. 297). The sampling I have chosen has deliberately looked at a range of cases and enabled such comparisons to be made.

Hammersley and Atkinson take issue with researchers such as Agar who wanted to reject standard issues of credibility in favour of “an intensive personal involvement, an abandonment of traditional scientific control, an improvisational style to meet situations not of the researcher’s making, and an ability to learn from a long series of

mistakes” (Hammersley 1990 p. 273). Although this brings flexibility, the danger is again of ending up with something that is anecdotal, that is “picking telling examples rather than looking at the totality”. The semi-structured nature of the interviews in this research helped to guard against this, giving an initial structure for comparison. In addition, the purposeful sample that has deliberately looked for types of walkers who might be expected to have different views, militated against this. Care was taken to ensure all views were recorded and treated as of equal value (comprehensive data treatment) as per the grounded theory approach. Hammersley and Atkinson (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995 p. 143) advocate recording data at the time rather than relying on memory which can be “inadequate”. There was then the “validity to deal with contrary cases” rather than succumbing to “preciousness about the researcher’s tribe” which was a particular danger when the researcher was also a member of a walking group.

The problem of the distance and objectivity of the researcher needs some reflection. As sole researcher and a member of a walking group, I had to be mindful of not asserting or imposing my own views about walking and visual culture on participants. A first step to dealing with this was the self-awareness that this could occur, and then taking steps to guard against expressing my own views whilst interviewing or whilst walking with the group. Interviews were recorded and transcribed which provided some guard against making assumptions about what people said.

There were though times of shared experience and shared understanding. For example, where the interviewer had shared a walk with the interviewee, and then the interviewee would make reference to the shared experience during the interview. This has been acknowledged when it occurs, and might mean that at times there was a lack of probing about the interviewee’s own experience and views. It could be that the interviewee was unable to express those views. It might also have been, and this is reflected on in later chapters, that the researcher and interviewees share understandings because of sharing the same visual-cultural context. The exploration of the visual-cultural and social contexts provided examples of what those shared understandings, assumptions and experiences were. Getting interviewees to take photographs provided a way of getting interviewees to reflect on things that were personal to them.

During the time of the second phase of interviews, I did not take any photographs of landscape. This was in case what I liked in the landscape or looked for in a photograph of the landscape might colour what I then saw or understood to be seen in the photographs of the interviewees. In reality, it is impossible that I would have come to the photographs without any personal ideas about views of landscapes (personal ways of seeing) but it was an attempt to create some distance and some freshness in approaching the photographs that interviewees had chosen to take. Interviewees were reassured that they did not have to take good quality photographs, and that interviews would explore what they were intending to photograph or capture in the photograph rather than them being judged on artistic merit.

No researcher can ever be entirely neutral. However, it was hoped by being aware of the pitfalls, using some of the mechanisms of systematic gathering of information, having a wide enough and varied enough research sample, and detailing the research process that being completely partial could be avoided. Some interviews had been done with people outside the walking group, and, somewhat reassuringly, these had not yielded noticeably different data (both in terms of transcripts and photographs).

Naturalistic approaches to enquiry have been criticised because they can neglect the political dimension (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995 p. 14). It was important to bear the political dimension in mind since what is true or false “is constituted through an exercise of power”. This has been increasingly the case in the research since one of the important dimensions of the context for the research has been the changing policies in relation to walking in the countryside. When the research began government policies around walking in the countryside centred around health and fitness i.e. policies promoting walking as healthy. Within this were assumptions about the importance of health, and links to health policies with economic policies e.g. promoting walking for health as a way of combating the “obesity epidemic” and reducing the cost to the health service. These three things were linked together in government policy, and in public walking magazines that might be expected to have an impact on participants in the research. However, in 2011 another area of policy came to the fore with the proposed selling off of forests by the government. This re-ignited interest in access to land and ownership of land. In the Ramblers, access once again became a key issue in their own magazines, newsletters, and campaigns. Again this might be expected to be important to participants and how they view the countryside. In addition, health and social

policies may also have had an impact on visual representations in walking magazines or programmes.

The style of interviewing was quite open and fluid. This was deliberate practice to allow room for respondents to comment and take the research along paths they wish to explore, and as a way of making interviewees relaxed, not being judgemental about answers and giving people enough time and space to say what they want to say. This followed Patton (Patton 2002) and the idea that one should care very much about finding out what people want to say and listening to them, whilst at the same time reserving judgement about what they say. In this way, it was hoped that people were more likely to open up and present their views more honestly.

The semi-structured questions gave a certain framework but there was room for exploratory prompts and to check that what interviewees were saying was understood by the researcher. A completely unemotional response by the interviewer was rejected as off-putting. Most of the people that were interviewed had not taken part in research interviews before and were unsure what to expect. Putting people at their ease therefore became an important part of the style of interviewing.

### **3.5.2 Interviewing whilst walking**

Ethnography is intended to be a study of people in natural settings. Most of the interviews took place in people's houses, or places of work, or neutral spaces. Some interviews took place whilst out walking, and observation notes whilst out walking contributed to the research. However, it is questionable how naturalistic the research was. Even on the three interviews done whilst walking, it was unnatural and unusual to have set questions and be recording the interview.

Some studies have used interviews whilst walking. Anthropologists such as Ingold use a mixture of interviews and observation. Kate Moles carried out interviews whilst walking and found walking was both a method and means for understanding responses (Moles 2008). For Moles the spatial awareness enabled new meanings to come out of the narrative that would not have happened in a traditional interview. Sometimes a particular sight would trigger a memory. Walking interviews can be particularly useful when the interviewer needs to pinpoint particular places, and connecting "*what* people

say with *where* they say it” (Jones et al. 2008 p.2 – authors’ italic). These interviews were found to add a richness to the data about certain spaces and also to prompt personal histories, or a socio-political narrative. Interviewing whilst walking could take the interview in an unexpected direction. Clare Rishbeth and Mark Powell asked respondents to make on-site recordings of their experiences in urban landscapes. They found that the methods “allowed connections to be made between immediate experiences and reflective thought processes” (Rishbeth and Powell 2012 p. 15).

The researcher offered the option of doing an interview whilst walking because it would be expected that walkers might find this more comfortable, more interesting, and that certain sights or sites might trigger particular thoughts in relation to the visual landscape.

### 3.5.3 Interdisciplinary research

This brings us to the final and perhaps chief challenge of the research in methodological terms which was to bring together research traditions from ethnography, social science and art history/visual studies. To some extent other writers have already been working in this way, for example the ethnographical studies of Ingold (Ingold 2000), or writers such as Ann Bermingham and WJ T Mitchell who consider visual representation in relation to society and power (Bermingham 1994; Mitchell 1994). Denis Cosgrove and Stephen Daniels have discussed how society and individuals are informed by visual representations of landscape, and what those representations tell us about society (Cosgrove and Daniels 1988; Daniels 1993). The literature review has shown the congruence of visual culture theorists and cultural geographers in thinking about how landscape has moved, for example, from being considered as a noun to a verb.

Theories and methodologies from social science were useful into explore current walkers’ views. So, for example, ideas around structure and agency allowed ways of thinking about how walkers engage with landscape and visual-cultural contexts, how they have engaged in the past and whether it is different now. Of particular importance were ideas of “practice” and habitus from Pierre Bourdieu (Bourdieu 1990). A grounded theory approach was seen as the best way of exploring walkers’ engagement with landscape without imposing set views, and to allow individual variations and synergies to emerge.

The approach was taken in order to see whether there were recurrent themes or patterns that could be linked through the component strands of the research. Sometimes ideas from visual and social culture, such as Romantic ideas re-emerged in the current visual-cultural context and were also found in the interviews. Others, such as images and ideas about the countryside as a place of security were key in the interwar years, not present in current visual-cultural context, but then reappeared in the way interviewees engaged with landscape. Such differences were noted and theories formed from the different patterns of data. This was a way of involving all the data and making sense of it, exploring how discourses and ways of engaging with landscape had changed.

### **3.6 Conclusion**

This chapter has explored the methodology and methods used in this research, and reasons for choosing those methods. The research was interdisciplinary and so involved bringing together some traditionally disparate types of research methods. Bringing the elements together has at times been challenging. Practice theory and the concept of habitus allowed exploration of how walkers might be surrounded by culturally accepted ways of engaging with landscape at a macro level, whilst having their own creative relationship with landscape. Using a grounded theory approach to the research, following common themes through the disparate elements, has enabled a coherent approach to analysis.

The next two chapters present the visual, cultural and social traditions that provided the context for walking. Chapter Four looks at the context for walkers during the interwar years and Chapter Five brings this up to date by looking at the current context for walkers.

## Chapter 4 – Context – the Inter war years

### 4.1 Introduction

Chapter two gave an overview of recent literature about landscape and walking. Before reflecting on these ideas in relation to findings from the interviews, it is important to consider how people's views and attitudes to walking might have changed, what might be the range and sources for current visual influences on walkers, and how these influences have arisen and been disseminated. This is the focus of the next two chapters which reflect on certain key impulses, typologies and conventions in ways of representing and thinking about the countryside. The second of these two chapters looks at the current visual-cultural context for walkers, such as TV programmes about walking, and walking guides of direct and particular interest to walkers, and that could be expected to have been experienced by walkers. This chapter focusses on the inter-war years as a time of resurgence in interest in landscape for circulating forms of visual culture and walkers. This might seem an arbitrary time to pick out, probably just within the lifetime of few current walkers. However, the period is important to the subject of this thesis for a number of reasons. Firstly, this was time of a very particular revival in landscape art. Secondly, it was a time when landscape and particular landscapes became associated with and seen as embodiments of particular notions of national identity following the Great War. Being in the countryside and immersed in the natural world were important for those returning from the war and those who had remained at home coping with loss, physical injuries, trauma and shattered nerves. The countryside and nature became a place where the effects of the war could start to be healed and physical and spiritual health could be renewed. Thirdly, there was an emphasis on the benefits of being outdoors and doing physical exercise (Trentmann 1994). The Girl Guides and Scout movements were just taking off. The Youth Hostelling Association had been set up to encourage walkers and cyclists to use the countryside. Hostels sought to encourage people using public transport who wanted a cheap and healthy holiday in the countryside, as is seen in the photograph below of a young woman from Tyneside cleaning her boots at Malham Youth Hostel.



**1944 - At the Youth Hostel in Malham, Nell Petrie (from Jarrow) oils her walking boots before setting off for a day's hiking. Beside her, a fellow youth hosteller is checking the contents of her rucksack. [Imperial War Museum]**

Access to the countryside was made easier for tourists through easier and cheaper transport by cars and trains. Fourthly, there were changes in access to privately owned land by the general public. The significant act of mass trespass at Kinder Scout in 1932 triggered a series of protest and political movements which eventually led to wider public rights of access to private land. It is necessary therefore to consider this context in more detail to comprehend how particular types of countryside were perceived and represented in forms of visual culture at that time.

#### **4.2 The growth of mass interest in walking and being out in the fresh air**

Recreational walking had long been a pastime of those in the middle classes and industrial working classes but there was a burgeoning of institutions promoting exercise and the outdoors emerged in the inter-war years. The Scouts had been set up in 1907<sup>8</sup> followed by the Guides in 1910<sup>9</sup>. These organisations continued to grow throughout the

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<sup>8</sup> [www.scout.org/en/about\\_scouting/facts\\_figures/history](http://www.scout.org/en/about_scouting/facts_figures/history)

<sup>9</sup> [www.girlguiding.org.uk/about\\_us/key\\_information/history.asp/](http://www.girlguiding.org.uk/about_us/key_information/history.asp/)

1930s. The National Council of Ramblers Organisations appeared in 1931 and the Ramblers Association came into being in 1935 (McKay 2012 p. 82). The National Trust emerged in 1895 but it was in 1907 that the National Trust Act was passed to preserve places of historic interest or natural beauty for the nation<sup>10</sup>. The Council for the Preservation of Rural England was set up in 1926 and The Youth Hostel Association began in 1930 instigated by the Liverpool and District Ramblers' Association. This facilitated cheap holidays and weekends away for walkers. In 1929 there were discussions about the feasibility of setting up National Parks. All these movements were concerned with opening up the countryside to the public. They also reflected the idea that walking was a sociable pursuit, with many different types of groups that encouraged walking as a pastime. Even those who went walking on their own or with a small group of friends would experience the camaraderie of Youth Hostels. Many of these organisations are still in existence today. Even though they may have changed over time, the concerns to use the outdoors for walking and the way walking was thought about continue at the present time.

The benefits of open air exercise were emphasised by government following concerns about national fitness after the First World War. Not only walking but cycling, swimming, camping and PE as well as other sports were encouraged. Outdoor exercise was often disciplined and Spartan. Youth Hostels continued this emphasis with walkers expected to contribute to chores, and facilities of a very basic nature. Physicality and endurance were valued. Such exercise also contained a moral dimension, to provide physical and spiritual wellbeing (Matless 1998 p. 70). It was seen as a way of getting the working classes out of the city and out of pubs, as one of the few other leisure pursuits of the working man.

Open air pursuits were seen as healthy but there were also moral undertones of appropriate conduct and having an aesthetic appreciation of the landscape. People visiting the countryside were expected to spend time in reflection. David Matless discusses the role of preservationists in this, those who were against the spread of cities and the encroachment of urban ribbon development which was seen as spoiling the countryside (Matless 1998). Country was set against city. The country was regarded

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<sup>10</sup> [www.nationaltrust.org.uk/what-we-do/who-we-are/our-history](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/what-we-do/who-we-are/our-history)

by the preservationists as organised, composed and rooted, whereas the city was artificial and chaotic. Men such as Cyril Joad, who wrote the charter for the Ramblers in 1934, and Vaughan Cornish, a preservationist geographer, were influential in defining how the countryside should be used and the attitudes of walkers. Parts of the countryside became archetypes e.g. the typical English Pub or the typical English village (Matless 1998 p. 67). As well as the physical healthiness associated with walking, walkers were expected to be contemplative and appreciative of the beauty of the countryside. The countryside was food for the body and the spirit. These are important ways of thinking about the countryside for the thesis, since such ideas were still found to be current amongst walkers, even outside organised walking groups. Trevelyan, another influential educationalist stressed the natural beauty that people in the cities needed access to, otherwise they would “perish in the spiritual sense” (Matless 1998 p. 84). However, wilful trespassers were regarded by the preservationists and the establishment as dangerously political.

There was though a political element in the changes to walking patterns. The interwar years were a tipping point in the struggle to obtain greater access for walkers to the thousands of acres in privately owned estates. The Kinder Scout trespass still resonates with walkers today and is often referred to and celebrated in walking magazines. From the 1920s growing calls for increased access were taken up in Parliament and at a number of rallies. The Pennines formed a focus for protests because large tracts of land were held by landowners for breeding and shooting grouse. Walking groups from the urban cities of Lancashire and Yorkshire who wanted to walk the land at weekends, as an escape from the city, often fell foul of gamekeepers. Events finally came to crisis with the Kinder Scout trespass in 1932 where 500 walkers (men and women) mainly from Manchester formed a mass trespass up Kinder Scout, the highest peak in Derbyshire. The trespass was led by a group of communists and Benny Rothman leader of the British Walkers and Sports Federation and walkers from Manchester and Sheffield.

Lest one might think that such an event had the support of other more middle class walking organisations who were also agitating for increased access, it should be remembered that at first the Rambler’s organisations around the country (generally middle class) did not support the idea of a mass trespass and favoured contesting the law through the courts and parliament (McKay 2012 p. 18). It should certainly not be

thought that the countryside was awash with angry, militant hikers demanding rights to access. Middle class ramblers were more akin to the aspirant middle class motorists targeted by the contemporary Shell Guides and posters and shared with them certain sensibilities towards the landscape where they walked, and places they might visit, that they were for educational and cultural improvement.

At the end of the mass trespass six of the trespassers were arrested and five of those imprisoned for incitement to riotous assembly and grievous harm<sup>11</sup>. However, the sentences were felt to be very harsh and following a public outcry, moves were made to try and secure better access to private land. The 1939 Access to Mountains Act for the first time gave some access to private land along rights of way. Mackay has written of how the Act's built in clauses took away some freedoms in that trespass for the first time was made a criminal offence (McKay 2012 p.84). There was not therefore a smooth and calm acceptance by politicians and landowners that the public could have access to the countryside, and access continued to be a contested issue.

As stated, the Kinder Scout trespass remains an important event that is still commemorated and celebrated by walkers today. The next chapter shows how the trespass is frequently referenced in walking magazines and websites, as a changing point in walkers' rights to walk across privately owned land. It has become a symbol of rebellion against private landowners, and a touchstone for new campaigns for access<sup>12</sup>.

It was not until 1949, seventeen years later, that walkers finally obtained the Access to Countryside Act. The principles of national parks were finally accepted in 1951. The White Paper that would form the basis of the Access to Countryside Act used suitably Romantic language (quoting Keats) to express its sentiments:

*“In the wilder parts of the country, our recommendations will provide for the greatest freedom of rambling access consistent with other claims in the land. They will enable active people of all ages to wander harmlessly over moor and mountain, over heath and down, and along cliffs and shores, and to discover for themselves the wild and lonely places, and the solace and inspiration they can*

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<sup>11</sup> <http://kindertrespass.com/index.asp?ID=190> – accessed August 2014

<sup>12</sup> <http://kindertrespass.com/index.asp?ID=190> – accessed August 2014. See also <http://www.ramblers.org.uk/get-involved/campaign-with-us.aspx> - accessed March 2015

*give to men who have been 'long in city pent'.*" (quoted in McKay (McKay 2012 p.87)

It conjures up a picture of empty and tranquil landscapes, much like those from the railway posters at the time, of a peaceful landscape where people could lose themselves in quiet, improving contemplation. There was then a certain way of thinking about walking and how the masses should engage with it, a tacit approval by the upper and middle classes of improving exercise in the fresh air but together with a mistrust of riotous behaviour led by working class potential revolutionaries.

### 4.3 Landscape art in the Interwar years

Whilst walkers struggled for greater access and the healthiness of outdoor pursuits was being encouraged, a further important development was taking place which had a profound effect on the way the countryside and landscape was conceptualised. This was the revival in landscape art in England when landscape became once again one of the central subjects of practising artists. It is worth exploring this revival because many of the artists contributed designs for railway posters and guides and so contributed to the popular images and the way landscape was presented and thought about. This was therefore a unique time when, because of the depression, artists were glad to take commissions to work on posters and guides which were aimed at the public. They thus contributed significantly to popular taste in landscape and the countryside. Although there had been continuing traditional approaches to landscape art, several artists at this time were using more modernist approaches and brought such ideas into mainstream culture.

The iconic images of the First World War were the black and white photographs of the trenches, and paintings of wastelands caused by war: stumps of shell battered, blackened trees sticking up through the swamps of mud such as Nash's *The Menin Road* (1918-19), and *Void of War* (1918). A very bleak painting *We are making a new world* (Nash, 1918) shows the sun rising on a blasted landscape that evokes questions of what happens after the war (Grant 2002). The sun and title provide some glimmers of hope but the bright light serves to highlight the ruin (of lives, landscapes, buildings) that many had to face.

The revival of interest in landscape painting following the war can be seen partly as a rejection of modernism or the horrors of modernity, and a search for comfort and security after the war. A recurrent motif in paintings and etchings of the time is the view from inside a domestic interior looking out over rural tranquillity e.g. Rex Whistler's *A Village in a Valley* (1934), or Harald Jones' *The Black Door* (1933), or Eric Ravilious' *Interior at Furlongs* (1939). Eric Ravilious' *Firle Beacon* (1927) for example takes the viewer from a position of security in a domestic garden looking beyond the fence, across a hinterland of an arable field thick with ripe corn, to a wilder place beyond. Such images were landscapes of safety, a place of security to retreat to after the horrors of war.

In the inter-war years ancient landscapes became an important part of defining Englishness (or Britishness) and linking the present to historical traditions. The *Shell Guides to Britain* similarly reflected a particular taste for the countryside and the prehistoric past, e.g. using ancient monuments like Stonehenge on their covers. This taste for a prehistoric past is seen in Paul Nash's photograph *Monolith in a Wood* (1938) (Mellor 1987 p. 88). The interest in ancient landscapes at this time was different to the picturesque concern with ruined abbeys and castles, since it reflected a longer sense of history reaching back to primitive art carved into hillsides or embodied in prehistoric stone monuments. Eric Ravilious painted or made woodcuts of the figures of giants and horses cut into the chalk of the South Downs. The figures almost embody something of the landscape so that the Downs of the White Horse of Uffington (seen below) are depicted as if they are the limbs of an animal, whilst another of the Cerne Abbas Giant depicts the figure as mysterious and threatening in the moorland beyond the fence.

It comes as little surprise that recently Macfarlane has focused his attention on Ravilious as a painter and walker. He writes of the way Ravilious captures the particular nature of the experience of walking on the chalk downs:

“so did the light; falling as white on green, distinctive for its radiance, possessing the combined pearlescence of chalk, grass blades and a proximate sea.” P 297 (Macfarlane 2012)

Such paintings evoke particular places, and show a deep attachment to those places.



**Eric Ravilious, *The Vale of the White Horse* c, 1939 – Tate Britain**

Like Ravilious, Nash was fascinated by ancient landscapes and ancient landscapes as they appeared at the time. On his first trip to Avebury he relished the fact that the stones were overgrown and showed signs of being part of a natural landscape that had grown around them (Cardinal 1989 p. 21). This is a very different approach to the tidy, mown lawns surrounding ancient monuments that visitors now experience, although the fascination with such monuments for visitors and tourists remains. Nash did not reproduce traditional picturesque or romantic images of these landscapes but adopted modernist approaches such as depicting stones as semi-abstract tubular blocks in *Equivalents for Megaliths* (1935) or as surreal objects in *Landscape of the Megaliths* in 1937. This was an attempt to find “new symbols to express our reaction to the environment” (Nash in Unit One 81<sup>13</sup> – quoted by Smiles in (Corbett, Holt, and Russell 2002)).

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<sup>13</sup> *Unit One* was a group of modernist artists founded by Nash in 1933.

Herbert Read writing at the time in *Unit One: the modern movement in English painting, sculpture, and architecture (1934)* saw evidence of changes in landscape art. British art was no longer confined to reproductions of Constable and Turner paintings but could be “evocative and multi-vocal” (ibid. p.80) using different styles and embracing different types of landscape. Read concluded that British art related to something that was solidly crafted and the result of long embedded traditions (ibid. p.26), things that want to be found rather than screaming for attention. There was a mistrust of mass production and the “*brash assertiveness*” (ibid. p.29) of the industrial revolution. Nature and landscape were more an expression of Britishness because they were seen as culturally embedded, part of a tradition. For Causey the inter-war years did produce an English landscape art characterized by “craft, sobriety, and lack of excess, a secular attitude and sane resistance to the intellectual, refusals to prioritise centre or periphery, town and country.” (Corbett, Holt, and Russell 2002 p. 295)

What is of particular interest for the arguments of this thesis is Nash’s embracing and articulation of the importance to his work of the concept of *genius loci*. This was the idea that certain places had a spirit or magical power, elements beyond the physical experience. He had a continuing attachment to several particular places such as the Chilterns, Dymchurch, Avebury, and Wittenham Clumps (Nash et al. 1989; Cardinal 1989) and painted them often. It is worth quoting Nash’s own description for the *Unit One*’s magazine in 1934 edited by Herbert Read (quoted in (Grant 2002) about art and national character:

“If I were to describe this spirit [that animates art] I would say it is of the land: *genius loci* is indeed almost its conception. If its expression could be designated I would say it is almost entirely lyrical...”

Thus, for Nash the spirit that he found in certain places gave rise to his art. Nash in his own words valued in his paintings the quality of being “properly situated” and the feeling of “having arrived” (Cardinal 1989 p. 13). This is different from emotional attachment to place derived from pleasant memories, and has been taken up by modern writers (as seen in chapter 2) such as MacFarlane to understand what make places special.

Wittenham Clumps, for example, was a site of great importance to Nash and there are several paintings of the place. In later paintings the clumps become places of mythical power, appearing in different paintings with allusions to the changing seasons and

landscapes linked with the movements of the sun and moon, equinox and solstice. In this way Cardinal describes him as making the mysterious in landscape his own:

“to honour that paradox, sustaining poetic mystery by the visible logic or clarity of the controlled pictorial design” (ibid. p 64)

Graham Sutherland too pursued the mysterious and mythological in his paintings and engravings. He was heavily influenced by the 19<sup>th</sup> century Romantic painter Samuel Palmer and his work (for example in *Welsh Landscape with Roads* (1936)), like Nash’s landscapes of Wittenham Clumps, often shows the mystical or magical in nature.

Kenneth Clark described Sutherland’s painting as “poetical painting” and thought of it as the reverse of abstraction and yet not surreal (Hammer 2005 p. 78).

Such deep connections to particular landscapes evoke a spiritual or otherworldly relationship with landscape. This is substantially different to Wordsworth’s ideas about Nature as the great teacher. For Wordsworth, Nature, although addressed as a goddess, was not conceived of as being outside a Christian universe: God worked with Nature and the imagination. In the mysticism of the inter-war years, there are more pagan sensibilities. These inter-war paintings also conceive of certain places as producing feelings of security, and connections back into the distant past. They are places of tranquillity and healing.

British landscape artists, as we have seen with Nash, also embraced modernism, experimenting with abstraction and cubism. Lanyon for example worked in non-naturalistic styles in his landscape paintings. He used the experience of flying over land in his paintings, thus turning a mechanistic experience into a new appreciation of landscape (Causey 2006 p. 176). His painting *Ponniou* 1937 is a cliff top landscape with abstract shapes and natural objects such as a fungus form (ibid. p.25). As Causey points out the forms might be Nash-like and naturalistic but the straight lines point to a tension between “an abstract surface and pictorial depth” (ibid. p. 26) That is, Lanyon was working with abstract forms and exploring the non-figurative like fellow St Ives artists Ben Nicholson and Barbara Hepworth.

This section has underlined the wide variety of landscape painting in the inter-war years but also some common concerns. The types of painting were not the comfortable landscape of Constable’s *Hay Wain* popular at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century when “Visual images of a pleasant, friendly rural England became the

commonplace of posters, biscuit tins and place mats as well as fine art paintings.” (Vaughan 1993 p. 97) David Mellor defines the landscape in Neo-Romanticism as internalised, mysterious, and symbolic (Mellor 1987). These artists express deep connections to specific places, even some of the more abstract painters such as Nicholson. The interest in ancient monuments appears to be different to that of the picturesque artists who would see a ruined abbey as a charming focal point to a picture. The pictures of Ravilious and Nash of ancient monuments show a questioning of the ancient in relation to modern, and a profound contemplation of these chalk figures and megaliths in relation to the landscape and thinking about the landscape and British art.

#### **4.4 The growth of tourism**

Such ideas about the landscape fed into the popular images in transport posters and guides, and these were important because the inter-war years saw an enormous growth of tourism in the UK using trains and motorcars. The less affluent used trains to go on trips to the seaside at places such as Blackpool and Scarborough, and stay at cheap hotels or bed and breakfast places for a weekend or their main summer holiday. During the day they would go to the beach, or walk along the promenades and piers. In the popular hierarchies of tourism those taking such excursions have been characterised as trippers (Taylor 1994). They were largely working class and escaped from the large industrial cities and towns to the seaside and countryside. Others used trains and charabancs to get into the countryside to walk, or take to their cycles. The YHA provided cheap accommodation for such people, with the idea being that people could walk or cycle from one hostel to another.

Car ownership increased enormously from 78,000 in 1918 to over 2 million in 1939 (Matless 1998 p. 64). This was mainly an increase in middle class ownership: the working classes had to travel by bus, train and charabanc. Automobiles had been a luxury of the upper classes but now were affordable by the middle classes. An increasing number of motorists explored the countryside, looking for the ‘real’ tourist experience (Taylor 1994). Rather than being satisfied with the pleasures of seaside resorts (ice cream, candy floss, Punch and Judy, seaside shows), they sought a holiday as a tourist where they could explore an area, and see the sights. These were holidays with an emphasis on improvement and education. Motorcars enabled access to more remote and uncrowded locations.

New technology made printing posters and producing guides much cheaper, and there were new printing techniques that made colour production easier. So images of the countryside were more widely circulated and more visible. Railway posters, rather than listing a number of destinations, now showed artists' impressions of what could be seen and the types of fun that could be had at various destinations.

At the same time, individuals were encouraged and increasingly enabled to document their own views and memories of the countryside using photography. Kodak had made cameras cheaper and more reliable and urged consumers through its advertising to record the beauty of Britain, and to take pictures to preserve memories. For example, one poster of May 1928 showing a girl looking at an old windmill has the line "Don't let sights like these run like water through your fingers. Catch them with a Kodak." (ibid. p.138) The sort of sites photographers were encouraged to take pictures of and the sorts of pictures one could buy on postcards were of gentle, unthreatening English country scenery. These were sites of reassurance and permanence after the War:

"The countryside was made available in pictures, so that when tourists went in search of what they had already seen, they found exactly what they were looking for, and either bought postcards of the favoured sites or took their own photographs." (Taylor 1994 p. 130)

Many of the guides used traditional landscape compositions. What Taylor has termed using a (ibid. p.129) "distant, uninflected gaze" that invited dreaming. It was England as a "dependable make" with cosy, secure, picturesque villages, or landscapes with few people in sight.

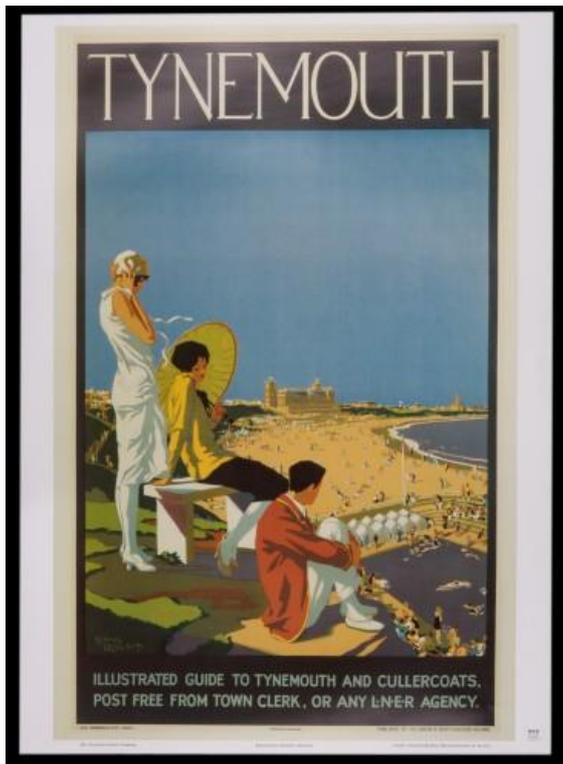
## **4.5 The emergence of particular types of scenery and discourses about walking and the countryside in railways posters, postcards and guidebooks**

### **4.5.1 Railway posters**

Posters and guides were widely available and encouraged visitors to take trains for day excursions to the country and seaside, or walk, cycle or drive to explore the countryside. The *Shell Guides* commissioned artists to encourage an influx of motorists and tourists. As Catherine Brace has commented in relation to the Batsford Guides of the 1930s this was art that did not appear on a wall or art gallery but was "tactile, portable, art-on-the-move" p 366(Brace 2003).

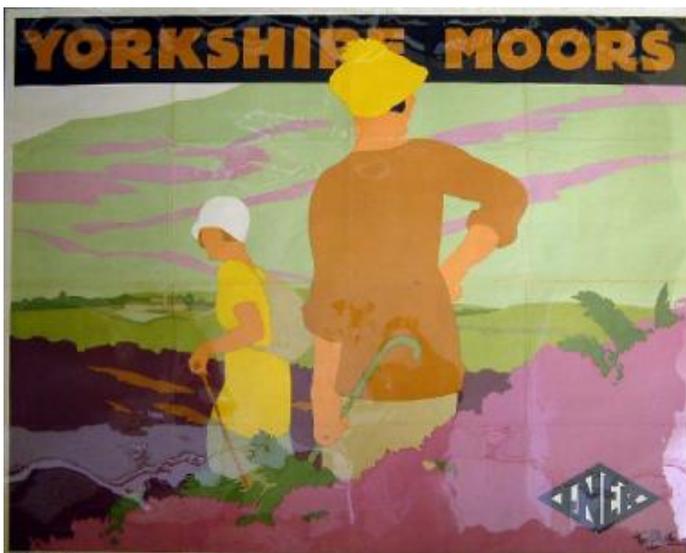
For those going by train, posters depicted sunny destinations like Clacton, or Cornwall, Southend-on-Sea, or Scarborough. The scenes showed crowded beaches often fronted by bathing beauties or jolly fishermen (Frost 2012). North East posters showed people frolicking on the beaches of Whitley Bay and Tynemouth, as well as interesting places to visit such as Bamburgh Castle, Durham Cathedral, High Force, and Hadrian's Wall. Railway posters in the interwar years had become more sophisticated, moving away from multiple images of places to visit to a central image and short title. The posters symbolised "Englishness, history, pleasure, recreation, romance and style" (Frost 2012 p.23). For example, the poster for Carlisle showed a mediaeval knight on horseback within the castle walls, whilst through the drawbridge is glimpsed an enticing road leading out across an ancient arched bridge to snow covered peaks beyond (ibid. p.33). One for the Cornish Riviera showed a more traditional landscape scene with three sailing dinghies moored in a tranquil cove where little cottages rise up behind onto the green hills. A single man is standing under a palm tree in the foreground. The North was shown as exciting, romantic, and wild, whilst those of the South showed more tranquil, gentle scenes.

The posters depicted the outside as a place for enjoyment. Being outside and physically active was shown as fun, and what people should be doing in their free time. The poster for Tynemouth (seen below) shows, for example, a typical scene with people strolling on the beach and swimming in the sea lido below in brilliant sunshine.



**Tynemouth, National Railway Museum Science & Society Picture Library**

There were also posters demonstrating the enjoyment of looking at a traditional landscape for quiet contemplation. For others there was the lure of picturesque castles, or old cathedrals and abbeys to visit. There were posters specifically aimed at walkers. The LNER ran a poster campaign encouraging people to take trains and then ramble on the North York Moors. The cover of *Ramble On* by McKay (McKay 2012) reproduces a famous LNER railway poster showing two ramblers with their backpacks striding along a sea path, and one for the Yorkshire Moors (below) shows two female walkers.



**Ramblers, National Railway Museum Science & Society Picture Library**

There were images of walkers in painting as well, as in the painting by James Walker Tucker in the Laing Art Gallery, Newcastle upon Tyne. The painting is called “Hiking” (<http://artuk.org/discover/artworks/hiking-36495>) and was painted around 1936. It shows three energetic young women hikers pouring over a map. There is a confidence about the walkers underlining that women were quite at ease with hiking and reading maps. The countryside below (presumably where the hikers are going) shows a small, peaceful village with the squared church tower emphasising the solidity of the buildings. The countryside has also become a place for active, young walkers (and female walkers) who engage with the countryside rather than the pretty scenes of rustic peasants decorating the countryside as in paintings by Birkett Foster.

#### **4.5.2 The Shell Guides**

The Shell Guides were first printed in the 1930s under the editorial control of Sir John Betjeman and the artist, John Piper, and were instrumental in creating a certain view of the countryside, to some extent defining taste and educating people in how to see the countryside and what to look at. Betjeman and Piper used both words and images to take guidebooks from a gazetteer with just a list of towns and villages with some dry facts about populations and major industries, to one that would entice the motorist to explore the countryside. Betjeman was keen to write guides for the discerning middle class drivers. They presented interesting places and things to see that it assumed the day tripper (largely working class) would not be interested in. The guides written by several authors reflect the somewhat eclectic taste of those authors (Heathcote 2011 p. 95). Key artists of the time were involved in various guides and responsible for their look. Piper was responsible for many guides, Paul Nash produced the Dorset Guide with a mixture of woodcuts, photos and paintings, and Stephen Bone, worked on the West of Scotland guide. For Betjeman it was a chance to write about his love of architecture and particularly Victorian architecture. Others focussed on ancient monuments. The Shell posters famously produced a poster of Stonehenge (by Edward McKnight Kauffer, 1931) which was adopted by advertisers as a symbol of Britain (Anderson, Meyrick, and Nahum 2008 p.39). Piper in particular was interested in archaeology and old churches. As arbiters of appropriate good taste the guides contrasted commercialism and heavy industry unfavourably to the elegance and beauty of fine architecture such as the Crescent in Bath or an Adam’s designed stately home, or an interesting stone circle. These guides were very popular and were revived in the 1950s and continued being produced into the 1980s.

The earliest guides were of the Southern counties. The Northumberland & Durham Guide (1937) was written by Thomas Sharp and one of the few guides to concentrate on social concerns rather than the countryside. This was a portrait of a grim, industrial north. Photographs showed individuals working in industry or standing at the door of working men's clubs, much in the vein of the Mass Observation photographs. There was little about which stately homes or castles to visit. There was for example no mention on the entry for Holy Island of the castle redesigned and rebuilt by the famous architect, Lutyens, which one imagines Betjeman would have been unlikely to ignore. The guide for the West Coast of Scotland (1938) was more in tune with Betjeman's ideas. It did not dwell on the industrial heritage and instead presented a series of themes on Gaelic, tartan and the clans. This more traditional guide was compiled by an artist, Stephen Bone, used to sketching and visiting the countryside.

Other popular guides of the time such as the Batsford series of countryside books also articulated links between the countryside and nationhood (Brace 2003). The advertising copy for the books states that they were intended to give "a true picture of the land whose freedom we are defending today: its fine traditions of craftsmanship, and the life and work of its countryside, evolved through centuries of peaceful endeavour". Early dust jackets for the Batsford Countryside Books are recognizably art deco in style but without any modern representation of technology and machines. Different elements were brought together and the view framed to produce a certain depiction of England. Thus for example, for the cover of the Devon guide there were different elements from different parts of the country making a picture of what the ideal landscape should be. The coast looks as if it could be from Devon (Sidmouth or Budleigh Salterton) where red sandstone cliffs rise up from a curving beach but the village shown was in fact based on one in the Cotswolds. This was not an actual representation of a place in Devon but a compilation: a picture of what Devon ought to look like. Although eschewing most signs of modernity, the guides embraced the new colours for printing, creating brighter pictures. Some of the guides use a view over the land as if from a low flying aeroplane. The space and fields stretch away into the distance. The viewer was left with an idealised form of the landscape, peaceful, managed and based around the archetypal English village.

### 4.5.3 Shell Posters

In addition to the *Shell Guides*, a series of advertising posters were produced by Shell during the 1920s and 1930s. Many of the famous artists worked on the posters and for many this was their first commissioned work. The roll call of artists included Graham Sutherland, Paul Nash, Ben Nicholson, Hans Feibusch, Vanessa Bell, Duncan Grant and the graphic designer, Edward McKnight Kauffer (Shell 1998). Posters appeared on the sides of Shell delivery lorries, advertising hoardings and at petrol stations. Earlier posters concentrated on the oil and petrol Shell products being good for the car (Shell 1998). So for example, posters depicted petrol garages with smiling attendants, or pictures of racing cars. However, very quickly the emphasis moved to showing pictures of the places people could visit in their cars and were designed to appeal to the tastes of aspiring middle class car owners.

To begin with in the 1920s, however, the appeal was to the upper middle class (see Hewitt in introduction (Shell 1998)). De Fouqueray's poster of "Sma' Glen Crieiff" 1923 for the *See Britain First – on Shell* advertising campaign shows some very well to do tourists in their cars approaching a Highland Glen. As Hewitt points out, even if these people do not own the land, they act as if they are comfortable in it. Later posters depict places of interest, for example ancient monuments, probably most famously the one of Stonehenge by McKnight Kauffer 1931, and the Giant of Cerne Abbas by F. Dobson. These posters were again under the campaign to *See Britain First – On Shell*, and so contributed to reinforcing in particular the identity for Britain. There were posters of stately homes, ruined abbeys and follies, much in the way the Shell guides concentrated on these as places of interest to visit. There were pictures of more bucolic landscapes like the old rustic mills and ruined abbeys painted by Rosemary and Clifford Ellis or the rolling arable farmland of Eric George's 1932 Marwood, North Devon. In the latter all that disturbs the peace is a man on a horse and another with a rake or scythe. Indeed most of these posters showing beauty spots in Britain depict landscapes utterly devoid of any motorists, garages, or telegraph poles. This is an empty, peaceful landscape inviting the motorist to enjoy the space and tranquillity.

This is not to say that the posters did not also embrace modernity. In the same way that the Shell guides embraced a new way of depicting landscape, many of these poster artists were modernists and landscapes were filtered through that modernist lens. Stuart Hill's poster of Mousehole in Cornwall (1932) is in the style of the Vorticists. This is

not a conventional study of picturesque cottages by a pretty harbour. Instead a railway track and road fall dizzyingly down in a swooping series of curves round the coast and into a town of grey cubes of houses. The sea to one side is a stylized pattern of straight, horizontal blue and white lines. These are cut by a slanting diagonal of slightly lighter tones depicting light falling across the waves. Sutherland's poster of Brimham Rocks in Yorkshire depicts them as strange forms like a Henry Moore sculpture, and the colours are lurid yellows, oranges, ochre, dull green, and greys. Even the clouds are a peculiar shape like bent wings. There was also a series of posters *British Industries* (Frost 2012) showing groups of industrial workers outside factories and mines. Robinson's poster in 1924 showed workers in a cotton mill, albeit a very tidy and clean looking mill, and there is one by George Clausen of miners walking past a pit.

Castles, ruined abbeys, and pretty waterfalls were still important places to visit. There was a new fascination with ancient monuments which are often presented as strange and other. They are not the cleaned up, freshly mowed ancient monuments with handy brown signs and notice boards of present day Britain. There was a continuing dialogue about the place of modernism and modernist styles. The Shell Guides and posters in particular introduced more abstract and surrealist ways of looking at landscapes. Traditional bucolic landscapes though persisted, especially in the covers of the Batsford and other guides but these now look old-fashioned. The countryside was to be enjoyed by walkers but also car owners and was often depicted as empty of people.

#### 4.6 Conclusion

The inter-war years were an important time for establishing a set of particular discourses that contributed to both moral and cultural values associated with the countryside and to walking in the countryside that continue to be influential. These included ideas about the body, the circulation of forms of visual imagery, and institutions. There is a sense of a cultural landscape that emerges at this time in relation to walking and the countryside that contributed to the enduring popularity of walking and how walkers might engage with landscapes.

There were growing numbers of people taking to the countryside for exploration and recreation. Some of these were day trippers just on a day's jaunt to the seaside. Others were serious walkers, perhaps starting out in the guides and scout groups and then

joining the Youth Hostel Association or Ramblers Association to get away for weekends into the hills and countryside. These would have been people encouraged to travel by car and train to go walking encouraged by guides and posters. In addition, there were the beginnings of opening up the countryside to wider access. Although the Acts making private land more accessible to the public and the creation of national parks had to wait until after the Second World War, the genesis of change began at this time. Access to walk on private land remained a contested issue. The outdoors was seen as a space for healthy and improving exercise but there was an improving or moral side to outdoor exercise. Being out in the countryside was meant to improve both the body and the mind, to educate and to encourage contemplation. Thus walkers in the countryside were encouraged to engage with the landscapes in particular ways, to see the beautiful views and be contemplative. The political edge of the rebellious trespassers was not supported by the establishment who favoured a more gentle approach to enjoying the countryside.

The revival in landscape painting in the interwar period was not a slavish reproduction of Turner or Constable paintings. It was not a return to the picturesque prettiness of Birkett-Foster or the “endless lingering autumns and golden twilights” or painting of “cows in a landscape” that the Royal Academy received at the end of the nineteenth century (McConkey in (Corbett, Holt, and Russell 2002))<sup>14</sup>. Instead landscape artists experimented with modernist ideas of abstraction and surrealism. Some embraced abstraction wholeheartedly like Lanyon or Hepworth. Others like Ravilious, Nash and Piper used elements of abstraction and surrealism to create new ways of seeing the landscape. Englishness or Britishness was not interpreted as a bucolic rural idyll but concerned deeper, more ancient, and more mythological attachments to the landscape. Landscapes evoked the peacefulness of the countryside, with many images of security. The countryside was a place of spiritual and physical renewal.

At the same time as these artists were creating paintings, many were also designing those railway posters and county guides just discussed that were encouraging the general public to get out into the countryside. So their artwork cannot be seen in isolation, as rarefied pieces of work consigned to galleries. Through railway posters

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<sup>14</sup> “The essential recipe was a bit of murky swamp, some distant hills, a few proud elms or firs, or sheep and cattle returning to the fold, bound together in an autumn fireglow.” (P. 70)

and the Shell Guides and posters they were instrumental in creating new and different ways of looking at the countryside, moulding taste for particular places to visit and particular places to look at.

The traditional picturesque visions of crumbling castles and abbeys set in lush countryside, or romantic scenes of lakes and mountains did persist, especially in some guides, postcards, and the sort of photographs people were encouraged to take to record their own memories. However, as discussed the guides and posters also reflected modernist ways of presenting the world through surrealistic juxtaposition of images, surrealistic ways of looking at objects, and designs that used elements of abstraction and Vorticism. Some even presented less idyllic pictures of places in the posters and guides showing industrial workers in Northern towns. In addition to ancient abbeys and castle, the posters and guides also reflected the new interest in pre-historic sites. Whilst guides and posters may have presented glossy and sometimes composite “ideal”, pictures of places, they did also contribute to the continuing importance of sense of place. Perhaps they did not go as far as some of the paintings into presenting the mythical and otherworldliness of certain spaces, but the sense of particular places remained important.

Northern landscapes in posters were often presented visually along similar lines to more Southerly landscapes. Thus, for example, the poster for Tynemouth showing Longsands Bay discussed above shows people frolicking on the beach and the open air lido, and could in fact be a South Coast resort. The guides, however, did focus more on the industrial side of the North, and certain of the Shell Posters also. Cities were places to escape from, with the countryside presented as peaceful and unpopulated. There is a sense too of the unruliness of the city working classes, as the trespassers on Kinder Scout or the day trippers going to Blackpool to enjoy themselves. Landowners and the aspirant middle classes were keen to preserve the countryside as a place of education and improvement. Giving people access to the country to learn more about culture and give people the opportunity for Wordsworthian contemplation of nature (perhaps even inspire them to write poetry) was viewed favourably by the government and establishment; a large group of working classes asserting their right to roam on private land was a different matter.

The walking and outdoor movements at this time, together with the artistic interest in landscape contributed to defining an ideal of Britishness and, at the time of the Second World War, defined what sort of country people were fighting for. This was not just a superficial engagement with landscape but a more refined idea such as articulated by Herbert Read. The belonging now was to a more ancient landscape, pre-industrial revolution and pre-enclosure acts where members of the public were being encouraged and demanding more access to land for walking and recreation.

The next chapter examines how such ideas continue to inform the way the countryside and landscapes are presented today in magazines, television, guides and the internet. There are differences but it is evident that the ideas about and ways of engaging with the countryside from the inter-war years continue to have resonance.

## **Chapter 5 – Current context**

### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter considers how views and attitudes to walking have changed since the inter-war years, what might be the range and sources for current visual influences for walkers, and how these have arisen and been disseminated. The countryside is now more accessible to the general public through public transport and car ownership, although this is still largely an experience for White middle class tourists (Taylor 1994 p. 275). Organizations such as the National Trust, Forestry Commission and the National Parks have preserved and conserved the landscape, opening up managed walks and trails. Workers, rather than fleeing grimy, industrial cities to find peace and clean air in the countryside or on the coast in the UK at holiday times, are as likely to spend leisure time in cities, or fly abroad for cheap holidays. People do though still go walking in the countryside in large numbers and often in organised groups.

The production and consumption of images and ways of communicating ideas that contribute to the current discourses about walking have become much more diffuse. Walkers can watch specialist television programmes, read books, and search the internet for walks and walking groups. Google Maps and Google Earth provide resources for looking at landscapes as maps or satellite pictures. Phone apps are used to guide people around walks. This chapter reflects on current key impulses, typologies and conventions in ways of representing and thinking about the countryside. The chapter explores how far representations and attitudes towards walking in the countryside have changed since the interwar years. There was found to be a legacy of certain discourses and preoccupations which are evident in the way the countryside and walking in the countryside are presented and the way walkers are expected to engage with the countryside.

### **5.2 Walking in the countryside today**

It might appear that the problems of access to land for walking seen in the inter-war years have largely been overcome. Today large tracts of land are owned by National Trust, and increased access to land has been made possible through the Countryside and

Rights Of Way (CROW) Act in 2000 which provided access to land “comprising mountain, moor, heath, down, and registered common land, and contains provisions for extending the right to coastal land”<sup>15</sup>. This might seem a huge step forward in opening up land to public access, and is an improvement from the restrictions in place before the Kinder Scout Trespass, but the Act also safeguards provision for landowners to maintain rights to farmland and provision for safeguarding wildlife (for example with restrictions on access to Sites of Special Scientific Interest).

Access and rights to access remain key issues for the Ramblers’ organisation. The summer issue of Walk magazine (2012) celebrating the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Ramblers had major articles on the history of increasing access, beginning with the Kinder Scout trespass, and an article by Roy Hattersley “The land belongs to us” celebrating the trespass and the public’s right to walk. The latest Ramblers’ campaign is to create access right around the coast of Britain. There is no guarantee that such rights to access are secure. In 2011 arguments about public access again came to the fore as government policies to sell off public forests and woodland threatened to impact on using the countryside for leisure (Watt and Vidal 2011). Currently there are campaigns against the proliferation of wind farms on the grounds that they might spoil the views from National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Many of these sites are on private land but visitors using the National Parks want to have a say over the countryside as viewed from National Parks<sup>16</sup>. This is moreover part of the North/South debate with the North being targeted as a suitable place for development because it is more sparsely populated and regarded as “desolate” by at least one Tory peer<sup>17</sup>.

Much of the landscape for walking is managed. Thus the National Trust in the Lake District has preserved a landscape which would be familiar to Wordsworth. Sheep graze on the uplands keeping the summits clear of vegetation and there have been few new woods planted. Indeed the so called “wild” moorland that walkers access was and is still managed for grouse shooting, with patches of heather burnt down on rotation every 10 to 15 years to provide the leaves of the bilberries that the young grouse feed

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<sup>15</sup> <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-1378>, accessed on 1 October 2013

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.ramblers.org.uk/england/what-we-do/ramblers-position-on/windfarms-and-renewable-energy-england.aspx>, accessed on 1 October 2013

<sup>17</sup> Lord Howell, quoted in the Guardian 31 July 2013, speaking in favour of fracking in the North East.

off and flat areas (Leks) for mating displays.<sup>18</sup> Far from these being “unspoilt” areas that have been left to develop without intervention, the open landscape of the Cheviots or North Pennines is a landscape that is farmed for sheep or game, and has been maintained in this way for centuries. Current walking practices are often managed too at a group level with group leaders and hierarchies, the monitoring of direction and safety, and the requirement to take part in the collective and sociable side to walking (Edensor 2000 p. 100). Meanwhile guide books, or internet guides indicate the places walkers should visit. There has been a growth in managed trails and long-distance footpaths. In Northumberland in recent years long-distance trails have been created including Hadrian’s Wall, St Cuthbert’s Way, St Oswald’s Way, and in 2013 the College Valley path in the Cheviots. The Lake District now has a number of clear, stony tracks gouged into the earth that have followed Wainwright’s walks. Efforts to conserve the landscape have resulted in stone steps and flagstones being set into the ground where people are directed to walk.

This is not to imply that walking in the Pennines or the Lake District cannot be difficult. Given particular adverse weather conditions, these places can be lonely and dangerous for walkers. Mountain rescue teams are regularly called out to rescue those who are lost or injured. There is a tension between the way such areas are marketed as an area for tourists doing short walks, and specialist walkers who will go for longer and potentially more dangerous walks. For example, a family might go on a short walk to a waterfall by one of the lakes, and then take in tea and cakes in a nearby café before visiting a craft centre. A walker seeking “wild”, inaccessible and less popular landscapes would now probably look to the North of Scotland, the Cairngorms, or the Northern Pennines to find wilderness in Britain.

No longer is it enough to don a pair of stout boots, a woolly jumper and jacket to go walking. The present day walker is expected to know about latest waterproof gear, GPS (geographical positioning systems), or the right layers of clothing for different grades of walking. Walking in the countryside has become a specialised engagement with the landscape requiring and promoting its own uniform. Edensor has written of the “fetishizing” of boots and the “status-conscious” decisions about what gear to buy (Edensor 2000 pp. 98-99). Of course, such equipment can be practical and useful: on a

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<sup>1818</sup> Information from National Park Rangers on the Balmoral Estate on guided walk, May 2014.

wet walk in the Cheviots one does not wish to have leaky boots, or a coat that is not made of breathable material. However, walkers have now a certain visual image or uniform and have become consumers of specialist gear.

As well as being an arena for recreation, the natural environment is consistently now promoted by government, and in particular in public health policy, as a space for health, becoming, as shown in the literature review, a “transactional zone” for public health to promote physical activity and mental wellbeing (Brown and Bell 2007). In this can be seen the legacy of the inter-war years’ focus on the countryside as an area for health, activity and wellbeing. Walking in the countryside is still promoted to improve mental and physical health but this has become much more medicalised in government policies. The value of nature and the natural world is conceived of in medical terms as “an antidote” to ill health or de-stressor. Walking groups have engaged with this agenda. In 2011 The Ramblers took on responsibility for delivering Healthwalks for those who want to get fit in countryside and urban settings. Landscape for walking is here presented in terms of a “green gym” of the “Natural Health Service”<sup>19</sup>, a pleasant space where individuals can exercise, rather than considering that they may have any deeper connection to specific places or landscapes.

Despite the campaigning and health policy interest, membership of the Ramblers has fallen over the past 10 years, although the numbers were steady at around 107,000 in November 2014<sup>20</sup> in their latest figures. Similarly, the YHA has been forced to sell off several of their Youth Hostels because they were no longer economically viable. Whether this reflects a decrease in the number of walkers overall is difficult to gauge. It might be that the older organisations, such as Ramblers, which had their roots in working class desire to escape from the cities are no longer appropriate to a younger demographic that has grown up enjoying the amenities a city can offer, such as bars, cinemas, museums, music venues and festivals. On the other hand, visitors to National Parks or the National Trust properties number in the millions and some of these will

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<sup>19</sup> Briefing statement from the Faculty of Public Health in association with Natural England [http://www.fph.org.uk/uploads/bs\\_great\\_outdoors.pdf](http://www.fph.org.uk/uploads/bs_great_outdoors.pdf) accessed March 2015

<sup>20</sup> Minutes of the Board of Trustees meeting, November 2014, accessed February 2015  
<http://www.ramblers.org.uk/about-us/how-we-are-run/about-the-board-of-trustees/board-of-trustees-published-minutes.aspx>

walk as part of their visits<sup>21</sup>. Different sorts of walking organisations are now available including specialist groups e.g. women only groups, health walk groups, under 30s groups. An internet search for walking groups in Northumberland alone in 2015 found a list of 36 walking groups<sup>22</sup>. These included Ramblers, University of the Third Age and Health walking groups, the Long Distance Walkers Association, the Northumberland Railway Walks Society, and the Gay Outdoors Club. There were other guided walks organised locally by the National Parks and the National Trust. Walking in the countryside remains a popular activity.

### 5.3 Recent developments in landscape art

It is difficult to know how far contemporary landscape painters influence the way people look at and engage with landscape. They do not have the same access, as the inter-war artists did through their work on guides and posters, to a general public interested in exploring the countryside. Neither has there been a revival of interest in landscape as a subject for prominent artists such as there was in the inter-war years.

Nevertheless, it is easy to find exhibitions in major galleries on landscape painting. For example, in 2012 there were exhibitions at Tate Britain on the Romantics and watercolour; at the Laing in Newcastle on Watercolours; and at the Royal Academy on “Constable, Gainsborough, Turner and the Making of Landscape”. Tate Britain used the opportunity to showcase their own collection of famous paintings such as Turner’s *Blue Rigi* and Gilpin’s *The White House*, works by Ravilious and Nash along with more modern landscapes from Burra, Doig and Goldsworthy. The Laing in Newcastle similarly used paintings from its own collection and works by other well-recognised landscape painters such as Miles Birkett-Foster, Gilpin, Cox, Constable, Turner and Gainsborough. In 2014 there were major exhibitions of Turner (“Late Turner: painting set free”) at Tate Britain, and Constable (“The Making of a Master”) at the Victoria and Albert museum<sup>23</sup>, as well as Mike Leigh’s film “Mr Turner”. Although these exhibitions

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<sup>21</sup> For example, National Trust promotional material seeking donations to repair Lake District footpaths in September 2013 stated that 15 million people visit the Lake District every year.

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.walkinginnorthumberland.co.uk/groups.php> accessed April 2015

<sup>23</sup> Both these exhibitions received good reviews in the National press – see for example The Guardian 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> September 2015.

are probably relatively cheap to mount because they use much from own collections, they are popular. Such exhibitions reinforce the national cultural importance of landscape artists, particularly Turner and Constable.

Hockney is one of the few well known landscape painters working at the moment. He began painting landscapes of the Yorkshire Wolds when visiting his dying friend, Jonathan Silver, in 1997 (Hockney 2011 pp. 18-19). He then began working more in situ, trying to capture the changing light of different seasons as he explains when talking about painting a particular group of trees:

“In December, as I say, they are reaching for light, the branches. So once you’ve done the second one, you think, ‘Well, when spring comes along, and it is changing, I’ll do another.’ So I did.” (Hockney 2011 p. 29)

This is much in the vein of Constable and Turner, working in the open air, and capturing changes of light and natural growth, and he shares with Constable an emotional investment in a particular part of the country. His exhibitions here and in Europe have been well attended (for example, one at the Royal Academy in London - David Hockney RA: A Bigger Picture 21 Jan to 9<sup>th</sup> April 2012), and his gallery at Salts Mill in Yorkshire is popular.

The ‘Art Everywhere’ in 2013 event showed 57 artworks chosen by the public (the public voted on-line for their favourite pictures) in advertising spaces over Britain. Hockney’s *A Bigger Splash* 1967 was chosen rather than one of his more recent landscapes<sup>24</sup>. Peter Doig’s landscape, *Blotter* 1993 was chosen which shows a single figure stepping in melt water by a frozen pond next to a snow covered wood. Others chosen were more traditional landscape paintings, such as Constable’s *Salisbury Cathedral and the Meadows* 1831 and Gainsborough’s *Mr and Mrs Andrews* c1750. Samuel Palmer’s *In a Shoreham Garden* 1830 and Nash’s *Landscape of the Vernal Equinox* 1943 made the final 57. These choices reflected the continuing popularity of Romantic and neo-Romantic landscape painting.

The enthusiasm for landscape painting or photography has persisted locally with exhibitions in many small towns and villages. There are combined teashops and art galleries in Cumbria, the Yorkshire Dales and Northumberland. The depictions are not just traditional, representational pictures of pretty views of the countryside but use

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<sup>24</sup> Guardian supplement, Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> August 2013

mixed media and use more modernist styles such as abstraction. Northumberland has a yearly art tour where small galleries can be visited as part of a tourist package, and then there are numerous local watercolour art classes and painting holidays in rural idylls<sup>25</sup>.

One mainstream art movement of the last twenty years which walkers might be expected to encounter is Land art. Works of art are sited in specific landscapes, and sometimes used natural materials that were part of that landscape. For example, Richard Long's *A line made by walking* 1967 where the work of art is a path made through grass by walking along a track, or Andy Goldsworthy's snaking stone wall at Grizedale *Taking a wall for a walk*. Goldsworthy's work involves a connection to the physicality of landscape and to particularities of place:

“The energy and space around a material are as important as the energy and the space within. The weather—rain, sun, snow, hail, calm—is that external space made visible. When I touch a rock, I am touching and working the space around it. It is not independent of its surroundings and the way it sits tells how it came to be there. In an effort to understand why that rock is there and where it is going, I must work with it in the area in which I found it.”<sup>26</sup>

Land Art was largely non-representational and based on a deep and lasting relationship with the landscape and sometimes particular places. Land Artists can therefore be linked to Ingold's idea of dwelling in the landscape because the art is experiential, and the audience experiences it as part of the landscape. Such a way of thinking about artworks, and linking them to walking was embodied in sculpture trails or works of art situated besides public footpaths.

One of the early sculpture trails was at Grizedale, begun in 1977. The initial focus was on creating art from material found in the forest that would then decay over time leaving no trace (Grant and Harris 1991). There were tableaux of wild boar constructed from branches and twigs by Sally Mathews, runs of hollowed out tree trunks carrying water, and sculptures from local slate. Later sculptures were more overtly concerned with ecological messages, creating sculptures out of the detritus of modern living such as plastic bags and bottles. Grizedale reflected a concern for the land and the added

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<sup>25</sup> For example, the 2014 Holiday Fellowship (HF) Holiday brochure (which also provides walking holidays) advertises painting and drawing holidays in Coniston, Malham, Whitby, St Ives, Dolgellau, and Alnmouth.

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[http://www.ucblueash.edu/artcomm/web/w2005\\_2006/maria\\_Goldsworthy/philosophy.html](http://www.ucblueash.edu/artcomm/web/w2005_2006/maria_Goldsworthy/philosophy.html) accessed on 1 October 2013

contribution land art could make to an appreciation of the landscape. It was also concerned with artists' responses to specific landscapes, so that artists would come and work in an artistic community and their art be a part of this place. Indeed the initial guide to Grizedale refused to term this a sculpture trail or temporary exhibition, since these implied setting sculptures down in the landscape. Instead the guide describes 'a sculpture project', or an artist symposium where artists respond to the space (Grant and Harris 1991 p. 19).

Other sculpture trails followed. The Yorkshire Sculpture Park also began in 1977, and has 300,000 visitors a year visit the 500 acre site.<sup>27</sup> The Kielder Forest "art and architecture trail" began in 1995<sup>28</sup> and had 345,000 visitors in 2012<sup>29</sup>. Such walks are encouraged by organisations like the National Trust and the National Parks. This is a move away from urban galleries exhibiting pictures of landscapes, towards developing engagement with art outdoors in certain landscapes. Rather than being a visitor to a stately home, going around the building learning about the history of the place and viewing the fine objects and paintings on display, visitors are encouraged to walk through a forest, and think about their relation to the landscape through these works of art. Much as in the way the Shell Guides formed taste, guides to these artworks, now web based, describe what the visitor should be experiencing and what the value is of seeing such works such as this guide to James Turrell's Skyspace at Kielder -

"Visitors will find themselves in a space where the artist manipulates our normal perceptions of light and space. In daylight hours, this chamber; illuminated only by natural light through the roof opening, is a contemplative space that presents the ever-changing sky as a moving picture for visitor's enjoyment and meditation. As the light conditions change at dusk and dawn, a ring of hidden lights illuminate the upper part of the chamber and visitors can expect to experience a highly unusual display of tone and colour lasting up to an hour."<sup>30</sup>

The guide directs how people should experience the art work and emphasises the contemplative: that the visitor should engage in a ritual of looking. It reinforces the idea of the importance of specific locations, going to visit a place to obtain a particular experience.

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<sup>27</sup> <http://www.yssp.co.uk/page/about-yssp/es>, accessed on 24 September 2013

<sup>28</sup> <http://www.kielderartandarchitecture.com/plan-your-visit.html>

<sup>29</sup> <http://www.visitkielder.com/news/2013/02/north-east-engl-tourism-awards-winner>, accessed on 24 September 2013

<sup>30</sup> <http://www.kielderartandarchitecture.com/home.html> accessed on 24 September

[2013](#)

From the 1990s land art developed with more engagement with environmental issues and has been termed environmental art (Thornes 2008 p. 404; Tufnell and Gallery 2006). There continue to be exhibitions of land artists with those of Long, Goldsworthy and Turrell being popular. Such art provides a commentary on environmental issues as well as “raising awareness about the fragility of the environment” (Thornes 2008 p. 407). Although land art or environmental art remain popular for exhibitions, there are doubts about how far visitors go to places for the artworks. Today there are 40 sited artworks in Grizedale linked by a series of walks and cycle routes<sup>31</sup> but a recent survey in 2010 found that the trails for walking and biking were more important in attracting visitors, and most visitors enjoyed the art as an incidental pleasure (BMG-Group 2011).<sup>32</sup>

Compared to the interwar years there is not now the homogeneity and crossover of a group of artists engaging with new ways of representing landscape in fine art practice and also popular posters and guides. Many contemporary artists engage with contested landscapes and environments and deal with the aesthetics of sustainability, and ecology. Landscape painting remains popular but no longer mainstream. There are still attempts to create spaces where walkers or visitors to the countryside might see land art but this increasingly comes with proscribed ways of looking.

## 5.4 Guidebooks

Whilst some walkers might not be aware of landscape art, they might well be expected to have read and looked at the way landscape is presented in guidebooks. This section looks at guidebooks, beginning with Wainwright’s guides which remain very popular and have provided the blueprint for many subsequent walking guides.

### **Wainwright**

A section on guidebooks for walkers would not be complete without mentioning Wainwright’s guides. The guides were written in the 1950s-60s. The author was devoted to walking every weekend in the Lake District and compiled the handwritten and hand-drawn guides after returning to his boring office job in Preston. This was a

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<sup>31</sup> <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/inf-d-7hyebb>, accessed April 2015

<sup>32</sup> [http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/QOE\\_GRIZEDALE2010.pdf/\\$file/QOE\\_GRIZEDALE2010.pdf](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/QOE_GRIZEDALE2010.pdf/$file/QOE_GRIZEDALE2010.pdf)

man in the tradition of the Manchester Rambler working all week and then escaping to the countryside to walk. The man and the guides belong to an earlier time but his guides remain very popular as the Wainwright Walks website testifies:

“Another reason for the increase [in walking] is the popularity of a certain Mr Alfred Wainwright or AW as he is more fondly known. His work has never been more in the public eye with his original pictorial guides having reached their 50th anniversary and over 2 million sales worldwide. The guides have more recently been updated and revised to reflect the ever changing landscape of the Lake District. There’s also been several television series which have brought to life the unique style and charm portrayed in his hand written guides to the fells. 'Wainwright Walks' will give you the background to his life and work, together with valuable information on how to safely navigate the Lake District fells yourself, including what to do, where to go and what equipment you’ll need when you get there.”<sup>33</sup>

The guides have been updated and have been disseminated through the internet and TV. They remain a touchstone or pattern for other guides and indeed for walking in the Lake District and the Pennines.

The Lake District guides focus on climbing up and being on the top of hills. There is also sometimes (echoing the delight in the Spartan elements of walking in the inter-war years) a delight in overcoming the physical challenge (Edensor 2000). The maps show each of the several routes up an individual fell, fitting together to form a complete map of an area. These are not topographical representations of the landscape, rather pictures of what the outline of the fells would look like from the walker’s perspective, detailed line drawings of what might be experienced along the walks, such as views of crags or gorges. Occasionally there are pen and ink drawings of waterfalls or rocks on a summit. Sometimes there are diagrams showing the direction and distance to various peaks from the top of a fell. These are drawings of ascents – in Wainwright’s words, “neither plans nor elevations” - and the topography is distorted to show details that will be of interest or use to the walker.

One extraordinary thing about the books is that they were hand drawn and hand written and were printed directly from this. They embody therefore a kind of gifted amateurism, and the way they were constructed was at odds with mass circulation and modernity. In this way they appeal to the culture of unique, authentic travel, rather than commoner forms of tourism (cf (Buzard 1993 pp 81-82)). The guides are very practical

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<sup>33</sup> <http://wainwright-walks.co.uk/> accessed on 20<sup>th</sup> August 2014

and widely used still by walkers. Indeed they have been instrumental in popularising and opening up the Lake District and the Pennines to walkers. They fit easily inside a pocket and provide valuable, practical advice on the type of terrain that might be encountered on the walk:

“The Gatescarth route is particularly easy: a hands-in-pockets stroll with no steep climbing, the top being reached with surprising lack of effort. Nonagenarians will find it eminently suitable. Avoid Wren Gill in mist.” Harter Fell 7, *The Far Eastern Fells*. (Wainwright 1957)

Or this on Armboth Fell

“Squelch, squelch, squelch all the way. A wet and weary trudge along the swamiest ridge in the district.” Armboth Fell 6, *Central Fells* (Wainwright 1958)

The books also refer to the views that might be encountered. The good views are described in Romantic, even Wordsworthian prose:

“Grange Fell is nothing on the map, everything when beneath one’s feet. In small compass, here is concentrated the beauty, romance, interest and excitement of the typical Lakeland scene. Here Nature has given of her very best and produced a loveliness that is exquisite.” Grange Fell, *Central Fells* (Wainwright 1958)

This is graced by one of Wainwright’s own line drawings of the fell bathed in shafts of sunlight. He has been moved by the view to capture the image on paper, not to photograph it, but take time to be immersed in the landscape and draw it, in an attempt to express its beauty and romance

The bad ones fall short of the romantic and sublime ideal:

“Ullscarf will generally be adjudged the most central and it is a pity that Nature has not endowed it with a distinctive superstructure worthy of the honour. If only the crags extended a thousand feet higher, and if only the summit took the shape of a Matterhorn! Instead of which, the top of the fell is the dullest imaginable...The top of Ullscarf is a cheerless place, even in sunshine; in storm there is no vestige of shelter.” (Wainwright 1958)

There is a line drawing of the fell subtitled “a study in desolation” and a picture of “The bog”. There is a sense of humour about this but also a ranking of the Fells according to the views they can deliver.

There is a rare and famous self-portrait (seen below):

“The space thus saved by the top-sided diagram is devoted, as a special treat for readers, to a picture of the author apparently contemplating the view (but more likely wondering if it’s time to be eating his sandwiches) from a precarious

stance on the edge of Raven Crag.” Raven Crag 4, Central Fells (Wainwright 1958)

Again there is the self-deprecating humour but it is an important view of the author as the lone walker, complete with rucksack and hiking boots, hands in pockets on top of a crag looking down to the lake.

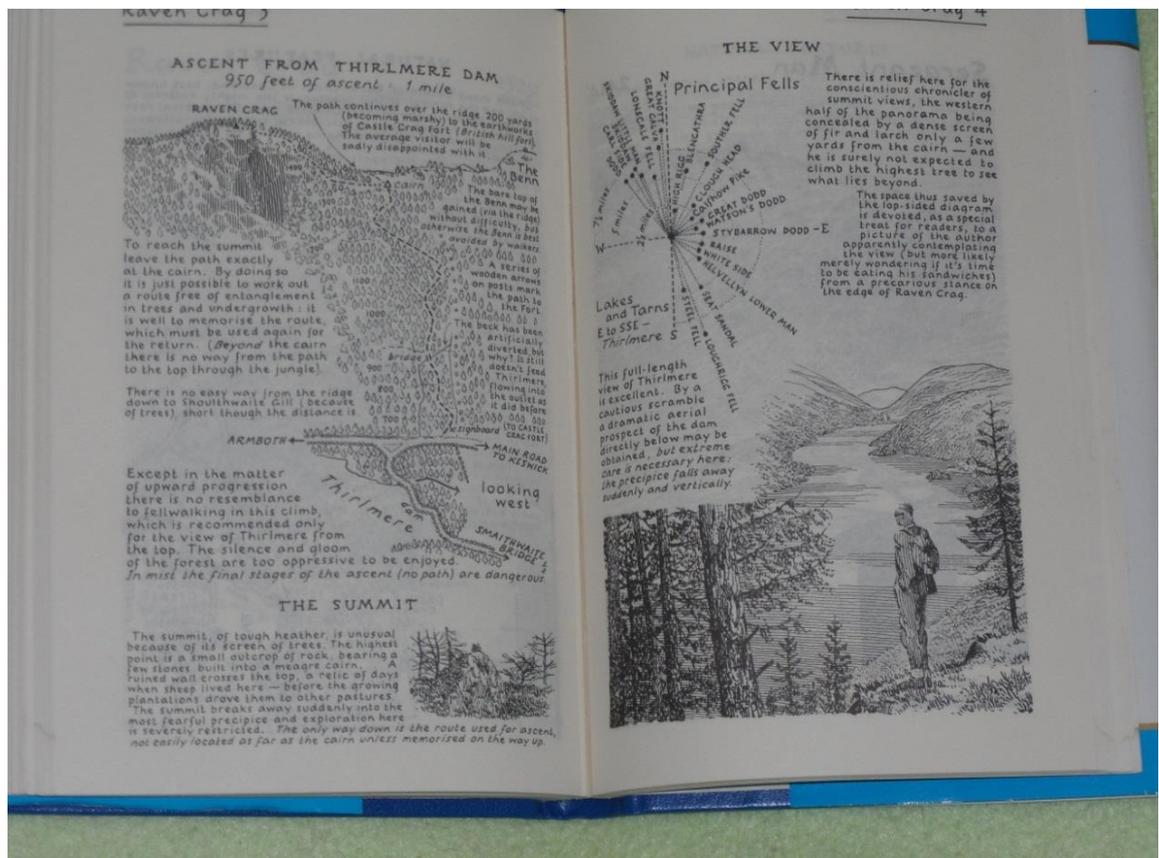


Photo: B Harrington of Raven Crag, Central Fells by A Wainwright ©

The tone throughout is authorial. Judgements about the landscape are made partly on the basis of the terrain traversed but more important are the views, sublimity and grandeur of the scenes. What the eye sees is important but it is seen through a Romantic lens. In their handcrafted nature and the fact that they were written 40 or 50 years ago, the books seem old-fashioned. They were written by someone escaping his mundane job as a tax inspector, who travelled by bus and battered old car at the weekends and who represents probably one of the last generations to be driven out of dirty, industrial cities to escape into the countryside. However, the books remain hugely popular aided by a TV series with Wainwright in the 1980s and reinvented in 2000s with Julia Bradbury. His is a particular way of seeing the landscape that has persisted.

### Walking Guidebooks

The walker now has access to a number of different guides in hard copy and on the web for walks all over Britain, as well as walks leaflets from National Parks and the National Trust information centres. These usually present a small map accompanied by written directions and sometimes a photograph or line drawing of what might be of interest on the walks. These are similar to the Shell guide books and posters in terms of what sorts of places should be visited but are stylistically less innovative. The covers of guidebooks present the viewer with a very particular view of the landscapes<sup>34</sup>, many of which owe a great debt to the Romantic traditions of landscape painting. There are scenes of mountains in clear bright sunshine, misty blurred outlines of mountain ranges, photos of the Lake District showing a traditional scene with a lake in the foreground and mountains in the background, or photos of a single figure perched high at the top of a summit or on a rock platform projecting out over a valley, looking out at a panoramic view stretching away into the distance below his (and they often are male figures) feet. A key point of reference is the lone Romantic hero as seen in the Caspar David Friedrich painting of the Wanderer looking over the misty mountain tops below.



**Caspar David Friedrich**

*Der Wanderer über dem Nebelmeer*

*1818 –Kunsthalle Hamburg*

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<sup>34</sup> Covers of guidebooks were accessed over the internet  
<http://www.cicerone.co.uk/product/index.cfm/menu/36/cid/39/catalogue/walks---british-isles>  
[http://www.amazon.co.uk/s/ref=nb\\_sb\\_noss\\_1?url=search-alias%3Daps&field-keywords=walking+guides#/](http://www.amazon.co.uk/s/ref=nb_sb_noss_1?url=search-alias%3Daps&field-keywords=walking+guides#/)

The misty views of the Lake District, although perhaps running the slight risk of not appealing to the potential visitor by showing bad weather, are very Turner-esque and are used presumably because the audience wants to experience or understands that this is the way to understand and value such landscapes. The books' covers rarely show groups of walkers going for a walk. The guidebooks' initial appeal is to the Romantic walker, walking with a close friend, enjoying the space and dramatic scenery.

The guides to areas without significant hills have views of empty, white sandy beaches (e.g. Cicerone guide to walking on the Gower Peninsular), picturesque castles, or a view across rolling countryside. Again one can find parallels for example in Constable's sweeping view of Lyme Bay, or Turner's painting of Dunstanburgh Castle, or the rolling landscapes of Constable's depictions of the Stour Valley. Places of antiquity are still prominent, as in the Cicerone guide to walking the North Downs which has a view of the White Horse in the distance. These, the guides imply, are the things worth seeing and will entice the walker to go out. The appeal is, as Buzard (Buzard 1993 pp. 81-82) describes, to a true traveller experiencing the world rather than a day tripper just ticking off the sites. In this they share much with the Shell Guides, focusing on similar sites of interest and continuing the myth of the empty countryside. The message from these new guides is that like the Romantic hero (although in this age with very good walking gear and a smallish rucksack), the walker will discover a new world, outside of humdrum modernity.

Because the thesis is concerned with those who walk in Northern Landscapes and the way these are presented and engaged with, a selection of the guides for this area were also reviewed. The Lake District guides have mostly views of mountains which might reflect Wainwright's influence in detailing walks up the fells, rather than views of walks and waterfalls around the lakes. The Northumberland guides present pictures of wild moorland, dramatic castles, Holy Island and Hadrian's Wall. For the North Pennines there are photographs of Durham Cathedral, wide open moorland, and the great waterfall of High Force. Noticeably absent are views of villages, or any modern buildings. The covers are not markedly different in terms of subject matter and presentation to those of the Southern landscapes where walkers are invited to enjoy prehistoric sites and pretty villages:

“Some of the walks visit the ancient sites of Iron Age hillforts while others pass more modern features such as Wilton Windmill and the Kennet and Avon Canal.

Many pass through picturesque villages with cosy pubs, thatched cottages and fascinating old churches. Some follow sections of the Ridgeway National Trail, which links some of the oldest ‘green’ roads in Britain, while others meander gently along the banks of the River Thames following the Thames Path. All the walks have one thing in common: they introduce the adventurous Rambler to some of the best parts of the region.”<sup>35</sup>

Walkers in Northumberland are expected to enjoy a wilder landscape:

“Walkers will experience wild walks, craggy ascents, forest treks and gentle riverside strolls that cover endless miles of sandy bays, rippling dunes and rocky points.”<sup>36</sup>

Nevertheless they will also have the chance to experience “massive castles and pensive priories,”<sup>37</sup>. There are some scenes of the rolling Cheviot Hills looking down valleys, or up to crags. There is the odd lonely farmhouse or a sole hiker enjoying the emptiness. The weather is always sunny, even in the photograph of Hedgehope (a big hill in the Cheviots) in the snow.

What these guides share with the interwar Shell Guides and posters are the places of interest for the visitor – the castles, abbeys, churches and the prehistoric monuments – and their referencing of picturesque and Romantic images. Visitors are still assumed to want a landscape largely empty of people where solitary contemplation of the beauties of nature can occur. Where they differ is in having no equivalent to the inter-war years’ modernist depictions using abstraction, cubism, or surrealism. There is also none of the emphasis on industry as was seen in the early Shell Guide to Northumberland, although some of the walks include looking at the remains of the comfortably distant industrial past such as old lead mines or aqueducts. However, this is very much industry as comfortable heritage. In general, these guides seem much more like the Batsford Guides or the more old-fashioned guides from the 1930s presenting a tame, view of Britain – back to Britain as Taylor’s “reliable make” (Taylor 1994 pp. 120-151).

## 5.5 Walking and new technology

Although printed guides and leaflets are still available and much used, today’s walker can access new technology. Walkers can use Google Earth, for example, to look at satellite pictures of the landscape and then toggle to a topographical map. There are

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<sup>35</sup> <http://www.cicerone.co.uk/product/detail.cfm/book/570/title/walking-in-the-thames-valley>, accessed on 24<sup>th</sup> September 2013

<sup>36</sup> <http://www.cicerone.co.uk/product/detail.cfm/book/428/title/walking-in-northumberland>, accessed on 24<sup>th</sup> September 2013

<sup>37</sup> <http://www.cicerone.co.uk/product/detail.cfm/book/428/title/walking-in-northumberland>, accessed on 24<sup>th</sup> September 2013

websites with local walks that one would use much as guidebooks and have similar views and concerns as the guidebooks. Ramblers have a website and many walking festivals have webpages. These tend to have more pictures of groups of walkers but even walking festivals such as one in Keswick show a photo of two walkers looking at a stunning view of unpopulated lakes and fells with the strapline “Discover the tranquillity of the Lake District.”

Walks for Northumberland can be found on the internet and downloaded via websites from the Northumberland National Park, National Trust, and Northumberland County Council’s website as well as Independent websites such as one called Walking Britain edited by Lou Johnson, or North of Tyne Walks by Norman MacKillop.<sup>38</sup> Most provide a small section from an Ordnance Survey map and written directions, and a bigger regional map locating the walk. Places of interest are mentioned which are similar to those the guidebooks show - the castles, waterfalls, beaches and ancient monuments<sup>39</sup>. Sometimes, as for National Trust and North of Tyne walks, there are photographs taken along the way as part of the directions.

There are phone apps such as the recent one from Dove Cottage<sup>40</sup>, where a walker can use the phone and GPS to explore the landscape that has been shown in an exhibition of paintings. Once again the experience is managed with walkers encouraged to do the following:

- “Compare the old views, as seen on your smartphone screen, with the 'live' view, as it is today, and take your own photographs.
- Can you find the exact spot where you think the view was originally painted?
- What has changed?
- What has stayed the same?
- You can find the locations of the viewpoints by using the GPS tracker on the App map, which will indicate where you are and when you are at the viewpoint.”

The app also provides hints for how you can find the best location to take your photographs.<sup>41</sup> As with the instructions for Turrell’s Skyspace, it is as if walkers are now urged to visit the country with the modern day equivalent of the Claude glass:

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<sup>38</sup> <http://www.walkingbritain.co.uk/index.php> accessed on 27<sup>th</sup> September 2013  
<http://www.northofthetyne.co.uk/walks.html> accessed on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2013

<sup>39</sup> For example, The North of Tyne Walks includes photographs of St Cuthbert’s Cave and a Pele Tower on a walk near Belford.

<sup>40</sup> Dove Cottage is William Wordsworth’s former home in Grasmere, and now the Wordsworth Museum.

<sup>41</sup> <https://wordsworth.org.uk/pen-paint-pixels/smartphone-app.html> accessed on 8 October 2013

directed to what they should look at, directed to compare and contrast the views historically, and finally directed as to particular views that should be recorded as photographs.

## 5.6 Walking magazines

Walkers can access a number of specialist magazines. Three of these magazines seen below (*Trail Magazine*, *Walking*, and *Walk*, the official magazine of the Ramblers organisation) were compared part way through the research, prior to the interviews, in order to provide a snapshot of how the countryside was presented for walkers. The magazines are similar including articles on why people go walking, descriptions of particular walks or walking holidays, maps of walks and walking gear, but are designed to appeal to different types of walker.

*Trail Magazine* (June 2012) is aimed at the serious, committed and young walker. The articles are about how to ‘bag a Munro’, ‘conquering’ mountains, ‘splendid’ climbs, how to do a ‘grade A scramble’. The language used is redolent of going on a quest with a stress on the physicality of the experience. This magazine is for walkers who want to dominate the mountains, and for whom a tough, physical challenge is to be welcomed. Much of the language is aimed at adventurous walkers and young people – probably men. The pictures of landscape are of mountain peaks and people at the top or walking along ridges. The cover, for example, shows a walker/climber in dark silhouette climbing using hands and feet up an exposed edge of a hill/mountain in the Scafell range (strapline “it’s easier than it looks”) looking down on the valley far below and across to other large peaks in the distance.

In *Trail* the images of landscapes are given a Romantic gloss, with empty wide vistas and dramatic mountains. Sca Fell peak is featured because it is the highest in England, and therefore worthy of note to readers of this magazine. Sca Fell is apparently “*the Lake District’s most muscular mountain monster*.” (Trail, June 2012, p. 21). Despite this emphasis on the physical achievement of the climb, the scenery and views remain important. Thus, there is a reproduction of one of William Heaton Cooper’s paintings of Sca Fell Pike (1936) enclosed in a print of an old master picture frame, as well as photos of the Fell. This is a strange pictorial reference, rather at odds with the modern, youthful, emphasis of the rest of the magazine. Putting the print in a printed frame highlights its antiquity but this is presented not as an object of scorn but of veneration.

The painting is there as a signifier of the beauty of the landscape. Since the Fell was worthy of being painted, it is therefore of value. The picture is a Romantic composition of dark forbidding crags and buttresses below whilst the upper tops fade into mists. To one side there is a waterfall which starts in a patch of golden mist at a valley towards the top of the peaks. No paths are shown, so that this is depicted as a wild place untouched by humans.

Much of *Trail* magazine is taken up with gear: what to buy, recommendations, and adverts. The adverts show more extreme mountaineering than the other 2 magazines. Walkers are shown stretched across cliffs climbing free form, or fell running, or hanging off cliffs on a rope and one hand. The message is about overcoming fear, embracing danger, and being tough enough and fit enough to handle it. The danger is exciting and presented therefore as a sublime experience – to be in awe of something but to enjoy that feeling of awe and anxiety. Although women appear in the magazine (fit and young women), this seems to be a product presenting traditional masculine ideas, playing up danger, overcoming fear to ascend great heights or get through endurance tests, obsessing about equipment, and equipment aimed more at mountaineering (for example, advertisements for 4 season sleeping bags). It presents man (and very often it is a man in this magazine) in competition with nature.

Unlike *Trail*, *Walk Magazine* is aimed at middle age or older people, although there are references to getting children and young people walking. Prior to 2012 there was a big emphasis in the magazine on walking for health, and getting people involved on health walks. The emphasis has changed in recent years, around the time of the furore about the government's plans to sell off forests in 2012, and now the campaigning side of the Ramblers has come to the fore, especially around the time of the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the mass trespass at Kinder Scout in 2014. Ramblers appear to have reconnected with its campaigning roots with articles at this time about campaigning for a coastal footpath.

The cover of the summer 2012 edition of *Walk* has a montage of the Olympic stadium, bunting, and hikers going through fields of corn. The pictures inside are a mix of bucolic, gentle, typically southern English landscape such as the Olympic rowing venue in front of Windsor Castle, the Bedfordshire downs with a couple sitting on a seat overlooking a patchwork of fields in the valley below, or Exmoor blooming with heather and gorse. The edition is referencing the celebrations around the London

Olympics and the Royal Jubilee. Thus the magazine becomes rather like those photos of “This is England” in *Picture Post*, a celebration of English and Englishness drawing on ideas of England as the green and pleasant land.

*Country Walking Magazine* (June 2012) provides a middle of the road view of walking. It is fronted by the almost ubiquitous Julia Bradbury walking in the Lake District. The Lake District and Scotland are presented as the best places to walk but there are photographs as well of the gentler rolling landscape of the South. Julia Bradbury is the main focus of the picture. Her striding figure looking to camera is in the foreground, with some rolling Lakeland hills in the background and the lush green valley floor with a lake in the middle ground. Inside are pictures of dramatic scenery – Lakeland, the Alps, the Scottish mountains – and of people perched on the tops of crags looking down and across to a terrific view of other mountains and lakes but the walks are not presented as particularly dangerous. Pictures in *Country Walking* show iconic British landscape such as a bluebell wood, Lindisfarne castle, or a stone circle.

Alongside Julia Bradbury’s brief article on how walking changed her life, there are others by celebrities such as Timothy Spall, Simon Armitage on a literature walking trail in West Yorkshire, and Stuart Maconie on the Kinder Trespass. So there are articles about access in this magazine but there is not the same fore-fronting of such issues as there was in *Walk*. One of the articles is about a walk in Scotland. This was not a particularly hard walk and the focus of the story is that the author bumps into Prince Charles, says hello, and gets ignored for his pains. This does not, however, lead to a discussion about land ownership, or access but a description of the pleasures of this walk. The magazine is like the *Home and Gardens* for walkers, very safe, conservative, and comfortable.

The section on camping in *Country Walking* in contrast to *Trail*, where walkers are shown peering out of tents wrapped in their sleeping bags on the edge of some inhospitable mountain, shows couples or families camping in sunshine in nice fields or at the top of picturesque coastline, or asleep in wooden pods or camping barns. Cooking whilst camping in *Country Walking* consists of cooked paella, followed by bananas baked with chocolate. Whereas *Trail* has a picture of someone stuffing several jaffa cakes in her mouth and recommends taking malt loaf because it “reacts well to

squashage”. Obviously people who read *Trail* have very little time whilst doing their hard walks to indulge in the fineries of cooking.

Other magazines did not differ markedly in way the landscape was presented. For example, *The Northumbrian* showed a short walk around Thockrington over undulating country in Northumbria. It included a reservoir, an old church with the grave of Beveridge and the ruins of a Peele Tower - the sort of things Piper and Betjeman might have drawn attention to in their Shell Guides. Views were important, especially those across to the North Tyne Valley and the “*blue outlines of the Pennines*”. Another Northern magazine *Living North* was mainly concerned with shopping and up-market consumerism of cars, property, interior design, and fashion. However, even so there was an article about art in the region which focussed on landscape artists painting pictures of the coast. The National Trust magazine promoted walking and its Big Walking Festival in its Autumn 2012 edition. There was an article about paths by Robert Macfarlane, articles by celebrities (e.g. Toyah Wilcox, Stuart Maconie and Ben Okri) on their favourite walks, and a celebration of Beatrix Potter and the Lake District by Emma Thompson. There were both urban and rural walks, and illustrated by traditional views of mountains and lakes in the Lake District.

In all these magazines, picturesque castles or prehistoric sites are presented as the object of a walk, celebrities enthuse about walking, Romantic images abound and the Lake District is presented as a key destination for walkers. The magazines present a uniform visual identity of the landscape for walkers drawing on Romantic and picturesque images. Even in the consumer orientated *Living North*, paintings of the landscape are important for people to look at and buy. Consumerism has become part of walking, either in buying the appropriate gear, spending money on teashops, or buying pictures of landscapes. Celebrity culture is used to endorse walking as a pastime. The celebrities, like the readers want to access uncrowded, peaceful spaces, where they too can see the beautiful views shown in the photographs. The typical Romantic and bucolic landscapes have become a convenient (and perhaps shallow) shorthand for what walkers should enjoy in a landscape.

## 5.7 TV programmes about walking

Finally, television has been and continues to be a source of popular images and ways of thinking or engaging with landscape. Ways of presenting landscape and walking have altered since the early TV programmes (in the 1980s) with Eric Robson and Alfred Wainwright exploring some of Wainwright's walks. The programmes were not fashionable or mainstream and were aimed at an elderly or conservative audience. They used a static camera which restricted the variety of shots available. Much of each programme has the two men talking in front of an impressive mountain scene and perhaps a bit of walking, before moving to the next scene where the camera has been reset. The walk became a series of set tableaux. Wainwright was old when the programmes took place, so some of the walks were restricted. Both men wore cloth caps, Barbour jackets and knickerbockers – a far cry from today's ubiquitous fleeces and Gortex. The programmes already had an old-fashioned style of colour-bleached, grainy films of two men talking together whilst leaning over the parapet of a bridge.

TV programmes featuring walking have become more prevalent over recent years with programmes such as *Wainwright's Walks* and *Canal Walks*, and *Coast* being popular. Many of the current programmes are on BBC2 or BBC4 and aimed at the older viewer. Presenters tend to be in their late 40s or 50s. Although not peak viewing, the programmes must have a considerable audience since they are often repeated on Channel 4. Outdoor walking became a regular feature of TV with *Coast* which began in 2005 (screened initially on BBC2). The first series had as a central feature Nicholas Crane walking around various parts of Britain's coast. There were stories about archaeology, fossils, geography, industrial archaeology, points of historical interest, wild-life and ecology. It was a rich mix of landscape and points of interest, an eclectic hotchpotch of what interested the presenters. This was a great change from the rather stilted programmes on Wainwright fronted by Robson. Technology (and funding) could now provide mobile walking shots and helicopter shots along the coast, and there is a sense too of the world opening up to explore all the different associations of a place.

*Coast* rarely discusses art or artists in relation to the coast but delights in picturesque views of cliffs and beaches and swooping helicopter shots. It also presents the lone walker/archaeologist/geologist/biologist walking along a sandy beach or up on the cliff

tops. This is a more experiential presentation than earlier walking programmes and relates to a multi-layered sense of being in a particular environment, aware of historical, geographical and archaeological associations. *Coast* has proved to be a very popular programme. It is now in its 9<sup>th</sup> series (started in 2005) and has branched out beyond the UK coast to Europe and Australia. One of the enduring motifs of *Coast* is of the walker striding along the cliffs to the next point of interest. This is a programme where people are on the move and, as with any walk, meet interesting people along the way or see interesting sights. It is essentially a gentle programme that only rarely deals with more disturbing stories such as the Irish Famine or the Highland Clearances.

An example of one of the specialist walking programmes was Gryff Rees Jones' *Mountain* (first screened in 2007) where each programme dealt with one particular climb up a mountain. The programme on Ben Nevis was realistic showing Rees Jones ascending in a mist and being unable to see anything at the top. He was accompanied by a guide who provided stories of dangerous ascents and accidents on Ben Nevis, which made the climb sound dangerous and exciting. There was though a sense of Rees Jones feeling let down at the end of the walk, led on by the challenge of the mountain but being bereft of the tremendous view from the top. It is assumed such a view or revelation would have somehow made the walk complete and that the walker had been cheated of the full experience. The series was set up to understand why people would climb mountains, and Gryff Rees Jones' answer was that the beauty of the landscape inspires people to climb mountains.

Nicholas Crane presented a documentary programme on – *Munro Mountain Man* September 2009. Munros are named after Sir Hugh Munro (1856–1919), a member of the Scottish Mountaineering club who produced the first list of Scottish hills over 3,000 feet in his *Munros Tables* in 1891. Some walkers aspire to climb ('bag') all the 282 Munros, and a few people having completed the Munros will then start again. The programme presented the story as a competition between Munro and the Reverend Archie Robertson over who would be the first to climb all the Munros and which peaks counted as Munros. The programme used images that draw on Romantic ideas with many shots of high mountains, views of other mountains from the tops of peaks, views to lakes and the sea. The programme ends with Nicholas Crane doing a dangerous, scary climb of the Inaccessible Pinnacle on Skye. Ostensibly this part of the programme is about whether this could be counted as a Munro but it gives the

programme makes the opportunity to present something dramatic. There is a personal story as well in that we learn Nicholas Crane was taken there with his father as a child but was not allowed to climb it then. So the climb represents for him unfinished business and a triumph over his own fears.

*Wainwrights Walks* have been very popular, leading to two series and the spinoff *Canal Walks*. The programmes are aimed at a slightly younger audience than the original Wainwright programmes. They draw heavily on the Wainwright tradition in that the presenter, Julia Bradbury, is often shown as alone. She would, of course, be accompanied by a TV photographer and sound recordist but the image is of the lone walker although she does meet a few interesting characters along the way. In general, the programme is non-confrontational and non-threatening. This presents walking as fun, and achieving a personal challenge. The views are dramatic and the focus is on achieving the top of a fell, as Wainwright favoured. One programme showed Julia Bradbury walking up a fell in the mist with no views. However, at the end of the programme there was the familiar helicopter shot giving a dramatic view of the top of the fell in fine weather. In other words, presenting the viewer with what “should” have been the point of the walk. In this, it is like the Gryff Rhys Jones programme of Ben Nevis where the payoff for the walk is to get to the top of the mountain to see the beautiful view of the world spread out below.

TV programmes reflect some of the new diverse approaches to walking, finding interest not just in the landscape as scenery but concerned about history, geography and archaeology. The idea of climbing up a big hill and getting the view from the top remain central to programmes specifically about walking, reinforcing the idea that these are the important things to do on a walk. The walker is still often presented as a lone figure, contemplating the landscape in the way of the Romantic hero, sometimes facing inner demons such as Nicholas Crane climbing the Munro, or at least facing a hard climb or long walk as with Rhys Jones or Bradbury. These are sublime landscapes, presented as awe-inspiring. The way Wainwright saw and thought of the landscape has become enshrined almost as a myth – the Lake District is revered, as is the image of a lone walker in an unpopulated landscape.

## 5.8 Conclusion

There are a lot of similarities in the way landscapes, walking and the countryside have been conceptualised nowadays with traditions from the interwar years. There have been some shifts in thinking as well which this chapter has demonstrated.

People now walk with a number of groups, and there are some signs that the older organisations like the Ramblers and the YHA are struggling to maintain membership numbers. Cities are no longer primarily places for people to escape from into the healthy countryside. However, walking remains popular and access to what was private land has a greater acceptance through organisations like the National Trust and the National Parks (although there can still be flashpoints where access is contested). The countryside is still, as in the inter-war years, presented as an arena for health and peace.

What is striking about the visual context for walkers is the number of recurrent motifs from the picturesque and Romanticism in different media. Thus guidebooks and TV programmes will provide shots of “great views”, with underlying assumptions of what makes great views. There is the continuing interest in old abbeys, castles, standing stones, and stone circles in guidebooks or on TV. Walks are often constructed around walking to one of these sites of interest.

Romanticism lives on in the continuing popularity of the Lake District for walking. This can be seen as a line stretching from Wordsworth and Coleridge walking in the Lakes and making the place central as a romantic ideal, through Wainwright’s guidebooks, to the translation to TV of *Wainwright’s Walks*. Magazines, guides and television often concentrate on the dramatic views of the Lake District, as if this part of the world were the epitome of good walking and the goal for all walkers. It is this, rather than flat, featureless moorland that makes up the bulk of images. Images of the dramatic hills of Derbyshire, peaks in Scotland, the rugged coast of Cornwall, or the Romantic castles of Northumberland are far more likely to occur in the various different media than images of the Cheviots or the landscape of the North Pennines. Northern landscapes in the current context appear therefore to be largely the landscapes of the Romantic imagination.

There is above all the recurrent motif of the lone walker as Romantic hero/heroine striding off in high remote places pausing occasionally to look at wonderful views of

nature that are a reward for undertaking the climb. There are countless (and apparently endless) representations of this in guidebooks, magazines and on television. Few of the visual elements reviewed in this chapter show large groups of people walking. Guidebooks and magazines encourage a construction of the countryside for walking largely as a suitable place to aesthetic contemplation, unsullied by signs of modernity and the messiness of real people. Land art might have brought art and ecological concerns to visitors but it often remains an incidental pleasure to other activities.

Much of this material which helps form discourses around walking and the countryside appears to be largely unchanging and uniform. There have been slight shifts from the interwar years in relation to an acceptance of rights to access, and the widening interest in ecology. Other concerns such as health seem to have narrowed, wanting to construct the countryside as a green gym. Set against these are the long-standing traditions such as the Romantic hero-heroine but these often appear in the various media to be superficial, albeit widely accepted ways of thinking about and constructing walking and landscapes. The next three chapters move on from the contextual chapters to present findings from the interviews. These investigate how much of this context is engaged with by regular walkers in the countryside, and what influence it might have had in their constructions of walking and landscape. The interviews allowed for individuals to express their own interpretations. Thus although walkers might be surrounded by images, cultural artefacts, ways of thinking in popular media that produce a certain discourse of how landscape is engaged with at a macro level, the interviews were able to capture distinctions and variability at an individual level.

## **Chapter 6 – Background to the interviewees and their engagement with the current visual-cultural context**

### **6.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents a more detailed picture of the interviewees, introducing the walking group that many belonged to, presenting some short biographical details about the interviewees, and the general reasons they gave for going out walking. The contention of this thesis is that landscapes are performed and produced in particular ways through ideas, experience and memory (Muir 1999 p. 174; Wylie 2007 p. 13). Taking also on board the notion that culture is contested and emergent following Shields (Shields 1992 p. 6), the interviews provide a way of understanding the ways in which ideas, experience and memory of these walkers contests and contributes to emerging discourses around walking. It was important therefore to provide background information about the interviewees because such biographical experiences are later shown sometimes to be important in explaining individual variations and individual agency following Bourdieu's concept of habitus (Bourdieu 1990 p. 13). There then follows a discussion about how aware the walkers were of the current visual-cultural context and what role that played in their engagement with landscape and walking. This was in order to gauge in the following chapters to what extent walkers' immersion in this material might contribute to the way they responded to the countryside and different landscapes in the interviews and in the images they produced. The intention here was to demonstrate whether this particular group already had distinctive aesthetic biases in relation to different landscapes and the countryside.

In this chapter and the following two, the findings are presented according to emergent themes. The interviews investigated how today's walkers engage with landscape, and the significance of specific kinds of visual images, traditions and wider practices of looking. Patterns of similarities and differences between the various respondents are explored. Following the initial sampling for the research, walkers have been categorised as a hard or moderate/easy walker; male or female; walked as part of the formal walking group or mainly walked alone or with close friends or family. The definition of hard or moderate/easy walker is based on that used by the Rambler's group (outlined in the next section). The analysis has also explored differences and similarities in attitudes in terms of gender and age. Since the information interviewees

gave was confidential, interviewees have been given pseudonyms to avoid identifying particular individuals.

## 6.2 About the interviewees

Initial interviews took place May 2011 to November 2011 when twelve people were interviewed. In the second phase of the study, interviews were carried out between November 2013 to April 2014 with ten of the original sample plus an additional five interviewees. In total seventeen people were interviewed including four males and thirteen females; including five people who walked on their own or with a small number of friends and family; and twelve who were members of the walking group. The sampling had a range of people who went on different lengths of walk (ranging from 5 to 17 miles), different physical difficulty of walks (according to height ascended and routes), people who habitually walk alone or with one or two close friends and/or family, and people who were members of a walking group. Most interviews were conducted in respondents' houses. Four interviewees opted to have an interview whilst walking, and two of these opted to have a joint interview whilst walking. All walkers walked habitually in Yorkshire and Northumberland with occasional walks in the Lake District or walking holidays in Europe and further afield.

Those interviewees who were part of a walking group were from a Rambler's group based in North East. The group has been long established and includes members who have been walking with the group for over 20 years. Members can choose to do a walk ranging in length (5-17 miles) and difficulty as follows:

- **Easy**                Up to 8 miles with little climbing
- **Leisurely**        8 to 10 miles with up to 1000 feet of climbing, slow pace
- **Moderate**        9 to 13 miles with up to 1500 feet of climbing, steady pace
- **Hard**                Over 13 miles or over 1500 feet of climbing, brisk pace

These categories were used to describe the different types of walkers in the study.

Respondents were categorized into groups (hard/moderate/easy) walkers. This was based on the categorization used by the Ramblers. The groups were chosen because it had been hypothesised that the harder walkers might not be interested in looking at or engaging with the landscape other than in landscape as something to be traversed or overcome, with an emphasis on the physical aspects of landscape. Those who were not

members of the Ramblers were also assigned to these groups, again to give some indication of the types of walking they did. Those doing harder walks, having to cover many miles, might not have time to stop or think about the landscape and perhaps thought of walking in the countryside as a green gym. Others, who went on easy or moderate walks, might well be expected to have different relations with and understandings of the landscape, perhaps choosing less demanding walks so there would be time to look at and reflect upon different landscapes. The groupings from the Ramblers provided a useful framework for separating out those who might go on longer walks with those who might go on shorter walks. However, the findings showed there were few differences between the groups. Nevertheless, it was thought important to retain these groupings (and to attach them to quotations) to show how different emerging themes and categories rarely related to one group or another (where this does happen, this is highlighted in the text) but instead often cut across the different groupings. The groupings were retained to show that where one might have expected someone from a particular grouping to react in a certain way, this was often not the case.

Group walks take place twice a week and a coach takes walkers regularly to different areas, alternating between going North one week to the Cheviots and North East coast up to Berwick; West to the North Pennines the next, Upper Weardale and Upper Teesdale, and Lake District the following week; South to the Yorkshire Dales and North York moors the fourth week. There are also occasional trips into the borders and Scotland. Not everyone interviewed went on the same types of walk every week, in that some members could choose to go on a hard walk one week, and a leisurely the next. They were categorised by the types of walks they usually did. There can be on average between three and twenty walkers doing a particular walk. Walkers go out walking for the whole day, returning back to the coach between 5-6.30 pm (depending on hours of daylight).

The Rambler's group is formally constituted with regular committee meetings and an Annual General Meeting where officers are elected. There is a Chair and secretary with regular reports from the Coach leaders, Footpath Secretary, Treasurer, Publicity Officer, Web Officer. Walks' leaders meet separately twice a year to plan the walks' programme. The group is part of Northumbria Area Ramblers who also meet regularly with a similar formal constitution. The group meets in a Methodist Church Hall in the

centre of a city and has been doing so since the club was constituted in the 1930s. It has then its roots in traditional Rambler's groups and links with non-conformist groups. One of the interviewees spoke warmly about a previous Chair of the Ramblers, who was working class and used to try to recruit everyone who came into his watch repair shop. This was different from the more middle class characteristics of the national Ramblers. Access to land is still important and the group is committed to the aims of the Ramblers i.e.:

“The Ramblers is a charity whose goal is to protect the ability of people to enjoy the sense of freedom and benefits that come from being outdoors on foot. We're an association of people and groups who come together to both enjoy walking and other outdoor pursuits and also to ensure that we protect and expand the infrastructure and places people go walking.” Benedict Southworth, Ramblers CEO – Mission statement <http://www.ramblers.org.uk/what-we-do/>

There is a Footpath Secretary for the group who is responsible for alerting local councils about paths being blocked off or footbridges and paths being in poor states of repair.

The walkers interviewed from the Ramblers' group were all retired except one (two others retired over the course of the study). The Ramblers' group does have members in their 40s and 50s who are still working but these were not interviewed. This was not deliberate but followed the original intention of having a mixed group of easy and moderate/difficult walkers, rather than focussing on workers/non-workers or age differences. Interviewees had been employed or were still employed in a range of occupations: teaching, social services, shipyard foreman, engineering, libraries, administration, accountancy. There was a mix of mostly middle class and some working class, as far as this can be defined by previous occupation. However, here Bauman's ideas of the fluidity of identity (Bauman 2004) needs to be borne in mind, especially as being retired presents a whole new fluidity in terms of class.

Groups are sociable, sharing picnic lunches, afternoon “fruit breaks”, and a cup of tea at a café or pint of beer in a pub at the end of the walk. New members have joined the group and old members have left during the time of this project. Nevertheless, there is much shared history and experience of walks with some core members who come out week after week. Many friendships continue outside the walks. Four of the interviewees were walks' leaders able to navigate using map, compass and GPS, and very knowledgeable about safety whilst walking. This bears out Edensor's observation of how walking has become a restrictive practice with monitoring of direction and

safety (Edensor 2000). It is interesting to note though that some members, who were not leaders, were content to be led and just go for a “nice walk”, without caring about where they were going.

Those who walked on their own or with close friends and family were on average younger and still working. Some had joined a walking group at an earlier stage e.g. as a student. Some went on holidays with a walking group but they had no allegiance to a specific group. Instead they were flexible (“fluid” in Bauman’s sense of the word (Bauman 2004)), joining a group for a holiday but more usually walking with one or two people. Four of these were used to and liked walking on their own. This was something that was not evident in those interviewed from the Ramblers’ group.

### 6.3 Vignettes and general motivations for walking

The vignettes below give some brief details of the interviewees in order to give a sense of the different types of people who have taken part in the study. They are arranged according to the initial sampling: hard walkers and members of the walking group; easy/moderate walkers and members of the walking group; hard walkers not members of the walking group; and easy/moderate walkers not members of the walking group. These are introductory vignettes and the analysis moves beyond these to look at a number of themes and findings in relation to research groupings and individual differences. Individual variations relating to personal experience and biography will then be drawn upon in the subsequent analysis.

#### **Hard walkers and members of walking group**

**Edward** is retired and leads walks regularly for the Ramblers. He is married but his partner did not walk with the group. He likes undertaking long and hard walks of between 13 and 17 miles, frequently going over rough ground without paths (“heather bashing”) and climbing several peaks during one walk. He likes the physical exercise of hard walks but is also interested in scenery. He likes being active and having something to do for a whole day. He also plays other sports. He had been on walking holidays in Nepal and Spain. He enjoys the companionship of the group.

He had first started walking in his teens when he had been on holiday in Europe with his parents. He and his wife had joined the Ramblers 30 years ago but he was the one who

had stuck with it. Being a leader gave him the opportunity to do the walks he wanted to do. Whilst enjoying hard and physically demanding walks, he also likes and is impressed by what he calls “spectacular scenery”.

**Stephanie** is also retired (she had worked in the public sector) and was a member of the Ramblers’ group. She regularly undertakes hard walks of between 13 and 17 miles. In the last four years she has started Munro bagging. She had not been serious about Munro bagging to begin with but now spends a lot of time in Scotland with a group of other Munro baggers, or attends walking festivals and last year (2014) was just over the half way point of gaining all the Munros. She also goes on walking holidays in Europe. She regularly takes part in other sports like golf and skiing. Like Edward she enjoys getting to the top of peaks.

She began walking from an early age with her family, and her father had a particular interest in natural history which he passed on to her. In her teens she went to the Yorkshire Dales on a walking holiday. At this time walking was an adventure and she relished being able to do outdoor pursuits “just like the boys did”. She walked in her twenties but then walking stopped until her fifties. Then she had gone on walking holidays, and National Park Ranger walks in Northumberland. She joined Ramblers about ten years ago and has been out walking regularly with them since. Like Edward she enjoys the physical challenge of hard walks but again walking is more than just exercise for her. She likes the scenery, the geology of the landscape, the company, and has a particular interest in wild flowers.

**Sam** is married and retired. He had worked as an engineer in the shipyards. He had walked as a lad with a group of mates but only then took up walking seriously about 7 years ago. He had walked with his family and been to the beach and the countryside. They had to walk because they did not have a car. About fifteen years ago, a friend suggested he joined the National Trust walking group and he “liked the company”. He soon found that walking once a month was not enough for him and he joined the Ramblers. He now walks twice a week. He started off by doing short walks but has gradually pushed himself further to do longer and harder walks which he finds satisfying.

### **Easy/moderate walkers and members of walking group**

**Sarah** is recently retired. She began walking in her early 40s. She had moved a lot as a child and finally felt a sense of belonging to Northumberland and places in that area. As a child she had lived in Wallsend<sup>42</sup> where people “did not think about” going for a walk in the countryside. It was when she had driven out to Northumberland in her 40s to get some sheep’s wool for a project, that she discovered a liking for the countryside. She liked history which also gave her a sense of understanding and belonging to the communities in Northumberland. Although a member of the group, she also goes walking with friends and family. She enjoyed the exercise, the company and the views.

**Harry** is retired. He used to walk on holidays with his children. He joined the Ramblers with his wife over 20 years ago but she no longer walked. He likes using navigation skills and now leads walks for the Ramblers most weeks. He enjoyed the group and that walkers had enjoyed their walk. He makes a point of welcoming new members, so that they will feel included and welcome. He had completed several long distance walks such as the Coast to Coast, the Dales Way and St Cuthbert’s Way.

**Lorna** is newly retired. She had always liked walking but had stopped when she was looking after her children. She had met Harry on a computing course and he suggested she joined. She liked it from the beginning, despite some atrocious weather when she started. She walks with the group most weeks. She enjoys meeting people whilst walking and making friends outside of work. She also enjoys the way her body felt good after walking and space to “let her mind wander”.

**Peggy** is married, retired and leads easy/moderate walks. She had started walking after bringing up her daughter in order to get out, and partly so she would have a different interest to her husband that they could talk about. She did not play sport, or do crafts but wanted something to do. She found the people in the group welcoming and sympathetic. So she continued walking and enjoys the exercise and seeing wildlife.

**Joy** was retired<sup>43</sup>. She enjoyed walking with groups and had been on many walking holidays. She was involved in various Ramblers’ committees and was a Northumbria Park Ranger. She had walked as a teenager being a girl guide, and had walked home

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<sup>42</sup> An inner-city area of Newcastle upon Tyne

<sup>43</sup> Sadly, Joy died last year.

from work. She found walking peaceful. She had joined the Ramblers over 30 years ago because she wanted to walk in the Himalayas. Walking with the Ramblers had built her strength up. She was very fond of the Lake District because of her interest in the Romantic poets. She had completed several long distance walks, including Lady Anne Clifford's way.

**Jane** was working when the research began but is now recently retired. She is in her 50s and married. She had joined the Ramblers when her husband encouraged her to join after he had been a member for 2 years. She has been walking with the Ramblers for 15 years. She loves being outdoors and having leaders take her to places she would never go on her own. She particularly likes places of interest on the walk and having talks about them. She had been interested in navigation since being in the Air Training Corps when she was learning how to fly a plane. She had brought maps on walks and then was encouraged to become a leader. She enjoys learning about new places and sharing that knowledge with people who went on her walks.

**Vicky** is in her 40s and working. She enjoys taking photos of landscapes and wildlife. She likes the exercise, the beauty of the landscape, seeing wildlife and the social aspects of walking. Having a wide range of people to talk to was interesting, and walks gave her a chance to talk through problems. She had joined the Ramblers when she was in her 20s with her partner at the time. Then weekends became taken up with looking after family. She re-joined after the death of her partner about 10 years ago "to get out of the house and be connected with people".

#### **Hard walkers and not members of walking group**

**Stephen** is walking from Land's End to John O'Groats. He is in his 50s and working. He had arranged time off to do this walk. He walks regularly with friends and family but was not a member of a walking group. He is interested in geology. He likes particularly walking in remote areas and has walked widely in the Lake District and the Scottish highlands. He gets great satisfaction from the sense of journeying across a landscape, experiencing different environments.

### **Easy/moderate walkers and not members of walking group**

**Polly** is still working and in her 40s. She mostly walks with one or two friends, although she had joined groups on walking holidays. She goes on easy/moderate length walks. It is a form of exercise for her and she does not take part in any other sport. Walking is for her a way of getting fresh air and exploring new places. She had started walking as a youngster because her father had been in the army and took her out. This was not always an enjoyable experience as we will see from some quotations later on in this chapter. She had also walked with a partner, and when she had a dog. She enjoys using navigation skills. She began walking again when her job became stressful. Walking became a way of meeting up with a friend, doing something whilst catching up, and talking through problems. She has since been on walking holidays with groups in Europe.

**Ellen** is working and is in her 40s. She walks with friends but had walked on her own occasionally. She enjoys walking for the exercise, and visiting somewhere new. Walking provides a chance to talk things through. She grew up in a village but walking in the countryside was not something they did as children: they “played out”. She had started walking again about 15 years ago because she was friends with middle class lesbians who went walking. This stopped until about 10 years ago when she was unemployed and living in Scotland, and began walking on her own. She enjoys using navigation skills. Work has improved but at times before she had felt quite claustrophobic and needed to get out into the countryside.

**Rosalind** walks with close friends and family and sometimes on her own. She is in her 30s and a mature student. She walks on moderate/hard walks and enjoys particularly going up peaks. She had been encouraged to walk as a child with the family, and had been on many camping holidays so she was used to and liked the outdoors. In her 20s she had joined a walking club at University, and when she worked, she had joined the Ramblers for two years. Joining clubs was a way of meeting people and getting away from work or University. Since then she had walked more on her own or with family and friends. She had been on two National Trust holidays and liked being in the fresh air. She had also trekked in Nepal because at one stage she “just wanted to get higher and higher”. She likes physical exercise but is not keen on sports. She particularly likes walking in open spaces.

**Rose** is in her early 60s and was working at the start of the research but has recently retired. She is married with grown-up children. She likes walking in mountains and places with views. She paints and makes collages in her spare time. She likes the exercise but also the sense of walking along paths that others have made before. She walks on holidays abroad with her family but never on organised or group walks.

This section has provided some more information about the interviewees and their different walking patterns. Most were over 50 years old although those that were not attached to the walking group tended to be younger. Looking at previous and present occupations, there was a mix of middle and working class. Most were retired or retired during the course of the research, although there were four who were still working. Most had worked in the public sector, two had worked in the shipyards, and two in the private sector.

It was clear that walkers had a variety of reasons for going walking and show a range of interests in flowers, wildlife, geology, history and the views that they enjoyed whilst out walking. Many had started walking whilst they were children or teenagers and had picked up walking in later years:

“Well my mum’s always loved walking in the countryside and so we regularly used to get taken out on Sundays, whether we wanted to or not...” Rosalind (moderate to hard walker, not a walking group member)

Sometimes it had not been a lot of fun:

“We were dragged moaning up the hillsides of the North York Moors and I guess I just got the idea that this is what you do when you have spare time and energy. And it tends, everyone in my family loves walking, and I remember vividly being taken up Studley Pike in West Yorkshire in driving wind and rain and being bribed by lots of Galaxy chocolate.” Rosalind (moderate to hard walker, not a walking group member)

“I didn’t have particularly good experiences when I was younger because my Dad was in the forces and when we used to go walking. It was like it was a trial and it was like a route march. And you were only allowed to have water after you’d done a certain number of miles and all of this business. So it was just, it wasn’t a very pleasant experience.” Polly (moderate walker, not a walking group member)

Despite these beginnings, walking was something that both of these took up with again later on and had become now a major part of their leisure time.

There was a pattern of many of the interviewees taking walking up later in life, after they were free of caring responsibilities for children or parents. Some had taken it up in retirement. For some of those who had retired it was a way of “filling in” a day or meeting people but then it quickly became something very enjoyable to do. The companionship experienced in groups was important. Some, such as Sarah (moderate to easy walker, walking group member) had started walking as relieve stress and to get “emotional support”. Vicky had joined in order to meet new people after her partner had died. Rosalind who was not a group member had begun walking again whilst at university in order to meet people and then found walking was also fun and relaxing after studying all week. Polly had begun when she got a dog and had to start walking it. Ellen had joined because she was friends with “a group of middle class lesbians who went on walks”. So this was a way of being with like-minded people, and is similar to Sam’s experience of beginning to walk because that was something his friends did.

These walkers were motivated to start walking again because of having experienced it in childhood, thinking of it as something that was done, or being encouraged by friends who were already walkers to join in. For many, joining a walking group was a way of meeting new people who shared their interests. Walkers mentioned how they enjoyed the company, and how the actual walking was relaxing or fun. For many walking was a de-stressor. Ellen (moderate walker, not a walking group member) spoke of getting “this bug for it”, and Lorna (moderate walker, walking group member) that she “just loved it”. One senses almost an addiction:

“I eventually went and found I enjoyed the bit of company and decided to go back. It was only once a month. Very quick you realise once a month was not enough, and why I enjoy it, I do not know. Can’t tell you [laughter].” Sam (hard walker, walking group member)

Physical fitness was one motivating factor. It was the harder walkers who enjoyed the physical challenges associated with walking. This group of walkers participated in a number of different sports as well but for the easy to moderate walkers, walking was their only exercise. Experiencing particularly bad or good weather on a first walk did not seem to matter. Harry (moderate walker, walking group member) began walking with the Ramblers on an idyllic walk in Kettlewell where the scenery was pretty and the sun shone all day. Lorna (moderate walker, walking group member) in contrast had dreadful weather on her first walk, and for several walks afterwards, but persisted.

There were many reasons for going walking and it is important to note that respondents did not give one single or overriding reason. Although many had started walking as a way of making friends or having companionship with like-minded people, there were other personal or more intrinsic motivations:

“It was a good way of meeting people and getting a change of scenery, and getting away from towns, getting fresh air. It was a good way of exercising, a cheap way of exercising, so cheaper and more pleasurable than going to the gym for an hour every day.” Rosalind (moderate to hard walker, not a walking group member)

“Well there are a number of reasons. One is because I love the countryside, particularly Northumberland and I like being there, away from people, you know away from towns and houses into remote places...I like that too, that link with the history and I also like the exercise and the fresh air and it’s a good companionable thing to do on a Sunday as well.” Sarah (moderate to easy walker, walking group member)

“Respondent: Because of the fresh air, the different scenery that you see, wildlife, the animals, the flowers, you meet nice people, good exercise, fresh air.

Interviewer: Is there any of those in particular?

Respondent: No, nothing in particular – just the whole lot.” Peggy ( easy walker, walking group member)

Exercise was important, different scenery, flora and fauna, or seeing ancient castles or the Roman Wall. Many enjoyed using navigational skills. In addition, interviewees valued what they termed beautiful countryside, or seeing beautiful views. However, it was difficult to get at precisely what people meant by this, take for example this exchange with Edward:

“Interviewer: You talked about the views, what is it about the views? Are there landscapes that you like?

Respondent: Oh the Lakes and to a lesser extent the Yorkshire Dales.

Interviewer: And why the Lakes?

Respondent: The spectacular mountains.

Interviewer: Right, and um what, because they felt so big?

Respondent: You’ve got spectacular scenery, the crags, and not just the lake but mountains, lakes. Or in Nepal or walking in the Benidorm area of Spain, the mountains all round. They are quite spectacular.” Edward (hard walker, walking group member)

From this quote can be seen that the respondent values the scenery, and that there is something “spectacular” about mountains and Lakeland scenery. He did not take up the idea of bigness. So his word “spectacular” conveys something that is extra-ordinary and a spectacle rather than something just big.

Concerns about access only arose in one interview. This was a joint walking interview with Polly and Ellen where a path had been blocked by a combination of geese, a horsebox, and a low fence which prompted a later comment about rights to access:

“I also have another thing that we haven’t touched on which is I think this land is ours, and I can be quite stropy about things like that. So I’m not in the Ramblers and I’m not part of any campaign groups. It’s not about that but it’s a very strongly held ersatz conviction that people who think they own the land, don’t own it, and they shouldn’t decide where we can or can’t walk...so I get anxious about crossing a fence where it looks like you’re not supposed to go but I do in my heart feel that they shouldn’t be stopping us from walking.” Ellen (easy/moderate walkers, not a group member)

The interview did not ask about access and perhaps there are underlying assumptions about rights to access that stayed unvoiced until provoked by an attempt to stop access. The members of Ramblers would have been aware of the campaigning work of the group to promote access. This also suggests that walkers who are not part of an organised campaigning group may well hold these views.

The above provides a picture of general motivations for walking, and the next two chapters explore further how these walkers thought about, constructed and engaged with landscapes. Before doing that, it was necessary to see how far the interviewees were aware of the visual-cultural context, in order to see what bearing this might have on the way they engaged with and responded to landscape.

## **6.5 Walkers’ engagement with current visual-cultural context**

The previous two chapters have shown how attitudes to and discourses around walking and landscape have developed. The interviews sought to ascertain how aware these walkers were of current visual-cultural context and what role it played in their engagement with landscape and walking. Thus in the interviews there were specific questions about whether the walkers watched TV programmes, were interested in art, what guidebooks they had, and whether they read walking magazines. This section discusses how important current visual-cultural context was for our walkers and how

they engaged with it. It was necessary to do this in order to establish to what extent the interviewees were immersed in such ideas and images, and whether this differed between individuals, because this might have affected their response to or engagement with landscape and the countryside. For example, it might have been found that the sample were all great admirers of Turner landscapes, had Turner prints in their homes, and deliberately sought out Turner-esque landscapes whilst out walking because this was the way they had been conditioned to respond to landscape. The reality was very different and showed much subtler influences of visual-cultural material.

It has been shown how programmes like *Coast* encouraged engaging with disparate interests whilst out walking, looking at sites of historical and scientific interest. Whilst programmes such as *Wainwright's Walks* promoted Wainwright's ideas about the central importance of the Lake District as an area for walking, the value attached to climbing to the top of fells, Romantic landscapes, big views, and depopulated landscapes. However, not all interviewees watched walking programmes on TV. Some preferred books and liked descriptions of landscape and walking in those. One interviewee did not watch walking programmes because it would make her feel frustrated not to be walking herself. Others would watch them if they "happened to be on", rather than making a point of watching them.

Most though had watched Julia Bradbury's *Wainwright's Walks* or the older Wainwright and Chris Brasher programmes. Sometimes these inspired the interviewees to go on the walks and matched their experiences of walking:

“Respondent: Yeah, very much, yes. I'm going, “Oh yes, I've been there.”  
When I'm watching them, “I've done that. Doesn't it look hard?”

Interviewer: And do you watch them and think I would like to do that, to go on those walks?

Respondent: Oh yes, because she's done a traverse I would like to do, yes. Sometimes she's done something a bit challenging that I haven't done, yes.”  
Stephanie (hard walker, walking group member)

“Well I'm there. I go with them. It's er, it's like books. I get totally absorbed by books, I'm there.” Joy (moderate to easy walker, walking group member)

The programmes were experienced as exciting, presenting new challenges or new adventures for walkers. Joy had also been inspired by seeing the Himalayas in a documentary to go trekking there. Stephanie similarly was inspired by Julia Bradbury's

programme about walking in Iceland to take a walking holiday in Iceland. However, Stephanie found the walking programme did not reflect the reality because there would be a camera crew present, whereas in reality walking on one's own in such a place might be dangerous. There was awareness that these programmes were manufactured rather than reflecting reality.

Harry, in contrast to these experiences said that the programmes had not inspired him to go walking. On the contrary walking had inspired him to look at Wainwright books which then led to more walking:

“No I think walking inspired me to read Wainwright and then Wainwright inspired me even more.” Harry (moderate walker, walking group member)

TV programmes were accessed casually by the interviewees although most interviewees had watched at some time *Wainwright's Walks* and *Coast*. Sometimes they inspired people to do walks or go to particular places but they tended to be in the background of walkers' lives rather than a key part of their lives.

In contrast to television programmes which were accessed casually, the walkers all had a wide range and number of guidebooks. Wainwright's guides to the Lake District were popular amongst the interviewees. They had National Parks guides, as well as guides to climbing Munros in Scotland. Wainwright and his guides were held in high esteem:

“There was one walk that I did and he described the wall and I sat down there, and he said, “You get up from here and you walk ahead and you'll cross over a tumulus”. Anyway, we'd had wor tea, got up and we walked straight over it, and I couldn't even see it until we got there. But I did what it said, and there it was and I walked over the top and I thought there's a bloke who knows what he's saying. I mean that is just one example but he is like that. If he says this is the way, or this is it, he's right and if you don't recognise it, you're either in the wrong place or you're looking at the map wrong, something.” Harry (moderate walker, walking group member)

Guides were used predominantly for planning walks and there was discussion about how some were better than others for this.

“I use, oh what's it called? *Walking Highlands of Scotland*. That's quite useful for ideas about routes. Um *Outdoors Magic* can be a source of information about reviews of equipment, and that's probably it.” Stephen (hard walker, not a walking group member)

“Well local ones actually, and I have all the books that the National Park has done, and so I use those a lot. I use those on the rare occasions I lead a walk, I've used those.” Joy (moderate to easy walker, walking group member)

Sometimes guidebooks were dipped into for pleasure and many enjoyed the wry humour of Wainwright's writing.

Wainwright's guides were highly valued and formed a template for other guides. Many of the other guidebooks that walkers owned followed Wainwright's pattern of hand written script, hand written maps, and small line drawings of interesting features like waterfalls. One interviewee had a series of books for climbing Munros and a coffee table book of the Munros which was more for pleasure. This also had a useful table for ticking the Munros off once they were done and so had a practical use as well.

“Well I use them a lot for Scotland. So I've got the Cicerone guide to the Munros which is really useful. Actually I like, I've got Cameron MacNeish's *Munros* and his is just nice to read. He's not to be trusted on things like the time it will take but he has got good descriptions in, yes. So it's a nice read. And actually he's got, he's I like, I use his to tick them off because he's got a list in the front and you can just tick them off and then later you can put them on that Munro chart, if you want. But he also has them in groups and it's nice to read the descriptions.” Stephanie (hard walker, walking group member)

Guidebooks were used instrumentally for planning walks, rather than books one would read for pleasure. Although guidebooks were used instrumentally, walkers would have been immersed in the ideas presented in the books of planning walks around sites of interest, or climbing to the tops of fells to experience fantastic views, searching out open, empty, Romantic landscapes, and avoiding urban and industrial centres. The continuing respect for Wainwright guides as useful for planning walks, provides testament to how little the landscape in the Lake District has changed. His ways of thinking about landscape and walking perhaps also encouraged feelings of nostalgia for a previous age. The next chapter shows the extent to which interviewees drew on those ideas about the landscape.

In terms of new technology, apps were not used, even amongst the younger walkers, but websites were used by all but one of the interviewees and by all ages. Again, like the guidebooks these were used instrumentally to plan walks. What would have been done by looking at maps or reading guidebooks was now available on the web. Harry who led moderate walks for the walking group regularly used Google Earth, toggling between the satellite and map views to recce walks. This was so he could find paths that might not be on Ordnance Survey maps but were visible and could form part of a walk. The web was another tool as this quotation shows:

“Now, take the walk we did on Sunday at Cold Fell. I thought, this is the way my mind works often on a walk I think, if there’s no obvious route and I see a route on the map, I’ll say “I’m not the only one who’s wanted to do that.” So then what you’ve got to do is find out somebody who’s done it. Now when I thought about Cold Fell, I looked at all the possibilities of how you would do it, and the main one is sort of East to West looked a long, hard slog, time consuming. I thought other people have done this, they’ve been there besides me. So I just put it in on the internet, Cold Fell, and up it came *Cumbria Access Land Walks* and there was Cold Fell, and there it was the walk that we did, described, mapped out with the possibilities. We did one of the possibilities. We went onto Tindale Fell as they said, which was a good idea because when I got up through that fence and it was really decision time then, the more when I looked ahead I thought “That looks terrible.” So we went off to Tindale Fell and it was the best decision. We had a reasonable track there. Then it was a bit difficult!” Harry (moderate walker, walking group member)

He wanted to go up Cold Fell but not use the regular route and so used the web to explore other possibilities. What the quotation shows is the weighing up of different options and using the internet as an information tool. In a similar way, Stephanie, the Munro bagger, used the *Walk Highlands* website to plan walks and accommodation.

“I would only go on [the internet] if I was actually planning to do a particular route or hill and then it’s interesting to read what other people say about it, because they put, there’s some blogs as well and the route descriptions are on and things like that.” Stephanie (hard walker, walking group member)

Some easy/moderate walkers used the internet to find new walks and sites of interest:

“I plan all the walks on the computer. I found a fabulous website that you can put a grid reference in and it shows you all the things of interest, there’s loads of information. You can get photographs, people put in links to information. I’ve found out so much and people can relate to that.” Jane (easy/moderate walker, walking group member)

Rather than just relying on a map, walks’ leaders like Jane could see photos of what parts of the walk look like, and provide information for those on the walk about interesting buildings or archaeology that they would encounter.

Using the internet has opened up a whole new way of finding new walks and seeing what paths one might take, or even to check the existence of paths. Websites were used as practical tools for planning rather than to spend time browsing for pleasure. As was seen in chapter 5, the way information was managed meant that certain walks could be directed. So for example, Jane could look up interesting sites, plan walks around those and relay information about them as a guide. Others, like Harry, were using the new technology more creatively to plan new routes, using Google Earth as a tool for new explorations.

Specialist walking magazines were not read widely by the interviewees. Ramblers' members were sent *Walk* magazine once a quarter and would pick up and read some articles. Very few actually bought walking magazines. Stephen who was walking from Land's End to John O'Groats (hard walker, not a walking group member) had read *Trail Magazine* but stopped because he found it repetitive. Stephanie, another hard walker, liked *Walk* because it linked her to other Ramblers and bought magazines specifically if she wanted to buy new gear:

“It's a nice thing to pick up but it's, well it keeps you in touch with what the Ramblers are doing, doesn't it? But it's not so good for things like gear and stuff. Sometimes I buy one of those, you know, *To Go* or *Trail* or something has got a particular, if I'm looking to buy something, I might buy the magazine.”  
Stephanie (hard walker, walking group member)

She went on walking and skiing holidays in Norway so having specialist equipment to deal with those conditions was important.

Magazines played a similar role to television programmes as a sort of background noise in walkers' lives. Ramblers' members were familiar with *Walk* magazine and would have been aware of campaigns for access. They would also have been exposed to what the last chapter referred to as images of bucolic and Romantic landscapes which were present as well on TV programmes and in guide books. *Trail* magazine had been bought by the person doing the long walk, and perhaps this reflects his interest in hard, physical challenge. It is interesting that he found it repetitive since chapter 5 showed many of the magazines used certain images and types of images as a convenient shorthand for the types of landscape that should be valued whilst out walking.

Some of the interviewees were artistic. Rose painted pictures, and made collages of landscapes. Vicky took photographs of landscapes and wildlife. It might have been expected that only those walkers would have a special, aesthetic relationship with landscape but many of the other walkers appreciated the effects of light, colours and shapes:

“I love the colours. These, you know a thousand shades of green just blending in and then the heather and obviously it's August because you can see the heather.” Sarah (moderate to easy walker, walking group member)

“Sometimes it's green and sometimes' it's bronze and sometimes it's grey because it's mainly rock. And sometimes it's sort of silvery because it's limestone pavements so the colours are different. You get different colours and

different feelings.” Joy describing long distance walk from the Yorkshire Dales, across the Eden Valley to the Lake District (moderate to easy walker, walking group member)

Jane had taken the photo below because of the beautiful autumn colours of the tree against the blue of the sky at Low Force, Teesdale:



**Photo 1 – Jane, Low Force ©**

The tree frames the view of the waterfall creating a pleasing picture. The sunshine and colour of the foliage show a scene of a rural idyll, but one still to be enjoyed today. The harder walkers were not immune to appreciating landscape on aesthetic grounds such as this description by Stephen of another photo taken of a snowy, mountainous landscape:

“It’s essentially black and white. I do like landscapes covered in snow. I think they are pretty. They are quite, in a way they are quite brutal, quite harsh, almost lacking in subtlety. It’s either white or it’s black. The surfaces here are sharp, clearly very cold but on the other hand not hostile in the sense of being impossible.” Stephen (hard walker, not a walking group member)

There was an obvious delight from Stephen in this monochrome landscape as “pretty” and showing the sharp edges of rocks. However, quickly this moves to how the picture whilst pretty also communicates a landscape that is harsh and lacking in subtlety.

Sometimes there was a desire to take an artistic photo or pleasure in thinking one had achieved that. There were, for example, photos taken framing the landscape through the arched window of an ancient castle. Sarah had taken a photo of a lane which she said was like “a repoussoir”:



**Photo 2 – Sarah, Repoussoir ©**

“It’s just so beautiful because you’ve got the wall on the right, and you’ve got the shadows caused by the light coming through a deciduous tree. Beautiful patterns, beautiful patterns and then you get that arch of shadow and a light, of a kind of tunnel and people standing there, and I thought that was just lovely to look at. I mean they do things like, that are like paintings aren’t they?” Sarah (moderate to easy walker, walking group member)

The language here shows a consciousness of formal artistic conventions. Rosalind spoke of how the landscape of Northumbria could actually be like an 18<sup>th</sup> century idyll with fine trees and lush, gentle rolling farmland and had tried to capture that in photo 3.



**Photo 3 – Rosalind, Northumberland idyll ©**

Rose, who painted and made collages of landscapes, was interested in the play of light and shade in water. She was attracted by the reflections because she enjoyed painting and wanted to capture the effects of light on water in her paintings such as in photo 4.



**Photo 4 – Rose, France ©**

Vicky took many photographs and walking provided the opportunity to capture a particular moment:

“There was snow on the hills to my right, and as the sun was going down, it coloured the snow shades of pink, so you had these pink snow covered hills and

I was snapping away, getting further and further behind.” Vicky (Moderate walker, walking group member)

These two painted or took photographs in their spare time and so might be expected to view the landscape as potential artistic subjects but it is interesting that others (as we have seen above) were concerned to take artistic or aesthetically pleasing photographs. Harry was another example, very pleased that a photograph (photo 5) he had taken had produced an artistic effect, even though this had not been his intent:

“Well I thought the scenery was good but to get that effect, which quite honestly was, somebody else explained why it happened, why I’d got it because I wasn’t aware. It was because I was taking it into the sun and it must have been the sun rays I suppose but I don’t know. That’s what I was fortunate enough to get anyway.” Harry (moderate/easy walker, member of walking group)



**Photo 5 – Harry, Yorkshire Dales ©**

Such consciously artistic photos show a desire to do more than just capture a moment. They construct views of landscape as aesthetic objects. Most photographs taken by the walkers were not like this. However, there was an awareness from images circulated in magazines, in books or on the internet of what constitutes a good picture, and some were very pleased when they achieved this. Although some of the group had an awareness of landscape being like paintings, the next two chapters show that there were some very different ways of responding to landscape.

## 6.6 Favourite artists and display of images of landscapes in the home

Some academic writers have focussed on the importance of photographs and other visual artefacts in people's homes. As discussed earlier Tolia-Kelly has investigated the importance of such artefacts as remembrances of the past in another country and as a continuing part of present life (Tolia-Kelly 2004a). Rose has investigated how photographs in a home embodied both the presence of family members whilst at the same time their absence (Rose 2003). Gilroy et al. have written of the choices people made to perform identity that others could read through the photographs and the placing of photographs in their homes (Gilroy, Jackson, and Kellett 2005). They used the example of the choices older people made of photographs to be placed prominently on a mantelpiece. The photographs thus served as objects of remembrance and cherishing, as well as to communicate to visitors something of their own identity.

In this research interviewees were asked about whether they had images of landscapes in their houses and to talk about a favourite. This was initially a way to gauge participants knowledge of art and liking for art and whether they were influenced by any particular artists or style. However, the findings went beyond a superficial engagement with the images and artefacts.

The thesis has outlined the contextual material available as produced in guides, magazines and on television. Much of this is unchanging, uniform and superficial. It might have been expected that participants would have similar images or artefacts in their own home, and value them. It has been seen how important some of these ways of thinking about, conceiving of landscapes were in the affinity for walking guides.

Three interviewees mentioned Turner as a favourite artist. They liked his impressionistic paintings, the light and water, and that he had painted many landscapes of Yorkshire and the North East.

“Turner, well it's his skies and the light effects on the water. I suppose it's how he paints light really. He's also, he's painted all round Britain, hasn't he, I know he has abroad as well. He's painted everywhere so. He spent a lot of time painting Yorkshire as well.” Stephanie (hard walker, walking group member)

Others mentioned Cezanne, Van Gogh and Hockney. Constable was deemed “too pretty” (Joy (moderate to easy walker, walking group member)). Hockney was liked particularly for his paintings of trees. Cezanne's Mont St Victoire was a favourite

because of the many colours and changing colours in different paintings. A few walkers went to exhibitions but went to exhibitions that happened to be on rather than specifically for landscape artists.

Although none of the walkers mentioned sculpture parks, Joy had taken a photo of a sculpture on a walk in the Yorkshire dales and Jane mentioned interesting sculpture on a railway walk near Consett:

“They’ve made a lot of sculpture out of the old, like industrial sculpture. Or it’s the same as on the Cleveland way when you do Whitby to Saltburn, there’s the industrial sculpture.” Jane (easy/moderate walker, walking group member)

Coming across sculptures was commonplace and seen as making walks more interesting. The increase in land art means that finding sculptures whilst walking in the countryside is accepted. Such objects seemed to be incidental pleasures.

Given the predominance of certain types of images of landscape in guides, magazines and television, and the favouring of Turner, for example, the favoured images of landscapes in walker’s homes might well have been expected to repeat such images. However, the types of landscapes participants mentioned as being favourites in their home told a different story. Some caution needs to be exercised because domestic spaces were often shared spaces, so the pictures and artefacts might well be a product of negotiations between partners of what would be included in that space. Nevertheless, interviewees were asked to talk about a favourite picture of a landscape, so the answers should reflect a personal choice.

There were a wide variety of pictures and photos in respondents’ houses. Two of the interviewees, Sarah and Vicky, took many photographs of landscapes but did not have any in their homes. A few had prints of famous paintings by famous artists such as Monet or Hockney, or posters of Venice. Pictures or photographs from the Lake District were mentioned by three interviewees. However, for the most part interviewees had pictures of places to which they felt personally connected. When asked to describe or talk about picture of landscapes in their homes the interviewees almost invariably talked about landscapes of personal meaning as the following quotation shows:

“It’s a snowy slope and it’s in greys and white, and although the landscape is of the South Downs, it’s exactly like or reminds me of a slope where we go sledging which is really precipitous. So it reminds me of North Yorkshire...I’ve got a landscape, um of the Pennines with sheaves of corn, with sort of greyey,

browny landscape but it's very northern. It's absolutely wonderful. Those are the ones that spring to mind." Rose (easy/moderate walker, not a group member)

Although she has a picture of the South Downs, it is a favourite because it reminds her of a place in Yorkshire where she went sledging with her children. Another favourite landscape is actually of the Pennines. Ellen also had a favourite picture that reminded her of a familiar landscape:

"I've got a set of three, well it's one painting but it's kind of split into 3 pictures that my sister gave me. So it's in one long frame but it's split into 3 and it's a painting, and it's of coastal, land, sea and there's a couple of figures in the middle. It's quite an abstracty and I think, I don't know if it's meant to be of South Wales where we grew up but that's where she bought it, where we're from, but it's not obvious from the pictures. It's a sort of coastal picture" Ellen (easy/moderate walker, not a group member)

Harry had a painting done by his wife of a place that they had both visited and liked which had a story attached.

"Yes, Langstroughdale, favourite scene there, that. I remember that one, that was a winter scene in Wensleydale there when [wife] took that photograph and came back and painted it...I remember that one because that day we had the two dogs with us. They were small and we were on the Shawl (a limestone terrace), and we'd taken that photograph and then we dropped down off the Shawl, and we headed to the next place after Leyburn and we were on our way back by then, and the dogs were just Yorkies and we were near Leyburn. Sophie, she was the smallest one of the two, and she just ran under the hedge and laid down in the snow. She'd had enough. So I carried her." Harry (moderate walker, walking group member)

The picture was important to him because it had been painted by his wife but also because it evoked memories of a particular place and day where he had to carry one of the dogs because she had become so tired.

Polly (easy/moderate walker, not a walking group member) had a picture of the Cheviots done in silks because she liked walking in the Cheviots. Lorna had a picture of the Himalayas to remind her of where she had been trekking.

"I have got a landscape of the Himalayas. Within the forefront is a suspension bridge and three women walking across it with things on their back. The Himalayas are in the background, and that is what do you call it wax painting, wax and it was done by a Nepalesean man who was selling his work... It picks out such a lot about that trekking holiday I had in Nepal, the suspension bridge,

the women and their daily lives and how hard they worked in an environment which was so beautiful but so hard for them, so very hard, um and it just reminds me of what I saw, what I experienced, the hard lives especially for women and children, but the beauty of the Himalayas in the background.” Lorna (moderate to easy walker, walking group member)

The picture evokes memories of a trip, both the scenery and the lives of the people she met there.

Stephen had a landscape painting of the Lake District and mentioned how the artist had worked from sketches he had made at the place, in ways reminiscent of Turner or Constable. This suggests there was an authenticity to the painting, and the painting resonated with the interviewee because he had walked there and knew the area:

“Respondent: I mean we’ve got one big one from the Lake District and the painter, the artist told me, could tell me, “I sat and I did my sketch drawing and did the painting from that”. So I think, I don’t know but I’m pretty sure they were all produced from sketches made in those environments.

Interviewer: And what made you buy them, were they areas you knew?

Respondent: Areas I knew. So I could relate to them personally.” Stephen (hard walker, not a walking group member)

Rosalind had a print of Hockney’s Yorkshire Wolds as a colourful version of a place important to her. Stephanie had pictures of the Lake District and Skye but in a similar way to Rosalind these were valued because she had walked in those particular places. Similarly, Jane had a picture in her home of a well-known local landmark but the importance to her was because it was a favourite place of her and her husband:

“We’ve got a beautiful print of St Mary’s Island because my husband loves St Mary’s Island because that was done by a local artist in Seaton Delaval...there’s a local artist shop, does local watercolours. And it’s a lovely one. It’s wonderful scenery... it’s a lovely because blue’s me favourite colour. It’s all these lovely blues and it’s in a lovely like silver frame.” Jane (easy/moderate walker, walking group member)

Sam was perhaps an exception in that he did not have a particular favourite picture of landscapes. There were some of the Lake District but he actually preferred one that was mysterious and Romantic:

“Not in that strict sense. We have a couple of pictures, watercolours, one is of an area of the Lake District which I kind of quite like but the other one which I like even better is a scene in the Spanish mountains but it’s mainly mist. Because in mist there’s something hidden, some mysteriousness. So although you can see this little sort of village hanging on the end of this mountain. It’s mainly mist. Something attracts me about this. But we do have other things. [Partner’s name] likes little sort of serene boat pictures, a rowing boat just floating in the middle of it, a river or the seaside. She likes those sorts

of pictures, which I don't have any objection to, but they're just nice pictures.”  
Sam (hard walker, walking group member)

However, in general the pictures of landscapes in Sam's home were not of a particular place.

The photographs were not particularly for display of people's character, although photos, pictures and visual artefacts will have that function. The pictures and artefacts would be shared as an object to be seen by visitors but it is unclear how often the stories behind the object would be shared.

The contextual visual and artistic representations did occur in some of the walkers' homes. However, most interviewees had images of landscapes that had personal meaning attached to specific places. These were individual ways of engaging with the landscape. The images in interviewees' homes did not dominate the space, and were not therefore a prominent display of identity as in Gilroy et al.'s work (Gilroy, Jackson, and Kellett 2005), but were part of their domestic lives. Already, within their homes, landscapes most often had a personal importance, even if they had been mass-produced or showed traditional scenes. In this way the images and artefacts were part of interviewees' biography similar to Tolia-Kelly's findings where images and artefacts in British Asian homes had meanings and value beyond textual content (Tolia-Kelly 2004b). The personal feelings are also examples of Barthes' idea of 'punctum' as explained by Rose, as particular and felt memories in relation to the images and artefacts (Rose 2003).

The photographs taken by interviewees showed this more personal attachment to specific places or specific types of landscape. Taking photographs also gave interviewees the chance to focus on their own feelings and ways of engaging with the landscape because there was not the focus on a shared and negotiated domestic space. This part of the research therefore acts as a bridge between contextual visual and artistic representations and the mobilisation of the gaze in relation to landscape.

## 6.7 Conclusion

This chapter has provided more background information about the interviewees and explored what led them to take up walking. The walkers liked physical exercise but also found pleasure in other things they might encounter whilst out walking. For some the sociable aspect of walking in a group was important. A general finding was that all, regardless of whether they were hard walkers or not, responded to what they termed splendid or beautiful views, although they could not always explain what they meant by this. The following chapters explore further and in more detail what they liked about and valued in the landscapes in which they walked and how such constructions of the landscape often linked back to previous traditions.

It was an early hypothesis of this thesis that walkers might be so imbued or saturated with the current visual-cultural context, that this would have a big impact the way they would respond to and engage with the landscape. However, the influence of the visual-cultural context was not so straightforward, and there was not a discernible linear cause and effect. Walkers did watch TV programmes about walking, particularly Wainwright's walks, but engaged with such programmes from time to time rather than being avid consumers of such programmes. Wainwright has had a clear and abiding influence though, perhaps more by the use made of his guide books. Chapter 5 showed how Wainwright's relationship with walking drew on Romantic ideas and was nostalgic, and the next chapter shows how some of those types of images and ways of engaging with landscape continued. Specialist walking magazines were not widely read. However, many of the interviewees got *Walk* magazine and so would be familiar with campaigns for increasing access, and the images of romantic and bucolic landscapes. Other magazines tended to be obtained to get recommendations for specialist gear. Many walkers used guide books for planning walks. Fewer used them for recreational reading. These would have highlighted the places to visit, what old ruined castles or picturesque waterfalls could be seen on trips. The web was widely used, again as a planning tool. Chapter 5 has shown how images of landscapes from the web tend to be clichéd, or shorthand versions of what can be seen and experienced. Some walkers though were using the internet more creatively to find new areas to explore. Even though walkers may have not actively sought out TV programmes, or read guides for pleasure, or read magazines avidly, they were obviously exposed to

representations and ways of thinking about landscape from the current visual-cultural context.

A few of the walkers had some knowledge of famous artists but not so many as to suggest that the sample was biased in favour of walkers who were particularly interested in art. Constable's paintings were not popular. The interviewees favoured Turner and the impressionists. In walkers' homes, however, the landscapes were not popular reproductions of famous paintings (although there were a few of those). In their own homes, walkers had paintings, photos, or creations in pottery and silks of particular landscapes that were important to them. These provided a link to specific places of personal connection. Such choices show an individual response to landscape. This was different to the hackneyed repetition of images of landscapes reproduced in guidebooks and magazines. However, such an individual engagement is a characteristic of Romanticism. Such valuing of the personal in relation to certain spaces is also redolent of Nash's concept of *genius loci*, attaching meaning to special places and this is discussed further in chapter 8. The choices were of landscapes within a domestic setting which sometimes was a negotiated area. They were, nevertheless, individual choices with particular resonance but not displayed in prominent places to convey a person's identity or a projected sense of self. There is a difference between images available in guides, magazines, and television and those in a more private domain, and different again as shall be seen in the photographs interviewees took whilst out walking. The images and artefacts in homes were on display. The images from the photographs brought perhaps more private and personal views to the fore.

The next chapter presents findings from the interviews that relate to the re-emergence of forms and practices from Romanticism and the inter-war years. Despite much of current visual-cultural context being in the background of interviewee's lives, such images and ways of thinking continued to resonate with the present day walkers.

## Chapter 7 – Engagement with forms of looking, visual representations and circulating images in relation to landscape

### 7.1 Introduction

This chapter looks at individual active constructions of landscapes and the significance of visual images relating to traditions explored in Chapters 4 and 5 through discussion of findings from the walkers interviewed for the research. It is useful here to recall some of the ideas about landscape from the introduction, the multiple meanings attached to landscape, in particular Wylie's idea of landscape as a tension between the "perceiver and perceived, subject and object" (Merriman et al. 2008 p. 202-203). Wylie is keen to stress this is a precise term. Through the tension emerge versions of self and the world:

"Landscape isn't either objective or subjective; it's precisely an intertwining, a simultaneous gathering and unfurling, through which versions of self and world emerge as such."

What follows then is an account of "the materialities and sensibilities with which we see" (following Wylie, *ibid.*), reflecting on how the interviewees actively constructed landscapes through individual experience and memory, intertwined with certain layered narratives, traditions and distinctive ways of visualising landscapes.

The interviews showed the creative relationship that people have with cultural practices. People do not just accept what they are shown or ways in which the landscape is thought about and presented, for example, in popular TV programmes, or guidebooks, but have an active relationship with cultural practices. There was variability based on biography, experiences, and the groups they belonged to. So following Shields' idea that culture is "contested, temporal and emergent" (Shields 1992, p.18) the interviews revealed current discourses around landscape that are emerging and variable. Since landscape is perpetually under construction according to (Ingold 2000, p. 199), how are present day walkers constructing it? These next two chapters present the complex and active relationship walkers have with landscape.

Chief among the forms and practices explored in the thesis and emerging from the interviews were traditions from Romanticism and the inter-war years (although these, as

have been shown, change over time and overlap). By traditions from Romanticism is meant for example those ideas that favoured the imagination and individualism over reason and the formal rules of classicism. This is found in particular styles of images such as dramatic, wild and awe-inspiring landscapes. It also concerns notions of the sublime, and the idea of individuals spending time contemplating the joys of nature and the divine. A key finding of the thesis is that these forms and ways of engaging with the landscape continue in the way present day walkers engage with the countryside.

Theories about the nature of practices and habitus (following Bourdieu (Bourdieu 1990)) provided ways of understanding the walkers' creative relationship with cultural practices. Thus it will be seen that visual prejudices from visual imagery (the way, for example, there is a preponderance of certain styles or types of images in different media which produces a dominant discourse in certain ways of thinking about and relating to landscape) did have a strong effect on the way the walkers engaged with landscape but there were also very personal ways of engagement. Using habitus as a theory underpinning the analysis allowed the commonalities to emerge e.g. shared values in relation to walking, whilst showing variability because of distinctive personal experiences and agency. The interviews also provided an opportunity to see how far the internalisation of the social order (following Eriksen and Nielsen (Eriksen and Nielsen 2001)) depended on being part of a group, or a particular type of walker. Did the group members, for example, share particular discourses about landscape, or were discourses accepted more widely than that? Walkers displayed a relationship with landscape that embodied Ingold's theory of dwelling. That is, they did not view landscape as a separate object, a type of pretty picture or background to their walking. They did not engage with landscape with the Cartesian dichotomy of body and mind but had deeply felt and personal associations with the landscape and countryside.

Chapter 7 explores the ways in which particular discourses about walking and landscape from the past re-emerged in the interviews. However, this is not to say that the present day walkers interviewed were just re-enacting ways of engaging with landscape or unthinkingly continuing practices from previous times. The nature of such discourses and ways of engaging with landscapes are that they change, re-emerge and are reconstituted over time. The interviews showed such changes and different types of engagement with the landscape. What is interesting is not, for example, the repetition of Romantic types of images (although some photographs did reproduce such images),

but the profounder ways of thinking about and engaging with landscape that relate to the impulses, ideas about nature and the self from Romanticism.

Much of the current visual-cultural context, looking at the relative importance of such contextual material was in the background of interviewees' lives. Although a few of the interviewees were aware of particular landscape painters and read some of the walking magazines, the chief influences came from TV programmes or Wainwright's work. The previous two chapters showed how forms and practices from Romanticism and the inter-war years continue to figure strongly in the visual-cultural context and I turn now to how such forms, practices and discourses re-emerged in the interviews. However, this is only part of the story because what has also been noted from the literature is the shift in the last decade or so away from privileging the visual in thinking about landscapes (and about walking) according to non-representational theory concerned with being, sensing, "dwelling" and embodied experiences, and thinking about notions of sociability, managed landscapes, naturalness, and health (Ingold and Vergunst 2008; Edensor 2000; Wylie 2005a; Lorimer 2005; Macpherson 2010, 2009). The investigation of forms and practices related to Romanticism and the inter-war years shows that these were not in fact concerned solely with the visual or even privileging the visual. Although some of the images produced are redolent of other images, the feelings evoked by such landscapes reflected an engagement with the landscape that went beyond a purely visual or a purely aesthetic appreciation.

## **7.2 Romanticism and walking**

The thesis has shown how Romantic ideas have been of enduring and continuing importance for walkers from the early Romantics such as Wordsworth, Coleridge and Turner seeking inspiration in wild and sublime landscapes, to Wainwright privileging the tops of Fells to gaze on spectacular views in the Lake District. Thus Solnit (Solnit 2006 p. 82) describes Shelley's romantic taste for wild places, and the way Romantic ideas informed attitudes to walking so that it can be experienced as a spiritual epiphany (Solnit 2006 p. 159). MacFarlane also, writing about the current lure of mountains for walkers and mountaineers, traces this longing to the second half of the 1700s when travellers began to visit mountains, not because they had to, but because they wanted to. He writes of the strong hold mountains had on the imagination not only of writers such

as Shelley<sup>44</sup> and Ruskin but on mountaineers pitting themselves against the great peak in the alps, conquering the Matterhorn and the Eiger (Macfarlane 2008 p.15-16). Mountaineering has been one of the fastest growing leisure activities of recent years and there are growing number of hikers who whilst not scaling the higher peaks of the Alps, enjoy climbing peaks in Britain or walking among mountainous landscapes. So that now the “once shunned wildernesses” (ibid. p. 76), are embraced as sublime.

Romantic images and ways of thinking about landscape are widespread on television, the web, and in guidebooks and magazines. Nevertheless, the interviewees, as shown in the last chapter, were not totally immersed in programmes or magazines about walking. Wainwright’s work was though well-known and respected amongst the interviewees and his work is imbued with Romanticism. Palmer has written of Wainwright’s liking for rocky landscapes at height that provided for the “possibility of a dramatic, awesome mountain landscape” (Palmer 2007 p. 402). Wainwright preferred landscapes that gave rise to feelings of the sublime or awe to wet or marshy land which was hard to walk through (ibid. p. 105). For Wainwright a “good walker” was one who took time to admire the surrounding landscape, and walking was for him a solitary pleasure where he could commune with the fells (ibid. p 412-413) and he has been described as the founder of walking for aesthetic reasons (Edensor 2000 p. 86). Romanticism has provided a certain style of representation of landscape but perhaps more importantly ways of engaging with landscape that are individual, emotional and psychological.

Edensor has written of the way the rise of excursive walking in the Romantic era has become part of “modern corporeal reflexivity” (Edensor 2000 p. 82) in that there is an expectation that walking will provide opportunities for reflection. However, this is not necessarily the experience of all walkers and he points out that hikers in the 1930s walked for companionship rather than apprehending the sublime. Modern day hikers’ practice is often routinized with sets of appropriate behaviour, so that walking becomes an “unreflexive and habitual practice” beset by conventions (ibid. p. 83), such as wearing certain types of clothing, or focussing on safety procedures and finding directions. In addition, the solitary chance for reflection is curtailed in walking groups. The walking experience for Edensor is not geared around reflexivity and privileging the

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<sup>44</sup> E.g. Shelley’s poem

visual, so much as a practice that engages with other senses. It is often serendipitous and interrupted through the engagement of the body (ibid. p. 102).

It was evident from this study that the walkers sought out and valued wild and spectacular places to walk through. Given the prevalence of Romantic ideas and images in relation to walking in the last 200 years as seen in the previous chapters, it was not surprising that the interviewees engaged with landscape in this way. Such ideas were not gender or age specific. Neither did they depend on whether interviewees were hard or easy/moderate walkers, or walked with a group or not.

Sometimes interviewees' appreciation of and liking for the Lake District was directly linked to the influence of Romantic writers. Joy (moderate to easy walker, walking group member) had been influenced by reading Ruskin, Coleridge and Wordsworth and so wanted to see the Lake District and thought it was beautiful. The last chapter showed as well the general liking for paintings by Turner, or Romantic images of the Lake District. In general though walkers did not refer to the Romantic writers and artists but nonetheless liked walking in the Lake District or in what they viewed as wild and remote landscapes. The hard walkers especially liked wild landscapes found on high moors and hills:

“I think perhaps more particular landscapes, and they would be remote and wild places.” Stephen (hard walker, not a walking group member)

Stephen's Photo (photo 6) of a winter scene on a mountain in Scotland shows such a wild landscape. He talked of the photo in terms of a sublime and inhospitable place where he watched two climbers as they walked up from the bottom left of the picture to dramatic ice cliffs.



**Photo 6 – Stephen, Snow and ice, Scotland ©**

“And it also gives a scale not only of the size of that landscape as a whole and I can remember looking at that and it goes right over that way, and right over that way, similar big cliffs but we’ve also got a sense of the scale of, here is an outcrop of rock. Well actually it’s a big outcrop of rock, witness its size compared with those people. Here’s a frozen waterfall, another there and another there but it’s actually a very substantial mass of frozen water, I don’t know, 2 metres [looking at the two figures on the lower left in the photo], I never thought to work it out but that must be 40, 50 60 metres easily... We watched those two people walking over in that direction for perhaps half an hour or so and we still weren’t sure exactly where they were going to. Again it gives you an idea of the scale of the lower slope here, that they were having to cross in order to start to explore the area up here.” Stephen (hard walker, not a walking group member)

There is a sense of awe with Stephen being impressed by the size of the frozen waterfall where the figures are tiny in comparison, as well as the sense of remoteness and wildness of the place. This is reminiscent of the painting of *Niagara Falls* by William Henry Bartlett (1809-54) mentioned in chapter 2 where the human figures in the foreground are dwarfed by the falls. The photo is almost monochrome (it was taken in colour) and the land seemingly inhospitable, although part of the experience for Stephen was being able to see such wonders because he and his companion had the correct gear on and were “quite comfortable”. The scale is vast and tiny figures walk through this unpopulated and otherworldly landscape. For Stephen there was a certain frisson to this view in the sense that this was special: it was a privilege to be able to walk in such an area and see such sights. The language used by interviewees to describe their feelings is important because it shows “the intertwining of versions of self and world”.

Thus, for Stephen there are the intertwining of traditions and narratives that have constructed such landscapes as places of awe, and his individual feelings that mean he has sought out and enjoys such landscapes.

Interviewees liked and photographed mountains that had a classical mountain shape, i.e. sharply triangular in shape tapering to a point (Photos 7 and 8):

“And this is that, the iconic shaped mountain that I was speaking of. So the photograph was taken from a just a little from this viewpoint here, just taking a view along the ridge forming the summit of the mountain. It has 2 peaks, one I’m stood near to take the photograph.” Stephen (hard walker, not a walking group member)



**Photo 7 – Stephen, Scotland ©**

Rosalind had taken a photo of Hedgehope (photo 8), a large pointed hill in the Cheviots. Although it is not quite as high as the Cheviot, it has a definite high summit that stands out for miles around:

“I love the shape, it’s really a classic shape, and I like the sides they are bare and different to the surrounding countryside which is cultivated and the colours, the heather is out this is, I think this is, I think you can see the sea maybe but you can’t really tell.” Rosalind (moderate to hard walker, not a walking group member)

Summits, as favoured by Wainwright, were important to walkers, and particularly those that were “classically” shaped. The interviewees did not take photos of flat summits, unless they were looking out on the surrounding views. Again, although there are traditions and narratives that favour such summits, the interviewees’ language shows a personal enthusiasm – loving the shape, or calling the shape “iconic” and “classic”.



**Photo 8 – Rosalind, Hedgehope Northumberland ©**

Some of Stephen’s photos were of weather inversions, the rare sight of clouds beneath one’s feet (photo 9).



**Photo 9 – Stephen, Cloud inversion, Scotland ©**

His interest in these was because it was a rare sight, a rare combination of weather and being up high. Stephen regarded them as something he was fortunate to see. He had had to climb high and camp overnight, and then this was the view he was given in the morning. There is a sense that such views are deserved by the hard work of getting to inaccessible places, and partly a gift. Many of the photos taken by the interviewees attempted to provide an image of large distances as well, looking down from a great height into the far distance, similar to those images repeated many times in magazines and on the web. This image was especially similar to the type of landscape viewed by the lone Romantic hero in Caspar David Friedrich's painting of the *Wanderer above the sea of fog* (1818) reproduced in Chapter 5.

Sam, another hard walker, had brought a photograph (photo 10) especially to the interview which had been taken by someone else because it encapsulated what was important to him about walking. It showed Sam as the lone figure, standing on an outcrop of rock looking over a view below:

“That to me helps to sum up the special days...So I'm standing on top of Simonside. I didn't even know that [name] had even taken that but I was just standing there thinking, “Isn't this just wonderful”, on a day like that, a little bit of snow around but yeah, absolutely beautiful...You can be at peace with the world for a moment, then it all comes crashing back in [laughter]!” Sam (Hard walker, member of walking group)



**Photo 10 – Sam, looking from Simonside to the Cheviots ©**

He could remember “contemplating” the view and being lost in the wonder of the scene. The photo is of Simonside in Northumbria, a ridge where the ground drops steeply away giving long distance views to the coast some 30 miles away and in this picture the snow covered Cheviots to the North. Sam was a hard walker but even the hard walkers who might cover several miles, could be lost in a moment of contemplation and wonder.

Chapter 5 showed the prevalence of this sort of image, a single walker perched on an edge, overlooking a huge view. Walkers still wanted to do this and valued being able to see such sights, regarding them as “beautiful”. Being up high and looking across made Sam feel at peace. Partly this is because he is far removed, physically at a distance from the world of people below in the valleys. Partly as well, as is discussed in the next chapter, being aware of huge spaces gave walkers a sense of a wider world and often helped to put mundane, day to day concerns in perspective.

Easy and moderate walkers liked dramatic views as well. For example, Jane had photographed High Force because it was, in her words, “spectacular” (photo 11).



**Photo 11 – Jane, High Force ©**

Jane expected (much like Edward mentioned earlier who liked “spectacular” mountains) that everyone would find this spectacular and my attempts to probe what she meant by this met with a certain bafflement:

“Oh well, come on, it speaks for itself! But what I like is the blue sky, well you can see the sunshine, and that’s in shadow. We’d had a lot of rain. You could hear. It’s the sound of the waterfalls as well.”

Jane (moderate walker, walking group member)

There was an assumption of shared values that others would understand and react to this as a spectacular view. This was a typical view of High Force and reproduced in many guides and posters but Jane’s enthusiasm was genuine. Jane’s experience was that this was dramatic and awesome with the sound of the water in full flood adding to the experience. Although this was a photo, when she spoke about it, her other senses were caught up in the experience.

Sam described a memorable walk to the top of Snowdon. This had long been an ambition of his (since childhood). He and a friend had a sense of satisfaction of having organised this walk and found the way using maps and compass. It had been a long climb up and the weather had been misty and rainy so they could not see much. He then described the beauty that unfolds as the mist clears:

“The achievement itself and the beauty of the place. It was fantastic. When we were going up it was a bit drizzly and bit squally, not wonderful, cloud. When we got to the top of Snowdon everything was in mist shrouded. Just as we were there, the clouds started to lift and the area was absolutely beautiful. You could see for miles. The sun was shining. Absolutely beautiful.” Sam (hard walker, walking group member)

This is similar to Wordsworth’s description in *The Prelude* of being on top of Snowdon and the clouds parting:

“I panted up 30  
With eager pace, and no less eager thoughts.  
Thus might we wear a midnight hour away,  
Ascending at loose distance each from each,  
And I, as chanced, the foremost of the band;  
When at my feet the ground appeared to brighten,  
And with a step or two seemed brighter still;  
Nor was time given to ask or learn the cause,  
For instantly a light upon the turf  
Fell like a flash, and lo! as I looked up,  
The Moon hung naked in a firmament 40  
Of azure without cloud, and at my feet  
Rested a silent sea of hoary mist.

A hundred hills their dusky backs upheaved  
All over this still ocean; and beyond,  
Far, far beyond, the solid vapours stretched,  
In headlands, tongues, and promontory shapes,  
Into the main Atlantic, that appeared  
To dwindle, and give up his majesty,  
Usurped upon far as the sight could reach.”  
Book 14, The Prelude

Solnit has written of how Wordsworth’s prelude ends as a “visionary experience on top of Snowdon” (Solnit 2006 p. 159). For Sam the climb represented a personal achievement, a fulfilment of a long ambition, and graced by the view at the end. The last chapter showed the assumption of the pay-off of fine views for reaching the top of a mountain or fell. I asked Sam subsequently whether he knew of Wordsworth’s poetry and he said no. In his home he had a picture of the Lake District but the picture he preferred in his home of Spanish mountains in mist. This he liked because “there’s something hidden, some mysteriousness”. This suggests his liking for Romantic landscapes. The other pictures he had were serene boat pictures, with a rowing boat just floating in the middle. He was a hard walker who enjoyed the physical challenge of walking, and had done greater and harder distances over time. An initial hypothesis for this thesis was that harder walkers would be more interested in achieving a physical challenge than stopping to look at and have aesthetic appreciation of views. However, this was not the case. Sam had not climbed up Snowdon anticipating such views or such emotions, and was not prompted by an immersion in Romantic literature and images. Nevertheless, he engages with this particular landscape much in the way Wordsworth did, valuing and astounded by the beauty and the tremendous views over a vast space.

This experience is interesting to contrast with the one above where Jane thought that the beauty of the place, High Force, was self-evident. With Sam there was a walk and an image at the summit which is significant for him because it was the fulfilment of a lifelong ambition. This suggests that although there may be common appreciation that certain sites are beautiful, there are layers of meaning attached to sites because of personal biographies. So on the one hand there is a common and self-evident interpretation and on the other a specific biographically framed take on a place.

The idea of walkers as contemplative, Romantic, individualists continued through the inter-war years when it was hoped the walkers who went to the new National Parks

would contemplate the beauties of the landscape. The interviewees shared this desire to be contemplative in nature. Sam was not alone in spending time looking and thinking. Rose, for example, found being beside water very conducive to contemplation:

“I was at a tarn in the Lake District and it wasn’t named on the map and in my head I called it Considering Tarn because I was sitting there considering things and I think that’s what I like about water. It helps me think.” Rose (easy to moderate walker, not a group member)

For Lorna (easy/moderate walker, member of walking group) the summits were not important but nevertheless the places where she walked gave rise to contemplation. In her photo a tree (photo 12) became symbolic of herself and the way she felt about walking:



**Photo 12 – Lorna, Tree, Cumbria ©**

“The more I look at this photograph, the more I see possibly why I walk and why I enjoy the surroundings I go to when walking...“It’s a tree on its own. However, it was in a line of trees, a line of three. But to me that just shows solitude. Bareness, the leaves are off it, but how beautiful it is against the blue and white sky and then the green below. And although I walk with a group of people always, and I’ve said I will always need a leader, I like that feeling of being alone. So maybe that tree depicts how I feel, to me, and I know, Barbara, you’ll want to take this to analyst and get it all, you know should this person be what do you call it, should this person be not condemned, sectioned? [laughter]...And can I just say that that is so strange because I’ve got a picture in my room at home which is that, which I didn’t realise when I took it and loved it, and I’ve got a picture which a very, very good friend of mine drew for me.

She's a very, very talented person. However, hers has got all the roots showing as well the branches had all the roots showing, and I've got it up on the wall."  
Lorna (moderate to easy walker, walking group member)

The beauty and solitude of this photograph were important to Lorna. The tree was a symbol for her of how she felt whilst walking, alone but in a line with others, enjoying the blue sky, part of the natural world. This image was directly linked by her to an image in her home that she liked. In this example, Lorna places herself as part of the natural world, enjoying being outside and surrounded by nature. The response to the tree is very personal and individual and has echoes of a picture she owns of a tree. She also identifies with being both alone and part of a group. This was common among other interviewees who liked a mix of being with people and the chance to have moments of individual contemplation. The interviews did not go further in these instances to probe exactly what walkers were contemplating. However, there are instances referred to later, in the same interviews and in different interviews which suggest that these moments of contemplation can concern thinking through problems or difficulties in life, gaining perspective by being away from daily life, or reflecting on one's place in the "scheme of things" or "the bigger picture".

The findings show the endurance of certain ways of thinking about and relating to landscape. Romantic ideas and ideals persist, both in the images that some of the interviewees had taken and in the way interviewees responded to landscape. Wild, lonely and even bleak places were valued. Spectacular waterfalls and ice covered cliffs were experienced as wonderful and dramatic. Interviewees, in the manner of Wainwright and TV programmes, wanted to get to the top of hills or mountains. Walking and landscapes were also sites of contemplation. Reaching the top of the hill and having a well-earned rest also provided the opportunity for a moment of solitary contemplation, as Wylie (Wylie 2002) described in walking up Glastonbury Tor where there were natural places to rest and take in views.

There was no difference between those who walked in the group and those who did not. So such ways of engaging were not peculiar to a group and therefore not solely communicated through group practices but applied to all the different types of walkers in the study. It might have been expected that a long standing group would hold similar ideas and values, reinforced on numerous walks together, stopping and look at particular views or climb certain hills, imposing normative codes in the way Edensor found

(Edensor 2000). However, these ideas were common to all the interviewees. It is difficult to ascertain where the walkers have acquired such ways of engaging with the landscape other than to postulate they come from the all-pervasiveness Romantic ideas and images that are part of the popular culture of walking. The previous chapters have shown the continuation of such ideas and ideals. Thus the reproduction of the sorts of images and ways of thinking about landscape that exist on television or in magazines and guidebooks suggests a pervasiveness of these images and ways of engaging with landscape, from Wainwright describing fantastic views to be had at the top of his favourite fells, to the helicopter shots in *Wainwrights Walks*. The imaginative and Romantic response MacFarlane (Macfarlane 2008) described of mountaineers to the landscapes where they climb, the way that “mountains seem to answer an increasing imaginative need in the West” (ibid. p. 274), can now be seen to apply to walkers as well.

Nevertheless, such responses to landscape were not a slavish aping of what others do, or because it was expected: it was part of what walkers did and was important to them. So for example, for Jane, High Force was spectacular and she experienced it as spectacular and awe inspiring, not as a sight divorced from her feelings. Walkers were, in the manner Ingold (Ingold 2000) describes, actively engaged and emotionally invested in certain landscapes.

The findings are at odds with those of Prentice and Guerin (Prentice and Guerin 1998) whose study of users of iconic Scottish landscapes (the area around Loch Lomond) led them to conclude that popular landscape consumption was not formed by Romantic texts and art. Their study included a small qualitative pilot study where the interviews showed there was an absence of Romantic associations associated with walking in the area (p. 183). There needs though to be some caution here since this absence refers to absence of “literary-induced images” that could not be “inferred from the experience described” (ibid.). The expected associations with the works of Sir Walter Scott did not appear in these interviews, nor did associations with Romantic art. The next part of the study used a quantitative survey of 400 visitors and found these walkers were more interested in physical exercise than beautiful landscapes. However, for this part of the survey, the researchers decided somewhat arbitrarily that expressions that the landscape was peaceful or beautiful denoted Romantic associations arguing that both the majesty of mountainous landscapes and peacefulness, softness and smoothness of the landscape

were both elements of Scottish romanticism. This was rather than considering the nature of Romantic ideas and images, or asking those they surveyed about such ideas. It is unsurprising therefore that this thesis differs from those findings. Rather than linking Romanticism to specific texts and arts, this thesis has engaged with the complexity of such ideas and images and shown how such ideas and images developed over time contributing to current visual-social culture, and finding such ideas and images very important in current walkers' engagement with the countryside and landscape.

Edensor has described walking as a sensuous, serendipitous practice interrupted through the engagement of the body (Edensor 2000 p. 102). Interviewees did talk about how difficult walking terrain could interrupt their views, and solitary contemplation was not always possible in group walks (these ideas are developed in the following chapter). Nevertheless, walkers still wished to engage with landscape in this way. The research presented in this thesis has shown, whilst walkers themselves might not recognise their engagement as relating to Romantic images and ideas, the language, ideas and images in the interviews clearly show Romantic ways of engaging with landscape. The difference lies in the interviewees' attitudes and ways they engage with the landscape, what MacFarlane has termed the imaginative need (Macfarlane 2008).

### **7.3 Ideas from the inter-war years**

Walkers still thought of the countryside as a haven of peace and security. Sometimes the photographs the interviewees took and the way they spoke about the countryside was like the countryside celebrated in the Shell Guides of the interwar years showing pictures of serene villagers, Taylor's idea of England as a reliable make: unhurried, calm, unchanged for centuries, a place of refuge and regeneration after the horrors of the First World War (Taylor 1994). At that time there was already a sense of nostalgia for less hurried times, and the interviews with current walkers showed similar nostalgia and valuing the countryside as a peaceful space.

Interviewees had taken photos to try to capture landscapes which evoked feelings of peace and calm, as well as invigorating and awe inspiring landscapes.

“It's lovely isn't it? I think we were having lunch at this point. So again I think there's a church there. So it's just that little community nestling at the foot of the hills. So lovely. So you've got one hill coming down from the left and one coming down from the right and one forming a frame at the back and that little village nestling there. It's lovely. And again the dry stone wall and they're

deciduous trees not coniferous trees. Well they're much more attractive, aren't they?" Sarah (moderate to easy walker, walking group member)

This was a gentle landscape (photo 13) described in terms of security, "nestling" in the landscape. It could almost be one of the unchanging typically English villages as captured and celebrated on posters or Shell Guides in the inter-war years, or in the paintings of Samuel Palmer. There is nostalgia but Sarah was also interested in history particularly related to this part of the world (the Cheviots) where she felt at home.



**Photo 13 – Sarah, Cheviots ©**

Harder walkers also photographed images of peace. Stephen took a photo of mountains reflected in a loch. This was perhaps a traditional image of the sort often seen in calendars but it was talked about in an emotional way. He had taken the photo to capture the peace of the moment:

“Yeah it’s very peaceful as well, it’s very calm. Early in the morning such that we’ve got that perfect reflection of the mountains, the mountainside, the clouds all appearing again reflected in the surface of that loch. And again, an unusual view. You don’t often catch those still mornings when you get a view like this. You need to be immersed in that environment to have a chance of experiencing them. And you might notice it as you’re driving along the road but you wouldn’t properly appreciate how still and quiet it is unless you were stood in that environment and could feel the absence of the wind. You could hear the absence of the wind, and you properly appreciate just how calm the environment is, such that you get a view like that.” Stephen (hard walker, not a walking group member)

This was a physical experience the calm scene, hearing no wind, and being part of, or out in the landscape. It was an experience he would not have had by just looking and hence his repetition of the word “environment”. The scene was tranquil to look at but for Stephen, being there and the “immersion” in that environment were more important.

Another of Stephen’s images was of being inside a tent looking out (photo 14). It was reminiscent of images of domesticity looking out onto the landscape beyond as seen in inter-war artists’ work. It is an image taken from a place of safety looking out onto the landscape.

“I like this because it sort of summarises for me what, how it’s possible to sort of translocate your home, all your belongings to a remote environment. So that’s sat in the tent. There’s everything I need pretty well in that view. There’s a means of cooking, drinking, walking, food and a roof over my head and all from that little, that little nest, we’ve got such a wonderful view.”  
Stephen (hard walker, not a walking group member)



**Photo 14 – Stephen, Inside of tent looking out, Scotland ©**

This gives on one level a sense of what is needed to walk in remote areas but on another level the tent becomes a “home” and “nest”. Walkers are finding peace and contentment in the landscape, and a sense of being at home. Sarah, for example, experiences the village she sees as something that has been there a long time, is rooted in the landscape and as peaceful, life going on as it has for centuries. Stephen’s tent

becomes a home but this is not a refuge from the wilderness. The wilderness was still inviting to him and he talked of how wonderful it was to wake up and see that sort of view outside the tent. Such landscapes were not threatening. He said that in contrast he would feel anxious if he were to camp in an urban run down area:

“Their remoteness means they demand respect. Their roughness and sometimes altitude means climatically they can be challenging, um, but not necessarily threatening. I’ve never felt insecure which I suspect if I was camping on a bit of scrubland in a built up area I certainly would do.” Stephen (hard walker, not a walking group member)

Four other interviewees had taken photos through stone archways or behind stone walls looking out onto landscape (Photos 15 and 16). These were also images of refuge and safety:

“I took that because it’s a, it is a big castle (photo 15). I am always impressed by how thick the walls are of these castles.” Joy (moderate to easy walker, walking group member)

In this example, there is an idea about the reassuring thickness of the walls. Such images also refer us to artistic convention, deliberately making an interesting composition –framing the landscape.



**Photo 15 – Joy, archway Yorkshire ©**

Wylie has written of the tower on Glastonbury Tor providing a point of reference so visitors would orient themselves with their backs to the walls of the tower to view the landscape. In this way the tower regulated vision (Wylie 2002 p. 452). Two walkers said they had taken the photos because they were looking to the next stage on the journey. The stop at the stone wall or ruin was a break before going on somewhere else:

“Respondent: Because again I’m looking beyond to see what’s coming next. And I’d reached an end point and there was a, I know why I took that one. There was a lovely breeze coming through and it was really refreshing and I got to the, as far as I could get, and then there was this wonderful aperture and then the breeze coming through was so refreshing, and it was, it just added to the excitement.

Interviewer: And you were excited because you might be going beyond this or you could see something?

Respondent: Or that there is the possibility of another day exploring somewhere else. And also a sense of achievement, fulfilment even. I think I probably needed to sit and rest at the top, because it involved climbing to get there.” Rose (easy to moderate walker, not a group member)

This was a place of rest and a chance to look around before going on. This again is similar to the experience of the walkers who reach to top of Glastonbury Tor (Wylie 2002), sit down and feel a sense of security as the wide “vertiginous” views retreat to the safety of picturesque views.

In these examples the archways also acted as gateways to what could be seen beyond. Rose had been walking with her partner in France when taking this photograph (Photo 16). The walk had been a bit of an adventure, following an unclear path along a ridge. It was hot too and Rose talked on the sensual experience of walking, smelling the herbs. The breeze and this archway provided a break but framed enticing new adventures for other days.



**Photo 16 – Rose, archway France ©**

Some of the images of peace and security, like the village in Northumberland are like going back to England as a “reliable make” or nostalgia for the old days (Taylor 1994) with old fashioned villages clustered around a square-towered church, timeless and unchanging, or the comfort of thick castle walls that had stood the test of time for hundreds of years. Such ways of thinking about the landscape were not confined to easy/moderate walkers or members of a walking group. The image from inside a tent by Stephen is reminiscent of images in the Inter-war years looking out from a cosy and womb-like interior to the landscape beyond. Even though the view from the tent is to wild landscape, he thought of this as a peaceful and comforting landscape. Archways too provided a place of respite, a safe place to view the world beyond. These, however, were more fleeting, resting places, and often a gateway to a wider world to be explored. Perhaps Stephen and Rose as people who have walked on their own share a delight in exploring wilder landscapes.

#### 7.4 Countryside and the city

The thesis has demonstrated how cultural practices from Romanticism, the inter-war years (Matless 1998) and later through Wainwright (Palmer 2007) valued the countryside as an escape from industrial cities. For many of the interviewees, getting out into the countryside was a way of escaping crowds in the city:

“I’m not sure what appeals to me about remoteness but it does. I just I think it’s just getting away from crowds, the feeling of open space” Stephanie (hard walker, walking group member)

Stephanie preferred a natural environment “and the more remote, the better”. Edward also spoke of the countryside as an escape:

“I find it was a bit claustrophobic I can put up with the city one, two days and then I’ve got to head for the countryside.” Edward (hard walker, walking group member)

The city was for him a place of crowds and traffic noise. The city these days is no longer that of Dickens’ Coketown in *Hard Times* or Gaitskel’s Milton in *North and South* where factory workers toiled in the mills or heavy industry for six days a week, the buildings were black with soot, and the air heavily polluted. Although, as we have seen two of the group had worked in the shipyards in the North East and perhaps valued escaping to the countryside in a similar way. The cities in the North East are post-industrial and the centres have been redeveloped, although poverty and inequalities still exist in certain areas. The previous section showed too how unsafe Stephen felt at the thought of camping on waste land in an urban area. Cities have become cleaner and

pleasanter places in the last twenty years, but Harry and Sam would have been working at the height of the shipbuilding industry. Most of the interviewees though had worked in white collar jobs. Younger walkers like Rosalind wanted to escape the city too and spoke of the city where she worked in terms of it being claustrophobic, and feeling hemmed in:

“In towns everything is, really your view, your vision is really constrained by the buildings around you. Everything is cut into streets, and tall buildings obscure your view of anything that’s going on like much beyond the next few streets, you know. So, because I live somewhere that’s got a lot of tower blocks, it’s got quite a stunning skyline, quite dramatic but it means that when you’re walking at street level, you can’t see very far. So often when I leave I just love the fact that I can see for miles over hills and see into the distance beyond.”  
Rosalind (moderate to hard walker, not a walking group member)

The city landscape of buildings did not create the space to look that was so important to walkers. The next chapter discusses in more detail the importance of a sense of space for walkers and the particular association of space with Northern landscapes. Rosalind escaped these feelings of claustrophobia by walking in wide empty spaces. She talked of walking in the countryside as if being suddenly put into a 3D world after spending most of the week working in a concrete building.

Peggy (easy walker, walking group member) found the hard ground of city walking was off-putting. At the time of the Foot and Mouth epidemic the Ramblers had done city walks. She had found this interesting (they had visited museums or houses with blue plaques on) but the ground was hard and there were traffic fumes. For most of the interviewees, the city is somewhere that constrains and contains. It is viewed as somewhere noisy and crowded that needs to be escaped from.

Although this was a study about the countryside, three of the walkers did talk about how they enjoyed walking in the city. Harry (moderate walker, walking group member) had led walks in the city using parks and Denes (wooded valleys in the North East). This he characterised as a “suburban walk” with houses on one side and the countryside on the other. However, the countryside was where he preferred to walk and what had got him into walking in the first place. Polly mentioned walking by the river Tyne and enjoying walking past the old industrial areas:

“I mean I absolutely love walking down by the river here past Scotswood, past the staithes<sup>45</sup> and along. I love all that. I love the vibrancy and the sort of old

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<sup>45</sup> A landing stage for loading and unloading cargo

industrial bits of that. That isn't something, I don't have a preference. Well I do probably prefer to be out in the country because I work in an urban environment so I'm here all the time. But I don't actually mind, if it's something different, I don't mind whether it's urban or country." Polly (Easy/moderate walker, not a walking group member)

The old industry is no longer disturbing and exists, as Taylor (Taylor 1994) wrote about the heritage industry, as a comfortable past. However, for Polly, like Rosalind, walking in the countryside was an escape from reminders of work.

Ellen was the only interviewee who took photos of urban landscapes: a walk along Newcastle Quayside (photo 17) in the middle of the city, and the seaside at Whitley Bay (photo 18). However, like walking in the countryside, walking in such areas was valued because it gave a feeling of space:

"But I like the openness and I like the amount of sky. I like there to be a lot of sky. That's very important to me and I think that's partly a kind of antidote to the sort of slightly claustrophobic urban life that we have in small rooms with no windows." (moderate/easy walker, not a walking group member)



**Photo 17 - Ellen, Newcastle Quayside ©**

The city and urban living could be claustrophobic but there were places that gave a sense of space. She liked the shape of the Sage building (seen on the left of the photo) and the way the curves of the Sage echoed the curves of the bridges. This was an aesthetic response and she liked the way her photographs had captured the evening light on the water. Ellen knew the Quayside well over many years. She enjoyed exploring all the alleyways and looking at the architecture. In many ways this was similar to other

interviewees' liking of particular parts of the countryside, feeling a connection with certain places, interested in the stories that the changing architecture could tell about this landscape. Ellen too liked being near water so she had taken photos of the coast at Whitley Bay, a small town on the coast, including some that formed a panoramic view of the bay attempting to capture the sense of space she felt there (photo 18).



**Photo 18 – Ellen, Whitley Bay ©**

Lorna, who photographed a busy beach at Cullercoats (photo 21), had taken some urban photographs. These were not though of urban landscapes but of an event in the Yorkshire village of Goathland. Every year there is a day when locals and visitors dress up in clothes and uniforms from the Second World War, and the walk had coincided with that day. The photographs showed an interest in the event and the people, rather than being enthused by the urban environment per se (photo 19).



**Photo 19 – Lorna, Goathland ©**

Although the countryside still presents an escape for many walkers particularly from those still working, there are signs that this is beginning to change. Some walkers were enthusiastic about walking in an urban setting. This is not quite at the stage of an urban idyll as in the way Hoskins (Hoskins and Tallon 2004) has written, where the public is happy to spend time visiting museums, valuing the modern and updated buildings, drinking in pavement cafés, and going to markets. Interestingly, what walkers valued in an urban space were similar to things that were valued in the countryside: a sense of space, the aesthetics of light on water, or a special event such as the World War Two weekend or old industry. The redevelopment of Newcastle Quayside was appreciated as an urban idyll with Ellen finding the bridges and new buildings like the Sage and the Law Courts aesthetically pleasing.

## 7.5 Unpopulated landscapes

Landscapes for walking were valued when they were relatively unpopulated. So Harry for example took a photo showing people walking on an empty beach:

“But this is the one I like, this is the one (Photo 20) that says to me what the beaches of Northumberland are really like, this photograph here. This is what you can get if you go to Northumberland and walk on the beaches anywhere from Craster up to Berwick, you can get that, and you’ll not find that very far, in very many places, just 2 people on the beach.” Harry (moderate walker, walking group member)



**Photo 20 – Harry, North East coast ©**

Harry intended this picture to show the emptiness of landscapes where he walked. This was something special, a certain privilege to be had from walking on the coast in Northumberland.

Many of the walkers mentioned going for walks and not seeing “a soul”. This was seen as a huge advantage of walking in Northern landscapes:

“When you come further North, when I say further North I’m thinking about Yorkshire although I have walked in Derbyshire as well, it’s very good Derbyshire, but once you get into Yorkshire further North, it is wilder, less populated. I was amazed at how less populated the whole North of England is compared to the counties I was just mentioning, and the ease with which you can get away from crowds and big cities, and this feeling of space and just openness.” Harry

Such ideas can be linked back to those apparent from the interwar years and the way the Shell Guides presented the countryside as unpopulated. There was a hierarchical ordering of views dating back to the 18<sup>th</sup> century when the upper classes valued an unpeopled view (Darby 2000 p. 42). By the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century such emptiness appealed to the middle class vision of peaceful farmland as representative of a national identity which was village centred, lowland, and of the South East (ibid. p. 141). Of course, the North East does have a low density of population<sup>46</sup> and so walking in these areas allowed walkers to achieve the desire of not seeing a soul. Not seeing a soul that is, other than the other group members, but as was seen in the previous chapter, even group walkers managed to carve out some quiet time for contemplation.

There was only one photo of a crowded walking scene. Lorna photographed other people enjoying walking by the sea at Cullercoats<sup>47</sup> (photo 21), but that was the exception. Even here the figures are remote from the observer. Most of the interviewees’ photos perpetuated the myth of a depopulated countryside.

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<sup>46</sup> For example, 9 of the 10 least densely populated Lower layer Super Output Areas in mid-2013 were in either North East England or Wales, with the top four all being in Northumberland. <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/sape/small-area-population-estimates/mid-2013/mid-2013-small-area-population-estimates-statistical-bulletin.html#tab-Super-Output-Area-Population-Estimates> Accessed March 2015.

<sup>47</sup> Just outside Tynemouth on the North East Coast



**Photo 21 – Lorna, Cullercoats ©**

### **7.6 Sites of interest**

The contextual chapters show the continuing prevalence of circulating images and ideas about the types of places to be visited by tourists and walkers – all the castles, abbeys, sculptures, old churches, and ancient monuments reproduced in posters, guidebooks and websites. There were some images of these in the interviewees’ photographs but not a large amount which was unexpected given the prevalence of these. Even Jane who as a walks leader often planned her routes to take in interesting places like ruined castles or ancient cup and ring marked rocks did not have any photographs of these. She had actually taken photographs of waterfalls because she liked walking near water and felt a personal affinity with such places.

Thus there was one photograph of the ruins of an abbey by Richmond. Stephanie, a hard walker and Munro bagger had taken a photo of Loch an Eilein Castle in Scotland, on a walk on one of her rest days in between bagging Munros (photo 22).



**Photo 22 – Stephanie, Eilein Castle ©**

She spoke of this as “a typical romantic picture, it’s a romantic scene and a bit of history”. She liked the area especially because it was quiet and there were few tourists around. She has also taken care to frame the picture with trees creating an aesthetic view. Stephanie liked interesting sites and had photographed a place in Turkey where natural fire came up through the rocks. Such strange, interesting and “romantic” objects added something to her walks.

Joy too had photographed a castle (photo 23) and various bridges whilst completing the Lady Anne Clifford Way.



**Photo 23 – Joy, Yorkshire Dales ©**

She was very interested in history and liked visiting such places whilst out walking.

For Joy it was a way of connecting with the past:

“I love walking round castles. Again, as I said, I can imagine this with people living in this and what it was like.” Joy (easy/moderate walker, walking group member)

Like Stephanie she appeared to like castles or objects of interest in the landscape. She was only one of two people to take a photo of a sculpture on a bridle-way in Yorkshire (photo 24). Sarah had taken a photograph of a sculpture of fisherwomen and children (photo 31 – in chapter 8).



**Photo 24 – Joy, Sculpture, Yorkshire Dales ©**

Perhaps these three were particularly interested in such sites. It might have been that within the time limits given to take photos the others did not encounter such sites on their walks. However, it seems more likely that had walkers been very interested in such sites, they would have brought photos of them to the interviews. This suggests that for most of the walkers, such sites of interest were incidental pleasures rather than what they particularly liked about landscapes and the countryside. This might be a reflection too of the impact of current TV programmes like *Coast* which pick out various places or buildings with interesting stories. So such places punctuate the walk and are interesting but perhaps not the main point of walking in the countryside. The three who photographed such sites were easy/moderate walkers and possibly the harder walkers

would not have time (or inclination) to spend exploring such incidentals. The next chapter shows how certain sites were associated with stories and rituals associated with group practices. However, in these instances, the connections appear more personal than widespread so that those, like Joy, with a particular interest in history are drawn to castles and historic bridges.

## 7.7 Special places

The concept of “genius loci” or spirit of place is one that emerges in the work of several writers, and also artists in the inter-war years. Clare Rishbeth and Mark Powell argued that there was an imaginative response to places (Rishbeth and Powell 2012 p. 17) in their research into how immigrants responded to certain places. In chapter 4 the importance of the concept of genius loci in the inter-war work of Paul Nash was discussed, the idea that certain places had an intense and unique spirit or intangible force. Such sensibilities towards a spiritual or otherworldly dimension appear in more recent writers, as the thesis has shown. For example, MacFarlane has described his strange experiences of sleeping overnight at Chanctonbury Ring (Macfarlane 2012, p317-20) and more recently of the eerie in the countryside<sup>48</sup>. Wylie too has described the cultural meanings, layers of mythology and use that attach to Glastonbury tor and are experienced as part of walking up the tor (Wylie 2002). Such concepts emerge too in non-representational theory in relation to the multi-sensual and affective responses and engagement with landscape, for example in the writings of Lorimer, Macpherson, Rose and Wylie (Macpherson 2010; Lorimer 2005, 2006; Rose and Wylie 2006; Wylie 2005a, 2002). Lorimer in particular has drawn attention to the more than human, affective relationships that can exist between walkers and landscapes (Lorimer 2005).

Chapter 6 showed how interviewees had pictures in their homes of places that were personally important to them. In the interviews, walkers often expressed likings for particular places. An example of this was the photo (photo 25) taken by Harry from a bridge looking over a river in the Dales:

“Well, I’ve been there so many times, and one of the great experiences I had there was I was leading the Dales Way which we were doing once a fortnight and that stretch between Kettlewell and Buckden was the last stretch of the day and we stopped just about there. And it was a beautiful day. It was lovely and warm. We stopped and sat and had a bite to eat and looked in the river and there was about 12 trout just swimming around, lazy and it was just lovely, you know. And it often comes back.” Harry (moderate walker, walking group member)

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<sup>48</sup> *The eeriness of the English countryside* – article in the Guardian, 10<sup>th</sup> April 2015



**Photo 25 – Harry, Yorkshire Dales ©**

Revisiting the spot was a way of recalling the happy memories and endowed that place with special qualities. Harry was the walker who had a picture in his house that his wife had painted from a photograph which was connected to the story he told about his dog getting tired in the snow. This was a similar connection through a personal experience, which brought back memories or could even be said to contain memories that could be revisited.

Sarah felt a link with a place in the Cheviots through a connection to history. The links between the landscape and the past were important:

“Also for me there’s a sense of history and a link the past when I’m sitting on a hill surrounded by nothing but sheep and you’re looking down a valley and you know it formed part of the debatable lands... It’s that idea of where you were sitting, people were living lives...and I love that sense of different times and different experiences....yes I do feel I’m part of that. I feel I belong here.” Sarah (moderate to easy walker, walking group member)

For Sarah walking in the Cheviots (the debatable lands are a name for the border country fought over by the Scots and English into the 18<sup>th</sup> century and was a place largely on the edge of the rule of law) gave her a sense of the history of the landscape.

Further, there was a sense of belonging to that history and to this particular area. Sarah said this was because she moved house a lot as a child and had felt no sense of belonging to a particular place until much later in adult life. The sense of belonging came when she started walking in the Cheviots. The sense of history she describes is not something outside of herself, but is experienced as a physical connection by walking through the landscape where others had lived and walked. Sarah was excited when a walk took her along a path she had seen in the distance but not walked on before:

“So we actually took a route that I’ve looked at many, many times and imagined people coming down from Scotland but I’ve never done it. So I actually followed a route that I imagined people had gone on, and we did go high then down, down into this valley and it was just beautiful and it put two separate areas together and linked them and I could see how people in the past would have travelled between the two. So I had the history and the achievement and beauty of it all together.” Sarah (moderate to easy walker, walking group member)

Sarah is the walker who mentioned the village “nestling” in the valley, and although she lived in a city, felt a connection to a different world through particular places.

These deep, personal connections to specific places show that walkers are not merely passers through or tourists gazing on pretty scenes. Through memory and imagination, they feel attached to certain places. Bauman has written of how individuals in this modern era are threatened by insecure work, and fragmenting communities particularly in cities which have “all but abandoned” hope of an orderly and predictable existence. Instead there is a desire for places that can be associated with safety and variety without being over-stimulated:

“the bereaved utopian longings for the exquisitely human-friendly habitat that combines intriguing variety with safety, without endangering any of these two necessary ingredients of happiness, have been focussed on smaller, and so more feasible and realistic targets.” (Bauman 2003 p. 25)

Although Bauman here is writing of gated communities within cities or at the edges of cities, it is not inconceivable that in this context, certain places in the countryside are seen by walkers as providing a human-friendly habitat. Such places offer the walkers some continuity and embeddedness, as they return to them, relive pleasant memories, and feel a connection.

Sometimes in the interviews the special places took on an otherworldly, spiritual or mystical element. For example, Ellen and Polly (moderate to easy walkers, not walking group members) had been captivated by what they termed a “fairy dell”:

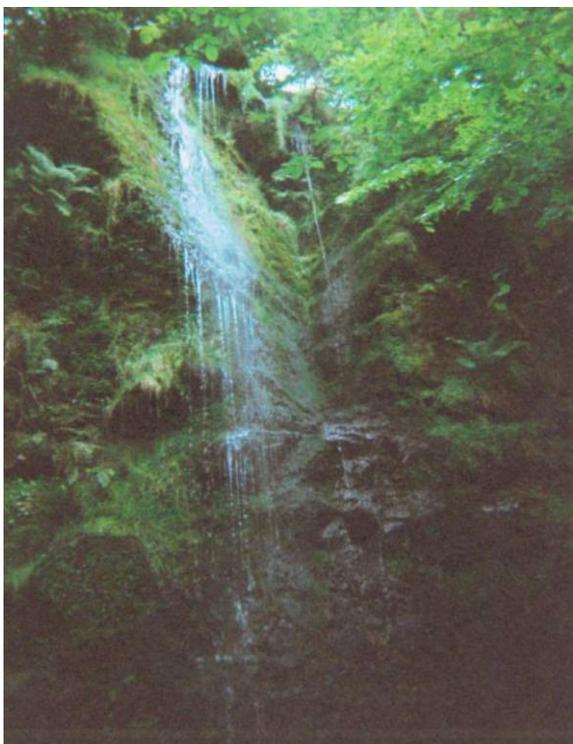
“Polly: Well that was by a babbling brook. It had a little wooden bridge. It had the velvety cushion hill and it had like, they weren’t rhododendrons, like big bushes with flowers on.

Ellen: Rose bay willow herb, loads of it was out.

Polly: And you could hear the tinkling of the stream. You could hear the birds. The sun was shining.”

When asked to describe it, they came out with descriptions like the illustrations of fairy stories using phrases such as “velvety cushion hill”. There was a physical dimension as well with the sound of the stream and the birds adding to the atmosphere.

Jane liked waterfalls and as a leader would often incorporate a visit to a waterfall. This she said was because she was a water sign (in astrology) and felt an affinity to water. She liked High Force because it was spectacular and had a photograph of the usual view of it (photo 11) but other, smaller waterfalls such as Malyan Spout were special places (photo 26):



**Photo 26 – Jane, Malyan Spout ©**

“It’s magical, it’s like a little fairy dell, you’ve got the water running. You’ve got the spray coming off and cooling you down. You’ve got the sunshine. It’s just like you’ve died and gone to heaven.” Jane (moderate walker, walking group member)

Again there is the description of it as a “fairy dell”, which could be shorthand for a type of place. It is easy to understand and imagine the sort of place “fairy dell” describes, but this does not detract from the sense of a special place, outside of normal experience, and somewhat otherworldly. This was not the spectacular waterfall of High Force but a smaller, pretty waterfall where the water falls over moss covered rocks in amongst green trees.

Such ways of constructing landscape were not confined to females or easy/moderate walkers. Sam had taken a photo of a very flat and uninteresting stretch of moorland and a far from spectacular view (photo 27).



**Photo 27 – Sam, moorland ©**

However, he spoke of how the moorland to him was special and “magical”:

“There’s nothing there apart from the greens of the grasses. There are no trees you know, and it’s a bit of a wilderness. So if you were caught in there in winter, for instance in a snowstorm you wouldn’t want to be there, but it’s got a magic for me, you know. This is what I find a lot of the walking is about.” Sam (hard walker, member of walking group)

These were qualitatively different types of places than the wild dramatic views and distances of the Romantic landscapes which were also enjoyed by the walkers. These were more often more intimate spaces, or spaces that evoked very personal connections.

The thesis has also reflected on the importance of the concept of *genius loci* and attachment to place. Certainly, the interviewees found particular places of special importance. Sometimes this was through imagined connections like Sarah's, or personal happy recollections like Harry's. For others such connections became otherworldly. So there was again a sense of some other power at work but this time not an appreciation of infinite spaces but a contentment of being in a smaller but special place. These likings for special places tended to come from easy/moderate walkers rather than those who did the longer, harder walks. Even Sam, who spoke of the magic of moorland, was referring to open space rather than a specific place. This suggests that easy/moderate walkers are more likely to connect to special places, possibly because they have more breaks and time to immerse themselves in such.

## **7.8 Conclusion**

The previous chapter showed that the visual-cultural context tended to be in the background of the lives of most interviewees. There were a few interviewees who were interested in art, and could relate to certain landscapes or images as "artistic" but this was by no means all. However, this chapter has underlined the persistence of certain types of images and ways of thinking about landscape. There is the continued Romantic appeal for walkers of wild landscapes and high peaks that fill them with awe. Hard walkers were more likely to have photos of peaks but what was interesting was the way such ideas and ways of engaging with landscape were common to all walkers. Even the hard walkers who one might have imagined in their focus on challenge might not take time to look around them, valued walking in such landscapes and responded to them as sublime landscapes. Nor was this a practice only taken up by group members, as if such stopping and looking at the view had been transmitted by group practice. Walkers who were not members of the group also valued Romantic landscapes. Furthermore, walkers engaged with landscape in a Romantic way, taking time for contemplation, gazing over vast stretches of land and thinking about their place in this world. This was not just blindly following tradition, or the superficial engagement of the magazine world. The interviewees had internalised such responses.

For modern walkers the countryside was still experienced as peaceful, calm and a refuge from the city. This has similarities with the valuing of the countryside in the inter-war years. At that time, the countryside was considered a place of quiet and healing after the horrors of the First World War. Many walkers wanted to escape the city although these had become much pleasanter places to walk. Old attitudes of feeling hemmed in and claustrophobic in the city persisted although there were signs this was beginning to change. Interestingly though, what was valued in cityscapes were interesting or aesthetically pleasing buildings, and a sense of space and peacefulness that were valued in more traditional rural landscapes. Walkers often used walking as an escape from the pressures of everyday life. Those who were still working liked getting out of the urban environment where they spent most of the week. Others like Sam and Vicky wanted to escape caring responsibilities at home. There are different pressures on time, not just the nine-to-five office job but as is shown in the next chapter, having a break from the urgencies of modern life. The time spent walking gave time for contemplation, but contemplation also appeared to be helped by being in open physical space.

It is striking that there were relatively few photographs of castles, abbeys, sculptures and ancient monuments, given the prevalence of these in guides, magazines and websites. The easy/moderate walkers seemed more interested in these, possibly because they had time on the walk to investigate such objects. Such interest too was linked to personal liking for and interest in history, showing the influence of particular biographies. The easy/moderate walkers were more likely as well to mention liking for particular places, and again this could be due to having more time to explore and spend time in such places. Such responses to particular places were shared by those who were group walkers and those who were not.

This chapter has explored the continuing influence of ways of engaging with the landscape that have their roots in the visual-cultural context of Romanticism and the interwar years. Even though the visual-cultural context seemed to be in the background of their lives, the strength of these traditions was very evident in the interviews and some of the images produced by the interviewees. What was also interesting was, for the most part, that such attitudes cut across the research groupings (easy/moderate and hard walkers; group and non- group members) showing the wide pervasiveness of such ideas and ways of engagement.

Such internalisation of these dominant discourses across different research categories suggests in Bourdieu's terms a wide field and a habitus that embraced different types of walkers. Randal Johnson in his introduction to the essays of Pierre Bourdieu on cultural production has written of habitus as a set of dispositions, often inculcated from childhood (Bourdieu and Johnson 1993 p. 5) and most of the interviewees had indeed started walking at an early age. This together with the dominant discourses of the current contextual material provides an explanation for the continuation of such ways of thinking about and constructing the countryside.

However, the strength of Bourdieu's model is that there can be changes over time as individuals challenge received opinions (Anfara and Mertz 2006 p. 170). Such traditional ways of experiencing the countryside were not the only ways walkers engaged with the landscape. Ideas about walking in the city for example were changing for some of the interviewees. The literature review outlined recent shifts in thinking from landscape perceived as an external object to be read, to non-representational theories where landscape and walking are deemed to be multi-sensual, more than textual, more than human (Lorimer 2005) and embracing "the materialities and sensibilities with which we see" (Rose and Wylie 2006 p. 478). The next chapter discusses these broader and different types of engagement with landscape that emerged from the research.

## Chapter 8 – Modern discourses of walking

### 8.1 Introduction

The literature review showed how ideas about landscape and the construction of landscape have changed moving from the idea of landscape as an external entity (a text that can be read) to one where the observer is actively engaged and that engagement and experience creates the landscape. The literature review explored the notion of “dwelling” in the landscape, how even those who walk through or work there but do not live in the countryside, nevertheless have relationships with the landscape. They are actively engaged and emotionally invested. The interviewees were not just passers through, mere tourists taking in beautiful sights. The interviews reveal deeper engagement with the countryside and landscapes which went beyond a purely visual appreciation. Although specific kinds of visual images, traditions and wider practices of looking from past cultural traditions were important, there were other more recent understandings of landscape emerging from non-representational theories, as outlined in the literature review, which have had a particular value for the thesis.. This chapter applies these multi-sensual, affective, social, ‘more than human’, more than textual forms of engagement or being in the landscape in relation to the interviews conducted with walkers.

In an era where health policy emphasizes the health benefits of physical exercise, it might have been expected that exercise was of paramount importance to walkers. This was not actually the case but there were important aspects of health and walking which the following section addresses. Another key area for the research is the sociability of walking. This was important in considering both the enjoyment of walking and the habitus of walkers and how practices may be communicated. Within these broader types of engagement with walking were concerns about nature. The next section explores what walkers meant by natural landscapes and their relationship to the natural world. In addition to relating to the natural world, walkers were found to still respond to the landscape as an imagined space, a place for adventure, where the journey and special places were important. Such imagined spaces and places for adventure connect to the outlined tropes of Romantic individualism, with the emphasis on the centrality of the imagination in life, but they also revealed certain differences.

## 8.2 Physical nature of walking

Walkers' physical relationship to landscape is not easily ignored. Trudging through mile after mile of muddy fields in the depths of winter makes for a grim experience as Armitage describes on the gruelling walk across Cross Fell getting wetter and colder and scarcely able to see:

“...so after only ten yards the view behind us is no longer viable as a reference point, and the view ahead is nothing but a silvery, swirling mass, and we have disappeared. It is also raining... (Armitage 2012 p. 120)

Among the interviewees, Lorna's response to the question, “Do you like looking at the surrounding landscape when you're walking?” was common:

“Most certainly I do. Sometimes you can't do that easily like we experienced on Sunday, and as soon as you put your head up to look, you're down a hole.”  
Lorna (member of walking group, easy/moderate walker)

However, being able to stop and look at what they were walking through was important:

“It is very important to stop, for me, to stop and look around and see what is around, see where I've come from and see just what is there which is amazing, which on Sunday was more amazing than we've seen for a long time.” Lorna (moderate to easy walker, walking group member)

There were frustrations with not being able to see, as Rosalind had found on a previous trip to Nepal where she was told to “look at her feet the whole time while we were walking in case you walked off an edge or something.” Green tracks or green ways were welcomed since they provided easy walking and a chance to look around and enjoy the walk (such as in photo 28 below).



**Photo 28 – Harry, a green way, Yorkshire Dales ©**

Most respondents mentioned exercise as one of many motivating factors but, as seen in the previous chapter, it was always listed as one among many others. There were two hard walkers who played sports as well. They regularly played tennis, and golf, and would go on skiing holidays. Some of the easy/moderate walkers went to exercise classes such as Pilates. Walking was part of these walkers' exercise regimes. Edward (hard walker, walking group member) said he would prefer to go walking than play tennis and this was because going for a walk on a Sunday took the whole day whereas tennis would only “fill” an hour or two. Stephanie (hard walker, walking group member)) explained that she could exercise in other ways, if exercise was all she got from walking.

Sarah was not good at sports but enjoyed the sense of physical well-being walking gave her:

“Yes, it’s just a good thing to feel the rhythm of the walking. I was never any good at sports at school. I have no hand eye coordination of any kind. I can’t ever remember returning a serve in tennis, and the feeling that you’re actually, your body’s working in a good healthy way in the open air is a rewarding one for me...I find that it’s the kind of, the rhythm, easy rhythm of the walking, movement combines with the views that I get to give me, to calm, to give me a sense of calm and peace.” Sarah

The steady rhythm of walking contributed to feelings of peace and calm, so the exercise was meditative and restorative, rather than being a virtuous, calorie consuming workout.

Some walkers did like the physical challenge of covering many miles and pushing themselves to the limit:

“I very quickly realised I could do the 14 miles because that is a challenge for me. It takes it out of me. It’s not easy for me. I have to work at it but there’s some satisfaction in doing that. I think enjoyment is the wrong word because half the time you’re [laughter] just about on your knees but at the end of it there’s a satisfaction, higher heights during the summer months and that’s great. That’s smashing.” Sam (hard walker, walking group member)

“I think a bit of a challenge is important, yes.” Stephanie (hard walker, walking group member)

Challenge appeared to be more important to the hard walkers. They were more inclined to describe a physically challenging walk as their memorable walk. Edward, for example, talks of his most memorable walk of going up Jake’s Rake in the Lake District in ways that emphasise its difficulty:

“[it is a ] semi-rock climb, scramble that runs diagonally through a thing called Pavey Arch and it’s probably the longest, difficult scramble a walker can do...there was a ridge walk going out, then the challenge of the scramble and then quite a steep descent.” Edward (hard walker, walking group member)

These people seemed more on the *Trail Magazine* end of the walking spectrum, getting a thrill out of overcoming physically demanding terrain. However, the challenge was not the whole point of the walk. Both Edward and Sam (both hard walkers and walking group members) said they went on longer walks in order also to be able to explore more remote areas and to see the scenery there, given the limited time span of being able to reach places and return before the coach took them back. This was a constraint of walking with the group which had set times for setting out and returning.

Nevertheless, liking a challenge was not only found among hard walkers. Thus Sarah liked a walk in Glenridding because it gave her a sense of personal achievement and because the views were good. Harry (moderate walker, walking group member) had enjoyed a walk to the top of Staerough - a large hill on the edge of the Cheviots which has panoramic views across the borders into Scotland and across to the North East coast. As a leader he liked the fact that others had enjoyed the walk and could do the climb even though it was tough, but mainly because he thought the views were good. In

this case, the challenging aspect of the walk was instrumental in that it provided wonderful views.

It might be thought that this taste for a challenge drew some of the walkers to northern landscapes which have been generally regarded as physically testing and threatening (Davidson 2005). However, the interviewees regarded the terrain of northern landscapes with respect rather than fear.

“Testing in a physical sense, er definitely the Cheviots can be [testing] in a physical sense, and the sea can be testing. I think for both you’ve got to have respect for those landscapes for what is there, you know, and the power of them.” Lorna (moderate to easy walker, walking group member)

“I would say yes they are testing and they can be harsh. I mean the Cheviots, you haven’t got to take it too lightly. If you go up there in really bad weather, winter, you could be in big trouble if you didn’t have a compass and you got some really foul weather coming on you because let’s face it, the Cheviots are one of the least populated places even in Europe, you know.” Harry (moderate walker, walking group member)

Interviewees were concerned about taking appropriate safeguards such as using the right equipment and walking clothes, being able to navigate in bad weather, and having escape routes off dangerous places. In this they displayed the current rituals related to walking that Edensor has written about, rituals relating to safety, being seen to have the correct gear, the concern for finding the correct path or direction (Edensor 2000). This was particularly the case with the group’s Walks leaders who had to be mindful of safety and encourage group members to wear the appropriate gear.

The multi-sensual nature and experience of walking was often very evident from the interviews. The last chapter showed how Jane was excited by the sound of High Force, Stephen felt the silence and peace of a loch in the early morning, and Rose whilst walking in France was attuned to the sensory experience of the sounds of birds and the smells of aromatic plants. Rose and Vicky liked swimming and sometimes looked at rivers for the potential of swimming opportunities:

“but that’s the sort of water, river where there’s the possibility of swimming and where the light reflects the sky. And that stony shore, I really like, and rocks. And there’s a place in the Dales, Semmer Water, where you’ve got a similar foreshore, and place in Ireland I’ve swum which are similar to those, and I like that because I’m not worried about catching my feet on anything. It’s quite shallow to go in and the water’s really clear and it usually gets deep quite quickly and you can have a nice swim and feel quite safe and it’s, yeah, and just sit and contemplate. It’s beautiful and that, if you’ve got that stony bottom, or

sometimes it's a bit reedy but you do get wonderful reflections." Rose (easy to moderate walker, not a group member)

These two had found another way of physically engaging with the surrounding environment. Again, such an experience is not just about the physical exercise, but feelings of safety and enjoying being in beautiful surroundings. Rose said it was a different way of immersing oneself in the landscape and relating to the landscape through senses other than vision. On group walks there were very rarely opportunities for swimming or even paddling and perhaps the necessity of providing a walk for a group with fixed start and end points militated against being able to enjoy different types of physical experience.

Thus walkers were aware of physical aspects of walking and sometimes frustrated by constraints when they could not look around. They were aware of the interruptions to their walks caused by having to look down at their feet but these were unwanted interruptions. They did not find as Edensor and Vergunst found such interruptions interesting and a new way of thinking about walking. Such interruptions were a nuisance. However, as in MacPherson's visually impaired walkers (Macpherson 2008), there were jokes made about walking not being much fun when traipsing in the mud or falling over if one did not occasionally look where one was walking rather than admiring the view. Some, mainly the harder walkers, enjoyed walks that were physically challenging. Here there was a certain pride in overcoming a challenge. However, some of the easy/moderate walkers also liked the occasionally physically challenging walk either because it gave the opportunity for personal achievement or gave the opportunity to see terrific views. Some of the interviewees were immersed in the physical experience at times such as when Stephen experienced a peaceful lake scene, or Jane feeling excitement at the sound and sight of High Force waterfall. Two walkers took this immersion in the physical senses by swimming but these were rare occurrences, and even rarer within the group.

### **Empty landscapes and space**

Many interviewees photographed wide vistas from the hill tops. Part of what attracted interviewees to northern landscapes were the wide open spaces. These were not the liminal spaces of Auden's or Armitage's Pennine valleys where the industry and habitation of the valley floors gradually gave way to wild moorland on the tops. The North for the interviewees started around south Yorkshire, north of Pickering, the Humber, or Ferrybridge Power station, and was characterised as being expansive:

“Traditional family folklore has it, that’s where the north starts because when you drive up from the South, you get to Ferrybridge power station and suddenly there’s no traffic on the roads, everything opens out, there are big skies.”  
Rosalind (moderate to hard walker, not a walking group member)

This was contrasted with the South which was more enclosed and restricted:

“I haven’t really done a lot but the little bit I have done and it’s not really a fair comparison they’ve been walks where there are quiet villages and things and they’re very pretty and it’s nice but you don’t get that sense of vastness.” Sarah (moderate to easy walker, walking group member)

“The South has small hills which are all close together, studded with villages and surrounded by motorways.” Rosalind (moderate to hard walker, not a walking group member)

All types of walkers – hard and easy/moderate, male and female – liked being in wide open spaces. There were many photographs from the top of a great peak, looking down and into the distance, and it was common to talk about having wonderful 360° views. Some of the cameras had not caught the distance well (disposable cameras are not good at taking long views) but this was what many of the interviewees wanted to capture.

“The next one is [Photo 29] is the view from Benn Starach and although it’s not a perfect example, I put it in, because I think one of the great things about climbing to the top of a mountain in Scotland is that you get this rolling vista. You can just see so far, you know, set of hills, after another set, and from Ben Scarraf you can see right out to the islands, on a good day. Stephanie (hard walker, walking group member)



**Photo 29 – Stephanie, Benn Starach ©**

Many respondents said they liked being on moorland, or at the top of a hill looking across long distances:

“So often when you leave, I just love the fact that I can see for miles over hills and just see into the distance beyond. You can see more sky as well which I like not just a small patch above you. You can see the sky, see the weather and you can see what changes the weather is going to make.” Rosalind (moderate to hard walker, not a walking group member)

Stephanie talked of a liking for remoteness that was linked to enjoying big open spaces:

“No, I’m not sure what appeals to me about remoteness but it does, I just, I think it’s getting away from crowds, the feeling of open space. I like to see big skies, wide skies, open skies and just distant vistas.” Stephanie (hard walker, walking group member)

Such views were dramatic and awe inspiring but there is a sense here of open space being important in its own right. Physical and visual space were linked to temporal space in the sense of having a long stretch of time to do something in. For Rosalind it was important to walk outdoors and have a long term goal of spending a whole day getting up a mountain and coming back down. This was preferable to cutting life into small manageable pieces:

“I think with long-term goals you can just, there’s so many more aspects to consider. It’s more the whole experience rather than we are always told we should break everything down into small amounts, into manageable chunks. You never get the bigger picture doing that. It’s a way of you know, having short term goals is a kind of coping strategy but having a sort of bigger goal, you know, there’s more a sense of achievement.” Rosalind (moderate to hard walker, not a walking group member)

Note here the use of “bigger picture” which refers to the whole experience of spending a day walking up a hill, rather than solely being able to see a long way. She contrasted it to being in a gym doing concentrated bouts of exercise moving between machines every few minutes. Going out walking for a day was a way of slowing down and not being embroiled in the minutiae of everyday life. Somehow being able to see a long way helped with this feeling. This again links to Bauman’s ideas about modern life and the city, where life has become speeded up and there is the drive to spend every minute of time “usefully”:

“Infinity of possibilities slips into the place vacated in dreams by the infinite duration. Instantaneity (nullifying the resistance of space and liquefying the materiality of objects) makes every moment infinitely capacious; and infinite capacity means that there are no limits to what could be squeezed out of the moment – however brief and ‘fleeting’. ‘Long term’, though still referred to by

habit, is a hollow shell carrying no meaning; if infinity, like time, is instantaneous and for immediate use and immediate disposal, then 'more time' can add little to what the moment has already offered and nothing can be gained from the 'long-term' considerations." (Bauman 2000 p. 182)

The walkers appear to find in wide open spaces places away from the pressures of instantaneity.

Such views were also, as seen in the last chapter, linked to ideas of the sublime but not the divine as the Romantics would have understood it. The interviewees talked rather of a sense of something bigger than one's self. Several walkers liked having a sense of the infinite which they got from wide open spaces:

"So are particular landscapes or places you go walking important to you? The landscapes that I can see that go on for miles and miles that have no end. Like outside here the sea has no end and that really, they really, really fascinate me and make me feel secure. Now you can analyse that, Barbara, when you go home. [laughter] But it does. I could come out in the morning, look down to the sea and see it going on and on and think "I'm OK, the sea's still there"." Lorna (moderate to easy walker, walking group member)

Stephen talked about having a sense of bigger perspective, and his place in the "bigger picture". One of his photos was of a landscape in the Cheviots where he could see (or read) different parts of the landscape which showed how they had evolved over sometimes hundreds, sometimes millions of years.

"And that sort of environment I find yes, relaxing, calming would be the first description. Um interesting because given the scale that you can see, you can get a sense of the scale of the landscape, how, a scale of me as an individual human being within that landscape or indeed a humans and much human activity within that landscape in that it's small and a variety of different features that reflect various landscape forming processes. So the hills in the distance, there are not the Cheviots, might almost be the Simonside Hills. So it's either the volcanoes of the Cheviots or the sandstone outcrops that are a result of geological activity and the rough terrain, the wild grass there, is indicative of a predominantly wet environment, acid soils, there's a whole variety of things going on in that landscape there." Stephen (hard walker, not a walking group member)

Rather than this just being a reading of the landscape as signs, it was also an act of contemplation that gave him a sense of sharing the world with other animals, and a sense of contentment at being part of a vast system:

"Yes, I mean I suppose there is a sense of insignificance but actually I experience that more as a sense of place, that here is an ecosystem. This is a part of it. I am a part of that ecosystem. I have a role. I have an effect on that ecosystem just as other organisms in that system have an effect on me. So I am

part of a bigger process. There is also a sense of time, um younger trees on the right, more mature trees on the hillside obviously trees that become old enough to be harvested immediately on the left of that road, the mountains in the distance will have been formed 100s of millions of years ago.” Stephen (hard walker, not a walking group member)

Here walking has given Stephen time and space to reflect on his place in the ecosystem. He did not feel insignificant or unnerved by the vastness but actually felt a sense of place, that he had a role in the system. The role of contemplation as a Romantic way of engaging with landscape has been discussed previously. However, the ideas here have moved away from Nature as a divine goddess to a more secular idea of divinity.

### **Walking and health**

Much current UK health policy literature stresses the importance of exercise to reduce obesity, and the academic literature about health and walking has concentrated on exploring factors that might motivate people to take up exercise (Johnson et al. 2012; Zheng, Orsini, Amin, Wolk, Nsuyen, et al. 2009) or evaluations (Forsyth et al. 2009). Given such a focus, it was perhaps surprising that the walkers in this study did not refer directly to obesity. There was an underlying awareness that exercise was healthy but no specific references to walking in order to lose weight.

Sometimes in the literature improvements in mental health are mentioned but with little idea of how this occurs whilst walking. Morita et al (Morita et al. 2007; Morita et al. 2011), for example, showed the beneficial impact on mental health of walking in forests. However, they were not sure what caused the improvement but tentatively ascribed this to physical causes such as the scents in the forest, rather than associations made by walkers. Pretty et al. studied how walkers reacted to images on a screen where urban and rural pleasant scenes improved blood pressure, self-esteem and mood (Pretty et al. 2005). However, this was a laboratory experiment and findings might have differed in an outside environment. Marselle et al. (Marselle, Irvine, and Warber 2014) carried out a longitudinal study in England comparing groups of walkers who did group walks in nature and those who did not. They found associations in the group walks in nature with “significantly lower depression, perceived stress, and negative affect, as well as enhanced positive affect and mental well-being” (ibid. p 134). This was a quantitative study with a comparison group, and showed statistically significant differences suggesting that health benefits of walking in nature went beyond physical benefits. In this research interviewees made links between mental and physical health.

Kaplan is one of the few researchers to think about combinations of elements (Convery, Corsane, and Davis 2012 p. 109), postulating four elements that were beneficial (Attention Restorative Theory) which were - being away from everyday life, fascination with the walk, extent and variation, and sense of compatibility. Some of these ideas resonate with the experience of the interviewees who liked being removed from everyday concerns, liked being out for long periods of time, found many different things like animals, flowers, or archaeology to enjoy, and felt at ease with the countryside. Gesler writes of the importance too of spiritual dimensions to a walk such as feelings of awe and reverence, tranquillity and peace (Convery, Corsane, and Davis 2012 p. 110).

Gesler (Gesler 1992, 2005) has explored the concept of therapeutic spaces, places that are important because they are experienced as providing healing or retreat. The concept of therapeutic spaces was initially applied to places that had a reputation for healing but was then opened out to places that promoted and maintained health (Gesler 2005). Interviewees did not identify particular places as therapeutic, or the restorative places that Thwaites has written about (Thwaites 2010a) but more generally considered walking to be therapeutic, as in Gatrell's idea of "therapeutic mobilities" which he set beside "therapeutic landscapes" where motion could benefit human health (Gatrell 2013 p. 98-100). Gatrell whilst acknowledging Gesler's notion of the importance of therapeutic landscapes, follows up the idea of the moving experience being important, not only in places but on journeys (ibid. p. 100). Rhythms of walking or slowness of walking have been found to improve mental health (Slavin 2003; Guell et al. 2012) and sometimes this borders on a spiritual experience (Sharpley and Jepson 2011).

Sarah said walking gave her a sense of perspective:

"I think it is true that in the countryside you're able to put things in perspective and I think that's a combination of what you're looking at, the sense of being away from things, and the regular physical movement of the walking and it seems to me that the combination of all those is a combination of the physical and the mental relaxation so that you do that. So you relax and you do feel your own smallness in the big scheme of things and that I think helps you put things in perspective." Sarah (moderate to easy walker, walking group member)

Like the walkers in the study by Sharpley and Jepson (Sharpley and Jepson 2011), what she describes is the combination of physical movement, space to think, and being in

spaces that were away from everyday stressors. Similarly, Stephanie spoke of how being in the countryside and beautiful surroundings gave her a sense of peace:

“Most kinds of scenery interest me but also it’s just the aesthetics of it. Yes, I find it very beautiful, very calming and it renews the spirit really.” Stephanie (hard walker, walking group member)

Joy (moderate to easy walker, walking group member) spoke of how one could go out feeling bad, and then walking “makes you forget and you feel better”. Being in open spaces and the physicality of walking interacted to provide a sense of well-being, and this was often bolstered by being able to talk through problems:

“It doesn’t mean that I never get grumpy but I know it’ll be all right after about half an hour because you kind of walk it out, talk it out and then it’s OK.” Ellen (moderate walker, not a walking group member)

Having space, both physical and temporal, was therapeutic and seen most vividly in the following example from Rosalind:

“I think there’s a certain type of freedom when you’re up on top of a ridge, on top of a mountain and there’s nothing above you but sky. It sounds corny but as soon as I start climbing up, I kind of, all the problems are left at ground level. I kind of detach myself from everything that’s going on at the bottom of the hill...At one point I wanted to just go higher and higher.” Rosalind (moderate to hard walker, not a walking group member)

For Rosalind walking up a hill was a way of leaving problems behind. So that metaphorically problems were left behind, as well as being somehow physically left behind. It was as if the increased space and being up high made the problems no longer significant or pressing.

Walking and health were important but for these walkers, healthiness was not so much about physical health, but more the experience of the intertwining of mental and physical health. There is a certain complexity here in that the countryside has been and is still conceived of as an area of peace or an arena for contemplation. Therefore the walkers will associate peace and tranquillity with such places. So it is unlikely that peacefulness or feelings of wellbeing are transmitted through smells of forests (as is contended in the Morita et al. studies), and far more likely to be an accumulation of ways of thinking about landscape in the ways that have been shown in this thesis. Thus the dominant discourse that conceptualises the countryside as a place of peace and recreation is part of the general habitus of walkers, and then laid over that, or as another layer of complexity, are concerns to escape the smallness and busyness of modern life.

### 8.3 Sociability of walking

The sociable nature of present walking day practices have been described by Green and Armitage (Green 2009; Armitage 2012). Green contends that current health initiatives may be limited because they do not take note of the social organisation of walking. Doughty in her study of different walkers in walking groups found that people often joined such groups to combat loneliness, sometimes after a divorce or death (Doughty 2013). This study has shown that people did join walking groups to meet people, and sometimes after bereavement, as in Vicky's case. Doughty found that the new members had the chance to talk about other things, or to talk in depth about emotional concerns. Walking was found to relax social norms and could increase emotional closeness. The rhythms of going for a walk contributed to this because there are pauses that provide opportunities for speaking but there can be periods of quiet, for example when following single-file along a small path, which helps those who find interaction difficult. Doughty argues that movement is an inseparable element of therapeutic spaces and practices by encouraging social interaction at times, for example on tracks where people can walk two abreast, whilst also providing times of quiet, for example when people have to walk single file (ibid. p. 141). Macpherson, as noted, similarly found the sociable nature of walking was of great importance to visually impaired walkers (Macpherson 2009). She particularly notes how telling jokes and laughter formed one of the key experiences of a walk (Macpherson 2008). Indeed, walking group members can be very protective of the sociable nature of groups as Copelton found in a study of those using pedometers in fitness walks (Copelton 2010). In this study walkers were concerned that the implied competition of who had done the most steps would destroy the group's sociability. The use of the pedometer was based on measuring progress by number of steps but this was not what attracted people to join and stay in the walking group (ibid. p. 306).

Although the interviewees knew this was research about landscape, many interpreted the invitation to photograph what they liked about walking to take photos of the groups (photo 30) taking a tea break together, or gathered together to look at a view. It was important for many of the walkers to share the walking experience with others.

“I liked the look of it. Here the group's coming, the track's good, it's quite a good shot, the day looks good, they look happy.” Harry (moderate walker, walking group member)



**Photo 30 – Harry, the walking group ©**

This is a leader of a group and so part of his responsibility is that the people in the group enjoy the day. The people who took pictures of the group did tend to belong to the walking group and obviously felt close connections to the people they went walking with regularly:

“And that is important to me in that there’s a group of people standing in the same environment as I’m in and enjoying and chatting about the landscape around them. That is how I see it. And also what makes that picture important to me, there’s someone in that picture who is a walker extraordinaire and has been in their life and who is still walking now at a very advanced years, in his very advanced years but also with a disability that says they cannot do it on their own any more. Which is very sad for them but it, you know, they are still enjoying their most precious pastime and that’s important to me.” Lorna (moderate to easy walker, walking group member)

Members of the group formed a community, looking after those who needed help. The leader was also valued by Lorna:

“Now this picture depicts one of the reasons I do go out walking and one of the reasons I go out walking and one of the securities I’ve got to have when I do go out walking, and that is a leader. So there’s somebody that I am following, that I have great trust in, in that, and that goes for who, that isn’t this particular person although I do have but it is the leader I would have great trust in. In that, they can map read, they know where they’re going, maybe not all the time but they know how to find out where they’re going. So they are going to get me to the end safely in an environment that I can just chill out in and enjoy, without the responsibility. And that sounds very selfish but that is one of the important things to me.” Lorna

This relationship was about trust. For Lorna people in the group were important and the leader provided security. (She did not trust all leaders in this way!) Lorna did not map-read and had no interest in knowing where she had been. She was content to be led on a nice walk and not having responsibility of finding directions or being concerned for safety. The fact that the group has existed with leaders in this way for so long suggests she was not alone in enjoying this aspect of the walking.

Such adherence to the group was evident also in the hard walkers who one might have expected to be the archetypal lone romantic figure clambering to the top of a summit. Thus Stephanie had taken a picture of her fellow Munro baggers at the top of one of the Munros:

“So this is all of us at the top of Schur nan Gillian. That was the lot of us that went to Skye. [names people on the photo] So I quite like that one because these are people that I’ve met through going to Scotland and climbing the Munros.”  
Stephanie (hard walker, walking group member)

The Munro baggers form a group, planning holidays together and celebrating as they overcome another mountain. As Vergunst has described (Ingold and Vergunst 2008) Munro bagging is a sociable affair, people joining up along the way, walking in groups and talking about where they have climbed. They, in much the same way as Stephen did on the long distance walk, have a sense of the topography of the landscape. The sense of camaraderie is reflected in the following field notes on attending a walking festival in Scotland:

“Munroers talk in a strange language, naming various peaks – Ben Sci Dhu, Lochnagar, Ben Cochfoct, Ben Trossach, Sciath Slavcht. Some of these I have made up because it was like listening to a fog of words and names. I had no idea where these are or what they are. Speakers talking Munroese did not at any point feel moved to explain. It became an impenetrable and secret language where fellow Munroers are in the know and others are excluded.” Author’s field notes from the Ballater Walking Festival, Deeside, May 2013.

The language used by Munro baggers showed a shared sense of topography. They were also part of an exclusive and exclusionary club, and enjoyed talking to each other about how difficult their conquests had been.

For many of the respondents meeting people had been a reason for going walking in the first place. Sam (hard walker, walking group member) describes how he first went walking as a youngster (20s to 30s) with a group of lads and he just “tagged on”. In

later life he had returned to walking and had “enjoyed the bit of company” and this was still an important aspect of the walk for him. Another (Rosalind) had joined a walking group in her 20s as a way of broadening her social circle.

Respondents enjoyed meeting other people who liked walking, finding shared interests and values that made for easy company. Peggy (easy walker, walking group member) valued being able to talk with strangers that they might meet whilst walking:

“I’ve found it’s a nice thing when you are passing people out on a lonely path somewhere, they all speak to each other, say hello, perhaps pause, have a little conversation. You might pass a house with somebody in the garden and might chat to them and admire the garden or ask them something about the area. So it’s a very sociable thing to do.” Peggy ( easy walker, walking group member)

This is like Armitage’s description of the people he met whilst walking along the Pennine Way, making for a wider community of walkers. Even Stephen who set off to walk from Land’s End to John O’Groats on his own enjoyed the “transient meetings” he had along the way or when he was accompanied by another walker for part of the journey. Peggy and Sam who were married (to other partners) and retired said that walking had given them something to talk about with their partners when they returned home.

There were though limits to the ideal size of group. Sarah (easy/hard walker, walking group member) was not keen on big groups because she then lost the sense of being far away from the crowds:

“I much prefer walks where I’m with a few people I like a lot. If there’s a large number, however nice they are, you don’t get that sense of being away from things because there are too many people. And it’s not their fault. It’s just not the same because if you’ve got 20 or so people inevitably you’re waiting to go over stiles, it slows you down, there’s a lot more talking, and you don’t get that sense of isolation.”

Sam too liked a mix of quiet times and talking:

“The company is important. It’s nice to have your quiet periods but I like a bit of chuntering on sometimes, the meeting up afterwards over a couple of pints, the chatter in a bar. It’s good.” (Sam (hard walker, walking group member)

So there is this mix of wanting some company but also wanting physical and mental space. Most walkers wanted to experience both although a few went walking on their own.

Many of the places that the interviewees had photographed came with shared stories. Much like the Dogrib tribe, written about by Ingold (Ingold 2000), who walked through a landscape and stopped at particular places to tell stories relating to that place, walkers, particularly those in the walking group, wanted to mark places which had an interesting story attached and this became part of the way they moved through landscape. The Dogrib tribe did not use this as a way of navigation but of relaying the stories to younger members, so they would know the history and significance of such places. In this study some interviewees had taken photos of the memorial to the Polish airmen who died when their plane had crashed on the top of Buckden Pike in Yorkshire in 1942. As usual at the top of a steep climb, there was an opportunity to rest and look around. Here there was a further reason to stop. There were rituals associated with stopping to read from the information board, marking what had happened, and discussing or reflecting on what had happened. This helped to make a connection with the particular place.

“It’s where the Polish soldiers were training and they were killed all but one. So these go with that...Just that lovely sense of history. You’re quite sad for a moment and you think about what must have happened there, these young men, you know, and one of them getting down to the village to get help. Remember, and it’s the story isn’t it? And you stand there and someone tells the story or you read it and you think about that and what it must have been like that day. Imagining the past, I think that’s it.” Sarah (moderate to easy walker, walking group member)

Sarah had a particular interest in history but the story is something shared by the group. Sarah also recounted the story associated with the sculpture of fisherwomen (photo 31) on the coast looking in vain for their husbands’ return.



**Photo 31 – Sarah, sculpture, North East coast ©**

It was another place where walkers were called upon to imagine what it would have been like for the wives and children waiting for the fishermen.

This was not just true of the group but was experienced by those who were not group members. Thus Polly and Ellen who were not members of the walking group, had also stopped by an information board in the Cheviots recounting the story of 2 shepherds who froze to death on the hillsides in 1962:

“Ellen: And then we went past the farm where the shepherds were trying to get to when they died. There was all this signage about the tragedy, a group of tragedies that had happened on this hill and there was great deep snow.

Polly: These two incidents

Ellen: of 50 years ago and all about how the bodies were found in the snow.”

The information boards provide a shared history and narrative. The story was now old but commemorated and a way of fixing the place as now associated with that story, although the tragedy is now shared with a wider audience, rather than those who lived in the area and may have had personal knowledge of the shepherds.

Chapter 5 considered the extent to which the countryside is increasingly managed, for example at sculpture trails where the viewer is guided on what to think and notice about particular sites. So journeys are punctuated by places in the landscape where the landscape is made sense of in a certain ways and commemorated. The stories aid the passing on of shared history and gave importance to particular places. The sharing was often a group experience, acting as a way of cementing the group through common experience and understanding. Information boards, memorials and statues manage the landscape, much as the Shell Guides did, pointing out sites of interest. So that even those walking outside of the group, would know what sites signified, and that the sites were deemed special.

Those who were not members of a walking group often went with one other person and enjoyed the companionship. These were close friends or family members. Polly and Ellen had joined groups on walking holidays but their membership of walking groups was transient. They were, however, more likely than those who were group members to walk on their own at times. Ellen, Rosalind, Stephen and Rose had all walked on their own:

“My partner doesn’t really like walking but she also really can’t get the thing about walking on your own. Because what she’ll say is, “Is it safe? Don’t you worry?” and I say, “God, no.”...it just doesn’t occur to me that. I can be very solitary.” Ellen (easy to moderate walker, not a walking group member)

This was a personal liking for times on her own which she dated from living on her own in Scotland and enjoying walking on her own. There was a streak of non-conformism amongst those who were not group members. Edensor has written about the restrictive conformity associated with walkers and the conventions surrounding walking (Edensor 2000) and this seemed evident in those who walked with a group. However, fortunately some walkers were able to break out of the mould. Rosalind, for example, was gleeful at going on a walk which had been a “spur of the moment thing”, walking up Great Shunner Fell with a “ragbag of waterproofs” she and her companion just happened to have in the boot of the car:

“It was great because it was quite blustery and rainy but it wasn’t that cold. It felt really, it was one of those good to be alive days where you can feel the elements. We, yeah it was lovely path up. It’s sort of an old paved track to begin with and then just opens out onto a normal path... It was quite funny in places because we met these two, there was no visibility at the top, and we met these two guys wearing these funny waterproofs that looked like dresses, the kind that covered the rucksack as well. And they looked at us and were like, ooh two women out on the hillside! And they were like “Are you OK?”, and we were like “Yeah we’re fine.” [laughter]” Rosalind (moderate to hard walker, not a walking group member)

They had been looked down upon by other (male) walkers they encountered because they were women out on their own in the hills, not expected to be walking in wild weather, and probably because of what they were wearing, although Rosalind points out that the men in their proper gear looked ridiculous. There was a real sense of freedom in this walk unencumbered by concerns about dressing or behaving appropriately.

So there are some walkers who eschew the group ethos and instead embrace their inner adventurer. Those who were not members of the group also sometimes went walking alone, many of them women. This might reflect the growing independence of women with their own transport, and social acceptability of walking on their own, although, as shown above, there are still some social barriers to overcome. Some women like Kate and Ellen in going walking on their own or walking in remote landscapes with another woman challenge conventions of the feminine. In contrast, it was accepted by the people that Stephen encountered whilst walking from Land’s End to John O’Groats that a single man would do that.

Many walkers liked the sociability of group walking. For some it was a way of dealing with divorce or a partner dying, children grown up and left home, or retirement. However, as we have seen these group members stayed because for them there was something else about walking that they liked including seeing beautiful views, looking at rare plants, or escaping to the countryside. There are shared stories that are enjoyed and marked by the group. These stories are reinforced by information boards and on websites, so that even walkers who are not members of the group will have a similar understanding of what they see. Even Munro bagging or walking long distance paths have communities of practice, with people joining up in groups to bag Munros. Walking on one's own (perhaps particularly as a woman) or not in the right sort of gear is still regarded as strange, in actuality questionable, but there are signs that this is beginning to happen more. The walkers who do this were less likely to be members of the walking group. The section below shows how some walkers also related to landscape in ways that were unusual, quirky and individual - not managed.

### **Individual responses to landscape**

The previous chapter showed that walkers have adopted ways of engaging with landscape that could be traced back to ways of conceptualising landscape from the Romantics and the Inter-war years. However, there were some surprises where what walkers appreciated was individual, and unexpected, rather than just reproducing views or images that were similar to those which could be found elsewhere.

One example, from Harry, was a stone wall which was appreciated because of the workmanship (photo 32). He took several photos of this particular wall:

“Now I do like walls and there are certain stretches where you see some magnificent ones. And this is one. That's a magnificent wall and you can say what you like about, the way they're all levelled out. They're nearly of an even size looking at them. It's a really well made wall, and other places, there are lots of places where you find a well-made wall, but another place, but another place where there's quite a striking wall. It's on the Dales Way, begins with an 'O' a little place, when you're heading towards Kirby Stephen (hard walker, not a walking group member).” Harry (moderate walker, walking group member)



**Photo 32 - Harry, dry stone wall, Yorkshire ©**

Harry was interested in the good construction of stone walls, so much so that he could recall another example of a well-built wall in a different county many miles away. Harry had worked as a foreman in the shipyards and perhaps that background made him appreciate the craftsmanship and sheer hard work that went into constructing a good wall. Other interviewees mentioned stone walls as a characteristic, almost as an inherent part of the landscape following the contours of the hills but were not interested in the construction. Stone walls there were a sign of walking in Yorkshire and part of that particular landscape.

Polly had taken a photo of a sign in Ireland where a road came to an end. The sign had instructions to turn round which seemed very funny as the road had stopped at the edge of a cliff. Ellen had taken photos of seagulls perched on a line of bollards which had amused her. These photos were taken because they amused them, and presented something odd and quirky whilst they were out walking.

Stephen had taken a photograph of a boulder field which looks like a mess of stones to an untutored eye but this was apparently an important and rare geological feature. This reflected his interest in geology:

“They will have been full of ice right up to this level. Ice will have flowed from one valley to another wearing away at this gap here and then as the ice retreated, it was still very cold and the frost fractured the rocks either side and ultimately they would tumble down as boulders and the whole of this gap for about half a mile was choked with these boulders fallen off this mountain either

side as a consequence of frost action. Some of the boulders are sort of, maybe half a metre as you can see here judging from the scale. As you move through the gap, you're climbing around boulders the size of cars and sometimes even buses. So it's a very, it's a very rough terrain and nearly all bare rock, not much vegetation except underneath the boulders. So you're now moving through a very physical environment rather than a very biological environment." Stephen (hard walker, not a walking group member)

This was not a conventionally attractive picture, and Stephen was capable of taking many stunning and beautiful pictures but was enormously interesting for him. It is another example of how there are layers of meaning to an image or walking experience that depend partly on biography. It illustrates the difference between, as seen in chapter 7, where Jane argues that beauty is self-evident and what individuals value in landscapes.

Rosalind described a beautiful sculpture made by the ice and wind at the top of Great Shunner Fell:

"We got to the top and there's a sort of wind shelter, one of those wind shelters. It was covered with snow and ice and I think it had been freezing while the wind was blowing because it was carved into this weird kind of mushroomy sculpture. The snow was carved into like marshmallow, like glass. It was not something you'd see normally. So yeah, that was fantastic." Rosalind (moderate to hard walker, not a walking group member)

This was an aesthetic response to something unusual talked of in terms of an art object, a transformation of something mundane by the elements and a rare sight. Sculpture in landscape is now more common and Joy had taken a photo of one such on a Yorkshire walking trail. However, part of the attraction here was the ephemeral nature of the sculpture, the walker feeling privileged to see such a thing and able to respond to it on a personal level.

Sam described a surreal moment when he looks back at a tarn from Haystacks in the Lake District:

"We were up on the top of Haystacks...and I looked back and I saw this tarn, just a small one, and it was dead still on top of this dark hillside and to me, just to me I was looking at a hole as if I could see through to Australia. That was my imagination." Sam (hard walker, walking group member)

He tried to share this with another member of the group who did not get it:

"Now Phil couldn't see it. When I said to Phil, [he said] "Oh na, I can't see that." Phil thought I was peculiar but that to me does things. That is almost a

hole in the ground and you're looking through something on the other side.”  
Sam

This was definitely not a group experience or one that other members of the group could or wanted to share. Such ways of responding to landscape were natural for Sam. He had taken a photo of High Cup Nick (photo 33) as an example of an exciting, dramatic landscape but said too, “I tend to think that the stream is a piece of rope that somebody has thrown down the valley, in this wiggly line.”



**Photo 33 – Sam, High Cup Nick ©**

These instances appeared to be untutored and unmanaged engagements with landscape. Chapter 5 showed how managed and clichéd some of the images of landscape have become in guidebooks and on television. Some walkers, fortunately, seem to be finding their own ways of relating to landscape. They found interest in stone walls, funny signs, very specific geological formations, ice sculptures, and surreal ways of looking at things in the landscape. These are individual and idiosyncratic ways of relating to landscape related to individual biographies or ways of thinking about landscapes. Thus for Harry, perhaps his work as a craftsman had given him an appreciation of a well-built wall which gave him pleasure. Stephen with his interest in geology found a boulder field of great interest. Rosalind liked seeing something aesthetically pleasing and ephemeral – a rare and beautiful ice sculpture. Sam had imaginative and surreal ways of engaging with landscape. After some of the mannered

and clichéd ways of engaging with landscape evident from the current visual-cultural context, it came as a relief that some walkers were still capable of finding their own delights in the landscape.

The group was important for some walkers but the group did not reinforce certain ideas or ways of engaging with landscape. There was one clear example of Sam seeing a hole through to the other side of the world, where such strange thoughts were not encouraged. However, both these chapters show that many of the ideas and ways of engaging with landscape were held by walkers whether they were members of a walking group or not, and whether they were hard walkers or not. This suggests a wider practice of walking, communicated to and experienced by different types of walker.

#### 8.4 'Natural' landscapes

Cultural geographers and anthropologists have drawn attention to the way natural looking landscapes have been manufactured or cultivated over centuries (Ingold 2000; Cosgrove and Daniels 1988). Yet interviewees persisted in talking about “natural” landscapes. As part of the thesis it was important to consider what walkers meant by “natural” and whether these ideas were related to certain aesthetic and cultural traditions.

Landscapes have been managed and preserved in certain way, such as in the National Parks (Taylor 1994). Interviewees are aware of this at some level. Thus Sarah talking of deciduous woods:

“I like those yes because they seem to be natural. I mean obviously they’ve been planted but there’s a naturalness about them, and a harmony about them.”  
Sarah (easy/moderate walker, member of walking group)

However, this did not stop interviewees equating much of the landscape where they walked like “wild moorland” as “natural” and valuing “naturalness”. Some interviewees had taken photos to show that the landscape was “natural”. Moorland was categorised as natural because it showed little overt human impact in the way of dividing the land into fields or erecting buildings on it. Villages could be evolved and natural. This was the description of a coastal village where little fishing cottages had been built following the contours of the hillside to the sea.

“And this is the village and it was a lovely village. It was just higgledy piggledy. I think I like the naturalness, the way this fishing village has evolved.” Sarah (moderate to easy walker, walking group member)

The “naturalness” here was in the way the village followed the contours of the landscape and had evolved over time, rather than being built rapidly or cutting through the landscape. There was another description of a photo of hay bales not covered in black plastic. This photo for Sarah celebrated harvest, the fruitfulness of the land and the ritual of the seasons. What was valued was not a modern world and not an urban world. There were no photographs taken of tractors working in a landscape or a well-appointed farm. Much like the paintings of landscapes Barrell drew attention to (Barrell 1980), the valued countryside is in these photographs still one not populated by people who live and work there and evokes the traditional rural idyll. There was the unconscious irony of liking a village because it was empty of people:

“Well it was a lovely quiet village with not a soul in it, absolutely nobody there.” Joy (moderate to easy walker, walking group member)

Trees were a focal point for some of the photographs and in particular deciduous trees. Forestry Commission pine forests were regarded as manmade, regimented, dark and gloomy. Dandy and Van Der Wal’s study of appreciation of woodland landscapes by land management professionals and lay people found that deciduous woodlands were referred to as ‘natural’ and ‘wild’ (Dandy and Van Der Wal 2011). The woods were conceived of as unmanaged with a place for wildlife, and naturalness was perceived positively by all. Woodland was valued for aesthetic characteristics such as colour and the “architecture of the trees”.

The only time the interviewees regarded man-made forests as good was when they were covered in snow like a Christmas card.

“Respondent: The only time to be in a pine forest I would say is in winter, if it’s snow covered, then if you’re on a good track they’ve got a bit of appeal but otherwise there’s not much pleasure in walking through pine forest.

Interviewer: What is it you don’t like about them?

Respondent: You’re closed in. You cannot see anything, and they’re repetitive, and they’re just man-made for a start off. Often a good track through them but really I cannot find much to commend them.” Harry (moderate walker, walking group member)

Walkers still considered certain landscapes on one level as more natural and this reflected previous prejudices against anything that appeared to be manufactured, imposed on the landscape rather than growing up over time with the landscape.

These ideas related to previous cultural and aesthetic traditions but continued to be experienced by present day walkers. The thesis has underlined the enduring influence of Wainwright who had strong aesthetic objections to monotonous pine forests (Palmer 2007 p. 407). Wainwright liked trees but favoured those that were natural or planted so they could develop to full maturity. His main objections to man-made forests were that the walker was shut off from views, and shrouded in silence. The uniformity was disturbing, and Wainwright saw them as out of kilter with the landscape, something imposed upon a landscape rather than growing with the landscape. This is very similar to the views of the interviewees.

Walkers liked and were interested in the flora and fauna they might encounter. Even those who did the more arduous walks, like Stephanie, focussed on small details like alpine flowers as well as the mountains. So whilst climbing peaks and getting up high remained a key part of the walk for many hard walkers, they could also be diverted by a tiny alpine flower. Walkers liked seeing animals, for example, seeing the wild goats at the edge of the Cheviots, deer running into woodland, a hare running across a ploughed field, or spotting an adder sleeping in the sun. These are rare occurrences and there were no photographs in these interviews, although some walkers talked about photographs they had taken:

“I’ve only seen a deer once and that photo was very distant, very distant. But I’ve also and this happened on a very early walk with the Ramblers, I managed to take a photo of a slow worm...and I was excited because I managed to get photos of red squirrels.” Vicky (easy/moderate walker, group member)

The interviewees did photograph domestic animals (cows and sheep) for the research. Walkers related to animals they encountered and thus showed the concern for the ‘more-than-human’ aspects of landscape that Lorimer identified (Lorimer 2006, 2005). Rosalind had a photo of a sheep with a strange, “miffy” face, and Sarah had taken one of some young cows. Lorna had photographed a line of cows to convey thoughts about humans inhabiting the world with other animals:

“There a Scottish cow and they are black and white, a big white like a white saddle that goes around their middle, and they are a certain breed and it was obviously on the borders, on a walk on the borders. But this group of cows were

all together. They were all together, and they were watching us and they were saying, “What the hell are you doing in our space? [laughter] Now this is our field. We don’t want you here so p. off.”... And some people were saying “Ooh they might chase us!” [silly voice – laughter]... So it was going back to respecting the landscape as not just yours, it’s you know, animals live there and it’s respecting that. It’s respecting animals’ space in that.” Lorna (moderate to easy walker, walking group member)

As with the earlier remarks by Stephen there was an appreciation of humans sharing the world with other creatures and all being equal, valuable parts of the ecosystem. The youngest walker, for example, had photographed trees (photo 34) because she thought of them as a crucial part of the ecosystem:

“Respondent: This is rural idyll again because there’s a farm in the distance. And more big trees. They are like a lung, have you ever seen a cast of all the blood vessels in a lung? Then they are exactly like a tree.

Interviewer: OK and that’s good?

Respondent: Well, yes, it’s the lungs of the planet.” Rosalind (moderate to hard walker, not a walking group member)



**Photo 34 – Rosalind, trees, Northumberland ©**

Such attitudes were similar to those of the land or environmental art being aware of ecological issues as shown in Thornes’ paper (Thornes 2008), mindful of the position of

humans within the ecological system, and valuing the place of animals and plants within that system.

## 8.5 Imagined landscapes

Macfarlane has written of the adventurousness of walkers and imagining landscapes (Macfarlane 2008), and of the complex layering of history and imagination that drove mountaineers to climb peaks in the Alps and the Himalayas. Interviewees also showed a desire for adventure, perhaps not surprisingly given the influence of Romanticism.

For example, Stephanie (hard walker, walking group member) talked of wanting to emulate the boys when she was younger and being jealous that they had their own outdoor centre. This was because she, and other girls, wanted “our own adventure”. She liked walking in other countries in difficult terrain such as Iceland and Norway. Another hard walker, Edward, enjoyed the challenge of scrambling up Jake’s Rake. This exchange between Polly and Ellen shows delight in being “forced” in a guided walk to do a proper scramble:

“Ellen: Well that mountain ridge walk that we did! When we did the narrow ridge in Snowdonia that was wonderful. We couldn’t believe that. She actually made us scramble.

Polly: We had to leap across that gully. A great gap.

Ellen: A crevasse with an overhanging rock.

Polly: So that you went that way, and that was the rock overhanging, and she was like this, leaning out.

Ellen: In case you plunged.

Polly: Hundreds of feet!”

Although scary, this was obviously an exciting episode, rewarded at the top by a view of the whole of Cardigan Bay, and making them feel very proud of themselves. This was an out of the ordinary experience. They enjoyed the challenge and overcoming fears. So adventure was not just for the hard walkers.

It is perhaps a commonplace to think of a walk is a journey, getting from A to B. However, as discussed, more recent academic writing about walking explores space and

movement in relation to bodily movement, culture and spaces. Different sorts of journey are seen in pilgrimages or quests (Armitage 2012; Davidson 2005). Green and Slavin (Green 2009) Slavin 2003) have written of the importance to walkers of pilgrimage. Pilgrims are not part of “a liminal place on the edge of society” but “in a place radically, ontologically different from places bound by space and time” (Slavin 2003 p. 7). The importance of the journey for pilgrims is not to reach an end point but to “be” in that space. Slavin is careful not to describe pilgrimages as just an inner journey. He writes of the way walking on pilgrimages becomes meditative as the body falls into a rhythm. Pilgrims are both embodied in time whilst walking but apprehend infinity and the divine as well (ibid. p. 9).

The assumption in asking interviewees to take photos was that these would be snapshots of points along a journey. However, some interviewees were keen to focus on the journey itself as part of what they enjoyed. Two of the interviewees reflected on and talked about the journey. Thus Stephen had a photo of a highland valley that signified to him the mid-point of his journey, walking into this valley and then out again. He was moreover undertaking the long journey from Land’s End to John O’Groats and kept an online blog of his progress. Documenting the journey and a sense of journey was important to him. Another example was that of Polly (moderate walker, not a walking group member) who chose to show a journey she had taken with a series of photos of a walk on part of St Cuthbert’s Way. The sequence began with the start of the walk at Melrose, and then a series of views going up the Eildon Hills and looking back from where they had come. One photo caught the anticipation of what they were walking towards:

“It’s just to show the sort of um, you know the anticipation of us all when we’re going, and I wonder whether they [the rest of the group] were thinking that or not.” Polly (Easy/moderate walker, not a walking group member)

The next photo showed her exhausted by a steep climb. This had been taken by a friend on the walk. She said that these sorts of pictures were not normally taken but she felt this was an important part of the walk, although often such struggles and physical duress are later erased from the experience, and she wanted to include it. Subsequent photos in the sequence looked back to the hills they had walked over, a convivial lunch stop, and finally a place by a river near to the end of the walk (photos 35-7). There was a sense of what it was like to take time to travel, starting with anticipation, various times for rest, and the conclusion. As was seen earlier in the chapter, there is a strong link

between temporal and physical space, so the experience of undertaking a journey contributes to that.



**Photos 35-7 – Polly, the journey from Melrose through the Eildon Hills ©**

Two of the respondents were completing what could be seen as their individual quests. Stephanie was very proud to be part way through climbing all the Munros. What had begun as bagging a few Munros on some walking festivals in Scotland had soon become a determination to climb all of them. She now planned time away and at festivals to bag the outstanding Munros. The other person was Stephen who was walking from Land's

End to John O’Groats. Although he had had to stop midway because of injury, he was determined to finish at some time (and indeed is blogging about continuing the walk, now he has recovered). What he liked about the walk was having a sense of how the landscape of Britain fitted together:

“So all those are changing the timescale but I do want to finish it because I would, partly yeah I want to finish what I set off to do, partly I really would like to continue this thread of the country that’s in my mind’s eye to continue it all the way up to John O’Groats because I do, I like the idea of being able to fit places into where I actually walked.” Stephen (hard walker, not a walking group member)

Stephen wanted to finish the task he had set himself which had taken over a year in planning, but also because he now had this sense of connection between places. Finally, there was Rose, seen in the last chapter, peering through an archway, looking towards what other areas might be explored in future.

## 8.6 Northern Landscapes

Throughout this chapter and indeed the thesis so far there have been references to how walkers conceived of northern landscapes .in particular However, it is worth reflecting in general on the ways in which walkers engage with the complexities and nuances of northern landscapes and how they conceive of those landscapes. The literature review showed the complexity of ideas of northern landscapes as variously conceived of as industrial, or in the Dales as a place where the urban and rural mix together at the edges, as alien and forbidding, as a place for quest and adventure, as a place of testing and challenging experiences, and as a place situated in opposition to Southern England (Davidson 2005; Holt 2003). This assumption is made despite the bleakness and challenging terrain of areas in the south like Dartmoor. Guides and posters from the interwar years did not show a great deal of difference in subject matter between northern and southern landscapes although there was a notable exception in the early Shell guide to the North East which showed industrial scenes and underlined their decay.. Northern landscapes were also at this time the site of struggles over access to land with implications for issues of social class and identity in the period of the Depression. More usual though were the sites of historical interest, mighty waterfalls, and the romantic ideal of the Lake District. More recent contextual material showed the continued eulogising of the Lake District, and Northumberland and the North Pennines

as places of enticing wildness. The presentation of industry in the north was confined to interest in industrial archaeology or heritage, comfortably in the past.

Although respondents had certain ideas of what constituted Northern landscapes, the overall sense of what these were was complex and varied. Respondents identified different types of landscapes within the north.

“Yes, the Lake District is very different to the highlands of Scotland. Partly they’re on a smaller scale, partly they are, they move more rapidly from farmland to unimproved land and just generally the shapes of the mountains are different. The, even in Scotland though there are differences so the Assynt area of Ullapool is remote and wild but characterised by discrete mountains and the moors, Cairngorms those mountains are piled on top of one another. So there are differences there as well.” Stephen (hard walker, not a walking group member)

“I mean I love doing the pavements in Malham, when you go to Malham, and you do these limestone pavements. I love that area because it’s so different, and then I love walking in the Cheviots because of the rolling hills and the greenery and then you go to the lakes and it’s different again. It’s jagged. It’s a jagged landscape and that’s completely different again to our rolling Cheviots. So different landscapes give you a variety and an interest and I think that’s why I keep walking. Although in some ways I’m happy to do the same walk again and again.. I’ve just done the Lady Ann Clifford’s way that’s 100 miles across Yorkshire and Lancashire and Cumbria and that, and that’s wonderful landscape and that is different. That’s different, you go over into the different dale and it’s different, and you come to the Eden Valley and that’s different, and then you come into the lakes, and that’s different. So it’s all different.” Joy (moderate/easy walker, walking group member)

The Yorkshire Dales were seen as softer, more cultivated, as were the Scottish borders. The Lakes were likened to alpine landscapes, with more jagged rocks. The limestone pavement and landscape around Malham were different again. The rolling hills of the Cheviots were sometimes as steep and hard to climb as those in the Lake District but they were far less populated by other walkers. The Cheviots were characterised as having rolling hills but these were different to the gentle rolling hills of the South. Here there were steep rounded hills creating shapes and shadows rather than the gentle undulations of the South Downs.

“And for the Cheviots for me it’s the rolling hills, the rolling and the shapes and the shadows, the colours and the um nobody’s there. You don’t often meet people. And I know I walk in a group, I don’t do this on my own but even in a group you can get the feel on your own, get the feel of you and the hills and the yeah the never ending, just the rolling, never ending.” Lorna (moderate/easy walker, walking group member)

Many interviewees took pleasure in the different and changing colours of the landscape. In the north this was a different, muted colour palette of greys, browns, greens, and the mauves of heather. For Harry places such as the Peak District shared some of the characteristics of Northern landscapes but were identified as part of the Midlands. Other interviewees like Ellen and Sam pointed out that they felt parts of Wales and Ireland shared some of the characteristics of Northern landscapes:

“...because all those things are also Wales to me which I like...I’ve walked in Ireland as well and had similar experiences.” Ellen (moderate/easy walker, not a walking group member)

These similar sorts of landscape were of high mountainous or moorland areas.

Nevertheless, interviewees, as has been shown, did have definite ideas of the north as a specific area beginning around and spreading northwards from South Yorkshire and the Humber where landscapes started to open out. Because the interviewees were based and walked in the North East, the landscapes of the north were places they knew as walkers and where they lived. Northern landscapes were associated with less populated areas. Harry, for example, (as shown in section 7.5) spoke of valuing North East beaches because there were so few people there and how far less populated the countryside was in the North Pennines and the Cheviots. Big skies, and the pleasure (almost thrill) of experiencing 360 degree views were mentioned a number of times, and being able to see for miles and miles.

“Very definitely big skies, 360 degree views, you can often see the sea, um look out and you can’t see another city and you can’t hear a motorway, the openness, the wind and cold.” Rosalind (moderate/hard walker, not a walking group member)

The thesis has shown that these elements were highly valued by walkers and were particularly associated with northern landscapes. Such ideas are perhaps an example of the cultural distinction between types of tourism: the traveller who prefers more apparently authentic and less-visited sites compared to the tripper who enjoys superficial pleasures. The experience and understanding therefore of the northern landscape as more solitary and more encouraging of contemplation would confirm that distinction, that these walkers are engaged in a more “authentic” and perhaps more serious experience.

When respondents were asked about northern landscapes, all talked in terms of the countryside rather than urban landscapes, and often differentiated them from the cities.

Probably because the research asked about landscapes and most walked in the countryside, they thought of landscape as referring to the countryside. There were a few who mentioned walking in urban landscapes but these were the exception. There is too a certain pride in living close to and habitually being able to walk in the varied landscapes of the Cheviots, the Lake District and Yorkshire, a valuing of a known landscape.

However, as seen in section 8.2 when asked whether they found northern landscapes testing or threatening, the interviewees answered that they found them testing and they appreciated that aspect of the landscape. This concurs with Davidson's ideas of Northern landscapes as challenging but they were not anxiety-provoking places of fear. Northern landscapes were testing in a physical sense and demanded respect. The walker who did not respect the toughness might encounter risk. Both Harry and Ellen specifically mentioned the Cheviots as examples. Although the hills are not as high as the Lake District, the unpopulated and remote nature of the area made them potentially dangerous in poor weather.

Northern landscapes have been seen as "other" or alien places in literary and cultural references (Davidson 2005) which might have been linked to the sense of walking as a quest for some of the interviewees. However, none of the interviews thought of Northern landscapes as particularly strange or alien:

“Interviewer: Are northern Landscapes strange places?

Respondent: Strange!?”

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: No, not to me. To me they're familiar and I love them. In another, strange in another sense?

Interviewer: Just as completely different and alien.

Respondent: Well they're certainly not alien to me. No, no. I feel akin with them. Perhaps I'm like that too but they're certainly not soft and gentle and welcoming the way some southern ones are. So there is that sense of, well I wouldn't say strange or alien, I would say isolated perhaps just a little bit, perhaps they're also yes just little bit harsh and unwelcoming but I quite like that.” Sarah (moderate to easy walker, walking group member)

Some, who had not been born in the north, had adopted it as home.

“No, not now. They’re home. They’re not strange now. They were very different when I came up here but now they’re home.” Joy (moderate to easy walker, walking group member).

The alien country for people who habitually walk in northern landscapes was ‘further north’ and interestingly this were mentioned by two of the harder walkers. So Stephen spoke of the very north of Scotland, of areas which were so wild he would need to take a tent to journey across the landscape. There would be no shops or habitation. This did not make him fearful. He liked the challenge of making plans for such a trip and a chance to be in somewhere really remote. The really strange Northern realm for Stephanie was Iceland. This was seen as an otherworldly place, where larva had been sculpted into odd shapes and covered in a blanket of moss:

“These are strange some of these...Some of them are mosses. This is all growing on top of the larva. It’s amazing, isn’t it?...Very strange landscapes, and the ice as well there, it’s amazing really.” Stephanie (hard walker, walking group member)

The north beyond northern England and the Scottish lowlands for these walkers was a marker of remote and inaccessible landscapes, the Ultima Thule to be explored. Perhaps there is here too some of the fascination for the “contemporary eerie” of the countryside, the uncanny and disturbing elements which MacFarlane has written of (MacFarlane 10th April 2015).

If the North was thought of as home and the familiar, the South here was characterised as other. For the interviewees Southern landscapes were seen as softer, and more gentle but without the wide expanses and unpopulated nature of northern landscapes. There was a definite favouring of northern landscapes which were seen as providing the physical and mental space so important for extended moments of contemplation and providing dramatic vistas.

Perhaps not unsurprisingly in this post-industrial era, the industrial landscapes of the North were not mentioned. The only time industrial landscapes were referenced in interviews was in relation to industrial archaeology such as the evidence of lead mining remains in the North Pennines, or the old staithes along the Tyne where coal wherries and fishing ships would once have moored. These are visible reminders of past interactions with place, that are now overplayed with new engagement by walkers enjoying the places and perhaps reflecting on past lives and views. The links between

present and past gave an experience of reassuring continuity rather than promoting challenging or obtrusive thoughts.

There was a local affinity to north Yorkshire and the Cheviots, with walkers embracing these different landscapes that still provided an opportunity of getting away from urban centres into a wilder, more open and less populated area. These were not the North of testing places or quests. For those areas, people who walked in the North-East looked further afield.

## 8.7 Conclusion

This thesis set out to explore walkers' motivations for walking in the countryside, their individual engagements with certain types of landscapes and the significance of specific kinds of visual images, traditions and wider practices of looking. There has been a marked persistence of and similarities between particular ideas, cultural traditions and interpretations of walking from the Romantic period to the present day. This chapter has looked further at constructions and discourses of landscape in relation to current concerns, moving away from the privileging of the visual and exploring how people engage with the countryside through walking in wider physical, sensory and emotional senses.

Being able to see for miles was important to walkers. Partly this was because it provided spectacular views and so perhaps a way of apprehending the divine or spiritual that Burke writes of in relation to the sublime: that sense of feeling part of a bigger landscape, of something greater than the person, although this was not couched in religious terms or "the divine" in these interviews. Having physical space was important to walkers who were still escaping the crowds and bustle of cities. What the research also revealed were links between physical and temporal space. Empty and apparently limitless space brought feelings of contentment. Such ways of valuing space and emptiness can be linked back to for example expectations from the inter-war years that the countryside was ideally empty of people, or Romantic ideas of contemplating the infinite. However, they are a product of modern times when there are increasing pressures to cram activities into small chunks of time. The longing for a peaceful utopia

in response to the instantaneity of the modern world that Bauman writes of was evident in the delight and peacefulness felt by walkers in the countryside.

Work and living in cities has changed. The cities are no longer places of heavy industry, coal blackened buildings, dirt and smog, although there are still problem areas (Shields 1992p. 218). Harry and Sam had direct experience of working in heavy industry on Tyneside and perhaps for them the experience of escaping the city was similar to those in the first part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It is also important to remember that the cleaning up of cities and move to a post-industrial economy is fairly recent memory, within the last 30 years<sup>49</sup> and many of the walkers had begun walking before then. Much of the work is in the white collar sector rather than industrial factories but the stresses of modern life trying to cram in work, exercise, caring for a family, still require an escape to the countryside. This was certainly the case for those interviewees still working, and for retired interviewees who had family caring responsibilities looking after parents or grand-children.

Despite the emphasis on physical health benefits of walking in health policy, walking was never just an exercise, even among the hard walkers. The health benefits that were mentioned were more connected to mental health – feelings of freedom, perspective and peace. These cannot be disassociated from an accumulation of ideas about the countryside as a place embodying such qualities. However, interviewees did not mention the “Natural Health Service” and did not think of where they walked in those terms.

The sociability of walking continues to be important. Some of the walkers enjoyed the sociable aspects of walking, being in a group, and making friends. In this they shared some of the camaraderie of walking groups set up in the inter-war years. Walkers, as noted, had joined a group to make friends often after leaving university, or divorce or retirement. As well as making friends within the group, walkers enjoyed the friendliness of fellow hikers. Nevertheless, even those who were group members liked space on a walk to have time for contemplation, preferring a balance between those different kinds of experience. Those who walked with friends or family sometimes joined a group for holidays but were fluid in their adherence to groups. They were

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<sup>49</sup> Swan Hunters’ Neptune Yard, one of the last shipbuilding yards on Tyneside, was closed in 1988

more likely than group members to walk on their own. The group did reinforce certain stories and ways of engaging with landscape by stopping at certain places and sharing stories. The landscape was managed in this way, and even those not in groups had their attention drawn by information boards to certain ways of responding to the landscape. However, there were some interviewees (both group members and those who walked with friends or family) who found their own ways of engaging with the landscape that were personal and non-conformist.

However “unnatural” the landscape, these walkers liked what they termed “wild” and “unspoilt” landscapes. By this was meant landscapes that had no obvious evidence of industry, or only of industry that had long gone. Villages that had evolved gradually as a community and followed the contours of the landscape were favoured, showing still the nostalgia for a pre-industrial age. They also liked the flora and fauna during a walk because it gave them a sense of humans’ place in relation to the rest of nature.

Some walkers were still keen to engage with landscape as an adventure or quest, and again such preferences cut across the research groupings. They liked a sense of journeying, making threads of connection between places. Certain particular places were special and interviewees had deep and sometimes felt mystical connections to these places. This embodied the idea of *genius loci*, a sense that places have a particular spirit that invests them with special qualities. It was seen earlier in the way walkers had images on their walls to remind them of personally important places, and some had taken photographs of such places.

Walkers favoured Northern landscapes because they could provide them with space, open views and emptiness which were valued for contemplation. The North was seen in opposition to the South but because of the openness. In these post-industrial times, few of the walkers mentioned industry, and, when they did so, it was industrial remains, which were now part of the heritage industry. comfortably and reassuringly in the distant past. Northern landscapes were recognised as various but not testing or particularly harsh. It was more that such landscapes demanded respect, and indeed most felt a sense of belonging or even coming home to such landscapes.

Many of the ways of engaging with landscape connect with discourses that associate the countryside and walking as places or practices for peace and contemplation. Such ways

of engagement cut across the different types of group in this study. So although harder walkers might like a challenge, they still valued what the others valued. Although the group was socially cohesive, the ways of relating to landscape did not seem an especial practice of the group, showing how deeper and more pervasive certain ways of engagement are.

The previous chapter showed the persistence of certain ideas and aesthetic traditions in walkers' motivations for going walking and their engagement with the landscape. There has been a marked evidence of and some striking similarities between particular ideas, cultural traditions and interpretations of walking in and looking at types of countryside from the Romantic period to the present day. These form basic but also very strong, internalised discourses for walkers which influence how they engage with landscape. The constant thread of individual responses linked to personal biographies throughout the interviews demonstrated how personal biographies help to internalise certain practices. However, these are just part of the experience and this thesis has found that other issues such as walking in particular kinds of space, the sociability of walking, and imagined landscapes are equally significant although many of these have been shown to be developments rather than completely new ways of walkers engaging with the countryside. What the thesis has also shown is the prevalence of such ways of thinking across different communities of walkers. In Bourdieu's theories of practice, there is always the opportunity to create new discourses in reaction to or development from previous discourses. In these new ways of thinking can be seen perhaps challenges to the old and the beginnings of new discourses?

## Chapter 9 – Conclusion

The thesis focuses on the meaning that walking has for some people and how walking is constructed. The research investigated walkers' relationship with landscape as 'produced' through practices and the place of visual culture within this. Walkers' relationship with the landscapes through which they walk are complex and this research sought to go beyond a discussion of barriers and facilitators to walking to explore those relationships. In order to do this, the research drew on a number of disciplines including visual culture studies, cultural geography, anthropology and sociology to explore the persistence of cultural traditions and ideas and their role in walkers' current engagement with the countryside. During the research I uncovered reasons why particular people and groups of people engage with landscapes in different ways, beyond mere concerns with health or fitness.

The links between art and landscape are well known but this research sought to go beyond looking at the circulation of visual images to explore walkers' relationships with those images as well as cultural and individual constructions of landscape. There have been many very important studies from cultural geographers about the nature of walking and walkers' engagement with the landscape. These provided a basis for the research in terms of conceptualising landscapes and walkers' relationships or engagement with landscapes. These studies though have sometimes used a small group of walkers, or one or two people to reflect on walking in the countryside (Wylie 2005a, 2002; Vergunst and Ingold 2008). This research adds to such findings by exploring similarities and differences between those who habitually walk in organised groups and those who walk on their own or with friends and family, and harder and easy/moderate walkers.

The research in this thesis was limited to those who go walking in the countryside on a regular basis. There was a range of ages, gender, people who walked in an organised group and those who did not, those who habitually went on hard walks and those who went on easy/moderate walks. The aim was to explore the attitudes and constructions around walking, landscapes and the countryside of those for whom walking is a significant part of their leisure activity. The sample did not include those who went on health walks because they might well have been focused on health to the exclusion of other motivations or ways of engaging with the countryside and landscapes. The research did not investigate those with visual impairments either because this would

have added another layer of complexity of ways of “seeing”, understanding, and engaging. Extending the study to these groups would have opened up areas of research which would have been unmanageable in the time. The interviewees walked in northern landscapes and lived in the north. Partly this choice was driven by practicality and ease of completing the research, and partly the necessity to establish the beliefs and attitudes of this particular group before comparing with other types of walkers.

The research was informed by ideas from visual culture and more latterly cultural geography that moved from considering landscape as something outside the observer which could be read, to landscape as created and constructed socially and visually, in particular Shields (Shields 1992), Wylie (Wylie 2007, 2002, 2005a; Wylie 2005b) and Ingold (Ingold 2000). Concepts drawn from recent discussions of non-representational theory have also informed the research and supported the understanding of multi-sensual, more than human and affective relationships with landscape and walking (Macpherson 2010; Anderson and Harrison 2010; Lorimer 2005, 2011). Other important concepts which informed the research were those of therapeutic landscapes (Gesler 1992, 2005; Thwaites 2010a), genius loci (the spirit of a place) (Rishbeth and Powell 2012), imagined landscapes and walking as quests or pilgrimages (Slavin 2003; Green 2009; Macfarlane 2008), and northern landscapes (Davidson 2005).

The research followed Bourdieu’s notion of habitus where people are socialised into practices but which also allows that they have a creative relationship with cultural practices. Such ideas of individual agency led to a research design that investigated individual engagement with and constructions of walking and landscape, as well as cultural traditions and discourses around the countryside and landscape. The intention of comparing members of a walking group with those who were not members was in part to help determine whether organised groups played a major role in socialising the way walkers engaged with various landscapes and the countryside.

The aim was to generate theories from the findings about the construction of landscape. Thus the first part of the research explored the cultural constructions and representations of landscapes, and the influence of circulation and consumption of particular kinds of images. Such aesthetic and cultural traditions of visualising and interpreting certain landscapes (and the way they take on associated meanings) were relevant to understanding walkers’ views and attitudes relating to walking and landscape. The

initial focus was on the inter-war years as an important time for understanding cultural constructions and representations of landscapes and the countryside that continue to resonate with today's walkers. There followed investigation of the current visual-cultural context.

The second part of the research took an ethnographic approach using qualitative, in-depth interviews in order to understand how walkers engage with landscapes. This allowed for investigation into individual biographies, experiences and values which demonstrated how walkers assimilate aesthetic and cultural traditions depending on their own histories, and then what new ways of conceptualising landscapes and the countryside emerge. The research was thus able to consider walking as a social act and product of the social world and cultural traditions, whilst allowing individual variability to be considered.

The research was an organic process building from early interviews that gave some indications of walker's motivations for walking but not enough depth and detail about what they valued in landscapes and how they conceptualised landscapes. Getting the interviewees to take photos and talk about the photos meant that the research could go beyond the superficial. This was a very effective method. There were many surprises but this enabled themes and ideas to be generated that embraced the surprises, depth and complexity of the interview data.

The inter-war years were found to be an important time for establishing a set of particular discourses around the countryside and walking that contributed to the enduring popularity of walking, including ideas about the body, the circulation of forms of visual imagery, and institutions. The outdoors was seen as a space for healthy exercise, accompanied by an underlying belief in the improving or moral benefits of outdoor exercise. Walking was encouraged by the increase in public transport, the growth of hostels, and a number of organisations that encouraged walking. Access to walk on private land remained a contested issue but the Kinder Scout Trespass fostered greater access and assumptions about walkers' rights to roam on private land. The revival in landscape painting was important in conceiving of the countryside as a place of spiritual and physical renewal. Englishness or Britishness was not just interpreted as a bucolic rural idyll but concerned with deeper, more ancient, and more mythological attachments to the landscape.

Researching the current visual-cultural context found that much of the countryside was now managed, either with marked footpaths and landscape management or with guides or signboards explaining the significance of and what visitors should think about certain places. Modern guidebooks and magazines had little sense of the experiments with modern styles prevalent amongst the artists of the inter-war years. Instead images had become largely clichéd repetitions of picturesque villages, ruined abbeys, castles, waterfalls and prehistoric monuments, images of the Romantic hero stood on a crop of rock contemplating a wide panorama, or mysterious mountains shrouded in mist. Wainwright's guides had an important influence, contributing to the pre-eminence of the Lake District as a place to walk and in walking itself as a Romantic, contemplative pursuit.

However, the interviews with the walkers and the photographs they took show that the influence these images and ideas is not straightforward. Although some of the interviewees watched TV programmes or read magazines about walking, these were often in the background of their lives. Even guidebooks that were widely read were used instrumentally to plan walks. Many walkers used the internet but again instrumentally to find new routes, or occasionally to look up information about sites of special interest such as archaeological remains. A few of the interviewees had some knowledge of famous artists but not so many as to suggest that the sample was biased in favour of those who were particularly interested in art. There was a slight bias in the walkers towards Turner's depictions of landscape but the research found that walkers favoured landscape depictions in their own homes which had personal associations, places where they had walked and held particular memories or associations. Such personal attachments to places formed a strong theme in the interviews.

There have been studies seeking to find out how to motivate people to go walking for health and exercise reasons (Zheng, Orsini, Amin, Wolk, Nguyen, et al. 2009; Forsyth et al. 2009; Johnson et al. 2012), but these have mostly not addressed the wider motivations and cultural constructions of walking. Doughty's research on walking is one of the closest to this research in looking at motivations beyond exercise, but her study concentrates on the sociability of walking (Doughty 2013). Macpherson's research focussed on a particular group of visually impaired walkers (Macpherson 2009). The interviews revealed current discourses around landscape and showed the

complex and active relationship walkers have with landscape. Such findings have added to what was known in a number of ways.

Traditions and discourses about the countryside and landscapes from the Romantics and interwar years persisted. Such ways of conceptualising the landscape included the Romantic and sublime appeal of wild and dramatic landscapes, and taking time to for solitary contemplation. The influences of the Romantics has long been noted but an important finding was that even amongst a group of walkers with no particular interest in certain forms of art and literature that this was the way they engaged with landscape at a deep level. Such ideas cut across the research groupings so that, somewhat unexpectedly, both hard and easy/moderate walkers and those who were group members and those who were not. Even those who enjoyed walking hard and might be expected to focus on physical exercise and covering a number of miles conceived of walking and landscapes in this way, and indeed had a tendency to favour awe-inspiring and dramatic landscapes. This contradicts the findings from Prentice and Guerin (Prentice and Guerin 1998) which found that popular landscape consumption was not formed by Romantic texts and art. However, that study was trying to pin visitors down to specific examples. What this thesis has shown is the pervasiveness of particular images and ways of thinking about and constructing landscape that derive from Romantic traditions which still contribute to walkers' present discourses and constructions.

The influences of the interwar years included valuing the countryside as peaceful and calm, and the liking for unpopulated landscapes. Even though nowadays walkers wanted to escape from the busyness and closed in nature of cities, rather than the smog and industry of previous times. There were though some signs that attitudes to walking in cities were beginning to change with some of the interviewees liking urban walks. Cities though were not valued by walkers because they represented a new kind of urban idyll as described by Hoskins (Hoskins and Tallon 2004), in that visiting museums, going to cafés, and visiting markets were not considered as part of the walking experience. What walkers liked about walking in cities was similar to what they liked about walking in the countryside: finding open spaces, peacefulness and aesthetically pleasing views. Many of those interviewed, however, still wanted to escape the speed of modern city life to the slower pace of the countryside.

There were though relatively few examples of the castles, abbeys, archaeological remains that were found in the inter-war and current contextual material. This suggests that the appeal of such places may be for those walkers with a particular interest in history or archaeology. Another idea that resurfaced from the interwar years and is now relevant was that of “genius loci” in that there were certain places that had individual associations and memories that made them special for the interviewees. These were often more intimate spaces which sometimes had an otherworldly feel for individual interviewees. Often these were places mentioned by those who went on easy/moderate walks rather than the harder walks, perhaps because they had more time to rest at such places and form such associations. The imaginative response to particular places agrees with the work of Rishbeth and Powell, Macfarlane and Wylie (Rishbeth and Powell 2012; Macfarlane 2012, 2008; Wylie 2002) but shows that such ideas can now be applied to those who go walking in the countryside.

Furthermore, these were not superficial engagements with the countryside and landscapes through which they walked. Because many of these ideas were widely held and cut across research groupings, this thesis has developed theory because such ways of engaging with landscape and constructing landscape are part of a wider practice of walking embracing both hard and easy/moderate walkers, and those who belong to organised walking groups or go walking with friends and family. In spite of the normative codes imposed in group walking as Edensor found (Edensor 2000), the findings show such practices were not restricted to a walking group taking forward old traditions but that the above traditions and ways of conceptualising walking and the countryside, although apparently part of the background of walkers’ lives, were common to all walkers and suggest the all-pervasiveness of such ideas and cultural artefacts.

The internalisation of these dominant discourses across different research groupings suggests, following Bourdieu (Bourdieu and Johnson 1993), a wide field and a habitus that embraced different types of walkers. So dominant discourses around walking which had their roots in early traditions were experienced by the different types of walkers in this study. Bourdieu’s notion of habitus also provides an explanation for the continuation of such ways of thinking about and constructing the countryside.

Bourdieu's understanding of habitus and modes of cultural production and concepts drawn from non-representational theory allow for change and the research revealed other modern discourses of walking in relation to current concerns and moving away from privileging the visual. Following on from cultural geographers and anthropologists who have brought to the fore how physical movement can determine how humans move through and engage with landscape (Ingold 2000; Ingold and Vergunst 2008; Wylie 2002, 2005a), the research found that walkers were aware of the physical aspects on walking and sometimes frustrated by physical constraints when they were unable to look at the surrounding environment. The harder walkers were more likely to enjoy walks that were physically challenging, although this applied to some of the easy/moderate walkers as well. The physical sensations sometimes added to the experience as in feeling and hearing the rush of a great waterfall, or being immersed in a peaceful scene. A few took the immersion further by swimming but here the group normative practices tended to preclude this activity as a part of group walking. Being in space and experiencing a sense of space was enormously important and was connected to walkers' particular conceptions of northern landscapes. Such ideas were linked to ideas of the sublime, standing at the top of a fell and being able to see awe-inspiring views evoking a sense of something bigger than the self. However, such views had developed from Romantic ideas of Nature as the goddess educator or emanation of God to something more secular.

Similarly ideas about health and walking have moved on since the inter-war years. Much of academic literature about health and walking has concentrated on motivating factors or evaluations of health walking groups (Forsyth et al. 2009; Johnson et al. 2012; Zheng, Orsini, Amin, Wolk, Nguyen, et al. 2009), and health policy has promoted walking to improve physical health. So it was surprising that walkers were not focused on walking solely as a way of improving physical health. The findings from the thesis were more in tune with those who found associations between mental and physical health in walkers (Morita et al. 2007; Morita et al. 2011; Marselle, Irvine, and Warber 2014) with walkers finding an intertwining of mental and physical health. The interviewees did not talk of or photograph particular places as therapeutic spaces such as Thwaites and Gesler have written about (Thwaites 2010a; Gesler 1992) but were more in accord with Gatrell's notion of therapeutic mobilities where walking could be therapeutic (Gatrell 2013). Rather than this being a result of physical causality, this research found that the complex layers of traditions, dominant discourses of the

countryside being a place of peace and safety, away from the busyness and unsettled nature of cities (following Bauman (Bauman 2003) and the sociability of walking all contributed to feelings of wellbeing.

The sociability of walking was important for the interviewees which concurs with other findings from Green, Doughty, Macpherson and Copelton (Green 2009; Doughty 2013; Copelton 2010; Macpherson 2009). This research adds the importance of shared stories and rituals attached to specific places which contributed to the coherence of walking groups. However, this research also found that there were those who went against the normative codes of walking, particularly a willingness by women to walk on their own. This was more evident in those who were not part of a walking group and female. There were as well idiosyncratic ways of engaging with the landscape which were related to personal history and interests. Such individual ways of thinking were not often shared within the group. They were though still held by walkers who were group members and those who were not and suggests new ideas of what might be valued by walkers in the landscape. Present day walkers still enjoy walking as adventure, journeys, and quests. This again connects with Macfarlane's writing about the imaginative need (Macfarlane 2008).

Although cultural geographers have written about how "natural" seeming landscapes have been changed and cultivated by humans over the centuries (Ingold 2000; Cosgrove and Daniels 1988), walkers still preferred what they considered to be "natural" landscapes. They liked walking in natural landscapes and having animals (including domesticated ones), flora and fauna around them whilst walking. However, such ideas had moved on again from Romantic ideas of the goddess Nature to ideas about walkers sharing the Earth with other creatures and plants as part of the ecosystem.

The reasons why particular people undertake certain forms of walking has been shown to be complex, and multi-layered. In the process of the research has been seen how landscapes have been and are constructed through particular types of engagement, traditions of thinking about walking and the countryside, production and consumption of certain types of representation. The interviews have brought to light fascinating material in terms of how these people describe the importance that their type of walking has for them. The thesis has considered the ways in which certain typologies and aesthetic categories with roots in forms of Romanticism have persisted, from the

picturesque to the sublime, at the level of the visual, i.e. in painting, prints, photographs, and the internet. In later chapters though it has been acknowledged that the visual has been over-privileged in accounts of walking in the countryside and recent scholarship in cultural geography and anthropology have been cited in that regard.

Finally, visual culture has been shown to be significant in the way walkers conceptualise and engage with landscape. Romanticism extends beyond mere observation (and associated ideas of detachment from the landscape) to the way walkers participate, actively construct landscapes and their immersion in environments. So that although those looking at magazines or images on the internet may see a hackneyed repetition of certain images, the way walkers engage with Romantic ideas and ways of engaging with landscape goes beyond such superficialities. However, what has been identified through the interviews is an appreciation of the fuller sense of how walkers engage with and construct landscape that uses these ideas but also extends to a social, bodily, affective and multi-sensual engagement.

The research has limitations in that it looked at a small sample of interviewees based in the North East. It was not a representative sample because the intention was to study in depth a new area of research. This research is very much a first step in understanding the ways current walkers relate to and conceptualise walking and landscapes. It is useful in having found complex relationships based on the assimilation of previous traditions and ways of conceptualising landscape together with individual responses and ways of engagement. However, further research would be needed to establish how representative these views and forms of engagement are. In one way it was disappointing that the research groupings did not produce greater differences, although this in fact showed how widespread some of the ways of thinking about and engaging with landscape and the countryside are for different types of walkers. There may be other groupings that produce different findings, and possible areas of exploration might be to consider much younger walkers, or those who live in different parts of the UK, or even further afield.

The findings add to current research in showing the persistence of certain ideas and aesthetic traditions in walkers' motivations for walking in the countryside, and the way walkers engage with the countryside. Such ways of constructing landscapes as Romantic, sublime, imagined and also as peaceful, safe, unpopulated form deeply held

and internalised discourses for a wide range of UK walkers. These are perhaps more widely experienced and more deeply felt than was known previously, although there would need to be further research to determine the extent of this. Romanticism emerges as a constant throughout the thesis and went beyond referencing Romantic painters or writers. As has been indicated there are wider issues relating to notions of freedom from restraint, individual subjectivity, feeling, emotion, spirituality, the importance of nature and the emotional value of certain kinds of space.

The findings also add to current research in showing the way in which current discourses about landscape, the countryside and walking are beginning to change, for example, in the way walking can answer the need for space and mental wellbeing in the modern world, or in the way certain individuals in their thinking and behaviour challenge normative behaviours. Such ideas do not challenge the important theories concerning how walkers actively construct landscape or ideas around the importance of physical aspects of walking. It provides an understanding of how such ideas are more widely held among walkers than was known before.

As a next step, it would be interesting to test out the research findings with another sample of those who walk in different types of landscapes, perhaps more typically southern, gentle bucolic landscapes. Do those, for example, walking in the South or in flatter areas, share similar feelings of peace, similar desire for open spaces, similar wishes for contemplation, and similar attachments to personal places? This would provide an understanding of how widely are held such ideas and ways of constructing landscapes whilst walking.

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## Appendix A

### Interview Schedules

#### First Phase

Why do you go out walking regularly in the country?

What do you enjoy about walking in the country? - prompts:

- Exercise, getting fit
- Wildlife - different birds, animals, trees, flowers
- The challenge of walking a long way, over hard terrain
- Visual aspects - scenery
- Smells/fresh air
- Comradeship

Describe to me a significant walk you've done in the last 12 months. It could be memorable because it was good or because it was particularly bad. What made it stand out for you?

What made you start walking?

What keeps you coming out?

Is there something about the countryside that's important to you?

## Second Phase

The box below shows the full interview schedule with series of bulleted prompts following each main question.

***As part of these interviews, I am interested in finding out your views about landscape and scenery. This first part of the interview asks you some questions about that.***

Are particular landscapes or places where you go walking important to you?

- Probe for examples
- Why are those places important to you?

Do you like looking at the surrounding landscape when you are walking?

- Why is that?

Is the sort of scenery you can see an important part of the walk for you?

- If yes, what types of scenery do you particularly enjoy walking through?
- Is the scenery the point of the walk, or is the destination more important?

The role of Northern Landscapes – *In particular, I am interested in finding out about what you think about Northern Landscapes.*

When I say Northern Landscapes what do you think of?

- Are there particular characteristics you associate with walking in or looking at Northern Landscapes?
- Can you describe them?
- Do you think of them as being testing or hard landscapes?
- Are they strange places?

Do you prefer Northern to Southern landscapes for walking?

- Why is that?

Are there different types of Northern Landscapes?

- Are the landscapes of the Lakes, Cheviots and the Pennines different?
- If yes, in what ways?

Do you like walking through Northern Landscapes?

- Why is that?

Do you like looking at Northern Landscapes?

- Why is that?

*[continued on next page]*

**Discussion of photos – *As part of the interview, I asked you to take some photos of landscapes that you were interested in.***

**Can you talk me through why you chose these views?**

- What do you like about the views?
- Why did you choose to photograph this/these particular view/s?
- What were you trying to capture in these photos?
- How successful do you think you've been in conveying what was important to you?

**Awareness of visual context – *I am also trying to get an idea of whether you watch TV programmes or read books about walking, and what you think about those.***

**Have you watched any walking programmes on TV?**

- If yes, What have you watched? If no, Why is that?
- What do you think of them?
- How far do they match your experience of walking?
- Do you watch them and think you would like to do that or actually go on those walks?

**Do you have any guidebooks or books about walking?**

- If yes, which ones? If no, why is that?
- How often do you look at them? Probe: is it for particular walks or do you read them/dip into them for pleasure?
- What do you think of them?
- Are there particular ones you use when going walking?
- How far do they match your experience of walking?

**Do you read walking magazines?**

- If yes, which ones? If no, why is that?
- What do you think of them?

**Do you use any walking websites or apps?**

- If yes, What have you watched? If no, Why is that?
- What do you look up on them?
- What do you think of them?

**Do you have any pictures of landscapes in your home?**

- If yes, could you describe a favourite one? If no, why is that?

**Do you like paintings of landscapes?**

- If yes, do you have any favourites/favourite painters?
- What do you like about them?

**Is there anything else you would like to add?**

## Appendix B

### Walking through Landscape – the impact of the visual

#### Research Project – Follow-up Interview - photos

Thank you for agreeing to take part in the research project. For this second interview I would like to explore more about what particular types of landscape people are drawn to and like looking at. In order to give us some examples to talk about, I would like you to take this disposable camera and over the next 6-8 weeks take some photos of landscapes or scenery that you particularly like. In the interview we can then discuss what you like about particular landscapes and why you took those pictures.

Each camera has 27 photos. I would like to have about 810 photos from each person to talk about at the interview. You might also have other photos that you have taken yourself of landscapes that are of special importance to you. Please bring those along too. Once you have taken all the photos, please return the camera to me and then I can get the photos developed. You can ring or email me at the numbers below and I can come and pick it up. We can then set a date and time for the next interview.

I would like, with your permission, to keep copies of some of the photos for my research, but you will get to keep your photos.

Thanks – I hope this will be fun for you as well as useful for the research!

Barbara Harrington